

King of all the Spaniards:
An Analysis of the Spanish Transition to Democracy
Through the Words of Juan Carlos I

By

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Introduction

Transitions to democracy, always notable political events, have acquired an even greater importance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially in the context of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as a world superpower. Perhaps the most fascinating transition of the second half of the twentieth century occurred in Spain, in which democracy emerged from an authoritarian regime in a wholly unique manner. Historically there had been two paths towards the creation of democracy: they were either born out of catastrophe or were the product of an “incremental, centuries-long process”.¹ However, the Spanish transition to democracy was a relatively peaceful process without a clear break from the previous regime that occurred over a short period of time. Some have argued that this process is best understood as “transition through transaction”, that is, that the success of democracy was a product of the negotiation and compromise between the various factions of Spanish politicians.² While this is true, especially of the specific legal changes that were enacted over this period, there are broader aspects to the success of democracy that overshadow the importance of these transactions. Most important is the simple fact that not only all political factions, but the majority of the general population were brought into this process, so that the newly born democracy was truly a product of all Spaniards on both the left and the right and of varying economic and cultural backgrounds. The success of the transition therefore was most

¹ Donald Share, *The Making of Spanish Democracy*, Democracy in the World (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1986). ix.

² *Ibid.*, ix-x.

of all a product of the government's and the King's ability to get these sides to at least tacitly accept the desired reforms without antagonizing any one faction.³

Another important dynamic of the Spanish transition to democracy is the role of the King, Juan Carlos I de Borbón. In 1975, upon succeeding to the throne, the King was widely seen as, and legally was, the heir to the recently deceased dictator, Francisco Franco. In the few short years of the transition, however, Juan Carlos shed this link to the previous, authoritarian regime and became widely associated with the new Spanish democracy. And, especially following his role in stopping an attempted coup in 1981, the King was not only associated with democracy, but was seen as its savior, as the key protagonist in its consolidation in Spain. Even years after the success of the democratic transition, Juan Carlos still enjoys a significant amount of popular support for the role he played in this process. And while some historians tend to exaggerate the King's role, claiming that the success of democracy was basically attributable to the sheer will of Juan Carlos, it is clear that he played an important part in the transition. The key questions then, are 1) What allowed the Spanish transition to be successful in a way never before accomplished in a transition to democracy?

³ Several historians have problematized the use of the word "transition" as a "misleading name, which suggests the falsehood that democracy was an inevitable consequence of Francoism." Instead, this was a period of time in which decisions were made and chances were taken based on the current social and political situation. Democracy was therefore not a foregone conclusion, but the result of this series of decisions and chances. Indeed, "The Spanish transition is phenomenal precisely because so much could have – and historically has – 'gone wrong.'" However, while the term "transition" may encourage this sort of teleological view of the time period, I use it in this paper as simply a useful and well-known description of this process with the hope that those who read this will understand that such historical outcomes are not predetermined or inevitable in any way. Javier Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*, trans. Anne McLean (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2011). 91.

Laura Desfor Edles, *Symbol and ritual in the new Spain* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 8.

and 2) How did Juan Carlos successfully transition from “Franco’s heir” to the “the pillar of democracy”?

The answers to both these questions are very much intertwined. The unique success of the Spanish transition and of Juan Carlos’s personal transition was based around the success of a broad strategy outlined before the death of Franco by Juan Carlos and his long-time tutor and advisor Torcuato Fernández-Miranda. Fernández-Miranda called this strategy “de la ley, a la ley”, or “from the law, to the law”; its goal would be to enact democratic reforms through the existing Francoist institutions. This path of reform was designed as an alternative to the options preferred by the political left and right at the time of Franco’s death. The left hoped for a *ruptura*, a break with the previous regime, while the right aspired to continuity, an extension of Francoism under a new face. These divisions were key to the transition, as they represented an extension of the conflicts of the Civil War;

“La continuidad franquista era la reivindicación política de los vencedores de la guerra civil. La revolución política defendida por los rupturistas era la bandera de los vencidos. La reforma fue el punto de encuentro que permitió alumbrar una democracia con los defectos que se quiera, pero libre de un defecto inevitablemente letal: una nueva división entre vencedores y vencidos. La reforma fue, pues, cauce de reconciliación y el origen de una democracia nacida sin grandes enemigos, precisamente porque no hubo grandes derrotados.”⁴

Thus this strategy of reform was conceived with the awareness that such reforms would be carried out under the shadow and memory of the Civil War; there would be a constant fear during this period that any one decision could incite a spiral of violence and bloodshed similar to that which consumed the country forty years prior.

⁴ Pilar and Alfonso Fernández-Miranda Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1995). 29.

It was the knowledge of this possibility, of the fragility of a peace between the victors and the vanquished of the Civil War, that informed the creation of Juan Carlos's strategy to reform the existing Francoist infrastructure with the participation of all sectors of Spain's population. By avoiding both *continuismo* as well *ruptura*, the King hoped to oversee an evolutionary turn towards democracy in which reforms were gradually put into place without alienating or excluding any one side.

This thesis seeks to understand the implementation and success of this strategy through an analysis of the words and actions of the King, Juan Carlos I de Borbón. The King's speeches are both a reflection of this strategy as well as an integral part of it. The King's goal was to oversee the process of installing democratic reforms through the existing Francoist infrastructure; therefore, his words would need to placate the reformist ideals of the left while reassuring the right and the Armed Forces that nothing significant would change. As such, "This ability to combine elements of both continuity and change was to become a hallmark of Juan Carlos's official statements."⁵ These speeches also reflect the evolutionary nature of the transition. That is, as more and more democratic reforms were put in place the King began to insert more and more democratic rhetoric into his speeches. In addition, Juan Carlos would tailor his speeches to his audience and that particular political moment, so that at various times he would make greater promises of democratic freedoms, or more references to the legacy of Franco or to the importance of discipline for the Armed Forces. Thus the King's speeches not only formed part of the strategy previously outlined with Fernández-Miranda but also reflected how this

⁵ Charles Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996). 159.

strategy was put into place and help to demonstrate why it was so successful. This then, was the key to the success of the Spanish transition to democracy. And while Juan Carlos did not simply will the country towards democracy, he played an integral role in maintaining the participation of all sides and overseeing the creation of an authentic democracy of all Spaniards.

Chapter 1: Franco's Heir (1969-1975)

“Que nadie tema que su causa sea olvidada; que nadie espere una ventaja o un privilegio. Juntos podremos hacerlo todo si a todos damos su justa oportunidad. Guardaré y haré guardar las leyes, teniendo por norte la justicia y sabiendo que el servicio del pueblo es el fin que justifica toda mi función.”⁶

⁶ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación," (Speech1975).

Prior to becoming King in 1975, Juan Carlos was widely seen as the heir to Francisco Franco and the person who would ensure the continuity of the Fundamental Laws and the *Movimiento Nacional* after the death of the Caudillo. However, while he appeared numerous times at Franco's side during official ceremonies, the future King was also privately expressing his intentions not to fulfill this role as heir to the Generalísimo's regime as well as communicating these intentions with foreign governments and peoples. Although he could not distance himself from Franco and the actions of Franco's regime while the dictator was still alive, Juan Carlos knew that the future monarchy could not be one of only the Francoists, but would have to incorporate others from the left into a new government.

According to the Law of Succession, put in place in March of 1947, Spain had been a nominal monarchy for a little more than twenty years before Juan Carlos was officially declared Franco's successor. However, the country had really been a monarchy without a monarch, in which Franco acted as a regent and could essentially elect his preferred candidate to succeed him as Head of State.⁷ Throughout these years Juan Carlos was the favorite to secure the title of heir to Franco, as he had been living in Spain under the guidance of the Caudillo for some time. During this time Franco often made attempts to link Juan Carlos with his regime in the public eye, and disassociate the prince from the legacy of Don Juan, Juan Carlos's father. Indeed, "Throughout this entire process the prince would benefit from Franco's direct supervision and guidance. 'I consider it important that the people grow accustomed to seeing the prince with the Caudillo', he wrote to Don Juan, referring to himself in

⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 8.

the third person as was his habit, ‘so that they may begin to understand what he represents for the nation’.⁸ To accomplish this, Juan Carlos would consistently participate in public ceremonies, such as the annual military parade celebrating the victory in the Civil War, or an event in 1959, when he “laid a laurel wreath at Alicante prison, where the founder of the Falange, [José Antonio] Primo de Rivera, had been shot in 1936.”⁹ Thus even prior to accepting the mantle of successor to Franco, Juan Carlos was very much linked with the dictator in the mind of the public.

This link became official in July of 1969, as Franco officially named Juan Carlos as his political heir following the Law of Succession, and the future King accepted this appointment. The very ceremony itself was designed to make this association, as Juan Carlos, dressed in his naval officer’s uniform, moved from the left of the Caudillo to his right during the ceremony, symbolizing his acceptance of his role as Franco’s heir.¹⁰ In his speech to the Cortes, the Spanish legislature, Franco made sure to emphasize that the future monarchy, one installed by the current regime, drew its legitimacy from the Civil War and would simply be a logical continuation of the Fundamental Laws and the *Movimiento Nacional*. Franco then proposed that Juan Carlos would be his preferred candidate to succeed him as Head of State, and that he was sure that this nomination “asegura la unidad y la permanencia de los Principios del Movimiento Nacional...”¹¹ The Cortes approved this decision nearly unanimously. For his part, Juan Carlos accepted his nomination as successor to

⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁹ Ibid., 18-19.

¹⁰ "El Jefe del Estado propondrá hoy a las Cortes al sucesor," *Ya*(22/07/1969), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹¹ "Texto del mensaje leído personalmente por su excelencia el Jefe del Estado," *ABC*(23/07/1969), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

Franco, stating that, “Plenamente consciente de la responsabilidad que asumo, acabo de jurar como sucesor a título de Rey, lealtad a su Excelencia el Jefe del Estado y fidelidad a los principios del Movimiento Nacional y Leyes Fundamentales del Reino.”¹² In addition, the future King of Spain made clear, “que recibo de su Excelencia el Jefe del Estado y Generalísimo Franco la legitimidad política surgida el 18 de Julio de 1936 en medio de tantos sacrificios, de tantos sufrimientos, tristes, pero necesarios, para que nuestra Patria encauzase de nuevo su destino.”¹³ We can see that Juan Carlos did not waver here in officially endorsing the current regime and assuring the members of the Cortes that as Franco’s heir he would ensure the continuation of the Fundamental Laws. He acknowledged that this regime’s legitimacy derived from the Nationalists’ victory in the Civil War, thus perpetuating the divisions that war had inspired and sharpened. He insinuated with this statement that his future reign would be one of only the victors of the war, and not all the Spaniards. However, Juan Carlos had originally desired to temper this message of fidelity to Franco with a statement in which he stated that, ““quiero hacer expresa mi devoción filial e inmenso cariño a mi padre, cuya lealtad y amor a España conozco mejor que nadie. Y de quien he recibido todo lo que soy, de su permanente lección de patriotismo,”” but the Caudillo forbade it.¹⁴

Actually, despite his clear affirmation of the Fundamental Laws and his loyalty to Franco and the Franco regime, Juan Carlos already knew at this point in

¹² "Discursos del Príncipe en las Cortes," *ABC*(24/07/1969), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 53.

