

The origins of the Econometric Society in Spain

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The Constitution of the Econometric Society provided for two forms of association: ordinary members and fellows, both by election from the Council. The November 1934 issue of *Econometrica* published the first list of members of the society. There were no Spanish fellows and three members: Olegario Fernández-Baños, Josep Antoni Vandellós, and Antonio de Miguel. We have more information on the first two, a Castilian and a Catalan, who were particularly prominent during the Republican period.

The first noticeable fact from that list is how shallow the Spanish membership was, relative to other European countries. It is a good indicator of the backwardness of Spanish science and the almost inexistence of social science. In a way, what is exceptional is the very existence of individuals like Baños or Vandellós, an event of no probability.

Baños and Vandellós were great mean, but peculiar, almost Hemingwayan, characters. Baños was born in a small town in La Rioja and went to study for priesthood. Realizing lack of vocation, he quit only a few days before being ordained. He then went to study mathematics, subsequently developing an interest in mathematical statistics, and becoming head of research at the Bank of Spain during the 1930s. At the outbreak of the Civil War he escaped from Madrid and joined the insurgent Francoist forces in Burgos.

Vandellós was born in Figueras and studied law, but was advised by a relative to move into economics and statistics. He went to Padova to study statistics with Corrado Gini and to the University of London, to do banking and transportation. In the mid 1920s he published the first estimates of the wealth and income of Spain and Portugal in a French international journal. He was an economist, a statistician, an originator of the Spanish and Catalan statistical administration, a demographer, and a journalist. He was also a Catalan nationalist concerned with low fertility, immigration, and decadence of the Catalan race, who wrote two books on the subject. At the outbreak of the war he went to Venezuela, where he greatly contributed to the development of national statistics there. Later he worked for the UN and lectured at Columbia University.

Baños died in Madrid in 1946 and Vandellós in Ithaca in 1950. The first impulse was gone. Both Baños and Vandellós were men of learning and scholarship that were led not only into public service, but to become developers of public institutions, at the same time that they participated in the international scholarly movement created by the Econometric Society.