

Falangist antisemitism in Spain 1933–1945

Between Catholic influences and fascist racism



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ABSTRACT • Spanish fascists held power for a lengthy period, yet their antisemitism remains under-researched. This article, drawing on periodicals and archival documentation, specifically examines the early years of the Falange until 1945. The period was characterised by a significant surge in antisemitic sentiment in Spain, accompanied by a growing presence of the alleged 'Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy'. Representing the first in-depth approach in English, the text is divided into four parts. The first serves as an introduction to the outbreak of antisemitism and conspiracy theories within the political cultures of the Spanish illiberal right following the advent of democracy in 1931. The second focuses on fascism and its four most prominent figures up to 1936. The third analyses the Falange's pronounced antisemitism during the Spanish Civil War, exploring both its internal and external influences. The fourth and final part addresses the fervently antisemitic stance of the Falange during the decisive years of the Second World War, navigating the tensions between Nazi antisemitic racism and Catholic anti-racist antisemitism.

In October 1975, a month before his death, the dictator Francisco Franco still publicly denounced 'the left-wing Masonic conspiracy [...] in collusion with the Communist-terrorist subversion'¹ allegedly seeking to overthrow his regime and plunge Spain into chaos and anarchy. Times had certainly changed since the 1930s and the early 1940s, and the explicit antisemitic element was now left aside, but the references to the Masonic conspiracy can at least be interpreted as a coded antisemitic message. In any case, with this formulation, Franco chose in his very last public address to close a circle of more than forty years by resorting to one of the central topoi of Spain's far-right movements: the 'Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy'.

Since their first assaults against the Second Republic, Jews, Freemasons and leftists were involved in the same subversive project.

This article concentrates on fascist antisemitism from 1933 until 1945 through an analysis of the writings and publications of Spain's fascist party, the Falange. Despite occasional references, the focus will be on Falangism itself, not on the other – non-fascist – political cultures of the Spanish illiberal right, nor on Franco and his dictatorship's policies. Such a chronology allows us to study Falangist antisemitism during the first stages of Spain's fascist party in three contexts as varied as democracy, civil war and dictatorship during a world war.

In the first section, I introduce the upsurge of antisemitism and conspiracy theories (or so-called conspiracy beliefs) after the proclamation of the Second Republic in 1931. In

1 *ABC*, 2 October 1975. All translations are by the author of the article.

the second section, I focus on Spain's two fascist parties in the early 1930s: the Councils of National-Syndicalist Offensive (Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista, JONS) and Falange Española (FE), along with the resulting merged party (FE-JONS) and its four most prominent figures prior to the *coup d'état* of 1936: José Antonio Primo de Rivera, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Onésimo Redondo and Ramiro Ledesma. In the third section, I investigate Falangist antisemitism during the Spanish Civil War, exploring both internal and external influences. In the fourth section, I deal with the decisive period of the Second World War, concluding with some insights into the period after May 1945.

Democracy as the hour of conspiracist antisemitism

In April 1931, the Second Republic was unexpectedly proclaimed. The joint Republican and Socialist candidacies had won the local elections in the main cities, and the Bourbon monarchy quickly faced the consequences of a general lack of support. King Alfonso XIII had supported the *coup d'état* of General Miguel Primo de Rivera in 1923 as well as his subsequent six-year dictatorship. After Primo de Rivera's resignation in January 1930, the monarch attempted to turn back the clock of history and return to a constitutional monarchy, as if nothing had happened since 1923. The king's failure ended with his departure into exile and the bloodless proclamation of Spain's first democracy with popular enthusiasm (Cruz 2014).

Democracy thus arrived in Spain at a moment when it was already on retreat in the rest of Europe (Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Poland etc.) and in the middle of a global economic crisis. As a matter of fact, the Second Spanish Republic was the only democracy to be constituted on the Old Continent between 1920 and 1944. In its first two and a half years

(1931–3) the republic witnessed progress in political and social rights as a result of unusually stable coalition governments formed by centre-left republicans and socialists. Inspired by the French and German republican models, the Republican Constitution from December 1931 was considered 'the most modern in inter-war Europe' (Mazower 1998: 18).

The proclamation of the republic and the king's subsequent renunciation to exercise his dynastic rights (although officially he never abdicated) surprised Spanish monarchists, leaving them in shock. Some republican conservative parties aimed to consolidate the democracy and actively supported the new system. But, despite working loyally to win popular support, republican conservatives soon became a small minority. From its inception, Spanish democracy faced four opponents in the non-republican right: firstly, political Catholicism, closely linked to the Church hierarchy and its social doctrine; secondly, traditionalist monarchists, followers of the Carlist pretender to the throne in a century-long dynastic struggle that had provoked three civil wars (the so-called 'Carlist wars') in the nineteenth century; thirdly, the Alphonine monarchists, also reactionary nationalists but followers of the now-exiled king, whom the Carlists saw, in turn, as illegitimately usurping the throne; finally, the fascists, newcomers in Spanish politics in the early 1930s and a minor political force right up to the Civil War. Initially, all four options were deeply divided among themselves and mostly disorganised, lacking the political structures and traditions needed to operate in a democratic framework.

By 1933, the anti-republican far right had reorganised and updated its political practice, both doctrinally and organisationally. This process was significantly favoured by two elements: firstly, the importance that religion (that is, Catholicism) rapidly attained both in the political debate and in the public sphere after

1931, mostly as a rabid reaction to the republic's secularist legislation; and secondly, antisemitism, that 'old European tradition' (Berstein & Milza 2014: 493), that was increasingly becoming a 'political element of importance' (Bergmann 2016: 91) in the early 1930s. Equally perceptible in many Latin American countries (Lvovich & Bohoslavsky 2007: 180–3), Spain was no exception. Barely latent in the previous decades, antisemitism was by then present, to a greater or lesser extent, in all four far-right political cultures (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1050). These factors are hardly surprising in a country where Catholicism had been essential for political power (and the monarchy) as well as for nation-building.

The surge of illiberalism after 1931 brought antisemitism to 'levels never known before' in contemporary Spain (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 302). Following the emergence of modern antisemitism in the country in the late nineteenth century, this new wave marked its 'second golden age' (Domínguez Arribas 2009: 57–66, 74). Simultaneously, antisemitism became to a growing extent an ingredient in conspiracy theories. Almost every illiberal right-winger shared the myth of a 'Jewish-Masonic conspiracy' and used it as the *leitmotif* of anti-republican propaganda (Grüttner 2001: 108; Domínguez Arribas 2009: 76). Even before the proclamation of the republic itself, during the April 1931 election campaign, monarchist supporters pre-emptively linked an eventual republican victory not only to the Bolshevik Revolution, but also to Judaism (Domínguez Arribas 2009: 74; Rohr 2010: 67).

