AGRARIAN SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN THE PROVINCE OF BADAJOZ UNDER THE SPANISH SECOND REPUBLIC, 1931-1936

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Modern History, University of Oxford.

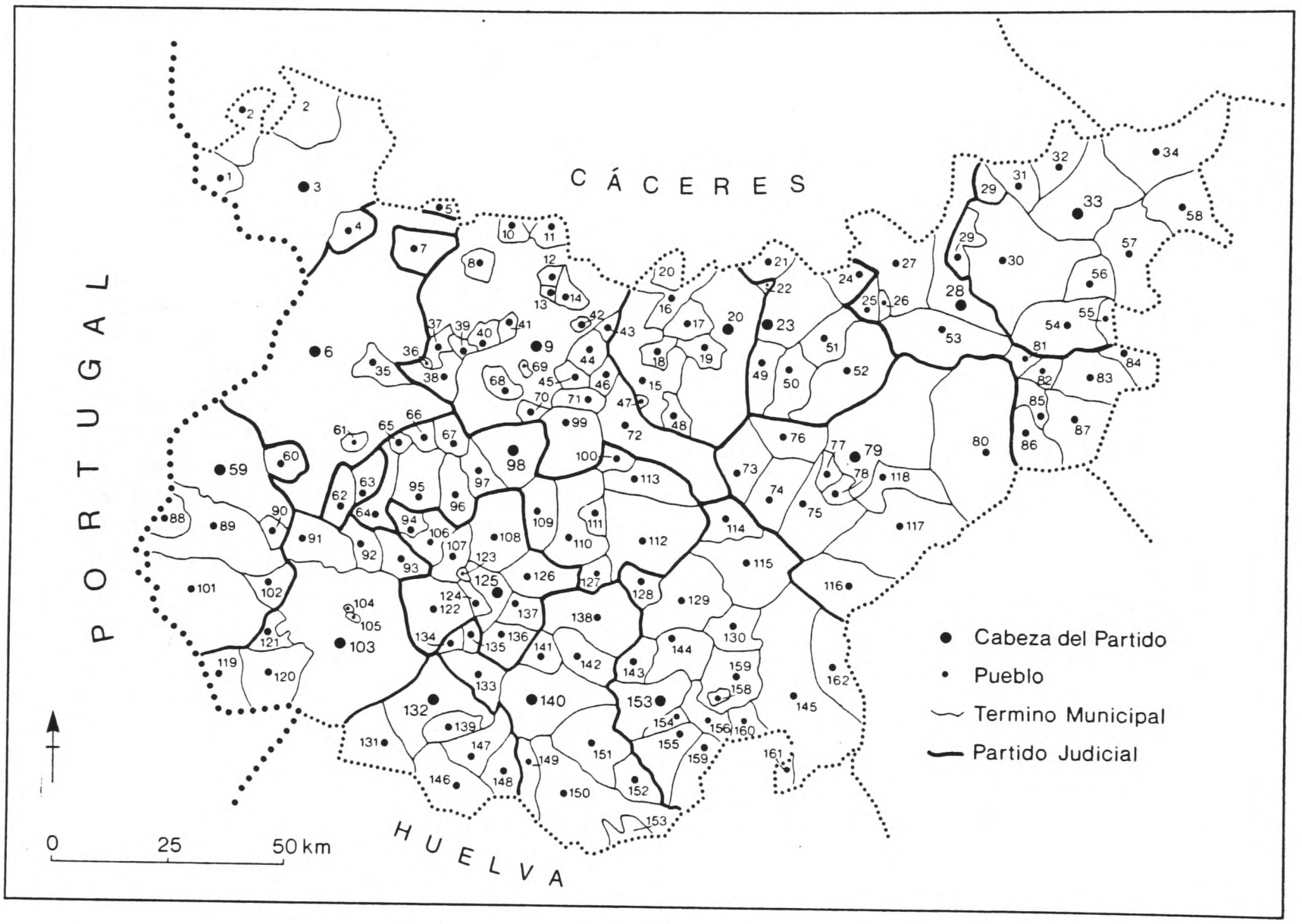
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Province of Badajoz: Administrative



KEY

Cabeza del Partido - District Seat

Pueblo - Town or Village

Termino Municipal - Municipal Area

Partido Judicial - District

24 Acedera
97 Aceuchal
157 Ahillones
99 Alange
61 Albuera (La)
3 Albuquerque
89 Alconchel
124 Alconera
12 Aljucén
62 Almendral
98 Almendralejo
68 Arroyo de San Serván
135 Atalaya
145 Azuaga
6 BADAJOZ
91 Barcarrota
84 Baterno
118 Benquerencia de la Serena
158 Berlanga
142 Bienvenida
139 Bodonal de la Sierra
122 Burgillos del Cerro
80 Cabeza del Buey
148 Cabeza la Vaca
69 Calamonte
149 Calera de León
141 Calzadilla de los Barros
52 Campanario
115 Campillo de Llerena
87 Capilla
11 Carmonita
13 Carrascalejo (El)
29 Casas de Don Pedro
154 Casas de Reina
32 Castilblanco
79 Castuera
1 Codosera (La)
10 Cordobilla de Lácara
51 Coronada (La)
66 Corte de Peleas
47 Cristina
88 Cheles
45 Don Alvaro
20 Don Benito
65 Entrín Bajo
41 Esparragalejo
78 Esparragosa de la Serena
53 Esparragosa de Lares
107 Feria
132 Fregenal de la Sierra
57 Fuenlabrada de los Montes
140 Fuente de Cantos
159 Fuente del Arco
108 Fuente del Maestre
146 Fuentes de León
56 Garbayuela
83 Garlitos
40 Garrovilla (La)
162 Granja de Torrehermosa
15 Guareña
49 Haba (La)
34 Helechosa
33 Herrera del Duque
75 Higuera de la Serena
144 Higuera de Llerena
102 Higuera de Vargas
131 Higuera la Real
127 Hinojosa del Valle
112 Hornachos
103 Jerez de los Caballeros
123 Lapa (La)
38 Lobon
128 Llera
153 Llerena
50 Magacela
130 Maguilla
161 Malcocinado
77 Malpartida de la Serena
48 Manchita
17 Medellín
136 Medina de las Torres
19 Mengabril
9 Mérida
14 Mirandilla
150 Monesterio
151 Montemolin
117 Monterrubio de la Serena
37 Montijo
94 Morera (La)
8 Nava de Santiago (La)
27 Navalvillar de Pela
64 Nogales
120 Oliva de la Frontera
72 Oliva de Mérida
59 Olivenza
26 Orellana la Sierra
25 Orellana la Vieja
100 Paloma
106 Parra (La)
3 Peloche
85 Peñalsordo
116 Paraleda de Zauzejo
28 Puebla de Alcocer
36 Puebla de la Calzada
113 Puebla de la Reina
152 Puebla del Maestre
111 Puebla del Prior
5 Puebla de Obando
137 Puebla de Sancho Pérez
76 Quintana de la Serena
156 Reina
22 Rena
114 Retamal
110 Ribera del Fresno
82 Risco
7 Roca de la Sierra
92 Salvaleón
93 Salvatierra de los Barros
81 Sancti-Spíritus
43 San Pedro de Mérida
16 Santa Amalia
95 Santa Marta
126 Santos de Maimona
2 San Vicente de Alcántara
147 Segura de León
54 Siruela
67 Solana de los Barros
30 Talarrubias
35 Talavera la Real
90 Táliga
55 Tamurejo
63 Torre de Miguel Sesmero
39 Torremayor
70 Torremegía
155 Trasierra
42 Trujillanos
138 Usagre
31 Valdecaballeros
18 Valdetorres
129 Valencia de las Torres
119 Valencia del Mombuey
133 Valencia del Ventoso
134 Valverde de Burguillos
60 Valverde de Leganés
160 Valverde de Llerena
44 Valverde de Merida
73 Valle de la Serena
104 Valle de Matamoros
105 Valle de Santa Ana
109 Villafranca de los Barros
143 Villagarcía de la Torre
46 Villagonzalo
96 Villalba de los Barros
23 Villanueva de la Serena
101 Villanueva del Fresno
4 Villar del Rey
21 Villar de Rena
58 Villarta de los Montes
125 Zafra
121 Zahinos
74 Zalamea de la Serena
86 Zarza-Capilla
71 Zarza de Alange

ABBREVIATIONS

ADH	Archivo Diego Hidalgo
ActDPB	Actas de la Diputación Provincial de Badajoz
ActAB	Actas del Ayuntamiento de Badajoz
ADMHB	Archivo de la Delegación del Ministerio de Hacienda de Badajoz
ADPB	Archivo de la Diputación Provincial de Badajoz
AGCS: PSM	Archivo de la Guerra Civil. Salamanca: Político-Social Serie 'M' Madrid
AGCS: PSU	Archivo de la Guerra Civil. Salamanca: Político-Social Serie 'U' Extremadura
AHN: MGA	Archivo Histórico Nacional: Ministerio de Gobernación Serie 'A'
AIRYDA	Archivo del Instituto de Reforma y Desarrollo Agraria
APA	Acción Popular Agraria de Badajoz
BIRA	Boletín del Instituto de Reforma Agraria
BOPB	Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Badajoz
CEDA	Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas
CNCA	Confederación Nacional Católica Agraria
CNT	Confederación Nacional de Trabajo
DLR	Derecha Liberal Republicana
DSCC	Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes
DSC	Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes
FNTT	Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra
FPI	Fundación Pablo Iglesias
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
PRR	Partido Republicano Radical
PRRS	Partido Republicano Radical-Socialista
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español

UGT	Unión General de Trabajadores
UM	Unión Monarquica
UP	Unión Patriótica

I. The Landed Elite, Great Estates, and Agro-Towns: the Making of Agrarian Autocracy, 1875-1930

Proof that the Civil War had important roots in the agrarian conflicts of southern Spain came with the westward advance of Nationalist forces from Seville following the rising of 18 July 1936. Although militarily a brief opening phase to the agonising struggle that followed, the campaign ruthlessly eliminated southern rural society as an area of support for the democratic Republic established in 1931. Caught in the path of the advance, the province of Badajoz provided the first evidence for the outside world of the brutality of the war when a fierce repression by the victorious forces, that included massacres in town cemeteries and bullrings, came to light. Though initially justified as a wartime nec essity, the involvement of civilians in systematic and continuing violence to eliminate social and political enemies suggested that far more than military pacification was at stake.[1] Rather, the war interrupted a complex and bitter local power stuggle, repeated in not dissimilar form elsewhere in agricultural Spain, that had reached crisis proportions during the years of the Republic. At the heart of this conflict stood a provincial agrarian elite, part of the interlocking oligarchy that largely controlled Spain into the

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[1] See Justo Vila Izquierdo, Extremadura: la Guerra Civil (Badajoz, 1983) for a modern study of the war. Paul Preston, 'The Agrarian War in the South' in Preston (ed.), Revolution and War in Spain, 1931-39 (London, 1984) pp. 159-81; Manuel Tuñón de Lara, Tres claves de la segunda República (Madrid, 1985) pp. 21-212 give recent surveys of the rural contribution to the origins of the war.

modern era, that sought to defend its position as a rural ruling class.

Badajoz is the largest province in Spain, forming the lower half of the distinctive region of Extremadura to the far south-west of Madrid. It is closer in its natural and human geography to Andalucía and eastern Portugal which flank it than to Castile, lying to the north. Physically, Badajoz begins at the outer edge of Spain's high central tableland (Meseta) from which small streams emerge to coalesce into a major river, the Guadiana, which flows down across the centre of the province and on into Portugal. Vast plains stretch either side of the river, extending to the upper Extremaduran province of Caceres to the north and to the mountain barrier of the Sierra Morena to the south. In its climate, Badajoz is part of a 'dry' southern Spain characterised by low overall precipitation and hot and dry summers.[2] The province takes its name from the capital, the seat of a Bishop and a garrison town, from which the major offices of government and the law operate. Badajoz is further subdivided into fifteen partidos judiciales (districts), named for the major town which acts as the cabeza del partido (district seat). Grouped within each district are collections of towns and villages (pueblos), with their own councils (ayuntamientos), which in turn administer the wider municipal area (término municipal).[3] In 1930, 163

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[2] Ruth Way, A Geography of Spain and Portugal (London, 1962) pp. 11-2; M. I. Newbegin, Southern Europe (New York, 1932), p. 311; F. Hernández Pacheco, 'Bosquejo preliminar de las comarcas geográficos de Extremadura' Boletín del Instituto de Reforma Agraria (henceforth BIRA) 1933. No.16.; Naval Intelligence Division, Spain and Portugal vol. 1 (London, 1941) p. 253.

[3] Great confusion is caused by multiple identity, most particularly in the case of Badajoz which can be the name

separate pueblos had a recognised existence, supporting a total resident population of 702,418 persons of all ages according to the census of that year. Perhaps even more than Andalucía, Extremadura was stigmatised as a region with a seemingly unbroken existence as the preserve of 'feudal' landlords living off the backs of an impoverished populace that scratched a primitive livelihood from the soil. In reality, the agrarian elite and the rural society it presided over during the Republic were products of processes of economic and social change affecting the control and use of land that had their origins in the nineteenth century.

Landownership in Badajoz was strongly influenced by a series of liberalisation measures introduced by successive governments. Beginning in 1798 and culminating in 1868, these dismantled the constraints on rural property ownership that had existed under the seigneurial regime, encouraged land speculation by allowing a fully free market and promoted the auction of church and municipal holdings following disamortization.[4] Within Badajoz ecclesiastical lands representing some 8-12 percent of total provincial land holdings were made available for purchase. In addition an even larger, but incalculable, proportion of common lands (montes

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applied equally to province, provincial capital, district and municipal area.

[4] For an overview of the liberal bourgeois revolution and the land see Angel García Sanz, 'Crisis de la agricultura tradicional y revolución liberal, 1800-50' in García Sanz y Ramón Garrabou (eds.) Historia agraria de la España contemporánea vol. I (Barcelona, 1985) pp. 7-99; A. M. Bernal, La lucha por la tierra en la crisis del antiguo régimen (Madrid, 1979). Francisco Simón Segura, 'La desamortización española del siglo XIX', Papeles de Economía Española 20, (1984). pp. 74-107; Ministerio de Agricultura/Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, Desamortización y Hacienda Pública 2 vols. (Madrid, 1986) give detailed studies of the disamortizations.

públicos) and public pastures (dehesas boyales and baldios) were also sold into private hands, frequently in dubious legal circumstances. These sales largely destroyed traditional agrarian institutions and commons rights that had been a barrier to the working of market mechanisms. The resulting commerce exacerbated an existing inequality in the distribution of land while shifting the concentration of ownership into new hands.[5]

Although this was very much a liberal revolution that allowed full capitalist development in the countryside, there was no concerted resistance by the landed aristocracy of the old order, whose incomes were under pressure from the loss of feudal dues and who might have felt their interests threatened.[6] Those among the nobility that had resources available supported the end of feudal rights and took the opportunity offered by the open land market and disamortizations to add to their existing holdings. During the sale of church lands the agents of the Conde de Puebla del Maestre, Duquesa de Fernán Nuñez, Marqués de Encomienda, Conde

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[5] On the process in Badajoz see J. P. Merino Navarro, La desamortización en Extremadura (Madrid, 1976) especially pp. 62-79 for figures; Teodoro Martín Martín, Notas sobre la desamortización en Extremadura (Badajoz, 1975); Isidoro Francisco Bohoyo, Situación socio-económica y condiciones de vida en la provincia de Badajoz, 1880-1902 (Badajoz, 1984) pp. 11-22; J. G. Carapeto, 'El siglo XIX en Extremadura: los grandes cambios' Revista Alminar 12, 1980; J. Naredo, 'Antecedentes y características de una sociedad jerárquica' in Manuel Gaviría (ed.) Extremadura Saqueada (Paris, 1978) pp. 13-7; Alberto Merino de Torres, El obrero del campo 2nd. ed. (Badajoz, 1920) pp. 49-51. Useful accounts of the previous pattern are Fermín Rey Velasco, Historia económica y social de Extremadura a finales del antiguo régimen (Badajoz, 1983); Richard Herr, The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain (Princeton NJ, 1958) pp. 90-119.

[6] Josep Fontana, 'La crisis agraria de comienzos del siglo: sus repercusiones en España' Hacienda Pública Española 55, 1978. pp. 177-90 charts the problem of feudal dues.

de Santa Coloma y Cifuentes, Condesa de Montijo and Marqués de Fuentes were active buyers. Nevertheless, the overwhelming beneficiaries of land transfers in the nineteenth century were persons of non-noble origins who were attracted into ownership by the prestige and rising material value attached to rural property, acting in an unwritten agreement with the most dynamic element in the nobility. The backgrounds of the new landowners are obscure, but most already had substantial business interests in the province as tenant farmers or merchants involved in the cork and mining industries.[7] More exact information about the narrow stratum of large landowners that emerged is available for the twentieth century from the Cadastral survey begun in 1906 and completed in 1930. Just 1.74 percent of all those who owned some rural property, some 1,576 persons, possessed 61.94 percent of total available land.[8] According to a further survey undertaken in 1933 a group of 400 persons, many connected by blood or marriage ties, owned 26.6 percent of the total area of the province. Within the ranks of major landowners, nobles continued to account for a sixth to an eighth of the total, retaining many of the largest individual ownerships in the province. The survival of noble influence over rural property was even more marked among the 100 largest owners in the province, 28 of

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[7] Merino Navarro, La desamortización pp. 73-7 gives available details.

[8] Pascual Carrión, Los latifundios en España (Madrid, 1932) table pp. 70-1 gives the results. The survey defined large landowner as anyone possessing more than a total of 250 hectares of land. The Catastro was not complete in all aspects for the province as a whole. By 31 December 1931 82.91 percent of the total area had been completely surveyed, while the districts of Herrera del Duque and Puebla de Alcocer lacked some results.

whom held aristocratic titles.[9] Even so, one telling measure of the degree to which market values had uniformly triumphed on the land by the final quarter of the nineteenth century was that distinctions of birth - whatever the social advantages of a title - made no discernible difference to the manner in which large landowners approached the practical management of their property.

Despite these enormous upheavals, the appearance of continuity in the countryside was preserved because changes in landownership and increased concentration occurred without any corresponding fundamental alteration in the actual structure of landholding. Great estates (latifundios) - defined as consolidated holdings of over 250 hectares - were the most important possessions of the large owners (latifundistas). These had been the dominating feature of inequality in the distribution of land and of the landscape itself since the conquest of the province from the Arabs in 1230 by the military orders and soldiers of fortune who were given grants of estates and slaves (encomiendas) by the Castilian crown.[10] Of the 1,368 estates counted in the cadastral survey, the majority were of up to 1,000 hectares in extent, but some were

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[9] Data compiled from Instituto de Reforma Agraria, 'Registro de la Propiedad Expropriable del Instituto de Reforma Agraria, 1933 Provincia de Badajoz'. Archivo del Instituto de Reforma y Desarrollo Agrario (henceforth AIRYDA). Edward Malefakis, Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain (New Haven, 1971) pp. 75-6 gives the results of investigations from the same source into the top 400.

[10] On the concept of the latifundio see Miguel Artola et al., El latifundio (Madrid, 1979) pp. 11-18; Pascual Carrión, Los latifundios pp. 39-47; Gabriel Garcia-Badell, 'La distribución de la propiedad agrícola de España en las diferentes categorias de fincas' Revista de Estudios Agro-Sociales 30, 1960.; Salvador Martín Aranciba, 'Panorama actual de la propiedad de la tierra' in Gaviria, Extremadura Saqueada p. 189.

even larger with at least 5 enormous holdings of up to 5,000 hectares in area. Covering 34.06 percent of the total area of the province, these estates co-existed with 16,083 small to medium sized holdings (*minifundios*) of 10 to 250 hectares. With a considerable proportion of land in this category of holdings also in the hands of *latifundistas*, the possibilities for substantial peasant proprietorship in Badajoz were extremely limited. In particular, the larger holdings in the cadastral survey (1,876 of 100-250 hectares) seem to have been municipal lands that passed wholesale into the hands of large owners. They had also gained control of a portion of the remaining holdings (11,240 of 10-50 hectares and 2,967 of 50-100 hectares) by the 1930s through the mechanism of debt accumulation. While no substantial landed peasantry had ever actually existed in Badajoz, the loss of commons rights in the nineteenth century did increase the marginal status of smallholders (*minifundistas*) whose holdings were close to the 30 hectares of unirrigated land required, according to estimates, to support a household. Middlemen (*acaparadores*) who acted on behalf of large landowners in the myriad profitable practices of moneylending for agricultural improvement - provision of seeds, tools and fertilizers at exhorbitant interest rates of 50-60 percent between seasons - foreclosed on the vulnerable after poor harvests. Despite this pressure, 12,375 households were recorded in the cadastral survey as part of a small but significant stratum of smallholders (*minifundistas*) in the province. Even so, the pervasive persistence of usury limited the real autonomy of

even these smallholders and ensured that large landowners exercised considerable indirect control over their lives.[11]

Large landowners were unable to consolidate small to medium holdings into the estate system due to the inherited field pattern in Badajoz.[12] Centred on defensive medieval village sites, fields of similar size were clustered together to form rough rings that radiated out from the settlement boundary. On the outskirts stood dense collections of gardens and small strips of land divided by border stones (mojones). 25.68 percent of the total provincial area was in fact covered by 431,942 parcels of land under 10 hectares in extent, of which the overwhelming majority were smaller than 1 hectare according to the cadastral survey. It was holdings of this type that accounted for the 61,900 households reported as owners of up to 5 hectares, and the 8,387 more that owned 5 to 10 hectares. Fragmentation of these holdings was very marked, with families controlling a number of minute scraps of land scattered throughout the outskirts allowing only a few vegetables, chickens or a pig to be produced for individual

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[11] For details of the structure of holdings in the cadastral survey see Carrión, ibid. table pp. 50-51. José Luis Martín Galindo, La dehesa extremeña como tipo de explotación agraria (Valladolid, 1965) p. 3. estimates land requirements for family farmers. On the nature and function of usury see the description in Merino Torres, El obrero del campo pp. 25-30.

[12] This description of field systems draws on the land registers and detailed engineers' plans of the period prepared for taxation purposes for individual términos municipales. I have selected twelve representative sites from around the province, see 'Registros de Propiedad' of, La Albuera 1930-43; Albuquerque 1928-43; Lobón 1932-55; Mérida 1929-55; Carrascalejo 1930-55; Almendralejo 1919-41; Quintana de la Serena 1932-45; Orellana de la Sierra 1934-44; Hornachos 1923-42; Villafranco 1919-42; Fregenal 1924-44; Montemolin 1930-44, Archivo de la Delegación del Ministerio de Hacienda de Badajoz (henceforth ADMHB), libs. 6522, 6523-3, 6582-3, 6590-4, 6552-3, 6529, 6622, 6613, 6581, 6658, 6566, 6598. See also, Martín Galindo, La dehesa pp. 2-3.

household use. In the event, absolute landlessness only applied to 22,675 households classed as 'peasants' in the survey, out of a total of 105,337.[13] Beyond this patchwork lay successive rings of smallholdings and the larger fields of ex-municipal lands split by ditches and hedges. Estates could only finally be found in the open countryside between villages, marked off by ornamental arches and gate posts announcing their names, which reflected local folklore and topography (La Nava, Moriana, Monte Lobo) and gave them individual personalities to match their size and importance. The very largest estates contained within their boundaries numbers of individual villages and their immediate rings of fields. Wide regional variations in the proportions of land taken up by estates also existed, and in some partidos conditions of history and geography produced a notably

[13] Carrión, Los latifundios table pp. 50-1 gives exact figures for these small parcels of 213,944 of less than 1 hectare (6.42 percent of total area), 102,902 of 1-5 hectares (13.15 percent), and 15,096 of 5-10 hectares (6.10 percent).

Summary of Holdings by Size in Hectares c.1930

Holdings	Number	Area Covered	% Total Area
SMALL PLOTS			
<1	213,944	113,478	6.42
1-5	102,902	232,516	13.15
5-10	15,096	107,900	6.10
Up to 10	331,942	453,894	25.68
MINIFUNIOS			
10-50	11,240	245,111	13.87
50-100	2,967	198,471	11.23
100-250	1,878	268,112	15.17
10 to 250	16,083	711,694	40.26
LATIFUNDIOS			
250-500	901	295,308	16.71
500-1000	289	205,099	11.60
1000-2500	43	84,702	4.79
2500-5000	5	16,872	0.95
More than 250	1,238	601,983	34.06
Totals	349,265	1,767,571	

Summary of Landownership by Size of Total Ownership in Hectares c.1930

	Size of Ownership	Number of Owners	% Land Area Owned
Elite	>250	1,576	61.94
'Peasant'	10-250	12,375	)
	5-10	8,387	) 38.06
	<5	61,900	)
	0	22,675	
		105,337	
Elite & 'Peasant'		106,913	

higher predominance of smaller fields.[14] But the very density of the field system and its onion-like structure made it highly unlikely that different holdings of varying size belonging to the same person would share the same borders. Because integration of fields was prevented, the appearance of the landscape of Badajoz in a apparently 'traditional' form was preserved into the twentieth century.

The management problems of large owners were of enormous significance for the landed regime in Badajoz. In particular, chronic absenteeism encouraged the existence of a stratum of non-landed intermediaries that formed an important component of the provincial agrarian elite. A rising rentable value for land in the nineteenth century encouraged the more aristocratic and most landed, 36.5 percent of all landowners

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[14] Latifundios by region:

	Fields of More than 250 Hectares			
Partidos	Area(A)	No.	Area	% (A)
Albuquerque	124,598	114	74,874	60.09
Almendralejo	144,328	85	42,301	29.31
Badajoz	159,398	162	110,503	69.32
Castuera	170,302	78	65,049	38.20
Don Benito	103,121	55	38,099	36.94
Fregenal de la Sierra	88,677	34	13,498	15.22
Fuente de Cantos	140,512	92	34,986	24.90
Herrera del Duque	190,076	79	94,069	49.49
Jerez de Caballeros	127,952	108	42,145	32.94
Llerena	215,764	126	73,795	34.20
Mérida	199,425	146	93,850	47.06
Olivenza	138,968	148	75,149	54.08
Puebla de Alcocer	144,969	78	77,255	50.29
Villanueva de la Serena	70,837	33	14,633	20.66
Zafra	71,746	30	11,396	15.88

A 'rough and ready' survey of 91 municipalities across the province, produced by the distribution of a questionaire in 1927 to local authorities, echoed the results of the cadastral survey and suggested that variations in historical patterns of landholding, church patronage, demography, fertility of soils and topography accounted for regional differences, see Eduardo Cerro, 'Algunos datos sobre la vida en la provincia' Revista del Centro de Estudios Extremeños 149. 1927. p. 2.

in 1930, to live on rentier incomes in Seville, Madrid, or even abroad. These owners, who included families such as the Duques de Alba and Medinacelli that possessed land across the whole of Spain, virtually never visited their holdings and consequently had little connection with provincial affairs.[15] Instead, they passed on the costs and risks of production to substantial tenant farmers, known as labradores, who rented entire estates on secure long leases and thereafter exercised practical control over the land. Although the number of such persons is impossible to calculate, the 142,000 hectares of productive land reported as permanently leased by the cadastral survey indicates that they were a considerable force, increased even further in importance by the common practice of rack-renting estates.[16] Even the majority of landowners who were truly provincial, in that they actually lived in Badajoz, were not always resident on their lands. The most important lived in the cabezas del partido or the capital, by choice or because of the geographical dispersion of their holdings.[17] This gave rise to a further addition to

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[15] Figures from Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 86. Only 22.6 percent of all bourgeois owners were absentee.

[16] Malefakis, ibid. p. 86 gives figure. See also the discussion of the nature of the labrador in J. Martinez Alier, 'Labradores, empresarios o señoritos?' in Ramón Garrabou et al. (eds.), Historia agraria de la España contemporánea III, (Barcelona, 1986) pp. 534-66.

[17] Examples of such owners drawn from the 'Registro de propiedad Expropriable del Instituto de Reforma Agraria, Provincia de Badajoz 1933' AIRYDA op. cit., the leading figures in their own districts, were the families Montero de Espinosa, Grajera and Albarrán of Badajoz; Jaraquemada, Cabeza de Vaca and Sánchez Arjona of Almendralejo and Fregenal; De la Cueva Godoy, Gironza de la Cueva, Donoso, Barquero Hidalgo Barquero of Castuera; Solo de Zaldivar in Don Benito and Puebla de Alcocer; Zambrano Maeso, de la Gala and de Llera in Llerena; García de Gregorio, Peche and Valle in Jerez de los Caballeros; Pacheco, Lerdo de Tejada, and López de Ayala in Mérida; Ovando in Zafra.

intermediaries, in the form of estate managers (gerentes) appointed to run holdings in the absence of their true owners. The addition of labradores and managers with significant amounts of land in their charge expanded the ranks of agrarians beyond the otherwise very narrow numbers of actual landowners. As Richard Herr has pointed out, the ultimate reason for the inclusion of intermediaries within the agrarian elite was that it was practical control, not simply ownership, of the majority of land in the rural economy that gave enormous oportunities to exercise power, due to the overwhelming dependence of the provincial populace on the soil to make a living.[16]

Demands on the land and its products from a rising population, both within and without Badajoz, grew steadily through to the 1930s. Exterior population growth, particularly in the larger cities, stimulated the creation of a national food market. Tariff protection for cereals guaranteed the home market to domestic producers from the 1820s onwards. Agrarians in Extremadura, along with the other southern regions, were increasingly able to respond to these developments.[17] However, agrarian entrepreneurs were handicapped in Badajoz by the late arrival of railway communications until after 1870, and the

[16] Richard Herr, 'Spain' in David Spring (ed.), European Landed Elites of the Nineteenth Century (Johns Hopkins, 1977) pp. 98-105. From this point onwards the use of the term agrarian elite or agrarians includes landowners, labradores and managers.
[17] Surveys of developments in national agricultural demand are, Gabriel Tortella, 'Agriculture: a slow moving sector, 1830-1935' in N. Sanchez Albornoz (ed.), The Economic Modernisation of Spain, 1830-1930 (New York, 1987) pp. 42-62; Ramón Garrabou y Jesús Sanz, 'La agricultura española durante el siglo XIX: inmovilismo o cambio? in Historia agraria II, pp. 7-191; L. Prados de la Oscura, De imperio a nación: crecimiento y atraso económico en España (1780-1930) (Madrid, 1988) pp. 95-138.

slow extension of the banking system to the countryside.[20] Nor was the provincial market for consumption and labour left aside by the tide of population change. Growth in the second half of the nineteenth century seems to have been steady with a falling infant mortality rate; in the first three decades of the twentieth century the population increased rapidly by 35 percent from 520,246 persons to 702,418. The initial result was an impetus to food demand from the provincial population itself. But even more significantly, there was an enormous relative increase in pressure on the land to provide livelihoods for the 70 percent of the population that, according to the first accurate census of occupations, depended on agriculure in 1930.[21] By the late nineteenth century, the provincial agrarian elite presided over a thoroughly commercial latifundist economy, adapted to the wide variety of natural conditions and different opportunities for development found in Badajoz, and built around a rigid division between agrarians and the rural lower orders.

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[20] Between 1870 and 1900, main railway lines were built from Madrid and Ciudad Real to the provincial capital, and from Sevilla to Mérida, and in the early twentieth century branch lines were added to link the main towns. The number of provincial banks branches rose from 1 in 1919, to 20 in 1926 and 38 in 1934. See, Juan Muñoz, 'La inserción de Extremadura en el mercado y su papel de zona dependiente de los intereses dominantes en el sistema capitalista' in Gaviría, Extremadura Saqueada pp. 29-33; J. G. Carapeto, 'El siglo XIX en Extremadura: los grandes cambios' Revista Alminar 1980.

[21] Figures from Censo de la población de España 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930; Censo de la población de España: región de Badajoz 1930.

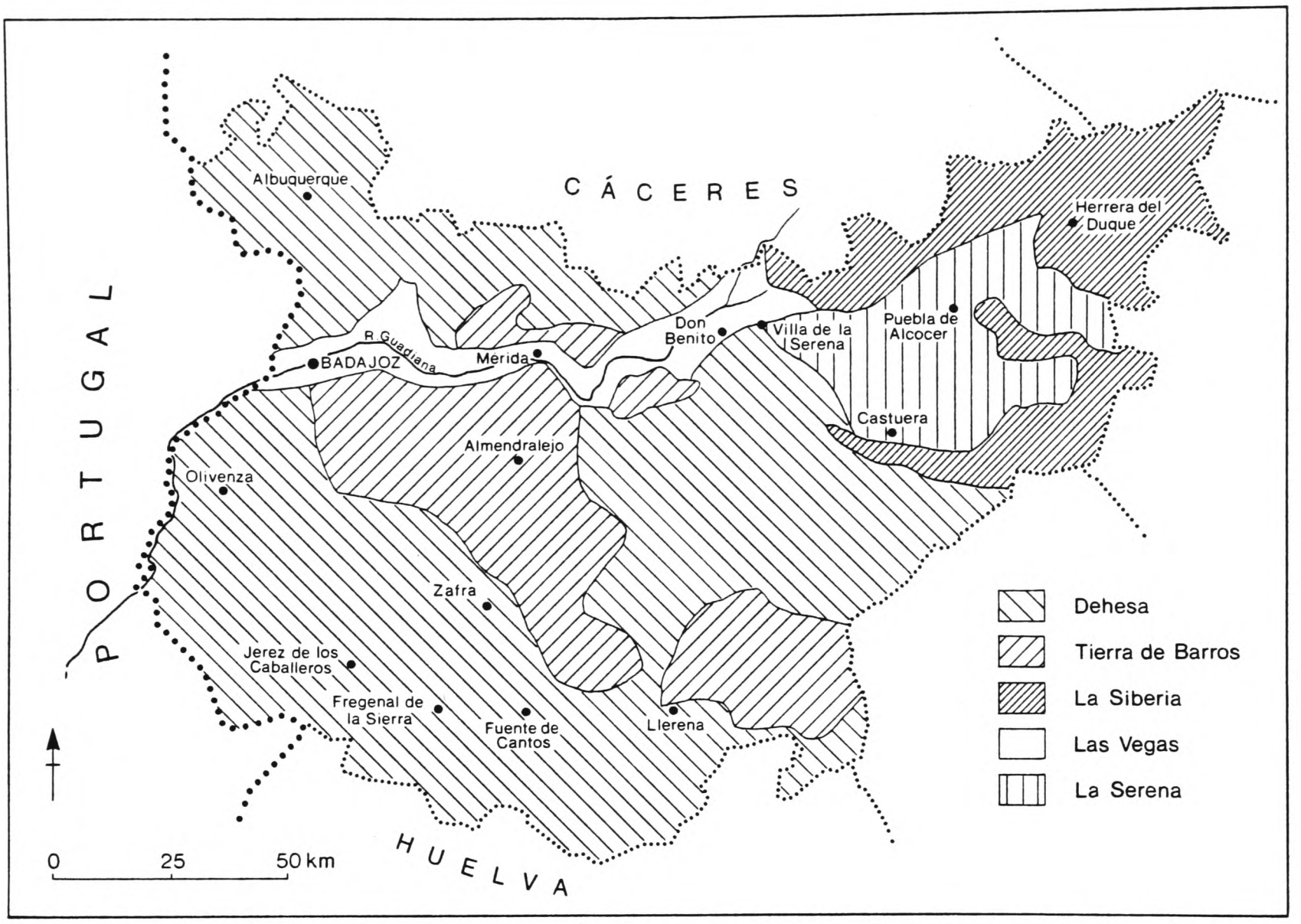
Year	Total (de hecho)	Scale (1900=100)
1900	520,246	100
1910	593,206	114
1920	644,625	124
1930	702,418	135

In the provincial periphery estates were large tracts of open land on predominantly medium soils, mostly covered by a parkland dehesa of pasture and acorn-bearing holm oaks. This gave way to less regular tree coverage and scrub pasture, as soils became poorer towards the eastern highlands of the aptly named La Siberia and La Serena regions. Although frequently mistaken for barren wastes by outside observers, these landscapes were actually carefully maintained and balanced ecosystems supporting a staple product of sedentary herds of pigs, sheep and goats that covered 51.41 percent of the province and directly employed some 15,000 shepherds and foresters in the 1930s.[22] Though considered the most 'traditional' part of the rural economy in the twentieth century, modern pastoralism had first emerged following the final destruction of the famous Mesta in 1839. This classic seigneurial organisation was a corporation of nobles, powerfully supported by the Crown, that regulated a transhumant system of sheep rearing involving the movement of flocks of merinos along trails (cañadas) from Castile to pasture in Extremadura. The openness of the land was preserved by preventing enclosure and ploughing, and

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[22] Figures from Carrión, Los latifundios table pp. 328-9 on land use; Censo de la población: región de Badajoz 1930 on occupations. Studies of the dehesa regions and their animal economy are, Mario Gaviría (ed.), El modelo extremeño: ecodesarrollo en La Siberia y La Serena (Madrid, 1980); Antonio Perez Diaz, Cambios y problemática en la dehesa (el suroeste de Badajoz) (Cáceres, 1988) pp. 19-24, 56-86; Naval Intelligence Division, Spain and Portugal III, p. 246; Martín Galindo, La dehesa p. 2.

Province of Badajoz: Natural Regions



by strictly regulating cultivation. Protests from agriculturalists and sedentary pastoralists in Badajoz against these limitations eventually became part of a general liberal reform movement that swept the Mesta away.[23] Although tranhumance did continue, the majority of animals belonged to local owners and were raised to fulfil the demands of a growing national food market in Spain.[24] Aided by the extension of the railway to the province, commercial animal production revolved around a series of livestock fairs (rodeos), held in a yearly cycle around the major towns of the dehesa regions, attracting buyers from Córdoba, Seville and Madrid.[25] The chief product was the pig, fattened between October and January on acorns knocked to the ground from the holm oak forests by the staves of their shepherds, and raised to meet the growing demands of a Spanish population eager for cured hams (jamón serrano) and pork.[26] Meanwhile, mixed herds

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[23] J. Klein, The Mesta (Cambridge, 1920) is the authoritative study of the Mesta. Angel García Sanz, 'La agonía de la Mesta' in García Sanz y Ramón Garrabou (eds.), Historia agraria I, pp. 103-29 on its fall.

[24] Studies of nineteenth century animal production are limited. However a later survey was sure that numbers of head had increased in Badajoz in the decades before 1917, reaching 1,783,744 of all types in that year. See Ministerio de Fomento, Estudio de la ganaderia en España de 1917 I, (Madrid, 1920).

[25] On the connection of the province into national markets, see Bohoyo Velasquez, Situación socio-económica p. 35; Juan Muñoz, 'La inserción de Extremadura en el mercado y su papel de zona dependiente de los intereses dominantes en el sistema capitalista' in Gaviría (ed.), Extremadura Saqueada pp. 23-33.

[26] An English traveller passing through the province in the 1840s was particularly struck by the growing predominance of the pig, remarking that, 'Second only to the sheep are the swine of Extremadura, and here again nature lends her aid, as vast districts of this unreclaimed province are covered with woods of oak, beech and chestnut...Extremenian man in fact is quite a secondary formation, and was created to tend herds of these swine, who lead the once happy life of the Toledan cathedral dignitaries, with the additional advantage of becoming more valuable when dead.' Richard Ford, A Handbook for Travellers in Spain (London, 1845) p.519.

of sheep and goats, for internal provincial consumption as well as for export, grazed the scrub pastures around the trees through the rest of the year.

Only one non-animal product was naturally well suited to this regime, the cork oaks grown around Albuquerque used in the tanning and wine industries.[27] Otherwise, the reliance on a delicate parkland ecology for animal production restricted the opportunities for cultivation. For Eduardo Cerro, it was clear that the bad distribution of land in the province could have been counter-balanced by a good system of renting on secure tenancies. However, Arroyo de San Servan was unique in his survey in having written leases of 4 to 20 years and a money rent as a matter of course.[28] Even leaving aside the inherent difficulties posed by the soils of the region, local agrarians had a vested interest in making sure that the needs of their valuable animals came first. Consequently, they chose to integrate agriculture within the pastoral regime through carefully controlled indirect exploitation that passed on the risks of production to family producers engaged in share-cropping agreements of two broad types. These were found elsewhere in the province but predominated on the dehesa.[29] Aparcería, covering some 12,000 families in the 1930s, involved smallholdings - of which a larger than average number in the dehesa passed into the hands of the elite - and portions of estates split into 30-50 hectare parcels. Though

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[27] See James J. Parsons, 'The Cork Oak Forests and the Evolution of the Cork Industry in Southern Spain and Portugal' Economic Geography 1962, pp. 195-214.
[28] Eduardo Cerro, 'Algunos datos' p. 153.
[29] Martín Galindo, La dehesa p. 13-4 even argues that the incidence of share-cropping was increasing during the nineteenth century as agrarians sought greater profitability from their lands.

details of agreements varied considerably from locality to locality and landlord to landlord, the portion of the produce forfeit was usually a fifth of the actual harvest on poor land and a third on good (terrazgo), or a fixed amount decided in advance (cantidad fija) ;the latter was disastrous for the tenant in the event of harvest failure. Orally negotiated, leases lasted for between 1 and 6 years and were normally renewable. All tenants were also subject to a variety of further onerous burdens, ranging from having to carry out land improvements or switching production to directed crops at their own cost, to the requirement of performing labour service on the estates.[30] In comparison, the 20,000 families engaged as yunteros (a peculiarity of Extremadura) had even less autonomy and security of tenure, being assigned small amounts of land on a rotating basis for only one year under rent arrangements and burdens of land improvement and labour service that were the same as those affecting aparceros. Moreover, the yunteros relied for a portion of their yearly income on work found throughout the province as ploughmen, using a pair of draft animals (yunta) that comprised their only capital.[31]

For all sharecroppers semi-independent family production took place amidst severe constraints. Families favoured a mixed agriculture of cereals, olives, and root vegetables in

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[30] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 117-8; J. Martínez Alier, Labourers and Landowners in Southern Spain (London, 1971) p. 269; 'Share Tenancy in Spain' International Review of Agricultural Economics 1, 1923. pp. 19-36; Eduardo Cerro, 'Algunos datos' pp. 153-5; J. Polo Benito, El problema social del campo en Extremadura (Salamanca, 1919) pp. 60-2; Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 19-23.

[31] See Malefakis, ibid. pp. 77-9; Merino de Torres, ibid. pp. 17-8.

order to minimise the problems of harvest failure, with wheat and barley as the main cash crops. Patterns of cultivation were determined by the dry farming (secano) regime, the use of animal fertilizer, and the availability of family labour. On medium soils most used a pasto y labor rotation system that involved a year of bare fallow, followed by a year of cereals, and ended with two years of natural pasture. In the case of La Siberia and La Serena the regime was more often straight subsistence, with the possibilites of cereal crops reduced to one year in every six or seven.[32] Even after tenants had paid their rent, the remainder of the harvest often ended up in the hands of landlords who controlled the local cereal markets.[33] Like the smallholder, economic insecurity made the sharecropper equally prey to the activities of the acapadores. The endless cycle of indebtedness and poverty that resulted tied the aparcero and yuntero tightly to landlords, for whom the animal not the agriculturalist came first.

In contrast to this pastoral/agricultural mix, the highly fertile central regions of the province formed by the Las Vegas (Meadows) and Tierra de Barros (Land of Clays) had been transformed into a zone of intensive agriculture by the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Here, estates, mainly dedicated to the production of cereals, plus some wine and olives in the Barros, formed compact farms (cortijos) with central buildings for storage, processing and habitation. Cerealisation in the provincial heartland was delayed in relation to Andalucía, not only by poor communications but

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[32] Naval Intelligence Division, Spain and Portugal III p. 184.
[33] Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 31-2 describes these problems.

also by tensions with pastoral interests that continued after the destruction of the Mesta.[34] Though the suitability of the soils to wheat and barley had long been proven, agriculturalist agrarians, eager to take advantage of the growing protected market, were still constrained by legal restrictions on land use that allowed animals to pasture on the lush fallow meadows produced under extensive pasto y labor rotations. Eventually, the decades of conflict between agriculturalists and pastoralists over grazing rights were solved by the courts mainly in favour of the former, in a victory for the expansion of food supply and the application of liberal economic principle. While the sheep herds did not entirely disappear, particularly when they belonged to agrarians who also had agricultural interests, they were decisively displaced from the region.[35] Entrepreneurial agrarians were now able to exploit land using an intensive al tercio system of rotations - a year of prepared fallow (barbecho), a year of crops (cosecha), and a year of pasture (pasto) that maximised cereal production in dry farming regions. After Spain had weathered the depression in

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[34] The 1930 cadastral survey showed proportions of land under different crops as: cereals on 23.19 percent; 4.55 percent of olives; 1.67 percent under vines; 12.1 percent under fallow. Surveys of agricultural development in these regions are given in Santiago Zapata, 'Notas sobre la producción agraria extremeña, 1900-1931' Revista de Estudios Extremeños 42, 1986. pp. 313-23. Naval Intelligence Division, Spain and Portugal III, pp. 184-6; Willian E. Bull, 'The Olive Industry in Spain' Economic Geography 1936 pp. 136-55. Gabriel Tortella, 'Agriculture: a slow moving sector' pp. 47-54 gives an overview of cerealisation throughout Spain.

[35] Pascual Madoz, Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de España III (Madrid, 1846) pp. 233-4 records a history of cereal farming in the area using hired labour, and of tensions over grazing. See also the comments of Raymond Carr, Spain 1808-1975 (Oxford, 1975) pp. 402-3; Naval Intelligence Division, ibid. p. 186 on later conflicts.

agricultural prices of the 1870s to 1890s behind increased tariff barriers, the twentieth century saw a constant, albeit uneven, increase in exportable surplus production of wheat and barley as well as wine, olives and chickpeas in Badajoz. By the 1930s the province was the third largest cereal producer in the country.[36]

Yields per hectare and crop quality remained, however, amongst the poorest in Spain, indicating that agrarians and many likeminded smallholders in the central zone achieved this adaptation to the market merely by extending the area under cultivation without significant investment in technical improvements.[37] Methods of production on the cortijos remained fairly primitive in nature. Animal manure, available within the province, remained the most commonly used form of fertilizer, even after artificial phosphates became available in Spain at the end of the nineteenth century. The majority of ploughs in use continued to be of the simple roman type rather than the more sophisticated mould-board variety. Moreover, with draft animals supplied by the yunteros as the major source of traction power, the depth of soil actually turned was only some 15-16 centimetres. Deep ploughing which could have improved yields and allowed multi-cropping in suitable areas was virtually unknown in the relative absence of the necessary mechanical power and ploughing equipment. Other kinds of machinery - harvesters, threshers, bailers, and seed

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[36] See the study of Santiago Zapata, 'Notas sobre la producción agraria extremeña, 1900-1931'. Consejo Provincial de Fomento de Badajoz, Estadística social agraria (Badajoz, 1921); Anuario Estadístico de las Producciones Agrícolas 1931-33 give additional information.

[37] Anuario Estadístico de las Producciones Agricolas 1933 gives comparative figures by province.

drills - which could be pulled by animals or run by steam were only slowly and patchily adopted in the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, no widespread efforts were made by individual agrarians to increase the fertility of the soil through irrigation.[38] Clearly lack of capital to make expensive, long term investment - an especially acute problem for _labradores_ and smaller producers - was one reason for this lack of technical progress. But lack of incentive to engage in such expense was another. In fact the commercialisation of agriculture was achieved through the instrumentalisation of a rural proletariat under a repressive system of labour relations.

A fundamental precondition for the successful operation of modern cereal latifundism in Badajoz was the availability of a large and dependent pool of labour. Implicit in the adaptation of estates to monoculture was the reduction of employment opportunities in the local rural economy and the creation of a true rural proletariat. A rising population and the impossibility of large scale emigration, either to industry within Spain or abroad, added to a steadily growing number of households that became almost entirely reliant for their livelihoods on work as day laboureres (_jornaleros_). This phenomenon was charted by a commission of social enquiry in 1884, which reported the growing predominance of labouring

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[38] Reliable figures are a problem, especially for the nineteenth century, but the available surveys are clear in their conclusions, both quantative and qualitative. See Eduardo Cerro, 'Algunos datos' p. 149 on ploughing; _Anuario Estadístico de las Producciones Agrícolas_ 1933; Juan Hernández Andreu, _España y la crisis de 29_ (Madrid, 1986) table 18-II, p. 220 on fertilizers; Unión Patriótica de Badajoz, _Barógrafo de un lustro: memoria demonstrativa del avance dado por la provincia de Badajoz desde el 13 de septiembre de 1923 a igual fecha del 1929_ (Madrid, 1929) p. 120 survey of machinery.

families in the Vegas and Barros. By 1905 another report suggested that day labourers formed the single largest section of the rural community. A further study of 1921 gave numbers of jornaleros as 61,461 men and 9,176 women, while another of 1933 suggested an overall total of 88,032.[39] Life as a rural labourer was made highly precarious by a strictly seasonal cycle of demand for labour on estates. The year was organised around a calender of agricultural tasks (faenas) that needed large ammounts of manual labour:

January	Olive Harvest
February/March	Preparation of Fallows
May/June	Cereal Harvest
August	Ploughing and Sowing
September	Grape harvest

Only when winter vegetables were included in the rotation system was any other major agricultural work available. Consequently, estates only offered between 180 and 250 days of paid employment on average to labourers. At other times labour was dispensed with, leading to long periods of 'forced unemployment' (paro forzoso).[40] By relying on the resulting competition for scarce work, agrarians were able to dominate

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[39] See Informe de Comisión de Reformas Sociales (Madrid, 1884); Instituto de Reformas Sociales, Resumen de la información acerca de los obreros agrícolas en las provincias de Andalucía y Badajoz (Madrid, 1905); Consejo Provincial de Fomento de Badajoz, Estadística social agraria (Badajoz, 1921); report on provinces of Badajoz and Cáceres in, 'Actas del Comité Ejecutivo del Instituto de Reformas Agrarias, May 1933', Archivo de la Guerra Civil. Salamanca: Político-Social Serie 'M' Madrid (henceforth, AGCS: PSM) leg. 662.

[40] See J. G. Carapeto, 'El siglo XIX en Extremadura'; Bohoyo Velásquez, Situación socio-económica p. 67. Also a set of surveys, made in the 1940s but still relevant for the earlier period, which chart the seasonal nature of employment opportunities, Ministerio de Industria y Comercio, Mapa nacional de abastamientos: provincia de Badajoz (Badajoz, 1948, 1949, 1950).

the labour market and carefully control wages and conditions of work on the estates.

The social organisation and management of the commercial cereal estate, refined in the nineteenth century to create a 'factory in the fields', was patterned around the exploitation and supervision of labour. Agrarians employed a small core of 'fixed' workers (fijos), some 10-15 percent of the total available workforce, to carry out specialised tasks on the cortijo. They included stable hands, carters, machine operators, cooks, estate guards and skilled labourers. This last group carried out the work of weeding cereals, grafting and pruning olives and vines required year round by the crops. Permanent employment, higher wages, the exercise of skill, autonomy at work and a close relationship with the estate operator were the basic benefits, indeed privileges, enjoyed by a fijo. The position also entailed exercising power over ordinary day labourers as a foreman (manijero) during the periods of major agricultural tasks.[41] Fijos therefore became a vital part of the administration of the estate, in a structure of command frequently referred to by contemporaries through military metaphors in which agrarians formed the officer class, manijeros acted as NCOs, and the day labourers were the cannon fodder of latifundism. If anything such analogies, suggestive of military discipline, underplayed the brutalities of a system run through fear, violence and intimidation.

Gang work (enganche) was at the heart of the labour system on the estates. Hiring took place in town squares where

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[41] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 94.

labourers looking for work gathered at daybreak to await the arrival of foremen from local estates. Men predominated in the crowds, though women without bread winners could also be found on a regular basis. Otherwise, only at harvest time with its high demand for labour were women, and sometimes children, present in the square. Workers were contracted in gangs of 20 to 30 persons through verbal agreements (corrientes), in which the terms were simply stated and labourers took them or left them. Foremen played upon the desperation of workers to be picked, based upon the terror of unemployment, to keep wages down and often demanded bribes in choosing those to hire or discriminated against 'troublemakers'.[42] Once a gang was formed, tools were placed in the hands of the labourers and they were walked out to the fields in an unpaid journey (corte) that might last for an hour or more each way. At the height of the harvest season, with its frantic activity, workers would often sleep out in the fields. Work was back-breakingly hard and monotonous, requiring no application of skill or initiative. Constant bending to use mattock or sickle to clear ground, break clods, dig and harvest by hand, gave jornaleros a characteristic stoop. A working day was sun up to sun down (de sol a sol), up to fourteen hours in high temperatures during the summer. There were normally four cigarette breaks during the day, and short halts for food provided by the estate - usually coarse bread, olive oil and

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[42] Three general periods of hiring were recognised that broadly corresponded to different sets of tasks rewarded at different rates on the estates: semetana between 8 September and 8 December; barbecho to 15 May; recolección which completed the cycle; José Carlos Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia del movimiento obrero de Montijo (Montijo, 1982) pp. 12-3.

vegetable soup - at mid-morning and early afternoon. Water, drunk on the job, was carried out to the gangs by a lad (chaquero). Gangs traversed the fields together, working at a relentless pace under the direct supervision of the hated manijero. Usually armed with whip or club, if not a shotgun, and frequently mounted on horseback, the foremen extracted labour through harsh discipline. Verbal and physical abuse of supposed slackers was common, and a system of fines and punishments was used as a sanction against inferior work. Any labourer who complained faced victimisation by the foremen, with expulsion from the estate, a beating from the guards and the blacklist the ultimate weapons.[43] In this manner the estates systematically consumed labour, squeezing the greatest quantum of manual work out of the jornaleros, in a manner that reduced them to the status of mere things, factors of production, in the agricultural life of the province.

Though not built directly upon unfree labour, like plantation slavery, profitability under cereal latifundism relied directly on the impoverishment of the rural workforce. Agrarian control of the labour market, as monopoly suppliers of work, largely ensured that wages were kept low. However, payment of wages by piecework (destajo), where individual agrarians set the rates of pay and standards of work for different tasks, combined with the localized nature of labour markets, gave great geographical and seasonal variety to wage rates. For labourers, the scarcity of winter work was partially compensated for by a higher level of wages during

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[43] Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 41-50; Merino de Torres, El obrero passim; Molano Gragera, ibid. pp. 13-5 give details.

the harvest season, when agrarians were anxious to ensure that sufficient labour was available to secure the main crop. Indeed, at this time the province had a temporary labour shortage which threatened to push up wages as employers competed for scarce labour. Agrarians responded by importing thousands of seasonal labourers by cattle truck from Portugal, paying them a pittance to undermine local labour, and fostering a bitter hatred felt by rural workers in Badajoz for the incomers.[44] The level of cereal prices was not linked to wages; in good years labour surplus still kept wages low and in bad years agrarians simply dispensed with the labourers entirely. At these times the 'normal' unemployment of winter deepened into a 'labour crisis' that tipped labouring families from everyday wretchedness into sheer starvation. The extent to which cereal latifundism was organised by agrarians to pass the majority of costs and burdens of agriculture on to the masses of labourers concentrated in the provincial centre was then most starkly reveal ed.

While latifundism in all its variety supported the absolute domination of the elite on the land, there was very little in the wider economic and social balance of Badajoz that matched the power of agrarians. Though by 1930 the census showed 30 percent of the working population involved in non-agricultural occupations, it would be misleading to suppose that they represented an independent industrial and service

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[44] Statistics on rural wages are both scarce and unreliable. Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 100 and Bohoyo Velázquez, Situación socio-económica pp. 64-5 give average figures for the turn of the century of 1.5 to 1.75 pesetas per day at the turn of the century. A rather more detailed study for 1921, concentrating on harvest wage rates and showing the regional variations, is provided in Consejo Provincial de Fomento, Estadística social.

sector. Only lead and mercury mining, concentrated in the south of the province in myriad minute operations, offered this prospect. However, extraction was almost entirely controlled by the landowners, on whose property the deposits were found, for their own benefit and as an adjunct to their main agricultural interests. Rather, it was the activities of agriculture and pastoralism, and the needs of those employed by them, that supported the small scale manufacturing, retailing and construction which made up the overwhelming bulk of urban trades. In nineteenth century Badajoz autarky was largely the rule, with some cloth, foodstuffs and agricultural implements brought by mule and cart from Seville and Toledo. Wealthy agrarians alone could afford luxury goods - manufactured furniture, clothing and prepared foods - due to the high cost of transport. Everything else was made locally by small groups of artisan carpenters, blacksmiths, seamstresses and tailors. Only with increased rural economic development and the arrival of the railways did a wider range of goods and machinery became increasingly available. Badajoz and Mérida had the first closed shops in the 1870s, selling new consumer goods such as sugar, chocolate, pepper and ready-made clothing. In Montijo the first store, a cobblers, opened in 1904, to be followed by a few bars and restaurants. After the First World War, basic shops selling cheap manufactured goods to the rural population spread across the province. By the 1920s high class tailors and dressmakers were established in the main towns to serve the elite. Though many of these products came from outside the province, a greater scale of domestic manufacturing also developed in small workshops

employing a few workers, using simple machinery. By the 1930s bread, confectionery, domestic implements, farm machinery, doors and windows were all produced in this way. Construction trades, such as building and plumbing, as well as public services, like gas, electricity and transport, also evolved to supply services in proportion to the size of settlements.[45] Commerce produced not inconsiderable numbers of urban based small businessmen, industrial workers and artisans, but their activities remained peripheral and dependent on the real source of power in the province, the land.

Agrarian power also extended into the concentrated villages and towns (pueblos) which formed the residential and administrative centres of the province. In Badajoz, the countryside itself was largely empty, as the rural population was concentrated into the urban centres. Population pressure, particularly in the three decades up to 1930, had a dramatic effect on the pueblo environment. In 1900, 50 percent of all settlements had up to 2,000 inhabitants, and 65 percent up to 3,000. Only seven towns had more than 10,000 inhabitants, with the capital by far the largest with 30,899 inhabitants. By 1930, 50 percent of pueblos had up to 3,000 inhabitants, and 65 percent up to 4,000, and 17 towns had populations over 10,000 strong. Growth was particularly rapid in the larger towns, especially in the decade 1920-30, as internal migration in search of work took place from the more sparsely populated provincial periphery to the closely packed, teeming

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[45] See Censo de la población de España: región de Badajoz 1930 for figures on non-agricultural occupations. See also Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 14; Juan Simeón Vidarte, No queríamos al rey (Barcelona, 1977) pp. 19-20; Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 20-1.

settlements of the heartland.[46] Most pueblos were on well established sites, near water and on higher ground. At the centre was a main square surrounded by the oldest houses, the council hall (ayuntamiento) and the church. There were often the remains of fortifications or defensive walls; on a substantial scale in the cases of the capital, Mérida and Olivenza. Narrow streets radiated off from the square to the pueblo boundary, or in larger settlements into an interlocking pattern with other, newer squares. The social divisions of the fields were recreated in the layout of the dwellings, splitting the pueblo into distinct quarters (barrios). In the most favoured area, uphill of the main square, were the substantial stone houses of the landed elite, varying in size according to individual wealth and status, with interior plumbing and domestic servants. Downhill from the square, unpaved streets contained the houses and cottages of the

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[46] Calculations from Censo de la población de España 1900, 1930.

