Rural labour markets and rural conflict in Spain before the Civil War (1931-1936)

ABSTRACT: This paper looks at the causes of the explosion of rural conflict in 1930s Spain. Rather than emphasising the effects of poor harvests and rural unemployment or the effects of employers’ reaction to Republican legislation, this paper explores the role of government intervention in the sharp rise in unionisation and conflict in the period. This is done by looking at the effects of legislation on rural labour markets, especially in the dry-farming areas of Spain (Castile and parts of Andalusia). In particular, I look at the effects of labour exchanges and restrictions on temporary migrations on conflict and collective bargaining. Quantitative evidence on harvest-to-winter ratios and on local strikes and union implementation are provided to back up my claims.

I

In the 1930s, Spain reached an unprecedented stage of social mobilisation and political participation. Male universal suffrage was passed in 1931, and women were given the right to vote for the first time in the 1933 general election. The Second Republic (1931-1936) was, however, besieged by a wave of social unrest that would put the Spanish experience on par in terms of union growth and strike intensity with that of such troubled societies as Germany, Austria or Italy after the First World War.¹ Although the historiography does not consider the war an inevitable outcome, it is generally accepted that the onset of the Civil War (1936-1939) was related to the instability and polarisation of the Second Republic.²

Perhaps the most novel phenomenon of this process of massive social change was the mobilisation of peasants and rural workers. Rural strikes had been important in some areas in the 1880s, the early 20th century or in 1918-1920, but the magnitude

¹ For comparisons: Mann, “Sources”; Freeman, “Spurts.”
² Jackson, Republic, p. 480; Casanova, Republic, p. 2.
of mobilisation in the 1930s was unprecedented. Rural conflict did not stop with landless labourers, as sharecroppers also mobilised in the 1930s. However, for reasons of space, this paper deals exclusively with the mobilisation of rural workers, most of them landless labourers, and leaves for further study the mobilisation of sharecroppers.

There are two main hypotheses, which can be seen as related, put forward in the literature about the mobilisation of rural workers in 1930s Spain. Firstly, rural workers mobilised and protested because Republican authorities were too slow to implement land reform and pro-worker legislation and were unable to confront employers’ opposition to these laws.3 Secondly, abysmally low living standards, unemployment and poor harvests ignited the countryside.4 In both cases, it is claimed that a spontaneous, bottom-up process of mobilisation took place in the Spanish countryside.

Despite their intuitive appeal, explanations positing a bottom-up process of mobilisation can be attacked on several grounds. Firstly, “frustration-aggression” mechanisms for explaining movements of protest have been discredited by social scientists and historians, especially because these explanations are naïve about the phenomenal co-ordination problems involved in the organisation of mass social movements.5 Secondly, absence of reform had been the norm for long periods of time in Spain’s recent history and peasants did not organise to the same extent. Thirdly, no one doubts that life was brutal in early 20th century Spain for landless labourers or

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3 Casanova, Republic, p. 37, pp. 47-48, p. 51; Shubert, Social history, pp. 100-103; Graham, Civil war, p. 14.
4 Preston, Civil war, p. 55, p. 57, p. 68; Graham, Republic, p. 41; Malefakis, Agrarian reform, chapter 11; Casanova, De la calle, p. 47. More qualified: Payne, Collapse, p. 61.
5 Among many others: Shorter and Tilly, Strikes, pp. 6-7; Béteille, Agrarian, p. 188.
sharecroppers, but there is no reason to suspect that working and living conditions were poorer in the 1930s than in previous periods of time. For instance, protected behind very high tariff walls, agriculture was not particularly affected by the Great Depression. Poor wheat harvests in 1931 and 1933 alternated with exceptionally good harvests in 1932 and 1934, with no apparent correlation with the intensity of social conflict. Furthermore, domestic wheat prices did not fall in the 1930s, in a period of price stability between 1931 and 1935. Figure 1 presents the evolution of domestic wheat prices. The solid line represents the evolution of nominal wheat prices while the dashed line represents the evolution of domestic wheat prices relative to the cost of living. There were no signs of an impending agricultural crisis.

Figure 1. The relative evolution of the price of wheat, 1913-1935.

Sources: Cost of living is from Maluquer de Motes, “Consumo y precios”, p. 1290, and wheat prices are from Barciela et al., “Sector agrario,” p. 336. Solid line is an index of the nominal price of wheat (1913=100) and the dashed line is the index of the ratio between the price of wheat and the cost of living (1913=100).

Barciela et al., Sector agrario, p. 336.
Rural conflict has also been linked to the slowing of structural change that occurred in the 1920s. The argument holds that, as in the cities, many migrants, mostly in the construction sector, could not keep their jobs in the early 1930s; thus, they were forced to move back to their towns. Return migration, in turn, led to the overcrowding of rural labour markets and therefore to unemployment and falling wages. Social conflict naturally followed.

But the link between return migration and conflict is doubtful. Research on internal migrations in Spain shows that most the high-conflict provinces of Western Andalusia, Extremadura and to a lesser extent South Castile were not particularly well integrated into the Spanish labour market. In the first three decades of the 20th century, they showed relatively low out-migration rates despite being among the poorest regions of Spain. Historians of Spanish migrations have suggested that one explanation for this puzzle is that these areas were far away from the main destination points of domestic migrations (Biscay, Catalan industrial cities, and Madrid), although factors like human capital or information must have played a role. Because they, in fact, had few emigrants in the 1920s, it is difficult to accept return migration as a trigger of social conflict in areas like Andalusia or Extremadura.

Rather than arguing that lack of palliative reform triggered the explosion of rural unrest in Spain, this paper claims that the impact of decisive labour market intervention on collective action caused the unprecedented rise of rural militancy and conflict in the period. Government intervention altered the costs and benefits of participating in rural unions whilst it also re-distributed bargaining power towards the

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7 Among others, for example, Graham, Republic, p. 35.
local, permanent workers and away from the seasonal migrants. Seen in this light, rural mobilisation and conflict resulted mainly from top-down legal and institutional changes of vast magnitude and effects.

In order to test my hypothesis, I start by considering the qualitative evidence on changes in labour markets in the 1930s, focusing on changes in hiring practices and the role of temporary migrations. I will then provide a quantitative test that exploits the acutely seasonal character of labour demand in cereal-growing areas. With labour demand outstripping the local supply of workers, wages paid during harvest time were traditionally about double the wages paid for autumn and winter tasks. If unions’ control on hiring and the restrictions on temporary migrants in the 1930s had some bite, we would expect these seasonal gaps to have increased in the 1930s with respect to previous periods of time. I compare harvest-to-winter differentials before and after the passing of legislation and show that the differentials were largest in the 1930s, which would be consistent with the hypothesis defended in this paper. I will also evaluate other potential causes for this increase.

