

A ‘European Memory of the Jewish Extermination’? Spain as a Methodological Challenge

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This article seeks to question academic assertions of a European memory of the Jewish extermination by using the Spanish case. Peculiar links between Spain and the Jewish genocide indicate that a common European story about the Jewish extermination cannot be taken for granted. On the contrary, I propose an alternative model focused on the transmission process and the actors that control it, namely national narratives, anti-Semitic rhetoric and, over the past few decades, ‘Holocaust mass media products’. Such an approach will not only provide useful insights about the perception of the Jewish extermination in countries outside the traditional academic spectrum on Holocaust studies, but will also portray Spain’s self-image in a European perspective.

Introduction

Allusions to the Jewish extermination¹ are a commonplace phenomenon in modern political and popular culture. Politicians, representatives of social movements, national or ethnic collectives, and the general citizenship often use references and analogies to the Jewish genocide in order to define the gravity and seriousness of human catastrophes, wars, ethnic cleansing or any other disasters. The popularization of the event extends worldwide through mass culture products such as blockbuster movies, novels, comics, etc, and the destruction of the European Jewry is an important part of the curriculum in educational programmes all over the world. Moreover, the Jewish extermination has attracted widespread interest in the academic realm, not only for the ultimate understanding of the causes of the systematic extermination of the Jewish race, but also because the evolution of its remembrance poses fundamental questions about individual traumas, concerns and vested interests that surround collective remembrance and, by extension, links to identity and political uses of the history.

The popularization of references to the Jewish genocide has raised arguments about the dimension of its impact at a global scale. From a cultural-sociological perspective, Jeffrey Alexander believes that the transformation of a positive-looking narrative about

the Jewish genocide during the post-war years into a tragic-narrative one since the early 1960s lies behind the decontextualization of the Jewish extermination and its emergence as a 'moral universal'. Following Alexander, the 'detachment' of the Jewish genocide from its surrounding circumstances transformed the event into a 'bridging metaphor' that could be referred to in order to explain the 'employment of violence against members of a stigmatized group', affecting people's understanding of justice and human rights.²

At a regional level, the historian Tony Judt has stressed that the Jewish extermination has emerged as a core part of the 'contemporary European memory'. Judt emphasizes that '[t]he Holocaust today is much more than just another undeniable fact about a past that Europeans can no longer choose to ignore [...] [T]he recovered memory of Europe's dead Jews has become the very definition and guarantee of the continent's restored humanity'.³ Close to Alexander's argument yet at a European scale, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that the Jewish extermination has achieved a central place in the 'European memoryscape', resulting from a complex narrative process influenced by political and cultural transformations that turned the Jewish genocide into a 'decontextualized' event with universal lessons for humankind. Behind these assertions is what Levy and Sznaider coin as 'cosmopolitanization of memory' of the Jewish extermination, which originated from 'the mutual constitution of particular and universal conceptions that determine the ways in which the Holocaust can be remembered', and the thrust for referring to it around the world arises from the transformation of the Jewish extermination into a 'moral touchstone in an age of uncertainty and the absence of master ideological narratives'.⁴ Global awareness about the Jewish extermination cannot be taken for granted, they say, and people's identification 'is only produced when distant events have a local resonance'.⁵

References and representations of the destruction of the European Jews trespass on the traditional national frames of social remembrance. I doubt, however, that groups without relations with the Jewish extermination can share a similar consciousness, if not awareness, of the event. Can a 'transnational remembrance' arise from bestsellers or Hollywood mass media successes? Michael Rothberg has rightly argued that the idea of a 'moral universal' around the memory of the Jewish extermination has overlooked interactions between the memory of the Jewish genocide and national stories, close to Andreas Huyssen's reflections on the potential role of the Jewish extermination to empower sensibility to national stories, but it can also block the attention to national events.⁶ Still, Rothberg's research focuses on France and the de-colonization wars. Can countries, other than those directly related with the Jewish extermination, share common patterns of morality that originated from a sensibilization that has ultimately been caused by invoking the Jewish extermination?

Franco's Spain and the Destruction of the European Jews: Framing the Issue

Unlike, for example, France or Italy, links between Spain and the destruction of the European Jewry under the Nazis are peculiar, not only in relation to the position of Spain during the Jewish extermination, but also in terms of the circumstances that have existed

in the country since 1945. First and foremost, there was almost no Jewish population in Spain, as a result of the 1492 Decree of Expulsion of all Jews from Spain.⁷ By 1950, approximately 2500 Jews lived in Spain. In the next two decades this number would reach almost 9000; the growth was focused in Barcelona and Madrid in particular.⁸ From the end of the Franco dictatorship until the present, the Jewish population has increased to 12,000 people, which equates to 0.3 Jews per 1000 people. This figure, however, contrasts with the much greater presence in neighbouring countries such as France (490,000), Germany (120,000), and Great Britain (295,000), let alone the US, which has an estimated Jewish population close to six million.⁹ Secondly, Spain was not directly involved in the Second World War. In the first stage, Franco's government declared Spain's neutrality, due to the appalling state of the economy and the military; after the war, it changed to non-belligerency in an attempt to become closer to the Axis. However, despite this attitude and the groups of volunteers sent to the USSR (namely, the *División Azul* – the Blue Division – and the *Legión Española*), Spain did not enter the war. Finally, the presence of Franco's dictatorship from 1939 until 1975 had significant consequences for Spain's historical consciousness: for its population's identity, education, cultural manifestations and religious beliefs; for the chances of dissident sectors being able to express their opinions; and for the possibilities of a reliable public press.