Categories	Pueblos		Cumulative %	
	(1900)	(1930)	(1900)	(1930)
0-500	12	5	7.36	3.07
500-1,000	32	19	26.99	14.73
1,000-2,000	38	33	50.30	34.97
2,000-3,000	24	27	65.02	51.53
3,000-4,000	16	22	74.83	65.03
4,000-5,000	14	17	83.42	75.46
5,000-10,000	20	23	95.69	89.57
10,000-15,000	5	10	98.76	95.70
15,000-20,000	1	5	99.37	98.77
20,000-25,000		1		99.38
25,000-30,000				
30,000-35,000	1		99.98	
35,000-40,000				
40,000-45,000		1		99.99

See also Instituto Geográfico, Cadastral y de Estadística, La demografia española en el decenio 1921-30 (Madrid, 1935).

majority.[47] A few smallholders, better-off tenants, businessmen and shopkeepers might actually own the buildings they occupied. The rest were at the mercy of agrarians, whose property interests extended into urban life through landlordship.

Landlords and their agents were quick to seize the possibilities that increasing housing demand created to add to their profits, largely at the expense of the rural and urban lower orders. In the 1880s a doctor, writing of Cabeza del Buey, pointed out the poor state of labourers' dwellings, with families often sharing one or two-roomed hovels made of mud and straw. The street was a family toilet and rubbish bin, while water was only available from a communal pump.[48] Little was done to alter this pattern until the 1930s, as landlords found they could easily fill even the worst accommodation available. Meanwhile rents rose rapidly from the turn of the century, ahead of the average growth in wages according to one close observer.[49] With no alternative available, poor families found themselves living in cellars and shacks erected around the outskirts of town. Makeshift encampments were constructed around the walls of Badajoz, while the Roman ruins of Mérida were colonised by ragged families. Landlords had little incentive to build new homes while demand ensured that they could fill ever smaller spaces, thus extending their control

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[47] See V. Jiménez Milara, Crónica de 17 pueblos (Sevilla, 1982); Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 31-2; Servicio Militar de España, Mapas militares 1940 for Badajoz, Mérida, Almendralejo, Don Benito, Castilblanco and Azuaga.
[48] Nicolas Pérez y Giménez, Estudio físico, médico y social de la comarca de la Serena en general y la de Cabeza del Buey en particular (Badajoz, 1888); Bohoyo Velázquez, Situación scio-económica pp. 24-6.
[49] Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 101-2.

over labourers even in the domestic sphere. In contrast to the ever-growing squalor of housing conditions for the masses, wealthy agrarians were important patrons for the building of new theatres in Badajoz, Mérida and Don Benito for their entertainment and prestige. Likewise, private clubs (casinos) were often lavishly furnished and equipped, by provincial standards, for the elite.[50] Contrasts of wealth and opportunity, power and dependency, could not have been more explicit in pueblo life.

The way was clear for the elite as the major providers of work, land, housing and credit to use their patronage to act as the arbiters of urban life and public affairs, creating local agrarian autocracies. Agrarians in general consolidated their position with the creation of the Restoration State in 1875, which ensured its own stability through effective delegation of authority to the rural elites and the provision of subsidy and protection for agriculture to support them. At the local level this allowed a complex hierarchy of bosses (caciques) - a word derived from Latin American Indian chiefs under Spanish colonial rule - to wield power through position and influence. In fact, municipal officers or provincial parliamentary deputies for the Conservative and Liberal Monarchist parties were often not agrarians, but drawn from circles of local notables that included professionals (lawyers, doctors, pharmacists), shopkeepers and public officials who acted on their behalf.[51] Caciquismo was

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[50] Merino de Torres, ibid. pp. 9-10; Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 30-35.

[51] On caciquismo, and the debate abouts its nature, in general see, Richard Herr, 'Spain' op. cit. pp. 111-9; A. M. Bernal, La lucha por la tierra en la crisis del antiguo regimen (Madrid, 1979) pp. 97-108; Joaquin Romero Maura, 'Caciquismo

transformed into a mechanism of political power, that connected petty village potentates with networks of regional bosses and then on upwards to a trade in influence that reached national government. It perpetuated itself by excluding everyone not connected to agrarian patronage from formal politics through control of town hall electoral registers and the voting procedure, in an open example of the corruption of the supposedly liberal political realities of the Restoration regime. Not that the system was entirely monolithic; instead it subsumed within itself a subtle web of competition. Strong rivalries between individual agrarians and their supporters often existed, that became battles for political control. In the district of Llerena, for example, the Maeso and Gallardo families, controlling numerous lesser caciques in surrounding villages, undertook a dynastic feud that lasted well into the twentieth century. Similarly, in Montijo in the 1870s and 1880s the town was politically dominated by two families - one linked to the Liberal deputy for Mérida, Antonio Pacheco, and the other to the Conservative deputy for Badajoz, José Albarran.[82] Though a phenomenon difficult to chart with exact precision, caciquismo, nurtured by the enormous patronage that all agrarians possessed, both heightened the power of the individuals involved and protected the privileges of rural property in general.

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as a Political System' in E. Gellner (ed.), Patrons and Clients (London, 1977).

[82] On the provincial situation see J. Raya, 'Anatomía del caciquismo extremeño' Revista de Estudios Extremeños 1980; Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 36, 49-52; Juan Simeón Vidarte, No queríamos pp. 50-1; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 13, 20, 53-9. See also the contemporary novel charting the impact of turn of the century caciquismo in Badajoz, Felipe Trigo, Jarrapallejos (Madrid, 1988).

Inevitably, the stability of the rural regime dominated by the elite required effective control over law and order and the functioning of civil and judicial administration. Freedom to act with only self-restraint as a guide had important material implications for agrarians, not just as a licence in the straightforward pursuit of profit, but also by excluding any possible measures - taxation of land, controls on the labour market and conditions of work, regulation of rents and tenancies - that could disrupt the basis of latifundism. In these circumstances, the central state had very little presence, except in matters that, as Merino de Torres argued, 'touch the pocket or those referring to military service'.[83] Especially in smaller pueblos, a handful of powerful agrarians and their notable allies could totally dominate affairs, restricting access to outside ideas and developments as long as the absence of communications allowed them. Agrarians controlled the paramilitary Civil Guard and local magistrates as private forces for the preservation of private property. The effect overall was to preserve the status quo and to reinforce further the social divisions of countryside and town in the province.

Little existed to bridge the prevailing social distance in Badajoz between agrarians and the rural lower orders, that became an enormous gulf in the case of day labourers. In particular, members of the elite were exempt from the poverty associated with agricultural work and family production. For the majority, deprivation in the province was endemic and cumulative, producing some of the worst reported social

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[83] Merino de Torres, ibid. p. 35.

conditions to be found in Spain. Average diets remained monotonously subsistence, mainly consisting of pulses, olive oil and occasional vegetables. Yet agrarians could conspicuously consume by eating meat on a regular basis.[54] Not surprisingly, published causes of death in 1930 showed a predominance of deficiency diseases associated with malnutrition and poor housing. Respiratory, liver, kidney, and stomach disorders were widespread, as were infectious diseases, such as flu, tuberculosis, typhoid and cholera. Badajoz was also a major malaria region, with a few hundred deaths a year but many thousands debilitated at any one time. Olivenza was just such a malarial town, with 1,500 persons affected in 1923-4 alone. However, municipal hospitals existed only in the largest towns and none were free to the public. Folk remedies and the services of wise women were therefore the recourse of the poor, while agrarians engaged private doctors and travelled to Seville for surgery. Murders, of which there were 166 in 1930, were also high, though typical of a violent and despairing society, in which wife-beating, and the settlement of disputes through knife fights and violent vendettas, were commonplace.[55] In contrast, agrarians lived behind the solid walls of their town and estate houses with private retainers to guard them. Education barely existed for the mass of people - 51.3 percent of men and 63.2 percent

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[54] Polo Benito, El problema social p. 49-50 provides an interesting contrast.

[55] See Anuario estadístico de España de 1930 for deaths by cause. Also Merino de Torres, El obrero p. 100; M. Samaniego Boneu, El problema escolar en Extremadura de 1900-1936 (Badajoz, 1986) pp. 9-10. A fascinating, if horrific, picture of health problems at the turn of the century is given in the novel of Badajoz doctor Felipe Trigo, El médico rural (Madrid, 1978).

of women could neither read nor write according to the 1930 census. As a whole, the province had 1.1 teacher per thousand inhabitants in 1930, along with 738 public schools in which 50 percent of pupils never matriculated. At the same time 3,188 pupils of the wealthy received a private education, often with their own tutors. Higher education was only normally available to the sons - not daughters - of the landed or professional classes, with a law degree from Madrid, Seville or Salamanca universities considered the appropriate gentleman's qualification.[56]

In fact the very mechanisms of agrarian domination precluded any systematic means to foster any deep sense of community or cultural identification with the elite. On occasion individual agrarians did have the reputation for paternalism towards the poor. This did not extend, however, much beyond giving work on ditch digging and road mending to those in forced unemployment (alojamiento), or allowing traditional rights to glean from fields and woods to survive - 'ir a bellotas' in the local phrase.[57] Any municipal or provincial public policy of relief or welfare to improve housing, food supplies, health, hygiene and education that would have involved raising local taxes was precluded. In the midst of this barren picture, the only force capable of functioning as an agency providing social cement to bind society together was the Catholic Church. Yet rates of religious practice in Badajoz had probably always been low,

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[56] Censo de la población de España: región de Badajoz de 1930 gives figures on literacy. See also, Samaniego Boneu, ibid. passim.; Merino de Torres, ibid. pp. 84-88; Unión Patriótica de Badajoz, Barógrafo de un lustro pp. 39-56.

[57] Literally, 'to go for acorns', see Merino de Torres, El obrero p. 61.

and the image of the Church as the servant of the privileged did nothing to alter this situation. Local priests were seen as the allies of agrarians, on whom they were often dependent for their livelihoods, and as agents of social control through their role in charity. Hospitals for the poor, soup kitchens, pauper schools, and orphanages were all provided by the Church. However, the potential recipients of aid were resentful and resistent because of the need to prove their piety and moral worthiness that led to forced attendance at church. Nor did a version of Catholic doctrine expounded from the pulpit - often by ill-educated rural priests - that emphasised the need to endure poverty and powerlessness in the wait for a better future life give much comfort. Far from drawing society together, the message passed on by a Church largely absent from the lives of the majority was of passive acceptance of the established order as God-given, and obedience to authority - views exactly reproducing those of the rural elite.[55] In these circumstances of starkly unmediated social divisions there was scant basis for any form of unquestioned traditional authority to support agrarian autocracy.

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[55] Unión Patriótica, Barógrafo de un lustro pp. 39-56 gives survey of religious charitable work for the 1920s. See W. J. Callahan, Church, Politics and Society in Spain 1750-1874 (Cambridge. Mass, 1984) pp. 242-4, 276; Frances Lannon, Privilege, Persecution and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain 1875-1975 (Oxford, 1987) pp. 13-16, 75-7; Merino de Torres, Ibid. p. 100 on attitudes to religious practice and charity.

II. Violence and Protest: the Challenge to Agrarian Power, 1875-1930

In so far as they could be said to possess an ideology, agrarians maintained a commitment to the exercise of virtually absolute property and political rights over a deferential rural majority. Such an apparent archaism actually fitted perfectly the conditions of social and economic subordination required by cereal and animal latifundism. It was also consistent with the autocratic ethos of individualism and robust self reliance of an elite that lacked internal cohesion. No shared field sports or country-house weekend tied together agrarians divided by status - illustrated when landowners refused membership of town clubs (*casinos*) to *labradores* - economic interests and local political competition. Consequently, no agrarian organisation developed in Badajoz in the late nineteenth century to defend the elite as a whole, nor did it seem a serious necessity, as long as agrarians could rely on the wide range of means of coercion available to them to sustain the rural order. By and large, however, the disruptive effects of social and economic change, relative isolation of the province and populace, and lack of political resources, ensured that no serious challenge developed in the nineteenth century to threaten the modern agrarian elite or rural order in Badajoz.

An inheritance of ideas and organisation critical of the newly consolidated rural order did exist in the Restoration era. This was a legacy from a limited and divided resistance to the emerging agrarian regime that had peaked during the

preceding revolutionary period of 1868 to 1875. Protest seems to have begun as a spontaneous reaction to the loss of commons rights, abolished with the disentailments and land sales. Thus in the late 1860s in many areas there were demonstrations against the loss of common lands by communities claiming traditional grazing and cultivation rights. Similarly, in Villafranco de los Barros a petition was taken up in 1868 protesting that local caciques had stolen community land. Such actions were only made possible by the social and political turmoil that accompanied the over throw of the Monarchy in the September Revolution and the corresponding paralysis of the established forces of order - the background on which the Restoration regime was eventually created. Within Badajoz, disputes between agrarians over land use, preservation of grazing rights and political influence were at a height. In these circumstances, control of the major public offices in Badajoz, as elsewhere, passed temporarily into the hands of republicans. Provincial republicanism stressed political democracy, federalism and moral economy - ideas which captured the attention of a few small groups of intellectuals and reformers found only in the largest towns of the province. Nevertheless, a republican Governor, backed by a liberal government in Madrid and sympathetic to protests couched in terms of the loss of traditional rights, effectively disrupted the vigilance of a Civil Guard that normally treated harshly all signs of disaffection. Attempts to protect common lands only raised the opposition of agrarians eager to defend their new property, and helped persuade them to accept the restored Monarchy in 1875 as an alternative to the Republic.

Though republicanism remained a minority opinion, the influence of its ideas was continued into the Restoration, developing as a forceful moral critique of caciquismo and the corruption that underlay the consolidated rural order, through the Partido Republicano de Extremadura based in Mérida. Committees of the party, containing a handfull of members - teachers, printers, and engineers were prominent - were formed in a few towns.[1]

Though republicanism had only a marginal impact on wider society in Badajoz at this stage, the relative political relaxation of the revolutionary period allowed the circulation of the more radical ideas of anarchism. This doctrine arrived in the provincial capital in 1872 with Agustín Cervantes, exiled from Madrid for anti-clericalism, and gained some support. Early anarchist doctrine stressed egalitarian communal rights, collective action and - of particular relevance for Badajoz during the height of the disentailments - the need for an equal division of the common land (reparto). Inspired by the new ideas, a small group of resistance societies (sociedades de resistencia) were formed in pueblos surrounding the capital, containing probably only a few dozen members in total and unable to expand to other areas through lack of proper communications and the natural hostility of agrarians.[2] Independent artisans, rather than landworkers,

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[1] Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 15-17, 21; Bohoyo Velázquez, Situación socio-económica pp. 94-100.

[2] On early ideas see George Esenwein, Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain, 1868-1898 (Berkeley, 1989) pp. 22-59. Also José Raya Tellez 'El movimiento obrero en Badajoz: aproximaciones a sus orígenes' Revista Alminar 1979; Max Nettlau, La Première Internationale en Espagne 1868-1888 (Amsterdam, 1969) pp. 164, 291-2; Josep Termes, Anarquismo y sindicalismo en España (Barcelona, 1972) pp. 225-6, 290-3. Resistance Societies were reported as existing in

seem to have been the nucleus of these societies which had an otherwise tenuous connection with local rural protest. Even so, invasions of recently-sold estates led by apparently newly dispossessed small holders calling for reparto, in Montijo, Salvaleón, Barcarrota, Nogales, Salvatierra, and Burgillos during 1873 seem to have had anarchist support.[3] Soon after this, however, the public authorities, given the go ahead by a Governor alarmed at disorder, moved to suppress the nascent anarchist movement. In the following year the resistance societies were reduced to a clandestine existence. Pressure on them was further intensified with the consolidation of the Restoration regime in 1875, when social and political protest of any complexion was rigorously suppressed by the new provincial Governor and the Civil Guard.

This last ditch defence of community rights associated with an almost dissolved ancien regime proved no basis for the survival and expansion of an anarchist movement in Badajoz. Though nominally some six societies survived in the western zone of the anarchist Federación Regional Española, formed in 1877, public repression effectively reduced adherents to a few isolated individuals. By 1897 a survey reported only 200 active anarchist adherents and 400 sympathisers in Badajoz.[4] Only in the capital did anything like a continuous presence remain, allowing intermittent production of locally-circulated pamphlets and newssheets promoting anarchist ideas. Support for anarchist notions of self-government was among the

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Aceuchal, Badajoz, Cabeza la Vaca, Calzadilla, Fuente del Maestre, La Morera, Nogales, Santa Marta and Villalba.

[3] Termes, ibid. p. 179.

[4] Undertaken by Ricardo Mella and cited in Esenwein, Anarchist Ideology pp. 201-2.

artisans and craftsmen of the uncommonly large section of workshops, found in their own quarter of the city, the Barrio de San Roque, which had established communal organisations and a measure of independence.[5] Elsewhere, the original causes championed by early anarchism in the province faded into insignificance, overtaken by the rapid changes of the maturing agrarian order. With the loss of commons rights an established fact by the late nineteenth century, the emphasis of anarchism upon division of the land seemed less relevant. In particular, the growing masses of rural labourers were preoccupied by the immediate struggle to find employment and cope with the tightening work discipline on the cortijos, and in the battle for survival in the pueblos of the provincial heartland. Moreover, the communal associations and sociability that were able to sustain a rural anarchist movement more attuned to these problems in western Andalusia, where socio-economic change was more advanced, were not well developed in Badajoz at this time.[6] With their dominance assured after 1875 by a monarchist regime based firmly on support for rural property, the Church and public order, the agrarian elite entered the Restoration era unopposed.

Even during the seemingly effortless supremacy that stretched until the First World War for the majority of the

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[5] The six were in Aceuchal, Badajoz, Fuente del Maestre, Nogales, Santa Marta and Villalba. See Termes, ibid. p. 246; Nettlau, La Première Internationale p. 291.

[6] Anarchist sheets reported in Badajoz were, El Obrero 1874-1923, La Defensa del Obrero 1900-23 and El Perseguido 1900-1923. Temma Kaplan, Anarchists of Andalusia (Princeton, 1977) pp. 61-2; Juan Díaz del Moral, Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas (Madrid, 1969) pp. 67-86 emphasise the importance of popular culture in the survival of anarchism in Jerez (Cádiz) and Córdoba. On Andalusian anarchism in general in this period see Esenwein, Anarchist Ideology pp. 63-9, 87-148.

elite, agrarian rule clearly received at best only a limited legitimacy. Evidence that surface tranquility covered a smouldering subterranean discontent among the labouring poor was provided, even amidst tight agrarian control, by a wide variety of desperate acts of survival and revenge. Smuggling, poaching and rural theft were rife, while resentment at work discipline and wages led to night-time incendiarist attacks on crops and hayricks, and similar furtive mutilation of trees, olive plants and animals. Unemployment and food shortages sparked off occassional outbursts of serious local unrest, like those of the 1890s when crises in cork and cereal prices produced riotous mobs demanding relief and work in the Albuquerque and Badajoz regions. Continuity with past practice was evident in much of this activity; food riots in particular followed a traditional pattern, with crowds gathered in front of town halls from where women called for the distribution of bread. In any event, agrarians dealt with even the most minor of these symptoms of disaffection by resorting to a ruthless naked force designed to punish and dissuade. The local state, in the form of the Civil Guard, stood ready to defend property and public order, often with great violence and brutality. At the same time individual agrarians administered summary punishments using their estate guards and foremen.[7] Although persistent, such spontaneous and sporadic conflicts could never pose a fundamental threat to the power of the elite. Indeed, the futility of rebellion, in the face of agrarian autocrats able to rely on enormous coecive powers and a virtual monopoly of physical force, could only confirm a

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[7] See Isidoro Bohoyo Velázquez, Situación socio-económica pp. 89-109.

confident elite in a belief in the essential stability of the rural order. Consequently, agrarians failed to recognise that the rural order in Badajoz was certainly not immune to serious pressures for change from below.

Writing in 1912, Merino de Torres specifically pointed to the developing danger to social stability that was reveal ed in his survey of the conditions of rural labour in Badajoz, remarking that,

'...although the day labourer class lives in the same abandonment (as in small pueblos) and does not make the least sacrifice to leave its ignorance, it always has caudillos and propagandists that have charged themselves to open its eyes.'[8] Here, workforces had become fully established on the estates and the nature of work had taken on a stable pattern, allowing the iniquities suffered by rural labourers to become widely recognised. Work in gangs meant that the humiliations of competing for employment and resentment at the harsh conditions of supervised labour for poor pay produced a heightened sense of a shared fate. More immediately, agrarians adjusted to a further crisis in cereal prices beginning in the late 1890s by imposing reductions in both employment and wages. Grievances were further reinforced in the largest towns, where labouring families were now concentrated into ghetto communities in which they lived in an environment physically cut off from agrarians, where it was increasingly possible to develop forms of sociability and institutions that were difficult for the elite to control. Moreover, the population in these areas was less static. The railway brought

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[8] Merino de Torres, El obrero p. 39.

immigrants to work on the cereal estates and in the multiplying local services, and allowed people and news to travel. Subversive ideas could spread and find a receptive audience. However, the persistent agitators identified by Merino de Torres were rarely rural labourers themselves, but a small number of the younger, better educated, more independent, artisans and craftsmen that shared the urban environment. Literacy and time for thought and travel brought greater access to ideas, both old and new. As a result the ideology they propagated, one that increasingly captured the attention of rural labourers, was an uncertain ideological blend in which continuity was derived from surviving local anarchist and republican traditions and organisations, and innovation from socialism imported from Madrid and Seville.[9] Socialism became particularly influential from the 1890s, being discussed in small informal circles of artisans and workmen who met for self education in bars that had sprang up in the workers' quarters, and whose reading included the newspaper El Socialista, alongside the thought of Rousseau and works of literature. What particularly impressed them was not the doctrinal details of a Spanish socialism which took little interest in rural conditions at this time, but rather the emphasis that was placed on pragmatically pursuing class conflict through mass organisation and disciplined action. This message was a revelation in an agrarian society where the everyday workings of cereal latifundism appeared proof of capitalist exploitation and the difficulties of challenging

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[9] Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 21-3.

the enormous power and privilege of the landed elite were only too obvious.

The actual process by which these propagandists and organisers succeeded in developing the beginnings of a rural labour movement in Badajoz after a generation of agrarian dominance uninterrupted by organised protest in the countryside remains obscure. However, what is certain is that between 1901 and 1914 they took the lead in creating a group of sociedades obreras (workers' societies) that became the fundamental form of labour organisation in the province. Not surprisingly, it was in the provincial capital with its large, diverse population and established tradition of social and political dissent that organisation first began. In May 1901, following a spontaneous demonstration of rural and town workers against low wages and the rising cost of living that was dispersed by the Civil Guard, a sociedad obrera was formed. 'La Germinal Obrera' was led by a small group of artisans, members of a socialist circle, who declared themselves 'committed to the advancement of workers in Badajoz'. Within days similar organisations were formed in the nearby towns of Alconchel ('El Alba del Nuevo Dia'), Albuera ('Centro Obrero'), Olivenza (Centro Obrero') and Albuquerque ('Centro Obrero').[10] By the Great War a chain of sociedades, mostly founded during a period of intense social conflict between 1901 and 1906, was painfully built up from local initiatives, with cooperation emerging only slowly. During a congress in April 1902 in Torre de Miguel Sesmero, home to 'La Luz', representatives from 21 sociedades claiming 4,000

[10] Bohoyo Velázquez, Situación socio-económica pp. 121-5; Molana Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 34.

members joined together to condemn 'the mistakes which, in our judgement, the employer class or bourgeoisie commits in their relations with the worker'.[11] Further development took place in March of the following year at a second congress, involving 18 sociedades claiming 4,412 members, that authorised the formation of a provincial directorate based in the capital. The Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras de Badajoz was to encourage mutual aid between societies, which in turn were to use only lawful and pacific methods to advance the cause of workers against 'the abuses of the employers'.[12]

It was the experience of struggle itself which, above all, shaped the development of the sociedades. Significantly, the organisers of sociedades eschewed ideology in their appeals - indeed the Badajoz labour movement was destined never to produce a significant theorist - and instead carefully directed their initiatives to local conditions in which rural labour set the agenda. Typically, initial organisation took place amidst existing conflicts, which persuaded those involved of the immediate need to act collectively. In this specific sense, ideas in themselves played little part for the rural labourers whose particular interests, rooted in the sociology of latifundism, largely determined the evolution of syndicalist aims for their organisations. The core of frequent tangible demands for improvements in conditions, employment and wages was

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[11] Reported in Bohoyo Velázquez, ibid. p. 132. Representatives came from Badajoz, Albuquerque, Barcarrota, La Garrovilla, Torremayor, Jerez de los Caballeros, Valle de Santa Ana, Valle de Matamoros, Higuera de Vargas, Santa Marta, Albuera, Olivenza, Valverde de Leganes, Almendral, La Morera, La Parra, Montijo, Puebla de la Calzada, Alconchel, Táliga and Torre de Miguel Sesmero.

[12] See Molana Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 40.

particularly clear and remained unchanged through to the 1930s: recognition of the sociedades as the representatives of labour; collective bargaining of wages, to be fixed by written contract and paid in cash; abolition of piecework; abolition of supervised gang labour; abolition of recruitment in the town square and labourers to be employed in strict order from a list drawn up by the sociedad; wage rises at varying amounts for different types of labour; an eight hour day as a norm and payment of overtime; proper poor relief and guaranteed work in the low seasons. In addition a wide variety of secondary demands were made, relating to specific local conditions, for instance on the use of machinery, more breaks from work, better food and the dismissal of particularly brutal foremen.[13] Considered together these aims struck at the whole basis of cereal latifundism by undermining the management rights of rural property-holders, and therefore represented a revolutionary challenge to the entire elite order in Badajoz.

The corresponding means to wrest concessions from employers was the weapon of the local general strike. Organisations were literally created for action; all sociedades launched strikes for recognition and redress of grievances the moment they were formed. Early strikes were haphazard affairs, but labourers quickly learned that solidarity and discipline was the key to gaining control of the labour market and starving the estates of their most important resource. Artisans and craftsmen often struck alongside, in pursuit of similar improvements. By 1912, Merino de Torres could comment that 'the strikes have lost their

[13] Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 15-6 provides a useful summary of strike aims.

primitive character' and that carefully considered basic tactics had been developed.[14] Periods of action were carefully timed as each set of tasks in the crop cycle approached and the demand for labour rose. This was especially true during the summer harvest, when agrarians were at their most vulnerable facing the loss of an entire year's investment. Strikes had to succeed quickly before the loss of scarce income led labourers to capitulate. As a result many of the early sociedades had fluctuating fortunes, as support from the rural labourers who made up the majority of membership proved highly volatile in line with the successes and failures of an increasingly bitter syndical struggle. Real gains, in terms of wage rises and improvements in conditions of work, were limited and temporary even during the high point of early conflict up to 1906. Afterwards, a period of relative stability in prices and incomes that lasted to the Great War was accompanied by a period of relative quiescence in the countryside during which the number of sociedades declined until a solid core of 16, with some 1,406 members, remained in 1918.[15]

To a great extent the organisational instability and erratic growth of the sociedades resulted from the nature of employer reaction to the unexpected beginnings of local collective resistance. Most of those affected were outraged at the emergence of organisation amongst labourers whom they were accustomed to consider as passive and submissive. Some employers initially gave way to workers when first threatened by surprise strikes, giving sociedades their early successes.

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[14] Merino de Torres, El obrero p. 90.
[15] Polo Benito, El problema social p. 15.

But thereafter most agrarians swiftly adopted a severely inflexible range of measures to combat the demands of sociedades and dealt with the accompanying strikes as a dangerous menace to the rural order. Tenant labradores, with the smallest margins to grant improvements and wage increases, proved particularly intransigent and resorted most readily to intimidation and force to break the solidarity and endurance of strikers. Negotiation was rare as agrarians refused to recognise the sociedades or bargain with their social inferiors. Instead, lockouts, blacklisting, attacks on ringleaders, working the fields with strikebreakers, fijos and Portuguese labour under guard, and meeting demonstrations and deputations with force became the norm. Though instances of the Civil Guard offering to mediate - usually rejected by employers - were known, the forces of law and order generally acted in open collusion with agrarians to harrass strikers and punish ringleaders. During the first strike of 'La Germinal' in the capital, the entire leadership and 600 stikers were imprisoned. Such heavyhanded intransigence had a price in that it encouraged sympathy strikes and hardened the resolve of strikers. Violence, meted out as policy by agrarians, infused the wider conduct of the syndical struggle. Estate foremen and the Civil Guard were prone to opening fire on strikers and demonstrators, while summary beatings were an everyday occurrence during disputes. In turn, desperate strikers fearing defeat would attack strikebreakers in the fields leading to pitched battles with knives and scythes between Portuguese and Spanish labourers. A reversion to futile direct attacks on property, such as incendiarism, crop theft and the

mutilation of cattle, frequently followed the aftermath of a failed strike.[16] The undoubted effectiveness of agrarians in combatting the sociedades, which confined protest to a few areas and led to only fleeting gains for the strikers seemed to vindicate the essential strengths of autocracy and the rural order. Before the war, occasional temporary local alliances between the small minority of rural employers directly involved in a particular dispute were the only signs of cooperation among the elite. Perhaps unsurprisingly, while force remained functional and the vast majority of agrarians remained untouched by conflict no measures for collective permanent defence were taken, nor apparently needed.

The fact that the sociedades obreras could not be eliminated entirely in the long run, as had occurred after the First Republic, showed the remarkable resilience, underestimated by agrarians, of the new organisations. Their capacity for maintaining a dormant existence after defeat, to recover and then to rise again, was due to their roots in the community. From the outset the sociedades were not purely economic organisations but were the centres of new subcultures, with their own distinctive, separate values, rituals and customs. Of fundamental significance in this regard was the casa del pueblo (people's house), which ranged in size from a room in a house or bar to occasionally a whole building, which all sociedades strove to acquire as meeting place, social centre and campaign headquarters. Most importantly, the casa del pueblo was an office for running an organisation that

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[16] Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 90-1; Molana Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 37-8, 42; Bohoyo Velázquez, Situación socio-económica pp. 128, 135-43.

allowed different sections of workers to come together. In Montijo, for instance, there were rooms for plumbers, cobblers, bakers, carpenters and barbers to hold their own meetings apart from the majority of rural labourers, as well as a larger salon in which all could join together. Most sociedades included artisans and craftsmen directly in their ranks, but in the largest towns - most obviously in the capital - they had their own casas del pueblo. These institutions also served as a place for a wide variety of other meetings and activities. Co-operatives sold cheap food, while sociedades tried to relieve distress by renting small plots of land for their members to work. The casas also functioned as social centres for drinking, parties, pursuing hobbies and celebrations. May Day - the worker's day - became a particular occasion, when processions took place in which bands would play. Similarly, spring picnics were organised at nearby rivers or ponds, at which there were dancing and games. Schools were organised for both adults and children, teaching reading, writing and basic arithmetic. Education was part and parcel of every facet of life revolving around the casa del pueblo. In classes and communal gatherings of various kinds debate flourished and was encouraged by the leading figures of the sociedades. Selections from El Socialista, anarchist tracts, republican papers and novels would be read out aloud to audiences who would discuss their importance, deepening the sense that fundamental change was needed to improve rural society.[17]

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[17] See Molano Gragera, ibid. pp. 35-6, 42-3; Bohoyo Velázquez, ibid. pp. 133-4; Estatutos de la sociedad obrera 'La Unión' de Fuente de Cantos (Badajoz, 1906).

Political action to attack the institutions that supported agrarian power also became an important adjunct to syndicalism for the sociedades, beginning a process that brought provincial labour organisations into direct contact with national forces. Candidates were increasingly put up in opposition to the nominees of local caciques in elections for the town hall, opening the question of which political strand they should represent. Virtually all sociedades in the first wave of organisation contained a mix of opinion, and early political campaigns were undertaken with the help of any local republican or socialist circles that might exist. Anarchists, with an influential presence in the provincial capital, opposed the whole trend towards political activity as a fatal compromise with the existing order. While electoral victories were indeed few in number before the war, they boosted the confidence of sociedades, giving them spokesmen on a number of councils who could state their case and oppose the monopoly of the caciques in public affairs.[18] These successes particularly favoured the argument of provincial socialists that political involvement could be a powerful and necessary adjunct to syndicalism. However, outside support for their activities came only belatedly from a Socialist Party (PSOE) in Madrid that was little concerned with rural questions. A representative, Luis Montalban, was only despatched to make contact with the Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras as late as 1909. In 1913 five branches (agrupaciones) of the party existed in the province. A turning point was reached in the following year, when the PSOE launched a major recruitment

[18] Molano Gragera, ibid. pp. 28-9, 42 describes these developments.

drive throughout the south, that included a visit to Badajoz by Pablo Iglesias, the party leader. Following this, Socialist branches were set up in the majority of sociedades. In practice, however, the gradual adoption of the Socialist Party banner for political activy little affected the conduct of syndical activities of the sociedades and membership of the party remained low in the province, largely confined to the leading figures of labour organisation. Significantly, despite personal appeals by Vicente Barrio, secretary of the Socialist trade union conglomerate (UGT), the Provincial Federation could not be persuaded of the need to declare a formal attachment to any national organisation.[19] Yet despite these hesitant origins, the development of a mutually supportive relationship with the national Socialist movement powerfully benefitted provincial labour organisation, reducing its isolation and providing access to propaganda materials, advice and resources beyond those available in Badajoz.

In striking contrast to the tenacious efforts of the sociedades to establish and maintain a political presence in rural society, the agrarian elite showed no general enthusiasm to respond innovatively to this explicit threat to their hegemony. Lack of incentive played a part once again, as this apparently limited problem could be contained adequately by the existing mechanisms. It was from this period that caciquismo became associated with open electoral fraud, bribery and intimidation as a means to coerce reluctant voters into support for candidates in local elections, when deference and political indifference no longer sufficed. The plethora of

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[19] Molano Gragera, ibid. p. 43; Paloma Biglino, El socialismo español y la cuestión agraria 1890-1936 (Madrid, 1986) p. 100.

dirty tactics varied from stuffing the voting urns to straightforward buying of votes, threats of loss of work and physical attacks on opponents. When potential adversaries could be induced not to stand, article 29 of the electoral law guaranteed that election was automatic, ensuring as Merino de Torres observed, '...the legalisation of a procedure of very ancient following in many pueblos'[20] However, deeper underlying problems of fragmentation in the elite were also evident, belying the seeming solidity of autocracy and the rural order for the majority.

Only a few farsighted non-agrarian activists, associated with two distinct movements but sharing a concern at the trend in labour relations in the countryside of Badajoz, warned that the inflexibility and lack of unified vision and purpose shown by agrarians were inimical to their basic interests. The first group came from within the Church, was ostensibly motivated by the low level of religious observance in the province but focussed increasingly on the dangers posed to catholicism by the growth of 'class conflict'. These social Catholics drew their inspiration from the doctrines first propounded in the papal encyclical Rerum Novarum of 1891 - later added to by Quadragessimo Anno in 1931 - which encouraged the Catholics to concern themselves with social issues as well as the defence of the Church. Once the development of organised protest had begun within Badajoz, a variety of commentators identified the conditions in which day labourers lived and worked as a problem. Indeed, it was the anti-clerical attacks of the new sociedades that identified the Church as the servant of

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[20] Merino de Torres, El obrero p. 36; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 24-5.

agrarian exploitation, saw the priest as a parasite, and confronted Catholic prerogatives in education and charity, that first drew their concern. While they often recognised many of the injustices faced by rural workers, social Catholics denied the legitimacy of 'breaking with established society', as Merino de Torres put it in his work dedicated to saving the labourer from, '...the apostles of socialism'.[21] Labourers were seen as irretrievably secularised, brutish and prone to follow dangerous demagogues preaching doctrines of class warfare that were inimical to Catholic views of social reconciliation. In this view the day labourer was a lost cause to the Church and catholicism, that required that fundamental change in the rural order be brought about.

Though staunch supporters of the need for private property, social Catholics contrasted economic development in Badajoz which was multiplying a rural proletariat that represented a permanent threat of revolt with the supposed Catholic and family virtues of peasants in harmonious Castile. Their remedy was spelt out in a later call to action by the leading proponent and initiator of Catholic social action in the province, the priest Ezequiel Fernández Santana, as 'individual property, as a sacred right, and work, based in relations of justice, and of charity between employer and worker.'[22] In contrast to the alienation of employer-employee relations on the cortijos, what was needed was a form of

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[21] Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 5, 9-10, 41 and passim.; Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 2-3, 8 and passim.; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 35-6.

[22] Ezequiel Fernández Santana, La cuestión social en Extremadura (Los Santos, 1935) p. 7. On his life and work see Fernández Santana, Catecismo social (Huelva, 1947); Guadalupe Blanco Nieto, 'Escuelas y sindicatos: la obra social de Ezequiel Fernández Santana' Revista Alminar 1982.

socio-economic organisation on the land that brought collaboration in the manner of medieval guilds. With the passing of a Law of Agrarian Syndicates in 1906 the way was officially sanctioned for interested individuals - Fernández Santana becoming their early spokesman in Badajoz - to create Catholic associations on these lines in the countryside. In fact eight sindicatos católicos rurales (Catholic Agrarian Syndicates) and cajas rurales (rural banks) - the two were essentially the same - already existed in the province, providing services of saving and credit, seed, machinery, transport and agricultural education for family producers. Their vision was to persuade agrarians, in the interest of creating a stratum of stable peasant farmers, to divide the estates and parcel them out to deserving labourers who would become sharecroppers supported in a fair partnership with landlords through the aid of the syndicates and banks. By 1910 some 42 Catholic associations had been founded in Badajoz; although a few were very active, in many cases their existence was merely a nominal one. This resulted from the inherent difficulties of sustaining organisation not the product of specific state or Church policies, but reliant on the enthusiasm of individual local priests and on the tiny minority of agrarians prepared to become involved. Consequently, before the war the Rural Banks and Syndicates did achieve some success where smallholders and sharecroppers already existed in the cereal zone, and sometimes in the periphery, reinforcing the precarious existence of the relatively few family producers in the province. However, they failed in their main aim of altering the growth of the rural

proletariat in favour of a traditional society of settled rural ranks.[23]

In contrast to the primarily religious terms in which the social Catholics understood their task, leading Fernández Santana to note about the Syndicates during a conference in 1912 that '..they are very useful for the custody of the countryside, but useless for the development of agriculture', the second group of concerned observers of the rural scene approached their activities from a determinedly economic viewpoint.[24] The agrarian professionals were products of attempts to foster rural modernisation through 'scientific agriculture' in Badajoz that gradually took place from the turn of the twentieth century. Most of the engineers, hydrologists, surveyers and agronomists involved worked in a provincial agronomical service created by the delegations of the main government economic ministries. A major increase in their numbers and prominence came in 1907 when an agricultural research station, Granja Escuela Práctica de Agricultura, was founded, along with an educational service, Cátedra Ambulante de Agricultura. As determined capitalist modernisers, keen to increase agricultural productivity through technical improvement, they viewed the rise of organised protest as a problem of rural development not just as a social crisis. The expansion of opportunities and incomes by more efficient

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[23] Castillo, Propietarios pp. 75-81; Instituto de Reformas Socialies, Estadística de asociaciones (Madrid, 1917) pp. 8-9; Blanco Nieto, 'Escuelas y sindicatos' pp. 9-10; Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 50-5, 60-2; Merino de Torres, El obrero pp. 43-7; Caja Rural Frexense (sindicato agrícola), Memoria de 1912 (Badajoz, 1913); Caja Rural de Ahorros de Almendralejo, Memoria de 1909 (Badajoz, 1909).

[24] Consejo Provincial de Fomento, Folleto de las conferencias dadas durante la semana agrícola 12-16 nov. 1912 (Badajoz, 1913).

exploitation of the land was their solution, inspired by the technocratic works of Joaquín Costa and the Regenerationists. They envisaged no essential need to break up the estates of the agrarian elite, stressing instead the enormous potential benefits to be derived from extensive irrigation. This reasoning was based on the calculation that one hectare of irrigated land was able to support a family that otherwise required thirty hectares in dry farming. The professionals' ideal was of technically enlightened property owners, willing to invest in improvement, both to increase their own wealth through greater yields and to end unnecessary labour disputes by settling labouring families on small plots of irrigated land.[28] However, lack of capital and the need to find incentives for agrarians to substitute machinery for labour on the estates made this an uphill task.

In practice, the schemes of these two groups were complementary, and both reliant on the agrarian elite to make the fundamental changes to the rural order they sought. Consequently, the formation of the Cámara Agrícola (Chamber of Agriculture) in 1908 to promote agricultural improvement brought together social Catholics and agrarian professionals in the leadership. After this date the programmes of the two groups became inextricably entwined. As a result, alongside the provision of technical advice on production, marketing and pest control, the Cámara conducted campaigns for ambitious irrigation schemes, and for a programme of land settlement

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[28] Arcadio Guerra, Bosquejo histórico de la economia agraria en Badajoz y su término (Badajoz, 1979) pp. 9-14; Consejo Provincial de Fomento, Cartilla redactada para dar a conocer los trabajos que se realizan en la Granja Escuela (Badajoz, 1913); Antonio Cruz Valero, Para los agricultores extremeños (Madrid, 1936).

through the Catholic Syndicates from its base in the capital. Though given official recognition by the government as the body representing provincial agricultural concerns in 1916, the Cámara attracted the support of only a handful of individual agrarians before the war. Almost all were large landowners, resident in the province, and already participants in the existing Catholic Syndicates and the promotion of scientific agriculture. The indifference, even downright hostility, of the majority of the elite - denounced as the absence of 'a spirit of charity' by social Catholics - stemmed partly from satisfaction with the status quo and an unwillingness to pay for agricultural improvement, but mainly from a rejection of modifications to latifundism, and hence to the whole rural social order. In particular, the condemnations of the evils of absenteeism for social solidarity made by all sections of opinion in the Cámara directly threatened both absentee landowners and also the interests of the tenant labradores who rented their estates. Meanwhile, the demand that agrarians should yield a measure of direct control over land to create an expanded stratum of settled family producers appeared not so much an act of enlightened self interest but a suicidal invitation to sacrifice everything in the way of power and status that rural property ownership brought.[26] There could, therefore, be no modification to the rural order as proposed by members of the Cámara Agrícola while agrarians embraced autocracy and naked force sufficed to defend it.

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[26] For the evolution of the Cámara and its activities see Nicolas Ortega, 'Política hidraúlica y reforma agraria en Extremadura' in M. Gaviría (ed.), Extremadura Saqueada pp. 112-5; Juan Luis Cordero, Regionalismo agrario (Salamanca, 1917).

Dramatic proof of the actual vulnerability of agrarian power in the province was provided by the changes brought about by the Great War. Spanish neutrality led to a cereals boom stimulated by increased demand from the Allied powers. High prices encouraged agrarians in Badajoz to place more marginal land under the plough to gain quick profits, which in turn increased demand for labour. Temporarily at least, the anxieties suffered by day labourers in the cereal zone eased; expectations grew as employment prospects expanded and employers found the easiest way to raise labour productivity and avoid disputes on the cortijos was to increase wages. However, when cereal prices collapsed with peace, agrarians reacted to overproduction by returning more land to fallow, reducing their use of labour and imposing wage reductions. Moreover, the subsequent frustration felt by labourers during the olive harvest of 1918 at a return to poverty incomes, unemployment and increased labour discipline was exacerbated by a cost of living for basic foodstuffs which doubled nationally between 1914 and 1920.[27] Meanwhile, considerable activity had taken place within the existing labour movement in the province despite its outward quiescence during the war years. The Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras had mounted a strong propaganda campaign attacking rural employers as exploiters more interested in a quick profit than in providing decent wages and working conditions. A decisive advance in the ability of labour leaders to reach a wide audience was made with the foundation of a weekly newsheet, La

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[27] Joseph Harrison, The Spanish Economy in the Twentieth Century (Beckenham, 1985) p. 46 gives national average. Within Badajoz price rises on some foods seem to have been even greater, see Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 45.

Verdad Social, in 1916. Though Badajoz was not directly touched by the political, military and labour relations crises occurring elsewhere in Spain in 1917, the authorities nervously responded by declaring a 'state of war' in the province during which public meetings were banned, newspapers censored, strikes prohibited and the administration of justice handed over to army courts. Many leaders of sociedades obreras were imprisoned in 'preventive actions' after May Day festivals in 1918, increasing the level of tension in the fields and workers' ghettos just as economic and social conditions worsened.[28] Against this background there followed three years of agitation in Badajoz that formed part of the so-called Bolshevik Years that swept the whole of latifundist southern Spain. Any remaining complacency or sense of paternalism among cereal agrarians was destroyed as waves of harvest strikes, organised by new and recreated workers' organisations, spread repeatedly across the entire central zone of the province. By April 1919, during the second season of labour militancy, some 50 sociedades obreras were able to send representatives to Mérida, where they resolved, after lengthy debate, to integrate the Provincial Federation into the UGT. Though this did not lead to any greater doctrinal purity within the labour movement in Badajoz, where anarchist and 'Bolshevik' propaganda continued to circulate, it did provide a minimum level of unity of aims and direction. At the height of renewed conflict in the summer of 1920 sociedades from 59 municipalities launched general strikes for identical

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[28] Molano Gragera, ibid. p. 47; Simeón Vidarte, No queríamos pp. 47-66; Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo sobre Extremadura (Madrid, 1938) pp. 9-10.

improvements in wages and conditions in the provincial heartland. Likewise, the Socialist Party in the province made sympathetic headway in organising electoral support in the province against the caciques, forging pacts with republicans in many localities that produced council seats for their alliance in the capital, Almendralejo, Mérida and Montijo.[27]

Alarmed at the strength of support mobilised by the strikes, the rapid multiplication of the sociedades and political commitment to socialism shown by day labourers and town craftsmen, rural employers again often gave way initially to workers' demands only to turn as soon as possible to forceful means to combat collective protest. The characteristic tactics of strike-breaking, established from the earliest disputes at the turn of the century, returned and were now applied by a much greater number of agrarians in the cereal zone. Violence occurred again when armed foremen and the Civil Guards opened fire on crowds of strikers and demonstrators, in pitched battles between strikers and blackleg labour, and when strikes degenerated into attacks on property, and even persons, of agrarians. The intensity of conflict was far greater than had ever been experienced before in the province, rising in line with the level of support and determination that the sociedades were now able to bring to bear, to the extent that in some instances members of the rural elite abandoned their houses in the countryside and retreated to the nearest district seat for greater protection. Despite their best efforts, unprepared agrarians found their

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[27] Polo Benito, El problema social pp. 12-4; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 47; Paloma Biglino, ibid. pp. 197-8; Venturo Sosa, Recuerdo del primer congreso obrero en Don Benito (Don Benito), 1919).

private means and disorganised local actions insufficient to cow the workforce to prevent the return of the strike waves, even when fully supported by local Civil Guards and courts. The desperate situation was only finally resolved in the summer of 1920 by extraordinary measures. In some areas employers were prepared to let the crops rot in the fields and enforce a permanent lock-out, sacrificing their economic interest in favour of reasserting control over the striking labourers. Finally, responding to requests from the Cámara Agrícola, the Provincial Governor called on the central government to authorise the use of troops from the garrison in the capital and to provide others. Under a state of emergency, strike leaders were arrested, the casas del pueblo closed down and the countryside placed under armed occupation. Though after the sociedades collapsed under repression and the exhaustion of their supporters - only 34 remained in 1922 - it was clear that autocracy alone had been found wanting.[30] Agrarians were fortunate that protest had remained largely confined to the cortijos, that the provincial periphery of yunteros, shepherds and sharecroppers had remained immune to the influence of Socialist organisation, and that they could rely in extremis on the outside intervention of the state. Not surprisingly the bitter truce that now prevailed in the provincial heartland only encouraged agrarian acceptance of the arrival of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in 1923 as a strong regime that promised to guarantee permanently their supremacy.

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[30] Molano Gragera, ibid. p. 48; Paloma Biglino, ibid. p. 523; Polo Benito, ibid. p. 16; Federación Provincial Socialista, El fascismo p.10.

Retrospectively viewed by agrarians as a golden era of security and stability, the years of the Primo de Rivera regime really represented a lost opportunity for them to enact purposeful changes that might have strengthened the rural order and entrenched their power and position. Nowhere was this more keenly perceived than among the ranks of social Catholics and agrarian professionals in Badajoz. Linked through the Cámara Agrícola they saw their strenuous efforts to enact long-laid plans for reform, aided by a government prepared to support the social restructuring of latifundist provinces, brought to nought. Their hopes had been high in the aftermath of the post-war disturbances, encouraged by an upsurge of interest for the Catholic Syndicates, rural banks and employers' organisation shown by frightened agrarians. As a result, a Federación Provincial de Sindicatos Catolicos was created in 1921, headed successively by the landowners Sebastián García Guerra and Angel Samper. It allied itself to the Confederación Nacional Católico Agraria (CNCA), an umbrella organisation most successful in Castile, and began a vigorous campaign to form new Syndicates and Rural Banks modelled on those of Fernández Santana. By 1928 a total of 40 of both types existed in the province, mostly grouped in the cereal zone. However, this apparent success disguised the degree to which many were purely paper organisations, lacking any real core of support, which led social Catholics to denounce the apathy of agrarians once again.[31] Similar disillusionment accompanied the creation

[31] On the development and problems of the organisation see issues of the provincial social Catholic magazine, Ara y Canta 15 June, 25 March 1929; Unión Patriótica, Barógrafo de un lustro pp. 91-2, 124-7; Juan José Castillo, Propietarios muy pobres (Madrid, 1979) p. 148.

of an official government organisation in 1927, the Patronato Provincial de Acción Social Agraria, also headed by García Guerrero, which had very similar aims. A year later it claimed bodies in all but three pueblos under the direction of influential local persons and all working to combat underemployment and to promote the distribution of land. Yet the impact of these patronatos locales was completely marginal, as they were dependent for their success on co-operation from agrarians which was only rarely supplied.[32] The failure of all these initiatives flowed from the growing indifference of the majority of agrarians as the threat of renewed protest receded. Pastoralists, unscathed by the events of the trienio, had the clearest reason for ignoring social Catholic schemes and rejecting calls from the Cámara Agrícola to lend support. Meanwhile, the agriculturalists would still not accept the modifications to latifundism and hence to the whole social order in Badajoz. The continued identification of rural property rights with autocracy by agrarians clearly remained at odds with any serious attempt to promote reform.

Attempts made under the dictatorship to forge a broader unity of purpose among agrarians through the creation of a political base for the regime also foundered for similar reasons. The new government satisfied the expectations of the elite for a full restoration of their authority by dissolving all existing town councils and replacing them by juntas municipales, appointed by the Civil Governor from local

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[32] On the organisation and its aims see Unión Patriótica, ibid. p. 89; 'De acción social agraria: constitución y misión de los patronatos locales' Ara y Canta 5 July 1928 and 31 August 1929. For instances of land distribution to colonos in well publicized ceremonies see Ara y Canta 20 July 1927, 25 October 1928, 5, 12 November 1928.

notables and their nominees.[33] However, having effectively reinforced caciquismo in its provincial context, the regime moved to attack the system, beginning by severing the connections with central government and administration that the discredited and excluded Liberal and Conservative Parties had provided. It was aided in this from within Badajoz by the leaders of the Cámara Agrícola, who were placed in control of the provincial administration in lieu of any other suitable candidates. They took the opportunity to attempt the formation of a monarchist movement with agrarian support through the foundation of the regime's political organisation, the Unión Patriótica (UP), in April 1924. Its executive represented all the forces in the province in favour of self-interested social and political change, including the noble Marqués de Solana, Sebastián García Guerrero of the Catholic Syndicates, Ricardo Carapeto Zembrano of the agronomical service and Juan Nieto Muñoz of the Cámara Agrícola. Yet, despite its claim to 54,544 affiliates across the entire province in 1928, the possibility for an independent life for the movement was effectively sabotaged at the local level. The caciques controlled the sections in each pueblo - as was inevitable unless UP leaders and the regime were prepared to countenance virtual revolution - and enrolled their families, friends, dependent servants, fijos and tenants into the ranks. Sincere attempts, such as those made by the powerful López de Ayala family in Mérida, actively to promote the UP programme of rural modernisation were the exception. Instead, the rule was provided by the well known traditional agrarian caciques that dominated district

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[33] Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 49-50.

leaderships, having simply adjusted their established practices to the new regime which was forced to accept the situation.[34]

The story of agrarian short-sightedness and apathy was played out against a background of the corrosive effects of an accelerating deterioration of latifundism. The initial cause was a catastrophic crisis in animal prices and production that began in the war, leading to the loss of over a half a million head between 1917 and 1921 alone.[35] In 1919 this led to the formation of an agrarian association, the Junta Provincial de Ganaderos. However, rather than a fully fledged patronal association that could unite elite interests, the organisation was purely concerned with sectional campaigns on behalf of stockbreeders. Moreover, while calling for aid to protect animal prices and modernise production through the building of an industrial abbatoir in Mérida, the Junta attacked the Cámara Agrícola as being too closely identified with cereal interests favoured by protective tariffs. The deepening of the animal/agricultural cleavage that resulted, was even recognised by the president of the organisation, the ubiquitous García Guerrero, in 1927, when he wrote that an equilibrium could be restored by '...modifying the area turned over to cereals, especially wheat, and raising the level of stockkeeping.'[36] Yet beneath this divisive clash of interests, pastoral agrarians reacted to continued crisis by furthering

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[34] Details of UP are provided by Shlomo Ben-Ami, Fascism From Above (Oxford, 1983) pp. 128, 136-42; Unión Patriótica, Barógrafo de un lustro pp. 293-316.

[35] 1,783,744 to 1,251,456 of all types according to Ministerio de Fomento, Estudio de la ganadería; Consejo Provincial de Fomento, Estadística social.

[36] Ara y Canta 5 June 1927. See also a similar article, 'El equilibrio rural' in the edition of 31 August 1927.

the extension of cerealisation into the dehesa to the detriment of sharecroppers. Beginning with the wartime boom and continuing with the recovery of agricultural prices in the mid-twenties, aparceros came under increasing pressure from commercially minded landlords who altered tenancies to force the exclusive production of cereals as a cash crop, undermining the household economy, and charging higher rents.[37] Simultaneously, agrarians began using yunteros merely to clear parcels of parkland preparatory to soil-depleting direct cultivation by gangs of labourers, themselves often unemployed herdsmen and foresters. This virtual proletarianisation of the yunteros was compounded by the beginnings of mechanisation on the cortijos which threatened their livelihood and skilled status as ploughmen.[38] As a result of these changes the precarious social balance in relations between agrarians and sharecroppers that had helped keep the dehesa largely immune from the events of 1918-20 was destroyed by the late 1920s.

Elite division, lack of organisation, and complete alienation from rural society now made a complete crisis of the agrarian order in Badajoz almost unavoidable. It was made certain when provincial landed interests helped deal a severe blow to the faltering dictatorship. This developed from proposals made by the regime in May 1928 to extend compulsory arbitration of wages and working conditions through committees of employers and workers (comités paritarios) to the southern countryside. Although it was originally intended as a means to

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[37] International Labour Organisation, 'Agrarian Conditions in Spain' Reports No. 2, 'K' 1928 pp. 4-5 on plight of provincial tenants. Ara y Canta 20 January 1928 also looks at the plight of family producers.

[38] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 79.

ensure stable labour relations - part of the dictatorship's attempt to win the support of the UGT - all sectors of agrarian opinion in Badajoz reacted in horror at this perceived attack on rural property rights. Within the province, the Cámara Agrícola joined in a national campaign organised, successfully, by the CNCA for the measures to be withdrawn.[37] Having enjoyed a broad range of support, including tariff protection for cereals and the complete suppression of strikes, agrarians now found themselves bereft of state support. With a return to the conditions of autocratic supremacy prevailing before 1923 an impossibility, agrarian defences were virtually non-existent during the transition towards a democratic Republic that was certain to be sympathetic to potentially very powerful provincial social and political forces hostile to the elite and rural order.

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[37] Ara y Canta 25 June 1928; Ben-Ami, Fascism From Above pp. 259-60, 301-2.

III. The Rural Order Transformed?: Socialism and the Republic, January-July 1931

In the sudden onslaught that swept aside agrarian autocracy in Badajoz in a few months, contributing to the wider circumstances in which the new Republic was established in Spain, the renewal of social and political protest by the rural lower orders played the most vital part. The immediate cause was an economic crisis that gripped latifundism from the winter of 1930. This developed from a reduction in world wheat prices that became a precipitous fall of 57 percent between the onset of depression in 1929 and a slight recovery in 1933. Meanwhile, the government crisis in Spain prevented any prompt response to raise tariffs and import quotas to protect internal prices, leaving cereal producers in a highly vulnerable position. Already suffering severe economic dislocation from the decline of animal breeding, all regions of Badajoz were affected by the cereal recession. Agrarians reacted by returning more marginal land to fallow and lowering costs on the estates by reducing wages and increasing unemployment for the 1930-31 season. As a result yunteros found themselves denied new lands to sharecrop, dramatically accelerating their decline in independent status. Meanwhile, day labourers found reduced opportunities for work exacerbated by heavy rains in December and January which wiped out the olive harvest, denying them a short but important period of work and precipitating a 'labour crisis'.[1] As the new year

[1] Juan Hernández Andreu, España y la crisis de 29 p. 182; 'Cuestiones Agrarias' El Correo Extremeño 28 February 1931; 'El Unico Camino' Ara y Canta 20 March 1931.

progressed municipal authorities found themselves facing a rising level of demands for work and poor relief from workers who had become used to fairly steady employment and wages in the middle years of the 1920s. Reliant on the goodwill of agrarians to provide some work on ditch digging and fencing during periods of want and dominated by the nominees of the caciques who were unwilling to raise local taxes, the authorities were unable to act decisively even if they had wished to. In March, while even the monarchist press of the province was reporting the suffering taking place in the countryside, a desperate deputation of mayors appealed in vain for funds from the Civil Governor to provide more public works.[2] In no clearer way could the bankruptcy of municipal and provincial administration - economic, moral and political - as well as the culpability of the elite have been demonstrated.

This unrelieved worsening of conditions for rural workers and their families exacerbated an accumulated discontent with the rural order that found expression in an explosive renewal of organisation, transforming provincial socialism into a true mass movement. As sociedades obreras revived and reformed unchecked they affiliated themselves to the Socialist, Federación de Trabajadores de la Tierra (FNTT). This landworkers' federation was created by the UGT in April 1930 in belated recognition of the importance of rural unionism and to spearhead a Socialist propaganda campaign throughout the

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[2] For reports on the crisis and limited responses to it see, El Correo Extremeño 6, 7, 11 January, 7, 14, 15, 18 March 1931.

south.[3] Although figures vary, a clear pattern of expansion was evident. FNTT sources suggest that beginning from a rump of sociedades in twelve of the larger pueblos of the Vegas and Barros in early 1930 they spread across the province to reach seventy-one sites in October 1931 during the early months of the Republic, and eventually to 110 in February 1932.[4] At the same time as the drive to organise gathered momentum the Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras took the opportunity to modernise the provincial organisational apparatus. Regional organisers were based in each cabeza del partido to provide a link with every sociedad. The membership claimed for sociedades rose from 1,776 in 1930 to 18,908 in October 1931 and eventually 36,673 in 1932 according to the UGT/FNTT figures, and reached 44,685 in February 1933 according to provincial figures.[5] As always, it is difficult to judge what the exact significance of such figures really was. They certainly overstated the numbers of permanently

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[3] Paloma Biglino, El socialismo español pp. 294, 300-8. FNTT, Memoria: II congreso (Madrid, 1932) gives details of Badajoz representation at founding.

