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## Spanish Antisemitism? The Jews in Spain Under Francisco Franco

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**Spanish Antisemitism? The Jews in Spain Under Francisco Franco**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in European Studies from  
The College of William and Mary

by

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Spanish Antisemitism? The Jews in Spain Under Francisco Franco

Honors Thesis

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## Introduction

“An antisemite<sup>1</sup> says to his friend: ‘The Jews are responsible for World War I.’

‘Certainly,’ answered the friend, ‘the Jews and the bicyclists.’

‘Why the bicyclists?’ asks the confused antisemite.

‘Why the Jews?’ responds the friend.”

—Rafael Cruz, “El antisemitismo moderno (1875-1945): Un estado de la cuestión”

Antisemites around the world and throughout history have often made their prejudiced claims without a great deal of actual knowledge about Judaism, a fact that certainly held true during the rule of dictator Francisco Franco in Spain during the twentieth century. Just as this plague of hatred had spread so often before in countries in which there already existed structural and social problems, so too did the weakened state of the country after the devastating Spanish Civil War from 1936-1939 encourage the government to draw upon antisemitic rhetoric that originated in other countries in order to blame the Jews for the numerous problems facing Spain at the time.

But the treatment of the Jewish people in Spain under the rule of Franco has long stood as a point of contention in the academic community. Did the antisemitic speeches made by Francisco Franco and by his regime’s leaders lead to corresponding government-sanctioned antisemitic actions? How did Spain respond to the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948? As Nehemiah Robinson adequately summarizes in

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that contrary to the accepted spelling of “anti-Semitism” as a hyphenated term, I have utilized “antisemitism” throughout this paper. Researchers in the field are gradually accepting “antisemitism” as the preferred descriptor for linguistic reasons. See the preface of *Vanishing Diaspora: the Jews in Europe since 1945* by Wasserstein, p. xii, for more explanation. Nevertheless, I maintain the original in the texts I cite directly.

her pamphlet from 1953, at a time when Franco still held the power in Spain, “In its attitude toward the Jews and the Jewish question, the Franco regime has displayed a kind of ‘split personality.’ There can be no doubt about the anti-Jewish philosophy of Franco, the Falange,<sup>2</sup> and the Church” (Robinson 8). Yet many today would argue that antisemitism did not exist under Franco, and would carry that further to claim it does not exist in Spain today. In his book *Franco, Spain, the Jews, and the Holocaust*, Chaim Lipschitz further claims that, “Franco’s frequent anti-Semitic utterances and oft-expressed sympathy for the similar prejudices of others were not consistent with his actions” (3). In this thesis, I utilize a variety of sources that fall on both sides of the argument, in order to present a broad view of the situation for Jews in Spain throughout history, and particularly between the years 1939 and 1975.

## **Historical Background**

The Jewish people have had a very long and unique experience in Spain when compared to their histories in many other European nations. Jews have lived in Spain for centuries, predating Christianity and Islam in the country by several hundred years. Some sources make Biblical references in the Hebrew Torah that indicate Jews may have settled on the Iberian Peninsula during the time of Solomon, referring to the ancient city of Tarshish as possibly Tartessus, in modern Andalusia, Spain (Lindo 1). This presence would predate the Christian Era by at least seven centuries.

Christianity officially came to Spain during the first century (Netanyahu 20). Compared to the relative religious freedom that existed on the peninsula under Roman

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<sup>2</sup> A far-right, fascist organization closely associated with the ideology of Francisco Franco’s regime.

rule, the Catholic hierarchy in Spain established early prejudices during the Council of Elvira in 304. At this gathering of Catholic clergy, they issued various Canons against the Jews and other religious groups, such as “Canon 16—The daughters of Catholics shall not be given in marriage to heretics, unless they submit themselves to the Catholic Church; the same is also ordained for Jews and schismatics. Parents who transgress this order shall be excommunicated for five years” (Lindo 10). This 304 issue, and other similar Canons, implied that Jews were somehow equivalent to “heretics,” and sought to prevent the intermarriage of Jews and Catholics in order to preserve the Catholic faith, though the country increasingly moved toward more explicitly antisemitic rulings. This grew clearer when in the year 380 the Spanish Emperor Theodosius “made Christianity the Empire’s official religion and denounced adherents of other faiths as heretics to be punished” (Netanyahu 20). Stronger anti-Jewish laws began to emerge by the 4th and 5th centuries. These laws “denied the Jews many basic rights and rendered them second-rate citizens” (Netanyahu 29).

By 718, Spain had switched hands religiously to become the “capital of the Islamic world,” and for a time these Muslim rulers established a much more lenient atmosphere of religious toleration than had their Christian predecessors. Jewish people came to the peninsula during this period, “to partake of their prosperity and science; they were freely allowed to practice that worship, their Christian rulers had imputed to them as a crime” (Lindo 40). Numerous prominent Jewish writers and translators emerged during these centuries. Eventually Christian leaders returned, however, supplanting the Muslim rulers. They established further laws relevant to the Jews throughout this period, such as one in 1261 issued under Alfonso X of Castille, who actually interacted with and sought

the help of Jewish people in his scientific, mathematical, and Arabic studies, as part of the “Siete Partidas.” Though these laws apparently “exhibit[ed] the protection afforded by these enlightened monarchs to the persons and property of the Jews, and the free exercise of their religion,” they still included controversial stipulations, such as the requirement that Jews wear a special headpiece to mark them as Jews or risk a fine or public lashing (Lindo 91-102). By the 14th century pogroms had started in Spain. However, many other European nations had already acted more strictly than had the rulers Spain, so that “as far as the Jews were concerned, the end came much later in Spain than elsewhere, for they had already been expelled from most countries in Europe” (Netanyahu 87). This comparative delay in Spain largely resulted from the significant impact that Jews had on the economic sector. Houses of religious worship often changed hands during these various regime changes, so that even today buildings serving as churches or mosques may once have been used as Jewish synagogues.

During much of the Middle Ages, members of the Jewish faith living in Spain often interacted with the wider community of many different faiths to some extent, allowing for an acculturation that surpassed that of many European countries in the same time period. Though some propose that the concept of this so-called “Golden Age” in Spain, in which Catholics, Jews, and Muslims lived in relative harmony, may exaggerate the degree to which these three separate religious communities managed to interact peacefully, Spain still stands out as one of the more tolerant countries from the time period. Some Jews even managed to find positions working directly for the Spanish monarchs, including the renowned Torah scholar, and financial adviser to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Don Isaac Abrabanel, born in 1437 in Lisbon, Portugal

(“Don Isaac Abrabanel”). Ferdinand and Isabella further proved critical in the larger course of Spanish history because with their marriage they united the kingdoms of Aragon and Castille to form the majority of the physical land that forms the modern Spanish state. However, these beloved monarchs, who still hold a place of honor in the hearts of Spaniards today (who often affectionately refer to them as “Los Reyes Católicos,” the Catholic Monarchs), decided to expel the Jewish population from Spain in 1492. They issued the Edict of Expulsion in that year, which accordingly generated an atmosphere of persecution and fear that drove almost the entire Jewish population out of Spain (including Abrabanel). Jewish people were forced to either convert to Catholicism or leave the country, and a few chose to practice their Judaism in secret while outwardly professing Catholicism. According to a *New York Times* article, “it is estimated that 50,000 to 150,000 of the 600,000 Jews in Spain at that time left,” with many of the rest converting (Eder 3).

The infamous time of the Inquisition actually began in full force several years prior to the Edict in 1481, as the Church sought to discover those who did not fully adhere to the Catholic faith but claimed to do so. After 1492, when the Jews of Spain were faced with the option of leaving behind most of their worldly possessions, their lives, careers, and friends to start over again somewhere new all within a few short months, or converting to Catholicism, some chose to show outward signs of converting while still secretly maintaining the Jewish faith of their families. The Inquisition sought out any of the so-called “New Christians,” as converted Jews were called, that might still be practicing the Jewish faith secretly in this way, in order to punish them (Netanyahu 3). Though estimates for how many individuals actually continued to practice their Judaism

in secret are difficult to establish, some academics imply that it was not a significantly large number. The most renowned and extreme punishment of the time involved burning a person alive at the stake in front of a crowd of spectators, a spectacle known as an “auto da fé,” or show of faith (Zacharoff). The Portuguese author Samuel Usque, writing in the 16th century, referred to the Inquisition as a “wild monster of such terrible mien that all of Europe trembles at the mere mention of its name” (Netanyahu 3). Technically, “the Inquisition persisted until late into the nineteenth century” (Avni ix). Many of the academic analysts of antisemitism in Spain focus upon the Inquisition time almost exclusively, which does not adequately expose the prolonged and continuing history of prejudice in Spain. However, the events that took place during this dark period of history remain highly significant in their impact on modern Spanish Jewry. Spaniards saw minorities as threatening strangers, an idea that persisted even to the time of the racism under the Franco regime (Netanyahu 4). Sephardic Jews thus faced both tolerant and intolerant times in Spain throughout history.