In addition, I discuss the evidence on strikes. First of all, a very large proportion of rural strikes were won, which is inconsistent with a bottom-up, frustration-aggression response. Secondly, I use local strike data matched to patterns of land ownership and the proportion of landless peasants, which allow me to dismiss the hypotheses that the ability of employers to act collectively against reform or the greater presence of volatile landless labourers increased social conflict and union mobilisation.
Section II presents the main hypothesis and puts it in the context of collective action theory. Section III discusses the changes in rural labour markets. Section IV analyses the evolution of hiring practices and changes in the pattern of temporary migrations. Section V tests the main hypothesis of the paper using rural wages in different seasons of the year. Section VI uses evidence of strikes to argue that patterns of conflict are not consistent with potential bottom-up causes. Section VII concludes.

II

Spain witnessed a rapid growth in union participation and conflict in 1931-1933, but most of this growth occurred in agriculture. Rural workers accounted for almost half of the explosive gains of the socialist General Workers’ Union (Unión General de Trabajadores, henceforth UGT) and membership was concentrated in the provinces of Córdoba, Jaén and Málaga in Andalusia, in Toledo and Ciudad Real in the centre of Spain and in Cáceres and Badajoz in Extremadura (South-West of Spain). Membership of the anarcho-syndicalist union National Confederation of Labour (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, CNT) exploded in 1931 (claiming more than 300’000 rural members in Andalusia alone) and declined thereafter, although membership numbers are fragmentary after 1931.

How can this process of vast social change be explained? The starting point of my argument is the consideration of unions as institutions that aggregate the preferences of their members regarding working conditions and wages. Unions might have other objectives –more labour-friendly laws, a more democratic polity or a particular stance in foreign policy - but this does not alter the fact that the main task of

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unions is to bargain with employers and the state for better working conditions for their members.

Unions have a fundamental problem of collective action in that they bargain “public goods” like hours of work or higher wages. As individual worker cannot be excluded from the public goods obtained by unions, it is rational for individuals to avoid the costs being in unions: paying union dues, foregoing earnings by taking part in strikes, or facing retaliation by employers or the state. Therefore, to guarantee a high level of collective involvement, the union relies on different mechanisms to penalise those who do not participate. Most penalties are well known: violence against strikebreakers, social penalties against non-union members, or preventing non-union workers from finding work (the closed shop).¹²

My argument builds upon this insight of collective action theory. Republican governments started intervening the labour market, giving all the power to decide who was hired to unions and taking this power from employers. With the legendary Socialist leader Francisco Largo Caballero appointed as Labour Minister, the government passed a series of decrees in the Autumn of 1931. Firstly, there was a law of employment (ley de ocupación obrera) that created local labour exchanges which organised the hiring of workers. Secondly, the government decreed the creation of local and provincial boards of conciliation (jurados mixtos), which had the responsibility to draw up collective contracts and make sure they were enforced. Finally, the law of municipal boundaries (ley de términos municipales) established

¹² Olson, Logic, p. 69.
that migrants could not be hired in a town if there were local workers who were unemployed.\textsuperscript{13}

The main hypothesis of this paper is that these laws radically altered the costs and benefits of participating in unions and gave unions a greater ability to punish neutrals and strikebreakers in strikes. Until June 1934, rural unions enforced something akin to a closed shop aided by republican legislation that radically increased the costs of not participating in unions and strikes. As I show below, this legislation was reinforced by restrictions on the employment of temporary migrants, which eased the ability of unions to reconcile the preferences of different types of workers. Given these institutional changes, an endogenous explosion of union membership was inevitable.

III

The first step in my analysis is to understand the working of rural labour markets in early 20\textsuperscript{th} century Spain. Perhaps for the lack evidence, historians of the 1930s have not fully integrated the role of temporary migrations in the functioning of labour markets in the dry-farming regions of Spain (a large area comprising the centre and South-West of Spain).\textsuperscript{14} The main characteristic of labour markets in these regions was the very short working year. Because of highly specialised nature, with few alternative crops for lack of water, labour demand fluctuated wildly throughout the year, peaking during harvest time in the summer and falling in the winter. As a result, the working year was about 180 to 200 days long and workers remained unemployed.

\textsuperscript{13} Casanova, \textit{Republic}, pp. 43-44.

\textsuperscript{14} Temporary migrations however have attracted the attention of economic historians: Carmona and Simpson, \textit{Laberinto}, chapter 3; Silvestre, “Temporary;” Florencio Puntas and López Martínez, “Trabajo.”
or underemployed for several months of the year.\textsuperscript{15} However, in the summer, the demand for labour was so high as to require the migration of temporary workers from other parts of the country who were attracted by the high wages.

Despite their importance, we know little about temporary migrations. The main reason is that it is difficult to trace migratory flows because they were rarely captured by the population census.\textsuperscript{16} What we know from the historical evidence is that there was a long-established pattern of migrations from neighbouring hilly areas to the fertile plains.\textsuperscript{17} Gangs of workers from the towns of Málaga descended to the plain around Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz) in harvest time and peasants from Almería and Granada went to cereal-growing areas of Córdoba and Sevilla (all in Andalusia). Short-distance moves were also typical within the provinces of Córdoba, Sevilla and Cádiz (in Andalusia). In addition, there were several long-distance flows, the most famous one being the movement of Galician and Portuguese peasants to harvest wheat in Castile and Northern Andalusia. Furthermore, workers emigrated from the Levant to South Castile and the Ebro basin (see map 1).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} Carmona and Simpson, \textit{Laberinto}, p. 98; Bernal, “Rebaño,” p. 86.
\textsuperscript{16} Silvestre, “Temporary,” is the best attempt to document these flows using the population censuses.
\textsuperscript{17} Pitt-Rivers, \textit{People}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{18} A very detailed depiction is given in Bernaldo de Quirós, “Segadores,” \textit{El Socialista}, 26 September 1924.
Given the lack of quantitative evidence, we know almost nothing about the long-term trends for these flows. It seems plausible, however, that the increasing mechanisation of harvest work in the first decades of the 20th century caused a reduction of labour needs. In the centre and north of Spain mechanisation advanced significantly in the first three decades of the twentieth century, whereas in the South mechanisation was slow except in the province of Sevilla. However, it is well established mechanisation progressed slowly in Spain in comparison with more
developed European economies and that temporary migrations remained important in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{19}

In this context, collective action problems were severe: local rural workers faced the competition of temporary migrants ("forasteros"), who were generally willing to act as strikebreakers. Local, permanent workers with a very short working year had an interest in extending the harvesting season, and therefore, preferred to be paid time rates rather than piece rates and preferred to work shorter hours. Temporary migrants, alternatively, preferred to maximise their productivity by being paid piece rates and work “\textit{de sol a sol}” (from dawn to dusk), so as to shorten the harvest as much as possible and move on to the next town. Furthermore, in absence of temporary migrants, local, permanent workers would have enjoyed very strong bargaining power right before the harvest, in fact most strikes took place in May and June, but this power was eroded by highly mobile gangs of temporary migrants.