[4] Figures in Biglino, ibid. p. 528. These figures relate to sociedades registered with the provincial federation. See also, Paul Preston, The Coming of the Spanish Civil War 2nd. ed. (London, 1978) p.19. For rather different figures see those provided in 'Registro de Sociedades Obreras de la Junta Agraria, febrero 1933', Archivo de la Diputación Provincial de Badajoz (henceforth ADPB). This gives founding dates as,

pre-1930	22
1930	14
1931	69
1932	30
to Feb. 1933	3
no date	1.
Total	138

[5] Figures in Paloma Biglino, ibid. p. 528; 'Registro de Sociedades Obreras', ADPB. A 'Censo Co-operativo Electoral de la Provincia de Badajoz' made at the end of 1929 suggests higher figures, though its reliability is doubtful, see Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Badajoz (henceforth BOPB) 4 June 1930.

participating members as sociedades seem to have inflated the figures by including every person who ever paid dues. Equally, the actual level of community support in practice would have been much greater - if for no other reason than the inability to pay the standard membership fees of 25 céntimos a month excluded many. In any event the broad aspirations of the sociedades, aptly summed up in the founding declaration of 'Agrícola Adelante' of Magacela as that of 'raising the stature of labour in Badajoz', steadily attracted a far wider range of support, both socially and geographically, than had ever been achieved before in Badajoz.[6]

Day labourers made up the overwhelming majority of people passing through the new casas del pueblo, attending meetings and drinking in the make-shift bars. Not surprisingly the areas of most intensive organisation, where the rural labourers predominated, were once again the cereal estates of the Vegas and Barros, with their populace closely packed into ghettos, and their tradition as the heartland of the Socialist movement in Badajoz. However, from the end of the dictatorship the sociedades also spread decisively into the dehesa regions with their more mixed agricultural communities. They were often based initially in the cabezas del partido from which outlying villages were organised as circumstances permitted. Here yunteros made an especially significant contribution - though of course they worked in other areas as well - standing alongside the jornaleros for the first time. Likewise, herdsmen, declining and proletarianised like yunteros, were

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[6] Libro de Actas Archivo de la Guerra Civil: Político-Social. Serie 'U' Extremadura (henceforth AGCS: PSU) leg. 13.

swept up into the sociedades.[7] The inclusion of these last two groups was significant as it ensured greater solidarity amongst rural workers. Moreover the provincial Socialist movement was confirmed during the transition as a community-based alliance of different groups by the inclusion of urban workers. In small pueblos the handful of town artisans (blacksmiths, carpenters, labourers) were usually fully integrated into the ranks of the local sociedad obrera.[8] In the larger towns where their numbers were greater artisans had separate organisations linked to UGT federations other than the FNTT, though usually sharing a casa del pueblo and overall direction with their agricultural counterparts. In the only survey to give details, made in October 1931, 40 unions were listed for non-agricultural workers - mainly in food, shoe-making, construction, railways, metalworking, urban transport, and paper. They formed a substantial minority of 8002 persons of the provincial total in the 1931 survey.[9] Though absolute numbers were small, this represented a high proportion of the

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[7] Register of sociedades obreras, ADPB, ibid. and the registros de socios showing the mix of jornaleros, yunteros and ganaderos for 'Renovación Social' of Esparragosa de la Serena, AGCS: PSU legs. 2, 10.

[8] See for instance the 'registros de socios' of Esparragosa de la Serena, ibid.

[9] For an individual example see 'Registro de Socios de Obreros Panaderos "La Espiga" de Villanueva de la Serena', AGCS: PSU leg. 37. Manuel Contreras, El PSOE en la II República: organización e ideologia (Madrid, 1981) p. 114. gives results of UGT survey.

Industry	Unions	Members	Industry	Unions	Members
Food	4	203	Entertainment	4	34
Admin.	1	3	Barbers	1	22
Railways	1	1,679	Waiters	2	101
Graphics	1	70	Cooks	2	39
Metals	2	74	Commerce	2	60
Paper	1	90	Tanning	2	174
Urban Trans.	2	495	Construction	16	1,459
Various	18	3,519	Total		8,022

total numbers of workers of this type in the province. Almost all were involved in trades or occupations, either independently or in small enterprises that served the agricultural community. Indeed many combined their 'town' labour with work in the fields, especially during the harvest periods. Their significance was further enhanced by the prominence of artisans and town workers in the leaderships of the sociedades obreras.

At the local level the surviving records of sociedades for the 1930s show that the juntas directivas, which ran their day to day affairs from the flourishing casas del pueblo, were usually composed of a handful of active militants.[10] Many seem to have been committed local men who retained their membership of the UGT or PSOE during the dictatorship and the general abandonment of organisation, and now reaped their reward. One such was Nicolas de Pablo Hernández who joined the UGT at 17 years old in Olivenza, becoming secretary of the regional organisation and finally on 14 April 1931, head of the Federación Provincial.[11] In other cases leading militants were from the new generation which had not participated in the trienio, and were represented strongly in the Socialist Youth movement. They seized the opportunity to revive the syndical struggle in the province, as the close surveillance of sociedades and ban on strikes that had existed under the

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[10] See Libros de Actas of 'Renovación Social' of Esparragosa de la Serena, 'La Estrella' of Don Benito, 'El Triunfo' of Zalamea de la Serena, 'Agrícola Adelante' of Magacela, 'Unión Obrera' of Quintana de la Serena, AGCS: PSU legs. 1, 3, 4, 13, 18, 33. See also the description of Juan Carlos Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 57.

[11] For an account of the life of Pablo Hernández see, Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo pp.4-6.

dictatorship became increasingly ineffective.[12] Sporadic local strikes occurred throughout the early months of 1931 in order to force reluctant agrarians and authorities to recognise the right of workers to organise, to make representations and to negotiate. This was accompanied by a populist campaign waged by the Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras accusing agrarians and town councils of speculation and graft in the carrying out of public works.[13] Community action of this kind which rallied support to the sociedades, and which avoided damaging direct confrontations with agrarians and the Civil Guard before organisations were sufficiently strong enough, was the predominating tactic at this time of great uncertainty.

The crucial corollary to this careful preparation of syndical organisation was the mobilisation of political opposition to the established order. Politics was still seen in many ways as an extension, albeit a necessary one, of the struggles of the sociedades in the province. Certainly only a minority of those involved in the FNTT-dominated sociedades obreras of Badajoz were members of the agrupaciones socialistas of the Socialist Party (PSOE). Even in 1932, at a high point of party membership, Badajoz only counted 6,520 militants, though there were 75 established branches.[14] The reason for the low number of members but high number of branches was that within the casa del pueblo local loyalties focussed on the sociedad obrera. Often only the leading

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[12] On the dictatorship period see Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, ibid. pp. 10-1; Paloma Biglino, El socialismo español pp. 267-88.
[13] El Correo Extremeño 14 March 1931 condemned the campaign.
[14] Contreras, El PSOE p. 99 gives figures.

figures were party members - the juntas directivas of the sociedad and agrupación were frequently composed of the same people - who provided the minimal organisation nec essary to run local political affairs.[15] In turn that part of the community which the casa del pueblo represented supported the banner of the PSOE when called upon to do so in elections and demonstrations, blurring any distinction between 'economic' and 'political' action. Most importantly, the lesson had been learned from the trienio and restrictions of the dictatorship that political action was necessary to achieve any alteration to the rural order. Whilst the landed elite could passively rely on the state and the support of the forces of public order and the local administration, it was difficult for the sociedades obreras to achieve more than only limited and temporary advances. Thus the renewal of the sociedades was accompanied and supported by the spreading of Socialist agitation and ideas.

Until the fall of Primo in 1930, the restrictions of the dictatorship permitted only limited political activity, whilst strikes and syndical action were effectively outlawed. Under the leadership of the veteran Narciso Vásquez Torres - the 'father of socialism' in Badajoz - the Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz began to organise speaking tours denouncing the dictatorship and Socialist collaboration, and making calls for a new regime.[16] At one such meeting Vásquez expressed the perhaps cynical view that,

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[15] See the actas of 'Agrupación Socialista de Renovación Social', AGCS: PSU leg. 1.

[16] Vásquez Torres was the most important spokesman for socialism in Badajoz and the organiser of the earliest agrupaciones; he stood in municipal and parliamentary elections. On his life and activity during the transition see

> 'The working-class has become convinced...that it is not possible to continue along their road in favour of change within the Monarchy. A democratic regime is needed.'[17]

This was very much in line with the thinking of some Socialist leaders at a national level, particularly Gabriel Morón, who were aware of the nature of rural society in the south.[18] As an immediate step towards altering the social conditions of the fields and pueblos which had been notably worsening under the dictatorship, it was necessary to do away with the monarchist system and its caciques that favoured agrarians. It was on this basis that a republican-Socialist alliance was formed in Badajoz which paved the way for the political transition to the Republic.

Republicanism in Badajoz was represented by a provincial committee of Alianza Republicana, formed in 1926 under the direction of the 'historic' republican, Narciso Vásquez Lemus.[19] This brought together the different groups in the province - still usually small circles of individuals rather than formal parties, often found only in the largest pueblos - who had kept republican ideas alive during the dictatorship. As the restrictions of the regime began to break down, alienation from the Monarchist social order and the control of the caciques could find expression to the benefit of the

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the report, Fundación Pablo Iglesias (henceforth FPI) AH-23-8. See also Federación Socialista Provincial, EL fascismo p. 11-12; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 57.

[17] La Voz Extremeña 31 March 1931.

[18] See especially G. Morón, El Partido Socialista ante la realidad política de España (Madrid, 1929) and P. Preston, The Coming pp. 10-11.

[19] Lemus' commitment to republicanism stretched back to the First Republic. On the national organisation, see Shlomo Ben-Ami, The Origins of the Second Republic in Spain (Oxford, 1978) pp. 68-76.

republicans as well as the Socialists in Badajoz. Whilst it is impossible to put any figures to this flowering of the republican movement, an important feature of it was the involvement of previously uncommitted, often influential figures. A typical and important example was Diego Hidalgo, a writer and lawyer born in Los Santos, who became involved as an Alianza representative in Madrid in August 1930 at the request of Vásquez Lemus.[20] He became a leading figure in the Radical Party in Badajoz and in early 1931 founded a newspaper, La Voz Extremeña, to support the Alianza.[21]

The provincial Radicals seem particularly to have benefitted from such recruits to republicanism. The party was already the best established republican force in the province and was ripe for expansion. Originally founded in 1916 as a 'modern' party, rather than a nostalgic remnant from nineteenth-century republicanism, its roots were firmly in the provincial petite bourgeoisie of small businesmen and professionals not directly connected to landed wealth. The Cámara de Comercio and Cámera de Propiedad Urbana were their strongholds and resource.[22] Many of the leading figures had interests outside Badajoz - particularly journalists and lawyers with practices in Madrid such as Hidalgo and Salazar

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[20] See letters from Vásquez Lemus to Hidalgo (14 August 1930) and his reply (13 September 1930), Archivo Diego Hidalgo (henceforth ADH). On Hidalgo in general see, Elsa López y otros, Diego Hidalgo: memoria de un tiempo dificil (Madrid, 1986) and Concha Muñoz Tinoco, Diego Hidalgo (Badajoz, 1986).

[21] On the founding of La Voz see a letter from Hidalgo to Salazar Alonso 3 March 1931, ADH. At the same time La Libertad de Badajoz, which had been a fierce critic of the dictatorship, was bought by a landowner who turned it into a defender of agrarian interests, leading to the defection of many journalists to the new paper.

[22] See for instance the extensive correspondence between the heads of the Cámaras and Diego Hidalgo in ADH.

Alonso - and links with the wider world. In general, the Radicals, more than the other provincial republican grouplets, articulated the frustrations with the regime felt by people not disposed towards socialism. By the 1930s the numbers of small manufacturers and businessmen, although never a very large group, had expanded with the growth in size of pueblos and their markets. This had been particularly marked after the war and under the dictatorship when favouritism towards landowners and big business, especially in taxes and tariffs, prepared them to embrace republicanism. The Radicals projected a critique of the established order that focussed on the relative lack of opportunity and security that these respectable people chafed against. Whilst they might have some local status, they could never challenge the position of agrarians and their control. So when the Radicals concentrated on the unfairness and distorting effects of usury, corruption and the rule of the caciques under the Monarchy, they struck a popular chord.[23]

Radicals were correspondingly prominent in the contribution of Alianza Republicana to the disintegration of the Monarchist regime within Badajoz. Following the resignation of Primo in January 1930 and the easing of restrictions in the ensuing confusion, the Alianza began a campaign in the province. In February it sponsored a series of meetings by Alejandro Lerroux, head of the Radical Party, ending in a packed rally in the bullring in the provincial capital which also included Manuel Azaña, leader of Acción

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[23] See Partido Republicano Radical, El libro de oro del Partido Republicano Radical 1864-1934 (Madrid, 1934) pp. 389-91.

Republicana, on the sp eaker's rostrum.[24] Attempts were also made to set up committees in individual pueblos and to encourage propaganda activities.[25] The themes of anti-monarchism and anti-corruption, common to the republican opposition across Spain, were mixed with appeals to small proprietors, both urban and rural, within Badajoz. Within the Alianza this growing success was accompanied by tentative overtures to the provincial Socialists. An ambiguous relationship between republicanism and socialism had long existed in Badajoz, seen in previous periods of temporary collaboration to oppose the caciques in elections which occurred amidst general mutual wariness. Now expediency suggested that a minimal co-operation to ensure the fall of the Monarchy and a transfer to a Republic was called for. The formation of the San Sebastian pact in August 1930 as a national alliance of the republican and Socialist movements provided a further incentive for some similar arrangement at the provincial level. Shortly afterwards a version of this agreement to campaign for a Republic was agreed in Badajoz between Alianza Republicana and the provincial Socialist movement. Any inconsistencies between the parties were submerged beneath the vague affirmation on the need for a Republic, making clear that this was never more than an alliance of convenience. Pedro Rubio, the leading figure of the Socialist Youth in Badajoz even made a public pronouncement to this end, remarking that, 'We have not fused

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[24] See Archivo Histórico Nacional: Ministerio de Gobernación Serie A. (henceforth AHN: MGA) legajo. 45 'Actos celebrados en provincias por republicanos'.
[25] See the activities of Hidalgo in this regard, letter to Roman Calderón 22 October 1930 ADH.

with the republicans in order to create a single party. One is treating with a circumstantial collaboration in order to contribute to the institution of a Republic'.[26] Even so, this somewhat negative unity did provide a clear focus of opposition to the established order.

The gathering momentum of the opposition campaign was not seriously checked by the provincial authorities. Newspaper censorship was perhaps the most restrictive measure which remained in force. Otherwise, only sporadic attempts were made to prevent or disrupt republican and Socialist organisation and meetings. Lack of an orchestrated policy to combat the rise of protest was evidence of the degree to which confusion reigned in both Madrid and Badajoz following the fall of the dictatorship and the difficulty of establishing a new government to preserve the Monarchy. The only result of local initiatives by mayors and Civil Guards to close down the casas del pueblo or break up gatherings to hear speakers was to fuel opposition determination and give evidence to their claims about the iniquities of the Monarchist system in the countryside. When the 12 April 1931 municipal elections were announced they were accepted in Badajoz, as elsewhere in Spain, as an opportunity to choose between a Monarchy and a Republic.[27] Any uncertainties within the anti-monarchist coalition about the correct strategy to adopt in order to create a Republic were immediately solved. It was this electoral mobilisation that finally broke down the apathy and de-politicisation that had allowed caciquismo to function.

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[26] La Voz Extremeña 1 April 1931.
[27] See the editorial, 'A los electores', taking this point of view El Correo Extremeño 12 April 1931.

In the face of rising opposition, concern about the threat to the established order mounted focussed in particular on the provincial Socialist movement rather than the republicans. The monarchist paper, El Correo Extremeño, owned by the prensa católica, was at the forefront in pointing out the dangerous situation developing in the aftermath of the dictatorship. In its editorials the lack of unity and purpose in the monarchist camp was contrasted with the strengthening organisation of the Socialists 'which is the only group totally defined and adjusted to an iron discipline of organisation'.[26] El Correo Extremeño argued the need for 'true political parties' to defend the Monarchist cause, identified as a guarantor of social stability, and suggested that,

> '...Spanish politics after the dictatorship reveals how only the old cacique organisations on one side, and the turbulent conglomeration of revolutionary forces on the other, are preparing for the struggle.'[27]

No well organised monarchist movement had ever really existed in Badajoz, where the old restoration parties had largely remained an umbrella under which the caciques had manoeuvred. With the end of the dictatorship the old links between provincial caciquismo and Madrid via the Ministry of the Interior that had harnessed the control of local notables to the state no longer existed. In Badajoz whilst the caciques themselves remained in situ the web of loyalties and alliances within the province which had underpinned 'grand' caciquismo had largely disappeared through disuse, leaving only the localised and often competitive aspects of the system behind.

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[26] El Correo Extremeño 14 January 1931.
[27] 'Como deben formarse los verdaderos partidos políticos', El Correo Extremeño 4 January 1931.

Despite the need for unity - in the face of 'an inevitable reality' in the opinion of El Correo Extremeño - there was no clear basis on which the remnants of the restoration parties could come together.[30] They had disintegrated into small grouplets supporting personal factions around individual caciques, and dividing over what form of monarchist regime could be created after the discrediting of the dictatorship. In addition to the Liberals and Conservatives, disgruntled monarchists formed an 'agrupación centrista' which supported the stand of the Catholic Miguel Maura and the Catalan Francisco Cambó in favour of a conservative Republic.[31] Even further antagonism was caused by the transformation of Unión Patriótica into Unión Monárquica de Badajoz, under the continued leadership of the Marqués de Solana. Its aim was to combine the defence of the monarchy with the legacy of the dictatorship. The reformed Liberal and Conservative factions rejected the UM and its support for dictatorship, although many caciques had themselves only just made a tactical withdrawal from the UP.[32] In contrast to the republican-Socialist coalition in the province which tended to present a Republican regime as the answer to all social and political problems, no real adjustments were made in the monarchist camp to prepare for a return to elections. As El Correo Extremeño pointed out, an appealing programme was needed to accompany the increasingly hollow sounding denunciations of the coming revolution that

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[30] 'La transformación de los partidos al impulso de una realidad inevitable', El Correo Extremeño 14 January 1931.
[31] See El Correo Extremeño, La Vanguardia de Badajoz 21 March 1931.
[32] Shlomo Ben-Ami, Origins p.185.

emanated from monarchist groups. The paper further revealed its connections with the social Catholic movement in Badajoz by urging the adoption of its characteristic ideas for some small scale land redistribution to create conservative peasants, and for 'a labour of peace, of love, of humanity and of justice' to win over the populace.[33] In this it pointed to the responsibilities of agrarians as a moving force, in effect arguing the need for them to act politically and socially as a unified class in defence of the established order.

Reacting to Socialist and republican attacks on the corruption and oligarchism of the established order, in repeated calls for reassessment El Correo Extremeño warned the landed elite that they had sacrificed social support over the years and that the vestiges of the old caciquismo, far from being a force to preserve the established rural order, were now the focus of a discontent that could sweep it away. A characteristic plea for renovation to meet the evident crisis of conservatism stated that,

> '...perhaps in no other [province] has there been so lively a longing for liberating oneself from the ancient practices of the old caciquismo, that is trying to revive today. It is urgent here, more so than in other provinces, to form a great regional party, that has as the basis of its programme the study and solution of the great economic and social problems of Extremadura...The time of the old castes and the despotic empire of the feudal lords is passed. There are in the people of Extremadura yearnings for liberation, a vague opinion, but widespread, that abominates the old practices and that shall lend great force

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[33] See the editorial 'Mas vale prevenir que combatir', El Correo Extremeño 21 January 1931, and similar exhortations, 5 March 1931.

> to persons that have the valiance to undertake this saving task.'[34]

Such frankness was obviously a recognition of the immediate urgency of the crisis for conservatives who saw the possible fall of the cacique and the Monarchist system as the beginnings of disaster. However, most agrarians clung to the familiar and trusted mechanisms of autocracy, even during a bewilderingly rapid period of rural upheaval which subverted the conditions of isolation and apathetic apoliticism in the pueblos that had previously allowed the system to work in their favour. Though the rural order placed considerable instruments of force into its hands, the elite simply lacked sufficient social and political resources within the province to defend itself; nor was there any prospect of outside assistance as had occurred in the crisis of 1918-20.

Nevertheless, in Badajoz the transition to the Republic took place, according to Diego Hidalgo, amidst,

> 'a terrible struggle between the republican-Socialists and the others...The atmosphere is charged as never before; the republican ideal has spread like a fire; the same in the largest populations as in the smallest pueblos, everyone is in a state of tension'.[35]

The republican-Socialist committees set up across the province were well placed to fight for the 1,861 council seats involved in the municipal elections and mounted a populist campaign.[36] With the lifting of censorship at the end of March the Socialist newssheet, La Verdad Social, and the Republican

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[34] El Correo Extremeño 'Los partidos regionales' 10 March 1931.
[35] Letter to Marcelino Domingo, 9 April 1931. ADH.
[36] On the preparations of the republican-Socialist alliance in the province see La Vanguardia de Badajoz 9, 16 March 1931.

weekly and daily papers, La Vanguardia de Badajoz and La Voz Extremeña, began to publish unhindered. In the provincial capital the committee of Alianza Republicana and the Federación Provincial Socialista undertook an active campaign involving both national and local speakers who packed meetings in the bullring to propose the Republic.[37] Elsewhere a similarly organised and effective electoral campaign of meetings and propaganda took place, in many areas for the first time.

However, the pattern of activities across the province revealed some differences between the various parties involved. The presence of the republicans was more important in the larger pueblos that had greater proportion of professionals and businessmen. This is not to say that the republicans were interested in appealing exclusively to this type of audience, which in any case was too small to have more than a marginal impact on the election on its own. Attempts were made to broaden their appeal, particularly by Radical speakers such as Diego Hidalgo and Salazar Alonso, who toured the larger towns of the province making strenuous attempts through promises of rural credit and security of tenure to win the support of small-holders and tenants.[38] Likewise there were strong pleas in support of the economic development of the region, with autonomy from Madrid based financiers and markets, as well as freedom from internal domination with the 'sweeping away, once and for all, of rural caciquismo'.[39]

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[37] See El Correo Extremeño 21 March 1931 on the launching of the pro-republican campaign in Badajoz.
[38] On the Radical campaign see the reports in La Voz Extremeña 1-12 April 1931.
[39] See La Vanguardia de Badajoz 16 March, 6 April 1931.

However, some aspects of republicanism such as anti-clericalism and anti-militarism were played down for fear of losing the support of Catholics. It was Alianza Republicana which took the leading role in the thirty big public meetings, sponsored by the coalition in towns such as Badajoz, Mérida, Don Benito, Almendralejo, Montijo and Villanueva de la Serena, reported on by the Civil Governor before voting day.[40] However, the republicans' prominence tended to disguise the importance of the Socialists in breaking new and difficult ground in the campaign.

The Federación Provincial Socialista appeared to play a secondary role to the republicans partly out of choice. Like the national leadership, Narciso Vásquez Torres saw the Republic as essentially a responsibilty of the republican parties, albeit one which the Socialists should support with their organisation and votes. However, the reality was that in many smaller pueblos in Badajoz the republicans had only a minimal presence, if that. Especially in those areas where rural workers of various types predominated in the pueblos, often in the remoter regions of the province, the Socialist movement was the dominant, if not unique, organised opposition and consequently bore the brunt of the campaign. Whilst the penetration of the Socialists into the countryside was low key, it did reveal the strong support that was building up amongst the rural working class. The Socialist Juan Simeón Vidarte described just such a situation during his speaking tour in the twenty pueblos surrounding his native Llerena in the far south of the province. At meetings he found little

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[40] 'Informe al Ministerio de Gobernación' 11 April 1931. AHN: MGA leg. 30.

enthusiasm for republicanism, though strong support for a Republic. Yet even in pueblos still without their own organisation, '..those masses were Socialists, with a magnificent spirit of struggle'.[41] In such circumstances the condemnation of landowners and the iniquities of latifundism and an unjust social order favoured by Socialist speakers - particularly those like Nicolás de Pablo linked to the syndical movement - struck a deep chord.[42] Such meetings took place across the province, extending both Socialist support and building up the network of organisation in those areas where frequently the residual influence of the caciques remained at its greatest.

In the larger towns and pueblos, typical of the Vegas and Barros regions but also encompassing most cabezas del partido, better communications, readily available newspapers, more people, and a greater social mix did not allow for the close attention of the cacique or surveillance of the Civil Guard. Independent life and ideas had thoroughly broken through in such towns to the benefit of the republicans and Socialists, making the established methods of the cacique less effective, if not obsolete, and real electoral competition a reality. While agrarians could rely on the loyalty of their permanent estate workers, it was more difficult than ever to apply pressure on the rest of the workforce. Threats of loss of employment or credit, coercion by estate guards and Civil Guards and bribery were less effective, even in the smallest pueblos, in the face of organised opposition. Of more utility

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[41] Juan Simeón Vidarte, No queriamos p. 367.
[42] For the best coverage of Socialist meetings, see La Libertad de Badajoz, La Voz Extremeña 1-14 April 1931.

to caciques was the control of the local electoral census which was used to try to exclude hostile voters. This was carried out by creating barriers such as literacy tests and property qualifications which worked in the main to remove the rural working class from the roll. Naturally it was more difficult to employ these practices in places where the census was open to scrutiny and challenge. Even so only 166,751 men were eligible to vote in the municipal elections.[43] The final, most important, means of electoral control was the use of article 29 of the constitution which allowed for the automatic election of candidates who were unopposed. Even before voting day, 59 pueblos all small and out in the countryside, were declared to be affected, 'electing' 536 monarchist candidates.[44] In some localities the effective suppression of free elections meant that pro-republican meetings were more significant in terms of political consciousness raising than in immediate electoral effect. By favouring the non-working-class part of the populace, the importance of the republicans within the anti-monarchist coalition was accentuated because their voters were more likely to be included in the census.

Far from showing the strength of the social and political defences supporting the Monarchist State in rural society in Badajoz, the use of corruption showed the degree to which only the connivance of the local and provincial administrations now kept the caciques in business. Although corruption gave the

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[43] Anuario Estadístico de España 1932 gives figures for census. There were 4009 candidates proclaimed in all.
[44] El Correo Extremeño 11 April 1931 gives a detailed list. Anuario Estadístico de España (Madrid, 1932) provides a much lower figure of 314 monarchists elected under article 29, though no similar breakdown. As both sources gave the same overall electoral results it seems likely that El Correo Extremeño is more correct.

conservative camp a great head start, it was no substitute for unity. At provincial level the lack of monarchist cooperation, bemoaned by El Correo Extremeño, left the Unión Monárquica, the Centrists and the Liberals and Conservatives all fighting separate campaigns.[45] No coherent monarchist campaign was possible, with only two meetings in major towns, Badajoz and Mérida, recorded by the Civil Governor in the period before voting.[46] Indeed Mérida was the only place where anything approaching a 'modern' electoral campaign was fought at all. Here a 'dynastic coalition' was formed to combat a well organised and active republican-Socialist alliance. This was supported by the local landowners' circle headed by the López de Ayala family, and produced a uniform list of candidates and made efforts to gain the support of the Rural Banks and Catholic Syndicates of the area.[47] Mérida was unique amongst major towns in the relative coherence and vigour that was achieved there. In other places individualist monarchist responses to the elections predominated for want of the kind of overall direction and basic aims the republican-Socialist alliance enjoyed.

Almost everywhere else, the picture was of hastily cobbled together local coalitions, competition between different monarchist factions, and an overall lack of campaign meetings and propaganda. The state of old, established rivalries amongst local notables largely determined the circumstances in which Monarchist candidates stood for election. In this situation party affiliations were even more

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[45] Ben-Ami, Origins pp. 219-20.
[46] 'Informe al Ministerio de Gobernación' 11 April 1931. AHN: MGA leg. 30.
[47] El Correo Extremeño 1, 4 April 1931 describes this.

incoherent, particularly within the Liberals and Conservatives, and often served more as convenient labels differentiating local factions than as defined ideological preferences. Thus a bewildering array of monarchist candidates was presented, ranging from unión-monarquicos, centristas, monárquicos, monárquicos-independientes, and constitucionalistas, to conservadores and liberales with their constituent factions of pidalistas, garcía-prietistas, romanonistas, albarranistas, and lopistas. Coalition seems to have been easiest in small pueblos with a handful of prominent notables who could agree to bury their differences in recognition of the general threat to their authority. As these were also most likely to be places where article 29 could be utilized to prevent a vote, this meant simply dividing up the council seats amongst the nominees put forward. Such was the situation in Arroyo de San Servan, where a local correspondent wrote in relief to El Correo Extremeño that '..happily all differences have been buried...and consequently no elections will take place.'[46] In other more populous areas where elections actually occurred, relations amongst caciques were often permanently strained and divided, and monarchist candidates could find themselves running against each other, as well as against Socialists and republicans. An outstanding example of such an internal weakening of the monarchist camp occurred in the district around Almendralejo. Here the old style cacique, the Marqués de Valderrey, had his candidates opposed by other monarchists in some pueblos.[47]

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[46] El Correo Extremeño 7 April 1931.
[47] El Correo Extremeño 15 April 1931.

In the event the actual elections passed off without major incident, apart from accusations of bribery, coercion and vote rigging by the republican-Socialist coalition against some landowners and their agents.[50] The results revealed the extent to which the grip of the caciques had been weakened by an active organised opposition. Although monarchist candidates took a narrow majority of 1,025 out of 1,861 seats, the use of article 29 was clearly crucial. The opposition alliance obtained a lesser figure of 836 seats, with the republicans receiving 484 and the Socialists 352. Other candidates, mainly independents and centrists, gained 147 seats.[51] However, the most revealing indication of the degree to which the political defences of the old order had broken down was the geographical distribution of council posts. Monarchist controlled councils, numbering approximately 100, of which 59 were obtained under article 29, were found in the pueblos with less than 5,000 inhabitants, usually in more isolated positions in the peripheral countryside. The warping effects of article 29 and the electoral census were evident in that only 20 percent of the electorate were in article 29 areas (producing a third of all councils seats) whilst 80 percent voted freely, albeit for only two thirds of the seats. The remainder of republican-Socialist dominated municipalities were overwhelmingly in the larger pueblos concentrated into the provincial heartland along the River Guadiana and the fertile clay regions, though also including most cabezas del partido.[52] This gave the

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[50] See La Voz Extremeña 14, 15 April 1931.
[51] Anuario Estadístico de España (Madrid, 1932) gives overall results. For more detail see, El Correo Extremeño 14 April 1931; La Libertad 14, 15 April 1931.
[52] La Vanguardia de Badajoz 14 April 1931 provides a good analysis.

republicans and Socialists control of the most important population and administrative centres, including the capital, and effective strategic domination of the province. Consequently they were well placed, with the results barely announced, to react quickly to the news of the declaration of the Republic in Madrid.

News of the inauguration of the Republic reached an already expectant population of Badajoz, initiating displays of popular enthusiasm across the province which rivalled those to be found anywhere else in Spain. In the provincial capital on the afternoon of 14 April a crowd had already gathered on the Campo de San Juan, an open space just inside the town walls, when the Republic was announced from the offices of La Voz Extremeña. By 5 p.m. the mass of people was 'extraordinary', swollen by new groups who clapped and cheered the change of regime. A predominantly working-class demonstration then marched up to the cathedral square, with the flags of workers' societies and portraits of Pablo Iglesias and Narciso Vásquez Torres prominently displayed. Moments later the flag of the Republic was unfurled from the balcony of the town hall, whilst the municipal band played the 'Marseillaise' and 'Himno de Riego'. The demonstration then wound its way through the narrow streets, claiming the whole town for the Republic. Finally at 7 'O'clock a further march took place, which ended in a political meeting at the Puerta de las Palmas. Part of the crowd wanted to storm the San Cristobal prison to free a republican prisoner of the ill-fated Jaca rising, but were dissuaded from doing so by Narciso Vásquez Torres who was one of the orators present. Wisely, the

military governor kept the troops in their barracks throughout the day and the police and Civil Guard stayed in theirs. The Civil Governor and mayor were likewise seized by inertia, awaiting instructions from Madrid, as the Republic was declared around them in the streets.[53] In similar scenes elsewhere the workers' ghettos emptied onto the streets to welcome the new regime, whilst the forces of law and order stood aside and the local administration remained paralysed. Demonstrations occurred complete with bands and flags - both the socialist red and republican tricolour - in places as far apart as Cheles, Jerez de los Caballeros, Montijo, Mérida, Olivenza, and Cabeza del Buey.[54] Simeón Vidarte participated in typical scenes in Llerena, where he announced the Republic to a cheering, flag-waving crowd from the balcony of the town hall whilst the Civil Guards stayed at home. The following day he took 'symbolic' control of the local administration, then went on to repeat the same actions in the surrounding district, passing through Azuaga, Berlanga, Granja de Torrehermosa, and finally Ahillones, which was prized as the centre of the 'fiefdom of the Maeso family'.[55]

As the coalition took control of municipal councils and the provincial administration, popular enthusiasm for change which had helped sustain the anti-monarchist campaign was given strong expression. Its scope was widenened even further

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[53] El Correo Extremeño, La Libertad de Badajoz, La Voz Extremeña 15 April 1931; La Vanguardia 13 April 1931. Also see the eyewitness account, E. Santos, 'El secretario': revelaciones sobre la Guerra Civil en Badajoz (Badajoz, 1984) pp. 13-5.

[54] See the reports in El Correo Extremeño, La Libertad de Badajoz 15 to 22 April 1931; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 57 describes the situation in Montijo.

[55] Simeón Vidarte, No queríamos, pp. 373-4.

in early June when elections were re-run in 40 'article 29' pueblos where the influence of the caciques was considered to have prevented an open contest; 36 passed into coalition hands.[56] When opening the first session of the new Diputación Provincial as president, Narciso Vásquez Torres bitter ly condemned the dictatorship and promised a new era of public administration in Badajoz. The new mayor of Badajoz, the republican Rodríguez Machin, announced at the first meeting that, 'The success of the municipal labour that we have to realise shall be interpreting faithfully the desires of the popular classes'. Elsewhere similar sentiments were expressed, often in front of large and enthusiastic crowds, drawing a distinction between the closed, anti-political administration of the Monarchy and caciquismo and the open era that had come with the Republic.[57] Even so the undefined aims of the republican-Socialist coalition for reshaping Badajoz meant that the direction of change was unclear. Certainly, strong desires to overturn the work of the past did not mean that any consensus existed as to how exactly a Republican administration should act or to what ends.

The symbolic destruction of the old order and the encouragement of popular rituals with a strong political content were amongst the first acts of republican-Socialist councils. Although not in themselves great changes to the previously established order of rural society, they were

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[56] La Voz Extremeña, El Correo Extremeño 2 June 1931.
[57] Actas de la Diputación de la Provincia de Badajoz (henceforth ActDPB) 21 April 1931; Actas del Ayuntamiento de Badajoz (henceforth ActAB) 15 April 1931. Reports of other councils see, La Voz Extremeña 17, 18, 19, 21, 25 April 1931; El Correo Extremeño 17, 18, 19 April 1931; La Vanguardia de Badajoz 20 April 1931.

viewed with horror by monarchists and the Church as direct challenges to tradition. Most basic of these actions was the flying of republican tricolours and red flags over municipal buildings; flag raising was often accompanied by gleeful announcements, such as that in one pueblo proclaiming 'we are the masters now'.[56] In Arroyo de San Servan there was an even more pointed display, when an effigy of a prominent local cacique was buried in a mock ceremony as a sign of the death of his influence in the pueblo.[57] Councils also indulged in frantic searches to find the names of suitable heroes of the new Republic after which to rename the streets. An even more direct expression of the rule of the masses was official support for popular demonstrations and celebrations linked with the Republic. After the fiestas of the immediate change of regime, 1 May 1931 was the first such occasion when this occurred. May Day holidays were declared across the province by councils which gave food and lent municipal bands for parades and open air meetings with republican and Socialist speakers. That these celebrations linked both the Republic and the workers' day - very explicitly when Socialist speakers were involved - was not lost on local agrarians. Indeed the Federación Provincial de Trabajadores presented a petition calling for social legislation and comités paritarios to be extended to the province.[60] Nor could the Church fail to notice that such displays usurped the place of Catholic processions and religious holidays in pueblo life. Indeed in

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[56] La Voz Extremeña 7 December 1931.
[57] La Voz Extremeña 10 June 1931.
[60] In particular a 12,000 strong crowd was addressed in the Capital, whilst Hidalgo spoke Los Santos to a large gathering. La Voz Extremeña 3, 5, 6 May 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 3,5 May 1931.

some cases casas del pueblo used the occasion to proclaim provocatively that they now considered the influence of both priest and agrarians to be at an end.

Republican and Socialist councillors were largely united in impressing the popular character of the Republic on the province, but proved to be far less so in the face of the economic and social crisis in the countryside and towns. Appeals for action to improve conditions began immediately, sponsored in particular by casas del pueblo which could now look to Socialist councillors to support them. Unemployment was clearly the most pressing problem, and groups of workers in paro forzoso gathered outside town halls across the province calling for work and aid.[61] This was also linked in petitions presented by sociedades obreras to councils containing a wider range of demands for improvements in living conditions in the pueblos. In the capital an exceptionally wide list of requests was presented by Socialist councillors, calling for the felling of the town walls for expansion, cheap new houses for workers, pavements and mains drainage to be extended, more public education, public baths and laundries, public works for the unemployed and enforcement of all social and labour laws.[62] Meanwhile, newspapers, councils and the Diputación Provincial received numerous reports detailing social deprivation in the province and condemning the failure during the Monarchist period to address it.[63] However, whilst concern was general amongst those now in power - even being expressed by monarchist councillors - the question of how best

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[61] El Correo Extremeño 22, 23, 28 April 1931.
[62] See ActAB 6 May 1931.
[63] La Libertad de Badajoz 22 May 1931 summarises.

to react to pressure for change proved divisive. In particular the Socialists showed a commitment to change that many republicans found disconcerting.

All the proposals and debates in the province about social issues shared in common a conception of public policy that was highly traditional. In particular, solutions to the 'labour crisis' were seen in terms of public works on roads and placement (colocación) of workers with employers. What was at stake was how far the authorities should go in extending these measures and forcing agrarians to take unemployed workers, rather than relying on their goodwill. Similarly, new workers' housing and public facilities, proposed on a greater scale than ever before, really represented the replacement of private charity with a public programme. This change of emphasis, most obviously championed by the Socialists as of particular benefit to workers and their families, also implied an increased burden on the public purse. Whilst the Diputación received an increased grant from the state to fund roadbuilding, councils had to rely on their own resources to meet their needs. The question of municipal action thus became intertwined with the issue of raising the level of local taxation. As councils began to establish their budgets in the first months of the Republic, the provincial Socialists began to complain that some of their republican partners were resistant to strong measures and the raising of municipal taxes. The Radicals in particular were accused in some council debates of being obstructionist, whilst they in their turn criticised the Socialists as being profligate and of seeking

to make work available for no proper ends.[64] Certainly the Cámara de Comercio in Badajoz was an active critic of greater public spending, as higher property taxes hit businessmen as well as the rural elite. Inevitably this current of opinion was transmitted to the Radical Party in the province. Likewise, in the Diputación the future of the Mérida abbatoir became a focus of divisions, beginning a long-running debate about whether it should be brought into public ownership. Despite these rumbling discontents, public programmes to relieve unemployment and provide municipal facilities did begin across the province under the prodding of the Socialists.[65]

For monarchist agrarians and their representatives this was conclusive evidence of the 'proletarian dictatorship' and 'Socialist tyranny' that El Correo Extremeño had begun denouncing in the province immediately after the municipal elections.[66] No doubt the Marqués de Valderrey reflected the fear and bewilderment felt by other landowners when he lamented the 'spirit of rebellion and anarchy' that seemed to have gripped the populace. El Correo reacted forcefully, arguing that it was still necessary under the new regime for the 'conservative classes to fight for what is right, and against socialism'. Such sentiments were undoubtedly heightened by the rapid transformation of the rural order that

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[64] For an interesting exchange see the Badajoz council debates, ActAB April-June 1931, and daily municipal bulletins in La Libertad de Badajoz and La Voz Extremeña.
[65] See particular reports, La Libertad de Badajoz 7 May 1931; La Voz Extremeña 26, 29 April, 20 May 1931.
[66] El Correo Extremeño 29 April 1931 editorial.

was initiated in the province.[67] Consequently, council-organised placements, the drawing up of lists of the unemployed for public works, and the whole idea of programmatic action - in contrast to Catholic social action - were denounced as dangerous impositions in themselves, aside from the fact that agrarians would have to pay for them. This kind of complaint was to be expected from those who had previously controlled local authorities to their own ends. However, except for the few areas where monarchist majorities remained, agrarians could only watch from the sidelines the debates within the republican-Socialist coalition. In cases where rear-guard actions were fought, most notably by Francisco López de Ayala as a councillor in Mérida, the effects were negligible.[68] Within the arena of public affairs at least the agrarian elite had lost their decisive say.

Agrarians were understandably most concerned at the opportunities that the Republic offered for the provincial Socialist movement to advance its direct challenge to the economic and social bases of latifundism. With the proclamation of a regime committed to pluralism, the continued spread of sociedades obreras throughout the countryside was accelerated. May and June 1931 saw a whole swathe of new organisations founded, raising their total numbers well over the level reached in 1920 and extending to all corners of the province. This coincided with the approach of the summer harvest, the most important faena in the agricultural year for

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[67] Manuel Pidal (Marqués de Valderrey), El nuevo régimen en el campo (Madrid, 1934) p. 21; Manuel Sardiñas, 'Las exigencias del momento' El Correo Extremeño 25 April 1931.
[68] See the daily column in La Libertad de Badajoz May to October 1931 covering Merida.

all sections of agrarian society. Inevitably, sociedades obreras sought to maximise their advantage, when the demand for labour was at its highest, to press for long sought improvements in wages and working conditions. Landowners, managers and labradores were naturally as reluctant as ever to accept the involvement of workers' organisations in decisions over the management and use of labour on latifundios, especially at a time when they were seeking to minimise costs. Consequently, they were determined to resist change as much as possible. A syndical struggle was initiated in the new circumstances of the Republic, but remaining fundamentally unchanged as a cycle of conflicts in the fields that corresponded to the arrival of different periods of agricultural tasks.

Campaigns by the sociedades obreras were based on a uniform strategy agreed within the provincial federation. This corresponded well with the structure of syndical organisation in Badajoz by providing necessary overall direction, and creating a united front and unity of purpose against agrarians, but preserving autonomy of action for local sociedades and the communities they were rooted in. Sociedades were encouraged to sign collective contracts with employers which specified basic pay and conditions of labour (bases del trabajo) in each locality for each approaching period of work.[67] In conditions of abundance - which were encouraged, if not institutionalised, by the sporadic labour needs of estate agriculture - rural employers had been free to hire and use

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[67] On collective contracts signed between 31 April 1931 and 1 June 1932 in Badajoz, see FNTT, Memoria: II congreso pp. 143-5.

labour under conditions that suited only themselves. That lasted as long as fragmentation of the available workforce to produce competition in the plazas for scarce work was maintained. By uniting workers, the sociedades could utilise the labour market as their weapon to force agrarians to negotiate, using the threat that local general strikes would be used to deny the estates labour. Thus, as the harvest season approached the sociedades seized the opportunity to create closed shop conditions. Success meant not only being able to impose their immediate demands on agrarians, but also in the longer run, to dominate decision making within the rural economy.

The fundamental demands of the sociedades were largely a straightforward continuation of those which had prevailed from the earliest period of rural organisation, striking at those aspects of the social organisation of the rural economy which most disadvantaged labour. For jornaleros in the labour intensive conditions of wheat latifundism, this meant the abolition of the gang labour system of hiring in the plazas and its replacement by the drawing of labour in strict order from a municipal list; the employment of only local labour and no use of machinery unless all were employed; piece-work payment to be changed for a fixed daily wage paid in cash; an end to harsh supervision by estate foremen; an eight hour working day; and the details of payment for travel to the fields, meals and breaks to be agreed in advance. Shepherds and yunteros also sought similar written contracts, as opposed to the whim of individual employers and vague 'custom'. The latter in particular looked even further to gaining rights as

fixed tenants to protect their disappearing independence. The ensuing struggle between agrarians and organised rural labour revealed a shifting balance of power in the countryside now that the Republic had arrived. From the end of April the sociedades, many just newly formed, began drawing up detailed proposals for the bases del trabajo covering the harvest, and often for future work as well. On May 5 1931 a meeting of representatives from across the province agreed a six point plan to serve as a basis for a concerted campaign to create closed shops and win collective contracts.[70] Determination to bring agrarians into negotiations and to force agreements that led to real improvements in conditions was aided by municipal councils which were either led by Socialists or at least included Socialist councillors. Appeals for support from sociedades were followed by the forming of council comisiones gestoras or comisiones mixtas designed to act as forums for the signing of contracts. These bodies contained representatives from sociedades to which local agrarians were also invited to contribute.[71]

Most rural employers were determined to resist workers' demands which they saw as threatening the rights of landownership and the economic and social basis of its profitability.[72] However, without the support of the state and lacking a solid base of social support, agrarians found

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[70] La Voz Extremeña 6 May 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 26 April 1931.
[71] El Correo Extremeño 6 May 1931 reports call of provincial federation of workers for local authorities to support the bargaining process. La Voz Extremeña 7 May 1931 gives example of petition of demands in the capital.
[72] For a clear expression of this viewpoint see Manuel Pidal, La farsa del llamado problema de yunteros en Extremadura (Madrid, 1934).

themselves extremely vulnerable. Moreover, as their confused responses to the demands of the sociedades revealed, agrarians had, at best, only an erratic unity of purpose and organisation. Their best established representative was the Cámara Agrícola in the capital, whose professional members were prepared to act in the defence of agrarians but whose influence only really extended to the surrounding district. They chose, as the best course in the rapidly changing and uncertain circumstances, to accept the wholly unwelcome idea of collective contracts and to negotiate to preserve what they could of 'the rights of landowners'. Initially they rejected all proposals covering the recruitment and supervision of labour, seeing these as challenges to the fundamental working of latifundism, but were prepared to concede on questions of wage levels, food and payment for travelling to the fields.[73] Elsewhere in the province similar negotiations gradually got underway, though in a confusing variety of different local circumstances. Sociedades found themselves dealing with various committees of agrarians, or their agents, on a more or less ad-hoc basis. In areas with some history of agrarian organisation - even if only a social club - these could be fairly representative and were usually prepared reluctantly to accept the need to negotiate. Such was the case in Mérida which had a strong landowners' circle headed by the López de Ayala family, with links to the Catholic Syndicates and comunidades de labradores. Elsewhere things were more informal, especially in areas where rural workers were newly organised and agrarians had run their affairs largely

[73] See La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 9 May 1931; El Correo Extremeño 27 April, 7 May 1931.

undisturbed or where absentee landownership was particularly prevalent and managers and substantial tenants were left to make decisions. In such circumstances the degree of collective response from local landed notables was very varied. In most cases negotiating committees of a handful of agrarians usually emerged to start talks. Sometimes, after overcoming rivalries, such bodies were fairly representative of local landed interests - more often when a powerful notable was involved or when a few landowners dominated ownership around a pueblo. Often they only spoke for themselves in seeking to be flexible in the face of the challenge of the sociedades.[74] Eventually, under pressure, rural employers began to sign agreements that mostly conceded sociedades demands, covering a whole district in some cases but only a single pueblo in others. Others, however remained committed to a rigid, individualistic defense, not choosing to recognise workers' organisations, let alone negotiating with them - often on the grounds of not demeaning themselves by sitting down with their social inferiors; they settled down to fight an isolated battle.[75]

Despite differing tactics and negotiating strategies, or the lack of them, agrarians all shared the desire to defend what they saw as the basic structure and rights of property ownership. Conflict of some sort with the sociedades was therefore virtually inevitable, and the harvest period saw widespread confrontation. This was immediate where intransigent agrarians tried to collect the harvest by relying

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[74] On negotiations and their circumstances across the province, see the reports, La Voz Extremeña 10, 15, 16, 19, 21, 28, 29 May 1931; El Correo Extremeño 10, 13, 20, 27 May 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 14, 16 May 1931.
[75] La Voz Extremeña 20 May 1931 remarks on this view.

on their fijos and attempted to ignore the sociedades to get the early morning hirings in the plaza working as normal. In some cases - more obviously in the remoter corners of the province - they had the aid of monarchist councils and the Civil Guard to coerce the sociedades and to protect migrant labour.[76] Even where collective contracts had been negotiated only rarely did they end dispute. Rather the faithful completion of agreements by agrarians once the actual harvest was underway turned into a trial of strength. Again circumstances varied, but as harvesting began sociedades began denouncing employers who were avoiding or totally rejecting the bases agreed. In many instances agrarians boycotted the sociedades and tried to break closed shops by refusing to hire labourers from the lists kept by the councils, arguing that they would not have bad workers forced on them. This led to lock-outs and attempts to bring in outside labour, usually Portuguese, to collect the harvest. The overuse of machinery became another area of dispute across the province, and the main cause of conflict in the district around the capital. Here employers sought to undermine agreements by bringing in a larger proportion of the cereal crop by machine than by hand - usually 50-60 percent instead of the 30 percent agreed.[77] The Cámara Agrícola proclaimed these decisions were justified as being part of the inherent rights of landownership and 'freedom of labour'.

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[76] See reports in La Voz Extremeña 8, 20 May, 26 June 1931. In one case, near Llerena it was reported that an entire Civil Guard post had been designated to guard one field owned by the most important local landowner.

[77] For various disputes see, La Voz Extremeña 23, 26, 29 May, 2 June 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 26 May, 13 June 1931.

Far from intimidating the sociedades these actions served to galvanise them into action, and in some areas served to convince rural workers of the need for strong organisation to replace the remains of custom and paternalism in their relations with employers.[78] As the harvest progressed, councils and the provincial administration received a stream of complaints against agrarians.[79] When the Civil Governor seemed sympathetic to agrarians, the leadership of the Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras was incensed.[80] Sociedades tried to force compliance with contracts by denying labour to recalcitrant landowers and threatening local general strikes. Agrarians who showed continued defiance provoked a series of stoppages across the province. Although these mainly involved jornaleros, in the Siberia and La Serena regions there were also widespread strikes by herdsmen who let animals roam and cut fences to increase the pressure on owners. Other types of 'direct action' which supplemented strikes involved barring fijos and outside workers from the fields, sometimes even cutting off pueblos by blocking surrounding roads. Occasionally when the local balance of power was very close fields were invaded by groups of workers who set fire to crops, chopped down trees and broke machinery.[81] Agrarians now faced a choice between capitulating in order to secure the harvest or letting it lie in the fields to rot.

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[78] See the interview with Pedro Rubio Heredia in La Libertad de Badajoz 14 June 1931.
[79] El Correo Extremeño 21 June, 3 July 1931.
[80] La Voz Extremeña 29 May 1931 gives statements.
[81] For reports see, El Correo Extremeño 21 May 1931 on Badajoz, and 17, 23, June, 3 July 1931; La Voz Extremeña 2, 5 June 1931.

Widespread capitulation by employers quickly followed either threats or actual strikes themselves. Although some die-hards preferred to lose the harvest rather than submit to contracts, they were left highly isolated when the majority bowed to pressure. Their situation had been made more untenable by councils which intervened to support sociedades by fining agrarians and prevented Civil Guards from enforcing 'the right to work' in the employers' favour. In the district around the capital as confrontation loomed, the Cámara accepted the bases, albeit after a show of concessions on the part of labour. Agrarians had found disunity and individual reactions counter-productive in their defense, whilst the establishment of the sociedades was confirmed, and with them the prospect of a drawn out syndical struggle within latifundism. During the harvest season the secretary of the centro agrícola in Azuaga underlined this ill-preparedness in a letter to El Correo Extremeño, saying that in reality organisations of defense for the agrarian elite were either non-existent or had 'fossilised'. Unless the 'landed middle-classes' revitalised themselves to match the 'discipline and organisation of the labouring classes' they would eventually have to concede all their rights as property holders.[82] However, as agrarians began to wake up to the intrinsic difficulties that a struggle against a confident and expanding provincial labour movement presented for them, they found their position even further eroded.

Whilst the situation in the countryside deteriorated and confrontation loomed, the Provisional Government intervened

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[82] El Correo Extremeño 12 June 1931.

with a series of decrees designed to alleviate the rural crisis in provinces like Badajoz and to offer reinforcement for the actions of sociedades. These measures were potentially far reaching in their effect on the balance of influence in the countryside. Some of them limited the ability of agrarians to utilise the means of economic and social control that had previously been available to them in dealing with workers. The first one, términos municipales (28 April 1931), prevented the long used practice of bringing in workers from Portugal and other parts of the province to undercut local wages and break disputes, thus making control of the local labour market easier for the sociedades. Meanwhile laboreo forzoso (7 May 1931) prevented producers taking land out of cultivation, primarily to stop them declaring lock-outs but also to force them to provide as great an amount of work as possible during the agricultural depression. Decrees from the Ministry of Justice (29 April 1931) also froze rural leases and automatically renewed them for the following year. This benefitted yunteros by securing land for them to work; it also removed the option for landlords to renew leases yearly and to direct yuntero families to any land they wished.[83]

Even more important was the decree of 7 May 1931 from the Ministry of Labour which established jurados mixtos (arbitration committees) in Badajoz. This extended state intervention in disputes and also applied social legislation, such as the 8 hour day, to the countryside for the first

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[83] Preston, The Coming pp. 56-7; Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 166-71.

time.[84] The _jurados_ had their origins in the _comites paritarios_ of the dictatorship which agrarians had so resisted, and in the desire of reformists, not just Socialists, to bring labour relations within a legal framework. The idea behind their function was a reforming one, aiming to resolve disputes among different interests within the various sectors of the economy without damaging overall economic well being. These interests were assumed to be represented by associations of employers and workers whose nominees could be brought together within the _jurado_, headed by state functionaries, to decide on disputes without the damaging effects of strikes and lock-outs.[85] Rural Badajoz was affected by two different types of _jurado_, both of which substantially altered the circumstances within which future syndical struggle would take place. Initially, _jurados mixtos de trabajo rural_ were to be established in Olivenza and Don Benito to rule in disputes over wages and conditions between employers and rural labourers. Meanwhile the provincial capital was the site for a _jurado mixto de la propiedad rustica_ concerned with rural leases, including those of _yunteros_.[86] The extension of this corporatist framework as a

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[84] _El Correo Extremeño_, _La Voz Extremeña_ 8 May 1931, _La Libertad de Badajoz_ 8, 9 May 1931. The 8 hour day was also established by a decree of 1 July 1931.

[85] On the conception behind the _jurados_ see, José Estadella and J. Aran Horts, _El fracáso de los jurados mixtos_ (Madrid, 1936) pp. 15-23; Luis Enrique de la Villa, 'El derecho de trabajo durante la segunda República' _Revista de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Madrid_ 34-6, 1969. pp. 348-54.

[86] Olivenza was responsible for disputes arising in the _partidos judiciales_ of Albuquerque, Almendralejo, Badajoz, Fregenal, Fuente de Cantos, Jerez de los Caballeros, Mérida, Olivenza and Zafra. Don Benito covered Castuera, Don Benito, Herrera del Duque, Llerena, Puebla de Alcocer and Villanueva de la Serena. _Anuario Español de política-social 1934-5_ (Madrid, 1935) pp. 186-99, 419-22; FNTT, _Memoria_ pp. 40-46; _El Correo Extremeño_ 10 May 1931; _El Socialista_ 10 October 1931.

buttress to the rights of non-agrarians was fiercely resented by members of the elite who saw it as an unjust intervention. They regarded the _jurados_ as partisan devices to be used by the _sociedades obreras_ to pursue the syndical struggle and to enhance the creation of closed shops.

Whilst rural employers were particularly concerned at the effects of the _jurados_ on their relations with rural labour, in fact the _sociedades_ were not the only section of society that benefitted from their creation. Although workers' organisations had long sought such bodies as the _jurados_ in order to institutionalise themselves into the agricultural economy, their creation also served as a focus for the middle stratum in the countryside who were eager, once the Republic was actually in being, to claim a share of its potential benefits. During the immediate transition to the new regime, although there was no evidence that small tenants in particular were actually engaged against their landlords, it was clear that they had not formed a bastion of social support for landownership despite the existence of the Catholic Syndicates and _cajas rurales_. However, after the declaration of the Republic discontent began quickly to surface. In May a letter to the Civil Governor from Azuaga described the plight of family producers as,

> 'More than 85 percent of the small and medium producers, who are the majority in the population, are trapped due to the depreciation of agricultural products, rising rents that they have to pay for tenanted lands and, exhorbitant interest on loans that they need to work the land running currently at 40 percent.'[87]

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[87] _El Correo Extremeño_ 14 May 1931.

The freezing of leases announced by the Provisional Government was of immediate benefit to tenants, particularly because it prevented further rent rises and foreclosure on defaulters by rural landlords. When the jurados decrees concerning rural property were produced, small scale family producers - mindful of the example of collective action being set by rural workers - turned their discontent into organisation to press for changes.

By early June La Libertad de Badajoz reported that a strong groundswell of opinion amongst small tenants existed to support proposed organisation.[88] Finally on June 9 1931 the Asociación de Arrendatarios de Fincas Rústicas de Badajoz was formed at a meeting in the capital attended by representatives from comunidades de labradores and sindicatos católicos.[89] The overlap with these other bodies that sought to provide self-help to small-holders and tenants in Badajoz was significant as it highlighted the rather different aims of the new organisation. Whilst the Asociación proclaimed itself to be non-political, it was clearly a vehicle for family producers (both sharecroppers and tenants) though smallholders were also encouraged to join to press for improvements. Their main aim, as shown in meetings and petitions to the authorities, was to restore what they saw as a proper balance to social and economic relationships on the land. The main target was the deteriorating independence of tenants from large landowners, which they proposed to redress in the immediate term by lowering money rents and eliminating 50 percent aparcería, obligatory labour service and compulsory land improvements. In

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[88] La Libertad de Badajoz 6 June 1931.
[89] La Libertad de Badajoz 11 June 1931.

the longer term they sought - like the sociedades - to replace customary agreements which favoured agrarians with written contracts enforceable in law. Of more minor concern at this stage were the likely effects of the 8 hour day and términos municipales on family producers.[70] Significantly, at a meeting with Largo Caballero on June 17 1931 to present a petition, the delegation from Badajoz was told that they must look to the jurados mixtos for results.[71]

With the actual formation of the jurados in Badajoz at the end of June, the Asociación was well placed to act. When the jurado mixto de propiedad rústica became the first to act, the central committee of the Asociación immediately took all the places reserved for tenants. On the employers side the Cámara Agrícola eventually nominated representatives.[72] The latter then had to submit whilst very favourable terms were laid down for tenants and the first of a stream of judgements against landowners were issued.[73] Whilst this was bad enough for agrarians, it could only be a foretaste of the situation to come when the next major faena on the estates began and the jurados mixtos de trabajo rural began to operate fully. As far as was possible latifundistas tried to boycott the new laws and decrees, or ignored the first judgments made against them. Certainly they had some success in this individual resistance,

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[70] For reports on Asociación see, La Libertad de Badajoz 14 July 1931; La Voz Extremeña 14 July, 22 August 1931; El Correo Extremeño 9 June 1931.

[71] La Libertad de Badajoz 18 June 1931.

[72] Jurados were announced for Badajoz on 20 June, La Voz Extremeña 20 June 1931. The first began working on 30 June, La Libertad de Badajoz 30 June 1931.

[73] La Voz Extremeña 24 July gives bases. El Correo Extremeño 22, 23, 24, 27, 29 July, 8, August 1931 reporting activites of jurado on rural rents and protests of landowners. Guillermo Cabanellas, Enjuiciamiento en los Jurados Mixtos (Madrid, 1934) describes their operation.

especially where they were supported by the connivance of local officials who were denounced in turn by the Socialists and many republicans. However, it was clear that without proper representation on the jurados, agrarians would eventually be dealt with. Indeed in cases where the employers' side failed to provide elected representatives, largely because of the fragmentation of landed interests, Largo Caballero as Socialist Minister of Labour appointed his own nominees from Madrid to fill the posts. Furthermore a deputation of landowners from Badajoz , which petitioned Caballero in June 1931 protesting at these actions and asking for the withdrawal or modification of virtually all the labour decrees, was dismissed.[74] Such episodes served to highlight further the inadequacy of existing patronal organisations in Badajoz and their total unpreparedness for the tasks of providing united defence and representation for the agrarian elite under the Republic. Yet, despite the transformed social and political environment that accompanied the arrival of the Republic to the detriment of the authority of agrarians, the structure of landownership remained intact. Agrarians still had the opportunity to adjust to a rural society in which custom and informal control had been replaced by regulation and the power of organised interests.

