

Casual workers, collective action and anarcho-syndicalism in southern Spain: Jerez de la Frontera, 1882 to 1933^{*}

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Abstract

During the first third of the twentieth century rural anarchism found its deepest roots in southern Spain. A small number of convinced revolutionaries had significant success in organizing large numbers of landless harvest workers by following a strategy of direct action to resolve local problems. It competed successfully with other trade unions for members, not just because it was usually the first to organize in the villages, but also because the socialists largely ignored farm workers until after the First World War, and Catholic syndicates could only access a limited constituency because of widespread anticlericalism. However weaknesses emerged during the Second Republic (1931–6) as the anarchist movement had to choose whether or not to support the new government, which was favourably inclined towards workers. At the same time it lost ground to the rival socialist union, which was more successful in operating at a national scale.

Opposition by farm workers to the introduction of harvest machinery is found in most countries, especially during the process of structural change when farming declines in importance relative to other economic sectors.¹ Although farm wages increase with industrialization and the growth of off-farm migration, the rises are usually less than those achieved by workers in other sectors but sufficiently great to encourage farmers to seek cost reductions. What was unusual in southern Spain in the half century prior to the Civil War (1936–9) was not that workers challenged these attempts by employers to limit wage increases and reduce work opportunities, but rather that they choose to do so by joining anarchist trade unions or syndicates. A handful of highly politicized leaders who wished to overthrow the state by revolutionary means provided leadership to large numbers of field workers whose demands

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¹ The classic account is perhaps Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (1969).

were generally limited to achieving higher wages and better work conditions. This paper argues that anarchist syndicates provided a relatively efficient organizational structure so long as conflicts remained local and trade union activities were restricted by law, but were less successful when they had to organize workers over large distances in a democracy.

Rural anarchism in Europe had its deepest roots in southern Spain and a rich literature exists, which attempts to explain the revolutionary thinking of its leaders and account for the movement's strength in what was one of western Europe's more backward regions.² However, just as it is difficult to classify the beliefs of the leading anarchists other than their rejection of a strong centralized state, so too is it hard to explain the mass appeal of anarcho-syndicalism to the region's workers. For example, theories which link anarchism to poverty caused by economic backwardness break down because of the movement's strength in Barcelona, the country's leading industrial centre, while rural anarchism was strongest after 1910 in a region where agricultural change was rapid and living standards were improving.³ Secretive revolutionary syndicates in the late nineteenth century were perhaps the only possible form of effective organization in societies where workers' rights were oppressed and political representation restricted, but the presence of anarchist thinkers and outrages were also common in other European countries at this time. What makes Spanish anarchism different was the creation of a mass movement that represented a significant part of the working classes, especially between 1917–21 and 1931–37.⁴ This paper suggests three alternative arguments for the strength of rural anarchism. First, the anarchist strategy of direct action involving the whole village community and responding to local problems was especially effective in organizing workers given the irrelevance of the Spanish state to villagers until the Second Republic.⁵ Second, anarcho-syndicalism could compete successfully with other trade unions for members, not just because it was usually the first to organize in the villages, but also because the Socialists largely ignored farm workers until the First World War, while the Catholic syndicates had only a limited constituency because of widespread anticlericalism in Andalucía.⁶ Finally, anarchism was strongest in regions such as Jerez where large numbers of day labourers worked on big estates on the rich, fertile plain (Campiña), a region where the farm ladder was weak if not absent, helping to create a relatively heterogeneous working class with common interests (see Map 1).

Jerez de la Frontera is located in the southern province of Cadiz and enjoyed a reputation for

² See for example Juan Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas* (1928, repr. 1973); Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth* (fourth edn, 1962); Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movements in the nineteenth and twentieth century* (1959); and José Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política del anarquismo español* (1976).

³ For anarcho-syndicalism in Catalonia, see especially A. Smith, *Anarchism, revolution and reaction. Catalan labour and the crisis of the Spanish state, 1898–1923* (2007) and A. Balcels, *Trabajo industrial y organización obrera en la Cataluña contemporánea (1900–1936)* (1974).

⁴ Julián Casanova, 'Introducción', in *Tierra y Libertad*, ed. Julián Casanova (2010), p. 8. The movement was banned in the 1920s.

⁵ Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política*, pp. 28–9. The state was considered an outside entity that extracted taxes, conscripted soldiers, and enforced law and order, but contributed nothing positive to the lives of the vast majority of the pueblo.

⁶ Francisco Acosta Ramírez, Salvador Cruz Artacho, and Manuel González de Molina Navarro, *Socialismo y democracia en el campo (1880–1930). Los orígenes de la FNTT* (2009), p. 135.



MAP 1. Cadiz Province

having both a dynamic agriculture and exceptional levels of rural conflict.⁷ The fact that Jerez is the centre of the sherry industry resulted in close commercial ties with the British market, allowing farmers to become quickly familiar with new methods and technologies developed in the First Industrial Nation. The revolutionary nature of the city's workforce was apparent well before the First Republic (1873–74). Over the next half-century Jerez experienced the Black Hand (*Mano Negra*) movement of 1882; a 'peasant assault' on the city in 1892; and extensive conflicts in the years between 1910 and 1923 and again in the early 1930s.

The article has three sections. The first looks at the nature of the Jerez economy and discusses the organizational problems facing cereal workers on the large estates. The article then examines how over time the anarchist syndicates overcame state repression and were able to introduce collective bargaining, especially during the 1910s. Advances were limited, however, as not only did the syndicate find it difficult to consolidate agreements from one year to the next, but farmers increasingly enjoyed the possibilities of mechanization. Finally, the third section shows how the Spanish Republic changed the institutional structure which determined collective bargaining and exposed the limits to the anarchist strategy during the 1932 and 1933 strikes.

⁷ For the link between a dynamic local agriculture and conflict, see especially Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones*.

TABLE 1. Farm population in Jerez, c.1900

	Number	% of total
Large property owners	213	1.5
Medium property owners	629	4.5
Small property owners	1064	7.7
Day workers (vines)	5000	36.0
Day workers (cereals)	1300	9.0
Day workers (general)	5592	40.0

Source: Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, pp. 50–1. Large owners are those with a taxable income in excess of 5882 pesetas, and medium owners above 588 pesetas.