Antisemitic language and action in Spain continued to fluctuate. For example, “In 1802, the king signed an edict reinforcing the prohibitions against the admission of Jews into any territory under Spanish control” (Avni 7). At the end of 1854, the Spanish Cortes met and “The request to rescind the Edict of Expulsion was brought before the special committee that discussed freedom of religion, which rejected it” (Avni 9). Yet in 1881, “the Spanish government decided, after consultation with the king, that ‘all Jews desirous of coming to Spain would find the protection they sought in the country in which dwelt so many of their ancestors’” (Avni 16). But the Edict of Expulsion technically remained in force throughout the 19th century, part of the reason that Spain had five centuries with

an almost non-existent Jewish population, as the Edict still officially prohibited Jewish settlement anywhere within Spanish territories. By end of World War I, Spain had three organized Jewish communities, in Seville, Madrid, and Barcelona. Many Jews who had lived in Spain temporarily during war left, so organized activities in these communities lapsed (Avni 43).

The Spanish situation by the 1930s seemed dismal. A weakened economy and unhappiness with the strict social hierarchy in the country increased tensions to the point that in 1931 the Second Spanish Republic seized power, in an attempt to eradicate many of the more traditional structures in Spain. This period of the Republic included the emergence of numerous democratic freedoms for the first time, in a nation that fell far behind other countries around the world in terms of these new measures of equality. The Republicans officially declared during this time that “the Spanish state has no official religion” (Avni 34). There was also an “avowed willingness of the Republican government to attract the Sephardic diaspora to Spain” (Avni 44). However, the more traditional elements of society quickly reacted, and the Spanish Civil War broke out between the Republicans and the Nationalists in 1936.

The Nationalists fought against the more liberal elements of law that the Republicans had imposed. As Michael Richards describes, “The Spanish Civil War was portrayed as a project to pathologically remake the physical stock of the *Patria*<sup>3</sup> and its morality. The ‘foreign virtu[e]s’ of liberalism, which bred communism, was an infection which had to be expunged” (Richards 47). Support for one side or the other came from various international sources, and foreign nationals even came to fight for whichever

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<sup>3</sup> “Patria” refers to the homeland, to Spain, but with specific allusions to the gloriousness of a strong, united nation.

political side they supported. The rightist Nationalists began to utilize specific language against certain groups they saw as political enemies, and “various tracts in the 1930s sought to prove the establishment of the Second Republic was nothing but a Jewish plot planned well in advance and abetted by the Freemasons and Communism” (Avni 38). This idea of a triumvirate conspiracy group, of Masons, Communists, and Jews served the strong purpose of uniting hatred against one group to hatred for all, and recurred in many antisemitic messages of the time.

The Nationalists won the war in 1939 under the leadership of Francisco Franco, and seized control of Spain, immediately reacting against the earlier reforms that the Republicans had implemented. They revoked the right to divorce, for example, as well as the freedom of religion, and reinstated the monarchy, meanwhile harshly punishing the Republicans and anyone else who disagreed with their ideology. The problems caused a drastic change in the society, and “during most of the 1940s Spain was a police state, torn and bleeding, with much of its national wealth destroyed and most of its population hungry” (Avni 55).

Spain’s populace faced many challenges during the Franco regime. An atmosphere of fear developed, in which political dissent against the government did not exist as an option. Those who fought on the losing side of the Civil War often faced jail time, forced work camps, and even death by firing squad in extreme cases. Some describe the time as one of the most terrifying dictatorships the world has ever witnessed, while others describe the security they felt by having a constant police presence watching over the nation. Throughout this period, Franco’s regime made antisemitic statements, utilizing the prejudices against Jews to garner support from an impoverished populace.

General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, the commander who held the area of Seville during the war, claimed that “Our fight is not a Spanish civil war, but a war for western civilization against world Jewry” (Avni 49). Despite clearly antisemitic prejudices such as this, the government increasingly allowed the Jewish people freedoms within the country over the course of the thirty-six years of Franco’s rule, although these freedoms still remained small when compared to other nations. They also at times tried to deny the prejudices: “When these excesses aroused comment in the Western press, Franco’s press officer issued a statement denying that the Spanish Nationalist movement was anti-Semitic” (Avni 49). The Edict of Expulsion remained on the law books until 1968. Thus, technically, the residence of any Jewish people in Spain until 1968 was illegal.

The Franco regime caused such hurt to many Spaniards that a certain culture of silence developed in Spain after the conclusion of the regime in 1975 with Franco’s death, and this silence has only recently been broken. Combined with the lack of any freedom of information laws in Spain, this lack of discussion around the abuses of the Franco regime has limited the ability for many academics to easily access documents from the time period. Slowly, as mass graves are uncovered and historical documents found, the world is managing to craft a fuller picture of the Spanish landscape of the mid-twentieth century. However, even today, many of those who lived through the controversial time period prove reluctant to revisit the old abuses.

## Chapter 1: Spain's Participation in a Europe of Refugees

### 1.0 Introduction

“What does the number of Jews saved by Spain matter,  
when the price of a single life is infinite.”

—Federico Ysart, *España y los judíos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*

The years in which Franco ruled in Spain, 1939-1975, coincided with an immensely disturbed period for the entirety of Europe, even beyond Spanish borders. The advent of World War II in particular at the same time as the Spanish Civil War brought hardship and upset to much of the continent. In addition to the numerous deaths and persecutions, the war caused mass exoduses of people across Europe as Jews and other “political enemies” fled the certainty of concentration camps, oppression, and a variety of other violent abuses that threatened their rights and sometimes their actual lives. This atmosphere of fear built upon centuries of outbreaks against Jews throughout the continent, from pogroms in the countries of Eastern Europe to destructive disturbances in places as small as the country of Wales in the United Kingdom.

After the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939, Spain hesitated to immediately engage in this new war that broke out in Europe. While officially remaining neutral, Spain provided support to members of the Axis. However, the country's new dictatorship mainly focused on rebuilding Spain's infrastructure, which had so recently been torn

apart as relatives and friends battled each other in the name of democracy or traditionalism throughout the Civil War.

The low number of Jews in Spain since 1492 held true during the period under Francisco Franco as well. As a result, a large amount of the academic research on the Franco period focuses on the interaction of Spain's government with Jews who lived outside of Spain itself. These groups included Sephardic Jews from other countries in Europe, some of whose families had lived outside of Spain<sup>4</sup> for centuries. However, the concept of these "Spanish" Jews nonetheless has inspired a great proportion of the Jewish research about this Spanish period. Topics analyzed include such issues as the Spanish government deciding whether they should provide aid to suffering Sephardic Jews in other countries, or whether they should permit passage of Jews through Spain as they attempted to escape the Nazis during the Shoah.<sup>5</sup> Other authors treat this subject in great depth, and I will thus provide an overview of the subject in an attempt to reconcile the many different opinions on whether or not Spain actively sought to help the Jewish refugees, or whether indeed the Spanish government only provided minimal help and instead purposefully sought to help the Axis powers in their persecution of these "political enemies."

During this time period, numerous Sephardic Jews living outside of Spain petitioned Franco and his government for protection from the worst abuses of the war. At times Spain helped, and at times they did not. In the quote above, Federico Ysart refers to

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<sup>4</sup> Sephardic Jews are those whose families traditionally come from Spain or Portugal, versus Ashkenazi Jews, whose families trace their heritage back to Eastern Europe, places such as Poland and Russia.

<sup>5</sup> The Jewish community generally adopts the Hebrew word "Shoah" to refer to the mass murders of Jews in Europe during the Second World War as opposed to the common term "Holocaust." "Shoah" refers to a widespread catastrophe, whereas "Holocaust" is a Greek translation of a biblical word for a voluntary burnt offering, which too closely touches upon the memories of the gas chambers that operated under Adolf Hitler's direction.

the Jewish idea from the Talmud<sup>6</sup> that if someone saves a single life that person saves the world because each life is so precious. With this quote, Ysart illuminates one of the major debates in the academic analyses of this topic: how many Jews dictator Francisco Franco actively saved from the clutches of the Holocaust. For Ysart, what matters is the fact that Franco reached out to them at all.

While Spain officially remained non-belligerent during the course of World War II, the Franco government provided supportive aid to the Axis powers, Germany and Italy (Robinson 8). The actual nature of this neutrality proved contentious; “Although Madrid had officially declared neutrality in September 1939, Franco in fact hoped for an Axis victory” (Rein 409-410). Various sources point to a very definite link between Nazi Germany and Franco’s Spain. However, while at times Franco’s government clearly acted in support of Germany, at other times Spain acted in ways that seemingly inadvertently frustrated the Nazi attempt to eliminate the entirety of the world Jewish population.

### **1.1 Jewish Refugees in Spain**

Spain’s long coastline, dotted with numerous ports, marked it as a particularly important escape route for Jewish and other refugees fleeing the upheavals of World War II, and for some even before the formal war had started; “During the 1930s, many Jews fleeing Germany found their way to Spain” (Gerber 261). Many escapees coming from Germany, France, Poland, and various other European nations aimed for Spain in order to

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<sup>6</sup> A vital piece of Jewish religious text, comprising what is termed “Oral Law” and includes the Gemara and Mishnah. Used with the Torah to determine the laws of the Jewish religion.

eventually leave Europe. This became particularly vital as countries began to fall to forces led by the Axis powers as the war grew in size and destructive impact, leaving numerous European countries unsafe for many different groups of people, including the Jews (both Sephardic and Ashkenazi). Haim Avni explains that when France surrendered on June 22, 1940, the Pyrenees Mountains, between France and Spain, became a main location refugees tried to reach, the mark of a safe haven beyond (Avni 72-86). Nehemiah Robinson emphasized what appeared to stand as the prevailing attitude in Spain at the time, that “Franco made little discrimination between the Jewish and non-Jewish refugees” who were fleeing persecution, an idea echoed by Haim Avni (Robinson 10, Avni 86).