Nevertheless, three groups were aware of the elimination of the European Jews. The Franco government knew at least from December 1941 that the Nazis were murdering disabled people and that the Jews had been gathered in ghettos in Krakow and Warsaw. From August 1942, Franco was aware that thousands of Jews were being deported to Poland and Ukraine.¹⁰ Spanish diplomatic delegations in Paris, Bucharest and Sofia informed Madrid from October 1940 about the Nazis' persecution of Jews and from August 1942 about the deportations (that, in some cases, affected Spanish Jews). From the end of 1943, diplomats openly referred to the persecution of the Jews as a process that ended in their ultimate physical elimination.¹¹ Besides the government, the Blue Division witnessed the Nazi crimes against Jewish communities in these areas.¹² Documents about the Nazi atrocities on the Eastern front appeared as early as the spring of 1942.¹³ A final group was that of the Red Spaniards. Most of them had fled Spain after the Civil War and were fighting with the partisans in the hope that the struggle against fascism would extend to Spain. They were captured by the Nazis and deported to concentration and extermination camps (mainly to Mauthausen and Dachau, but also to Auschwitz, Buchenwald and other satellite camps), and, albeit for different reasons, suffered atrocities similar to those inflicted on the Jews.¹⁴

The academic debate on Franco's policy towards the Jews during the Second World War has mainly concentrated on whether Franco's Spain truly aimed to save Jews and what was the exact figure of those rescued by the dictatorship. Scholars have shown very distinct assessments of Franco's behaviour towards the Jews and, for example, Chaim U. Lipschitz (1984) points to 45,000 people that would have been rescued by Franco, and gives a noticeable role to subjective aspects such as Franco's supposed Jewish ancestry or his 'noble' sense of protecting the weak, and yet he does not dismiss practical aspects too. Recent works such as that of Luis Suárez Fernández (1984),¹⁵ David Salinas (1996)¹⁶ and Ricardo de la Cierva (2000),¹⁷ have supported Lipschitz's arguments. On the other side, Haim Avni (1982)¹⁸ has called into question such positive views and

defended that the regime only assisted Jews as a result of its interests, and furthermore added that until the end of 1942 the regime was openly hostile towards the Jews. Avni estimates that 11,535 Jews were saved as a result of the dictatorship's direct efforts.¹⁹ A similarly critical view is shared by J.A. Marquina and G.I. Ospina (1987),²⁰ and B. Rother (2005), the latter considering that 5000 Jews directly benefited from Spain's measures for the safety of Jews.²¹ In line with Rother, Stanley Payne (2008) has stressed that Spain neither discriminated against Jews as much as other countries nor developed a clear policy of rescue towards them.²² Interestingly, most of these works are based on diplomatic correspondence that does not elucidate the issue of the exact figures of those saved and, ironically, many investigations (especially those that support Franco's pro-Jewish version) rely on Francoist official publications of the late 1940s with clear propaganda purposes.

In addition, scholars have discussed Spanish anti-Semitism until 1945, and especially the extent to which racial anti-Semitism existed in Spain. Alfonso Lazo⁷³ and Graciela Ben-Dror⁷⁴ consider that Spain's hostility towards Jews until the end of the Second World War stemmed from old Christian anti-Semitic discourse, which regarded Jews as a murderous population, while others, such as Isabelle Rohr (2007), believe that racist notions gained momentum among right-wing groups due to the influence of eugenic ideas within the Catholic discourse: 'Influenced by the turn of the century regenerationist movement, which saw Spain as a decaying body, and impregnated with notions such as the degeneration of the Spanish race and the Jewish infection, the clerical right blamed the decay of Spain on the racial fusion between Old Christians and *conversos*'.²³

Debates around the rescue of Jews and the image of Jews in Spain focus on a pre-1945 scenario without any concern whatsoever of the perception²⁴ of the destruction of the European Jews in Spain ever since. Scholars have dismissed the meaning of the Jewish extermination in Spain since 1945 as one of the greatest cases for revealing the dictatorship's power of transforming its image, since the destruction of European Jews became a paroxysm of Fascism with which Franco could not afford to be compared. Analyzing the perception of the Jewish genocide in Spain is also a unique opportunity to reveal the effects of manipulation of the Spaniards' historical consciousness concerning an event that happened outside Spain and which Franco had much less ability to control than he did that of the Civil War.

Problems of Existing Theoretical Models ('Trauma' and 'Collective Memory')

Analyzing the place of the Jewish extermination in Spain poses great methodological challenges that transcend traditional explanations of the memory of the Jewish extermination. Many scholars explain the emergence of memories and representations in a given moment through a psychoanalytic perspective in which the notion of trauma becomes central.²⁵ Dominick LaCapra considers that psychoanalytical approaches can be effectively applied to understand the remembrance of the destruction of the Jews. According to LaCapra, the remembrance of the Jewish extermination was repressed in the West not only because of social reluctance but because the protagonists had difficulties in finding an appropriate

language to explain it.²⁶ In this sense, LaCapra points out that the Jewish extermination 'was a reality that went beyond powers of both imagination and conceptualization, and victims themselves could at times not believe what they went through or beheld. It posed problems of "representation" at the time of its occurrence and it continues to pose problems today'.²⁷ Yet LaCapra acknowledges the risk of generalization, which can lead to 'an undifferentiated notion of all history (or at least all modernity) as trauma, and overextend the concept of victim and survivor'.²⁸

Because of their exclusive focus on an individual scale of remembrance psychoanalytical approaches and the notion of trauma hold significant limitations in the Spanish case. Not only do trauma explanations ignore political and social interests that may lie behind fluctuations of interest in memories in the public sphere, as W. Kansteiner has defended,²⁹ a psychoanalytical approach also seems useless for the Spanish case because there have been almost no Jews in the country since the end of the Civil War and those that are there play only a marginal role.

