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“Not to be shown to researchers”: Spanish Foreign Policy towards the Deportation of the Spanish Sephardic Community of Salonica in 1943

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Sephardic: (Derived from hebr. *šəfārad*, place-name traditionally identified with the Iberian Peninsula).

1. adj. Of Jews native to Spain, or those who, though not from Spain, accept the special religious prayer practices of the Spanish Jews.

Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy

ABSTRACT

The present chapter analyses the process by which the Spanish regime under General Francisco Franco dealt, from February 1943 on, with the problem of the extension of German repressive measures against the Jews to all territories conquered by the Third Reich, focusing on the example of Spanish nationals within the Sephardic community of Salonica. Following this decision, Spain found herself facing a grave dilemma, arising from the 1924 restricted recognition of citizenship rights to Sephardic Jews, the descendants of those expelled from Spain by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. The Spanish lack of reaction during a particularly volatile phase in the evolution of her foreign policy in relation to the war and, above all, the prejudices of the Spanish ruling classes in relation to the Jews, led to a stalemate that resulted in the deportation of this community to the Bergen-Belsen camp in Germany. Only in 1944, in the context of international pressure and the United States' commitment to facilitate the transit of the Salonica Jews to a third destination, did Franco's regime open the gates of *Sefarad* to them, for only a very limited time.

A comienzos de 1943, la decisión de las autoridades del III Reich de ampliar las medidas represivas contra los judíos a aquellos de nacionalidad extranjera residentes en los territorios ocupados por Alemania, situó al régimen español presidido por Francisco Franco ante un grave dilema. Desde 1924 una ley, promulgada por el dictador Miguel Primo de Rivera, reconocía -bajo condiciones restrictivas- la nacionalidad española a los judíos sefarditas,

descendientes de aquellos expulsados por los Reyes Católicos en 1492. El problema de los judíos de nacionalidad española en Europa se convertía, así, en uno de los más importantes retos que la política exterior española debía afrontar, en el contexto de una fase espacialmente volátil de la evolución de su posición ante el conflicto.

Uno de los escenarios donde la existencia de una importante comunidad sefardí de plena nacionalidad española hacía necesaria una acción inmediata era Salónica, con una comunidad de más de 500 individuos reconocidos como ciudadanos españoles. Mientras el régimen de Mussolini procedió a repatriar con la máxima rapidez a los judíos de nacionalidad italiana de ese territorio, los prejuicios dominantes entre la elite dirigente española desembocaron en un proceso dilatorio que concluyó con la deportación de los judíos sefarditas de Salónica al campo de Bergen-Belsen, en Alemania.

El conjunto de hitos por los que se llegó a este desenlace se analizan con profundidad en el presente artículo, así como el contexto en el que hay que situar el proceso de toma de decisiones español, tanto en lo que se refiere a la delicada posición internacional del régimen de Franco en el seno del conflicto, como a la percepción de la llamada “cuestión judía” predominante entre los dirigentes españoles. No será hasta 1944 cuando la presión estadounidense, la propia insostenibilidad legal del abandono al que quedaban sometidos esos españoles y necesidad del Régimen de mejorar su imagen ante los Aliados moverán a España a permitir su repatriación, una vez que alcanzado el firme compromiso por parte de las autoridades estadounidenses de facilitar su tránsito inmediato a otros destinos, en América, África o Palestina.

Spanish foreign policy during World War II is a tremendously complex issue, one which relates to political and social debates of great current relevance. Franco's dictatorship is undoubtedly ever present in contemporary Spanish life on many levels of discourse and thought in the sense that, in discussion of current problems, “the Regime” and its policies continue to be one of the favourite political weapons, whether in parliament or in animated pub discussion. Inevitably, in a particularly dark period in the history of Europe, such as that discussed here, the question of the Jews, the brutal genocide to which they were subjected by Nazism and the knowledge, tolerance, or resistance to this by Franco's regime during the various phases of its ambiguous and intricate foreign policy during World War II, constitute a fundamental element of that debate.

In this chapter, we will firstly unravel some of the most significant characteristics of Franco's policy with respect to the so-called “Jewish question” during the war years. We will enter, so to speak, into the actual moral philosophy with which the regime and its leaders approached one of the most lamentable and dramatic processes in the history of humanity. Subsequently, we will return to look at a specific question, that of Spanish nationals within the large Sephardic community of Salonica; the incredible journey of those families who, full citizens of the Spanish state, were victims of the unstable equi-

librium on which Spanish foreign policy rested in those years. Historically, Salonica was the location of one of the main settlements of Spanish Jews after their expulsion in 1492. The Sephardic presence was so relevant that, from the 16th century Salonica was often referred as the “*republica sefardita*”¹. By the beginning of the Second World War, about 49,000 citizens of the city were Jews; most of these were of Spanish origin or at least Spanish speaking². By 1943, about 600 of these had also obtained full Spanish citizenship. The lack of response of the Franco regime to their attempts to have their rights respected led to their deportation in 1943 by the German authorities to the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen. Only then did Spain, seeking to improve its image in the eyes of the Allies, begin negotiations to have them freed and sent to Spain. However, the old fatherland was not their final destination. Their entry in Spain was only granted after Franco’s regime had been given full assurances by the Allied governments that they would facilitate their passage to a final destination in Africa or America. In any case, for a very few, it was a drama that ended positively, or at least allowed them to survive: a microcosm in a vaster diaspora in which *Sefarad*, once a place of nostalgia, again turned out to be a forbidden territory, a place of passing; but a drama in which, after many vicissitudes, at least some lives were saved. If the horrors which other Jews faced are taken into account, this is not irrelevant. At any rate, it is a subject worthy of careful research³.

SPAIN, THE JEWS AND WORLD WAR II: AN OVERVIEW

It is unnecessary to point out that any reflection on relations between Spain and the Jewish people in recent centuries is determined by the Catholic Monarchs’ expulsion of most of the numerous Jewish community (those who did not agree to conversion) from its territory in 1492⁴. The expulsion was repulsive in form and effective in achieving its objective. It was the culmination of a series of repressive measures against the Jews adopted by the majority of European kingdoms during the Middle Ages that was intensified, if that were possible, during the difficult years in which the Black Death took hold of Europe⁵. The difference was that the Jewish population in Spain was far more numerous than in other European countries; thus, the measure adopted in 1492 was much more traumatic and difficult to be interpreted in all its implications. It should be stressed that it was not racial factors but religious fundamentalism and political insecurity that pushed Ferdinand and Isabella to take this step⁶. Countries such as England and France had expelled their small Jewish populations during the Middle Ages, while Spain remained mainly free of any kind of state-based repression until 1492. The Catholic Monarchs’ lands had only just been recovered for Christendom. In the messianic mood that arose with the fall of Granada and the end of the *Reconquista*, if Spain was to be turned into a great European power, as was the Monarchs’ will, it was essential to put a stop to elements which, in the opinion of many European courts and that of Isabella and Ferdinand themselves, made theirs not a fully Christian country but a suspicious

land. The significant number of individuals and communities of Jewish faith in Castile and Aragon (and fear of their willingness to spread their beliefs among Christians) was one of these elements⁷.

