European Landed Elites in the Nineteenth Century

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To take up the case of Spain in a volume dedicated to investigating how European landed elites coped with the new and alien forces of the nineteenth century places one at the outset in a quandary. What the subject brings immediately to mind is not a Spanish scene. Rather it recalls the picture of the English landholding aristocracy, entrenched in control of Parliament after 1688 and strengthened economically by the enclosure movement, faced with the rise of a wealthy industrial class and with a series of parliamentary reforms that threaten its political hegemony. Or it makes one think of the French aristocracy, flushed with successful resistance to the crown's attempt to reform the tax structure in the eighteenth century and strengthened by reasserting old privileges, falling victim to the democratic drive of the French Revolution, losing its privileges, losing part of its lands, and swamped in the long run by a new bourgeois society and egalitarian constitution. It may even suggest the plantation owners of the American South attacked by self-righteous abolitionists and northern factory owners and eventually defeated in civil war. On a theoretical level, the subject seems inspired by the materialist dialectic, with its prognosis of the inevitable displacement of the feudal class by the capitalist bourgeoisie.

All of these images illustrate the subject of landed elites struggling with new and alien forces, but none of them has its setting in Spain. What Spanish picture can we fit to it? What, in Spain, were the threatening forces of the nineteenth century? There was no French Revolution, no great industrial revolution; there were various civil wars, but none that so clearly pitted different social systems against each other as the American Civil War. And what was the “landed elite”? This last question sounds simpler, for at least we know that Spain was largely an agricultural country. Let us start with it.
“Elite” implies, of course, a select group. On what grounds shall we select among all the people who owned land in Spain, from the king to the smallest peasant? To say those with the most land does not tell us who they were. The aristocracy appears the most obvious group. In Spain this would be those nobles who had titles; for references to the Spanish aristocracy are never meant to include simple hidalgos, who, though noble, had only the title “don.” In 1787 there were 119 grandes and 535 other titled nobles, a total of about 650 aristocrats.¹ This number grew considerably in the nineteenth century. Jaime Vicens Vives has charted the frequency with which the monarchs gave new titles. The number of grants increased during or following periods of turmoil (150 titles were given out in the 1870s, in response to the revolution of 1868 and the First Republic).² The monarchs used titles to reward their influential supporters and to win the allegiance of military, political, and entrepreneurial leaders. By 1896 the number of aristocrats had risen to 207 grandes and 1206 other titled nobles, roughly double the figure of 1787.³

Many of the new aristocrats were not primarily landowners, however much they may have desired social acceptance by the old landed families. In 1932 the Cortes of the Second Republic ordered the confiscation without compensation of those properties of the grandes which fell into the categories of land subject to expropriation under the Republic’s agrarian reform law. (The law was complex. The origin of the title, the quality of the land, its current use, and extent within individual municipal boundaries were all taken into account in determining the amount an owner was permitted to keep; but the limits were conceived to eliminate the unjust economic and political advantage accruing to owners of large holdings.)⁴ The confiscation applied only to those grandes who had exercised the honorific privileges of their rank (that is, were adults and active at court); these were 176 of the current total of 262 grandes. Of these 176 only 99 owned any expropriable property. The rest may have owned land, but not in large enough blocks for the republicans to consider their properties incompatible with a democratic system and they therefore seem hardly to qualify for inclusion in the landed elite. Furthermore, of the 99 subject to expropriation, 24 owned less than 500 hectares of expropriable property. Thus only 75 out of 176 adult, active grandes in 1932 (43 percent) were owners of truly major holdings.⁵

An analysis of the list of expropriable grandes shows that on the average those whose titles dated from the nineteenth century owned less land than the older aristocrats, as one would expect.⁶ Even families who had entered the aristocracy before 1800, however, did not form a solid landed class. A quarter of them had less than 500 hectares of
expropriable property in 1932, if they had any at all. Some had disposed of lands since 1800, but we do not know how many.

Thus we cannot use the aristocracy, even the old aristocracy, as a synonym for the landed elite. To make possible a rational analysis of nineteenth-century developments, let me for the moment define the landed elite not simply as those persons who owned the largest properties but as those whose ownership or control of the land was such that others who made their living from the land were put in a position of dependency on them or subjection to them. This is an abstract and structural definition, and very imprecise at that, but it is clear that there were real people who fitted the definition. The problem is that we have virtually no studies that permit us to visualize them directly.7

We can, however, approach the question indirectly. We have descriptions of the upper levels of rural society in the eighteenth century and in the early twentieth century. From them one can interpolate the evolution that took place in the nineteenth century. The first description derives from a famine of the 1760s that had provoked serious urban riots throughout Spain.8 The government of Charles III called upon the provincial intendants and other officials of the grain-producing areas of the crown of Castile to report on the nature of local landowning and propose reforms that would increase output. Besides being familiar with their provinces, these officials could refer to a complete cadastral survey or catastro of property and income that had been carried out in the 1750s as a prerequisite for a projected reform of the tax structure. Their reports became the basis for a series of proposals for agrarian reform that culminated in 1795 in the Informe de Ley Agraria, written by Spain’s most acute thinker of the century, the royal councilor Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos.9

The royal reformers stressed the evil of vast inequality in the ownership of property, and they blamed it primarily on the legal privilege of entail. Ecclesiastical institutions by accepted right and private individuals by specific legal act of vinculación tied up their property so that it could not be sold, at least not without complicated petitions for specific royal authorization. Blocks of land of varying size thus became the inalienable property of churches and monasteries, and also of aristocratic, hidalgo, and even common families. The cadastral survey showed that ecclesiastical institutions owned about 20 percent of the land of Castile, measured by the value of the harvests and pastures. Lay vinculos, known frequently as mayorazgos, probably included more property, but much less than the extravagant claims that have sometimes been made.10

Inequality was greatest in the southern part of Castile: La Mancha,
Extremadura, and Andalusia. Here aristocrats and military orders had large seigneurial jurisdictions (señoríos), with the right to appoint certain municipal officials and collect certain dues. Señorío often included the control of the town lands, giving the señor the profit from extensive pastures. The señor of the towns of the military orders was the king, but the income from these jurisdictions went also to the caballeros of the orders, who were aristocrats and prominent hidalgos.

In southern Spain, besides extensive estates in pasture, there were large grain-growing properties called cortijos. The mayorazgos of aristocrats normally included cortijos, often within their señoríos. Hidalgos owning cortijos and other large properties were, however, far more important numerically than aristocrats. They also had more influence in local affairs, for most aristocrats were absentee owners. Hidalgos tended to dominate the municipal councils through the ownership of the hereditary offices of regidor. The cadastral survey reveals, for example, that in the Andalusian town of Baños (Jaén province) three extended hidalgo families, which included seven male heads of household, two widows, and a single woman, dominated the social structure because of their extensive income from landed property. Four of the men were regidores, two were other town officials, and the seventh was the local officer of the Inquisition. The town curate and a man in minor orders, both individually wealthy, also belonged to these families. We should class this kind of hidalgo among the elite, along with aristocratic señores. There were several other noble families in Baños of decreasing affluence and influence. Where one should draw the line below which the hidalgos of Baños and other Andalusian towns were no longer elite would be difficult to determine.1

Two other groups belonged to the elite. First were the clergy who, although they were not individual landowners, drew income directly from ecclesiastical landholdings. One form of income was the endowed benefices, the capellanías. Their holders included priests, many of them without a cure, cathedral canons, inquisitors, even university professors. Most of these did not reside where the lands whose income they enjoyed were located. Many impersonal institutions also had large holdings: monasteries, shrines, cathedrals, hospitals, and other associations of the faithful. In this case the clergy responsible for them, while not drawing direct income, nevertheless profited indirectly and had economic influence over numerous peasants who rented or worked the lands.