Despite the 1492 Edict of Expulsion technically remaining in effect throughout most of Franco’s reign in Spain, dictating that Jewish people were not actually legally permitted to reside in Spain, various governmental statements and actions over the centuries had implied that Spain would welcome the Jews into the country (see Historical Background above). One 2008 encyclopedia article about the Franco period claims that, “Many Jews sought refuge in Spain during World War II. Approximately 25,600 Jews escaped to Spain where they survived the duration of the war” (*Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora* 903). Yet another academic, Federico Ysart, claimed that “for close to 50,000 Jews, the walk to liberty passed through Spain” (Ysart 43). Jane Gerber takes a much more cynical view of the situation, explaining how Franco’s government only allowed a certain number of Jewish refugees into the country at any one point, that “the number of stateless Jews allowed refuge at any given moment in Spain never exceeded 2,000” (Gerber 264). She takes this view even further, claiming that Spain only let Jews

in when another group of refugees had already left; “The policy was inflexibly pursued throughout the war” (Gerber 262). This presumably would limit the number of foreigners in Spain, and fit with the Franco ideal of a strong, united, “pure” race of Spaniards still holding power in the country, without a threat from any minority groups.

Many sources disagree on whether or not Franco’s regime actively attempted to aid the Jewish people seeking refuge by staying in or passing through Spain during this time period. One individual, Rabbi Maurice L. Perlzweig, expressed gratitude in March of 1943 to Spain “for the refuge that Spain has accorded to the Jews coming from the territories under the military occupation of Germany” (Avni 2). Whether or not Rabbi Perlzweig was misguided is difficult to ascertain, but it was clear that at least at the time, some people viewed Spain as somewhat friendly toward the Jews. Jane Gerber’s work exposes another viewpoint when she claims that “The records clearly reveal that Spain’s humanitarian words were never matched by deeds” (Gerber 263). The Franco regime expended a great deal of effort on crafting a solid rhetoric in order to spread their traditionalist message throughout the nation and around the world, and this could certainly have influenced the minds of educated individuals like Rabbi Perlzweig, as it was a well-developed apparatus that operated for thirty-six years.

However, the excuse of “policy” was sometimes given for the rejection of refugees at the French border, where the Spanish officials could reject possible entrants if they did not have the correct French exit papers, the correct Spanish entrance papers, or both. At the time, various political dissidents, representatives of the Republicans from the Spanish Civil War, were often murdered or imprisoned for decades. In comparison, it seems that the regime treated the Jewish refugees lightly, maybe even with dignity in

some cases: “In general it may be said that Spain did not follow Hitler in her treatment of the Jewish refugees. It was reported that Jews who found their way from France into Spain were interned only if they were of military age, not otherwise” (Robinson 10). However, they did not seem to receive any special, protective treatment, and unfortunately these policies of seeming cool impartiality led to the death of a recognized leading Jewish literary mind from Germany:

One of the most famous refugees rejected in this way at the Franco-Spanish border in 1940 was Walter Benjamin, a German-Jewish philosopher widely acknowledged posthumously as one of the foremost literary critics of the twentieth century...He took his life in despair at not gaining permission to pass through Spain. (Gerber 262)

A historic source from 1953, written by Nehemiah Robinson for a Jewish group in New York, commented on the situation, saying that “There was no doubt that Spain permitted Jews, after the collapse of France, to pass through her territory to Portugal and safety, although it could have prevented it” (Robinson 9). Indeed, Hitler would likely have asked Franco to turn the Jews away, and some sources imply just that, but the Spanish government allowed at least some Jewish refugees free access to pass through the country. Robinson continues to describe that “A number of Jews found temporary asylum in Spain, even if the conditions of sojourn were anything but favorable and many Jewish refugees languished in prisons and camps for months. However, the Spanish attitude toward all refugees was very strict” (Robinson 10). This again implies an impartiality in the Spanish treatment of refugees. While Spain may not have given special

treatment to Jewish refugees, the government did not seem to particularly target them, either.

The disagreement over Franco's treatment of the Jews within Spain during this period garnered new controversy in 2010. Spain's leading newspaper, *El País*, reported that a Jewish journalist, Jacobo Israel Garzón, had unearthed documents indicating that Franco may have acted in Hitler's favor more than academics originally thought. The article implies that Franco's rhetoric led to the widespread conviction that his government actively sought to help Jews, and that those who believe this myth suffer from disillusionment caused by the practiced rhetoric of the regime, an idea Giles Tremlett echoes in an article in *The Guardian* when he explains that "Critics claim that Spain's help was deliberately exaggerated to improve Franco's standing in the US" (Tremlett). Garzón discovered that in 1941, the regional authorities in Spain received orders to submit information to the government about the Jews living in their areas, including personal information, ideological leanings, etc. (Reverte). Tremlett's article continues, saying that "the Spanish dictator, General Francisco Franco, whose apologists usually claim that he protected Jews, ordered his officials to draw up a list of some 6,000 Jews living in Spain and include them in a secret Jewish archive" (Tremlett). The article further claims that the Spanish gave the list "to the Nazi architect of the so-called 'final solution',<sup>7</sup> the German SS chief Heinrich Himmler" (Tremlett). This could have led to active persecutions of the Jews in Spain, similar to the round-ups and resultant murders that took place in those countries occupied by Germany, such as Poland, and could have led to the deaths of thousands of Jewish people. However, it remains unclear whether the

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<sup>7</sup> The "Final Solution" refers to the German Nazi plan to annihilate the Jewish people.

existence of this list actually negatively impacted any of the Jewish people who were profiled.

Jewish refugees entering Spain sometimes chose to remain in the country, which impacted the landscape of Jewish life in Spain to a certain extent. The centuries of a miniscule Jewish population received a small revitalization from Jewish people moving to Spain during this period, so that “when Hitler took power at the beginning of 1933, Jewish refugees began arriving in Spain from Germany and Poland, changing the size of the Jewish community and its organizations” (Avni 44). While still only a few thousand Jews lived in Spain at the time, their official communities and organizations began to grow and solidify into more formal institutions.

## **1.2 Sephardic Jews Outside of Spain**

The Franco regime’s rhetoric exposed an almost Nazi-like obsession with the purity of the Spanish bloodline in much of their propaganda, with one of the most notorious examples coming across in the novel written by Francisco Franco himself, *Race*. This fictional story depicts the ideals of Franco society, including a focus on the strength and vitality of “native” Spaniards, those whose familial bloodlines stretched back for centuries.

The concept of Judaism as a race, in addition to a religion, necessarily proves critical in the idea of Spanish protection for Sephardic Jews outside of Spain. Many of the Jewish individuals that Franco protected or allowed to pass through the country had never even lived in Spain, since their families having been driven out of the country in 1492

with much of Spanish Jewry. However, the Spanish focus on these people as “Spaniards” at times critically comes across in the fact that the regime extended protection to some of them. This, combined with the fact that the Jewish people themselves have long focused on endogamy<sup>8</sup> as an ideal for all Jewish individuals, may have helped the Franco regime rationalize helping “Spaniards” who may never have even traveled to Spain in their lifetimes. For example, at one point Franco had argued it was “Spain’s duty not to abandon the ‘many thousands’ of Spaniards who had lived in Morocco for centuries. By virtually all accounts, the figure of ‘many thousands’ was an extreme exaggeration, unless Franco was including the Sephardim as Spaniards” (Lipschitz 10). This awareness of Morocco came from Franco’s personal military experiences in the African country, which had at various times been a protectorate of Spain. Franco himself would have likely known the correct population numbers of the area, and thus his comments imply an awareness of the Jewish community there, and accepted them as part of the Spanish state to at least some degree.

The Franco regime’s focus on the purity of bloodline came out in many places, though sometimes to the detriment of the Jewish people. Closely associated with the Franco idea of a “pure” Spanish race was the concept of Catholicism as the correct religion for Spaniards to practice. Even from an early age, a generation of Spaniards came to adulthood with types of antisemitic prejudices associated with their sense of nationalism and religion: “The school textbooks used during the dictatorship perpetuated this idea of purity: ‘Another decision made by the Catholic monarchs, to purify strange

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<sup>8</sup> Endogamy refers to the ideal of marrying within the faith, choosing a partner also descended from a Jewish family. While this remains a critical part of Jewish law today, many of the more liberal parts of Judaism that do not follow strict Jewish law still maintain this as an ideal in order to continue the religion into the future.

elements and to unite the Spanish race spiritually, was to expel the Jews and Moors” (Richards 51). This legacy of the expulsion of both groups (the Muslim population was similarly expelled from Spain during the same time period) still had an influence on how the Spanish people identified themselves, even over 400 years after the fact.