The conspiracy myth had an 'essentially ideological function', which in Spain took shape on two levels, with a third added after 1936 (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1042). Firstly, it united the illiberal right 'outwards': Spanish democracy was supported by a broad spectrum of political cultures and projects, which were difficult to define and combat under a common

denominator. The solution was to encompass them under the label of 'anti-Spain': As a concept, 'anti-Spain' was an absolute impugning of the Spanish nation itself, uncompromisingly understood as essential for the Catholic religion. On the other hand, the conspirative myth was also cohesive 'inwards'. Otherwise divided, Spanish anti-liberals found in Jews and Freemasons a cohesive factor and common enemy: their alleged conspiracy delivered a 'brutally simplifying monism' that both built up a single 'group of imaginary enemies' and, consequently, had an 'important mobilising function' against them (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1067–9; Rohr 2010: 65).

However, as in most of the countries covered in this special issue (such as Finland, Norway and Denmark), the image of 'the Jew' held by Spanish antisemites did not derive from experience or direct contact with real Jews. After the so-called 'Catholic Monarchs' decreed their expulsion in 1492, there was officially no Jewish population in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, nor in later Spain. By 1930 hardly any Jews lived there, mostly a few families that had settled in the late nineteenth century. By 1936, some 6000 individuals were estimated to be present, and a further 13,000 lived in the Spanish protectorate in Morocco (Grüttner 2001: 97). As in Japan (Rohr 2010: 221) or Norway (Karcher & Simonsen 2023), Spanish far-right antisemites evolved as representatives of an 'antisemitism without Jews' (Böcker 2000). Agitators were influenced by translations of foreign writings, in what has been labelled 'imported antisemitism' (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 347) or 'pen antisemitism' (González García 2004: 267–8). The most evident influence came from France, both through Catholic fundamentalism and Action Française's reactionary nationalism, in clear contrast to the Nordic countries, which were largely influenced by German antisemitism. As a result, Spain's anti-republican right

adopted conspiracy theories to a similar degree to the French but connected on a theoretical level to their own national context.

South of the Pyrenees, the idea of a Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy was deeply rooted in Catholicism and had its own myths and traditions: the Reconquista (Spain's true founding myth as a nation), the secular rivalry with France and the colonial war in Morocco (Rohr 2010: 65–6). This framing allowed the construction of the enemy as a foreign 'other', an alien to the nation's body. Whether portrayed as instigators or executing agents in this alleged conspiracy, Leftists, Catalans, French, Jews, Freemasons and 'Moors' were all represented as one and the same thing: Spain's mortal enemies with the same common goal, namely Spain's destruction. As stressed in 1933 by the main Catholic party, the Spanish Confederation of Right-Wing Groups (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas, CEDA), in an electoral poster, 'Marxists, Masons, [Catalan] separatists and Jews' were all presented as enemies who 'want to annihilate Spain' (Company & Griño 2016: 190).²

No matter how unknown, unreal or imaginary he might be, 'the Jew' served as a 'screen' onto which to project all these fears about the nation's survival. But, even then, the subject of denunciations was dynamic and changing. In the early years of the republic (1931–2), far-right antisemites focused on the alleged Judaeo-Masonic character of Spanish democracy and on its supposedly anti-religious and dissolving legislation. Yet, starting from 1933, new topics and nuances emerged, increasingly situating the country's antisemitism within an alleged worldwide Jewish conspiracy. Three factors contributed to this situation: first, the

rise of the Nazis to power and the ensuing surge abroad in ideological sympathy and antisemitism among far-right circles, not limited to fascism; second, the gradual arrival of Jewish refugees fleeing the rise of antisemitism in Central Europe was portrayed by Spanish antisemites as a menacing invasion (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 302–5); however, the most significant factor was the dissemination of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Spain. By 1936, there were at least five different publishers and eight translated editions (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1048; Rohr 2010: 81–3; Martín Gijón 2010: 64). The *Protocols'* importance in fostering antisemitism was shared by the other countries examined in this special issue. What stands out is their relatively late reception in Spain. In Finland, its early distribution started after 1919 (see Paavo Ahonen's contribution), and again in the 1930s and 1940s through the *Tapparamies* circle and the *Siniristi* association (see Oula Silvennoinen's contribution). In Norway, *The Protocols* were disseminated through the monthly *Nationalt Tidsskrift* in the 1920s and later through the National Unity (Nasjonal Samling) party's weekly *Hirdmennen* during the German occupation (see Karcher's and Simonsen's contribution).

Fascist antisemitism before the Civil War

Antisemitism did not uniformly impact all four political cultures of Spain's anti-Republican right in the 1930s; there were differences and nuances among them. The Carlist traditionalists, especially those coming from Catholic fundamentalism, stood out the most, as they already had a five-decade tradition of cultivating the idea of a Masonic conspiracy. Notable examples also emerged among the Alphonsine reactionaries: the journal *Acción Española*, their main theoretical organ, whose influence went well beyond the limits of this political culture; their leading intellectuals (as Ramiro de

2 The image is online available at PARES, the Spanish State Archive's portal: <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/1343494>, accessed November 2023.

Maeztu or Zacarías de Vizcarra), the most like-minded newspapers,³ or women's magazines such as *Ellas* or *Aspiraciones*⁴ (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1050–4). Particularly between 1932 and 1934, antisemitism was also present in political Catholicism, although to a lesser extent; when it did appear, it was usually related to anti-Masonic topics, which received greater emphasis from the Catholic groups and the Church hierarchy. Finally, among Spain's far-right political cultures, the fascists would have been the ones who overall would have given less importance to antisemitism until 1936 (Domínguez Arribas 2009: 78, 80).

Spain was part of the so-called second wave of fascist movements in the early 1930s. The country's first political formation to be considered fully fascist were the above-mentioned JONS, the Councils of National-Syndicalist Offensive founded by Onésimo Redondo and Ramiro Ledesma in late 1931. Two years later, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the late dictator, founded the Falange Española (FE) in Madrid. This is why Ismael Saz called the republican years 'the hour of fascism' in Spain (Saz 2001: 162). However, the lack of momentum soon led both parties to merge as FE-JONS in early 1934. Even so, fascism remained politically marginal: failing to become a mass movement, Falangist membership could not have exceeded 30,000 (a quarter of whom were women). Electorally it was also insignificant and never reached 1 per cent of the vote in general elections, with

at most two seats among the parliament's 473 elected representatives. By the spring of 1936, political violence had become Falange's main field of action. Its membership started to rocket after the CEDA's failure to win the February general elections that year and take power. The escalation of political violence ultimately led to the party's illegalisation and neutralisation as a political force; most of its senior leaders, starting with Primo de Rivera himself, were imprisoned or forced underground. Therefore, and unlike the other forces of the illiberal right, the Falange played no significant role in the conspiracy leading to the July coup, only officially joining at the last minute.

