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### 13. THE 'TÁCITO' GROUP AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY, 1973–1977\*

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A remarkable feature of Spain's transition from authoritarian to democratic rule was the role played by some members of the Francoist political élite.<sup>1</sup> Its success is partly attributable to the presence of groups within the ruling coalition which observed the minimal possible adherence to the regime during the final years of its existence while simultaneously staking out a strong position in a future democratic system of government. This was done by formulating and publicizing a political strategy and programme—which we shall describe as reformist—which sought to guarantee a non-violent transition to democratic rule after Franco's death. In doing so, these sectors of the Francoist élite blurred the boundaries between those 'inside' and 'outside' the official political world (never very clearly defined in authoritarian regimes), which enabled them to exercise influence in both camps. During Franco's lifetime, these groups undermined the position of those within the ruling coalition who were opposed to democratic change by making the reformist alternative attractive to the sectors of Spanish society which had benefited most from the regime's existence. After his death, they provided leadership and an element of continuity which reassured these social groups and encouraged them to participate in the consolidation of the new democratic system.

It will be argued in this essay that, among the varied contributions to

\* This article is largely based on personal recorded interviews with the following persons, to whom I am greatly indebted: José Luis Alvarez (19 July 1984), Fernando Alvarez de Miranda (7 June 1983), Iñigo Cavero (30 Nov. 1984), Jaime Cortezo (3 Apr. 1986), Juan Carlos Guerra Zunzunegui (26 July 1984), Landelino Lavilla (22 July 1983), Marcelino Oreja (5 May 1983), Juan Antonio Ortega y Díaz Ambrona (27 Sept. 1984), Alfonso Osorio (29 Nov. 1984), José Manuel Otero Novas (27 Nov. 1984), Alejandro Royo Villanova (27 July 1984), José Luis Ruiz Navarro (24 June 1987). 'Tácito' articles published between June 1973 and April 1975 are collected in *Tácito* (Madrid, 1975), which also contains their programme.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'authoritarian' is used to describe political systems which are neither totalitarian nor democratic. See Juan Linz, 'An Authoritarian Regime: Spain', in E. Allardt and Y. Littunen (eds.), *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems* (Helsinki, 1964).

the transition made by the reformist élite, one of the most crucial was that of the group known collectively as 'Tácito'. Accordingly, it focuses on the composition, political programme, and performance in office of the group between 1973 and 1977.<sup>2</sup>

'Tácito' came into existence in May 1973, after a lengthy gestation period which had its origins in a meeting of the Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas (ACNP) held at Manresa in 1968.<sup>3</sup> The more forward-looking members of the ACNP, led by its president, Abelardo Algora, wished politically aware Propagandists of different tendencies to come together in a new group in an attempt to reunite the Francoist and anti-Francoist wings of the organization. Algora's efforts did not impress the older generation of ACNP leaders, and neither its more prominent opposition figures, notably Joaquín Ruiz Giménez and José María Gil Robles, nor those who collaborated with the regime at a senior level, such as Federico Silva Muñoz, lent him their support. This did not deter some of the younger, more anonymous (though politically ambitious) Propagandists, who constituted the nucleus around which 'Tácito' was to develop. Though clearly launched under the auspices of the ACNP, the latter soon adopted a low profile, and non-Propagandists were also encouraged to join the group. Once 'Tácito' had been established, Algora ceased to attend its meetings, and by mid-1974 the group no longer made use of the ACNP's premises.

'Tácito' is perhaps best defined in terms of the age and the occupational and social profile of its members. With very few exceptions, 'tácitos' had been born shortly before, during, or after the Civil War (1936-9), and were therefore in their 30s or early 40s when the group was formed. (Politicians in this age group are sometimes referred to as 'the Prince's generation'; Don Juan Carlos was born in 1938.) Almost without exception, 'tácitos' were in possession of a university degree, often in law, and a small minority had later studied abroad at a time when this was still unusual. Most of them embarked on a career in the liberal professions, particularly those which were both financially

<sup>2</sup> The collective pseudonym appears to have been suggested by Marcelino Oreja, who had been struck by the parallels between the Roman historian's account of Nero's words to the Senate on assuming power after the death of Claudius and the type of speech Don Juan Carlos might make on succeeding Franco. See Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, xiii. 4 (e.g. in English tr. by M. Grant; Harmondsworth, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> The ACNP, a prestigious Catholic lay organization founded in 1908, had provided the Franco regime with much of its political élite in the late 1940s and 1950s, but gradually lost influence. See M. Jerez, *Elites políticas y centros de extracción en España, 1938-1957* (Madrid, 1982).

rewarding and socially prestigious. Virtually all of those who later played leading political roles were in the service of the Francoist state, or had strong ties with it. Marcelino Oreja, Rafael Arias Salgado, and several others were career diplomats. Landelino Lavilla and Juan Antonio Ortega y Díaz Ambrona acted as *letrados* (lawyers) to the Consejo de Estado, while Alfonso Osorio, José Manuel Otero Novas, and Eduardo Carriles belonged to the other élite corps of the Spanish civil service, that of 'abogados del Estado'. A significant minority of 'tácitos' studied economics or engineering, and were employed in the public sector or had become entrepreneurs and financiers. The vast majority had been brought up in Madrid, where most were based, but between them they had ties with virtually every Spanish region. Women joined the group in very small numbers, and did not play an important role in its development.

