Competing Trajectories of Jewish Entrepreneurs: Renovating Jewish Life in Post-World War II Madrid

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Abstract: Several of the Jewish entrepreneurs who made it into Spain in the 1940s and the 1950s quickly understood the rules of state capitalism promoted by Francoism, and within a relatively short time, they had joined the group known as the "ricos de Franco". Their wealth enabled them to penetrate the higher echelons of Spanish society, as Catholic and reactionary as it was. This article examines the diverse strategies adopted by four Jewish businessmen—Andrés Zala, Ernesto Koplowitz, Isaac Salama, and Max Mazin—on their way to the top, with a particular focus on Mazin, who, from the late 1950s onward, devoted himself to the renovation of Jewish life in Madrid. The trajectories of these businessmen shed light on various historical processes that marked the lives of several generations of Jews and Spaniards. Their experiences also offer a lens through which we can observe from new perspectives the discussions on the nature of Franco's dictatorship and on the authorities' attitudes towards Jewish issues in general, as well as towards specific Jews.

Keywords: Francoism, Antisemitism, Andrés Zala, Ernesto Koplowitz, Max Mazin

Introduction

Not very many people know that Francisco Franco, Spain's dictator for almost four decades, welcomed into his inner circle a businessman of Jewish origins named Andrés Zala, a family relative of no other than Theodor Herzl, the Austro-Hungarian journalist considered the father of modern political Zionism.[1] Zala fled Nazi Germany and became a wealthy

1 Isaac Querub, former president of Madrid's Jewish community, in interview with the author, Madrid, November 2022.

entrepreneur in the Canary Islands. His remains rest in El Pardo, next to the grave of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, Franco's right hand and the man who was supposed to succeed him in power.[2]

All this might sound surprising, given the prevailing image of the Francoist dictatorship as a fascist regime. This image has been shaped by several factors: the support provided by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany to the Nationalist uprising headed by General Franco (Rein and Thomas 2016, 2018); the anti-Semitic rhetoric propagated by Falangist leaders and publications during the 1930s and 1940s in their crusade against Bolsheviks, Freemasons, and Jews (notably echoed by Franco himself in some of his pronouncements) (Álvarez Chillida 2010; Rohr 2007); and Spain's pro-German neutrality during World War II, especially while Ramón Serrano Suñer, Franco's brother in-law, was foreign minister (Payne 2008; Brenneis and Hermann 2020).

Still, a handful of Jewish entrepreneurs who made it into Spain in the 1940s and the 1950s quickly understood the rules of state capitalism promoted by Francoism and within a relatively short time joined the group known as the "ricos de Franco". Their wealth enabled them to penetrate the higher echelons of Spanish society, as Catholic and reactionary as it was. Spain's partial isolation in the international scene certainly helped. Since the end of World War II, Franco's Spain had been investing great effort in rehabilitating its image in the West, trying to differentiate the regime from the defeated Italian Fascism and German Nazism, which were associated with anti-Semitism and racism. A tolerant policy toward Jews could serve this purpose.

This article examines the diverse strategies adopted by four Jewish businessmen—Andrés Zala, Ernesto Koplowitz, Isaac Salama, and Max Mazin—on their way to the top, with a particular focus on Mazin, who devoted himself to the renovation of Jewish life in Madrid from the late 1950s.[3] Although each of them opted for a different path, in a Spain with

2 Zala died in 1972. On the El Pardo cemetery, see del Río (2019).

3 Of the four, only Koplowitz is mentioned in Sánchez Soler (2001), and only Koplowitz and Mazin in Torres (2002).

a very small Jewish population, they were acquainted with one another and occasionally joined forces for common causes.

Knocking on the elites' gates: The cases of Zala and Koplowitz

Born in Fiume, the present-day city of Rijeka in Croatia, Andor Zala, who became Andrés Blas Zala Deutch once he obtained Spanish nationality in 1945, was a representative of Fox Film in Berlin when the decaying Weimar Republic was replaced by the Third Reich. Soon enough, Zala understood that people of Jewish origin like himself had no place in Nazi Germany. The information we have about Zala is sketchy. We know, however, that in the mid-1930s he decided to immigrate to South America but en route the ship made a stop in the Canary Islands, and the young entrepreneur decided to stay there. Gradually, he managed to arrange for several of his family members to join him there, including some rescued in Budapest by Spanish diplomats in 1944 (Carcedo 2010; Espada 2013).