Other explanations gravitate towards the concept of 'collective memory', which was primarily developed by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Halbwachs explained that individuals reconstruct personal remembrances through interaction, which indicates that memory is a social construct. He argued that, unlike history, collective memory selects 'the past that still lives' in the 'consciousness of the groups', and provides historical sense and continuity to these groups.³⁰ In Halbwachs's account, there is a direct relation between memory and identity, and while the nation appears as a pivotal spatial framework in which collective memory happens,³¹ he rejects the possibility of an unbound collective memory: 'There is no universal memory. Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.'³²

The notion of 'collective memory' as understood by Halbwachs and later elaborated by a myriad of social scientists remains far from providing useful insights for the Spanish case, because of the inherent limitation of links with the past that the idea of collective memory entails. Collective memory's emphasis that remembrance is triggered by current concerns ignores the (potential) role of a group's old rooted attitudes and beliefs. In other words, popular culture and traditions may counter the impulse to invoke a particular event. Moreover, linking collective memory to the national milieu does not clarify how much a national group has to be involved in a particular event in order for it to be considered as part of the group's collective memory. Spain's involvement in the Second World War was indirect, despite the fact that many Republicans fought with the Allies or that Franco sent the Blue Division to back the Nazis in the Eastern front. The Spanish population remained outside the conflict, and there was neither popular collaboration in the deportation of Jews nor active persecution or any special assistance to such. Therefore, would it be possible for the destruction of the Jews to be considered as a part of Spain's collective memory? It could be argued that Spanish living memory of the Jewish suffering resides in the testimony of the 'Red Spaniards', those Republicans that fought with the Resistance and were deported to Nazi camps (mainly Mauthausen and Dachau). Although their memories are essential in understanding the perception of the Jewish extermination in Spain, it would be misleading to use their account as the foundation of 'Spain's collective memory of the Jewish extermination'. Their testimony was not convenient for the

dictatorship, and the nature of their experiences does not indicate that restoring the memory of the Jewish annihilation was among their principal interests.

An Alternative Approach

Spain's peculiarities highlight that neither the model of trauma nor that of collective memory can help to explain how the Jewish extermination has been perceived in Spain since 1945. Instead, I believe it is necessary to pay attention to the certainty that the memory of the Jewish extermination (not the fact *per se*) has been an ever-changing phenomenon. Assuming that the remembrance of the Jewish genocide is a communication process, and acknowledging Spanish peculiar links with the Jewish extermination, I believe that it is necessary to focus on three areas related to how the Jewish extermination has been transmitted and received.³³ First, on the actors that have controlled the discourse of the event (which, in this case, is the Francoist State), on their underlying intentions and, more importantly, on the effects left by such practices. Second, we have to consider people's predisposition towards invocations of the Jewish extermination, that is to say, attitudes towards Jews and how they evolved: how did prejudices affect the reading of the Jewish genocide in Spain? Finally, in view of the impact of Holocaust representations in the past decades, it will be necessary to reflect on the cultural industry in relation to national stories, what Michael Rothberg refers to as 'interactions'. In the following, I focus on the three areas mentioned, and use a wide range of studies on different countries in order to provide themes that could be used with the Spanish case.

(1) Official Narratives of the Second World War and the Construction of Post-War National Consciousness

Post-war narratives in countries with a direct or indirect relationship with the Second World War have clearly given priority to national interests and self-legitimacy when confronting their immediate past. Indeed, the war posed serious challenges for national stability, namely radical political transformations and active or passive collaboration with the enemy. In this regard, Richard Evans has highlighted that history becomes central in periods of 'political transition' for identity and for the purposes of political doctrine. This need is even more urgent if autocratic regimes disappear, when a 'real crisis of legitimacy' appears.³⁴

No matter the degree of implication in the Second World War and with the Jewish extermination, national rhetoric dominated everywhere in Europe in the post-war years. For countries that suffered Nazi occupation, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, the Resistance narrative dominated in the aftermath of the war. As Pieter Lagrou has highlighted, such emphasis on Resistance aimed to become a renewal force for legitimizing post-war political systems and achieving political normality and continuity. The 'anti-fascist paradigm' excluded explanations that did not chime with the national rhetoric, and particularly the specific Jewish case was ignored.³⁵ The case of France was even more compromising because of its history of active collaboration with the Nazis in the deportation of Jews, in sharp contrast to post-war public discourses and the national self-image. In his seminal study, Henry Rousso highlighted that the 'Gaullist Resistentialist

Myth' attempted to foster the impression that a united France had liberated itself from the Nazis as a means to offer a generally accepted explanation of the Second World War, yet omitted the Jewish issue.³⁶

It is even more interesting for our purposes to see how former Axis members completely reframed previous support for Hitler's policies, including the persecution of Jews. In an analysis of the Italian case, Oscar Österberg has stressed Italy's generalized effort to develop an 'anti-fascist paradigm of interpretation which tended to dominate Italian historiography and political debate for decades to come'.³⁷ Concerning the Jewish extermination, activities undertaken by the *Repubblica de Saló* were forgotten, whilst Germany was identified as the only country responsible. Jewish specificity was omitted and ambiguous references to 'Italian citizens' dominated. Moreover, the anti-fascist model emphasized the absence of anti-Semitism in Italy's society; in fact, hostility toward Jews was said to be antithetical to Italy's essence and propaganda efforts were not supposed to have forced their way into people's minds.³⁸ Incidentally, significant efforts were made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide a pro-Jewish image, especially in relation to the assistance given to Jews in North Africa and as to how the Italian government would have actively attempted to wreck Germany's anti-Semitic plans.³⁹ Österberg stresses that '[t]he image of Italians as *brava gente* seems to be an intrinsic and important part of post-war Italian national discourses'.⁴⁰