The more active 'tácitos' had often belonged to the same political organizations in the past. Many had joined the Asociación Española de Cooperación Europea, launched by the ACNP in 1954, a Europeanist platform which became an important forum for general political debate. In many cases, it was there that future 'tácitos' were first exposed to democratic and even socialist opinion. Some had also belonged to the monarchist groups which defended Don Juan de Borbón's claim to the throne, and were amongst those who regularly visited the exiled pretender at Estoril. Fernando Alvarez de Miranda had even belonged to Don Juan's Privy Council between 1964 and 1969, when it was dissolved after the designation of his son, Don Juan Carlos, as Franco's successor.

As Algora had noted with concern, these experiences had not prevented the future 'tácitos' from drifting apart in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A small minority had actively participated in official political life, though they were still regarded as very junior members of the Francoist political class. This was particularly true of Oreja and Osorio; the former sat in the Movimiento's National Council and the Cortes, while the latter, also a member of the Cortes, had briefly belonged to the Council of the Realm, the most exclusive Francoist institution of all.<sup>4</sup> Much to Algora's satisfaction, 'tácitos' also attracted some of those who had taken part in relatively harmless, 'alegal' (unlawful but semi-tolerated) forms of opposition to the regime.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of their position, see A. Osorio, *Trayectoria política de un ministro de la Corona* (Barcelona, 1980), 15-18.

<sup>5</sup> See Juan Linz, 'Opposition to and under an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of

latter were generally associated with Gil Robles and Ruiz Giménez, and could boast democratic—or at least anti-Francoist—credentials which served 'Tácito' well. Juan Carlos Guerra Zunzunegui, one of the few 'tácitos' whose family had not supported Franco during the Civil War, had helped to organize the 1956 student strikes in Madrid, for which he was briefly imprisoned. In 1962, Alvarez de Miranda, Iñigo Cavero, and José Luis Ruiz Navarro had been confined by the authorities for several months after attending a meeting with representatives of the exiled anti-Francoist opposition in Munich. These backgrounds, however, were not typical of the group as a whole; the majority of 'tácitos' had neither held office under the regime nor had they actively opposed it.

'Tácito's' early influence was largely determined by its ready access to the Catholic press. The decision—taken at the instigation of Cavero and Lavilla, with Osorio's disapproval—to publish a weekly article discussing current affairs or matters of general interest was thus decisive. For almost four years, between June 1973 and February 1977—with brief interruptions in August 1975 and 1976—'Tácito' met every Wednesday evening to discuss the article to be published two days later. The articles initially appeared in *Ya*, the Madrid daily owned by the Editorial Católica, whose board of directors included a number of 'tácitos'.<sup>6</sup> Within a year, they were being reproduced by some twenty newspapers throughout Spain. Although it is impossible to estimate how many readers 'Tácito' attracted, in 1975 the newspapers in question were selling over half-a-million copies a day.

Due to the nature of the group and the absence of an official register, accurate membership figures are not readily available. Routine meetings were generally attended by fewer than a dozen people, but forty or more would congregate to discuss a major political event. In all, some ninety different people belonged to 'Tácito' at various stages in its development. The group was therefore not much smaller than most of the proto-parties which constituted the 'alegal' opposition, and probably had more bona fide followers than some.<sup>7</sup>

Spain', in R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Regimes and Oppositions* (New Haven, 1973), 210–19.

<sup>6</sup> The ACNP founded Editorial Católica in 1912, and was closely associated with the Press thereafter. At least two 'tácitos', Luis Apostua (sub-director of *Ya*) and José Luis Alonso Almodóvar (director of *Diario Palentino*) were professional journalists. See A. Saez Alba, *La ACNP y el caso de El Correo de Andalucía* (Paris, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> Gil Robles's 'party', Federación Popular Democrática, claimed to have some 400 members in 1975. Ignacio Camuñas's Partido Demócrata Popular and Francisco Fernández Ordóñez's Partido Social Demócrata had even fewer.

'Tácito's' emergence in mid-1973 raises a number of questions concerning the role of dissidents within the ruling coalition of an authoritarian regime. Above all, why—and when—do élites belonging to social groups which have hitherto supported the regime and benefited from its existence begin to distance themselves from it?

One explanation would appear to be the regime's gradual loss of legitimacy. By the early 1970s, the Franco regime's legitimacy rested largely on the 'order' it had restored to Spanish life and on the socio-economic progress over which it had presided. In 'Tácito's' view, an excessively high price was being paid for the former, and the regime was no longer necessary for—and was possibly a hindrance to—the consolidation of the latter. The very nature of the regime had prevented it from achieving an effective national reconciliation after the Civil War, and had fostered anachronistic antagonisms. 'Tácito' believed the Francoist state had failed to assert the supremacy of civil over military authority, and held it responsible for institutionalizing an anomalous relationship with the Church. Furthermore, the regime's twin policies of political centralization and cultural repression had only served to exacerbate the regional question. In the sphere of labour relations, official legislation and institutions were questioned by workers and employers alike. Finally, 'Tácito' resented the fact that the regime's origins had prevented Spain's integration into Europe and her full acceptance by the international community.