In research into antisemitism in Spanish fascism, the first striking point is the scarcity of specific analyses (Martín Gijón 2010: 1), especially considering that Falange was the fascist party that stayed in power longest: almost forty years. Certainly, antisemitism was much less present in Falange than in Italian Fascism, let alone German National Socialism. It is also true that most studies on antisemitism in contemporary Spain devote some attention, sometimes even a section, to the fascist party (Lisbona 1993; Böcker 2000; Álvarez Chillida 2002; Rohr 2003 & 2010; Domínguez Arribas 2009). Moreover, three doctoral dissertations have been presented on antisemitic discourses in Spain in the 1920s to the 1940s (Palmero 2016; Romero 2019; and, in particular, González-Albo 2022). However, the same is not true of reference works on Spanish fascism. Whereas only a few international works on fascism and antisemitism have paid any attention to Spain (Laqueur & Baumel 2001: 183; Grüttner 2001; Studemund-Hálevy 2012), in Spanish historiography, Falangist antisemitism has merited no monograph, while journal articles or book chapters on the topic can be counted on the fingers of one hand (Lazo 1989 & 1995; Rodríguez Jiménez 2004; Martín Gijón 2010 & 2020).

3 Such as *ABC*, *La Nación* and, particularly, *Informaciones*, popularly known as 'Informaciones-Zeitung' because of its proximity to Nazi Germany and the funding through its embassy in Madrid (Martín Gijón 2020: 272).

4 A Spanish-Cuban woman, Carmen Velacoracho, who repeatedly put her publication at the service of the Nazi Embassy in Madrid, stands out here.

Certainly, most authors stress the limited importance of antisemitism for Spanish fascists prior to the Civil War (Southworth 1967: 34–5; Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1054; Thomàs 1999: 37; Grüttner 2001: 109). *El Fascio*, the first joint publication of the Spanish fascists, did not devote any articles to the topic (but it did, for example, to fascist women). The only brief references in its only issue are found in the article ‘La masonería española republicana’: two mentions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a third, at the end, to the League of Nations.⁵ Antisemitism was not mentioned either in the ‘27 Points of Falange’, the party’s programme approved in 1934 (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 343). Thus, it never became a central discursive topic and lacked any ‘minimal theoretical elaboration’ (Ruiz Carnicer 1996: 203–4).

Still, Falangists never rejected antisemitism either; quite the contrary: they recognised it as an element shared with other fascist movements and positioned themselves as in favour of it. The party’s campaigns argued that Jews were pulling the strings behind international capitalism and that, at the very same time, they were allied with Bolshevism and Freemasonry (González García 2004: 270). However, Spanish fascists mostly distanced themselves from any racist, biologically rooted antisemitism. As they repeatedly argued, their conception of ‘the Jew’ (always in the singular form because there was apparently only one kind of Jew) was rooted in religious and cultural terms, such as were indeed predominant in Spain (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1064–7). According to the Falangist weekly *FE*, ‘for Spain, the Jewish problem is not, nor has it ever been, nor will it ever be a problem of Race, but an article of Faith’.⁶ There were only a few occasional exceptions, such as Félix García Blázquez, a contributor to

5 *El Fascio*, ‘Haz hispano’, 16 March 1933.

6 *FE*, 11 January 1934.

Libertad (the JONS newspaper), who was the only Falangist to elaborate on antisemitism in terms of biological racism and extermination (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 110–11).

It is fruitful to focus more carefully on four of the most prominent figures of pre-war Spanish fascism. The first is José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903–36), Falange’s founder and leader. In the three brief years until his execution in the early stages of the Civil War, he produced a remarkable number of writings and speeches. However, in his *Obras Completas* of 1942, which span over a thousand pages, antisemitism is hardly present: just two mentions are to be found on Karl Marx’s Jewish origin and a further one on ‘Jewish traffickers’ among the Marxist revolutionaries. Primo de Rivera would often speak of the Communist International and the anti-Spanish conspiracy without referencing Jews or Freemasons (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 105).

Secondly, Ernesto Giménez Caballero (1899–1988) is considered the ‘introducer’ of fascism to Spain, and soon became one of Falange’s first theoreticians. A former literary avant-gardist, he moved from his initial philosephardism to explicit antisemitism. In his book *Genio de España* (1932), Giménez Caballero interpreted human history as the struggle of three geniuses: the Eastern, the Western and the Roman. He located the Jews in both the Eastern genius (alongside Communism and collectivising tyranny) and in the Western genius (together with capitalism, individualism and the cult of money). A convinced friend of Italy, which he visited in 1928, he unsurprisingly saw the superior synthesis in the ‘Roman genius’. His antisemitism would be characterised by a ‘violent rejection of Jews and Jewishness’ (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 120). But, perhaps as an Italophile at that time, he expressly opposed Nazi racism: for him, romanity would be ‘anti-racist’ and Spain ‘a

mixture of races' (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 346).⁷

Third, we find Ramiro Ledesma (1905–36), co-founder of JONS and perhaps the most fervent admirer of Nazism among early Spanish fascists. He was deeply immersed in the Nazi rhetoric, advocating social revolution, and mobilising the masses in a national revolution against Marxism and international capitalism, but apparently antisemitism played 'no role' in it (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 341). For example, although Ledesma spoke against 'the voracious pockets of foreign exploiters', he never made explicit reference to Jews, Judaism or Freemasons (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 105). When he addressed Jews at all, it was to justify the first antisemitic measures in Nazi Germany and criticise the subsequent arrival of Jewish refugees in Spain (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 341–2).

Fourth, undoubtedly the most antisemitic among the leading Falangists was Onésimo Redondo, the other co-founder of the JONS. As one of the first editors and main promoters of *The Protocols* in Spain at the beginning of 1932, he is credited with introducing antisemitism to Spanish fascism (Southworth 1967: 34). Redondo had lived in Germany for a time (in 1927–8), but his visceral antisemitism stemmed first and foremost from his deep Catholic religiosity (Tomasoni 2014: 552), as he was indeed the most conservative Catholic among Falange's early leaders. Following the canons of Catholic traditionalism, Redondo traced the origin of the Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy to the eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment. Throughout 1931 and 1932, he wrote several antisemitic articles for *Libertad*, where he discussed the 'Jewish plan tenuously known

and developed by international capitalism in alliance with the secret societies and the international revolution' (quoted after González García 2004: 270). While referring to 'traitors, Germanised, Frenchified, Freemasons and Judaisers', Redondo often resorted to the term 'race', but used it in a cultural sense. However, he did propose that 'shots to the head' should be fired at 'those really responsible' for anti-Spain, specifically 'those guys who fund with Jewish money' the allegedly anti-national publications (quoted after Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 100–3).

Before the Civil War, the Falangist press made several antisemitic references, particularly when discussing other European fascisms (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 342). In early 1934, the party's main periodical *FE* identified antisemitism as 'the most characteristic hallmark of German fascism'⁸ and defined 'the semitic race' as a 'scourge, plague and plundering pestilence of the country, wherever it falls'.⁹ It is no coincidence that these articles were published in the weeks following Primo de Rivera's request to be invited to Berlin, a visit that eventually took place that spring (Viñas 2001: 159–64; Morant i Ariño 2013: 83–103).

