



# **Remedying past injustices: study on the legal and political aspects of the Jewish communities in Spain**

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I hereby declare, that all the data used in this work, have been obtained and processed according to the rules of the academic ethics as well as the laws that govern research and intellectual property. I also declare that, according to the above mentioned rules, I quote and refer to the sources of all the data used and not constituting the product of my own original work.

Pablo Pérez Fernández

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'P' followed by a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*The captives of this army of the children of Israel,  
who are among the Canaanites, will possess even to  
Zarephath; and the captives of Jerusalem, who are in  
Sepharad, will possess the cities of the Negev.*

**The Book of Obadiah 1:20**

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## Preface

In the autumn of 2015, after over two years away from Spain, where I am originally from, I arrived in Thessaloniki to pursue my postgraduate studies at the University of Macedonia. Some weeks later, as I wandered around the centre of my new city, I found a plaque on the façade of a building on Agiou Mina street which read *Museo Djudio de Salonik*. The inscription, written in Ladino, made me understand that I was not only before a regular Jewish Museum, but most probably, before a Sephardic one. Moved by curiosity, I entered the museum that very day, and learnt that for centuries Thessaloniki had been home to the largest community of Sephardic Jews in the world. And there I was, a Spaniard, just like the ancestors of those Sephardim, in Thessaloniki, just like them, although the circumstances of our exile were obviously different. Months passed by and my visits to the aforementioned museum became more frequent, my knowledge of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki before World War II and the Holocaust deepened, my understanding of the history of these people and their journey since they were expelled from Spain enhanced, and my first acquaintances with Sephardic Jews, even though they were not from Greece, were made.

By the end of the academic year, when the time to decide the topic of my master's dissertation came, the Sephardic question was one of the first subjects to attract my attention, for I already had a strong interest in this community and its evolution, and I felt that I was in the right place to conduct a study of such characteristics. Furthermore, at around the same time, various pieces of legislation regarding the status of the Sephardim were passed in Spain, thus providing me with a more recent argument to include in my dissertation if I eventually opted for following that line of study. And that is the way it all started. After holding different meetings with my academic supervisor, Doctor Kalliopi Chainoglou, we agreed on adopting both a political and legal approach to the Jewish question, for Politics and Law are intimately connected. Moreover, we decided to cover the period going from 1492, when the Edict of Expulsion was signed by the Catholic monarchs, to 2016, when the last Royal Decree regarding the naturalisation of Jews in Spain was enacted.

Since the summer of 2016, therefore, I have devoted myself to the documentation and production of the present study, which has constituted an arduous process. There are several points that I would like to highlight and many people I would like to thank.

Given the considerable extension of the historical period studied, which comprises over 600 years, the amount of documents I have needed to go through has been immense. Nevertheless, it has been the selection of the books and not their amount what has presented the greatest difficulty for the documentation of the present dissertation. To start with, and considering the hardness of finding an accurate and exhaustive bibliography, I had to contact the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España, the principal Jewish institution of the country which, while on the subject will be referred to again later, and several scholars that specialise in Judaism and its relation with Spain. One of these scholars, and probably the person I owe the most for this work, is Davide Aliberti, Doctor in Hispanic Studies from the Université d'Aix-Marseille and the Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale, and researcher at Casa de Velázquez. For months, he has collaborated with me by suggesting numerous works of reference about the Sephardim and their legal and political role, including his own, although this one has not been published yet, and clarifying any doubt I could have.

Once the bibliographical list was more or less completed, I had to get access to the books on it. However, since most of the books that I needed were in Spanish and printed only, it was impossible for me to purchase them in Greece, and I needed my family to buy them in Spain and bring them to me during a Balkan trip we did in November. Additionally, as many other books that I needed to consult on a daily basis were fairly old and, as a result, several of them, including *España y los judíos en el siglo XX* by Antonio Marquina and Gloria Inés Ospina, had been discontinued years ago, they could not be purchased on the internet or in the public bookshops of my region, so I had to wait until the Christmas holidays to go to certain second-hand bookshops in Madrid and buy them myself.

Nonetheless, the books mainly helped me at a historical level, for, as I just said, they had been written years ago and covered the events that had unfolded up to the 20th century. In order to access more recent studies, I had to carry out an online research that, together with the wise suggestions of Doctor Aliberti and other scholars I contacted, led me to the finding

of shorter papers of a magnificent quality and a tremendous relevance for my own study, such as *La ciudadanía española y los sefardíes: entidades legitimadoras, ideologías étnicas y derechos políticos*, written by Maite Ojeda Mata. In any case, even this last paper was published in 2015, before the passing of the Law 12/2015 and the above mentioned Royal Decree of 2016, which meant that I required an alternative in order to gather up-to-date information.

This alternative, which has included both personal interviews and electronic correspondence, has undoubtedly been the most interesting one, for I have been able to gather firsthand information from people who have been working with the Jewish question for a significant part of their lives, and from actual Sephardic Jews.

With regard to the personal interviews, I have held or tried to hold three of them. The first one, took place in early January of 2017 in Casa Velázquez, in Madrid, Spain, and the interviewee was Doctor Davide Aliberti, whom I eventually had the pleasure to meet in person. During this interview, I assembled valuable information about the effectiveness of the recent Spanish pieces of legislation and the criticism these had received from certain Jewish personalities. The second interview was granted to me a couple of days later by María de Miguel, the Activities Coordinator of the Centro Sefarad-Israel, an institution established in the city centre of Madrid devoted to the enhancement of the relations between Spain and the State of Israel. Since she had lived in Thessaloniki herself, she showed a genuine sympathy for me since we first met and did not doubt to share with me the contact details of multiple Sephardic Jews, both occupying public positions and being private citizens, that could help me in more depth. In addition, she assisted me in finding some more relevant articles for my dissertation and recommended me to the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España so that they could give me an official version of the entire matter. The third and last interview did not take place in the end. In the course of another of my visits to the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki in early February of 2017, I asked a member of the staff about the possibility of being granted an interview by a member of the Sephardic community of the city, and I was told to go to the headquarters of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, on Vasileos Irakleiou street. I intended to hear the testimony of a Sephardic Jew who was not in Spain and planned to apply for the Spanish nationality, or else, who knew someone who did.

Additionally, I wanted to learn the official opinion of a Jewish institution abroad. When I arrived, however, I was interrogated by a policeman and a second gentleman without a uniform about the purpose of my visit, which I perfectly understood, and about my nationality and religious belief. The questions were followed by the gentleman without uniform friking me and the policeman registering a bag I was carrying. Once they decided that I did not pose any danger, I was allowed to enter the office and, after I was asked for my national ID and my student ID, which they kept for the entire visit, I was taken to the desk of a member of the community. When he finished listening to who I was and what I would like to ask, he suggested me to send a questionnaire with all my inquiries to the email address of the organisation for someone to get prepared to answer them. Then, when I was about to leave, this same gentleman told me to attach a recommendation letter by a professor of my master's programme so that they could grant me the interview. Being aware of his suspicions, I explained to him that I had been working in the present paper for months and I was already in contact with different Jewish organisations of Spain, but all I got for an answer was "*Let the letter be a formal one*". Thanking him, I left his desk and I went back to the centre of the office, where I saw how the receptionist had photocopied my documentation without my permission and how she kept the photocopies. After leaving, I felt distressed. Not only my interest for an issue that directly affected these people had occupied my time for five months without arousing their sympathy, but, in addition, their manners made me feel like an offender. It was then when I decided not to proceed with that last interview.

With respect to the electronic correspondence, I must admit that this dissertation would not be what it is today without the continuous emails that I have exchanged with several solicitous people. Besides the emails regarding the bibliography and those to plan the interviews that I have already mentioned, for a long period of time, I have been in touch with different journalists and Sephardic Jews from France, Spain and the United States, and with various Jewish institutions in Spain -I also tried to reach the Sephardic community of Istanbul before I visited the city in January of 2017 with no success-. Of a particular value has been the correspondence with María Royo and Carolina Aisen, Communication Director and Director of the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España respectively, for they both have taken the time to make the questionnaire I had sent them go through and have also answer the questions in it.



The last part of this laborious process has been the production of the text per se. In spite of the added difficulty of writing in a language different from the one of the vast majority of the literature used for this study, and the translation needed for the quotes included in the dissertation, the historical element has certainly been the most challenging one, for, as already indicated, a period of more than 600 years needed to be covered. I would like to clarify, nonetheless, that as it will be shown later in this paper, for an enormous time interval, no actions affecting the political and legal treatment of the Jews were taken, as a consequence of the existence of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, thus reducing considerably the still extensive amount of work. Furthermore, I would like to point out that the constant references to historical events contained in the present study, far from deviating from its major topic, assist the reader, particularly if he is not familiar with Spanish history, to better understand and follow the evolution of the relation between the Spanish State and Judaism.

This dissertation has been written out of the desire to address a question which, regardless of its topicality, is still rather unknown both in Spain and abroad. In pursuit of that goal, I have attempted to show the different arguments advanced by various individuals and institutions. I hope that the reader can appreciate my effort.

Pablo Pérez Fernández

## Introduction

The Jews are a religious group that originated in the geographic region of Palestine, in the so-called Ancient Near East, from the Hebrews or Israelites around the second millennium before Christ. They have traditionally presented an extraordinarily high level of interrelation between religion and ethnicity, for since the very beginning of their existence Judaism has been the cult of the Jewish people. Throughout the years, they lived in the Land of Canaan and established the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This situation, however, was to change as History would take them to very far-off places, including the Iberian peninsula, also known as Sepharad both in Classical and Modern Hebrew.

It is here, precisely, where the journey commences for the reader, since he will now accompany the Jews that settled down in Iberia and its different kingdoms and analyse the very many ways in which their lives were altered in the Western shore of the Mediterranean sea. This is the reason why, it is essential to begin the present study by explaining how the first Jewish communities ended up in such a remote place. One can come upon various theories on how this happened. The first one, although no historical evidence has been found to this respect, indicates that together with some of the flourishing empires of the Levant that included the Phoenicians, the inhabitants of Palestine set off to the Iberian peninsula in the hope to discover the semi-mythical land of Tartessos and the colossal amount of precious metals Tartessians were believed to have (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 235). Nevertheless, what most likely happened is that the first Jews that took up residence in the territories of modern-day Portugal and Spain were part of the Jewish diaspora into which the Roman Emperor Titus forced them after the Jewish-Roman wars were over (Pulido Fernández 1905, pp. 230-233). Such a diaspora, however, was not the first one that the Jewish people had to endure and, as it will be seen later in this text, it was not the last one either. Yet, it was of a paramount importance as not only did the Imperial Roman army burnt and destroyed the capital city of the Jews, Jerusalem, but they also sacked its magnificent temple, which was the greatest symbol of these people's religious identity. It is equally worth mentioning that in so doing, Emperor Titus expected to bring Jewish existence to an end (Pulido Fernández

1905, p. 232) although, as one can interpret from subsequent events, he did nothing but strengthen the feeling of Jewish Kehilla and the nostalgia for their homeland.

In any event, it is manifest that Jewish communities established in Iberia at a very early stage, as the inscription on the tombstone of Roman historian Marcus Iunianus Iustinus, which was found near Emerita Augusta and dates back to the second century, attests (Prados García 2011, p. 1).

It is observable by the same token that the descendants of these first Jews to arrive in Iberia or Sepharad stayed there for many centuries, living peacefully sometimes, or being the target of anti-Semitic actions at other times. Thus, by signing the Synod of Elvira or *Concilium Eliberritarum*, nineteen Catholic bishops from Hispania Baetica agreed on separating the Jewish communities from the Catholic ones, as well as on forbidding the marriage and any other kind of intercourse between Catholic and non-Catholic, this is, Jews, pagans and heretics (Grigg 1976, pp. 428-433). Years later, as the result of having been persecuted and mistreated by numerous Visigothic kings, a great number of Jews enthusiastically embraced the Arab campaign led by Muslim commander Tariq ibn Ziyad, who was in charge of the Islamic Umayyad army that crossed the Strait of Gibraltar from Northern Africa and brought Islam to the Iberian peninsula (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 236). It should be pointed out that several other Jews that had lived in the African continent for generations accompanied the Muslim hordes in their invasion of Iberia and, after conquering many of the Visigothic territories, held influential positions close to the ruling class (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 236). Nevertheless, not all Jewish inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula sided with the Arabs. Some of them, providing that a number of Catholic rulers, such as the kings of León, Castile, Galicia and Portugal Alfonso VI, Alfonso VII and Ferdinand III, and king James I of Aragon, were tolerant towards the non-Catholic population as in the cases of, stayed in the different kingdoms of the peninsula and contributed incredibly to the development of the arts and the sciences in all important cities (Pulido Fernández 1905, pp. 235-237). As a matter of fact, it was under such circumstances of tolerance and coexistence, that the Castilian city of Toledo knew its greatest magnificence and became a hub for not only Jews, but also Muslims. At the same time, and even though at the beginning of the Reconquista anti-Semitism had been widely spread, in later phases, the general attitude towards the Jewish communities changed

for the good and, after centuries living on Iberian soil, the sons of Judah eventually encountered some res (Pulido Fernández 1905, pp. 238-239).

The course of events, however, was to change again soon as the political reality of the region was to become radically different during the 15th century and once more, the Jewish communities would be forced to bear the consequences.

## **Medieval anti-Semitism**

In a milieu significantly affected by the acute economic and social crisis derived from the Castilian Civil War, the arrival of the Black Death in Spain in 1348, a plague that made a third of the European population perish, led several people in the Iberian peninsula to start searching for probable explanations for such a phenomenon. Some of those explanations directly concerned the Jewish community, for there were those who suggested that the plague was a divine punishment for the cohabitation of Christians and Jews, as the latter had long been considered a deicide people (Pérez 2009, pp. 12-13). There were others that fuelled, in turn, rumours about Jews poisoning wells so that the Black Death could spread faster. Be it as it may, their connection with the plague was undeniable and this, added to the general belief that they were rich and greedy, enormously contributed to the spread of anti-Semitism.

There were, however, two particular events that had a dramatic impact on the perception of Jews by Spanish Christians. As early as 1379, the assassination of a Jewish accountant and trusted man of the King called José Pichón at the hands of some of his coreligionists for allegedly being a traitor provoked a considerable hostility towards the Jewish community of Seville (Caro Baroja, 1986). Nevertheless, the greatest wave of anti-Semitism did not hit the different Christian kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula until 1391. For some fifteen years, Ferrand Marínez, a Spanish cleric and archdeacon of Écija preached anti-Semitic sermons telling Christians to expel the Jews, demolish synagogues and seize Jewish holy books. Along with the religious causes, the sense of impunity of those who actively practised anti-Semitism during that period as a result of the vacuum of power existing led to a major

escalation of assaults (Martínez de Arellano 1901, pp. 294-311). These acts of violence resulted in the anti-Jewish riots, also known as pogroms, starting in Seville on the 6th of June of 1391 and rapidly spreading through all of Spain, but not Portugal: Córdoba, Toledo, Barcelona, Valencia, etc. As a consequence of such pogroms, countless burnings and sackings took place, thousands of Jews were massacred and many others were forced to accept baptism. As a matter of fact, another prominent cleric called Vincent Ferrer, who was later honoured as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, added to the anti-Semitic agitation with his motto *Baptism or death* (Dantas 2006. pp.45-46). After 1391 and once the riots had been contained, the surviving Jews that had not opted for converting to Christianity were faced with two choices: exile or fidelity to Judaism. Those who chose to go into exile and moved to Portugal, the Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire enjoyed a relative peace, whereas those who continued to practise Judaism and even those who converted, the so-called *conversos*, faced discrimination, harassment and persecution.

