

Volume 20 Number 1

Spring 2001

*The Journal of*  
**ISRAELI  
HISTORY**

POLITICS, SOCIETY, CULTURE

---

A FRANK CASS JOURNAL

of American Middle East policy during the Eisenhower years is Peter Rainow's "La percezione sovietica della politica americana e i rapporti delle superpotenze nel Medio Oriente durante gli anni '50" (The Russian Perception of American Policy and Relations between the Superpowers in the Middle East in the 1950s). It describes the failure of the new American strategy in the region, which corresponded with the birth of a bright new star in the area — the Soviet Union, which slipped into the mantle of protector of the "decolonized" nations against the "new American colonialism."

Finally, Sanford R. Silverburg's impressive bibliography is a useful resource for studying the varied problems tackled by the scholars in this volume. Scholars who speak Italian with an interest in American policy toward the Middle East during these crucial years will find this volume invaluable.

MANUELA M. CONSONNI  
Hebrew University  
Jerusalem

Raanan Rein, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust and the Inquisition: Israel's Relations with Francoist Spain*. Trans. Martha Grenzebach. London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997. Pp. 278, Notes, sources, bibliography, index. ISBN 0 71464 796 9 HB, 0 71464 351 3 PB.

At times, *Realpolitik* coincides with the dictates of one's conscience. This is the principal conclusion arising from Raanan Rein's study of the State of Israel's attitudes towards Franco's Spain. Although most of those with an interest in the foreign relations of Spain or Israel will be able to read this study in the original Hebrew (published in 1995) or its Spanish translation (published in 1996), the English-speaking reader who enjoys diplomatic history will find in this work a fascinating study of the relations between two states, one of which was only peripherally important to the other. Hence, relations between them were determined not by economic or political interests but primarily by matters of "conscience."

The notion of conscience as a factor in the sphere of international relations may be surprising. The opening chapters, the most important in the study, offer an extensive description of Israel's refusal to recognize Franco's regime and to establish diplomatic ties with his state. The title of the book is misleading. It was not the memory of the Inquisition that prompted Israel's unbending policy towards Spain; likewise, the role of the Shoah in this context was negligible. Time after time, the ideological and conscience-based motives of the policy makers are emphasized: the extreme reluctance to recognize the Fascist regime of Franco, the last of the dictators to look favorably upon Hitler

and his regime — in the words of Walter Eytan (the first director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry), "the only one of all those helped by Hitler that had survived" (p. 67). Coupled with this was the personal, anti-Francoist ideological obligation on the part of the architects of Israeli policy and the upper echelons of the Foreign Ministry, spurred by the memory of their support for the Republican camp and all it had symbolized during the Spanish Civil War. In fact, it was Franco, with all the evils that he represented, who shaped relations between the two states.

This policy of estrangement, based on the dictates of conscience and ideology, was made possible, to a large extent, by the fact that it did not conflict with other interests. Moreover, in the early days of Israel's foreign policy towards its democratic friends in Latin America, it was advisable in this instance to take the moral "high ground." The positions of the various political parties on the domestic front also encouraged the adoption of a conscience-based policy: such a policy benefited the Mapai Party at the beginning of the 1950s in its dealings with the leftist opposition, which was unwilling to tolerate relations of any sort with the "Spanish fascist dictatorship" (p. 106).

However, as Rein notes in chapter 3 of his book, the first fissures in this moral posture already appeared in the early 1950s, when political considerations began to predominate. Among the latter was the attempt to prevent Franco's rapprochement with the Arab states. Here, Rein describes the cracks in the policy as a result of pressures that the Israeli Foreign Service brought to bear at the grass-roots level on the administrative echelons in Jerusalem and the architects of policy. This chapter provides a riveting description of the interaction among the various levels of the Foreign Ministry and the influence of the lower echelons on the top tier in the formulation and alteration of policy.

Understanding the value of relations with Israel, Franco courted the young state. Recognition by the victims of the Hitlerist regime would, to a great extent, legitimize his own position and that of his regime. On the basis of this conscience-based recognition, he expected to be accepted into the family of nations as an equal. Hence he wooed the "Israeli conscience." But by the mid-1950s, as Rein observes in chapter 4, Franco no longer needed the moral fig leaf of Israel. Rein notes that Franco had been granted an honored place in the family of nations as a result of the Cold War — and by the United States, no less. Consequently, he ceased pursuing Israeli recognition. In chapter 5 Rein presents the Franco regime's hostility toward Israel's exploratory efforts to establish ties between the two states from the mid-1950s onwards.