Finally, Falangist antisemitism was not limited to rhetoric. Words paved the way for practice, and, at least on two occasions before the Civil War, Spanish fascists took action. After months of antisemitic press campaigns against 'Jewish capitalism' and 'international banking' (certainly no exception in Spain's far-right press), a squad of the party's militia conducted a raid in March 1935 on the SEPU (Sociedad Española de Precios Únicos), Spain's first department store. The store was owned by two Swiss emigrants of Jewish origin: Henry Reisembach and Edouard Worms. Located on one of Madrid's central avenues, Falangists

7 In this regard, it might be interesting to compare Giménez Caballero's theses with the myth of the 'Fourth Humanity' in Brazilian fascism, founded by another former modernist intellectual, Plínio Salgado, the same year as Giménez's *Genius* was published.

8 *FE*, 11 January 1934.

9 *FE*, 19 April 1934.

smashed furniture, shattered shop windows with their truncheons and threatened customers (González García 2004: 271–2). Eleven months later, in the last general elections before the *coup d'état*, Falangists displayed antisemitic propaganda posters in the streets of the Spanish capital (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1054).

The Civil War, 1936–9

In the rebel-controlled areas, the Civil War years witnessed an outburst of antisemitism, accentuating the belief already shared by far-right parties before July 1936 (Rohr 2003: 195; Martín Gijón 2010: 64). Nationalist Spain relentlessly resorted to conspiracy theories to explain and justify the Civil War. Moreover, antisemitism quickly gained ground as an element of this argumentation (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 125; Rodríguez Jiménez 2007: 248). All political cultures interpreted the war as a 'Crusade', a patriotic reaction against an allegedly imminent takeover by Jews, Freemasons and Bolsheviks (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1057). But it was not just the Civil War: the conspiracist aspect of antisemitism could explain all the political and social changes that Spain had undergone since 1917, if not since 1812, that is, with the emergence of Spanish liberalism. Incorporating European patterns of antisemitism, Jews were conceptualised both as Communists and capitalists, and portrayed as evil, if not monstrous, in caricatures (Ojeda 2006: 67; Weisz & Rein 2021: 53). Under the label of 'Jews' could be amalgamated, as different components of the same conspiracy, not only all the forces loyal to the republic, but also anyone outside Spain who was not aggressively in favour of Franco's rebels. It did not matter whether it was Great Britain ruled by a conservative government, or Catholic intellectuals as unsuspecting as Jacques Maritain or Georges Bernanos. Among nearly all rebel forces, the antisemitic myth not only became a commonplace but was also used as a war weapon to

mobilise the population in the rebel-controlled areas (Álvarez Chillida 2004: 165–8; Rohr 2003: 202–4 & 2010: 102).

At least three reasons explain this outbreak of conspiracist antisemitism. Firstly, a deep-rooted Catholic tradition had popularised in Spain a stereotypical image of 'the Jew' long before 1936. Secondly, the sudden seizure of power by extreme far-right forces, which, prior to the coup were, if anything, secondary in Spanish politics, a phenomenon shared by Norway during the German occupation (see Karcher & Simonsen's contribution in this special issue). Thirdly, the rapidly growing influence of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in Nationalist Spain after the putsch: on the one hand, Nazism came to replace Italian Fascism as Falange's main political reference, making Spanish fascists even more receptive to German propaganda and further increasing their antisemitic hostility.¹⁰ On the other hand, Fascism also played a role after Italy officially became antisemitic in 1938. Moreover, from 1936 onwards the conspiracy myth was able to develop its third essential function: the moral justification of the rebels' actions. Compared with the danger of 'anti-Spain', even a *coup d'état* that had provoked a civil war, unhinged unlimited repression and would cause hundreds of thousands of deaths, wounded and refugees could be presented as 'the lesser evil' (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1070; Rodríguez Jiménez 2007: 248–50; Rohr 2003: 195; Rohr 2010: 115).

As Álvarez Chillida has pointed out, each political culture contributed its own antisemitic vision, with nuances that denoted important aspects of their respective ideologies (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 131). For Carlists (with

10 And, as Bauerkämper argued (2006: 176–7), in many fascist movements of the mid-1930s, the accentuation of antisemitism reflected their rapprochement with Nazism.

a markedly traditionalist Catholicism), the Jews were the murderers of Christ and a deicidal people. Antisemitic ideas were disseminated through speeches by prominent personalities, publications and, above all, the press (Álvarez Chillida 1996: 1058; Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 125). Against this already antisemitic backdrop, reactionary intellectuals who, before the war, had collaborated with Acción Española stood out (Rohr 2003: 200). Some authors even reached 'delirious extremes', as in the case of Juan Pujol (1883–1967), who wrote for *ABC*, from Sevilla, the most important non-fascist newspaper in the rebel zone. Another example, from the literary field, is the monarchist José María Pemán (1897–1981), who included numerous arguments from *The Protocols* in his 1938 *Poema de la Bestia y el Ángel* (Martín Gijón 2010: 64; Martín Gijón 2020: 283–4).

For their part, Falangists did not lag behind, perhaps because – as we have seen – their antisemitism had not been very prominent until 1936, and now they had more ground to make up. In fact, for historians such as Rodríguez Jiménez (2004: 125), Falangist antisemitism stood out the most compared to the pre-Civil War period. Its first expressions came early and were forceful, already in the first weeks after the coup. At the end of July, Falange's new interim leader (as Primo de Rivera remained in jail in Republican Spain), Manuel Hedilla (1902–70), exhorted his comrades to 'persecute and destroy Judaism, Freemasonry and separatism'. By way of justification, Hedilla saw in Poland 'the worst of misfortunes', for 'three million Jews live there, and if one Jew is already abominable, that number must produce fetid miasmas in the military and Catholic air of Poland' (quoted from Lazo 1989: 242). Falange's newspapers in Spain were quick to spread antisemitic content. Exactly two weeks after the coup, *Arriba España* carried Hedilla's words as a slogan (Álvarez Chillida 2004: 167–8), just one of the 'frequent antisemitic outbursts' that

would characterise this Falangist newspaper from Pamplona during the following years (Martín Gijón 2020: 284).

Five weeks later, on 9 September 1936, *Amanecer*, the Falange's newspaper in Zaragoza, presented 'Judaism, Freemasonry, Marxism and separatism' as 'the enemies of national Spain united in a terrible conspiracy' (quoted from Romero 2019: 302). As typical fascist rhetoric against big capital, these discourses tended to include Jews, depicting them as bankers and usurers who viciously exploited the humble Spanish worker (Álvarez Chillida 2002: 131). An example can be found in *Amanecer*, which in January 1937 defined the Jew as 'he who has no other God but his (and other people's) money' (quoted from Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 127). Álvarez Chillida (2007b: 93) attributes this accentuated antisemitic turn in the Falange to the 'strong influence of Nazi propaganda'. However, it is worth noting that these early outbursts had already developed before the German propaganda apparatus was installed in Spain.