This continuous attacks were possible thank to the establishment of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, commonly referred to as the Spanish Inquisition, on the 1st of November of 1478. This institution, which was the successor of the so-called Medieval Inquisition, being this one under the control of the Pope and operating in numerous European kingdoms, including Aragon, was founded by the papal bull *Exigit Sinceras Devotionis Affectus* granted by Pope Sixtus IV to the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, as a response to their request for constituting a tribunal of the same nature. (Pérez 2009, p. 25). Such a request had been motivated by the presumed existence of Crypto-Judaism in the city of Seville, which had been reported to Queen Isabella by the Dominican friar Alonso de Ojeda and endorsed by Pedro González de Mendoza, Archbishop of Seville, and by Tomás de Torquemada, a Dominican friar who would later become Inquisitor-General (Lario Ramos 2005, p. 22) The newly instituted Spanish Inquisition, unlike the aforementioned Medieval Inquisition, was directly controlled by the Catholic monarchs. This was attained despite the initial opposition of the Holy Father after King Ferdinand threatened to withdraw military support from the Holy See when the Ottomans were dangerously close to it. Extending the mandate of the Inquisition into the Crown of Aragon, however, encountered more resistance from the Vatican, for what King Ferdinand intended to do was bring back to life the branch of the Medieval Inquisition that had operated in Aragon years before with the difference that it

would now solely depend on the monarchs and not on the Pope. Nevertheless, Pope Sixtus IV gave in to the Spanish King's pressures once again and issued a brand-new papal bull on the 17th of October of 1483 by which Tomás de Torquemada became Inquisitor-General of Aragón, Valencia and Catalonia, thus turning the Spanish Inquisition into the only institution with authority in all kingdoms of the Spanish monarchy (Pérez 2009, p. 35).

The purpose of the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition was to ensure the orthodoxy of Spanish *conversos*, also known as *marranos* or New Christians -even though both *converso* and *New Christian* are terms that can also refer to people who had converted from Islam, these were not targeted by the Inquisition as often-, by punishing any suspect of judaising so that consequences of practicing crypto-Judaism were clear for the rest of *conversos*, and Judaising practices themselves were actually eradicated. Such customs included the performance of circumcisions, the preparation of kosher food and the obedience of the Law of Moses (Kamen 1999, pp. 274-275). Likewise, certain behaviours that could be indicators of crypto-Judaism, such as the large purchase of vegetables before Pesach, the acquisition of meat from a *converso* butcher or the lack of chimney smoke during the Sabbath, could suffice for someone to be tried (Kamen 199, pp. 274-275). Accusations were frequently made by neighbours, and defendants many times confessed having done things they had not done in reality after suffering from physical torture, a method regularly used by the court. They could repent and do penance at the so-called *autos-da-fé*, and, in case of relapse, they would be burnt at stake.

It is noteworthy, however, the fact that during the first years of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, actual Jews were not persecuted. As a matter of fact, for many years and until 1492 the Catholic monarchs were believed to be their protectors, as one can comprehend from a letter that Queen Isabella sent to the Jewish community of Seville in 1477, in which she claimed they all were her property, and guaranteed their security and that of their belongings (Pérez 2009, pp. 21-22). By the same token, she expressly condemned the passivity of those who would witness how any Jew was harmed without intervening. Yet, given the anti-Semitic sermons of numerous mendicant orders' friars, the generalised perception of Jews encouraging *conversos* to go back to their old religion or even to apostatise (Pérez 2009, p. 188), and the attempt to bring the vexations the Jewish community

was subjected to to an end, the situation began to change. Thus, in 1480 the Catholic monarchs advocated for the segregation of Jews, converting Jewish quarters for as long as 10 years, in ghettos from which their inhabitants could only leave in order to go to work every day. It is widely affirmed in any case that there was a hidden agenda behind such decision, for, besides granting the Jewish community with protection from Christians' assaults, it was also a clear message about the need to embrace Christianity if they wished to lead a normal life.

As years passed by, the branch of the Spanish Inquisition operating in Andalusia found out that regardless of the above mentioned segregation of the Jews, there had been a great amount of *conversos* that continued to gather with their Jewish relatives and friends on the occasion of Judaic festivities, to pray and fast when the Law of Moses prescribed so, and even to visit synagogues. It was thus concluded that the only possible manner to defeat crypto-Judaism was to keep the Jews away from the New Christians, and that was to be accomplished by expelling the Jews from Andalusian soil. These facts were presented to Ferdinand and Isabella, resulting in an order for Jews to leave the dioceses of Cádiz, Córdoba and Seville for Extremadura in 1483. It is though believed that many Jewish families did not comply with the aforementioned order as there is evidence that some of them were still in Andalusia when the final expulsion of Jews from Spain took place in 1492.

It is precisely this expulsion what marked a milestone in the history of Spanish Jews. On the 20th of March of 1492, the Inquisitor-General Tomás de Torquemada addressed a letter to the Bishop of Gerona in which he asked him to expel all Jews from both his city and his whole diocese. According to some scholars, this was the origin of the Edict of Expulsion or Alhambra Decree signed by Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon in Granada on the 31st of March of that same year (Conde y Delgado 1991, p. 197).

Even if in November of 1491, the Catholic monarchs and Boabdil, the sultan of Granada, had signed the so-called Treaty of Granada or Capitulation of Granada, in which the Granada War was officially ended and in which the freedom of worship of Moors was guaranteed, the Jewish communities of Spain in general, and that of Granada in particular did not enjoy the same rights. As a matter of fact, once the Moorish Emirate of Granada had been assimilated

into the Christian kingdoms of Spain in 1492, it did not take long for the aforesaid Edict of Expulsion to be issued by the Catholic monarchs. In the text signed in the Alhambra palace, centre of the surrendered Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, one could follow step by step the various policies introduced by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella regarding the treatment of Jews since the moment of their marriage in all their kingdoms and lordships, including areas of modern-day France, such as the County of Roussillon and Corsica; modern-day Italy, like Sardinia; and modern-day Greece, like the Duchy of Athens (Edict of Expulsion). Alongside these policies, explanations on how they had failed to fulfil their purposes to assure the purity of the Catholic faith were presented, thus leading one to the following, and the last one to the Edict of Expulsion itself (Edict of Expulsion). It is worth mentioning, however, the fact that whereas in the Castilian version of the Alhambra Decree only religious motivations were exposed in order to justify the expulsion of Jews, in the Aragonese one a reference to Jewish usury could also be found (Pérez 2009, p. 188). In any event, generalisations affecting the Jewish people were made in both versions and their banishment was prescribed:

*“Because whenever any grave and detestable crime is committed by members of any organisation or corporation, it is reasonable that such an organisation or corporation should be dissolved and annihilated and that the lesser members as well as the greater and everyone for the others be punished, and that those who perturb the good and honest life of cities and towns and by contagion can injure others should be expelled from those places and even if for lighter causes, that be injurious to the Republic, how much more for those greater and most dangerous and most contagious crimes such as this.”* (Edict of Expulsion. Translation by Edward Peters)

By the issuance of such a controversial piece of legislation, which while on the subject, should be brought to the attention of all, so that no one could pretend unawareness, all Jews and Jewesses were to depart any Spanish kingdom they were from or lived in and not to go back to them, not even when on the way to another place, in the future (Edict of Expulsion). They should take with them every single relative of Jewish religion, as well as all members of their domestic staff and, to avoid people thinking that financial motivations were to be found behind such a decision, they were allowed to sell or trade any of their belongings before the actual moment of their departure, on the only condition that the export of precious metal,



such as silver and gold, as well as that of coined money was strictly forbidden (Edict of Expulsion). All Jewish people who did not conform to the regulations contained in the Alhambra Decree and stayed in Spain after the end of July of 1492 -this period would be later extended until the 10th of August of that same year- without being baptised, together with those who dared to return to Spanish soil after the aforementioned date would face death penalty and the confiscation of all their chattels and real estates (Edict of Expulsion). Similarly, any Christian, New or Old, living in any Spanish kingdom who tried to protect, hide or assist a Jew would lose all of his possessions to the Chamber of Finance, as well as any financial grant they might have been receiving from the Spanish monarchy (Edict of Expulsion). Notwithstanding the previous clauses, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella committed themselves to take all Jewish people living in Spain under their protection and safeguard until the very moment of their departure, thus ensuring Jews to be safe and respected by all other Spaniards, and imposing a penalty on those Christians that did not comply with this last provision (Edict of Expulsion).

The situation of the Spanish Jews dramatically changed after this event. Many of them were forced into exile, as it had already happened after the pogroms of 1391, while the rest of them were obliged to be baptised, resulting in the newly converted Christians being once again the main target of the Spanish Inquisition. Those who decided to leave the Catholic monarchs' territories moved in great numbers to the kingdoms of Portugal and Navarre, although they could not remain there for long, for they would be expelled from the former in 1496 by King Manuel I the Fortunate, and from the latter in 1498 by King John III, a decision that was taken in both cases to honour the wishes of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. The situation that the Jewish communities encountered in these two kingdoms was nothing isolated, as similar anti-Semitic campaigns had repeatedly been launched in European countries such as England, France, Germany, Lithuania or Hungary, making them wander all across the Old Continent for centuries. As a matter of fact, even upon arrival in those territories that had traditionally been known for their religious tolerance, such as the Maghreb, several Jews were the object of maltreatment by some of the local communities, like the one of Fez, in modern-day Morocco. Aware of the Jewish odyssey, the Catholic monarchs offered to reopen the doors of their kingdoms to those who wished to go back there as long as they accepted to be baptised in the presence of both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. This disposition

was formalised through the Ordinance of the 10th of November of 1492 and, according to the records, returnees continued to take refuge in Spain until 1499 (Pérez 2013, p.115). Following their conversion, New Christians were able to get their old possessions back at the same price at which they had sold them before leaving the Spanish kingdoms, although it is also true that they were allowed neither to occupy certain civil and honorary positions nor to emigrate to the newly conquered Americas, as the result of the implementation of the different statutes of *limpieza de sangre* -Spanish for *blood purity*- by the Spanish Inquisition.

For over two hundred years, the obsession with blood purity persisted and the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition persecuted with tenacity Judaising practices in every Spanish kingdom (Rozenberg 1993, p. 1). Nevertheless, genuinely or not, after 1492 *conversos* fell in the category of Christians, and this is the reason why their evolution will be left for a different study to deal with. The present study will focus on the Jewish diaspora and its future relation with modern-day Spain.

As it has been already mentioned, Spanish Jews left the Iberian peninsula in high numbers after the pogroms of 1391. Yet, most of them did so following the issuance of the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 in the cases of Castile, Aragon, Leon and Granada, and some years later in the cases of Portugal and Navarre. Even though some of these fleeing Jews decided to stay in Europe and settled down in the Netherlands, where the freedom of religion after the Union of Utrecht was guaranteed and from where the first Jews left for the New World (Prados García 2011, p. 3), the majority of them set off to Northern Africa and, especially, to the Ottoman Empire, where, unlike in the European countries they did not get completely assimilated in the local communities but rather formed their own ones, and where they contributed in the flourishing of the greatest intellectual and commercial centres of the Eastern Mediterranean, such as the city of Thessaloniki in modern-day Greece, and Constantinople or Izmir, in modern-day Turkey (Prados García 2011, p. 3). Be that as it may, the descendants of this Jews who had been expelled from Spain would be known as Sephardim or Sephardic Jews, in reference to Sepharad, a word that, as already explained, means Spain in Hebrew, even if historians do not agree on the precise location of the biblical Sepharad.

It is convenient, however, to make some clarifications about the term *Sephardim*, for it will be widely used in the future and, in several cases, it will be of a paramount importance in both a legal and a political way. If one has a look at the literature dealing with Judaism, three different definitions are provided. The most widespread in academia refers to the descendants of the Jews that had been expelled from the diverse Christian kingdoms of the Iberian peninsula, as it has just been stated, in contrast to those Jews who actually lived in Spain, who are denominated simply *hispanojudíos* or Spanish Jews. There are some scholars who adhere to the idea that the usage of the this acceptance is Ibero-centric and, as it will be in actual fact seen, that it presents some problems when used abroad (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 2). The second definition given to the word *Sephardim* is closely related to the previous one, as historically they both might have been synonymous. It refers to one of the biggest sects of Judaism, the one who follows the Sephardic rite, originally from the Iberian peninsula, in contrast with the Ashkenazi rite (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 19). It needs to be brought to the reader's attention, though, the fact that not only Sephardic Jews descending from those who left the Iberian peninsula in the late 15th century belong to this sect, for Mizrahi Jews, also known as Oriental Jews and originally coming from the Middle East, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, also do. Nowadays, this is a strictly religious sense, being not related to ethnicity any more. The third and equally important acceptance of the term *Sephardim* is the one that refers to the Jewish individuals who in actuality lived in the Iberian peninsula until their expulsion in the 15th century, as well as to their descendants (*Law 12/2015*, p. 1). Although this is not the most accurate sense of the word from a historical point of view, considering the use that non-scholars have given it throughout the years, one could say that it is definitely the fastest-growing understanding of the term in current society and it will also be the one the present study will refer to from now on. It is also remarkable how politicians have used this last meaning, shaping in some cases a historical identity of a great value for contemporary politics. This point, however, will be discussed later in this paper.