1969 that he did not want to help with the continuation of the current regime, and was already considering opening up Spain's politics to a more democratic system.¹⁵

Above all, Juan Carlos consulted his long time teacher and the future President of the Cortes, Torcuato Fernández-Miranda. Juan Carlos was very concerned that in swearing an oath of loyalty to the Fundamental Laws and the *Movimiento Nacional*, he could later be accused of perjury or of breaking his word if he decided to enact some sort of democratic reform. In response, Fernández-Miranda reminded him that, “Al jurar las Leyes Fundamentales, las juráis en su totalidad; por lo tanto, también juráis el artículo 10 de la Ley de Sucesión, que dice que las leyes pueden ser derogadas y reformadas. Luego aceptáis desde ellas mismas esa posibilidad de reforma.”¹⁶ He convinced Juan Carlos that swearing loyalty to Franco and the *Movimiento* on accepting the post of Franco's successor would not contradict a later turn towards democracy after the death of the Caudillo. Such a turn was exactly what Juan Carlos had in mind on being named heir to Franco. While neither Juan Carlos nor Fernández-Miranda had any specific plan for how such a change would be accomplished, the two developed a broad strategy for a turn towards democracy based on Fernández-Miranda's belief that the Fundamental Laws allowed for their own reform. Fernández-Miranda called this strategy “de la ley a la ley”, or “from the law, to the law” and explained it in length in his personal notes:

“Era un cambio de una ley, yo no negaba su posibilidad, exigía que se hiciera de acuerdo con la ley. Si se quiere modificar la Ley Orgánica del Estado hágase como las Leyes Fundamentales dicen. Mi tesis estaba en la reforma según ley, aceptando en toda su hondura el problema, y aceptando las normas de reforma que las mismas Leyes

¹⁵ Ibid., 50.

¹⁶ Ibid., 54.

Fundamentales establecían. El tema estaba en que el intento de modificar las Leyes Fundamentales mediante ley ordinaria suponía una ruptura que anulaba la ley y abría paso a las peores aventuras. El cambio por vía de interpretación no era una reforma, ni era una evolución. Era volver, una vez más, a la mala historia del borrón y cuenta nueva, aunque se hiciera vistiendo el muñeco y con gesto de inocencia. Frente a ello ya hacía una afirmación pública de lo que quería que quedara constancia: Las Leyes Fundamentales eran reformables y había que tener el valor, si se quería la reforma, el cambio o el aperturismo, de plantearlo claramente por la vía señalada en la cláusula de reforma establecida en las Leyes Fundamentales.”¹⁷

Fernández-Miranda envisioned a path of reform that was an evolution of the existing structure, not a break with Francoism. While the key to this strategy was the fact that the Fundamental Laws could be reformed, it also described a broader plan for a transition period in which democratic reforms would be enacted through the existing Francoist institution in an attempt to maintain the participation of all sides in the process. There was no avoiding the fact that Franco had installed the monarchy Juan Carlos would now lead, but both the future King and Fernández-Miranda knew that a successful postfrancoist monarchy needed to be democratic, not authoritarian. Only in that way would such a government be accepted by the rest of Europe. Juan Carlos explained it best when he told Fernández-Miranda that,

“La Monarquía no puede ser azul, falangista, ni siquiera puede ser franquista. La Monarquía viene de atrás, de los otros reyes, de la Historia y no se puede concretar en las actuales instituciones excesivamente parciales [...] el futuro del país se encuentra en manos de muy pocas personas. No será nada parecido a lo que es ahora. La Monarquía tiene que ser democrática. Es la única manera de que pueda ser aceptada por Europa y por el mundo y de que pueda subsistir. Además es una institución que tiene que justificarse desde sí misma. No puede aceptar vinculaciones ni parcialidades. La Monarquía del 18 de julio es un contrasentido. Es absurdo pensar en

¹⁷ Ibid., 83-84.

una Monarquía azul. La Monarquía viene de la Historia, de los otros reyes.”¹⁸

While there was no specific plan for the construction of such a monarchy, one of all the Spaniards, not just of a faction, the King and Fernández-Miranda were in agreement on its necessity. In fact, Fernández-Miranda admits that the King was assured of this necessity as early as 1969, as he agreed to become the heir to Francisco Franco.¹⁹

As a result, the period from 1969 to 1975 represented an interesting contradiction for Juan Carlos, as the future King was both seen as the true heir to Franco and at the same time began to clarify some of his democratic intentions. For many Spaniards, it was hard to distinguish Juan Carlos in any way from his association with Franco. In fact, “He had little or no popular support. Years of glum, mute appearances next to Franco had led to the widespread assumption that he had neither intelligence nor courage.”²⁰ These appearances continued during this period, as Juan Carlos would consistently appear at Franco’s side during the annual military parade in Madrid as well as most of Franco’s big public speeches. In addition, when Franco’s prime minister and confidant Luis Carrero Blanco was assassinated in December of 1973, Franco was too ill to attend the funeral, and Juan Carlos took his place. Indeed, “demonstrating his courage at a time when fear was inundating the regime, he insisted on doing so, despite warning about a further ETA attack. Wearing the uniform of Rear-Admiral, he walked alone at the head of the procession that

¹⁸ Ibid., 55-56.

¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

²⁰ Paul Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004). 253.

followed the gun-carriage carrying the coffin.”²¹ In part this act showed Juan Carlos’s dedication to what he saw as his duty as heir to Franco, and it served to further link him with the current regime as well as remind Spaniards of his connections with the military. In addition however, such acts were also a reflection of the close personal relationship Juan Carlos had developed over the years with Franco. Despite the differences between the Caudillo and Don Juan, Juan Carlos had grown quite close to Franco, so much so that as Franco became more and more ill towards the end of his life, one of his doctors told Juan Carlos that, ““One of the key things that he needs is affection, the concern of all those that he thinks of as his family. And I think that, in that group, he includes Your Highness and your children.’ Rather moved, Juan Carlos replied, ‘Very good. I’ll do what I can. Everything I have, I owe to him.’”²² It was this relationship and this image of Juan Carlos as a loyal and dutiful servant to the Francoist regime that was projected and believed by many in Spain. For example, Santiago Carrillo, leader of the Spanish Communist Party (the PCE), gave a brutal condemnation of Juan Carlos’s chances for enacting democratic reform when he stated:

““¿Qué quiere que le diga de Juan Carlos? Es una marioneta que Franco manipula como quiere, un pobrecito incapaz de cualquier dignidad y sentido político. Es un tontín que está metido hasta el cuello en una aventura que le costará cara. ¿Qué posibilidades tiene Juan Carlos? Todo lo más ser rey durante unos meses. Si hubiese roto desde hace tiempo con Franco, habría podido encontrar una base de apoyo. Ahora ya no tiene ni ésa, y es despreciado por todos. Yo preferiría que hiciese las maletas y se marchara junto a su padre

²¹ Ibid., 280.

²² Ibid., 295.

diciendo: ‘Remito la Monarquía en manos del pueblo.’ Si no lo hace, acabará mal. Corre incluso el riesgo de que lo maten.’”²³

Therefore, whatever Juan Carlos’s democratic intentions, years of silent appearances at the Caudillo’s side and his official status as successor to Franco made such change seem highly unlikely. This was not only because of the strength of the Francoist system, but also because there was no real evidence as to the true nature of Juan Carlos’s intentions.

In private and outside of Spain however, Juan Carlos began to make clear his intentions to open up the political system of Spain upon becoming King. We have already seen that the future King spoke with Torcuato Fernández-Miranda about potentially reforming the political system, as neither believed that a monarchy totally loyal to the *Movimiento Nacional* of Franco could not be consolidated after the dictator’s death. In addition, Juan Carlos gave a series of interviews to American newspapers in which he began to express these intentions. Speaking to *The New York Times*, Juan Carlos admitted that he had “‘begun to let his acquaintances know that he does not accept the role apparently chosen for him: that of docile successor’, and had privately admitted ‘that he has no intention of presiding over a dictatorship’”; he was aware that, “‘I am Franco’s heir but I am Spain’s heir as well.’”²⁴ Thus Juan Carlos felt not only his duty to Franco as his successor, but also a duty to the people of Spain, two responsibilities that appeared to him to be significantly different, and possibly even contradictory. He made clear in this interview that he wished to rule Spain as “King of all the Spaniards”, something that, as he had discussed with

²³ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 41.

²⁴ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 254-55.

Fernández-Miranda, could not be achieved with a Francoist monarchy.²⁵ The future King became even more specific in an interview with *The Chicago Tribune*, in which he stated that, “‘Franco has never, ever interfered in my life. He leaves me entirely free. I believe that the people want more freedom. It is all a question of knowing how fast. There will be no question of an explosion as long as the constitution is in force. I am ready to use all means within the fundamental laws.’”²⁶ Thus we can see that even prior to becoming King in 1975, Juan Carlos already had a vague idea of how he wanted to proceed upon succeeding Franco, although this plan contained no specifics, and was unknown to a large majority of the Spanish people, who did not expect significant change under the leadership of Juan Carlos.²⁷ One reason for this was that neither of these interviews, or others like them, were allowed to be printed in the Spanish press.^{28,29}

While he was beginning to hint in private and abroad at his intentions for democratic change, Juan Carlos was also very aware such changes were expressly against the will of Franco, even though Fernández-Miranda believed them to be technically legal under the Fundamental Laws. In particular, Franco made clear that he was ardently opposed to the formation of any kinds of political associations, which he believed would lead to the creation of political parties, a move he saw as extremely dangerous for the country’s stability. In fact, “‘He left the Prince in no doubt about his opposition to any kind of liberalization,” stating that “‘There will be no

²⁵ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 47.

²⁶ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 265.

²⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 55.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 265.

associations as long as I live and I will do everything possible to make sure that there are none after: they would just be political parties.”³⁰ While the Caudillo admitted that the system itself was open to improvement, he believed that the core principles of the *Movimiento* were “permanent and unchangeable”, and would never allow for the creation of a party system.³¹ Thus while Juan Carlos did not see himself as betraying the Fundamental Principles, which he had sworn to uphold, in some sense he would later betray the wishes of Franco, and even in speaking to American newspapers about his democratic intentions the future King was going behind Franco’s back to express these controversial views. In doing so, Juan Carlos was beginning to show foreign nations that he was not simply a puppet of Franco, with no mind of his own. Despite this, Juan Carlos had not yet been able to show the Spanish people that he could be a statesman, a potential leader of Spain, or anything outside of a monarchist façade for a Francoist authoritarian regime.