While the cadastral survey shows that in Castile the church owned property producing about 20 percent of the total income from land,
the extent of ecclesiastical landholding varied widely from place to place. In Baños the figure was only 14 percent, but in the northeastern part of the province of Salamanca, a rich region of two-and-three-field farming mixed with larger grazing properties, 47 percent of the income from land went to religious institutions. Here, in a pattern more typical of the northern part of Castile, the economic power of the church was based on the ownership of a large number of tiny plots which were leased to local peasants.12

The other group belonging to the elite were wealthy tenant farmers who, although they did not own land, had sufficient livestock and capital to rent and operate one or more large estates. Some of them had working capital that included a hundred or more yoke of oxen, with their plows and other equipment.13 They were typical of the south, and in Andalusia they were known, and their modern equivalents still are known, as labradores, a term that elsewhere meant a well-to-do peasant with a yoke of animals.14 They were the counterpart of the large tenant farmers in eighteenth-century England, or the fermiers généraux in France.

Contemporaries referred to all these people, both lay and ecclesiastical, legal owners or not, who drew large incomes from the soil and lorded it over their inferiors as the poderosos, the powerful ones. It was a term frequent in southern Spain but also used in the north, the eighteenth-century equivalent of “landed elite.”15

A hundred and fifty years later, between 1906 and 1930, the monarchy carried out a new cadastral survey of central and southern Spain. This became the basis for various studies made during the Second Republic. Recently Edward Malefakis has reviewed all this material and also more sketchy information compiled for the rest of Spain by the Franco regime. His analysis forms the first part of his book Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain. He shows that large properties were still concentrated in south and southwest Spain. In this region holdings of over 250 hectares made up 41 percent of the area and accounted for 28 percent of the taxable land value, whereas in the center and east of Spain the corresponding figures were 16 and 6 percent, and in the north and northeast only 8 and 5 percent.16 The largest proprietors belonged to the titled aristocracy: in the six major provinces of the southern region 176 titled families owned estates of more than 500 hectares (21 of them of more than 5000 hectares), and of these families 124 (70 percent) held titles granted before 1800. Malefakis corroborates our previous evidence that aristocrats who received their titles in the nineteenth century on the average did not acquire such extensive estates as their predecessors
had. Alongside these titled aristocrats, however, Malefakis finds a numerically and economically more important group of what he calls “bourgeois” owners. They form the modern equivalent of the eighteenth-century landed hidalgos. The cadastral surveys do not provide information about large tenant farmers, but they also remain a powerful class, as can be seen in the direct observations of Juan Martínez Alier, an economist who has recently looked at Córdoba province. The continuity of patterns from the eighteenth to the twentieth century is thus remarkable. Indeed, the continuity can be pushed back to the period following the reconquest of Spain from the Muslims, when most of the patterns of land distribution first took shape.

Nevertheless, changes had occurred in the nineteenth century, some obvious, others more subtle. The church as an institution and the clergy as a class no longer owned much land, since the government sold off ecclesiastical properties in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, family estates were no longer entailed, the vínculo and mayorazgo having been abolished in 1836. Henceforth, the Spanish law that all direct heirs had to share in the inheritance applied to all classes, although one heir could be favored. Two more subtle changes in the nineteenth century can only be inferred from the evidence available, for we lack long-term comparative studies for specific regions that would confirm them. These are a growth in absenteeism among large owners and increasing intermarriage among them to produce regional family alliances.

From what one can tell, absenteeism is a practice that started at the top of the social and economic scale and worked down. When Napoleon seized the crown of Spain for his brother in 1808, his commander in Madrid furnished him with a list of the Spanish aristocrats living in that capital. It included 60 grandes (half the total number of grandes in 1787). In 1932 the records of the Spanish government show the birthplace of the current 262 grandes, a fair indication of the permanent residence of their parents about the turn of the century. Sixty-eight percent were born in Madrid and 13 percent abroad (5 percent in Paris). Nineteen percent were born elsewhere in Spain, all but 4 percent in major cities. These figures show that insofar as the grandes were landowners, they were mostly absentee, city dwellers, a landed elite by virtue of possession of the land rather than by permanent rural residence. It is possible that their absenteeism had increased since 1808, but one cannot be sure because so many recent grandes were not large landowners.

Absenteeism was less marked among the lower levels of the elite, but here it definitely seems to have been on the increase. In 1808 only
15 percent of the lesser aristocracy lived in Madrid, while the hidalgo owners of Andalusia usually resided in the towns where the majority of their estates were located. In the nineteenth century this pattern changed, to judge from the information collected by Miguel Bernal for Seville province. Agrarian prosperity in the two decades after 1850 encouraged large nonaristocratic owners to move to the cities, where they could engage in politics and educate their sons for liberal professions. Malefakis found that for the early twentieth century absenteeism was still substantially higher among the aristocracy than other classes, but was common among “bourgeois” owners and rose as their properties increased in size. In the countryside around Córdoba, 13.5 percent of the area held by nonaristocrats in parcels of less than 500 hectares was owned by absentees; the rate rose to 32.9 percent for properties of more than 5000 hectares. From such sketchy information we can conclude that there was a trend for owners who could afford to do so to move to the cities. Among aristocrats it had begun well before 1800, and developments of the nineteenth century made it possible for progressively lower strata of landowners to copy them.

Intermarriage seems to have followed a related pattern. The landed elite always intermarried, as one would expect, but eighteenth-century marriage alliances of hidalgo families, in contrast to those of aristocratic families, seem to have been local affairs. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Bernal found that in Morón de la Frontera (Seville province), seven family groups allied by marriage and sharing surnames owned 30 percent of the property. Since that time these groups have become so interrelated by marriage that they form one vast family, closely tied to the high society of Seville. In the early twentieth century, Malefakis found that in Badajoz province (Extremadura) 52 percent of the land owned in blocks of 1,000 or more hectares belonged to twenty-five extended families of more than one sibling group, while only 23 percent belonged to unrelated individuals. Many of the extended families included both titled and non-titled members. Absenteeism and intermarriage were obviously connected, for moving to the city would bring together socially landowners from different parts of a region and encourage family alliances among them. An interlocking landed elite that began under the old regime among the aristocrats was spreading downward to broader layers. How frequently marriage took place between this elite and families of urban origin has not been studied. When it occurred, one would anticipate the absorption of the urban families into the culture and political objectives of the landowners, rather on the English model
described by F. M. L. Thompson. Their union formed the cornerstone of the late nineteenth-century Castilian political oligarchy. The elite that emerges from these studies is primarily a phenomenon of southern Spain. This is so partly because there were more large owners in the south, and partly because government reports and historical studies have concentrated on this area. Some flesh, however, has been provided for the abstract definition proposed earlier. Nevertheless, as will become apparent, there were persons elsewhere whose ownership or control of the land was such that others who made their living from the land were put in a position of dependency on them. Let us continue to think in this wider and more structural fashion rather than simply equate the latifundistas of southern Spain with the landed elite as we turn to observe the impact on it of the new forces of the nineteenth century.

