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**Changing Views of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian
Conflict in Democratic Spain (1978-2006)**

by

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Abstract

This article examines the changing views of Israel in democratic Spain and its historical background. History plays an important part in the Spanish relationship to Israel: not only have Jewish people been for centuries an “absent presence” but, during the long period of the Franco dictatorship, Israel, as a model, has played an important role in the Spanish path to democracy. That democracy has been and still is the key point in Spain’s relationship to Israel explains why democratic Spain is not essentially different from the rest of Europe in what relates to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even if manifestations of antisemitism are present in Spanish public opinion, many of the criticisms of Israel are not about antisemitism but of specific Israeli policies.

Spain shares with the rest of the countries of Europe a deep relationship with Jewish history, its glories and its disasters. This is normally translated into a sense of guilt as well as responsibility for the Jewish people and for the specific communities which, for centuries, lived in those countries. The Spanish case involves the Sephardic Jews, who were expelled by the Catholic Kings's decree of March 1492. Since then and even after the second half of the nineteenth century, when some Jewish people began to return to Spain, the Jews, and the "Jew" as image and topic, have been an *absent presence* in Spanish literature and political and social thought, as well as in the different expressions of popular opinion, the *Refranero* among them. Even though we can find some expressions of philo-semitism in this huge collection of popular sayings, most common are the antisemitic topics, normally appearing in a religious-Catholic vision of the Jew as the representation of evil. The Spanish version, then, is not very different from what occurred in pre-liberal Europe.

In Spain today, after the peaceful transition to democracy moved the country from the authoritarian and technocratic politics of Franco's regime during its last decades, the views on Israel and the Jewish people keep great similarities with those of European countries. This evolution from the fascist ideology and manners of the first Francoist period was made without full detachment from its main ideological tenets, more anti-liberal than properly Catholic or religious, even if this anti-liberalism was presented everywhere under the cover of the Catholic religion. National unity and identity were the outcomes of this Catholicism, viewed as Tradition by Franco's ideologues and followers. Religion was but a political tool to keep, and create, a "national-Catholic" country different from the rest of the world, and free from the worst evils of the infamous twentieth century.¹ "Different" was the magic word of Francoist propaganda: Spain was different by being united, by being religious, by having freed herself, after a civil war presented as a Crusade. But, as the regime itself, the slogan suffered a change and "Spain is different" was transformed in the 1960s into what became the most well-known tourist slogan.

The success of the peaceful Spanish transition to democracy was partly due to Spaniards' tacit consensus to "bury into oblivion" (*echar al olvido*) much of the recent past.² This kind of oblivion does not mean forgetfulness, but a conscious decision not to bring back the past in order to be able to build up the present. Today, with democracy firmly rooted in Spain, memory has come back to the fore, both as a retrieval of the memory of the defeated and a new and somewhat positive version of the victors' memory. There are many coincidences between this process and the revision of canonical national histories underway in many European countries, beginning with the German historian's debate - the *Historikerkstreik* - and followed by France and others in the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century. Spain, after all, is not as different as Franco and the right wing asserted it was.

The same holds true for its attitude vis-à-vis Israel, given some differences related to the specific elements of Spain's internal development and foreign policy. The Spanish delay

¹See A. Botti (1992), *Cielo y dinero: el nacionalcatolicismo en España, 1881-1975*. Madrid: Alianza ed.; Carolyn P. Boyd (1997), *Historia patria: politics, history, and national identity in Spain, 1875-1975*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Carmen López Alonso (2001), "Fundamentalismos e identidades nacionales," *Claves de Razón Práctica* 112. Madrid; José Álvarez Junco (2001), *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX*. Madrid: Taurus; Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida (2002), *El antisemitismo en España. La imagen del judío (1812-2002)*. Madrid: Marcial Pons.

²Santos Juliá (2003), "Echar al olvido: Memoria y amnistía en la transición," *Claves de Razón Práctica* 129, pp. 14-25. Santos Juliá (2005), *Historia de las dos Españas*. Taurus, Madrid.

in establishing full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel is important but not the most significant, because this delay was not a logical necessity. As most authoritative studies have shown, the whole process could have been different and diplomatic relations could have been established at an earlier stage.³

More relevant is the fact that Spain did not participate actively in the European wars, most notably in World War II. On the one hand, this means that Spain did not fight in defense of democracy. On the other, non-participation means, at least in terms of direct political responsibility, that Spain did not take part in the catastrophic systematic extermination of the near totality of European Jewry.⁴

But the main difference rests in the internal domain, given the absence of Jewish communities in Spanish territory. There has not been any relevant Jewish community in Spain since the expulsion decree of March 1492 dictated in the name of the modern "raison d'Etat." Not until the second half of the nineteenth century, after the war with Morocco (1859-1860), did the first Jewish community return to Spain as a direct consequence of the conflict.⁵ This return was made possible thanks to the religious toleration granted by the Spanish democratic constitution of 1869. The *Centro Español de Inmigración Israelita* was created some years later, in 1886, under the liberal government headed by Sagasta. In any case, the number of Jewish people was very small throughout the century and continued to be so even after the arrival of groups of Sephardic Jews thanks to the decree of December 20, 1924, which granted them Spanish citizenship.⁶

Once more, as has happened many times in Jewish history, an external factor was behind the return. The first group to arrive were Sephardic Jews from the former Ottoman Empire, who settled mainly in the Barcelona area. Later on, during the years 1933-1934, several German Jews found refuge in Spain. To them must be added a small number of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe who escaped the Holocaust. During the first part of the twentieth century, before the Spanish Civil War, some Hispanic-Hebraic associations were formed and, in 1917, the first Madrid synagogue opened. Three years later, both the *Comunidad Israelita* and the Spanish Zionist Federation were established.

The Spanish Civil War, the big fracture in Spanish history, had immediate repercussions on the incipient Spanish Jewish community, then numbering around six to seven thousand members, some of whom fled during the first months of the war. In 1941, when the Spanish civil war was over and Nazi Germany seemed to be on the path to conquering Europe, the *Archivo Judaico* was created in order to have the "dangerous" Jewish community

³Berd Rother (2005), *Franco y el holocausto*. Madrid, Marcial Pons; Raanan Rein (1996), *Franco, Israel y los judíos*, Madrid, CSIC; J.A. Lisbona (1993), *Retorno a Sefarad: la política de España hacia sus judíos en el siglo XX*, Barcelona; (2002), *España-Israel, historia de unas relaciones secretas*. Madrid; A. Marquina and G. Ospina, G. (1987), *España y los judíos en el siglo XX, la acción exterior*, Madrid.

⁴B. Rother, *op.cit.*; Carmen López Alonso (2003), "Holocausto y Genocidios ¿Basta con conocer? La acción, la omisión, las interpretaciones históricas," in *Genocidios y Crímenes contra la humanidad, Historia y Política* 10, Madrid (pp. 11-69).

⁵The majority settled in the south of Spain, in Gibraltar, Algeciras and Sevilla. By 1914 the Sevillian Jewish community was the first one in the Spanish Peninsula (Vide J.I.Garzón and Uriel Macías Kapón, eds. (2001), *La comunidad judía de Madrid. Textos e imágenes para una historia 1917-2001*. Comunidad Judía de Madrid.)

⁶The Royal Decree was issued after the Lausanne Treaty (1923) suppressed the Capitulations regime.