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[74] El Correo Extremeño 16 June 1931. José Estadella, op.cit. p. 24 describes designation of spokesmen by the Ministry of Labour.

IV. Agrarians and Radicals: the Origins of an anti-Socialist Alliance, April-December 1931

Following the municipal elections of April, La Libertad de Badajoz had been able to see one positive aspect to the shock arrival of a new regime as far as the conservative cause was concerned, in that,

> '...our agrarian classes have stood up, having broken with their traditional apathy, with their secular indifference, with their censurable passivity, in order to incorporate themselves into the awakening national consciousness...with equal or greater enthusiasm, they should act so that in the coming general and provincial elections agrarian interests obtain the posts that they legitimately deserve.'[1]

However, an awareness of the need to adjust to the Republic did not lead to a straightforward political organisation of agrarians along class lines. The divisive legacy of the caciques, fragmentation of landed interests, and general confusion on the right were considerable obstacles to be overcome. As a result responses from the landed elite to the need to adopt some political cover varied considerably in the absence of any existing organisation that was specifically the creation and vehicle for a majority of them.

Some clung intransigently to the Monarchy, eventually grouping themselves around the Marqués de Solana to form a minority Monarchist Party, Renovación Española de Badajoz. They appeared as something of an anachronistic minority, marginal to the realities of landed defence under the

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[1] 'Los agricultores en las elecciones municipales' La Libertad de Badajoz 18 April 1931.

conditions of the Republic. Others gave support to Derecha Republicana, the party of former monarchists like Miguel Maura, which explicitly promised a defence of conservative interests and values within the new regime. Although its leader in Badajoz, Román Calderón, occasionally complained of 'monarchist infiltration' and 'cacique manipulation', its small local organisations seem to have easily absorbed agrarians into their ranks.[2] Indeed, in Ribera del Fresno the party was created by a group of large landowners.[3] By June 1931, La Voz Extremeña reported that Derecha Republicana was full of erstwhile monarchists who were seeking to use the party as a means to preserve the essence of the old regime within the new.[4] The possibilities for this were limited as Derecha Republicana stood outside the Republican-Socialist coalition which dominated the political terrain of the province after the municipal elections. As a consequence, many agrarians chose to infiltrate the mainstream republican movement in attempts to influence its policies, and to seek protection from the demands of the Socialist movement for change.

The potentially disruptive activities of these 'republicans of April' became a particular cause for concern to republican leaders in Badajoz as their entry coincided with a clearer separation of the different tendencies within the provincial movement into better defined parties. In the competition for membership that accompanied the creation of formal party organisations, the sincerity of all those seeking

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[2] See his articles, La Voz Extremeña 26 May 1931, 10 June 1931.
[3] La Voz Extremeña 30 April 1931.
[4] La Voz Extremeña 18 June 1931.

to join was in some doubt. In some cases the lack of republican commitment of these neophytes was transparently clear, as in the case of a 'republican' meeting in Zarza de Alange addressed by the well known cacique, the Marqués de Valderrey.[5] La Voz Extremeña warned of attempts by known monarchists to join republican groups throughout the province.[6] Few seem to have chosen the smaller parties in the process of formation which were in any event strongly resistent to infiltration.[7] Rather more chose to join temporarily the better established Radical Party as the most promisingly conservative and anti-socialist force in the republican camp, to judge from complaints of infiltration that followed. Amongst the most blatant examples of such action occurred in La Albuera and Peralda de Zauzejo, where previous members of Unión Patriótica formed whole new branches of the Radical Party.[8] Similarly in Cheles the frantic search for political cover was illustrated when local landowners first joined Derecha Republicana, and then changed to the Radical Party.[9]

Mixed reactions from within the Radicals to the entry of agrarians revealed an ambiguous position at a time when it, in rivalry with other republican groups, was seeking to spread its organisation and popular appeal in the province. In this regard, the Radicals had a head-start over other republican tendencies represented in the Alianza Republicana. The latter

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[5] La Voz Extremeña 31 May 1931.
[6] 'Política Caciquil' La Voz Extremeña 7 May 1931.
[7] Much to the distaste of La Libertad de Badajoz 31 May 1931 which condemned the rejection of landowners as party members following an incident in which they were expelled in Oliva de la Frontera.
[8] La Voz Extremeña 26, 29 April 1931.
[9] La Voz Extremeña 16 June 1931.

were only just beginning to move away from the collection of small groups of adherents that had characterised historic republicanism towards the defined leadership and formal party organisation that the Radicals already possessed. Although the Radical-Socialists formed an executive committee in May, it was not until December that Unión Republicana and Acción Republicana managed the same.[10] At the end of May the Radicals produced a separate manifesto, claiming credit for the initiation of the Alianza in Badajoz and leadership of the republican movement in the province. It went further, to argue that the Party embodied the true popular spirit of the new regime, and invited everyone to join.[11] The expansionism of the Radicals, their transparently hegemonic aims within rural republicanism, their support of private property and their populism still raised the question of whether recruitment should be unlimited. For Diego Hidalgo and La Voz Extremeña, committed to the Alianza, admitting landowners into the Radicals risked the purity of the new regime. Whilst the Party should try to attract as large a following as possible, known monarchists should be excluded.[12] However, the provincial executive committee and Salazar Alonso saw the matter differently. They argued that the Party was not against rural property as such, but rather opposed the authority of the caciques and their privileges under the Monarchy. By joining the Radicals these could be absorbed into the new regime,

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[10] El Correo Extremeño 9 May 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 8 December 1931; La Voz Extremeña 17 December 1931.
[11] In contrast to the other republican factions, the Radicals also claimed offices in all partidos judiciales. La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 30 May 1931.
[12] For Hidalgo's views see a letter to Vásquez Lemus, 8 May 1931 ADH on the need to retain an 'unequivocable proof of true republicanism'.

their special position weakened, and they could take a place alongside all the other 'respectable' sections of society that the Party was trying to attract and represent.[13]

Recruitment campaigns by the republicans, of which the Radicals' was the most aggressive, were not just a product of faction fighting but also an attempt to secure a stronger organisational presence in the face of the Socialist movement. In May 1931 López Alegría, leader of the Radical-Socialist faction of the Alianza Republicana, produced a manifesto urging republicans to match the '...truly prodigious political discipline in the mobilisation of the masses' shown by the Socialists.[14] Republicanism, although of some strength in the larger towns, did not have the influence that the Socialist movement had, and was extending, throughout the countryside. Under the Republic the masses now counted, and their votes and loyalties would determine the course of the regime in Badajoz. As rural workers and artisans were mostly committed to the Socialists, the republicans were naturally anxious to find a correspondingly broad constituency to which they could appeal. With the pressing need for coalition unity to achieve the change of regime now apparently passed, the signs of divisions and conflicts became more evident.

Whilst the eagerness of the Radicals to distance themselves from the Socialists had its immediate origins in the search for supporters, it was also the product of a more fundamental mutual antipathy. In retrospect, the Socialist deputy for Badajoz, Margarita Nelken, echoed general party

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[13] Rafael Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo de la revolución (Madrid, 1934) p. 23.
[14] La Voz Extremeña 10 May 1931.

feeling at the time in describing Lerroux as a 'little Dollfuss', and the provincial Radicals as 'corrupt'.[15] Salazar Alonso also recorded the 'hatred and distrust' felt for the Radicals from within Socialist ranks, whilst himself becoming the most prominent spokesman for a 'conservative' Republic.[16] The focus for differences was the increasing disagreement in the council chambers between Radical and Socialist councillors over public works and the use of public funds. As the Cortes elections approached this spilled into public statements that highlighted the clearly of the two sides. Salazar Alonso began the Radical criticism of the Socialists in a series of recruitment meetings in May in which he attacked the Socialist programme in the councils. Objections focussed on: the raising of municipal taxes to pay for improvements to housing, education and health; council controls on weights, measures and prices of food sold in local shops; the appointment of members of casas del pueblo to municipal jobs; and the use of fines against rural employers and small businessmen who broke the decrees on wages and conditions of work.[17] Thus agrarians who gravitated towards the Radicals sought to reinforce an already established, and increasingly predominant, conservative tendency.

The result was the launching of Socialist and Radical campaigns in the run up to the elections that stressed quite different priorities for the Republic in the countryside and that addressed different audiences. As a centrepiece to

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[15] Margarita Nelken, Porque hicimos la revolución (Barcelona, 1935) pp. 28-9.
[16] Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo pp. 11-12.
[17] See full reports of meetings in Cabeza del Buey and Peraleda, El Correo Extremeño 1 May 1931; La Voz Extremeña 28 May 1931.

Radical efforts Lerroux made a tour of the province in June, speaking to packed meetings in Albuquerque, Mérida and Badajoz flanked by Hidalgo and Salazar Alonso. The message was still a populist one, with a stress on meritocracy and a Republic for all classes, but with little mention of social and economic change aside from vague references to the need for land to be used in a 'socially useful' manner.[16] Meanwhile, the Socialists actively highlighted their aims for a transformation in working and living conditions for the provincial working-class, forecasting a time when this would require going beyond the limitations of the republican coalition. Nicolás de Pablo Hernández made clear that they ultimately reserved the right to freedom of manoeuvre at a meeting in Badajoz, when he argued that,

> 'The Socialists have to support loyally the Republican-Socialist candidature in order to consolidate the Republic. That is the interest of the moment. But sometime when it is consolidated, it is possible that the Socialists will be able to achieve their aspirations by legal paths without having to resort to revolution.'[17]

Evidence of tension between the partners in the republican-Socialist coalition, balanced between the need to consolidate the regime and the pursuit of sectional aims, surfaced during negotiations to draw up a list of candidates for the elections.

A list of candidates was required if a united coalition presence in the elections were to continue. Immediately the question was raised at the beginning of June, the Radicals

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[16] La Voz Extremeña 11, 12, 13 June 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz, El Correo Extremeño 12, 13 June 1931.
[17] La Voz Extremeña 19 June 1931.

opposed the inclusion of any member of the Radical Socialists from the Alianza Republicana side, on the grounds that the party had no real following in the province.[20] At the same time Diego Hidalgo wrote to Salazar Alonso expressing his concern that Socialists wanted to take a majority of Cortes seats and exclude the Radicals.[21] Confirmation that such sentiments did indeed exist at a local level within the provincial Socialist movement came on 4 June 1931 at an assembly of agrupaciones socialistas to discuss the elections. A delegate from Corte de Peleas proposed that the Socialists should ask for eight out of the eleven seats set aside for the majority in Badajoz 'as being the only party that has any organisation, whilst the Republicans without the votes of the Socialists will do nothing'. Others from Llerena and Puebla de Alcocer suggested a complete break, complaining that the Republicans in their districts were either 'the ultimate resting place of Unión Patriótica' or '...too close to the Monarchists'. In the event such opinion was overcome by the views of delegates from the provincial organisation and the largest agrupaciones in the capital, Mérida, Montijo, and Almendralejo who thought that the coalition needed to continue as long as the Republic seemed in any danger.[22] Similar views seem to have reconciled the Radicals, and the whole of the Alianza, to a united election effort. Diego Hidalgo, speaking as the voice of unity, called for a vote for all the coalition

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[20] La Voz Extremeña 7 July 1931.
[21] Hidalgo to Salazar Alonso 2 June 1931 ADH; La Voz Extremeña 23 June 1931.
[22] La Libertad de Badajoz 5 June 1931. Badajoz was to be represented by 14 deputies in total, with only three allocated to the minority. See Javier Tusell, Las Constituyentes de 1931: Unas elecciones de transición (Madrid, 1982) pp. 17-23 on electoral guidelines.

partners by the electorate, arguing that, '...the granting of this vote shall constitute the unequivocal proof of true republicanism'.[23] A few days later, on 17 June 1931, discussions between the Socialists and Alianza Republicana were concluded and the list of coalition candidates was announced. The compromise reached gave the Alianza five candidates, headed by the personal prestige of Vásquez Lemus (who shortly after joined Azaña's Acción Republicana), with three Radicals and one Radical-Socialist. Whilst all the republicans were from Badajoz, the six Socialist candidates were a mix of provincial figures and appointees from Madrid.[24] Undoubtedly the most powerful spur to final compromise was the sign of a resurgence of rightist political organisation which provided credibility to the need to consolidate the Republic. Belatedly, this allowed the coalition to begin the semblance of a united election campaign in the final week before voting, rallying around the promise 'finally to crush the caciques'.[25]

In a province in which caciquismo had handicapped the creation of an organised agrarian right able to meet the challenge of the Republicans and Socialists, the position of those existing bodies broadly committed to the pre-republican social and economic order became crucially important. The leadership of the Cámara Agrícola was thrust to the forefront by the practical needs of negotiations with the provincial FNTT over the bases del trabajo, in resolving strikes and

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[23] La Voz Extremeña 14 June 1931.
[24] La Voz Extremeña 17 June 1931. Candidates were Alianza: Narciso Vásquez Lemus (Derecha Republicana), Gustavo Pittaluga Fatermi (PRRS), Diego Hidalgo Durán, Rafael Salazar Alonso, and José Salmerón García (PRR). PSOE: Rodrigo Almada Rodríguez, Narciso Vasquez Torres, Juan Morán Vayo, Celestino García Santos, Juan Simeón Vidarte, Francisco Nuñez Tomás.
[25] La Voz Extremeña 26, 27 June 1931.

providing representation on the jurados and commissions. Equally, its leadership was well aware of the overall poor state of agrarian defence and the vulnerability of the elite in the face of a strengthening rural working class movement aided by the new government decrees. Whilst the agrarian professionals saw this partly as a result of the previous failure of the majority of the landed elite to pursue economic modernisation and reform themselves, they equated the protection of the fundamental rights of rural property with preservation of the existing social order.[26] This view coincided with similar concerns amongst social Catholic organisations in the province, themselves often intimately linked to landed interests. From the start El Correo Extremeño, the mouthpiece for conservative Catholic interests in Badajoz, conflated threats to religion and to property, stressing the idea of a Catholic social order under attack.[27] Despite its reforming pretensions the Federación Católica Agraria, like the national CNCA to which it was linked, also viewed the changing circumstances of the province with alarm. Proposals to lease lands for collective working by sociedades obreras and talk of a redistributive agrarian reform by the republican-Socialist government further fuelled their fears and were interpreted as an attack on the Catholic Syndicates and Rural Banks.[28] Dismayed at the pace at which the Republic

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[26] See Manuel Sardiña, 'Las exigencias del momento', El Correo Extremeño 25 April 1931 and calls for private property guarantees by Antonio Cruz Valero, El Correo Extremeño 26 June 1931.

[27] See in particular articles and editorials on the marxist threat of the Republic, the need for conservatives to rally around to defend the principles of religion, family and property. El Correo Extremeño 29 April, 1, 6, May 1931.

[28] Juan José Castillo, Propietarios muy pobres pp. 280-2; Angel Samper, 'Ante los arriendos colectivos' Ara y Canta 4

appeared to be overturning the rural social order and at the inability of the landed elite to defend it or themselves effectively, these different, albeit overlapping, groups were predisposed to break with their professed a-politicism to appoint themselves spokesmen for landownership and Catholic values. Their rallying point was provided by the announcement of the formation of Acción Nacional in Madrid, which was seized as the only immediate means available at hand to try to influence the shift in the balance of authority taking place in the countryside.[29]

On 31 May 1931 El Correo Extremeño published the national manifesto on its front page, proclaiming the need to guarantee private property, the Church and a Catholic social order, and attacking marxism and separatism. The regional party was announced the same day with a leadership of agrarian professionals, social Catholics and prominent landowners drawn from the Cámara Agrícola and Federación Católica Agraria.[30] Although the formation of Acción Nacional was aided by the presence of Francisco Asís y Sánchez Miranda, a Badajoz-born lawyer sent as the representative of Gil Robles in Madrid, it was clear that this was essentially a provincial response to the need for organisation. Indeed the different strands represented in the creation of the provincial party could not have been better illustrated than by the leading role taken by

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June 1931. As the new head of the Federación, he was a particularly active campaigner.

[29] Reported, El Correo Extremeño 9 May 1931.

[30] La Libertad de Badajoz, El Correo Extremeño 31 May 1931. The leadership committee comprised, Felipe Vargas, Marcelino Diego Cendoya, Salvador Nuñez y González, Diego Villalon, José Mendoza Botello, Regino de Miguel Guerra, Alfonso Rubio, Eduardo Ayala, Manual Caneho, Angel Samper, Alejandro Encinas de la Rosa and Felipe Muriel.

the López de Ayala family, backbone of both agricultural modernisation and Catholic action in Mérida. Local committees of like minded people sprang up in the largest towns, often with the active support of local priests. The need to work within the legality of the new regime, proclaimed by Acción Nacional on 16 June 1931, was recognised by the organisers more as a product of weakness and isolation than as an acceptance of the Republic and the potential for change that it stood for.[31] They intended its formation, in the immediate term at least, as a last attempt to create a more modern political defence against the ambitions of the republicans and Socialists, and the agrarian and social legislation affecting the province.[32]

The candidates and propaganda of the party fully reflected its origins and aims. With only three candidates put forward, the minority ambitions of Acción Nacional de Badajoz were evident from the beginning. The character of the party was well illustrated by them: Antonio Reyes Huertas was the ex-editor of the defunct social Catholic newspaper, Noticiero Extremeño and a poet; José María Pemán was an import from Madrid, a writer and future fascist intellectual, and Enrique Vásquez Camarasa was a priest linked to the Catholic Syndicates, substituted for Antonio Cruz Valero who was an agronomical engineer and leading member of the Cámara Agrícola.[33] In the short period before the elections the party

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[31] El Correo Extremeño 16 June 1931.
[32] See in particular the articles of Baldomero Argente and Francisco Díaz Giménez, El Correo Extremeño 12 June 1931.
[33] El Correo Extremeño 10 June 1931; La Voz Extremeña 11 May 1931. Juan Simeón Vidarte, Las Cortes Constituyentes (Barcelona, 1976) p.46. Noticiero fused with another paper in 1926 to become El Correo.

made protestations of support for social Catholic principles and presented a vitriolic and doom laden campaign that condemned 'the revolutionaries' and forecast the ruin of the province.[34] The land question was put to the forefront with attacks on the Provisional Government decrees and any prospective redistribution of the estates.[35] Yet without a widespread, effective organisation Acción Nacional was incapable of holding public meetings outside the capital, Mérida and Almendralejo, or of distributing propaganda directly. Nor were occasional attempts by individual agrarians, monarchist mayors and Civil Guards to use the old coercive methods to manipulate the vote any real substitute.[36]

Retrospectively, Francisco Asís y Sánchez Miranda bitterly recalled the disaster for the right in Badajoz,

> 'I arrived on the 11th of May. I found the forces of the right in disorder, filled with panic by the recent events...The failure (of Acción Nacional) convinced me that propaganda was needed to gain hold of right-wing opinion in the province.'[37]

Whilst the right was able to scare the republicans and Socialists into a precarious unity, the ad hoc formation of Acción Nacional and its close identification with old monarchist corruption during the republican euphoria denied the party a serious following in the electoral battle. With a high turnout of 75 percent of the 186,430 voters eligible

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[34] In particular the party declared its support of Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno, El Correo Extremeño 24 June 1931. On the campaign in general see, El Correo Extremeño 20-31 June 1931.
[35] See El Correo Extremeño 21 June 1931.
[36] Eventually leading to a parliamentary investigation, Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes (henceforth DSCC) 23 July 1931. See also, Vidarte, Las Cortes p. 46.
[37] Hoy 30 May 1933.

under a new electoral census[38], Acción Nacional gained only 8.1 percent of the total possible vote to the 67.4 percent of the coalition.[39] Under the electoral rules this was insufficient for the minority seats to be filled, requiring a second round of elections. The scale of the victory of the coalition and corresponding rejection of the right was impressive. Even in centres such as Mérida and Almendralejo with relatively large numbers of smallholders and strong Catholic Agrarian Syndicates, the rightist cause failed to attract a mass following. The results were the final proof of the hopeless prospects for an agrarian right in republican Badajoz when the landed elite and their allies were disunited

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[38] A new census was drawn up by the provincial administration, introducing full male suffrage for the first time. BDPB 5 May 1931.

[39] The final overall figures were,

Coalition (all elected)	
Narciso Vásquez Lemus	134,634
Rodrigo Almada Rogríguez	127,957
Gustavo Pittaluga Fraterni	131,637
Narciso Vásquez Torres	129,372
Diego Hidalgo Durán	132,471
Juan Morán Vayo	128,026
Rafael Salazar Alonso	131,602
Celestino García Santos	127,382
Juan Simeón Vidarte	127,419
Francisco Nuñez Tomás	127,485
José Salmerón García	132,555
Accion Nacional	
Enrique Vásquez Camarasa	11,492
Antonio Reyes Huertas	10,171
José María Pemán	10,232
Monarchist Independant	
Federico Carlos Bas	9,370
Derecha Republicana	
Salvador Díaz Berrio	4,708
García Romero de Tejada	6,633
Victoriano Maesso	5,306

For results see, El Correo Extremeño, La Voz Extremeña 30 June, 1 July 1931. Many of the originals are in ADPB 'Junta Provincial del Censo Electoral. Resultados de las elecciones de Cortes de 1931 por pueblos.'

and isolated from the rest of rural society. Although in the longer term the experience of Acción Nacional in the province taught its leaders and supporters important lessons, at the time its catastrophic failure deepened the depression and fears of the rural middle-classes, and led to a complete withdrawal from formal political activity on the right. In the aftermath of the elections the junta directiva of Acción Nacional was dissolved in the province, and was followed into oblivion in August by El Correo Extremeño which declared itself to be out of style with the new times of Badajoz. However its parting editorial comprised a defiant assertion of Catholic principles and the promise that it would return as an 'anti-revolutionary' voice as soon as conditions were more propitious.[40]

Although the electoral success of the republicans and Socialists proved the high level of popular acceptance of the Republic within Badajoz, it also led to the dissolution of their coalition. Divisions amongst the coalition partners over the future of the province and conflict over the allocation of the minority Cortes seats found free expression with the elimination of a possible monarchist backlash. From the electoral campaign the Socialists found evidence to vindicate the view that their republican allies were hitching a free ride. Vidarte described the situation during the campaign when,

> '...in the major part of the pueblos we carried out acts of propaganda alone, because in these there were only representative republicans, without

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[40] José R. Montero, La CEDA: el catolicismo social y político en la II República (2 Vols. Madrid, 1977) v.1 pp. 394-5; El Correo Extremeño 15 August 1931.

> organised parties, or parties created symbolically. Naturally, I am referring to the province of Badajoz and its pueblos; in the capital and important population centres the republican parties had a proper existence from the past.'[41]

He went on to contrast the paucity of republican efforts with the 'intense campaign' waged by the Socialists, relying on their growing network of sociedades obreras to reach out into even the remotest corners of the countryside.[42] Furthermore the higher overall vote achieved by the republican candidates was taken to be evidence of support by erstwhile monarchists and of a failure to support loyally the complete coalition list. Some sign of the latter assertion could be found in a number of out of the way villages where the vote was particularly skewed in the republicans' favour.[43] On 6 July 1931 Antonio Márquez of the Federación Socialista sent a circular to all agrupaciones socialistas in the province announcing the rupture of the pact with the republicans, 'for irreducible divergences', and instructing them to 'struggle alone' in the second round elections.[44] At the same time a manifesto was published containing socialist allegations against the republicans of influence by 'disguised caciques', of betrayal of trust and ineffectiveness. The last charge also referred to the splits emerging between the Radicals and the

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[41] Vidarte, Las Cortes p.46. See also, Nelken, Porque hicimos p. 30.
[42] Vidarte himself says he participated in more than forty meetings, ibid. pp.46-7.
[43] Paraleda del Zauzejo, Fuentes de León, Atayala, Helechosa, La Nava de Santiago, Villagonzalo, Navalvillar de Pela, Trujillanos and Garlitos provide examples. El Correo Extremeño 30 June 1931.
[44] For a copy see, AGCS: PSU leg. 10. Three socialist candidates were named, Manuel Muiño Arroyo, Luis de Zuleta Escolano, and Julián Zugazugoitia Mendieta.

other groups within Alianza Republicana, putting them forward as a reason why this was the best time for the Socialists to present a unified force in favour of social and economic change in the province.[45]

Although Socialist distrust was extended to all the republican groups, it centred on the Radicals. Indeed, Radical ambitions to play the dominant political role within both provincial society and the Alianza Republicana ultimately underlay the re-alignment of forces that took place. When bickering about the allocation of the final three seats broke out amongst the republicans following the socialist rejection, the Radicals took the opportunity to seize the banner of conservatism in Badajoz.[46] The first round results were interpreted - contrary to the Socialists' opinion - as an endorsement of the party as the true representative of the mood in Badajoz. Shortly before the new elections on 12 July 1931, a manifesto expressing this notion and condemning the 'dictatorial ambitions' of the Socialist movement confirmed the direction being taken by the Radicals.[47] However, these optimistic hopes were not borne out when the actual vote was returned, with all three Socialist candidates elected over a single Radical opponent in a low turnout.[48] Despite this

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[45] El Correo Extremeño 9 July 1931. For general accounts of the rupture of the coalition see, La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 7 July 1931.

[46] La Libertad de Badajoz 9 July 1931.

[47] El Correo Extremeño 11 July 1931.

[48] Final results were,

Manuel Muiño Arroyo	63,456	(PSOE)
Luis de Zuleta Escolano	60,244	(PSOE)
Julián Zugazugoitia	58,833	(PSOE)
Manuel Barbosa García	23,833	(PRR)
Fernando Miranda Quiñones	5,311	(PRRS)
Alfonso Márquez Bravo	3,980	(DLR)

El Correo Extremeño 14, 17 July 1931.

setback, and in the relative absence of competition from other republican groups or an established right, the Radicals were committed to a stance against Socialist hegemony in provincial affairs at every level.

The political trajectory of the Radicals was further emphasised by the formation of a new junta directiva straight after the elections whose leading members were directly linked to the Cámara de Comercio to such an extent that the president of both organisations was the same person, Miguel Barquero e Hidalgo Barquero.[49] Following the break-up of the coalition the Cámara was quick to issue a report on the province, highlighting the crisis in business and construction, and calling for protection of property rights.[50] Its conservative tone was reflected in the launch of a campaign to form new Radical organisations, including a youth section, supported by an intensive, no holds barred propaganda drive to try to consolidate the loyalty of that conservative but anti-monarchist force that El Correo Extremeño had identified. As new Radical branches were formed throughout the province, Salazar Alonso toured around promoting the party line on the need for a third force between the Socialist revolution and the reaction it would provoke.[51] The Socialist movement was accused of 'substituting false casas del pueblo for caciquismo ... heading towards a proletarian dictatorship or a reaction against it'.[52]

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[49] For a complete list, see El Correo Extremeño 19 July 1931.
[50] La Voz Extremeña 2 August 1931.
[51] For early examples see those of Peraleda and Bodonal, La Libertad de Badajoz 17, 29 July 1931. See also, Salazar Alonso, Tarea op.cit. p.51.
[52] Salazar Alonso addressing a meeting of the Radical Youth, La Libertad de Badajoz 1 December 1931. Also similar remarks at a rally in the capital, La Voz Extremeña 23 August 1931.

Municipal control was the main focus for Radical attacks, with bitter criticism of tax rises, the use of municipal guards to enforce labour decrees in the fields and towns, public works programmes, and council jobs for members of local sociedades obreras. In return the Socialists argued that they were only using municipal authority to pursue their aims, much as had happened under the previous regime, except this time it served the interests of the majority of society, not a privileged minority. As a consequence disruptive meetings of councils and the Diputacion Provincial became a regular feature of the first two years of the Republic in Badajoz, with accusations flying between Radicals, joined by other conservative Republicans, and socialists.[53] Within the Cortes the Radical deputies from Badajoz were, initially at least, constrained by the continued support of the party nationally for the government until the crisis of December 1931. Even so Hidalgo, breaking with his previous role as unifier, was the leading opponent to the acceptance into the chamber of the controversial Socialist Margarita Nelken, elected to the vacant seat for the province left by the death of Juan Morán Vayo in October.[54]

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[53] Views of Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo p.19. El Correo Extremeño 9 August 1931 on fall-out in councils. Also article by Román Calderón, 'El porvenir socialista de Badajoz' La Voz Extremeña on 'aggressive actions' of Socialists. The earliest, most prominent, conflicts arose in the Badajoz council where an open crisis developed over the leadership, and in a long running dispute which began in the Diputación over the socialisation of the Mérida abbatoir. ActAB 10 August 1931, ActDPB 20 July 1931.

[54] For this episode and its racist and sexist overtones see, DSCC 18 November 1931; Vidarte, Las Cortes pp. 84-5; Manuel Azaña, Obras completas 4 vols. (Mexico, 1965) iv. p. 295; La Voz Extremeña 21 November 1931. Nelken was elected by 59,783 votes, over a republican opponent, José Manuel Pedregal, who obtained 23,656, La Voz Extremeña 6 October 1931. Nelken was a

Provincial agrarians could only note with satisfaction the enhanced anti-Socialist rhetoric of the Radicals and the overtures by the party to landed interests in the name of the defence of property and order. Meanwhile, however, for rural employers the immediate practical need to resist the demands of the sociedades obreras and Socialist councils was ever more pressing, especially when a republican government was proposing an agrarian reform to redistribute land in the south. In response to this situation a meeting on 6 July 1931 in the provincial capital created the Federación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas de Badajoz as an umbrella organisation for agrarian defence. It brought together delegates from all over the province from individual centros agrarios and representatives from the agrarian and patronal organisations that already existed. The meeting was chaired by Pedro Navarrete, president of the Cámara Agrícola which provided the leadership for the new body and was to revitalise and coordinate the activities of the other organisations now linked in the Federación.[55] In turn the provincial organisation was associated with the national Agrupación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas, which co-operated with other patronal organisations in Madrid.[56] An interlocking network of spokesmen and representatives was being created which aimed, late in the day, to overcome individualism and divisions of interest amongst the landed elite and develop the kind of

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correspondent for El Socialista, of German descent, who later joined the Communist Party.

[55] The President was Juan Muñoz Casillas, and the directorate consisted of, Gregorio and Antonio Cruz Valero, Baldomero Galache and Francisco López de Ayala. El Correo Extremeño, La Libertad de Badajoz 7 July 1931.

[56] On the national organisation see, Mercedes Cabrera, La patronal ante la II República (Madrid, 1983) pp. 66-71.

thorough 'class' defence of landownership and the rural order that had been lacking in the past.

The first step was the formation of an Asamblea de Propietarios at a meeting in the capital attended by some 400 landowners and labradores. This was to be a body that, although sharing the same leadership as the Federación de Propietarios and Cámara Agrícola, could rally agrarians outside of any sectional and local differences. Naturally it also shared the aim of campaigning to oppose any legislation adversely affecting agrarians and to reassert the 'rights of landownership'.[57] To provide practical support to individual employers the Cámara Agrícola offered the services of its lawyers and members on the jurados mixtos.[58] During disputes the Federación de Propietarios coordinated the propaganda and responses of the other agrarian associations. The Federación was also active in lobbying in the name of all rural employers in Badajoz. On 10 July 1931 a petition was presented to the government, calling for protection from 'coercion by the peasant masses' and the maintenance of authority, for the right to use machinery as they wished, defence of wheat prices, an end to the placement of workers and the repeal of términos municipales.[59] Numerous objections on all aspects of rural affairs were to follow, though sometimes offering cooperation in so far as it allowed delaying tactics to be deployed.[60] In this regard the jurados mixtos presented the

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[57] El Correo Extremeño, La Libertad de Badajoz 30 July 1931.
[58] La Voz Extremeña 5 July 1931.
[59] Printed in El Correo Extremeño, La Voz Extremeña 10 July 1931.
[60] El Correo Extremeño 4 August 1931 gives a good example of a commentary by the Asamblea de Propietarios arguing that landowners are being persecuted unjustly, '...are we not also part of the national wealth'.

greatest dilemma, in that on the one hand their actions were an objectionable intrusion into landowners' decisions, particularly over levels of rent and wages, while on the other they acted less swiftly and harshly than the council comisiones mixtas. The Asamblea de Propietarios realistically asked therefore that the jurados be made solely responsible for all decisions over tenancy and work conditions.[61]

Similar considerations of tactics prevailed over the possibility of agrarian reform. Whilst it was obvious that any such intervention into the countryside was anathema to landowners, the unfavourable climate of the Republic made open, outright opposition potentially counterproductive. The Federación de Propietarios therefore sought to influence debate about reform towards the most innocuous direction possible. Within Badajoz this involved claiming that whilst there were agrarian problems in Spain, latifundios were not the main ones and that the promotion of irrigation and technical expertise was the real necessity to increase productivity and the demand for labour.[62] These suggestions naturally corresponded to the predilections of the agrarian professionals who became vigorous advocates of government plans to revive the building of dams in the province.[63] Any remaining desire for land could be met by the voluntary setting aside of land by owners for renting by 'suitable families', in a revival of social Catholic ideas in opposition

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[61] For discussions on how to deal with the jurados, and call for restrictions of the comisiones, see La Libertad de Badajoz, La Voz Extremeña 12 September 1931.
[62] See in particular, El Correo Extremeño 6 August 1931.
[63] On plans for hydraulic works, see Nicolás Ortega, 'Política hidraúlica y reforma agraria en Extremadura' in Mario Gaviría (ed), Extremadura Saqueada pp. 111-133.

to the collectivist preferences of the Socialist movement.[64] Such ideas were carried to Madrid, where the Federación de Propietarios lobbied ministers alongside patronal organisations from other provinces and sought to influence debate in the Cortes.[65] In August 1931 a government commission to investigate the relevance and application of agrarian reform in Badajoz began work. When elections to Juntas Locales to gather evidence and opinions in the province were announced in September the Asamblea de Propietarios had its candidates successfully placed on the employers' side.[66]

Whilst the Federación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas de Badajoz could hope to bring latifundists together in extremis, the problem remained of counteracting organised protest from below and the effects of republican legislation without having lacking social support. Agrarian organisations looked to the middle stratum of family producers in Badajoz as natural allies, but found that the reality was very different. The creation of the Asociación Provincial de Arrendatarios de Fincas Rústicas gained support from family producers involved in confrontations with landowners and labradores over rural rents and tenancy agreements. An analysis of the reasons for this division was provided by a study of Jerez de los Caballeros in the summer of 1931, which condemned the plight of arrendatarios paying extortionate rack rents to

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[64] For Asamblea proposals see, El Correo Extremeño 31 July 1931.
[65] See for instance a joint delegation with agrarians from Cáceres and Jaen, La Libertad de Badajoz 26 October 1931.
[66] La Voz Extremeña 24 September 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 27 November 1931.

exploitative labradores.[67] Indeed, the shooting of two sub-tenants by a labrador in July in a dispute over rents represented an extreme example of these conflicts.[68] By August it was evident that social Catholic organisations, seen by landowners' leaders as a readily available means to rally support, particularly of smallholders, were facing a crisis which severely undermined their usefulness as a means of creating social solidarity.

A setback had already been suffered when the authorities refused to accept the Catholic Syndicates as representatives for the workers' side on the jurados mixtos or the comisiones mixtas (council arbitration committees), on the grounds that they were not true workers' organisation because they also had employers in their ranks. However, when Angel Samper, president of the provincial Federación de Sindicatos Agrícolas, was arrested on the way to Portugal with 200,000 pesetas embezzled from the organisation, it was only a final blow to Catholic agrarian organisation.[69] Outside the areas of Mérida and Almendralejo where a relatively healthy network of syndicates and rural banks survived, organisations had withered due to falling memberships, shortages of funds and lack of interest amongst local agrarians. Not surprisingly, on 21 August 1931 a meeting of the provincial organisation, attended by Martín Artajo, head of the CNCA, concluded that a major rebuilding programme was necessary if the syndicates

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[67] Eduardo de la Vega, 'Jerez de los Caballeros, su estudio social y económico' Revista de los servicios social-agrarios y de estadística agrícola social August, September 1932.
[68] La Libertad de Badajoz 22 July 1931.
[69] La Libertad de Badajoz 8 August 1931; La Voz Extremeña 9 August 1931.

were to be revitalized in Badajoz.[70] This appeared to mark the definitive failure on the part of social Catholics, after years of warnings to the landed elite of the need to act unselfishly in their own interests to provide the secure underpinning to a stable rural order. In fact many of their ideas were transferred to new attempts to mobilise a 'propertied social bloc' to protect large landowners and substantial tenants.

At the founding meeting of the Asamblea de Propietarios the creation of sindicatos de propietarios was proposed to bring all the smallholders of the province into a tightly knit federation. As Francisco López de Ayala pointed out in a key address, if they were to be successful latifundists would have to make concessions to the 'small men', both to benefit them economically and to convince them that their security could best be defended in such an alliance. This approach was eventually approved by the assembly which added condemnations of absenteeism, unfair renting and usu ry to its stated aims - all criticisms of landowners which had been voiced by reformers in the past.[71] Further ideals were announced later by Ricardo Carapeto, an agricultural engineer, including communal purchasing arrangements, rural credit, producers' co-ops and the extension of sharecropping.[72] Calls for a 'provincial unity of the propertied' were accompanied by suggestions that all property-holders were now threatened by the decrees and reforms of the new regime.[73] The leaders of the Asamblea were quick to suggest that any agrarian reform

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[70] La Libertad de Badajoz 22 August 1931.
[71] El Correo Extremeño; La Libertad de Badajoz 30 July 1931.
[72] El Correo Extremeño 14 August 1931.
[73] See appeals in El Correo Extremeño 14, 15 August 1931.

would 'threaten thousands of small property-holders'. In contrast they pointed to the supposed determination of concerned large landowners to speak out in defence of all owners and tenants, and even to their altruism in making land available for settlement.[74] Meanwhile, little mention was made of the real threat to large owners posed by potential reform. Whilst support for such propaganda and organisation was crucial for any future resurgence of the social and political influence of agrarians in Badajoz, their immediate problem was how best to combat the sociedades which now appeared well established in the countryside.

The existence of the Federación de Propietarios did not immediately bring about a united, coherent defence by a majority of agrarians in the localities. Whilst it could easily step into the vacant role of 'official' spokeman for landownership, in reality the confusion that had gripped local landed notables during the period of republican euphoria could not be quickly overcome. Even so, after the changes in wages, work conditions, rural rents and collective negotiations conceded under pressure by rural employers during the summer harvest agitation, their resolve began to stiffen. This was confirmed by the realisation that conditions in the countryside under the Republic, whilst threatening, had not led to the apocalyptic disappearance of private landownership overnight. Agrarians were therefore able to fight on, albeit now under unfavourable terms. With the 'traditional' highpoint of harvest syndical conflicts passed, a natural hiatus ensued during which individual agrarians began to adopt a more

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[74] Quoted in Asamblea letter, El Correo Extremeño 31 July 1931; La Voz Extremeña 1 August 1931.

intransigent attitude where possible towards social and economic changes. At bottom these were uncoordinated opportunistic moves - though strongly defended by the agrarian organisations - rather than a directed policy. Trying to undermine or ignore the provisions of collective contracts with sociedades obreras, judgements of jurados mixtos, rulings of councils and requirements of government decrees were a part of this early stage of recovery. Overshadowing these actions in the scope of its impact was the temporary abandoning of more cultivation beyond that already lost through the reaction to poor cereal prices, thus deepening unemployment and weakening the hold of the sociedades over the labour market by intimidating rural workers through hunger and misery. The onset of the low period of work in the established agricultural year enabled rural employers and their organisations to argue that this was a 'natural phenomenon' rather than a means of social control. Alternatively it was suggested that it was the changes that had taken place in rural society championed by the sociedades, exacerbated by the actions of the republican government, which were themselves responsible for the worsening situation.

Unsurprisingly, the provincial Socialist movement took an opposing view of the situation developing in Badajoz. At a meeting of Socialist deputies for Extremadura and Andalucía in July 1931, at which the total unemployed for Badajoz was put at 45,000, it was reported that, 'the causes of the present crisis are the retreats of some property-owners in the face of fear of the masses'.[78] The urgency of the problem was further

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[78] El Correo Extremeño 14 July 1931.

evidenced in an even more pessimistic report in the same month by a commission appointed by the Civil Governor, stating that 80,000 families were without income.[76] Sporadic reports throughout the autumn and winter of labourers and herdsmen stealing acorns, chickpeas, olives and firewood, often claimed by them as denied 'gleaning rights' against the denunciations of agrarians, added to a picture of misery.[77] As the 'labour crisis' bit deeper, the casas del pueblo made strenuous efforts to mitigate its effects; at the same time the sociedades obreras sought to maintain their control over conditions of work in the fields.

Initiatives on unemployment, or the lack of them, immediately created controversy. A government grant of 1.4 million pesetas to the Diputación allowed a programme of public roadworks and street improvements to begin, but this could only partially and temporarily employ redundant labour.[78] Similarly, various types of self-help on the part of the casas del pueblo could only have a marginal effect. In Montijo bread was distributed to the families of unemployed labourers.[79] Attempts were also made to take advantage of a new authorisation which allowed collective renting of land by sociedades obreras. 'Renovación Social' of Esparragosa de la Serena provided an ambitious example, renting the holding 'cien fanegas' from a sympathetic local council; even so only

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[76] La Voz Extremeña 19 July 1931.
[77] See for instance reports from as far afield as Oliva de la Frontera, La Granja, Olivenza, and Almendralejo, La Voz Extremeña 8 August, 15, 16 October, 4 December 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 1 December 1931.
[78] La Libertad de Badajoz 29 July 1931.
[79] Molano Gragera, op.cit. p. 63

a handful of families was able to benefit.[80] Municipal responses were equally constrained and patchy, depending on the composition of councils and the ability of local landowners and labradores to subvert their actions. Most tried to extend the device of placing workers with charitable agrarians. Often local commissions of owners and workers were set up to try to deal with the crisis on a consensus basis. However, the general unwillingness of employers to accept placed workers and their attempts to avoid tax rises to pay for local relief and public works made a mockery of their frequent declarations of concern for the plight of labouring families. Even after July, when the placement of workers became the responsibility of new 'bolsas de trabajo', the determination of councils to act was all important.[81] Where Socialist councillors dominated, the rural police appointed by the municipality were used to enforce placements. In cases where conservative republicans or erstwhile monarchists were in control and refused to act against reacalcitrant landowners, casas del pueblo complained vociferously about obstructionism and organised demonstrations outside council offices. Despite the bitter battles fought over municipal policies on unemployment - alongside the campaigns for improvements to cheap housing, education, and sanitation to benefit the labouring majority in the pueblos - the fundamental problem of lack of work was still the way landowners and tenants chose to use the land.

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[80] For the arrangement see, 'Actas de Renovación Social de Esparragosa de la Serena' 1 September 1931 AGCS: PSU leg. 1.
[81] El Correo Extremeño, La Voz Extremeña 19 July 1931.

The availability of work had always been a feature of latifundism over which sociedades obreras had sought to gain some control. Conversely, landowners and labradores saw decisions over cultivation and employment strictly as a prerogative of landownership, and a vital element to their control over labour and hence the profitability of the estates. Rising unemployment and the patent inadequacy of temporary relief measures now brought to the forefront the question of who had authority over land and labour use. In August, when proposals were being considered by a commission set up by the Civil Governor for new labour contracts covering the forthcoming agricultural year in the area around the capital, levels of employment, as well as conditions of work and wages, proved contentious.[82] Sociedades recognised that, aside from the purely social effects of low employment produced by taking land out of cultivation, it also weakened the control of workers' organisations' over the labour market, and thus conditions and wages, by increasing competition for scarcer work. Agrarians saw attempts to specify the amount of work that would be available throughout the agricultural cycle as a final assault on their rights and the stability of latifundism. Consequently, the sociedades rejected the new bases del trabajo, announced by Gregorio Cruz Valero as chairman of the commission, at the end of September as inadequate in terms of employment guarantees, as well as on wage levels and conditions.[83]

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[82] El Correo Extremeño 13 August 1931 records the appointment of this commission composed of members of the Cámara Agrícola and Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras.
[83] La Voz Extremeña 26 September 1931.

When no new negotiations were forthcoming the twenty-eight sociedades obreras in the area of the capital declared a general strike in order to force a new agreement and its application throughout the whole province.[84] In spite of strong support, particularly amongst the 5,000 strong sociedad in the capital[85], a stalemate immediately resulted as the Cámara Agrícola, representing the landowners, refused to respond. The Civil Governor stuck to his previous statements that in the event of strikes he would 'maintain public order and the right to work'.[86] Tension quickly built up with a crowd of labourers besieging the Governor's office in the capital. Two days after the strike began a delegate hastily despatched from the Ministry of Labour arrived to seek its resolution and avoid the damaging period of conflict feared in Madrid.[87] With the backing of Largo Caballero, supported by pressure on the Civil Governor from the Ministry of the Interior, the delegate immediately began direct negotiations with a commission of employers, headed by Baldomero Galache and Gregorio Cruz Valero. A day later, on 9 October 1931, new bases del trabajo were signed, without the direct participation of the provincial labour movement which was forced by the delegate - himself a member of the UGT - to end the strike.[88] Although the terms appeared favourable to the workers, with a complicated table of minimum wages for different tasks and specified conditions of work, the

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[84] See La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 6, 7 October 1931.
[85] The casa del pueblo was the largest in Badajoz, containing over 30 sections. La Libertad de Badajoz 14 November 1931.
[86] La Libertad de Badajoz 18 September 1931.
[87] La Libertad de Badajoz, La Voz Extremeña 8 October 1931.
[88] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 9 October 1931.

agreement lacked the guarantees on employment the sociedades had sought. Although maximum hours of work were laid down for different times of the year as a means to give as many labourers as possible employment during highpoints of activity in the agricultural year, there was nothing to prevent landowners and tenants abandoning cultivation, making a farce of any agreement on wages and conditions for non-existent work.[69] Despite Caballero's announcement of the 'success' of this mediation, the provincial sociedades clearly did not see it this way. In fact frustration on their part was heightened rather than calmed by the episode, revealing as it did the limitations under which they still operated in their dealings with rural employers despite the dominant position they thought they had achieved in the province.

In November the Federación de Sociedades Obreras met to consider the failure of the strike to force employers into immediate aquiescence. Manuel Vásquez, the provincial delegate to the FNTT, pointed out that despite the general weakness of employers in the province, the basic circumstances had still worked against the sociedades, suggesting that

> '..that strike failed beforehand, insofar as there existed a level of forced unemployment whose circumstances were favourable to an employer class disposed to ignore the petitions that had been formulated.'[70]

Although this underlying problem, surviving from the pre-republican era, was acknowledged as important by the

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[69] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 10 October 1931 give details of agreement. Hours of work were to be: 7 December-March; 8 October-November, April-May; 9 June-September.

[70] La Voz Extremeña 22 November 1931.

sociedades, the main effect of this relative failure was to confirm their increasingly critical stance towards the provincial authorities who in this particular instance, it was argued, had failed to support workers' organisations and had tacitly aided the agrarians. Indeed Badajoz was an example put forward by the Socialist deputy Gabriel Morón when arguing that progress in the countryside for rural workers would be difficult, if not impossible, in the face of an administrative apparatus and personnel inherited from the Monarchy.[71]

Complaints of obstructionism and partisan interference with Socialist organisations had been mounting since the arrival of the Republic. The most serious involved violent clashes between the Civil Guard, the paramilitary police armed with infantry weapons, and crowds of demonstrating and striking workers. During the election campaign for the Cortes, incidents during protests against fraud in Guareña and Montemolín left one Guard and one civilian dead, plus four civilians badly wounded, when nervous Guards opened fire on the crowds. A further civilian death occurred in Almendralejo during a strike in July, whilst woundings occurred in Talarrubias, Valverde and Legares during the same period of unrest.[72] Meanwhile, in the Cortes, Simeón Vidarte complained that FNTT members in Badajoz were subject to persecution and arbitrary arrest by Civil Guards, whilst they failed to enforce social legislation and government decrees against local notables, under whose control they were still acting

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[71] Gabriel Morón, La ruta del socialismo ante la realidad política española (Madrid, 1932) pp. 85-93, 149-165.
[72] La Voz Extremeña 14 June, 15 July 1931. Letter of complaint from Margarita Nelken in El Socialista 26 December 1931.

despite the change of regime.[73] Similar charges were also levelled on 3 December 1931 when the Federación de Sociedades received a list of objections to the Civil Governor, including 'acts of collaboration' with employers during bargaining with rural workers, failure to prevent the overuse of agricultural machinery and opposition to government decrees and the actions of Socialist councils.[74]

The final straw came on 14 December 1931 when the mayor, his deputy and the president of the casa del pueblo were arrested in Almendralejo, on the orders of the Civil Governor, during a strike over wage rates and conditions for the forthcoming olive harvest.[75] Protests followed and a week later a special meeting of the Federación Provincial de Trabajadores decided that a show of strength and commitment was needed to force the authorities to act more within what they saw as the progressive spirit of the Republic. It was therefore decided, out of a sense of syndical weakness, to call the first political general strike seen in the province in order to protest, and provide a test of attitudes towards the syndical campaign and improvements in municipal conditions championed by the Socialist movement in the process.[76] Clear aims were announced for the forty-eight hour strike, planned to begin on 30 December: the transfer of the chief of the provincial Civil Guard, Pedro Perada y Sanz; the dismissal of the Civil Governor; liberty for those imprisoned in Almendralejo, and for all others arrested for 'social and

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[73] Vidarte, Las Cortes pp. 304-5.
[74] La Libertad de Badajoz 4 December 1931.
[75] La Libertad de Badajoz 15 December 1931 gives details.
[76] La Libertad de Badajoz 22 December 1931; La Voz Extremeña 18, 22 December 1931.

political offences'; and the appointment of a judge to rule on matters of public administration.[97] The use of the strike weapon was seen in limited terms, described by Nicolás de Pablo Hernández as the 'withdrawal of aid to maintain a fictitious order, based on the liberty of bourgeois abuse and the collaboration of the authorities'.[98] Despite orders from the strike committee to all sociedades obreras to adopt tactics 'that do not produce incidents' and announcements that no criticism of the republican regime was intended, FNTT and PSOE leaders in Madrid made efforts to have the stoppage called off as provocative.

An even more outraged reaction to the strike call came from those against whom it was aimed. Whilst the Socialists held meetings throughout the province and set up a network of local strike committees, the Governor, joining the speedy denunciations of La Voz Extremeña and La Libertad de Badajoz, condemned the protest as an abuse of power and the 'undermining of the normal channels of republican democracy'.[99] He went on to declare the strike illegal, calling at the same time for the 'rallying of the forces of law and order' and promising a strong reaction to any threat to public order.[100] The presidents of the Cámara de Comerio and Cámara Agrícola could only add to this a request for the 'freedom to work' in their messages of support.[101] The legal

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[97] La Libertad de Badajoz 23 December 1931 reproduces the circular issued by the central strike committee.
[98] In a letter to El Socialista 26 December 1931.
[99] La Voz Extremeña 22 December 1931; La Libertad de Badajoz 27 December 1931.
[100] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 27 December 1931; El Sol 30 December 1931. See also his message to the Minister of the Interior 29 December 1931 AHNMGA leg. 30.
[101] La Voz Extremeña 27 December 1931.

basis for a declaration of martial law had been supplied by the Republic itself in the form of the Ley de Defensa which aimed to counter the use of the general strike as a revolutionary weapon by the CNT, the Socialists' rivals for the support of the working-class. This gave the authorisation to move extra Civil Guards and troops to areas of expected militancy. Meanwhile, the agrarian associations pledged their support 'to resist aggression and threats to property and public order'.[102]

Despite the atmosphere of unease and tension reported throughout the province before the strike, the first day passed off quietly. La Voz Extremeña, the only provincial paper able to print, reported calm everywhere, with casas del pueblo organising marches and peaceful demonstrations in the streets, complete with bands and flags.[103] El Socialista carried information from the major centres, repeating the claim from the Federación de Trabajadores that over 80,000 workers were involved and remarking on the display of determination and discipline being shown despite the winter weather.[104] In contrast the Governor, echoing the provincial Radical Party, felt confident enough to suggest that the authorities had only to ignore the strike to prove its pointlessness and the paranoia of the Socialists.[105] Such sentiments seemed to have been vindicated during the second day, until reports arrived in the capital of a serious incident in the village of Castilblanco which had left four

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[102] La Voz Extremeña 29 December 1931.
[103] La Voz Extremeña 31 December 1931.
[104] El Socialista 1 January 1931.
[105] Reported in El Debate 1 January 1931. For the Radical view see, its editorial 31 December 1931.

Civil Guards and one civilian dead, and two more civilians badly wounded.

Castilblanco was in many ways typical of the sort of situation that had arisen in smaller, remote settlements in areas such as the Siberia Extremeña where it stood. The majority of the 3,000 inhabitants were primarily dependent for work on two families. Apart from some sharecroppers and smallholders, the majority of the population were reliant on herding and labouring for their existence. They formed the nucleus of a sociedad obrera, the first ever labour organisation in the village.[106] Since its creation in June a number of disputes had occurred between the landed elite and rural workers. In August, herdsmen had called a strike to obtain the wage rises guaranteed in government decrees, reinforcing their action by sabotaging telegraph lines and fences in order to disrupt business and let the stock wander.[107] There had also been a series of disputes over rents, the payment of piece-rates, the gang labour system, bargaining rights, and the signing of a labour contract. After the summer harvest, landowners imposed a rural lock-out preventing the preparation of fallows that had thrown the village deep into the 'labour crisis' at the time of the forty-eight hour strike call. This also coincided with a tense stage in a struggle for control of the local council, a copy of scenes familiar in Badajoz. During the municipal elections, the caciques' nominee, Felipe Maganto López, became mayor unopposed. However, following the formation of the casa del

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[106] On the pueblo see, El Sol 17 January 1932,; La Libertad de Badajoz 8 January 1932; La Voz Extremeña 10 January 1932.
[107] El Sol 17 January 1932.

pueblo, new elections for other posts on the council led to a landslide victory by Socialist candidates. Consequently, a tense situation developed within the divided council, with the landed elite afraid that a socialist takeover of local administration was imminent, and would lead to a reversal of 'past custom' in municipal affairs.[108]

When the instructions for the stoppage arrived by hand on 26 December 1931 after a difficult journey from the cabeza del partido in Herrera del Duque, they were enthusiastically received in the casa del pueblo. Justo Fernández, local FNTT and PSOE leader, immediately formed a strike committee and circulars were posted inviting the population to a meeting on the first day of protest. Over 300 people joined the mid-day meeting in the casa del pueblo, a lively affair with Justo Fernández addressing them on their cause and the corruption of the local authorities and caciques. Afterwards the crowd left the building and formed up in a procession outside, having voted to march through the village. At their head were two banners, bearing the words 'we want no Monarchists' and 'long live Socialism and the UGT'. The feeling was, as Fernández later put it, 'like celebrations on so many other occasions', much in the pattern of religious processions. The crowd marched in an orderly fashion through the few streets (having been warned not to drink alcohol) visiting important sites like the council buiding, the landowners' club, and the Civil

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[108] For this, and the account that follows see the collection of documents and trial submissions presented in, Luis Jiménez de Asúa, Juan Simeón Vidarte, Antonio Rodríguez Sastre, Anselmo Trejo Gallardo, Castilblanco (Madrid, 1933) passim; El Sol, El Debate, 31 December 1931-17 January 1932, 17-20 July 1933; El Socialista 31 December 1931-17 January 1932, 4-27 July 1933; La Voz Extremeña 31 December 1931-10 January 1932; La Libertad de Badajoz 1-11 January 1932.

Guard post before returning to the casa del pueblo. From here, elated with the success of the day and their domination of the streets, the people returned to their homes.

Such displays could only increase the insecurity of the landowners, at a time when they were 'afraid that power was escaping from their hands, and that they were not prepared to consent to this in any manner' as Vidarte later described it.[109] Alarmed at events, their representative, the mayor, visited the Corporal of the Civil Guard to remonstrate with him for not having intervened against the 'illegal' gathering and suggested that a violent siezure of power was being planned. Despite this meeting the Corporal visited Justo Fernández the following morning to remind him that demonstrations required the approval of the mayor, and asked if any further actions were planned for that day. When he was assured that none had been discussed, he indicated to Fernández that, as long as peace was kept, the Guards would stand aside. As the day progressed, striking workers and their families gathered in the square, near to the side street where the casa del pueblo stood. Undirected, they stood around chatting, eventually numbering some 500 persons. By mid-afternoon a recreation of the march of the previous day was decided upon, and once again the procession formed up and the banners were fetched from the house that served as casa del pueblo. However, this time Justo Fernández did not join them, and at the later trial it was reported that he tried to dissuade members of the crowd from a further demonstration and urged restraint. Nevertheless they set off through the streets

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[109] Vidarte, Las Cortes p. 87.

in the same orderly way as before, passing in the process the figure of the mayor coming from the council building, which also stood in the square.

Outraged at this new display of defiance the mayor hurried to the Civil Guard post to confront the Corporal. Determined to assert his authority, he ordered the Guards to break up the demonstration. As the Corporal and three others left for the casa del pueblo the procession was returning to the square having toured the streets. By the time they arrived, the crowd was drifting away, leaving a residue of around 200 persons standing about. The Corporal entered the casa del pueblo to order Justo Fernández to dissolve the demonstration that had already finished, leaving the other three Guards standing by the doorway with their rifles facing outwards towards the people left in the narrow street as though keeping them at bay. Comments flew from the crowd, the most forceful apparently coming from a group of women at the front. In the confusion one of the Guards pushed at some of the women with his rifle, and when further objections came he fired a shot, instantly killing one man. His nervous companions also fired, wounding two others. Those people nearest the Guards, in fear and panic, fell on the three men, who were unable to continue firing before they were seized. Upon hearing the shots, the Corporal ran out of the building into the arms of the crowd, who in a frenzy turned their weapons back on their owners and with rocks and knives hacked all four Guards to death. Following this, the crowd melted away to their homes.

The reactions that followed this exceptionally violent event were highly revealing, turning Castilblanco into a national cause célèbre in the process. A storm was raised by the rightist and conservative republican press in Badajoz and Madrid, echoing the comments of General Sanjurjo during a visit to Castilblanco, which presented the Civil Guard as an example of public order under assault from the ignorant masses stirred up by a virulent and extremist Socialist movement.[110] In the most fanciful version of events, Colonel Pereda described how the 'red band' ran through the streets 'assaulting the houses of the rich', before finally hurling themselves, Justo Fernández in the lead, on the hapless Guards.[111] Meanwhile in the Cortes, the Azaña government came under attack from the Agrarian and Radical deputies, led by Hidalgo and Salazar Alonso. They argued that no support should be forthcoming for an administration that had as its main pillar an 'irresponsible' party such as the PSOE which contained dangerous elements and was unable to contain its own supporters whom it had aroused with promises of unachievable change.[112] The PSOE was thrown onto the defensive, choosing to distance itself from the incident and its Badajoz Federation.

Naturally, the uproar in Madrid which helped mythologise and distort the actual events had its parallels in the province despite the closer proximity to reality. Castilblanco became a rallying cry for the Radicals and the right with the funerals, and public subscriptions for the families of the

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[110] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 5 January 1932 gives details of the visit.
[111] La Libertad de Badajoz 5 January 1932.
[112] DSCC 5 January 1932; Vidarte, op.cit. pp. 298-301; Manuel Azaña, Obras v.2 pp. 127-31.