Nazi propaganda reached rebel Spain only a few months after the *coup d'état*. With official diplomatic recognition in November 1936, Hitler ordered his new ambassador to Franco, Wilhelm Faupel, to take two men with him: one for propaganda issues, and the other for relations with the Falange. A 'special staff' (Sonderstab) was quickly set up in Salamanca, the first rebel capital, attached to the embassy but dependent on Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry.¹¹ Francoist newspapers began publishing more and more news based on material supplied directly by the official press agencies of Germany and Italy, the

11 On Nazi Propaganda in Spain during the Civil War and the Second World War, see respectively Schulze Schneider 2004 and 1995, although – curiously enough while dealing with such a topic – none of the texts paid any attention to antisemitism.

Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro and the Agenzia Stefani. With the material sent directly from Berlin, much of it translated into Spanish, ‘important contingents of Nazi-style antisemitic propaganda’ began then to enter rebel Spain, highlighting, for example, the alleged role that Jews played in events such as the 1918 Revolution in Germany (González-Albo 2022: 131, 802–4).

In turn, in early 1937, the Falange’s newly created Foreign Exchange and Propaganda Section established direct contacts with Nazi newspapers, such as the *Völkischer Beobachter*,¹² the main press organ of the NSDAP, and *Das Schwarze Korps*, the SS weekly.¹³ Another publication was *Der Stürmer*, whose antisemitism stood out even in the German press landscape of the time. With around 400,000 copies, the newspaper was essentially a monothematic publication focusing on the ‘struggle against the Jews’, featuring ‘brutal attacks’ and ‘radical appeals for extermination’ well before 1939 (Frei & Schmitz 1989: 104–6). Moreover, as Sofie Lene Bak and Lars M. Andersson underline in their contributions on Danish Nazis and Swedish fascists in this issue, *Der Stürmer* was also an inescapable point of reference for antisemites across borders. And, as Graham Macklin explains in his contribution, its editor, Julius Streicher, was also in contact with British antisemites. The newspaper’s

- 12 Exchange Section of the Jefatura Nacional de Prensa y Propaganda de Falange Española, to the editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter* (Munich), 5 December 1937; in Archivo General de la Administración (AGA, Alcalá de Henares, Fondo ‘Ministerio de la Presidencia del Gobierno’ (09), Delegación Nacional del Servicio Exterior (17.12), Signature 51/20891, File ‘Año 1937 (1936). Prensa extranjera. Correspondencia’.
- 13 Falange’s Exchange Section to *Das Schwarze Korps* (Berlin), 17 March 1937; in AGA (09)17.12, 51/20891, File ‘Año 1937 (1936). Prensa extranjera. Correspondencia’.

foreign editor, Paul Wurm, quickly accepted the proposal and even sent some copies of back issues. In addition, he took the opportunity to ask the Falange to contribute to ‘deepening the knowledge of the Jewish question’ in Spain. To this end, he resorted precisely to the interpretation of the Civil War as part of an international Jewish conspiracy:

The Jewish question is a global issue and not a single people’s issue. You are particularly qualified to write about it, as you are seeing the effects among your people most strongly. In the struggle against world Jewry, the enemy of all peoples with culture, we wish you success and a speedy victory.¹⁴

Just a month later, in a further attempt to introduce Nazi arguments into Falange’s antisemitism, the Sonderstab sent, among numerous propaganda materials, 250 copies of a study on ‘the Jewish mentality’.¹⁵ And soon afterwards, in early April 1937, the Sonderstab asked a senior Falangist leader to send over several copies of a pamphlet entitled *Los judíos en España y el Decreto de Expulsión* (1937), a recent lecture by

- 14 Paul Wurm to the Falange’s Exchange Section, 19 February 1937; in AGA (09)17.12, 51/20891, File ‘Año 1937 (1936). Prensa extranjera. Correspondencia’. Closely related to his role at *Der Stürmer*, Wurm was a figure close to *Welt-Dienst* and, moreover, head of the World Anti-Jewish League (Antijüdische Weltliga), which was responsible for establishing personal contacts and antisemitic networks beyond German borders (Brechtken 1998: 72–4). Wurm had previously been in contact with Vidkun Quisling: In 1934/1935, he had sent him copies of *Der Stürmer*, which contributed to the latter’s antisemitic radicalisation (Hoffmann 2001: 259).
- 15 Carlos Meyer (Sonderstab) to Manuel Solana, 14 March 1937; in AGA (09)17.12, 51/20891, File ‘Año 1937 (1936). Prensa extranjera. Correspondencia’.

José María González de Echavarrí. A Carlist and the rector of the University of Valladolid, the pamphlet's author described 'the Jews' as 'the invaders of Spain' and complained about the 'shameful hegemony of Jewish leaders', both in the United States and the Soviet Union (Martín Gijón 2020: 286). The Sonderstab member found the text to be 'a subject of great interest [...] very useful to me'.¹⁶ Just a few days later, on 19 April, Franco ordered the forced merger of the fascist party with all other political forces of rebel Spain (Carlists, reactionary nationalists etc.) into the Spanish Traditionalist Falange and of the Councils of National-Syndicalist Offensive (Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista, FET-JONS). The Unification Decree resulted in a new single party that profoundly changed the nature of Falange.

Fascism's influence was certainly minor, but it did play a role. In 1938, Italy proclaimed antisemitism as official doctrine and adopted its own antisemitic legislation. Despite subsequent frictions with the Catholic Church and especially the Vatican, newspapers in Franco's Spain showed their 'full support' through laudatory opinion articles. In the enthusiastic antisemitic campaign that followed, *ABC* stood out through the chronicles sent by its correspondent in Rome, the Falangist César González Ruano (González-Albo 2022: 632, 703). In fact, antisemitic laws had been preceded in Italy by a very intense press campaign accusing Jews of being at the head of the Bolshevik Revolution, of being responsible for the Spanish Civil War and of being one of the main economic supporters of the Republic (González García 1987; González García 1988; Pérez Guillén

2014). On 10 September 1938, while tensions arose in Europe, *Amanecer* echoed an article from an Italian magazine (referred to as 'La Correspondenza' [*sic*]), highlighting the alleged overlap between Freemasons and Jews: not only would Freemasonry draw 'some of its formulas from Jewish rites', but '40 per cent of militant Jews' belonged to it, who also happened to be its 'most active and confident' members (quoted from Morales Ruiz 2004: 148–9). Two months later, on 30 November, and as part of an ambitious exchange programme between Italian and Spanish university organisations, the Falangist *Haz*, the bi-weekly of the Sindicato Español Universitario, published a double-page translation of 'Art and Judaism: dangerous deviations', an article from the October issue of *Roma Fascista* on the relationship between Judaism and artistic modernity based on conspiracy theories.¹⁷

The post-Civil and World War years, 1939–45

In early 1939, the remnants of the Republic crumbled, and, on 1 April, the Civil War officially came to an end. The Italian press presented the occupation of Madrid as the final victory of fascism, but by then the Francoist press had begun to speak of 'Berlin–Rome–Madrid [as] the triangle of the future'.¹⁸ In just a month, Germany had occupied Prague, the Spanish Republic had been defeated and Italy had invaded Albania. The prevailing sentiment was of an acceleration of history in favour of fascism. In Franco's 'New State', antisemitism constituted a consensus within the dictatorship's political culture, to the extent

16 Hans Kröger (Sonderstab) to Javier Martínez de Bedoya (National Secretary of the Auxilio de Invierno), 16 April 1937; in AGA, Fondo 'Cultura' (03), Delegación Nacional del Auxilio Social (122), box 2052A.