Discussions in academia about this topic continually try to figure out the exact number of Jewish people outside of Spain that Franco saved, as though in an attempt to either give the Spanish greater thanks or dismiss their efforts as only minimally effective. For example, one encyclopedia entry claims that “Spanish diplomats were able to save nearly 4,000 Jews in France and the Balkans. The vast majority of the Jews who took refuge in Spain, later left for other countries” (*Encyclopedia* 903-4). This number, though seemingly small in the scope of the 6,000,000 Jews killed during the Holocaust, nonetheless holds significance, as Ysart pointed out (see the Chapter 1 opening quote above). Jane Gerber looks to other countries, claiming that “scholars have estimated that the number of Jews saved through Spanish diplomatic intercession in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and Rumania was 3,235 out of a total Jewish population of almost two million in that region (including 160,000 Sephardim)” (Gerber 264). But these numbers are far from consistent across various texts. For example, Lipschitz claims that governmental actions at the time rescued at least 45,000 Jews who otherwise “almost certainly” would have been killed by the Nazis (Lipschitz Preface-3). This could perhaps refer to both the Jewish people saved by passing through Spain itself as well as outside of Spain, though the process of obtaining such numbers remains unclear.

Other academic sources take a much more critical view of the situation, pointing instead to Franco’s lack of taking wider action to protect Jews in other countries at

additional times throughout his regime. As Avni explains, “because of Spain’s position during the war, the Spanish government could have rescued some groups of Jews, but it refrained from taking full advantage of the opportunity. The Franco regime did not want a Jewish community established in either La Mancha or in any other part of Spain, and so it could never become the modern Don Quixote it pretended to be” (Avni 199). Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida agrees with this more cynical viewpoint, at least to a certain extent, but focuses more on the religious underpinnings of the antisemitism than on racial definitions:

As we have reiterated, Spanish antisemitism did not correspond with that of the German biological racism, but rather with Christianity, coming most of all from France. The ideologues of Spanish antiliberalism of the 1930s centered their philosophy of history on the idea of the existence of one unique civilization, the Western, that was basically defined from the classicism Greco-Latino and Christianity. In this sense we can consider them racists... (Álvarez Chillida 1064-5)

Religious motivations in a very religious, Catholic nation like Spain certainly influences some of the traditionalist leaders in Franco’s government, but the acknowledgment of Jews outside of Spain necessarily points to an older type of inherent genetic association that cannot be ignored. Unlike contemporary definitions of American citizenship, for example, which focuses more on the concept of gaining citizenship through the location of one’s birth since the nation is largely comprised of immigrants, the Spanish definition focused to a certain extent on a much more historical definition of bloodline.

One Spanish document published by the government during the time period tried to combat the antisemitic perception by yet again affirming that the regime was committed to helping the Jewish people: “In 1949, Spain published a White Paper entitled Spain and the Sephardi Jews. This paper contends that, when the last war [World War II] broke out, the Spanish government gave its diplomatic representation abroad full power ‘to do anything, at any time, to help the descendants of these people [meaning Jews] who had been expelled from Spain four hundred years before’” (Robinson 10). Furthermore, Robinson claims that “It is worth noting that the Spanish White Paper appeared approximately at the same time as Franco’s announcement that he had decided to grant Spanish nationality to Sephardic Jews, i.e., in 1949” (Robinson 11). This announcement appears to have come directly from Francisco Franco himself. Franco also opened up citizenship in 1949 to a wider group of Sephardic Jews, when he “moved to permit the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 to return to the fatherland” (“Spain to Admit”). But the degree to which this helped is debatable. As reported upon by *The Washington Post* on January 10, 1949 about this announcement, “At the same time, it became known the government has authorized a Jewish synagogue for the first time since the civil war” (“Sephardic Jews Invited Back”). The article also notes, however, that “the synagogue is on the same footing as Protestant churches...It cannot have anything on the building marking it as a place of worship and public ceremonies in the open air are forbidden” (“Sephardic Jews Invited Back”). Thus, even with efforts to demonstrate some religious openness, Franco still remained wary of allowing too much religious divergence in the public sphere in 1949.

These combined claims and actions by the Franco government could imply that they truly welcomed the Sephardic Jews to return to Spain (even though the Edict of Expulsion technically still had power), but could also simply indicate rhetoric used in an attempt to change the perception of Spain on the international stage. This may have particularly held true in 1949 specifically because the United Nations still refused to allow Spain to join, as a result of the human rights abuses taking place under Franco. However, the new Jewish state of Israel joined in 1949, the year after its formal establishment. The refusal of Spain's application for entry may have encouraged some of this seemingly liberal religious rhetoric, at least for this part of Franco's rule (for more on the United Nations, Spain, and Israel, please see Chapter 4).

Many of the communities of Sephardic Jews living in other nations had grown after the expulsion almost five centuries earlier, and so many families no longer held formal Spanish citizenship. For example, a diplomat in France unsuccessfully tried to gain protection for Sephardic Jews in France. Avni comments on the failure, claiming that "So ended the only attempt made during the entire course of the war to extend Spain's assistance to Sephardic Jews beyond the small communities of Jewish Spanish nationals" (Avni 86). The implication that Avni makes here is not that the Franco government rejected pleas to help Sephardic Jews because of outside influences, but simply as a matter of policy, focusing his regime's attention mainly on Spanish citizens. Later in the time period, in the 1960s, Franco's government also extended its protection to various Jews during a war in the Middle East: "When Jews were imprisoned in Egypt

during the Six-Day War of 1967,<sup>9</sup> Spain adopted a visible role in arranging for their release” (Gerber 264).

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<sup>9</sup> The Six Day War involved an increase in tensions between Israel and its surrounding Arab nations, most notably Egypt. Israel won this conflict, but it led to an increase in feelings of solidarity amongst Middle Eastern nations and the displaced Palestinian people. For more information, see: Palmowski, Jan. “Six Day War.” *A Dictionary of Contemporary World History*. 3rd ed. 2008. Web. 10 Apr. 2013.

## Chapter 2: The Official Status of Religion in Spain

### 2.0 Introduction

The Edict of Expulsion of 1492 remained on the law books throughout the majority of Francisco Franco's dictatorship, so that technically Jewish people living in Spain did so illegally. Numerous efforts and campaigns to reverse the Edict of Expulsion before Franco's regime did not succeed, though some argued nonetheless that specific official actions taken by the Spanish government, especially since the mid-1800s, had essentially reversed the document in practice. Regardless, the law technically remained in force until 1968.

One of the main moves the Franco regime made as an extremely conservative regime was to return to traditional Catholic values. Catholicism was reinstated as the official religion of the country, after a brief period under the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War in which religious freedom was established. A return to this state religion meant to a return to more traditionalist views of the Jewish people, as outsiders, and as not truly belonging to Spain because they do not worship Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the son of G-d.<sup>10</sup>

But slowly, times began changing in Spain, too. New laws and governmental initiatives meant that by the end of Franco's regime, Spaniards who were not Catholic received greater governmental recognition for the first time in centuries. Increasingly the nation's political leaders met with Jewish leaders, oversaw the opening of synagogues,

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<sup>10</sup> Please note, some members of the Jewish faith elect to write the name of G-d with a hyphen as a sign of respect, in case the sheet on which it is written should ever be disposed of.

and participated in various other public Jewish rites. This change in official policy proved critical mainly on an emotional level for many Jewish people living in Spain.

## **2.1 The Legal Status of Judaism Under Franco**

Franco's government reinstated Catholicism as the official religion of the country, after a brief period of time under the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War during which religious freedom had existed by law.

But while the Edict of Expulsion remained in law for much of Franco's regime, for many staunch government supporters this merely served as an outdated technicality. Some scholars point to a declaration in 1868 by General Francisco Serrano as indicative of a critical step in moving towards greater recognition for the Jews: "On December 1, 1868, General Francisco Serrano, head of the provisional government, responded sympathetically to the appeal of the Jews of Bayonne and Bordeaux [to return to Spain]. Because the revolution had committed itself to religious freedom, among other human rights, he said, it had in effect canceled the Edict of Expulsion of the fifteenth century. 'As a result, you are free to enter our country and practice your religion like the members of all other religions'" (Avni 11). Though these Jews living in France received a positive response, even under Franco public rites of religion of any faith other than Catholicism were prohibited.

The government clearly tried to emphasize that it did not impose religious regulations during this time, even while sometimes making clearly antisemitic statements

(please see Chapter 3 for examples of this). This rhetoric apparently managed to convince one particular foreign ambassador at the time:

When German Ambassador Eberhard von Stohrer was asked to report on anti-Semitic legislation in Spain, he wrote in November 1941:

Since the historic persecution of the Jews that ended in their expulsion in 1492, no new laws have been promulgated against them. Insofar as the people are concerned, and insofar as the official ideology of the State is concerned, there is no Jewish problem. For the last few years, it is noteworthy that as a result of German propaganda there have been some anti-Jewish outbursts in the press and in literature, and there are a number of books on the Jewish problem, but on the whole the attitude of the Spaniards has changed but little. (Avni 71)

Another law enacted on July 17, 1945, called the “Fuero de los Españols—Statute Law of the Spanish People,” solidified the concept that people would be allowed to practice their individual faiths privately, though there could be no public ceremonies other than Catholic ones (Avni 200).