Guards sponsored by the Cámara Agrícola, Cámara de Comercio and Acción Católica, becoming occasions to popularise opposition to the Socialist movement.[113] La Voz Extremeña repeated its line, produced even before the strike, that the Socialist movement was being pushed to extremes by 'dangerous elements' - personified by Margarita Nelken.[114] Whilst Castilblanco was being turned into an anti-socialist symbol, other events in the province which showed another, perhaps more typical, view of violence and protest were glossed over. On the second day of the general strike, in Feria, one worker was shot dead and others wounded when Guards had opened fire on a crowd. In the days following Castilblanco the Civil Guard took the opportunity to crack down on the socialist movement, closing casas del pueblo and leaving further dead and wounded in Zalamea de la Serena, Villanueva and Oliva de la Serena.[115] Combined with outrage at the propaganda use of Castilblanco, these episodes produced a corresponding hardening of attitudes within the provincial Socialist movement.

After calling off the forty-eight hour protest the Federación de Trabajadores sent a telegram to El Socialista pointing out that

> '...the sad events of Castilblanco and Feria, are totally foreign to our tactics, and that the strike of 80,000 workers of Badajoz should have been, and has been, pacific, as proved in the instructions circulated and the result obtained in 161 out of 163 localities of the province.'[116]

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[113] On the funerals see, El Sol 2 January 1932; La Voz Extremeña 3 January 1932. For suscriptions etc. see, La Libertad de Badajoz 3-7 January 1932.
[114] La Voz Extremeña 29 December 1931, 5 January 1932.
[115] El Socialista 3-5 January 1932; La Voz Extremeña 2 January 1932.
[116] El Socialista 3 January 1932.

Meanwhile, the Socialist deputies for Badajoz firmly pointed to the responsibility of the Governor and the residual influence of the landowners, arguing that 'public opinion in Badajoz doesn't believe that the events originated with the general strike that exists in the province declared by the UGT'.[117] Margarita Nelken was particularly outspoken in her condemnation, earning a reputation as the bête noire of the right in the process. In an article in El Socialista she contended that, 'All the conflicts springing up in Extremadura between the Civil Guard and the workers have the same cause: hunger, leading to clashes between those who need food and work and the forces of the Civil Guard who protect those who deny them'.[118] Individual sociedades obreras also rallied around and contributed to a defence fund, which helped provide four laywers, including Vidarte, to defend the twenty four persons who stood trial for murder in a military court eighteen months later. Finally, a meeting of the Federación de Trabajadores in February 1932 reaffirmed a commitment to the specific aims of the forty-eight hour protest, and pledged itself to continue the struggle for social and economic change in Badajoz.[119] However, despite this determined response by the Socialist movement to attacks on it, disillusionment was also evident. The failure of the general strike had been obvious, even before the news of Castilblanco had broken. For the Socialist movement the hopes for an easy advance under the Republic, built up by the swift changes of the first few months of the new regime, were dashed.

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[117] El Socialista 1 January 1932.
[118] El Socialista 3 January 1932.
[119] La Voz Extremeña 12 February 1932.

V. Conflict and Containment: the Forward March of Rural Labour Halted, January-December 1932

Following Castilblanco, attacks on the provincial Socialists and criticism of the social and economic changes they championed were led by the increasingly conservative Radicals. As a result of their organisational efforts, by February 1932 a Party assembly claimed to have local committees 'dedicated to combatting the Socialists' in 115 pueblos.[1] In addition to the positions that Radicals held in municipal councils and the Cortes, the Party was well provided with public opportunities to speak and act, as they saw it, as an 'anti-revolutionary' force that sought to rally all forces opposed to the provincial labour movement.[2] They took every chance to intensify their populist campaign in favour of a conservative interpretation of the regime. Essentially, their opportunistic appeal to the province was aimed at everyone who might respond to denunciations of the Socialist movement. 'Public order' became one of the main Radical slogans directed at the Socialists, portraying them as the fomenters of violence and a threat to property.[3] Fears for private property were also heavily emphasised at the level of municipal and provincial administration, where the Radicals were a strong

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[1] La Voz Extremeña 2 February 1932.

[2] The party carried out a vigorous campaign of local meetings addressed by prominent personalities such as Hidalgo and Salazar Alonso, often joined by leaders of Derecha Repúblicana, see for instance a series around Llerena in April and Guareña in July, La Voz Extremeña 21 April, 21 July 1932.

[3] The post-Castilblanco debate provided amply opportunity for Hidalgo to put such views DSCC 5 January 1932. See also Octavio Ruiz Manjón, El Partido Republicano Radical 1908-1936 (Madrid, 1976) p. 298 on Radical conservatism in Badajoz.

dissenting voice. The established Radical following amongst small manufacturers, businessmen and shopkeepers in the pueblos was among the obvious supporters of denunciations of the effects of wage rises and fines ordered by jurados mixtos for urban trades, rises in municipal taxes for public works and poor relief, and council controls on basic food prices, weights and measures.[4] However, the Party remained vague and ambiguous on a specific alternative programme of administration and reform, seeking to spread its net as widely as possible in the search for support. In particular, if the party was to consolidate itself as the conservative alternative to socialism in Badajoz it needed to address the agrarian issues that increasingly divided the countryside.

The complexity of interests amongst tenants, small-holders, labradores and landowners, who were more likely to be receptive to the Radicals than the rural workforce firmly under the Socialist banner, made interventions on land issues difficult, though of overwhelming importance to any movement with pretentions to mass support in Badajoz. In this situation the fundamental question was the degree to which the Radicals were prepared to compromise with the interests of the landed elite, the beneficiaries and pillars of the established rural order, and risk alienating other sources of support. For Salazar Alonso at least there was no hesitation; from acceptance of still socially and economically powerful agrarians into the ranks of the party supposedly in order to

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[4] For this see almost daily references in La Voz Extremeña January-October 1932. Particular highpoints were a major split in the capital over tax rises in February, and the mounting number of fines levied on small businesmen for failure to meet minimum wages and conditions, La Voz Extremeña 16 February, 6 August 1932.

integrate them into the Republic, he moved easily to become a direct advocate of many of their interests. For the Socialists he was simply responding enthusiastically to what they perceived as the reality of the Radical Party in many localities, where infiltration by agrarians had effectively turned the Party into 'a defender of great capitalists and great landowners'.[5] Socialist hostility was confirmed by the ferocity of Salazar Alonso's attacks on the provincial Socialist movement during speeches and in his writings, calling for the 'dismemberment' of socialism as a public menace and a threat to a just republican order.[6] He also adopted a rhetoric specifically designed to appeal to the landed elite, describing '...the destruction of wealth that the province is suffering at the hands of Marxists and Socialists' and calling for the type of irrigation works and technical improvements that were the pet projects of the agrarian professionals with whom he maintained good contacts.[7] However, another more cautious current of opinion existed within the provincial Radicals, which emphasised the need to resist extremism but recognised a need for a measure of social and economic change to avoid revolution. In March 1932 La Voz Extremeña took this line on the contentious issue of agrarian reform, arguing that,

> 'It is dangerous to defer the innovation a day longer. Dangerous because the great

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[5] See article by José Calderón Romero El Obrero de la Tierra 28 May 1932, and a previous overview of the Radicals in Badajoz, El Obrero de la Tierra 20 February 1932. Also Socialist replies to Hidalgo in the Cortes debate on Castilblanco, DSCC 5 January 1932.

[6] For his views see his weekly column in La Voz Extremeña; Salazar Alonso, Tarea pp. 55-69; interview in La Voz Extremeña 5 January 1932.

[7] La Voz Extremeña 8 March 1932 on situation in Badajoz.

> mass of peasants in Extremadura and Andalucía are eager for reform as their only means of improvement.'[8]

As the foremost proponent of this type of view, Diego Hidalgo, the Radical Party's spokesman on agrarian issues in the Cortes, bore the brunt of dealing with the dilemmas of the reform proposals that were the acid test of Radical attitudes on rural questions, and of responding to pressures from landed interests.

The erratic part played by Hidalgo in the debates over agrarian reform illustrated the real difficulties of charting his middle course between sweeping reform and landowner opposition to any change carried out by the state.[9] During the saga of the passing of reform legislation to break up the southern estates to provide land for rural workers, he was the recipient, like Salazar Alonso, of a number of deputations from the Federación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas de Badajoz seeking to influence his actions as spokesman. However, until the proposition of Marcelino Domingo's definitive Agrarian Reform bill in March 1932 he maintained the 'balanced' approach, despite its obvious difficulties, not least of which was the determined pressure of the Socialist Party for strong measures. Thus Hidalgo was instrumental in rejecting the proposals of the Technical Commission in July 1931, which favoured immediate action by decree to redistribute land, claiming that this was unfair to landowners.[10] During the next six months of desultory debate,

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[8] La Voz Extremeña 19 March 1932.
[9] See Ruiz Manjón, El Partido Republicano Radical pp. 306-9 on this in relation to agrarian issues.
[10] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 176; Ruiz Manjón, ibid. p. 307; El Sol 21 August 1931 describe his reactions.

he proposed his own version of a legislated reform which would only expropriate specific 'scapegoats' with full compensation - essentially bad cultivators and rapacious landlords - but not pass land to rural workers for collective working. Instead land would be given, or rented, to family farmers, in effect mildly benefitting tenants and smallholders without amounting to an assault on private property. Although still proposing some redistribution, this was sufficiently mild in comparison with Socialist proposals floated at the time for Unión Económica - an umbrella for various patronal organisations - to reprint the text as a pamphlet.[11] Such acceptance suggested that in attempting to resist the strong measures championed by the Socialists, Hidalgo came uncomfortably close to attempts by patronal organisations to dilute reform, supported by the small group of Agrarian deputies in the Cortes.

By spring 1932, while maintaining a continued public commitment to the need for reform, Hidalgo was leading Radical opposition to Domingo's proposals in order to moderate the measures in accordance with his own ideas. After failing to have any elements from his own suggestions included, Hidalgo became an active participant in the clause by clause debates that began in May 1932. In his numerous interventions in the debates he argued for full, rather than limited, compensation, more financial support for smallholders and tenants, and against collective working by sociedades obreras.[12] However, this did not make him an entirely uncritical defender of landed interests, nor a supporter of the campaign of

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[11] Unión Económica, Ante la reforma agraria (Madrid, 1931). Malefakis, ibid. pp. 187-9 describes the episode.
[12] DSCC 7, 12, 13 July, 17 August 1932 for these points.

obstructionism undertaken by Agrarian deputies in the Cortes.[13] Despite the failure to change the fundamental bases of reform during the long, poorly attended, debates, Hidalgo did join the Republicans and Socialists in the final vote for the measures on 9 September 1932, after the impetus given to them by the abortive Sanjurjo rising against the regime.[14] In its final form the law was a compromise measure which allowed the expropriation of estate lands in the south, but with compensation paid to the owners and exclusion of the principle of collective working championed by the FNTT in favour of settlement on individual family farms. The implementation of reform was placed under the control of a new government organisation, known as the Institute of Agrarian Reform (IRA).

Not surprisingly the Federación Provincial de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas, as the representative of landed interests in Badajoz, was dismissive of the vacillating performance of the Radicals on the agrarian reform question, despite the efforts of Salazar Alonso. Clearly it was difficult to measure up to the uncompromising standards of provincial agrarians, as expressed in numerous statements from the Asamblea de Propietarios which presented the private ownership and free use of rural property as a fundamental right. Such a hardline attitude saw the Radicals merely as one potentially useful channel in the wider political defence of landed interests against the redistributive reform legislation eventually presented to the Cortes.[15] Indeed, given the desire

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[13] See Alejandro López López, El boicot de la derecha a las reformas de la Segunda República (Madrid, 1984) passim.
[14] For this see, P. Preston, The Coming pp. 73-4.
[15] See Ara y Canta 18 January, 12 February 1932 articles arguing for a reform by Vasquez Humasque, later director of

of most agrarians to return to the autocratic supremacy they had enjoyed before the Republic, it was highly unlikely that they would give their wholehearted support to any political force not completely committed to that aim. Thus deputations from the Federación de Propietarios to Madrid to lobby during the slow passage of the reform bill concentrated their efforts on establishing firm links with the Agrarian deputies from other provinces led by Gil Robles, although they usually also visited Diego Hidalgo and Salazar Alonso. In concert with the Agrupación Nacional de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas, provincial employers' organisations participated in an implacable resistance to reform that became part of an ever more confident campaign to stem the tide of change within Badajoz.[16]

As an alternative to the redistribution of lands by the state for collective working or family farming, agrarian organisations in Badajoz presented irrigation as 'the only possible solution to the social problem'.[17] This promotion of hydraulic works deflected the attack on property rights entailed in the agrarian reform towards preoccupations with problems of production. At the same time the Asamblea de Propietarios supported an accompanying settlement of 'suitable families' under the control of landowners onto parcels of irrigated land as sharecroppers.[18] The continuity of ideas over the staple concerns of the agrarian professionals in the Cámara Agrícola and the social Catholics in the Agrarian

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the Institute for Agrarian Reform, and 2ª May 1932 for a detailed critique of the bases of the proposed legislation.

[16] On the disruption campaign by the agrarians in the Cortes, see Alejandro López López, El boicot pp. 275-89.

[17] Ara y Canta 2ª April 1932.

[18] Ara y Canta 1 March 1932.

Syndicates and Rural Banks was striking. Ironically these notions were in fact widely supported across the political spectrum during the Republic, albeit without the same insistence on the primacy of private property rights. The Radicals, led by Hidalgo, pressed hard for irrigation to supplement a mild land reform.[19] Meanwhile Prieto, as Minister of Public works, presided over plans resurrected from those developed over the previous thirty years to dam the Guadiana in order to provide 108,000 hectares of irrigated land. In the event, although work eventually began in December 1932 on the first stage of the Cijara project, it was not to be completed until after the Civil War.[20]

Despite the setback presented to agrarian interests by the Agrarian Reform Law, the cumbersome administrative implementation of its measures by the IRA offered ample opportunity to develop a full range of spoiling tactics to disrupt and circumvent its practical application. Although in theory a frightening prospect, the patent limitations of the reform in reality made it something of a secondary issue for landowners. Undoubtedly its main effect was to secure a greater cohesion and level of organisation amongst agrarians in opposition to the Republican regime. Support for the positions of the provincial agrarian organisations was even further enhanced by plans on the part of the Diputación Provincial to socialise the operation of the industrial abbatoir in Mérida. By March 1932 La Voz Extremeña reported

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[19] See debates in the Cortes, DSCC 26, 30 August 1932.
[20] For plans in the Plan Nacional de Obras Hidraúlicas de 1933, in three stages: 10,00 hecs within 10 years, 60,000 hecs more by 15 and a final 38,000 hecs by 25 see, Ortega, 'El intento' in Gaviría (ed.), Extremadura Saqueada pp.114-7.

that 'capitalist livestock farmers have moved to combat the Republic'.[21] Yet the underlying need remained pressing to find an alternative to the corporate system erected in the countryside which had institutionalised the position of the sociedades obreras and permanently placed constraints on the exercise of landownership and on the profitability of the estates. In this task the agrarian reform proved a blessing in disguise in the continued attempts by the Asamblea de Propietarios to mobilise a propertied alliance as a defence for the established rural order and as an aid to containing the advance of the provincial labour movement.

The campaign to bring smallholders and sharecroppers into the sindicatos de propietarios in the localities made particular use of the agrarian reform to reinforce the suggestion that conditions in the countryside under the Republic were a threat to a supposed community of interests between family producers and large landowners and labradores. Despite the obvious cynicism behind the concern for 'the small men' often professed by agrarian spokesmen, these appeals did address some real predicaments faced by the middle stratum of rural society. Fear of a redistributive reform had already been expressed by the Asociación Provincial de Arrendatarios de Fincas Rústicas, representing predominantly small tenants of all types but also some smallholders. In a message to the Agrarian Reform Commission in September 1931, they argued that, 'The hour of their emancipation has still not arrived for the great majority'.[22] In January 1932 a commission sent to ministers in Madrid expressed the fear that the rights of

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[21] La Voz Extremeña 23 March 1932.
[22] La Voz Extremeña 15 September 1931.

tenants and smallholders would be adversely affected by any reform that favoured the Socialist preference for the collective working of the land.[23] Similar concerns were expressed to Diego Hidalgo during the passage of the reform bill in a barrage of letters from smallholding and tenant families in Badajoz.[24] Moreover, when the register of lands liable for expropriation was drawn up with the final approval of the legislation there was some justification for these doubts - though this was far from the apocalyptic vision of an all out assault by the state on rural property consistently portrayed by agrarian propaganda in the pages of La Libertad. The problem affecting Badajoz as elsewhere was that some medium to small sized holdings were included in the category of land liable for expropriation alongside the properties of the great latifundistas. In the province as a whole some 2,202 owners were included in the reform register; 808 of them with holdings over 250 hectares, and 288 with between 100 and 250 hectares, which left 1,106 with holdings of less than 100 hectares. The miscalculation by the government, in terms of its likely effect on the opinions of family producers, was further compounded by the relatively small amount of land - 25,630 hectares or 3.24 percent of the total involved in the reform as a whole - that could be obtained from this source.[25] Whilst smallholders were most directly threatened by the possibility of expropriation, some tenants also faced likely

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[23] La Voz Extremeña 13 January 1932.
[24] For example see letters to Diego de la Concha, 18 July, 23 August, 11 September 1932 ADH.
[25] For those affected by the reform see Francisca Rosique Navarro, La reforma agraria en Badajoz durante la II República (Badajoz, 1988) pp. 167-222; Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp.213-9.

adverse effects. This was because the reform, in the attempt to strike at absentee owners with multiple holdings permanently leased out to substantial tenants (labradores), failed to exclude from its remit holdings covering less than 100 hectares. This did not hit many sharecroppers whose plots were not systematically leased, but threatened to deprive small tenants of their way of life by taking away from the actual owners the lands that they worked.

Other changes in rural society under the new regime also favoured agrarian organisations in their efforts to attract broader social support. Family producers were adversely affected by many of the government decrees and by the advantages gained by rural workers in the sociedades obreras. During May 1932 the main complaints that had arisen were being voiced by bodies which represented tenants and smallholders. At a meeting in the capital of comunidades de labradores from the principal areas of smallholding strength, calls were made for the suspension of términos municipales, a minimum wheat price, freedom to use machinery as required, and an end to the placement of unemployed workers.[26] To this list a similar meeting of the Asociación de Arrendatarios added worries about the level of wages and hours that the jurados mixtos de trabajo rural would award workers for the forthcoming harvest season when they became fully operational.[27] The unifying thread was the difficulty that family producers were beginning to encounter in their use of labour. Lacking the economies of

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[26] Zalamea de la Serena, Mérida, Los Santos, Olivenza, Almendralejo, Aceuchal, Fuente de Cantos, Villafranca de los Barros, Bienvenida, Zafra, Campanario, and Quintanta de la Sierra were the particular towns represented. La Voz Extremeña 1 May 1932.

[27] La Voz Extremeña 6 May 1932.

scale of *latifundio* production, their marginal productivity especially at a time of low prices, left them poorly placed to pay for the wage rises and improvements in working conditions championed by the *sociedades*. In many small villages the regulations controlling the recruitment of workers meant that there were local labour shortages during the crucial summer cereal harvest when maybe only a couple of extra hands were needed. This last problem was chiefly due to the operation of the *términos* decree which had prevented the movement of workers from site to site as in the past because of the abuses of rural employers seeking to undercut the bargaining position of local workers. The result was an increase in the wariness between *sociedades*, who were resistant to any weakening of their gains, and family producers, who sought some modifications to ease their difficulties.

Despite the existence of this apparently fertile ground in which to develop the notion of common interests and concerns, the *sindicatos de propietarios* did not meet with great success amongst family producers. Only in areas such as Mérida and Almendralejo where a tradition of established Catholic Syndicates was evidence of the foresight of some agrarians - mainly resident landowners - who had long cultivated the support of their property owning neighbours, did the *sindicatos de propietarios* find a real following amongst concentrations of smallholders made fearful of agrarian reform and the demands of the Socialist movement. Elsewhere, the scatterings of smallholders were insufficient

to provide a real base for organisation.[26] Moreover, amongst tenants, the fears carefully played on by agrarian organisations during the passage of the reform legislation coincided with conflict over rural rents and tenancy agreements, which weakened their appeal to bodies directly dominated by their landlords.

Disputes came to a head in July and August in anticipation of the lapse of the temporary decrees which had frozen the level of rural rents and prevented the expulsion of tenants by landlords, passed by the government in the previous year. At the end of July 1932 the Asociación de Arrendatarios petitioned the government for a decrease in rents and for a fairer division of harvests between landlords and share-croppers.[27] This was followed in early August by an exchange of views between the Federación de Propietarios and Asociación de Arrendatarios, representing respectively the two sides involved. The tenants argued that the fall in cereal prices had placed tenants in a precarious economic position that was driving them into dependency and usury; only a permanent control of rents and legally binding tenancies and share-cropping agreements - in effect codifying the decrees - could alleviate the situation. The landlords rejected controls on the grounds that the decrees had been extraordinary measures introduced for specific circumstances of poor harvest and disruption during the change of regime which no longer applied: therefore a return to the status-quo ante was now possible. Furthermore, it was suggested disingenuously, that

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[26] Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 60 says that small-holders in Montijo were driven by fear of agrarian reform into the hands of large landowners.
[27] La Voz Extremeña 31 July 1932.

the effects of the decrees had been pernicious, 'creating a problem where one had not actually existed' and leading to the present unfortunate confrontation.[30] The last remark was specifically intended to prejudice tenants against a measure introduced by the Socialist deputy, Simeón Vidarte, from the province's most important share-cropping region between Zafra and Llerena; he proposed a law of tenancies to protect sharecroppers from expulsion and to prevent excessive rent rises.[31] In an immediate response, an assembly of the Asociación de Arrendatarios, fully aware of reports of tenants and landlords at loggerheads in the countryside, resolved to withhold all rents in money and crops until new regulations were introduced.[32] The passage of the new law, greeted with joy by the tenants' organisation, finally proved to agrarians that they could not rely on the unconditional support of the middle ranks of rural society.[33] Despite obvious parallel interests, significant differences remained so that tenants obviously preferred to maintain their autonomy rather than submerge themselves in bodies directly dominated by the landed elite.

A more significant influence on the attitudes of family producers towards change in the rural order was the rise in social conflict in the countryside during 1932. The growing bitterness of the syndical struggle in the fields and pueblos of the province reflected the stubborn resistance to change on

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[30] La Voz Extremeña 3 August 1932 prints the submissions of the two sides.
[31] On this 'Ley Vidarte', see Simeon Vidarte, Las Cortes pp. 506-7.
[32] La Voz Extremeña 5, 9 August 1932 on reports of frustration of tenants around the province and assembly.
[33] La Voz Extremeña 24 August reports.

the part of rural employers, and their determination to limit the improvements in wages and conditions won by the sociedades obreras. Because many of the direct mechanisms of social control for the management of the labour force in cereal latifundism were no longer so easily available due to the constraints imposed by government decrees, 'forced' unemployment had emerged as the principal defence against organised rural labour by the beginning of 1932. In part this 'forced' unemployment was a manipulation of the persistent cycle of demand for labour on the cortijos, with its short peaks of employment and longer periods of 'labour crisis'. Its effects had already been greatly exacerbated by a general trend among large landowners and labradores to put more marginal land out of cultivation in response to the steady fall in cereal prices. Now, non-cultivation for economic reasons was also matched by an increasing tendency amongst landowners to go further and abandon spontaneously a portion of production deliberately to increase the pressure on rural labour to abandon the sociedades and return to work on employers' terms or face increasing hardship.[34] Such tactics revealed the degree to which agrarians were prepared to compromise the profitability of their estates in order to resist the demands of organised labour. The inevitable result of this form of combatting workers' organisation, with all that it implied in terms of hardship and frustration for

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[34] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 237-8 argues that this process was easier for landowners in Extremadura compared to those of Andalucía because of the higher proportion of less productive, less profitable, land. He adds that the loss to owners was also made easier because the land could be used to graze livestock - this is less convincing given the low prices and internal crisis affecting large scale livestock producers in Badajoz at the time.

unemployed labourers and their families, was the widening social and political polarisation of rural society.

Public complaints by the sociedades obreras at this deliberate creation of 'forced unemployment' were first voiced at a meeting of the junta local de reforma agraria in February 1932, following the short period of work provided by the olive harvest. Workers' representatives made the accusation, against denials by Pedro Navarete and Francisco López de Ayala from the Cámara Agrícola, that in some areas the laboreo forzoso decree was being completely ignored by both individuals and groups of landowners and labradores.[35] Following the recent failure of the 48 hour strike in the province, both sides were clearly acutely aware that unemployment weakened the bargaining position of the sociedades and hampered their general effectiveness. Protests by the sociedades to the provincial authorities and jurados mixtos over unemployment were also prompted by the deleterious effects that unemployment was having on life in the towns and villages. Evidence of deprivation, other than the claims made by Socialist deputies, was provided by the growing instances of acorn and firewood robberies from the estates.[36] Such actions were justified from the casas del pueblo as the traditional right of rebusca (gleaning), but were condemned by agrarians and many Radical councillors as plain theft.[37] The denial of the right to these residues of an earlier, more paternal age,

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[35] La Voz Extremeña 14 February 1932.
[36] Margarita Nelken was the most vociferous, see Porque hicimos p. 45.
[37] For a fascinating and bitter controversy see the dispute between Socialist and Radical councillors in Berlanga, La Voz Extremeña 3 January 1932. Landowner denunciations are in La Libertad passim.

often enforced by estate guards in remote areas, gave the lie to the attachment to charity often proclaimed by employers. This hard attitude also extended to the 'placement' of workers on the estates, which remained one of the main ways in which unemployment could be relieved in the absence of a proper system of insurance or welfare benefit. Rural employers were highly resistant to the replacement of the previous system of voluntarily accepting workers by lists of the unemployed drawn up by the comisiones mixtas created by Socialist councils, who were then allocated in turn to different estates. They sought to limit the extent of these placements, or if possible refused to pay workers once the work - usually road mending or ditch digging - was completed.[36] Other means of easing existence during hard times also came under threat. This was particularly blatant in Albuquerque, location of dispossessed common lands known as baldios, where landowners announced in February that they had withdrawn the remaining right of local labourers and shepherds to graze their own animals on the pastures during certain times of the year.[37]

The misery that began to be experienced by unemployed labourers and their families in the province was in sharp contrast to the expectations of steady improvement to working and living conditions that their early achievements under the Republic had encouraged. This was compounded by difficulties encountered by the provincial authorities and Socialist

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[36] La Voz Extremeña 3 March 1932 reports the situation in Llerena where landowners' representatives on the comisión mixta would only accept workers for 10 days, rather than the 15 requested, leaving the meeting in disorder. See also other reports on short term placements and landowners resistence, La Voz Extremeña 30 March 1932.

[37] Highlighted in the Cortes, DSCC 18 February 1932.

councils in implementing promised improvements to public services. Despite the increase in funds available to the Socialist dominated Diputación Provincial, the extent of the social problems requiring attention meant that difficult choices had to be made. The most agonising was between improving education through a school building programme or attacking widespread basic health problems; in the end funds went to the most pressing problems of poor sanitation and malarial swamps.[40] Councils faced similar problems in completing the building of public baths, cheap housing and mains drainage for working class ghettos. Even so, the basic problem was the all too apparent failure of latifundism to provide employment and a decent level of wages and conditions for the rural majority whilst under the control of an intransigent landed elite. Inevitably, the provincial Socialist movement faced the difficult problem of how to preserve the gains that had been made and break out of the impasse that seemed to be developing in the countryside between workers and employers.

As the ability of agrarians to resist increased alongside their greater internal cohesion and organisation, the difficulties faced by sociedades were recognised at a congress of Andalusian and Extremaduran federations of the FNTT that started on 6 February 1932. Delegates from Badajoz, representing the largest of the provincial organisations, were at the forefront of debates about the future strategy of rural workers' organisations. Following intense discussions - during which similar stories of landowner intransigence and evasion

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40 M. Samaniego Boneu, El problema escolar en Extremadura pp. 12-5.

were recounted from across the whole of the south of Spain - the congress committed itself to maintaining an approach within 'republican legality' and to await agrarian reform. In practice this meant continuing to appeal to the national and provincial authorities, and the newly functioning jurados mixtos de trabajo rural, when decrees or agreements were broken by employers. As long as periods of unemployment persisted, the use of the local general strike remained ineffective in forcing compliance as had been the case before the Republican era.[41] An open example of discontent at this type of approach surfaced on March 4 1932, when the Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras announced that it was expelling the agricultural workers' section of the casa del pueblo in the provincial capital for sponsoring a 'communist meeting'. It was clear that this localised split had no connection with the Communist Party (PCE), which like the CNT had no significant organised following in the province at this time; nor did the section mention the idea of breaking away from the provincial movement. This was essentially a dispute about means not ends. The display of authority by the provincial Socialist organisation was directed against a dissenting view which, pointing to the failure of the provincial authorities or jurados to act decisively, suggested that 'revolutionary action' against landowners was necessary if rural workers were to make a lasting advance in conditions of work and life and that the land had to be seized and the estates turned over to workers' control.[42] Such a local split

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[41] El Obrero de la Tierra 13, 20 February 1932.
[42] La Voz Extremeña 4, 5, 6 March 1932 chronicles the dispute and prints letters from various viewpoints.

was in itself of minor importance, though it certainly represented dissatisfaction at the real pace of change under the Republic and questioned the degree to which the pattern of authority in the countryside had shifted away from agrarians.

Growing doubts amongst rural labourers were largely set aside as the summer harvest season approached and the opportunity presented itself to repeat the advances of the year before. On 26 April 1932 the Federación Provincial de Sociedades Obreras presented its proposals for the forthcoming work, demanding a basic daily wage of 12 pesetas for harvesters, a detailed scale of payments for other work, and laying down conditions for travelling, meals and the use of machinery.[43] The Socialist movement was determined to make up for wages lost during the winter and spring, to break finally the previous pattern of localised agreements which had favoured employers and to assert control on a province-wide basis. Clearly, agrarians were far more capable of meeting the challenge of organised labour than they had been previously during the early republican period. Even so, with the corporate structure of labour relations in the form of the *jurados mixtos* and *comisiones mixtas* controlled by nominees appointed by Largo Caballero's Ministry of Labour, local councils and the Civil Governor, employers' organisations were still on the defensive during the negotiations over the collection of the harvest that began in early May. Consequently, when the *bases del trabajo* were signed in the Civil Governor's office on 8 May 1932 by representatives of workers, employers, and small tenants' organisations, they

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[43] *La Voz Extremeña* 26 April 1932.

gave a still substantial daily harvesting wage of 9.6 pesetas and conceded virtually all the other conditions demanded by the sociedades obreras.[44]

When cereal harvesting began on 19 May 1932 the atmosphere was reported to be tense.[45] Despite some signs of discontent on the part of individual sociedades which thought the conditions failed to make up ground that had been lost, the workers' side showed considerable flexibility when it came to the specific application of the agreement.[46] For instance in Zafra and Mérida, local commissions negotiated changes to agreements to take account of particular conditions at the request of landowners and tenants.[47] The reason for underlying distrust was eventually explained when harvesting actually began and the tactics of the employers became clear. Agrarian organisations had participated in the signing of an agreement they considered disadvantageous because of the need to get collection underway, only to seek to undermine the actual bases during harvesting itself. Reports of conflicts resulting from the insincerity of landowners and labradores in the completion of agreements quickly mounted from across the province. Though disputes largely fitted the pattern of previous years, employers were better prepared for them. The most minor involved the breaking of agreements on the number of meal and cigarette breaks, in the provision of only poor quality food, and the employment of foremen considered too harsh by local workers. More major infractions included

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[44] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 9 May 1932.
[45] La Voz Extremeña 19 May 1932.
[46] La Voz Extremeña 14 May 1932 reports an instance in Torre de Migual Sesmero.
[47] La Voz Extremeña 21 May 1932.

attempts to ignore the decree on the eight hour day so as to take on only a minimum number of workers rather than having to employ virtually double in order to maintain harvesting during all daylight hours, and seeking to pay wages at a lower rate than agreed after work had been completed.[46] In these cases short lived local strikes often brought landowners and labradores to heel, though a steady stream of fines were also charged by jurados mixtos against employers with apparently less effect.[47]

The most serious conflicts arose over actions by agrarians which directly threatened the control over the labour market and corresponding authority over the operation of latifundism that the sociedades obreras had achieved since the creation of the Republic. At the heart of this was the replacement of the arbitrary competition for work at the early morning labour hirings in the town square by a regulated 'census of harvesters', drawn up for each locality by the municipal authorities and jurados mixtos from which labourers were selected for work in turn once rural employers had declared their needs. This system both reinforced the solidarity of the 72,000 workers included on the summer 1932 list by the sociedades, and undermined the authority of rural employers over labour by circumventing the apparatus of gang hiring and working, and the relations of economic and social dependency that this institutionalised. Instead, agrarians

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[46] La Voz Extremeña 26 May 1932 describes a whole host of these early conflicts. See also, Nelken, Porque hicimos p. 47; El Obrero de la Tierra 14 May 1932.

[47] For reports of strikes and their causes see, La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 20 May-25 June 1932. See La Voz Extremeña 21, 25 May 1932 on fines. The level of fines does not seem to have been that daunting, averaging around 500 pesetas, La Voz Extremeña 29 May 1932.

found themselves potentially dependent on the goodwill of sociedades - at least during the harvest period of high demand for labour - and at their mercy as far as the level of wages and conditions of work were concerned. Furthermore, just as landowners and labradores saw this as the virtual handing over of their estates to the masses, so their permanent hands resented the threat to their privileged role as the supervisors of the latifundist system of production and labour relations. With the loyalty of their permanent staff secured, employers were able to make various attempts to avoid the census and keep organised labourers unemployed.

Accusations that agrarians were attempting to hire non-census labour, largely Portuguese or from surrounding provinces, began to be made by sociedades at the very beginning of the harvest. Fines and orders to draw labour only from the lists followed though enforcement was difficult, especially in remote regions where the Civil Guard was often firmly in the pockets of the local landed oligarchies.[50] Once again, the main confrontation loomed over the use of harvesting machinery rather than manual labour to collect the cereal crop - thus avoiding the census entirely. By early June, 41 pueblos - almost all in the main cereal zone - were reported to be involved in strikes over machine harvesting. This led to the withdrawal of the Federación de Sociedades Obreras from the commission appointed to oversee the implementation of the harvest agreement in protest.[51]

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[50] La Voz Extremeña 24 May 1932 gives numerous instances.
[51] La Voz Extremeña 3, 8 June 1932; El Socialista 11 June 1932; El Obrero de la Tierra 27 August 1932. Mechanics and operators of machines received high wages in order to ensure their loyalty.

Agrarians reacted to the denunciations emanating from the provincial Socialist movement with counter-claims that sociedades had agitated amongst workers to break the agreements.[52] In the Cortes, Salazar Alonso took the employers' side in claiming that machinery could safely be used without creating unemployment, and that in any event the 30 percent of the crop allowed to be cut in this manner under the harvest agreement was being respected.[53] In reply, Vidarte charged that in many cases employers were cutting 50 to 60 percent by machine and relying on their fijos and strikebreakers to collect the rest, leaving workers belonging to labour organisations hungry.[54] That agrarians were prepared to continue to resist collectively, in sharp contrast to the collapse of their resolve in the face of strikes in the previous year, showed a renewed confidence. In one instance in Montijo, this readiness to defy labourers was taken to an extreme when a local landowner destroyed the harvest rather than abide by the agreements and local census.[55] Similar destruction of the crop by fire also took place in some areas at the hands of desperate labourers striking back at the profits of landowners who had denied them work.[56] Eventually in most of the main cereal zone agrarians reluctantly

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[52] La Voz Extremeña 21 June 1932 publishes letters from workers and landowners in Don Benito; the latter also sent to El Debate and ABC, which succinctly make the points of both sides. See also, M. Nelken, 'La siega en Badajoz' El Socialista 11 June 1932; Nelken speech in Cortes on harvest, DSCC 20 October 1932.

[53] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 9 June 1932; DSCC 8 June 1932.

[54] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 10 June 1932; DSCC 9 June 1932.

[55] La Voz Extremeña 14 July 1932.

[56] See La Voz Extremeña 7, 15 July 1932; La Libertad de Badajoz 6, 9, 13, 15, 18 July 1932.

submitted to the pressure of the authorities and sociedades and completed the harvest - or at least the part that remained - under the original agreement.

The success of the harvest in the province, a record crop despite the lesser amount of land under cultivation, heralded a new escalation in the resistance of rural employers to organised labour and the social and economic legislation of the government. The underlying impetus was a drastic worsening of the fall in cereal prices as a result of the glut that now affected the Spanish market, which reached their lowest point of the depression years in early 1933.[57] As previously, landowners and labradores reacted by increasing the amount of marginal land taken out of production. However, these circumstances were also used as a justification for a concerted campaign of non-cultivation promoted by the Cámara Agrícola. This aimed to deepen the pressure of 'forced unemployment' on rural workers by encouraging agrarians to actually abandon all work on holdings that were now 'excess to requirements'. Defiance of the laboreo forzoso decrees on a more or less individual basis now evolved into virtually a collective policy by large landowners and labradores in which the usual tasks required during the autumn and winter to prepare for the next agricultural year - removal of stubble, ploughing, maintaining ditches and fences, preparation of seed beds and sowing - were carried out only at a very much reduced level. Furthermore, the loss of this type of work was not

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[57] This was aggravated by the importation of cereals by the Minister of Agriculture to meet an expected shortage - an expectation fed by landowners and then exploited in a campaign by the agrarian organisations against the government, see Marcelino Domingo, La experiencia del poder (Madrid, 1934) pp. 243-8.

offset by an increase in those tasks normally needed to put land into an alternate state to production, such as preparation as fallow, seeding as pasture, planting for winter vegetables or tending as parkland. Consequently, employers who supported the Cámara Agrícola managed to engineer a 'labour crisis' of previously unmatched proportions, that was in reality an organised lock-out, which began immediately the harvest season ended and lasted through to the spring of 1933.[58]

The resulting level of unemployment in the province was estimated variously: by the technicians of the IRA in November 1932 at 39,268 labourers out of 88,032 available for work; at 36,000 by the provincial administration in January 1933; and by the FNTT at 50 percent of the workforce in February 1933.[59] Matters were made worse by the knock-on effect that rural unemployment had on urban workers in the pueblos, where the loss of trade from the agricultural community and crisis in construction left many artisans and town labourers out of work.[60] A particular example of the close dependency between town and country workers - most evident during harvest time

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[58] See the report on the crisis, 'Sobre la situación de las provincias de Badajoz y Cáceres' Actas del comité ejecutivo del Instituto de Reforma Agraria December 1932 in AGCS: PSM leg. 662 which estimated the loss of land under cultivation at this time at 20 percent. Also El Obrero de la Tierra 17 December 1933; El Socialista 27 October 1932 report on Badajoz. Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 237-8 looks at the province and at the national dimensions of the non-cultivation campaign. La Voz Extremeña 23 July 1932 reports first signs of renewed unemployment following the harvest.

[59] 'Sobre la situación' ibid. ; La Libertad de Badajoz 7 January 1933; José Sosa, 'La grave crisis de trabajo en Extremadura' El Obrero de la Tierra 4 February 1933 - all figures include only labourers.

[60] La Voz Extremeña 19 May 1932 gives details of the particular difficulties of transport workers, which eventually led to a general strike by them. Gas workers, waiters, plumbers and carpenters were also heavily affected.

when everybody worked the fields - was the fate of miners in the south of the province. Normally they spent half the year working the small open cast deposits of lead and mercury and half as rural labourers. Now with a crisis in mineral prices and the effects of the rural lockout they found themselves without work in either capacity.[61] The generally aggressive stance adopted by agrarians towards organised labour and Socialist councils in the province was further reflected in an intensified resistance to the palliative measures still being turned to by municipal authorities. When agrarians or their representatives boycotted the comisiones mixtas charged with alleviating unemployment, this provoked Socialist controlled councils, under pressure from sociadades obreras desperate to gain some relief for their members, to turn towards more coercive measures, levying fines against owners, and simply sending groups of workers to local employers to be provided with work on a scale commensurate with the taxable income from each holding in the locality. To enforce compliance with these measures and with the laboreo forzoso decree, councils also appointed 'commissions of rural police' - often drawn from the ranks of the sociedades obreras.[62] These actions initiated an increasingly characteristic feature of this crisis, which was that less and less distinction was drawn for practical

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[61] For a description see the exchange of letters between a sociedad obrera in Zafra to the UGT, describing their predicament and the intransigent attitude of the mine owners in their dealings with the jurado mixto. 10, 15 January, 27 February, 4 March, 4 July 1932, 'Correspondencia de la sociedad de obreros metalúrgicos y derivados de Zafra', AGCS: PSM leg. 2164.

[62] La Voz Extremeña 14, 28 September 1932; Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 58 describes the situation in Montijo; 'Actas de sociedad obrera "Agrícola Adelante" de Magacela' 8 October 1932, AGCS: PSU leg. 13 give instance of direct appointment of organised labourers to the rural police.

purposes between different types of employer. Consequently, family producers, who were less able than large landowners and tenants to resist fines and groups of angry workers demanding work, found that the burden of 'placements' which they could ill afford in their already marginal circumstances fell disproportionately upon them.[63]

The failure to stem significantly the steady rise in unemployment, and the obvious ineffectiveness of government actions to boost rural economic activity in the form of laboreo forzoso left the provincial Socialist movement desperately seeking other means available within the limits of the republican regime to break the employers' lock-out. At the beginning of August 1932 the council of the provincial capital showed the direction of Socialist hopes by calling for the enactment of the agrarian reform then passing through the Cortes at the begining of the new agricultural year.[64] This was followed by a meeting of the mayors of all the provincial cabezas del partido to arrange a joint campaign with councils in Cáceres and Andalucía to promote the swiftest possible application of reform in the light of the labour crises now common across the South.[65] A joint commission left for Madrid later in the month to meet the Ministers concerned, and to lobby Socialist deputies to support a reform law that would allow land to be quickly expropriated for collective working by the members of sociedades.[66] In the aftermath of Sanjurjo's attempted coup, the Federación Socialista de Badajoz

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[63] La Voz Extremeña 28 September 1932; 'Sobre la situación' Actas del Comité; La Libertad de Badajoz 7 January 1932.
[64] La Voz Extremeña 2 August 1932.
[65] La Voz Extremeña 10 August 1932.
[66] La Voz Extremeña 18 August 1932.

reaffirmed its support for the Republic and saw its faith rewarded by the announcement of the punitive expropriation of noble lands by the government.[67] However, this hopeful sign of vigorous action was followed by great disappointment at the eventual form of the main reform legislation. The provincial Socialist movement joined with the national FNTT to protest at the 'heavy and costly bureacratic apparatus of the Institute of Agrarian Reform', while Socialist deputies from Badajoz expressed disillusionment at the complexity and excessive timidity of the reform measures, especially in jettisoning the collectivist principle.[68] With the receding prospect of rapid outside intervention, the sociedades were effectively powerless in the face of the unemployment weapon that made strikes ineffective.

In these circumstances nothing could check the deterioration in the economic and social situation in Badajoz as the lockout took hold. Widespread hunger and misery among labourers and town artisans, including a rise in cases of tuberculosis and typhoid, and reports of workers demanding food with menaces from shops, led to a wave of desperate

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[67] The Federación called for calm and vigilance on the part of the sociedades obreras in the province, see La Voz Extremeña 11 August 1932; 'Informe de la UGT de Badajoz a las organizaciones provinciales', AGCS: PSU leg. 33. Indeed demonstrations in support of the regime were organised in Azuaga, Montijo and Llerena, La Voz Extremeña 13 August 1932. This attitude strongly contrasted with the indifference of the Civil Governor for the safety of the regime reported in the Cortes, DSCC 6 October 1932. Socialist reactions to the expropriation of the nobles reported, La Voz Extremeña 18 August 1932.

[68] La Voz Extremeña 30 September 1932; El Obrero de la Tierra 17 December 1932; Margarita Nelken, Porque hicimos p. 57; DSCC 6 October 1932.

attacks on private property.[69] From mid-September 1932 robberies of acorns, olives and firewood became frequent on both large estates and family holdings. Moreover these 'traditional' actions - often justified as assertions of commons rights - were now augmented by more serious attacks on property, including the organised felling of trees and robbery of animals on the dehesa often by large groups of labourers and shepherds, sometimes accompanied by their families.[70] By January 1933 the continual outbreaks of petty, and not so petty, social crime - only relieved briefly in the Almendralejo region in October by the grape harvest[71] - had paralysed the local courts with a total of 15,000 cases reported by the Civil Guard over the previous year.[72]

A dramatic contribution to growing unease in the province was added as yunteros suddenly shook off their passivity, under direct threats to their livelihoods from landlords, and joined other sections of the rural workforce in social protest. Despite the animosity between yunteros and animal agrarians that had carried over from the dictatorship, the benefits of the temporary 1931 decrees, freezing the terms of leases and preventing evictions, had maintained an uneasy status quo. However, when these lapsed at the end of September

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[69] El Obrero de la Tierra 26 November 1932 reports on deteriorating health conditions. La Voz Extremeña 23 October 1932 on extortion of food.

[70] In some cases hundreds of persons were involved, and scores of trees and animals were taken. Whether these were only for personal consumption or for trade - a distinct possibility given the long history of smuggling across the Portuguese border - is hard to prove conclusively. On the nature of these actions see often daily reports in, La Voz Extremeña 14 September-30 October 1932; La Libertad de Badajoz 10 September-1 January 1933.

[71] La Voz Extremeña 14 October 1932.

[72] 'Sobre las situaciones de las provincias de Badajoz y Cáceres' Actas del Comité.

1932, rural landlords began to refuse to grant new leases assigning land to yuntero families on the normal yearly renewals. Behind these actions lay partly economic motives, with agrarians reacting to the low returns from cereal production by turning the low yielding portions of the dehesa cultivated by yunteros back to pasture for marginally more profitable animal herds. However, the co-ordinated nature of these denials of lands in line with the general policy of obstructionism and provocation of crisis promoted by patronal organisations suggested a desire to break forcibly the connection of yunteros with labour organisation and to frustrate their ambitions to gain permanent occupation of land. Instead, they were pushed to a frantic defence of their existence. Without land to work, yuntero families faced the prospect of having to sell their draught animal and tools in order to eat, which would complete their decline to the status and condition of labourers.[73] Appeals by sociedades obreras on behalf of their yuntero sections to the jurados mixtos de propiedad rústica to have their rights, often also contained in local agreements with landlords, upheld were rejected on the grounds that the recent law regulating rural tenancies ('Ley Vidarte') did not cover yunterismo.[74] Now unprotected and frantic at the threatened destruction of their way of life, yunteros added their own particular variety of direct

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[73] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 238-9 describes.
[74] For a case study see a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Agriculture from 'Sociedad Obrera La Nueva Vida Agícola de Don Benito', dated 27 February 1934, outlining the local experience of yunteros at the hands of landlords and the authorities since the beginning of the Republic, AGCS: PSU leg. 13.

action to the catalogue already established by other rural workers by launching invasions of the estates.

The character of these land invasions, though undoubtedly very threatening, was highly ritualised and secretive. Isolated instances had already occurred, the most serious in Campanario, sufficient to cause the Civil Governor to issue a condemnation of these 'illegal actions' in March 1932.[75] From October 1932 the invasions that swept across the predominantly dehesa areas where yunterismo was concentrated followed the same basic pattern. A band of yunteros with their animals and tools, sometimes numbering in their hundreds, would gather at a site on the periphery of a pueblo before dawn. Avoiding any patrolling Civil Guards or estate workers - scarce at that time of the morning - the yunteros, frequently accompanied by flags, musicians and their families carrying food, would march to a pre-selected estate. Great discrimination in the choice of which lands to target for action was often evident, with those of the most notorious landlords being specially selected. At daybreak the yunteros would begin ploughing the land as the normal preparation for the agricultural year.[76] Their behaviour clearly suggests a pattern of protest that was essentially symbolic, asserting the right to have land to work, rather than a real attempt to seize and hold land, nor did they attack the houses and persons of landowners or labradores.

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[75] La Voz Extremeña 25 February, 3 March 1932.

[76] This description is drawn principally from the frequent reports of individual invasions and ploughings in La Voz Extremeña 5 October-30 October 1932; La Libertad de Badajoz 3 October-28 December 1932; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p.59. El Debate, El Socialista and El Sol for October and November 1932 also carry accounts.

Attacks on landed property through robberies or invasions on both the dehesa and cortijos contributed to an atmosphere of acute social tension that divided the province. Indeed, an otherwise coolly analytical official report summed up relations in the province as '..an irreconcilable hatred to the death between the employing and working classes; this hatred is shared by all workers and all employers.'[77] Agrarians deployed guards armed with shotguns on their estates to prevent thefts and invasions, and called upon the Civil Guard to protect them. Extra Civil Guards were sent to Llerena, Badajoz, Montijo, Maguilla, Valle de Santa Ana and Talavera la Real - the areas considered by the Colonel in charge of the Badajoz batallion to be special centres of disorder.[78] In such circumstances violence became a possibility especially in isolated villages, reminiscent of Castilblanco, when Guards confronted bands of invading yunteros or crowds of labourers who spontaneously demonstrated in front of town halls demanding food and work. Most such encounters did end peacefully, with yunteros almost always withdrawing from occupied land as soon as Guards arrived and crowds dispersing after listening to addresses from Socialist mayors; yet incidents did occur. Minor scuffles happened fairly frequently when Guards surprised and arrested groups of labourers rustling pigs or felling trees. Until November the most serious incident involving the public forces had been the beating of an unpopular municipal official by a group of

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[77] 'Sobre la situación' Actas del Comité described this as 'the most gloomy problem, constituting the gravest initial difficulty for the solution of any conflict.' Though equally it could be said to have also been a product of conflict.
[78] La Voz Extremeña 21 September, 5 October 1932.

unemployed workers in Puebla del Prior. However, on 7 November three guards in Navalvillar were disarmed by a small crowd and beaten up. This was followed on 14 November by the wounding of two labourers in Oliva de Mérida and the killing of another in Castillo de Llerena, when Guards opened fire on demonstrators demanding bread. Finally, a few days later, when six were wounded when Guards barred the passage of a band of yunteros intent on claiming their right to work on an estate near Llerena.[77]

Violence, however isolated, was eagerly seized upon by the Radicals and agrarian organisations as clinching proof of the barbarism of rural workers and the responsibility of the Socialist movement for encouraging disorder. The most outspoken leaders, Margarita Nelken, Nicolás de Pablo Hernández and Pedro Rubio Herredia (leader of the Socialist Youth), were singled out as the figures behind this change. These charges, which became the stock-in-trade for anti-socialism in the province, narrowly focussed on the criminality of events and the 'extremism' of members of the new sociedades obreras while ignoring all other possible causes.[80] In a typical contribution to this picture in early October, the Federación de Propietarios complained to the Governor about attacks on private property '...under the

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[77] La Libertad de Badajoz 17 October 1932, 8, 15, 18 November 1932.

[80] Manuel Pidal (Marqués de Valderrey), El nuevo régimen is a marvellous example, written by a Badajoz landowner, of this type of propaganda. In it he recounts the destruction of social order in the countryside, previously under the enlightened authority of landowners, at the hands of the masses encouraged by socialism and given a free hand by the new regime. See also Gil Robles' speech to the Cortes painting a similar picture of the province, DSCC 16 November 1932.

pretext of the present labour crisis'.[81] By drawing a picture of growing social breakdown and a province on the brink of insurrection, conservative forces clearly hoped to benefit from polarisation in order to isolate the Socialist movement and force a change in their favour. In many ways the attitudes of the provincial authorities under the control of the Civil Governor gave some encouragement to these hopes. The position of Civil Governor was easily the most powerful in the province, and appointment was the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior. During 1931-33 the succession of appointees to Badajoz were loyalists to the Azaña government, often with no direct knowledge of the province and members of Republican parties with only a minority following in the countryside. They tended to be pre-occupied by 'public order' and as a result were unsympathetic to any actions that threatened it, the most obvious of which were the protests by labourers and yunteros.[82]

Replies by Socialist leaders in Badajoz naturally sought to stress the responsibility of intransigent agrarians and their supporters for the creation of conditions which pushed rural workers to desperation, whilst defending the provincial movement from charges of 'extremism'.[83] As one observor later pointed out,

> 'These workers are not the unruly revolutionaries they have been called, nor

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[81] La Voz Extremeña 8 October 1932.
[82] They were successively: Vicente Sol Sánchez (Radical-Socialist) June-September 1931; Carlos Montilla Escudero (Acción Republicana) September-October 1931; Manuel Alvarez Ugena (Acción Republicana) October 1931-March 1932; Zacarías Laguna Mogena (Acción Republicana) March-July 1932; Vidal Gil Tirado (Acción Republicana) July 1932-January 1933; Hermógenes Cenamor (Radical-Socialist) January-August 1933.
[83] See Vidarte's speech to the Cortes, DSCC 6 October 1932.

> do they obey the commands of any extremist faction; they are only living beings that have stomachs that need food in them.'[84]

At the same time, however, there was undeniably strong pressure on sociedades from their supporters faced by the exasperating deadlock with employers and the failure of all other currently available methods to relieve the situation. Certainly in outlying areas greatly affected by lock-out and denial of land for cultivation - the partidos of Llerena, Fuente de Cantos, Castuera and Fregenal - dissatisfaction was spreading, leading to localised actions.[85] The first sign of the effects of this pressure came in the Llerena region, where the denial of land for cultivation and a persistent lock-out headed by the prominent Maesso family made for an especially tense situation. However, reports that 'communist elements' were threatening action reflected the dissatisfactions of rural workers and the prejudices of the conservative press, rather than being a realistic description of a division within workers' organisation in Badajoz.[86] Finally, on 8 October the sociedades obreras of the area, under the banner of the FNTT, declared a strike to protest at the actions of agrarians and the failure of the authorities to act decisively, and to call for a transfer of lands for collective working by labourers

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[84] José Mateos, 'La lucha del capital y el trabajo en Badajoz' El Obrero de la Tierra 26 November 1932. See also, José Calderón, 'Para los propietarios de la provincia de Badajoz' El Obrero de la Tierra 3 December 1932.

[85] 'Sobre la situación de las provincias de Badajoz y Cáceres' Actas del Comité.

[86] La Voz Extremeña, La Libertad de Badajoz 5 October 1932. This label was also repeated at a national level in the pages of El Debate and transmitted to subsequent analyses of this episode, see Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 239; S. G. Payne, The Spanish Revolution (London, 1970) p. 98.

and for individual parcels for yunteros.[87] Following this action which was marked by a series of clashes with the Civil Guard, numerous arrests and the closure of some casas del pueblo, a spate of even more localised strikes broke out across the province.[88] Their failure to exert real pressure on employers, due to lack of economic leverage during the winter low season, or to influence the local republican authorities could only further fuel the frustration felt by rural workers. However, their apparently revolutionary intent, boosted by the conservative press, did at last convince the republican government that without some decisive action a rural uprising in Badajoz was a distinct possiblity.[89]

Intervention took the form of a decree, issued on 1 November calling for 'the intensification of cultivation' in the province of Badajoz. This aimed to deal with the most important problems underlying the crisis by forcing landlords to make land available to yunteros and to resume cultivation themselves to provide work for labourers. In effect this was a cross between an attempt to enforce the laboreo forzoso and a temporary agrarian reform.[90] In a limited number of cases when landlords refused to comply families were to be settled on parcels of land selected by the technicians of the IRA for a period of two years. This would allow the preparation of a cereal crop for the 1934 harvest, part of which would be

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[87] La Voz Extremeña 8 October 1932.
[88] La Voz Extremeña 9, 10, 12 October 1932; Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 59.
[89] BIRA March 1933 gives an assessment presented to the IRA.
[90] On the decrees in general see, Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 240-43; Nicolás Ortega, 'El intento' pp. 125-7. They were extended shortly afterwards to the provinces of Cáceres, Cádiz, Toledo, Ciudad Real, Sevilla, Salamanca and Jaén where similar problems had developed.

passed to the landlord as a rent, and the land would then be vacated. By this time it was assumed in the Ministry of Agriculture that the agrarian reform proper would solve the problem on a permanent basis.[71] The Federación de Sociedades Obreras de Badajoz enthusiastically welcomed the decree as the type of direct and effective measure that they had hoped the agrarian reform would prove to be. On this basis FNTT leaders in the province recommended it to sociedades obreras as a solution to unemployment and the loss of yuntero lands.[72]

Initially at least, this hope seemed to be justified, due more to the disruption it caused to the agrarians' boycott campaign than anything else. During December, as the commissions of the IRA toured the province, rural employers agreed to more 'placements' of unemployed labourers and some new contracts with yunteros were signed by landlords. Consequently, the level of robberies and invasions diminished, though they did not disappear entirely.[73] However, this relative quiescence could only be a temporary respite in the polarising social and political struggles of the province. In particular, nothing was able to disguise the change that had taken place in the fortunes of rural labour organisations and their supporters, which had appeared so favourable in the early months of the Republic, but which had been nearly completely frustrated by the patronal defences of the landed elite and the political campaigns of the conservative Radicals.

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[71] Domingo, La experiencia pp. 226-7.
[72] El Socialista 5 November 1932.
[73] See La Libertad de Badajoz 27 November-30 December 1932.

VI. Resurgence and Reaction: the Mobilisation of the Catholic Agrarian Right, January-October 1933

From January 1933 the situation in the Badajoz countryside worsene d once again as agrarians renewed their lock-out against organised labourers and refused to renew yuntero contracts. In a striking example, the president of the provincial agrarian organisation, Muñoz Casillas, led local landlords in Barcarrota in a drive to raise rents, evicting any families that refused to comply and ignoring the local courts.[1] Their confidence in the boycott campaign had been reinforced by a successful application by the Federación de Propietarios to the Minister of Agriculture for representation of landowners on the commissions of the IRA that were to oversee the application of the intensification decree.[2] As a result it was possible for landowners' representatives to apply the tactics of delay and obstruction already attempted on the jurados mixtos and in preparation for the agrarian reform to hamper the implementation of changes. Consequently, rather than the swiftly and surgically applied measure it was supposed to be, the intensification decree quickly became bogged down in disputes over the administrative details of individual cases. Moreover, in the field IRA technicians were frequently obstructed in their duties and found their orders ignored. Attempts to force agrarians to cultivate their own estates proved particularly ineffective, despite fines levied under both laboreo forzoso and intensification decrees. As a

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[1] El Obrero de la Tierra 11 February 1933.
[2] Biglino, El socialismo p. 327.

result 'labour crisis' gripped the labouring communities of the province as harshly as ever during what was, even in normal circumstances, the winter low point of the agricultural year.

'Disorder' again followed as robberies on the estates continued across the whole of the province, and the numbers of labourers filling town lock-ups and the provincial jail rose steadily. Instances of bands of hungry labourers besieging the houses of employers demanding work, food or money - often ending in clashes with Civil Guards or estate workers that sometimes led to deaths and woundings - also became more common. In despair, rural workers also turned increasingly on the municipal and provincial authorities who seemed to be failing to provide them with sufficient relief and were unable to deal decisively with employer resistance. At dawn on 1 January a crowd of 400 people protested outside the Civil Government in the capital calling for bread and work, and later tried to invade the Governor's office.[3] Similar demonstrations outside town halls occurred throughout the province, particularly where non-Socialist mayors were in office, which on occasion turned into full-scale bread riots involving the looting of shops and further clashes with the Civil Guard.[4] Pressure on individual sociedades obreras from supporters resorting in despair to social protest also prompted a renewed spate of local strikes to prevent agrarians

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[3] La Libertad de Badajoz, Hoy 1 January 1933.