Zala and Franco were old acquaintances. Apparently, they first met in 1935 at Tenerife's golf club. Franco had been banished to the Canary Islands as a result of the government's suspicions about his support for a planned coup d'etat against the Second Republic. In the mid-1930s, Zala was already involved in the activities of the canning factories La Rocar and Conservera Canaria (known as Conca) (BiosferaDigital 2020). Soon he would also become the owner of Isla de Lobos. We know little of the relations between Zala, who converted to Catholicism at one point, and Franco during the 1940s and 1950s.

Zala is mentioned in passing in the memoirs of Vicente Gil (1981), Franco's physician, and it seems he was seen as a man of the world by the Spanish dictator. A polyglot who spoke seven languages, Zala had ties to the tourism and movie industries, as well as the shipyard and canning industries, and he was doing business with the Americans (Ruiz Mantilla 2013). His ties with the Hilton family made it easier for him to convince Conrad Hilton to expand his operations to Europe and make Madrid the first capital city in the Old World to have a Hilton hotel. The inauguration of Hilton Madrid on the Castellana Avenue in July 1953 almost coincided with the signing of the military agreement between the United States and

Spain (Viñas 2003). It surely had a symbolic political meaning, especially since in 1953 Madrid was not yet considered an attractive site by most American and European tourists (Cianfarra 1953). Flirtations with movie actresses like the Hungarian-American Zsa Zsa Gabor and ties with Dimitri Tiomkin, the Jewish-Russian who became one of Hollywood's most famous and loved music composers, probably aroused Franco's interest, as the Spanish dictator was known to be an enthusiast of American cinema. Special film showings were held for the dictator at his Pardo Palace outside Madrid, and Franco wrote, under a pseudonym, a film script, *Raza* (1942), and several film reviews for the daily *ABC* (Bosch and del Rincón 1998).

Zala's relationship with Franco was probably also based on the love they shared for the sea and for fishing. This perhaps explains Franco's decision to take a photo of Zala on the deck of the dictator's yacht, the *Azor*, following a nice catch.[4]

It is not entirely clear when Zala converted to Catholicism, but he was buried as a Catholic in the El Pardo cemetery in 1972. At any rate, Zala maintained ties with several prominent Jews in 1950s Spain, and as far as we know, alongside Max Mazin and Isaac Salama, he tried to use his contacts with leading Francoist figures to secure permission for Moroccan Jews trying to escape from the newly independent monarchy (since 1956) to enter the Spanish enclaves and set off in small boats from the North African coast to the Iberian Peninsula on their way to France and from there to Israel.[5]

In contrast, Ernesto Koplowitz Sternberg did not convert to Catholicism, but he married a Catholic woman and his two legal daughters learned only at a later age that their father was Jewish. Although he became one of the leading entrepreneurs in 1950s Spain and his daughters, Alicia and Esther, ended up being the wealthiest women in Spain, little is known about his trajectory.

4 In his biography of Franco, Paul Preston says that in the mid-1960s Franco went out in the *Azor* and caught a 375-kilo tuna, and in 1968, together with the yacht's crew, he caught a twenty-two-ton whale (1994, 723–724).

5 Isaac Querub, former president of Madrid's Jewish community, in interview with the author, Madrid, November 2022; Rein (2023); Ojeda-Mata (2020).

Koplowitz was born in 1908 in Upper Silesia, or to use the Francoist rhetoric of the time, "he was born in the heroic and martyr nation of Poland [conquered by the Communists]". The son of Jakob Wilhem Koplowitz, a chemist, and Clara Sternberg, he studied engineering before embarking on travels across Europe. In the late 1920s, he decided to settle in Spain, where he began working for the German firm AEG, a major producer of home appliances, first at their Valencia branch and then at the Madrid headquarters. Koplowitz is credited by some with placing the first illuminated signs on the roofs of buildings in Madrid's Puerta del Sol. When the Civil War broke out, he fled to France, spending several years in Paris. However, in wake of the Nazi invasion of the French capital, Koplowitz returned to Madrid, where, despite the ravages of the postwar period, he at least found safety from Nazi persecution.

