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Response to Manuel Alvarez Tardío and David Villa García

SAMUEL PIERCE

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In considering Manuel Alvarez Tardío and David Villa García's reply to my review of *El precio de la exclusión*, I think it is clear that they have misunderstood the intent of my review. It was a positive evaluation of their book, and I continue to believe that Alvarez Tardío and Villa García's analysis of the Republic's structural defects is an important contribution to existing scholarship on the Republic and its ultimate failure.

That the authors strongly disagree with what they believe my review said is clear, but a nearly 2000-word response to the original 800-word book review seems out of proportion with the positive nature of my review. The authors' anger is evident throughout their reply, accusing me of not carefully reading their analysis, of intentionally misleading readers about their honesty and objectivity, and falsely attributing certain arguments to them. Having read my review as an attack that I never intended to make, the authors write with an air of sarcasm and condescension. I think that a fair reading of my review shows that I did not commit these errors.

The authors appear to have taken offense at my mention of Pío Moa and read the rest of the review in a spirit of anger. Their claim that I only distinguished them from Moa because of their subtlety is an incorrect reading of what I meant. I maintain my assertion that Alvarez Tardío and Villa García employ a more conservative approach to studying the Republic, but they are very different from Moa in important ways. In my review, I tried to separate their approach from Moa's by praising their work as subtle and analytical, but they

seem to think this was an insult, rather than the compliment that I intended. I should have done a better job of making this distinction clear.

My review offered only a moderate critique of *El precio de la exclusión*. The strongest criticism I leveled was my contention that the book did not provide as balanced an account as I thought it should. However, I do not think, and I did not write, that this undermines the overall value of the book. I consider it an area in which the book could be improved, not a fatal flaw. The condensed nature of a short book review meant that there was not room to provide the comprehensive and specific evaluation that the authors appear to prefer, and it seems that this led them to consider my criticisms unjustified.

Other reviewers have borne out my assessment. Michael Seidman, in a review of this book and Stanley Payne's *¿Por qué la República perdió la Guerra Civil?*, writes, "*Los tres autores infravaloran el empeño de la derecha en socavar las bases de la República*" ("*Una democracia sin demócratas*," *Revista de libros* no. 167, November 2010). Seidman repeats this claim in an English translation of the review: "Payne, Álvarez and Villa underestimate the right's commitment to subvert the Republic" ("The Longest Dictatorship," *Contemporary European History* 20.1 (2011), p. 102). In his recent review of the book for the *American Historical Review*, George Esenwein wrote, "No doubt many liberal and leftist scholars will think that the authors have gone too far in heaping blame on the Spanish Left for the failures of the Second Republic. Indeed, in an ironic twist of the main premise of the book the authors neglect to appraise the corrosive effect the Right's anti-republican and anti-democratic movements had on republican politics" (*AHR* vol. 116, no. 4, October 2011).

Readers will judge for themselves. I am not interested in joining a polemic on this issue, because I don't think it would be useful or productive. These authors and I don't disagree in the ways that they think we do, and their anger toward my review is based on an incorrect understanding of what I wrote.