The phrase “the new forces of the century” calls to mind the more familiar term “modernization.” Unfortunately, modernization has no precise meaning. To economists it may connote industrialization; to political scientists, centralization and bureaucracy and mass politics; to sociologists, the end of a society based on legal orders; and to anthropologists, the adoption of the values of Western culture. Obviously no simple process can be labelled as modernization. A number of scholars have recently questioned whether there is any single path, however broadly defined, from a traditional society to a modern one. E. A. Wrigley, for instance, has argued that, in the case of England, industrialization and modernization were distinct currents that, for a while at least, pulled society in opposite directions. One may go a step further and propose that the different histories of European societies in the nineteenth century may be better understood if we systematically break down the concept of modernization into its distinct manifestations and then observe the order and timing of their appearance in each society.

The case of the Spanish landed elite lends weight to such a proposal. It survived the challenges of the nineteenth century with relative success, and this accomplishment can be explained in large measure as a function of the pattern of modernization south of the Pyrenees. Three different forms of modernization that affected rural elites everywhere provide the key to the explanation: one economic, one political, and one cultural.

Except in Catalonia and, toward the end of the century, the Bilbao
region, Spanish economic modernization did not take the form of industrialization. The term can be applied more meaningfully to the introduction of liberal economic policies, and in Spain these significantly modified legal titles to land. As we saw, the eighteenth-century royal reformers were already critical of the practice of entail. Faced by rising population and periodic food shortages in the cities, they wanted to improve the efficiency of farming, and they believed that legal prohibitions on the sale of land kept properties in the hands of neglectful landholders and religious institutions. Not all entailed land was badly exploited, but the law did prevent inefficient or heavily indebted owners from selling their properties and thus transferring them to interested exploiters. In his *Ley agraria* Jovellanos justified the end of entail with economic arguments that echoed Adam Smith. Beginning in 1798 the governments of Spain step by step abolished legal restrictions on the sale or transfer of land. To avoid the ruin of the royal credit in times of war and other crises—under pressure from foreign creditors and frightened by the danger of a fiscal collapse such as brought on the French Revolution—the state appropriated the extensive properties of the church and the municipalities and put them on sale at auction to the highest bidder, taking the proceeds and promising to pay 3 percent interest on the sale price to the former owners. Laws of 1798 and 1836–37 ordered the sale of ecclesiastical properties; in 1855 municipal, crown, and other public properties were added. These lands and buildings were thus left to the play of economic forces. A similar philosophy led to the abolition of entail on family estates in 1836, but the government never confiscated these or ordered their sale. Aristocratic and other mayorazgos were no longer inalienable, but were exposed to the working of the market and to the laws of inheritance, with results that could only be observed over a long period of years. All this legislation produced a profound alteration in property rights. Let us see how it affected the major sectors of the landed elite.

There is very little information on the impact of the end of the mayorazgo. Jaime Vicens Vives believed that it produced a vast transfer of land out of noble hands. He cites the figure of 273,000 properties sold by 1854; but he does not state how this figure was obtained, nor is it clear how it could be, given the nature of the documentary sources. We do know that some distinguished families frittered away their properties. The dukes of Frias spent much of their wealth in support of liberal causes; while the dukes of Medina Sidonia and Osuna had little land left by 1930. The count of Torres Cabrera experimented with the introduction of sugar beets in Córdoba prov-
ince at the end of the century with disastrous financial results that left him only 600 hectares. On the whole, however, the impact of economic forces does not appear to have been harmful until after the First World War, and not all sales indicated monetary losses. The Medina­celi family sold its estates in Córdoba in the twentieth century to its tenants as a calculated step to transfer capital to urban properties and industry. In any case, one can counterbalance these losses by other gains. The marquis of Comillas, a successful shipping magnate who received his title in 1878, founded a family that by 1932 owned 24,000 hectares, the sixth largest private holding in Spain. Malefakis found in a detailed analysis of parts of four southern provinces that 13 percent of noble landholdings in 1930 had been purchased by the current owner.

Vicens Vives recognizes that on the whole the aristocracy preserved its estates pretty much unscathed. To explain the many sales he records, he suggests that it was the lower nobility that sold out. Raymond Carr, following him, credits the abolition of the mayorazgo with destroying “the secure world of the hidalgo.” One might explain such a development if as a class the hidalgos had been heavily in debt and were now faced with foreclosures. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many of the high aristocracy obtained permission from the crown to establish oppressive perpetual liens (censos) on their mayorazgos. We lack studies, however, on the extent of liens on the thousands of small entails belonging to hidalgos. It is doubtful that they were ever as serious a burden as they were for the aristocracy. In any case, since agriculture was prospering in the nineteenth century, hidalgos should not have had to dispose of their estates to meet inherited obligations. For this reason one would not expect the transfer of property following the end of entail to harm them collectively. Even if there were as many sales as Vicens says, they do not necessarily establish the ruin of a social class. Many mayorazgos had properties scattered across the country, with resulting high costs of administration and little supervision. The end of entail gave owners the possibility of selling some properties and buying others with the objective of rationalizing their overall exploitation. The time was especially opportune, since ecclesiastical and municipal lands were being auctioned off by the government. Furthermore, Vicens’ figures indicate that only a small proportion of noble property was exchanged. He gives the value of those sold as one billion reales; by 1856 the forced sale of church properties had brought in six times this amount, yet nobles originally owned more land than the church. The most significant effect of the law was not that it ruined a gentry class but
that it prodded that class toward efficient management and improve-
ment as the condition for remaining well-to-do.

Very different was the working of the forced sales of church and
municipal properties, for these produced a vast exchange in the own-
ership of agricultural land. I have estimated that between one-quarter
and one-third of all property, measured by its value rather than its
area, was sold in this way. The term desamortización that applies to
these sales is infamous in modern Spanish history. Its critics have
popularized two views of desamortización: that it produced a bour-
geois revolution in the countryside and that it subverted a needed
agrarian reform that would distribute land to poor peasants and farm
workers. Both of these views are wrong in my estimation, although
only the first one calls for extensive discussion here. Desamortización
did not change the basic structure of landholding: minifundia re-
mained typical of the center and north and latifundia of the south.

This result was to be expected, for church properties, which were the
majority of those sold, were a fair cross section of local properties.
Their transfer to new owners would not alter the pattern of relative
size of holdings. On the contrary, the working of economic laws
would accentuate local characteristics. The sale of lands at auction
enabled the more wealthy bidders to get the properties. Where prop-
erty and wealth were already concentrated, sales would add to con-
centration. Where properties were small and wealth widely
distributed, as in hilly and mountainous regions, purchases would be
diffused and more equal.