These developments grew even more complicated, when in addition to the aid the Spanish government sometimes provided to Sephardic Jews outside of Spain by Franco’s announcement in 1949 “that he had decided to grant Spanish nationality to Sephardic Jews” (Robinson 11). Though not necessarily applying to all Sephardic Jews but instead to specific groups he intended to help at the time, this set the stage for later citizenship laws throughout the second half of the 20th century that would mirror this sentiment and allow Sephardic Jews easier access to citizenship than other foreign nationals. However,

by 1964 this had not been enough to placate the Spanish Jewish community, who then sought recognition from the government: “The leader of Madrid’s Jewish community...Max Mazin indicated in an interview that it was not a more auspicious time to ask for legal rights than at any time since [1492]” (“Spain’s 5,000 Jews Seek Recognition”).

Finally, the government officially revoked the Edict of Expulsion on December 16, 1968, though this change did not lead to an eradication of all the historic inequalities still persisting in Spain (Avni 202). The decree changing this ancient law was “signed by Justice Minister Antonio Oriol, in which the Jewish communities were registered under the provisions of the religious liberty law passed two years [prior]” (Eder 3). This announcement coincided with the opening of the first new synagogue built in Spain in 600 years (Eder 1).

## Chapter 3: Opinions of the Spanish Leaders

### 3.0 Introduction

“We want a fraternal Spain, a laborious and industrious Spain, where the parasites are not accommodated. A Spain without chains or the tyrannous Jews, a nation without the destructive Marxism or Communism, a state for the people, not a people for the state. A Spain without political sides, without superior parliamentarians, nor with irresponsible assemblies. We want a grand Spain, strong and united, with authority, with direction, and with order.”

—Francisco Franco, *Habla el Caudillo*

The period of Franco’s Spain was a time of rhetoric, during which the government and its officials propagated the beliefs of a traditionalist system in every possible way through their language. They utilized censors so that even films would pass their strict standards, filled the media with their messages, and tried to shape a society that built upon historic values. The rhetoric they utilized included beliefs regarding the “purity” of Spanish blood, which implied the nobility of the Spanish race over all others. The ideas entrenched in the society of the time uplifted the idea that outsiders, those who did not belong to the elite race of the Spaniards which generally included those who did not uphold the ideals of Catholic purity and ancient Spanish colonialism, were somehow inferior in this hierarchical society.

Jewish people could easily fit into that category of the “other.” Antisemitic rhetoric at the time was thus not uncommon, though less widespread as it was in Nazi Germany during this same period. Nevertheless, Franco and his officials found ways to weave in such prejudiced speech into their larger, practiced body of rhetoric. One main method for doing so involved believing in an international conspiracy theory.

For many years, a very popular aspect of antisemitic rhetoric around the world (including in Franco Spain) has involved trying to incite fear in the general population by arguing that the international Jewish community is secretly plotting to take over the world in various conniving ways. This theory ignores the vast differences between different Jewish communities, and actually draws on similar theories about the Freemasons and the Bolsheviks in order to group all of these “dissidents” into one target group. Arguably the most famous antisemitic text ever created, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (abbreviated in this thesis as *The Protocols*), uses this theory in its writings.

*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* originally appeared in Russia in the first decade of the 20th century, but actually draws upon older antisemitic tales from France. This fabricated document details the completely fictional minutes of a supposed 1897 (which was the correct year of the actual First Zionist Congress) meeting of world Jewish leaders and their detailed plot to take over the world, and various antisemites have used it as supposed “proof” of the evil nature of the Jews. This document has been translated into countless languages since its first publication in the first decade of the twentieth century. Prior to Franco’s ascent to power, various outlets had proved that the document was false, yet antisemites continued to speak about the document as though it reported

actual events. Franco's officials, and famously the Catalan Priest Juan Tusquets, particularly drew upon this document in their writings and speeches. In Chapter 3.2, I provide a literary analysis of several key passages from *The Protocols* and how the rhetoric fit in with the Rightist rhetoric under Franco, in order to discuss more in depth the beliefs of the Franco regime and how it could directly apply to Jewish people.

### **3.1 Indications of Antisemitism in the Franco Leadership**

Numerous primary and secondary sources referring to the Franco period allude to speeches he and his leadership made that indicated certain antisemitic prejudices. These unfortunately are not widely available, possibly a result of actions taken to suppress these proofs of antisemitism, as one of the leading historians on Franco Spain's relationship with the Jews, Paul Preston, alludes to in his notes in *Franco: A Biography*. Few secondary sources quote the leaders directly at all, instead simply mentioning that they made speeches that included particularly antisemitic language, and those that do quote the speeches directly generally include only a few lines. However, even in the same years when this antisemitism came out in speeches, so too did the regime issue documents affirming their support for the Jewish people and lack of antisemitism as a part of the Falangist rhetoric.

This type of rhetoric apparently worked on many people. The religious leader Rabbi J. T. Loeb wrote a letter to the editor of *The Washington Post* in 1939 expressing his happiness over another letter in the newspaper which claimed that Franco's regime seemed to not hold antisemitic views: "I felt myself greatly relieved from anxiety

concerning the effect of Franco's victory upon the status of Jews and other liberals in that country" (Loeb B9).

One of the speeches in which Franco draws upon the theme of a Jewish-Bolshevik-Communist-Freemason worldwide conspiracy was given during his first year-end speech in 1939, the year he assumed power in Spain. In his rhetoric, he refers back to the vital Edict of Expulsion and the Jews, saying that, "We, by the grace of G-d and the clear political vision of the Catholic monarchs, centuries ago were liberated from such a burden [as the Jews]..." (Salinas 11). Nehemiah Robinson, writing in 1953 for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, part of the World Jewish Congress, in New York City, mentions this type of rhetoric specifically, claiming that "Anti-Semitism was part of the standard line in the Falange's propaganda and was revived under Franco, although it had little meaning in Spain except in its relation to the anti-Republican, anti-Communist and anti-Masonic scare campaign" (Robinson 8). Robinson, writing while the Franco regime still had power, mentions other apparent antisemitic actions that might have taken place: "According to press dispatches, an anti-Semitic campaign was in progress in Spain in the first months of 1940. It was reported that legislation to expel all Jews who had entered Spain after 1931 was in preparation...Circumcision<sup>11</sup> was allegedly prohibited" (Robinson 9). But then also, "in 1943, all discrimination against the Jewish religion was ordered stopped" (Robinson 9). This pamphlet, produced for an American Jewish organization, acknowledged even back in 1953 the seemingly contradictory actions and opinions made and given by Franco and the regime at the time, sometimes seemingly to oppose Judaism, and at others offering a type of religious openness to the group.

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<sup>11</sup> Refers to a vital Jewish religious ritual performed on male children eight days after their birth; also known as a "bris" or "brit milah."

However, Robinson emphasizes that “It must be stated, in all fairness, that no instances of violence against the Jews of Spain or their synagogues during the Franco regime had been reported,” despite the antisemitic rhetoric coming out of the regime at the time (Robinson 12).

Franco at times oversaw decisions that helped the Jewish people in Spain, rather than hurting them. For example, on “the 10th of January of 1946 Bartolomé Barba received a letter from the Minister of the Interior, Blas Pérez, informing him that in the last Council of Ministers, chaired by the head of state, Francisco Franco, it had been agreed ‘to authorize the opening of a synagogue in Barcelona’” (Antonio Lisbona 131). It would appear from this that Franco did not completely oppose the presence of the Jewish religion in Spain.

In an attempt to further convince the world that their regime did not hold antisemitic views, a pamphlet circulated from Spanish Foreign Ministry called “Spain and the Jews,” and described the “contribution of the Nationalist government to the rescues of Jews during the Holocaust” (Avni 2). This blatant form of propaganda, though, did not confirm their claims, but instead simply fit into the larger rhetoric of the Franco regime, which exhibited both clearly antisemitic elements, and attempts to claim that the regime was not antisemitic, possibly to improve the regime’s perception by the international community.

### 3.2 The Franco Regime and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

Francisco Franco and his government created a consistent rhetoric, supported by a variety of important texts and one of these texts was *The Protocols*, the most antisemitic text ever written. These *Protocols* won popularity in Spain after the Spanish edition of 1932, although they were published for the first time in Spain in 1920. *The Protocols* describe a reunion of a fictional group of “the Elders,” or the leaders of the Jews of the entire world, and their plan to take over the world. This completely fictional text was based on stories from the 19th century from France and Germany and the first actual meetings of the Zionists.<sup>12</sup> The text is divided in twenty-four parts that are called “protocols.” Many antisemites thought that they were a true description of the ideas of the Jews. The first Spanish edition was published in 1920 and one more time during the ascent of the Francoists. Particularly, the ideas about the economy, religions, race, and world domination by the Jews are presented in the preface of the Spanish edition and in the protocols two, three, nine, and eleven. Nevertheless, the use of this text in Spain was very ironic because of the almost complete lack of Jews in Spain during this time, a result of their expulsion from the country in 1492 and the persistent antisemitism after. As Preston explains, “The ultra-right-wing press in general regarded *The Protocols* as a serious sociological study. Since there were few Jews in Spain, there was hardly a ‘Jewish problem.’ However, Spanish ‘anti-Semitism without Jews’ was not about real Jews but was an abstract construction of a perceived international threat” (42). It was important that the Francoists could support their ideas, with lies if they needed to.

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<sup>12</sup> Zionists are those who support a Jewish state on the land of modern-day Israel.

