

Chapter 22

The Last Two Decades

The time for writing a detailed history of the college since Dr. Connolly's retirement in 1952 has obviously not yet come. Any attempt to do so now would be doomed to failure since the passage of time alone will allow recent events to be seen in their proper perspective. Like their predecessors in the history of the college, those of the present generation must be willing to let posterity pass judgment on them. This last chapter can, therefore, claim to be little more than an effort to record, briefly, the changes that have occurred in the college since 1952, so that some kind of picture can be formed of the present state of the institution on the eve of the bicentenary of its re-establishment in Valladolid.

This period of less than twenty years has seen three different rectorates, Monsignor Flanagan leaving after eight years to be rector of the Scots College in Rome and Canon Boyle being made rector of Blairs College after less than five years as rector in Valladolid. The former took over at a time of great difficulty and when even the very continuance of the college was in doubt. His problems were not made easier of solution by the fact that he arrived in Valladolid as a stranger to the country, to the language and to the college, but an early decision of great importance needed to be made. The building was nearly four hundred years old and seemed dilapidated; his two predecessors had been convinced that the community should move; and the Archbishop of Valladolid made no secret of the project whose realisation involved his acquiring the Scots' property. In these circumstances, should the college move—to Canterac, or even to Salamanca? The decision to remain, made on a provisional basis at first but now accepted policy, seems to have been justified by events. The grandiose scheme for the Citadel of the Sacred Heart has been abandoned or, at least, so drastically modified that the college building no longer forms an integral part of the plan.¹ Moreover, the fabric, ancient and venerable though it is, has proved able to accept a number of improvements that suggest that it still has many years of useful existence ahead.

All of the exterior walls of the building have been resurfaced, the street façade in particular being much restored, with cement laid over the old brickwork. The original front door of Geddes' time, which opens on to the main corridor, was brought back into use, instead of the one in the centre of the façade which gives entry directly to the "central part" of the old college of St. Ambrose acquired in 1783.² The rooms of the *entresuelo* (or middle floor) of this central part (i.e., in the area of the main library) have been transformed into students' accommodation to meet the increase in the community's numbers, the old billiards room being divided into two, and the ancient books, formerly in two small rooms of the corridor, being transferred to the old waiting room. A new staircase has been constructed at the western end of this part of the building, just outside the main library, giving easy access to all three floors there. The former music room has become the main classroom and one of the rooms on the ground floor at the far end of the "central part" has been made into a smaller classroom. The students' recreation room is now situated in what, until 1953, was the study room, above the kitchen. The billiards table was re-erected in that area of the *entresuelo* where the stone baths installed by David McDonald had been. The priests' dining room was enlarged and the room near the present main entrance (where the first act of the community in

the college, the recitation of the litanies of the Holy Name and of Loreto, took place on 31st May 1771) is now the room in which visitors or callers are received. All the books of the library have been rearranged and catalogued.

A system of central heating, first with three small coal furnaces, and later with one large oil-burning furnace and extended throughout the building, has been installed, Washing and toilet facilities have been improved and increased. All of the corridors and the main staircase have been repainted for the first time since 1899, the old false doors whose only purpose was to break up the windowless walls of the main corridor, almost fifty yards long, having been removed and a series of paired pilasters introduced for the same end. The views of Rome which decorated the top corridor have given way to photographs of Spanish cities; the Jesuit martyrs of the bottom corridor have been moved to the staircase and a smaller number of larger pictures, most of which come from the Madrid period of the college, put in their place.³ The refectory has been panelled in wood and has its tables and seating completely renewed, but retaining the same "round-the-wall" style which the character of the room demands; there, William Semple, María de Ledesma and John Geddes still look down on the latest beneficiaries of their work, while a huge "Last Supper" and Isabel of Bourbon, masquerading as "*La santa Martyr y Gloria de su siglo, Dña. María Estuarda, Reyna de Escocia,*" continue to occupy the end walls.⁴

In the reliquary chapel new seating has been installed and the pictures, statues and relics removed from its walls and collected in glass cupboards at the back. The main church now has a tiled floor, new sanctuary furniture (tabernacle, altar, lectern, seats) in accordance with the liturgical reforms, and a heating system. A covered passage along the outside of the church allows a more dignified entry to be made from near the back of the nave.

In the grounds of the college, the old outhouses have been pulled down, a large open shed and a garage erected, and the street wall rebuilt. A concrete games court has been laid down in the biggest of the three *patios* (the "*corral*").

This unelaborated list of the major material changes and improvements of the last two decades will suffice to show that Mgr. Humble's gloomy prognostications about the old building's "fast nearing the end of its earthly usefulness"⁵ have proved unfounded and that the centuries-old structure, with its walls of earth, three or four feet thick, has been capable of sufficient adaptation and modernisation to make living conditions there not at all unbearable.