[4] The two worst incidents occurred in Torremayor, where a meeting ended in an assault on the town hall by a crowd of workers demanding the resignation of the mayor, and in Fuente de Cantos, where 900 hungry workers attacked a bread factory after the municipality could no longer afford to give them food. La Libertad de Badajoz 14 January 1933; Hoy 28 January 1933.

employing only non-union labour when work became available. In olive growing areas the harvest favoured the sociedades and employers were forced to agree to a series of conditions negotiated in the jurados mixtos. However, poor conditions produced a much reduced crop and no significant boost to employment.[5] Elsewhere, stalemate was more usual with employers relying on their permanent workers to keep estates running at a minimal level, and trying to hire non-union workers from the squares on their terms when they needed them. The round of strike and lock-out was only ever broken by energetic action on the part of Socialist municipal authorities or the re-imposition of employers' fiat. In the latter case, machine breaking and assaults on strike-breakers often followed when workers reached their wits end.[6] Most importantly, however, invasions of estates by yunteros also revived on a scale even greater that before, spurred on by fears that the slow pace of grants of land under the intensification decree would not allow occupation before the vital spring sowing could take place.[7]

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[5] On the olive harvest, strikes and fines on employers see, Hoy 5, 7, 10, 12 January 1933; La Libertad de Badajoz 22, 24 January 1933.

[6] Conflicts centred around work related to preparation of seed beds and spring planting. Examples that illustrate their nature are: Zafra, where employers were only hiring 50-60 workers daily at a wage of 3 pesetas, leaving unemployed registered with the council; in feria employers were only hiring 'loyal workers' (pegaos) at a wage of 3.5 pesetas; the mayor of Villanueva arrested foremen hiring strikebreakers in the town square; Albuera, where a record strike of 19 days collapsed and workers were driven to work on employer' terms; in Montijo estate guards had to protest machinery. La Libertad de Badajoz 11, 12, 19, 21 February 1933; Hoy 7, 21 February, 11 March 1933.

[7] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p. 241 comments. For the frustration of one sociedad obrera with the intensification process see, AGCS: PSU leg. 1 'Actas de Renovación Social de Esparragosa de la Serena' 5 November 1933.

Further government action was prompted by a preoccupation with 'public order' and by renewed fears that the regime was becoming discredited amongst its supporters in rural socialism, not just in Badajoz but across the South as a whole. Deliberations in early January on the situation in Extremadura and Andalusia led to a commitment by Marcelino Domingo to at least press on with intensifications, as the best available measure available before the agrarian reform was implemented.[8] In Badajoz, concern at further deterioration prompted the appointment of a new Governor, the Radical-Socialist Hermógenes Cenamor, who was charged with pursuing a more vigorous approach to the labour crisis in general and agrarian obstructionism in particular.[9] Under his direction many parcels of land subject to invasions by yunteros became recognised as legitimate settlements under the intensification decrees. Patronal representatives on the IRA commission could only express their horrified objections after the fact at the threat to grazing this supposedly represented.[10] Subsequently, a steady stream of intensifications began to be passed in the face of continued obstructions. By October 1933 IRA figures showed that Badajoz was the province most affected by the intensifications - itself a sign of the extent of the struggle between yunteros and landlords - with 18,699 families temporarily settled as tenants on 642 holdings covering 53,146 hectares, at an average of 2.84 hectares per family.[11] Of the

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[8] On discussions see, La Libertad de Badajoz 13 January 1933; Hoy 7, 14 January 1933.
[9] Hoy 7 January 1933 describes the appointment.
[10] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform p.243 makes clear that stock production did not suffer significantly from intensifications.
[11] Figures from BIRA October 1933. Credits were also voted to yunteros to provide seed and tools to the value of 6,384,497.82 pts for 1933 and 3,407,569.01 for 1934. Only

57 pueblos affected, all were in the outlying regions of the province where yunterismo was concentrated. Most of the lands granted were either previously unploughed or parcels that yunteros had expected to receive before the withdrawal of contracts by landlords had taken place.[12] Despite the eventual success of the intensifications in settling a relatively high number of yunteros the pace at which they took place, spread over virtually a whole year, did not immediately diminish the level of protests. Not only did frustrated yunteros continue to invade estates into the summer of 1933, but the expectation of help under the intensification decree actually encouraged other forms of action. Two serious examples came in early March when sociedades obreras in Herrera del Duque closed down the council, and another in Cabaza del Vaca started a general strike to press for the implementation of intensifications in their areas.[13]

The polarising effects of further conflict in Badajoz were carefully exploited by agrarian organisations to mobilise social support for landed property and its privileges. These initiatives were spearheaded by the appearance at the beginning of January 1933 of the newspaper Hoy to replace the defunct El Correo Extremeño. This was the result of the promised return of an 'anti-revolutionary voice' which had led to moves by Angel Herrera to found a provincial adjunct to the national paper, El Debate, to represent the views of the

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small portions of individual estates, never complete holdings were handed over, thus preserving the normal pattern of limited cultivation normal in the dehesa.

[12] BIRA March 1933 shows that 60 percent of lands settled in Badajoz were unploughed.

[13] Hoy 2, 5 March 1933.

Catholic right.[14] Its pages faithfully represented the views of the Federación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas de Badajoz, unsurprisingly given the close links of its owners with the national organisations of agrarian interests.[15] This was shown not least in alarming reports of violent disorder and attacks on property carried out by the 'uncultivated masses' or 'ignorant hordes' which were linked with the main enemies of agrarians, the provincial Socialist movement and Republican government.[16] Certainly, the land invasions, robberies and bitter strikes did provide a more convincingly threatening background to the appeals of the Federación de Propietarios to family producers than its previous vague affirmation of the natural community of interests of the propertied. Indeed, as agrarian organisations stepped up their campaigning as spring approached, the crisis in the province was openly used as a justification for their actions. All the ills that afflicted the province, including the 'forced unemployment' affecting labourers, were ascribed to the 'tyranny' of Socialist councils and government measures, while agrarians were portrayed as chief amongst the innocent, even overly generous, victims of developments over the first two years under the republican regime.[17]

Through public statements, petitions to the Civil Governor, and meetings with Cortes deputies and ministers in

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[14] La Voz Extremeña 11 March 1932 reported earlier moves to create a 'modern' replacement for El Correo.
[15] For a discussion of the network of which Hoy was a part see, José R. Montero, La Ceda vol. 2 pp. 357-437.
[16] For these descriptions see, Hoy 28 January 1933. Manuel Pidal, El nuevo régimen en el campo is also a typical attack by a landowner, contrasting a mythical pre-republican rural arcadia with the destruction the new regime had brought.
[17] Hoy 22 January 1933.

Madrid, the representatives of the landed elite in Badajoz presented a coherent series of criticisms and demands. Together these amounted to an alternative policy for the countryside which would shift the balance of social power back into their hands.[16] The modifications openly called for by agrarian spokesmen struck at virtually every innovation brought in under the Republic that had directly favoured organised labour and weakened the authority of the landed elite. Jurados mixtos were to alter the level of wages and conditions of work theoretically enjoyed by rural labourers to lower costs to employers to return the estates to full profitability. For similar reasons términos municipales should be suspended to weaken the stranglehold of the sociedades obreras over the labour market. The intensification decrees were condemned as simply 'official robbery' and a reward for the wrongdoing by yunteros.[17] Perhaps the most controversial demand of the Federación de Propietarios was for the removal of Socialist councils, the most direct supporters of the aspirations of rural workers at a local level. They were condemned by Muñoz Casillas, director of the Cámara Agrícola, as an 'obstacle to the reign of peace in the countryside of Extremadura' which raised taxes for public works projects, protected the robbers of olives and wood from the Civil Guard, intervened through comisiones mixtas in the rural economy,

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[16] The most interesting and prominent example of these actions came with a mission to Madrid by the leaders of the Federación de Propietarios in February 1933, during which they also co-ordinated their views with those of the national, Agrupación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas. La Libertad de Badajoz 15, 16 February 1933; Hoy 11, 15, 16 February 1933.

[17] See in particular a petition sent by the Asociación de Ganaderos to Prime Minister Azaña stating this view, Hoy 25 January 1933.

forced the 'placement' of unemployed workers on the estates, and imposed fines and bans on rural employers.[20] Finally, the answer to the plight of labourers was not the state sponsored transfer of lands under the agrarian reform, but for landowners to place privately a majority of them onto parcels of land irrigated by a programme of hydraulic works where they could become peaceful (and dependent) sharecroppers.[21]

The Federación de Propietarios and its affiliates showed signs that some useful lessons had been learnt in the very judicious manner in which they now pursued their particular interests so as to maximise their popular appeal. Aware that family producers were resistant to surrendering their independence by joining bodies dominated by the elite, the agrarian organisations concentrated solely on the task of fostering the notion of a community of interests with medium and smallholders. The Catholic Syndicates, Rural Banks and comunidades de labradores, as organisations which already had some agrarian involvement, were seen as particularly useful channels for disseminating the ideas of the social Catholics and agrarian professionals. In all their public pronouncements on policy and rural issues, and through the pages of the provincial rightist press, the Federación de Propietarios stressed grievances shared by all the propertied and dismissed any wariness felt towards agrarians. These efforts were aided at a grassroots level by an anti-Socialist current gaining ground amongst family producers. Family producers had increasingly been affected in the struggle between large employers and the sociedades obreras, suffering from hardline

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[20] La Libertad de Badajoz, Hoy 15 February 1933.
[21] For a clear statement see, Hoy 31 January 1933.

bargaining and strikes over the employment of the few labourers they hired, and facing thefts of acorns, olives and wood from their parcels of land. The lack of the estate guards of the latifundios actually made family producers more vulnerable than agrarians to the actions of desperate labourers. Equally, the effect of the government decrees, particularly términos municipales, fell proportionally more heavily on the smaller man, despite the efforts of some Socialist deputies like Simeón Vidarte to improve their difficult situation squeezed between rural large capital and organised labour.[22] The direction in which smallholders in particular were moving was illustrated by elections in the comunidad de labradores in Castuera, where a local landowner defeated a candidate from the casa del pueblo by 240 votes to 42.[23] Meanwhile, in Montijo the comunidad petitioned the Minister of Agriculture to act quickly, 'to avoid the revolutionary eruption initiated by certain worker elements under the pretext of the lack of work'.[24] Thus by February, despite the unwillingness of family producers to surrender their independence, the Federación de Propietarios was claiming the support of 105 rural banks and comunidades for its policies.[25]

Evidence that the Federacion de Propietarios was indeed achieving a leadership role amongst at least some family producers was provided by reactions to the agrarian reform. In

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[22] Hoy 17 January 1933 reported the difficulties that smallholders experienced in hiring labour.
[23] Hoy 24 January 1933.
[24] Hoy 13 January 1933.
[25] Interview with Muñoz Casillas Hoy 11 February 1933. The figure of 105 seems rather high, though undoubtedly this was supposed to be rhetorical rather than strictly accurate.

Montijo, the president of the smallholders association followed the rejectionist line of the agrarian organisations when interviewed about local views on the reform.[26] Propaganda combined with fears raised by the threat of expropriation by inclusion in the registers of land drawn up by the IRA, were having a significant effect. However, a true measure of the success of the agrarians' campaign for support came when elections to the Junta Provincial of the IRA - the body designated to implement the reform in the province - were announced in February 1933. In response the Federación de Propietarios invited rural banks, Catholic Syndicates and comunidades from across the province to a meeting in the capital to discuss the elections.[27] Muñoz Casillas urged those present to organise to put forward 'good people' to the Junta and to maintain the 'unity of the landed' in the face of the reform; he was rewarded by a vote of confidence by those present for any actions that the Federación might take as their representative.[28] Although this was a rather tentative embrace of the spokesmen for agrarian interests by smallholders, it was a crucial development.

Circumstances were now sufficiently propitious for the formation of an agrarian Catholic political party in Badajoz. The failure of Acción Nacional in 1931 had shown that at that time not only was there no existing mass base upon which the right could rely upon, but also that the landed elite was too divided to provide a necessary core of powerful support. Relatively cohesive patronal organisation, able to speak as a

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[26] Hoy 29 January 1933.
[27] Announced in Hoy 25 January 1933.
[28] Hoy 4 February 1933. The Junta Provincial was eventually formed in April, Hoy 19 April 1933.

voice for the landed with at least some potential allies in the divided countryside, was thus an important precondition for the creation of a political alternative to the corporate framework of the Republic and the powerful position it allowed the Socialist movement to assume in rural society. Plans to create a political organisation of the right in line with developments elsewhere in Spain had been circulating under the directorship of Francisco Asís y Sánchez Miranda, the representative of Gil Robles in Badajoz. Hoy acted, like its parent El Debate, as the focus for these efforts to 'crystalise right wing currents in the province'.[29] Consequently, on 9 March 1933 Gil Robles announced in Madrid that the formation of Acción Popular in Badajoz had been approved.[30] The leadership was drawn from the ranks of the landed elite and their network of representatives, with the agrarian professionals and social Catholics naturally predominating.[31] Indeed, the fundamental character of the provincial party as the political arm of agrarian organisation was made all the more evident when the name was changed to Acción Popular Agraria de Badajoz (APA) in order to emphasise its agrarian basis.[32]

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[29] Description given by Sánchez Miranda in an interview, Hoy 30 May 1933. For a general account from a national perspective see, Montero, La CEDA vol. 1 pp. 394-5. As elsewhere with the formation of Acción Nacional the important political role in organisation and propaganda of a newspaper linked to the prensa católica is striking.

[30] Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 9 March 1933.

[31] The provincial committee contained many names already familiar from the various overlapping currents of landed opinion and organisation, amongst them some directly inherited from the earlier Acción Nacional. President: Luis Hermida Villelga. Vice-Presidents: Villalón Angulo Treas, Fabián Lozano Reyes. Spokesmen: Luis Navarra Boceta, Francisco López de Ayala, Ricardo Gironzo de la Cueva, Antonio Vargas Zuñiga y Montero de Espinoso. Hoy 9 March, 30 May 1933.

[32] Hoy 4 October 1933.

APA immediately began a furious recruitment and propaganda campaign throughout the province, seeking to extend the hold that it had already established in the major small-holding areas of Mérida, Almendralejo, Don Benito, Montijo and Guareña. It was in these areas that the constituent organisations of APA, divided into separate women's , men's , and youth groups under a local political committee which co-ordinated their activities, had begun to spring up with eager agrarian support even before the formal proclamation of the party.[33] By the end of May the party claimed organisation in 52 towns and villages around the province, was awaiting registration in 23 others and was trying to form branches in 30 more.[34] APA, like Hoy, was a largely uncritical supporter of the aims and methods of the Federación de Propietarios, unsurprisingly given that they were led by people from the same networks. Although it affected lamentations about the failure of landed property under the Monarchy to live up to

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[33] Hoy 7, 25 January, 1 March 1933; La Libertad de Badajoz 31 March 1933 reports formations. Significantly these were the areas with the largest numbers of small-holders and a strong tradition of Catholic Syndicates and Rural Banks.

[34] The constituent bodies were Juventud de Acción Popular (JAP), Asociaciones Femeninas (AF) and Asociaciones Masculinas (AM). This organisational base was typical of AP nationally, and indicative of the idea of separation of the sexes that was part of its 'traditional' outlook.
For the 52 pueblos the figures were:

Mix of Bodies	no. of pueblos
JAP; AF; AP	4
JAP; AF	2
AF; AM	17
AM	18
AF	9
JAP	2
	52

Individual Totals	
JAP	8
AF	32
AM	39

Source: Hoy 30 May 1933.

its social responsibilities, from the start the party expressed the militancy of agrarians towards the Republic in general and the Socialists in particular.[35] Likewise, the appeal to a propertied alliance, in this case on a political basis, was reflected in a 'peasantist' ideology which proclaimed the importance of the family producer as the backbone to the agricultural economy and the conservative ideals of family and fatherland. Newly formed APA branches called for the support of all property holders in their areas in the face of rural 'revolution', and APA offered to extend legal and material aid to them.[36]

The ideological cement that was to bind this alliance together and formed the fundamental basis of APA's popular appeal was the defence of religion and a Catholic social order. This appeal was not only to a general notion of church under attack from the Republic, but also to specific grievances that affected Catholics in Badajoz. Socialist and republican hostility to the church was well established in the province, focussing on the popular perception of it, and its priests, as allies of the landed elite and oppressors of the rural poor. Indeed, disputes over the church and religious practices had appeared immediately with the transition to the Republic. The theme portraying the new regime as a threat to the church, established by Acción Nacional during the first Cortes elections of 1931, became a standard rallying cry for members of the right and paved the way for the formation of

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[35] See an interview with Luis Hermida on this point, Hoy 30 May 1933.
[36] See Sánchez Miranda interview, Hoy 30 May 1933; Manuel Pidal, La 'farsa' del llamado problema de yunteros en Extremadura passim; Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 60-1 recounts case in Montijo.

APA. Catholics in the province were exhorted during periodic visits by Gil Robles to defend, '..our church and way of life' and the 'established social order'.[37] Meanwhile, examples of the bitterness harboured for the church and priests quickly multiplied. These included the attacks voiced by Socialist and republican leaders, such as Vidarte who regularly condemned clericals 'who aid their political actions with the name of Christ', to great applause in meetings in casas del pueblo.[38] Concrete examples of action against the church followed as sociedades obreras used their positions to oppose public religous acts. These ranged from petitions to have Catholic holiday processions replaced by demonstrations celebrating secular causes, to a wide range of prohibitions introduced by individual Socialist councils.[39] The latter came to fill the pages of Hoy as examples of the persecution of the church, and included banning the ringing of bells, breaking the church's monopoly of education and poor relief, and preventing burials by priests.[40]

The strength of feeling that APA could tap and encourage of a religious community under siege was conflated with a defence of property rights into the general notion of defending a threatened Catholic society. The idea of saving the moral, as well as material, order gave APA a crusade atmosphere (even before it became so prominent in the Civil War) and gave sense to its call to rally to the 'fundamental

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[37] La Libertad de Badajoz 15 December 1931; La Voz Extremeña 22 October 1932.
[38] La Voz Extremeña 24 August 1932.
[39] See for instance, 'Actas de Agrícola Adelante de Magacela' 1 October 1931, AGCS: PSU leg. 13.
[40] E. Santos, 'El secretario': revelaciones sobre la Guerra Civil en Badajoz p. 20; Hoy passim.

institutions' of church, property, family, and nation. Religious observance virtually became a sign of political dissent in the anti-clerical ambiance of Badajoz. By making catholicism one of the defining elements of its conservatism APA projected itself as the political expression of a Catholic culture. Ties to the network of Catholic institutions formed by Rural Banks, Syndicates, and Catholic action, already linked with agrarian organisations, were strengthened and political impetus given to their revitalisation. APA also confronted the Socialist notion of class with its own emphasis on the family, seen as the building block of social and economic stability in the Catholic order. This entailed a particular appeal to women as the guardians of family values; or as Socialists and republicans cynically argued, because women were more easily manipulated by their confessors. Whilst no women controlled the important political committees of the party, their role in the Asociaciones Femeninas was to promote 'family issues'. In this way the activities of APA in the province were divided between public political meetings and propaganda controlled by men, and church and family activites - including issues of charity and education - run by women.[41] Finally, the family idea was perfectly complementary with the economic ideas of both the social Catholics and agrarian professionals calling for a modification of latifundism to

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[41] The involvement of women in APA was not exactly 'private', although separate, but one in which public campaigning on appropriate issues was very important. Indeed the pages of Hoy were full of petitions and letters from Asociaciones Femeninas protesting at the treatment of the church. For a discussion of Catholic attitudes to women and politics see, F. Lannon, Privilege, Persecution and Prophecy pp. 52-8.

support a strong stratum of family producers to protect the rural order against agitation by rural workers.

Despite the steady advance of APA organisation, reaching virtually every corner of the province by the end of the year, there were clearly severe limits to the success achievable by a party so closely identified with the landed elite under the political system of the Republic.[42] At the most basic level the party had to struggle with the fact that the mass of the population were not rural property-holders and the province, like the south as a whole, had low levels of religious practice. Even so, the support of smallholders, permanent workers, and Catholics could reasonably be counted upon for reasons of self-interest or natural affinity to APA's message. Beyond these groups, the welcome for APA amongst the rest of the middle stratum of rural society was far from straightforward. Small tenants in particular were not about to give up their independence, jealously maintained in the Asociación de Arrendatarios and throughout their battles against landlords over the terms of rural leases, despite the blandishments of APA. Having benefitted from the Republic but also suffered to an extent at the hands of organised rural labour and Socialist councils, tenants proved to be a volatile political force. Indeed, in May 1933 Hoy was scandalised at the presence of Socialist deputies and Martínez Gil, president of the FNTT, at an assembly of the Asociación de Arrendatarios and at the failure of that organisation to pledge its suppport to the 'propertied bloc'. During the proceedings, Pedro Navarrete, representing the Cámara Agrícola, left in disgust

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[42] Montero, La CEDA vol. 1 p. 395 says that by 1935 APA had 320 bodies in the province.

despite explanations that the event was entirely non-political and all interested parties were welcome to attend.[43] Thus, the political loyalties of tenants were very much divided and potentially of benefit to other political forces in the province, particularly the Radical Party.

Rivalry with the Radicals for the conservative voice in Badajoz was the greatest obstacle facing APA. The Radicals themselves were placed in a dilemma by the creation of an agrarian right that threatened to undercut their efforts to establish a monopoly over organised conservatism in the province. Whilst their firm base amongst the urban business community was secure against the appeal of APA, their support amongst the rural community was bound to suffer. This was true not least amongst those agrarians who had entered the party in 1931 and who now began to move to APA. Not that this ended contacts between patronal organisations and the Radicals, whose deputies continued to receive delegations from the Federación de Propietarios.[44] Both APA and the Radicals shared a basic anti-Socialist outlook to the extent that in a series of well publicised meetings around the province in January 1933, Salazar Alonso and Diego Hidalgo expressed opinions on Socialist councils and the role of the casas del pueblo identical to those of the Catholic right.[45] Beyond this, two currents of opinion within Radical ranks were once again evident on the question of how to respond to APA. Hidalgo and his supporters were wary, arguing that APA was in effect a

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[43] Hoy 5 May 1933.
[44] For instance Hidalgo and Salazar both recieved visits in Madrid, Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 15, 16 February 1933.
[45] La Libertad de Badajoz 17, 19, 20 January 1933; Hoy 8, 17 January 1933.

Monarchist threat to the Republic which should be resisted, just as the left needed to be. Moreover, he argued that there could be '...no Republic without agrarian reform', a change that inevitably struck at the position of landowners that supported APA.[46] In contrast, Salazar Alonso represented the view that revolution from below was the most serious threat facing the countryside and Spain as a whole.[47] Therefore, he reluctantly accepted the existence of APA - helped no doubt by a mutual admiration with Gil Robles - and proposed collaboration in a formal anti-Socialist coalition.[48] When limited municipal elections for seats still left unfilled were announced for 23 April 1933, a decision between these two views became a paramount priority.

Both the Radicals and APA faced the prospect of electoral suicide in electoral competition with the PSOE in the province if they split the conservative vote. The APA leadership were quick to suggest a tactical alliance as the only sensible action, an offer that they also extended to the small Derecha Liberal Republicana. After brief internal discussions, Diego Hidalgo's faction gave way to Salazar Alonso and the executive committee, and the Radicals agreed to informal local alliances in any of the 19 pueblos involved where APA had branches.[49] Hoy summed up the logic pulling these different political

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[46] At a speach in Almendralejo, Hoy 31 January 1933. Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo p. 23.
[47] Salazar Alonso, Tarea p. 55 gives his opinion.
[48] Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo p. 23, 75-7; Jose Maria Gil Robles, No fue posible la paz (Barcelona, 1968) pp. 120-3.
[49] On the creation of the alliance see, La Libertad de Badajoz 17, 19 April 1933; Hoy 19 April 1933. The position of Diego Hidalgo may well have been undermined by the closure of La Voz Extremeña in October 1932, for reasons never clearly explained, though lack of finance seems likely.

forces together, and expressed the main theme of the conservative electoral campaign as,

> A response to a state of opinion, every day growing more, that raises a voice of protest against the abuses of a new and destructive caciquismo.[50]

The elections showed the depths of bitterness and divison that had been reached at a local level. Accusations of malpractice and coercion from the main sides, leading to a threat of resignation by the Civil Governor, were overshadowed by a bloody clash in Hornachos which left 5 killed and 15 wounded when Guards opened fire on demonstrators.[51] In the event the hastily created anti-Socialist coalition and republican parties which ran independently were soundly beaten by the Socialist candidates.[52] Even so, the initiative was clearly passing to the right in what was now an open political struggle between socialism and anti-socialism in Badajoz.

To the casual observer during Spring 1933 the provincial Socialist movement appeared strong and almost unchallenged. Sociedades obreras and agrupaciones socialistas were at a peak of membership, and Socialists controlled some 115 councils across the province after the April elections. However, this appearance of hegemony masked underlying discontents amongst organised rural workers who increasingly questioned whether, despite the advances that had undoubtedly been made, it was

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[50] Hoy 20 April 1933.
[51] Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 23, 25 April 1933 describe elections. See also Vásquez Torres and Vidarte article alleging abuses against Socialist campaign, El Socialista 23 April 1933.
[52] Overall results were, PSOE 81, APA 8, Rad 19, DLR 6, Acc. Rep. 5, Rad-Soc. 4, Indep. 6. Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 25 April 1933. See also the decription of Socialist victory in Castilblanco, M. Márquez Sánchez, 'Castilblanco ha sido conquistado' El Obrero de la Tierra 27 May 1833.

possible to achieve lasting social and economic change under the republican regime. Jornaleros and yunteros, who had experienced the difficulties encountered by sociedades obreras in overcoming the lock-out and obstruction tactics used by landowners during the first two years of the Republic, increasingly accused the republican authorities of hindering the advance of rural labour. Control of local councils and the threat of a general strike were not powerful enough to bring rural employers to heel or to control Civil Guards and local officials disposed to support them. Socialists had expected the aid of the Republic against their agrarian opponents, but instead the public authorities seemed more concerned to arrest hungry workers taking acorns, prevent land occupations and confront protesters. One sociedad obrera expressed this mood in the comment that, '...for landowners bourgeois justice always intervenes in the defence of an order that sustains their privileges'.[53] At a meeting in Cabeza del Buey the Socialist deputies, Manuel Muiño and García Santos, were greeted with cries from the crowd of, 'They do not pay us our wages! Now we are sick of sermons! We are Hungry!', when they promised that the Republic would fulfil their 'just aspirations'.[54]

The approaching trial of a group of townspeople for the murder of the Civil Guards at Castilblanco, for which sociedades provided a defence fund, further contributed to prevalent feelings of disillusionment. May Day demonstrations contrasted the enthusiasm of previous years by becoming

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[53] 'Actas de la sociedad obrera "Unión Obrera" de Quintana de la Serena' 25 December 1932, AGCS: PSU leg. 31.
[54] Hoy 22 January 1933.

occasions to express frustration at the lack of change.[55] Suspicion that the republican state was unable or unwilling to exert pressure against agrarians even extended to the decrees and reform legislation introduced by the government. For sociedades obreras struggling to improve conditions of life and work for rural workers and their families, the limitations to the corporate system of labour relations in the countryside now seemed greater than the advantages it had once offered. In so many cases the advances that had been gained seemed more theoretical than real. That decrees and laws on municipal boundaries, forced working, minimum wages, the eight hour day and the regulation of tenancies were designed to decrease rural unemployment, raise wages and increase the security of yunteros was of little comfort to those without work or land.[56] Sociedades looked to the jurados mixtos, as the bodies responsible for operating and policing the corporate system, and found them wanting. While there were no complaints that the juries were biased towards employers and landlords when it came to the judgement of cases or in the drawing up of agreements, it was in the enforcement of these decisions that they seemed inadequate. Following a tenacious rearguard defence put up by the Cámara Agrícola representatives, agrarians tried to ignore the commands of the juries, shrugging off the paltry fines, until decisive action could be

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[55] See Hoy, La libertad de Badajoz 2 May 1933.
[56] For a statement on the 'failure of reform in Badajoz' see, A. Valero, 'La República en los pueblos' El Obrero de la Tierra 4 February 1933 and Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo sobre Extremadura p. 12. The estimation of a doubling of rural wages between 1931 and 1933, taken from the bases del trabajo published by juries, was clearly negated by the high levels of unemployment in the countryside, see Anuario Español de Político-Social 1934-35 pp. 419-422, repeated by Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 263-4.

taken by hard pressed officials. In the eyes of rural workers the failure of the juries to coerce employers into compliance, in a way that the sociedades obreras had shown themselves unable to do alone, exposed the essential difficulty of change in a 'bourgeois regime'.[87] The fundamental problem was that the juries were inappropriate to the real conditions of social and syndical struggle in the countryside. They were intended to resolve conflicts between different interests through the consent of all the participants in a process of arbitration. However, they were implanted in the midst of a syndical struggle in which they were regarded by the workers' side as a means to further their ends, and were rejected by rural employers as a dangerous threat to the profitable operation of their estates. In the absence of consent only coercion remained as a means of resolving disputes - something that lay outside the remit of the juries themselves.[88]

Similar doubts about the willingness of the republican state to push through reforms of interest to rural workers in the teeth of an organised agrarian opposition were raised in the case of the agrarian reform. Unfortunately, the slow application and minimal effects of the reform in the province largely bore out the original reservations expressed by the FNTT when the legislation had finally been passed in September 1932. By December 1932, with only a handful of families having

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[87] José Calderón, 'Jurados Mixtos' El Obrero de la Tierra 11 February 1933 looks in particular at the case of Don Benito.
[88] On the legal foundations and limitations of the jurados mixtos see, Guillermo Cabanellas, Enjuiciamento en los jurados mixtos (Madrid, 1934); José Estadella et al., El fracaso de los jurados mixtos (Madrid, 1934); José Castán Tobeñas, Conflictos y litigios del trabajo (Madrid, 1936); Luis Enrique de la Villa, 'El derecho de trabajo en España durante la segunda República' Revista de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Madrid 34-36, 1969 pp. 348-54.

received a parcel of land, the Federación de Sociedades Obreras in Badajoz was already denouncing reform as an 'illusion' and a betrayal of the hopes of day labourers.[59] Moreover, these transfers did not take place under the auspices of the agrarian reform law proper, but were from holdings totaling 2,610 hectares punitively expropriated from two nobles implicated in the attempted coup by Sanjurjo.[60] With the technicians of the IRA struggling to cope with the demands placed on them by the intensification decrees, the Civil Governor called for more personnel to be sent to the province in January 1933.[61] Even with these reinforcements the preparatory work for the reform was still not finished in March, when Diego Hidalgo questioned the continuing delays in the Cortes and sociedades obreras petitioned the Ministry of Agriculture for action.[62] Not until April, when the Junta Provincial Agraria was finally formed under the directorship of the Radical-Socialist, López Alegría, could real work begin.

The completion of the preliminary formalities led not to the swift and vigorous redistribution that the rural Socialist movement had originally desired, but merely to the agonising bureaucratic tangle that it had feared. Once again a body designed to operate through consent - in this case the Junta Provincial - was to implement the measures, rather than one that could supply the necessary coecive powers.

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[59] El obrero de la Tierra 17 December. Only 78 families had been given 680 hectares BIRA December 1932.
[60] BIRA December 1933.
[61] An engineer and 13 technicians were eventually sent, La Libertad de Badajoz, Hoy 13, 15 January 1933.
[62] La Libertad de Badajoz 28, 29, 30 March 1933; 'Actas de Agrupación Socialista "Renovación Social" de Esparragosa de la Serena', 9 March 1933 AGCS: PSU leg. 1.

Representatives from the Cámara Agrícola naturally exploited the possiblities for obstruction in the same manner as over the intensifications. In each case they applied for an exemption on the exceptional grounds allowed under the law that the land in question came in the categories of 'directly worked' by the owner or of 'model working'. Investigating the position of each individual owner ate into the time of the Junta which had to agree expropriations before any action could be taken, rather than dealing with objections retrospectively. A further blow came in August when the IRA ruled in a disputed judgement that stockbreeding dehesa which had never been cultivated was not liable for expropriation.[63] In frustration the workers' side frequently tried to have cases referred upwards to the national executive committee of the IRA, whilst the agrarians' side sought to retain all decision-making powers at the provincial level.[64] When expropriation orders were eventually passed, the hardpressed technicians, short of funds and often lacking local knowledge, found it very difficult physically to carry out the transfer of lands and the setting up of families to work the parcels. Landowners and labradores naturally refused to co-operate and frequently used their estate foremen or the Civil Guard to harrass officials.[65] Eventually, in order to try to achieve some momentum, expropriation was directed at the soft target of absentee noble landowners. This was justified on the grounds that they represented the clearest 'monarchist threat'

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[63] Malefakis, op.cit. p. 325.
[64] BIRA September 1933; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 59-60 on Montijo.
[65] José Ruiz-Castillo, Funcionario republicano de Reforma Agraria (Madrid, 1983) passim.

to the regime. By the end of 1933 still only 1,738 families were reported as permanently settled as owners under the Agrarian Reform Law on 12,715 hectares of expropriated land. This represented 40 percent of all the noble holdings included in the register of expropriatable land for the province, but only 1.6 percent of the total available in theory.[66]

These meagre transfers did next to nothing to relieve the plight of rural workers; in that sense the intensification decrees were more successful. Furthermore, expropriating some of the land of a group of absentee landowners, albeit some of the best known nobles in Spain, in no sense constituted a decisive blow to provincial landownership or the rural order as a whole. Far from weakening the resolve or organisation of agrarians in Badajoz, the botched attempt at reform actually strengthened their hand. The leaderships of the Federación de Propietarios and APA were little concerned at the loss of noble lands whose absentee owners they had already publicly condemned as having little interest in the life of the province. Thye turned it to good advantage in their campaign to consolidate social support. That some expropriations did take place was used as a sure sign to smallholders that the threat to all rural property-owners in Badajoz was a real one, against which the agrarian organisations and APA were the only appropriate defence. Moreover, the Federación de Propietarios was able to exploit the slow pace of change produced by its successful obstruction campaign to suggest that a state implemented reform was actually 'inappropriate'.[67] Any changes

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[66] BIRA March 1934.
[67] Baldomero Argente, 'Había que hacer la reforma agraria pero se ha hecho mal' La Libertad de Badajoz 19 March 1933.

nec essary, it was suggested, were best left to the elite themselves, guided by the dictates of a proper Catholic attitude to charity and conscience. To provide some material evidence to family producers that agrarians were indeed imbued with a 'reforming spirit', so lacking before the arrival of the Republic, the agrarian organisations began a highly publicised campaign during 1933 to provide grants of land to 'suitable' settlers.[68] These were made under the auspices of Catholic action, through the Rural Banks and Catholic Syndicates that the Federación de Propietarios was trying to build up as a counter to workers' organisations. Far from being free gifts, the land made available was usually passed to non-union workers on renewable share-cropping tenancies. Even so, the Federación stressed to agrarians the need to foster good local relations with the Syndicates and the comunidades de labradores, and to overcome their 'traditional prejudices' against giving away land and hostility to any organisations, even Catholic ones, that appeared as potential rivals to their autocratic authority.[69] For the outraged representatives of the sociedades obreras enduring the cynical submissions of landowners to the Junta Provincial of IRA and the rural workers witnessing the bitter farce of the reform in practice, this was but a further example of the betrayal of their hopes by the republican state.

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[68] Hoy and La Libertad de Badajoz provide numerous instances of such transfers. They were usually made in small public ceremonies presided over by local priests. They seem to have been usually of only small parcels of land made by handfuls of landowners with marginal land to spare.

[69] For a clear exposition on this theme see, Hoy 31 March 1933.

The growing dissatisfaction of rural workers was naturally transmitted to the leadership of the provincial Socialist movement. They were concerned that frustration could lead rural workers to drift towards the more revolutionary positions of the anarchists or communists. However, despite patchy attempts to exploit the situation there was no evidence that such a movement was actually taking place at a grassroots level. Some sympathy with anarchist positions existed in sociedades obreras, shown by elections in Fuente del Maestre where members voted 302 in favour of the UGT against 147 in support of the CNT (out of a total membership of 2,000) to decide which union they should be affiliated with.[70] The rightist press, eager to support charges of 'extremism' against the Socialist movement, suggested that whilst most workers were outwardly committed to the PSOE/FNTT in their comportment they were really anarchists, but there was little material evidence to support this.[71] Whilst a few small anarchist sindicatos existed, these were mainly amongst workers in trades, such as transport and gas making, which were nationally organised by the CNT. The largest of these was in the capital itself, with 400 members - a minute number in comparison with the strength of the Socialist casa del pueblo - including some agricultural workers, led by the shadowy figure of 'Bocanegra'.[72] Only in some peripheral areas close to the borders with Andalucía, with its greater proportion of anarchists, were there any independent CNT circles.[73] The PCE

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[70] Hoy 7 January 1933.
[71] Editorial, Hoy 12 April 1933.
[72] Hoy 17 MAy 1933 gives some details.
[73] Fregenal, bordering Huelva, had its anarchist centre closed down by the governor in January, Hoy 3 January 1933.

seems to have been in an even less favourable position, with only small grouplets of supporters in the major towns.[74] In reality the nature of most sociedades obreras, with their emphasis on the social solidarity of rural workers in defiance of the landed elite and their allies, was not conducive to an ideological schism. Given the existing predominance of socialism, the possibilities for the kind of inter-union struggles that erupted in Córdoba and Sevilla, with their long history of anarchist organisation, were very slight.[75] The real question for the leadership in Badajoz was how to respond to workers who were pressing for a resumption of the advances that had seemed possible in the early months of the Republic when opposition was weak and divided.

Concern that the leadership was falling out of step with the feelings and experiences of the rank and file particularly affected those representing the sections of the provincial movement at the forefront of social conflict. Foremost amongst these were syndicalists, represented by Nicolás de Pablo Hernández, the president of the Federación de Sociedades Obreras. Closely in touch with the everyday reality of the syndical struggle waged in the localities, he was particularly aware of the groundswell of demands that the FNTT should break with its previous reliance on the general strike and jurados to achieve concessions from employers. Land invasions and robberies on the estates indicated the path of direct action

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[74] Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 62 mentions such a handful of members in Montijo during the Republic, led by a 'furtive poacher' José García Barrena.

[75] For an analysis see, Fernando Pascual Cevallos, Luchas agrarias en Sevilla durante la segunda República (Sevilla, 1983) pp. 67-93; pp. Manuel Pérez Yruela, La conflictividad campesina en la provincia de Córdoba 1931-36 (Madrid, 1979) pp. 95-104.

that yunteros and labourers were being pushed down, and led to demands for a more vigorous 'direct' approach on the part of the sociedades. Nicolás de Pablo responded by recalling his comments of two years previously cautiously welcoming the Republic as a means to advance the cause of rural workers. He suggested that the useful limits of the regime were being reached and the time was now fast approaching when an exclusively Socialist government was required. Similar critical views were also expressed from within the provincial political leadership by Margarita Nelken and Pedro Rubio Herredia. Both had already established reputations as outspoken figures, closely in touch with developments in the province through their tireless work as public speakers. Pedro Rubio had a particular powerbase as editor of La Verdad Social (the provincial union newssheet) and president of the Socialist Youth, which attracted the most radical figures within the provincial movement.[76] Similarly, Margarita Nelken had a special appeal for the women's sections of the Socialist movement as a strong supporter of their cause.[77] Together with the exasperated syndicalists, Nelken and Rubio were identified with Largo Caballero's tendency in Spanish socialism and became engaged in a series of enthusiastic meetings around the province pressing for a break with the limitations of the Republic.[78]

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[76] Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo sobre Extremadura pp. 6-7 gives a profile of Pedro Rubia.
[77] Margarita Nelken, La condición social de la mujer en España (Barcelona, n.d.) Articles in El Socialista. Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 62 says women formed radical wing of sociedad in Montijo.
[78] Hoy 22 March 1933 gives details of such a meeting in Villanueva de la Serena, described as 'communist in character'.

During 1933 the preoccupation of Socialist leaders with the defence and extension of the gains made by the rural labour movement in Badajoz was gradually overshadowed by fears for the future of workers' organisation in the face of increasingly aggressive conservative forces. Initial indications of some of the practical intentions behind the anti-Socialist rhetoric of the conservative camp came from the agrarians. Rural employers were now poised, having built up their patronal organisation, to go beyond measures for self-defence to reassert forcefully their authority over rural labour in a struggle to regain complete control of the estates. In February 1933 the Federación de Propietarios announced that employers could not afford another year like the previous two, that labour costs must fall, that it was determined to use more machinery for harvesting, and that the level of local taxes must be reduced.[77] This resolve to restore the dominant position of the landed elite was evident when agrarians met in early May to consider the bases del trabajo proposed for the summer harvest period by the jurados mixtos. All the main points of the bases, which reflected the various changes brought about under the Republic, were rejected by employers' representatives. In turn they reiterated the alternative policy of the Federación de Propietarios by calling for the suspension of términos municipales, a return to locally negotiated work contracts, the use of machinery to cut 50 percent of the cereal crop, the banning of the operation of workers' censuses by Socialist councils, and a reduction of daily harvest wages from the

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[77] Hoy 16 February 1933; El Obrero de la Tierra 11 March 1933.

proposed 9.6 pesetas level.[80] Agitation against the restrictions of the corporate system, and the role of the jurados in particular, mounted to such an extent that the Ministry of Labour sent a special delegate to oversee negotiations over the harvest. The high point of pre-harvest protests by employers came with a meeting called by the Federación in a packed theatre in the capital where, despite warnings of the need to remain within legal bounds, delegate after delegate bitterly denounced the jurados, local councils and Ministry of Labour as partners in a 'socialist conspiracy'.[81] This militant language did not prevent representatives from the Federación de Propietarios from eventually agreeing terms for the harvest with the provincial FNTT, setting a 30 percent ceiling on the use of machinery and high wage levels.[82] However, suspicions entertained by the workers' side that employers signed agreements in order to avert damaging stikes that would prevent work from beginning only to renege on them later again proved well founded.

As the summer cereal harvest got underway sociedades obreras complained of an 'offensive' by employers to lower wages and split workers away from the FNTT by giving work only to those prepared to declare their loyalty and accept any conditions offered.[83] Poor barley and wheat crops made it easier for employers to discriminate against organised workers.[84] Employers claimed that the resulting unemployment,

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[80] Hoy 9, 10 May 1933.
[81] Hoy 11, 12, 13 May 1933.
[82] Hoy 16 May 1933.
[83] El Obrero de la Tierra 3 June 1933.
[84] The 1933 harvest in the province produced falls over the previous year of 24.95 percent in wheat, and 24.56 percent in barley. Pequeño Anuario Estadístico (Madrid, 1936).

during what was normally the period of greatest demand for labour in the fields, was entirely due to the reduced crop. However, the Federación Provincial pointed suspiciously to the degree to which those left looking for work - particularly in the cereal growing heartlands of the province - were overwhelmingly the supporters of the casas del pueblo. Agrarians were accused of trying to return to the previous pattern in estate agriculture of early morning gang hirings in town squares, the harsh rule of the foremen and of secretly bringing in Portuguese labourers. Sociedades obreras demanded that the turno rigoroso be applied, with workers strictly drawn from only council lists.[65] In these circumstances the conflicts which immediately erupted over the use of labour-saving machinery were particularly bitter. In Villalba de los Barros, the desperate families of unemployed labourers attempted to bar harvesting machines from the fields, leading to pitched battles with the Civil Guards and estate foremen trying to protect them. Elsewhere, agrarians complained of nocturnal machine breaking and assaults on mechanics.[66] However, a general strike threatened by the provincial FNTT over the failure to keep to the established harvest norms brought a further round of negotiations, ending with a modified agreement between workers and employers.[67]

Far from falling off, the number of disputes and local power struggles now intensified, revealing the growing ability of agrarians actively to engage the sociedades and defy the authorities. In seventy cases reported to the delegate of the

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[65] El Obrero de la Tierra 23 September 1933.
[66] Hoy 27 May 1933.
[67] Hoy 20, 26 May 1933.

Ministry of Labour it was labradores and resident owners of modestly sized estates who provided the most militant impulse behind the actions of rural employers in general. In comparison to the great latifundistas, themselves often absent from the local scene, they were more likely, with their delicately balanced profit margins making it difficult to offer concessions, to have a strong antipathy to organised labour and to feel a threat from municipal and government regulation. Consequently, they were more inclined to adopt an intransigent and aggressive attitude which was transmitted to local patronal organisations.[88] Montijo was a typical example where the agrarian organisation voted 85 to 5 to reject all agreement with unionised rural workers and to ignore all interventions by the jurados or local council. A total lock-out was maintained by all employers, from latifundistas to family producers, whilst machines and 'reliable labour' brought in the harvest protected by the shotguns of estate guards.[89] The effectiveness of the employers' boycotts of rural labour prompted a renewed flood of complaints by sociedades obreras to the Civil Governor and jurados mixtos. The Federación de Propietarios followed with a display of decisive action, responding to the antipathy of rural employers to the jurados mixtos de trabajo rural of Badajoz and Castuera by withdrawing all its delegates to protest at their bias towards rural workers.[90] Although new appointments were swiftly made from Madrid and the juries continued to

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[88] Hoy 8 June 1933 reports.
[89] Hoy 6, 8 June 1933.
[90] 'Se generaliza la ofensiva patronal contra los jurados mixtos', 'La enemistad patronal contra los jurados mixtos', El Socialista 1, 2 July 1933; BIRA July 1933.

issue orders against resistant employers, this move signalled a complete break by agrarian organisations with the system of corporate relations established in the countryside under the Republic.[71] Support for patronal policies was the theme of a provincial assembly of the Federación de Propietarios in August. The leadership presented the situation in the countryside as a great opportunity to strengthen agrarian organisations by capitalising on the unpopularity of the Socialist movement.[72] A census by the Cámara Agrícola which listed 102 officially recognised local agrarian organisations in the province showed that a strong network did indeed exist. Moreover, the numbers of smallholders involved suggested that the struggle to win them over to the agrarians' side had been almost completely successful.[73] Consequently the campaigning activities of the agrarians intensified during the Autumn. Constant publicity for the demands of the Federación de Propietarios in the rightist press was augmented by public rallies, the largest of which were held in the bullring of the capital and attracted representatives from over 90 local organisations.[74]

Conservative social forces were encouraged by evidence that, despite its continued dominance in social and political life, the provincial Socialist movement had significant points of vulnerability. Paradoxically, one of the clearest signs of this was the reduced number of strikes undertaken by rural workers in comparison with previous years to drive

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[71] Hoy 13 June, 8 July 1933; BIRA August 1933 detail the re-organisations.
[72] Hoy 1, 2, 4 August 1933.
[73] Details in Hoy 22 August 1933.
[74] Hoy 29 September 1933.

recalcitrant employers into accepting agreements over wages and conditions of work, and to break lock-outs. Virtually deprived of an effective strike weapon, and without alternative tactics, organised rural workers emerged from the few short weeks of harvest to meet the usual season of unemployment that followed lacking, either wholly or in part, the vital summer wages needed to carry their families through the autumn and winter. Agrarians, who refused to accept any responsibility for poor relief by begging 'economic exhaustion', joined with Radical councillors and members of the Diputacion who disrupted attempts by councils to provide assistance, to increase the squeeze on the unemployed and their families.[75] Members of sociedades obreras could only be dismayed at their inability to enforce their authority over employers during the crucial harvest season. Labourers consequently faced harsh choices, either joining the desperate throngs that filled town squares calling for work and food as the autumn months advanced, or submitting to the dictates of employers. Robberies from the fields of crops and animals, demonstrations outside town halls, and attempts by groups of labourers to force their 'placement' on estates testified to the determination of many workers not to submit. However, some local weakening of casas del pueblo and a corresponding strengthening of the authority of the landed elite was also evident. This was particularly so in the provincial peripheries, such as the Siberia Extremeña and Serena, where workers' organisations had established a precarious toehold during the first rush of enthusiasm of the Republic. As

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[75] La libertad de Badajoz 5 February 1933; Hoy 12 February 1933 give details of Radical spoiling tactics.

agrarians had recovered from their previous disunity and isolation from the rest of rural society, they were better placed to apply local pressure in small villages. This was especially so in the region of Herrera del Duque, where Socialist organisation had been thrown into disarray first by the defection of the most prominent regional leader to a Catholic Syndicate which bought him off, and then by a campaign of intimidation by employers directed against organised labourers and shepherds.[76] With these auspicious examples of Socialist vulnerability to hand, the agrarians and conservative republicans were well placed following the autumn crisis and final fall of the Azaña government in Madrid, to intensify their efforts against a reforming regime and the rural workers' movement.

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[76] El Obrero de la Tierra 28 January 1933.

VII. Dismantling Rural Socialism: the Radicals in Power, November 1933-October 1934

The position of the Radicals and APA was greatly strengthened within the province by the formation of the Lerroux government on 11 September 1933. They benefitted immediately with the appointment of a new provincial governor, Carlos Echeguren Ocío, who removed all political constraints.[1] These had directly affected APA, which had its meetings in the capital, addressed by Gil Robles, and Mérida banned by the previous governor when the Socialists and republicans protested that they represented a threat to the regime.[2] In addition, the provincial administration was immediately suspended, pending changes in key personnel, whilst Radical councillors capitalised on the situation to appeal against virtually every initiative taken by Socialist-controlled municipal authorities. Likewise, rural employers received a tremendous reinforcement in their relations with rural labour when their campaign against existing decrees and legislation was rewarded with the modification of términos municipales to make the whole province one district and the suspension of the operation of the jurados mixtos.[3] The result was almost complete paralysis in the face of ever worsening social and economic conditions in the countryside. This paved the way for APA and the provincial Radical Party to condemn the situation as proof of Socialist fanaticism and of the failure of the

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[1] Hoy 14 September 1933.
[2] Hoy 27 May, 21 July 1933.
[3] Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 27 September 1933.

Republic to maintain order.[4] In turn, the repetition of such slogans at meetings and in the provincial press became the rallying cry for a renewal of the provincial pact between the Radicals, APA and the Derecha Liberal, prompted by the announcement that general elections to the Cortes would take place in November.[5] As during the municipal elections the underlying logic behind this coalition, formalised as the 'anti-marxist alliance', was the certainty of an otherwise suicidal electoral defeat in the face of the strength of the Socialist vote. With the major changes in political circumstances that had taken place in Badajoz since the first elections to the Constituent Cortes, most importantly the shift to increasing conservatism of the Radicals and the creation of an agrarian Catholic party in the shape of APA, the prospects for a reversal of Socialist and Republican control now seemed bright.[6] However, while a shared antagonism to rural socialism and to the social and political changes that had occurred in the countryside under the Republic continued to be the fundamental force drawing together the various sectors of rightist and conservative opinion in Badajoz, this tended to obscure quite different ambitions and roles within the alliance.

The Radicals were most limited, offering no specific programme beyond the panacea of an alteration of political power in the province to exclude the Socialists. Strong enthusiasm for an electoral alliance was shown by Salazar

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[4] Hoy 8 September 1933.
[5] La Libertad de Badajoz, Hoy 4, 10 October 1933 report provincial reaction to the crisis of Lerroux government and the call for elections.
[6] El Obrero de la Tierra 21 October 1933 reports.

Alonso and his allies on the provincial executive committee, all of whom were closely identified with Lerroux. They argued that the high level of political support and organisation established by the Radicals in Badajoz would ensure that the party would be 'senior partner' in the alliance. Radicals could therefore take the lion's share of Cortes seats and obtain a correspondingly strong political presence in the province as a whole.[7] In this view the support of agrarians could only be an advantage, ensuring that the anti-Socialist vote would be maximised to the greater benefit of place-seeking Radicals. Local party organisations, with leadership approved by the provincial committee, seemed to agree and actively sought to establish close links with agrarian organisations in their areas.[8] Meanwhile, Diego Hidalgo privately continued to express a more cautious minority viewpoint suggesting that the strength of the Radicals was sufficient for it to go into the elections alone and reject an alliance with an APA that was tainted by its close association with the beneficiaries of the Monarchy. However, when faced with the virtual unanimity of opinion marshalled against him by Salazar Alonso and the party hierarchy, he swallowed his reservations and threw himself into the electoral campaign.[9] The Radical contribution consisted of a series of electoral meetings addressed by the leading personalities of the provincial party, the main theme of which was crude denunciation of socialism. Salazar Alonso was the most

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[7] Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo pp. 18-9; Ruiz Manjon, El Partido Republicano Radical pp. 386-93.
[8] Hoy 8 September, 20, 21, 31 October 1933 reports Radical meetings in Villafranca, Bienvenida, Zafra and Fuente de Cantos urging anti-Socialist unity.
[9] Concha Muñoz Tinoco, Diego Hidalgo (Badajoz, 1986) p. 74.

aggressive of the speakers, specialising in highly personalised and abusive attacks on Margarita Nelken, who replied in kind.[10] Ironically, the fact that almost no Radical policies for government or society were on offer led the Socialists to very similar conclusions to those of Hidalgo about the dangers facing the Republic and their organisations in Badajoz. Echoing a previous warning about any future Lerroux government circulated by the Federación Socialista to all Socialist groups in the province, El Obrero de la Tierra described the role of Radicals in the alliance in Badajoz as one of providing the shock troops for a rural reaction, sponsored by APA, in return for the spoils of office.[11]

Any pretensions on the part of APA to leadership within the alliance were realistically tempered by tactical considerations. Despite viewing the Radicals as uncertain allies - Salazar Alonso not withstanding - the provincial executive committee of APA adopted the pragmatic position that effective electoral cooperation was such a vital necessity that almost any concession was worth making in order to achieve it. An editorial in Hoy made full justification of the importance of the alliance on the grounds that,

> The union and force of the Socialists can only be defeated by the union and force of those who are not (Socialists). Campaign opposing campaign; meeting opposing meeting; violence opposing violence, if they provoke it; money opposing money'.[12]

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[10] Juan Simeón Vidarte, El Bienio Negro y la insurrección de Asturias (Barcelona, 1977) p. 32; Hoy 20 October-19 November 1933; La Libertad de Badajoz 2-19 November 1933.
[11] El Obrero de la Tierra 21, 28 October 1933; 'Informe del Federación Socialista a todas las organizaciones socialistas de la provincia' 28 September 1933 AGCS: PSU leg. 4.
[12] Hoy 24 October 1933.

A recognition of relative weakness was also involved in this decision; APA remained in a whirlwind of organisation, made all the more hectic by the approach of elections, but still lacked widespread popular appeal whilst the Radicals were a fully established force in the province. Consequently, during negotiations to draw up a united list of candidates for the elections APA was willing to agree to the major share of places going to Radical candidates. This apparently generous attitude in support of as wide a coalition as possible was even extended to the minute Conservative Republican Party.[13] As a consequence the 'anti-marxist' slate of candidates contained six Radicals, two Conservatives and three Apistas.[14] Though APA conformed to the general spirit of the alliance campaign with vehement denunciations of 'revolutionary' socialism and the evils of the Azaña governments during its hundreds of meetings and in the thousands of leaflets of the election campaign, any comparison with the vacuousness of the Radicals ended here.[15] APA showed that as the representative of landed interests it looked well beyond the immediate gratification of running the provincial administration and local councils. This was promised to the Radicals in return for aiding the agrarian right in their far reaching plans to alter the whole basis of social power in the countryside to their advantage once more.

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[13] Hoy 28 October 1933 describes the path of negotiations.
[14] These were: Antonio Arqueros, Diego Hidalgo, Salazar Alonso, Luis Bardají López, Manuel Carrascal Montero de Espinoso, Miguel Barquero Hidalgo Barquero (Radical Party); José Diaz Ambrona Moreno, Fermín Daza y Díaz del Castillo (Rep-Con); Luis Hermida Villelgas, Francisco de Asis Sanchez Miranda, Manuel Jiménez Fernández (APA), Hoy 2 November 1933.
[15] APA claimed to have carried out 600 meetings and to have distributed 50,000 leaflets in the capital alone, Hoy 14, 16 November 1933.

As election day approached the APA campaign proposed 'permanent and lasting changes in the province' that would restore 'traditional values'.[16] Such a project naturally drew its inspiration both from the concerns of the Federación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas which had given life to APA, and the reflections and formulas of their joint leadership of agrarian professionals and social Catholics. The chief lesson learned from the tenacious defence of weakened landed interests under the Republic was to be that some change was necessary if everything was to remain the same. Heavyweight support for this view of a 'sane landownership' was provided by the inclusion on the APA list of Manuel Jiménez Fernández, a prominent member of ACNP and professor of canon law in Seville, alongside the two other established provincial figures.[17] APA aims included the control of the jurados mixtos, the end of casas del pueblo and Socialist councillors, and the implementation of a 'just Catholic social order'. Fundamental order and harmony would be restored, from the point of view of the elite, if 'political unions' were replaced by Catholic unions 'opposed to the war of the classes', which employers would support by giving their members work. Meanwhile, a further distribution of lands, under the control of landowners to suitable tenants would strengthen a social barrier of sharecroppers against 'subversion'. Whilst APA propaganda presented this project in arcadian and religious terms that stressed the personal

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[16] See editorial Hoy 19 October 1933 on the choices facing Badajoz.
[17] For an insight into his ideas see, M. Jiménez Fernández, El orden cristiano económico (Sevilla, 1940), and prologue to A. Alvarez Josue, Arrendamientos rústicos (Madrid, 1935).

sacrifices that the landed elite would make, the authoritarian implications of their promises were also clear.[16] Their ability to create this new order, in effect designed to restore the rural order as it had existed under the discredited monarchy, could only be achieved by the effective regimentation of rural workers and the dismembering of their organisations. Likewise the rural institutions and social legislation put in place by the Republic would be emasculated, to be replaced by Catholic alternatives with which the elite would be more comfortable with.

That APA could have few illusions that a large measure of consent existed for their designs, despite a careful silence on the means by which the transition to their new order was to be carried out, suggested to the provincial Socialists that their fears for the future were well founded. APA was seen as the principal threat, despite the apparent importance of the Radicals, as it was clear that a group as socially and economically powerful as the agrarians would wield great influence under any future regime sympathetic to private property rights.[17] Even more explicitly the provincial Socialists saw confirmation of the determination of agrarians to complete their resurgence at any price in the ambiguous attitude shown by APA towards fascism. Early articles and editorials on fascism in Hoy - some contributed by ultra-rightists like Calvo Sotelo - praised fascist achievements in Germany and Italy, whilst making clear that their atheism made

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[16] For the reflection of these ideas in APA's election campaign, see the editorials, reports, and manifestos printed in Hoy 10 October 1933-20 November 1933.
[17] Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 32 states this as an accepted view.

them only partially applicable models for a Catholic Spain. However, all were agreed that fascism only existed, and was made necessary, because of the advance of marxism.[20] The implicit conclusion, that a Spanish form of fascism was becoming a 'necessity', was made chillingly evident in a cartoon which showed a chick labelled 'fascism' in a nest inscribed 'Spring 1933'.[21] Fascist imagery and ideas were most clearly represented within APA - as in Acción Popular and CEDA nationally - in its youth sections. A focus was provided by the formation of a provincial organising committee of the Juventud de Acción Popular (JAP) in May 1933, which produced a youth paper, Adelante, in the rightist centre of Mérida.[22] When the APA leadership began to play down any attachment to extremism to avoid alarming the Radicals, even specifically rejecting any 'alliance with violence, fascism and racism' during the Cortes elections, the continued outspoken attacks of JAP and the predilection of its members for uniforms and straight-arm salutes left the Socialists and republicans unconvinced.[23] When they insisted that the elections to the Cortes represented a stage in a struggle against fascism, or 'monarchist-fascism', they at least echoed a part of the language used by APA itself.[24]

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[20] For examples see, Hoy 8 February, 17, 23, 26 March 1933.
[21] Hoy 25 March 1933.
[22] The members of the provincial committee of JAP were, President: G. Herminio Pinilla Yubero, V.Pres: José Galache Nevado, Secretary: Manuel Almeida Segura, Treasury: Antonio Soriano Díaz, Hoy 19 May 1933. See José R. Montero, La CEDA Vol 1. p. 620 for the founding of Adelante, and pp. 582-656 for JAP at a national level.
[23] Hoy 13 October 1933.
[24] A theme taken in Manuel Márquez, 'Campesinos: a la lucha electoral' El Obrero de la Tierra 11 November 1933.