The Franco supporters came to power in Spain during a very unstable time in the 1930s, when a population divided by social and economic inequality. In response, the new regime created a specific rhetoric for representing minorities as enemies, as “others.” A group that fit well into this category of enemies was the Jews. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had been translated into Spanish for the first time in 1920. Paul Preston explains in his book *The Spanish Holocaust* that “...those who justified the slaughter innocent Spaniards used an anti-Semitic rhetoric and frequently claimed that they had to be exterminated because they were the instruments of a ‘Jewish-Bolshevik-Masonic’ conspiracy” (xi). While *The Protocols* had been written in another place and another time, the fits in with the more widespread Franco rhetoric creating “the other” in its antisemitic treatment of this fictional group of world Jewish leaders.

The Franco regime’s desire to return to a much older and glorious age, in which Spain had colonies and a much grander empire than in the Franco years, was part of the government’s rhetoric. In a work from 1938, *España y Franco* by Ernesto Giménez Caballero, we can see the use of these ideas in his rhetoric of “the others,” here the red communists, in his violent language: “When Franco, arriving at the sea, chopped with his sword in two pieces the Red Beast...our Spain believed it had arrived at the end of its drama and of its war” (3). But the idea of “the Beast” was, also, all groups outside of the traditional society: including Jews, Masons, and more.

The association of the Jewish people with Masons and other groups comes out very clearly in these *Protocols*. In the introduction to the Spanish edition of *The Protocols* it says that, “For all intelligent thinkers, the Mason question is complicated by the Jewish question” (*Los Protocolos* 13). By implying that to disbelieve in this

combination of groups would be inconceivable, this citation implies that it was the common feeling that these groups were connected. This line of reasoning functioned for the Franco situation with references to the Jews in particular because there did not exist a strong community of Jews in Spain at the time to protest this false idea of a “Secret Society” of Jewish world leaders (*Los Protocolos* 13). Rafael Cruz explains in his article “El antisemitismo moderno (1875-1945): Un estado de la cuestión” that “In Spain, is it well known the ideological function of the triumvirate Jewish-Mason-Communist. The political and social changes of the 1930s were brought to them and to them it was accused of triggering the Civil War, justifying the military uprising” (142).

The idea of a larger group presented a much greater threat to the survival of Spain than simply focusing on the Jews could have done. With the relative lack of a Jewish presence in the lives of most Spaniards, this larger group could make the threat much more threatening, by implying the deviousness of the Jews and Masons as “secret” groups, and the Bolsheviks as representing the ideological threat of the communists in the Soviet Union. This threat directed at glorious Spain emerges in the language of *The Protocols* about the desire of the Jews to take over the world and eradicate individual countries in an attempt to create chaos and allow for the Jewish people to supposedly rule the world. *The Protocols* says that, “In this way [by eliminating individual nations] our international rights will be thrown around the entire world, and they will govern the States, exactly the same which makes each does one for sorting out the issues among the citizens” (*Los Protocolos* 58). The idea was that, to conquer the world, they needed to break the connections that the citizens had to their countries in order to create a new type of society, in which the Jews were the rulers. But in an atmosphere of increasing Spanish

national pride, recently revived under the Rightist Nationalist leaders, this idea was especially unpopular because it threatened an already weakened system and thus the leaders had to react strongly to this.

In the preface of the Spanish edition of *The Protocols*, the editor brings in the idea of Judaism as a threat to the Catholic religion. He explains that, “It [the collection of *The Protocols*] treats, without a doubt, in them of the world domination of Israel,<sup>13</sup> represented by the ‘symbolic serpent’” (*Los Protocolos* 7). This mention of a serpent recalls ideas of Satan as the serpent in the Bible, whose cunning led to the human race’s fall from grace and G-d’s good favor. This allusion thus emphasizes just how great a threat the Jews posed to these societies, in the minds of antisemites. The text further says that the Jews created antisemitism for their own use, when in Protocol 9 it describes that, “we have an absolute need that antisemitism overflows, because in this way it is much easier for us to govern and maintain the cohesion of our brothers of an inferior class” (*Los Protocolos* 83). It is clear that the antisemites utilized whatever would support their false ideas about the Jewish people. Another common line of antisemitic reasoning at the time dealt with religion, because Catholicism was very important during the Franco regime. As Preston explains, “The idea of an evil Jewish conspiracy to destroy the Christian world was given a modern spin in Spain by the dissemination from 1932 onwards of one [of] the most influential works of antisemitism, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*” (34). During the years of the Second Republic, there were attacks on the Church, both physical attacks and moral attacks. With the restoration of a government allied to the Church, there was a very strong reaction against whatever thing could be

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<sup>13</sup> Israel here refers to the entirety of the Jewish people, rather than specifically the state today known by the same name.

perceived as a threat to Catholicism. We can see in the words of *The Protocols* the fear of the original writers, and how the Francoists could utilize them for their own intentions. For example, in the third protocol, which focuses on the methods of the Jews' supposed quest for world domination, we can see language bordering on almost religious terminology when it says, "Today, I can [a fictional Jew] assure you that we are already at very few steps from our final objective. Only a small distance remains for us to travel and the circle of the symbolic serpent that is the symbol of our people will close" (*Los Protocolos* 61). The idea of a menacing snake immediately conjures biblical allusions, to when Lucifer appears to Eve in the Garden of Eden, when he tempts her away from the directives of G-d. This story proves relevant also as an example of another type of "othering" under Franco, because it could demonstrate a belief in the weaker morality of women, an idea that the Franco regime could use as support in their view of the world as a hierarchy with men at the very top. The Jews appear like the rest of the world in the citation since they want to strangle the Christian spirit like a snake.

Chillida explains the fear of a threat to Christianity when he cites Eduardo García as saying, "On the Jews is located the Satanic hatred that excites all of Christianity" (1046). In fact, there were many members of the Church hierarchy that were more public antisemites, with the intent to protect Catholicism that was a great part of Spanish identity. Chillida explains that "It was not a small number of the highest members of the Church hierarchy, in these years, who went beyond the theological antisemitism to assume, in grand of small part, the thesis of the myth of the worldwide Jewish conspiracy" (1061). This theme emerges another time in the discussion of Christians in

the eleventh protocol (which discusses a new proposed constitution of this fictional Jewish group) when it describes that:

The Christians are like flocks of sheep, and we are for them, the wolf, and well they know what happens to the sheep when the wolf enters the field: they all close their eyes, and we promise to give them back all the freedoms that we have taken from them, when the enemies of peace are quiet, and the games reduced to unimportance. (*Los Protocolos* 94)

This quotation encapsulates the fears of the majority of the country, because after all the fighting of the war, they wanted normal, Christian lives. The Church was normal, and was a critical way in which the new regime could maintain order. Further, the citation was a direct threat to the government, and one of clear violence in the images of a wolf that goes to eat the sheep, and they could not allow it. Also, the analogy of Christians to sheep implies a type of stupidity that is clearly insulting. Michael Richards, in “Purifying Spain (11): degeneration and treatment,” explains that “A psycho-pathological language was employed during the Civil War...to conceptualise [sic] the enemy as ‘inferior to animals’ or ‘inhuman’” (48). Though this describes Franco’s treatment of Republicans during the war, it also provides insight into the way in which the regime thought about its enemies. The religious argument clearly became closely associated with a rhetoric that focused on blood, and that who was a true Spaniard.

The specific language in *The Protocols* fits particularly well with the racist Franco rhetoric about purity of blood as well. The ideas entrenched in the society in Spain held the idea that outsiders, those who did not belong to the elite race of the Spaniards and those who did not uphold the ideals of Catholicism stood as inferior human beings.

The false idea of an alliance between the Jews and the Masons (and, further, with the Bolsheviks, or the Communists, or one of any other number of groups)<sup>14</sup> infiltrated the minds of many military generals in Spain under Francisco Franco, and exposed their insecurities about the threat these various groups could pose. As Preston describes, “Several influential individuals spewed out a rhetoric which urged the extermination of the left as a patriotic duty. They insinuated the racial inferiority of their left-wing and liberal enemies through the clichés of the theory of the Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy” (*The Spanish Holocaust* 34). Again, the idea of Judaism as a race of people existed in at least some of the minds of the time. This concept of the purity of the Spanish race meant that Rightists could claim that they were justified in their persecution of some groups because they were not true Spaniards, but this idea grows more complicated in *The Protocols*.

Richards analyzes the language of race in general under Franco when he cites a Francoist philosopher, Manuel García Morente, when he says that, “Spain is made of Christian faith and Iberian blood” (48). This idea infiltrated in all the rhetoric of the time in Spain. We can see a similar allusion to this idea in *The Protocols* in a feeling that the antisemites that that it was the Jews who judged the Christians, rather than the other way around. It is true that part of the rhetoric of the Jews themselves is formed a people, a race, a result in great part from the traditional Jewish law that a Jew is only Jewish if his or her mother is Jewish. In Protocol 11, in this same idea, describes that “G-d has given to us, a Chosen People, the Diaspora, and in this weakness of our race has concentrated our strength, that which we have brought today to the doors of the universal domain; little

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<sup>14</sup> The Masons comprised a group of people outside of the “correct” society during this epoch as well, because they were Christians, but not Catholics. The Bolsheviks also fell outside of the community, because Spain forcefully opposed the communism of the Soviet Union at the time.

remains for us to build these foundations” (*Los Protocolos* 95). The language is very similar to that of the government when they would describe “our race,” which meant that the Francoists could understand this type of rhetoric, and use it for their intention to represent the Jews as a singular race, an “other.” It is clear in this instance that the language in *The Protocols* is similar, but Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida describes the situation in a different manner. In his article, he defines three types of antisemitism:

Lower: Antisemitic stereotype

Medium: Theological antisemitism

Highest: Myth of the Jewish worldwide conspiracy. Two types:

—Christian: Joins the previous anti-Masonic myth

—Racist “völkisch” [from Germany]

(Álvarez Chillida 1042)

Álvarez Chillida did not think that this antisemitism was about race, as very obviously in Germany with the eugenics movement during the devastating World War II, but rather that there was an anti-Masonic reaction without many references to race. But the many discussions about the purity of Spanish blood, and the passion with which the general adopted this text during the Franco regime, implied that there was a possibility that they read protocol eleven and that race was not completely outside of the conversations about Jews.