An opportunity to show his independence from Franco and at the same time consolidate his influence within the Armed Forces presented itself with a crisis in the Spanish Sahara in early November of 1975, just weeks before Franco’s death. While conflict over control of Spanish Sahara with Morocco and to a lesser extent, Mauritania, had been brewing for some time, in early November the Moroccan government organized an enormous “Green March” of over 300,000 unarmed civilians in Spanish Sahara. As tensions rose, there was concern that the section of the Spanish Army stationed there might fire on the civilians or be forced to retreat (something that the Armed Forces would have felt as a great blow to their honor). In

³⁰ Ibid., 267.

³¹ Ibid., 268.

the face of this situation, Juan Carlos made the decision to fly to the large Saharan city of El Aaiún and help to negotiate a Spanish withdrawal from the region. When the future King announced this intention in a cabinet meeting, “The politicians were thunderstruck, but the soldiers present were delighted by this demonstration of courage and initiative by their new Commander-in-Chief. It echoed the gesture of the dictator, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, who, in October 1924, took personal responsibility for a major Spanish withdrawal in Morocco.”³² Such an action clearly took politicians by surprise, as they had only seen Juan Carlos as a simple tool used by Franco to ensure the continuity of his regime, and not as an independent, forceful statesman of Spain. A few days later, “True to his word, on 2 November Juan Carlos landed his own aircraft at El Aaiún, where he spent the day in the company of the garrison stationed there, whom he assured that ‘we shall do whatever is necessary so that our glorious Army may preserve its prestige and honour intact’.”³³ Thus this impromptu trip to the Sahara had two intentions; to demonstrate Juan Carlos’s independence from Franco and his own personal charisma, as well as to increase his popularity within the Armed Forces, something that Juan Carlos knew would be extremely important when he became King. And, while he was successful in negotiating a Spanish withdrawal from the region, it is worth noting that the entire sequence of events was somewhat choreographed by Juan Carlos using his contacts in the United States to arrange for a private agreement on the withdrawal before the future King even left for the Sahara.³⁴ Overall though, this show of independence had

³² Ibid., 314.

³³ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 77.

³⁴ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 314-15.

its desired effect. One Spanish newspaper wrote that, “planteándose en El Aaiún ayer a mediodía para hacer visible su solidaridad con nuestro Ejército de África, nos parece algo más que un noble y valeroso gesto personal ... Quiere decirse que la interinidad de hoy es ... el primer escalón de la reinstauración real y objetiva del Trono de España.”³⁵ This sentiment was echoed in another article, when the author wrote that this action was so impressive, that “Los historiadores situarán quizá el comienzo del ‘posfranquismo’ el día en que don Juan Carlos de Borbón, Jefe del Estado en funciones tomó la decision inapelable de visitar al Ejército del Sahara.”³⁶ Clearly Juan Carlos had succeeded to some extent in shedding the common image that he was simply a puppet of Franco, as some saw this visit to the Sahara as the beginning of the restoration of the monarchy in Spain. In addition, the move was wildly popular among the Army stationed in the Sahara, who saw in the future King’s initiative a concern for and a loyalty to the Armed Forces. This was therefore a move made with the knowledge that Franco had been ill for months, and that the moment of his succession to the throne could not be very far away; although, of course, even Juan Carlos did not know how soon this would be.

After weeks of severe illness, Francisco Franco died on November 20, 1975. The Generalísimo’s authoritarian regime had ruled Spain from 1939 to 1975, spanning four decades; despite the long decline in the health of the Caudillo, his death left the country in a state of shock and immense uncertainty. A large percentage of

³⁵ "Dignidad en el Sahara," *Informaciones*(3/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

³⁶ Guillermo Medina González, "La herencia política de Franco," *Informaciones*(8/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

the population had never known any other leader; therefore, Franco's death marked not just the death of a man, but of an era. This fact was acknowledged in the newspapers published in the next few days, which wrote: "La Historia ha muerto, viva el Rey,"³⁷ and, "Franco es ya Historia de España ... significa el fin natural de toda una época que, con justicia, llevará su nombre."³⁸ There was a general consensus as well, especially among the more right-leaning newspapers, that the era defined by Franco would be remembered as one of peace and prosperity.³⁹ Two days after the death of the Caudillo, Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón was crowned King of Spain.

This dramatic change of leadership left the country with one looming question: would the era initiated by the death of Franco and the coronation of Juan Carlos as King of Spain constitute a continuation of the ideas and policies of the Francoist regime or a transition to a new kind of government, one that moved away from the authoritarianism that had characterized the previous forty years? Some clearly supported and expected this policy of continuation. For example, "don Blas Pinar dice, según un despacho de la agencia Cifra: 'Si. Franco, el hombre, ha muerto, el símbolo, lo que Franco representa, seguirá viviendo. Por eso, cuando Franco ha muerto, yo quiero gritar con más fuerza que nunca: 'Viva Franco'.' En el despacho

³⁷ Ricardo de la Cierva y Hoces, "Última crónica: La Historia ha muerto, viva el Rey" *Gaceta Ilustrada*(20/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

³⁸ Emilia Ors, "La nueva etapa que comienza deberá caracterizarse por la participación ciudadana en la cosa pública," *Informaciones*(22/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

no figura ninguna referencia al sucesor a título de Rey.”⁴⁰ Others commented that, ““son muchísimos los españoles cuyo deseo más íntimo era que Franco pudiese continuar indefinidamente como conductor de España,” and ““Soy optimista sobre el inmediato futuro de España, ya que la persona del Príncipe, a título de Rey de los españoles, será garantía de continuidad de la obra del Caudillo.””⁴¹ Alejandro Rodríguez Valcárcel, president of the Cortes, believed, as did many members of Francoist Cortes that “it was the Prince’s task to succeed Franco only in his ceremonial functions” and that the task of political initiative “would be the job of the Francoist élite who considered themselves to be the executors of the Caudillo’s will.”⁴² In this sense Juan Carlos was seen as a puppet installed by Franco to mask the continuation of his authoritarian regime with the appearance of change. By attempting to “establish” a monarchy, Franco was trying to repurpose an historic Spanish institution as a means for preserving his political legacy.

The opposition on the left, notably the Communists and the Socialists, communicated in a much different tone that they held similar expectations for the continuity of the Franco regime and did not believe Juan Carlos capable or willing to enact any sort of democratizing change. Santiago Carrillo, leader of the PCE, prior to Franco’s death had called the future king, “Juan Carlos the Brief” and declared that, ““Juan Carlos will be the regime’s perpetuator. What is more, he has discredited himself in the eyes of the Spanish people by selling his father down the river for the

⁴⁰ "Después de Franco, el Rey," *Informaciones*(22/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 309-10.

sake of the crown; not even the monarchists will forgive him for that’.⁴³ The Spanish socialist party, the PSOE, felt similarly skeptical of Juan Carlos’s ability to distance himself from the previous regime arguing that it was ‘impossible not to identify the monarchy with authoritarianism’.⁴⁴ Charles Powell explains their reservations particularly well:

“As far as the Socialists were concerned, Juan Carlos’s monarchy could therefore represent nothing but the continuity of the Franco regime. For fifteen years the prince had ‘been at the dictatorship’s complete disposal’, never raising his voice against the repression, corruption, and injustice it had endangered, and he should therefore be regarded as ‘an accessory to the crimes committed on behalf of the *Movimiento*’. Since 1969 he had done little more than travel abroad and carry out ‘demagogic visits’ to Spanish towns and villages, usually in the wake of a natural disaster. The rest of his time had been taken up by the armed forces and the Franco family, ‘with which he identifies more closely than his own’. Juan Carlos’s monarchy would thus be another Francoist institution, in view of which the only option left to decent Spaniards was to ‘fight against it with the same strength and vigour with which we have fought the dictatorship’.”⁴⁵

Thus both the left and the right saw Juan Carlos as the successor to Franco and to the authoritarian legacy his regime left behind. The death of the Caudillo left these two sides, at war since the 1930s, with the understanding that the future held simply a continuation of the past, in which the government of Juan Carlos perpetuated the domination of the victors of the Civil War over the vanquished, who prepared to continue the fight and resistance that had characterized their last half century of existence.⁴⁶ However, the great majority of Spanish society existed somewhere

⁴³ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 69.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁶ Clearly the reality of the Civil War was much more complex than one large bloc versus another, but for the purposes of this paper I will simply treat these as those

between these two extremes of ideology, and for most people the coronation of Juan Carlos marked not a decisive continuation nor a break with the past, but a sure sign that a new era had been inaugurated.⁴⁷ Whether or not some form of continuity or democracy lay in the future, it was evident that *some* change was on the horizon; the death of Franco meant that things would not, could not, remain the same.

On November 22 Juan Carlos was officially crowned King of Spain. Dressed in his military officer's uniform, Juan Carlos gave his first official speech as King, drawing on what he saw as the greatness of Spain's past, the possibilities for its future, and acknowledging both the left and the right of the political spectrum, as well as the Armed Forces. Right away, the King both broke with and affirmed his place as the successor to Franco, stating that the legitimacy of his rule came from "la tradición histórica, las Leyes Fundamentales del Reino, y el mandato legítimo de los españoles."⁴⁸ Thus he noted that the throne was inherited legally from the Fundamental Laws instituted by Franco and the previous regime, but also drew on the historical tradition of the monarchy as a Spanish institution. In Franco's view, the monarchy initiated by Juan Carlos would have represented the "establishment" of an institution, not the restoration of the Bourbon line, or, as Juan Carlos alluded to here, the "re-establishment" of the monarchy.⁴⁹ In both acknowledging the Francoist and historical origins of his rule, Juan Carlos emphasized this idea of "re-establishment",

who supported Franco and those who opposed him, two sides that became, with the success of Franco's rebellion, the victors and the vanquished of the war.

⁴⁷ Cierva y Hoces, "Última crónica: La Historia ha muerto, viva el Rey".