“under control.”⁷ Even though Spain was no longer a country of refuge for Jews escaping from Nazi Europe, nearly thirty thousand Jews arrived in Spain, staying there “in transit” to safer places in America, both North and South. But in the following years, the situation worsened and they were interned at the Miranda de Ebro camp, in northern Spain.

In July 1945, shortly after WWII ended, Franco’s government promulgated the *Fuero de los Españoles*, which permitted religious minorities to hold their services privately, but forbade them public expression. One year later, a synagogue opened in Barcelona and in 1948 the *Oratorio Israelita* in Madrid. In 1956, the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco (1912-1956) came to an end, bringing a new wave of Moroccan Sephardic Jewish immigrants who settled mainly in the south of Spain. The political situation in Latin America and, especially, the 1976 Argentina military coup and repression were behind the last wave of Jewish immigration. This brought about changes in the tiny Spanish Jewish community, both in its composition and internal balances, with tensions arising between the most traditional Sephardic Jews and the immigrants from Latin America, who were highly professional and mainly secular.

The Jewish community, as such, has not been very visible in Spain, keeping a low profile until recent times, even if some of its members are prominent figures in Spanish society and politics. For a long time most of them were not identified as Jewish by Spanish public opinion and the media. In fact, and this is more than anecdotal, as we will see later in this article, until quite recently the Jewish quarters of many Spanish cities were seen as tourist sites, as three-dimensional postcards, not concrete realities, not “speaking stones.” The same holds true, even if their history is quite different, for Arab quarters and buildings.

Democracy and the ways towards democracy as the keystone

Although important, all these differences don’t imply any fundamental distance from the rest of Europe in Spanish attitudes towards and treatment of the State of Israel, Zionism, the conflict with Arabs and Palestinians, and the multiplicity of forms of antisemitism. Here, as in many other domains, democracy is the keystone and, later on, membership in the European Community, the real turning point.

Israel played an important symbolic role in the Spanish path to democracy. For reasons that are several and well known, the State of Israel means the triumph of the humiliated and offended, survivors of the Nazi extermination plan, defenders of constructivist socialism, a people able to create an egalitarian garden from a mainly hostile nature. Israel keeps the image of the little David confronting Goliath, the giant, represented not just by the Nazis but also by the great powers, and the difficulties coming from nature, swamps, malaria, the Babel of language, the isolation and so on.

The whole narrative of pioneering, of building a new democratic and socialist State, rooted in a utopian idea and achieved with an iron will, was an example to imitate. It was a model for the left wing, not just for the few individual members of the Spanish clandestine political parties, but for the whole group of “*progres*,” the common label given to the people who, however inarticulate, were against Franco’s dictatorship. Some of them were those in the sixties and the seventies who traveled to Israeli *kibbutzim* in a kind of peregrination quite similar to the one driving them to Cuba’s *zafra* or to study “in situ” the Yugoslavian coopera-

⁷J.I.Garzón (1997), “El Archivo Judaico del Franquismo” *Raíces* 33. Madrid 1997-98, pp.57-60.

tives. These activities were part of the basic curriculum of the Spanish “young progressive.” Among this group we can find many of those who later became very active in the establishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and Israel in 1986.

Israel has been a model not only for the Spanish progressive left but also for peripheral nationalisms, mainly those in the Basque and Catalan countries, and also for those in Galicia and other areas as well.⁸ They look to Israel and the Zionist movement as a model of successful nationalism which, far from the fascist nationalisms that caused disaster in the 1930s, can be accepted from an ideological point of view. Israel’s success in implanting the new-old Hebrew language, a relevant question in all Spanish peripheral nationalisms, is carefully studied and, as it happens in many *ikastolas*,⁹ followed.

Israel is part of the democratic world, the one that was defended during WWII. A main aspect of the “difference” was official Spanish neutrality in this conflict – presented, and seen somewhat – as a blessing. This idea is increasingly called into question by the fact that WWII was tightly related to democracy and deeply intertwined with the very idea of Europe.

Franco died in 1975, taking his regime with him. By that time, the country had gone through a deep transformation reaching every field: social, cultural, economic as well as political. This huge transformation played an important role in the successful Spanish transition to democracy. Openness to the outside world, as well as a growing interest in European and international history, is but one of the main features of this transformation. The world changed too: more than seventy new independent states were created – mostly after wars in which fighting against a colonial power was coupled with internecine conflict and armed confrontations among the civil populations. International intervention, either openly or under cover, occurred in many of these liberation wars.

“Liberation” was the term used as a legitimating tool. Passive resistance, armed confrontation, the use of terrorist tactics, even intervention by the great powers, were presented as ways to “liberate” the oppressed. Vietnam was the paradigmatic example. In the United States, the war brought about a growing protest movement which, not by accident, was connected with the civil rights movement and with the so-called “countercultural revolution” that spread across university campuses all over the world. By 1973, the date of the Yom Kippur War, the Vietnam War came to an end with the signing of a ceasefire, and a policy of “détente” began, especially in what relates to the so called “third world.” The same year both Germanys, the Federal and the Democratic, established diplomatic relations and Germany officially entered the UN as a member.

Spanish perceptions about Israel have to be placed within this European and international context. Intertwined with them is the impact of anticolonialism, which is present in the

⁸In May 1987, during his official visit to Israel, Jordi Pujol, leader of the most important Catalan nationalist party and president of the autonomous government of Catalunya (*Generalitat*) praised Zionism as a model to follow in a widely broadcast declaration, see J.B.Culla (2005), *Israel, el somni i la tragèdia. Del sionisme al conflicte de Palestina*. Barcelona. On Basque nationalism and its relation to Israel and Zionism see Jon Juaristi (1997), *El bucle melancólico. Historias de Nacionalistas vascos*, Madrid: Espasa and J.A. Lisbona (2002), *op.cit.*

⁹*Ikastola*, type of school in the Basque country in which students are taught either entirely or predominantly in *euskera* (Basque language).

social and political movements and plays an important role in those linked to liberation theology, which was very influential in Spain at that time. It was not by chance that, in the seventies, a critical approach to Spanish heroic history, especially that of the Counter-Reformation period, began. The expulsion of Jews was openly questioned, as well as the whole Spanish colonization process. The debate on the *Indias* question, central in sixteenth-century Spain, recovered its centrality. This debate was connected with the Humanists' thinking about the need to transform charity into social justice, the role to be played by municipalities and local powers and the whole problem of the responsibility and limits of political power.¹⁰

One of the main elements of historical revision in this period centers on the price that Spain had paid, in terms of lost population and ideological closure, for the expulsion of the Jews and, a century later, the *moriscos*,¹¹ in the name of national, and Catholic, unity. This critique paralleled that of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the growing number of Jewish settlements being built on them, and was coherent and compatible with Spanish sympathy and interest in Jewish history and deeds, especially those related to our "own" Sephardic Jews, and to the history of contemporary Jewry as well. Along with this material, during the 1980s some books on antisemitism were translated into Spanish, such as the one by Bernard Lazare, and books by Spanish authors about Jewish Spanish history, such as those of Amador de los Ríos (1875-1876), were reprinted, as well as contemporary work by J. Caro Baroja.¹²

1982 was a turning point in Spain as well as in Israel.¹³ In June the Israel army invaded Lebanon. This was the first Israeli war viewed, both from outside and inside of Israel, as an aggressive, not just a defensive war. After the September massacre at the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila criticism grew in intensity and hardness. There was a real "J'Accuse" among Israeli public opinion, wrote Zeev Schiff in *Haaretz*.¹⁴ In Spain, as all over Europe, demonstrations were held against Israel's policies and, in a more or less explicit way, the taboo about the comparison between Nazis and Jews was broken.¹⁵ If the Lebanon

¹⁰José Antonio Maravall (1986), *La literatura picaresca desde la historia social*, Madrid: Taurus; Carmen López Alonso y Antonio Elorza (1989), *El hierro y el oro. Pensamiento político en España, siglos XVI-XVIII*, Madrid; Carmen López Alonso (1986), *La pobreza en la España medieval*, Madrid.

