

JOSEFINA CRUZ VILLALÓN. *Propiedad y usa de la tierra en la Baja Andalucía: Carmona, siglos xviii-xx*. (Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura. Serie Estudios. 1980. Pp. 360. Paperback 600 ptas.)

The Spanish land reforms of the early nineteenth century disentailed property belonging to the nobility and enforced the sale of large amounts belonging to the Church and Municipalities. Although these reforms marked a legal end to the *ancien régime* the initial slowness and even failure of agriculture to change in much of Spain has led historians to examine the nature and importance of these reforms. The latest is Josefina Cruz who uses the tax surveys in the years 1755, 1850, 1910 and 1946-8 to examine changes in property ownership and cultivation in this important agricultural region in southern Spain.

In the mid-eighteenth century only 15 per cent of Carmona's land was not entailed, with the Church owning 44 per cent of all land. The freeing of legal restrictions and subsequent sale of large quantities of property initially strengthened the nobility but it also saw the appearance of untitled estate owners. Some of these had previously been substantial tenants in the area, their family names appearing in the Census of 1755 but others were new, individuals attracted by the investment opportunities and the social prestige in owning land. In spite of the sales the inequality of property ownership fell only slightly in the two centuries, from a Gini coefficient of 0.88 to 0.79. The author shows that these changes in land ownership and new economic opportunities saw a switch away from leasing to direct farming, especially after 1850. As a result the area under the olive, a permanent crop which was rarely leased, grew at the expense of cereal lands. The decline in the area of cereal cultivation was met by an increase in production as the amount of fallow declined from a half to a third between 1755 and 1850. By 1910 cereal land was normally farmed directly although yields were still well below European levels. Since about 1960 progress has been rapid in the region with wheat alternating with cotton, sugar-beet or sunflowers and the labour intensive olive declining appreciably as wage costs have risen.

Josefina Cruz has written an excellent book which allows us to examine the changing nature of the *latifundia* in Carmona over the last two centuries. A little more attention

should perhaps have been given to the accuracy of the tax surveys, especially in view of the criticism levelled at those of the middle years by contemporaries, but the author has used her material well and the book is to be recommended.

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