⁴⁸ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

⁴⁹ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 36.

a position in between the two extremes previously proposed.⁵⁰ In addition, the King noted that his legitimacy derived also in part from the will of the Spanish people, no doubt a reference to the opinion polls conducted by the Franco regime during the years after his appointment as successor, although the accuracy of these polls is somewhat suspect as they were conducted under an authoritarian regime.⁵¹ After acknowledging the sources of his legitimacy, the newly inaugurated king paid tribute to Franco, strongly emphasizing the importance of the Caudillo to the recent history of the Spanish nation and noting that it was due to the dedication and loyalty of Franco that, as many wrote, the previous era would surely bear his name. The King declared:

“El nombre de Francisco Franco será ya un jalón del acontecer español y un hito al que será imposible dejar de referirse para entender la clave de nuestra vida política contemporánea. . . . Su recuerdo constituirá, para mí, una exigencia de comportamiento y de lealtad para con las funciones que asumo al servicio de la patria. . . . España nunca podrá olvidar a quien como soldado y estadista ha consagrado toda la existencia a su servicio.”⁵²

These words of praise for the legacy of the Caudillo reflect a clear connection to the past and a nod to those who hoped for a continuation of the particular type of loyalty and service that Franco embodied. However, immediately following this praise for Franco, Juan Carlos stated that “el cumplimiento del deber está por encima de

⁵⁰ This position was first established by Juan Carlos in a statement published shortly before he was officially named Franco’s successor in January of 1969. In the statement, “the prince spoke of the need to sacrifice individual claims for the sake of the dynasty, and intimated his willingness to endorse the regime’s political laws and principles. In his determination to please both legitimists and Francoists, the prince cleverly referred to the future ‘re-establishment’ (*reinstauración*) of the monarchy, and not its restoration (*restauración*) or mere establishment (*instauración*).” *ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

⁵² Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

cualquier otra circunstancia. Esta norma me la enseñó mi padre desde niño, y ha sido una constante de mi familia, que ha querido servir a España con todas sus fuerzas.”⁵³

By acknowledging the influence of both Franco and his father, Don Juan, Juan Carlos did not firmly place himself on either side of the decades-long conflict between these two men who had so strongly shaped his upbringing and political life⁵⁴.

After addressing the political legitimacy of his reign and acknowledging the legacy of the Caudillo as well as the influence of Don Juan, Juan Carlos began to articulate the “nueva etapa” that would begin with, essentially, the speech he was currently giving. The King emphasized a few sentences in particular that illustrated the basic message of his speech and the motto that Juan Carlos hoped would come to define his rule and the institution he personified: *El rey de todos los españoles*.⁵⁵ The King declared that, “nuestro futuro se basará en un efectivo consenso de concordancia nacional,” and “Que nadie tema que su causa sea olvidada; que nadie espere una ventaja o un privilegio. Juntos podemos hacerlo todo si a todos damos su justa oportunidad. Guardaré y haré guardar las leyes, teniendo por norte la justicia, y sabiendo que el servicio del pueblo es el fin que justifica toda mi función.”⁵⁶ Here Juan Carlos made reference once again to the primacy of the Spanish people under his future reign as king; he would not seek to impose his personal will on the country but

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Juan Carlos had actually tried to include a similar acknowledgment of Don Juan in his speech accepting the role of successor to Franco, but the Caudillo forced him to eliminate these sentences beforehand. Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 43.

⁵⁵ "Puntos del mensaje especialmente recalcados ", *Informaciones*(22/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁵⁶ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

act as a moderator, assuring that justice and equality marked the core ideals of this new era. In this speech the King also began to define what he meant by “King of all the Spaniards.” In stating, ‘Que nadie tema que su causa sea olvidado; que nadie espere una ventaja o un privilegio’ Juan Carlos seemed to acknowledge that during the previous regime there were those whose cause *was* forgotten and those who *did* gain an advantage under the authoritarian system of Francisco Franco. In short, he admitted that the Franco regime was a government of the far right in which the left was willingly ignored and excluded, a government of the victors, not the vanquished. In doing so Juan Carlos began to indicate that he intended to open up the government of the country to more than simply the incumbents of Franco’s regime. There is no specific mention of the opposition or how far this opening might extend, but the opportunity for change, for democratization, had been laid on the table. Politically therefore, “King of all the Spaniards” meant the king of both the right and the left, both the *vencedores* and the *vencidos* of the Civil War. However this message also had a significance beyond the strictly political realm. Juan Carlos emphasized that, “Un orden justo, igual para todos, permite reconocer dentro de la unidad del Reino y del Estado las peculiaridades regionales, como expresión de la diversidad de pueblos que constituyen la sagrada realidad de España. El Rey quiere serlo de todos a un tiempo y de cada una en su cultura, en su historia y en su tradición.”⁵⁷ While Juan Carlos did not use the word “nationalities” (a statement that would have infuriated the far right and the Armed Forces), he demonstrated his willingness to view the different cultures and histories that exist within the greater national unity of Spain. For

⁵⁷ Ibid.

citizens of Cataluña, the Basque Country, or Galicia for example, this statement represented yet another indication of a dramatic change in the direction and scope of the national Spanish government. While the individuality of these regions had been ignored and subjugated to the Francoist ideal of one homogenous, Catholic Spain, here was indication that some level of recognition would be achieved under Juan Carlos's rule.

Another indication of the King's possible democratic intentions was his statement that "Una sociedad libre y moderna requiere la participación de todos en los foros de decision, en los medios de información, en los diversos niveles educativos y en el control de la riqueza nacional. Hacer cada día más cierta y eficaz esa participación debe ser una empresa comunitaria y una tarea de gobierno."⁵⁸ Again, this introduction of democratic vocabulary marked a decided break from the policies of the Franco regime and an effort to demonstrate to the opposition that Juan Carlos would not endorse the continuity of the *Movimiento Nacional* and an authoritarian system of government. At the same time however, the King attempted to maintain a certain level of support from the right by addressing the Army, "ejemplo de patriotismo y disciplina" and ending his speech by making clear his stance on an important Francoist issue: the status of Gibraltar. While he did not mention the territory by name, Juan Carlos concluded that, "No sería fiel a la tradición de mi sangre si ahora no recordase que durante generaciones los españoles hemos luchado por restaurar la integridad territorial de nuestro solar patria."⁵⁹ Thus, Juan Carlos, in his first speech as King, attempted to both emphasize his intentions for change as well

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

as for continuity, promising a turn toward democratization as well as a desire to honor the legacy of the Caudillo and maintain certain aspects of his regime. In this way the speech can be seen as “part of a complex juggling act of different sets of symbols, those of the Francoist past and those of the democratic future.”⁶⁰ Juan Carlos knew that only as “Rey de todos los españoles” could he successfully navigate the transition period that lay ahead, and that the new government he initiated could not be a government of the right or the left, of Madrid or Castilla, but of all Spain, both politically and geographically.

The King also understood that the Armed Forces were perhaps the most important actor in ensuring the success of his new regime. In addition to singling out the military during his coronation speech, Juan Carlos also subsequently addressed the Armed Forces directly. As a result of the previous fifty years of Spanish history, the Armed Forces had become completely loyal to the Generalísimo and both fearful and hateful of the Communists and, to some degree, the Socialists. Therefore in his address Juan Carlos struck a conservative tone much more in line with the advocates of *continuismo* and the perpetuation of the Francoist regime. He praised the Armed Forces as “los depositarios de los más altos ideales de la patria y la salvaguardia y garantía del cumplimiento de cuanto está establecido en nuestras Leyes Fundamentales, fiel reflejo de la voluntad de nuestro pueblo,” and honored the Caudillo as “un ejemplo único de amor a España y sentido de la responsabilidad.”⁶¹ This could not be more different from the message of the King’s proclamation

⁶⁰ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 323.

⁶¹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a las Fuerzas Armadas," (Speech 1975).

speech. While the first praised Franco's memory but made no specific mention of the Fundamental Laws, the address to the Armed Forces describes these same laws as the faithful reflection of the will of the Spanish people, a phrase that seems to concede the supremacy of the authoritarian Francoist government and ignore both the left opposition as well as the various regional identities within Spain who had no say in the creation of these laws. We can assume that as Juan Carlos's position with regard to the future of the country had not changed between the delivery of these two speeches, he consciously adapted the content of these speeches to his audience, attempting to reassure both sides in his proclamation speech while informing the military that their role had not changed with the death of Franco and that "como español, como soldado y como Rey me siento orgulloso de contar con vuestra adhesión y lealtad."⁶² In addition, Juan Carlos made his first official act as King of Spain a visit to the resting place of Franco's remains, an homage that thousands of Spaniards had paid in the two days following the death of the Generalísimo.⁶³

In large part it seems as though these speeches had their intended effects, as those more moderate and left-leaning citizens saw the King's words as an indication of a new era in Spanish history, while those on the right maintained their belief in the continuity of the Francoist regime. Observers commented that "El discurso del Rey, en una primera oída, me produce una sensación de esperanza," and that "estamos plenamente en un tiempo nuevo . . . sin ninguna suerte de exclusiones o

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Adiós del pueblo español a Franco," *Informaciones*(22/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

proscripciones civiles por causa de clase, origen regional, o ideología.”⁶⁴ In fact, many also saw in the coronation of Juan Carlos an invigoration of youth into a political system full of veterans of the Civil War and Franco’s rise to power. These people felt that, “con el nuevo Rey llega al poder una nueva generación.”⁶⁵ In a sense this new generation that came to power with the King brought with it the promise of a bright and different future. The promise of political participation meant that for the first time in half a century there was hope in Spain that the Spanish population could begin to look to the future without being tied down by the weight of the past, by the divisions of the Civil War. Alberto Martín Atajo, a former Foreign Minister for Franco, noted the importance of this participation when he stated in an interview with *Informaciones* that “Sólo mediante la participación política podrá evitarse el monopolio del poder por parte de grupúsculos y oligarquías que se pretendan con derechos especiales a la sucesión del franquismo ... el futuro pertenece a todos.”⁶⁶ In addition, the King got an unexpected show of support from the archbishop of Madrid, Tarancón, who declared that, “La Iglesia no patrocina ninguna forma ni ideología política, y si alguien utiliza su nombre para cubrir sus banderías, está usurpándolo manifiestamente,” and that the Church “exigirá a todas que estén al servicio de la comunidad entera, que respeten sin discriminaciones ni privilegios los derechos de la persona, que protejan y promuevan el ejercicio de la adecuada libertad de todos y la necesaria participación común en los problemas comunes y en

⁶⁴ "Juramento y proclamación de Don Juan Carlos como Rey de España," *Informaciones*(22/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁶⁵ "Jamás un Rey podrá tener tantos ciudadanos dispuestos a participar (Mundo Diario)," *ABC*(23/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁶⁶ Ors, "La nueva etapa que comienza deberá caracterizarse por la participación ciudadana en la cosa pública".

las decisiones de gobierno ...”⁶⁷ Clearly Juan Carlos was able to inspire a degree of hope for a more democratic future with his words in front of the Cortes on November 22, communicating his desire to act as “King of all the Spaniards”.