¹¹*Morisco* is the name given to those who accepted forced conversion to Catholicism. In February 1502 a *Pragmática* [Decree] of the Catholic Kings of Spain gave an ultimatum to Spanish Muslims to either convert or emigrate.

¹²Among the most relevant are Bernard Lazare (1986), *El antisemitismo: su historia y sus causas*. Madrid; J. Amador de los Ríos (1984), *Historia social, política y religiosa de los judíos en España y Portugal*, 3 vols. Madrid: Turner; Julio Caro Baroja, *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea* (1986, 3rd ed.), Madrid; *Misión en Palestina*, the book written by Pablo de Azcárate, member of the United Nations team that reported on Palestine in 1947, was reprinted in 1968.

¹³The Spanish parliamentary elections held in October 1982 brought the Socialist party into power for the first time since the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

¹⁴Victor Cygielman, "La opinión pública israelí pide que Begin y Sharon dimitan," *El País*, September 21, 1982. The author refers to the Israeli media, especially the editorial articles in the main newspapers (The *Jerusalem Post*, *Ha'aretz* and *Yediot Aharonot*) where there is an open criticism on the Begin government and on Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Defense Minister. Twenty years later Sharon would be considered by some media not just as the person who was politically responsible but as the direct author of the massacre perpetrated by the Lebanese Maronite Christian Phalanges (vid A. Shlaim, *op.cit.*).

¹⁵The comparison between Nazis and Jews was not new (vid. T. Segev, *The Seventh Million, the Israelis and the Holocaust*, New York 1993). But now the taboo is broken in European, and Spanish, public

invasion and the killing of Bechir Gemayel were openly condemned by the Spanish press, as well as by the Spanish conservative government, it was after the Sabra and Chatila killings that the Begin government was accused of risking the whole international equilibrium and of

...having the crude conscience of those who began politics at the same time as terrorism, thinking that it was one and the same thing....

General Sharon, the Israeli Minister of Defense, was described in a major Spanish newspaper as

...not just the author of an invasion that broke the pacts and the law. He converted the whole operation into genocide... his soldiers have shot against their fellows who were in a demonstration against this barbarism that can bring back the sinister image of the Jew and open the way to a new antisemitism - there are many who are just waiting for a signal -. It is the first time that Israel's soldiers have fired against their own countrymen.¹⁶

Such a very negative image of the Likud government, scarcely nuanced, was intermittently present over the following period, until the end of the second Intifada.

On the other side, there was the Palestinian image. Beginning at the end of the 1970s, the image of the terrorist increasingly merged with that of the victim. Palestinians began to be identified with the former image of the Jew. There were reports on Palestinian refugee camps that explained how they were called ghettos all along the Gulf States, a name that could be found in the press as well.¹⁷

The positive image of Palestinian terror and how it was related to the heroic vision of the anticolonial revolutions was an issue pointed out by many authors. But in the Spanish case, a much more familial and important factor was the latent acceptance of ETA terror as a manifestation, although a deviant one, of the fight against Franco's dictatorship.¹⁸ Even if critiques of ETA's terror were heard from the beginning of the 1980s, it was the June 1987 ETA

media. An example would be *La matanza de Beirut*, an editorial published in *El País* on September 20, 1982: "... the European consciences, that have been sustaining this little country for reasons that go from the necessity to repair the damage of recent history to the admiration of the way in which this little and courageous country has been built and its self-defense from their surrounding fanatic enemies, have now a new reason to feel betrayed. A reason that adds to the others that, little by little, are devouring the postwar hopes and illusions about a new creation of the world. We can see every day how Nazism and Stalinism have incessant allotropic forms, continuously disguised. [...] The idea that the Lebanese Christians were fighting for a peaceful reconstruction of their country and for an extension of peace all over the Near East has sunk, and with it, the hope of a way out [...]. The image of Israel is sinking as well, even if the incessant barbarisms can only be attributed to Begin and Sharon and to the fanatic parties that sustain them while the domestic opposition claims against what considers genocide."

¹⁶"Los resultados de Begin y Reagan", *El País*, September 27, 1982.

¹⁷"El próximo año en Jerusalén", *El País*, June 26, 1982. In that article Eric Rouleau affirms that the word "ghetto" is normally used in the Gulf countries for those neighborhoods with a majority Palestinian population. On the identification between Palestinians and Jews see the critical comments made by Mahmud Darwish (Carmen López Alonso, "Israel, Shoah y Nakba. Entramados, diferencias, comunidades de sufrimiento," *Claves de Razón Práctica*, 2004, pp. 68-74).

¹⁸ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna* - Euskadi y Libertad -) the radical nationalist Basque paramilitary organization created in 1959. ETA was included in the list of terrorist groups in 1999 (U.S.) and 2001 (European Union).

terrorist attack in Barcelona (Hipercor) that made crystal clear the murderous character of the organization, especially to those on the left for whom ETA was still adorned with the romantic aura of freedom fighters.¹⁹

1987-1991, a multiple context

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and Israel was near to being accomplished by 1982, under the conservative government of Calvo Sotelo²⁰ (February 1981-October 1982) when the "Galilee Operation" began. The Spanish government firmly condemned the invasion, but did not break contacts with Israel because the establishment of relations was one of the major points in the Calvo Sotelo's agenda. September 16 was the date previously fixed, but Sabra and Chatila rendered that impossible.²¹ When relations were finally established, on January 17, 1986, some months after Spain had become a member of the European Economic Community (later the EU), there was no relevant opposition from Spanish public opinion, which openly favored a normal relationship with Israel. The opinion polls showed that only 10.7 percent were opposed, in comparison to the 50 percent that favored the establishment of relations.²² At that time references to the 500 years of Jewish absence from Spain, and the links of the Sephardic Jews to their homeland, Sefarad, became common. The same can be said about the "*España de las Tres Culturas*," where toleration and respect of different religions and communities were supposedly the rule. This image of toleration and respect among the three cultures, which is more a hopeful project than a past reality, was one of the main topics during the 1992 commemorations of the five centuries of the *Descubrimiento* and, by the way, of the Expulsion decree.

However, in this same period a series of events had an important impact on the Spanish perception of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

The Holocaust and the historiographical debates

¹⁹During the years of the Spanish transition to democracy ETA continued the escalation of its terrorist actions in attacks that were mainly directed against the military, the police and relevant civil personalities (in the period immediately before the frustrated attempt at a military coup, February 23, 1981, there was one attack every three days). Even if public condemnation of terrorism was clear, especially after Franco's death, the final turning point in Spanish opinion about ETA was the attack on Hipercor, the big Barcelona mall, which caused the deaths of twenty-one people and seriously injured another forty. This attack, clearly directed against an undifferentiated civil population, was perpetrated on June 29, 1987.