Loss of legitimacy, however, may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for regime transformation; what really matters is the absence or presence of preferable alternatives.<sup>8</sup> Given Spain's geo-strategic position, her recent socio-economic development, and her political culture, the most obvious alternative to authoritarian rule was a Western-style democracy. By the early 1970s, even Spaniards who had supported the regime—as well as those who had passively tolerated it—had begun to believe that their socio-economic interests could be safeguarded in a democratic context as well as—or even better than—in an authoritarian one. Simultaneously, some of their self-appointed representatives in the ruling coalition—groups such as 'Tácito'—gradually became convinced that they could ratify (and even improve) their position via competitive elections.

Admittedly, many Spaniards had been aware of the democratic

<sup>8</sup> A. Przeworski, 'Some Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy', in G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter, and L. Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore, 1986), 50–6.



alternative long before certain sectors of the official political class openly acknowledged its appeal. The emergence and development of these reformist nuclei was largely—though not exclusively—determined by the imminence of Franco's death. Attempts to institutionalize the regime also affected reformists' perceptions of the likelihood of success. The designation of a successor (Prince Don Juan Carlos, 1969), the appointment—and subsequent assassination—of a head of government, other than Franco himself (Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, 1973), and his replacement by a civilian (Carlos Arias Navarro, 1974), are all examples of this. The more far-sighted sectors of the political élite were similarly conditioned by fluctuations in the distribution of power within the ruling coalition, particularly when these resulted in attempts to 'liberalize' the regime from within. Exogenous factors, notably the collapse of authoritarian rule in Portugal (April 1974) and Greece (July 1974) were also taken into account.

'Tácito's' very existence raises a related question, namely: why did those in power tolerate dissent within the ruling coalition? A possible explanation is that some of the advantages of the existence of an opposition in democratic systems of government also apply to authoritarian regimes.<sup>9</sup> As long as internal dissidents accept the regime—albeit temporarily—their participation could provide it with considerable flexibility by shifting blame, giving hope to emergent leaders, and broadening the base of recruitment. Significantly, at the time only the extreme hard-line sectors of the ruling coalition regarded 'Tácito' as a threat to the regime's stability.

'Tácito's' programme was conceived as an attempt to provide fresh answers to the many questions posed by the prospect of Franco's death. It was based on the premise that under Franco Spain had developed into a country not unlike her Western European neighbours, and that Spanish society was therefore ready for democratic rule. In effect, 'Tácito' was advocating far-reaching political change while at the same time accepting existing socio-economic conditions as fundamentally valid.<sup>10</sup>

'Tácito' came into being partly as a reaction to Carrero Blanco's appointment as head of government in June 1973. This was generally perceived as a victory for the regime's 'continuistas', those who wished

<sup>9</sup> See Linz, 'Opposition', pp. 226 ff.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that 'Tácito' was not critical of some of the consequences of the so-called Spanish economic miracle: the group advocated a far-reaching fiscal reform, the extension of welfare services and the socialization of education. See 'Tácito', pp. 35–8.

to uphold the status quo. 'Tábitos' were unanimous in the conviction that the Franco regime could not outlive its founder, and therefore regarded 'continuismo' as an irresponsible and ultimately suicidal attempt to postpone the inevitable. By opposing attempts to liberalize the regime from within, the hard-liners could only increase the likelihood of a sharp, possibly violent, break with the past, and would become its first victims. 'The option', a prominent 'tácito' declared, 'is not continuity versus change, but gradual change versus abrupt change.' This is not to say that 'Tácito' had no sympathy for those who thought of a future without Franco with apprehension. On the contrary, its message to them was a simple one: Franco's death would entail democratic change, but if anticipated and supervised by the General's lawful successors, the latter would be in a position to ensure that those who had prospered under the regime would have nothing to fear.

'Tácito' was equally critical of the anti-Francoist opposition's 'ruptura democrática' programme, which envisaged the creation of a representative provisional government (presumably at some point after Franco's death), a plebiscite to decide the republic vs. monarchy issue, and the immediate restoration of the Statutes of Autonomy granted under the Second Republic. Even if the opposition were sincere in their avowed rejection of the use of violence to further their cause, 'Tácito' feared that any attempt to break sharply with the past would inevitably lead to a military intervention. Furthermore, a non-violent 'ruptura' presupposed a spontaneous collapse of authority, and could only succeed if it enjoyed the active support of broad sectors of the population. 'Tácito' thought the opposition could take neither of these for granted. The Portuguese revolution had some useful lessons to offer, but comparisons should not be drawn too closely. Spain was not involved in a colonial war of long standing, the armed forces of the two countries had little in common, and Franco had named his successor. Above all, Spain had endured a civil war which made a lasting impact on its political culture.

'Tácito' believed the only viable alternative to the above was a democratizing process originating from within the existing political framework and respectful of the established constitutional order and its own systems of reform. Although it was generally agreed that this would only get under way in earnest after Franco's death, there was considerable debate within the group as to how the reformist programme could best be advanced during his lifetime. The more con-

servative wing of the group, represented by Osorio, advocated limited reforms which would free the hitherto undeveloped democratic potential of existing institutions. Osorio had been a 'procurador familiar' for the province of Santander in the Cortes, and believed the latter could be made more representative by increasing the proportion of directly elected members.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, he hoped office-holders at the municipal level would be made accountable to the electorate at large. These reforms, it was argued, could make the transition to a fully democratic system of government less traumatic. This optimism was not shared by the more progressive—or perhaps simply sceptical—'tácitos', such as Alvarez de Miranda and Caverio, who never believed those in power would make significant concessions. Most members stood somewhere in between these two positions, and favoured a pragmatic approach, advocated by the likes of José Luis Alvarez, which was to allow 'Tácito' to adapt to new circumstances as they arose.