I

The historical literature has often associated the concentration of landownership and *latifundios*, especially in cereal farming, with rural unrest in Andalucía during the first third of the twentieth century.⁸ In the western provinces of this region, comprising Cadiz, Cordoba, Huelva and Seville, an estimated 57 per cent of all property was found in estates of over 250 hectares and was owned by just 1.8 per cent of landowners. Even if some land was only marginal for cultivation, these estates contributed 37 per cent of all taxable income.⁹ In Jerez de la Frontera, which represented a fifth of the area and almost 30 per cent of the taxable income of the province of Cadiz, around 74 per cent of all its land was found in large estates of over 250 hectares.¹⁰ Over half the total farm incomes in 1900 were earned by 842 large and medium property owners, while the other 94 per cent of the farm population, made up of 1064 small property owners and 11,892 landless casual workers or *jornaleros*, accounted for the rest (Tables 1 and 2). One estimate for Andalucía in the early 1930s suggests that *jornaleros* were only employed for between 180 and 250 days a year, and most worked part time in other activities such as construction, transport or mining to cover their most basic needs.¹¹ Yet high levels of land inequality and rural poverty were hardly unique to Andalucía, and Díaz del Moral, in his classic study published in 1928, noted that ‘if hunger produced unrest ... then ... Cordoba would have been in perpetual rebellion during many centuries’.¹²

⁸ The literature is vast, and includes Antonio Miguel Bernal, *Economía e historia de los latifundios* (1988); Pascual Carrión, *Los latifundios de España* (1932, repr. 1975); Edward Malefakis, *Agrarian reform and the peasant revolution in Spain: origins of the Civil War* (1970); Juan Martínez Alier, *Labourers and landowners in southern Spain* (1971); Rafa Mata Olmo, *Pequeña y gran propiedad agraria en la depresión del Guadalquivir* (1987); Jacques Maurice, *El anarquismo andaluz. Campesinos y sindicalistas, 1868–1936* (1990). The distribution of property and presence of the family farm differed significantly between eastern

and western Andalucía, as well as between the hillsides and rich alluvial plain of the Campiña. The *latifundios* often belonged to absentee owners, who rented them out as large farms.

⁹ Carrión, *Los latifundios*, cuadros 7 and 8. The cadastre underestimates inequality as shown in Malefakis, *Agrarian reform*, pp. 403–4.

¹⁰ Carrión, *Los latifundios*, cuadros 31 and 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

¹² Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones*, p. 63. In a similar vein Scott has written that ‘if anger born of exploitation were sufficient to spark a rebellion, most of

TABLE 2. Estimated distribution of farm income in Jerez, c.1900

	<i>Number of individuals</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Estimated income (ptas)</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Small owners	1064	7.7	182,153	1.8
Day workers	11,892	86.2	4,846,359	48.2
Medium-sized owners	629	4.6	1,337,834	13.3
Large owners	213	1.5	3,679,188	36.6

Source: Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, pp. 50–1.

In fact rural unrest in western Andalucía was greatest in the half century prior to the Civil War, a period when employment opportunities in farming grew at roughly the same pace as the active labour force and real wages increased.¹³ *Jornaleros* in towns such as Jerez were poor, but explanations for the high levels of rural unrest during the first third of the century need to be sought elsewhere.

Jerez, with 135,000 hectares, was one of Spain's largest municipalities, and its population fluctuated around 63–65,000 during the first two decades of the twentieth century, with 50,000 living in the city itself. By 1930 the population had increased to 72,000, and it reached 81,000 by 1935.¹⁴ Despite the size, the city's economy was essentially rural, involving farming and the processing and marketing of farm products. In the mid-nineteenth century viticulture production was at the heart of the town's economy, employing large quantities of skilled labour in the vineyards, wineries, and barrel-making industry, and its sherry accounted for a fifth of all Spanish exports. However, from the 1870s British demand collapsed, and phylloxera devastated the vineyards a couple of decades later. In Jerez the area of vines fell from about 7500 hectares in 1893 to 2800 by 1925, while wine production contributed less than ten per cent of agricultural output in the entire province by 1931 (Table 3).¹⁵ Although the early anarcho-syndicalism movement in Jerez developed against a background of falling wages and labour de-skilling in viticulture and wine-making from the 1870s, this cannot account for the strength of the movement after 1900, as the sector had already adjusted to the new market conditions. Nor can it explain the presence of anarchism in other villages in western Andalucía, where the vine was rarely cultivated.¹⁶

Note 12 *continued*

the Third World (and not only the Third World) would be in flames'. James C. Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant. Rebellion and subsistence in southeast Asia* (1976), p. 4.

¹³ James Simpson, 'Technical change, labor absorption and living standards in rural Andalucía, 1886–1936', *Agricultural Hist.* 66 (1992). See also Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agritaciones*, p. 20, who argues that workers' living standards were improving from the turn of the century.

¹⁴ Antonio Parejo, *Historia económica de Andalucía*

contemporánea (2009), p. 228.

¹⁵ Leandro Prados de la Escosura, *Comercio exterior y crecimiento en España, 1826–1913* (1982), p. 41, Enrique Montañés, *Transformación agrícola y conflictividad campesina en Jerez de la Frontera, 1880–1923* (1997), pp. 80–3 and 124, and James Simpson, *Creating wine: the emergence of a world industry, 1840–1914* (2011), ch. 8.

¹⁶ For the link between viticulture and anarchism in the nineteenth century, see especially Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia, 1868–1903* (1977), José Álvarez Junco, 'Sobre el anarquismo y el movimiento

TABLE 3. The nature of production in Cadiz, 1909/13 and 1931*

	1909/13 in millions of pesetas	1931 in millions of pesetas
Cereals and legumes	43.7	46.6
Livestock	33.8	26.6
Wine (must)	7.9	8.4
Olive oil	4.8	5.0
Other crops	23.9	23.4
Total	114.1	110.0
Output per hectare	1433 pesetas	1445 pesetas
Output per male worker	301 pesetas	326 pesetas

Note: 1909/13 given in 1931 prices.

Source: James Simpson, 'Spanish Agricultural Production and Productivity 1890–1936', in *The economic development of Spain since 1870*, ed. Pablo Martín-Aceña and James Simpson (1995), pp. 208–9 and 211–12.

Instead, early twentieth-century rural anarchism was strongly linked to cereal farming, especially in the Campiña. Favourable prices and technological innovation saw the area of cereals and legumes in Cadiz increase from 118,758 to 152,423 hectares between 1886–90 and 1930–35, while the fallow in the rotation declined from 191,046 to 90,957 hectares.¹⁷ The *cortijo* was a large farm and, because many were found at a considerable distance from the town, they provided accommodation for a small number of permanent workers who looked after the animals.¹⁸ Labour and capital requirements in traditional cereal production were small, and for much of the agricultural year provided Jerez's workers with little employment. However for a few weeks during the cereal harvest labour demand became significantly greater than supply, and years of large harvests and high prices provided ideal conditions for organized labour to bargain for better work conditions. Failure to collect the harvest had major consequences. It might deprive workers of two or three weeks of well-paid work, but it left farmers with virtually no income for that year.

Workers' syndicates, even at favourable times, faced major difficulties in organizing a highly heterogeneous workforce. Although the harvest required large amounts of physical labour, few skills were needed and the high wages attracted not just local *jornaleros*, but also small farmers

Note 16 *continued*

obrero andaluz', *Estudios de Historia Social*, 10–11 (1977), pp. 275–97, and Antonio López Estudillo, 'Conflictividad social agraria y crisis finisecular. Republicanismo y anarquismo en Andalucía (1868–1900)' (Ph.D thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1993).

