

## The History and Creation of the European Confederation of Jesuit Alumni (ECJA)

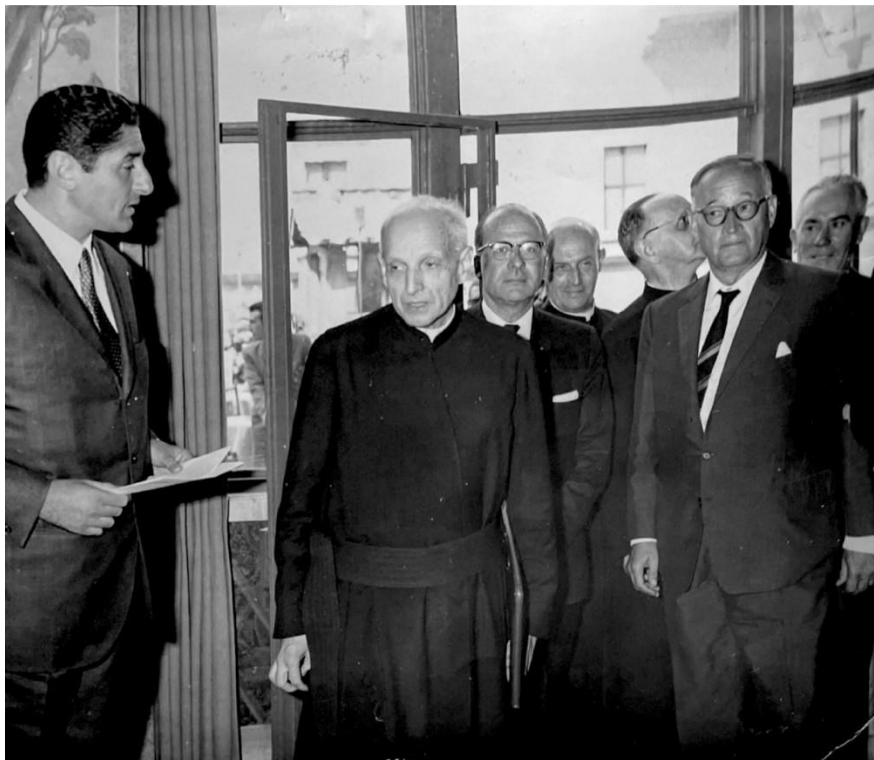
Fifty years ago, in the Valencia Congress, in Spain, Father Pedro Arrupe delivered an historical speech to the Jesuit Alumni telling them, “You should be Men for Others”. This was the beginning of our European Confederation of Jesuit Alumni (ECJA).

### **When the ECJA was created ? By whom ? For what purpose ?**

The ECJA was created in September 1954 during the Congress of Rome. A preparatory meeting took place in Frankfurt, Germany, by a group of friends; more specifically, each President of the national associations across Italy, Spain, Germany, Portugal and France, among others. Whilst they anticipated that Russian tanks would attack Prague and Budapest, this group of Jesuit Alumni from Western Europe decided to meet regularly to exchange ideas and concepts, about defending their values, protecting the Jesuit ethos, and providing assistance to the Society of Jesus and its method of education. For these men, the engagement in politics was a necessity. Among their ranks, Theo Lombard was Deputy Mayor of Marseilles, Enzo Sala was a prominent lawyer in the city of Milan, and Pietro Adonino, from Rome, became an active Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

They created two new organisations:

- The European Confederation of Jesuit Alumni in 1954, and,
- The World Union of Jesuit Alumni (WUJA) in 1956, a result of the Bilbao/Loyola Congress and of the Rome Congress in 1967 (in the presence of Father Pedro Arrupe).



*Photo: Father Pedro Arrupe at the 1967 Rome Congress with Pietro Adonino and Théo Lombard.*

The goals of the ECJA were summarized in article 4 of its By-Laws:

*“the Association, which does not seek to make any profit, aims to continue the work of formation of the Jesuit Fathers through the continuing education of their former students.*

*For these purposes, the Association may in particular:*

- *collaborate with the Society of Jesus, especially with their European authorities, in its educational, humanitarian, solidarity, social and spiritual action;*
- *create bonds of friendship and mutual aid between former students in different countries of Europe, by organizing general assemblies and/or other meetings;*
- *represent the European dimension of former students from the different countries of Europe, among others within the framework of the World Union of Jesuit Alumni;*
- *collaborate with European and worldwide organizations of Catholic school alumni.*

*To achieve its objectives, the Association may receive any material or financial assistance or contribution from public or private institutions and persons. The funds and materials thus collected must be used exclusively for the achievement of the social goal.*

*In order to achieve its purpose, the Association may carry out any operation directly or indirectly related to its purpose or which may lead to its development or facilitate the achievement thereof.”*

This text was originally drafted by Enzo Sala, a man of values, who devoted many years of his life to the Jesuit Alumni and Alumnae, in creating the legal structures of the Jesuit Alumni associations. He had a very deep friendship for my father, Theo Lombard, and while the two worked together on these By-Laws, we met with their children in Casenate, the Sala family house in the lake of Como in Italy, and became friends as well.



*Photo: Theo Lombard and an Italian representative at the Marseilles Congress, 1961.*

With the ECJA Goals set down, next came the implementation of its policies.

After the Congress of Rome in 1954, the following congresses took place:

- The congress of Bilbao, 1956
- Brussels, 1958
- Marseilles, 1961
- Vienna, 1963
- Bad Godesberg, 1965
- Rome, 1967
- Lisbon, 1969
- Liege, 1971
- Valencia, 1973, and
- Vannes in France, 1975.

From my childhood eyes, I remember one of the first Congresses, the Congress of Marseilles (1961), which various Austrian friends attended with Dr. Franz Montjoie. The Congress had working sessions, together with a cocktail party hosted by the City of Marseilles and a boat visit of the Calanques where two young alumni disappeared and were nearly drowned, but were eventually saved.

A second congress which impressed me, was in Bad Godesberg (1965), with a speech from Edmond Michelet, a former prisoner of the Dachau camp, and the French Minister of Culture under General de Gaulle at the time.

A third congress was in Lisbon (1969), with the excellent organization of Professor Alvaro Cabral, where all the many young alumni met on the beach for a part of the night. Pietro Adonino, President of the Confederation, delivered an impressive speech at the City Hall of Lisbon.

A fourth congress was in Liege (1971), well organized by Jean Van Halle and I made a speech on behalf of the Praesidium of Young Alumni on Europe and Culture. The president of the Praesidium was from Belgium, Pierre Filleul. There was a group of French Alumni including Herve Carrera, and Italian Alumni, composed of Ettore Moretti, Sergio Borlenghi and Francesco Giavazzi. Francesco Giavazzi subsequently became Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Italy, Mario Draghi. After this congress, we all met in Avignon, in Southern France, for a summer session of the Praesidium of Young Alumni with a group of young Spanish, German, Austrian and French Alumni. That day, we had discussions with theatre actors and directors, and in the evening, we went to the theatre. We had a wonderful time and this is where I met my wife Chantal, 50 years ago.

These activities of the Young Alumni turned out to be very important for the Jesuit Alumni movement, as many elected members of the ECJA and our WUJA started with the Praesidium of the Young Alumni. Including Eric de Langsdorff, François-Xavier Camenen, Herve Carrera and Laurent Grégoire in France.

The future of our respective Alumni and Alumnae Associations, our Confederation, and our World Union, is in the hands of our talented and dedicated young members.

François Lombard