In contrast to the confident campaign of the 'anti-marxist' camp, the Socialists increasingly retreated into an uncertain, defensive posture designed to protect both the gains made by rural workers under the Republic and their organisation itself. The employers' offensive and the aggressive political developments on the republican conservative and agrarian Catholic right during the autumn affected the existing debates within the Socialist movement, serving to reinforce the influence of those in the syndical and political leaderships of the province (supporters of Largo Caballero in the main) who favoured a purely Socialist government within the Republic.[25] This, they argued, would fulfil two related ends, freeing Socialist organisations from the limitations imposed by the failure of the republican administration, which in turn would allow the agrarians and their Radical allies to be overcome. These arguments won the day at a reunion in October to decide electoral policy, during which representatives of all the Socialist Party branches - joined unconstitutionally by many members of the FNTT - overwhelmingly rejected overtures by the provincial republicans for a renewed alliance to keep APA away from power.[26] Consequently, following a desperate petition to Lerroux asking him to end the Radical provincial pact with APA and to join instead a republican united front, Republican Action and the Radical-Socialist Party presented their own list of candidates.[27] Likewise, a request by the PCE to have

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[25] Preston, The Coming pp. 82-91 details these national problems.
[26] Vidarte, Bienio Negro p.30.
[27] Discussion over whether to seek a renewed alliance with the PSOE had taken place previously, see La Voz Extremeña 14 August 1932; Hoy 16 May 1933 on deliberations. Hoy 20 October

one candidate of theirs included on the Socialist list for the province was rejected out of hand.[28] However, the result was not strong self-sufficiency, but the isolation of the Socialist movement and some internal division in the face of reprisals that had already begun against it.

Despite the increasing use of a militant language of socialist advance, projected in particular by Margarita Nelken, Pedro Rubio and Nicolás de Pablo, all preparations were for a highly conventional electoral campaign not a revolutionary movement. The assumption seems to have been that the numerical strength of the working-class vote could be relied on to secure a victory and all that was required was a strong socialist appeal. The concoction of the PSOE list of candidates became an occasion to try to boost the popular appeal of the party, and at the same time to marginalise the chief opponents of the 'caballerista group' in the leadership. Chief amongst the victims was Narciso Vásquez Torres, the 'father of socialism' in Badajoz, and Manuel Muiño, whose early enthusiasm for a 'bourgeois Republic' - from which they had not distanced themselves like Nicolás de Pablo - now counted against them. Instead, the syndicalists and youth section forced the inclusion of two prestigious national figures, Largo Caballero and Lucio Martínez Gil, as candidates. This left the remainder of the list made up of persons with strong local followings, such as Vidarte and José

1933 gives petition to Lerroux, and Hoy 29 October 1933 list of Republican candidates. José Salmerón, Vicente Sol (PRRS), Juan Antonio Rodríguez Machin (AR).

[28] A separate PCE was announced consisting of Ventura Castello, Luis González, Dolores Ibárruri, Juan Astigarrabía, Amalio Fatuarte, José Silva, Pedro Corraliza, Agustín Zapirain, Gregorio Salgado and Nicanor Almarza, Hoy 25 October 1933; Vidarte, Bieno Negro p. 30.

Sosa, who were broadly speaking supporters of Prieto.[29] Despite these internal wranglings, the provincial movement presented a strong campaign in terms of meetings and acts of propaganda, the main theme of which was working-class solidarity and defence.[30] However, any confidence within Socialist ranks proved a cruel illusion when the election results were announced, awarding all ten majority places to the coalition and leaving only the three minority seats to the Socialists.[31]

The Socialists were both disappointed and incredulous at their defeat. It was hard to accept that the large proportion of working-class voters that existed in Badajoz should not have produced virtually automatic victory, no matter how united the opposition. The results could not be blamed on the effects of post Casas Viejas abstensionism by the anarchists, as was possible elsewhere in the south. The 74.18 percent turnout of all eligible voters in Badajoz was one of the

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[29] The complete list was, Margarita Nelken, Pedro Rubio Herredia, Nicolás de Pablo Hernández, Juan-Simeon Vidarte, Antonio García Santos, Antonio Navas Lora, José Maestro San José, José Sosa Hormigo, Lucio Martínez Gil, Largo Caballero, Manuel Márquez Sánchez, Hoy 24 October 1933; Vidarte, ibid. 18, 30.

[30] Vidarte, ibid. pp. 31-2; Nelken, Porque hicimos p. 67-9.

[31] Initial results given in Hoy 28 November 1933 were,

Coalition		PSOE	
Hidalgo	141,942	Margarita Nelken	137,928
Salazar Alonso	141,931	Pedro Rubio	137,596
Arqueros Garrido	141,921	Nicolás de Pablo	137,333
Bardají López	141,774	Simeón Vidarte*	137,023
Carrascal Montero	141,774	Largo Caballero	136,960
Díaz Ambrona	141,465	García Santos	136,919
Daza Díaz	141,309	Navas Lora	136,429
Hermida Villelgas	141,309	Maestro San José	136,355
Sánchez de Miranda	140,848	Sosa Hermiga	136,229
Jiménez Fernández	140,801	Martínez Gil	136,077

* After a review of votes cast in Siruela, Vidarte received an additional 400 votes, exchanging places with Nicolás de Pablo as the third PSOE deputy BOPB 2 December 1933; Vidarte, Bienio Negro pp. 33-35.

highest in Spain, and in marked contrast to those of provinces such as Sevilla (49.84), Malaga (50.53),and Cádiz (33.37).[32] One major change of importance that had occurred was the enfranchisement of women for the first time, which had swelled the electoral roll in Badajoz to 385,375 eligible voters, double the number of 1931.[33] Simeón Vidarte, narrowly re-elected as a Socialist deputy for Badajoz on a recount, saw a sinister effect behind this, arguing that women were more likely to vote for the right because of the greater influence of the clergy over them.[34] Statistical evidence for this is impossible to find, but it was certainly the case that the battle for the female vote was one of the hottest during the electoral campaign in the province. This was an open demonstration of the growing political importance of women themselves, rather than an extension of their subordination in the social and economic spheres into the public. The sociedades femeninas of the PSOE/FNTT were active campaigners, supported by the strong voice of Margarita Nelken, for a Socialist government that would raise the rights and status of women. A similar picture of activity was shown by the female branches of APA, obviously not arguing for female liberation, but pressing their views on the defence of the church and home life in meetings throughout the province, which were often addressed by specially invited women speakers.[35] Such evidence suggests that far from being passive, women had become increasingly politicised alongside men. If priests were able

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[32] Anuario estadístico de España 1934.
[33] Anuario estadístico de España 1934 gives figures from the 1932 census of voters in use at the time.
[34] Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 19.
[35] The largest was in Don Benito, where Pilar de Velasco addressed a crowd of 1,000, Hoy 14 October 1933.

to exert a direct influence, it would seem likely that this was only over their low numbers of regular church attenders who were arguably rightist or conservative supporters already. It is more probable that female vote was as divided amongst the contending forces as was the male.

The most outstanding feature of the election results from the point of view of the Socialists, more obvious than the effect of either anarchists or women, was the narrow margin of the coalition victory, a mere 4,014 votes. One conclusion that could have been drawn was that the failure to ally with the Republicans - dimissed by both coalition and PSOE as 'fictions' in the real conflict - had been a fatal error.[36] If all their 7,000 votes had gone to a combined list they could well have swung the elections against APA and the Radicals.[37] However, Socialists attached more importance to their conviction that they had actually been swindled out of victory. Some evidence existed to support the allegation that the elections had taken place in an atmosphere of intimidation and falsification created by conservative and rightist forces. Socialist speakers were denied the use of theatres, cinemas and dance halls because of pressure from local notables, forcing them to address open-air meetings in the November cold, often from the balconies of town halls with sympathetic administrations. In other cases, the Civil Guard connived with agrarians and Radicals to impede the Socialists, breaking up meetings and 'supervising' voters at the urns. Bribery and threats were also used to sway Socialist voters. Gifts of food

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[36] Hoy 25 November 1933; Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 31.
[37] The exact figures were, José Salmerón: 7,777, Vicente Sol: 5,575, Rodriguez Machin: 4,898. The PCE candidates only received a maximum vote of 2,215.

and offers of work were naturally very tempting to suffering labourers and their families. In the region around Almendralejo the Márques de Encomienda offered unemployed workers food in return for their votes.[38] In some cases prominent members of casas del pueblo were attacked by estate guards and foremen as a demonstration to the populace at large, whilst retaliation by members of the Socialist Youth was bitterly denounced in the conservative and Catholic press.[39] During campaigning Vidarte had shots fired at him twice by unknown gunmen. In an even more bizarre episode, Vidarte claimed that Salazar Alonso had planned an assassination attempt with the anarchist 'Bocanegra'.[40] In addition ballots were rigged, with the urns stuffed with votes, and in the case of Siruela destroyed by the retainers of a local landowner.[41] Indeed, such was the stranglehold on pueblo affairs that agrarians and their representatives seemed to be exercising once more in many districts of the provincial periphery, that the accusation was made that caciquismo was returning.

Whether or not coercion was decisive in defeating the Socialists, the unpalatable truth was that the Radical-APA coalition had been able to mobilise a level of popular support previously unsuspected by their opponents. Similar successes across the southern provinces as a whole made a significant contribution to an overall Radical and CEDA majority in the Cortes, paving the way for Lerroux to form a government in

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38 Nelken, Porque hicimos pp. 67-9.
39 Hoy 24, 26 October, 5, 9 November 1933 provides examples.
40 Vidarte, Bienio Negro pp. 32-35.
41 Vidarte, ibid. p. 33.

December.[42] Within Badajoz corresponding changes took place in the provincial administration which ousted all representatives of socialism and republicanism from public positions. The new Civil Governor, José Carlos Luna, was a Radical and a close friend of Diego Hidalgo, with no previous experience of administration but strong conservative instincts that were to carry him through a record two years in the position.[43] Following his appointment, the Diputación Provincial was suspended and then reconstituted at the end of January 1934. The new executive commission formed a cross section of Radical and APA opinion in the province, drawing particularly on the talents of the Cámara de Comercio and Cámara Agrícola for its members.[44] However, despite the satisfaction of the election results and change of power, a sense of urgency remained within the 'anti-marxist' camp. Hoy in particular warned of the need to capitalise on success to press on with the task of 'cleaning up' the province, lest complacency allow a resurgence of 'enemy forces'. The paper pointed to the continuing strength of the Socialist movement, evident in the narrow margin of its electoral defeat, and to the survival of

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[42] Preston, The Coming pp. 96-99; Ruiz Manjón, El Partido Republicano Radical pp. 409-12 give the background to the formation of the government.

[43] Hoy 9 December 1933.

[44] ActDPB 4 February 1934 gives new commission.
President: Manuel Barbosa (Radical Party)
Members:
Baldomero Galache Fernández (Cámara Agrícola and APA)
Antonio Donoso Balmaseda (Radical)
Santos A. Sánchez Cortes (APA)
Simón Díaz Asensio (APA and ACNP)
Martín Girbal Duemas (Cámara Agrícola)
José Macarro Garcia (Radical and Cámara de Comercio)
Leopoldo de Miguel y Miguel (Colegio de Abogados and Radical)
Manuel Barrena Gragera (Radical and Cámara de Comercio)
Martínez Aranda (Radical)

its local influence through control of councils and extensive grass roots organisation in the casas del pueblo.[45] This constant emphasis on the ultimate aim of permanently displacing rural socialism - 'the most difficult battle' according to Hoy - was the characteristic hallmark of APA advice. Having boosted the Radicals into control, APA and the provincial agrarian organisations were naturally anxious that they did not squander the opportunity, gained within the hated Republic itself, to make the changes they had promised during the elections. Such concern reflected the politically precarious position of APA, reliant on the support of the unreliable Radicals, and forced by circumstances to work through the institutions and legal processes of an alien regime. To this end agrarian pressure was constant, facing the Radicals with a solid patronal front at both provincial and national levels. Within Madrid, the CEDA deputies and the leaders of the Agrupación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas ensured that pressure from the provinces was translated into well-prepared lobbying activites.[46] In the event the assault on the social and political changes achieved in the countryside during 1931-33 and on rural socialism developed quickly showing that, at least in the short-term, no conflict of interest between agrarians and Radicals existed.

The immediate fruit of victory, from the point of view of rural employers in Badajoz, was freedom from the constraints

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[45] See editorials, Hoy 29 November, 2, 3, December 1933.
[46] Agrarians were excellently placed to exploit their access to government following the elections, which were preceded by the creation of the Comité de Enlace de Entidades Agropecuarias to cordinate all activities of agrarian organisations. Mercedes Cabrera, La patronal pp. 280-2 gives details.

imposed by the labour decrees and social legislation of the Azaña governments. This did not entail a complete repeal. Only the términos municipales decree was the subject of legislation, with an interim bill to suspend its operation passed in January 1934 followed by its definitive removal in May. The agrarian reform was allowed to drift to a minimal conclusion that only affected some absentee noble lands in Badajoz, without any great complaint from agrarian organisations.[47] Rather than face the delays and difficulties of an inevitably slow legal process to reverse all the reforms on wages and conditions of work that had been passed, the government opted simply to negate their application in practice, freeing it to pass new measures at leisure. To this end the most significant innovation that affected the realities of life in Badajoz was the appointment of new directors to the jurados mixtos. With Radical supporters in place, many of whom had no experience of agriculture or labour relations, the character of the bodies that stood at the heart of the regulation and enforcement of the laws and decrees was changed markedly. At the same time the nominees of Largo Caballero on the patronal side were dismissed, and members of the Cámara Agrícola and Cámara de Comercio expectantly took their places once again.[48] The result was that, though no dramatic reactionary reversal had apparently taken place, the practical reality at a local level was that rural and town workers were left largely bereft of the official support for their interests that they had enjoyed over the two preceding years.

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[47] Lands seized after the Sanjurjo rising were returned.
[48] Hoy 30 December 1933 reports appointment of new heads.

Predictably, agrarians grasped every opportunity that presented itself in the search for profitability and the assertion of the rights of rural property, even flouting the legal bounds that, in theory, still remained. With the provincial administration and jurados mixtos abandoning all attempts at enforcement, landowners and labradores - frequently joined by smallholders - sought to lower wages and impose the conditions of work that suited them. The methods they used in dealing with organised rural workers were fundamentally the same as those previously deployed to contain the advance of the sociedades obreras. However, the new political conditions that pertained multiplied their effectiveness in the syndical struggle. The pattern was set as the olive harvest approached, and organised labourers discovered that the eight hour day, bases del trabajo and turno rigoroso had finally become complete fictions. Only 'reliable' workers prepared to return to the early morning labour markets in town squares to accept what was offered found work, whilst imported Portuguese labour once again appeared in the fields. In Santa Marta and Albuquerque, unemployed members of the casa del pueblo clashed with gangs of 'loyal workers' (pegaos) heading out to the olive fields. Meanwhile in Fregenal, armed estate guards protected the harvesters earning 5 pesetas a day, whilst the local sociedad obrera declared a totally ineffectual boycott.[47] Yunteros - affiliated to rural socialism in Badajoz - also experienced the determination of landlords to use all means possible to reassert absolute control over the land. A measure of legal

[47] Hoy 1, 7, 8, 19, 21, 22 December 1933.

protection had apparently been granted by a decree of 11 February 1934 which, although evicting yunteros not settled by the IRA, guaranteed the occupation of land until the original August 1935 deadline.[50] Whilst in public only voicing their protests at this measure, in private many landlords made forceable evictions of yuntero families from their estates.[51] In Almendralejo, Civil Guards prevented families from working the lands that they had recently been allocated.[52] However, these actions by agrarians went beyond the immediate economic aim of driving down the cost of labour, to recapturing control of the land and restating the social predominance of the landed elite.

The actions of employers towards organised rural workers, described by Socialists as 'persecutions', mixed an immediate desire for vengeance against those who had mounted such a frightening challenge to the landed social order, with a calculated attempt to drive workers from the sociedades obreras back into the controllable, preferably docile, workforce required by cereal and livestock latifundism. The miseries of 'forced unemployment' continued to be the principal economic weapon used, producing official provincial unemployment rates during the winter and spring of 1934 well above 50 percent. Agrarians were now also much freer to employ violent methods against resistant workers. In this employers were frequently supported by the public forces and the guards and fijos from the estates, who also sought to regain the

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[50] In effect this decree evicted those yunteros settled by the Governor General of Extremadura, virtually all in the province of Cáceres, Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 343-4.
[51] Hoy 14 February 1934 voices disappointment of landlords.
[52] Cited in Tuñón de Lara, Tres claves p.107.

privileged role they used to play. Vigilantism was one aspect of this, involving physical attacks on the leading members of sociedades obreras by gunmen and Civil Guards, able to act with virtual impunity in isolated areas despite the efforts of Socialist controlled councils. Fuente del Maestre witnessed a particularly brutal example when Guards beat people emerging from the casa del pueblo with rifle butts, before wrecking the building.[53] More widespread still than this sporadic use of terror for social and political purposes was on-the-spot corporal punishment of hungry labourers and shepherds caught robbing crops, animals and firewood from the countryside. Such attacks on property, by now a well established facet of social protest against forced unemployment, continued to be widespread. Another sign of changing political circumstances in Badajoz was the sympathetic response that now greeted appeals for 'law and order' to be upheld in the face of 'Socialist anarchy'. The head of the Federación de Propietarios, Muñoz Casillas, was able to make direct requests for Civil Guard reinforcements from the Ministry of the Interior.[54] By April 1934, in addition to armed estate guards, there were 842 Civil Guards and 170 Assault Guards employed solely to protect the fields from thieves, and Badajoz as a whole had become the province with the highest proportion of police to people in Spain.[55] The countryside increasingly took on the intimidating appearance of an armed encampment.

The threat, often the reality, of violence was not the only form of pressure faced by rural workers. Following the

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[53] El Obrero de la Tierra 6, 13, 20 January 1934.
[54] Tuñón de Lara, Tres claves p. 107.
[55] Anuario Estadístico de España 1935.

change in provincial administration employers also turned deteriorating social conditions in the working-class ghettos to their greater political advantage. A steadily falling level of wages for all types of workers obviously played its part in increasing the difficulties of life for the poor, but their fundamental problem remained the high level of partial or total unemployment which agrarians had progressively exacerbated through their land use policies. Although this did not worsen dramatically over the first few months of Radical government, having already reached a crisis point, the withdrawal of palliative measures which followed deepened the crisis. The character of this change was determined by the approach of the Radicals - in fact the only policy pursued by the party - to public administration and welfare, which was always to act in the name of 'financial propriety'. In practice this euphemism was designed to benefit Radical support amongst traders, businessmen and small property-holders, represented within the party by the Cámara de Comercio, who had seen themselves as the financial victims of Socialist attempts to expand public provision and to regulate commerce. Cost cutting began immediately, with the Radicals, strongly supported by their agrarian allies, abolishing controls on prices and rents, suspending public works and reducing taxes.[66] The Diputación Provincial took an immediate lead, ending projects for cheap housing, schools, and public baths designed to improve working-class life, particularly in the overcrowded major towns. Likewise, road building and street improvement schemes designed to provide temporary

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[66] Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 135.

relief from unemployment were also stopped.[87] The Civil Governor also ordered Socialist controlled municipalities, already suffering from a loss of 'strategic funds' from the Diputación, to lower local taxes levied on land and business, preventing them from providing poor relief. Simultaneously, rents and food prices, particularly of bread and olive oil staples, rose rapidly as landlords and shopkeepers capitalised on the removal of all controls and regulations.[88] Consequently, workers' families found themselves facing the 'urban crisis' of the province without even a marginally effective, sympathetic public policy to provide some respite.

Having engineered the reversion of public administration to more or less the guidelines and limitations of the dictatorship, private charity was once again virtually the only channel of welfare to which the poor could turn. Sociedades obreras, their meagre funds exhausted by the election campaign, could provide only the most minimal self-help, and the Radicals made no alternative public relief available.[89] This placed a powerful instrument of social control in the hands of the 'traditional' providers of charity in the form of local notables and the Catholic Church. The systematic manner in which they now consciously wielded this instrument as a weapon contrasted markedly with the days of haphazard local patronage associated with caciquismo. Charity was overtly politicised and organised, just as the church and landed elite had themselves become. Unemployment and poor

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[87] ActDPB 20 February, 5, 20 March, 5, 20 April, 5, 20 May 1934 chart the evolution of this policy. Hoy 1 December 1933 reports the early demise of the cheap housing initiatives.
[88] Hoy 10 April 1934 gives details.
[89] Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 33.

social conditions were blamed partly on economic depression, but mainly on rural socialism and the destructive effects of the legislation of the first two years of the Republic. Occasional handouts from priest and employer were replaced by soup kitchens and thrift shops run by the sindicatos católicos, Catholic action and the female sections of APA.[60] Women were placed at the forefront of this effort to gain a grip on workers, a role justified in Catholic thinking by the stress placed on the defence of 'family values'. In addition agrarians, after bitterly resisting the efforts of councils to 'place' labourers on grounds of economic exhaustion, suddenly discovered that it was possible to find work during the spring faena for 'suitable' workers.[61] But the past price of lip service to the Church or loyalty to a local cacique was now raised to membership of a Catholic organisation or of APA. A Socialist worker had not just to kow-tow as before, but to trade his or her soul to receive a bowl of soup, a blanket and a day of poorly paid labour ditch-digging. Indeed, the important role of 'charity', really the exploitation of poverty, as a political tool to fashion the 'just Catholic order' promised by APA during the elections, was confirmed when Hoy concluded an article on unemployment by calling for the formation of 'sindicatos de obreros'. These would receive

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[60] The description and promotion of these activites through the pages of Hoy was so frequent it is impossible to give individual references. It should be noted, however, that it is only following the elections that the first mention is made.
[61] Hoy 28 November 1933 records the first instance of this about face in Almendralejo, where APA set up an office to 'place' workers. See also, Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 61 on agrarian and APA efforts in Montijo, and Hoy 7 December 1933 for details of a Federación de Propietarios meeting in the capital which resolved to encourage its members to provide work.

land rented from landowners to create a 'barrier against the landless masses and the Socialist call to revolution'.[62] Shortly afterwards, branches of a new organisation, Acción Obrerista, were formed in APA buildings in Almendralejo, Don Benito and the capital, precisely for this purpose.[63] The established aims of the social Catholics and agrarian professionals of APA and the agrarian organisations, to defuse class-struggle and protect private property rights through social engineering, shone through accompanying talk of creating a new rural arcadia. Thus it was with a judicious mixture of carrot and stick that the task of controlling the working-class began.

These efforts to weaken loyalty to the sociedades obreras amongst provincial workers at a grass-roots level were complemented by a corresponding attack on Socialist organisation and its institutional gains in the province. Semi-legality and opportunism dominated the approach of the Radical authorities to their task, still described by Salazar Alonso as the 'dismemberment' of socialism. The key to Radical control of the province was the wide-ranging powers granted to the Civil Governor as the representative of the ministry of the Interior. If the Socialists had chafed at the restrictions imposed by previous republican holders of the office, they were quick to discover that Carlos de Luna was prepared to act in a far more interventionist manner against them. The first demonstration of the conservative character of the new administration came in the aftermath of a nationwide call to insurrection by the CNT on 11 December 1933. Socialist Badajoz

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62 Hoy 2 January 1934.
63 Hoy 14 January 1934.

was unaffected, except in Villanueva de la Serena where a municipal guard, Pio Sopena Blanco, and eight others barricaded themselves into an army recruiting office, killing two Civil Guards and wounding another in the process. Spectacular scenes followed with the offices bombarded by heavy machine guns and artillery. When the Civil Guard, reinforced by troops, eventually assaulted the offices the following morning they found all the occupants dead.[64] Despite the anarchist sympathies of Sopena Blanco, leading members of the Socialist casa del pueblo in Villanueva, including the mayor, were also rounded up. A mythology of Socialist responsibility was swiftly erected by the rightist press and parties in Badajoz, rejecting the denials issued by the Socialist deputies from the province who complained of 'distortion'.[65] Hoy pressed home the attack in an editorial which called for the closure of all casas del pueblo, condemning the provincial Socialist movement for not denouncing the events in Villanueva in sufficiently strong terms and for 'preparing the environment necessary for these violent acts'.[66] The events in Villanueva and accompanying campaign by APA and the Radicals did indeed provide the first justification for such a policy, followed thereafter at every possible opportunity by the Civil Governor. Orders for the closure of casas del pueblo followed over the early months of 1934 in a number of towns, the rightist centres of

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[64] For accounts see, Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 12, 13 December 1933; Vidarte, Bienio Negro pp. 70-6. Accusations that summary executions were carried out by the Guards followed in the Cortes, Hoy 18 January 1934.
[65] Vidarte, ibid. pp.71-9 gives details of the parliamentary contributions of himself and Pedro Rubio. Hoy 14 December 1933 on protests.
[66] Hoy 15 December 1933.

Almendralejo and Mérida prominent among them, whenever the Governor could find some justification on financial or policial grounds.[67] Such closures in effect criminalised the sociedades obreras affected, forcing their members into furtive meetings to avoid the Civil Guard, and struck at the role of the casas as the centres of working-class sociability and organisation that underpinned the Socialist movement.[68]

These opportunistic attacks on sociedades obreras by the provincial authorities were accompanied by an even more systematic and determined assault on rural socialism which struck at the widespread Socialist control of municipal administration. Denounced more vociferously than ever after the general election by the Radicals and APA as the 'true centres of Socialist tyranny', the Socialist town hall became the minimal surviving institutional support to which organised rural workers and their families could turn. Despite a lack of funds, and harrassment by local notables and the Civil Governor, Socialist mayors continued to intervene, to uphold observance of the social and labour laws by fining exploitative employers, landlords and shopkeepers, and to provide some relief to poor families.[69] Such actions, however pathetically inadequate in the changing circumstances of

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[67] Reasons for closure included preventing councils from renting buildings, for hosting 'clandestine meetings', during strikes and after raids by Civil Guards searching for 'subversive materials and arms', Hoy 6 February, 11, 13, 22, 29 March 1934 details instances in Mérida, Salvaleón, Zalamea de la Serena, Ribera del Fresno, Orellana la Vieja, Almendralejo, and Puebla de la Guareña.

[68] In Fregenal the Radical mayor prevented, 'clandestine meetings of the casa del pueblo' during conflict over the olive harvest, severely disrupting the effectiveness of Socialist organisation. Hoy 22 December 1933.

[69] Hoy 1, 21, December 1933, 10 January, 7 February 1934 gives instances of interventions.

provincial life, only further enraged the right which rapidly moved to fulfil the cherished aim of removing Socialists and republicans from their council posts.[70] The means to achieve this potentially difficult, anti-democratic, task were found once again under the slogan of financial responsibility adopted by the Radicals. Practical application consisted of teams of inspectors appointed by the Governor descending on a council to inspect its books, leading to the dismissal and occasional prosecution of its officials on the grounds of 'misuse of funds'. Further disclosure revealed these crimes to be the use of council resources to provide public works, town improvements and schools, and the payment of wages to public employees at levels that conformed to the bases del trabajo. Radical mayors, supported by Radical and APA councillors, were then appointed by the Governor, pending new local elections which never came.[71]

Initially the number of removals was relatively low, due to a long delay in dealing with the important case of the capital; after March 1934 the pace accelerated rapidly when a government crisis, provoked by CEDA demands for the removal of 'weak' ministers, led to the appointment of Salazar Alonso as Minister of the Interior.[72] The ensuing schism of Martínez Barrio to form Unión Republicana, provoked by this lurch to the right in the Radical government, caused no stir within the conservative Badajoz party, which joined with APA in welcoming

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[70] For editorial attacks see, Hoy 8, 30 December 1933, 17 January, 8 February 1934.
[71] For the methods of closure see, Hoy 11 March 1934; Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo pp. 115-29; letter from Diego Hidalgo to Carlos de Luna on 'clean-up' of councils, 9 January 1935 ADH.
[72] Hoy 13 December 1933-30 February 1934 reports only six removals. See also, ActAB 24, 25, 26 December 1933.

such a highly committed enemy of socialism into this important position.[73] Within Badajoz the arrival of Salazar Alonso to office resulted in ever more strenuous anti-Socialist activities by the Governor, now backed by government encouragement and resources. Whole councils were suspended for the offence of 'failing to obey the orders of the Governor', resulting in a reversal of the public policies associated with municipal socialism during the first two years of the Republic.[74] Hungry workers seeking relief from Radical controlled municipalities were now met by the slogan, 'Comed Republica y socialismo' (let the Republic and socialism feed you), and the crowds that flocked in protest to town halls were dispersed by the Civil Guard.[75] More important still for the rural and urban employers who backed the Radicals and APA on the new councils, the supervision of their activities by local comisiones mixtas and rural guards was also ended. Local priests reacted with joy at the liberation from 'the Socialist tyranny of religion' by symbolically ringing the church bells. As the summer approached those that shared such views enthusiastically anticipated the final stages in the effective elimination of a provincial Socialist movement that was now under siege.

The most important result of electoral failure and the ensuing reversals suffered by the sociedades obreras was that the utility of the tactics pursued by the Socialist movement

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[73] Preston, The Coming p. 108; Vidarte, Bienio Negro pp. 117-8; Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo pp. 29-41.
[74] Exact numbers are hard to calculate but 32 cases are detailed by Hoy 9 March-22 May 1934.
[75] Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 135 describes the campaign. The worst incident occurred during a bread riot in Villanueva de la Serena, Hoy 19 April 1934.

in Badajoz over the first two years of the Republic now appeared completely exhausted. The overriding concern at all levels of Socialist organisation was the defence of the movement and the preservation of its practical achievements, rather than the question of how best to resume the advance of rural workers that the Republic had initially appeared to make possible. In Don Benito brave declarations by shepherds of their determination to defend themselves and their organisation contrasted with the reality of local employers using imported labour to guard the sheep flocks and attacks on the casa del pueblo by Civil Guards.[76] Everywhere sociedades discovered the futility of complaining to the Radical authorities about infractions of the labour and social laws, the actions of the public forces and the aggressive activities of agrarians.[77] Likewise, appeals to the jurados mixtos proved fruitless in the face of the determining role of Radical appointed presidents who swung the balance of power to the employers' side.[78] In these circumstances it was not surprising that a meeting in March of the Federación de Trabajadores de Badajoz, representing all FNTT, UGT and PSOE organisations in the province, should conclude that it was useless to continue to make appeals to the authorities because of their blatantly partisan nature.[79] Public activity of any

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[76] 'Actas de sociedad de ganaderos "La estrella" de Don Benito 7 February 1934, AGCS: PSU leg. 3.

[77] El Obrero de la Tierra 31 March 1934 gives detailed accounts of the situation in all the Southern provinces, including Badajoz.

[78] 'Actas de sociedad obrera "Renovación Social" de Esparragosa de la Serena' 1 April 1934, AGCS: PSU leg. 1 recalls a frustrating experience with the jurado of Don Benito.

[79] 'Actas del PSOE' 7 March 1934, FPI AH-20-2; El Socialista 7 March 1934.

kind became difficult, and even attempted May Day demonstrations and marches were broken up by the Civil Guard. In Fuente del Maestre, the scene of previous attacks on members of the casa del pueblo, Guards opened fire on a crowd of workers and their families, killing four and wounding fifteen.[80] With open means of protest increasingly denied to them, the fears and frustrations of rural workers found an outlet in sporadic outbreaks of violence, which sociedades were unable to control, directed against the authorities and agrarian organisations. Incidents mainly involved fights between Civil Guards and young labourers trying to sell newspapers or put up posters. However, anger at the actions of local notables, once more in the ascendant in the pueblos, sometimes led to the stoning or even invasion of landowners' clubs by groups of workers.[81] Such uncoordinated, undirected actions served no useful purpose, but rather underlined the real impotence and fragmentation of workers' organisations as the tide turned against them. Moreover, they were pointed to as evidence of the violent revolutionary intent of the Socialists, helping to legitimise the actions of the Radicals and agrarian right against organised workers as well as provoking further harsh responses from the public forces.

Forced back from effective political action, with their members progressively excluded from any influence over economic and social conditions by the actions of employers and

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[80] Hoy, La Libertad de Badajoz 2, 3 May 1934.

[81] Hoy 22 February 1934 describes an attack by 20-30 members of the Juventud Socialista in Alange on the local landowners' circle, which involved the destruction of property and assaults on members present. During May a Guard was killed by a group of youths in Arroyo de San Servan, whilst there were wounded in both sides in another clash in Alange, Hoy 10, 12 May 1934.

the authorities, the Socialists were faced with the dilemma of finding new tactics. Some sense of a new direction had come in January when the 'Besteirist' leadership of the FNTT under Martínez Gil was replaced by a directorate of 'Caballerists' led by Ricardo Zabalza, promising a more energetic policy to meet the agrarians' offensive in the southern provinces. However, from the perspective of the most prominent members of the Badajoz Socialist movement, far from signifying a great change from above, it was the national leadership that had now come into line with their thinking. Indeed Zabalza was greatly influenced by Margarita Nelken, as was Manuel Vázquez, previously the Badajoz delegate to the FNTT and now the treasurer.[82] Despite an increase in revolutionary language and calls for the socialisation of the land in the pages of El Obrero de la Tierra, the real extent of any 'radicalisation' within rural socialism was actually limited. A sense of frustration over social and economic change had developed amongst rural workers during the first two years of the Republic, weakening the influence of the older generation of Socialist leaders in the provinces well before Zabalza came to control the FNTT. In fact continuity in the aims and methods of rural socialism was more evident than any great 'revolutionary' break with the past; this was unsurprisingly given that the economic and social bases of latifundism remained fundamentally intact, and still largely determined the working life of rural labourers and yunteros. However, what had obviously altered was the circumstances in which Socialist rural organisations were struggling to operate. Thus

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[82] El Obrero de la Tierra 20 January, 3 February 1934.

as political approaches and appeals were exhausted, the options open for a significant defence of rural workers' interests were correspondingly narrowed. In this sense the shift in tactics towards syndical activity, mixing political demands, which took place after much discussion at provincial and national levels of rural socialism as the summer agricultural season approached was more of a desperate last resort and a result of weakness than a transformation in strategy and aims.[83]

The consequent decision, reluctantly taken by the executive of the FNTT against the advice of the UGT, to call a national general strike for June 5 for the proper application of the labour and social laws was met with approval in Badajoz.[84] Indeed, the provincial federation was foremost in urging that the cereal harvest represented the last opportunity to stave off the destruction of reform and of Socialist organisation in the countryside at the hands of the agrarians and Radicals. Such an opinion derived from the calculation that the need for the labour of rural workers during harvesting was the sole residual power that remained to the sociedades obreras in their relations with employers and the authorities. The fact that the jurados mixtos de trabajo rural began to lay down bases in April for forthcoming harvest work at rates not substantially reduced from previous years had initially suggested to the Socialists that their opponents

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[83] For differing interpretations of the significance of leadership changes in the FNTT, and the adoption of a 'revolutionary line' see, Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 324-34; Biglino, El socialismo español pp. 383-441 including some regional examples; Preston, The Coming p. 113.

[84] On the deliberations of the FNTT executive over calling a strike see, Vidarte, Bienio Negro p. 151; El Obrero de la Tierra 31 March, 21, April, 6, 19, 25 May 1934.

were being reluctantly forced to compromise. However, the consistent refusal of the employers' side to accept the turno rigoroso and later modifications to the bases forced by them convinced the Socialists that the process was actually a farce designed to lull them into a false sense of security.[85] The Federación de Propietarios refused to meet requests for guarantees over wages and conditions of work from the provincial FNTT, clearly planning to seize the chance to impose pre-1931 conditions of labour under latifundism once again.[86] With no harvest agreement by the end of May, strikes were already being threatened in a number of districts of the province as sociedades met to discuss FNTT proposals for a national stoppage. On May 25 the provincial federation brushed aside attempts by the Civil Governor to arrange further negotiations, accepted the overwhelming vote of the sociedades and issued the strike call.[87]

The strike aims, posted in every pueblo, were basic and principled - mixing the social and economic concerns of rural workers. They were:

1. Completion of the bases del trabajo and social legislation. Minimum salary in all areas. Comisiones mixtas appointed to punish all infractions.

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[85] On the negotiations and bases see, Hoy 19, 20, 24, 28 April 1934.
[86] Hoy 20 May 1934 justifies their attitude.
[87] Hoy 23, 25 May 1934; 'Actas de Sociedad Obrera "Renovación Social" de Esparragosa de la Serena' 22 May 1934, AGCS: PSU leg. 1; 'Actas de Sociedad de Ganaderos "La Estrella" de Don Benito 4 July 1934, AGCS: PSU leg. 3; 'Actas de sociedad obrera "Agricola Adelante" de Magacela 25 May 1934, AGCS: PSU leg. 13 on discussions and strike aims.

2. Obligatory use of the turno rigoroso. Nobody should be boycotted for their opinions. Work should be divided equally between all those figuring on the census.
3. Regulation of the use of machinery and outside workers during harvesting.
4. Effective measures to be taken against unemployment.
5. The law of collective leases to be made effective.
6. The IRA to be given lands to settle peasants.
7. Recognition of all rights under the intensification of cultivation decrees.
8. That all settlements promised by the agrarian reform law be made effective before the autumn.
9. Agricultural credits to be made available for all collective leases.
10. Return of all communal rights.[ee]

Though not in the least 'revolutionary' in itself, the strike was immediately transformed into an out and out confrontation in the climate in the countryside.

From the outset the general mobilisation provoked by the strike call revealed a decided imbalance of effective resources and motivation between the forces involved. In the towns and villages, the battered sociedades obreras called defensively for rural workers to take a final stand against the authorities and local agrarians. Working-class unity was aided by the support of most organisations representing non-agricultural labourers, who rallied to the casas del pueblo despite attempts by the UGT executive to prevent their

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[ee] 'Actas de "Renovación Social"', 'Actas de "Agrícola Adelante"', ibid. list demands.

participation.[69] Attempts were also made to reach agreement for joint action with local anarchists and communists, through a committee for a 'united front' which seems to have had a sporadic existence from February 1934. However, given the dominance of the Socialists in the province this was bound to be more symbolic than of any material value.[70] Yet despite the evident determination behind Socialist preparations, backed by the efforts of Pedro Rubio and Margarita Nelken who toured the province in support, it was conservative and rightist forces who really relished the opportunity now presented to them finally to dismantle workers' organisations. Rural and urban employers, united in common cause against the strike, had the enormous advantage of the wholehearted support of the state. Salazar Alonso proved his worth here, overriding more cautious cabinet colleagues with the support of CEDA deputies to declare the harvest 'sacred' and ban all strike preparations as a 'revolutionary threat' - views identical to those of the Federación de Propietarios in Badajoz.[71] In fact, the Minister of the Interior had been planning measures to meet just such a strike with the head of the Civil Guard and Director General of Security since March 1934.[72] Apart from suppressing El Obrero de la Tierra and allowing Civil Guard and troop

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[69] Preston, The Coming p. 114; 'Actas de sociedad de obreros metalúrgicos y derivados de Zafra' 5 June 1934, AGCS: PSM leg. 2164 joined strike; Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 64-5 on situation in Montijo.

[70] Hoy 4 February 1934 mentions a pro-united front meeting in a theatre in the capital attended by members of the PSOE, FNTT, PCE and CNT. See also a manifesto from a 'comité pro-frente único' to all workers' organisations in the province, which includes the signature of Nicolás de Pablo, AGCS: PSU leg. 13.

[71] See Hoy 26, 30 May 1934.

[72] Salazar Alonso, Bajo el signo p. 141; Preston, The Coming pp. 115-6; Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 336-7.

reinforcements to be sent to Badajoz, the criminalisation of the strike gave the Civil Governor a free hand to act against the Socialist movement. Although intervention by the state was of crucial importance for the defeat of the strike, the situation also provided the highpoint in the mobilisation of anti-Socialist political and social forces. In addition to close co-operation between APA and the Radicals throughout the province, towns and villages saw the combination of agrarians, businessmen, smallholders and tenants to break the strike.[73] With the Socialists effectively isolated and doomed to face the tactical difficulties of striking at a time of high unemployment, their opponents were confident of easy victory.[74]

Although the strike was effectively broken before it even began, the actual process of suppression in Badajoz - underway even before June 5 - was amongst the most brutal in the southern provinces.[75] Badajoz was still a great bastion of rural socialism in Spain, and the ability of rural workers to resist remained considerable. Claims by Hoy, the only paper spared closure by the Governor, that only twenty-five percent of pueblos were affected by the strike when it actually began contrasted with other reports, one of which suggested that solidarity was virtually complete in over one hundred

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[73] Socialist strike plans for a blanket action made no allowance for family-producers whose summer season required the crucial help of only a few labourers.
[74] See the predictions in Hoy 27, 31 May, 3 June 1934.
[75] The principal sources for this account are, Hoy 30 May-20 June 1934; Margarita Nelken, 'Para la España obrera y campesina' El Socialista 27-30 June 1934; El Debate, El Sol 5-15 June 1934; Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 64-5; Tuñón de Lara, Tres claves pp. 138-9.

districts.[76] 'Preventive actions' carried out by the authorities, which preceded the strike and continued apace throughout it, were most immediately effective in handicapping strikers in the provincial periphery of small villages where the sociedades obreras were at their most vulnerable. Civil Guards acted in their localities to suppress all strike preparations, arresting pamphleteers and public speakers, and detaining the leading militants of sociedades obreras in dawn raids on houses. Once strike action actually began, wholesale detentions took place on a scale which rapidly filled the jails in the capital and district seats. To relieve this problem groups of strikers were loaded onto cattletrucks for removal to Cádiz and even Burgos, where they could be accommodated.[77] Most were released to make their way home after the strike was over, sometimes carrying allegations of torture, to return to enthusiastic welcomes.[78] However, the officials of sociedades were usually tried and sentenced to terms of imprisonment by emergency courts. Similarly, Pedro Rubio was expelled from the province by the Governor on the grounds of 'incitement' and Margarita Nelken was frequently prevented from speaking, in clear violations of parliamentary

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[76] Hoy 6 June 1934; Comité Central del Partido Comunista, Informe sobre la huelga agrícola de Junio de 1934 p. 14. The Civil Governor reported that 'from the first day the strike is virtually total', Carlos de Luna to Minister of the Interior, 7 June 1934 AHN: MGA.

[77] El Socialista 5 July 1934 reported a demonstration in Madrid by 200 male and female workers from Badajoz, suppressed by the police, returning from Burgos.

[78] In Lobon the Civil Guard acted to break up such a crowd greeting seven returnees, with cries of 'long live the revolution', Hoy 6 July 1934. Allegations of torture were even repeated in the rightist press following a prison death in Villanueva de la Serena, see Hoy 21 June 1934.

privilege.[99] Casas del pueblo were also closed down as centres of strike organisation, frequently by vigilante attacks by estate retainers and Civil Guards. The use of force and intimidation by the public forces helped ensure that, outside of those apparently few areas where the strike was broken almost imediately, conflict in the pueblos was at its bitterest.

In the countryside the Civil Guards also joined estate guards to protect the strike-breaking activities of employers, even issuing a manifesto guaranteeing 'liberty to work' in Fuente de Cantos.[100] Agrarians showed themselves well prepared for this confrontation, using all means at their disposal to bring in the harvest without having to employ organised labour. Local branches of APA and Catholic Syndicates became centres for directing operations. Imported Portuguese and Galician labour was employed on a large scale, while machines were used extensively alongside loyal estate fijos and any local workers from the town squares prepared to work, either willingly or when driven by hunger. Family producers also benefitted from these arrangements, helping each other bring in the harvest but also being lent machines and labourers by large landowners and labradores. Meanwhile sociedades obreras tried to bring harvesting to a halt by sending pickets into the countryside to prevent strike-breakers and machines from working, and by organising land invasions and ploughings by yunteros. Scenes followed of shotgun-armed estate guards holding off crowds of labourers, hand to hand battles with

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[99] See Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes (henceforth DSC) 14 June 1934 for a debate between Rubio and Salazar Alonso on this point.
[100] Hoy 6 June 1934.

knives and agricultural implements between enraged strikers and harvesters, and yet more mass arrests by the Civil Guard. Inevitably, clashes resulted in fatalities as well as woundings, the worst in Alconchel where Guards surprised a crowd in the fields, killing two persons and wounding three more.[101] Violence of a different kind also accompanied the collapse of the strike as gradually, pueblo by pueblo, rural workers succumbed to pressure until only Montijo remained affected. With a bumper cereal crop being collected virtually uninterrupted, crushed labourers struck back in the only way left open to them by attacking property.[102] Midnight incendiarists fired ricks and barns, and occasionally threw petrol bombs through the windows of the houses of agrarians and headquarters of APA, in retaliation for defeat.[103]

Even with the strike at an end after only ten days the suppression of the Socialist movement by employers and the authorities continued unabated during late summer and autumn until the crushing of workers' organisation in the province was completed. Hoy gleefully reported the continuing Civil Guard detentions of militants, the raids on clandestine meetings and the capture of underground presses. At the same time, the removal of Socialist and republican councillors by the Governor continued apace. The state of socialism and its supporters in Badajoz was such that in October the imposition

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[101] Hoy 6 June 1934. Other examples included a battle between workers from Trasierra-Llerena and strike-breakers that left eleven badly wounded, and a clash in Almendral that saw one labourer shot dead by Guards and another badly wounded.

[102] Harvest totals were, wheat: 50,849 tonnes, barley: 28,188 Anuario Estadistico de España 1936.

[103] Reports of incendiary attacks continued in Hoy until August. Almost inevitably, given the record of bitter local hatreds, Montijo and Fuente de Cantos were prominent sites of bomb attacks on APA buildings, Hoy 13 June 1934.

of martial law during the Asturian Rising in anticipation of support from rural workers for their industrial comrades was entirely unneccessary.[104] Indeed, a few days later the Governor was able to report that all public signs of workers' organisation in Badajoz had been eradicated, with all the casas del pueblo and sociedades obreras closed down.[105] Prominent leaders were either in detention or had fled abroad; Nicolás de Pablo to Belgium and then Russia, Nelken and Rubio to France.[106] Diego Hidalgo could write to Carlos de Luna congratulating him on a successful final 'clean-up' of local administration, with 158 councils controlled by Radical majorities, 3 in the hands of APA, and with the capital under joint direction. This satisfied, Radical view of 'perfect and absolute public order in every pueblo' was echoed by agrarians who had spent the period since the defeat of the harvest strike consolidating their complete personal control of the estates once again.[107] However, from the perspective of the leadership of APA and the Federación de Propietarios this enforced tranquility was just the completion of the first stage in their intentions to remodel rural society in Badajoz to create a secure future for agrarian autocracy. As Gil Robles had uncompromisingly informed a packed meeting of Apistas in the Badajoz bullring a few days before the FNTT strike, the time had come for a Republic not of Socialists or

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[104] Hoy 7 October 1934.
[105] Hoy 9 October 1934. Even bars favoured by workers were shut.
[106] Federacion Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo sobre Extremadura p. 5.
[107] Hidalgo to Luna, 9 January 1934 ADH. For a complete list of Radical councillors and local committees, see the reports sent to Lerroux AGCS: PSM leg. 993.

leftists, '...but a Republic that conforms to Spanish reality and Spanish reality is that which our programme dictates'.[108]

[108] Hoy 1 June 1934.

VIII. Triumph to Terror: the Failure of the Agrarians in Power and the Descent to Civil War, November 1934-July 1936

The Catholic agrarian right in Badajoz was understandably euphoric in the aftermath of the events of October. Having secured agrarians from the threat of 'rural revolution', APA laid claim on their behalf to absolute preeminence in all matters relating to rural property and religion in the pursuit of its stated aim of creating 'a just social Catholic order in the countryside.' In the furtherance of this end, Hoy reported with delight the elevation of the Badajoz deputy Jiménez Fernández to the Ministry of Agriculture, as one of the three promised CEDA cabinet appointments that had precipitated the disastrous October risings. In remarks clearly directed at the Radical administration, the paper enthused that this development ensured that the direction of agrarian policy at all levels would rightfully rest in the hands of the representatives of rural property as the section of society best qualified to take the lead in rural affairs.[1] However, the vision of a rural society of predominantly conservative, Catholic, peasant families, held out by APA propaganda as the alternative to class conflict and the threat to property, was never to be transalated into practical reality.

One of the initial difficulties for social catholicism was that hard-won unity of purpose in agrarian ranks became a victim of the very success of their anti-Socialist campaign. Nothing in social Catholic doctrine had prevented its proponents from supporting the suppression of the rural

[1] Hoy 5 October 1934.

workers' movement as a threat to property and religion. The use of force was not seen as a permanent remedy to the social and political problems of the countryside, but as a necessary prelude to reforms which, by social engineering, would make class conflict a virtual impossibility. As the political and patronal unity of agrarians based upon fear of the 'revolutionary threat' naturally weakened, social Catholics recalled the pledges to respect the 'social obligations of property' and exhorted the landed elite finally to take the opportunity to become their own saviours by sacrificing an element of their power and prestige. Jiménez Fernández confirmed his belief that this renewal should be the thrust of agrarian action in a speaking tour of local APA branches in Badajoz during December 1934, at the same time that agrarians became convinced that the countryside had at last been made safe once more for autocracy. Indeed, he had good reason to press his vision of 'access to the land' and 'the creation of the greatest number of property holders possible' in a province where the dilemmas and divisions involved in modifying the rural social and economic order resurfaced immediately and acutely with the question of the future of the yunteros.[z] As a result Badajoz was effectively turned into a testing ground of national importance for the implementation of rural social Catholicism in the face of considerable agrarian reluctance.

The situation of yunteros presented both a promising opportunity to restructure rural relations and a pressing problem. Normally owning tools and animals, and already

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[z] See Hoy 8, 9, 15 December 1934 on tour and remarks.

possessing the skills necessary for family production, yunteros were the section of a volatile rural workforce most obviously suited to conversion into passive sharecroppers. However, the deterioration in relations with agrarians that had dramatically worsened under the Republic had only been assuaged by the Intensification of Cultivation decrees which had given yuntero families protection from eviction by granting them limited security of tenure. As these lapsed in the autumn 1934, Jiménez Fernández signalled his intentions to reverse the enmity that had built up by promoting a bill, passed in December 1934 (although delayed from November by Monarchist bloc objections), that extended yuntero leases for a further year. This was followed by a general decree of 2 January 1935 which, although it halted all expropriations of property under the Agrarian Reform Law, authorised 'temporary occupations' on land voluntarily offered by owners and gave preference to family producers possessing their own tools.[3] Within Badajoz corresponding attempts to encourage the voluntary settlement of yunteros by APA and the Federación de Propietarios de Fincas Rústicas were headed by the leading social Catholic landowner Francisco López de Ayala. Occasional instances where families were indeed offered small plots of land to sharecrop in the dehesa by local landowners were prominently reported in Hoy.[4] However, the paper also reported abortive meetings to discuss arrangements for leasing land, such as one held in Jerez de los Caballeros in which the mayor lamented the general indifference of the majority of major

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[3] Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 348-9.
[4] Hoy 26 December 1934, 3, 6 January, 10, 13 February, 28 March 1935 reports on these efforts and successes.

landlords.[5] Motivated by desires to turn to cultivation by hired labour, to regain absolute control over estate lands and to punish their upstart inferiors, agrarians continued the outright eviction of yunteros begun in the autumn when leases fell due and which was pursued in defiance of government orders. Despite the closure of casas del pueblo and close supervision of estate guards, there was a renewed rise in spontaneous invasions and ploughing of estates by bands of yunteros responding to these further threats to their existence.[6] With agrarians calling for more Civil Guards to be deployed to patrol vulnerable pastures in this persistent rural conflict, the promise of a countryside pacified by granting a measure of wider access and control of the land to its inhabitants seemed to be receding rather.

Only determined government legislation and enforcement, backed up by sustained support of the political and patronal organisations of the agrarian right, could overcome the reluctance of the majority of agrarians to fulfil the substance of social Catholic expectations. In December 1934, Jiménez Fernández initiated just such an attempt by introducing a wide-ranging parliamentary bill for a Law of Rural Leases. This aimed permanently to strengthen a peasant social bloc by giving all tenants rights to more equitable rent agreements and granting them the option to acquire the land that they worked from the landlord. In the Cortes, the immediate rejection of these proposals as unacceptably interventionist and an attack on property rights came from the

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[5] Hoy 12 January 1935.
[6] Hoy 15, 20, 26, January, 3, 5, 17 February 1935 reports instances of invasions and responses of local authorities and Civil Governor.

Monarchists of the agrarian minority, led by Antonio Lamamié de Clairac.[7] Outside, the ensuing dissent from within agrarian ranks, whose effects extended into the upper reaches of CEDA, proved particularly pronounced in Badajoz. A contradiction between previously inseparable patronal and political interests was revealed when local Agrarian Syndicates attacked the eventual parcelisation of estates into small farms for rent and sale, intended by this legislation as the basis for a new rural regime based on Catholic conservative values. Under pressure from this grass-roots revolt of its membership, again led by labradores who feared for their autocratic status, leaders of the Federación de Propietarios increasingly began to question any attempt, however well intentioned and logical, that would weaken direct agrarian control in the countryside.

Convinced social Catholics were thrust to the sidelines in a gathering internal campaign of radicalisation, that naturally encompassed APA, which coalesced with similar developments in other southern provinces to swing national patronal organisations and the Cortes deputies of CEDA's agrarian right behind an open obstruction of the reform measures. In Badajoz a restructuring of the directorate of the Federación de Propietarios in March 1935 reflected growing support for a militant opposition. Muñoz Casillas was replaced as president by the even more hardline Marcial Gómez Castaño, who was linked to the ultra-rightist agrarian organisation, the Confederación Española Patronal Agrícola.[8] Politically

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[7] For details of the proposals, and for the parliamentary battle, see Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 349-52.
[8] Hoy 31 March 1935 lists the members of the new directorate. Mercedes Cabrera, La patronal p. 70 gives details on the Confederación.

this appointment was significant in that Castaño was also a leading figure in the minority Monarchist party, Renovación Española, formed in Badajoz in August 1934, which specifically called for the destruction of the Republic.[9] Within APA a similar development swept Francisco López de Ayala, linked to social catholicism but increasingly taking a hard line, into the leadership. In concert with prominent members of the right-wing of APA brought onto an enlarged executive committee of the Federación de Propietarios, Castaño launched a campaign to reverse falling support in the countryside by constituting sindicatos patronales agrarios in every locality, dedicated to an uncompromising defence of agrarian interests.[10] Bitter debates in parliament followed, during which the supposed political compatriots of Jiménez Fernández - including members of APA afraid of losing agrarian support - not only stripped all the social Catholic features away from the leases legislation, but substituted clauses that gave legal sanction to virtually any actions undertaken by rural landlords. By the time of the final vote on the leases bill in March 1935, the initially enthusiatic support of Hoy reflecting its role as mouthpiece for APA had turned to an embarassed silence that spelled doom for Jiménez Fernández and eventually virtual expulsion from his own party.[11] A follow-up bill designed specifically to give yunteros in Badajoz a permanent right to land made no impact within the province and was dropped

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[9] Hoy 16 August 1934 reports the founding. The ex-Governor of the province during the dictatorship, Antonio Tobardeo y Solar, was leader.

[10] Hoy 24 April, 5 May, 4 June, 2 November 1935 give details of the formation, executive committee and numbers (80 in November 1935) of the sindicatos.

[11] Hoy 7, 23 February 1935 offer interesting commentary. Malefakis, Agrarian Reform pp. 350-1.

without discussion in the Cortes. Finally, during a cabinet reshuffle in May 1935 the post of Minister of Agricuture was passed to the landowner, Nicolasio Velayos y Velayos.[12] In Badajoz agrarians celebrated their reclaimed freedom to act with only self-restraint as a guide by mass expulsions from the land, not just of yunteros this time but also of numbers of tenant share-croppers, considered to have been disloyal in their attempts to gain the kind of security that APA had once promised them.[13]

This defeat of comprehensive conservative reform did not lead to any outward reduction in social Catholic rhetoric or activity in Badajoz; rather, in practice, its language and organisation were largely placed at the service of the vengeful agrarian reaction that now triumphed. Having successfully reestablished the principle that rural employers and landlords were free to deal with the dependent lower orders as they chose, a majority of agrarians opted for continued repression as the safest course. Indeed, rural labourers on the cereal estates, untouched by the social Catholic experiments directed at tenants and yunteros, never experienced any other alternative. Cereal agrarians showed not the slightest intention of dividing their lands for sharecropping, being more concerned to strengthen their hold over labour, not only through the management structure of the estate but also by more overtly organised means. Realising

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12 Malefakis, ibid. pp. 352-4, 356.
13 Juan Simeón Vidarte, Bienio Negro pp. 436 -7 describes, though his figure of 60,000 dispossessed (unless it includes all family members) seems somewhat high. Hoy 15 December 1934 describes previously high expectations amongst tenants for reform. See also an editorial of 9 July 1935 protesting at the mass eviction of tenants in Zarza de Alange.

that market mechanisms alone had been an insufficient means to deliver a docile workforce, some employers turned to the notion of disciplining labourers by forcing them into 'Anti-Marxist Syndicates'. Urged by the Federación de Propietarios to offer the members of such organisations the incentives of guaranteed work and higher wages to break with 'marxism', some 34 were in existence by April 1935 and others appeared over the course of the year.[14] More commonly though, agrarians turned to the already established Catholic Agrarian Syndicates to achieve much the same ends. After languishing in the doldrums since the early Republic, their remarkable revival took their numbers from 28 to 91 in the space of a year. This was presented by APA and the Federación Católica Agraria, itself reorganised in July 1935, as a vindication of the social and political theories of the Christian-right.[15] In reality their activities barely fulfilled the doctrines of mututal aid, education and agricultural credit that many social Catholics continued to recomend, and their efforts were turned to other purposes.[16]

Far from forging a new collaborative spirit in the countryside, the Syndicates and 'anti-marxist' unions became tools in a recreated pattern of rural labour relations in

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[14] Hoy 2, 5, April, 12 May, 28, 30 August 1, 7 September, 23 October 1935 reports.
[15] On the rise and reorganisation of the Syndicates through 1935 see Hoy 9 July, 21 August, 27, 28 September, 12 October, 17, 19 November, 3, 6 December 1935; J. J. Castillo, Propietarios muy pobres p. 289. A special article of Hoy 21 January 1935 gives a history of the Syndicates and rural banks up to that date, and gives the new central committee of - President: Joaquín Villalon Angulo, Vice-President: Joaquín Murillo Pizarro, Treasurer: Evaristo Navarette de Arteaga, Secretary: Antonio Fernández García, Vice-Secretary: Juan Pérez Rodríguez.
[16] Hoy 9 July 7, 8 November 1935 detail the 'social functions' of Syndicates.

which agrarians relied almost exclusively on pure force. Rural labourers were found in the 'mixed' organisations of all classes for the first time. Yet it was the search for work available to members, not conversion to the Church, that motivated them. Indeed, the evolution of the Syndicates to employer controlled labour exchanges was reinforced by a new law on jurados mixtos that recognised Catholic bodies, while virtually excluding the rural trade unions from representing workers.[17] While the casas del pueblo remained closed, Socialist leaders imprisoned, in hiding or in exile, and the Civil Guard maintained its vigilance, rural workers were left defenceless in the labour market and strikes were an impossibility.[18] Despite agrarian promises that the removal of the influence of the sociedades obreras would lead to a new period of peace and work, the labour crisis persisted and deepened. Moreover, continuing agricultural unemployment had a severe knock-on effect on artisans and craftsmen, who found themselves without work as well. The unpleasant alternative prospects for labourers were clear. For those able to prove their loyalty and be hired, the harsh discipline of the estate and poor wages awaited, while the majority, unable or unwilling to deliver themselves back into the hands of the foremen and accept their permanent subordination, were left on the brink of starvation.