Koplowitz grasped early on the dynamics of the capitalist and semi-autarkic regime in Spain. In a system characterized by corruption and a thriving black market, the best path to wealth was through securing lucrative public tenders; and the best way to securing public tenders was through a network of connections with key figures in the higher echelons of the dictatorship and aristocratic families.

In 1944, Koplowitz became a partner of Juan Lillo Ozáez, the Madrid councilman responsible for lighting and member of the Cortes Españolas (the Francoist pseudo-parliament), who had founded the company Construcciones y Reparaciones. The Falangist Lillo Ozáez was the key person in the concession of sewage pipes in the capital. Koplowitz became the front man to develop the business, as Lillo Ozáez was engaged in other businesses of his own. Among other things, Lillo Ozáez also worked for Unión Electrica Madrileña, later to become Unión Fenosa. Unsurprisingly, Construcciones y Reparaciones obtained the concession for lighting and sewerage services in Madrid (Sánchez Soler 2019; Sánchez Soler 2021, 207–210).

By 1946, Koplowitz was already known as the contractor for irrigation pipes in Madrid, overseeing the water network of emblematic sites such as the Almudena Cemetery, the Plaza de Torros, and the Prado Museum (Madrid 1946). However, it seems that the company was involved in some dubious practices, prompting the city council to launch an investigation.

Consequently, Koplowitz lost the lucrative maintenance contracts (García Abadillo y Fidalgo 1990, 83).

During the 1940s, Koplowitz was a regular attendee at the balls held at the Ritz hotel, a venue of significant importance for establishing important social and political contacts (a fact Max Mazin was well aware of when he chose to reside there in the early 1950s). In the mid-1940s, Koplowitz met the daughter of the Marquis of Cárdenas, Esther Romero de Juseu. Esther, of Cuban descent, was particularly noteworthy as a close friend of Carmen Polo, Franco's wife. Following a brief courtship and a convenient papal dispensation to solve the religious issue, Koplowitz and Esther married in 1946. Unlike Max Mazin, Ernesto did not cultivate his Jewish identity, and his two daughters were raised as Catholics.

As he became a more important player in the world of public works, Koplowitz purchased Construcciones y Reparaciones in the summer of 1952. Later that year the company was rebranded as Construcciones y Contratas, the parent company of what is today Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas, the emblematic FCC, presided over by his granddaughter, Esther Koplowitz Alcocer.[6] The company experienced a considerable boom until it became one of the main groups in the construction sector. It began to bid for public works contracts, especially in road construction. In 1953, it was awarded the construction of part of the Torrejón de Ardoz air base (the main part was granted to German firms). For this purpose, Koplowitz created the company El Encinar de los Reyes, appointing as president Miguel Ardid Gimeno, the future father-in-law of the Marquis of Villaverde. The construction of new American bases, which consolidated the international position of Franco's Spain, also contributed to the ascent of Max Mazin in the real estate business.

Empowered by his new social position, Koplowitz made a series of notable appointments to the board of directors of his company, including Franco's father-in-law, José María Martínez Ortega; the "yernísimo" (Franco's son-in-law) Cristóbal Martínez-Bordiú; Alejandro Bermúdez González, director of the Instituto de Moneda Extranjera (Foreign Currency

6 In 1956, Koplowitz is mentioned in the press as the CEO of Construcciones y Contratas (Diario de Burgos 1956).

Institute); and José María Rivero de Aguilar, then undersecretary of public works. Max Mazin adopted a similar strategy of partnering with Falangists, aristocrats, and relatives of the dictator on his own path to prosperity.

Bonded by their Jewish origins, rising social status, and interest in real estate development, Ernesto Koplowitz and Max Mazin enjoyed a cordial relationship, and their two families have maintained close ties for several decades.[7] When Mazin was laying the institutional foundation for the renewed Jewish community in Madrid, Clara Sternberg and her son Ernesto Koplowitz were among the wealthy individuals to support its initiatives (Lisbona 1993, 224). Tragically, in 1962, while riding a horse in the Casa de Campo, an accident led to Koplowitz's premature death. In the subsequent years, Mazin built a close friendship with Koplowitz's daughters Esther and Alicia, who represented Construcciones y Contratas, and as a result of this he gladly accepted their offer to join the board of directors.