17 Amor Bavaj (Italian Royal Press Attaché, Spain) to Ministry of Popular Culture (Rome), 11 December 1938; in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS, Rome), Fondo Ministero della Cultura Popolare, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, box 205.

18 *ABC*, 11 February 1939.

that Rodríguez Jiménez (2004: 125) defined conspiracy theory as ‘the official doctrine of the regime’, playing a crucial role, especially in the early years, because of antisemitic radicalisation and its wide dissemination through the Francoist press (Grüttner 2001; Álvarez Chillida 1996: 38). As propaganda, the myth proved highly effective. While keeping the external enemy ‘alive’ (Communist, Freemason, Jew, now presented as more dangerous than ever), it facilitated internal discipline within the ‘New Spain’ and, not least, helped to close ranks around the figure of the dictator (Rodríguez Jiménez 2007: 248–50).

With the invasion of Poland, Spanish fascism expressed its enthusiasm for German military victories, and the pro-Nazi stance of its writers became even more pronounced. Following the unexpected collapse of France, antisemitism in the party’s press reached its peak. Antisemitic comments proliferated, with three of the main newspapers – *Arriba*, *Libertad* and *Pueblo* – among the most enthusiastic (Martín Gijón 2020: 289; Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 127; Álvarez Chillida 2007b: 186). Suddenly, however, almost every reference to Judaeo-Bolshevism disappeared: for over a year, until the summer of 1941, ‘the Jew’ was depicted only as the democrat, the plutocrat, the greedy capitalist behind Western democracies,¹⁹ just as described by Nicola Karcher and Kjetil Braut Simonsen for Norway in their contribution to this special issue. This illustrates the interrelation between internal and external developments, that is, between Falangist discourse, international politics and German interests. Additionally, the Spanish press not only engaged eagerly

19 A pattern shared by Nazi antisemitic propaganda in general (Herf 2008: 64 ff.) and, at least, also in the Norwegian case (see related references to the weekly *Hirdmannen* in Karcher’s and Simonsen’s contribution).

in detail regarding the antisemitic legislation that was being imposed in Germany, its occupied territories and its allies, but also expressed favourable opinions, not just as something justifiable, but also as something the Jews supposedly deserved (Lazo 1995).

Once again, Falange stood out in its pro-Nazi antisemitism. As usual, the pages of *Arriba* constituted a ‘constant panegyric of Hitler’, a compendium of fascist rhetoric highlighting Falange’s identification with Germany (Martín Gijón 2010: 65). A brief examination of the newspaper during the period between the fall of France and the Normandy landings reveals a significant number of eulogies (at least forty, almost one per month) discussing the deteriorating situation of Jews in Europe. They were presented as big capitalists,²⁰ smugglers,²¹ swindlers,²² criminals,²³ and in the case of Bohemia and Moravia – literally – as ‘guilty of the situation’,²⁴ hoarders,²⁵ cowardly deserters,²⁶ ‘stateless and undesirable’,²⁷ ‘counterfeiters’,²⁸ allies of the Bolsheviks and ‘Communist agitators’,²⁹ and, at the same time, ‘rich’.³⁰ Very similar to the patterns described by Sofie Lene Bak for *National-Socialisten* in Denmark in her contribution to this special issue, Spanish fascism always depicted Jews as threatening, outlaws (or, at least, outside the bounds of morality), with the clear intention of ‘instilling in the reader the idea of Jewish “dangerousness”’, as Lazo (1989: 237–8) observed for *FE*, in Seville.

20 *Arriba*, 7 November 1940.

21 *Arriba*, 8 February 1941.

22 *Arriba*, 26 April 1941.

23 *Arriba*, 16 May 1941.

24 *Arriba*, 2 October 1941.

25 *Arriba*, 1 November 1941, and 3 September 1943.

26 *Arriba*, 8 January 1942.

27 *Arriba*, 13 September 1942.

28 *Arriba*, 7 January 1943.

29 *Arriba*, 20 June 1943, and 1 August 1943.

30 *Arriba*, 21 April 1944.

This portrayal not only aimed to present or prepare for the supposed justification for punishment against Jews, but some journalists even called for harsher measures. *Arriba*'s editorials, always on the front page, were particularly more significant because they tended to accompany any reference to Jews with insults (Martín Gijón 2020: 289–90). In one of its pieces, entitled 'The ballast of Europe', *Arriba* not only rejected any mercy for Jews attempting to escape from Europe, but also suggested that the ships carrying these fleeing 'enemies of Spain' should be sunk:

No. It is impossible that, faced with the spectacle of the definitive defeat of the enemies of Spain and of true European unity, we can show a gesture of commiseration, forgetfulness or even contempt. These are our longstanding enemies, those who interpreted and encouraged hatreds and divergences of a religious, economic, political and geographical nature. The passengers of the Clipper are our constant enemies. And it is only natural that we should wish them the fate deserved by those who tried to take away our reason and our way of being Spanish. [Quoted according to Martín Gijón 2020: 289]

When reading this, it should be borne in mind that, as Lazo (1989: 233) asserted in the case of Seville, the antisemitism of these publications was voluntary and conscious, not at all imposed by the censorship apparatus of the Francoist state. In fact, the news item just quoted was no one-off excess: five months later, the same newspaper – the main press organ of Spanish fascism – published, on its front page, that 'A ship full of Jews runs aground in the Black Sea. Confidence in saving the ship', without any kind of lamentation – if not with evident contempt – for the

loss of human lives.³¹ Although the historian Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrio (2021) does not detect antisemitism to be a priority in the close Nazi–Falangist collaboration, she suggests the possibility that this kind of news was drawn from material supplied by the German embassy. While Falange publications ('all of them, without exception') maintained their antisemitism throughout the Second World War, Lazo (1989: 243) does detect different phases: 1939–40 (until France's fall), 1940–3 (until Mussolini's destitution) and 1943–5. It was the second, the years of the National Socialist New Europe, that saw the 'greatest fervour' in Falangist antisemitism.