Near Salamanca, where ecclesiastical institutions owned many small
plots of land, the forced sale of these holdings permitted wealthy
individuals of the city to buy up blocks of fields which they then
rented out to peasants as the church had done before. In the period
1798–1808, the extreme case was Don Francisco Alonso Moral, a grain
merchant and administrator of various large estates, who bought about
five hundred fields and meadows in at least twenty-four towns.

When he was finished, he had as many tenant farmers as a wealthy
religious house. He was but the largest of a number of buyers, who
included notaries, university professors, beneficed clergy, royal offi-
cials, administrators, landowners, merchants, and a military officer.
Such transfers show that a lay landed elite could develop in those
areas of central and northern Spain where there were no large estates
without changing fundamentally the pattern of property holding.
Studies of Álava (Basque provinces) and Gerona (Catalonia) later in
the century indicate the emergence of similar owners of many small
properties there.
In these and other areas wealthy urban residents replaced urban ecclesiastical institutions as the holders of rural property. This development has been put forward as proof of a bourgeois revolution in landholding. The conclusion rests on the usually unstated assumption that all men of wealth who did not have titles were bourgeois, but the assumption can be very misleading. We have seen how mixed was the group of large Salamanca buyers at the beginning of the century. In Baños (Jaén) the hidalgo families who dominated the town in the eighteenth century were among those that bought the most land in the first disentail of 1798. Shall we call them bourgeois because they had no titles? Even the fact that the buyers of the mid-nineteenth century lived in cities is no proof that they were previously alien to landowning, for we have seen that landed families were moving to the cities.47

Simple reason would suggest that just as the working of the sales at auction preserved local land distribution, so did it preserve local social structures—minus, of course, the clergy as a separate landed class. Outside Catalonia—and Madrid and a few other large cities—a strong bourgeois class, whether eager for land or not, was hardly present. Auction gave the advantage to those with money, and in agricultural regions these were mainly the people who directly or indirectly drew their wealth from the land. Not all owned land before, but throughout most of Spain they all formed part of a social structure long geared to agriculture as the final source of income. Salamanca, a university city and ecclesiastical and administrative center, was not typical. Yet even here large buyers in the first disentail included all types of men of wealth, many of them receiving their income more or less directly from the agricultural economy. As the century progressed the really large properties everywhere often went to distant men of wealth, especially in Madrid, some of them speculators, some merchants, some government officials, and some also landowners.48 Except in the industrial cities and perhaps Madrid, however, one suspects that the landed elite soon absorbed socially and culturally those outsiders who bought large holdings.

Some writers have recognized that the buyers were largely made up of landowners, but nevertheless cannot abandon the idea that the desamortización effected a bourgeois revolution. For them the adoption of a classical free economy, based on alienable private property, wage labor, and production for the market, involves the triumph of a bourgeois class. Even if its members were not previously bourgeois, this interpretation asserts that their new relationship to land, labor, and capital now made them so.49 As if nobles had not hired labor and sought profits under the old régime! When one looks at the process
without a preconceived expectation of finding a bourgeois revolution, one sees that the landed elite that took shape was an amalgam of new and old elements, and not properly speaking bourgeois, either culturally or economically.

By a strange mingling of conceptions, the same writers who find an aggressive bourgeoisie taking advantage of the desamortización to seize control of the land frequently describe the new owners as an idle, spendthrift, leisure class. Francisco Simón Segura, the leading Spanish student of the desamortización, describes the new owner: “The capitalist born of the desamortización did not pursue the maximum profit with the intention of reinvesting it rapidly and thus increasing the social product, he did not place himself in the service of society. Rather, a devotee of elegant living, of the daily gathering in the café, of hunting, he did not venture risk capital in his affairs, and thus he lacked the fundamental feature of the entrepreneurial spirit.”

Simón and others judge desamortización an economic failure, wasting Spain’s accumulated capital in a vain search for status. In their view, since savings were exhausted in the purchase of land, the new owners lacked capital for improvement and modernization of agriculture, or to invest in industry. Again I think reality is hidden by popular misconceptions, no doubt inspired by the example of real individuals but exaggerated by reformers and critics of the landowning class. The early nineteenth century saw a vast breaking of pasture and marginal lands for planting grain. After 1860, when grain was no longer so profitable, olive groves and vines replaced wheat over wide areas. All these changes represented capital investment in production for a national and international market, and many of the larger owners and beneficiaries of land sales must have been in the forefront of the movement. When the revolution of 1868 led to a law for the auction of mineral rights in Spain, foreign investors obtained the richest mines. In this area Spaniards with capital had little experience or economic commitment. But Spaniards kept control of their best agricultural land, although foreigners were free to buy, and products of the soil rivalled minerals as leading exports at the end of the century. The growth of commercial agriculture favored the rise of merchants and others involved in this trade with profits which they could in turn use to buy land. Wealth could spread out from agriculture and return in this way. The end of the entails family mayorazgo facilitated the success of the more enterprising agricultural entrepreneurs. The critics of the desamortización believe a distribution of land to small peasants would have been more just and beneficial, but the economics of the situation suggest that such a policy would have retarded Spain’s agricultural progress and in the long run would not have benefited even the peasantry.
On the whole desamortización was carried out in a fashion that would strengthen the landowning class and others familiar with agriculture. It helped the strong and aggressive to get stronger; in economic terms by freeing the factors of production from legal restrictions it favored those who used them most efficiently. What the Spanish case shows is that the growth of a mercantile, industrial class is not a prerequisite for the adoption of laissez faire policies. In an agricultural country, enterprising men engaged in exploiting the land and in marketing its products stood to benefit from freeing the market in real property in a time of rising demand for agricultural goods. Here economic modernization was not alien to a landed elite, but rather gave new life to an old social structure, minus, of course, its clerical sector.

Political modernization would be a different matter. Spain's change from the absolute monarchy of the old regime to parliamentary government—permanently so after 1834—and eventually to universal suffrage in 1890; the abolition of seigneurial jurisdictions in 1836; and the growing power of the centralized state all represented obvious attacks on the power of a landed oligarchy, although the clergy and the monarchy were more direct victims. By their very nature, the workings of classical economics and political democracy were bound to conflict. The former enabled those in control of capital and land to advance at the expense of the less capable and less fortunate majority, while prohibiting workers from associating to present a united front against their superiors. Political democracy, in theory at least, measured power not by wealth but by individual votes. It legitimized the cooperation of the many through the electoral and legislative process to curb the power of the few, and through majority action to restore an economic balance. With reason the ruling classes of nineteenth-century Europe feared that universal suffrage would attack property rights—the cornerstone of classical economics—and introduce socialism.