Proud of their Jewish identity: The cases of Salama and Mazin

On July 15, 1953, General Franco met the then-president of the small Jewish community of Madrid, Daniel Francois Barukh. During the conversation, the Generalísimo told Barukh how the Jews of Tetuán had helped him when the civil war broke out in Spanish Morocco (Rein 1997, 166–167). Nearly a dozen years later, on January 20, 1965, Franco received Max Mazin and Alberto Levy, respectively the presidents of the Jewish communities of Madrid and Barcelona, in an official audience at the palace of El Pardo.[8] This type of audience was typically very brief and formal, reflecting Franco's reserved character; he engaged in conversation only to the extent necessary. This meeting was noteworthy for lasting over an hour. Mazin thanked the head of state for his benevolence and requested that the Jewish communities be recorded in the registry of associations of the Ministry of the Interior to attain legal status. He explained that he had received with enthusiasm the statements made by Franco in the New Year's Day

7 Ariel Mazin in interviews with the author, Madrid, December 2022; Lalo Ascona in interviews with the author, Madrid, November 2022.

8 See the typed partial transcription, kept by Mazin, of the conversation with Franco, Max Mazin Archive, Madrid.

speech promising progress towards guaranteeing religious freedom. Mazin stressed that such declarations would allow the full integration of Jews into Spanish society and an opportunity to prove their unwavering commitment to the destiny of the homeland.

Franco, for his part, recalled his encounters with Jews from Ceuta and Melilla in the early stages of his career, and was interested in learning details about Spanish Jews of Moroccan descent. Undoubtedly, the Caudillo's military experiences in North Africa had played a significant role in shaping his life and personality. As he told the journalist Manuel Aznar in 1938, "My years in Africa live within me with indescribable force. It was there that the possibility of rescuing a great Spain was born. [...] Without Africa, I can scarcely comprehend myself, nor can I properly explain myself to my comrades in arms" (Preston 1994*a*, 24).

In the twilight of Franco's regime, Mazin would give more details about the meeting:

> I assumed that the meeting would last only five minutes. [...] Then he began talking to me, which was unusual. [...] He started by recounting his time as captain and commander of Melilla, telling me about the capture of Xauen and how a Jewish delegation had approached him to seek permission to wear leather shoes. The Muslims prohibited it. They also asked permission to fetch water from the river, which the Muslims did not allow either, as they would take it and sell it to the Jews. Franco granted their requests. Then he told me about the families he had met in Melilla and asked me about them. [...] I even grew weary, yet he continued talking. Except for five or ten minutes talking about the Jewish community in Spain, the rest of the time Franco spent reminiscing about the war in Africa (*Personas* 1975).

Indeed, a good number of Jewish families in Spanish Morocco supported the Nationalist rebellion, which had started there on the evening of July 17, 1936. Anti-Jewish propaganda was rife, and several Jews were arrested because they were members of Republican parties or suspected of supporting the Popular Front. Others were detained and released only after paying large sums of money, while others faced the imposition of large fines on their communities (Calderwood 2019). Despite these challenges,

in August 1936, the Spanish armed forces published several lists of donors to the rebel cause, and these included many Jewish surnames. Whether voluntarily or forcibly, the majority of wealthy Jews in Spanish Morocco contributed to financing the military revolt.

The Salama family was among the richest Jewish families in Spanish Morocco, where the Jewish community numbered around fourteen thousand people on the eve of the civil war. Since the late nineteenth century, the Salamas had been the owners of Transáfrica, an import-export company that specialized in raw materials but gradually came to focus on grains and food items. They had supported Franco since his uprising against the Republic in the summer of 1936. According to one account, their ships supplied the Nationalist side with grain sent from the United States to Tangier; the grain was supplied on credit.[9] Another version suggests that on July 17, 1936, an oil tanker from France bound for the port of Melilla altered its course to Algiers upon hearing news of the uprising. Through the intervention of Jacobo J. Salama, Shell's concessionary delegate, the tanker ultimately docked in Melilla. It was thus Salama's personal guarantee that ensured the arrival of gasoline for the rebel army (Lisbona 1993, 70). Franco, as we have seen, never failed to acknowledge the support of Moroccan Jews and of the Salama family in particular. It is thus not surprising that once the family moved to Spain in the 1950s, they thrived under the wings of the dictatorship.