In the Autumn of 1931, legislative changes radically altered the bargaining power held by each group of workers. Employers could not freely decide who was to be hired. Instead, workers accessed jobs following the \textit{turno} (names were given to employers by local boards of conciliation or “jurados mixtos” according to the order of a list of eligible workers). In addition, especially after the law of municipal boundaries, local workers enjoyed a privileged position in labour markets: no temporary migrant could be hired if local workers remained unemployed. Moreover, if temporary migrations were restricted, local workers’ bargaining power increased

\textsuperscript{19} Simpson, \textit{Siesta}, p. 162.
exponentially just before the harvest, as strikers could cause large losses by refusing to harvest the ripe wheat.

IV

Evidence of the functioning of rural labour markets before 1931 is not abundant and I have to rely on several testimonies. For example, from April 1924 to April 1925 El Socialista published several responses to the survey undertaken by the socialist politician Fernando de los Ríos on working and living conditions in rural areas. This evidence needs to be interpreted with caution as one inevitably suspects the presence of several biases in the evidence produced by unions and militants, but the accounts are consistent with the historical record of very weak union organisation until the 1930s, except for the period of 1918-1920.

From this heterogeneous evidence, however, a coherent picture appears. In the market for rural labourers, there were two traditional mechanisms through which workers were hired. In both cases, there was minimal union intervention and, therefore, no co-ordinated mechanism for settling wages and working conditions. Firstly, individual workers or gangs of workers offered their work directly to farms. Secondly, workers in large towns waited in the main square for foremen to choose them for a harvest season or particular tasks. Carmona and Simpson (2003) assert that this strategy probably made sense: it was rational for workers to live in relatively large towns because they were hired by several employers for short periods of time and, in large towns, there was a greater availability of information.

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20 El Socialista, 7th March 1924; El Socialista, 21st March 1924; El Socialista, 4th April 1924; El Socialista, 6th June 1924; El Socialista, 30th October 1925. See as well for a town in Málaga: Fraser, In hiding, pp. 106-107.

Before the 1930s, 1918-1920 is the only period in which it is safe to say that unions controlled the labour market in some areas, especially the provinces of Córdoba and Ciudad Real. According to Juan Díaz del Moral, several local collective contracts were approved for the wheat harvests of 1918 and 1919.22 Andalusian unions were very effective at using boycott tactics against non-union workers, and especially temporary migrants.23 However, after the summer of 1919, martial law was declared in the region and unions quickly declined. Díaz del Moral cites several cases of local unions disappearing between 1920 and 1922.24 Employers and workers went back to individual contracting as a result.

Therefore, it was only in 1931 that labour markets experienced a general transformation. The Republican-Socialist coalition saw the organisation of local labour exchanges as one of the most important goals of public policy. In these exchanges, unions had the upper hand in drawing up the list of eligible workers and controlled the matching of eligible workers to the demand for labour, especially by establishing the order in which a worker appeared in the list (the so-called “turno”). Of course, the incentives for belonging to a union changed accordingly.

The qualitative evidence points to substantial changes of labour recruiting practices. For example, the famous Castilian writer Miguel de Unamuno complained

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23 Díaz del Moral, Historia, pp. 337-338; Instituto de Reformas Sociales, Información, “Primer informe del Sr. delegado regional estadístico, Joaquín de Palacios Cárdenas.”
bitterly in 1932 about the enormous power wielded by those who made the lists.\textsuperscript{25} Local studies show that, in the early 1930s unions controlled and organized the hiring of workers in towns as far apart as Mijas (in the province of Málaga, in Andalusia), Los Olivos (in Huelva, Andalusia), La Solana (in Ciudad Real, South Castile) and Belmonte de los Caballeros (in Zaragoza, Aragon).\textsuperscript{26} Obviously, the incentives to join unions were now strong. In a most eloquent statement, Jerome Mintz mentioned the testimony of a worker in Casas Viejas (in Cádiz, Andalusia) arguing he joined the union because “they said if one didn’t sign with the \textit{sindicato}, one could not get work.”\textsuperscript{27}

Employers complained bitterly that they had lost the power to decide who to hire and in fact saw the \textit{turno} as an imposition by the unions. Yet, the Republican-Socialist coalition saw the \textit{turno} as one of the main instruments for combating poverty and unemployment in the countryside. In a famous strike in the province of Salamanca (North Castile) in 1933, the union denounced employers who did not employ workers from the local censuses or lists and who therefore did not honour the \textit{turno}. In an effort to enforce the \textit{turno}, the state stepped in to disband the gangs of temporary migrants contracted by employers. A lock-out ensued in which rural employers insisted on free contracting. At this point, the UGT called for a general strike of rural workers. To avoid a larger social explosion, the government sponsored

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{El Sol}, 5th June 1932: “(…) En el fondo, lucha de clasificación. Quién será bracero \textit{listado} y quién será ojeador –trabajador de ojo, \textit{listero}.” “A fight of classification. Who is going to be listed labourer and who is going to be the workers’ scout, the list-maker”. Emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{26} Fraser, \textit{In hiding}, pp. 106-107; Fraser, \textit{Pueblo}, p. 60; Lisón-Tolosana, \textit{Belmonte}, p. 46; Collier, \textit{Socialists}, p. 79, pp. 84-85; Del Rey, \textit{Paisanos}, p. 346.

\textsuperscript{27} Mintz, \textit{Casas Viejas}, p. 164, as well p. 167, p. 173.
an agreement that established that the civil governor and the Ministry of Labour
delegate of the province would draw and organise the list of eligible workers.\textsuperscript{28}

The large institutional change put in place in 1931-33 was radically modified
in 1934. In November 1933, a conservative coalition won the elections. The new
government did not initially have a strong stance against collective bargaining but, in
June 1934, rural unions staged a massive general strike to demand higher wages and a
reversal of the planned repeal of the law on municipal boundaries and the reform of
the law of conciliation boards.\textsuperscript{29}

The strike of 1934 met with staunch repression, the closing of union offices,
and the arrest of socialist leaders. As a result, the whole institutional structure built up
in 1931 profoundly changed. Consistent with my hypothesis, the new top-down
changes radically reduced the incentives for joining independent unions. Although
data on hiring practices and labour market outcomes in 1935 would be very useful to
understand the impact of legislation, historical evidence for this year is scarce.
Censorship was imposed after October 1934 and official statistics are poor for 1935
(they were probably collected, but the war broke out in July 1936 and the statistics
were never published). The general picture is that several unions and their leaders
faced repression, and there was a very large drop in the number of strikes and
membership.