¹⁷ Grupo de Estudios de Historia Rural, 'Evolución de la superficie cultivada de cereales y leguminosas en España, 1886–1935', *Agricultura y Sociedad* 29 (1983),

pp. 309. The area sown was actually higher in 1903–12 (168,202 ha.) and 1922 (173,493 ha.).

¹⁸ Unusually for southern Spain, the Atlantic rains also allowed Cadiz to be an important livestock-raising centre. Cadiz was the 34th province in Spain in terms of the agricultural area, but 10th for the number of horses, 13th for cattle, 15th for swine, and 18th for goats. Spain, Ministerio de Agricultura, *Tres estudios económicos. Año 1933* (1934).

and others who were normally employed in the industrial or service sectors.¹⁹ In Jerez, as in the rest of Andalucía, harvest workers can be divided into three distinct groups, each seeking different incentives. First, the permanent workers who lived on the *cortijos* enjoyed annual contracts and small perks from the farmers who tried to secure their loyalty.²⁰ A second, and much larger group, consisted of the underemployed *jornaleros*, small farmers and artisans living in Jerez itself who attempted to maximize their *total* earnings by demanding to be paid day wages rather than piece rates.²¹ Finally, the high harvest wages attracted migrant labour from neighbouring villages in the Sierra de Cadiz (Villamartín, Prado del Rey, etc.), as well as from as far away as Portugal.²² These migrants preferred to maximize their *daily* earnings by using piece rates, and farmers often contracted a gang to harvest a specific field at a fixed price.²³

Only the second group of workers, those who lived in Jerez itself, could realistically organize to improve work conditions. As with all forms of collective action, attempts to create a syndicate to negotiate better work conditions faced the free-rider problem, as the benefits of a successful strike would be enjoyed by all workers regardless of whether they had actively supported it or not.²⁴ However an individual's decision to participate depended not only on the possible benefits they believed they could capture without contributing effort, but also crucially on how this decision would affect their standing in the community. Historians and anthropologists have argued that in the face of household resources being severely constrained and out-migration limited, village solidarity was exceptionally high. According to Magagna, for example:

southern villages and agro-towns can be accurately described as economies of shared poverty in which local communities practiced an enforced distribution of risks and benefits according to a finely graded hierarchy of locally defined rights and responsibilities.²⁵

¹⁹ In Spain in 1914, for example, harvest work paid 10 per cent more than the maximum wage for unskilled construction workers (and 40 per cent more than the minimum wage). Spain, Instituto Geográfico y Estadístico, *Anuario Estadístico de España 1915* (1916), pp. 242–5. In France, as late as the mid-nineteenth century between 500,000 and 800,000 industrial workers participated in the harvest in France. Gilles Postel-Vinay, 'The dis-integration of traditional labour markets in France: from agriculture and industry to agriculture or industry', in George Grantham and Mary MacKinnon (eds), *Labour Market Evolution* (1994), p. 75.

²⁰ The limited evidence suggests that the permanent workers' wages were low, but that they benefited from fringe benefits and paternalism. Francisco Fuentes Cumplido, *Memoria ... el problema agrario en el Mediodía de España* (1904), pp. 46–8, Jerome Mintz, *The anarchists of Casas Viejas* (1982), p. 56 and Juan Carmona and James Simpson, *El laberinto de la agricultura española. Instituciones, contratos y*

organización entre 1850 y 1936 (2003), pp. 99–101.

²¹ Most workers lived in the town because there was no permanent work to be found in the countryside. The 'labour exchange' was the town square, where employers and employees would meet to agree temporary contracts. Workers in Jerez in 1882 complained to the mayor when vineyard owners tried to recruit outside the Plaza de Escribanos between 7 and 10 each morning. *Los Vinos y Aceites*, 15 Apr. 1882, p. 82.

²² Antonio Florencio Puntas and Antonio López Martínez, 'El trabajo asalariado en la agricultura de la Baja Andalucía, Siglos XVIII–XIX', *Historia Agraria* 21 (2000), pp. 99–126.

²³ For the 'norms' established by workers in neighbouring Cordoba, see Martínez Alier, *Labourers and landowners*.

²⁴ Mancur Olson, *The logic of collective action* (1965) and Gordon Tullock, 'The paradox of revolution', *Public Choice* 11 (Fall 1971).

²⁵ Victor V. Magagna, *Communities of grain. Rural rebellion in comparative perspective* (1991), p. 173.

Solidarity was accompanied by discipline, and from the 1910s the anarcho-syndicates demanded that workers and employers *boicot* those who failed to respect a strike.²⁶ Furthermore, not only has the 'moral economy' approach for peasant communities been criticized, most notably by Popkin, but those anthropologists who have argued that social cohesion was unusually strong *within* villages in southern Spain, have also noted the high degree of competition that existed *between* villages.²⁷

Labour market segmentation, together with the fact that workers were employed on farms dispersed over a very large area, created significant difficulties for syndicates to monitor strikes, while migrant workers from neighbouring villages provided employers with large reserves of potential strike breakers. Employers also found it easy to victimize strikers, and those who were blacklisted by them often found few alternative employment opportunities, especially in Andalucía's smaller towns.²⁸ Labour leaders therefore demanded that only card-carrying local members be hired, and that the syndicate itself should choose the order in which workers were employed. By controlling the market in this way the syndicate hoped to offer material incentives in the form of guaranteed employment to its members and 'punish' those who remained outside it. Employers always rejected these demands, especially any interference to their *autonomía*, or their choice of workers.²⁹ However a large number of non-union workers were also opposed to a closed shop. It was at this point that the central state, represented by the provincial governor, became crucial. In theory it could intervene during a strike and make both sides accept arbitration; it could remain neutral, allowing market forces and the local power struggle in the countryside to determine the outcome; or it could back either the employers (for example by declaring a strike illegal), or the syndicate (by failing to guarantee the freedom to work during a strike). The state was therefore not neutral, and in Spain during the 1930s both employers and the moderate Socialist syndicate attempted to capture it. The anarchists, by contrast, choose to ignore it.

II

In Jerez, the liberal and republican ambitions of large sections of the urban population were frustrated by the failure of the First Republic and the return of the monarchy and repression after 1874. For much of the period between 1874 and 1914, and even on occasions between 1914 and 1936, organized labour was either banned or faced severe restrictions. It was against

²⁶ Díaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones*, pp. 337–8. The Regional Congress of the anarcho-syndicalist orientated *Sociedad de Obreros Agrícolas* in 1914 demanded that strike-breakers be treated with disrespect and denied work in their own towns. Archivo Municipal de Jerez de la Frontera (hereafter AMJF), legajo 558.