During the civil war, Salama had befriended military men in his native Melilla, including Rafael García Valiño, Juan Luis Beigbeder, Francisco Franco himself, Millán Astray, Juan Vigón, Franco Salgado-Araujo, and Agustín Muñoz Grandes, who would later become minister of the army and vice-president in Franco's governments. Like Max Mazin, Salama knew how to reconcile personal relationships with business, helping him to rationalize the military assistance Nationalist Spain and Nazi Germany gave to one another. Loyal to the regime, Isaac and his brother

9 Lalo Ascona in interview with the author.

José exerted pressure on Israel from the late 1940s, trying to orientate its policy towards developing formal ties with Franco's Spain.[10]

In 1949, several Sephardim from both Spain and Spanish Morocco wrote letters to Zionist leaders expressing their support for Franco and calling for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Spain and Israel. For example, José Salama, at the time the president of the Zionist Federation, travelled together with his brother Isaac from Tangier to Paris to see members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Knesset who were there on an official visit. They pleaded with the parliamentarians and the Israeli ambassador in France to vote in favor of lifting the UN diplomatic embargo on Spain. Their reasoning was that, after all, the alternative to Franco was communism. Isaac Salama also used his personal and family ties for this purpose. His brother-in-law was a Knesset deputy, and Salama did not hesitate to take advantage of a family visit to express his dissatisfaction with regard to Israel's policy towards Franco's Spain (Rein 1997, 109).

With such a background, it is not surprising that Isaac Salama had direct access to the minister of the army, Agustín Muñoz Grandes, who had been head of the Blue Division, sent to the Russian front under German command, and who had been decorated by Adolf Hitler himself. However, times had changed. When Max Mazin and Issac Salama met Muñoz Grandes in the early 1960s, the military officer agreed to cooperate with Israel's efforts to promote Jewish immigration from Morocco by way of the Iberian Peninsula and France.

Although Salama did not assume any official role in Madrid's Jewish community, he was well respected and supported various community initiatives. Synagogues throughout the world had been built by raising funds among local Jewish communities, but this was not easy in 1960s Madrid, where the Jewish community was too small and not affluent enough. Max Mazin compensated this lack of Spanish donations by raising funds in the United States, with significant contributions from organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee.

10 M. Fischer to M. Sharett, September 24, 1950, Israel State Archives, Jerusalem, Ministry of Foreign Relations, 2541/13a; Ruiz de Cuevas to Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid, September 21, 1950, AMAE, R.3147/3; Isaac Salama to Erice, September 23, 1950, R.4787/188.

However, there were still generous donations from prominent businessmen like Ernesto Koplowitz, Isaac Salama, and César Kajón (Comunidad Judía de Madrid 2017, 54).

Kajón was a Jewish industrialist originally from Trieste, Italy. He arrived in Spain in 1938 as a representative of Fiat, staying there until his death in 1999. He showed great generosity towards the Jewish community. Upon the approval of the statutes of the Jewish Community in 1965, he sent Franco's government a check for one million pesetas as a token of his gratitude for the regime's gesture. Franco himself thanked him and ordered that the money be used in the acquisition of artworks for the recently inaugurated Sephardic Museum of Toledo. Salama and Kajón also joined Mazin in the 1960s in the creation of the company Interdesarrollo, which aimed to promote commercial exchanges between Spain and Israel.[11]

Of the four Jewish entrepreneurs who did exceptionally well in national-Catholic Spain, Max Mazin undoubtedly stood out as the most visible and made the most important contribution to the reinstatement of Jewish life in the Spanish capital and the establishment of ties between Spain and Israel.[12]

On March 9, 1980, the newspaper *El País* presented Max Mazin Brodovka as a Spanish Superman in a photographic report included in its weekly supplement. In the photo he was depicted wearing the superhero's costume and cape. Six days before that image was published, the main leader of Spanish Judaism had escaped by chance an attempt against his life. A Palestinian commando sought to assassinate him due to his role as Israel's unofficial ambassador in Madrid, although this function was not so widely known. To Spaniards following the news, Mazin was a wealthy businessman who had an elegant and understated style and enjoyed enormous prestige among his colleagues. In 1977, he had brought them together in the first national employers' association, the Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations. At that time, Spain was defining the course to follow after

11 Informe sobre las relaciones económicas entre Israel y España, September 20, 1966, Israel State Archive, 3164/5.

12 The following paragraphs are based on Rein and Krupnik (forthcoming).

the death of Francisco Franco, moving from dictatorship to democracy, and Mazin appeared as a key person.