Since 1952 the property in Madrid has continued to afford a useful source of income. A new hotel, called the Hostal Luis XV, has occupied the fifth and sixth floors since 1966 but, with rents rigorously controlled and two major repair projects undertaken (the complete renovation of the exterior of the building and the replacement of the three lifts), the property has not been as consistently productive of revenue as might have been anticipated. The Madrid income and the money received from the sale of large parts of the Canterac estate for industrial development have been used for the improvements in the college building already mentioned, while the contributions which the students make from the allowances which they receive from the Scottish Education Department meet most of the costs of their normal maintenance in the college (food, heating, laundry, domestic staff, medical expenses, etc.)

The irrigated part of the Canterac estate continues to produce vegetables and crops, but with increasing difficulty, as the built-up area of the city has now reached it. Moreover, the extent of ground cultivated is so relatively small that the business has ceased to be an economic proposition and it is obvious that the future of the estate (apart perhaps from the football field and a kitchen garden for the college's use) lies in industrial and housing development. New accommodation has been built at Canterac and at Boecillo for the persons in charge of the college property in these places. At Boecillo, about half of the vineyards are still cultivated compared with the earlier part of the century, and here again with increasing difficulty and diminishing returns. The village of Boecillo is so near the factories of Valladolid that able-bodied men will not accept agricultural work at wages related to the low profitability of vineyards. As the yield of the latter, over the years, inexorably grows less, the situation at present is that, on the average, only a little more than enough wine for the community's own use is produced.⁶ The lands that the college owns in Boecillo will no doubt increase in value, as land in the vicinity of an expanding city normally does, but, as vineyards, their future in the long term seems bleak.

In the house at Boecillo, there have been various improvements in the years since 1952, notably the installation of running water pumped from the "*fuenta del rector*", the conversion of a store room into the priests' dining room, the construction of a garage, as well as a porch and outhouse at the kitchen back door, the laying of a tennis court in the *patio* and the making (and maintenance) of a flower garden in front of the house. The waste ground (or six-holes golf course) beside the house (on the village side), together with the adjoining vineyards, have been acquired in order to preserve some privacy as more and more houses and other buildings appear in the area.

The Casa Grande, as the Boecillo house is called, has been occupied each summer since 1953 onwards by students other than those who either have completed three years of their course (and so have spent the summer in Scotland) or have finished the six years' course and left the college. The summer months at Boecillo are usually enlivened by a succession of visitors from Scotland. Particular mention must be made of the fortnight which Cardinal Gray and three other Scottish bishops spent with the community in the summer of 1969, but this is only the outstanding occasion among many visits by Scottish bishops, priests and seminarians.

These visits provide a means of contact between past and present students of the college. So also does the San Ambrosio Society, most of whose members are priests who were formerly students in the Valladolid college. The society was founded in 1893, despite a proposal that it should not have a separate existence and that prospective members should be incorporated within the Blairs Society. The San Ambrosio Society meets once a year (at present, in mid-October), thus enabling former students of the college and other members to keep in contact with one another at least on those occasions and to enjoy the pleasure of each other's company at the lunch that follows the meeting. The annual meetings have not been held in unbroken succession since the society's inception. After the Humble Ritchie quarrel in 1918 there was a break of several years until the society was revived in 1929. There was another period during and after the second world war when meetings were not held with regularity, but since the 1950s, with the college reopened and sending priests to Scotland once more, the society has flourished. From members' subscriptions, a sum of money is sent each year to Valladolid to be spent on amenities for the students or to help defray the cost of their excursions to places of interest in Spain.

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In some ways, the greatest changes that have occurred in the college during the past two decades have been in connection with the life of the students. Twenty years ago, for example, they went for their walks and classes dressed in soutane, long coat and broad-brimmed hat and proceeding in a "crocodile";⁷ they were not allowed to enter a shop, an evening at the cinema was unthought of and, even within the college, the main library was out of bounds. Things have changed greatly in these and many other respects and, if anything, the rate of change has accelerated since the Second Vatican Council. This is not the place, nor even less the time, to speculate about the seminary of the future. We live in an era of change in the Church, so that seminaries have needed to change also. Changes for their own sake have no value but, if the changes brought about by the desire for fewer imposed rules and more individual responsibility produce better priests, more fitted for the work that lies ahead of them, then obviously their introduction has been worth while.

In 1967 the Augustinian college in Valladolid (the "*Filipinos*") became affiliated to the Pontifical University of Comillas and so was given power to confer the degree of bachelor of theology. To take advantage of this state of affairs, the students of the college, when due to begin their theology course, have, since that year, gone to the Augustinian college. Three years later, in 1970, the diocesan seminary ceased to provide courses in either theology or philosophy but, at the same time, part of the building there was taken over by the Dominican Higher Institute of Philosophy, transferred from Las Caldas de Besaya in Santander province. This Institute is affiliated to the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (the Angelicum) in Rome and the Scots students have been admitted to it for their philosophy course. Thus, although an association with the diocesan seminary, dating from 1910, has come to an end, the students now attend centres of a higher academic status than before.