Some relevant authors, such as Benzion Netanyahu or Christiane Stallaert, have presented the expulsion as the result of the implementation of a racist state-based ideology rather than the application of a drastic political and religious fundamentalist calculation⁸. As Joseph Pérez, a leading authority on this issue, has stated, applying the racial paradigm – as it was formulated in the 18th and 19th centuries – to Spain in 1492 would be, at least methodologically, inappropriate⁹. According to Pérez, what was expelled in 1492 was a religious group – a whole rich culture alien to the religious uniformity desired by the Kings of Spain – but not a race. The Jews were encouraged to convert and those who did so had no problem in remaining in Spain¹⁰. Nevertheless, significant levels of mistrust, hate and resentment towards the newly converted and their social success soon arose, resulting in the so called “decrees of blood purity”, which led to longstanding state-supported social discrimination of those unable to prove that their ancestors were “old Christians”¹¹, and the Inquisition often proceeded against them, accusing them of secretly practicing Judaism.

The 1492 expulsion inevitably resulted in the separation of the silent majority of Spaniards not affected by it from the Sephardis, who, at a distance, maintained not only their faith, but also their own language (Judeo-Spanish or *Ladino*), which linked them permanently to Spain, as well as a commendable loyalty to Sefarad, mythologised by successive generations. The passage of time leads us to the 19th century, and the encounter between Spain and the Jews through the bloody African wars, in which Spain, destitute of its empire, sought a new sun, in vain, in the shadow of the Atlas Mountains. These conflicts in Africa provided new opportunities for cross communication between the Sephardic Jews in Africa and the Spanish authorities, and also increased the Spanish government’s interest in the issue¹². On the other hand the (weak) triumph of the liberal doctrine in Spain during the 19th century led to the legal instauration of religious freedom, which *de facto*, countermanded the legal effects of the expulsion¹³. As Stanley Payne points out, even before the 19th century, Spain had taken protective measures towards minority religious communities in the Ottoman empire and, in 1881, the liberal government of Práxedes Mateo Sagasta offered protection to Russian refugees who faced the virulent pogroms against the Jewish communities in the Tsar’s empire¹⁴. In its political practice and intellectual debates, Spain certainly remained, generally speaking, very far from the radical assumptions which began to foreshadow the vicious theory which would sustain the genocide undertaken by Nazi Germany.

On 20 December 1924, General Miguel Primo de Rivera (father of José Antonio, founder of the Falange), then dictator of Spain as a result of the political fracture of the Restoration regime after the First World War, passed a royal decree allowing a limited number of Sephardis to obtain full Spanish nationality, under very strict conditions (only those able

to prove their Spanish origin after a demanding process were admitted). While accepting the limited scope of this law, many of Franco's officials considered it the legal referent that would justify aid to Sephardic communities in Europe. For others, it would be considered a noble and unnecessary act of generosity that in no way tied Spain to the Jewish communities threatened by Nazism, even if they had acquired Spanish nationality.

The Primo de Rivera Law was promulgated as the materialisation of a pan-Hispanism, a desire to turn Spain into a sort of cultural Fatherland for all the Spanish speakers, intended as a substitute or consolation for the loss of empire and the crisis of Spanish influence in the world, set in motion in 1898 with the humiliating loss of Cuba and the Philippines. This process was continued and intensified in the period of failed and frustrated illusions that was the Second Republic¹⁵. It is far from being the aim of this chapter to enter into a debate on the causes of the fall of the Republic and the origins of the Civil War. Whatever those were, the reality is that this conflict inaugurated a singular period in Spanish history in which the country reverted from its liberal path to become a Catholic-minded, nationalistic and authoritarian regime that, at least in its early stages, assumed most of the aesthetic and forms of the increasingly influential fascist regimes in Europe. Not by chance, one of the stages associated with Spanish policy during the Second World War has been the "fascist temptation"¹⁶. In any case, up to today, there is a certain consensus in linking the regime born in 1939 with Mussolini's Italy or Salazar's Portugal, but not in any case with Hitler's Germany¹⁷. Anti-Semitism, based on a racial conception derived from the ideas of ethnic superiority of Arthur de Gobineau, Huston Stewart Chamberlain or other thinkers in their wake, was very much a minority interest within the Spanish right and among the leaders of Franco's regime. Individuals such as Onesimo Redondo were openly anti-Semitic¹⁸; minority and radicalised sectors of the Falange, with strong connections to elements in the German Embassy in Madrid, fell under the spell of the successes and the martial glory of Nazi Germany, and under the sinister spell of their doctrines¹⁹. The newspaper "Informaciones", the most faithful of Spanish mass media to the Axis cause, frequently flirted with an anti-Semitism that was more aesthetic in nature than based on firm ideology. The same might be said about the paradigmatic case of the Blue Division's newspaper, the "Hoja de Campaña", which on various occasions adopted the anti-Semitic discourse of their comrades-in-arms on the Eastern front²⁰. There was, indeed, a lot of flirting and fascination in the relationship between Spain and Nazi Germany, but at no time did Spain come blindly close to even considering adopting any of the repressive measures that were implemented in Germany before and during the war in relation to the Jews. If there were *foci* of anti-Semitism in Spain and among its leaders (Franco himself being a paradigmatic case), they were the crystallization of the traditional long-term Catholic contempt for the Jews as the "deicide race", not the result of the application or assimilation of a Darwinist racial theory²¹.

Once the world war began, as Bernd Rother has stated in an indispensable study, Spain did not completely obstruct the entry of Jewish refugees from German-occupied territo-

ries. Although this may have been the objective reality, the fact – as Rother indicates – is that Spain’s generosity in allowing the passage of Jewish refugees through its territory was only relative, since it was well known that Salazar’s regime was openly disposed to admit them to its territory²². Thus in the first stages of the war, Spain showed what would be its long-term policy towards the Jewish people throughout the conflict. There was no generalised proscription based on racial criteria against the entry or aid to Spanish Jews, nor was the policy of marginalisation, deportation (or later extermination) of the Jewish people in occupied Europe either followed or supported. Nevertheless, identifying the whole of the Jewish people with liberal, socialist or pro-communist political positions, and – at least in particular sectors – assuming the dialectic that attributed the evils of the world to an international Jewish conspiracy (the famous “Judeo-Masonic plot”), Franco’s regime was not willing to allow, to use the words of one of the regime’s leaders, a Spain “full of Jews”²³. As regards the Sephardis, until early 1943, despite the enthusiastic opposition of the Spanish ambassador in Vichy, the ineffable José Felix de Lequerica, permission to enter Spain was granted to those who could provide documentation of their position as Spaniards by virtue of Primo de Rivera’s law. Many of those who could not present such proof of their status were – at times – given sufficient documentation to safeguard them, without receiving the right to be admitted to Spain. It was more a restrictive measure than a sign of generosity²⁴. In any case, it is clear that everything was done on an absolutely arbitrary basis, with a total absence of any clear criteria. In September 1942, José Félix de Lequerica very clearly indicated his opinion on the Jewish-Sephardic problem:

[...] they use this special title of Spaniard, which the glorious dictator Primo de Rivera granted them in a moment of generous optimism, exclusively to defend their interests.