Yet the Spanish landed elite managed to stave off the threat. The abolition of seigneurial jurisdictions does not appear to have had much effect on the real situation. Seigneurial rights were less profitable in most parts of Spain than in France and had not been the basis for a feudal reaction. Señores with jurisdiction were mostly titled aristocrats, and we have seen that they did not fare badly. Salvador de Moxó, the leading student of the end of the señoríos, argues that on the contrary, señores seized the opportunity to turn their jurisdictions
into private property, converting feudal dues into rents.\textsuperscript{54} I cannot believe that this was a widespread achievement. The census of 1787 shows that about half the towns and villages in Spain were under lay seigneurial jurisdiction; obviously no substantial proportion of them ever became the outright property of former se\'o\'res.

The establishment of parliamentary government and universal suffrage was a much more direct threat. The landed elite responded in a curious way. In the eighteenth century its political power rested on its control of local government. Se\'o\'res made appointments to local offices in their se\'nor\'ios, while wealthy hidalgo families in the south owned municipal offices and often made appointments to local ecclesiastical benefices as well. Meanwhile, with the advent of the Bourbons, the royal government had come into the hands of councillors and bureaucrats who thought primarily in terms of national economic and military needs. Among their projects, they tried to distribute municipal lands to independent peasant farmers, in the process threatening the economic power of the elite. They failed because municipal governments did not carry out their decrees, and the royal bureaucracy was too rudimentary to do the job.\textsuperscript{55}

In the nineteenth century a peculiar thing happened. To effect reform, beginning with the Constitution of 1812, the liberals sought to make municipal offices elective. When in power, the conservatives responded by requiring that mayors (\textit{alcaldes}) be appointees of the central government and its provincial agents. The reason is that once royal absolutism was replaced by parliamentary government, the elites of the country, including the ubiquitous landed elite, discovered that their power was better guaranteed by controlling the central authority than by resisting it locally. In the process they developed the institution known as \textit{caciquismo}, a word more infamous in recent Spanish history even than desamortizaci\'on.

As it is usually understood, caciquismo was a form of political bossism, whereby the bosses or \textit{caciques} preserved themselves and their associates in political control of the country by violating the legal constitutional order. The term \textit{cacique} was used already in the eighteenth century to describe the man with most local power,\textsuperscript{56} but its application to political bosses became common about 1880.\textsuperscript{57} It replaced the old regime term \textit{poderoso}, but it did not represent simply a new word for the rural oligarchs; a new function was involved. Much was written at the turn of the century on caciquismo—most famous was Joaqu\'\text{\'i}n Costa's memoir on the subject for the Ateneo de Madrid and the responses to his request for comments by leading Spaniards—\textsuperscript{58} and much is being written now.\textsuperscript{59} After the defeat of 1898, Spanish
reformers found in caciquismo the epitome of what was wrong with Spain. For them it was proof that the country was backward, uncivilized, and divorced from contemporary progress in western Europe. Costa hoped for a "surgeon of iron" to excise this cancer.

The classic picture of caciquismo is given life by the description by one of Costa's respondents of an electoral district in Córdoba province:

For more than a quarter of a century these patient Andalusians support a cacique regime which, though typical, has its peculiar features. The district is the fief—in appearance alternating but in fact simultaneous—of two former judges of the Supreme Court, one of them a Conservative, the other a Liberal Unionist, and brothers-in-law to each other. Their brother-in-law-hood is so effusive that word has gone down to both bands that in all political and administrative statements the clients of one band are to refer to their counterparts in the other as their brothers-in-law. Both bands recognize the immediate command of a certain Don Bartolomé Tolico, the ambidextrous steward of the Liberal and Conservative leaders. When the Conservatives are in power, Tolico is cacique as delegate of Don A.; when the Liberals take their place, Tolico hurls thunderbolts and issues ukases as plenipotentiary of Don B. His empire is so absolute that the entire life of the district depends on him. When a drought scorches the fields, the local people say, "Tolico does not want it to rain." I do not have to explain that throughout the width and breadth of the fief, mayors, judges, and priests, with a possible rare exception, are perpetually Tolicated.60

The original critics of caciquismo saw it essentially as a response to parliamentary government, an instrument created to manipulate the system so that the free wishes of the public would not become known or obeyed. For them, its primary function was to arrange elections in order to maintain in power the two established parties of the end of the century, the Conservatives of Canovas and the Liberals of Sagasta, alternating peacefully in control of the ministry. On the surface, Spain politically mirrored England; beneath the surface, it was run by and for the caciques and their associates. Since Costa's day much ink has flowed in describing how the caciques managed elections. While electoral corruption emerges conclusively, who the caciques were does not. Caciquismo seems easier to get hold of than the cacique himself. Was he the local party leader? Was he the local economic potentate? Was he an upstart and unscrupulous civil servant? All these characterizations have been applied, yet none describes him satisfactorily or explains his power.

The reason, I think, is that both since and before Costa the critics of caciquismo have misunderstood its nature. They have believed that
it was the result of the malfunctioning of the political system and that its cure lay in political reform. What had occurred, if my analysis is correct, is that the collapse of the old regime after the Napoleonic invasion brought with it a collapse of the royal bureaucracy. The alternating governments of the nineteenth century tried to revive the bureaucracy and rationalize it, while extending its functions down to local affairs as was occurring elsewhere in western Europe. They succeeded in creating both administrative and judicial hierarchies, but the legitimacy and authority of these were weakened by frequent civil strife and revolutions. With the establishment of parliamentary government a second kind of hierarchic network also developed, the organized political party. As elsewhere, the political party as a permanent organization took time to emerge. The Moderados were the first to create one, under Isabel II, with the purpose of influencing elections. It evolved into the late nineteenth-century Conservative party, and others followed, mostly to the left of it. Yet neither the state administrative and judicial hierarchies nor the political parties offered a reliable instrument for the elites to use in keeping the country running as they wished. Political parties alternated in power, state bureaucrats varied with revolutions and restorations. Thus a third parallel hierarchy of authority and administration arose that had no constitutional or legal role but became the effective network for enforcing the policies of those with social and economic power. Although not all its members were labelled caciques, we may call it the cacique hierarchy. Unlike the other hierarchies, its personnel remained relatively permanent and fixed in their geographic localities.

Since it had no legal or constitutional basis, the cacique network was held together from top to bottom by private contacts and personal loyalty, cemented by self-interest. The feature of direct personal association led contemporaries, when they sought comparisons for caciquismo, to liken it to feudalism and thereby demonstrate Spain's backwardness. It had a certain similarity to a lord-vassal system, for the typical cacique appeared to have authority over a private fief, was responsible to a higher cacique, and had others under him. It differed, however, in at least two major ways from feudalism. First, it was extra-legal and therefore fulfilled functions which by law belonged to constituted authorities, and second, its members did not belong to a single recognized social or legal class. One finds identified as caciques national and local party leaders, secretaries of municipal councils, powerful landowners, hidalgos, doctors, lawyers, merchants, even small shopkeepers.