²⁷ Samuel Popkin, *The rational peasant. The political economy of rural society in Vietnam* (1979) and Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra* (1954; 1971), pp. 8–9. These points are dealt with in greater detail in James

Simpson and Juan Carmona, *The agrarian origins of the Spanish Civil War* (in preparation).

²⁸ The diversity of Jerez's economy reduced somewhat this threat, which perhaps is one reason why conflicts were so bitter. However, Sebastián Oliva, a leading anarcho-syndicalist leader in the period 1914–23, could only find 'work' as the doorman to the syndicate's headquarters in the early 1930s, earning five pesetas a day. AMJF, Protocolo 553, 1 June.

²⁹ George Collier, *Socialists of rural Andalusia* (1987), p. 5.

this background that radical elements that operated clandestinely questioned the efficiency of strikes, and preferred instead acts of violence and propaganda by deed.³⁰ Violence in turn provided an excuse for the authorities to crack down on labour organizations. The terrible harvests of 1881 and 1882 led to widespread hunger and a significant increase in petty theft, as well as the appearance of secret organizations, and in particular the Mano Negra, which was linked to the murder of several workers and small property owners in the Jerez region. When the newly formed Spanish Workers' Federation (Federación de Trabajadores de la Región Española or FTRE) and the recreated local Union of Farm Workers (Unión de Trabajadores del Campo or UTC) tried to organize a strike against piecework on the eve of the excellent cereal harvest in 1883, the authorities used the Mano Negra as an excuse to carry out a 'preventive repression' and arrested large numbers of workers, while sending soldiers to collect the harvest.³¹ Again in January 1892 the authorities responded to a workers' 'invasion' of Jerez demanding employment as an excuse to weaken their syndicates through widespread arrests, torture and harassment.³²

Important lessons were learnt by both sides. After a couple of decades of limited success with clandestine activity and 'propaganda by deed', the more moderate anarcho-syndicalists saw that strikes could not be won in the face of opposition by the local authorities, a fact made more likely when violence was used. In addition, successful strikes needed the large-scale participation of workers, forcing syndicates to accept all workers regardless of their political persuasions. The fact that employers were obliged to pay for the use of the military to collect the 1883 harvest also encouraged them to be more flexible.³³ The 1902 strike shows how far things had changed, when just 87 anarcho-syndicalists organized 3000 harvest workers, and for the first time were able to negotiate higher wages and forced employers to end the custom of giving food as part of the wage.³⁴ Crucially not only was the national government willing to accept the 'legitimate aspirations' of workers to organize when public order was guaranteed, but Jerez's mayor was disposed to mediate, and the anarchist syndicalist leaders to negotiate an agreement.³⁵ However the success of the 1902 strike was followed by failure the next year, and in neighbouring Alcalá del Valle there was a violent confrontation between workers and the *Guardia Civil* (rural police). Torture was again used by the authorities to make workers reveal their leaders, but this was now criticized, not just in the anarchist newspaper *Tierra y Libertad*, but also in the mainstream national press.³⁶ While there was little strike activity during the next decade, landowners realized that they could no longer rely on police repression as an effective tool against organized labour.

³⁰ Álvarez Junco, *La ideología política*, p. 492.

³¹ Maurice, *El anarquismo andaluz*, pp. 115–22 and Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, pp. 192–205.

³² Between 400 and 600 workers armed with sticks, knives and pistols entered Jerez and were easily controlled by the authorities, although three people were killed. The use of torture was widely used to identify the supposed leaders, and four workers were garrotted. Maurice, *El anarquismo andaluz*, pp. 123–7.

³³ Clara E. Lida, 'Del reparto agrario a la huelga

anarquista de 1883', in *El movimiento obrero en la historia de Cádiz* (1988).

³⁴ Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, pp. 213–4. The strike was also supported by other workers in Jerez.

³⁵ See for example *El Guadalete*, 24 June 1902.

³⁶ Alcalá del Valle is a mountain village about 110 kilometres from Jerez. J. Connolly Ullman, *La Semana Trágica* (1972), pp. 242–52 and Maurice, *El anarquismo andaluz*, pp. 127–8.

TABLE 4. Wages and Strikes in Jerez de la Frontera (1911–1936)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Day wage</i>	<i>Wheat price</i>	<i>Cost of living</i>	<i>Strike called?</i>	<i>Agreement reached?</i>	<i>Provincial governors imposes conditions</i>	<i>Duration in days</i>
1911	100	100	100	Yes	Yes		13
1912	100	110	103	No	Yes		–
1913	100	140	105	Yes	Yes		13
1914	111	132	107	Yes	Yes		29
1915		150	117	No	Yes		–
1916		164	129	Yes	Yes		6
1917		181	143	Yes	No		15
1918	146	215	175	Yes	Yes		15
1919	161	225	187	Yes	No		30
1920	189	283	205	Yes	No		28
1921		229	182	No (?)	No		–
1922	171	193	178	No (?)	No		–
1923		188	175	Yes	No		30
1931	221	205	184	No	Yes and rejected		–
1932	243	216	180	Yes	Yes and rejected	Yes	15
1933	243	204	175	Yes	No	Yes	8
1934	243	222	187	No	No	Yes	–
1935	219	215	189	No	No	Yes	–
1936	219	199	198	Yes	No – Civil War		–

Sources: Wages refer to threshing with machinery, a task central to workers' demands. For 1931–36: AMJF, Protocolo 553; *Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Cádiz* (BOPCA), 3 June 1932; 14 June 1933; 16 Apr. 1934; 10 June 1935; 9 July 1936. Wheat prices are only available for Valladolid, in the *Anuario Estadístico de España*. Deflator, Prados de la Escosura, *El Progreso Económico de España*, pp. 364 and 365. Information on strikes for the period 1911–23, is found in Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, and for the period 1931–36, *Boletín del Ministerio de Trabajo*, various years.

The decade of the 1910s marked the peak of anarcho-syndicalist success in Jerez. A handful of militants succeeded in forcing the employers to the negotiating table and winning higher wages, secured limits to the use of harvest machinery, especially threshing machines, and obtained the consolidation of a system of collective bargaining for work conditions throughout the year.³⁷ Strikes were needed in six of the eight years between 1911 and 1918, and only in 1912 and 1915 was an agreement reached without one (Table 4). Crucial to these successes were the favourable harvest conditions and high wheat prices. When these conditions changed after 1921, employers became less willing to concede the demands put to them.

³⁷ Collective bargaining was first used in 1902, but then abandoned until 1911.