\textsuperscript{28} Cabrera, \textit{Patronal}, pp. 156-158.  
A reform, but not a full reversal, of the socialist legislation was also in the programme of the Radical

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Boards of conciliation did not disappear but were now used to punish militant workers. The UGT for example published several reports sent by rural union offices.\textsuperscript{30} Because unions may have an incentive to paint a bleaker picture, the evidence is not totally reliable yet it points to very telling details that are consistent with my hypothesis of the institutional framework determining behaviour to a large extent.

When explaining the political climate after June 1934, most militants immediately focused on the disruption of local exchanges and on the fact that now the socialists were now the ones excluded from the available jobs. For example, this was the case in Aliseda (Cáceres, Extremadura),\textsuperscript{31} in Valcabado (Zamora, North Castile),\textsuperscript{32} in Villamayor de Calatrava (Ciudad Real, South Castile).\textsuperscript{33} As a result, many workers left the socialist unions to join the catholic unions or simply to show allegiance to the owners of land.\textsuperscript{34} When the socialists did not control the exchanges, there were far less powerful reasons to join unions. As a result, only the very militant stayed and union membership collapsed. Strike and membership levels were very low in 1935, only to soar explosively with the arrival of the Popular Front in 1936.

All in all, controlling the labour exchanges was the main strategy of socialist unions in those years, mainly because control of the labour exchanges guaranteed that workers would flock to the unions. As a result of the government support of the labour exchanges, the recruitment successes of the pro-government UGT were staggering in the early years of the Republic, reaching around 450,000 workers in 1932.

\textsuperscript{30} Boletín UGT, number 64, April 1934, pp. 72-79.
\textsuperscript{31} Bizcarrondo, UGT, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{32} Bizcarrondo, UGT, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{33} Bizcarrondo, UGT, pp. 229.
\textsuperscript{34} Bizcarrondo, UGT, pp. 220-221, p. 225.
Evidence on the anarcho-syndicalists (the CNT) is certainly more mixed. Aggregate membership grew fast in 1931 in several traditional holds of anarcho-syndicalists in Córdoba, Cádiz and Seville.\(^{35}\) Although the CNT did not accept state-sponsored labour exchanges, it certainly signed collective contracts that restricted the freedom to hire by imposing bans on temporary workers and demanding that the household heads be chosen first when hiring decisions were made before the harvest.\(^{36}\) However, my emphasis on the importance of lists and the *turno* would also be consistent with the stagnation of the CNT in the countryside after 1931. Because they did not accept the existence of boards of conciliation and insisted on direct action, the anarcho-syndicalists were not able to benefit to the same extent from the state-enforced lists of workers and state protection of collective agreements reached by the local or provincial boards of conciliation. Several conflicts in 1931 can be interpreted as attempts by the CNT to limit the influence of UGT-dominated boards of conciliation, especially in the province of Córdoba.\(^{37}\) But most attempts to boycott agreements by the local or provincial boards of conciliation with general strikes generally met with state repression and, occasionally, the lack of support from the rank-and-file.\(^{38}\) Although anarcho-syndicalist unions had traditionally organised the countryside, especially in Andalusia, it was the General Workers’ Union that was to benefit most from the new legislation.

Furthermore, the operation of the *turno* between 1931 and 1933 was helped by the disruption of temporary migrations. Temporary migrants, by their willingness to

\(^{35}\) For example, Fraser, *In hiding*, p. XIV.

\(^{36}\) Pérez Yruela, *Conflictividad*, pp. 124-126.


act as strikebreakers and their reluctance to join unions, had been a serious constraint on the stabilisation of unions in the cereal-producing towns of Castile and Andalusia. The mechanisation of harvest work in the first decades of the 20th century must have slowed down migration.39 In the 1920s according to contemporary sociologist and law professor Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós, there was a sizeable decline in the number of emigrants from Galicia (in the North-West), although his analysis is fully impressionistic.40 However, probably because mechanisation did not proceed as fast as in other European countries, qualitative evidence shows temporary migrations were still an important phenomenon in the 1920s.41 For example, one respondent complained that “unemployment exists because workers from different towns chase the same jobs.”42 Another from Alicante claimed that “large numbers” migrated to olive-growing areas in the winter. Similar examples are easy to find for Extremadura or Northern Andalusia.43

The empirical question then is to what extent were temporary migrations disrupted as a result of institutional changes? State-sponsored collective contracts established a clear preference for local workers, although this law was subject to some ad hoc changes until it was finally derogated in May 1934. For example, a certain degree of mobility was allowed in the province of Córdoba during the olive-picking campaign in the winter of 1932 and in 1933 in Extremadura.44 These changes suggest legislation was flexible enough to respond to local shortages of labour during harvest

40 El Socialista, 26th September 1924.
41 Simpson, Siesta, p. 172.
42 El Socialista, 4th April 1924.
43 El Socialista, 18th April 1924. Other cases from other regions: El Socialista, 9th May 1924; El Socialista, 18th April 1924; El Socialista, 2nd May 1924; El Socialista, 20th June 1924.
44 ABC, 7th December 1932; Riesco, ‘Lucha,’ p. 132.
time. In any case, however, local workers always took precedence over temporary migrants.\textsuperscript{45}

When determining if temporary migrations were disrupted, the population census is not useful. The 1930 census was taken before the law was passed, and the next census was taken in 1940, when the law had been abrogated and independent unions were not legal. Therefore, censuses would not capture any temporary (but fundamental) break in the 1930s. As in the previous section, in order to uncover the behaviour of temporary migrations and rural unions in the 1930s, we have to turn to the qualitative evidence.