The tendency of the Jews, Sephardites or otherwise, to enter Spain [...] may come to constitute a problem. [...] The people of this race do not need to be excessively numerous to exert their influence, in a sense which at this moment is already known. If they could, they would dishonestly seek a way to elude the unforgettable work of Catholic Monarchs in 1492 at a time when the entire world is trying to imitate it openly or surreptitiously²⁵.

The issue was only moderately pressing until 1943. At the beginning of that year, a series of factors led to the explosion of the Jewish question. This occurred during the most delicate period of the whole conflict for Franco’s foreign policy, a policy of unstable and imperfect balance, which had to navigate the turbulent waters of a conflict whose outcome was unpredictable.

THE CRISIS OF 1943

The first months of 1943 constitute one of the most critical periods for Spanish foreign policy during World War II. In September 1942, after a summer marked by internal political conflicts and tensions, culminating in the so-called events of Begoña (a failed attack by radical Falangists on the monarchist minister of the Army, General Varela),

a ministerial crisis took place which led to the dismissal of the minister of Foreign Affairs, Ramón Serrano Suñer – Franco’s brother-in-law – and the appointment to that position of general Francisco Gómez Jordana, who was much more reluctant to align Spanish policy with that of the Axis. Serrano’s dismissal was universally interpreted as a heavy blow for German interests in Spain.

After his ascent to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs (or rather his return, as he had already occupied that position during the Civil War), Jordana began to take certain measures motivated by his desire to establish, with Franco’s necessary support, greater distance from the Axis. This new tendency could not but be intensified by the vast Allied landings in North Africa, in November (Operation Torch), which hit Spain’s uneasy policy like an earthquake. The landings took the war to the very doors of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco and affected one of the most sensitive questions for the army’s highest ranks, forged in the bloody wars that Spain had waged on that soil since the 19th century. The operation clearly resulted in an intensification of the initiatives undertaken by Jordana to position Spain at an “imperfect equidistance” in relation to the two opposing sides in the war, “imperfect” since its hidden desire was to continue to provide the Axis with whatever veiled help might be possible, to the detriment of the Allies, so long as the cost of that policy was not the enmity of the Allied powers, with whom the government was noticeably trying to improve relations as it was faced with the increasingly likely prospect that the war would end with the defeat of the Axis²⁶.

In any case, the leaders of the Third Reich in Berlin and in the *Wolfschanze* interpreted the aloof Spanish manoeuvres as unmistakable evidence that Franco’s loyalty to the Axis, always feeble, was now weakening, this time tolerably for the time being. The old plans to invade Spain, devised in the previous years, again became a frequent subject of discussion for the German general Staff²⁷. The Spanish geographical location might be critical in the future, to the good or to the detriment of the Reich. Spain offered a superb position from which to strike the disembarked Allied armies, but it might also be the next target of those forces, from which they might open the dreaded European front. Mussolini, knowing that the fall of Africa would be the prelude to that of Italy, began to urge the Führer to play the “Spanish card”²⁸. Hitler, obsessed with the Russian front, was not disposed to rush into a risky Spanish adventure, but in his private conversations of those months he showed different representatives of broad sectors of the Reich his desire for a drastic political change in Spain, that would definitively unite that country’s destiny with Germany’s²⁹.

As a result, a series of initiatives was designed in the German Embassy in Madrid and in Berlin to destabilise Spanish policy and to incline it definitively towards the Axis. First of all, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Auswärtiges Amt*) made contact with the commander in chief of the Blue Division (the Spanish voluntary unit that fought alongside the Reich on the Russian front), Agustín Muñoz Grandes, proposing that he head an opposition movement to Franco that would lead to his marginalisation as a symbolic

figure, after which the entire Spanish policy in relation to the war would be reconsidered. The general was receptive to the idea of leading an operation of this nature³⁰. On the other hand, contacts with the Spanish authorities were begun with the aim of inviting the Party Minister, José Luis de Arrese, to Berlin where he would be appropriately pressured to collaborate in a radical redefinition of Spanish policy. Both the minister of Foreign Affairs, Jordana, and the German ambassador himself, a diplomat of the old 'Wilhemine' school, Eberhard von Stohrer, knew of these movements and perceived the dangers they involved. Stohrer, whose relations with Minister von Ribbentrop had deteriorated greatly since the summer, due to their resistance to supporting a more aggressive diplomacy from Madrid, burned his boats and obstructed in whatever way he could the actions initiated by Berlin to promote Arrese's invitation. His open opposition to these plans led to a final confrontation with the main representatives in Madrid of the different families and power groups composing the Nazi network. Undermined in his authority by Ribbentrop, he was dismissed late in December and recalled to Berlin³¹.

With an aggressive strategy with respect to Spain that, it was hoped, would lead to specific results in early 1943, the appointment of a new ambassador without previous experience in Spanish affairs – Hans Adolf von Moltke – could only mean recourse to a figure of prestige, who would, however, have to depend on the greater experience of his subordinates, many of them feverishly devoted to the cause of the Axis³². The history of Hans Adolf von Moltke's embassy is beyond the scope of this chapter, but we can say that the ambassador turned out not to be the pliable and passive diplomat who was expected. Thanks to his action, limits were placed on the main conspiracies mentioned above. In any case, these were singularly intense months for Spanish policy³³, the complexity of which was further increased by the eruption of a question hitherto relevant but in the end only tangential for Spanish foreign policy: the Jewish question.

THE JEWISH QUESTION ERUPTS

By January 1943, Germany's political radicalisation, the result of the increasingly adverse course of the war and of the full scale implementation of Nazi doctrine (with the predictable result of the imminent deterioration of the Jews' situation in Europe) made the Spanish authorities turn their attention to the position of Spanish Sephardis resident in occupied countries. On 18 January 1943 – while the *dramatis personae* of the German embassy in Madrid pursued its policy – the Head of Foreign Policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – José María Doussinague – made a pre-emptive report on the question to his Minister, Gómez Jordana:

We point out the serious situation of the Sephardis in the occupied countries and the convenience of giving provisional instructions to the Spanish Representations, avoiding taking a definitive position and aiming mainly at the economic question, avoiding the confiscation of the goods of such Sephardis and silencing the question of race or religion³⁴.

It is an ambiguous document and, in any case, weak in its moral dimension, since it was a recommendation to adopt a lukewarm position that did not in the least jeopardise the global position of Spanish policy, which was at that time, as we have seen, in a particularly complex phase. A few days later, the situation of foreign Jews in occupied Europe reached a dramatic turning point. On 26 January, the German Embassy in Madrid informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the measures adopted up to that point against the Jews would also take immediate effect in relation to all Jews resident in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, including the nationals of third countries. Hundreds of Spanish Sephardis were threatened by this decision:

Up to now the German military administrations in France, Belgium and the Netherlands had not put into practice for a number of foreign Jews resident in those territories certain measures that had been taken with respect to the treatment of Jews. Due to the attitude taken by these Jews as well as for reasons of military security, it is no longer possible to apply exceptional treatment to them in the future. [...]