While this message was certainly aimed at a particular sector of the Spanish population, others were more skeptical. Some continued to believe that Juan Carlos would perpetuate the regime he inherited from Franco while others doubted his ability to break away from this title as “heir to Franco”; they believed that a monarchy, especially one newly created by the Caudillo could not succeed in winning over the opposition on the left. And, based on the initial reactions of the PCE and the PSOE, they would have appeared correct. Santiago Carrillo “described Juan Carlos as ‘nothing more than the representative of Francoism beyond the dictator’s open grave’, and the Communist weekly *Mundo Obrero* greeted his proclamation with the headline: ‘No to an imposed king’” while the Socialists thought that, “‘the Francoist clan surrounding Juan Carlos intends to use him as a liberalizing front in order to obtain the support of foreign governments’, but the people will not be fooled by the substitution of the yoke-and-arrows [the Falangist symbol] with a crown’.”⁶⁸ In addition to these reactions from the established opposition, others expressed their belief that “‘El porvenir siempre tiene su base en el presente, y Franco ha hecho el presente e iniciado el futuro.’”⁶⁹ While Franco’s death brought about the possibility of change, the weight of forty years of authoritarian rule made it difficult to envision a future that was dramatically different from the present, not to mention a present that

⁶⁷ Manuel Jiménez de Parga y Cabrera, "Los caminos del futuro," *La Región*(28/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁶⁸ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 84.

⁶⁹ "Juramento y proclamación de Don Juan Carlos como Rey de España".

was created by the Caudillo himself. The prospect of a democratic, parliamentary monarchy seemed unlikely not only because it would have to originate from the designated heir of the dictator, but because “son muchas ya los años que el pueblo español ha vivido lejos de una forma tradicionalmente monárquica...”.⁷⁰ However, the republican option also seemed remote; Spain had lived so long under the authoritarian regime of Franco that a large portion of its population had not experienced any other form of governance. Therefore, many expressed a point of view similar to José Luis López Aranguren, when he stated that, “Yo no soy monárquica. La mayoría de los españoles, tampoco. Es difícil participar, en 1975, en la creencia mística en la Monarquía . . . Pero la mayor parte de los españoles tampoco son republicanos . . .”, and that “La Monarquía viene tras cuarenta años de franquismo . . . El continuismo no solo es indeseable, es también imposible. Pero seamos realistas.”⁷¹ We can then see that in this atmosphere Juan Carlos’s proclamation speech fit in perfectly as an attempt to provide positive reinforcement to all sides of the political spectrum while refraining from declaring himself for any particular faction. The success of this message, and the portrayal of Juan Carlos as “King of all the Spaniards”, is evident in the reactions of the population. Those who hoped for a democratizing change in direction saw in the new King a hope for the future, those who desired continuity heard the King praise the legacy of Franco, the greatness of Spain and the importance of its territorial integrity, and those who were unconvinced of the possibilities of the transition process remained skeptical. The

⁷⁰ Fernando Jáuregui, "El sucesor tendrá que buscar nuevos apoyos," *Informaciones*(22/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁷¹ José Luis López Aranguren, "La tarea inmediata de la monarquía," *Informaciones*(29/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

general spirit of uncertainty, hope and loss was summed up by one madrileño, who exclaimed: ““Qué feliz me siento, a pesar de mi gran dolor por la muerte de Franco.””⁷²

The first important personnel decision for Juan Carlos as king would be the position of prime minister (presidente del Gobierno) and the person of Carlos Arias Navarro. Arias represented in many ways the continuation of the Franco regime, in part due to his political beliefs as well as his visible role as the reader of the Caudillo’s final statement to the people of Spain. However it seemed imprudent to dismiss Arias immediately following the death of Franco, as this would have been seen as a sure sign of *ruptura*, alienating all those still loyal to the established regime and ensuring their increased hostility to further change. In fact,

““La Monarquía –decía el Príncipe – tiene que dar desde el principio una imagen nueva. No puede seguir todo igual y Arias es un condicionamiento.’ El Príncipe comienza a resignarse: ‘No creo que pueda cambiar a Arias si tengo que prescindir de Rodríguez de Valcárcel para nombrarte a ti presidente de las Cortes. Al menos, en los primeros momentos, tendría que seguir.’ ‘Pero no le gusta esta idea –escribe Torcuato – aunque la acepta.””⁷³

Thus resigned to the necessary continuation of Arias as prime minister, at least for the foreseeable future, Juan Carlos officially confirmed him in this position. In this confirmation, “La intención del Rey es evidente: el anuncio público de la confirmación de Arias en su cargo implica un previo ofrecimiento de dimisión, de modo que se entiende que si Arias sigue no es por voluntad de Franco sino por

⁷² Pilar Trenas, "El pueblo en la calle vitoreó a los Reyes," *ABC*(23/11/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁷³ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 92.

voluntad del Rey.”⁷⁴ This was then an attempt to portray the confirmation of Arias as prime minister as a positive for the new regime of Juan Carlos. They hoped that in this public announcement they could separate the implicit association between Arias and the government of Franco. Unfortunately for Juan Carlos, this “reclamation” of Carlos Arias failed, as the public saw the confirmation of the prime minister as evidence of the continuity of the Franco regime and an impediment to democratic progress. It appeared that, “El ritmo de los cambios es pausado. Habrá frustración entre quienes consideraban condición ‘sine qua non’ los nombres y las caras nuevas,” a fact that some saw as evidence that, “los sectores más conservadores, cautelosos, y desconfiados hacia el cambio controlan en parte determinados centros de poder institucional que se manifiestan decisivos.”⁷⁵ Given the apparent strength of this “bunker” element, “lo que significa Arias es, en estos momentos, el mayor cambio posible sin ruptura del sistema institucional.”⁷⁶ We can see in these reactions a reflection of the thoughts of Juan Carlos: Arias could not remain prime minister if true change were to take place in Spain due to his connection with Franco, but at the same time the King could not afford to alienate the conservative elements in the government by immediately doing away with Arias Navarro. For the majority of the population however, the confirmation of Arias did not represent the most change possible without *ruptura*, but evidence of continuity and a temporary failure of Juan Carlos to promote and instigate change.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 118.

⁷⁵ Guillermo Medina González, "El primer Gobierno del Rey," *Informaciones*(6/12/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

In addition to Carlos Arias Navarro, Juan Carlos also faced the challenge of shaping the rest of a new government that would be both a continuation of the government of Francisco Franco and the beginning of his own regime. Above all the King desired to place his former teacher and advisor, Torcuato Fernández-Miranda, in a place of great influence in order to facilitate the democratic reforms he eventually wished to carry out.⁷⁷ The King had originally considered Fernández-Miranda as a replacement for Carlos Arias Navarro, but when presented with this idea, Juan Carlos's long time advisor replied that, "Al hombre político que soy le gustaría más ser presidente del Gobierno, pero puedo seros mucho más útil como presidente de las Cortes."⁷⁸ Therefore, in addition to naming Fernández-Miranda as head of the Council of the Realm, Juan Carlos used his influence as Head of State to install Torcuato as president of the Cortes.^{79,80} Despite this success, Juan Carlos was still forced, as in the decision regarding Arias Navarro, to maintain a certain amount of Francoist legitimacy within the new government, and while he managed to put in place certain new faces and names in different positions, the appointments were generally perceived as deference to the strong Francoist elements that remained in power. Now, "with hindsight, it is possible to see what Juan Carlos had in mind with various appointments. At the time, however, the presence of Falangist apparatchiks like Suárez, Martín Villa and Solís ... led the ever-widening opposition coalitions to

⁷⁷ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 90.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ The Council of the Realm would be a very important institution in the transition process as this body was tasked with providing a *terna*, or a list of three names, to the King from which he would pick a new prime minister.

⁸⁰ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 86.

denounce what they saw as a poorly camouflaged exercise in continuity.”⁸¹ One newspaper commented on these changes by writing that, “Por un lado, el país había esperado una renovación al completo del equipo gubernamental, pero ciertas manipulaciones del bunker torpedearon otros intentos.”⁸² Thus after the excitement of Juan Carlos’s coronation it seemed as though the fears and expectations of the opposition parties had been confirmed. The King had squandered an opportunity for real change; the makeup of the new government reflected the strength of the influential Francoist elements still in power and the inability or unwillingness of Juan Carlos to instigate democratic change. However, it now seems clear that these appointments reflect, as one newspaper correctly noted, the most change possible without the *ruptura* of the entire institutional system. During these first weeks and months of his rule Juan Carlos was forced to walk a fine line between providing enough promise of change to satisfy the left opposition while ensuring that the right that he would continue the fundamental policies of the Francoist regime.

⁸¹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 333.

⁸² "Por qué sigue Arias," *Cambio* 16(15/12/1975), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

Chapter 2: Dismantling Francoism (1976)

“La Monarquía hará que, bajo los principios de la democracia, se mantengan en España la paz social y la estabilidad política, a la vez que se asegure el acceso al poder de las distintas alternativas de gobierno, según los deseos del pueblo libremente expresados.”⁸³

⁸³ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey al Congreso de los Estados Unidos de América," (Speech1976).

Given the skepticism with which the public viewed the continuation of Carlos Arias Navarro as prime minister, Juan Carlos decided to make a visible effort to build popular support for the monarchy as well as demonstrate his dedication to being King of “todos a un tiempo y de cada uno en su cultura, en su historia y en su tradición,”: he would make his first official visit as King of Spain in February of 1976 to Cataluña.⁸⁴ In Barcelona he reiterated this desire to be “Rey de todos los ciudadanos y de todos los pueblos que constituyen la sagrada realidad de nuestra patria.”⁸⁵ Before going into the main content of his speech however, Juan Carlos made one particular remark that showed that he was not ready for a complete break from the Francoist regime that named him King: he stated that, “El Rey que – en expresión de las Leyes Fundamentales – es el representante supremo de la nación ...”. This small phrase completely changed the meaning of this sentence, linking not just Juan Carlos but the monarchy itself to the Francoist establishment. While many would no doubt implicitly assume that a king would, at least nominally, be the greatest representative of his nation, Juan Carlos specified here that this definition of the monarch did not come from the historical tradition of monarchy as an institution or from popular support, but from the laws that, put in place by Franco, “re-established” the monarchy in Spain. In essence he implied that he was the “supreme representative” of the Spanish nation because the Fundamental Laws declare him such.

Despite this acknowledgment of his ties to the Franco regime, Juan Carlos went on to emphasize his affection for Cataluña. He counteracted the reference to the

⁸⁴ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

⁸⁵ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en el Ayuntamiento de Barcelona," (Speech1976).