Max Mazin Brodovka was born in 1923 in a small Jewish village of about a thousand people located in present-day Belarus, then part of the Second Polish Republic. Mazin's parents and his young sister fell victim to the Nazis, while he and his brother found their way to the Soviet Union. At the end of World War II, he managed to flee from Russia to Belgium, via Poland and Germany. His experience in the Soviet black market, the lessons he learned during his journey through devastated Germany, and his contacts in the Belgian textile industry set him on the path to starting his own business. His audacity led him to make a fortune in less than a year. Always on the lookout for new opportunities, he also participated in auctions of military surplus, which he resold for substantial profits.

Following his arrival in Spain in the early 1950s, Mazin experienced a meteoric rise, achieving remarkable success both in the business world and as a leader of the Jewish community. Through his associates and their wives, Mazin managed in a short time to weave a network of relationships with influential people. One of his first business partners was Diego Luis González Conde y de Borbón, who had ties to the royal family. González Conde's mother was the older sister of General Francisco de Borbón y de la Torre, a military figure renown for defeating the Republican militias in Malaga. Moreover, González Conde's father was the Marquis of Villamantilla de Perales, a title that Mazin's new partner would inherit as the first-born son. González Conde was also a Civil Engineer, which in Spain at that time, as Mazin would say years later, made him an eminent person, even though he did not practice the profession. González Conde's wife was María Teresa Rueda, whose father would become vice-president of the Central Bank and eventually leave her a fortune.

The two most prominent figures in Mazin's network during the 1950s and 1960s were Luis Carrero Blanco, known for his anti-Semitism, and the dictator's wife, Carmen Polo. Characterized by conspiratorial world views of the kind shared by more than a few people close to the Caudillo, Carrero Blanco exaggerated Jewish power and believed that placating wealthy Jews might lead to more Western sympathy and support.

Like Koplowitz, Mazin saw in Spain's rapid rapprochement with the United States a circumstance that could open doors for him and his partners. Until then, Mazin had specialized in importing products, but with the strengthening of the country's ties with the United States, his attention shifted to real estate development, which would become one of the most profitable businesses in Spain from the 1950s onwards. Sensing a new opportunity, Mazin and his partner, González Conde, visited Carrero Blanco in La Coruña in 1954, shortly before construction began on the air base at Torrejon de Ardoz. Close to Madrid's main airport, this turned out to be the largest American air base.

Possessing useful information and the required permits, the partners bought a large plot of land a mile from where the base was to be located. They created their own construction company, and on the plot they built 750 apartments to house the American personnel. Two other associates participated in the business, one of whom was Luis Figueroa, Count of Romanones, son of a notable politician of the Liberal Party during the first part of the century. His wife, Blanca de Borbón, was González Conde's aunt, and by the time the construction began near the base, they were already good friends of Mazin. The construction project was financed by the Instituto de Crédito para la Reconstrucción Nacional, which was headed by a personal friend of Carmen Polo. Good connections were always useful.

Mazin declared himself proud to be a Jew and a Zionist. Unlike Koplowitz, he married a Jewish woman. Unable to find a suitable Jewish partner in Madrid, he continued his search during his trips to Israel. While in Jerusalem, he met Atara Mor Zilberstein, a beautiful young woman who had arrived in Jewish Palestine from Eastern Europe with her parents in 1937, when she was just a baby. Crowned beauty queen of Jerusalem in 1959, she would soon become Mazin's wife.[13] Mazin was undoubtedly a *rara avis* in the country of the Inquisition, which, five centuries later, still upheld Catholicism as the state religion and forbade any other external manifestation. He thus became a fascinating personality for the media and broad sectors of the Spanish public.

13 Atara Mor Zilberstein in interview with the author, Madrid, March 2021.

Early in his presidency of the Madrid Jewish community, in an interview given to the press in September 1962, Mazin manifested his desire to normalize the Jewish presence in the country. At the time, the Jewish population was calculated to be around four thousand, 1,500 of whom lived in Madrid (*España* 1962). Mazin's project aimed to provide solid and stable foundations to a still-incipient community whose members, according to an estimate provided by Mazin himself in the community's bulletin, had only been residing in Madrid between three and four years (Mazin 1962). This paper focuses on two of Mazin's initiatives in the 1960s that had an enormous impact on Jewish life in Spain: the creation of the Jewish-Christian Friendship (Amistad Judeo-Cristiana) association and the building and inauguration of the Madrid synagogue.