In addition to the regular repetition of the conspiracy myth in the press, specific publishing houses specialised in printing antisemitic books (Rodríguez Jiménez 2007: 252). Not surprisingly, in the same way that the German embassy in Denmark financed the Nazi publication *Kamptegnnet* (see Bak's contribution in this issue), the embassy in Madrid financed several publishing houses, such as Editorial Rubiños, Ediciones Antisectarias and Ediciones Toledo, featuring the prominent Falangist and antisemitic author Francisco Ferrari Billoch.³² In 1940 alone, Editorial Rubiños published three 'pamphletary works' of Germanophilia with antisemitic overtones (*¿Por qué lucha Alemania?* and *Cuando Inglaterra se quedó sola*, both by José Joaquín Estrada; and *Europa resucita: la guerra de hoy. Los secretos de la gran lucha*, by Félix Cuquerella and Antonio Alcalá-Galiano). Until 1943, Rubiños continued to publish at least three more specifically antisemitic books: *El problema judío*, *La dominación de los judíos en Inglaterra* and *La garra del capitalismo judío* (Palmero 2016: 199–205; Martín Gijón 2020: 289–90). Likewise, the

31 *Arriba*, 17 February 1941.

32 On the latter two, see Domínguez Arribas (2009), chapters 4 and 6.

German embassy financed the Spanish version of Henry Ford's *The International Jew*, with several reprints (Botti 1999: 720). As explained by Graham Macklin in his contribution to this special issue, this publication had a profound impact on antisemitic circles across the Atlantic and was also quickly circulated among British antisemitic groups. Another publication financed by the German embassy was *Poemas de la Alemania eterna*, a collection by the Falangist Federico de Urrutia. In its pages, alongside a fascination for Nazi Germany's supposed superiority, a 'total identification' with its antisemitic vision, including its racial postulates was assumed (Martín Gijón 2010: 65–75).

It was indeed the 'heyday' of antisemitism with a Nazi matrix in Spain (Botti 1999: 720). However, biological argumentation did not prevail in Spanish antisemitism, not even among Falangists. Certainly, the party's publications and speeches did evince a 'racist verbiage' and fervent support for the racism evident in other fascisms. However, Falange did not develop its own antisemitic racism: it remained clearly antisemitic but, at the same time, did so while being ambiguously racist. According to Lazo (1989: 242–51), Spanish fascism tried to elaborate a less anecdotal antisemitism compared to the broader Francoist press. Its doctrinal and theoretical aspirations were intended to bring a 'colder', more 'scientific' approach to readers, potentially making its articles much harsher. In the case of *FE*, almost half (49,5 per cent) of the news items classified as antisemitic had a racial basis, a tendency Lazo attributes to the party's emulation of Nazism. However, Spanish fascists never explicitly defined what they understood by 'Judaism', leaving their criteria of militant antisemitism unclear. In fact, Falangism thrived on ambiguity, with confusion prevailing, sometimes revealing contradictions within the same news item or even paragraph. Whenever an argument seemed

to support the racist criterion, a prompt clarification followed: in Spanish, the argumentation suggested that the concept of 'race' was grounded in spiritual or moral aspects, so it could not mean the same as in other countries. This nuance can be traced back, once again, to the significant influence of Catholicism and, above all, to the anti-racist stance of the Church hierarchy, which remained decidedly antisemitic, at least until 1943.³³ Thus, the divergence between Falangist and Catholic publications lay primarily in the basis of their respective antisemitic argumentation, rather than the intensity of their virulence.

What is also surprising about all these publications is the absence of antisemitic references to Spain itself at the time. Jews were consistently presented as external and alien. There was even a certain pride in the belief that Spain, by resolving the 'Jewish problem' in 1492, had the honour of preceding many other countries. Indeed, Falangist antisemitism was not directed against specific Jews, nor against the few who remained in the country after 1939, but rather targeted an abstract 'international Judaism' (Lazo 1989: 238; Grüttner 2001: 113; Álvarez Chillida 2004: 165–6).³⁴ In fact, most of the remaining Jewish population in the peninsula was concentrated in Madrid and Barcelona, and was not systematically persecuted, or subjected to any specific legislative measures based on racial motivation (Álvarez Chillida 2007a: 205; Rodríguez Jiménez 2007:

33 This pattern of non-racist antisemitism, while at the same time trying to keep distance from Nazism's racist antisemitism, can also be found in the influential Catholic press in inter-war Poland (Landau-Czajka 2004).

34 In this regard, the Falangists acted very differently from their Swedish 'comrades' during the Second World War. As Lars M. Andersson highlights in his contribution to this special issue, *Hammaren* asked its readers to identify 'Jews' and report them to the journal.

252). On the contrary, the other ‘part’ of the alleged conspiracy, the Freemasons, faced a harsh, systematic persecution, which usually claimed the lives of many of them as soon as they fell into Francoist hands (Álvarez Chillida 2007b: 192–4).

However, the end of the Civil War did bring about a radical change for Spain’s Jewish population. After Franco’s victory, the Expulsion Decree from 1492 (which had been repealed by the Republic) was *de facto* reinstated and the ‘New State’ came to regard Jews as ‘real enemies and a danger’. As such, they suffered hostility, discrimination and attacks, until at least 1943. The effects have been described as ‘very strong’ and ‘very negative’ by experts such as Marquina (2014: 164). The Barcelona synagogue was burned in 1939 and, along with the Madrid synagogue, closed. A year later, Jewish celebrations and rites (circumcision, bar and bat mitzvahs, marriages) were banned, while Catholic instruction at schools, communion and ecclesiastical marriage were made compulsory. Repeatedly, conversions were forced through baptism, and some people were dismissed from their jobs or separated from their families. In practice, it meant the return of to an underground life for Spain’s Jewish population (Álvarez Chillida 2004: 176; Grüttner 2001: 112; González-Albo 2022: 137–8).

The climate of hostility crystallised into special police vigilance. While in 1938 Franco’s rebel government had already created two special departments to persecute ‘Freemasonry’ and ‘Judaism’, a year later the dreaded Directorate General of Security (Dirección General de Seguridad, DGS), under the Ministry of the Interior, created a special brigade specifically responsible for controlling Jews, regardless of their nationality. Their identity cards were stamped with the word ‘Jew’. In May 1941, the DGS asked all provincial governors to draw up reports on ‘activities of a Jewish character’. The resulting files were used to create the so-called

Jewish Archive (Archivo Judaico), which functioned as a register of all Jewish residents until 1944 (Rodríguez Jiménez 2007: 252–4). Two things should not be forgotten in considering the potential of these measures. On the one hand, from June 1940 to October 1943, Spain was officially not a neutral country, but only ‘non-belligerent’ in the Second World War. On the other hand, since late 1937, a police collaboration agreement with Nazi Germany was enforced to combat ‘Communism’ (Whealey 1989: 67), and as we have already seen this was defined in broad and flexible terms by Francoists.