The scattered evidence available shows that temporary workers had a much harder time finding employment. In July 1931, an MP from Málaga (Andalusia) wrote a letter to the president of the Republic, complaining that there were about 40'000 unemployed workers in the province who could not find work in Granada or Sevilla (both in Andalusia), their traditional destinations during harvest time.\textsuperscript{46} In Extremadura, Sergio Riesco uncovered several protests in which mayors complained to the Ministry of the Interior that workers could not find work in other towns.\textsuperscript{47} In North Castile, a rural landowner claimed that in the harvest of 1933 (a year of a poor harvest) local workers did not look for employment in other towns, and that in 1934 (a year of an exceptionally good harvest) he was not confident that they could get temporary migrants to harvest the wheat quickly.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} For example, in the case of Salamanca: González Rothvoss, \textit{Anuario}, p. 450.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{El Sol}, 15th July 1931.
\textsuperscript{47} Riesco, ‘Lucha,’ pp. 132-135.
Despite the priority given to local workers, some temporary workers managed to be hired in some farms and cortijos. As a result, conflicts between temporary forasteros and local workers were abundant in the early 1930s, especially in 1931, although the evidence points to local workers now having the upper hand in determining who was hired. This was for example the case for strikes in Baena (Jaén) and Utrera (Sevilla) in July 1931, and local workers’ complaints to the prefect in La Rinconada (Sevilla).\(^{49}\) Cases of clashes in provinces like Toledo or Ávila were also typical.\(^{51}\)

Moreover, unions could rely on state protection in guaranteeing the preferential employment of local workers. In Carmona (Sevilla), when sugarbeet producers told the prefect they wanted to keep their specialised, forastero workers, the prefect replied that he could not authorise the employment of non-locals if there were local unemployed workers.\(^{52}\) Similarly, the prefect of Córdoba manifested local workers had absolute priority and ordered the gangs of temporary workers to go back to their towns, often with the help of the Guardia Civil.\(^{53}\) It is easy to find other cases for the provinces of Jaén and Cádiz in Andalusia or Salamanca in North Castile.\(^{54}\)

V

Because most of my main claims rely on qualitative evidence covering a vast geographic area, some of the claims put forward in this article need hard evidence to be proven. How do we know if restrictions on temporary migrations were enforced in

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\(^{49}\) El Sol, 11th July 1931; El Sol, 18th July 1931; La Vanguardia, 18th July 1931, 29th July 1931.

\(^{50}\) El Sol, 15th August 1931.

\(^{51}\) El Sol, 23rd June 1932; El Sol, 8th July 1932.

\(^{52}\) El Sol, 15th August 1931; La Vanguardia 23rd August 1931.

\(^{53}\) ABC, Seville edition, 7th June 1931.

\(^{54}\) El Sol, 3rd June 1932; La Vanguardia, 25th June 1932; El Sol, 20th May 1933; Cabrera, Patronal, pp. 156-158.
the 1930s? Were local workers favoured in most places by the enforcement of the list or the *turno* by the local exchanges? This question is difficult to answer directly. Temporary migrations were not captured on a year to year basis by the population census. Additionally, we cannot measure local union strength on the basis of local wages because wages in many cases were standardised at the provincial or regional level. Therefore, we need an indirect method.

Following Sokoloff and Dollar (1997) seminal article on seasonal labour demand fluctuations in English agriculture before the Industrial Revolution, a potential test for this hypothesis involves looking at the ratio of harvest wages to winter wages at different periods of time. According to Sokoloff and Dollar, the harvest-to-winter wage ratio is higher where the proportion of agricultural land devoted to cereals is higher. The main rationale for this is that in highly specialised cereal-growing regions there is little to do in the winter and therefore the opportunity cost of winter work is very low. As a result, the ratio of harvest wages to wages paid for winter tasks should be higher in regions specialised in cereal production as compared with less cereal-intensive regions.

The argument for my test proceeds as follows. Many areas of Spain, especially in the centre and the South-West, were very specialised in cereal production. Consequently, one should observe large seasonal gaps in the most cereal-intensive regions. However, the mobility of temporary migrants during harvest, by increasing the supply of available workers, probably reduced the ratio of harvest to winter wages. If Republican governments re-distributed rents towards the local workers and

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55 Sokoloff and Dollar, “Seasonality.”
away from the temporary migrants, one should observe a substantial widening of the harvest to winter ratio in the 1930s.

High quality information on rural wages is scarce, especially for the 1920s. Ideally, one should gather information of harvest-to-winter ratios in the late 1920s or in 1930 and then compare that with the same information in 1932 and 1933. However, to my knowledge, high quality data on seasonal rural wages in the 1920s does not exist.\textsuperscript{56} To sort this out, I rely first on information on rural wages in different seasons of the year at the level of the province (similar to the English county) published in the 1914 Spanish statistical yearbook, but probably collected in an unknown period between 1909 and 1914.\textsuperscript{57}

1914 wages are given for maximum, average and minimum daily wages for adult males. Money wages were adjusted upwards to take into account the part of wages paid in kind.\textsuperscript{58} Average wages for adult males were calculated as an average of all summer adult male wages, which included also tasks outside the harvest.\textsuperscript{59} Harvest wages were higher than winter wages, but not the highest wages paid in the summer.\textsuperscript{60} Therefore, because my focus in on the harvest-to-winter ratio in 1914 and in the 1930s, my preferred comparison uses average wages in 1914. However, I also calculate the summer-to-winter ratio using maximum wages to check the robustness of my results.

\textsuperscript{56} This is confirmed by the most authoritative study of factor prices, and wages in particular, in Spanish agriculture: Bringas, \textit{Productividad}, pp. 91-94; as well, Simpson, “Wages.”
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Anuario 1914}, pp. 244-245. On the collection of data: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, \textit{Preparación 1914}, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{58} IRS, \textit{Preparación 1914}, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{59} IRS, \textit{Preparación 1914}, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{60} IRS, \textit{Preparación 1908}, pp. 227-230.
For the 1920s, I collect some information on wages using the *El Socialista* survey of 1924-1925. Occasionally, unions gave very detailed information on the types of agricultural jobs, the number of hours, and days of work for each kind of activity and the wages paid in the town for each type of work. Data however are not abundant as unions were generally in disarray after 1920. Using this source, I was only able to gather local information on harvest-to-winter ratios for several towns in eight provinces.

Finally, for the 1930s, I exploit the very rich information contained in the agrarian collective contracts published by Mariano González-Rothvoss in 1935. Some of these collective contracts cover entire provinces or large regions within a province. Therefore, they can be used to calculate provincial averages. In a significant number of cases, however, I am forced to take the wages listed in local collective contracts as an estimate of the provincial average.

Moreover, there is a legitimate concern that these collective contracts were not fully enforced. However, since these collective contracts were revised and approved by the Ministry of Labour, there was an easy recourse to strikes wishing to voice the breaking of a legally sanctioned collective contract. In many cases, prefects levied fines for employers who did not comply with collective contracts. Moreover, workers could use labour courts to denounce recalcitrant employers disregarding legal working conditions, which in most cases favoured workers.