Considering the friendly relations that exist between Spain and Germany, this embassy, by order of its government, has the honour of informing the honourable Ministry of Foreign Affairs, immediately, of the preceding, declaring at the same time that the German Authorities are disposed to grant until 31 March of the current year, pending examination of each case, the corresponding exit permit to Jews of Spanish nationality, provided that the Spanish Government has the intention of repatriating them from the aforementioned territories subject to German control. After the deadline of 31 March, it will not be possible for the German Authorities to continue the special treatment hitherto granted to the Jews of Spanish nationality³⁵.

Faced with the reality that neutral Turkey, and Italy, which was unequivocally fascinated with the Reich, immediately started to repatriate the Jews of their respective nationalities, on 10 February the Spanish Consul General in France asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for instructions on the policy to be implemented³⁶. The next day, Ginés Vidal, ambassador in Berlin, also asked for instructions on the approach that should be taken to the new problem facing Spain in its relations with the Reich³⁷. Franco's regime was not prepared to allow the Spanish Sephardis enter its territory.

The Spanish attitude is more surprising and even difficult to explain considering the efforts made by Italian authorities to protect the Jews of Italian nationality all around Greece. As Irith Dublon-Knebel states, the leading Italian diplomats in Salonica, Consul General Guelfo Zamboni and his successor Giuseppe Castruccio, actively assisted Italian and even Greek Jews to reach Athens and the Italian controlled zones (free from any repressive measures against the Jews), providing them with the necessary Italian documents, and even asking Germany for the already deported Jews to be brought back from the east to Salonica³⁸. In July 1943, on the eve of the deportation of the Spanish Jewish community in Salonica, in a radical contrast with the blameworthy Spanish passivity, Italian commitment went as far as to open the Italian zone for them. The project got the approval of Rome and was presented to the Spanish authorities in the

zone, who were sympathetic, but the German authorities rejected this solution on the grounds of preventing the Axis powers acting against each other with regard to the Jewish question³⁹.

On 16 February, a Restricted Order from the Director General of Foreign Policy – Doussinague – in line with the report that he had sent to Jordana a few weeks before, told Vidal to initiate proceedings to secure entry visas to Turkey for the Spanish Sephardis⁴⁰. Doussinague's order crossed with a memorandum of Vidal, in which – anticipating the orders of his superiors – he informed them of the impossibility of obtaining these entry visas to Turkey⁴¹. Doussinague in his order also authorised Vidal to manage the entrance of the Sephardis to Spain provided the destination of their visa was another country. These arrangements began to achieve their objective. Given the pressure of the situation, which made it unthinkable to obtain these visas before the end of March, the pragmatic Doussinague suggested (9 March 1943) to Jordana, in a new report, allowing the Spanish Sephardis whose future was at risk to enter Spain in small groups who would remain prisoners and would leave the country as soon as they received exit visas. The decision of the government – expressed in a note in Jordana's own hand – was unequivocal:

The government, on being informed, considers that it could only agree to their entry with an absolute guarantee in writing that they are in transit and would pass through Spain for very few days. Otherwise, we would have to refuse since it is not possible to aggravate our problems with this new one of undoubted significance⁴².

It was a tremendously harsh measure, as well as a demand that was impossible to fulfil, all the more so as information from the Spanish embassy in Berlin did not evade the question as to the likely final destination of Jews subject to the new German arrangements. On 5 March Vidal had sent Jordana a memorandum that left no room for doubt or alternative interpretations:

[...] Friday 26 and Saturday 27 of the past month of February a search was carried out in Berlin and other cities in Germany to expel the last Jews who were resident in the Reich. [...]

I suppose that by now they will all have already been deported to the regions of Eastern Europe. According to rumours that Your Excellency will already know and that are naturally impossible to verify, these and the others that have preceded them, are deportations only in name, because they are simply transfers in bad conditions to places where they can easily be “eliminated” without regard to sex or age⁴³.

Faced with this reality, the ministry applied, on 19 March, via the Spanish embassy in Berlin, to the German authorities for an extension of the deadline until 30 April, at the same time as it authorised the embassy to begin granting visas to Sephardis who could provide sufficient evidence of their status⁴⁴. On 8 April, Vidal informed Madrid that the deadline, which in fact had already expired, was extended until the 30th. Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved a restrictive repatriation, in transit, of the European Sephardis of Spanish nationality who began to arrive in Spain in dribs and

drabs. Only a few hundred arrived; many were held back because they could not satisfy the demanding legal requirements⁴⁵. This was a time of hesitation and fear, but nevertheless there was progress in a somewhat positive direction.

THE DEPORTATION OF THE SPANISH JEWS OF SALONICA: A SEPARATE CASE

The problem, in any case, tended to worsen, not only because of Spain's irresolution, which contrasted sharply with the Italians' swift repatriation, but due to the extension of repressive measures against resident Jews in German-occupied territories to the north of Greece, a decision communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 11 May. The German embassy in Madrid reported the existence of 511 Sephardis of Spanish nationality resident in that zone, whom Franco's regime had the power (and the legal obligation) to save... if it so wished⁴⁶. The deadline given to the Spanish authorities expired on 15 June. The drama that they faced was exposed with dazzling clarity by the German Embassy in Madrid:

It is a case of applying the general measures against Jews to all Spanish subjects of the Jewish race who do not return to Spain in the specified period and who reside in the territories that are under the sovereignty of the German Reich, in the Protectorate, the General Government, the occupied territories of the West or in the occupied territories of the East⁴⁷.

If it was difficult for Franco's regime to absorb the need (for essentially political reasons) to take in Sephardis from the territories originally covered by the German ultimatum – under the restrictive interpretation of their Spanish status, only a few hundred were involved – facing the possibility of assimilating nearly 600 more Jews became a major problem for the regime. That fact accounts for the radically different attitude of Franco's authorities with respect to the Sephardis of Salonica.

On 20 May, a telegram was sent, via the Spanish embassy in Rome, to the new General Consul of Spain in Greece, the energetic Sebastián Romero Radigales (said to be married to a Sephardi), authorising him to grant entry visas to members of the Sephardic community of Salonica of Spanish nationality. Altogether the number came to nearly 550 people⁴⁸. A few days later, the Spanish ambassador in Berlin informed the Palace of Santa Cruz (headquarters of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that the Swedish Government was prepared to allow the evacuation of the Spanish Sephardis in Red Cross ships under the Swedish flag, which was a new and fortunate development for the community of Salonica⁴⁹. Nevertheless, the following day, a radical change would occur, blackening the panorama that we are analysing and setting a much more sinister tone. On that day, Ginés Vidal was informed that, in the future, the Consul General in Athens would have to abstain from taking any "personal initiative" with respect to the Sephardis, and must not in any event issue a collective passport giving them permission to enter Spain as "it was not possible to arrange the entry of the Sephardis by earth, sea, or air"⁵⁰. The Spanish Government was not, in fact, disposed to permit the entry of

Spanish Jews from Salonica to Spain in a single voyage and as a group, even though the authorities of the German Reich were willing – once again – to extend the period given to the Spanish authorities to allow the repatriation of these Sephardis until the end of June, as Ginés Vidal communicated to his superiors on 17 May⁵¹.