²⁰The Government (March 1979 - October 1982) was headed by Adolfo Suárez. After his resignation in February 1981 he was replaced by the Vice-President, Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo.

²¹J.A. Lisbona has made a detailed account of the process. The first attempts, linked to the Spanish interest in being admitted as member of the UN were answered by the Israeli refusal to establish relations with Franco's regime. Changes occurred after the signing in 1953 of bilateral accords between Spain and the U.S. and, three years later, Spain's admission into the UN. By then Spanish interests were more focused on the maintenance of good relations with the new independent Arab countries and on the question of Gibraltar. The policy of Franco's governments backed Palestinian rights, and Resolutions 242 and 338 of the UN were proposed by Jaime de Piniés, the Spanish representative. Vid., interview with J.A.Lisbona in *Horizonte, para una convivencia en Medio Oriente*, (2003) Año 2, nº5, and *op.cit.* (1993, 2002).

²²Quoted in *The Economist*, September 9, 1985.

In 1986 and 1987, Germany was convulsed by the historians' debate, which began after the Bitburg proposal made by conservatives to include among war victims each and every German, even those who belonged to the SS. Well-known historians who favored this historical revision explicitly identified the Germans with the Wehrmacht²³ and manifested their opposition to excluding any German from history. Some, such as Ernst Nolte, pointed an accusing finger on the left for trying to exclude the working class from German history. Jürgen Habermas wrote an article in *Die Zeit* responding to Nolte's thesis and the debate on the German national past went into the press and public opinion. The need to reestablish a national past allowing Germans to be identified with their own history, free from Hitler's shadow, is at the center of this debate in which, in line with Hannah Arendt's works, Nazism and Communism were presented as the two faces of totalitarian regimes. This was understood by some as a way to put the Nazi genocide into perspective and, at the same time, to reduce the singularity of the Holocaust.²⁴ This debate was echoed in Spain, where it coincided with the trial against Leon Degrelle, a member of the SS. The trial was initiated in 1985 by Violeta Friedman, an Auschwitz survivor, and lasted until 1991, when the Constitutional Court gave her constitutional protection (*amparo*), declaring the former sentences against her null and void.²⁵

In January 1987 the Klaus Barbie trial began in France. This became a central moment in the revision of French history of the Nazi period, both for the *Résistance* and the Vichy regime, revealing as it did the systematic destruction of the Jews during the Holocaust. Publicly broadcast, it had wide repercussions in Spain as well. Even though the American "Holocaust" series had been broadcast in 1979 on Spanish television, only after the trial of the "butcher of Lyon" was the extermination of European Jewry made more real, not least because it occurred in Vichy France, where many exiled Spanish republicans were interned in concentration camps after the end of the Spanish civil war. On June 29, only days before Barbie was condemned to a life prison sentence, ETA terrorists attacked in Barcelona.²⁶

The first Intifada

²³Andreas Hillgruber, (1986): *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums*. Berlin.

²⁴The debate, which focuses on the singularity and comparability of the Nazi crimes and the Holocaust, had a political and historiographical reach that transcended German borders. Vide Charles S. Maier (1988), *The Unmasterable Past. History, Holocaust and German National Identity* (2nd ed. 1997). Peter Baldwin, ed. (1990), *Reworking the Past. Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historian's Debate* (Boston), as well as the collection of articles on the subject in *New German Critique*; Spring /Summer 88 Issue 44.

²⁵In an interview published in August 1985 in the weekly *Tiempo*, Leon Degrelle denied the reality of the Holocaust and the gas chambers. Violeta Friedman's petition was rejected several times by the Spanish Courts. Finally, the Spanish Constitutional Court gave her *amparo* (constitutional protection) on the basis that *the affirmations, doubts and opinions about Nazi behaviour in respect to the Jewish people and the concentration camps even if they are reprehensible and distorted – by denying the historical evidence – are protected by the right of free expression, which is not the case with the offences against the Jewish people, which have a racist and antisemitic connotation, that could only be interpreted as an anti-Jewish incitement.*

²⁶Vide footnote 19.

By December 1987, when the Intifada began, the Palestinian image dramatically changed. The Black September terrorists, the hijackers, assassins, authors of attacks such as those in Munich in 1972, gave way to the “freedom fighter” image.²⁷

Images are risky. They are rapid, immediate and can easily conceal the complexity of the deep social and political transformations that have taken place both in Palestinian and Israeli societies. In the Spanish press the main focus was on Arafat and the PLO leadership. Some articles pointed to the rise of Palestinian political Islam, but little attention was paid to the democratization process taking place inside Palestinian society. The PLO’s Declaration of Independence made on November 15, 1988, in Argel, received broad coverage. Editorials and opinion articles considered the Palestinian Declaration a real step towards peace insofar as, in its text, it appeared that the PLO had finally accepted Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council and, thereby, the State of Israel. The information about Arafat’s discourse at the United Nations in Geneva in December emphasized the Palestinian claim for the return of refugees.

Less attention was paid to other aspects, such as the significance of this Declaration in the whole Palestinian political process, its meaning in the struggle for power between the PLO and Hamas, the Islamic movement launched at the beginning of the Intifada as the “strong arm” of the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁸ None focused in depth on the tensions within the PLO leadership in Tunis or on the emergence of the new Palestinian leadership that arose in the Palestinian territories and became the real actor in the launching and initial actions of the Intifada. Related to this was the very meaning of the decision taken in June 1988 by the Arab Summit, channeling to the PLO all the subsidies that until then had been given by the Arab League to the Palestinians, either directly or through Jordan.

The Madrid Conference and the commemorations for the Quinto Centenario

The Madrid Peace Conference was held in October 1991. For the first time Palestinians and Israelis were seated officially at the same negotiating table, despite the fact that Palestinians came as members of the Jordanian delegation. Broad media coverage of the conference included interviews with Israelis and Palestinians, political analyses of the situation in the Middle East, and the situation in the USSR as well (Gorbachev’s presence was central). An unusual take in the press on why Spain was the best place for a conference on the Middle

²⁷Founded in 1970, the Palestinian militant group took its name from the conflict known as “Black September.” On September 16, 1970, King Hussein of Jordan declared military rule in response to an attempt by the Palestinian *fedayeen* to seize his kingdom; as a result of the confrontations around 3,000 Palestinians died and 10,000 were injured. On September 27, 1970 an accord was signed between Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan that resulted in the expulsion of Palestinian militants from Jordanian cities. On November 21, 1971, the group assassinated Wasfi Tal, the Jordanian Prime Minister; after the attack the PLO was expelled from Jordan. The majority of its members settled in Lebanon. Vide, Avi Shlaim (2000), *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World* (NewYork: Norton); Rashid Khalidi (2006), *The Iron Cage* (Beacon Press: Boston).

²⁸The media points to the importance of Islamic Movement social activities. Vide Javier Valenzuela “El Islam renace en Palestina”, *El País*, December 21, 1987; Carmen López Alonso, (2007), *Hamas. La marcha hacia el poder* (Madrid: Ed.Catarata).

East was that this country, *once upon a time*, was the place where the three cultures lived in peace and mutual toleration.