Yet, there is something crucial to be pointed out and that is the one characteristic that, besides the Hebrew language and Judaism itself, is common to the people who qualify for the three categories or definitions of *Sephardim* that have just been analysed: the Judaeo-Spanish language, also known as Judezmo, and subcategorised in Ladino, spoken in the region of the

Balkans, and Haketia, spoken in Morocco. Judaeo-Spanish is a Romance language spoken by the descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain after the signing of the Alhambra Decree that originally derived from Medieval Spanish, although it has got a considerable influence from the other languages that were spoken in the Iberian peninsula during the 15th century, such as Galician-Portuguese, Old-Catalan, Old-Aragonese, Mozarabic and Astur-Leonese, as well as numerous elements from Hebrew, Turkish or Greek, depending on the geographical area we study. From its birth and until hundreds of years later, the orthography of Judaeo-Spanish was written in Rashi script, which is the same one used for Hebrew. Taking into account that for generations Jews had lived in lands that did not belong to them among people of several other cultures and religions, speaking each of them a different language, it was only natural for them to adopt many of these foreign languages and to use them in their daily life, which became a common practice during the Middle Ages. This phenomenon, however, stood in the way of Jews of different states when trying to communicate with each other. Alongside this, Hebrew remained to be the language used in the Jewish liturgy and the rabbinic literature, and to a much lesser extent in trade among Jews and poetry, but it had long ago stopped being an everyday spoken language because of the propagation of other languages such as Aramaic and Greek. In such a context, the Judaeo-Spanish language rapidly spread across the Jewish world thanks to the Spanish Jews that took it to all the places they moved to after the 1492 expulsion. But, why did these people take it with them? And, most importantly, why did the new generations of Sephardim preserve it? Miguel de Unamuno, a celebrated Spanish writer, philosopher and university professor, and Senator Ángel Pulido, a leading figure in the so-called philosephardic movement that will be later discussed in depth, addressed this matter in one of Pulido's books:

*“That was their mother tongue, this, ours, is their spouse tongue, and it is written that because of the woman one has to leave his parents.”* (Unamuno in Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 105)

*“It is extraordinary and perhaps unparalleled in the history of peoples, the case of a race that, having been expelled from a nation in which it was exotic and where it coexisted for many centuries, when spreading itself through other peoples, broken down into more or less big chunks, has secularly preserved the language that it acquired and has maintained it fervently, without it being either their religious or*

*their origin one, and without it being the one spoken in the places where it sought refuge in its exile.*" (Pulido Fernández 1905, pp. 48-49)

There are various explanations that had been put forward in order to solve this enigma. The first one alludes to the perception of Judaeo-Spanish as the only inheritance Sephardic Jews received from their ancestors and their willing to keep it. The second one, promoted by the Senator Ángel Pulido himself refers to the Sephardim's pride of being Spanish. The third one and probably the most plausible one as well, deals with the idea that the Judaeo-Spanish language survived for so many years as a consequence of the isolation many of the Sephardic communities found themselves in in their adopted countries (Pulido Fernández 1905, pp.48-58). which, together with the relatively prosperous financial position of some of their members, allowed them to maintain their customs and even to expand them. In any event, Judaeo-Spanish became the domestic language of a great number of Jews, the language in which some deals were closed in the Eastern Mediterranean and, even more importantly, the language in which many prayers and liturgies of the Sephardic rite of Judaism were conducted in.

Even though all these data about Judaeo-Spanish might seem irrelevant to the study, they are, if truth be told, highly significant for it, as in the future this language will be considered the principal connection between Spain and the Sephardic diaspora and it will be regarded time and time again as a key factor for their reconciliation, both legally and politically.

### **The Jewish question in 17th, 18th and 19th century Spain**

If one has a look at all the above mentioned historical data, it is easy to understand that the formation of the Spanish State dates back to the end of the Middle Ages, and the early modern period. Even though its constitution began with the progress of the Reconquista over Muslim-ruled territories, it was the marriage of King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I in 1469 and its consequent union of the crowns of Aragon and Castile, followed by the conquest of the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada in 1492 and the annexion of the Kingdom of Navarre in 1512, what shaped Spain. It is equally worth mentioning that, given the wide range of

languages spoken in the Iberian peninsula, the diversity of cultures that one could find and the different History of the various kingdoms that formed Spain, a connecting element among all of them was very much needed in order to create the new Spanish nation that would give legitimacy to the Spanish State. Aware of this, the Catholic monarchs decided on Catholicism to be that connecting element (Pérez 2005, p. 298) and put all necessary means to not only defend it, but also advance it by forcing infidels into conversion. As it has been introduced before, the establishment of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition served to safeguard the orthodoxy of all Christians in the Spanish kingdom, both New and Old, while the signing of the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 and the subsequent decisions made by the kings of Portugal and Navarre went a step beyond and expelled all Jewish individuals that refused to be baptised, thus prohibiting expressedly Judaism. Years later, and despite the promise that the Catholic monarchs had made to Boabdil in the Capitulations of Granada, Cardinal Cisneros, a prominent figure in the Spanish Inquisition's hierarchy and future Inquisitor-General, forced the Muslim population of Granada and the rest of Castile, also known as *mudéjares*, to either convert to Christianity or to leave the country in 1502. Islam was to be outlawed in the Kingdom of Aragon too in 1526, resulting this in the religious unity of the whole Iberian peninsula (Rozenberg 1993, p. 1) and in the clear idea that only Christians had a place there. This religious unity was to be pursued by the Catholic Church through its catechisms and manuals, where the Jews were considered a deicide people and from where the remembrance of the Spain of the three cultures was erased (Rozenberg 1993, pp. 1-2).

It was not, however, until the beginning of the 18th century when the centralisation of the Spanish political institutions took place, thus establishing the *de jure* Spanish State through the issuance of the Nueva Planta decrees, culminating on the 9th of June of 1716. Almost a century after such institutionalisation and because of the Spanish War of Independence -a war that was fought between Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom in one side and Napoleonic France in the other in order to avoid or facilitate the access of Joseph Bonaparte to the Spanish throne, between 1808 and 1814- Spaniards experienced for the first time the cohesion of the State, for when fighting the French troops, the Spanish population was urged to defend not only the country, but also ideas like those of the the nation and the “common Fatherland” (Fradera 199, p. 51). It was also in the course of the Spanish War of

Independence when the so-called *Cortes de Cádiz* or Cádiz Cortes, the first national assembly that claimed sovereignty in Spain, embraced the liberal ideas of French influence closely related to the view of the modern nation state in which, unlike in the Ancien Régime, the sociopolitical identities focused on the nation itself and on its language (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 4). This translated in religion losing its condition of vertebral axis within the Spanish society and its consequent separation from the State, which led, in turn, to the issue of the freedom of worship (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 15). Even though this last right was not contemplated by the Cádiz Cortes in the Constitution they established on the 19th of March of 1812, for a third of the assembly was formed by actual members of the clergy, and Catholicism continued to be the one and only religion allowed on Spanish soil, the secularisation of the State came about and, what is much more important for the purpose of the present study, the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition was abolished for the first time in 1813 (La Parra López and Casado 2013, pp. 97-103). It should be brought to the reader's attention the fact that Napoleon Bonaparte had already abolished it in 1808 in the Spanish territories under his influence through the Decrees of Chamartín (La Parra López and Casado 2013, p. 78-91), but such event was not of a high importance, for it did not affect the majority of Spain.

In such a context, the legal-political framework governing the treatment of Jews in Spain certainly started to change even though, as it will be thoroughly analysed in the upcoming pages, such treatment has gone through multiple ups and downs until the present day. Before commencing the aforementioned analysis, however, various instances of previous attempts to review the different policies on the Jewish population made before the Cádiz Cortes, as well as some other actions regarding the Sephardim, should be outlined: those of the Count-Duke of Olivares, Manuel de Lira, King Charles III of Spain, Pedro Varela and the diplomatic mission of Spain in Constantinople.

During the reign of Philip IV of Spain, the Count-Duke of Olivares, a royal favourite of the King, was a protector of the *converso* bankers and tradesmen from Portugal, particularly after the Spanish State went bankrupt in 1626, thus taking Genovese bankers, their previous moneylenders, to bankruptcy too. As a matter of fact, a year later, King Philip IV granted these same Portuguese bankers the right to freely trade and settle down in his possessions so that they could recover all the lost commerce with the Americas (Kamen 1999, pp. 279-281).

In 1691, Manuel de Lira, a Spanish diplomat during the reign of King Charles II, suggested to abolish the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 with the intention to promote commerce thanks to both Jewish and Protestant tradesmen. This project, however, was disregarded (Prados García 2011, p. 3).

As a direct consequence of the Age of Enlightenment, King Charles III of Spain introduced diverse socio-political reforms during his reign (1759-1788), including the establishment of equal rights for minorities like the Romani people, who had been persecuted in the times of the Catholic monarchs as a part of their plan to achieve the religious, cultural and linguistic homogenisation of Spain, and, what is of an even greater relevance for the present study, although indirectly as they were not Jewish any more, the *Xuetes*, a community that had lived on the island of Majorca for centuries and that was descended from the Majorcan *conversos* (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 7). The stigmatisation these two groups continued to be victims of for many years, and still are in the case of the Romani people, nevertheless, is undeniable.

For his part, Pedro Varela, the Secretary of the Inland Revenue of Spain and the Indies during the reign of King Charles IV, presented on the 21st of March of 1797 a plan to negotiate with the Jewish people in order to boost both the Spanish industry and commerce, as he was aware of the situation Sephardic Jews found themselves in within the Ottoman bourgeoisie. (Prados García 2011, p3.). Nevertheless, as in the case of Manuel de Lira, his attempt was in vain.

Last but not least, it is equally noteworthy the expediting by the Consulate General of Spain in Istanbul, an institution that will be oftentimes referred to in the future because of its active role in the mediation between the Sephardim and the Spanish State, of a Spanish passports in favour of Miguel Isaac Coen, as well as the granting of protection status to Abraham Angelo de Soria, two prominent figures of the Sephardic community of Istanbul, in 1804. This Consulate, which was inaugurated in 1783 after years of conflict between Spain and the Ottoman Empire was always close to the Jewish community of the Bosphorus, and Coen and de Soria are only two of the numerous Sephardic Jews that receive its help (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 2).



Having reviewed the above mentioned events, which to a certain extent determined the treatment of the Jewish people in 17th and 18th century Spain and served as a precedent for some of the forthcoming actions taken, and legislation adopted by the Spanish State, it is now time to go back to the aftermath of the approval of the Spanish Constitution of 1812 and the reformist ideas that came from Europe and were reflected in this text.

After the Duke of Wellington managed to expel the French troops from Andalusia with the help of an Anglo-Hispanic army under his command, and some other Napoleonic troops had to leave Spain in order to join the ones that were fighting Russia already, Joseph Bonaparte was at last defeated in Madrid and left the country. Following some other battles like the one in Vitoria and the one in San Marcial, Napoleon Bonaparte focussed on defending the border between France and Spain from a potential Spanish invasion, and signed the Treaty of Valençay in December of 1813, by which King Ferdinand VII was restored to the Spanish throne, and was given all his territories and subjects from 1808 back. In exchange, among other things, he had to put an end to the war and respect the followers of Joseph Bonaparte, the so-called *afrancesados*. Even though, the Cádiz Cortes refused to sign this Treaty, Napoleon ended up allowing King Ferdinand to go back to Spain, where he was given a document signed by 69 absolutist members of parliament known as *Manifiesto de los Persas*, through which they requested the abolition of the Cádiz Cortes and the return to the Ancien Régime. Thus, on the 13th of May of 1814, King Ferdinand regained the throne of Spain and about a month later, on the 21st of June of that same year, as a part of the reestablishment of the Ancien Régime, the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition was restored. Such decision, together with the issuance of a document on the 16th of June of 1816, which was a reminder of a similar one published in 1802, and in which it was forbidden for every Spanish port or city to allow the disembarkation or access of Jewish individuals into Spanish territory both in Europe and overseas without having obtained a formal authorisation from the King and without having notified the Spanish Inquisition, had the political purpose, as the absolute monarch intended to counterbalance the liberal politics of the Cádiz Cortes (Amador de los Ríos 2012, p. 849 ).

The rule of King Ferdinand VII, however, was once again halted in 1820, giving way to the so-called *Trienio Liberal* or Liberal Triennium, a three-year period following the military uprising of Rafael de Riego during which Spain was ruled by a liberal government. One of the measures taken by this provisional government was anew the abolition of the Spanish Inquisition, although after returning to power in 1823, King Ferdinand attempted to reestablish it again. Nevertheless, he only did it only *de jure*, but not *de facto*. This swinging in the policies concerning the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition ended when, after the decease of King Ferdinand VII, his wife, Maria Christina of the Two Sicilies, became regent for her daughter, the future Queen Isabella II and commanded its abolition on the 15th of June of 1834 (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 16). It should be highlighted, in any event, that even if all these divergences were used as a political weapon by both the King and the various liberal governments, and they involved several modifications of the Spanish legislation, their implementation was non-existent, for no Jewish community was established on Spanish soil at that time. This should rather be regarded as a part of the political and legal background for the decisions that were taken later in the 19th century and afterwards, a background that will certainly give the reader a better understanding of the matter.

The very same phenomenon occurred three years later when a new constitution was adopted in 1837 during the regency of Maria Christina of the Two Sicilies, as a response to the Spanish Progressive Party's initiative to write a new constitutional text resulting from a consensus with the Spanish Moderate Party. This new constitution brought some stability to the Spanish political scene as the two aforementioned parties agreed on not changing the constitutional text every time there was a change in the government, and was characterised by the restoration of several of the concepts included in the Constitution of 1812, such as parliamentarism, constitutionalism, separation of powers and freedom of worship. Once again, however, such freedom of worship was of no practical value, for until it was replaced by a new one in 1845, no Jews lived in Spain. It was around this time, nonetheless, when some foreign writers started to get a romantic interest for medieval Spain and, as a result of their research, they found the Jewish element to me a remarkable part of it. Another historical interest, this time about the Jewish question, began to arouse within the Spanish and the European academic community between the decades of the 40's and 50's of the 19th century, leading several scholars to research about this matter. Thus, studies like the ones by James

Finn, José Amador de los Ríos and Juan de la Puerta Vizcaíno, some of them of a conciliatory nature, some of them not as much, gained considerable fame across Europe (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 17). By the same token, in a context in which Europe was determined to consolidate its control over its colonies, the knowledge of the Orient was of a high interest. This is the reason why Arabic and Hebrew studies began to be undertaken by the State institutions of the European powers instead of by the ecclesiastical ones, as it had been traditionally the rule (Ojeda Mata 2015, pp. 4-5).

An exceptional event unfolded in 1854, when, leveraging the liberal political situation of the *Bienio Progresista* or Progressive Biennium going from 1854 to 1856, Ludwig Philippson, a German rabbi at the head of the Jewish community of Magdeburg, addressed the Spanish parliament to request the annulment of the prohibition of Jews to enter Spain that had been in place since the signing of the Alhambra Decree in 1492. He said:

*“We come at any rate neither to claim the properties that were snatched from our parents, nor the significant goods that were stolen from us, not even the temples that were taken away from us back then and whose domes we still see, we only come in order to wipe off the shame of the extirpation, in order to beg for the our brothers’ freedom to enter Spain if they wish to do so; it does not take more than a “yes”, but a precious “yes” because of its hint of charity, humanity, justice and civilisation.”*

(Philippson in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 17)

The answer of the Parliament came on the 28th of February of 1855, when it was decided that no Spaniard or foreigner could be molested due to their religion and, therefore, Jews were allowed to return to Spain, like any people of any other creed. The Edict of Expulsion of 1492, however, was not abrogated. This was a way of legalising an already existing situation (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 17). From this moment on, the legal and political treatment of Jews radically changed, for not only the authorities, but the Spanish society as a whole started to become familiar with the concept of *Sephardim*, and with that of *Jew*, by extension.