In other scenarios, however, the Jewish extermination was integrated into post-war official memories, as long as it fitted conveniently with national interests. In Sweden, a neutral country during the Second World War, Folke Bernadotte's activities to save Jews during the conflict made him a national hero and affected Sweden's interpretation of its role in the war in relation to the Jews. Ulf Zander has pointed out that '[t]he image of peace-loving Sweden as a compassionate Samaritan fitted very well with the conception of "people's home" definitions and was therefore easily integrated into the post-war national Swedish identity'.⁴¹ However, the identification of Bernadotte's task with Sweden's national identity became problematic whenever attempts were made to question Bernadotte's attitude towards the Jews.⁴² For example, when the British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper criticized Folke Bernadotte in 1953 for having exaggerated the impact of his actions for the Jews, and suggested that he was unfeeling about the persecution of the Jewish communities, a massive reaction led by the Swedish government condemned the historian for discrediting Sweden's humanitarian task. In the following decades, attempts to question the role of Bernadotte had no impact, and it was only in the late 1990s that his heroic status could be publicly questioned.⁴³

Overall, the place of the Jewish extermination in the post-war national conscience, independently of the position each nation took in the Second World War, was not accidental. On the contrary, it is proof of those aspects of the Second World War that all countries were willing to emphasize for national purposes. The active role of states in configuring the perception and history of the Second World War, and the Jewish extermination, as a means of legitimizing their political system and guaranteeing 'national' recovery is crucial in autocratic regimes, which, as Tvetan Todorov argues, regard the control of information as a 'priority'.⁴⁴ A historian needs to study these narrative manoeuvres to trace the state's role in tackling uncomfortable issues such as the

image of Nazism, the ultimate annihilation of the European Jewry, and the political and diplomatic stance that was adopted by Spain at the time. A thorough analysis of the views of Spanish survivors of Nazi Camps should be contrasted with the official Francoist narrative and highlight the extent to which the dictatorship fashioned a discourse for its very own purposes.

(2) *Anti-Semitic Expressions*

The perception of the Jewish extermination has been affected by attitudes and discourses towards the Jews since 1945. Indeed, anti-Semitism underlies the failure to address the Jewish specificity and, in fact, debunking the Jewish extermination has been at the heart of many anti-Semitic discourses. Generally, anti-Jewish sentiments have four grounds of development, namely religion, the State, the Middle East conflict and Neo-Nazism.

Christian anti-Jewish themes did not disappear with the Second World War and, for example, German priests conveyed old anti-Semitic messages in school textbooks in which Jews appeared as the murderers of Christ. Similar views exist among the American clergy in post-war years, to the point that, as Suzanne Brown-Fleming has asserted, some American priests even regarded Nazis as ‘protectors of the Christendom and the saviours of today’s civilization’.⁴⁵ Other examples are found in the Netherlands,⁴⁶ and even American officials in Germany believed in links between Jews and Communism.⁴⁷

This religious anti-Jewish continuum did not prevent the Church exploiting a victimist discourse, whereby priests and believers were martyrs who had heroically opposed the Nazis. The Austrian episcopacy even stated ‘no group had to make greater sacrifice in terms of property and wealth, of freedom and health, of life and blood than Christ’s Church’.⁴⁸ It was not until the beginning of the 1960s that the Church became more self-critical about its position in the Second World War, when it began to confront the consequences of its position on the extermination of Jews.

Anti-Semitic narrative has been exploited for political purposes by autocratic States for which Jews have been an appropriate ‘scapegoat’. In this sense, Zygmunt Bauman’s definition of scapegoat is illuminating, for it or he ‘must be sufficiently weak to allow aggressive actions to be safely unleashed against him; must be perceived as sufficiently strong so that victory over him can restore a feeling of self-esteem and supply a cause for pride; and must be accustomed to dealing with rhetoric used to describe the causes of frustration’.⁴⁹

Works on Polish contemporary anti-Semitism have thrown light on the exploitation of hatred against Jews between 1967 and 1968 by Wladyslaw Gomulka (First Secretary of the Communist Polish United Workers Party) amidst political and social deterioration that led to great social distress.⁵⁰ Such political use of anti-Semitism left profound consequences in the Polish milieu. For example, the Jewish cultural heritage was erased from Poland because it was unacceptable for a Communist vision of history.⁵¹ Moreover, anti-Jewish sentiments have endured until very recently: Barbara Törnquist-Plewa has illustrated the extent to which Jews have a negative image among Polish young generations. These attitudes have been behind the social reluctance to erect monuments for commemorating the Jewish genocide in Polish towns.⁵²

Among other sources of hostility against Jews, it is the Middle East conflict that has inspired anti-Semitic expressions across a broad ideological spectrum. Some extreme left-wing groups have already used anti-Semitic themes, influenced by a radical anti-Israeli narrative elaborated by the Soviet Union from the end of the 1950s. According to Zvi Guitelman, the Soviet Union 'gave great prominence to the myth that the Zionists were "allies" of the Nazis during the Second World War and that the Zionists actively co-operated in the destruction of the Jewish people'.⁵³ According to Robert Wistrich, these groups perceived Israel as an aggressive militarist State; it is seen as an authoritarian State and a product of Western imperialism that is committing 'a "genocide" against the Palestinian people', and which avoids condemnation by focusing on the remembrance of the Jewish extermination. These collectives, says Wistrich, have identified Zionists as racists and have even used old anti-Semitic themes.⁵⁴ Certainly, anti-Zionist expressions are not necessarily anti-Semitic, yet they often blur the limits between the condemnation of Zionist ideology and the association that all Jews are Zionists. Such a negative view about Jews had noticeable links with particular moments of the Middle East conflict, especially the Six Day War (1967), the election of Menachem Begin as Prime Minister (1977), and the Lebanon War (1982).