'Tácitos' may have disagreed amongst themselves as to how much they should expect from reforms attempted during Franco's lifetime, but they never doubted the General's successors would be in a position to initiate the democratizing process. The most important successor was, of course, the future king, whom many 'tácitos' knew personally. Those amongst them who enjoyed easy access to Don Juan were generally on close terms with his son as well. Many of the younger 'tácitos' who did not share this monarchist background had been taken to La Zarzuela to meet the then prince by the head of the ACNP's University College of San Pablo, Jacobo Cano, and Don Juan Carlos often visited the institution. These visits became even more frequent when Cano left the college to become the Prince's personal secretary. These contacts proved useful for Don Juan Carlos as well as for the future 'tácitos', for it enabled him to counteract the popularity of his cousin Don Alfonso, a former student of the San Pablo. In spite of having been nominated Franco's successor, Don Juan Carlos continued to regard Alfonso as a rival, particularly after his marriage to Franco's granddaughter in 1972.

The group's ties with La Zarzuela proved decisive in the development of its reformist programme. 'Tácito' enjoyed the Prince's confidence to the extent that in the summer of 1974 he inspired an article

<sup>11</sup> Since 1967, every Spanish province was represented in the Cortes by two 'procuradores familiares', elected by heads of households and married women. They were the only directly elected members of the Cortes, and represented approximately 20% of the total.

of theirs which criticized the decision to make him temporary head of state on account of Franco's ill health. Ortega y Diaz Ambrona recalls that 'we knew, because he had told us so himself, that at the time he did not want to become head of state, and would only do so again if it was for good, which is why we wrote such a critical article'. Partly as a result of this mutual trust, leading 'tácitos' were confident that after Franco's death the future king would seek to legitimize the monarchy by leading the democratizing process from above. In Ortega y Diaz Ambrona's view, 'as far as we were concerned, particularly after the fall of the Colonels in Greece, this was absolutely clear'. The support of 'Tácito' for the Prince nevertheless remained conditional on his ability to become the constitutional monarch of a parliamentary democracy. 'Only D. Juan Carlos and the monarchy can provide a way out of the Franco regime,' an internal 'Tácito' document observed, 'and not for emotional or technical reasons, but for pragmatic ones.'<sup>12</sup>

The type of operation envisaged by the group required more than the future king's commitment to democratic change, however. The reformist strategy also presupposed the existence of mechanisms whereby the Francoist constitutional framework could be reformed out of existence without contravening the letter of the law. This could be done in a number of ways, depending on the political objectives chosen. For 'Tácito', the election by universal suffrage of a legislative assembly capable of initiating a constituent process if it so decided was the key to a reform of this type. What was more, 'Tácito' believed the creation of such an assembly was possible without contravening the Francoist constitution; this could be done under the terms of the Law of Succession, which stipulated that the modification of a fundamental law (that is to say, a law of constitutional rank) required the executive to hear the National Council of the Movimiento, obtain the approval of the Cortes, and consult the nation by means of a referendum. Tortuous though it seemed to many, 'Tácito' favoured this procedure because it did not wish the future king to risk his prestige and authority in a more daring operation. Furthermore, the strict observation of Francoist legality would dissuade those opposed to change—including the more politicized members of the armed forces—from rejecting it on constitutional grounds.

<sup>12</sup> The article in question was 'La interinidad' (26 July 1974). On the monarchy, see also *Una Monarquía social* (7 Aug. 1973) and *Un príncipe leal y un pueblo libre* (29 Nov. 1974). Internal 'Tácito' document 1 (no title, no date, but probably May–June 1975).

Above all, the faith of 'Tácito' in the viability of the reformist alternative was based on the assumption that it would prove acceptable to the majority of the population. In particular, it was thought the reformist programme would appeal most to 'a very wide section of the labouring and professional middle classes . . . moderate people with a voice which must be heard and who, due to their very nature, have not been organized or even appealed to'. Indeed the potentially disastrous consequences of this political demobilization constituted one of the group's overriding obsessions. Events in Portugal, it was argued, had shown what could happen in Spain if these sectors of society failed to make themselves ready for the unavoidable changes which lay ahead. 'In times of crisis', 'Tácito' warned, 'it is impossible to improvise leaders and programmes capable of attracting and representing an electorate which is understandably disorientated and highly critical of the past.' The group feared that if the silent majority it wished to represent failed to organize themselves politically, the immediate post-Franco era would be dominated by two determined minorities, one actively committed to the regime's overthrow, the other to its survival. 'The extremes', 'Tácito' concluded, 'always proliferate when there is a vacuum in the centre, and the only antidote is therefore to strengthen the Centre.'<sup>13</sup>

During the early stages of its development, 'Tácito' may be said to have adopted an attitude of 'semi-opposition' to the regime. According to Juan Linz, one form of 'semi-opposition' is that practised by 'dissidents within the élite favouring different long-term policies and institutional alternatives, but accepting the top leadership—perhaps somewhat conditionally and temporarily—and willing to hold office'.<sup>14</sup> The ambiguity of the group's position is reflected in its first public statement—debated at great length and finally issued in December 1973 which announced that it would 'adhere' ('se sujetará') to the existing legal order. In spite of its criticism of Carrero Blanco's efforts to put the clock back, at first 'Tácito' barely succeeded in irritating the government. Indeed, Alejandro Royo Villanova, one of the younger members of the group, has evidence that the Admiral was 'quite sympathetic towards "Tácito"', because he believed there should be a degree of opposition, but a respectable one, and one which was not

<sup>13</sup> 'Tácito', pp. 23–4. See 'El Reto' (8 Nov. 1974), 'Portugal, un nuevo rumbo' (17 May 1975), 'Frente a los extremismos' (4 Oct. 1974).