From the early years of the Franco regime and until the late 1950s, the leadership of the Madrid Jewish community tried to keep a low profile to avoid drawing public attention to the few Jews living in Spain. When Mazin first joined the small group of Jews which formed the community, they were still convening for prayer in a rented basement, as non-Catholic practices were only allowed in the private sphere. When he assumed the leadership, Max Mazin opted for a strategy aimed at giving public visibility to the Jewish community.

In 1961, Mazin became the cofounder of Jewish-Christian Friendship (Rein and Bornstein 2023), an association that included Catholic priests and Jewish figures and followed the organizational model established in other Western countries to promote interreligious dialogue, in this case between Catholic and Jewish Spaniards. Mazin viewed the active participation of members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in this undertaking as a symbolic gesture of great significance. It was seen as a first step toward the official recognition of a community that, up to that moment, lived in a situation of informal tolerance, without the existence of officially acknowledged rights as a religious minority or of any legal or political guarantee that this tolerance would be maintained over time. In this context, the Vatican's determination to review the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish world, alongside the convening of the Second Vatican Council in October 1962, was a clear signal that the activities of the Jewish-Christian Friendship in Spain would meet with a very favorable climate.

The premature death of John XXIII in June 1963, the great promoter of the Second Vatican Council and surely the pontiff most committed to the ecumenical ideal, did not deter Mazin from his course of action. Madrid's Jewish community celebrated a religious service in honor of John XXIII the day after his death. As pointed out by the press, this was the first time that a Jewish community anywhere celebrated such an event in its synagogue in memory of a pontiff. At the end of the religious service, Mazin delivered an emotional eulogy recalling how, on one occasion, John XXIII had addressed a Jewish delegation with the words "I am your brother Joseph". Mazin firmly stated that the Jewish people mourned "the disappearance of a great friend" (La Vanguardia española 1963).

The decisions adopted by the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council, coupled with the growing collaboration between several members of the Spanish ecclesiastical hierarchy and prominent personalities of Madrid Jewry within the framework of the Jewish-Christian Friendship, exerted pressure within the Francoist state to reshape its relations with and attitudes towards the Jewish citizens and residents in Spain (Díaz Burillo 2019). This was happening against a backdrop of growing economic liberalization, with the regime taking timid and cautious steps towards political openness. One of the expressions of this new policy was the approval in 1964 of the Law of Associations, which allowed the free association of citizens as long as they did not challenge the political principles of the Francoist system (Palomares 2010; Radcliff 2010). These developments bolstered the confidence of Jewish community leaders in the possibility of achieving formal recognition of the small Spanish-Jewish communities (New York Times 1964).

In March 1965, Mazin announced that the government had approved the bylaws submitted by the Jewish community of Madrid, now officially recognized as the Hebrew Community of Madrid (Comunidad Hebrea de Madrid).[14] As the community leader put it, this ended the situation of informal tolerance that had prevailed until then, granting official

14 The choice of the term "Hebrew Community" instead of "Israelite" responded to the desire of Franco's government to avoid possible misunderstandings with the Arab countries, making it clear that the recognition of the Jewish community did not imply the establishment of diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. On Franco's policy of alignment with the Arab countries, see Pardo Sanz (2001).

recognition of a Jewish presence in Spain for the first time in five centuries (JTA Daily News Bulletin 1965). On December 14, 1966, the Spanish people approved in a referendum the Organic Law of the State, which introduced a series of institutional changes within the Franco dictatorship, including the recognition of religious freedom. Title I of the 1967 Organic Law of the State referred specifically to such liberty.

Despite some disappointment shown by the Jewish community leaders regarding the final wording of the law on religious freedom, all the necessary conditions were in place for the legal recognition of the Jewish communities in Spain. Mazin's negotiations with the authorities ultimately led to the legal recognition of the Jewish community of Madrid in December 1968, simultaneously with the inauguration of a new synagogue in the capital.