The process began each year with demands drawn up by the anarcho-syndicalist leadership and approved by Jerez's Farm Workers Association (Asociación de Obreros Campesinos de Jerez or AOCJF), which enjoyed a permanent membership of just 200 in 1911 and 400 in 1914, compared with the two or three thousand harvest workers found in Jerez.³⁸ The AOCJF, with its aversion to bureaucracy, used open assemblies and rotated its officeholders, and was little different to other anarcho-syndicates in Andalucía at this time. Only Jerez's farm workers were members, but the syndicate established close links with other urban workers, appealing to class solidarity and arguing that higher harvest wages increased the demand for their goods.³⁹ As the anarchist syndicates charged only a minimal subscription and had no strike funds, they were reliant on the contributions from others.⁴⁰ This at times created an outside discipline on their activities, as other local non-farm workers withdrew their support in the autumn of 1911 or summer of 1917 when they believed that the demands made by the AOCJF were unrealistic. Farm workers then drifted back to work and the strikes ended with violent conflicts between workers.⁴¹

If farmers rejected the AOCJF's demands, the syndicate proceeded to call a strike. Both parties realized that the strike's success or failure depended to a large extent on whether migrant workers could be used and the response of local government officials. The AOCJF was a leading participant in the National Federation of Farm Workers (Federación Nacional de Obreros Agricultores or FNOA), which represented the agricultural workers in the national anarchist federation, the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo or CNT. The Jerez syndicate used the regional congresses of the FNOA and the newspaper *La Voz del Campesino* to try and persuade other village organizations to respect the strikes in Jerez, and not send migrant workers.⁴² By contrast farmers looked to the police to protect harvesters who wanted to work, which led in 1914 to more than a hundred people being briefly detained, sufficient to seriously weaken the strike.⁴³ However, the police were under the control of the local authorities, and if these believed that the employers were being too inflexible, then the simple threat of their removal was often enough to obtain an agreement.⁴⁴ In the face of frequent strikes, and under pressure from the local authorities who acted as mediators, employers were now forced to accept collective bargaining. Unlike many towns in Andalucía, a significant number of the large landowners lived locally and 14 employers, who between them farmed about a fifth of the Jerez's land, agreed in 1914 to negotiate with the workers' associations on behalf of the sector.⁴⁵

The anarcho-syndicalists' successes in Jerez between 1911 and 1918 were due in part to a leadership that aimed to reach a negotiated settlement with employers, even though this caused

³⁸ AMJF, legajo 557 and *El Guadalete*, 11 June 1914. These figures are only approximate, as in 1914 some 800 people voted, but the official membership was only 200.

³⁹ *Fuerza Obrera*, 26 June 1913, supplement.

⁴⁰ In 1914, for example, 2758 pesetas was raised, of which 43% came from workers' associations in Jerez, and the rest from outside. Approximately 88% was spent on food and other necessities for the workers. *El Guadalete*, 14 July 1914.

⁴¹ In 1911 the mayor requested that the security forces remain to avoid violence between groups of workers.

AMJF, legajo 557. See Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, p. 227.

⁴² AMJF, legajo, 558. These included Arcos, Medina, Villamartin, Espera, and Bornos, all found in the sierra, and a major source of migrant labour for Jerez. The first congress of the FNOA was in 1913.

⁴³ *El Guadalete*, 2 July 1914 and *Diario de Cádiz*, 3 July 1914.

⁴⁴ For the pressure of the Provincial Governor on the employers, see *El Pueblo*, 3 July 1918.

⁴⁵ AMJF, legajo 3262.

internal conflicts when they achieved less than the rank and file wanted.⁴⁶ However the higher nominal wages gained were insufficient to improve real living standards significantly because of inflation. This moderate stance ended in 1919, when the anarcho-syndicalists demanded a 30 per cent wage increase, together with the abolition of piecework, a shortening of the work day, and a guaranteed minimum of 2.2 days' work per hectare to collect the harvest. In the face of this growing radicalism, the local authorities now sided with the employers, some of the syndicate's leaders were arrested, and workers were brought in from outside the town to break the strike.⁴⁷ This change in direction can be linked to the growing radicalization of the anarcho-syndicalists nationally. In 1918 the FNOA was dissolved, and the CNT reorganized so that the old national producers' organizations disappeared and instead a single village or town syndicate created to represent all those who worked in agriculture and the food industries (Sindicato Unico de la Alimentación). This had the advantage that minor issues affecting small groups of workers could be ignored, while the syndicate was able to call on considerably greater numbers when required, thereby increasing its negotiating power. However the leadership now also emphasized publicly, for the first time, the close links between the political movement and the syndicate, despite the majority of workers being more concerned with resolving the day-to-day problems of earning a living than belonging to a revolutionary organization, even in Jerez, one of the leading anarchist strongholds.⁴⁸ Furthermore it led to antagonism with workers outside the anarcho-syndicates. In Jerez, vine workers had traditionally belonged to an independent syndicate (Sociedad de Viticultores) and many now refused to join the anarchist Sindicato Único. The Sindicato Único demanded that the González Byass winery employ its workers only and, when it refused, called an industry-wide boycott of the firm in May 1920. Other wineries responded with a lockout which lasted two weeks, coinciding with the harvest strike of that year, and making thousands of workers unemployed. Not only did the anarcho-syndicalists fail in their objectives, but they lost considerable support from other workers.⁴⁹ Further setbacks occurred with the suspension of constitutional guarantees and the closure of its offices in Jerez between January 1921 and February 1923. In 1923 the leadership again called a harvest strike, despite scarcely 130 people being present for the vote. Falling wheat prices and rejection of the authorities to mediate resulted in a bitter strike ending after a month with few gains.

The limited success of the anarcho-syndicalists after 1919 highlights two major organizational deficiencies. First, even when the syndicate was able to successfully monitor and discipline the local workforce, it found it much harder with migrant workers. Attempts to create regional organizations which might have helped overcome these difficulties failed because they required a professional bureaucracy, something which was unacceptable to the anarchists. A second problem was the fact that strikes were often only won with the intervention of the elected mayor or provincial governor (a political appointment from Madrid), who mediated between the syndicate and employers. This created a dilemma for the more radical anarcho-syndicalists as they rejected these authorities. With the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera between 1923 and

⁴⁶ This was the case in 1917, the only year that the strike ended without an agreement.

⁴⁷ Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, pp. 243–5.

⁴⁸ The combination of a leadership providing strategy

and the syndicate implementing decisions ('el uno es el cerebro que piensa y formula y el otro el brazo que ejecuta'), AMJF Protocolo Municipal, 480, 1920.

⁴⁹ Montañés, *Transformación agrícola*, pp. 252–5.

1930, the anarchist CNT, unlike the Socialist national federation, the UGT, was banned and it only became legal again in 1931.