<sup>14</sup> Linz, 'Opposition', pp. 191–9, and L. García San Miguel, 'Para una sociología del cambio político y la oposición en la España actual', *Sistema*, 4 (January 1974), 95–9.

Marxist'. Seen in this light, 'Tácito' seemed 'a minor, necessary evil'. It is unlikely that this paternalistic benevolence would have continued for long had Carrero Blanco witnessed the group's later development, but it is nevertheless a surprising example of toleration of internal dissent.

The assassination of Admiral Carrero Blanco by ETA in December 1973 and the subsequent formation of the Arias Navarro government presented the reformist 'semi-opposition', and 'Tácito' in particular, with a serious dilemma. The new government's programme, outlined to the Cortes by Arias on 12 February 1974, represented not only the promise of a limited liberalization of the regime but also an attempt to bring the reformist 'semi-opposition' back into the fold. The reformists realized that their participation in a limited and ultimately ineffective liberalization could tarnish their democratic credibility, while their indifference was sure to condemn Arias's initiative to failure even before it was launched. What was more, the government's intentions were theoretically compatible with the reformist principle according to which the foundations of the transition to democracy would have to be laid—partially at least—during Franco's lifetime.

The so-called 'spirit of 12 February' was largely the creation of Pío Cabanillas and Antonio Carro, respectively the Minister of Information and the Minister of the Presidency. The 'tácitos' Oreja, Gabriel Cañadas, and Royo Villanova were invited to work under Cabanillas, while two others, José Ramon Lasuén and Luis Jádenes, joined Carro's team. The latter could also have included Ortega y Díaz Ambrona, who preferred to become director of the Institute of Administrative Studies instead. Another 'tácito', Lavilla, accepted a senior post in the Ministry of Industry.

The centre-piece of the Arias programme was undoubtedly the long-awaited legislation regulating the right of political association. Arias's speech reopened the debate concerning the nature of the Movimiento and the future role of 'political associations' within the Francoist political system. Since Spain's constitutional framework had remained virtually unchanged during the Carrero Blanco era, the reformists found themselves echoing the views defended by Manuel Fraga Iribarne and other 'aperturistas' (those in favour of 'opening' the regime) in the 1960s. 'Tácito' spoke for them all when it warned the government in June 1974 that 'the political associations must never be placed under the organized control of administrative structures parallel to those of the State. That is to say, we believe in associations which

may exist within the framework of certain principles, but not within the Movimiento understood as an organization.<sup>15</sup> Ortega y Díaz Ambrona, who had been asked to work on the project, set out to translate these views into concrete legislative proposals, but these were soon declared unsuitable by Movimiento officials.

The reformist team at the Ministry of Information was initially more successful. In Royo Villanova's opinion, 'shortly after our arrival the Press began to say more or less what it pleased . . . ideas and opinions which had not been discussed in public before began to be aired'. This is a somewhat over-generous view of the situation, given that many publications still ran into difficulties with the censors, but there undoubtedly existed greater freedom of expression than hitherto. Significantly, it was this facet of Arias's programme which irritated the hard-line sectors of the Francoist political class most.

'Tácito' found it increasingly difficult to reconcile its support for Arias with its commitment to reformism. In March 1974 the government attempted to expel the bishop of Bilbao, Antonio Añoveros, for authorizing a sermon read in every church of the diocese which was interpreted as a defence of Basque national rights. 'Tácito' reacted with caution, to the extent that Alvarez de Miranda accused the group of having sold out to the government. Another 'tácito', Jaime Cortezo, went even further, and left the group altogether.<sup>16</sup>

By late October, Arias could no longer stand up to mounting pressure to put an end to Cabanillas's liberalizing experiment, and the minister was asked to resign. The crisis had immediate consequences for 'Tácito'. Royo Villanova and Oreja came under intense pressure from those who wished them to stay, but they paid no heed. Ortega y Díaz Ambrona waited for several weeks in the hope that the new Estatuto de Asociaciones would prove acceptable, but resigned when he realized this was not to be.<sup>17</sup> Their reaction met the approval of most fellow 'tácitos', particularly those who had been reluctant to support the government earlier in the year. Nevertheless, a small minority, amongst them Osorio and Jáudenes, insisted that Cabanillas's fall did not seriously threaten the viability of the Arias programme, and saw no

<sup>15</sup> See 'El reto asociativo' (22 June 1974) and 'El marco constitucional del Derecho de Asociación' (12 July 1974).

<sup>16</sup> See 'Dos semanas de preocupación' (12 Mar. 1974). Fernando Alvarez de Miranda, *Del 'contubernio al consenso'* (Barcelona, 1985), 78. 'Tácito' had already advocated a clearer separation of Church and State in *Relaciones Iglesia-Estado* (3 July 1973).