Agrarian revanchism did not only imply the complete subordination of the rural workforce. It also posed a

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17 For a detailed discussion of the changes see Rafael Pérez Lobo, La nueva ley de jurados mixtos (Madrid, 1935).
18 'Informe de la Agrupación Socialista de Badajoz a todos los organismos de la UGT, PSOE y JS en la provincia', 3 March 1935 AGCS: PSU leg. 4. reports on the parlous state of Socialist organisation and leadership.

challenge to the authority of the Radical provincial administration which found itself powerless to act in the face of the rapid deterioration of social and economic conditions that accompanied the rejection of social catholicism. In December 1934 Hoy signalled the general attitude of the agrarian right and its supporters when it specifically warned the Radical authorities not to interfere in affairs in the countryside which were not their concern.[19] Even so, at the beginning of 1935 the normally cautious Diego Hidalgo felt able to write to the Provincial Governor, José Carlos Luna, of his satisfaction that,

> 'The social state of the province of Badajoz is good, and public order perfect and absolute in all the pueblos (following the) cleansing of the municipalities...;liberated from the tyranny of the casas del pueblo.'[20]

Yet, a few months later the Governor wrote to complain to Lerroux of the growing unemployment problem resulting from the unchecked actions of agrarians.[21] The extent to which employers were seeking to punish anyone associated with workers' organisation and were prepared to defy the authorities became evident in February 1935, when Radical mayors found it largely impossible to arrange voluntary 'placements' for unemployed labourers in ditch-digging, road mending or fencing.[22] As the harvest season approached, the situation showed no signs of improving despite a bumper cereal crop and the efforts of the Governor to impose some control

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19 Hoy 6 December 1934.
20 Letter dated 9 January 1935 ADH.
21 Manjon, El Partido Republicano Radical p. 469.
22 Hoy 28 February 1935 reports a return to this informal system of poor relief and the reluctance of employers to deal with 'disloyal' workers.

over agrarians. Attempts to prevent employers returning to the practices of bringing in Portuguese labourers, increasing the use of machinery and ignoring minimal conditions of work were useless.[23] Though the bases del trabajo of 1932 were supposed to be in force, leading to demands from the Federación de Propietarios for a 20 percent reduction in wages to 8 pesetas a day, in reality agrarians paid the lowest possible rates and then only to 'loyal' workers.[24] Even with the excuse of a fall in domestic cereal prices caused by the abundant harvest against the trend of world recovery, cases like that of the 3.75 pesetas a day offered in Fuente del Maestre moved even Hoy to protest at the callousness of local employers.[25] By the autumn, despair at the behaviour of agrarians and a sense of mounting crisis were evident in Carlos Luna's reports to the Ministry of the Interior.

> 'The majority of the pueblos are rabid with hunger, unemployment grows unchecked...the councillors nominated by CEDA refuse to intervene.'[26]

In a further letter to Diego Hidalgo, the rejectionism of the agrarians was made even clearer.

> 'The major part of the employers, ambitious and unconcerned by the problems that so directly affect them, reject collaboration with the public powers in order to mitigate the misery of the workers'[27]

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[23] Hoy 4, 5, 18, 19 May 1935. One report for Jerez de los Caballeros showed 1,143 workers unemployed out of 2,562 on the local register.
[24] Hoy 23, 26 May 1935.
[25] Hoy 9 June 1935. See also 16, 26 July, 5 September 1935 for details of cereal prices.
[26] Carlos Luna to Diego Hidalgo, 25 October 1935 ADH.
[27] Luna to Ministry of the Interior, 7 November 1935 ADH.

This defiance of authority was also accompanied by attempts on the part of APA to undermine directly the hold of the Radicals over public office. Plausible accusations of local corruption in the granting of licences and contracts were frequently levelled at Radical councillors by their APA counterparts.[28] Such criticisms of Radical control of the overwhelming majority of municipalities fed into a clear campaign by APA to reverse the minority position in public office that it had accepted as the original price of the anti-Socialist alliance. Not that policy was seen as the essential problem by APA - though occasional attempts to intervene against the worst excesses of agrarians were an irritation. Rather the Radicals by their very existence represented a barrier to open rightist rule that it no longer seemed necessay to accept. Consequently, in April 1935 APA councillors across the province and members of the Diputación Provincial resigned in protest at the unfair distribution of power, as part of a nationally organised attempt by CEDA to force concessions from the Lerroux government, threatening an open rift with the Radicals.[29] Though a cabinet reshuffle brought a rightward shift in government in Madrid, no similar sympathetic movement occurred in Badajoz due to the unexpected resistance of many Radical mayors, concerned at agrarian ambitions, to the re-admittance of APA to office let alone a redistribution of power. After the failure of this tactic furious APA protests and bitter attacks on Radical leadership

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[28] Almendralejo presented a particularly blatant case, see Hoy 18 December 1934, 22 January, 6 February 1935.
[29] See Hoy 4, 6 14 April 1935 for APA tactics.

followed throughout the summer.[30] The situation was only resolved in November when, after much pressure by CEDA ministers, APA councillors were allowed to take their seats once again.[31] Though the principal aim of forcing ever more concessions over public power appeared to be frustrated, APA pressure on the Radicals did have a very damaging and divisive effect on their supposed political allies.

Distaste at the actions of APA and its agrarian supporters and disillusionment with the role played by the Radicals were prevented from becoming an open conflict within the party only so long as the governing coalition remained intact in Madrid. In public the provincial leadership remained committed to co-operation with APA. Predictably, Salazar Alonso went even further, issuing messages of enthusiastic support for APA at every opportunity and professing himself a loyalist to the Lerroux line.[32] However, simmering tension, which had produced splits in local Radical branches over relations with APA, came to a head when new parliamentary elections were announced in December in the aftermath of the disastrous Straperlo scandal which had engulfed the national leadership of Lerroux.[33] As the party self-destructed at the top, any residual loyalty to the governing alliance on the part of critics at the provincial level was finally dispelled leading to open dispute within the Badajoz movement. Internal hostilities were given full rein when APA proposed renewed

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[30] See Hoy 7, 11 May, 'La anomalia situación política de la provincia' 11 June 1935 for this.
[31] Hoy 12, 13, 16, 20 November 1935.
[32] A conspicuous instance was his wholehearted approval of APA withdrawal from office, Hoy 4 April 1935.
[33] Hoy 1 February 1935 gives the fullest account of such a division in Campanario.

electoral cooperation, but with the weakened and nationally discredited Radicals as the junior partners - an act that seems extraordinary given the degree to which the Catholic agrarian right had sought to undermine and supplant the Radicals. The chance to act was now seized by the section of provincial Radical opinion, broadly identified with the conservative but republican views of Diego Hidalgo, that had always been uneasy at having a close relationship with APA and had found its worst fears justified. At a meeting of delegates called to discuss the elections, Hidalgo proposed that the provincial Radicals should establish themselves as an autonomous, republican party aligned only with other similar forces. This was fiercely resisted by Salazar Alonso and his supporters in the leadership, who wished to stay within the national party and accept the minority of places on a combined parliamentary list with the right. The Salazar Alonso faction easily won a vote, reluctantly accepted by an isolated Hidalgo but not by all local branches following bitter debates. Significantly, the argument that finally won over the mass of delegates was the same as that which had prompted APA to offer collaboration rather than fight the elections alone - the overriding necessity of unity in order to confront the threat posed by a workers' organisation in Badajoz that, despite its seemingly complete eclipse in the previous two years, rapidly revived in the final months of 1935 stronger and more determined than ever to seek change in rural society.[34]

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[34] Hoy 29, 31 December 1935 gives a full account of the proceedings of the assembly, attended by 200 delegates. Luis López Bardají, made Minister of Education following the resignation of Lerroux from power, was the chief supporter of Salazar Alonso among Radical Cortes deputies present. Almendralejo produced the major instance of local Radicals

This reversal of fortunes - ironically described by Hoy as akin to the return of Halley's comet - was all the more remarkable given the conditions of semi-clandestinity in which the Socialist movement had been placed.[33] In March 1935 a report produced by the Socialist Federation of Badajoz detailed the persisting closure of casas del pueblo, the seizures of news sheets, the ban on public meetings, and imprisonment or exile of leading figures not protected by parliamentary immunity, despite the formal legality of the party and unions.[34] Radical and APA self-congratulations on the outward social and political quiescence that prevailed in the province, and the weaning of workers away from the pernicious influence of 'marxism', symbolised by the complete absence of May Day demonstrations in 1935, merely masked a climate of persecution and fear. Horrific evidence of this came in June, when the parliamentary deputy, leader of the Socialist Youth and editor of La Verdad Social, Pedro Rubio Herredia was mortally wounded by a gunman while eating in a lunch room in the provincial capital. The assassin, Regino Valancía, prompted to act by accusations published by Rubio of his involvement in corruption as a local official, was a member of APA and a close friend of Salazar Alonso, who continued to support him. When a light sentence of twelve years and one day was given at the trial that followed, Simeón Vidarte, who had alleged premeditation and collusion with

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rejecting the decision, see Hoy 11 January 1935. See also 'El peligro de la lucha triangular en las proximas elecciones' Hoy 27 December 1935 on the views of APA.

[33] 'El frente revolucionario y el cometa Halley' Hoy 3 January 1936.

[34] 'Circular de la Federación Socialista de Badajoz a todos los organismos de UGT, PSOE y JS' 3 March 1935, AGCS: PSU leg. 4.

Salazar Alonso while prosecuting, condemned the decision as effectively an endorsement of rightist incitement to violence.[37] Meanwhile, the funeral became the occasion for a political protest in which the masses of people who followed the coffin could openly express their outrage at this murder and at the forces seen as being behind it.[38]

Partly in reaction to this episode, and with the end of the state of emergency begun in October 1934, the Civil Governor relaxed restrictions sufficiently to allow some open activity by provincial Socialists to begin. Severe limitations still existed such that, in practice, formal organisation, demonstrations and strikes were prohibited. This left only officially sanctioned meetings with speakers approved by the Governor and supervised by the Civil Guard as possible forms of action. Even so, following the first public meeting allowed on 19 July 1935, Simeón Vidarte and Ricardo Zabalza (FNTT leader) were able to address audiences in many of the larger towns attacking the Radicals and the 'Catholic-fascism' of APA.[39] But, as the accelerating crisis in the national government increasingly left the provincial administration without clear direction, the quiet reorganisation of sociedades obreras began despite the surveillance of the Civil Guard. With the announcement of elections, nothing could prevent the re-opening of the casas del pueblo and unrestricted agitation. The Socialist movement now benefitted

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[37] Hoy 12, 20 June, 25 July 1935; Juan Simeón Vidarte, Bienio Negro pp. 383-5 give accounts of the incident and trial. Salazar Alonso later appealed for a more lenient sentence.
[38] Hoy 14 June 1935 describes.
[39] Hoy 19 July, 22, 23, 24 October 1935 gives details of the Governor's order and meetings in Mérida, Almendralejo and Villanueva de la Serena.

from the bitterness and anger that had built up among rural workers and their families over the sufferings they had experienced. As recruitment mushroomed among all sections of the working populace, the 'anti-marxist' unions and Catholic Syndicates designed to discipline them collapsed, revealing again the essential resilience of the sociedades obreras as organisations firmly rooted in class and community in the countryside.[40] This rebirth of rural socialism was not, however, accompanied by an immediate resumption of the syndical struggle, though a wave of robberies of acorns from estates by the hungry did indicate an increasing, albeit desperate, willingness to defy the authorities.[41] High unemployment itself virtually ruled out the use of the strike weapon, and in any event while agrarians still had the support of the Civil Guards and municipalities they were able physically to suppress any threats to property. Therefore, politics became paramount, with the realisation that in the light of the previous two years the Radical-CEDA government had to be replaced before any other change was possible.

In Badajoz, as nationally, the immediate aim of wresting back political control formed the logic behind the creation of the Popular Front alliance. Inevitably, the Socialists, with the support of the mass of rural workers, were the dominant partners alongside the minute Communist and small republican

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[40] For the process of Socialist resurgence see the surviving reports from Civil Guard posts in Villanueva de la Serena, Santa Amalia, Don Benito, Mengabril, Medellin and La Haba from August to December 1935, AGCS: PSU legs. 27, 37; Carlos Luna report to Ministry of the Interior 7 November 1935, ADH; 'Actas de Agrupación Socialista "Renovación Social" de Esparragosa de la Serena', 'Actas de Sociedad Obrera "Agrícola Adelante" de Magacela', 'Actas de Juventud Socialista de Esparragosa de la Serena', AGCS: PSU legs. 1, 3, 13, 24.
[41] Hoy 31 October, 2 November 1935 reports by Civil Governor.

parties which also revived as the climate of repression eased. In fact, in many pueblos the Socialists were the only established opposition force, prompting rather bewildered responses when the call to establish electoral links with other local groups was passed on. Hostility to the provincial republicans, now divided between Azaña's Izquierda Republicana and Martínez Barrio's Unión Republicana, which had built up in the Socialist movement in the early period of the Republic, was put aside and a joint electoral committee was established in January 1936.[42] Shortly after this it produced a list of candidates consisting of six Socialists, one Communist, and two representatives of each of the republican parties. However, beneath the general acceptance by the Socialist leadership of collaboration lurked divisions that were revealed during these negotiations.[43]

For the dominant syndicalist wing, now headed by Nicolas de Pablo, Margarita Nelken and Ricardo Zabalza (added after the death of Pedro Rubio), the union with the republicans clearly was, as the Governor reported with alarm, simply 'a necessary event' on the road to power and 'social revolution'.[44] Enthusiastic supporters of the radical wing of the PSOE led by Largo Caballero, after their return from exile the message they preached in public meetings and through the paper, La Verdad Social, was the need for a specifically

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[42] See the circular of the Federación Socialista de Badajoz announcing this to all its constituent organisationas, AGCS: PSU leg. 4.
[43] The names were: Nicolás de Pablo, Margarita Nelken, Ricardo Zabalza, Simeón Vidarte, José Aliseda Olivares, José Sosa Hormiga (PSOE); Pedro Martínez Carton (PCE); Miguel Muñoz, Fernando Valera Aparicio (UR); Vicente Sol Sánchez, Jesús de Miguel Lancho (IR).
[44] Carlos Luna to Ministry of the Interior 18 November 1935, ADH.

socialist path that would finally break the hold of the agrarians and their Radical cronies on the countryside and, by extension, on Spain as a whole. Not surprisingly, this was very attractive to labouring and yuntero families eager to regain the improvements they had tentatively won in 1931-33, and then lost to agrarian reaction. With the position of the caballerists secured within the Socialist Federation they were able to pursue a vicious polemic against opponents in the leadership, directed in particular at the founding figure of Badajoz socialism, Narciso Vásquez Torres. Identified with Julián Besteiro, Vásquez was accused of being insufficiently revolutionary in a campaign of vilification, pursued particularly vigorously by Margarita Nelken. Meanwhile, a third group around Simeón Vidarte, seen as partisans of Indalecio Prieto and favouring a more solid relationship with republicanism, stood aside. When the question of the distribution of places on the electoral list arose a virtual internal coup d'etat took place. Returning from Madrid having thought that matters had been settled equitably, Vidarte discovered that the caballerists had cynically forced Vásquez Torres and his colleague, Anselmo Trejo Gallardo, from their positions in favour of the inclusion, disproportionate to their real voting strength, of two more republicans.[45] Fortunately for the election campaign that followed, there was little sign that this dispute had much effect on the members of local sociedades obreras. Indeed, the popularity of Nelken did not necessarily imply the unpopularity of Vásquez Torres, who was still seen as an important figurehead. This was

[45] Juan Simeón Vidarte, Todos fuimos culpables (Mexico, 1973) p. 38 describes this conflict.

graphically illustrated by the letter sent by the Socialist Party branch in the capital, a caballerist stronghold, to the national leadership denouncing the attacks on Narciso Vásquez as unfair.[46] As a result, Socialist energies were fully directed to the electoral success of the Popular Front in the immediate term, there would be no leadership brake on the expectations of their supporters afterwards.

Victory for the Popular Front in Badajoz was by no means certain throughout the difficult electoral campaign. A broad unity was preserved among the constituent parties around the general aims of a Popular Front programme that basically promised a return to the conditions of the first two years of the Republic. Vague promises of a return to agrarian reform did, however, allow the provincial FNTT to propagate a syndicalist programme promising that no half measures would be taken towards the 'conquest of the land'.[47] Though undefined, the revolutionary tone of this slogan was seized upon by the Radical and APA authorities to justify a campaign of harrassment and obstruction aimed principally at the Socialists and their supporters. Meetings were 'supervised' by police agents, while the local Civil Guards arrested bill posters and leading militants, and attempted to close down the newly opened casas del pueblo. Margarita Nelken found herself virtually unable to speak, except in large rallies in the provincial capital, due to the close attentions of the police. Meanwhile, the opponents of the Popular Front received a free hand to engage in vote buying and the intimidation of the

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[46] Letter dated 24 December 1935, FPI AH-13-36.
[47] See Federacion Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo sobre Extremadura p. 13.

hungry and unemployed. In return for support soup kitchens, run by the asociaciones femeninas of APA, dispensed the charity that the victims of the agrarian right had previously been denied. Inducements of work, threats of reprisals, and physical assaults were all offered by agrarians to their dependent labourers and yunteros.[48] Yet, despite this climate of intimidation and violence the Socialists predicted a margin of victory of some 30,000 votes.[49]

In contrast, despite the pressure exerted on behalf of the agrarian right and their allies, electoral defeat followed naturally from the final dissolution of the anti-Socialist bloc. The dominance of APA reflected the degree to which the Radicals, and to an extent the Conservative Republicans, had become the victims to the point of collapse of the drift to agrarian extremism during 1934-5. This trend to the right was confirmed by the forced inclusion of Monarchists, symbiotically linked to APA, on the electoral list of 'counter-revolutionary' candidates announced just before voting day.[50] Not surprisingly, therefore, the campaign itself relied almost entirely on the resources of the agrarian right

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[48] Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 66-8 offers good coverage, not just of Montijo. See also the letter, dated 9 February 1936, from the Socialist branch in Don Benito to the central committee of the PSOE complaining that 13 members had been arrested in Medellín, and that the authorities planned to imprison the scrutineers on the Saturday before the elections, FPI AH-13-15.

[49] Vidarte, Todos fuimos p. 39 cites the calculation.

[50] Only three Radicals were included, instead of the four originally promised, while Hidalgo protested - without resigning - at the inclusion of Monarchists. Hoy 29 January, 11 February 1936 gives details. The list was: Luis Hermida, Francisco López de Ayala, Francisco Asís y Sánchez Miranda, Antonio Fernández Domínguez (APA), Antonio Solar y Tabaoda (Renovación Española), José Rosado Gil, Fermín Daza y Díaz (Conservative Republican), José Díaz Ambrona (Monarchist), Diego Hidalgo, Salazar Alonso, Luis Bardají (Radicals).

and reflected their concerns. The defence of property and the Catholic Church figured prominently, but the main theme was an apocalyptic vision of the revolutionary threat posed by socialism.[51] Such propaganda, eminently successful in 1933, was of limited utility in 1936, given the break-up of APA support that had taken place in the intervening period. While smallholders and staunch Catholics could be relied upon, the support of a propertied stratum of society that APA had once sought to instrumentalise had been destroyed. In particular, though the truculent Asociación de Arrendatarios de Fincas Rústicas had disappeared in 1934, sharecroppers had suffered too much under agrarian rule to give their support again. Hoy clearly saw that the consequent problem was not that voters would necessarily switch en masse to the Popular Front, but rather that they would withdraw their support from the right and abstain.[52] APA efforts to bolster their own following were intensive and expensive, involving 195,000 posters, 1.5 million pamphlets, 72,000 leaflets, and meetings in every branch in the province.[53] Retrospectively, Diego Hidalgo offered a jaundiced view of the real effectiveness of these efforts,

> 'These people of Acción Popular believed that victory was assured by a dozen señoritos with slicked back hair strolling through the Extremeduran villages a month before the elections making ridiculous statements, having an audience of a few landowners and Daughters of Mary'[54]

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[51] On the campaign see, Hoy 17 December 1935 to 16 February 1936.
[52] Hoy 8, 13, 19 February 1936 offered editorials equating abstention with traitorism.
[53] Hoy 9 February 1936. APA also claimed 344 organisations in the province (145 A.P. Masculina, 127 A.P. Femenina, 72 JAP).
[54] Letter of Diego Hidalgo to Carlos Luna 27 February 1936, ADH.

Decisive electoral defeat marked the bankruptcy of all the social and political strategies painfully developed by the provincial agrarian right under the Republic, leaving their backers in the rural elite isolated and with limited defences in the face of a renewed challenge from below.[55]

Agrarians reaped the whirlwind they had sown for autocracy in a swift reversion to conditions akin to those of the dark days of 1931. This time, however, they were given no period of popular fiesta or experimentation to exploit and within which to recover. Instead, having learned the lessons of indecision and lack of forcefulness in previous dealings with agrarian power, the mood of the Popular Front forces on taking control of administration in Badajoz was of grim purposefulness. Despite instructions for an orderly transfer of power by the new republican Governor, Miguel Granados Ruiz, APA and Radical councillors were often expelled from local council chambers, occasionally amidst workers' demonstrations, by the Socialists and republicans they had replaced in 1934. With the tricolour of the Republic and red flags raised once

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[55] Results in Hoy 22 February 1936. In order to ensure that two of three minority places would go to the Conservative Republicans, Vidarte arranged tactical voting by Socialists in his home base of Llerena, see Vidarte, Todos fuimos pp. 39-40. Results were,
409,878 in census with 309,703 votes cast.

Popular Front		'Anti-Revolutionary'	
José Aliseda Olivares	168,411	Rosado Gil	143,003
Ricardo Zabalza	168,270	Daza y Díaz	142,350
Miguel Muñoz	168,270	Luis Bardají	142,248
Sol Sánchez	168,162	Díaz Ambrona	141,849
Simeón Vidarte	168,069	Fernández Domínguez	141,849
Sosa Hormiga	168,003	Diego Hidalgo	141,612
Miguel Lancho	167,953	Sánchez Miranda	141,456
Margarita Nelken	167,829	Solar y Taboada	141,437
Nicolás de Pablo	167,825	Hermida Villegas	141,429
Valera Aparicio	167,590	López de Ayala	141,334
Martínez Carton	167,372	Salazar Alonso	141,090

more above the town halls, reinstated Socialist mayors quickly set about changing again the complexion of local authority. Municipal employees appointed by the Radicals were dismissed and replaced by members of the sociedades obreras. The arbitration committees (comisiones mixtas) were reactivated, and the rural police reformed to enforce respect from agrarians for council decisions to allow the gleaning of acorns and firewood, placing of the unemployed in work and provision of poor relief. Meanwhile, immediate increases in local property taxes were announced to pay for new programmes in housing, health and education.[56] Similar scenes were enacted in the Diputación Provincial, reformed exactly as in 1931, which immediately issued orders to start social assistance and public works throughout the province.[57] Finally, to complete the displacement of conservative social and political forces, the corporate system of rural labour relations brought in under Largo Caballero was implanted again by decrees issued by the new all-republican government. Laboreo forzoso was applied as before, alongside a modified form of términos municipales, while emergency jurados mixtos with representation as in 1931 were gradually created. Moreover, with sociedades obreras poised to take advantage of these measures to shift the balance of social and economic control within latifundism back to themselves, the Institute of Agrarian Reform (IRA) was charged to renew the

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[56] Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 66; Hoy 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28 February, 7, 8 March 1936. In the capital even the Monarchst representatives of 1931 were included in the reformed council, under the Socialist, Sinfornio Madronero.

[57] See ActDPB 21 February, 20 March, 5 June 1936 on reconstitution and activities.

redistribution of lands begun so ineffectively after September 1932.

Rural workers rejoined the syndical struggle with a vigour that surprised even many of their own leaders, who often found themselves reluctantly carried along by it. This was especially true of the yunteros, dispossessed for over a year, who now pressed for permanent access to land without any sharecropping relationship with landlords. By the spring of 1936 their need was urgent, not just to break with unemployment, but to have land in time to begin ploughing and planting operations. With the alteration in public power in the province, spontaneous local land invasions and ritual ploughings of parcels previously occupied by yunteros began once more. These actually intensified following a government decree on 5 March that promised the settlement of yuntero families within the space of thirty days on the land they had worked in the 1933-4 season. Almost inevitably, occasional clashes with the Civil Guard and estate guards occurred when landowners used force to eject the occupiers.[88] While the Civil Governor called for calm, the leadership of the provincial FNTT took a very measured and non-inflammatory line. On the one hand they offered support to the Governor, and on the other they pressed the Ministry of Agriculture to allow local mayors and rural police to choose lands for settlement without having to wait for IRA approval or prior compensation. In a response to the situation, the director of the IRA, Vásquez Humasque, visited Badajoz to promise settlement within eight days.[89] However, such promises were no

[88] Hoy 5, 12, 21, 26 March 1936.
[89] El Obrero de la Tierra 7 March, 4 April 1936.

longer sufficient for yunteros who had little faith left that there would be lasting change. Consequently, in the early hours of 25 March mass land invasions were carried out by yunteros, joined in many cases by labourers expelled from parcels settled under collective contracts. Estimates of the numbers involved varied, but a minimum of 30,000 families seems certain. Such numbers acting across the whole of the dehesa clearly required co-ordination, but there was little evidence that the syndical leadership of rural socialism played a major role - though they were quick to claim subsequent credit. Nor did spontaneity imply disorder. Though local Civil Guards, not to mention estate guards, were powerless to act against this mass disobedience, the disciplined and ritualised behaviour of yunteros was maintained. The parcels occupied were carefully chosen and symbolically ploughed to stake a claim; the occupiers then withdrew and presented a petition to the mayor calling for restoration of their rights and permanent settlement.[60] Receiving reports of revolutionary acts in Badajoz, and fearing a disastrous deterioration in the countryside across the whole of the South, the IRA responded by rushing technicians to the province and granting immediate settlement without compensation, often on the lands already occupied. By the end of April some 50,000 households were settled in the predominantly dehesa regions affected by invasions, in a

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[60] El Obrero de la Tierra 4 April 1936 gives the fullest account. Hoy 26, 27, 28 March 1936 gives sketchy details and condemned the action, joined by the Governor. Federación Provincial Socialista de Badajoz, El fascismo p. 5, 14 gives the figure of 30,000.

redistribution of land far more extensive than any previous attempt.[61]

Shocked by their inability to resist what was, in effect, an agrarian reform by direct action, the rural elite and smallholders turned to last ditch measures to defend property rights. Calls by the Federación Provincial Socialista for the collectivisation of land and remarks by Margarita Nelken that the Popular Front was unable to satisfy the aspirations of rural workers caused agrarians to fear that labourers would also seize the cereal estates by force.[62] Certainly, the threat to estate management from the sociedades obreras, now in control of the labour market and favoured by the corporate system, returned immediately following the Februaury elections. While labourers moved to regain and make permanent the improvements in wages and working conditions they had achieved at the outset of the Republic, the Federación de Propietarios and local sindicatos agrarios found their petitions of protest to the Governor and Madrid government in vain.[63] Within the cereal zone rural employers reverted to even more extreme forms of the tactics used successfully

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[61] BIRA June 1936 gives the results of these settlements. Though all were claimed to be yunteros, the figure seems far too high and must have contained a significant proportion of labourers.

Partido	Number of parcels	Hectares	Settlements
Jerez	634	37,000	13,288
Llerena	284	28,080	11,592
Mérida	245	18,366	9,355
Castuera	277	15,590	5,157
Badajoz	222	14,432	4,496
Puebla	272	11,764	5,921
Totals	158	125,331	48,809

[62] El Obrero de la Tierra 11 April 1936 records a provincial assembly. Hoy 12 April 1936 reports Nelken's remarks at a meeting in Madrid.

[63] Hoy 5 April, 16 June 1936 records a petition from Almemdralejo and a deputation of the Federación de Propietarios sent to Madrid.

during 1931-33 to obstruct change. Spring sowing and weeding were completely abandoned, increasing 'forced' unemployment among all but permanent workers. Meanwhile, employers refused to negotiate the 'placement' of workers with town halls and the Governor, and denied wages to those forced on them. In response, robberies from the fields surged, encouraged by many sociedades obreras but condemned by the Governor. Fines, and even arrests, were ignored by labradores and landowners who, through their patronal organisations and the pages of Hoy, frequently complained of a breakdown in law and order.[64]

As the harvest season approached the social and syndical conflict in the cereal areas intensified dramatically. Employers refused to recognise the sociedades obreras or to engage in the negotiation of new bases for the signing of collective work contracts. Spontaneous local general strikes flared up across the provincial heartland as labourers tried to force the agrarians into compliance. Meanwhile, calls from the Governor for patronal organisations to act responsibly were simply ignored. A particularly vicious and uncompromising conflict exploded in Almendralejo - a test case for the whole of Badajoz according to Hoy - in which members of the sindicato agrario threatened death to any employer who treated with local labour organisations or offered relief to the 2,000 unemployed.[65] Sporadic arrests of agrarians who refused municipal orders, culminated in a spectacular closure of the

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[64] El Obrero de la Tierra 7 March 1936 gives a summary of agrarians' actions. Especially interesting is the letter of 'Agrícola Adelante de Magacela' to the C.E. of PSOE on 9 April 1936 complaining about local employers and the failure of the Civil Guard to intervene, FPI AH-13-21.

[65] Hoy 9 May to 2 July 1936 covers the whole period. El Obrero de la Tierra 13 June 1936 general reports and details of Almendralejo.

Federación de Propietarios by the Governor following accusations of sabotage of the harvest and co-ordination of the illegal work boycott.[66] In Almendralejo the captain of the local Civil Guard pleaded with rural employers to take a conciliatory attitude, fearing that serious violence would begin as hatred among the labouring poor deepened.[67] However, though there were occasional instances where employers gave way - particularly smallholders entirely dependent on the crop for their livelihoods - the harvest remained largely paralysed by lock-outs and strikes well into June. An attempt from the jurados mixtos to break the deadlock, by announcing unilaterally detailed bases del trabajo brought no real change as employers simply rejected them as disastrously expensive to implement.[68] Meanwhile, agrarians who tried to bring Portuguese workers or machinery on to the estates to gather the harvest without recourse to local labour faced attacks on the migrants and machine breaking. The situation was only resolved in most areas late in the harvest season, when local mayors ordered desperate labourers to collect the harvest without the cooperation of employers, under the protection of the rural police, and then demand the wages promised in the bases. Agrarians reacted to this direct negation of property rights by refusing payment, deploying their own guards to drive the labour gangs from the fields, and even destoying the crop to deny it to their 'persecutors'.[69] For the elite the

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[66] Hoy 20 May 1936.
[67] Hoy 2 June 1936.
[68] Hoy 16 June 1936 prints the bases and patronal comment. Basic harvest wages were to be 11.50 pts, a considerable rise over 1934-5.
[69] El Obrero de la Tierra 20 June 1936 reports communications from the Badajoz Socialist Federation on agrarian actions. See

'revolution' they had predicted, and done so much to bring upon themselves, seemed at the doorstep.

In the midst of the harvest crisis, the sense of overwhelming danger to the established order and persons who supported it was heightened by statements from the Federación de Propietarios and Hoy. The paper attacked those who accused the patronal organisations of rebellion, explaining that, 'what is called a case of subversion and rebellion is the exercise of inalienable rights of the bourgeois regime.' Agrarians were threatened, it explained exaggeratedly, with disappearance or suicide. In further comment the Federación de Propietarios interpreted events as leading inevitably to economic ruin and social disintegration at the hands of fanatics. The tone of imminent descent into the abyss was completed when Hoy called for solidarity with employers in Almendralejo, '...in these days of collapse...and resistence to the hordes of Atilla'.[70] In mounting panic, seized by the conviction that their lives were in danger, many among the rural elite who were able began physically to abandon the countryside, moving from their pueblos to the supposed safety of either the larger provincial towns - particularly the rightist centres of Mérida and Almendralejo - or to Seville and Madrid.[71] Encouraged by Hoy despite the censorship, this atmosphere of hysteria formed the crucial social prelude, and later justification, for the descent to Civil War.[72] All

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also Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 67; Hoy 18, 20 June 1936.

[70] All in Hoy 20 June 1936. See also Hoy 26 June, 2, 4, 5 July 1936 for similar commentary and reports from the Federación de Propietarios.

[71] Federación Provincial Socialista, El fascismo p. 15.

[72] See for instance, Baldomero Díaz de Entresotos, Seis meses de anarquía en Extremadura (Cáceres, 1937) written by a

adherence to political activity within the Republic by the agrarian right was abandoned in Badajoz, as elsewhere, in favour of violent confrontation. Indeed, immediately following the election of the Popular Front in February Hoy had concluded that the road of 1934-5 had, despite its promise, been proved a failure.[73] Subsequently, APA simply dissolved as a political force, its members being urged by Hoy to maintain their anti-revolutionary fervour. Across the province, instances of disruption of public administration by rightist supporters mounted. For instance the work of the Diputación Provincial was made impossible by the number of cases with which it had to deal of denunciations against hospital employees refusing to work and 'contributing to the disorganised anarchy of conspiracy'.[74]

More sinister was the steady growth of vigilante assaults and attacks on opponents, principally directed against provincial socialism, that was reminiscent of the early activities of the squads in some rural regions of Italy prior to the fascist takeover. Most were associated with the Falange, an openly fascist political force that barely had an existence in Badajoz while the conventional right was strong. In early 1935 the party had only 500 adherents in the province, mostly the sons of agrarians and businessmen in the major towns, and found little role to play while the rural left was effectively suppressed.[75] However, it became

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municipal official from Puebla de Alcocer covering the period January to July 1936.

[73] Hoy 23 February 1936.

[74] ActDPB 6 June 1936 lists 27 cases against personnel of one hospital in Mérida alone.

[75] Stanley G. Payne, Falange: a History of Spanish Fascism (Stanford, 1961) p. 81.

increasingly prominent after February 1936 when a new executive committee was formed by Arcadio Carrasco y Fernández Blanco to promote more militant action. Though the number of formal members of the party remained small and youth was a predominant feature - reinforced by the wholesale defection of JAP to falangist ranks - collusion and support with APA were clearly more widespread. The sympathetic reporting by Hoy of falangist attacks on Socialist newspaper sellers, assaults on leading militants of sociedades obreras and clashes with demonstrating workers was one aspect of this. Another, more serious side, was illustrated by instances like that in Don Benito where local falangists joined by the Civil Guard attacked the casa del pueblo with firebombs and rifle shots after the victory of the Popular Front.[76] A leading Falangist militant, Eduardo Ezquer, was even to claim that his detachments had, '...managed, with noble behaviour, in open and gentlemanly struggle, to reduce the Marxist groups which predominated in the province.'[77] Though clearly an exaggeration, such remarks and activities were a chilling portent of the intentions of the provincial right and its supporters. A clue as to why this kind of political violence

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[76] See Hoy 1 April to 17 July 1936. Information of the party before the Civil War is scant. On activities in Montijo where the sons of local agrarians formed the nucleus, see Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia p. 69. For the Don Benito incident see the letter of the agrupación socialista to the parliamentary deputy for Badajoz, Miguel Muñoz, 19 February 1936 AGCS: PSU leg. 33. Interesting comparative studies on Italy include, Frank M. Snowden, 'The Social Origins of Agrarian Fascism in Italy' Journal of European Sociology 1972 and, Violence and Great Estates: Apulia 1900-22 (Cambridge, 1987); Anthony Cardoza, Agrarian Elites and Italian Fascism (Princeton, 1986); Paul Corner, Fascism in Ferrara (Oxford, 1975).

[77] Quoted in Sheelagh Ellwood, Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era (London, 1987) p. 137.

did not become more general and determined, or the aid of agrarians more open, was provided in the editorials in Hoy praising the Civil Guard and the military in general as the saviours of Spain and the traditional order.[78] With the knowledge that a military rising was anticipated the paper increasingly concentrated on national events, advising its readers to read the rightist press for advice and keep themselves in readiness.[79] Hopes had clearly been placed on the swift success of army intervention against the Republic, which it was anticipated would be the saviour of last resort of the rural social and political order in Badajoz. On 17 July 1936, as tension rose within the province on receipt of the news that the military had risen in Morocco, the republican authorities obtained a promise from the commander of the Badajoz garrison that his troops would remain loyal in the event of an attempted coup, and organised workers kept vigil in the casas del pueblo in anticipation of a local attempt to join the coup.[80]

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[78] Hoy 11 July 1936.
[79] See particularly, Hoy 16 July 1936.
[80] Hoy 17 July 1936.

Epilogue: Counter-revolution in the Countryside

While the military significance of Badajoz to the overall course of the Civil War was shortlived, as in the rural south as a whole, the social and political impact of the Nationalist victory was of decisive importance. At first the provincial response to the mainland rising of 18 July 1936 that finally broke the tension and uncertainty that had accumulated since February was ineffective. Though the Civil Guard and the few existing Falangists joined the coup attempt in many localities, they lacked organisation and the civilian and army support that would have ensured success. The most significant blow to their efforts came when the commander of the garrison in the capital, Luis Castello Pantoja, stuck to his earlier promise not to attack the Republic and persuaded his senior officers to do likewise. Consequently, the provincial rebels found themselves isolated and facing members of workers' organisations, armed with shotguns and weapons distributed by town councils, who took to the streets to defend their towns and villages. In the majority of cases surrender was the only possible answer. However, in Azuaga a battle ensued which ended in the capture of the town hall and left two Civil Guards and eighteen townspeople dead. A similar, though bloodless, triumph for the Guard occurred in Jerez de los Caballeros. Meanwhile, in Atayala and Monesterio the Guards retreated to their barracks where, alongside local right-wingers, they remained besieged. With these exceptions, and in the absence of any central or provincial government direction, power inevitably passed to the victorious Socialist and

republican forces in these local struggles. Formal political structures and norms were thrust aside by rapidly created popular committees, dominated by the sociedades obreras, which took control of administration as a necessity. Though Nationalist propaganda represented these developments as proof of a pre-planned subversive intent on the part of the Socialist movement, there was little actual evidence of conspiracy. Instead, confusion, fear and the absence of central direction was more obvious in the spontaneous efforts of groups of workers' leaders and prominent republicans to maintain public order and secure their own areas.[1]

Ironically, far from forestalling the rural revolution that the agrarian right saw advancing in the countryside, the initial outcome of the attempt to destroy the Republic by force of arms actually prompted just such a development. Not that the actions of the popular committees were in any sense systematic; rather they fitted into a pattern dictated by the march of events which inevitably entailed the dismantling of the elite-dominated rural order. Their initial concern was to guard against any threat from local rightists, leading to the arrest and imprisonment in makeshift jails of anybody thought of harbouring 'fascist sympathies'. Membership of the organisations of the right, including the Radicals on occasion, were the main causes for suspicion, but control of rural property and connection to the church were often reason enough as well. Indeed, church buildings and the lands and houses of the elite became immediate targets for the

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[1] On these events see Vila Izquierdo, Extremadura: la Guerra Civil pp. 27-31; J. M. Martínez Bande, La campaña de Andalucía (Madrid, 1969) p. 113.

committees, which took a variety of measures to bring them into public use. In some cases this meant outright expropriation of land for collective working by the sociedades obreras, especially where the owners had fled, but often estates were placed under the control of commissions which landowners and labradores were invited to join as a minority voice. Effective control of the land passed into the hands of the workers' organisations which enacted a number of measures from raising wages and abolishing the hiring practices and work discipline on the cereal estates, to distributing parcels of land on the dehesa for permanent occupation by yunteros.[2] Alongside the haphazard emergence of a new economic order in the countryside, the established mechanisms of social control and justice were also thrown into disarray.

Nationalist propaganda represented this short period of effective workers' control as one of uncontrolled 'barbarism'; the reality was far more mixed as far as the evidence allows a picture to be drawn.[3] Detained rightists frequently suffered from poor conditions and verbal abuse in their improvised prisons, but the random killings and executions at the hands of vigilantes that occurred in other, anarchist- dominated provinces seem to have been unknown. Initially at least the popular committees provided protection for those held, and prevented any uncontrolled acts of murder. In most towns and

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[2] For a general picture see Vila Izquierdo, Extremadura: La Guerra Civil pp. 115-8. Also the surviving records of collectives in Esparragosa de la Serena, Don Benito, Orellana de la Sierra, Castuera, Valle de la Serena, Acedera aqnd Quintana de la Serena, AGCS: PSU legs. 1, 3, 8, 10, 13, 31 , 32.

[3] Rodrigo González Ortíz, Extremadura bajo la influencia soviética (Badajoz, 1937) is the prime example of such propaganda.

villages this was to remain the situation, as even later reports drawn up by the Falange made clear. Of sixty-two pueblos surveyed, no atrocities took place in forty-six. In the other sixteen there were executions of right-wingers, priests and Civil Guards, largely authorised by the local committees. 256 persons were killed in total, the majority in the rightist centre of Almendralejo. Around 100 further deaths occurred in the other major centre of the political right in Mérida (not included in the surviving reports), where the desire to exact vengeance on perceived oppressors also ran high. Any further additions to the toll of political casualties on the right are impossible to verify, though some are likely. Though horrific, this brutality was not premeditated but occurred when individual popular committees learned in panic of the advance of Nationalist forces through the province. As their own towns and villages came under direct threat, individuals took the decision to remove the danger from within, hastily assembling firing squads to carry out the executions. Invariably, the executioners were drawn from the volunteer workers' militias created to face the military threat that appeared within a fortnight of the failure of the rising.[4]

The rapid conquest of Badajoz from the south by Nationalist forces, seeking to link up the two zones of Spain where the rebellion had succeeded, ended the emergence of a

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[4] Surveys are collected in AGCS: PSU leg. 24. See also Hoy 17, 18, 19 August 1936; Araceli Spinola de Gironza, Dios sobre todo (Madrid, 1940) pp. 116-23; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 70-1; Vila Izquierdo, Extremadura: la Guerra Civil pp. 130-1. Francisico López de Ayala was the most prominent casualty, killed in Mérida. Salazar Alonso was also executed, following his capture in Madrid.

new order in the countryside almost before it had begun. Under the overall control of Colonel Yagüe, three 'columns' commanded by Colonel Asensio, Lt. Colonel de Tella, and Major Castejón invaded the province along the Seville-Mérida road. The total of 4,500 infantry plus artillery and air support involved were mainly composed of regular legionaries and Moorish mercenaries of the Army of Africa, joined by volunteers from the political parties of the right, including agrarians from Badajoz who had fled to Seville before the rising began. Though small these forces proved more than a match for the badly-armed, untrained and uncoordinated militias that faced them. Travelling in requisitioned trucks and on horseback, the insurgents entered the province on 4 August 1936 in a campaign that, in the brutality of its form, took on a striking resemblance to the wars of colonial pacification waged by Spain in North Africa. Troops disembarked before towns and villages, which were bombarded by artillery and from the air to cower the defenders if any signs of resistance were evident; villages were then stormed at bayonet point. Such tactics were initially highly successful, and the advance along the line of the main road, with occas ional diversions to attack towns and villages to either flank, made great speed. Within four days Almendralejo had been reached and subdued, albeit with slightly greater difficulty than Fuente de Cantos, Llerena, Zafra and the surrounding villages which lay behind. Mérida, defended by a number of different militias and loyal Civil Guards concentrated in the area by Colonel Puigdengolas, appointed by the Madrid government to oversee operations in Badajoz, proved

a more costly proposition in terms of time and casualties. A fierce two day battle developed around the bridge over the Guadiana, during which the town was constantly shelled and bombed, before the attackers broke through on the evening of 11 August 1936. The insurgents then turned to the west following the river until they reached the capital. Swollen by refugees fleeing the Nationalist advance, bringing tales of the ruthless brutality of the Moors, the city was defended by militia and the regular soldiers of the garrison. Bombardment and an attempted revolt by the Civil Guard had shaken morale, but there was no easy victory. In the initial assault on 14 August the attackers were repulsed by heavy fire from the city walls. However, further shelling produced a breach at a gate already partly demolished by the local council to build workers' housing. This was then stormed with great loss, and the insurgent troops were able to pour through eventually to subdue the defenders after street to street fighting which ended inside the Cathedral. Following the capture of the capital, the African Army pressed on towards Madrid. Meanwhile, the isolated southern and western parts of the province, previously left untouched, fell virtually without a shot being fired to reinforcements of regular soldiers and volunteers sent from Seville. Though 35 pueblos in the La Serena and La Siberia regions were left in the hands of the Republic until the end of the Civil War, allowing the collectivisation of the land to procede for three more years, the military struggle in Badajoz was effectively over in only ten days.[5]

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[5] For detailed accounts of the campaign see, Martínez Bande, La campaña de Andalucía pp. 114-6; Vila Izquierdo, ibid. pp.

The repression that immediately followed the conquest revealed the basic social and political purposes of the Nationalists. During the campaign no quarter was given to militia, loyal soldiers and Civil Guards captured by the insurgents. Massacres of defenders, carried out in the streets, bullrings and cemeteries, were justified by rebel officers as a military necessity - terror tactics were the only ones open to their small forces in the face of superior numbers - and as a reaction to the discovery of 'red' atrocities against priests and rightists. Colonel Yagüe argued in this vein when he remarked, in reply to the questions of horrified reporters about the most infamous of the mass executions of over 2-4,000 persons in the bullring of the capital, 'Naturally we killed them. Did you suppose that I was going to carry 4,000 prisoners with me while my column had to continue the advance? Or should I have left them in the rearguard so that Badajoz could go red once more?' However, even during this initial bloodletting, the persecution of social and political enemies whether involved in combat or not was given a priority that went well beyond the dictates of sound military strategy. Under the cover of the army occupation returning and released right-wingers, predominantly agrarians, directed this continuing violence, leading the searches for anyone involved in labour organisations and the Socialist and republican political parties, and commanding the firing squads that carried out nightly executions. Expeditions even took place across the Portugese border to bring back opponents who had fled after the fall of the capital, most of

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37-54; Gabriel Jackson, The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931-39 (Princeton, 1965) pp. 266-9.

whom were shot out of hand by the roadside.[6] Though individual acts of mercy did occur, this vengeful settling of scores proceded without any real restraint. Gradually, it became ever more organised and thorough, lasting well into the early post-war years. In this process the provincial Falange was transformed in size from a few hundred to some 26,000 by the end of 1936, with a rush of agrarian and rightist recruits eager to join the only political movement recognised by the Nationalist insurgents. Despite objections from some quarters at the debasement of the radical aspects of Falangism by this relative flood of so-called 'new shirts' committed only to the restoration of the pre-1931 status-quo in the countryside, military support for property made expansion irresistible. As a result the party became a tool of dominant elite interests in each locality, part of a concerted effort to destroy all the changes that the Republic had allowed to take place in the countryside that had threatened autocracy. Falangist death squads roamed throughout the province, hunting down anyone considered subversive. No person of prominence in the sociedades obreras or political parties of the left was immune. Towards the end of the Civil War, this white terror was further aided by the construction of concentration camps near Mérida and Castuera to which Badajoz republicans and Socialists, captured throughout Spain, were taken. The total

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[6] On the repression see, Vila Izquierdo, ibid. pp. 44, 46, 54-85; Molano Gragera, Introducción a la historia pp. 77-80; H. R. Southworth, El mito de la cruzada de Franco (Paris, 1963) p. 123; Federación Provincial Socialista, El fascismo sobre Extremadura pp. 17-32; El Obrero de la Tierra 10 October 1936. The Socialists, Anselmo Trejo Gallardo and Ricardo Zabalza, were the most prominent victims of the purges within the province. Two leading Socialists pursued to Portugal and shot out of hand were Nicolás de Pablo (FNTT leader and Cortes deputy) and Sinforino Madroñero (Mayor of Badajoz).

number of executions has been much disputed, though the figure was certainly in the tens of thousands.[7]

The level of open violence directed against their opponents on behalf of the agrarian elite, unique even in a province which had seen many bloody clashes in the past, had a clear counter-revolutionary rationale. Its immediate origins have to be placed in the context of the equally unprecedented challenge to the autocratic rural order which agrarians had constructed, mounted over the years of the Republic principally by organised labour. In turn the general crisis experienced by the elite in the Badajoz countryside during 1931-36 was the product of a longer term failure to contain the rise of organised protest over thirty years - itself a comment on the essential weaknesses of an unjust and arbitrary autocracy. This struggle came to a head when a successful patronal and political defence ultimately proved impossible within the open regime of the Republic by an agrarian elite committed to such an uncompromising concentration of economic and social power. Unable fully to overcome perennial problems of internal cohesion and the lack of wider social support, elite leaders in the Cámara Agrícola were successful in temporarily reversing the advance of rural labour aided by a sympathetic state, but could not achieve a full resurgence of agrarian dominance. Fearing a final dissolution of the rural order and unable to save themselves, the physical elimination of rural socialism at the grassroots through outside

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[7] On the role of Falange see, González Ortíz, Extremadura bajo la influencia soviética and Ellwood, Spanish Fascism p. 137 on the criticism and later expulsion of the Falangist ultra, Eduardo Ezquer. Vila Izquierdo, ibid. pp. 161-6 charts the continued repression and creation of the concentration camps. Estimates of the total number of deaths vary from 10-40,000.

intervention appeared to be the only means open to the elite to remove the threat and restore the status quo ante. With the support of a military equally uncompromising in its determination to destroy the Republic, the resolution of this confrontation was in no doubt and agrarians were able to lay the groundwork for a return to a form of unchallenged supremacy unseen since the end of the nineteenth century. While a full and lasting rural counter-revolution required an apocalyptic use of force, this was not sufficient in and of itself. This time there was to be no suppression of opposition in the countryside only for protest to return later, as had occurred in 1921 and 1934.

Stability was assured by the establishment of the new Francoist state, strongly committed to the protection of rural property interests and unconditionally supported in turn by agrarians in Badajoz, and throughout the south. The implantation of a permanent dictatorship in the countryside in alliance with the landed elite began immediately following the conquest of the province. Army officers were appointed to the major administrative offices - to be replaced after the war by civilians - and Falangists took over the town halls. Undoubtedly, agrarians were the major beneficiaries of the new regime but, crucially, they had to accept political subordination as the price of being saved. No organisation not connected to the state was allowed, leading to the abolition of the Federación de Propietarios and its constituent bodies. Some continuity was ensured, however, because representation for agrarian interests was to be entirely through the Cámara Agrícola. Its leading figures were to gain a prominent place

under the dictatorship, where they pressed strongly for the application of their ideas on irrigation as a means to improve agricultural productivity and provide land for colonisation. In many respects the clock was turned back in the rural order to the pre-1931 era, with all the reforms of the Republic abolished immediately, and all lands returned to their original owners.[e] However, while agrarians were largely free to run their estates as they chose, they also had to accept - and were willing to do so in contrast to their attitude under Primo de Rivera - a good deal of intervention in their economic affairs. A quest for security, rather than economic efficiency, prompted measures that modified the market mechanisms that had governed the operation of estates since the nineteenth century. Product prices were set by the state to ensure stability of food supply and encouraged producers to keep land in cultivation, leading to guaranteed incomes for agrarians, particularly in cereals where the Servicio Nacional de Trigo provided generous returns. Meanwhile, labour supply was organised through new vertical syndicates, controlled by the Falange, which served as local exchanges that gradually replaced hiring in the town square. Workers' organisations and strikes were banned, while wages and conditions were returned to pre-1931 levels. Once again all the means of local force, on the estates and through the Civil Guard, were brought to bear. Opposition of any kind became impossible, and mere survival for labouring families became an obsession in the severe years of the 1940s. Major casualities of this regimentation of labour were the yunteros, who simply

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[e] Vila Izquierdo, ibid. pp. 119-20.

disappeared as significant sector of rural society once landlords were free to eject them from their lands and pursue cereal production using day labour. Across the south an 'uncontested reign of property', as one observer has described post-war Huelva, began in which agrarians were free to pursue the profitability of their lands in tranquility.[7] For the elite this was the beginning of something of a golden age. The price was the curtailment of that absolute autocracy which agrarians had rigidly sought to maintain. However, in return the dictatorship gave latifundism and the landed elite an extra twenty years of life.

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[7] On Huelva see George Collier, Socialists of Rural Andalusia (Stanford, 1987) pp. 165-85. Francoist policy in the southern countryside is detailed and discussed in Eduardo Sevilla Guzman, La evolución del campesinado en España (Barcelona, 1979) pp. 125-73.

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Long Abstract

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D.Phil
Michaelmas, 1990

Agrarian Society and Politics in the Province of Badajoz under the Spanish Second Republic

This thesis analyses the history of social and political conflict in the countryside of Badajoz province (Extremadura) during the Spanish Second Republic of 1931-1936. The study is prompted by a historiography of modern Spain that has long acknowledged the 'agrarian question' as one of the most important problems facing the establishment of a liberal democratic regime and as a key factor in the outbreak of Civil War. However, most works have tended to take a general high-politics perspective on rural society and to concentrate in particular on the abortive attempt to carry out an agrarian reform to break up the estates (latifundios) that dominated in the southern regions. The few existing studies offering a regional perspective have concentrated on the region of Andalucia and have been particularly concerned with the development of rural anarchism. In contrast this investigation of Badajoz offers a detailed view of the wider processes of social and political change and polarisation at work in the southern countryside during the Republic. It seeks to show the complexity and diversity of agrarian society, and to offer insights into the rural roots of many important political movements (Socialist, Catholic, republican and Radical) and developments during the crisis period of the Republic.

The thesis presents a broad analysis of rural society and politics, including a particular focus on the role of the powerful landed elite that dominated the province in the modern period. It takes an original theme in charting the defence of an agrarian autocracy, established in its modern

form at the end of the nineteenth century, during the crisis years of the Republic. In order to illustrate best the changing nature of power relations in the countryside over the period covered by the thesis much of the structure is narrative. It contains two opening chapters that set the republican period in the context of social and political development since the final quarter of the nineteenth century, followed by six chapters and an epilogue covering the years 1931-36.

This research has necessitated the use of a wide variety of materials, many of which were unavailable in Spain until recently. Archives in Badajoz, Madrid and Salamanca have been utilised containing private papers, administrative records and the documents of political parties. In addition provincial and national newspapers have proved an important source of information. The study has also drawn on printed sources that range from censuses and official reports to parliamentary debates and the publications of economic and political organisations. Other primary sources used include memoirs and contemporary works concerning social and political issues. Finally the thesis has incorporated the findings of the relevant secondary literature.

The thesis begins its coverage of the topic with an opening chapter on the evolution of the rural order in Badajoz from 1875 to 1930. It documents how the increasing concentration of ownership and control of the land in the modern period, predominantly into great estates, was the basis for the creation of a powerful landed elite. Crucial to the understanding of the elite, however, is the need to recognise

the degree to which it was riven by clashes of interest which reflected wider processes of economic and social change within the province. These led to an expanding rural proletariat, alongside a range of family producers (smallholders and sharecroppers of various types), within the lower orders. It shows how, unchallenged by any other dominant force, the elite were able successfully to subordinate the rest of society in a rural regime that was characterised by an all-embracing local autocracy that lacked social and political legitimacy.

Chapter two takes up the theme of the stability of autocratic order and considers the growing challenge to agrarian power before the Republic. In the absence of other means, requiring a weakening of autocracy and coordinated activity by agrarians, the elite relied on force to maintain its rule - a situation made acceptable by the relative success of violence. This was insufficient to contain the growth of organised protest by rural labour under the banner of Spanish socialism that directly challenged the rural order. The elite survived a period of crisis in 1918-20 only with intervention from the state, and thereafter by the support of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Rather than bringing renewed stability to the rural order, the dictatorship period saw a progressive weakening of elite rule and a dramatic widening of the challenge to autocracy.

Chapter three considers the political crisis of autocracy that accompanied the transition to the Republic. It outlines the internal division, lack of organisation and the absence of wider social support that characterised the agrarian elite and shows how these factors were of crucial importance to the

failure of agrarians to defend themselves or the rural order they had presided over. Social and political control largely passed into the hands of rural workers' organisations strengthened by the support of a reforming regime. These benefitted from decrees that established a corporate system of labour relations and introduced improvements in wages and conditions that were a revolutionary threat to latifundism and the elite.

Analysis of conservative responses to the Republic forms the basis of chapter four. The belated creation of employers' organisations to defend the interests of agrarians was one important development. The study shows how this movement drew its leadership from agrarian professionals and social Catholics who had long recognised the dangers facing the elite. However, the main banner of political conservatism was passed to the Radical Party which moved rapidly from a position in alliance with provincial socialism to one of opposition; the thesis is perhaps the first to explore the importance of the Radicals as a political force in rural society. A tacit anti-Socialist alliance, drawing on a wide range of support from businessmen, Catholics, smallholders and agrarians, developed which was increasingly successful in organising social and political opposition to the new republican order in the countryside.

Chapter five considers the increasingly bitter syndical and political struggles of 1932 and, in particular, explores the significance of the yunteros - a form of rural worker unique to Extremadura - in rural conflict. The extent to which

agrarian organisations and the Radicals were able to nullify the gains of the Socialist movement are analysed.

Chapter six focusses on one of the fundamental developments in Badajoz under the Republic, that of the mobilisation of an agrarian Catholic political party (Acción Popular Agraria) during 1933. Its creation was a prerequisite for a resurgence of agrarian power in the countryside. Despite this success, APA could only attract a limited range of support for its reactionary ideology of support for rural property rights and the privileges of the Church. As a result the importance of an alliance with the provincial Radicals was strengthened; inevitably limiting agrarian ambitions.

The success of the anti-Socialist coalition in winning political power after the general elections of November 1933 is examined in chapter seven. In accordance with the agreement reached between the two conservative partners, this allowed the Radicals to take control of the provincial administration. It documents the manner in which the gains of rural labour were systematically removed, to the extent that employers gained a free hand once more. In a final effort to prevent this reversal provincial labour organisations attempted a general stike in the summer of 1934. Its crushing defeat paved the way for the complete suppression of rural socialism.

Chapter eight charts the break-up of the provincial anti-Socialist coalition after November 1934. It shows how APA took effective control of public policy in an effort to implement a social Catholic programme of change that would have entrenched the control of the agrarian elite. Failure to do this stemmed in large part from the resurfacing of internal division within

agrarian ranks, involving resistance to any diminishing of autocracy. As a result workers' organisations were able to reform and renew their challenge to the elite under the banner of the Popular Front after the elections of February 1936. Unable to resist and fearing a final dissolution of the rural order, agrarians abandoned any attempt at a defence within the Republic and instead put their faith in the army rising being prepared elsewhere.

The Civil War and creation of the Franco regime, considered as a rural counter-revolution, form the basis of the epilogue which concludes the study.

Short Abstract

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Agrarian Society and Politics in the Province of Badajoz under the Spanish Second Republic

This thesis analyses rural social and political conflict in the province of Badajoz (Extremadura) during the Spanish Second Republic of 1931 to 1936. It takes a broad approach to social and political change in a province typical of southern Spain, but focusses particularly on the under-explored role of powerful agrarian elites opposed to the reforms introduced by the new liberal-democratic regime. The study begins with two complementary chapters covering the period 1870-1930; they consider the evolution of the autocratic rural order presided over by the elite and discuss the growth of the challenge to agrian power from organised rural labour. In the following chapters covering in detail the period 1931 to 1936 the partial transformation of the rural order that accompanied the transition to the Republic, the subsequent processes of social and political struggle, and the polarisation that followed are documented. A final epilogue considers the Civil War as a rural counter-revolution that involved the resurgence of agrarian autocracy in Badajoz. The thesis draws on a wide range of primary materials, from archives and printed sources to memoirs, and utilizes the relevant secondary literature. In general the study forms part of a movement to reach a deeper understanding of social and political change during the Republic and in particular offers new perspectives on the contribution of the 'agrarian question' to the breakdown of the regime and the origins of the Civil War.