Since Spain had lost the great majority of its Latin American colonies at the beginning of the 19th century, thus resulting in its international prestige being enormously damaged, on the

22nd of October of 1859, a declaration of war on Morocco was made by the Spanish State with the alleged purpose of undertaking a new colonialist adventure in the Maghreb region. The justification behind such declaration of war was the impunity of those Moroccans who had assaulted the Spanish stronghold of Ceuta, in spite of the diplomatic agreement reached between Spain and Morocco on the security of other Spanish cities in Northern Africa like Melilla or Alhucema some time before. However, it is believed that the actual reason behind the war was the relative ease with which the Spanish troops could defeat Moroccan and the high rewards such victories could bring to many of the military authorities, which included nobiliary titles, thus avoiding potential uprisings in the army (Fontana 2007, pp. 299-301). Be it as it may, the truth is that during the Hispano-Moroccan War, when the Spanish troops under the command of Leopoldo O'Donnell entered the Moroccan city of Tetouan, they found a large community of Jews that spoke Spanish with a particular accent and numerous different expressions and words, and whose houses were decorated in a Spanish way (Alarcón 1859, p. 192). These people were Sephardic Jews, descended from those who settled down in the Maghreb after their expulsion from Spain in 1492, and received O'Donnell's men live liberators (Rozenberg 1993, p. 2). Their existence was brought to the attention of the Spanish society between 1860 and 1866 thanks to newspapers like *El Liberal* (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 17), and the books and other publications of writers like Pedro Antonio de Alarcón and military personnel that had taken part in the Moroccan campaign (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 2). Additionally, and as a direct consequence of that first contact between Spanish soldiers and Sephardic Jews from Morocco, the first Jewish community of Spain took up residence in Seville in 1860 (Prados García 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, from this same year, several Jewish tradesmen from Northern Africa were granted consular protection in order to promote import and export activities, as well as to serve as interpreters for the diverse diplomatic missions (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 8).

At around the same time, more information on the Sephardic Jews living in the Ottoman Empire started to arrive in Spain thanks to some members of the Spanish diplomatic delegation in the Eastern Mediterranean. A distinguished figure of the Spanish representation in the Ottoman Empire, Adolfo de Mentaberry, who occupied the vice-consul position in Damascus between 1865 and 1867, before being transferred to the Istanbul delegation, where he served as a diplomat between 1867 and 1869, combined his diplomatic career with his

passion for writing, which allowed him to produce some informational texts on the Sephardim:

*“Jewish descendants of those that our Catholic monarchs, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, exiled from Spanish territories. Not only maintain they the language of their ancestors, even though they write it with Hebrew characters, but some of them even keep the keys and property documents of their estates in Spain, where they hope to return with that tenacious perseverance of their race. with that same obstinate faith with which they are expecting the Messiah. Nonetheless, what a bizarre thing!, they do not show any rancour against us, they always treat us well and listen to us with beating enchantment, as if our voice, our words and our style reminded them of their ancestors, bringing to their fantasy confused and agreeable reminiscences of that loving language, of those tender maternal accents that rocked with a soft aura the cradle of children.”* (Mentaberry in Martín Asuero 2007, p. 2)

This reconciliation between the Spanish society and the Sephardic communities from the Eastern Mediterranean was possible for Adolfo de Mentaberry in a liberal context that characterised the Madrid of the late 19th century. Such liberalism was fostered by the Glorious Revolution of 1868, a military and civil revolt that resulted in Queen Isabella II being deposed and in the Constitution of 1869 being wrote and enacted by the parliament. This new constitutional text was of a liberal nature and resembled that of 1812, for, among other things, the freedom of religion was contemplated in it. This very question was, as a matter of fact, passionately debated in the parliament on the 12th of April of 1869, when the draft of the aforementioned constitution was being discussed and religious intolerance, which had been the element that had harmed Spain the most, as well as the greatest evil for the future of the country (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 597), was tackled. Politicians of different ideologies took the floor, being worth mentioning the speech given by Vicente Manterola y Pérez, a priest and moderate member of parliament for Gipuzkoa, which lasted for two hours and included multiple attacks against the freedom of worship and the Jewish race. Manterola’s anti-Semitic speech made use of every lie and accusation that the Catholic fanatics had traditionally employed (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 597) and it was followed by the intervention of Emilio Castelar, a liberal member of parliament who had previously opposed the monarchy. Castelar rectified several of the statements made by Manterola in a

speech that was to be remembered for decades in the history of Spanish politics, and advocated for the Jewish people, even though he had only known in person some of them during his trips around Italy. It was precisely as a result of such trips that Emilio Castelar wrote his book *Recuerdos de Italia*, in which he devoted a passage to the Jewish community of Rome:

*“I have never seen a love for the homeland like the love of the Spanish Jews. So many injustices have not been enough to make them feel rejection against this mother Spain, turned for them into a wicked stepmother. I met in Florence a Jewish husband and his wife that were travelling around Europe and came from Damascus. The wife was an extraordinary Oriental beauty. Her pale skin, projected by the fire of her black and deep eyes surrounded by incredibly long and shadowy eyelashes, stood up among her long curls, fine and shining like silk. Her nose was Greek, like the one of the Venus de Milo, and her red lips, like the vivid carmine of the pomegranate flower. So much beauty caught my attention, as it caught hers to hear me speaking the national language with other Spanish and Americans.. She immediately talked to her husband and said some words in Spanish. The national language, spoken in a foreign land, vibrating in the ears of the migrant, transports, alienates, like the most melodious music. I could not help it and asked her: Are you Spanish, ma’am? She answered that she was Jewess, that she was born in Livorno, that she had married a Greek man and now lived in Damascus, that she had learn Spanish in her native synagogue and that she spoke it with her coreligionists from the Orient, among which several had maintained it like a compassionate memory of their origin, like a glorious sound of their lineage. The most genuine affection are always the most conflicting ones. My love for the homeland, as intense as it was, seemed to me lukewarm in comparison to the love for Spain of this race that, persecuted like a beasts herd, recipient of every type of affront, exiled from the national soil, dispersed in their four-century banishment, still turn its loving eyes to a land where the sun sets, and still speaks the language of its persecutors, in the same way that ancient Israelites sang the hymns of their prophets on the bank of the Euphrates under the weeping willows of Babylon.”*

*“When thinking that, when feeling that, I saw crystal clear the political movement that should break the chain of the old traditions of my homeland, and I swore that, if I ever obtained the confidence of my fellow citizens to occupy the illustrious position of legislator, I would fight without rest until I achieved that we were not a monstrous*

*exception in the modern world because of our intolerance, and until we opened the doors of our homeland to all ideas and all sects, and we honoured that right, without which the rest of rights are as if they were not, the right to open our conscience to the light, and to worship both in public and in secret the God who lived in our conscience.”* (Castelar in Pulido Fernández, pp. 598-599)

Resuming the parliamentary session of the 12th of April of 1869 and having already understood the position of both Vicente Manterola and Emilio Castelar regarding the question of the freedom of worship and, thus, that of the modernisation of Spain (Rozenberg 1993, p. 2), which represented, in turn, those of the conservatives and the Catholic Church in the first case, and those of the liberals in the second, a passage of Castelar’s intervention needs to be highlighted.

*“Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member for Gipuzkoa [...] said that he would renounce to all his beliefs, that he would renounce to all his ideas if Jews got together again and rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem. So, does the Honourable Member for Gipuzkoa believe in the terrible dogma that children are responsible for the fault of their parents? Does the Honourable Member for Gipuzkoa think that modern-day Jews are the ones who killed Jesus Christ? I do not think so, I am more Christian than all that, I believe in divine justice and mercy.”*

*“Great is God in the Sinai, the thunder precedes Him, the lighting accompanies Him, the light surrounds Him, the ground trembles, the mounts break down; but there is a greater, an even greater God, which is not the majestic God of the Sinai, but the humble God of the Calvary, hammered into the cross, wounded, stiff, crowned with thorns, with bile in his lips, yet saying “My father, forgive them, forgive my executioners, forgive my persecutors, because they do not know what they are doing!”. Great is the religion of power, but greater is the religion of love, great is the religion of ruthless justice, but greater is the religion of merciful forgiveness, and I, in the name of Gospel, come here in order to ask you to include in your fundamental code the freedom of worship, this is, freedom, fraternity, equality among all men.”* (Castelar in Pulido Fernández 1905, p 601)

The freedom of worship that Emilio Castelar vehemently demanded in the parliament was factually included in the Constitution of 1869, and it involved a major change in the legal and political treatment of Jews in Spain, for it was not only officially regarded by the fundamental legal text of the country and supposed the repeal of the Alhambra Decree signed in 1492, but it was also utilised as a political weapon, like in the case of Juan Valera y Alcalá Galiano, a Spanish politician and author, who stated that there was a reason behind the promotion of the freedom of religion, and such reason was of an economical nature. He even added that, precisely because of this economical motivation, it could not be taken seriously and would probably be the object of mockery (Valera in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 18).

Notwithstanding the criticism received, as well as the legal and political impact of the newly approved freedom of religion, such freedom was of almost no practicality, for it only translated in some wealthy Jewish bankers and merchants, settling in Cádiz, Madrid, Málaga and Barcelona, among other commercial zones of Spain -something that they most probably would have done if Catholicism was the only religion allowed on Spanish soil by just acting in a prudent way-, and only sixteen Jews, most of which were not even of Sephardic origin, acquiring Spanish nationality by *carta de naturaleza* or naturalisation between 1869 and 1875 (Amador de los Ríos 2013, p. 567). These data, as José Amador de los Ríos remarked, meant that the complaints voiced by Jewish personalities such as Ludwig Philippson since 1854 were not as urgent and they appeared to be, and that those who claimed that Spain would become flooded with Jews after the constitutional article permitting the practice of any religion were wrong.

By the end of 1874, a Spanish army officer called Arsenio Martínez Campos, participated in a coup d'état that ended the First Spanish Republic and gave way to the so-called Bourbon Restoration, a period in which the monarchical system was brought back to life in the person of King Alfonso XII first, and in that of his son, King Alfonso XIII afterwards. As a consequence of such a radical change in the Spanish politics, the Constitution of 1869 was replaced by a new one promulgated by Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, a conservative politician who had actively pursued the return of King Alfonso XII to Spain, in 1876. Because of this, the new constitutional text was of a more conservative type and, even though freedom of worship was still granted, it was limited to the private sphere. In any event, this



amendment did not implicate any alteration of the *de facto* repeal of the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 made through the Constitution of 1869, for Jews, as well as other religions' practitioners, still retained the right to reside in Spain and practice their religion at home (Bel Bravo 1997, p. 360).

Having a look at the above mentioned legal modification introduced by the Constitution of 1876, and considering that the majority of the political efforts made during the first part of the Bourbon Restoration focused on the proper functioning of the newly established monarchical system, it is easily understood that the Jewish question occupied a second place on the political agenda of the country (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 19). Nevertheless, the government of King Alfonso XII never forgot the Sephardic community and expressed its interest for its members at a time when an anti-Semitic wave was fastly spreading all across Eastern Europe (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 3). It was, however, in 1881, when two different events introduced a new change in the treatment of the Jewish communities by the Spanish State. On the one hand, Práxedes Mateo Sagasta, at the head of the Liberal Party, took office on the 8th of February of 1881, leading the Spanish Government to engage in a more active foreign policy (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p.19). On the other hand, another occurrence of a much greater repercussion affected the Jewish communities settled in Europe and, therefore, the relation of several Jews and Spain: the 1881 pogroms.

After the Russian Empire, which traditionally had not been home to many followers of Judaism, annexed territories with a large Jewish population between 1791 and 1835, large-scale anti-Semitic riots began to take place across the Russian geography. These riots, which have been already mentioned, were known as pogroms, and, according to some sources, commenced after the death of Gregory V, the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, in 1821, as the Jewish community of the Bosphorus was accused of having dragged his corpse around the streets of the Ottoman capital. Fourteen Jews were killed as a response to such vexation. However, it was not until 1881 when even bigger anti-Jewish riots arose in the south-western area of the Russian Empire, particularly in Warsaw and Kiev. Like in the case of Gregory V, some people blamed the Jews for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, thus leading to the pogroms of 1881, which lasted from April to December. In an atmosphere of anti-Semitic violence, numerous members of the Jewish communities of the Russian Empire

faced the necessity to search for a solution to their problems abroad, since even within Russia, they were not allowed to travel from one region to another without converting to Russian Orthodoxy. This is the reason why, there was a multitudinous exodus of Jews who sought for protection in the neighbouring Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Ottoman Empire (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p.19).

Due to the fact that many of these Russian Jews arrived in Constantinople seeking for protection after realising that the Russian government would not protect them efficiently from the anti-Semitic riots, the Spanish diplomatic representation based there came into contact with them, thus learning that in several cases they were of Sephardic origin and, therefore, Ladino speakers (Rozenberg 1993, p. 2). Motivated by his willingness to assist these Jewish -Sephardic or not (Álvarez 2002, p. 193)- refugees, the Count of Rascón, who was the head of the diplomatic mission, sent a communiqué to King Alfonso XII on the 4th of June of 1881, through which he presented the hard conditions in which these people who had fled the Russian Empire lived, and in which he formally requested their protection. No more than eleven days later, Antonio Aguilar y Correa, Marquis of La Vega de Armijo and Minister of State, responded to Rascón's petitions on behalf of the King through a telegram:

*“After receiving the communiqué number 102, His Majesty the King entrusted me to notify His Excellency that both His Majesty and the Government will receive the Jews coming from Russia, opening for them the doors of what was their old homeland.”* (La Vega de Armijo in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 20)

By sending such telegram, the Spanish State adopted an explicit and clear position in order to find a solution for the problem of the Jewish refugees coming from the Russian Empire without avoiding it, in what was considered to be the first time that Spain took a concrete measure regarding the Jewish communities of the Eastern Mediterranean (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 20). Straight after this decision was taken, a media campaign on the position adopted by the Spanish authorities was launched all over Europe with articles, like the one published on the 21st of June of 1881 in the British newspaper *Standard*, which applauded the performance of King Alfonso XII and informed that

*“he embraced with the greatest enthusiasm and pleasure this opportunity to remedy an act of injustice perpetrated by his predecessors, and he would happily receive and help [Jews] to recover their old position in Spain.”* (Standard in González García 1991, p. 216)

The Count of Rascón, who enthusiastically received the announcement made by the Spanish Government, commenced a similar campaign to disseminate its content through the Jewish society of Constantinople, and delivered the first in-depth official report on such campaign, as well as on the situation of the Sephardic Jews newly arrived in the Ottoman Empire to the King.