Finally, attacks on the truthfulness of the Jewish extermination, a 'trend' called Negationism or Revisionism, are based on old anti-Semitic prejudices. Maurice Bardeche and Paul Rassinier, two prominent Negationists, rejected the existence of gas chambers and, in fact, Rassinier believed that the Jewish extermination was a hoax created by Zionists in order to financially exploit the German guilt for the benefit of Israel. Such a view would ultimately confirm the Jewish control of world mass media, an old anti-Semitic theme.⁵⁵

Neo-Nazi, extreme right, and negationist groups have found many opportunities to use anti-Semitic rhetoric, including the denial of the Jewish extermination, in the public sphere. Neo-Fascist groups have referred to events in the Middle East conflict to diminish the nature of Jewish annihilation and to openly vent anti-Semitic messages.⁵⁶ Moreover, social and political challenges have triggered such messages. Deborah Lipstadt has stressed that, during the 1960s and 1970s, Western European neo-Fascist groups combined their attacks on non-Caucasian immigrants with anti-Semitic expressions.⁵⁷ In the following decades, there was a growth of anti-Semitism after the collapse of the Soviet Union; radical groups blamed the Jews for the political and economic problems that after 1989 affected the Soviet bloc.⁵⁸

Revisionism has shown a considerable capacity to circulate worldwide, especially among groups with racist, xenophobic, conspiracy and other radical ideologies. Revisionist works are distributed internationally through these groups. Moreover, centres of revisionism (such as the Institute for Historical Review or Ernst Zündel's centre in Canada), editorials throughout the world (i.e. Garbert Verlag and Druffel Verlag in Germany), and magazines (i.e. *Code* and *Aula* in Austria), have enhanced the spread of revisionist ideas with an apparently respectable façade.⁵⁹

Anti-Semitism is an old phenomenon in Spain. In fact, anti-Semitic expressions have featured in Spanish literature and culture ever since 1492, when the Reyes Católicos expelled all Jews from Spain. The persistence of this kind of attitudes has led historians

to label Spanish hostility towards Jews and Judaism as an ‘anti-Semitism without Jews’. What about anti-Semitism after 1945? Scholars such as Alvarez Chillida,⁶⁰ Rodríguez Jiménez,⁶¹ and Casals,⁶² among others, have argued that anti-Semitism gradually weakened and became only an expression of (marginal) radical groups that would either fade in the first democratic elections, or were already minor collectives.

However, attention on more traditional anti-Semitic expressions has largely overlooked the image of Israel in the Spanish public sphere as a source of a new hostility against Jews. In many European countries, the image of Israel has been largely confused with Judaism and Jews in general, let alone condemnations of Zionism as being a supposedly ‘inherent’ ideology to all Jews. To what extent has this phenomenon occurred in Spain? A recent report from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) shows that Spain is the most anti-Semitic country among larger European States and that most of these attitudes towards Jews were closely related to Israel’s policies in the Middle East.⁶³ This evidence contradicts assumptions that anti-Semitism is a marginal phenomenon in Spain.

(3) The Jewish Extermination as a ‘Mass Phenomenon’: Impact on Local Histories

The transition of the remembrance of the Jewish extermination has found a new dimension with the boom of representations by which the destruction of the European Jewry has become a universal symbol of atrocity. Jeffrey Alexander has superbly outlined the change of narratives from a forward-looking one in the post-war years into another with ‘greater symbolic weight’.⁶⁴ Along with representations and mass media products, people’s identification with the Jewish extermination changed after the Eichmann trial, Hannah Arendt’s reassessment of understanding perpetrators and evil, and, as Annette Wieviorka has stressed, the transformation of the Jewish extermination into ‘a succession of individual experiences with which people today could identify’.⁶⁵ Approximately as of the mid-1960s, the Jewish extermination was ‘detached’ of its particular circumstances, and was used, as Alexander argues, as a ‘bridging metaphor’ for explaining hatred or ‘violence against members of a stigmatized group’.⁶⁶ The American media invoked the Jewish genocide during the Balkan Wars: the mass media and civil society spread associations of Serbians with the Nazis to raise national concern and to condemn the inaction of Western governments.⁶⁷

The impact of the Jewish extermination as an unbounded symbol of horror has also caused indignation to other collectives with similar claims for recognition of their traumatic pasts. In a thorough investigation of the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. Edward Linenthal has highlighted the confrontation between the officially designated commission, appointed to define how the museum would be created, and Eastern European groups. The latter were mainly formed by Polish and Ukrainian representatives, who claimed that Polish and Ukrainian victims had to be included in the Commission’s definition of ‘Holocaust’. Similarly, Romani collectives claimed for the recognition of the ‘Gipsy genocide’ as equal to that of the Jews. They argued that ‘whereas “others” rightly occupied a less prominent “rung” on the hierarchy of victimization, they belonged at the centre, with the Jews, and they were being unjustly deprived of their “right” to tell the story in “their” way’.⁶⁸