<sup>17</sup> To the embarrassment of 'Tácito', neither Lavilla nor Jáudenes resigned.

reason why 'Tácito' should withdraw its support. In Osorio's opinion, Oreja and others were wrong to regard Cabanillas as the champion of their cause, for 'it should not be forgotten that it was he who stopped our article on the Añoveros crisis, which is why we published a weaker version'. These arguments failed to convince his friends, however, and on 31 October 'Tácito' published a highly critical article, written by Cañadas, which concluded: 'there was an opportunity to follow the path which had been outlined in the speeches and which we had defended. A different one was chosen . . . a political alternative ceased to exist yesterday'.<sup>18</sup>

The fears raised by the October crisis were confirmed two months later when the new Estatuto de Asociaciones was made public. At a special meeting held on 25 January 1975, 'Tácito' decided that in view of the Estatuto's limitations it would not form an 'association'. Only a small faction, led by Osorio, objected to this resolution, and later left the group to form their own 'association', Unión Democrática Española.

'Tácito's' rejection of the Estatuto reopened the internal debate as to the nature of the group and its future role. As Oreja wrote in April 1975, it was necessary to decide whether 'Tácito' was 'merely a platform where like-minded people of different political backgrounds come together on an informal basis, or whether the time has come to articulate a political group with its own discipline, programme, and organization'.<sup>19</sup> A majority of 'tácitos' favoured the second option, largely because they wished to help bring together the constellation of independent reformist personalities which cluttered the Spanish political scene. In the summer of 1975 'Tácito' was to play a key role in the creation of FEDISA, a reformist platform whose very existence spelt the failure of the Estatuto. The decision to institutionalize the group, however, necessarily entailed the departure of 'tácitos' such as Alvarez de Miranda and Caverio, who already belonged to a political party.

In the wake of the January meeting, 'Tácito' ceased to behave like a debating society and adopted the trappings of an embryonic political party. In April 1975 the group published its programme and articles in book form. This allowed prominent 'tácitos' to travel throughout the country giving numerous talks and press conferences, which led to the

<sup>18</sup> *El Estatuto de Asociaciones* (6 Dec. 1974).

<sup>19</sup> Internal 'Tácito' document 2, entitled 'Breve reseña de Tácito y reflexiones en el momento actual', dated 8 Apr. 1975, signed by Oreja.



setting up of small branches in Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, and elsewhere.

'Tácito' modified its strategy in other respects as well. The most important of these was the decision to forge closer links with the institutionalized opposition. Between February and April 1975 prominent 'tácitos' exchanged views with leaders of the Socialist Party (PSOE), various Christian Democratic parties (amongst them Ruiz Giménez's Izquierda Democrática and Gil Robles's Federación Popular Democrática), Social Democratic groups, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), and representatives of Catalan nationalism. Secret talks were also held, on a more informal basis, with Communist Party leaders in Spain and abroad, and with representatives of the Workers' Commissions (CCOO). That summer, an internal 'Tácito' document concluded: 'even though they do not believe in it, and even dislike it, a large sector of the opposition will support the reformist solution if it advances, and would certainly participate if it succeeded. Indeed they might not oppose it if the necessary contacts are made and adequate explanations are given.'<sup>20</sup>

The public statements of 'Tácito' during this period also became increasingly critical of the Arias government and its inability to prepare for the succession. Ortega y Díaz Ambrona set the tone at the Club Siglo XXI in February, when he declared: 'a democratization is still possible, but it is unlikely and will soon be unattainable'. Three months later, their articles had become positively alarmist: 'If in 1973 there was still some hope of a gradual evolution, today it is evident that anything short of immediate reform will mean accepting unforeseeable risks.' In private, 'tácitos' were even more explicit. An internal document observed: 'It is clear that reforms cannot be put into effect under the present head of state, both because of him and the groups which influence him. The opposition will never agree to negotiate with him and it is impossible to obtain foreign support or acknowledgement with Franco in power.'<sup>21</sup> This led them to advocate a solution already proposed by certain reformists in the wake of Franco's first illness, in mid-1974, namely Don Juan Carlos's accession to the throne during Franco's lifetime. With hindsight, Ortega y Díaz Ambrona and others readily acknowledge that this would have been highly counterproductive, but at the time it enabled 'Tácito' to dissociate itself publicly from those in power. Less than a month before Franco's death, 'Tácito' had

<sup>20</sup> Internal document 1.

<sup>21</sup> Internal document 1.

an article stopped for the first time. Written largely by Ortega y Díaz Ambrona, it defended the view that 'a monarchy for all Spaniards has to be a democratic monarchy'; only then would Franco's true successors, the Spanish people, regain their sovereignty. This proved excessively daring for the censors, and the group was taken to court. The case was later dropped, but the incident allowed 'Tácito' to pose—however briefly—as a victim of the regime's repressive legislation. By late 1975, therefore, 'Tácito' had ceased to behave like a 'semi-opposition' group in order to adopt many of the traits of an 'alegal' opposition proto-party.