It would not be until 29 June – the day before the expiry of the term granted to Franco's regime by the Government of the Reich to initiate repatriation – that the Spanish Government received a communication through Ginés Vidal that Germany had planned for the collective repatriation of the 510 Spanish Sephardis of Salonica. German authorities further reiterated their urgent need for concise information on the situation as rapidly as possible, and on the steps that Spain was to undertake, in order to set the repatriation in motion⁵².

There was no response from the Spanish government to the German request; apparently nothing was done. A “top secret”, order, seemingly unsigned, and as far as we know, without precise date, was sent to Athens commanding the Spanish authorities to continue with their passive approach to the issue⁵³. The only possible result was deportation, which seems to have been already fixed for the last days of July. On the 21st of that month, Romero Radigales sent a strong letter to José María Doussinague, in which he indicated clearly the gravity of the implications of negligence on the part of the Spanish authorities:

[...] The desperation of those wretches on seeing that our abandonment of them is going to lead to their deportation, with the terrible consequences that this involves, cannot be described. The telephone calls full of anguish when they were going to be interned in the ghetto of Salonica, asking me for a protection that I could not give them, pierced my soul.

I am sure that there may be weight behind the motives for the deportation, but as these are not known, public opinion reproaches us for having abandoned them in such tragic moments; and this abandonment has been placed in relief when our behaviour is compared with that of the other nations that had Jews in Salonica, who have been repatriated with all manner of aid. The Italian government, whose Jewish colony in Salonica was numerous, despite the racial laws existing there, has allowed them to choose between going to Italy or to Athens and, not content with this, has extended their protection to many Greek and Spanish Sephardis related with Italians, saving them from deportation⁵⁴.

Along with this report, Romero sent to Madrid two letters from the Colony of Athens, signed by Moise Botton, David Benadon, Isac Bourla and Behor Yessarum, representatives of the Spanish Sephardic community of Salonica; one was directed to Doussinague the other to General Franco. Both documents emphasised law-abiding nature of the Sephardis, which would mean a valuable contribution to the economy and the Spanish recovery after the Civil War. The unfortunate consequences that the government's decision inexorably implied were not concealed from Doussinague:

The desperation of our racial brothers of Salonica cannot be related. Where they had the security that, from one day to the next, they were going to be sent to Spain, they have received

the news that they are prohibited entry and they are going to be deported to Germany, with the terrible consequences that implies.

We do not know the reasons that may have motivated this change of opinion on the part of our Government, but it has surprised us greatly, because you who know us, know that we are elements of order and our entry in Spain would not be detrimental but beneficial⁵⁵.

The letter to Franco necessarily resorted to a flattering tone, seeking the protection of the Caudillo for the Jewish people, emphasising their secular cultural Spanishness and respect for the law, while emphasising the valuable contribution of capital that the entry of that community into Spain would mean:

Our race has always given proof of love for the mother country of its ancestors, as testified by the fact that through the centuries it has conserved the Spanish language as a family language. The Sephardis have always respected the laws of the country in which they lived and not mixed in politics nor sought to be a preponderant element, while their morality is well known to all. Our entry would not be detrimental but favourable for Spain, since we will import valuable capital and the experience that we have in industry and commerce would be beneficial. Our conduct would always be that of good Spaniards.

Illustrious Caudillo, Saviour of Spain!

Do not abandon these wretches. To your generous heart we entrust our salvation⁵⁶.

On 22 July, a civil servant of the Spanish embassy in Berlin, of whom we know only his name “Federico”, wrote a private letter to José María Doussinague, an extremely revealing document. The text echoed the decision, communicated that same day by the authorities of the Reich, to deport the Sephardic community from Salonica to the camp at Bergen-Belsen, in Hanover (the camp in which Anne Frank died). The document once again mentioned the fact that the probable future of that unfortunate community was deportation to Poland, and death. The dramatic reality of the genocide of the Jewish people appears to have been at least partially known to the Spanish authorities in Berlin, who emphasized to their superiors in Madrid, on numerous occasions, the moral and political implications arising from the regime’s abandonment of the Sephardis. The document is a magnificent summary of the Spanish position and the increasing divergence from it in the Berlin embassy. Such was the gravity of the situation, as contemplated by Ginés Vidal and his subordinates, that the author of the text quoted below, a fairly low ranking civil servant, perhaps (writing to Doussinague using the respectful form of address “usted”, rather than the colloquial and familiar term “tu”), took the step, with the approval of the ambassador – of writing to the powerful director of Foreign Policy, respectfully emphasizing the incongruities and culpable weaknesses of Spanish policy on this question:

You are not unaware that the ministry, after authorising the entry of those who unquestionably show Spanish nationality with all necessary requirements, on seeing that our General Consulate in Athens, spoke of arranging a special train with more than 500 Spanish Sephardis, has considered it impossible to admit them to Spain and has given instructions

that the visas granted up to now be annulled and no new ones issued except with the countersignature of our Embassy in Berlin and only in exceptional cases.

I am of course not one to criticise this decision inspired, needless to say, by the greatest concern for the interests of our country, but I would, nevertheless, wish to present the true terms of the problem, as they can only be seen from here.

If Spain, for reasons of which nobody can be ignorant, refuses to receive this part of its colony abroad, despite the fact that they enjoy Spanish nationality and that they have strictly fulfilled whatever formalities our legislation has imposed on them, it sentences them automatically to death, because this is the sad reality which it is necessary to try to disguise, although there is nothing in our country that can, I will not say justify, but serve as a basis for this attitude. I will be a poor prophet if the day does not arrive when we will be justly criticised as, knowing what was going to come, we washed our hands like Pilate and left these people who are, after all, our compatriots, to their sad fate, without making the least protest, and doing nothing save them.

I understand perfectly that we would not be happy to see such a great number of Jews arrive in Spain, however Spanish they may be theoretically and practically, but knowing the feelings that form the base of the Spanish soul I cannot believe that there is no possibility of saving them from the horrible fate that awaits them by receiving them in our country and making them wait in a concentration camp (which would seem to them in this case a paradise) for the war to end to return them perhaps to their place of origin or to any country that wants to welcome them when, with the end of hostilities, "humanity" has returned to the world. [...]

In a telegram of this same date the ambassador is informed of the decision to immediately deport our Sephardis to Germany first and, shortly... to Poland!

I have naturally submitted this letter for the approval of the ambassador who is completely in agreement with its content and approves it⁵⁷.