Similarly, national ethnic groups have competed with the Jews for the same recognition of their suffering. In this regard, Andreas Huyssen has argued that, while evocation of the Jewish extermination can motivate reflections on a traumatic event in local situations 'far in historic terms and politically different from the original event', it can also obscure 'or simply transform the reflection of specific local histories'.⁶⁹ Peter Novick has highlighted that Native and African American collectives have expressed indignation at the continuous public representations and references to the Jewish genocide. They claim that their suffering, as linked to American national history, has been obscured in the public sphere. In the late 1980s, when the Smithsonian Institution rejected the return of thousands of skeletons of Native Americans so that their descendants could give them a proper burial, Native Americans demanded treatment on a par with the Jews. They raised the question of whether the same behaviour would occur with Jews that had been murdered by the Nazis. Some scholars even published different arguments defending the recognition of each group's suffering and drawing comparisons between them.⁷⁰

Claims for the recognition of the extermination of Native American Indians, however, were not as relevant as those for the 'Black holocaust'. Following Novick, the consolidation of a Black 'particular self-identity' during the 1960s and 1970s and the politics undertaken for their public recognition clashed with the unquestionable and unattainable dominion of the Jewish extermination in the US's public sphere. Although the perception of being less recognized than the Jews was general among African Americans, certain groups – such as that of Louis Farrakhan – boosted the debate about which group had had more victims.⁷¹

Holocaust representations and the mass media industry have an enormous impact worldwide, no matter what links have existed with the Jewish extermination. Analyzing the reception of these products in Spain will throw light upon that nation's understanding of the persecution of European Jews, its people's opinion of Nazism and the role of Franco Spain towards the Jews and during the Second World War in general. Did these representations activate interest about the conflict between Fascism and democracies? Moreover, if the awareness of the Jewish extermination as a 'moral universal', in Alexander's exact words, has raised sensibility towards foreign conflicts as it did in the US with regard to the Balkan Wars, did it also raise sensibility in Spain towards its own national trauma, and which was deliberately neglected until the early 2000s? Was the Jewish genocide, after all, behind the people's commitment to the recognition and justice of genocides, even at home?

Conclusions

In an address to the Spanish Congress in January 2005, Spain's then Prime Minister José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero approved an annual Holocaust Commemoration Day as a date to remember 'the memory of the victims of anti-democratic regimes, of Francoism, Fascism, and Nazism'.⁷² Zapatero's speech indicates that the remembrance (and lessons) of the Jewish extermination have been recognized at the institutional level, and yet reports such as that of ADL suggest that the institutional awareness cannot be easily extrapolated at the popular level.

An alternative approach that concentrates on those elements that influenced how the Jewish extermination was communicated to Spaniards and the conditionings affecting their responses should both provide a path for understanding the public perception of the Jewish extermination in Spain and, even more importantly, uncover crucial aspects about the society of Franco Spain. To begin with, it would show how the dictatorship manipulated information about Nazism, its crimes, and the Second World War, and its effects upon the Spanish people's understanding and remembrance of the Second World War along with contemporary humanitarian conflicts and genocide in the following decades. Second, it would uncover if and how prejudices towards Jews affect the reading of the Jewish extermination in Spain, noticing that the Middle East conflict opened a broad new theme for stigmatizing the Jews. Finally, it would clarify whether, as in other countries, Holocaust representations truly had a social impact in Spain, raising awareness and sensibility towards humanitarian conflicts. If so, it would be illuminating to analyse if the popularization of the Jewish extermination in Western mass media, and its consequences on claims for grievances, responsibility and international human rights and justice during the 1990s, could have influenced later domestic claims to recover the memory of the Civil War.

References and Notes

1. This investigation will avoid the term 'Holocaust' and, instead, will employ 'the Jewish extermination', 'the Jewish annihilation' or similar terms. However, it seems necessary to explain this rationale in more detail, and for this purpose the study of Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman about the word 'Holocaust' is highly relevant. They indicate that 'Holocaust' comes from the Latin *holocaustum*, which originally derives from the Greek *holokaustos*, which means 'something wholly burnt up'. According to Garber and Zuckerman, before the Second World War, 'holocaust' denoted a 'religious sacrifice', and after the conflict the elimination of the Jews was referred to as the 'Nazi Final Solution on the Jewish Question'. Garber and Zuckerman have highlighted that it was the Romanian survivor Elie Wiesel who made this word popular during the 1950s, and the term would become frequently used during the Eichmann trial in 1961 and in the following two decades. Wiesel, as Garber and Zuckerman state, adopted the term with 'unmistakable religious/sacrificial overtones' and especially with the notion that the Jews were, like Abraham's son in Genesis 22, the 'chosen victims', the 'only ones', Israel. Similarly, as Garber and Zuckerman point out, the word 'Shoah' comes from biblical Hebrew and means 'destruction, ruin'. Z. Garber and B. Zuckerman (1989) Why do we call the Holocaust 'The Holocaust'? An inquiry into the psychology of labels. *Modern Judaism*, 9(2), 198–200. and 202–205. Due to these religious connotations, it seems inconvenient to use the terms 'Holocaust' and 'Shoah'. The term 'Jewish extermination', on the contrary, avoids a narrow understanding of the destruction of the Jewish population as 'only' their physical elimination in Death Camps; the broader meaning that is implied by the term 'Jewish extermination' will allow this investigation to take into account more aspects surrounding the event when analysing its perception in Spain. I will, however, use 'Holocaust representations' or 'Holocaust mass media', for these terms do not define the nature of the annihilation of the European Jews.
2. J.C. Alexander (2002) On the social construction of moral universals: the 'Holocaust' from war crime to trauma drama. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(1), 43–50.