Leyes Fundamentales by declaring that as King, “me siento con orgullo sucesor de los Condes de Barcelona, de Urgell, de Girona, de Osona, de Empuries, de Besalú y de tantos otros; y heredero de los Reyes de la Corona catalano-aragonesa...”, heir to a long tradition of monarchy in Cataluña, giving credit to the region for its great role in Spanish history. He went even further by stating that “la participación de todos en los asuntos públicos” was the “base de una democracia auténtica orientada al bien común.”⁸⁶ Here again was the assertion from Juan Carlos that he was dedicated to greater participation from the Spanish people of all regions, but this time, the King went further, adding that this participation was the basis for building a functioning, authentic democracy. While he did not make any specific statements as to the nature of this proposed democracy, there can be no doubt as to the king’s intentions towards the political future of Spain. As many had suspected, the possibility of strict *continuismo* was impossible. There was as yet no conclusive evidence that Juan Carlos would not be a puppet of Francoist politicians, but it seems evident that Spain would not remain under an authoritarian dictatorship and that some sort of democratizing would occur under Juan Carlos’s rule.

After declaring his democratic intentions Juan Carlos made clear beyond any doubt that this was a new era in Spain, that things would be dramatically different in the country as a whole and in Cataluña in particular. In the middle of his speech in Barcelona the King switched from Castilian to Catalan, stating that Cataluña would have a special role to play in this task of democratic transition, acknowledging what he saw as the great tradition of independence and liberty in the region and concluding

⁸⁶ Ibid.

that this essential quality of the Catalan people “puede ser el espejo en que España se mire.”⁸⁷ Even more significant than the content of this portion of the speech was the switch in languages. Catalan was “a language those in power had not spoken in public for almost forty years” and, “Given that, during the Civil War and after, Franco had endeavoured to annihilate Spain’s regional nationalisms, this was a deeply emotional moment. Juan Carlos’s gesture was a startling announcement that things were really changing and it provoked scenes of wild enthusiasm.”^{88,89} Newspapers reported that, “Grandes aplausos interrumpieron y rubricaron el discurso, en catalán y castellano... Don Juan Carlos I... recibió, igual que Doña Sofía, nuevas y muy cálidas demostraciones de fidelidad de la muchedumbre.”⁹⁰ Thus we can see that in such trips around Spain Juan Carlos used symbolic actions, in addition to his words, to demonstrate his democratic intentions and reinforce the message of his proclamation speech, that he would be the King of all the Spaniards, of each region in its history, culture and tradition. The King again strengthened this idea on the second day of his visit, when he “met the leading Catalan cleric, Cardinal Jubany, and visited the monastery of Montserrat, traditionally regarded as the fount of Catalan culture and thus of nationalist opposition to Madrid.”⁹¹ As this quote reveals, in reaching out to Cataluña and acknowledging the importance of Catalan identity Juan Carlos attempted to position his government as one of reconciliation, as a government that

⁸⁷ José Baró Quesada, "Los Reyes de España inician su primera visita oficial a Cataluña," *ABC*(17/2/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁸⁸ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 95.

⁸⁹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 337.

⁹⁰ Baró Quesada, "Los Reyes de España inician su primera visita oficial a Cataluña".

⁹¹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 337.

had moved beyond the divides of the Civil War, a government of the *vencedores* and the *vencidos*.

In another gesture that reflected the change he wished to initiate, Juan Carlos went against the advice of his government to visit the region of Baix Llobregat, an area that had just the day before ended the longest registered strike in Cataluña since 1939.⁹² In the region's capital of Cornellá, the King spoke to the workers of the area, assuring them that, "el Rey siento como propios los problemas del mundo del trabajo. ... Las Leyes Fundamentales dicen que España constituye una Monarquía social, y es mi deber cuidar de que así es (...) . Estais seguro de que se os reconocerán y podrán en aplicación todos vuestros derechos como ciudadanos y como trabajadores."⁹³

This speech represented yet another attempt by Juan Carlos to bridge the gap between his position as the nominal heir to Francisco Franco and those who Franco antagonized and ignored during his four decades of dictatorship. In making the trip to Cornellá Juan Carlos went, quite literally, out of his way to emphasize his dedication to repairing these relations that had divided the country following the Civil War of the 1930s. At another stop in the city of Lérida, the King concluded by declaring, "Homes i dones de Lleida: ¡Visca Catalunya! ¡Visca Espanya!"⁹⁴ Again, it would have been inconceivable for Franco or anyone from his regime to end a speech with "Viva Cataluña", let alone make that declaration in Catalan. As with his speech in Barcelona, this statement marked a clear sign that things were changing in Spain, and

⁹² Enrique Sopena Daganzo, "Positivo balance del viaje de los Monarcos a Cataluña," *Informaciones*(23/02/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

⁹³ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en Cornellá," (Speech1976).

⁹⁴ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en Lérida," (Speech1976).

that Juan Carlos seemed intent on raising his popularity among sectors of the population previously ostracized under Francoist rule. Some would argue that he was successful in this endeavor, as “a poll carried out at the end of May by the Catalan left-wing Republican group, *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, placed Juan Carlos top of the list with 69 per cent of those interviewed declaring him to be the most popular political figure.”⁹⁵ However, while this poll, carried out two months after the King’s visit suggests a rising popularity for the King, Juan Carlos still faced stoic opposition from the PCE. In fact, “The king’s brave performance [in Baix Llobregat] failed to impress the Catalan Communists ... who condemned the visit in strong terms.”⁹⁶ Thus, while Juan Carlos may have made some headway in raising his popularity among the general population it was evident that until specific, tangible results of democratization were achieved, the organized left, the PCE and the PSOE, would not publically support the King’s government.

Juan Carlos concluded his tour of Spain with a visit to Galicia, making a special stop at the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela for the festival of Saint James. In his official speech to the city, the King acknowledged the religious reasons for his visit, stating that “Venimos en peregrinación a Compostela para hacer un acto de fe y agradecer al Apóstol, en nombre de la nación española, su protección,” while also emphasizing his desire to interact with the people of Galicia.⁹⁷ The King also repeated the message of his other speeches around the country that he desired to understand the region’s specific problems. And, much like his speech in Barcelona,

⁹⁵ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 338.

⁹⁶ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 95.

⁹⁷ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en el Ayuntamiento de Santiago de Compostela," (Speech1976).

Juan Carlos switched, in the middle of his speech, to the local dialect from the traditional Castilian. Speaking in Gallego, the King spoke of the virtues of the Galician people and called the plaza on which the cathedral of Santiago stands the “fuego espiritual de España”.⁹⁸ Finally, the King ended by declaring, “¡Viva Galicia! ¡Viva España!”, again recognizing the individuality and uniqueness of each of Spain’s regions. In addition, the King spoke a few words on July 25th in an offering to Saint James, as did Ángel Suquía, Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela. As well as making the traditional remarks regarding the saint and the faith of the Spanish nation, Juan Carlos also referenced the staunch Catholicism of his predecessor, stating that, “Muchos Reyes de España, mis antecesores, tuvieron la honra venir a venerar vuestras santas reliquias; y el Generalísimo Franco, que me precedió en la Jefatura del Estado, os presentó personalmente esta ofrenda en varias ocasiones.”⁹⁹ Such a reference put Franco within the historical tradition of the leaders of Spain as well as the tradition of Spanish Catholicism. More importantly, both Juan Carlos and the local archbishop “hablan pronunciado una vez en cada uno de los discursos la palabra reconciliación.”¹⁰⁰ In attempting to become “King of all the Spaniards” the word “reconciliation” represented an extremely important message for Juan Carlos. As both terms imply, the new King wished to initiate an era in which all sectors of Spanish society were united under one government after the division that had defined the Franco years. In a final moment of symbolism, the King and Queen paid a visit to

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey con motivo de la ofrenda al Apóstol Santiago," (Speech 1976).

¹⁰⁰ Ismael Fuente Lafuente, "Santiago: S.M. el Rey presentó la Ofrenda Nacional al Apóstol," *ABC*(27/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

Franco's widow while still in Galicia, affirming the closeness of relations between Juan Carlos and the Caudillo and providing another visible link between the two families.¹⁰¹ Thus within Spain Juan Carlos reached out to various regions in attempt to build his popular support among the general population, although amidst the democratic rhetoric remained his ties to Franco, and the lack of real reform ensured the continued opposition of the organized left.

Between his travels throughout Spain, Juan Carlos also made time for a trip abroad, visiting the United States in early June 1976 as part of a celebration of the country's bicentennial. In doing so, Juan Carlos became the first Spanish monarch to set foot on American soil. In some ways this trip served a similar purpose to those around Spain, that is, to build the King's popularity and garner support; however, Juan Carlos's speeches in the United States also demonstrated certain key differences between his various destinations. Juan Carlos gave the most important speech of his visit on June 2nd to a joint session of Congress. In large part, the King spoke of the historic connections between both Spain and the Spanish monarchy and the United States, focusing on Spain's role in the discovery and establishment of the country and emphasizing the strong and cordial relationship the countries maintained. As was appropriate for the bicentennial celebration, and perhaps for his own motives, Juan Carlos focused in addition on the long tradition of freedom, liberty and democracy in the United States, stating that, "Su filosofía, inspirada en el respeto a la libertad del hombre y a la soberanía del pueblo, dio vida y forma a vuestra nación, cuya

¹⁰¹ "Diálogo abierto de Juan Carlos I con el pueblo de Galicia," *El País*(27/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

fundación ahora celebráis y celebramos todos los países amigos.”¹⁰² After making clear his respect and admiration for the democracy and liberty embodied by the United States and its history, Juan Carlos spoke of Spain, and here, away from the borders of his country the King made greater strides to distance himself from the regime of Francisco Franco and show his democratic allies that Spain, although a much older country, would hope to follow the American example of liberty and freedom for all citizens. The King began by noting that two thirds of the Spanish population was young than forty years old and that this youth created a society that was “nuevo, dinámico, enérgico, austero, y trabajador.”¹⁰³ And, after acknowledging the success of the Franco regime in stabilizing and invigorating the Spanish economy (although without a direct mention of Franco), Juan Carlos spoke to the political future of Spain in terms clearer than any he had previously used, declaring his democratic intentions:

“ningún obstáculo se opondrá decisivamente a que nuestra comunidad española siga adelante trabajando por la creación de una sociedad cada vez más próspera, más justa y más auténticamente libre. La Monarquía española se ha comprometido desde el primer día a ser una institución abierta en la que todos los ciudadanos tengan un sitio holgado para su participación política sin discriminación de ninguna clase y sin presiones indebidas de grupos sectarios y extremistas. (...) La Monarquía hará que, bajo los principios de la democracia, se mantengan en España la paz social y la estabilidad política a la vez que se asegure el acceso ordenado al poder de las distintas alternativas de gobierno, según los deseos del pueblo libremente expresados.”¹⁰⁴

This selection of Juan Carlos’s speech represents a dramatic display of democratic rhetoric unlike any previously used in his trips around Spain. However, the King

¹⁰² Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey al Congreso de los Estados Unidos de América."