The project for the new synagogue had been in the making for several years. The Jewish community in Madrid had been experiencing a noticeable growth due to the continuous inflow of Moroccan Jews, and the premises on Pizarro Street, which were being used for community services, could no longer accommodate an expanding community. Consequently, in 1963 they decided to buy a plot of land on Balmes Street, in the Chamberí district (Ayton Shenker 1993). As the community lacked legal personality back then, they had to create a corporation, Bet Knesset (synagogue in Hebrew), to acquire the property.[15]

A lengthy process to be granted the necessary authorizations then began. This finally came to fruition at the end of 1967, when Mazin obtained the construction license for the first building to be erected in Spain with all the visible signs of a synagogue since the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492.[16] Funding for the land purchase and the construction costs came from donations from local and international Jewish organizations and individuals. The largest contribution was made by the Swiss banker Edmond Safra, whose father was honored with the

15 Max Mazin in an interview with César Vidal, Max Mazin Archive.

16 The Jews of Barcelona had built a community building on Porvenir Street in Barcelona in 1954, which also functioned as a synagogue for religious services. But they had no legal permission as such, and neither were there any external signs of the function of the building, which maintained the appearance of a residential building. See Lisbona (1993, 167–174).

name of the synagogue, Beth Yaacov (Comunidad Judía de Madrid 2017, 54). The synagogue's inauguration ceremony was held on December 16, 1968, with the participation of London Rabbi Salomon Gaon, Rabbi Davis Kahan of Buenos Aires, and Rabbi Harold Gordon of New York.[17]

Conclusions

The Jews of Spain experienced both ancestral prejudices and a peaceful social integration in the post-World War II period. The trajectories of the four businessmen covered in this article shed light on various historical processes, provide context, and facilitate our understanding of the events that marked the lives of several generations of Jews and Spaniards throughout the twentieth century. Their experiences also offer a lens through which we can observe from new perspectives the discussions on the nature of Franco's dictatorship and on the authorities' attitudes towards Jewish issues in general, as well as towards specific Jews.

While most studies on Franco's Spain and the Jews have focused hitherto on the salvation of Jews during the Holocaust, this paper focuses on the emergence of Jewish life in Franco's Spain, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, and on the way several Jews became part of the upper echelons of society, establishing a network of contacts that led to successful business dealings and continued to expand over the course of the century. Beyond individual benefits, ties with leading figures in the dictatorship and among Spanish aristocrats also benefited Jewish causes and the improvement of relations with the Jewish state.

It is clear that Ashkenazi Jews such as Zala, Koplowitz, and Mazin felt relieved in Spain, as the people who surrounded them had not taken part in the mass murder of Jews in Eastern or Central Europe, an ordeal many members of their own families had endured. Since Spain only indirectly participated in the war, sending the Blue Division to fight in the Soviet Union, Zala, Koplowitz or Mazin did not have to wonder about the role

17 A letter of thanks from Rabbi Gordon for the invitation is preserved in Max Mazin's archive, as is a letter in which J. I. Linton of the Department of International Affairs of the World Jewish Congress thanked Mazin for the opportunity to be present at the event. John Slawson, of the American Jewish Committee, also congratulated Mazin on his achievements (Max Mazin Archive).

of the people around them in the Nazi extermination of European Jews. The fact that Franco had ascended to power with the support of Hitler and Mussolini and had adopted a policy of friendly neutrality toward the Axis in World War II seemed less relevant in the Cold War era, a time when the Franco regime's role in saving Jews during the Holocaust years was also greatly exaggerated.

Sephardic Jews, especially those arriving from Morocco, felt at ease in Spain due to their cultural heritage and, in the case of those from Northern Morocco, their proficiency in Spanish. Jewish families like the Salamas who supported the Nationalist rebellion in 1936 enjoyed direct access to leading figures in the regime.

Though they remained the traditional "others" in a Spain still dominated by national-Catholicism, all four businessmen were anti-Communist and were not at odds with at least some parts of Francoist ideology. They all understood the rules of state capitalism promoted by Francoism under the guise of autarky. They formed ties with key figures in politics, such as Luis Carrero Blanco, and in the Spanish aristocracy, some of whom were related to the royal family. These figures had no objections to conducting business with wealthy Jews.

Each of the four figures discussed here pursued a different strategy to reach the top. Max Mazin was the only one to publicly declare himself Jewish and Zionist. In a remarkable way, he was capable of combining economic success with attachment to Jewish traditions and with the public vindication of his ethno-religious identity. Mazin probably contributed more than any other individual to the renovation of Jewish life in post-World War II Madrid.

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