On 24 July, Eberhard von Thadden, head of the Jewish Desk of the Auswärtiges sent a report to Adolf Eichmann – the vicious SS responsible for organising the *Final Solution* – regarding the issue of the Spanish Jews of Salonica. According to Thadden, Spain had demonstrated its clear will to leave them at Germany's mercy, *provided that it was certain they would not be liquidated*⁵⁸. However, it was possible that Spain, facing a growingly intense Allied pressure, would change its position in the future, finally asking for the repatriation of the Salonica Jews. As a result, considering the propaganda implications of the accounts the Spanish Jews would provide when entering in Spain, it had been decided to send them to a camp *similar to a detention camp*, not in Poland but in the Reich (the Camp of Bergen-Belsen), where they were to await Spanish reactions to the expected Allied pressure, treated according to the hope of using their case as a denial of the mass murders that were taking place in Poland, at that moment still quite veiled to the world. Spanish authorities had already been informed of this decision⁵⁹. If Spain failed to ask for their repatriation, their fate would be to increase the numbers of Jews forced into slavery and carried to their death in the east⁶⁰.

Indeed, on 22 July the deportation of the Sephardis of Salonica had been officially communicated. In a report by Romero Radigales a few days later, 8 August, which summarised the events of these weeks, the lamentable succession of misfortunes of those days is recounted. According to Romero:

The consternation of the Sephardis of Salonica [...] is indescribable. I telegraphed the Berlin Embassy requesting that the old, young and ill be exempted from the deportation, and did the same to the German authorities of occupation, but the request was not heeded. The General Consulate of Italy in Salonica, authorized by its government and the Italian occupation authorities, favours our Sephardis in whatever way it can and it is thanks to them that many have been able to flee from Salonica. In their desire to save them to all, they planned their transfer en masse to Athens, and the Italian civilian and military authorities, which are those that command in the capital, accept the idea, and begin to make preparations to form a military train to transfer them; but at the last minute, the German authorities deny the Sephardis exit from Salonica, and a certain friction between Germans and Italians arises⁶¹.

Continuing with the account of Romero Radigales, on the morning of the 29th, the German Commission responsible for Jewish affairs ordered that the males be brought together. They were informed that, as it was impossible for Spain to take them in, they would be deported to Germany, though categorised as political prisoners, so that their status would be different from that of the rest of the Greek Jewish deportees. With the whole community already gathered, the consulate sent Father Typaldos, a civil servant of the legation, to the rendezvous point, prior to the convoy's departure, who, besides attending to the deportees, asked the German Consul General once again to exclude the old and children from deportation. The Consul replied that this was not possible as he lacked the authority to order it, laying the blame for the situation on the Spanish Government, which had refused to grant refuge to its own subjects. According to Romero Radigales, the order to proceed received by the German Consul from Berlin insisted on attributing the deportation to the Spanish Government's lack of interest in repatriation. Father Typaldos succeeded in meeting with the local head of the Gestapo, who informed him that the journey would be undertaken in the best possible conditions and that the property seized from the Spanish community (22 million drachmas, 40,000 dollars and about 55,000 Swiss francs⁶²) would be transferred to Germany to be returned to its owners in the event of their obtaining permission to enter Spain. On 2 August – at 8 p.m. – the train, which would transfer the deportees to Hanover, left Salonica⁶³.

The state of desperation in which the Sephardis left is indescribable; their nerves were shredded. I allow myself to beg Your Excellency to repatriate as quickly as possible, the old, women, children and weak persons, who are those who will be least able to survive the conditions of the concentration camp⁶⁴.

In such a grave situation, a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, possibly the work of Doussinague, gave an account of the situation that still seemed at a standstill:

The German authorities always admitted sympathetically the possibility that the Sephardis of Salonica could be repatriated to Spain, and noted that the issue of a collective passport and organisation of a special train would be advisable for the journey. The Government then decided that these measures should not be undertaken and, to this effect, orders were issued to our representations in Berlin and Athens to adopt a passive attitude and thus restrain their excess of fervour.

This was the reason why the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated to our ambassador in Berlin, and this was transmitted to us on the 20th inst., that, faced with the impossibility of maintaining the Sephardis of Salonica in those coastal zones in view of the danger of an Allied landing, the German authorities would be forced to repatriate them to camps in Central Europe. [...]

Both the ambassador in Berlin and the consul in Athens insist on the tragic consequences that their transfer to Poland would have for the Spanish Sephardis, and point out the fact that, except for the Spaniards, the other foreign Jews of Salonica have been repatriated with the aid or intervention of their respective consulates⁶⁵.

This was indeed an issue that, in the course of a war increasingly favourable to the Allies, could easily turn against the regime.

If the proverb states “better late than never”, seldom has a statement been so accurate, although much of the evil towards the Jewish people caused by the Franco regime’s feeble policy and hesitation in the first months of 1943 was already difficult to repair. After this series of events, which culminated in the deportation of the Sephardic community from Salonica to the camp of Bergen-Belsen, the Spanish Council of Ministers made the (surprising) decision to authorise their entry to Spain with conditions: that this entry should take place in groups of twenty-five people, in transit en route, first, to Portugal and, later, to America, Algeria or Palestine, and in such a manner that no group could enter the country without the previous one having left. The Portuguese Red Cross would be responsible for the exit of each group from Spain and the American Joint Committee (Representation in Spain of the American Relief Organisations⁶⁶) for their final exit from the peninsula, whereas the Directorate General of Security would be responsible for their journey from Germany. Germán Baraibar, Head of the European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was selected to supervise the whole process. In the letter that José María Doussinague sent to Baraibar informing him of his new assignment and the decisions made by the Council of Ministers, he insisted that delays in the operation would be attributable, from that moment on, to the Portuguese Red Cross, and thus the Regime washed its hands with respect to whatever might occur from then on⁶⁷.

Right at the moment when a repatriation of the Sephardic community of Salonica became a much more complicated topic, with their deportation to Bergen-Belsen, the Spanish Government radically changed its position (as von Thadden was expecting) and now allowed their entry to Spain. On 13 August, Ginés Vidal informed Jordana of

the natural surprise that such a change seemed to have produced among the German authorities.

Confidentially, I cannot avoid mentioning that they were somewhat surprised at the new decision to repatriate all the Sephardis of Salonica, lamenting that this had not been done before, with ourselves taking care of the journey⁶⁸.

In the same letter, Vidal suggested that, to speed up proceedings, the entry of the Jewish deportees in a single expedition should be permitted, given the fear that, if their repatriation in groups of twenty-five were delayed for too long, many of them would end up being deported to Poland, from where it would be impossible to rescue them. The uncertainty of the journey to Bergen-Belsen, begun two weeks previously, is shown by the fact that there was still no news of the arrival of the convoy at the camp⁶⁹.

THE END OF THE STORY

The question of the repatriation of the Sephardic community of Salonica remained unresolved; it was still a burning issue at the end of 1943. As many of those in charge of Spanish foreign policy had feared, the inefficiency and overwhelming timidity of Spanish foreign policy had become a prominent reason for complaint and criticism on the part of Allied representatives in Spain, spokesmen of the side in the war that, undeniably, advanced day by day towards complete victory. On 10 December, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gómez Jordana, had to write to the ambassador of the United States, Carlton Hayes, justifying the policy carried out by Spain in recent months, in the face increasing criticism of the Regime in relation to the Jewish issue. His justification prompted a letter from the American ambassador, in which the Spanish position regarding the Jews was implicitly assimilated to that of the Nazis:

[...] The negotiations that I have been engaged in with the German authorities continue intensely so that a group of more than three hundred Sephardis of Spanish nationality can leave the concentration camp, so that they can come to Spain and also continue their trip to Algeria or Palestine, as they wish. I do not deny that the last part of your letter has caused me great surprise, in which it seems to indicate that some think our behaviour can be assimilated with persecution of the Jews, when indeed we have been making all manner of efforts and negotiating intensely to get the Spanish Sephardis out of Germany, where the concentration camps are located, and from the countries occupied by the German Army⁷⁰.