The events of the period 1911–23 forced employers to negotiate with the anarcho-syndicalists, but the higher harvest wages also encouraged them to consider mechanization to reduce labour costs. Jerez's estates were worked as rational business enterprises, and by the turn of the twentieth century this implied that technological change was biased towards labour saving machinery. Mechanization needed no state involvement and the potential savings were relatively easy for farmers to calculate, while large tenant farmers could take their machinery with them when their leases ended. Mechanization started in the nineteenth century, and the diffusion of steam threshing machines was initially more important than reapers, despite their considerably greater capital costs. By the First World War reapers and threshing machines had been substituted for some of the Portuguese harvesting gangs, and had begun to threaten national workers in Jerez.⁵⁰ Mechanization reduced labour requirements to collect and thresh a hectare of wheat by 40 per cent, but for male workers it was 70 per cent.⁵¹ During the 1920s there was also a growth in the number of tractors, which had the major advantage in that they could plough in summer without waiting for the autumn rains. The first farm machine census was published in 1932, and shows 137 tractors, 571 reapers (and reaper-binders), as well as 18 combine harvesters in Cadiz.⁵² These figures are probably an underestimate, and they increased during the 1930s leading one historian to suggest that there were sufficient machines available to mechanize most tasks in cereal cultivation on Jerez's latifundios.⁵³ Mechanization also changed the nature of employment opportunities, and the right wing Unión de Derechas Independientes in 1932 claimed that there were 300 farm mechanics 'of different categories', and five large workshops in Jerez, 'which existed to repair farm equipment'.⁵⁴ By contrast, landowners were reluctant to lobby the state to invest in research and development because 'scientific agriculture' was often associated with irrigation, which was usually considered incompatible with large estates and required landlords to pay higher taxes for the huge infrastructure costs.⁵⁵ For workers' organizations, restricting the use of machinery, and hence preserving work opportunities, became as important as achieving wage increases.

⁵⁰ Antonio Cabral Chamorro, *Renovación tecnológica y mecanización de la agricultura en Cádiz (1850–1932)* (2000), pp. 63–4 and 73. The reaper substituted energy (mules and horses) for labour. While energy was cheap and labour expensive in the United States at this time, the situation was reversed in Spain. James Simpson, 'La elección técnica en el cultivo trigoero y atraso de la agricultura española a finales del siglo xix', *Revista de Historia Económica* 5 (1987), pp. 289–90.

⁵¹ José María Sumpsi, 'Estudio de la transformación del cultivo al tercio al de año y vez en la campiña de Andalucía', *Agricultura y Sociedad* 6 (1978), pp. 58–9.

⁵² Spain. Ministerio de Agricultura, *Anuario estadístico de las producciones agrícolas. Año 1932* (1933), pp. 320 and 322.

⁵³ Chamorro, *Renovación tecnológica*, pp. 76, 80 and 91, gives 200 threshing machines in Cadiz in 1942 (of

which 81 were in Jerez); 42 combine harvests in Cadiz (of which 31 were in Jerez); and by the end of the 1930s, 286 tractors in Cadiz (and 190 in Jerez).

⁵⁴ Diego Caro Cancela, *Violencia política y luchas sociales: La Segunda República en Jerez de la Frontera* (2001), p. 194.

⁵⁵ Attempts to create local societies to encourage better cultivation, such as the *Sociedad Fomento Agrícola de Jerez* and the *Sociedad de Reforma Agrícola Andaluza* went bankrupt in 1866 for the lack of financial support by their members. López Estudillo, 'Crisis finisecular, transformaciones agrarias y atraso económico. Andalucía 1870–1930', p. 148 and Chamorro, *Renovación tecnológica*, pp. 49–85. Short leases also discouraged tenants from investing to improve soil fertility.

III

The declaration of the Second Republic in April 1931 changed radically the institutional structure in the Spanish countryside, with the balance of power switching from farmers to workers. In anticipation of a future land reform to benefit *jornaleros*, the Socialist Minister of Labour quickly passed decrees which had a wide-reaching impact on labour markets in the countryside.⁵⁶ Farmers were required to cultivate their land with the same intensity as in previous years (crucial to stop them responding to higher wage costs by cutting back on labour inputs or instigating a lock-out). They were also required to employ local unemployed workers before migrants, even if these came from the next village, and wages, along with other important decisions such as the deployment of harvest machinery, were to be determined by local *jurados mixtos* (arbitration boards). The boards had equal representation of employers and workers, and a government-appointed chairman with the deciding vote. These laws changed 'the costs and benefits of participating in unions and gave unions a greater ability to punish neutrals and strike-breakers during strikes'.⁵⁷ Therefore despite the deep economic recession and growing unemployment at a time when cost-effective harvest machinery was available, the number of rural strikes in 1932–3 in Spain as a proportion of those employed in agriculture increased six-fold compared to the previous peak in 1918–20.⁵⁸

The anarchists continued to work outside the state and their decision not to participate in either national or local elections now placed them at a considerable disadvantage, as they were unable to reward their followers to the same extent as the socialist farm workers syndicate, the Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra (FNTT). Therefore, while the FNTT saw its national membership grow rapidly from 27,340 to 392,953 between 1930 and 1932, and in the province of Cadiz from just one local organization with 50 members in 1930, to 15 centres and 5169 members in 1932, the anarchist CNT in Andalucía saw its 350,000 members in December 1931, of which about half were agricultural workers, drop to 243,000 by March 1933.⁵⁹

In Jerez, with the end of Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the anarcho-syndicalists created the Farm Workers' Association (Asociación General de Trabajadores Agrícolas or AGTAJF). The CNT organizational structure now grouped workers by profession, so the *jornaleros* involved in the cereal harvest were found in a different syndicate to vine tenders or market gardeners.⁶⁰ Otherwise the syndicate continued as before: minimal bureaucracy; no professional leaders; a leadership whose political ideas differed to those of the rank and file; and policy determined locally by members voting in open meetings.⁶¹

⁵⁶ The land reform legislation was finally passed in Sept. 1932, but its results were limited. See especially Malefakis, *Agrarian reform* and Ricardo Robledo Hernández, 'La Segunda Republica (1931–1939): de la Ley Agraria a la Guerra Civil', in *Historia del Ministerio de Agricultura, 1900–2008*, ed. Ricardo Robledo Hernández (2011).

⁵⁷ Jordi Domenech, 'Rural labour markets and rural conflict in Spain before the Civil War (1931–36)', *ECHR* 66 (2013), p. 90.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵⁹ Diego Caro Cancela, *La Segunda República en Cádiz* (1987), p. 145 and Maurice, *El anarquismo andaluz*, p. 28. Membership figures however are only very approximate.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 280–1. The AGTAJF, despite criticism from the CNT, argued for the need to organize casual workers and small farmers in separate groups.