In recent times, the presence of a staff of three priests (spiritual director, as well as rector and vice-rector) has enabled the students to receive a considerable number of classes in the college. This is particularly true of those students in the philosophy course (since, on first arrival, their limited knowledge of Spanish is a handicap) or of those subjects in which Scottish conditions and needs have to be kept in mind (e.g., sociology, history of philosophy, church history, sermon practice, pastoral theology). The post of spiritual director has existed in the college only since 1950 and its occupant, of course, fulfils a most important function. Another related improvement is that, nowadays, the annual retreat is given by a priest whose language is English; normally a priest from Britain, religious or diocesan, is invited out specially for the purpose.

There has been, since the Council, a deeper realisation that the students, particularly the senior ones, ought to engage on some form of active pastoral work during their seminary course and, although in Valladolid there is the difficulty of being foreigners in a pastoral situation different from that of Scotland, something has been done, especially perhaps through the existence in the college, from 1966 to 1970, of a praesidium of the Legion of Mary.

The students of the present generation do much more travelling than did their pre-war predecessors and their finances, especially that part of their grant which is their own personal allowance, are usually sufficient to enable them to have a few days' holiday away from the college during Christmas and Easter weeks, in addition to a longer period in the summer. Until the early 1960s, the old custom continued whereby the students were ordained in Valladolid; only, with the difference that,

since the college reopened, the ordination ceremony was normally performed by a Scottish bishop and held in the college church. But, within the past six or seven years, the preference has been for ordination in Scotland.

The changes in the college, the many innovations in the life of the community, perhaps obscure the fact that there has been continuity as well. There is continuity in many ways: obviously in such institutions as, for instance, the theatricals at Christmas, the biannual appearance of *The Ambrosian* and, above all, the weekly meeting of the “Academy”; but there is continuity also in a deeper, less tangible sense. To be a member of the community is to live in a house with a proud history, to realise that one is only the latest link in a centuries-old foundation, to be aware that one inherits the traditions of so many predecessors, illustrious or unremembered; it is, in a word, to know that one is “a Spaniard”.

The college founded by William Semple has now been in existence for nearly three hundred and fifty years. On more than one occasion, only the impossibility of removing its financial assets from Spain has prevented its complete disappearance. To be realistic, this is the reason why it has survived until the present. But to admit this is not to confess that there is no other reason why it should exist now and in the future. Obviously, circumstances have changed in Scotland, the penal laws are abolished and seminaries have existed and flourished there for many decades. No one suggests that all Scottish priests should receive their training in the college in Spain. But surely it is desirable that the priests who are to work in the dioceses of Scotland should have come from varied educational backgrounds. And surely it would be folly to turn one’s back on the opportunity, as long as it may be there, for a proportion of Scottish priests to spend some of their formative years living in a house with such a history and in a community with such a tradition as the Royal Scots College of Valladolid.

To attempt to look into the future is pointless. The college no doubt has difficulties and even crises ahead of it, but that will be nothing new. The very fact that it has been so near extinction on several occasions and yet has recovered; the other fact that, in the last fifteen years, the number of students has seldom fallen below twenty and in 1969 reached a total of twenty-nine—the highest number in the history of the college; these facts give one great confidence for its future. May God, in His providence, watch over the college as He has protected it in the past. May He, in His goodness, reward the founders, the benefactors and indeed all who have had the privilege of being associated with the Scots College in Spain.

Notes for Chapter 22

1. Under the patronage of Archbishop García y García’s successor, Dr. José García Goldáraz, and the direction of the Right Rev. Emilio Alvarez, rector of the Santuario Nacional, several large buildings have been constructed in recent years on the ground adjoining the Scots College and where the “new part” of the Jesuit College of St. Ambrose once stood. These buildings pertain to the “Obra Social del Santuario Nacional” and provide living accommodation and training facilities for considerable numbers of handicapped children and young people.

2. Cf. Appendix II C.

3. Cf. College archives 19/94: catalogue of objects recovered from the Irish College in Alcalá and which had been in the College in Madrid. Among the pictures recovered was one (of about 45” by 33”) of “P. Juan Ogilveo.”

4. This last painting has been identified as a seventeenth century copy of the portrait, in the Prado, Madrid, by Rodrigo de Villandrando. (Juan José Martín González, *Varia del Seminario de Arte y Arqueología de lo Universidad de Valladolid*, 1956, p. 137.)

5. College archives 50/5.

6. Amounts of wine produced are subject to enormous fluctuations from year to year but, whereas in the 1840s the yearly average yield from the college vineyards was between 50,000 and 60,000 litres, in the 1940s it was about 15000 and in the 1960s about half of that.

7. Inside the college, the soutane normally continues to be worn. It is black, but with a badge, introduced in 1950 and consisting of a St. Andrew's cross surmounted by a crown. On formal occasions, outside as well as indoors, the dress is the soutane and a purple sash (the latter introduced in 1966, when the long coat and clerical hat fell into disuse).