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

built up to the moment in which he unequivocally revealed these intentions, beginning with an assertion that Spanish society would become more prosperous, just and “authentically free”, and adding that participation in politics would be encouraged without discrimination. At this point, Juan Carlos had not declared anything that differed dramatically from his proclamation speech, in which he also advocated liberty, justice and the participation of the public, albeit with more deference to the legacy of Franco. However, the King then declared the Monarchy would operate “under the principles of democracy” and would “ensure the orderly access to power of distinct political alternatives”. Thus Juan Carlos made clear that the principles of democracy would be those that guided the political strategy of his government and the future of Spain, and allowed for the possibility of the incorporation of oppositional political parties (although it is not at all clear at this point whether or not the Communist Party would be included in these “political alternatives”). Obviously such a declaration, made in excellent English, drew great applause and support from the audience of senators and representatives.^{105,106}

Therefore, despite an oblique reference to the positive results of the Franco regime and another to the importance of Spain’s “territorial integrity”, that is, reacquiring Gibraltar, Juan Carlos made quite the impression on the United States government. By making such democratic declarations in front of a joint session of Congress in honor of the bicentennial of the United States, Juan Carlos clarified his intentions for

¹⁰⁵ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 349.

¹⁰⁶ David Binder, "Juan Carlos, on U.S. Visit, Pledges Liberty in Spain," *The New York Times*, June 3 1976.

the future of his regime. While the possible success of such a venture was still very much up in the air, the King's position was no longer quite so ambiguous.

Both American and Spanish newspapers also perceived such implications in the days following the King's speech. Interestingly, one Spanish periodical, *ABC*, while emphasizing the significance of Juan Carlos's democratic intentions, also put great importance on his affirmation of Spain's desire to reclaim Gibraltar; clearly such long-standing issues of national, territorial "integrity" strongly supported by Franco were not easily forgotten.¹⁰⁷ Overall however, Juan Carlos's declarations to the joint session of Congress produced the desired reactions. *The New York Times* wrote that this speech marked "the most positive commitment of his sixth-month reign to the restoration of 'authentic liberty' and democratic government in Spain", and that the King "at last made clear his determination to break with the Franco era; he has indicated deep dissatisfaction with the slow pace of reform projected by Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro, a Franco holdover..."¹⁰⁸ Here we can see the beginning of a tendency to associate Juan Carlos with the positive measures of change that occurred, while blaming others for any barriers or impediments to democratization. This would continue throughout the transition, partly as a result of the strategic campaign led by Juan Carlos to present himself from the start as "King of all the Spaniards". While this trend was certainly not universal, especially among the oppositional Spanish left, it marked the initial success of the King's campaign in creating an implicit connection between the monarchy and democracy, progress and an optimistic idea of change. Even in the United States this had not always been the

¹⁰⁷ "Mensaje del Rey al Congreso de Estados Unidos," *ABC*, June 3 1976.

¹⁰⁸ "A King for Democracy," *The New York Times*, June 4 1976.

case, as *The New York Times* admitted that, “What was in doubt in the period after General Franco’s death last October [sic] was his willingness to stand up to the Francoists and to risk alienation of more conservative elements in the armed forces in order to push desperately needed reforms.” And while Juan Carlos had abolished these doubts among many of the senators and representatives present for his speech, it was also evident that his “remarks are certain to provoke bitter criticism from die-hard supporters of the late Generalissimo Franco and possibly ... from elements in his armed services.”¹⁰⁹ Thus despite the optimism of the King’s speech and the assurance that Juan Carlos was dedicated to installing a modern democracy in Spain, this future was not guaranteed. In fact, “It is still far from clear that the King together with the forces of democracy can prevail over the hard core of Francoists, determined to perpetuate the Caudillo’s archaic authoritarianism.”¹¹⁰ Such views represented not just an American viewpoint, but were reflected in the Spanish press as well. The true effect of the King’s speech was best summarized by the Spanish daily, *El País* in an article published the day following Juan Carlos’s address to Congress. The newspaper noted that “Hay que decir que el Monarca ha estado más explícito en sus palabras ante los congresistas americanos que ante los procuradores en Cortes el día de su juramento. En efecto, la promesa genérica de que ‘el Rey lo será de todos los españoles’ se ha visto matizada esta vez y positivamente.”¹¹¹ Such a sentence reflects the success of Juan Carlos’s speeches and the construction of his image. For though many remained skeptical as to the possibility of democracy, the King had been

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ "El Rey promete la democracia," *El País*, June 3 1976.

successful in shaping the discussion around his desired title of “King of all the Spaniards”. In some eyes, this image was more and more becoming a reality as the King’s speeches increasingly employed unambiguous democratic rhetoric while separating themselves from the Francoist establishment, a trend that reflected the broad strategy outlined by Fernández-Miranda of pursuing evolutionary democratic change through the existing Francoist infrastructure. Once again however, the paper qualified these optimistic statements by writing that “No es todavía la nuestra una situación democrática y las tensiones, a las que el propio Rey se ha referido en su discurso, son cada día más fuertes, cada día más graves, cada día más aparentemente incontroladas por quienes tienen la obligación de hacerlo.”¹¹² This accurately represents the situation in Spain in June 1976. While Juan Carlos increasingly clarified his democratic intentions in nearly every progressive speech and public appearance, especially those outside the country, there were still elements within Spain firmly opposed to any deviation from the Fundamental Laws of the Franco regime and those who did not completely trust the King’s grand words and promises.

During these first six months following the death of Franco, while Juan Carlos made various trips around Spain and abroad, significant political developments were taking place in Madrid, centering around a rising tension between the prime minister, Carlos Arias Navarro, and the King and his close allies. Largely, this tension related to differing views on the transition process and different visions of Spain’s future. Juan Carlos hoped to follow the course proposed by his long time advisor and current

¹¹² Ibid.

President of the Cortes and the Council of the Realm, Torcuato Fernández-Miranda, in enacting democratic reforms through the existing institutions, the strategy of “de la ley, a la ley”.¹¹³ Arias, who had at times appeared to favor reform while at others professing loyalty to Francoism, finally clarified his views at a meeting on February 11, 1976. At the meeting, “He was noticeably displeased when Fernández-Miranda stated that the principles of the *Movimiento* could be reformed,” stating that, ““What I want to do is continue Francoism. And as long as I’m here or still in political life, I’ll never be anything other than a strict perpetuator of Francoism in all its aspects and I will fight against the enemies of Spain who have begun to dare to raise their heads and are just a hidden and clandestine minority.””¹¹⁴ Here was an unmistakable indication that Arias did not agree with the plans for reform supported by the King, and while he would persist as prime minister for another four months, it is clear that he would never be able to truly act as the bridge between the two eras, as both the executor of Franco’s will and the engine behind democratic reform in Spain.

Despite the frustrations of Carlos Arias’s tenure as prime minister, the King was beginning to make some headway with the opposition on the left. For example in late May of 1976, Felipe González, a leader of the socialists, “publicly declared that ‘the Spanish monarchy is not necessarily incompatible with democratic freedoms ... if the king is capable of assimilating and adapting to this historic process, the monarchy will survive’,” and later, in June, the Communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero*

¹¹³ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 83-84.

¹¹⁴ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 335.

“reluctantly admitted the possibility that he might break with the Francoists ‘in a moment of courage’, and seek the support of democratic opinion. This would not guarantee the monarchy’s future because ‘the democratic solution requires that the institutional question be put to the people sooner or later’, but ‘only a king capable of running this risk would be in a position to hope for the democratic legitimation of the monarchy’.”¹¹⁵

While these by no means represented endorsements of the monarchy or of Juan Carlos, such statements marked clear progress from the condemnation the King had received upon his coronation. In the face of such promising developments the continuation of Arias as prime minister became more and more impossible as Juan Carlos became “urgently aware that only a more positive commitment to democratic change could prevent a serious challenge to the existing order.”¹¹⁶ The status quo was unsustainable; some substantive change was required if Juan Carlos was to truly win the support of the left and provide hard evidence of his democratic intentions.

In spite of his failings, Arias was responsible for a few reforms towards the end of his tenure as prime minister. Most notably, on June 9 the Cortes voted to legalize political parties, “the most important move so far in the reform program” and one that went strongly against the Francoist doctrine.¹¹⁷ However, the promise of such a law was far surpassed by the reality of the situation. First, the reform was largely seen by both the press and, judging by his actions less than a month later, Juan Carlos, as too little too late. *The New York Times* wrote that this legalization of political parties would “leave the country still far short of the vision held up recently for the United States Congress by King Juan Carlos of a system with ‘full scope for

¹¹⁵ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 101.

¹¹⁶ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 335.

¹¹⁷ Henry Giniger, "Spain's Politics: All is Confusion," *The New York Times*, June 15 1976.

political participation' by every Spaniard."¹¹⁸ In addition many critics argued that the law merely represented a superficial change, in that it did not legalize or allow all political parties, only those that the government did not deem to be "subversive", and that even as it was passed, "General Franco's police continue to carry out arbitrary arrests of political figures, some with impeccable democratic credentials."¹¹⁹ Therefore, these reforms, while promising on the surface, proved to be too little, too late for Carlos Arias Navarro, who had made clear in the months following the death of the Caudillo his unwillingness to cooperate with the initiative for democratic reform promoted by the King and his supporters. Consequently, on July 1, Juan Carlos asked for and received Arias's resignation as prime minister of Spain.