3. T. Judt (2005) *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: William Heinemann), p. 804.
4. D. Levy and N. Sznajder (2002) Memory unbound. The Holocaust and the formation of cosmopolitan memory. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(1), 93.
5. D. Levy and N. Sznajder (2002) Memory unbound. The Holocaust and the formation of cosmopolitan memory. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(1), 92.
6. M. Rothberg (2009) Multidirectional memory and the universalization of the Holocaust. In: J.C. Alexander (Ed.) *Remembering the Holocaust. A Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 124–133. A. Huyssen (2002) *En Busca del Futuro Perdido: Cultura y Memoria en Tiempos de Globalización* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica), pp. 17–18.
7. The number of Jews that lived in Spain during the first decades of the twentieth century until 1936 never reached more than 6000. The outbreak of the Civil War significantly reduced this figure. H. Avni (1982) *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America), pp. 40–50.
8. H. Avni (1982) *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America), pp. 204–205.
9. Mandell L. Berman Institute North American Jewish Data Bank (2007) *World Jewish Population, 2007* (<http://www.jewishdatabank.org>), pp. 577 and 582.
10. B. Rother (2005) *Franco y el Holocausto* (Madrid: Marcial Pons), pp. 125–126.
11. B. Rother (2005) *Franco y el Holocausto* (Madrid: Marcial Pons), pp. 158–179 and 126.
12. The testimony of the Blue Division with regard to the Jewish extermination has barely been addressed by historians. I have only recently found a work by Wayne Bowen, which argues that the Blue Division treated the Jews of Suwałki and Grodno (Poland), Novgorod (Russia), and Riga and Vilnius respectfully and even defied Nazi racial policies. W. Bowen (1998) 'A great moral victory': Spanish protection of Jews on the Eastern Front, 1941–1944. In: R. Rohrich (Ed.) *Resisting the Holocaust* (Oxford and New York: Berg), pp. 195–213.
13. B. Rother (2005) *Franco y el Holocausto* (Madrid: Marcial Pons), pp. 158–179 and 125.
14. There are several studies about the fate of around 15,000 Spaniards that were sent to Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War. The case of Mauthausen is highly relevant; thousands of Jews, mostly Dutch, were also deported to this camp between 1939 and 1945. E. Le Chêne (1971) *Mauthausen: The History of a Death Camp* (Bath: Chivers Press), pp. 11–115. D. Wingeate Pike (2000) *Spaniards in the Holocaust: Mauthausen, the Horror on the Danube* (London: Routledge), p. 9.
15. L. Suárez Fernández (1984) *Francisco Franco y su tiempo* (Madrid: Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco).
16. D. Salinas (1996) *España, los Sefarditas y el Tercer Reich* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid).
17. R. de la Cierva, *Franco, la historia* (Madrid: Fénix, 2000).
18. H. Avni (1982) *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America).
19. H. Avni (1982) *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America), pp. 186–187.
20. A. Marquina and I. Ospina (1987) *España y los judíos en el s. XX: la acción exterior* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe).
21. B. Rother (2005) *Franco y el Holocausto* (Madrid: Marcial Pons), pp. 408–409.
22. S.G. Payne (2008) *Franco and Hitler. Spain, Germany, and World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 220.
23. I. Rohr (2007) *The Spanish Right and the Jews, 1898–1945: Anti-Semitism and Opportunism* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press), p. 5.

24. I believe that the word 'perception' is more suitable for Spain than 'memory', when referring to the place of the Jewish extermination in that country. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'memory' means 'the faculty by which things are remembered; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things' (Vol. IX, 597), and thus it suggests that the subject's act of remembering is tied to a personal experience. Similarly, 'remembrance' indicates 'memory or recollection in relation to a particular object, fact, etc.' (Vol. XIII, 586). The most precise term for the purpose of this investigation is 'perception', which means 'the action of the mind by which it refers its sensations to an external object as their cause' (Vol. XI, 523). J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. (Prep.) (1989) *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edn) (Oxford: Clarendon Press). As the first part of this text suggests, Spain's links to the Jewish extermination are limited to certain groups and not to the whole country. For this reason, the most accurate word is 'perception', yet in particular cases the term 'remembrance' will also be used.
25. There are many definitions of the word 'trauma'. Cathy Caruth indicates that 'trauma' generally describes 'an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena'. C. Caruth (1991) Unclaimed experience: trauma and the possibility of history. *Yale French Studies*, **79**, 181.
26. D. LaCapra (c1994) *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 188.
27. D. LaCapra (c1994) *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 220.
28. D. LaCapra (2002) *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, quoted in W. Kansteiner (2002) Finding meaning in memory: a methodological critique of collective memory studies. *History and Theory*, **41**(2), 187.
29. W. Kansteiner (2002) Finding meaning in memory: a methodological critique of collective memory studies. *History and Theory*, **41**(2), 187–188.
30. M. Halbwachs (1980) *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper), p. 80.
31. M. Halbwachs (1980) *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper), p. 51.
32. M. Halbwachs (1980) *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper), p. 84.
33. Of special interest are Klas-Göran Karlsson's reflections on the memory of the Holocaust as an ever-changing 'cultural phenomenon' that evolves differently from the real event. Karlsson mentions Claus Bryld's understanding of 'historical culture' as 'the individual and collective process in which history is communicated and used from fixed forms (genres) and norms', and highlights the need to pay attention to 'the historical transfer as an instrument of socialization'. K.-G. Karlsson (2006) The Holocaust as a problem of historical culture. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), pp. 14 and 31.
34. R.J. Evans (2003) Introduction: redesigning the past: history in political transitions. *Journal of Contemporary History*, **38**(1), 7 and 9.
35. P. Lagrou (2000) *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp. 22, 35, 251 and 260.
36. H. Rousso (1991) *The Vichy Syndrome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) pp. 16–59.
37. O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), p. 25.

