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The Spanish Inquisition - Part I

Lead: The Political Unity in Spain was forged in part by a religious policy known as the Spanish Inquisition.

Intro.: "A Moment in Time" with Dan Roberts

Content: By the Early Middle Ages, the on rushing tide of evangelical Islam had swept North Africa, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and moved irresistibly north into Spain. Moslem forces were halted only by vigorous military action at the Pyrenees Mountains. Seven centuries of near constant conflict followed. Christian

and Moslems struggled over the control of Spain but in many ways the warfare masked social, ethnic, and political upheaval as well as religious dispute.

Eventually the Moslem kingdoms of Spain were supplanted by Christian ones but the agonizingly slow reconquest brought into Spanish life a marked suspicion of alien racial and religious groups. One of the most visible and prosperous of these were the Jews of Spain. Jews tended to congregate in the cities and dominated the professions of medicine and law. They were considered excellent administrators and were often found as estate managers and tax collectors. Many rose to prominence as

bureaucrats and bankers. In surprising contrast to the rest of Europe before the late 1300s in both Moslem and Christian sections of Spain there was a reasonable amount of toleration of the Jews.

Unfortunately, Spanish Jews because of their prominence, talent and clannish unity to were perfectly situated to serve as scape goats. They were blamed for a remarkable run of bad times that after the middle of the 1300s began to inflict much pain and suffering on Europe in general and Spain in particular. Spaniards were inundated by the Black Death, almost continual warfare, economic conflict, a divided and distracted Roman Catholic Church, and incompetent leaders. People couldn't explain all this

bad fortune and looked around for someone to blame. Why not the Jews? Next time mass conversions to Christianity and enforcement through the Spanish Inquisition

"A Moment in Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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