The great economic and power inequalities that existed between the social classes under Franco led to the regime’s use of “othering” techniques in order to focus the populace’s discontent on individuals outside of the government. As Nehemiah Robinson described in 1953, “One reason for the popular discontent has been the rising cost of

living, the constantly worsening position of employees, and the decline of industrial production...The average Spanish worker was considered to have been only one-half as well off in 1951 as in 1936” (6). There also existed a strong feeling in the government of the necessity to return to the morals of the Catholic Church, and a fear that the tensions that continued in society could drive the Spaniards to another war. The respected Spanish historian, Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, explains that “The political and social crisis that opened in 1931, and that did not make but escalated at the outbreak of the Civil War, was the breeding ground in which antisemitic ideas developed, especially amongst the diverse parts of the extreme Right, that is to say, the anti-liberal Right” (1048). In an atmosphere of hate, the Rightist dictatorship wanted to establish rhetoric against a common enemy to give to the population a scapegoat on which to focus their dissatisfaction. In his book, Paul Preston explains that the “rightist theological and racial theories were elaborated to justify the intervention of the military and the destruction of the left” (xiii-xvi). In this rhetoric, there was only one correct way of life: that of Catholic marriage, and all people as dedicated patriots to the idea of a glorious Spain. This unfortunately strict ideal gave the Francoists a useful language to utilize when representing enemies of the state as “others.” Preston continues to explain this time with more details, saying that, “The intention was to ensure that establishment interests would never again be challenged as they had been from 1931 to 1936 by the democratic reforms of the Second Republic” (xv). In fact, there were many Jews that supported the Republicans during the Civil War. In his book *Spain, the Jews, and Franco*, Haim Avni explains that Jews were “roughly 10 percent of the 40,000 foreign volunteers” fighting against Franco (50).

The economy of Spain during and after the 1930s had much inequality amongst the social classes, a fact that the Right intended to hide from the public in their use of some rhetoric texts like *The Protocols*. Protocol 2 deals with the false idea of an “economic war” that the Jews wanted to start throughout the whole world, with the goal of conquering a weakened world. This part says, using the false point of view of the Jews, that “It is indispensable for our projects that the wars do not cause any territorial alteration. In this way many of the wars will be negotiated under the economic aspect (*Los Protocolos* 58). This citation is very similar to the much larger history of antisemitism, in which the Jews are associated with money and avarice, but specifically in this moment of Spanish history because the economy had fallen so far. The poor were extremely impoverished, especially in the countryside, where the majority of the population had economic difficulties due to “the rising cost of living, the constantly worsening position of employees, and the decline of industrial production” (Robinson 6). At the same time, the ruling class, which included principally traditional hidalgos, government officials, and the leaders in the Church hierarchy, had an abundance of privileges, such as economic resources and political rights. Preston explains more about the point of view of a priest when he describes that, “[Tusquets] asserted that the Jewish assault on Spain was visible both in the Republic’s persecution of religion and in the movement for agrarian reform via the redistribution of the great estates” (36). Further, as Segel explains about the theology of antisemitism, “It is the Jew again who ruins the individual classes in the Christian states by stirring up hatred, envy, and discord among them. The class struggle is an invention of the Jew” (8). This quotation puts the blame for the economic difficulties on the Jews, by diverting the focus of the poor away from the

real people that were causing the difficult situation: the rich, the government and the leaders of the Church. This protocol continues to talk about the economy, but in a manner that represents the Jews as violent people when it says, “Thanks to the press we accumulate all the gold, although it has cost us torrents of blood and the sacrifice of many of ours; but each one of our sacrifices is worth before G-d thousands of gentiles” (*Los Protocolos* 60). The winners of the Civil War, the Right, would have liked this citation because it is another way to divert the blame for the terrible violence of the war to the Jews, “the others,” while using traditional antisemitic language about Jews and gold.

There were many members of the Rightist government who used *The Protocols* in their rhetoric against the Jews and “the others” in general. Paul Preston explains the diffusion of this text through the minds of the leaders of the Francoist government in much detail, including through a description of the life of Juan Tusquets Terrat, a Catalan priest: “Tusquets used *The Protocols* as ‘documentary’ evidence of his essential thesis that the Jews were bent on the destruction of Christian civilization. Their instruments were Freemasons and Socialists who did their dirty work by means of revolution, economic catastrophes, unholy and pornographic propaganda and unlimited liberalism” (*The Spanish Holocaust* 36). This brief summary encapsulates all the important problems in Spain during the time of the Civil War that the Francoists could blame on the Jews, including the challenges to the religion, the antique system of economy, and the sometimes unpopular traditionalist morals. Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, in his article, “The Antisemitic Myth in the Spanish Crisis of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” comments that specifically, “Franco himself, fervently anti-Communist and obsessively anti-Mason, participated in some occasion of the antisemitic environment, although significantly less than other

personalities in his regime” (1058). This duality of antisemitic and more accepting language characterized most of Franco’s time in power.

It was ironic also that the antisemites in Spain used this text during the Franco regime because before this period, *The Protocols* had been shown to be false, but their key ideas that could support the Francoist rhetoric meant that the Right still used them anyway. The editor of the Spanish version of *The Protocols* recognized that they were possibly false, but it didn’t matter to him because they were useful in the rhetoric of the time. As M. E. Jouin comments in his Note from the Editor in a reprint of the 1920 edition, “Think what you want to this about the authenticity of the referenced documents [*The Protocols*]...there is no doubt a point of interest that today they offer and of the sad truth that the actual experience of the world has conferred” (*Los Protocolos* 5). It did not matter to this editor, nor to the other antisemites in Spain that read this text, if it was the truth. The more important idea was that the text supported the ideas about the Jews in Spain, and many “others” that Francoist rhetoric created at the time. For this commentator in particular, *The Protocols* obviously expose the truth, a point of view that he discusses when he claims that, “We believe that the reader will be amazed at the accuracy, that we could call prophetic, of *The Protocols* (*Los Protocolos* 5). This quotation implies that M. E. Jouin believes that his ideas were so commonly felt that all readers would agree with them. One of the principal commentators was Benjamin W. Segel. In his book *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: The Greatest Lie in History*, he explains this determination to believe in the truth of *The Protocols*: “Anti-Semitic journalism pleaded that a plagiarist and a forged document are two entirely different things. Proving a book to be a plagiarist, did not prove it to be a forged document. First of

all, it should be ascertained who committed the plagiarism....who else but the Elders of Zion?" (21). This decision to use them anyway is discussed at the end of the Note, when Jouin cites an Italian adage, "Se non é vero, é ben trovato [Even if it is not true, it is well-conceived]" (*Los Protocolos* 6). This expresses a feeling that the truth of a work does not matter, as long as it supports some useful opinion, an idea that was rampant in all the publications of the government at the time, especially if the publications were talking about the reasons behind the economic problems of the society.

In the end, the use of othering under the Franco regime and similar sentiments echoed in this antisemitic work are the reasons that *The Protocols* were very successful in supporting the rhetoric of the political Right in Spain during the Franco regime. The military generals blamed the Jews for the problems in the society, using this rhetoric of their supposed desire to dominate the world, in the end diverting the blame of the regime and encouraging compliance with the dictatorship. Regarding the false theology of *The Protocols*, Segel explains that "...the watchword of the Elders of Zion must be: Power and Deception. Power forms the basis, but craftiness and slyness operate as means to power" (41). This completely negative vision of the Jews throughout all of world history functioned perfectly in the rhetoric of the Right. The ideas about a worldwide alliance of Jews with the intention to cause havoc in order to conquer the world functioned within the ideas about the economy, the religion, and race under Franco.

## Chapter 4: Spanish Relations with the Jewish State of Israel

### 1.0 Over Forty Years of Tense Relations

The Jewish nation of Israel officially gained statehood in 1948, and from the very beginning they had difficult interactions with Franco's Spain. Various ideological differences meant that the relationship between these two countries, beyond a difficult beginning, remained strained for decades. The best sources on this complicated time in the relationship between Spain and Israel come from Raanan Rein in a series of articles she wrote on the time period. In these, she exposes some underlying factors that look beyond simply the official statements made by the two countries, and instead delves more deeply into some of the tense undercurrents that fed the mutual hostility. In her article "Israel's Anti-Francoist Policy (1948-53): Motives and Ideological Justifications," Rein describes that "During the first five years following its establishment, the state of Israel pursued a hostile policy towards the Spanish General Francisco Franco's dictatorial regime" (408).