Franco's death and Don Juan Carlos's proclamation as King of Spain in November 1975 marked the beginning of a new phase for 'Tácito'. Although it never supported the second Arias government, formed in December, with the enthusiasm it had shown for the first, 'Tácito' was once again associated with those in power. Osorio, who still regarded himself as a 'tácito' even though he no longer attended its meetings, was appointed Minister of the Presidency at the King's suggestion. Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, who had kept a low profile in the group, became Minister of Public Works. The new Minister of the Interior, Fraga Iribarne, asked the 'tácito' José Manuel Otero Novas to become his expert in domestic political affairs. Oreja, who remained one of the group's more influential figures, joined José María de Areilza at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

'Tácito' encouraged the new government to adopt a reformist strategy consisting of three successive stages. The first envisaged a 'liberalization' resulting in the recognition of all democratic rights and freedoms. This would be followed by a 'democratization', which would culminate in free elections to all representative institutions. The final stage, described as a 'substantive constitutional reform', would enable the newly elected (*de facto*) constituent assembly to consolidate a democratic constitutional framework.<sup>22</sup>

The group's optimism was such that at a meeting held in January 1976 it was agreed that in view of the imminent democratic elections the group's top priority should be the creation of a political party. In spite of the presence of prominent reformists in the cabinet, however, the new government did not perform as expected, largely due to the attitude of Arias himself. This induced 'Tácito' to become increasingly explicit as to the type of democracy it wished to see installed. The group's original programme, circulated in April 1975, had included

<sup>22</sup> 'La tarea del nuevo Gobierno' (12 Dec. 1975).

amongst its objectives a bicameral system with a lower house elected by universal suffrage. This suggests that at that stage it did not discard the possibility of an indirectly elected upper house (Senate). A year later, however, 'Tácito' explicitly rejected the constitutional reform contemplated by the second Arias government, which envisaged the creation of such a Senate. Similarly, although its programme had clearly stated that 'sovereignty resides in the people and only those who are its legitimate representatives may govern', 'Tácito' did not explicitly demand that future governments be accountable to the Cortes until the Arias reform failed to meet its approval on this issue. In private, 'Tácito' had given these matters a good deal of thought, however. By mid-1975, the group had already decided it wanted to see an electoral system based on principles of proportional representation, incorporating correcting devices to prevent the proliferation of small parties. The system adopted two years later met these requirements entirely.<sup>23</sup>

The second Arias government's policy towards the democratic opposition, which sought to isolate the Communist Party and the radical left from their more 'moderate' allies also forced 'Tácito' to take a stand. In an article published in September 1974, the group repudiated 'those who defend fratricidal violence, Communism and any other form of totalitarianism'. Similarly, an internal document circulated in mid-1975 advocated the temporary exclusion of the Communist Party from the official political scene during the early stages of democratization. In April 1976, however, precisely a year before its legalization, 'Tácito' announced its support for Communist participation in the first elections. True to form, this was defended as a necessary concession to political realities, rather than as a matter of principle.<sup>24</sup>

In view of the government's failure to make significant progress on the road to full democratization, Arias's dismissal in early July 1976 raised the hopes of 'Tácito' once more. On this occasion, they were amply rewarded. Following the King's advice, Arias's successor, Adolfo Suárez, relied on Osorio, whom he promoted to the vice-presidency of the cabinet, to help him pick his ministers. Suárez felt he could not call on his own friends and colleagues, virtually all of whom had made careers in the official Movimiento structure. In spite of

<sup>23</sup> *Tácito*, p. 46. See 'No, pero' (1 Feb. 1976); 'La piedra de toque del reformismo' (26 Mar. 1976); 'Qué reforma?' (30 Apr. 1976).

<sup>24</sup> 'Puntualizaciones' (20 Sept. 1974); internal document 1; 'Extrañas alianzas' (2 Apr. 1976).

earlier differences of opinion, Osorio even approached Alvarez de Miranda, though he was later turned down. In all, no fewer than seven of the twenty ministers in Suárez's first government were (or had been) active 'tácitos'. As Suárez himself has admitted, it was to be the most cohesive and effective government over which he ever presided.<sup>25</sup>

'Tácito' read the difficulties encountered by the second Arias government as proof of the need for a more daring approach. Under Arias, Fraga had sought to introduce limited reforms which would allow for the election of a democratic congress without modifying other aspects of the Constitution. This approach had failed, and as early as April 1976 'Tácito' had begun to think in terms of a single reform law which would lead to the election of a democratic Cortes conceived as a *de facto* constituent assembly. As we saw earlier, such a law would have to meet the approval of the existing Cortes before it could be put to the nation in the form of a referendum. In the final years of his rule, Franco had congratulated himself for having left everything 'tied and well tied down'; the response of 'Tácito' could almost be summed up in a single article heading: 'Consult the nation, and cut the knot' (23 April 1976).

'Tácticos' in office played a major role in the events leading to the first democratic elections in June 1977. Between July 1976 and the spring of 1977 Osorio was Suárez's most influential advisor. Lavilla, the cabinet's leading constitutional expert, played a major role in drafting the decisive law of political reform, passed by the Cortes in November 1976. As Minister of Justice, he also planned and carried out the delicate legal operation whereby the major political parties—including the Communists—were legalized in the spring of 1977. Otero Novas, one of Suárez's closest advisors during this period, acted as the government's middleman in its dealings with the democratic opposition, as he had already done under Fraga. Another 'tácito', Enrique de la Mata, Minister for the Sindicatos, established contacts with the leaders of the illegal trade unions which paved the way for their legalization and the recognition of fundamental trade union rights in April–May 1977. Throughout this period, Oreja, Suárez's Foreign Minister, displayed an intense diplomatic activity which helped to establish the government's credibility abroad.