The critics of caciquismo have tried to establish a functional con-
nection between the public role of caciques and their membership in the cacique hierarchy, but the resulting explanations run into serious difficulties. Seeing them as the local heads of the political parties leads to such improbable assertions as that local party leaders were prepared to support their political rivals in elections in order to preserve the system, or that both parties employed the same local cacique. Neither can the cacique network be understood as having a direct relationship with the administrative organization of the state. One contemporary shook his head at the problem posed for anyone trying to govern the country through such a maze: in provinces where a known man was cacique the task was easy, but what to do “in those happy provinces where a head of a bureau rules in three towns, a director has a district and a half, and a subsecretary has two parts of an electoral district”? I believe that the mistaken identification of caciques with political henchmen or office holders has arisen because membership in the three hierarchies, state, party, and cacique, frequently overlapped. Both local party leaders and local civil servants could belong to the cacique network, but they fulfilled functions of that network in their role as caciques and not those of their public positions.

Since the purpose of this network was to effect privately determined policies, it had to subvert the official hierarchies, in so far as these stood for impartial administration and law enforcement. While corrupting elections was the most famous achievement of caciques, their day to day activity was to see that local administrators and judges carried out policies determined by those to whom the cacique network was subservient rather than the policies that law and equity prescribed. Large owners paid ridiculously low property taxes, judges rendered biased decisions, administrators granted favors, made arrests, and in general enforced the law selectively all according to the instructions of the relevant cacique. There was no question where authority lay. The highest official in the province was the civil governor yet the president of the association of ex-governors stated bitterly: “In the struggles between governors and caciques, the governors are usually right; but since the caciques are immovable, the governors have to leave.” Reforming administrators found themselves transferred, and honest judges stagnated in courts of the first instance while those who cooperated rose in the system. An astute observer noted that caciquismo had separated appointments of local officials from the central government just as señoríos and the purchase of municipal office had done under the old regime. And yet it was not a new feudalism, for it was sub rosa, acknowledged by no body of recognized law.
Neither was it a form of patron-client relationship, as some have held, although this explanation would be consonant with its extra-legal existence. It seems virtually impossible to document the nature of relationships within the hierarchy. Some no doubt were of the nature of patron and client, but not all. The functions of the network placed many individuals in a superior-inferior relationship independent of their personal connections. They cooperated loyally because of more than personal favors. The astute observer cited above argued that a cure for caciquismo would be to establish a proper system of _compadrazgo_ or clientage.

A final comparison that comes to mind is between caciquismo and the revolutionary political party, like the Jacobins or Nazis, that transmits authority outside the state hierarchy and enforces its policies on local officials. But caciquismo was not revolutionary, and it was not a political party. It had no membership lists, no official titles, no publications. Above all it was not held together by an ideology, for as we shall see it depended on mass apathy, not political mobilization. One begins to understand why historians have had such difficulty in pinning it down, and why the present analysis may also turn out to be incorrect, or only partially correct.

Nothing in the analysis so far has demonstrated that caciquismo was the institution used by the rural elite to cope with parliamentary democracy. Many writers have recognized that caciques were often figureheads, _testaferros_, who served others who hid behind them, the real oligarchs. Costa entitled his report _Oligarchy and Caciquismo as the Present Form of the Government of Spain_. One of his respondents described the cacique as "the representative of an oligarch who exercises unlimited public functions without legal authority in a province, district, or municipality by means of the legitimately established authorities, who have been placed under his orders by the person who appointed them. The power of the cacique derives from the influence that the oligarch he represents has with the central government." While contemporaries described the caciques in detail, they did not seek the structure of the oligarchy behind them. Most seem to have been too convinced that the problem was primarily political or administrative to have sought an explanation in the social or economic structure of the country.

We may approach the problem indirectly. To see whose interests caciquismo served, we can ask who did not need it. The answer is the vast majority of people, who would have been better off if the law had been fairly and strictly applied and if freely chosen delegates had enacted legislation in their interest. Since a democratic parliamentary
system aimed to favor the majority, the logical reason for the existence of caciquismo was to protect those whom democracy could hurt. The reasoning outlined above points to those whom the liberal economic system favored, the powerful economic interests, the upper classes, the elites. This rather obvious conclusion is not new. The historian Joaquín Romero Maura has explained: “In the zones of the country where powerful economic interests organized themselves as pressure groups, the local caciques—when they did not achieve their position through the help of these groups—placed themselves at their head or tried by all means to cooperate in their victory.” He sees them working for textile manufacturers in Catalonia, mining interests in Asturias, and wheat growers in Castile.71 Reality was much less simple than this, however, or the point would have been made long ago. Caciques obtained favorable administrative decisions for modest citizens, they got local youths exempted from the draft, had local taxes reduced across the board, and in other ways seemed at times to be benevolent despots. Here they did act in the role of patron. But they also served the acquired interests, local cliques, the political parties, and not least the other persons in the cacique network. Caciquismo was not more prevalent in regions of large properties like Andalusia than in those of small peasant farms. Various writers point to Asturias, a province of minifundia in the north, as suffering from deeply entrenched caciquismo.72 It will help us to conceive of caciquismo as an instrument of the rural elite (among other elites), if we keep to our general definition of that elite rather than substitute for it only the southern latifundistas.

In the present state of our knowledge it is hard to see how the wishes of the elites became the commands of the cacique network. One suggestion is that the ministry contained the heads of both the cacique and the political networks, and that it represented the major national interests.73 This is undoubtedly true, for the parliamentary monarchy established by the Moderados in the middle of the century worked to reconcile the various national and foreign interests in Spain. Fortunately for them the various interests tended to be strong in different geographical regions. Where they conflicted, the ministerial system usually could work out a compromise; and if they seriously fell out, the threat or fact of revolution served to bring them back together.74 But unity of interests among persons at the highest level, while undoubtedly critical, cannot be a complete explanation. There must have been a myriad of ways operating tangentially up and down the hierarchy whereby oligarchies worked as groups and impressed their will on caciques. So far as the landed elite is concerned, we recall
that it was moving into the cities and becoming more and more intermarried on a regional level. One result is that it would become a series of much more consciously integrated oligarchic groups and another is that it would need agents, straw men, caciques, in the smaller towns and countryside to enforce its will. The term *cacique* replaced *poderoso* because the poderosos were disappearing from the scene leaving the caciques to fend for them.

Two examples of the many described by Costa's respondents show how caciquismo drew a veil over the naked power of the large landowners. The first involves a Spanish corporation established to build a dam and exploit mineral resources in southern Spain, activities that roused landowners' apprehensions, especially because they introduced industrial conflicts. The corporation carefully appointed to its governing board some associates of the local cacique. The undertaking started propitiously enough, but soon it began to feel a hostile atmosphere. Its projects were delayed and official authorizations failed to come through. The anonymous author of the account we have, a member of the governing board, offered personally to catch the cacique and give him a thrashing, convinced that all the local inhabitants would come out of hiding to applaud. The others were more circumspect. The president explained: "An ill-humored frown of the señor would be enough for ninety percent of the local landowners to deny us permission to build our aerial tramway over their fields. A nod from him will open up private properties and obtain the licenses of municipal councils. One must recognize the facts. What are we to do? Live in peace and submission to the cacique, seek his friendship, and solicit his protection." The author, furious, resigned from the board, telling them they were acting like women. "And everyone knows," he said, "what happens to women sooner or later, by the law of nature." The corporation sought to avoid this fate by a more subtle defense. It named a foreign citizen to the governing board.