After the turning point of the Second World War in 1943, not only did the intensity of published antisemitism diminish, but the situation of the Jewish population also began to improve. The change was noticeable in the non-Falangist press, especially in the publications closest to the Church. Antisemitism became less and less visible in its pages, and the most obviously antisemitic contributors (such as González Ruano in the monarchist *ABC*) were removed. Meanwhile, the more Germanophile journalists and writers – including the Falangist ones – hid their earlier fascination. Nevertheless, the party’s newspapers clung to the antisemitic language and maintained practically until the war’s end, and without a single criticism, their support for antisemitic persecution in Europe (Lazo 1989 & 1999: 20; Martín Gijón 2010: 75; González-Albo 2022: 805). Until D-Day, *Arriba* enthusiastically reported that the ‘Jewish problem’ was in the process of being ‘solved’ in Europe. According to its headlines: ‘Romania will solve the Jewish problem with all its CONSEQUENCES’,³⁵ ‘The Jewish problem is the starting point of French policy.

35 *Arriba*, 17 March 1943; capital letters, in the original.

Measures to solve it',³⁶ or 'The new Hungarian government has taken care of the Jewish problem'.³⁷ It was the same unconditional antisemitism that the most uncompromising Swedish national socialists showed in the last years of the Second World War. As explained by Lars M. Andersson in his contribution to this special issue, *Hammaren* warned in 1944 against any concession, let alone any compromise on the 'Jewish question'.

Even after Spain returned to official neutrality in October 1943, Falangist resistance to Franco's shifting away from Nazi Germany persisted. A month later, the National Leader of the SEU (Falange's Students Union) complained to the party's Minister-Secretary about the censorship to which the party itself was subjecting both *Haz* and *Juventud*, its two main publications. To demonstrate the absurdity of such censorship, the SEU leader pointed out that one of the articles removed was 'against the Jews', another against Soviet education and a third was a text by a German artist. In the end, he warned, it was 'seriously dangerous for the education of Spanish university students' to conceal 'those problems which, affecting the national core and the national being, must be exposed with all the necessary crudeness and without appeasement or softness'.³⁸ From the subject matter of the three articles in *Haz* and *Juventud*, it was clear that the SEU leader considered anti-Communism, antisemitism and Germanophilia to be essential components of Spanish youth training. Finally, although public displays of loyalty to Nazi Germany became less and less frequent, *Y*, the monthly of the Sección Femenina (the Women's Section, another of Falange's most staunchly Nazi-friendly organisations), continued publishing

propaganda on Germany's economic and technical capacity throughout 1944 and the first half of 1945, probably funded by the embassy in Madrid. This included advertisements for a well-known moth-proofing product called Eulan, manufactured by the IG Farbenindustrie, a concern with a branch in Auschwitz-Birkenau until the very end (Winkler 2000: 95).³⁹ Falangist women's loyalty to Nazi Germany went so far that the last advertisement for IG Farben's insecticide still appeared in their June issue, weeks after Germany had already surrendered but, at the same time, also after the first – though very partial – news about the extermination camps had appeared in the Spanish press.

From the last stages of the war, the Spanish press showed 'much reluctance' (Martín Gijón 2020: 296) to report on the discovery of the extermination camps. And, on the rare occasions that it did, it hushed up the fact that their main victims had been Jews.⁴⁰ The same tactic was used in the only Francoist film newsreel (known as *No-Do*), which showed images of the Buchenwald and Belsen camps. In fact, *Arriba*, which had been, at the very least, silent about the Shoah for years, took exactly fifteen days after the war's end to mention the persecution of the Jews, accusing a Soviet Communist of having killed 900.⁴¹ This 'clamorous silence' of the Spanish press (González-Albo 2022: 803) would make it easier, still in 1945, for someone like Ismael Herráiz – deputy editor and later editor of *Arriba* – to deny, in his book *Europa a oscuras*, the evidence of the Shoah and justify Nazi antisemitic policy. The foundations of Spanish denialism were thus laid from a very early stage (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 128–9).

36 *Arriba*, 13 October 1943.

37 *Arriba*, 29 March 1944.

38 Carlos María de Valcárcel to José Luis Arrese, 11 November 1943, in AGA (09), 17.2, 51/18974.

39 *Y. Revista para la Mujer*, February 1945 and June 1945.

40 *Ya*, 25 April 1945, and *ABC*, 26 April 1945.

41 *Arriba*, 22 May 1945.

Concluding remarks

Falangist antisemitism did not end in May 1945 and was not then limited to rhetoric alone. On 18 July, after attending events to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the *coup d'état*, a group of 15 to 20 Falangists (some of them veterans from the so-called Blue Division, the Spanish military unit in the Wehrmacht fighting against the Soviet Union) stormed the headquarters of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Barcelona, located in the Bristol Hotel. Led by Dr Samuel Sequerra, who had arrived in 1941 from the Jewish community of Lisbon, the Committee facilitated the transit abroad of those fleeing Nazi Europe, for example a few hundred Jewish children from France (Rother 2001: 126–7). The assailants, perfectly organised, occupied the telephone switchboard as soon as they entered the hotel. While some guarded the main door, the others gathered the staff in the same room to keep them under control. They then went straight up to the rooms that they knew in advance belonged to the Jewish organisation: there they smashed the furniture, threw inkwells against the walls, opened the drawers and files, and scattered their contents across the room. When the police finally arrived, they arrested only two Falangists, who had stayed behind to interrogate two hotel workers, perhaps to try to find out the whereabouts of Sequerra, absent during the raid.⁴²

As Nicola Karcher and Kjetil Simonsen highlight in their article in this special issue on the Norwegian case, conspiracy theories are never harmless. One only need look at what

happened in Norway when a fascist minority came to power, backed by German bayonets during the Nazi occupation. Events such as the raid on the Joint Committee or the strict police surveillance and registration of Spain's Jewish community in 1941 seem to indicate that, as some authors have already pointed out (Rodríguez Jiménez 2004: 128; Martín Gijón 2010: 76), if the Second World War had ended differently, the profound antisemitism that characterised the political cultures of the Franco dictatorship – perhaps then even more influenced by Nazi racism – could have left the realm of rhetoric without great difficulty. As the examples presented in this article show, the doctrinal basis existed and the distance from words to deeds was not very large.

During Francoism's remaining decades, conspiratorial antisemitism became a frequent political resource. Whenever the dictatorship faced a major political crisis, the conspiracy myth confirmed its functional character. This was the case around 1945, when the regime (and even more the Falange) feared for their own political survival after the defeat of the fascist powers in the Second World War. The pattern was repeated in 1962 when, following the meeting in Germany of left-wing and monarchist opponents, many of them former enemies during the Civil War, the leading Falangist newspaper spoke of the 'Munich Conspiracy'. And it came to the forefront once again in the final crisis of the dictatorship in the 1970s, of which Franco's speech at the beginning of this article is perhaps the best-known example. Conspiracist antisemitism ran as a red thread through the whole Franco dictatorship. ■

42 Aide Memoire de la US Embassy in Madrid to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 July 1945, and Classified Report by the Spanish Minister of Interior, Blas Pérez, to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 September 1945; both, in Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (Madrid), R-1468/26.

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