Rein's book is commendable, particularly for his assembling of the historical data, the result of meticulous research conducted in Israel, Spain, the US and Great Britain. He has accorded appropriate weight to each of the many facts and theories surrounding the emotional relationship between Israel and Spain. Wisely, the author has also employed a broad — almost global —

canvas, encompassing an impressive range of events and information. In so doing, he has avoided the limited perspective that might otherwise color such an ostensibly narrow subject as Israeli-Spanish relations. It seems to me, however, that the events he describes could be assessed differently.

By presenting a "non-event" — the absence of diplomatic relations — the author generates anticipation among the reader for the main event: the establishment of diplomatic relations. One cannot help but notice that Rein disapproves of the decision not to pursue a course based on self-interest, and the consequent lack of relations between the two states. He is clearly critical of the political echelons for shunning relations with Franco's regime, referring on a number of occasions to the fact that Israel did indeed maintain relations with regimes no less deplorable, like that of Stalin, on the one hand, and with Germany on the other. But the reputation of the Soviet Union, from the perspective both of public opinion and policy makers, was very different from Franco's status on both the ideological and pragmatic levels. In addition, Israel's policy planners stressed more than once that their criticism was directed against the Francoist regime and not against the Spanish state, meaning that any comparison between relations with Spain under Franco, the dictator who had supported Hitler, and relations with the "other Germany" of Adenauer was unwarranted.

Did these moral-ideological considerations prove to be justified? It does not emerge from Rein's book (especially chapters 3 and 4) that Israeli recognition of Franco's regime would have blocked Spain's march towards the Arab world or balanced its Middle East policy. Nor would it have strengthened Israel's status in Jerusalem — one of the issues that preoccupied Israel in its early years, and a subject on which Spain's opinion, as a leading Catholic state, would have carried much weight. On the contrary: Rein himself indicates that Franco continued to flirt with the Arab world even as he attempted to woo Israel. Franco also made it clear that Spain supported the internationalization of Jerusalem (pp. 88–90, 106).

In other words, it appears that the adoption of a policy based on conscience or ideology did not harm Israel's interests. Franco, at the western boundary of the Mediterranean Sea, achieved his goal — international recognition of himself and his regime — without recourse to the moral authority of Israel. Ultimately, Israel's position even seems to have earned the sympathy of post-Franco Spain. Rein himself quotes Abba Eban, who related that Felipe González had praised Israel's anti-Francoist stance even before he led his Socialist Party to power in Madrid. The Spanish leader gave this reason as one of the factors that influenced his support for establishing diplomatic ties with Israel (pp. 46, 217). In the mid-1980s González, meanwhile Spanish Prime Minister, decided to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Hence Israel had not lost anything valuable, not even as far as political clout on

Spain's internal politics was concerned, by its principled position of denying diplomatic recognition. As before, by the mid-1980s conscience partially dictated policy.

MARCOS SILBER  
Diaspora Research Institute  
Tel Aviv University

Alan Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2001. Pp. xiv + 337, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0 52020 941 9 PB.

Alan Dowty's *The Jewish State* has been reprinted in a new edition having first appeared in 1998 when it immediately attracted considerable attention. The book is intended to supply students with a readable account of Israel's political development — which it does — and also to establish terms of analysis that are bold and original. Dowty's analysis provides as much theoretical insight as factual information, and its great achievements help us think clearly and carefully about the crucial challenges confronting the Jewish state.

"... Israel entered ... [its] third millennium, and the second century of Zionism, as a success story by objective criteria" (p. xiii), argues Alan Dowty in his comprehensive and learned examination of the country's political system. Not only does Israel's political culture draw on Jewish values for many of its symbols, institutions and policies, it also gathers its momentum from a complex of democratic ideas and practices evolving over the course of the past century. Jews waged war to secure their sovereignty. Now, according to Dowty, they must struggle to bridge the gap between the contradictory claims of a particularistic, communal Jewish tradition and a universalistic, individualist democratic ideal. If the Israeli polity has not yet fulfilled all of its founders' visions, it is still, in important ways, inspired and shaped by them.

To uncover the cultural underpinnings of the Zionist idea of creating a modern Jewish state, Dowty begins his analysis with a brief but meticulously accurate historical review of nineteenth-century Jewish politics in Eastern Europe. Utilizing the best of recent research, Dowty is able to trace the source for conventional assumptions in Israel about the proper division of power between central and local authorities and provide reasons for the distinctions commonly drawn by politicians and embedded in public policy between Jewish national rights and civic rights for all the country's citizens.

Formulated in an autocratic world where challenges to authority originated from a broad set of nationalist and populist principles, Zionism produced no single consensus on the prerequisites of liberation and