La España de las Tres Culturas was the main slogan around which the whole commemoration of the five-hundredth anniversary of America's discovery (1492-1992) revolved. In March, just before the launch of the Universal Exhibition in Seville, a ceremony took place in Madrid's synagogue, attended by the President of the State of Israel and the King of Spain, who made a speech to the Jewish community. On this occasion, several articles centering on the five hundred years of the Jewish Diaspora gave a special emphasis to the words of the Spanish King at the dinner offered in honor of President Herzog where, quoting Ben Gurion, he said that "history, with its wise moves and its mistakes, is a past that cannot be rewritten." But it was the King's reference to Palestinian rights ("Don Juan Carlos defends the realization of national Palestinian rights") that was in the headlines of the main media.²⁹

In spite of calls to the past in the commemoration's acts, in exhibitions, in the many conferences held on the subject, as well as in articles both academic and popular, there was little attention to, or criticism of, the dark side of 1492, with some exceptions such as Eduardo Subirats's *The Empty Continent*, and some articles asking for reflection on other aspects of the date. The general tone of the celebration was not critical so much as a wishful project for the future, in which nostalgia and utopian desire, if not an obliging paternalism, were dominant.

Nonetheless, there were positive results from the 1992 commemorations. First came more knowledge of Sephardic Jews, already "discovered" in the second half of the nineteenth century, on the occasion of the war in Africa and the Jewish Moroccan communities' immigration to the Peninsula. Then, some years later, Angel Pulido wrote extensively about his journey and encounters with Sephardic Jews living in the Balkans. In the 1990s his books and articles were reprinted, studied and incorporated into Spanish history.

Not were only the Sephardic Jews, who kept with them the keys of their homes in *Sefarad*,³⁰ "re-discovered," but the *Conversos*³¹ as well. Their history was approached in new ways and new themes enriched the classical Américo Castro perspective in the first quarter of the past century.³² The studies emphasized the influential role played by the *conversos* in the critical renewal of Spanish political and social thought, which helped to open small fissures in the closure of Counter-Reformation Spain. This was the beginning of a reconciliation now materializing in the "re-cognition" and study of Jewish sites changing them from mainly tourist places into real and present history. The academic world has been pioneer and central in this process, from the Hebrew Chair at the Complutense University of Madrid, among others, to the work of the CSIC³³ and *Sefarad*, its prestigious journal.³⁴ Today the

²⁹"Don Juan Carlos defiende la realización de los derechos nacionales palestinos," *El País*, March 31, 1992.

³⁰*Sefarad*, the Hebrew name for Spain.

³¹*Converso*: in late medieval Spain and Portugal, the Jews who converted to Christianity in order to avoid persecution or expulsion because of their faith.

³²Américo Castro (1948, 2001): *España en su historia: Cristianos, moros y judíos* (Reprinted 2001, Barcelona: Crítica); (1954): *La realidad histórica de España* (Mexico: Porrúa).

³³CSIC (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas).

³⁴Vide Angel Sáenz-Badillos (2005): "The Spanish Contribution to Jewish Studies," in A. van der Heide and Irene E. Zweip, eds., *Jewish Studies and the European Academic World*. Plenary Lectures read at the VIIth Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies (EAJS), Amsterdam, July 2002. *Revue d'Etudes Juives*, Paris/Louvain, 2005, pp. 23-44.

Spanish Government also plays an important role in the recuperation of this Jewish heritage, even though it was started before by various groups. Among them are the Amistad-Hispano-Hebrea (Hebrew-Spanish Friendship) and associations such as those in Segovia, Gerona, Barcelona or Toledo, to cite some examples. Important as well was the Judeo-Christian Studies Center, linked to the Sisters of Sión, created in Madrid in 1972, which has published *El Olivo* since 1978. But this “recovery” addressed the long past, not yet contemporary European Jewish history and its tragedy. This will come later.

1992 was a year of change in Israel, too. The Labor party won the June elections and Yitzhak Rabin presided over the government. There were talks of a “limited peace” with Syria in exchange for the Golan Heights and a more active pace towards the Palestinians. But in December, Hamas abducted and killed an Israeli border guard and the Israeli government decided to expel 415 Palestinians, most of them members of, or linked to, Hamas or the Islamic Jihad. The expulsion was condemned by the UN Security Council and criticism spread internationally and in Israel. The official “peace process” was blocked, but from January 1993 secret meetings were held between Palestinians and Israelis under the protection of the Norwegian government. The need to find an end to conflict was imperative, both the Israeli-Palestinian one and the internecine Palestinian conflict underway, which harmed the international Palestinian image, damaged already by scenes during the Gulf War of Palestinians cheering the launching of Iraqi missiles into Israel.

The Oslo Declaration of Principles, the mutual recognition between Israelis and Palestinians, was signed in Washington on September 13, 1993. The framework was Resolutions 242 and 338 (CSNU). But all of the important questions – borders, refugees, settlements, Jerusalem and the Palestinian State – were not discussed, leaving them for the final settlement. Even so, in the Spanish press, as in the international media, Oslo was taken to be the beginning of the end of the conflict, a hope for peace.

The optimistic climate was general. In Spain, the Fifth centenary commemorations ended successfully and the main interest in the country became European history, mainly directed to the evolution of democracies and the processes leading to their breakdown, as well as the fight in their defense. It is here where the history of the European Jews, as part of Europe’s history, entered into play. Studies about memory, general and historical, flourished, and many were immediately translated into Spanish, as were the most recent studies on twentieth-century European history.

Books and opinion articles by Israeli writers such as Amos Oz, David Grossman or Abraham Yehoshua, all committed to the Israeli peace movement and critical of the occupation, were translated too. Shlomo Ben Ami, highly respected for his books on contemporary Spanish history, became the obligatory source for contemporary Israel.³⁵ Shmuel Hadas, the first Israeli ambassador to Spain, wrote periodically in Spanish newspapers and in some pol-

³⁵Since his first book, *Historia del Estado de Israel*, edited with Z. Medin in 1972 and reprinted for the third time in 1992, Shlomo Ben Ami has been one of the main sources for Israeli history and current events in Spain. His books on the peace process have been rapidly translated into Spanish and widely read and quoted (*Israel entre la guerra y la paz* [1999]; *¿Cuál es el futuro de Israel?* [2002] and the most recent, *Cicatrices de guerra, heridas de paz* [2006]). To that it has to be added his work at the *CITpax* (Toledo International Centre for Peace) and his frequent articles and political analysis in the media. Shmuel Hadas, the first Israeli ambassador to Spain, writes periodically in the Spanish press as well as in specialized journals with articles and analysis about Israel.

icy journals. All of them, among others, described Israel as a pluralist society, not a simple black and white picture, and mentioned the ample movement favoring peace, headed by Zionists who did not conceal their nationalist ideology, thinking it was fully compatible with a democratic system in which both communities (Jewish and Palestinian) could live together. The negative image of the Palestinians after the Gulf War practically disappeared after the signing of the Oslo Accords.

But in February 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a Jewish extremist linked to Meir Kahane's movement, killed twenty-nine Palestinian worshipers at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. This changed the situation.³⁶ If in 1991 the press had signaled with alarm the presence of Jewish fundamentalists (M. Kahane was expelled from Spain in 1991 when he tried to boycott the Madrid Peace Conference), now articles and analyses of these groups multiplied, not always making a clear and necessary differentiation between religious Jews and those fundamentalists who are grouped around *Gush Emunim*.