On 20 December, the ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Spanish High Commissioner in Morocco, General Luis Orgaz, emphasising the crossroads at which Spain found itself with respect to the policy adopted up to that point with regard to the Spanish Sephardis. The expression contained in this document, to which we have already referred, alluding to how undesirable it was for Spain to be “filled with Jews”, is very revealing of the perspective – perhaps not racist, but full of distrust and guilty prejudice-, from which the question was approached during the whole war:

For many months the problem of the Spanish Sephardis from the East and generally all of Europe occupied by the Axis has been posed. These Sephardis, of undeniable Spanish nationality and full documentation to accredit it, asked to come to Spain, some of them being in concentration camps in Germany. The problem is grave inasmuch as it is not at all in the interests of our country that, taking advantage of the circumstances of the present war, Spain should be filled with Jews, nor, on the other hand, can we deny the protection to which they have a right by nationality: and although we could do it, it would always be a political liability due to the repercussions that it would have overseas, the campaigns that it would provoke against us, the accusations to which it would lay us open of having an anti-Semitic policy copied from Germany etc.⁷¹.

The repatriation of the Sephardi of Salonica finally occurred in February 1944. The regime sought to use the arrival of Jews in large numbers in the country as a clear demonstration that, far from its policy in this regard being indistinguishable from that of Nazi Germany, it followed the highest moral standards, in clear contradiction to some of the accusations that had been made by the Allies. To “clarify” these ends, a telegram was sent to the main Spanish legations, specifying the terms in which the return of the Sephardic community of Salonica should be communicated:

With the aim of resisting the anti-Spanish campaigns that attribute a racist policy to us, I will communicate to you that on the 10th and 13th inst. entry via the border of Port-Bou has been permitted to 365 Israelites of Salonica, from the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen, whose departure has been achieved thanks to our intervention, which continues with other Sephardi groups. On their entry to Spain they showed gratitude for the help given by our government⁷².

As we have seen, propaganda motives led the German government to give generous treatment the Spanish Sephardis interned in Bergen-Belsen⁷³. From the time of their departure from Salonica it was clearly very probable that they would end up being repatriated to Spain, so their experience could help to refute the open secret of the mass murders in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the situation in which the protagonists of this history arrived in Spain was far from ideal and – contrary to what they had been promised – their property was not returned to them at the Spanish border⁷⁴. Moreover, the old *Sefarad* would not be the final destination on their eventful journey. Spain was not prepared to take them in and, via Africa, they apparently ended up in Palestine and – once more – in Greece. Following their tracks is one of the future directions for this research, still in progress.

It was a cruel Diaspora that these souls underwent, but one that, in spite of the great weaknesses of Spanish foreign policy towards them, ended more happily than those of millions of other Jews in Europe, without Spanish nationality or any recognition or protection by the Spanish state. This work is only an initial approach to an exciting question, based on the revelations of the documents of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on the principal and most useful studies of the theme. This line of investigation, I believe, can make a valuable contribution to our examination of Diaspora

studies, one of the aspirations of this fourth volume of the Clöhres thematic work group on “Europe and the World”. In addition, the author of these lines cannot hide the attraction of possibly following up in Israel and Greece, the history of those people who were first abandoned and later recovered by their ancient motherland, their home for just a few weeks, in a journey that for many ended in the “promised land” – Israel – a land in which, sadly, the shadow of war and death has followed them ... and what is perhaps even less bearable, the shadow of incomprehension. It is, in truth, a story that “should not be shown to researchers”⁷⁵.

NOTES

- ¹ K.E. Fleming, *Greece, A Jewish history*, Princeton 2008, p. 54.
- ² See B. Rother, *Franco y el Holocausto*, Madrid 2005, p. 94. Original German version: *Spanien und der Holocaust*, Tübingen 2001; M. Morcillo Rosillo, *La Comunidad Sefardita de Salónica después de las Guerras Balcánicas*, in “Espacio, Tiempo y Forma”, 1993, V, pp. 441-460. The work of Mark Mazower is a contribution of the utmost importance on the general issue of the Jewish communities in Salonica and Greece (M. Mazower, *Salonica, City of ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950*, London 2004). The works of K.E. Fleming (K.E. Fleming, *Greece, A Jewish history*, Princeton 2008) and Rena Molho (R. Molho, *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, political and cultural aspects of Jewish life*, Istanbul 2005) also constitute essential contributions to this topic.
- ³ The main studies of the relationship between Franco’s regime and the Jews have covered the issue of the Spanish Sephardic community in Salonica in broad general terms. However, one of the most valuable works on this topic (H. Avni, *España, Franco y Los Judíos*, Madrid 1982) lacked an analysis of relevant Spanish relevant sources, as the Spanish Foreign Affairs Archive was still closed at the time of its publication. Further research has also suffered from limited access to these sources (A. Marquina Barrio, G.I. Ospina, *España y los Judíos en el Siglo XX. La Acción Exterior*, Madrid 1982). The best and most comprehensive research on the issue of the Salonica Jews is undoubtedly the work by Rother on which I have mainly based my analysis (Rother, *Franco y el Holocausto* cit.). Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida’s work *El Antisemitismo en España. La Imagen del Judío 1812-2002*, Madrid 2003 is also a most valuable contribution to the issue, but the wide scope of his study (about two centuries) limited the information provided on the issue of the Second World War and the Salonica Jews. The work by Joseph Pérez (J. Pérez, *Los Judíos en España*, Madrid 2004) constitutes an indispensable survey.
- ⁴ The debate on the numbers of those affected by the expulsion continues. There were around 200,000 Jews in Spain at the time of the expulsion. Numbers given for those affected by the expulsion vary from 50,000 to 150,000. See J. Pérez, *Los Reyes Católicos*, Madrid 1998, p. 215.
- ⁵ See, for instance: E. Mitre, *Los Judíos de Castilla en tiempos de Enrique III. El Pogrom de 1391*, Valladolid 1994.
- ⁶ See L. Suárez Fernández, *Documentos Sobre la Expulsión de los Judíos*, Madrid 1964; Id., *Los Judíos Españoles en la Edad Media*, Madrid 1980.
- ⁷ Pérez, *Los Reyes* cit., p. 216.
- ⁸ See the works of Benzion Netanyahu and Christiane Stallaert. Stallaert has recently compared the inquisitorial Spain and Nazi Germany in a challenging essay (C. Stallaert, *Ni una Gota de Sangre Impura*, Barcelona 2006). In my opinion, a methodological step too far.
- ⁹ Cf. Pérez, *Los Judíos* cit., pp. 84-97, 293-293.
- ¹⁰ See *Ibid.*, pp. 161-219.