The second illustration comes from the letter of a judge of the first instance:

I recall, among other examples, the case of a poor farm laborer, brought to court for the misdemeanor of crossing an open field which belonged to an important person of high position in the town. The real purpose was to use this indirect and expeditious means to close a public path across his property. An associate of the cacique, a most devout but unscrupulous lawyer, argued the case for the plaintiff, and the poor defenseless man was convicted in the municipal court. He appealed and obtained a reversal of the verdict, and this judgment led to the circulation of atrocious reports about the judge of the first instance. The plaintiff
pretended to drop the case, but the municipal attorney took it to the Supreme Court. How bad his case was can be judged from the refusal of that court even to consider it.76

Costa's respondent makes it clear that the happy ending was not typical, but he is careful not to say where this incident occurred. While it could have taken place anywhere, the refusal of the laborer to be cowed by the local court suggests that it was in a region of independent peasantry, outside southern Spain.

Such was the mechanism by which the landed and other elites maintained local authority and thwarted the democratic challenge. Caciquismo became their primary defense against political modernization, however, only because Spain offered special conditions that derive from the nature of its cultural modernization. Elsewhere—in England, in Germany—conservative forces resorted to ideological appeals to win the support of the common people. They used nationalism and the race for empire to win the masses from the proponents of radical change. In Spain on the contrary, the elites survived thanks to the slowness with which political awareness spread to the bulk of the people. Ideological commitment is one aspect of the third kind of modernization which affected nineteenth-century landowning classes: the development among the people of awareness of, and participation in, new cultural phenomena. Since acceptance of new ideologies is one of these phenomena, cultural modernization joins hands with political modernization, but they are not identical. Cultural modernization is a function of such forces as urbanization, universal education, and the growth of communications. In this area Spain differed much more from northern Europe than in its economic and political institutions.

Elsewhere I have tried to explain the political history of nineteenth-century Spain by reference to the anthropologist Robert Redfield's division of the culture of a preindustrial society into a "great tradition," the rational written culture of the educated classes who hold the levers of power, and the "little tradition" of the unlettered people of the villages.77 The little tradition follows the great tradition at a distance, adopting its thought patterns crudely and unreflectingly. This is an oversimplified explanation of a complex process, but it conveys the essence. Now, it appears to me that the great tradition in Spain bifurcated in the eighteenth century when a new secular ideology devoted to progress broke with the older authoritarian religious ideology. The bearers of these two ideologies in the nineteenth and twentieth cen-
turies have been called the "two Spains." Slowly the little tradition also became divided in the same way, as some of those who lived at this cultural level began to listen to the new great tradition. Proximity to and communication with the bearers of the new ideology were critical, for I would go beyond Redfield and apply the term little tradition to lower class urban culture as well as village culture. The urban lower classes, witnesses to the political involvement of their employers and to revolutionary municipal juntas and exposed to the press, speeches, and other political propaganda, became politicized and adopted crude versions of the new tradition, the catchwords of republicanism, anarchism, and socialism. After the revolutions of mid-century, spawned in the cities, the Spanish elites, unlike most of their European counterparts, made no concerted effort to direct an ideological appeal to this audience.

The rural lower classes remained cut off from modern thought patterns. The railroad network was skimpy, and there were few decent roads. Most peasants went to the cities rarely, if ever, and felt awkward when they did. They felt alien to the modern world burgeoning there, and a fortiori to the newfangled parliamentary system. Romero Maura has denied such ideological isolation of rural Spain, pointing to the many peasant youths who gained experience in the armies that fought in nineteenth-century civil wars, and to the millions who went to America to work and returned. He also points to the local priests as a channel for contact with modern culture, but here I think is rather one of the keys of the continued rural isolation from modern ideologies. Because liberals and republicans had destroyed his traditional way of life and the basis of his income, the priest painted the new great tradition as evil and helped keep the peasants loyal to the old great tradition. If local civil servants reflected the will of the caciques, their presence would have a similar effect. Most villagers did not want to vote, or to defend their civil rights, or to challenge the legality of the caciques' actions, because to do so was alien to their concept of what society expected or would tolerate. Caciquismo flourished on their ignorance, apathy, and lack of awareness of national issues, on a "ruralization" of political life, as one author called it.

While contemporary critics did not as a rule seek to explain caciquismo through a study of the ruling elites, the more perceptive were well aware that cultural backwardness made it possible. Besides his "surgeon of iron," Costa saw the need for long-term medication: education and economic betterment of the common people were the cures he prescribed. Popular education, the creation of an enlightened public ready for a constitutional system, the raising of the Spanish
people to the level of the rest of Europe, were the recommendations of the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, the scientist Santiago Ramón y Cajal, and the novelist Emilia Pardo Bazán.81

It would appear that Spain’s slow progress in cultural modernization can be explained to a great extent by the fact that its economic modernization was largely agricultural and rural rather than industrial and urban. In turn, cultural backwardness permitted the beneficiaries of economic evolution to subvert the parliamentary system. This peculiar syncopation in the different manifestations of modernization gave Spain unique characteristics. One of the earliest countries in Europe to become permanently parliamentary, it was one of the slowest in adopting mass political parties.

Cultural modernization could be checked only so long. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was growing apace. Catalan manufacturers appealed to Catalan nationalism to build up a following against Madrid and against their own workers, and in the process they destroyed caciquismo in their region.82 More critical for the landed elite was the appearance of anarchism in Andalusia in the last third of the century. It arose where agricultural workers lived in semi-urban agglomerations and where, as a result, they associated with an urban lower class of craftsmen and small shopkeepers. Even if not industrial, the southern urban setting provided the cultural development needed for a rudimentary mass ideological movement.83

Gradually the twentieth century destroyed the conditions whereby the landed elite asserted itself. Industry and cities grew, swinging the balance of power away from agriculture and the countryside. Socialists and anarchists effectively politicized the southern rural workers by the time of the Second Republic. After five years of turmoil, the landed elite was justifiably frightened in the spring of 1936. Rural alienation remained, however, in the center and the north, the regions of small towns, and these areas supported Franco’s “crusade.” The Franco era has completed the transformation. Increasing industrialization, emigration from the countryside, highway transportation, and television are bringing the rural and urban worlds culturally together throughout the country.

The landed elite has survived, however. Political authoritarianism has replaced caciquismo to fend off the dangers of democracy. Some members of the elite have become modern entrepreneurial agriculturalists, others have diversified their operations to include investment in banking and industry, while others have continued to accumulate lands.84 In the nineteenth century the landowning class grew stronger and incorporated new members through the process of desamortiza-
ción, and its old and new members became integrated by associating together in the cities and intermarrying. Now, as agriculture has lost its preponderant position in the economy, they are reinforcing their connections with other leading sectors. The landed elite inherited from the old regime the advantage of control of Spain’s main factor of production, but it has survived by its ability to adapt to changing conditions.