<sup>25</sup> Those associated with 'Tácito' were: Eduardo Carriles (Treasury), Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo (Public Works), Landelino Lavilla (Justice), Enrique de la Mata (Sindicatos), Marcelino Oreja (Foreign Affairs), Alfonso Osorio (Presidency), and Andrés Reguera (Information and Tourism).



The presence of prominent 'tácitos' in a government committed to far-reaching reforms left the rest of the group free to pursue its other, complementary goal, namely the creation of a political party capable of winning the first elections and of contributing to the consolidation of the emerging democratic system.

In spite of its origins, 'Tácito' had long since dismissed the idea of creating a Christian Democratic party in Spain. Most of its members were opposed to the existence of confessional parties on principle, and it was generally feared that the Christian Democratic label would alienate many of the group's potential constituents.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the more influential members of the Catholic hierarchy, notably Cardinal Tarancón and his *alter ego*, José María Martín Patino, had publicly discouraged the creation of such a party. According to Osorio, who was in favour of uniting the large though divided Christian Democratic family, Martín Patino, a personal friend of Cabanillas, was largely responsible for frustrating his plans.

By April 1976, 'Tácito' was already working towards the creation of a centrist, mass-based party, capable of attracting support from all sectors of society. The main concern of 'Tácito' was to bring together the numerous existing centrist groups and 'parties', and it was not going to allow strictly ideological considerations to stand in its way. In keeping with the pragmatism of 'Tácito', the future party's ideological purity would have to be sacrificed in order to maximize electoral support. Though fundamentally inspired in the principles of Christian humanism, 'Tácito' hoped it would appeal to Liberals, Social Democrats, and independents, as well as Christian Democrats.<sup>27</sup>

These ideas weighed decisively in the formation of the Partido Popular, formally launched in December 1976. Two months later, the last article of 'Tácito' announced the group's formal integration in the new party. Ironically, the 'conservative' and 'progressive' factions which had left 'Tácito' in early 1975, and which had gone on to form Unión Democrática Española (Osorio, Eduardo Carriles, Andrés Reguera) and the Partido Popular Demócrata Cristiano (Alvarez de Miranda, Cavero, Ortega y Díaz Ambrona) respectively, had come together in the autumn of 1976 as a new Partido Demócrata Cristiano.

<sup>26</sup> *Tácito*, p. 28. The use of the Christian label was explicitly rejected in 'La familia y el matrimonio' (27 Feb. 1976). For an attempt to account for the absence of a Christian Democratic party in Spain, see C. Huneeus, *La Unión de Centro Democrático y la transición a la democracia en España* (Madrid, 1985), 175–90.

<sup>27</sup> See 'Un gran partido interclasista' (9 Apr. 1976), 'El gran Partido Popular' (11 June 1976), and 'Un partido para una situación nueva' (18 June 1976).

The latter joined the Partido Popular in mid-January 1977, thereby forming the nucleus of the future Centro Democrático. Indeed the only politically active 'tácitos' who did not join the new party were those who had left the group in 1974–5 but had remained loyal to Ruiz Giménez. The latter would also have joined Centro Democrático, had it not been for Gil Robles's party, their partners, who insisted they should fight the elections as a clearly defined Christian Democratic alternative.

With the full approval of the more influential ex-'tácitos', in March 1977 party leaders sacrificed Centro Democrático's independence as well as their most popular colleague, Areilza, in return for unlimited government backing and Suárez's leadership. This did not come as a surprise. The party identified fully with the government's achievements—as 'Tácito' had done—and Suárez needed a suitable electoral vehicle. What was more, most of its leaders, the ex-'tácitos' included, were no longer certain of winning the elections on their own. This pact led to the somewhat improvised creation of Unión de Centro Democrático, the party which was to govern Spain until 1982.<sup>28</sup>

'Tácito' was right to assume that a majority of Spaniards would support (or at least tolerate) a gradual, non-violent transition to democracy after Franco's death on the understanding that neither their physical integrity nor material prosperity would be seriously endangered. The group was also correct in anticipating the King's role as a 'modernizing monarch', and in assuming that the armed forces—as an institution—would not interrupt the democratizing process as long as it was undertaken in accordance with the Francoist constitution, and by members of the pre-existing political élite, accountable only to the King.<sup>29</sup> 'Lastly, it was quick to see that the anti-Francoist opposition forces would discover—if they did not already know it—that the 'ruptura' they had envisaged was beyond their reach and would therefore agree to collaborate with the King and his cabinet in establishing a truly democratic system of government. The idea of a 'reforma pactada' ('negotiated break') was already implicit in the group's programme and strategy by mid-1975. Unlike most of those who theorized about the post-Franco era during the final years of the

<sup>28</sup> Twelve ex-'tácitos' won a seat in the Cortes in 1977, including Alvarez de Miranda, who became president of the new Congress. Three others (Lavilla, Oreja, and Osorio) sat in the Senate as royal nominees. A total of 25 ex-'tácitos' were elected to the Cortes in 1979.

<sup>29</sup> The role of the 'modernizing monarch' is discussed in S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), ch. 3.

regime, 'Tácito' saw its members rise to positions of authority and implement their ideas with considerable success. Having belonged to both the 'semi-' and 'alegal' oppositions, 'Tácito' was ideally suited for the task of bridging the gap between the pre-existing political élite and that which had been denied a lawful and public existence until 1977. In doing so, its members made a significant contribution to the climate of mutual respect and generosity which marked Spain's transition to democracy.