*“... regarding the information on the Jews who are fleeing the Russian empire and are not granted asylum in Romania and other neighbouring nations, I will share it with the Israelite commission that has come to this city and I will attempt to use all necessary means to encourage these Jewish individuals to accept the assistance offer made by His Majesty, which being so kind and so generous, can bring enormous advantages to the Spanish nation”* (Rascón in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 20)

As one can sense in this passage of the above mentioned report, the Count of Rascón added underlying financial and political reasons to the apparently altruist step taken by the Spanish State regarding the Jews of the Orient. As a matter of fact, he used such report to describe in detail how beneficial it would be for Spain to stimulate the settlement of commercially organised and active Jewish tradesmen on Spanish soil, and particularly along the Andalusian, Catalan and Valencian coasts. According to Rascón, if these Jews took up residence in Spain, their connection with over 350,000 Spanish speakers of Sephardic origin around the Ottoman Empire could certainly be to the advantage of Spanish trade, for the latter constituted a solid market for Spanish agricultural products that could be easily shipped to the Eastern Mediterranean coasts, as well as to those of the Black Sea, especially if a steamship line like the ones the British and the French had was operated between Spain and Turkey. Furthermore, he highlighted how profitable this Hispano-Ottoman relations would be for Spanish international prestige, if the expansion of the Spanish language was facilitated by the

creation of an educational institution in prominent Ottoman cities, such as Istanbul and Thessaloniki:

*“If this was followed by the establishment of a Spanish secondary school [...] in Constantinople and another one in Thessaloniki, where over 70,000 Jews of Spanish descent live, our commercial relationship with Turkey would be tremendously enhanced. A great step would be taken in this direction if the plan of the Jewish community of Constantinople to adopt the Latin alphabet in the place of the Hebrew one, which they use even when writing in Spanish in the newspapers and in the textbooks within the Jewish schools, is implemented.”* (Rascón in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p.21)

One day after the report of the Count of Rascón reached Spain, Marquis of La Vega de Armijo sent a more lengthy communiqué to the Spanish delegation of Constantinople than the previous one, in which he reiterated his welcome message to Jewish refugees coming from the Ottoman Empire. Such reiteration was of a great political value, for, besides its humanitarian nature and its hidden economic agenda, it supposed a liberal move by Sagasta in order to endorse his own Government in European eyes (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 21).

It is unquestionable, moreover, the fact that the clear position adopted by the Spanish State surely constituted a precedent for subsequent official actions concerning the Jewish communities (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 3). Additionally, it coincided with the expansion of so-called Philosephardism, a movement that was born some decades before with the purpose of counterbalancing Spanish anti-Semitism, and fostering the rapprochement between Spain and the people of Israel, even considering in some cases the granting of Spanish nationality to Jewish individuals. As a matter of fact, it can be said that Philosephardism itself was the stimulus that the Spanish authorities needed in order to change their treatment of the Jewish communities during the 19th century. Some of the best-known early philosephardic advocates were Adolfo de Castro and José Amador de los Ríos, two authors who worked for the divulgation of the Jewish question, and some of whose books have been used for the composition of the present study. Emilio Castelar and the Count of Rascón can also be found

on the list of personalities that adhered to the philosedardic movement, although unlike in the case of Castro and Amador de los Ríos, their approach was a lot more political than cultural as it can be understood from the previous pages. Nevertheless, the involvement in Philosephardism of the Count of Rascón went beyond the political -and commercial- sphere, for, even if he was determined to promote the Spanish language and culture among the Jews of the Orient in the hope of gaining a commercial and political reward for Spain, taking into account the fierce mercantile competition that Spain was to encounter in the Eastern Mediterranean with countries such as France, Italy and Great Britain, the government abandoned all efforts that had been made in this direction, thus leaving Rascón as the only alternative to focus on the humanitarian aspect of the situation (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 22). However, the limited financial resources of the Spanish Government restricted, in turn, the framework for humanitarian action of the Spanish diplomatic missions in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, which were notified by two different telegrams sent on the 8th and the 12th of July 1881, respectively, that, although those Jews willing to go to Spain were welcome to do so, the Spanish State would not defray their journey.

Far from losing faith in the “repatriation” project, Rascón continued to assist Jewish refugees, relying on the financial help of some of his personal friends, as well as on that of the international navigation companies that agreed on transporting these Jews to Spanish territory free of charge. This course of action, however, fuelled the fear of the Spanish authorities, who believed that the free transportation to Spain of Jewish individuals, together with the increase of asylum seekers that there would be if the Russian pogroms spread through Romania and Bulgaria, would translate in a number of Jews reaching Spain much larger than expected in almost no time.

*“The wave of immigration of Russian Jews is becoming considerably large. They leave [Russia] in thousands, although many of them go to America, given how easy it is for them to go there, and some others to Italy and France. The hallway and the patio of our Consulate in Constantinople are always crowded with people who come hoping to be transported to Spain for free. I have selected, among those who seemed better to me, seven, who should have left yesterday in a Fraissinet steamboat and will be taken*

*from Constantinople to Marseille free of charge, in view of the fact that Mr Benci, the shipowner, is willing to please me.”*

*“They will depart next Saturday and I expect to send up to twenty without either them or us spending a single penny. I have written to González Zabala so that he can provide them with free transportation from Marseille to Barcelona and I have no doubt that he will do it, for being the journey so short and having that port so many Spanish ships, they will not refuse to please him and will distribute the passengers among them.”* (Rascón in González García 1991 pp. 232-233)

Nevertheless, against all odds, as it had already happened after the freedom of worship was guaranteed by the constitutional text of 1869, the good will of the Count of Rascón, as well as that of King Alfonso XII and the Government of Sagasta did not have such a great practical impact, for only fifty-one Jews from Russia sought asylum in Spain (Bel Bravo 1997, p. 342). A plausible explanation behind the little success of this governmental initiative was the idea that many Jews had that even if Spain was showing a great generosity, the sincerity of their alleged tolerance was called into question, as the Count of Rascón himself stated in one of his formal communications with the King, in which he assured that those Jews with the intention to relocate in Spain would refrain from publicly accepting their Judaism (Rascón in Marquina and Ospina 1897, p. 24). Such perception was not strange given the past of strong anti-Semitism and religious intolerance of Spain and it was shared to a certain extent by various Jewish associations from the United Kingdom, as it was demonstrated at a meeting held by both the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association, in which it was said that as long as the limitations of the religious freedom were not legally removed, the future of Jews in Spain would not be safe (Avni 1982, p. 15).

It is now time, however, to go back to the line of Philosephardism, for it was of a paramount political importance and there are many other instances of philosephardic politicians and diplomats that need to be examined in order to understand the evolution of the Jewish question in 19th century Spain. As it was pointed out earlier in the present study, and mayhap because of its greater exposure to the Jewish communities from the Ottoman Empire and those who fled Russia after the aforementioned pogroms, the diplomatic mission of Spain in Istanbul performed a crucial role in this evolution. Once the Count of Rascón stopped serving

as the Spanish ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, he was substituted by Diego de Coello Quesada, who held his new position between 1884 and 1886. An ardent admirer of Ottomanism and his achievements, among which the equal treatment of all citizens regardless of their creed was worth mentioning, he exposed in his first *Letter of Constantinople* the religious and ethnical diversity one could find in the Bosphorus:

*“The whole Christian clergy of Constantinople, represented by the Catholic delegate Monsignor Rotelli, and the Armenian Azeri Patriarch, together with Hebrew Chief Rabbi, were in the front line of this reception, which was truly brilliant.”*

*“And like the Christian churches, whose hospitals and schools frequently receive the donations of the Sovereign, who is father -pasha- of all his subjects, the thousands and thousands of Israelites of Constantinople, who after four centuries still recall their beloved homeland, Spain, and whose fortune is envied by the Jews of Romania, Hungary, and even civilised Germany, receive his protection.”* (Coello in Martín Asuero 2007, p. 3)

Through letters like this one and other articles published in *La Época*, a liberal newspaper that Coello had founded himself, and other publications like *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, references to the Sephardim of Istanbul and Thessaloniki were repeatedly made by the Spanish ambassador. For this and similar reasons, Coello gained an immense popularity among the Jewish community of the Ottoman Empire which supposed not only a personal affection towards him, as it was showed through the invitations he received to attend the inauguration of the railway in both Turkey and Northern Greece in 1888, even if he had been relocated in Rome some years earlier and could not make an appearance at the event, but in the substantial assistance rendered by the Sephardic bourgeoisie of Istanbul in an event organised to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake that had struck Andalusia in 1884. As a result of such altruistic gesture, Diego de Coello Quesada was filled with admiration for the Jewish community of the Bosphorus, although he showed at the same time surprise when he realised the willingness of these people, who were the descendants of those who had been expelled from Spain in 1492 by the Catholic monarchs, to help Spaniards. As a matter of fact, this ambivalent attitude towards the Sephardim was to be found continuously in Spain (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 3), and even nowadays, the perception of the Jews that several

people in Spain have is to a considerable extent an ambivalent one, for even if the Jewish communities are stereotyped as “greedy” and “traitors”, numerous positive virtues such as their intelligence, responsibility and wealth are generally attributed to them (Rozenberg 1993, p. 5).

At around the same time, on the 30th of December of 1886, the National Centre for Israelite Immigration was established in Spain by Isidro López Lapuya (Prados García 2011, p. 4), a philosephardic Spanish journalist, with the purpose of attracting Jewish migrants, particularly those of Sephardic descent, who would be chosen with the collaboration of other European Jewish associations to the Spanish State,, spreading information about Spain among the Jewish communities of Europe, publishing reliable information on the Sephardim, their lives and their customs, and granting the Jewish migrants who succeeded to relocate in Spain the financial assistance necessary to integrate themselves in society (González García 1991, p. 118). Lapuya himself was appointed president of the National Centre for Israelite Immigration, whereas Naim Guedalla, a British Jew of Spanish origin who congratulated the Spanish State after the freedom of religion was approved by the Constitution of 1869 and who asked for permission to build a synagogue on Spanish soil with no success, was designated honorary president, as a reward for his advocacy of Judaism in Spain between 1868 and 1869 (Manrique Escudero 2008, p. 13). The founding of this centre had a major repercussion in the political life of the country, leading in February of 1887 to the intervention of Sagasta, who had been reelected Prime Minister of Spain in 1885, in the Senate in order to clarify whether the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 had been abrogated, and to present the terms in which those Jews that intended to go back to Spain could do it in actuality. As an answer to the first question, the Spanish Prime Minister stated that, according to the freedom of worship in force, Jews, as well as the followers of any other religion, could freely live in Spain, as long as their actions were not against Christian morality. With respect to the second inquiry, Sagasta announced that, as in the previous case, Jewish individuals could return to Spain under the same circumstances as anyone else (González García 1991, p. 119). It is observable here that the repeal of the Alhambra Decree, as it has been already mentioned in the present dissertation, was only a *de facto* one, for no law explicitly abolished it. In actual fact, this became a greatly controversial matter due to the fact that both Jewish



individuals and Jewish organisations were suspicious of the real position of the Spanish Government, which most times showed an evasive attitude towards it.

During the rest of the decade of the 80's and the entire decade of the 90's of the 19th century, three were the aspects that decided the course of the Jewish question in Spain: the ideological rivalry between conservatives and liberals, the progressive doctrine of Pope Leo XIII and the birth of Zionism.

As already illustrated by the parliamentary confrontation between Emilio Castelar and Vicente Manterola y Pérez on the of the approval of the Constitution 1869, the perception of Judaism, which was closely connected with the freedom of worship, and that of the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 were at the centre of the political discussion of 19th century Spain and would be equally important during the 20th century. Liberal politicians, led by Castelar considered the banishment of Jews from Spain the principal reason for the decline of the country, while conservatives were divided into two groups, the one that was closest to the Catholic Church and affirmed that the expulsion of the Jewish communities in the 15th century had been a historical imperative, and the one that, even if thought that forcing Jews into exile had been a regrettable act, did not agree with liberals on the idea that such exile was to be blamed for the Spanish decline (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 5) . It is noteworthy the fact that, since both sides became genuinely passionate in the defence of their views, a distinguished representative of each of them engaged with the arduous task of writing an essay to express their beliefs. Thus, in 1881, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, a conservative philologist, historian and Nobel Prize nominee published his work *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, whereas Emilio Castelar divulged his book *Crónica Internacional* in 1899 (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 27). In this book, Castelar approached the Jewish question from a religious tolerance perspective, which, in actuality, found its ideological support in the second aspect of the list, that is the liberal doctrine of the Catholic Church under the reign of Pope Leo XIII. After the years of Pius IX at the front of the Holy See, a new era of openness was brought to Catholicism by Pope Leo XIII, who advocated for the coexistence of religion and science, the mutual understanding between the Church and the modern world and the reconciliation with the working class, thus creating an ambiance in which the practice of other religions was perfectly tolerated.

Last but not least, the creation and quick development of the the Zionist movement needs to be carefully examined in order to get a better understanding of the Jewish question in Spain not that much by the turn of the century, but for the impact it will have in the 20th century politics. Zionism was a national movement created in Central and Eastern Europe by the people of Israel as a response to the anti-Semitic persecutions and to other nationalist movements that had emerged at the end of the 19th century. Its primary goal was the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty at the historic Land of Israel, even though, a more religious variety of Zionism advocated for the idea of Jews upholding their adherence to Judaism and opposing their assimilation into other societies. Even though, the first reference to Zionism appeared in a Spanish newspaper called *Heraldo de Madrid* on the 1st of November of 1897, it was not until April of 1899 that the matter was dealt with at a diplomatic level, when the Spanish ambassador of the Russian Empire expounded the concern of the Russian authorities about the so-called *mouvement social semitique sous le nom de sionisme* in a confidential report he sent to the Spanish Government (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 26). According to the Spanish diplomat, given the uncertain nature of the Zionist movement and its lack of solidity, no one could be confident of the direction it would take, especially considering that many of its followers might not regard it as a Hebrew national movement and use it as a revolutionary and social movement instead, thus becoming a real destabilising element. As a matter of fact, it was expected that Zionists strengthened their organisation and:

“ *espèrent pourtant à l'aide d'une organization social solide de ces sociétés faire pénétrer jusqu'au peuple même les idées socialistes et démocratiques.*” (González García 1991, p. 320)

Through that same report, the Spanish ambassador in the Russian Empire queried about the possible existence of a Spanish branch of the Zionist movement, for he feared the action of such a destabilising element within Spain could alter the sociopolitical bases of the country. However, given the short proportion of Jews living on Spanish soil and its lack of cohesion, the issue of Zionism did not affect Spain whatsoever (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 26). In actuality, there was a matter of much larger dimensions affecting the Spanish political scene

at that time, the so-called *Desastre del 98* or the Spanish-American War, an armed conflict which was fought in 1898 between Spain and the United States after Americans trooped intervened in the Cuban War of Independence, leading to the actual independent of Cuba and involving the loss of the Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. The aftermath of this war or disaster, as it is habitually referred to by Spanish historiography, was characterised by a nationwide moral, social and political crisis caused by the loss of the last Spanish overseas possessions in America and Asia, and the consequent nostalgia for grandeur, which made Spain focus on healing their internal wounds, with little attention turned to the international sphere. In a context marked for this event, the so-called Generation of '98, a group of Spanish writers and philosophers, was born and shortly became the main intellectual force of the country to criticise the conformism and ignorance of Spanish society, which was associated to the educational establishment of Spain. In various of their writings, like in those of Ramón María del Valle Inclán and Pío Baroja y Nessi, the racial mixture of Spaniards was treated, even if the peoples allegedly descended from medieval Jews and Muslims, Catalans and Andalusians respectively, were oftentimes negatively stereotyped (Ojeda Mata 2015, pp. 5-6) . In any manner, these works served for spreading the idea of a historically multicultural Spain that was to be utilised again during the 20th century.