On July 1, 1994, Arafat returned to Gaza. In October, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty and, even though the terrorist attacks did not stop, on September 28, 1995, Oslo II (Interim Accords) was signed.³⁷ The Accords enlarged Gaza autonomy, committed Israeli forces to redeploy from Palestinian cities except for Hebron, established the holding of Palestinian elections, and, until a final settlement to be reached after five years, divided the territory into three areas: zone A, where the Palestinians had the civil and military administration; zone B, where Palestinians had the civil administration whereas the Israelis kept the military one, and zone C, where Israel maintains both, civil and military, administration. The hope created by Oslo was short-lived. On November 4, Yitzhak Rabin was killed by Yigal Amir, a Jewish religious extremist.

From the turning point of 1995 to the Al Aqsa Intifada and Arafat's death

Rabin's assassination was a fundamental break, not just for Israel but also for the whole area. The news was on the front page of every paper and Rabin became an icon for pacifists and a rallying point for those who defend political, and not military, solutions to the "Palestinian question." The positive image that Israel had recovered in the Spanish press and public opinion since the Oslo Accords grew after the assassination. News and articles focused both on the right-wing politicians, led by B. Netanyahu, the new Likud leader, and on Jewish religious fundamentalism. This time, there was a clear distinction between these religious extremists and Israelis as a whole; some articles pointed to the differences that exist between an Israeli citizen and a Jew. Nonetheless, the main emphasis was placed on the pluralism of Israeli society and politics. On the other side, the image of the Palestinians was no longer a monolithic one. A series of terrorist attacks damaged the Palestinian image, already questioned after the Gulf War. But this time, the differences were more nuanced, even if Yasser Arafat was hardly called into question, either in the Spanish press and opinion, or in the international one.

³⁶"Asesinar la paz," *El País*, editorial, February 26, 1994.

³⁷Spain headed the European Union during the second half of 1995. A new Israel-EU Trade Agreement was signed in November 20, 1995, and, one week later, the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held in Barcelona, marking the starting point of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process).

With the second Palestinian uprising, the Al Aqsa Intifada, once again everything was depicted in black and white, especially after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and the war on terror as articulated by the U.S. administration, an approach not shared by many Europeans. From this moment, Israeli policy against the Palestinian rebellion and its terrorist manifestations was presented, and perceived, as fully identified with U.S. policy, if not its direct source. This is one of the main differences with the first Intifada. The other, and not a minor one, is that the war on terror is fought not just in the domain of reality but, and conspicuously, in the virtual one. The overwhelming amount of news and information, a feature of the area, is now exponentially multiplied, and images and news are immediately transmitted by Internet, where it is possible to reach both radio and television all over the world. Perhaps more important are the many web pages, blogs, chats and e-mails that help circulate news, as well as information/disinformation. The war becomes digitalized and, at the same time, presented as explicitly close, to the point that the Iraq invasion in 2003 had journalists "embedded" in U.S. armored vehicles. "Trees impede the view of the forest": as in the popular saying, the excess of transparency risks veiling the facts. No individual is capable of processing it all. The excess of presence, with images supported by very short phrases, as in an advertisement, can transform the real into virtual slogans.

This is the context, symbolically inaugurated by the 9/11 attacks, that has to be kept in mind when following the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during this period of time. The conflict was transformed, and seen, as part of a broader conflict, developed not just in the Near East but in the whole Middle East, one whose effects have a global reach.

The beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada at the end of September 2000, after the failure of the summer negotiations at Camp David, was mainly presented as a result of the provocation of Ariel Sharon with his visit to the Esplanade Mosques. The Spanish media linked this to the political motives underlying Sharon's decisions in his fight with Netanyahu for leadership of the Likud Party.

The Al Aqsa Intifada was characterized by extreme violence. At the very beginning, the world was impressed by images of a Palestinian child, Mohamed Dura, lying dead in his father's arms in the middle of crossfire in Gaza. Some days later, the same thing occurred with the public lynching of two Israeli soldiers "detained" in a police headquarter in Ramallah.³⁸

In February 2001, Ariel Sharon was elected as Israel's Prime Minister with 62 percent of the votes. In the Spanish press, Sharon was presented as the sole person responsible for the breakdown of the peace process, even if many other people took part in it, as was the case with Yasser Arafat. The weeks following the election saw continued violence and, in

³⁸ Mohamed Dura was shot dead in a cross-fire in Gaza on September 30, 2000, two days after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Esplanade Mosques in Jerusalem. On October 12, 2000 two Israeli reserve soldiers were lynched when detained in the Palestinian Police building in Ramallah, in the West Bank. The facts were broadly condemned in the Spanish media where it was said that "peace cannot be reached by lynching Israeli soldiers or by throwing bombs". Nonetheless the press pointed to what it was considered an asymmetric response: "the world has been able to see how the powerful Israeli army was deployed into Ramallah and Gaza. The lynching of the two Israeli reserve soldiers by a Palestinian mob has provoked a disproportionate Israeli reaction to the point that Yasser Arafat private residence has been bombed when he was meeting the director of the CIA". (Lluís Foix, "Peligrosa escalada en Oriente Medio", *La Vanguardia*, October 12, 2000).

March, the Israeli government announced that its actions were no longer simply defensive, but that Israel was now going to take the initiative.³⁹ The general perception was that the accusations and responsibilities attributed were somehow repetitive and that nobody was really interested in finding a negotiated exit to the situation, despite the efforts made by the EU envoy, the Spaniard Miguel Angel Moratinos, the members of the Quartet and some Israelis. For many, Shlomo Ben Ami among them, international intervention was needed for the peace process to be accomplished.

Violence and mutual accusations grew dramatically. The Israeli government accused Arafat of not stopping terrorist attacks and the *raias* accused Israel of being the cause of this terrorism “because of its policy of targeted killings and attacks against the Palestinian people.” Since the beginning of the Intifada, Spanish opinion had been very critical of the terrorist attacks, as well as of Israeli retaliation. Targeted killings, normally labeled as “extrajudicial killings,” and the demolition of the houses of suicide bombers’ families were among the incidents provoking the major criticisms. These critiques grew during the summer of 2001 when Israel, in response to the wave of terrorist attacks and suicide bombers, used F15 and F16 airplanes against the headquarters of the Palestinian police in the Palestinian autonomous territories of Gaza and in Nablus on the West Bank, and destroyed the material and administrative Palestinian infrastructures. Only an international presence, says one editorial in *El País*, could stop the escalation of these last months where