By 1949 Israel had already joined the United Nations, something that Spain would not achieve until 1955 due to the country's human rights violations under Franco's regime. These abuses had even led many nations to place a diplomatic embargo on the country until Spain fixed some of its worst offenses. Almost immediately after Israel joined the United Nations, it had the opportunity to vote on the possibility of ending the diplomatic embargo on Spain, and chose to vote against ending it because of both Franco's association with the Nazis and a political prejudice amongst some of the Israeli

leaders, which carried over from the time of the Spanish Civil War. The embargo was not formally lifted by the United Nations until 1950, though even after that year Israel did not immediately seek relations with Spain (“Israel’s Anti-Francoist Policy” 408).

The official reason given by Israel for their reluctance to lift the ban was that Franco’s government had supported Germany during World War II. The Shoah ended in 1945, yet many Jewish people have continued afterward to echo the maxim “never forget,” meaning that we can never let the world forget the abuses and genocide committed against the Jewish people by the Nazi regime. After the end of Nazi Germany, when both Hitler’s regime and its fascist ally Italy fell, Spain’s government still continued on and thus for some Jews became the lingering symbol of the genocide. Rein quotes Ambassador Yaakov Tsur’s words from 1949:

“The time has not yet come to forget. Whereas [the Spanish] government was, for a certain time, the ally — even if only on paper, as he says — of that government that bears the responsibility for that massacre... This is not directed, however, against Spain and its government, but against the Nazi regime, which still casts a shadow over our relations with this country” (“Israel’s Anti-Francoist Policy” 410-411).

Haim Avni further explains that when several Latin American nations tried to establish diplomatic ties with Franco in United Nations, Israel disagreed with the move, saying that “[Israel] does maintain that Franco Spain has been an active and sympathetic ally of the regime that had been responsible for that policy [of extermination]...” (Avni 1).

However, Spain still continued their crusade to portray a sympathetic face to the world in terms of their policy towards the Jews. Following Israel’s lack of support for

ending the embargo, apparently “Spain’s disappointment with Israel’s vote in the U.N. did not result in hostile measures taken against Jews” (Avni 209).

Raanan Rein’s research implies that even beyond the Spanish government’s association with Nazi Germany there existed other motives behind Israel’s initial reluctance to have official relations with Spain, and in some ways these had to do with personal political opinions amongst the Israeli leadership. Rein describes a correspondence in 1951 from the head of the Western European division in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Gershon Avner, in which he explained to the Israeli Ambassador in Brussels the reluctance of the Israeli administration. Rein describes that in his correspondence, Avner “pointed out the important fact that most of Israel’s leaders belonged to MAPAI, a party that had been staunchly anti-Francoist during the Spanish Civil War” (“Israel’s Anti-Francoist Policy” 412). Rein conducted further interviews with various Israeli officials from the time period, which confirmed this hypothesis that the diplomatic decisions taken by Israel at the time did not solely arise from the link between Spain and Germany. One issue by the Spanish government came in response to Israel’s vote against Spain in the U.N. General Assembly in 1949; “Spain, imbued with its universal Christian spirit of love for all the races on earth, contributed to the rescue of the Jews, and acted more for spiritual than for merely legal or political reasons...” (Avni 179). This emphasis on the aid that Spain had provided to the Jews could have marked an attempt to garner great international support, at a time when Spain did not have strong relationships with many of the world’s nations.

Rein suggests that the long history of antisemitism in Spain did not affect Israel's diplomatic decisions at the time. Rein quotes a message from 1950 which was sent by the first secretary at the Israeli Embassy in Paris, Shlomo Kedar:

The year 1492 indeed remains a shameful blot on the pages of Spanish history, but at the same time it does not seem to me good political sense to nurse a grudge forever. If Israel wanted to maintain relations only with those states which, throughout their histories, had never persecuted Jews, I doubt that any could be found, except perhaps those where Jews have never lived. ("Israel's Anti-Francoist Policy" 417).

The lack of Israel and Spanish relations did not necessarily have a big effect on Israel, as Spain still had a weakened economy at the time. But as Rein describes in "Outpaced by the West: Israel's Spanish Policy, 1953-56," times for Spain would soon change for the better on an international scale, as "the year 1953 marked a turning-point in Spain's international status" (78). A particular growth in associations between Spain and various Arab nations during this time proved significant later in the century. Around this time, Spain (which had reached out to Israel earlier but faced rejection) still apparently had an interest in associating with the country, despite its increased relations with Arab nations. As Rein describes, "Madrid was still interested — though that interest was 'waning' — in appeasing international and Jewish public opinion" ("Outpaced by the West" 88). Increasingly, in the early and mid-1950s, certain Israelis began arguing in favor of establishing relations with the Iberian nation. Notably, in December of 1955, Israel actually supported Spain's entry to the United Nations (Avni 210). Finally, in 1956,

Israel reached out to Spain in an attempt to open consulates in that country, but the Spanish government refused (“Outpaced by the West” 101-102).

Despite these difficulties between the two nations, Franco’s complicated legacy as both an antisemite and a savior for many Jews continued. Notably, during the Six Day War in 1967, “Spain helped to make arrangements whereby many Jews were allowed to leave Egypt, sparing them prolonged arrest and brutality” (Avni 209).

Soon after Franco’s death in 1975, Israel reached out again with the hope of establishing diplomatic relations with Spain. However, within the Spanish government there still existed “mixed feeling[s] about Spain’s past hard policy against Israel” (Leslie). Spain and Albania were the only European nations which did not have official relations with Israel in 1975. This long, strained relationship may have led to the decision by many Jews from Spain to make aliyah,<sup>15</sup> and in all 1,412 Jews left Spain for this purpose between 1948 and 2008 (*Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora* 904).

The two countries finally established formal diplomatic ties in January 1986 (*Spain: A Country Study* 272).

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<sup>15</sup> The term “to make aliyah” refers to a Jewish person living in the Diaspora, or outside of Israel, who decides to move to the land of Israel.

## **Final Conclusions**

### **A Complicated Legacy**

In the end, researchers may never fully understand the years during which Francisco Franco ruled over Spain. Even after no successor to the regime leadership stepped up after Franco's death in 1975 and democracy slowly came to the country, a culture of silence regarding all of the abuses over the preceding four decades developed. Only in recent years have many people started to come forward and speak openly about these abuses, and increasingly survivors call for the excavation of newly-discovered mass graves throughout the country. This silence, combined with the lack of a significant Jewish community in Spain during these years, has not as of yet led to the development of an extremely strong body of primary and secondary literature on the actual experiences of Jewish people in Spain under Franco. Hopefully with the increasingly candid discussions about the Franco regime and a larger Jewish community within Spain itself today (though still miniscule in terms of percentage of the Spanish population), this and other topics of interest to researchers of Spanish antisemitism will come more to the forefront of historical research on Spain.

In the official Spanish constitution that emerged in 1978, three years after Franco's death, the change to a more democratic society was clearly enunciated: "Spain constitutes a state of social and democratic laws which as the highest values of its legal order recognizes freedom, justice, equality and political pluralism" (Jan Osmanczyk 865). While today the country still remains Catholic in personality, all religions find official

acceptance. The government has also made numerous efforts to reach out to Spanish and world Jewry since Franco's death in 1975. For example, in 1992, King Juan Carlos symbolically repealed the Edict of Expulsion, 500 years after the Catholic monarchs initially published the document (*Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora* 902). Various agencies and groups have grown in the country, such as Casa Sefarad, in an attempt to foster stronger relations between the Spanish nation and the Jewish people.

Unfortunately, though, today, a lingering antisemitism still persists in Spain, as throughout much of Europe. Spain in 2008 received a large amount of negative press, when the *Pew Research Center's Pew Global Attitudes Project* found that 46% of the Spanish rated Jews unfavorably ("Unfavorable Views"). This racial prejudice does not usually emerge in the country in violent ways, as more commonly occurs in other countries (such as France), but instead in biased public comments, such as slights in the media and political cartoons. As Baer explains, "Medieval antisemitic tropes rooted in the religious tradition emerge from time to time in the representation of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the mainstream press" (Baer). These comments also increase in frequency when fighting erupts in the Middle East between Israel and other Middle East nations, reflecting Spain's strong support for Palestine over Israel. The fact that most Spaniards have never even met a Jewish person further leads to the association of all Jewish people with the actions of the state of Israel. However, this does not stop many Spaniards from also exhibiting prejudice against the growing Muslim population in their country. The announcement in late 2012 that Spain would grant automatic citizenship to those Jews who could prove their Sephardic heritage, in comparison to the residency requirements

imposed on most other groups seeking Spanish citizenship, raised questions about the motivations behind this decision (Zacharoff).

Without more information from the historical archives of Spain and full disclosure, researchers may never reach a definitive ruling on whether or not Francisco Franco was a dedicated antisemite or whether he personally sought to help the Jewish people of Spain and beyond. Some point to rumors of Franco's possible Jewish heritage as either a sign of his inherent sympathies for that group, or for a type of self-hatred that led to their persecution. Either way, the era clearly remains one of complications and numerous layers that could benefit from greater research into its antisemitic rhetoric.

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