### **The Jewish question in 20th century Spain**

At the beginning of the 20th century, the imprint of the liberal politics of Emilio Castelar regarding Judaism and that of the Philosephardic movement as a whole embodied in the figure of the aforementioned Senator Ángel Pulido Fernández, who from 1903 on became a staunch advocate for the Sephardic cause. On the 24th of August of 1903, when Senator Ángel Pulido left Belgrade on a steamship with his family, he made the acquaintance of a couple of fellow passengers who, according to Pulido himself, spoke a broken Spanish. After introducing each other, Pulido learnt that the gentleman was Enrique Bejarano, the headmaster of a Sephardic Jewish school in Bucharest, and that he professed a pure love for Spain. This encounter marked a milestone in the political life of Pulido, who was impressed by the existence of that language, Ladino, four centuries after the Jews had been expelled

from Spain, leading him to launch a philosephardic campaign that lasted for almost twenty years and was of a paramount importance for the new century. Thus, on the Senate session of the 13th of November of that same year, Pulido addressed the House with a speech in which he asked if the Spanish Government was in the position to ignore the Spanish language that was spoken in several countries of the Orient and was threaten to disappear. Additionally, he advised the gathering of information by the Spanish diplomats living in the Eastern Mediterranean on the amount of Sephardim who could speak Spanish in those region , and the establishment of Spanish institutions that could promote it (Prados García 2011, p. 5). This speech divided the audience, for politicians like the Count of Casa-Valencia strongly disagreed with various of the points made by Pulido, whereas some others, such as the Count of San Bernardo, who was also the Minister of the Interior, stated that he intended to do everything in his hand to get to know these speakers of Spanish, and to open a school through which this language was kept alive.

Senator Pulido, however, did not content himself with his interventions in the Spanish Senate. In 1904, he requested the assistance of Antonio de Zayas y Beaumont, a Spanish diplomat who had served as Embassy Secretary of third class in the Consulate General of Spain in Constantinople between 1897 and 1898, and who, in spite of having an anti-Semitic ideology, had engaged himself in the elaboration of a report on the Sephardim of the Bosphorus, given their significance within the Ottoman society. Thanks to that report, later that year, Pulido published his book *Los israelitas españoles y el idioma castellano* (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 4). Nevertheless, it was his second book on the Jewish question, the one that enjoyed a greater fame: *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí*, published in 1905. In this second book, Pulido presented the results of a study he had carried out and the information he had gathered by the correspondence exchanged with numerous members of the Sephardic communities, not only in the Eastern Mediterranean, but all over the world. The letters Senator Pulido sent, included a questionnaire with twelve questions aimed to find out the characteristics of the Sephardim of every country:

- “1. Are there Sephardic Jews in the city where you live? How many?
2. Are there other cities in that country where Sephardic Jews live? Which are they?
3. What is the social status of the Spanish Jews that live in your city?

4. *Do they hold high positions, such as the Government and the army, in universities jurisprudence, medicine and banking?*
  5. *Which newspapers are published in Judaeo-Spanish in your city?*
  6. *How many schools are there in your city? Who funds them (the Government, France, Germany...)?*
  7. *Is Judaeo-Spanish taught in schools?*
  8. *Is Judaeo-Spanish well conserved or has it been affected by the use of other languages?*
  9. *Would the Sephardim of your city be willing to cultivate relations with their old homeland, Spain? Would they show sympathy in so doing?*
  10. *Are the Israelites of your nation persecuted? Are there laws of emergency affecting them?*
  11. *Which are the communities of Sephardic rite and which are the intellectual centres to which we one can send books, magazines and newspapers?*
  12. *Which are the bookshops of your city where they sell Jewish publications?"*
- (Pulido Fernández 1905, pp. 11-12)

The philosephardic campaign led by Senator Pulido obviously attracted the attention of the Jewish communities of Morocco and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as that of numerous Spanish diplomats and members of the Embassy personnel working in that area. such as David Rousso, counselor of the Spanish Consulate of Istanbul, and Alejandro Spagnolo, Consul General of Spain in Alexandria, Egypt (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 4). It was in fact Alejandro Spagnolo who passed the questionnaires sent by Pulido to the Alliance Israélite Universelle of Alexandria and to Abraham Galante, a prominent Turkish journalist living in Egypt (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 405). Moreover, in a letter he sent to Senator Pulido, he expressed a keen interest in the aforementioned initiative:

*"Let me, first of all, express my most sincere applause for the patriotic initiative taken by you, attracting the attention of our Government about how useful and convenient it would be for the national interest, if not to spread, at least to prevent our language to disappear among those hundreds of thousands of Spanish Jews that, scattered around all the countries of the Levant and besides centuries have passed by, have managed to keep it until today, with their patriotism and honour." (Spagnolo in Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 471)*

There were other members of the Jewish diaspora, however, such as Abraham Shalom Yahuda, that strongly criticised the hypocrisy of this “philosephardic” initiative (Yahuda 1996), for he considered that it intended to use the Sephardim in the process of economically regenerating a country (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 6) that desperately needed it after the loss of the last colonies in 1898. It is true in any case that , not only constituted Philosephardism the regeneration of Spain at an internal level, but, most importantly, it began to be used as a tool of the Spanish foreign policy in the early 20th century and still continues to be. According to the Spanish authorities, including diplomats like Alejandro Spagnolo, as it has been in his letter to Pulido, the existence of Sephardic Jews that spoke “Spanish” could be employed to boost the international political prestige that had been recently lost (Ojeda Mata 2015, p.15), thus resulting in a substantial benefit for Spain.

As a matter of fact, Senator Pulido himself mentioned in the introduction to his book *Españoles sin patria y la raza sefardí* the fact that his campaign would be beneficial for both Spain and the Jews, as well as for what he called “the evangelical education of races and peoples” (Pulido Fernández 1905, p. 1), thus showing an active interest in the preservation and diffusion of culture.

Be it as it may, it cannot be denied that the philosephardic initiative launched by Senator Pulido had in actuality significant repercussions in the Spanish society of the early 20th century, for it created a much needed atmosphere of solidarity (Rozenberg 1993, p. 5) that allowed the creation of a certain number of Jewish institutions in Spain, such as the Alianza Hispano-Hebrea in 1910 and the Casa Universal de los Sefardíes, whose main objectives were to bring the Jews of the diaspora and Spain closer (Prados García 2011, p. 5), as well as the opening of the first synagogue of the country in 1909 in Madrid (Rozenberg 1993, p. 2). Concurrently, and given the political use that the Spanish institutions started to make of the Sephardim, a number of “hispanising” societies were established abroad. Thus, the Casa de España en Estambul and the Asociaciones Hispano-Hebreas de Marruecos were open around that time (Ojeda Mata 2015, p.6). In any event, it should be brought to the reader’s attention the ambivalence with which the Sephardim are treated (Ojeda Mata 2015, p.6), which challenges the idea of fraternity between Spain and the Jewish people that the establishment of all these institutions might suggest.

The following legal actions regarding the Jewish community were not taken by the Spanish authorities until 1913 when, in the aftermath of the Second Balkan War, the Treaty of Bucharest was signed by the delegates of Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 5). As a result of the above mentioned treaty and the several changes in the borders of the different Balkan countries involved in the conflict, the general insecurity of the region encouraged numerous Jews to leave for Constantinople. Many of these refugees were originally from Adrianople or Edirne, an Ottoman city that had been lost to Bulgaria during the First Balkan War and reconquered by the Ottomans during the Second Balkan War, in which the Jewish population was estimated to be of around 20,000 (Martín Asuero 2007, pp. 5-6). Since a large number of them were Sephardim, it is easily understood that the requests for protection received by the Spanish Consulate speedily increased reaching only that year 71 files, in which the Spanish origin of the applicants and their refusal to acquire Bulgarian nationality were constantly referred to. Furthermore, a report written by the consular personnel including a mention to the fortune of the applicant and the reasons why his protection would be beneficial for Spain was attached to the application itself (Martín Asuero 2007, pp. 5-7).

In order to be granted consular protection, and in accordance to the regulations of 1871 on the protection procedures for the Orient, and the Royal Orders number 14 and 23 sent to the Consulate General of Spain in Constantinople, the applicants were requested to sign with their names and two surnames, as it was and continues to be advised by the Spanish naming customs, and to provide the first name of his wife together with her maiden name, and the names and age of their children. All this information had to be certified by a Chief Rabbi (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 5). After a period of revision that could go between one day to two months, depending on the fortune of the applicant, 69 out of the 71 Jewish individuals that had sought protection from the Spanish authorities did in fact get it, being the remaining two Russian Jews that had claimed to be of Sephardic origin: Mair Namiot Epstein and Joseph Saltzman (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 5).

At around the same time, and as a consequence of the Balkan wars, the region of Macedonia was annexed to Greece, thus leaving the enormous Jewish community of the city of

Thessaloniki, which was formed by 80,000 people out of the total population of 173,000 and had traditionally supported the Ottomans, exposed to Greek nationalism. As a matter of fact, the Jews of Thessaloniki were assaulted by both Greek private citizens and soldiers, thus turning to different foreign consulates, including the Spanish one for protection (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 37). Nevertheless, unlike in the case of Constantinople, the Spanish consul of Thessaloniki showed a rather passive attitude towards the Sephardim of the city and only a small number of them were granted consular protection (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 37).

This consular protection system in the Eastern Mediterranean, however, was not in force for long, for the Balkan States and, primarily, the newly-constituted Republic of Turkey categorically opposed what, in their opinion, was a residual legacy from the colonial system (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 6). Thus, on the 17th of April of 1917, the Spanish Ministry of the Interior issued a Royal Order regarding the Jews of Greece under Spanish protection through which, in accordance to the bilateral Treaty of Athens signed by Greece and Spain in 1913, the matter of consular protection became a matter of naturalisation (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 38).

By the same token, in order to fill the legal vacuum caused by the abolition of extraterritorial rights that permitted the protection of a Turkish citizen by a foreign power, the Spanish Government of Miguel Primo de Rivera enacted a Royal Decree on the 20th of December of 1924 through which those people of Spanish origin that had previously been under Spanish consular protection could be granted Spanish nationality (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 46-47). It is worth mentioning, however, the fact that no specific reference to Sephardic Jews was made, even though it is true that the Sephardim were the only people to meet the two requirements contained in the Royal Decree, unlike some Christian Maronites of the Levant that, despite of having been under Spanish consular protection, were not of Spanish origin (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 8).

The Royal Decree of 1924 was valid until the 31st of December of 1930, which gave those Sephardic Jews who wanted to acquire the Spanish nationality six whole years to follow the corresponding process. Moreover, given the complexity of such process, which included the



payment of around 500 pesetas, the renunciation of previous citizenships, the oath to the Spanish constitution, and the possibility to do all the aforementioned in the Spanish consulates without having to travel to Spain, some guidance was given through the issuance of diverse governmental orders until 1928 (Prados García 2011, p. 6).

Nevertheless, there were certain problems regarding the naturalisation of Sephardic Jews that need to be discussed. To start with, after the Royal Decree of 1924 was enacted, and after 1917 in the case of Macedonia, the newly-constituted republics of Greece and Turkey considered Spanish protegés to be actual Spanish citizen, while Spain, for its part, regarded them as national of the countries in which they lived. Concurrently, up to 1926, the Spanish Government continued to issue Sephardic protegés with Spanish passports, although this did not mean that they were legitimate Spanish citizens (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 47). The confusion resulting from this situation, which led several Jewish protegés to mistakenly believe that they were Spanish nationals, together with the little diffusion given to the new legislation by the authorities, translated in merely a modest number of Sephardic Jews from Thessaloniki and other former Ottoman cities applying for the Spanish nationality (Prados García 2011, p.6) and an even more modest number actually relocating in Catalonia, Spain, where they began to work in the textile sector (Martín Asuero 2007, p. 7). It is however important to remember the significance of the Royal Decree of 1924 during World War II (Rozenberg 1993, p. 2) although this will be referred to later in this study.

On the other hand, as years passed by, new issues related to the Real Decree of 1924 began to raise in Egypt and the Republic of Turkey. As a consequence of the fierce nationalism that dominated the Egyptian political scene of the decade of the 20's, those people under the consular protection of foreign powers living in Egypt, as well as those who held a different nationality, were in fact regarded as Egyptian nationals (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 54). In fact, the position taken by the Egyptian Government was a way of discrediting such foreign powers, as the Spanish diplomats of Cairo and Alexandria themselves stated in a communiqué sent to Spain:

*“This decision of the authorities entails the total annulment of the Spanish Royal Decree through which naturalisation was granted to protegés.”* (Marquina and Ospina, p. 54)

The situation in Egypt deteriorated when on the 10th of May of 1929, foreign nationals were legally obliged to adopt Egyptian nationality if they desired to stay on Egyptian soil, or to leave otherwise (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 55). In order to resolve this issue, the Spanish Government enacted a new Royal Decree on the 20th of December of that same year, through which it was implied that all Jews to acquire Spanish nationality were indeed allowed to relocate in Spain (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 55).

The circumstances of the Jews in Turkey, for its part, worsened as the ultranationalist Government of the country supposed a threat for all those protegés that were not able to acquire a foreign citizenship, for they could be expelled whensoever. The solution to such issue came from Spain in the form of a Royal Order sent to the Spanish ambassador of Istanbul on the 12th of January of 1931 in which it was stated that the content of the Royal Decree of 1924 would apply from that moment on to all former Spanish protegés of Turkey, regardless of their origin, or to the descendants of such protegés (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 71-72).

It is equally noteworthy the fact that, given the diverse reforms that the Royal Decree of 1924 underwent and the various requests received by the Spanish Ministry of the Interior from the diplomatic missions of Bucharest, Cairo and Istanbul, among others, the validity of such decree was extended in different cases so that a larger number of applicants could follow the naturalisation procedure (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 71-74).

Leaving the logistics of the Royal Decree of 1924 and the problems derived from its implementation aside, it is now time to address the political aspects that motivated such action. In addition to the symbolic value of the legislation, which entailed the recognition of a special bond between Spain and the Sephardic Jews (Rozenberg 1993, p. 2), the enactment of this Royal Decree involved the first political action taken by the Spanish Government regarding the Jewish communities (Rozenberg 1993, p. 5), thus becoming the first greatest

success of Philosephardism as well. To comprehend why such political action was taken, one needs to consider the intention of the Spanish dictatorship to put an end to the isolationism of the country and to restore its international prestige (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 46-48), something that had been repeatedly attempted since the beginning of the Bourbon Restoration. The possibility for Sephardic Jews to become Spanish citizens was the best way to ensure their future utilisation as a foreign policy tool in the Eastern Mediterranean and to eventually restore the lost international prestige. In actuality, the fact that the Jewish applicants could deal with the paperwork to acquire the Spanish citizenship in the Spanish consulates of the countries in which they lived entailed that they were more useful for Spain in the Levant than on Spanish soil (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 8).