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Even if we accept collective contracts as a valid source for wages, calculating the ratio of harvest to winter wages is not obvious. First of all, one needs to take into account whether the worker was fed or lodged by the employer. This is relatively easy to do as collective contracts generally established very clearly when part of the wages was paid in kind.63 Because seasonal wages are not given, I took as harvest wages the wages of harvesters that used scythe or sickle (workers on mechanical harvesters earned higher wages but also provided more capital like a horse). And for winter, I took the average of daily wages paid for tasks like hoeing or sowing.

Because my argument is about the re-distribution of rents towards local workers and because an unknown share of temporary migrations happened within some provinces, using provincial wages might not be suitable for the task at hand. Provincial averages potentially mix the wages of workers in areas receiving inmigrants and in areas expelling emigrants in the same province. Yet, in most cases, wages aggregated at the level of the province are the only option. Wages published in 1914 are the averages of wages of towns in the same province that responded to the survey sent by the Instituto de Reformas Sociales. Furthermore, several collective contracts in the 1930s standardized wages at the level of the province or at the level of a large region within a province.

Moreover, provincial averages are most probably circumscribed to the towns with a harvest labour market because the averages were calculated from a selected sample of towns in a given province: the towns that responded to the survey sent by

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63 Wages were generally stipulated “a secas”, that is, contracts did not include meals.
the Instituto de Reformas Sociales.⁶⁴ This biases the sample used to calculate summer wages to observations from large towns with a harvest labour market, because large, rural towns generally concentrated a large number of landless labourers. Additionally, 1930s collective agreements on harvest wages, which I take as provincial averages, are in fact either the average of local harvest wages or the standardised harvest wage of the towns that specialised in growing cereals.⁶⁵ In some cases, this has to be assumed, like in the case of the provincial agreement in Córdoba, which more than probably only applied the towns along the Guadalquivir plain but not in the towns on the hills. In others, harvest wages only applied to cereal-growing areas in the province.⁶⁶ Because I take wheat harvest wages, these capture the wages paid in towns with a shortage of workers during the harvest and with an important number of permanent labourers. In conclusion, although I only have provincial aggregates, the provincial averages of summer wages closely resemble the average of the local harvest wages paid to adult males.

Changes in seasonal ratios could be affected by changes in the relative price of wheat. It is well known that many European governments protected domestic cereal producers with high tariffs. Spain in fact had one of the highest tariffs on wheat in the world, up to the point of completely shutting Spanish markets out from cereal imports. However, it is unlikely wheat prices had much of a distorting effect on the wage ratios: in Spain, wheat prices increased less than the cost of living from 1913 to 1935 (wheat prices increased by 45 per cent and the general cost of living by 65 per cent).⁶⁷ Domestic wheat producers were heavily protected, but given the relative

⁶⁴ Instituto de Reformas Sociales, Preparación 1914, p. 212.
⁶⁵ González Rothvoss, Anuario, p. 420.
⁶⁶ González Rothvoss, Anuario, p. 419, p. 426
evolution of the domestic price of wheat, it looks unlikely that they were more protected in the 1930s than in previous periods.

The evolution of seasonal wage ratios could also be affected by mechanisation. As I have said above, mechanical harvesters spread slowly in South Castile and Andalusia and a bit faster in North Castile. However, because I only look at the wages of manual harvesters, my ratios are not contaminated by the (slow) spread of mechanical harvesters between 1914 and 1931.

Finally, one needs to take into account changes in maximum hours of work.\textsuperscript{68} The Republican government extended the existing mandatory eight-hour ceiling to workers in agriculture. In fact, most collective contracts established a maximum working day of 8 hours for the harvest, and in some cases of seven or six hours, including several restrictions to overtime hours.\textsuperscript{69} Therefore, our estimates of daily wages for 1932-1933 are no longer for the traditional “dawn to dusk” schedule (“\textit{de sol a sol}”), but for an eight-hour day. Maximum hour ceilings only had some bite in the summer, when sunlight allowed for long working hours. Hours in the winter were always short because there are fewer hours of sunlight in the winter (generally allowing an 8-hour day). Therefore, before 1931, part of the seasonal wage gap reflected that hours of work were longer in the summer. However, the seasonal gap in the 1930s was mitigated by the fact that standard hours of work in the summer were not much longer than winter hours. In other words, looking at seasonal gaps in daily wages in fact underestimates the true seasonal gap.

\textsuperscript{68} I would like to thank one of the referees for insisting that I clarify this important point.
In order to establish the credibility of my test using seasonal gaps, I replicate the analysis of Sokoloff and Dollar (1997) and look at the correlations between the harvest-to-winter wage ratios and the level of cereal specialisation in each province. I have constructed two estimates of the harvest-to-winter ratio: the first considers the difference between the average male rural wage in the summer with the average wage in the winter, the second the maximum wage in the summer relative to the average wage in the winter. It makes sense to look at the two because the correlation coefficient between the two ratios is about 0.4. I have replicated the same exercise with fewer observations with evidence on wage ratios from the early 1930s.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show the correlation between wage ratios and the proportion of agricultural land dedicated to cereals.\textsuperscript{70} The graphs show clearly how in all cases seasonal wage ratios were positively related to the specialization in cereal production. In the case of the 1930s, ratios should be considered comparable to ratios calculated with average summer and winter wages in 1914. The relationship between the wage ratios and cereal specialisation is always statistically significant.

\textsuperscript{70} The proportion excludes land left fallow, but results do not change if fallow land is included. I have used the Statistical Yearbook of Spain for 1922-1923 because previous yearbooks did not break down the uses of agricultural land for each province.
Figure 2. Harvest-to-winter wage ratios in 1914 and cereal specialisation (using average summer and winter wages)


Figure 3. Harvest-to-winter wage ratios in 1914 and cereal specialisation (using maximum summer and winter wages)

Sources: *Anuario 1915*, pp. 244-245; *Anuario 1922-23*, pp. 58-59.
Figure 4. Harvest-to-winter wage ratios and cereal specialisation, the 1930s.

Source: González Rothvoss, Anuario; Anuario 1932-1933, pp. 126-127.

Were ratios before the 1930s exceptional with respect to other historical cases? The unweighted average of the average wage ratio of the top ten cereal-growing areas in 1914 was 182, which is below the ratios calculated by Sokoloff and Dollar (also unweighted averages of several scattered observations) for counties specialising in cereals in England in the mid 19th century (220) and above the gaps calculated for the North East and Massachusetts in the US (142 and approximately 170), which were areas not heavily specialised in growing cereals.\textsuperscript{71} The Spanish case seems to lie between these two experiences.