⁶¹ The anarcho-syndicalists, for example, supported a land reform to that gave no compensation to owners,

TABLE 5. Wheat production and labour syndicates in Cadiz, 1932

District	Area of wheat (% provincial total)	Casual labourers	CNT membership	FNTT membership
Jerez	21	5338	3000	
Arcos	10	4025	3200	
Sierra	15	6336	1400	
Cádiz				5169

Sources: Area of wheat: Memoria Resumen del Catastro Agronómico de Cádiz, in Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz, Hacienda, legajo 507; casual workers, estimated from the active labour force in agriculture (minus the number of landowners) from the *Censo de Población*, 1930. CNT membership: Federación de Trabajadores Agrícolas de la Comarca de Cádiz, *Memoria del Primer Congreso Comarcal Celebrado por la Federación De Trabajadores Agrícolas de la Comarca de Cádiz, en los días 17 y 18 de enero de 1932, en Jerez de la Frontera* (1932), pp. 6–8; FNTT membership: Caro Cancela, Diego. *La Segunda República en Cádiz* (1987), p. 145.

The AGTAJF established links with other farm and craft syndicates through their membership of the CNT, but the relationship was often weak. The AGTAJF also attempted to organize harvest workers at the provincial level, but while anarcho-syndicates represented most workers in the towns of Jerez and Arcos, it was the Socialist FNTT that had the greatest support among the relatively poor small farmers in the Sierra villages, many of whom were also dependent on harvest earnings in the *Campaña* (Table 5).⁶² Furthermore the local anarcho-syndical groups resisted any move that led to a loss of autonomy, even though labour markets were now operating over a much wider geographical area, and organizations such as the Socialist FNTT, employers' associations, and political parties, were effective at the national level. This organizational weakness is reflected in the fate of *La Voz del Campesino*, the anarchist newspaper which appeared at best only erratically, and finally had to close because of financial problems in January 1933.⁶³

The AGTAJF leadership was initially in the hands of moderate veterans, but the agreement they signed with the employers for the 1931 harvest was rejected by the rank and file because it failed to give the syndicate control over which workers were to be hired, allowed piecework for some tasks, and failed to limit the use of harvest machinery.⁶⁴ The same fate met the agreement signed the following year under the auspices of the civil governor.⁶⁵ The militants succeeded in removing the moderate leadership and organized harvest strikes not just to demand higher wages and limit the use of farm machinery, but also for the political purpose of challenging the Socialist-created *jurados mixtos*, as well as attempting to erode the stability of the new regime and open a new revolutionary period.⁶⁶ Although the 1932 and 1933 strikes were well supported

Note 61 *continued*

and land was to be given to the syndicate or collectives without state interference. See minutes from meetings held in April and May 1931. AMJF, Protocolo 553.

⁶² It was intended to be the embryo of a national federation.

⁶³ For the financial difficulties, see *La Voz del Campesino*, 7 Jan. 1933, p. 1.

⁶⁴ The employers were represented by the *Asociación Gremial Agraria* and *Unión Agraria*. AMJF, Protocolo 553.

⁶⁵ This included salary increases and a reduction in piecework, but the employers demanded norms on work effort and the free use of machinery.

⁶⁶ Maurice, *El Anarquismo Andaluz*, pp. 280–1.

in Jerez, they failed to halt the harvest as the government declared them both illegal and the security forces guaranteed the rights of migrant labour to complete its collection.

It is the organizational weakness of Jerez's syndicate (AGTAJF), contrasted with the considerable negotiating skills of Cadiz's provincial governors in playing one group of workers off against another, which helps to explain the failure of the 1932 and 1933 strikes.⁶⁷ Despite being government appointees, the governors preferred not to impose the *jurados mixtos* that the Socialists were promoting from the Ministry of Labour because these were rejected outright by the anarcho-sindicalists in Cadiz. In the summer of 1932 the governor initially obtained an agreement between workers and farmers in the Sierra that included wage increases, a reduction in piecework, minimal work standards and, for the first time, limits to the use of harvest machinery to mitigate the exceptionally high local unemployment caused by the restrictions on the movement of labour.⁶⁸ By avoiding conflicts in the Sierra and elsewhere in the province, the Republican authorities effectively isolated Jerez's strikers. Once the provincial governor declared the strike illegal, Jerez's farmers were free to hire casual workers from other localities, a task now made easier by motor vehicles which allowed strike breakers to be brought from much greater distances. Clashes broke out between different groups of workers, and the security forces made arrests. Despite a number of serious incidents and damage to farm equipment, the AGTAJF had to recommend a return to work without obtaining its objectives, and accept the conditions imposed by the provincial governor, which were based on the original agreement between employers and syndicate leaders that had been rejected by the workers.⁶⁹

In the autumn of 1932, the governor initiated negotiations for winter employment between employers' organizations and workers in three different regions of the province. An agreement was reached first in the Campo de Gibraltar and adjoining localities, followed by the Sierra, and finally in Jerez for the Campiña.⁷⁰ These agreements helped institutionalize a process of local collective bargaining for the sector which was independent of the *jurados mixtos*.

In Cadiz, the 1933 harvest strike was limited to Jerez because the governor again brokered agreements between labourers and farmers in the rest of the province. In the Campo de Gibraltar the 1932 settlement was repeated, but with restrictions on the use of harvesters and combines, and in the Sierra the governor also imposed conditions that included restrictions on the use of harvest machinery, despite the strong opposition of farmers.⁷¹ Once again, by avoiding conflicts in these regions, the governor managed to isolate Jerez's strikers, some of

⁶⁷ The Provincial Governor in 1932 was Joaquín García Labella, a member of *Acción Republicana*, whose leader was Manuel Azaña. In 1933 the Governor was Ernesto Vega, who belonged to the *Partido Republicano Radical Socialista* of Marcelino Domingo.

⁶⁸ The agreement prohibited the lending or renting of machinery, and required that a minimum of one third of the harvest be collected by hand on farms of more than 50 fanegas (equivalent to 32 ha). For details, see BOPCA, no. 131 (5 June 1932), p. 1. Labour was permitted to move freely between the villages of the Sierra, but restricted by the *Ley de Terminos Municipales*, from working in Jerez.

⁶⁹ BOPCA, no. 159 (7 July 1932), p. 1.

⁷⁰ BOPCA, no. 240 (8 Oct. 1932), pp. 1–2. The agreement in Jerez was signed by the AGTA. BOPCA, no. 267 (10 Nov. 1932). Small wage increases were obtained, as well as the abolition of piecework, an eight-hour day, and the preference for hiring local workers before migrants.