To further understand this point, it is important to bring to the reader's attention the fact that even if the government of Miguel Primo de Rivera did not adopt an openly anti-Semitic attitude during the 8 years of his dictatorship, the "repatriation" of naturalised Sephardic Jews was oftentimes obstructed by the Spanish authorities (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 74). This hampering posture was demonstrated by the lack of one only clear legal text facilitating both the naturalisation and return of the Sephardim to Spain from the beginning. Nonetheless, it was not made official until the issuance of the Royal Order 570-bis on the 24th of January of 1930. through which the diplomatic missions of Spain of numerous European and American countries, as well as that of Istanbul, were told to discreetly hinder the repatriation of Jews to Spain by following three lines of actions, as Antonio Marquina y Gloria Inés Ospina point out in their book *Espanoles y los judios en el siglo XX*:

- “1. It was not cautious to encourage the Sephardic immigration in Spain.
2. For political convenience, the current nuclei of naturalised Spanish abroad should be maintained , given that, because of their contacts and sympathy towards Spain, they could and they should utilised in the benefit of the Spanish influence and the increase of the intellectual and commercial relations.
3. It was not advisable, on the contrary, to create nuclei of Israelites in Spain, considering that <<they constitute, as it is their habit, within [the society] a particular organisation of its own kind, with their own objectives, and with a risk of perturbing the regular functioning of our economic institutions, our commercial institutions, etc.>>” (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p.60)

Be it as it may, the political situation of Spain was to change again on the 14th of April of 1931, when the Second Spanish Republic was established after King Alfonso XIII left the country and the monarchical system was abolished. As it had already happened during the First Spanish Republic, the freedom of conscience and the freedom of worship were proclaimed (Rozenberg 1993, p. 7), which was interpreted by the international press and the different Sephardic communities as a chance for the Sephardim to relocate in Spain (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 81). The position adopted by Republican Spain, nevertheless was not very clear in this regard, for, as it had been the custom for centuries, every single Government approached the Jewish question from a different perspective according to its ideology (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 82).

Thus, during the first period of the Second Spanish Republic, the so-called Reformist Biennium, the actions taken by the Spanish Government of Manuel Azaña regarding the Jewish communities were in the same vein as those that had been previously taken by the dictatorial government of Miguel Primo de Rivera. The official position of Spain continued to be fairly vague for, even if it was a tolerant one, it did not promote the immigration of Sephardic individuals or Sephardic groups (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 82-84). At around the same time, it was discussed at a governmental level, although not expressed legally, the possibility to grant the Spanish nationality to all Jews, not only to the Sephardim. This measure, however, was not taken eventually as a result of the anti-Semitism showed by the most conservative sectors of the Parliament (González García in Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 8). Nonetheless, the time of legal residence in Spain requested by the Spanish Government in order for someone to be granted Spanish citizenship dropped from ten to two years for all Hispanic American nationals and for those from the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco, among which Sephardic Jews were to be found (Ojeda Mata 2015, pp. 8-9).

It is equally worth mentioning two initiatives taken for the sake of leveraging the Sephardic communities spread all over the world but, specifically, those living in the Eastern Mediterranean. Even though these two initiatives did not have a great legal repercussion, their political significance needs to be highlighted.

In October of 1932, Agustín de Foxá, a Spanish diplomat serving in Sofia, Bulgaria, delivered a report in which, as it had occurred before, he emphasised the need for a cultural expansion of Spain in the Balkans through the Sephardic nuclei that inhabited those countries (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 82-90). Nevertheless, he was aware of some of the difficulties that Spain would encounter in the area if it was to intervene. The first one was the aggressive nationalism of certain countries that, as it has already been discussed, did not pave the way for any foreign intervention, even if it was of a cultural nature. The second one was the exponential growth of Zionism in Eastern Europe, which had already undermined the work of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a French cultural institution in charge of educating Jewish youngsters in various countries (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 89). To avoid the same fate, De Foxá suggested that the Spanish Government collaborated with the Zionist movement instead of working independently, and that the idea that Zionism and Philosephardism were not antagonistic was spread. For so doing, he constantly repeated what Ernesto Giménez Caballero, a Spanish diplomat who had worked for the government of Primo de Rivera had once stated:

*“Philosephardism is strictly for the Spanish Jews a second-degree Zionism. Spaniards are not anti-Zionist. Rather we have come to complete Zionism.” (Giménez Caballero in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 89)*

Last but not least, in the hope to facilitate the cultural expansion he aimed for, De Foxá requested an extension of the period for the application of Spanish citizenship by Sephardic Jews, for, as it has been mentioned earlier in this study, the little diffusion given to the Royal Decree of 1924 did not allow several Sephardim to apply for it (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 90). None of his recommendations, however, was of any efficacy.

The second initiative concerning the Sephardim was the continuation of the so-called *Sefarditismo económico*, an economic doctrine formulated in 1930 by a Spanish diplomat called José María Doussinague. According to this doctrine, diverse measures, such as the creation of a Spanish bank in the Balkans, the establishment of a Spanish Chamber of Commerce in the capital cities of the Balkan countries, and the handling of the Jewish

question by the Ministry of Economy, should be implemented in order to get the economic advantages expected from the Sephardim (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 66-91).

Based on the *Sefarditismo económico* of Doussinague and on various previous reports and pieces of legislation such as the Royal Decree of 1924, the first and only Republican attempt to politically approach the Jewish question was made by the government of Manuel de Azaña on the 27th of February of 1933, when a Circular Order was issued. The objective of this order was to operate the article 23 of the Republican Constitution, which dealt with the need to establish a procedure through which people of Spanish origin living abroad, especially Sephardim, could acquire Spanish nationality. This measure would have been of a legal, an economic and a cultural nature (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 91), but it did not have an appreciable practical effect.

Before moving onto the second period of the Second Spanish Republic, it is necessary to say that, besides being used as a tool of foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean both economically and culturally, according to diverse Egyptian newspapers, such as *La Voix Juive* and *La Bourse Egyptienne*, the Sephardim would have been utilised by the Spanish Government as an anticlerical element (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 83). This could be understood if the major influence that the Catholic Church of the Bourbon Restoration exercised over the Spanish society, and the strong will of the Republican Government to reverse the situation.

By the end of 1933, parliamentary elections were held in Spain, resulting in a change of the government, which gave way to the so-called Dark Biennium. During the following two years, the Ministry of the Interior clearly positioned itself against the immigration of Sephardic Jews to Spain (Marquina and Ospina 1987 p. 82). This anti-Semitic position was a consequence of the participation of the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas or CEDA in the coalition that formed the government, given the fact that Catholicism played a key role within this political party.

Nevertheless, there were certain events that unfolded during this second period of the Republic that clearly contradicted the anti-Semitic rhetoric that has just been analysed. The first one was the founding of the first Zionist association of Spain in 1934, followed by the

establishment in Madrid of the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España at the end of that same year. Both of these institutions performed a crucial role in the assimilation of the first Jews fleeing Nazi Germany (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 116). By the same token, on the occasion of the 800 anniversary of the birth of Maimonides, a celebrated Jewish philosopher born in Córdoba, numerous activities were organised by the Spanish authorities. Such activities were accompanied by diverse speeches given by Spanish politicians, like José de Gardogni, the civil governor of Córdoba, who read a communiqué sent from the central Government:

*“So come back to Spain, my dear brothers. [...] We want to open all ways for your return. The French say <<every farewell is a death>>. But do not forget that <<every return is a resurrection>>. [...] say to everyone that Spain has erased the last remains of its dark past and that the new Spain embraces you like a son that comes back from a long journey.”* (De Gardogni in Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 112)

This official declaration was one of the means used by Alejandro Lerroux, an anticlerical member of the Government and President of the Spanish Council of Ministers, to regenerate the perception of Jews of the previous years, as well as a cordial invitation for the Sephardic communities to return to Spain (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 112). This resulted in around 5000 Jews living in Barcelona by 1936, and about 150 Jewish families living in Madrid during that period (Avni 1982, p. 43).

The enlargement of the Jewish communities in Spain, nevertheless, was halted when the Spanish Civil War broke out on the 18th of July of 1936, after the a coup d'état against the Republican Government was mounted by a sizable part of the Spanish army. Three years later, when the war was over and the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco began, a strong official anti-Semitic attitude was adopted by the newly-constituted Spanish Government. Such shift in the ideology was due to the fact that the Catholic Church regained the influence it had lost during the Second Spanish Republic and, most importantly, thanks to the close bond between Francoist Spain and Nazi Germany, which was evident in the Nazi propaganda spread by the Falange. As a matter of fact, for most of Franco's dictatorship,

together with Communists and Masons, Jews were considered to be the main enemies of Spain (Marquina and Ospina 1987, p. 131).

The position of Franco's Government concerning the Jewish question did not change during the first stage of the dictatorship, although it should be mentioned that some Sephardic Jews that had been part of the so-called Army of Africa during the Spanish Civil War acquired Spanish nationality at that time (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 9).

Furthermore, it needs to be brought to the reader's attention the fact that during World War II, in their attempt to safeguard the freedom of the Jews that were being victims of the Holocaust and protect their lives, various of the Spanish diplomatic missions abroad interpreted the orders received from Madrid in the way that most benefitted the Jewish communities living or passing through their countries, or even disregarding them (Lisbona 2015, p. 33). What is more, in multiple cases, as it was briefly referred earlier in the present study, the Royal Decree of 1924 was of an incalculable value for the Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. Since many of these Jews had acquired the Spanish nationality through the aforementioned piece of legislation, it was possible to save them after the German Government gave them an ultimatum of being deported or repatriated (Prados García 2011, pp. 6-7). In addition, the issuance of transit visa for Jews in Europe by diverse Spanish consulates allowed them to flee Germany and seek asylum in safe third countries (Prados García 2011, p. 7).

Some years later, on the 29th of December of 1948, the Spanish Council of Ministers passed a decree-law through which the Spanish protegés in both Egypt and Greece were entitled to obtain Spanish nationality, which enabled the immigration of several Sephardic Jews to Spain during the decades of the 50's and the 60's (Rozenberg 1993, p. 5). This action was preceded by the signing of a bilateral agreement between the Republican Spanish Government and the Egyptian Government in 1935, and another one between the Republican Spanish Government and the Greek Government in 1936, respectively, in which two lists with the names of the Spanish protegés in both countries were included (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 237-238). However, it was in 1948 and not previously when the naturalisation of the Sephardic Jews living in Egypt and Greece was granted. This is explained by the fact that the regime of



capitulations was to be shortly abolished and, once again, a number of Spanish diplomats in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Alonso Caro, the Spanish ambassador in Egypt, interceded in favour of the Jewish communities (Marquina and Ospina 1987, pp. 237-238).

Be it as it may, the adoption of a law regarding the Jews that, in fact, supposed the continuation of the Republican policies would have not been feasible if the ideology of Franco's Government had remained the same as in the beginning of the dictatorship. This anti-Semitic ideology, nevertheless, began to change after the defeat of Hitler in World War II and, specifically, when Francoist Spain attempted to bring the international isolation it suffered from to an end. Thus, in 1949, an international propaganda campaign was launched by the Spanish Government in order to promote the idea that Franco had been a saviour for the Jews (Pérez 2005, p. 335-336). Such campaign aimed to achieve an international recognition of Francoist Spain and it was, and to a certain extent continues to be, tremendously successful (Álvarez Chillida 2002, p. 406). It culminated in its access to the United Nations in 1955, besides the opposition of the newly-constituted State of Israel, which still considered that Franco was an ally of Hitler (Pérez 2005, p. 336).

Approximately three decades after these last events, the following legal action concerning the Sephardic Jews was taken by the democratic Government of Spain on the 13th of July of 1982. That day, the Law 51/1982, through which articles 17 to 26 of the Spanish Civil Code were amended, was passed, thus including the Sephardim as one of the groups that could acquire the Spanish nationality by legal residence in Spain of two years instead of ten (Prados García 2011, p. 7):

*“Article 22.*

*The Spanish nationality pursuant to residence shall be granted after ten years of residence in Spain, prior application by the interested party, and through concession granted by the Ministry of Justice, which might be refused on the grounds of law enforcement or national interest.*

*Two years shall suffice for citizens by birth of the Ibero-American countries, Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea or Portugal, or for Sephardic Jews, that can prove their respective condition.” (Law 51/1982)*

The positive discrimination behind this amendment, similar to the one introduced during the Second Spanish Republic although no express reference to the Sephardim was made in that one, was explained by both the willingness of the Spanish Government to establish relations between Spain and “the nations of its historical community”, and to remedy historical injustices perpetrated against the Sephardic community (Prados García 2011, p. 7). According to the scholar Celia Prados García, the first one would refer to the expulsion of the Jews by the Catholic monarchs in 1492, whereas the second one would allude to the omission of protection of Jewish individuals by Franco’s Government, not its diplomatic missions, during World War II (Prados Garcia 2011, p. 7).

Nonetheless, the amendment of the Spanish Civil Code did not involve the addition of any clause through which the Sephardim were permitted to hold dual nationality (Law 51/1982). This did not apply to the nationals of the rest of the countries listed in the Article 22, for they could keep their previous citizenship together with the Spanish one, as stated in diverse bilateral agreements between Spain and these countries (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 10).

It is worth mentioning, however, the fact that, besides the acquisition of Spanish nationality by legal residence in Spain, Sephardic Jews, as any other foreign individual, could acquire Spanish nationality by naturalisation. This procedure could be followed if special circumstances concurred in the interested party (Law 51/1982). Such circumstances, in the case of the Sephardim, were the family names and the language. Nevertheless, taking into consideration how names had evolved through the years, and at the request of Enrique Múgica Herzog, a Socialist MP of Jewish origin, this clause was repealed (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 10).

In any event, the condition of Sephardic Jew per se had been a special circumstance for decades, and after the clause concerning the surnames of the applicants was repealed, the matter was approached in a more flexible manner, which could benefit or not the naturalisation of the Sephardim (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 10).

By the end of the 20th century, even though no other piece of legislation with regard to the Jewish question was passed, at a political level some actions were taken by the Spanish State. Thus, on the 17th of January of 1987, diplomatic relations between Spain and Israel were finally established after years of mistrust (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 7). That same year, on the 1st of October, King Juan Carlos I visited a synagogue for the first time. It was the Sephardic Temple of Tifereth Israel in Los Angeles, California (Law 12/2015, p. 1). In 1990, the Sephardic communities won the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord, where they were defined as a “dear part of the great Hispanic family” which became an “itinerant Spain” (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 7). In 1992, numerous events were organised by the Spanish authorities on the occasion of the 5th centenary of the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, thus completing a political and ideological rapprochement between Spain and Judaism (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 7).

### **The Jewish question in present-day Spain**

The rapprochement between Spain and the Jewish communities that, with its numerous ups and downs, had started in the second half of the 19th century culminated in the passing of the Law 12/2015 on the 25th of June of 2015. This new piece of legislation was of a paramount importance not only because of its content, which will be later discussed, but, most importantly, because of its symbolism.