38. O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), pp. 27–28.
39. O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), p. 29.
40. O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), p. 42.
41. U. Zander (2006) To rescue or be rescued: the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and the white buses in British and Swedish historical cultures. In: O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), p. 359.
42. U. Zander (2006) To rescue or be rescued: the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and the white buses in British and Swedish historical cultures. In: O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), p. 364.
43. U. Zander (2006) To rescue or be rescued: the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and the white buses in British and Swedish historical cultures. In: O. Österberg (2006) Taming ambiguities: the representation of the Holocaust in post-war Italy. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), pp. 364–367.
44. T. Todorov (2000) *Los Abusos de la Memoria* (Barcelona: Paidós), p. 13.
45. S. Brown-Fleming (2004) 'The worst enemies of a better Germany': post-war anti-Semitism among Catholic clergy and US occupation forces. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, **18**(3), 386–387.
46. P. Lagrou (2000) *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 256–257.
47. S. Brown-Fleming (2004) 'The worst enemies of a better Germany': post-war anti-Semitism among Catholic clergy and US occupation forces. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, **18**(3), 385–388.
48. M. Phayer (1996) The German Catholic church after the Holocaust. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, **10**(2), 153.
49. Zygmunt Bauman quoted in A.J. Wolak (c2004) *Forced Out: the Fate of Polish Jewry in Communist Poland* (Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books), p. 69.
50. Arthur J. Wolak has indicated that the Polish Communist leadership used anti-Semitism to deflect internal problems. Although, theoretically, anti-Semitism would have been banned from the Communist regime, in practice Jews were unprotected from official persecution, as the 1967–1968 anti-Semitic campaign showed. The Jews became the perfect scapegoat at a time when anti-Semitism and anti-Sovietism increased. Gomulka successfully implemented anti-Semitic campaigns due to the regime's control of the mass media, which allowed him to ensure a complete 'manipulation of the masses'. A.J. Wolak (c2004) *Forced Out: the Fate of Polish Jewry in Communist Poland* (Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books), pp. 35–42 and 58–72.
51. As Slawomir Kapralski has argued that, in order to gain legitimacy, the post-war Communist leadership had to insert itself into Poland's 'national tradition' and tried 'to present the Communist system as a continuation of elements integral to that tradition and at the same time acceptable in terms of the Communist vision of history'.

- According to Kapralski, the Jewish extermination was utterly irrelevant to the Communists, and references to the Jewish specificity were completely ignored when remembering the struggle against the Nazis. S. Kapralski (2001) *Battlefields of memory: landscape and identity in Polish-Jewish relations*. *History and Memory*, **13**(2), 45, 48 and 54.
52. B. Törnquist-Plewa (2006) The tale of Szydłowiec': memory and oblivion in a former Shetl in Poland. In: K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander (Eds) *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture* (Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag), pp. 211–215.
 53. Z. Gitelman (1990) The evolution of Soviet anti-Zionism: from principle to pragmatism. In: R.S. Wistrich (Ed.) *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism in the Contemporary World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with the Institute of Jewish Affairs), p. 23.
 54. R. Wistrich (1990) Left-wing anti-Zionism in western societies. In: R.S. Wistrich (Ed.) *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism in the Contemporary World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with the Institute of Jewish Affairs), pp. 48 and 51.
 55. D.E. Lipstadt (c1993) *Denying the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press), pp. 50–64.
 56. J. Wetzel (1997) Anti-Semitism among right-wing extremist groups, organizations, and parties in post-unification Germany. In: H. Kurthen, W. Bergmann and R. Erb (Eds) *Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 162–163.
 57. D.E. Lipstadt (c1993) *Denying the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press), pp. 103–104.
 58. B. Bailer-Galanda (1997) 'Revisionism' in Germany and Austria. The evolution of a doctrine. In: H. Kurthen, W. Bergmann and R. Erb (Eds) *Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 189.
 59. B. Bailer-Galanda (1997) 'Revisionism' in Germany and Austria. The evolution of a doctrine. In: H. Kurthen, W. Bergmann and R. Erb (Eds) *Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 184–186.
 60. G. Alvarez Chillida (2002) *El Antisemitismo en España. La Imagen del judío (1812–2002)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons).
 61. J.L. Rodríguez Jiménez (1997) *La extrema derecha española en el siglo XX* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial).
 62. X. Casals (1995) *Neonazis en España. De las audiciones wagnerianas a los skinheads (1965–1995)* (Barcelona: Grijalbo).
 63. Anti-Defamation League (2009) *Attitudes Towards Jews in Seven European Countries* (New York: www.adl.org).
 64. J.C. Alexander (2002) On the social construction of moral universals: the 'Holocaust' from war crime to trauma drama. *European Journal of Social Theory*, **5**(1), 20–32.
 65. A. Wievorka (1999) From survivor to witness: voices from the Shoah. In: J. Winter and E. Sivan (Eds) *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge), p. 137.
 66. J.C. Alexander (2002) On the social construction of moral universals: the 'Holocaust' from war crime to trauma drama. *European Journal of Social Theory*, **5**(1), 44–46.
 67. For a study on analogies between the Holocaust and the Balkan Wars made by Americans see A.E. Steinweis (2005) The Auschwitz analogy: Holocaust memory and American debates over intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, **19**(2).

68. E.T. Linenthal (1995) *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (London: Penguin), p. 249.
69. A. Huyssen (2002) *En Busca del Futuro Perdido: Cultura y Memoria en Tiempos de Globalización* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica), pp. 17–18. (author's own translation).
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73. A. Lazo (1995) *La Iglesia, la Falange y el Fascismo* (Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones).
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