- ¹¹ See J. Caro Baroja, *Los Judíos en la España Moderna y Contemporánea*, Madrid 1978.
- ¹² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
- ¹³ Cf. S. Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany and the Second World War*, New Haven - London 2008, pp. 210-211. The Spanish Constitution of 1869 recognised the full right to practise religions other than Catholicism in Spain (title I – articles 21 and 27). This improvement was modified in the 1876 Constitution, which limited this religious freedom by banning public displays of non-catholic religions (title I – article 11). The texts of both constitutions are available on the web page of the Spanish Congress of Deputies: www.congreso.es. One of the defining characteristics of the reign of Alfonso XIII (1903-1931) was his personal interest, and that of his successive governments, in the protection of the Sephardic communities' interests around the world. The King is justifiably described by Matilde Morcillo as the "greatest protector of the lost sons of Spain". According to this author, his regime opened a period of open and intense friendliness towards the Jewish world. Morcillo Rosillo, *La Comunidad Sefardita de Salónica* cit., p. 449.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Payne, *Franco and Hitler* cit., pp. 211-212.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- ¹⁶ See, for instance, J. Tusell, *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial. Entre el Eje y la Neutralidad*, Madrid 1994; M. Ros Agudo, *La Gran Tentación*, Madrid 2008; Payne, *Franco* cit.
- ¹⁷ See, for instance, J.P. Fusi, *Franco. Autoritarismo y Poder Personal*, Madrid 2000; S. Payne, *Fascism, Comparison and Definition*, Madison 1983; J. Linz, *Un Régimen Autoritario, España*, Madrid, n.d.; J. Ruiz, *Franco's Justice: The Repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War*, Oxford 2005; J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, in "Handbook of Political Science", Massachussets 1974 (vol. III); S. Payne, *El Régimen de Franco*, Madrid 1987; E. Moradiellos, *La España de Franco (1939-1975)*, Madrid 2000; I. Saz Campos, *Fascismo y Franquismo*, Valencia 2004; E. Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la Antorcha y la Esvástica. España en la Encrucijada de la II Guerra Mundial* (Doctoral Thesis due to be published in autumn 2009), Madrid 2008.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Payne, *Franco and Hitler* cit., p. 213.
- ¹⁹ A relevant study of this issue in K.J. Ruhl, *Franco, Falange y III Reich. España durante la II Guerra Mundial*, Madrid 1986; Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la Antorcha* cit.
- ²⁰ Cf. E. Sáenz-Francés, *Journalists in the Trenches. The Representation of the Allies in the Blue Division "Hoja de Campaña"*, in M. Harris (ed.), *Sights and Insights: Interactive images of Europe and the Wider World*, Pisa 2007, pp. 185-204.
- ²¹ A relevant study of Franco's perception of the Jews is Álvarez Chillida, *El Antisemitismo en España* cit., pp. 396-402.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- ²³ Cf. Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la Antorcha* cit.
- ²⁴ Payne, *Franco* cit., p. 223.
- ²⁵ Lequerica to Jordana, 29-9-1942, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Archive (MAEC) R1716-3.
- ²⁶ Cf. Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la Antorcha* cit.
- ²⁷ Cf. C.B. Burdick, *Germany's Military Strategy and Spain in World War II*, Syracuse 1968.
- ²⁸ Cf. Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la Antorcha* cit.
- ²⁹ Cf. H. Trevor Roper, *Hitler's Table Talk. 1941-1944*, London 2000 (See 7 July 1942).
- ³⁰ Cf. L.E. Togores, *Muñoz Grandes. Héroe de África, General de la División Azul*, Barcelona 2007, pp. 325-383.
- ³¹ Cf. Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la Antorcha* cit. See also Ruhl, *Franco, Falange* cit., pp. 167-212.

- ³² Cf. E. Sáenz-Francés, *Las Memorias Secretas del Embajador von Moltke. Un Estudio Preliminar*, in “Letras de Deusto”, 110, Bilbao 2006, pp. 85-134.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ General Dossier of the Spanish Sephardis, 1943/1944, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación de España [MAEC] R1716-4.
- ³⁵ Verbal Note from the German Embassy in Madrid to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 January 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ³⁶ General Dossier of the Spanish Sephardis, 1943/1944, MAEC R1716-4.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ I. Dublon-Knebel, *German Foreign Office Documents on the Holocaust in Greece (1937-1944)*, Tel Aviv 2007, pp. 33-34.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173n. See Altenburg to Berlin, 26 July 1943, in *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
- ⁴⁰ General Dossier of the Spanish Sephardis, 1943/1944, MAEC R1716-4.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Vidal to Jordana, 5 March 1943, MAEC R1177-1.
- ⁴⁴ General Dossier of the Spanish Sephardis, 1943/1944, MAEC R1716-4.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ Verbal Note to the Spanish embassy in Berlin from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 May 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ General Dossier of the Spanish Sephardis, 1943/1944, MAEC R1716-4.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* Maybe the Spanish aim was to force Germany to accept the entry of the Sephardis in Spain in small groups, as in the case of those in western Europe. In any case, no documentary evidence sustains that.
- ⁵⁴ Romero to Doussinague, 21 July 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁵⁵ Letter from Moise Botton, David Benadon, Isaac Bourla and Behor Yessarum to José María Doussinague, Athens, 29 July 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁵⁶ Request for aid from Moise Botton, David Benadon, Isac Bourla and Behor Yessarum to Generalissimo Francisco Franco (attached to the previous reference), Athens, 29 July 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁵⁷ Federico to Doussinague, (Berlin), 22 July 1943, MAEC R1716-5. Bernd Rother states that “Federico” was the Spanish diplomat Fernando Oliven; Rother, *Franco* cit., pp. 269-270.
- ⁵⁸ Von Thadden to Adolf Eichmann, 24 July 1943, in Dublon-Knebel, *German Foreign Office Documents* cit., pp. 170-171.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ Wagner to von Thadden, 26 July 1943, in Dublon-Knebel, *German Foreign Office Documents* cit., pp. 172-173.
- ⁶¹ Romero Radigales to Jordana, 8 August 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁶² Cf. Rother, *Franco* cit., p. 272.

- ⁶³ Romero Radigales to Jordana, 8 August 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ NOTE: Present state of the question of the Sephardis in Salonica 24-07-1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁶⁶ Directed in Spain by David Blickenstaff. At every moment he was prepared to help the Sephardis with all means at his disposal.
- ⁶⁷ Doussinague to Baraibar, 5 August 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁶⁸ Vidal to Jordana, 13 August 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁶⁹ Cf. Vidal to Jordana, 13 August 1943, MAEC R1716-3.
- ⁷⁰ Jordana to Hayes, 10 December 1943, MAEC R1371-6.
- ⁷¹ Jordana to Orgaz, 20 December 1943, MAEC R1371-1.
- ⁷² Telegram to all the Heads of Mission in America, excluding Washington, Havana and San Salvador, 19 February 1944, MAEC R1672-1.
- ⁷³ Rother, *Franco and the Holocaust* cit., p. 299.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 305.
- ⁷⁵ Hand-written annotation in the folder "Spanish Jews" preserved in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, MAEC R1672-1.

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