NOTES

5. Boletín del Instituto de Reforma Agraria, year 3, no. 25 (July 1934), pp. 539–43; Malefakis, Agrarian Reform, pp. 222–24.
6. The Marquis of Comillas, the great shipping magnate, was the only grande whose original title was granted in the nineteenth century to have over 10,000 hectares of expropriable property. Thirteen families with titles going back before 1800 did. (Calculated on the basis of sources cited in notes 3 and 5; see also Malefakis, Agrarian Reform, table 17, p. 71.)
10. The best available estimate of eighteenth-century ecclesiastical property, based on the totals of the cadastral survey for the provinces of Castile, is provided in Richard Herr, “Hacia el derrumbe del Antiguo Régimen: crisis fiscal y desamortización bajo Carlos IV,” Moneda y Crédito, no. 118 (Sept. 1971), pp. 37–
100, tables 2 and 3 (income of ecclesiastical property in Castile: 236.6 million reales; of all property: 1,248.0 million reales). We lack firm figures on noble holdings at the end of the Old Regime, since the cadastre did not distinguish between noble and nonnoble lay owners. Alexandre Moreau de Jonnès, Statistique de l'Espagne (Paris, 1834), p. 127, quotes Charles III's adviser Francisco de Cabarrús as providing the following figures for all Spain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area millions of hectares</th>
<th>Net Income* millions of francs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32,279 ecclesiastical establishments</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,323 noble families</td>
<td>16.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>396,034 hidalgos and bourgeois</td>
<td>9.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vacant land</td>
<td>9.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*including buildings and livestock

Such figures can only have been informed guesses, since the cadastre, the only full survey, was not totaled for area but only for income and did not cover the crown of Aragon. The income stated for ecclesiastical properties is far below that of the cadastre, and this inconsistency casts doubt on the validity of the table as a whole.

Raymond Carr, Spain, 1808–1939 (Oxford, 1966), p. 39, n. 1, says: “A very rough estimate of the distribution of landed property in Spain c. 1800 is: Church 9.09 million fanegas; Nobility 28.3; Commoners 17.5 (the fanega = 0.64 hectares).” These figures come originally from a table given to the Cortes of Cadiz in 1811 by a deputy who favored the abolition of seigneurial jurisdictions. They refer to the types of jurisdiction in which lands were located, and not to the ownership of property. The specification was cultivated lands given over to grains and vegetables, excluding waste and pasture land (baldios y montes), that were under royal jurisdiction (realanga), lay seigneurial jurisdiction (señorios seculares), and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, including that of the military orders (señorios eclesiásticos y órdenes militares). The figures are of aranzadas (the aranzada was 0.45 hectares). He gave no source. (Alonso y Lopez, 27 June 1811, Diario de las Cortes, v. 6, pp. 475–76). The economist José Canga Argüelles picked up this table but changed its meaning. He entitled it “The cultivated lands that exist in Spain, according to the class of owners to whom they belong.” Lands under royal jurisdiction he called of manos vivas (belonging to owners who did not have their lands in entail), and the others of señores and manos muertas (under ecclesiastical entail). (José Canga Argüelles, Diccionario de hacienda con aplicación a España [Madrid, 1834], s.v. “Tierras cultivadas que hay en España con distinción de clase de los poseedores a que pertenecen.”) Presumably, Carr got his figures from Canga Argüelles, changing aranzadas to fanegas.

In the present state of our knowledge, we really have no reliable figures for titled, noble, or entailed estates in the old regime. The most extravagant claim for the nobility, clearly wrong although often cited, is by Vicens Vives that in 1500 the nobles possessed 97 percent of the surface of the peninsula, either as direct property or under seigneurial jurisdiction. Of this, he says, 45 percent belonged to the church. (Jaime Vicens Vives, An Economic History of Spain, trans. Frances Lopez-Morillas [Princeton, 1969], p. 295.)


12. This information is based on a study of desamortización under Charles IV that I am currently working on. See Richard Herr, “La vente des propriétés de

13. *Memorial ajustado hecho de orden del Consejo... sobre los daños, y decadencia que padece la Agricultura...* (Madrid, 1784), para. 660. This memorial was republished, slightly abridged, in “El expediente de reforma agraria en el siglo XVIII,” ed. Antonio Elorza, *Revista de Trabajo*, no. 17 (1967), pp. 138–310. The paragraphs are numbered the same, and my references will be to them.


17. Forty-one percent of the area of latifundist Spain was held in blocks of over 250 hectares, but in the six major provinces tabulated by Malefakis, only 8 percent of the cultivated land of all size properties belonged to aristocrats. Evidently nonaristocrats owned a greater proportion of large properties than aristocrats did. (Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform*, tables 3, 16, pp. 19, 70.)


20. In his six major southern provinces, Malefakis found under 0.5 percent of the land belonging to the church ( *Agrarian Reform*, p. 67). On the sales, see below.


24. Same source as note 22.


27. So I conclude from the study of the cadastre of several towns in Jaén province.


30. This absorption is described briefly in Antonio Miguel Bernal “La petite noblesse traditionnelle andalouse et son rôle économique-social au milieu du XIXe siècle: (L'exemple des Santillan),” Mélanges de la Casa de Valazques, 10 (1974), 387–420 (see pp. 405–6).


37. Calculated on the basis of sources cited in notes 3 and 5.
38. Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform*, p. 69. He finds this a small figure compared to 27 percent for “bourgeois” owners, but in absolute terms the average noble owner may have acquired more than the average “bourgeois” owner.


41. This fact is clear, although we lack accurate figures on noble holdings at the end of the old regime. See note 10 above.


45. Based on the records of property transfers in the *partido* of Salamanca, 1798–1808, Archivo Histórico Provincial de Salamanca; Sección Contaduría de Hipotecas, *libros* 850–56 (especially the inventory of his property, *libro* 855. fols. 15–102).


53. I have developed this point in Richard Herr, “El significado de la desamortización en España,” pp. 86–94.


56. [Joaquín Costa], *Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España: urgencia y modo de cambiarla* (Madrid, 1902), p. 611.

57. See the references quoted by Joaquín Costa, e.g., ibid., p. 33. Manuel Tuñón de Lara dates it after 1868 (*La question de la “bourgeoisie” dans le monde hispanique*, p. 86).

58. Work cited in note 56. The author on the title page is La Sección de Ciencias Históricas del Ateneo Científico y Literario de Madrid.


60. Luis Navarro in Costa, Oligarquía y caciquismo, pp. 452–53.


63. Thus Gumersindo de Azcárate, Rafael Altamira, and Joaquín Costa, in Costa, Oligarquía y caciquismo, pp. 21–22, 198, 624–25.


68. Sixto Espinosa in ibid., p. 226.

69. Ibid., pp. 228–29.

70. Damián Isern in ibid., pp. 275–76.


72. Enrique Fiera in Costa, Oligarquía y caciquismo, pp. 509–10. Rafael Altamira and three other professors of the University of Oviedo are also evidently describing Asturias, ibid., pp. 197–206.


74. See Costa’s biting description in Oligarquía y caciquismo, pp. 50–51.


76. Enrique Fiera in ibid., pp. 505–6.


79. The journalist Granmontagne, quoted in ibid., p. 35.

80. Costa, Oligarquía y caciquismo, pp. 80–81.

81. In ibid., pp. 491–92, 427, 379.