\textsuperscript{71} Sokoloff and Dollar, “Seasonality,” p. 313.
For my purposes, what matters is whether harvest-to-winter wage ratios increased as a result of institutional restrictions on the entry of temporary migrants into local labour markets in harvest time. As I have said, since I basically have 1914 as a benchmark for the situation before 1931, this comparison is audacious. Moreover, because the official workday in the 1930s was shorter in the summer but left winter hours mostly unaltered, the comparisons underestimate the true evolution of the change in the ratios. With this caveats in mind, table 1 presents the estimates of the seasonal ratios in three different points of time.

Table 1. Comparison of harvest to winter wage ratios, 1914, 1924-25 and the 1930s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1914 average</th>
<th>1914 max</th>
<th>1924-1925</th>
<th>1930s</th>
<th>Type of collective contract 1930s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albacete</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>Local: Villarrobledo, La Roca, Alcaraz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almería</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ávila</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badajoz</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>2 regions within province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cáceres</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cádiz</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castellón</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local: Burriana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciudad Real</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>183</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granada</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalajara</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huelva</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local: Aracena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaén</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Local: Martos, Villacarrillo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>León</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Málaga</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td>169</td>
<td>Local (Málaga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palencia</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salamanca</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Provincial, regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>Local: Madridejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Local: Chiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valladolid</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamora</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strictly comparable samples

UNWEIGHTED AVERAGE 165.2 174.15 198.2

Standard Deviation 34.98 28.96 34.26

**t-test differences in means:**

The null hypothesis is that the means are equal:

- average ratio 1914 vs. ratio 1930: \( t = -4.18^{**} \)
- maximum ratio 1914 vs. ratio 1930: \( t = -2.69^{**} \)
Table 1 shows how most harvest-to-winter ratios increased in the 1930s with respect to 1914 wages. In the case of the 1914-1931 comparison, for the 20 provinces for which it was possible to match the 1914 ratio with the 1930s ratio, my calculations show how often the ratio went up in the 1930s in comparison with 1914. The average went up 20 per cent using my preferred comparison with average wages in 1914 and 13 per cent when I use maximum wages. In both cases, the difference in the means of 1914 ratios and the 1930s ratio is statistically significant. Although I am in no position to know winter and summer hours in 1914 in each province, I can derive harvest-to-winter wages for hourly wages assuming reasonable eight-hour working days in the winter and a eleven-hour working days in the summer for 1914 and an eight-hour working days in the winter and and in the summer in 1931. This goes some way in adjusting daily wages for working time, but also I should take into account for how long workers stayed employed in each season. When the necessary adjustments are done for hours of work, the size of the change is very large, I estimate an increase in the harvest-to-winter ratios of approximately 66 per cent for ratios calculated with average wages and 60 per cent for ratios calculated with maximum wages.

In the case of the comparison with 1924-1925 ratios, the sample size is much smaller but in several cases, with the exception of Badajoz, the ratios also increased in the 1930s with respect to the mid 1920s or stayed the same. Although sample size is restricted to only six matched observations, the change in the ratio is close to 20 per cent (using daily wages and not adjusting for hours of work). As in the case of the
1914-1930s comparison, taking into account hours of work would increase the estimated increase in the wage ratios.

Summing up, although the evidence is sparse and in some cases difficult to interpret, the evolution of harvest-to-winter wage ratios between 1914 and the 1930s suggest summer wages increased by a large amount. I have shown that this evolution cannot be explained by changes in wheat prices or by mechanisation. The evidence on the evolution of wage ratios is consistent with the hypothesis of a re-distribution of rents towards local workers caused, whereas it is difficult to square with “bottom-up” arguments of peasant mobilization.

VII
Quantitative data on strikes and union implementation are also not consistent with bottom-up narratives. I look firstly at the grievances put forward in rural strikes and the number of strikes won, and show that they are not consistent with bottom-up explanations. Afterwards, I exploit a new data set of strikes and union implementation matched with local data on patterns of landownership and proportion of landless workers in the overall peasant population. I use these variables to test the arguments put forward by the proponents of the bottom-up hypothesis using regression analysis. I do so by using a probabilistic model that regresses the occurrence of a strike or the existence of a union office against the proxies for the presence of landless workers or for the existence of large estates. In this setting, I use the proportion of municipal land taken by large estates as a proxy for the ability of landowners to organise collectively. If landowners were able to organise collectively, they could coordinate the resistance against labour legislation and the new collective contracts. Therefore, I expect the fraction of municipal land occupied by latifundia to be positively correlated with
conflict. Alternatively, the proportion of landless labourers captures the presence of potentially volatile landless workers. I also expect a positive coefficient for this variable.

Official strike data have several shortcomings, especially because they underestimate the number of strikes organised by anarcho-syndicalist unions and lack information on a large number of strikes. However, they convey a powerful insight: explanations of rural conflict based on a frustration-aggression response by workers or on a decline in living standards must be challenged by the fact that agricultural workers won a disproportionate amount of strikes until June 1934. At the same time, most of these strikes asked for a pay rise or a new collective contract and only very few were caused by unemployment or the need to enforce previously agreed working conditions. For example, in 1932-1933, 70 per cent of agricultural strikes with known motivations presented more than one demand to employers. According to the tabulated tables of the Spanish statistical yearbooks, a third of strikes were organised to change the “organisation of work,” which most probably meant new collective contracts.72 In 1931, rural workers obtained a concession from employers in 85 per cent of strikes, although they organized a fairly low number of them.73 Strikes multiplied by two in 1932 and workers were still able to win 70 per cent of strikes (meaning they at least won a concession from employers).74 In 1933, a year of a relatively poor harvest, 80 per cent of strikes were won, despite an almost three-fold

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72 This is overwhelmingly supported by qualitative accounts on the waves of strikes preceding harvest time. Quantitative data: *Anuario Estadistico 1932-1933*, p. 647.
73 *Anuario Estadistico 1931*, p. 580, the figure only takes into account the strikes for which the outcome was known (about 28 % of strikes had missing information on the outcome).
74 *Anuario Estadistico 1932-33*, p. 650, the figure only takes into account the strikes for which the outcome was known (about 40 % of strikes had missing information on the outcome).
increase in the number of strikes with respect to 1931.\textsuperscript{75} No frustration-aggression response can explain these overwhelming ratios of won strikes.