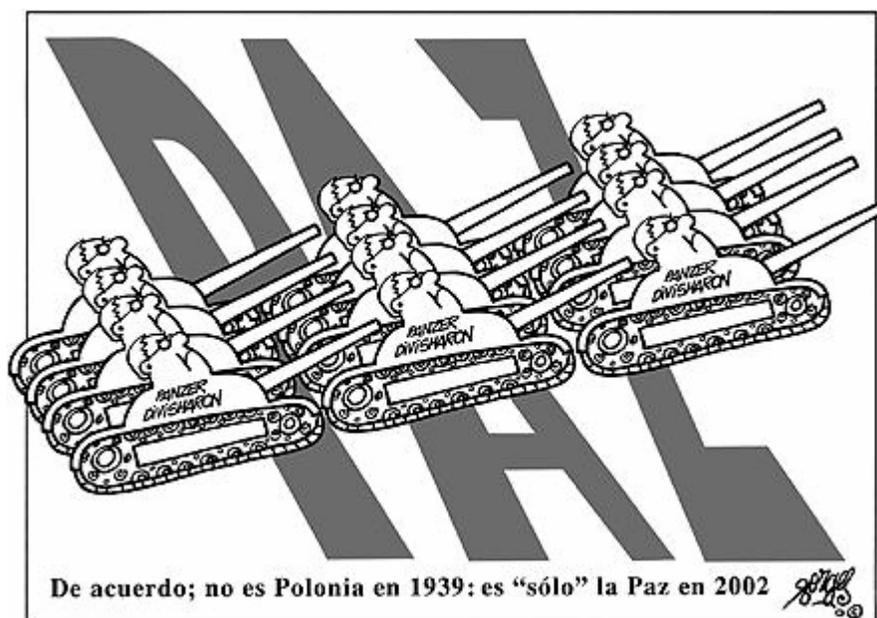
*...the violence of the cruel suicidal attacks by the Palestinian groups has reached Israeli cities like Tel Aviv that were considered as safe. Israel, on its part, has replied with warlike measures, ‘selective attacks’ and other actions that on some occasions could be described as State terrorism that delegitimizes Israel and stains its international image.*⁴⁰

The critiques grew in intensity and radicalism after the beginning of the *Defensive Shield Operation* and the military reoccupation of area A of the West Bank, with the detention of thousands of Palestinians. Israel asserted that there was no valid interlocutor on the Palestinian side to pursue any peace negotiations since Arafat, confined to the PA headquarters in Ramallah, was considered as an enemy. The real turning point for the image of Israel, both in Spain and in other European countries, was the entry of the Israeli army into the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002. From the beginning, the press wrote about a massacre, and cartoons appeared in the national press that, in some cases, created a total symmetry between Israeli actions and Nazi actions against European Jews. Sharon was represented as Hitler during the Munich meeting, leading armored divisions, the *PanzerDiviSharon*, that were advancing over the peace;⁴¹ in some cartoons the Nazi cross was converted into the *Magen David* (Star of David).

³⁹ Enrique Cymerman, “Israel afronta una nueva etapa”. *La Vanguardia*, February 16, 2001

⁴⁰ “Una peligrosa escalada”, *El País*, August 27, 2001

⁴¹ Cartoon by Forges in *El País*, April 9, 2002.



There were many such references, but few so extreme as the cartoon published in March 2002 in a major Catalan journal. In this, emblematic images of the Nazi persecution were shown with a boy with his arms up in front of Nazi soldiers, similar to the emblematic Palestinian child⁴².

⁴²Published by A. Ferreres in *El Periódico* (March 13, 2002). In his letter of protest, Herzl Inbar, the Israeli ambassador to Spain, denounced the clear antisemitism of the cartoon. How could any person compare the systematic extermination of six million persons, one and a half million children among them, just because they were Jewish, with the confrontation provoked by the PNA in the context of a dispute about national rights that has caused the death of more than 1,200 victims, 360 Israelis among them? To this is has to be added – continues the Israeli ambassador – that the symmetry is accompanied by a comment that the cartoonist imputed to Israeli soldiers that is a legend of theological origin, with all the consequences that have resulted from its tendentious interpretation (H. Inbar, “Carta al Director,” *El Periódico*, September 19, 2002).



("Ours is different: we are the chosen people")

In May 2002, the Israeli government decided to build a wall or fence of separation, similar to the one that already existed in Gaza, whose efficacy in preventing terrorist attacks Israeli security reports had made clear. The first phase of the building began almost immediately. From the beginning, there was very detailed information on the construction and route of the fence, which penetrated into territories far from the Green Line, as well as about the negative consequences for the everyday life of Palestinians. In Spain, it was the CSCA that focused on this information, from reliable sources both Israeli (*B'tselem*) and Palestinian, most of them grouped in Pengon, the umbrella association of Palestinian NGOs.⁴³ The symmetry between images of World War II, the concentration camps and the wall/fence was implicitly or explicitly present in many of the popular mobilizations, in which information and protest merged. The Palestinians referred to similar images when they compared their situation to the Warsaw Ghetto, emphasizing the Jewish rebellion.⁴⁴

As violence grew on both sides, from Palestinian attacks and Israeli retaliation, silence emerged on the so-called "Israeli Left," but some individual voices continued to espouse the validity and actuality of the Zionist project, as Zeev Sternhell did in his long article, "For an open nationalism, for a liberal Zionism," that was published in Spanish in 2002.⁴⁵

Not every critique of Israeli policy is necessarily anti-Zionist or antisemitic. There are many that are not, on the condition that these references are intellectually decent and historically accurate, and are used as a form of reminder, a kind of moral alert, as many Israelis have done since the beginning of the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, and

⁴³<http://www.pengon.org/members/members.html>. Among the Spanish NGOs that collaborated in the campaign against the Wall were the CSCA (Solidarity Committee with the Arab Cause: <http://www.nodo50.org/cscs>), the 2015 Platform, the Foro Social de Madrid, and thirty other organizations, the PSOE (the Spanish Socialist Party), Izquierda Unida and CCOO (Comisiones Obreras) among them.

⁴⁴B. Burston, "Fence divides Israel and U.S., Israeli and Israeli" (*Haaretz* September 17, 2003)

⁴⁵Zeev Sternhell, "Por un nacionalismo abierto, por un sionismo liberal," *Claves de Razón Práctica*, nº 123, July 2002.

even before. In fact, in the Spanish press and public opinion, more so during this last period, there is growing plural and documented information, both on Israel and Palestine, as well as on the conflict between them.

A case in point is when the terminology employed is very imprecise or tendentious, as happens, for example, when references are made to *Hebrew* army, tanks, aircrafts or soldiers instead of *Israeli* ones. The question is not just the lack of accuracy, since in the Israeli army there are Druse and Bedouin units that are not formed of Jews, but that by employing *hebreo* as a descriptive term – not as insulting as the *judío* could appear to the Spanish ears – there is a biased form of presenting the information under the guise of respect for the Jewish people. Another case, quite generalized in the Spanish press and international media, is the use of the term *inmolación* to refer to the suicide bombers. This religious term, with a very positive meaning, is employed for the person who gives testimony of his/her faith by giving his/her life in the hope that his/her blood, as well as the blood of those who die as a result of his or her death, could help in the redemption process. Something similar occurs when the media use, quite commonly, the Arab term *shahid* as a descriptive, as if this term were interchangeable with “terrorist” or “assassin”; it is not.⁴⁶

If some of these traits could still be found in some of the media, that is not the case with many of the articles that appear in the Opinion sections of the big national newspapers, as well as in the more specialized journals which publish articles that are informative, well documented and weighed for the most part. Even if some voices, as is the case with the already mentioned Shlomo Ben Ami or Shmuel Hadas, continue to be highly influential, there are new ones added to them: books and articles by Rashid Khalidi, Nur Marshala, Avi Shlaim, and Emmanuel Sivan, among others, have been translated into Spanish, and in the national newspapers there are analyses made by first-line experts, as is the case, among many others, of Yezigh Sayigh, one of the most prominent scholars on the question and author of a very influential and well documented critique on Arafat’s regime, urging reforms in the PNA before it is too late.⁴⁷ Similar petitions, more in their conclusions than in their focus, were made by Edward Said, whose articles regularly appeared in the Spanish press, or by R. Khalidi and others. There is a broad list of very well-known names whose analysis appears regularly in the Spanish media, as Barry Rubin, the director of the GLORIA Center,⁴⁸ Walter Laqueur, Robert Fisk, Michel Wieviorka, Amira Hass, Marwan Bishara, to cite but some of them. To these must be added the Spanish scholars, and some well-known journalists, who for years have written on the topic.⁴⁹ For the most part they have shown a critical, and well informed, approach to Israel policies. Many are relevant, as well, in denouncing any form of antisemitism, especially one that is growing in Spanish society, as is pointed in the EU Re-

⁴⁶Vide Shaul Shay, *The Shahids. Islam and Suicide Attacks* (ICT, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick and London, 2003). Carmen López Alonso, *op.cit* (2007).