In the preamble of the forenamed law, King Felipe VI of Spain begins by defining who the Sephardim are -the third definition given on page 18 is the one used-, and continues by tracing their history since they were expelled from Spain in 1492 as a consequence of a “historical imperative” (Law 12/2015, p. 1). Following this preface, diverse attributes of the Sephardic communities, such as their fidelity to Spain and their nostalgic use of Ladino language, are presented, and the legislative text is introduced:

*“ In any case, the love towards a Spain which is finally aware of the historical and sentimental grounding of the Sephardim palpitates. It is only fair to back up such awareness through the opportune legal resources to grant the condition of Spaniard to*

*those who zealously and prodigiously refused to stop being it, besides the persecutions and the affliction that their ancestors cruelly had to suffer until their expulsion in 1492 from Spain and Aragón, and not much time later, in 1498, from the Kingdom of Navarre. Through the present Law, present-day Spain, wants to step forward to achieve the ultimate reconciliation with the Jewish communities” (Law 12/2015, p. 1)*

The body of the text, for its part, explains the two different manners of acquiring Spanish citizenship, this is by legal residence and by naturalisation, as it was indicated earlier in this study. Furthermore, an amendment to the Spanish Civil Code is introduced, and details on the procedure leading to the acquisition of Spanish nationality by naturalisation are given.

As it was mentioned earlier, even though two years of legal residence in Spain sufficed for a Sephardic Jew to be able to apply for Spanish citizenship since 1982, unlike the rest of people under the same category, the Sephardim were not allowed to hold dual nationality. The exact same thing applied to those Sephardim acquiring Spanish citizenship by naturalisation. Through the Law 12/2015, nevertheless, the Article 23 of the Spanish Civil Code was amended and the possibility to hold dual nationality was granted to Sephardic Jews:

*“Article 23*

*The following are common requirements for the validity of the acquisition of Spanish nationality by option, naturalisation or residence:*

*[...]*

*c) For the same person to declare that he renounces his previous nationality. Nationals of the countries listed in section 1 of the Article 24 and the Sephardim originally from Spain shall be excepted from this requirement.” (Spanish Civil Code in Law 12/2015, p. 7)*

With respect to the acquisition of Spanish nationality by naturalisation, it needs to be brought to the reader’s attention again, the fact that special circumstances needed to concur in the

applicant. The Law 12/2015 specifies that these special circumstances consist of being a Sephardic Jew of Spanish origin, being able to prove it, and showing a special bond with Spain (Law 12/2015, p. 3). It is now time to examine the guidelines on how to meet the previous requirements according to the aforementioned Law. In order to prove the condition of Sephardic Jew of Spanish origin, the submission of the following documents is required:

*“Article 1*

*[...]*

*2. The condition of Sephardic Jew of Spanish origin shall be proved by the following probationary means, which shall be considered altogether:*

- a) Certificate issued by the President of the Permanent Commission of the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España.*
- b) Certificate issued by the president or the analogous position within the Jewish community of the place of residence or birthplace of the interested party.*
- c) Certificate issued by the competent Rabbinic authority, legally recognised in the country of residence of the applicant.*

*[...]*

- d) Certification of the use of Ladino or Haketia as the family language, or of other indicator that confirm the belonging to the community*
- e) Birth certificate or “ketubah”, the marriage certificate in which the celebration in accordance to the customs of Castille is specified.*
- f) Report issued by the competent authority which guarantees the belonging of the applicant’s surnames to a Sephardic family of Spanish origin.*
- g) Any other circumstance that irrefutably demonstrates the condition of Sephardic Jew of Spanish origin of the applicant.” (Law 12/2015, p. 3)*

For the certificates referred to in section b) and c) to be valid, nevertheless, it is advisable to submit another certificate issued by the President of the Permanent Commission of the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España through which the authority of the issuing

institution is guaranteed. Otherwise, a number of other documents, such as an original copy of the foreign religious organisation issuing the certificate, or a certificate legally recognising the existence of such organisation, all of them authorised and translated into Spanish by a sworn translator, are required (Law 29/2015, p. 3).

In relation to the special bond of the applicant with Spain, there are diverse manners to prove it and, as in the previous case, the documentation would be considered altogether:

- “a) Certificate of Spanish History and culture issued by official institutions, or by private institutions officially recognised.*
- b) Certification of the knowledge of Ladino or Haketia.*
- c) Incorporation of the applicant or his direct ancestors on the list of Spanish protegés from Egypt or Greece to which the Decree-Law issued on the 29th of December of 1948 refers, or on the list of those who were naturalised through the Royal Decree issued on the 20th of December of 1924.*
- d) Consanguinity of the applicant with a person mentioned in section c)*
- e) Participation in cultural, economic and charitable activities in favour of Spanish people or institutions, or people living on Spanish soil, as well as in those organised in order to support the institutions working on the study, conservation and diffusion of the Sephardic culture.*
- f) Any other circumstance that irrefutably demonstrates the special bond between the applicant and Spain.”* (Law 12/2015, p. 4)

Likewise, two different tests, one of Spanish and the second one of cultural knowledge about Spain and the Spanish Constitution, need to be taken at the Instituto Cervantes. Nonetheless, the nationals of countries where Spanish is the official language, do not need to take the language test (Law 12/2015, p. 4).

Last but not least, Sephardic applicants are only given three years, plus an extension of one more year if needed, to go through the entire process. This translates in the lack of effectivity of the Law 12/2015 by, the latest, autumn of 2019. Nevertheless, the Article 23 of the Spanish Civil Code will remain amended after that date (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 11).

Having a look at all the above mentioned requirements that Sephardic applicants need to meet in order to acquire Spanish nationality by naturalisation, the reader can easily realise that the entire process is of a serious difficulty. Such difficulty, however, does not correspond to the alleged willingness with which the Spanish State attempts to “achieve the ultimate reconciliation with the Jewish communities” (Law 12/2015). As a matter of fact, if one pays close attention to the body of the Law 12/2015, as Maite Ojeda Mata highlights, it becomes evident that the mere fact of being a Sephardic Jew does not entitle the applicant to acquire Spanish citizenship, for it is necessary for him to show an evidence of his special bond with Spain (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 11). It is precisely after analysing these two aspects that the reader might wonder about the existence of a political factor behind the issuance of the law.

Even though various reasons, such as the potential Jewish investment in a Spain hit by an acute economic crisis, the reputed Spanish attempt to compensate Israel for the support showed by Spain in the recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer of the United Nations, or the need for the Sephardic Hispanism to counterbalance the independentist threats of Catalonia have been discussed by the media, none of them seem feasible (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 14). On the one hand, the exact moment when the Law 12/2015 was passed, the economic situation of Spain was eventually getting better, which does not back up the idea that Jewish investment was needed. On the other hand, Spain was not the only country to support Palestine at the General Assembly of the United Nations, which makes it unlikely for this measure to have been taken in order to compensate such action. The aforementioned Sephardic Hispanism, for its part, is not something new, and therefore does not explain the reason why the Law 12/2015 was enacted just recently (Ojeda Mata 2015, pp. 14-15).

By the same token, if the historical reparation was the incentive of Spain in order to adopt the aforementioned law, a similar one concerning the descendants of the Muslim population expelled from Spain at the beginning of the 16th century would have been passed too. In actual fact, if the historical reparation had motivated any of the legal or political actions regarding the Sephardim that have been discussed in the present study, the descendants of the Muslims that once lived in Spain should have been treated equally and initiatives like the ones launched in relation to the Jewish communities should have been launched for them as well. Nevertheless, they were never mentioned in pieces of legislation such as the Law 51/1982

(Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 10) and, what is more, during the 19th century, they were portrayed by Spanish historiography as “poor” and “uncultured” (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 4). Furthermore, their expulsion, although regretted, was not considered as catastrophic as that of the Jews (Rivière Gómez 2000, p. 88).

Taking into consideration, all these aspects, one can readily understand that the passing of the Law 12/2015 was just one more action taken by Spain within a tradition of recognising the rights of the Sephardim neither absolutely, nor universally (Ojeda Mata 2015, p. 14). As a matter of fact, in the official version of the Federación Española de Comunidades Judías presented for the realisation of this study by her Director, Carolina Aisen, through electronic correspondence, “the continuation of the actions performed by Spain in other periods through which Spanish citizenship was granted to Sephardic Jews in danger.” is mentioned. Additionally, a reference to the historical reparation allegedly intended by the Spanish Government can be found within this official version.

It is noteworthy however, the fact that not everyone has shown their enthusiasm about the forenamed Law. Isaac Querub Caro, for instance, the former Director of the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España, and one of the people who requested the Spanish Government to create a law that symbolically repealed the Edict of Expulsion of 1492 (Ojeda Mata 2015, pp. 13-14), stated that they “did not like the Law [12/2015]” (Aisen). Moreover, given the difficulties that Sephardic applicants need to face in order to be granted Spanish citizenship, which includes going to Spain to complete the process in situ, even the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España has requested that certain amendments are made (Federación de Comunidades Judías de España)

Once the Law 12/2015 has been thoroughly examined, and after adding that some directions on the procedure of naturalisation have been given by the Ministry of Justice on the 29th of September of 2015, it is now time to analyse the results of such pieces of legislation. Even though Carolina Aisen indicated in one of her emails that several Sephardim had been granted Spanish citizenship since the Law 12/2015 was passed, and that the official website of the Federación de Comunidades Judías de España states that 4,522 Sephardic Jews had been naturalised Spanish by October 2016 (Federación de Comunidades Judías de España), a



deeper analysis of these data is required for a better understanding of the current situation. It is true that by the issuance of the Royal Decree 895/2015 and the Royal Decree 322/2016, the Spanish Government naturalised 4,302 and 220 Sephardic Jews respectively (Royal Decree 893/2015 and Royal Decree 322/2016). Nonetheless, the 4,522 of them had proved their condition of Sephardic Jew before the Law 12/2015 was passed, which means that the aforementioned law did not affect the applications of these Sephardim whatsoever (González 2016). According to the Spanish journalist Miguel González, only one person has been naturalised under the conditions set out in the Law 12/2015. Concurrently, even if hundreds of thousands of applications were expected by the Spanish Government, by the summer of 2015, only 2,424 Sephardic Jews had applied for the Spanish nationality (González, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the present study, it has been thoroughly examined how the Jews communities have been treated in Spain from both a legal and a political point of view since the end of the Middle-Ages until these days.

As it has already been pointed out, during the formation of Spain that followed the marriage of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Catholicism was used as a unifying element in order to create the new Spanish identity. Precisely because of this and thanks to the establishment of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, the practitioners of any religion other than Catholicism were forced to get baptised or leave the country. As a matter of fact, by issuing the Edict of Expulsion of 1492, the Catholic monarchs utilised, although not for the first time, a legal document regarding the Jews with a political purpose.

For centuries after such expulsion, and given the power of the Spanish Inquisition, Judaism was expressly prohibited on Spanish soil, even though diverse economically driven attempts to legally benefit Jews were made during the 17th century by the Count-Duke of Olivares and Manuel de Lira.

With the different abolitions of the Spanish Inquisition, one in 1812, and the final one in 1834, however, the freedom of worship, together with several other liberal ideas were introduced in Spain. This translated in the possibility for Jews to freely follow their religion in Spanish territory. It should be mentioned, nevertheless, that these legal changes were used as a political weapon by both the liberal party and its opponents, rather than as an altruist measure, which supposes the utilisation of the Jewish communities, among others, once more. The exact same situation developed after the Constitution of 1869 was passed and years later, when the Bourbon Restoration started.

The following episodes regarding the Jews, specifically the Sephardim, and their relation with Spain were the ones following the pogroms of 1881, for several Sephardic, and not only, Jews sought for Spanish assistance in the Ottoman Empire and Eastern Europe. In a milieu in which Philosephardism was fastly spreading, the Spanish diplomatic mission of Constantinople, as well as the Spanish Government, interceded for these Jewish refugees by granting them consular protection. Nevertheless, as it had already occurred in the past, these actions were motivated by the political interest of Spain. On the one hand, the Jewish communities of the Orient were expected to contribute to the expansion of Spanish commerce in their communities. Furthermore, the Sephardim wanted to be utilised in order to expand the Spanish culture and to restore the lost international prestige of Spain. It is equally noteworthy the fact that the procedure to apply for consular protection involved a report on the financial situation of the applicant as, several times, it was preferable to “protect” a wealthy Sephardic Jew that could go to Spain and boost the industry there.

Some years later, by the adoption of the Royal Decree of the 20th of December of 1924, the possibility to acquire Spanish citizenship was granted to the Jews that had been under consular protection in the past. Additionally, in certain cases, a number of Sephardic Jews were in actuality allowed to relocate in Spain. This new measure was taken by the dictatorial government of Miguel Primo de Rivera with intent to bring the international isolationism of Spain to an end, as well as to proceed with the international prestige restoration campaign.

During the Spanish Second Republic, a rapprochement to the Sephardic communities was made by the Spanish Government by following two lines of actions that had been used

before: the cultural expansion and the economic influence of the Sephardim in the Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, the relation between Judaism and Spain, as it had been in the case in the past, was used politically for the various parties to oppose each other.

When it comes to Francoist Spain, the approach to the Jewish matter was not the same the entire time. At the beginning, given the close bond between Francisco Franco and Nazi Germany, the Spanish Government showed an anti-Semitic attitude. It is remarkable, however, the fact that against the directions coming from Spain, diverse Spanish diplomats assisted several Jews during the Holocaust with, what seems a genuine altruism. Years later, as time passed by and Hitler was defeated, the attitude of the Spanish Government in regard to the Jews changed, leading to the issuance of a decree-law through which Jews from Egypt and Greece under Spanish consular protection could acquire Spanish citizenship. This switch was due to the fact that Franco needed to ameliorate the international opinion of the Spanish regime so that Spain could access the United Nations. Again, no real willingness to assist the Jews can be found here.

From the adoption of the Law 51/1982 to the adoption of the Law 12/2015, numerous steps have been taken by the Spanish authorities towards the “reconciliation between Spain and the Sephardim”. These actions have include a modification of the Spanish Civil Code to facilitate the acquisition of Spanish nationality by residence by Sephardic Jews, as well as the presentations of the requirements the Sephardim need to meet in order to be naturalised Spanish. According to the Spanish authorities, all these changes have been made in a spirit of historical reparation and with the intention to finally reconcile with the Sephardic communities. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the lack of similar measures taken in regard to the descendant of the Muslims that were also expelled from Spain in the 16th century, the historical reparation mentioned in diverse official texts does not seem to be the reason behind such legislation. Additionally, the fact that the procedure to acquire Spanish citizenship by naturalisation is of a considerable length and cost does not seem to help in the reconciliation of the Sephardim and Spain. As a matter of fact, as it was underlined earlier in the present study, the very condition of being a Sephardic Jew does not entitle the applicant to obtain Spanish nationality, for a particular relation with the country needs to be proved.

Thus, one can conclude that the past injustices caused to the Jews have not been remedied by the Spanish Government as for today. Nevertheless, both the Jewish institutions in Spain and various educational institutions in Israel have publicly praised Spain for their work regarding the Jewish question.

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