Because union offices and strikes are underestimated for the provinces in which the anarcho-syndicalists were important, when approximating the pattern of union implementation and of strikes, I concentrate on provinces in which socialist unions were dominant. Information from the 1932 Congress of the Agricultural workers’ federation of the General Workers’ Union (UGT) includes data on strikes at the local level (the unit here being a general strike of rural workers in a town), the existence of an agreed upon collective contract or whether the town had a union local in 1932.\textsuperscript{76} This local information is, firstly, matched to a census of peasants collected in 1933, which broke down the composition of peasants in each judicial district (which in turn had several towns) into landless labourers, sharecroppers, and small owners.\textsuperscript{77} Secondly, to Pascual Carrión’s estimates of land ownership inequality in each town, proxied by the proportion of agricultural land in each town concentrated in estates of more than 250 hectares (around 340 football pitches).\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, in order to control for other factors like access to information or externalities coming from other unionised sectors, or to control for potential biases in the reporting of strikes, strike and union data are matched to the size of the towns, using information from the 1930 Population census. I evaluate the probability of observing strikes and finding a union office in 390 towns in the provinces of Badajoz and Cáceres (in Extremadura), in Ciudad Real (in South Castile) and in Jaén (Andalusia), all dry-farming areas in which the UGT was the dominant union.

\textsuperscript{75} *Anuario Estadistico 1934*, p. 756, only 11 per cent of registered strikes have missing information on outcome.
\textsuperscript{76} Federaración Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra, *Memoria*.
\textsuperscript{77} Espinoza et al., “Estructura.”
\textsuperscript{78} Carrión, *Latifundios*, several pages.
It is fair to say that data extracted from union sources have potential biases. The most plausible is that the UGT (or the CNT) could decide to artificially increase the number of affiliates to seem more powerful than they actually were. And the same could happen with the number of operative union locals or with the number of strikes.

However, there are grounds for thinking unions did not distort their numbers significantly. First of all, the main federations did not report spectacular membership levels. At around 25%, union densities in Spain in the 1930s remained below union density levels of more industrialised economies. When for example one looks at the penetration of the UGT in several provinces, one sees immediately that a large proportion of towns did not have a union local or did not stage a strike in 1932. Union sources recognised several towns were not covered by collective contracts. Unions, moreover, did not abstain from reporting losses in membership. All in all, it seems that although unions might have had incentives to over-report membership levels, union records do not have obvious biases.

In order to evaluate the determinants of the spread of strikes and local union presence, I use probit models to estimate the probability of having a union local or a rural workers’strike in a given town in 1931 and 1932. I therefore estimated the following equations for 390 towns in Badajoz, Cáceres, Jaén and Ciudad Real:

\[
\Pr (\text{strike} = 1) = \alpha + \beta_1 \ln (\text{population}) + \chi_1 \ln (\% \text{ landless}) + \delta_1 \ln (\% \text{ estates >250 hec}) + \varepsilon_1.
\]
Pr (union local=1) = \alpha_2 + \beta_2 \ln (\text{population}) + \chi_2 \ln (\% \text{ landless}) + \delta_2 \ln (\% \text{ estates } > 250 \text{ hec}) + \epsilon_2,

I estimate these regressions and analyse the robustness by including/excluding some of the three variables and analysing the stability of coefficients when I take into account a sub-sample of the data (for example only looking at towns with less than 10’000 inhabitants). Table 2 gives the basic correlations between the explanatory variables. Table 3 reports the marginal effects from the set of probit regressions on the determinants of strikes in 1932 and the determinants of union presence. The table shows marginal effects when the sample is restricted to towns with less than 10’000 inhabitants, but results are very similar when only towns with less than 5’000 inhabitants are taken into account.

### Table 2. Correlations between the explanatory variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ln (pop1930)</th>
<th>Ln (% landless)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ln (% landless)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (% large estates)</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: own calculations.
Table 3. Probit regressions, determinants of strike and union local. Marginal effects reported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union local =1 Mean=0.6</th>
<th>Strike=1 Mean=0.12</th>
<th>Subsample pop&lt;10000 Strike=1 Mean=0.14***</th>
<th>Subsample pop&lt;10000 Strike=1 Mean=0.04**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ln (pop 1930) 0.13***</td>
<td>0.04* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.14*** (0.03)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (% landless) -0.13</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.14)</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.15)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln (% large estates) 0.04</td>
<td>0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N 390</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood -250.2</td>
<td>-138</td>
<td>-265.3</td>
<td>-227.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Squared 25.4***</td>
<td>6.94*</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>20.4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R Sq 0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. * means statistically significant at the 1 per cent level, ** at the 5 per cent level, * at the 10 per cent level.

All in all, neither the greater presence of landless peasants nor the inequality of land ownership increased the likelihood of general strikes or of a union local. These results also hold when I remove the town population variable. All of this lends very little support to bottom-up arguments. The main determinant of union presence or of strikes is the size of the town, and this result holds even if we restrict the sample to towns with less than 10’000 inhabitants or with less than 5’000. Although it routinely appears in quantitative analyses of social conflict, the interpretation of the marginal effect of population is not obvious. Externalities from well-organised artisanal sectors in the more diversified larger towns could be an explanation. One could argue as well that large towns had greater access to information and markets.

VII

79 Hobsbawm and Rudé, Swing, pp. 163-183. See as well Kaplan, “Andalusian.”
80 Markoff, “Geography.”
This paper evaluates the impact of changes in labour market policy in 1930s Spain to claim that state-induced changes in labour markets explain the rapid increase in mobilisation and conflict in rural Spain, whilst at the same time arguing that neither poor harvests nor the extraordinary expectations generated by land reform caused the explosive mobilisation of the period. In a largely agrarian country with an underdeveloped mass education system, collective action problems were generally so severe as to require top-down changes to mobilise workers.

Moreover, although the trends in union densities and strike intensity in 1930s Spain look similar to the trends of other European countries, Spain was very different from other countries in Western Europe in the same period. In the case of Spain, no bottom-up process of mobilization triggered by the Great Depression took place. This is the kind of process Richard Freeman claims unfolded in Northern Europe and the US.\textsuperscript{81} Spanish rural unions, on the other hand, were in no position to supply the kind of private benefits that were important to the growth of unions in other countries.\textsuperscript{82} The paper also speaks to the large volume of literature on social movements and conflict that stress the precedence of mobilising and polarising effects of state policy and institutional change over the role of changes in living standards, inequality, or unemployment to explain social conflict.

**Abbreviations:**

CNT: *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, National Confederation of Labour.

UGT: *Unión General de Trabajadores*, General Workers’ Union.

\textsuperscript{81} Freeman, “Spurts,” p. 295.

\textsuperscript{82} Boyer, “What did unions?;” Van Leeuwen, “Trade unions.”
Sources:

*Anuario Estadístico de España*, various years.


Instituto de Reformas Sociales, *Preparación para las bases de un proyecto de ley de accidentes del trabajo en la agricultura* (Madrid, 1908).

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