⁷¹ In the Campo de Gibraltar, only 45% of the area sown could be collected by machinery, a greater restriction than that set in the Sierra the previous year because of the greater unemployment caused by the meagre harvest. BOPCA no. 124 (30 May 1933) and no. 146 (24 June 1933).

whom resorted to acts of sabotage as in the previous year.⁷² Workers were again forced to accept conditions imposed by the governor, although these contemplated for the first time restrictions on the use of agricultural machinery when the harvest was poor, and employment opportunities limited.⁷³

The difficulties of collective action were not just caused by the anarcho-syndicalist's organizational model, but derived ultimately from the nature of rural society itself. Day labourers and smallholders could share objectives such as higher harvest wages or job creation schemes on large farms, but some also aspired to improve their status by leasing small plots from landowners. However the anarchists opposed the temporary settlements of the landless on large farms and rejected the Republican land reform because they believed the creation of small family farms was an obstacle to modernization, and that settlers would eventually become indebted as they had in earlier state-sponsored projects. This opposition to the family farm and land reform lost the anarchists support among many sectors of rural society, as can also be seen by the significant electoral support that right-wing parties enjoyed in both the 1933 and 1936 elections. In Cadiz, a province where 71 per cent of the active population was unskilled workers, the right still managed to obtain 40 per cent of the votes in the 1936 election.⁷⁴ Cliental relations and patronage in rural society remained very strong, even in this democratic society.

To measure the relative success of the Anarchist and Socialist syndicates is difficult. Ideally changes in both day wages *and* the amount of farm work available to labourers in towns such as Jerez controlled by the anarcho-syndicalists need to be compared with towns where the workers were organized by the Socialist FNTT. However, only day wage rates are available. These are of poor quality and are often those agreed during collective bargaining, and not necessarily those that were actually paid. As most strikes took place during the cereal harvest, Jordi Domenech has recently tried to determine how successful they were by measuring the gap between winter and summer wages, and has argued that the relatively small gap between the two in a province such as Cadiz suggests union weakness.⁷⁵ However, guarantees of employment were just as important as higher wages, and syndicates attempted to fix wages and negotiate the amount of work during winter months, so that a small spread between the two rates cannot be interpreted as failure.

Yet harvest wages in Jerez do not appear to have increased as quickly as elsewhere. Over the period between 1914 and 1933, harvest wages in Jerez increased almost a fifth less than the average unskilled wage in Spain, while the 'maximum' farm wages in Cadiz in 1931 were only about four-fifths the average in Andalucía.⁷⁶ These figures are only very approximate, but they suggest that Jerez's anarcho-syndicalists were probably less successful than the Socialist FNTT by the time of the Second Republic, although the greater level of farm mechanization found in Jerez probably made their task greater than elsewhere.

⁷² During and immediately after 1933, the press reported numerous acts of sabotage: 14 barns burned, 5 combine-harvesters, 8 reapers and 11 reaper-binders destroyed or made unusable in Villamartin, and irrigation gates destroyed on the Majarromaque cortijo that led to the loss of 250 *aranzadas* (equivalent to 110 ha) of corn, and numerous attacks on workers and mechanics.

Diario de Cádiz, 18 June 1933.

⁷³ BOPCA, no. 137 (14 July 1933), pp. 1–3.

⁷⁴ Caro Cancela, *La Segunda República en Cádiz*, pp. 191–6.

⁷⁵ Domenech, 'Rural labour markets'.

⁷⁶ *Anuario estadístico de España*, various years.

IV

Spanish historians have noted how rural protests in Andalucía occurred in 'waves' from the late nineteenth century to the Civil War. The timing of these conflicts – 1882–3, 1902–5, 1918–20, 1931–33, and 1936 – are usually linked to periods of liberalization in government policy towards organized labour, and they end with state repression.⁷⁷ However this interpretation ignores other important changes that took place, both in the objectives and nature of collective action, and the response of the state. During the 1910s the anarcho-syndicates were able to operate effectively because their organizational structure was flexible and essentially local, making it relatively easy for them to respond to villagers' needs, which were often parochial and difficult to generalize. Yet from the 1920s it was the Socialists who found it easier to respond to the steep learning curve of transforming small village conflicts into a mass struggle to improve living standards. The Socialists pursued a policy of institutionalizing collective action and controlling local government, rather than support isolated strikes that were concerned with purely village problems. The political branch, the PSOE, was instrumental in introducing major new labour institutions in the countryside in 1931 and 1932, allowing its farmworkers' federated syndicate (FNTT) to rapidly increase its membership. These institutions were rejected by the anarchist CNT, and their syndicates often found themselves as much in conflict with the FNTT as with the employers.

The strike failures in Jerez during the 1932 and 1933 harvests illustrate not just the organizational weaknesses of the anarchist syndicates but also, to the radical leaderships' despair, the growing role of the provincial governor and the state in resolving labour conflicts. By contrast, the success of the Socialist FNTT was dependent on its position as the official client, and when the PSOE lost political power in 1933, the new centre-right government was quick to end cooperation, and the *jurados mixtos* began to favour the farmer. As an increasing number of socialists viewed the agrarian problem in terms of class conflict, the response of these 'frustrated corporatists' was now to move to the left, and look to the syndicate rather than the party to carry out radical political change.⁷⁸ As with the anarcho-syndicalists, the government responded with repression.

In the long run, attempts by the *jornaleros* in southern Spain to create class-based syndicates to achieve permanent improvements in living standards had only limited success. However, this was also true of collective action everywhere among casual farm workers, whether they were organized locally by independent syndicates, or by moderate bureaucratic socialist organizations. The long-term solution in most countries was some form of corporatism, which involved the substitution of political bargaining for market-determined wage settlements, such as the FNTT had attempted in the 1930s.⁷⁹ At the extreme was Britain, where the vast majority of workers felt comfortably integrated in a democratic system, and where the exceptional experience of wartime economy produced in 1917 'what 50 years of trade union agitation had

⁷⁷ These dates for Andalucía differ slightly to those discussed in this paper for Jerez.

⁷⁸ Santos Juliá, 'Corporativistas obreros y reformadores políticos: crisis y escisión del PSOE en la Segunda

República', *Studia histórica. Historia contemporánea* 1: 4 (1987), pp. 41–52.

⁷⁹ George M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy* (1991), p. 2.

failed to', namely a guaranteed national minimum wage and a fixed working week for farm workers.⁸⁰ In Italy, and later in Spain, a different form of corporatism emerged with Fascism, which organized the farm sector vertically and gave limited guarantees to farm labour. By contrast, class-based syndicates, such as the anarchist CNT and, after 1934, the Socialist FNTT, were even more unlikely to obtain a sector-wide agreement with employers and government in a democratic society, especially when market forces and the availability of relatively cheap harvesting and threshing equipment were working against them.

⁸⁰ Alun Howkins, *Poor labouring men. Rural radicalism in Norfolk, 1870–1923* (1985), p. 121 and more recently Alun Howkins and Nicola Verdon, 'The state and the farm worker: the evolution of the minimum wage in agriculture in England and Wales, 1909–24', *AgHR* 57 (2009), pp. 257–74. The board had representatives of workers and farmers, as well as appointed members from government. Although it was abolished in 1921, it was restored by the Agricultural Wages Act (1924) and enabled workers to obtain minimum work conditions in what was a highly volatile industry.