⁴⁷Yezig Sayigh “Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt,” *Survival* 43,3 (Autumn 2001): 47-60; “The Palestinian Strategic Impasse,” *Survival* 44,4 (2002-2003): 7-21; (2005), “Luchas de poder entre palestinos,” *La Vanguardia*, August 11, 2005; Yezig Sayigh and Khalid Shikaki, *Independent Task Force Report. Strengthening Palestinian Public Institutions* (Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

⁴⁸GLORIA, the Global Research in International Affairs, of the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya, Israel.

⁴⁹Miguel Angel Bastenier, Isaías Barreñada, Joan B. Culla, Gema Martín Muñoz, Carlos Nadal, José Nuñez Villaverde, Andrés Ortega, Ignacio A. Osorio, Florentino Portero, Antoni Segura, Darío Valcárcel or Pere Vilanova, among many others.

port on antisemitism (2003), where 59 percent of the poll considered Israel as more dangerous to world peace than countries like Korea or Iran.⁵⁰

The question of criticism to Israel and antisemitism

Does this mean success for Bin Laden's rhetoric, using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a legitimizing tool for Al Qaeda actions? For some, anti-Zionism and anticolonialism from the left is but a disguise for growing antisemitism, and they label as antisemitic any critique of Israeli government policies. The danger of that attitude is that the defense both of Israel and Palestine risks being directed, and listened to, only by those who are already convinced.

In Spain it is mainly the electronic media that have defended Israeli policies during the Intifada years. A part of this defense has been to give information from Hebrew-Israeli sources and news and to translate Arabic media into Spanish. Some of these electronic media are quite obliging to Israel, but there are others that have more balanced and critical information and opinion, as happens with *Radio Sefarad* or the Jewish Spanish journal *Raíces*, to cite but two. There are webpages such as *El Reloj* that translate the Israeli press on a daily basis⁵¹ and others, such as *Malas Noticias*, that follow, on a daily basis as well, every bit of news about antisemitism in Spain. Among the digital newspapers *Libertad Digital*, where Daniel Pipes⁵² writes frequently, has maintained a decided defense of Israeli policies. The fact that this newspaper in particular is clearly identified with the rightist-conservative Spanish wing could affect the efficacy of Israel defense, which can be understood as being used as a part of domestic politics. Nonetheless, what is dominant in the Spanish media, as well as in the specialized journals and at the centers of analysis (think tanks) is a critical approach with a real interest and concern for Israel.⁵³ That does not exclude, but complements, interest and concern for the Palestinians. As a Spanish author has written, Israel is "our Israel" insofar as we westerners, "Jewish or not, by being Judeo-Christians, we all come from there, there is the origin."⁵⁴ But Israel is the incarnation of the Jewish people as well, and that is the way it is perceived, even by those who have a clear knowledge on the differences existing between Jewish and Israeli.

⁵⁰The polls taken by the Spanish Center of Sociological Research (CIS) have found similar results for the year 2000: 46 percent answered that responsibility was "on both sides," compared to 19 percent who considered only the Israelis responsible, and just 8 percent who put responsibility on the Palestinians. The same question posed in 2002 resulted in 33 percent who considered both sides responsible, 26 percent who put responsibility on the Israelis, and 4 percent who considered only the Palestinians responsible.

⁵¹Even if in this particular case the main source is *The Jerusalem Post*, Spanish media, both broadcasting and newspapers, use a broader range of sources, mainly the English version of the daily *Haaretz* as well as translations from the Hebrew *Yediot Aharonot*.

⁵²Daniel Pipes is the founder and leading figure of Campus Watch. Vide X. Batalla, "Caza de académicos," *La Vanguardia*, January 24, 2004.

⁵³CITPax (Toledo International Centre for Peace), CIDOB, FRIDE (Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior); RIE (Real Instituto Elcano); Instituto Gutiérrez Mellado de Investigaciones para la Paz y la Seguridad, and GEES (Grupo de Estudios Estratégicos) among others. CSCA is clear in its political options and its webpage has many links and references as well as translations of articles, mainly from the Arabic press. Another source of translations of the Arab press can be found in MERIA (Middle East Review of International Affairs), which recently has opened a webpage in Spanish. Translation of articles by Daniel Pipes, Carolyn Glick or Batia Ye'or, the author of *Eurabia: The European Axis*, can also be found on the webpage of the GEES.

⁵⁴Suso del Toro, "Israel, nuestro Israel," *La Vanguardia*, November 18, 2003.

Behind many of the criticisms is the implicit exigency that Israel be the exemplary democracy that was an attainable dream and, in many senses, the model to be followed when Israel's defense was perceived as a need for survival and not the excessive use of force and unnecessary aggression. This is what happened during the Al Aqsa Intifada, when the same people who defended the Israeli state, free, just and democratic, considered the Sharon government's policies as one of the main sources of antisemitism. Antisemitic roots, unfortunately, have never been fully uprooted in our Judeo-Christian western society that is its source and where it grew until history's worst disaster. The consciousness of this disaster lies behind many critiques of Israel's policies, as calls to "one of ours" not to go away from us.

It is true that figures like Yasser Arafat have been treated with too much indulgence, even when knowing how increasingly destructive his policies were for the Palestinians. But since 2002, at least, there is a clear awareness of the negative face of a leader whose contribution to the building of a Palestinian national movement cannot be denied, even if it is this same movement that Arafat himself helped in many senses to destroy as well.

Conclusion

History, both old and distant, plays an important role in the Spanish relationship with Israel. Since their expulsion at the end of fifteenth century the Jewish people have been an "absent presence" in Spain. From very early after the expulsion it is possible to find opposed expressions of this absent presence. They appear in received religious anti-Jewish popular opinion and they are evident as well in the humanistic defense of liberal reforms and in the fight against intolerance. Later on, during the long period of the Franco dictatorship, the State of Israel played an important role as a model of democracy. Last, but not least, the Zionist way of building a national state has had a clear influence on peripheral Spanish nationalisms, such as the Basque and the Catalan. A close analysis of the process followed in Spain in the last few decades, well before 1986 – the date of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and Israel – shows that, notwithstanding these singularities, democracy has been, and still is, the key point in the Spanish relationship with Israel, especially in what concerns public opinion. Democratic Spain is not essentially different from the rest of the European countries in terms of its relationship with Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This applies as well to the manifestations of antisemitism that can be found in Spanish public opinion and the media, a phenomenon that has been clearly growing since the beginning of the second Intifada (Al Aqsa). Nonetheless, many of the criticisms of Israel are about specific Israeli policies and it is doubtful that they all should be considered as anti-Zionist or antisemitic.

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