Carlos Arias's resignation caught nearly all by complete surprise around and outside of Spain, as many saw this change as one whose timing was unexpected but not wholly unwarranted.¹²⁰ Some admitted that over the previous months the government had seemed to reach a stalemate between the democratic intentions of the King and the opposition of the remaining Francoist elements. Not only did this dynamic inhibit change, but "La lentitud, en fin, amenazaba convertirse en un factor peligroso de inestabilidad política y de erosión de la misma institución monárquico. Mientras, los problemas reales del país están a la espera..."¹²¹ Most importantly however, was the link that still existed between Arias and Franco, a link that was ingrained in the minds of the public when the now former prime minister read

¹¹⁸ "Progress in Spain," *The New York Times*, June 14 1976.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ "Sorpresa ante el cese de don Carlos Arias," *Informaciones*(02/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹²¹ "Salir del estancamiento," *Informaciones*(02/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

Franco's last message to the Spanish people on national television in 1975. With this in mind, it was understood that, "Con Arias, además, cae el último gobierno del franquismo. Ahora debe ser posible, de verdad, el primer gobierno de la Monarquía, el primer gobierno de la nueva época."¹²²

It was with this view in mind that the King and Fernández-Miranda had to decide on a new prime minister, as this politician would lead what Juan Carlos could present as the first true government on the monarchy and of this *postfranquista* era. First, given the failure of the Arias government, Juan Carlos wanted to make sure that the next prime minister was completely loyal to the monarchy and the type of reform that Fernández-Miranda had in mind. As the King could not himself simply name a prime minister, he had to work with Fernández-Miranda to ensure that his desired candidate would appear on the *terna*, or list of three names that the Council of the Realm would provide to Juan Carlos from which he would select Arias's successor. In looking ahead towards future reform, and in keeping with his desire to be "King of all the Spaniards", the ideal candidate for prime minister would be one who could handle both the Francoist "bunker" as well as the opposition in order to navigate the tricky path of reform through the existing system. In particular, Fernández-Miranda wrote that the next prime minister should possess "Lealtad inequívoca al proyecto democratizador de la Corona, con independencia de los fundamentos de dicha lealtad, y tal proyecto comportaba dos cosas: respeto a la legalidad como método y radical

¹²² Josep Melía Pericás, "Los errores de Arias," *Informaciones*(03/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

democratización como resultado.”¹²³ Thus in the failings of Carlos Arias we can see the most important qualities that the King and Fernández-Miranda looked for in his successor: one who was above all loyal to the monarchy and to the path of reform chosen by Fernández-Miranda. They found this ideal candidate in Adolfo Suárez. While other politicians such as Manuel Fraga or José María de Areilza seemed to be too old and too established in their own views, “Suárez had been Civil Governor of a province, a Director General in the government administration and head of the *Movimiento*. He was trusted by the Francoist establishment and knew the system inside out.”¹²⁴ Thus Suárez, while young, possessed impeccable Francoist credentials. Additionally however, there were hints that Suárez not only had a sympathetic history with the Francoist establishment, but also was open to and in favor of democratic reform, a fact that especially could be seen in his defense of the legalization of political parties less than a month prior to Arias’s resignation. In front of the Cortes,

“Suárez’s speech was a superb combination of ambiguity and pragmatism. The recognition of basic political rights such as that of association was presented not as a break with the Francoist past, but rather as the culmination of a forty-year process of national reconstruction. According to Suárez, under Franco Spaniards had known peace, social justice, and cultural and material progress; the time had finally come for them to enjoy full political rights as well.”¹²⁵

After making his case for the legalization of political parties, Suárez concluded with a quote by Spanish poet, Antonio Machado: “Está el hoy abierto al mañana. / Mañana al infinito. / Hombres de España. Ni el pasado ha muerto, / Ni está el mañana ni el

¹²³ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 190.

¹²⁴ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 355.

¹²⁵ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 103.

ayer escrito.”¹²⁶ It is easy to see in this selection of a quotation why both Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda hoped that Suárez would be the politician to lead the transition. Suárez here elicits a sense of hope for the future while acknowledging the importance and weight of the past. Such a statement not only served as an adequate representation of the debate over political parties, but also can be used to describe the transition process as a whole. Impressed with this speech, his Francoist credentials, and his loyalty to the King and to the King’s program for reform, Juan Carlos asked Fernández-Miranda to ensure that Suárez’s name would appear in the *terna*. After some deliberation the Council of the Realm produced a list of three candidates: Gregorio López-Bravo, Federico Silva Muñoz, and Adolfo Suárez González. Upon emerging from the meeting, Fernández-Miranda declared that ““Estoy en condiciones de ofrecer al Rey lo que me ha pedido.””¹²⁷ Having received the *terna*, Juan Carlos then named Adolfo Suárez prime minister, filling the post vacated by Carlos Arias Navarro.

Political circles across the country reacted with general surprise to Suárez’s appointment, as many had expected the King to name a much more established politician such as Fraga, Areilza or López Bravo as prime minister. In the immediate wake of the appointment many condemned Suárez as a continuation of Francoism, although they still held some hope for the future based on his speech in favor of the legalization of political parties and the possibility that he might learn from the mistakes of Carlos Arias. One politician, Joaquín Garrigues Walker admitted that

¹²⁶ Pilar Urbano, "Mis difíciles entrevistas con Adolfo Suárez," *ABC*(04/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹²⁷ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 212.

“Me ha sorprendido mucho, y no sé cuál es el propósito de este nombramiento.”¹²⁸

Once past their initial surprise, others argued that “Adolfo Suárez, por su trayectoria ligada al Movimiento y a la Subsecretaría de la Presidencia con Carrero Blanco y López Rodó, no es un político para el futuro ni para el difícil presente, porque representa el continuismo del régimen surgido de la guerra civil.”¹²⁹ As a politician of the past, and not the future, he did not seem like an appropriate choice to lead a reform effort designed to bring Spain a democratic government with full participation of both the victors and the vanquished of the Civil War; “el nombramiento de don Adolfo Suárez no conecta con esa corriente democrática.”¹³⁰ As for the organized opposition, after the first moment of surprise the PCE “initially accepted the interpretation first put forward by the newly launched *El País* to the effect that Suárez’s appointment represented a victory for the hard-line sectors of the regime,” while the PSOE “took heart in the appointment of someone ‘without a relevant political past, who comes from the *Movimiento* and knows it so well that he may be the ideal architect to demolish the institutions’.”¹³¹ However, both warned that unless this new government produced results, the transitional government led by Juan Carlos would not survive. They believed that two important lessons could be learned from the failure of Arias as prime minister. First, that dialogue with the opposition as well as with the different regions of Spain was key to a successful transition to a functioning democracy in which the King would be “King of all the Spaniards”.

¹²⁸ “El nombramiento de Adolfo Suárez, un signo positivo,” *ABC*(04/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹²⁹ “Sorpresa generalizada,” *El País*(04/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹³⁰ “El error Suárez,” *Cuadernos para el Diálogo*(10/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹³¹ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 113.

Second, the opposition refused to believe that democracy could be achieved through reform of the Francoist system (the plan outlined by Torcuato Fernández-Miranda), that only *ruptura*, a break with the past, could succeed in propelling the country forward.¹³² Finally, as Arias had been seen as the last prime minister of Francoism, and Suárez the first of the monarchy, it is clear that Juan Carlos had been excused to some extent of the failings of the first six months of his reign. Now, with his chosen prime minister, any failure to produce successful democratic reform would be blamed directly on Juan Carlos. In fact, “The fate of the monarchy hinged on his success or failure. Suárez commented later that the King ‘gambled the crown’ on his appointment.”¹³³

An added sense of crisis was mixed with the resignation of Arias however, as the naming of a new prime minister meant that government activity was suspended until a wholly new Cabinet, or Consejo de Ministros could be formed.¹³⁴

Unfortunately for Juan Carlos, “The announcement of the final cabinet list could not have had a worse reception from the press. (...) Ricardo de la Cierva, Franco’s self-styled official biographer, who was engaged in a short-lived operation to redefine himself as a liberal, denounced it as ‘the first Francoist government of the post-Franco era.’”¹³⁵ In reality however, “Suárez’s team was dominated by young men. They were loyal monarchists who had been introduced to Juan Carlos in the early 1970s by his secretary, Jacobo Cano . . . [and] gave Suárez a better chance to carry

¹³² "Sorpresa generalizada".

¹³³ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 356.

¹³⁴ "Mañana prestará juramento el nuevo presidente, Adolfo Suárez," *ABC*(04/07/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹³⁵ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 357.

out reform than his critics believed possible.”¹³⁶ Despite the criticism, Juan Carlos demonstrated his confidence in this new Cabinet in a speech given at the Cabinet’s first official meeting. In this speech the King made clear what the objectives of the new government would be, stating that the decisions of the Cabinet should “fomentan la unidad entre los españoles, acrecienten la confianza en la Monarquía y en las instituciones del Estado, hagan posible la participación de todos en los frutos de su esfuerzo y en cuantos asuntos afectan a la comunidad,” and concluding that, “A través de vosotros quiero decir hoy a todos los españoles sin distinción, sin exclusiones, que el Rey piensa en ellos, porque ellos forman la nación que personifico y el pueblo al que sirvo.”¹³⁷ In his address Juan Carlos returned to the themes of his proclamation speech, speaking of political participation, unity of all Spaniards and his desire to serve the country and act on behalf of the Spanish people. Importantly, the King made this last point by stating that he spoke through the Cabinet, thus directly linking himself to the new government and its success or failure. The potential of this new, Suárez government, the first of Juan Carlos, was displayed in the program proposed by Suárez for the goals and objectives of this government. Issued on July 16, the program

“unequivocally stated that ‘popular sovereignty resides in the people’, and promised to work for ‘the establishment of a democratic political system based on the guarantee of civil rights and freedoms, on equal opportunities for democratic groups, and the acceptance of genuine pluralism’. More explicitly, the government looked forward to ‘the emergence of majorities which will in future determine the composition of representative institutions and of the government of the nation’, the first indication that future governments would be

¹³⁶ Ibid., 358.

¹³⁷ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en el Consejo de Ministros," (Speech1976).

accountable to a democratically elected Cortes. Finally, Suárez promised a referendum on constitutional reform, and general elections before 30 June 1977.”¹³⁸

Even in this initial program it was obvious that the government would operate differently under Suárez than under Arias, that this first government of the Monarchy was dedicated to democratic reform. For even though pressure remained from the opposition for immediate reform, the program put forth by Suárez not only promised such reforms but gave specific examples of their intentions: creating a democratically elected Cortes and holding general elections for those Cortes within the next year. We can also see here why Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda insisted on a prime minister with impeccable Francoist credentials: Suárez still held the respect of the Francoist establishment and his presence at the head of the new government seemed to indicate that while change was probable, it would not be a radical change that moved directly against the principles of Francoism. Therefore, for many in Spain, “The King and his Prime Minister projected dynamism, youth, and sincerity in a way that consolidated political support among the silent majority by offering both to protect the economic and social advances of recent times and to advance peacefully and gradually towards democracy.”¹³⁹ Thus, while the opposition remained skeptical, although not completely hostile, the new government led by Adolfo Suárez promised real hope for democratic change. Though the methods of these reforms were still very much debated, it appeared as if the personnel for such change were finally in place. Juan Carlos had wagered the future of the monarchy and the success of the

¹³⁸ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 114-15.

¹³⁹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 359.

transition process on his new government, and only the next few months would tell if this gamble would pay off.

While the opposition took heart in the change of government following Arias's forced resignation, the fact remained that neither Juan Carlos nor his new prime minister would win over any supporters without producing tangible reforms; after forty years, the left was asking for deeds, not words.¹⁴⁰ The goal of the King, Suárez, and Fernández-Miranda then, was to produce a law of political reform in the coming months that would attempt to fulfill the promises of the new government's program: to create a democratically elected Cortes and arrange for free elections in the near future. The biggest challenge to this however, would not be the opposition on the left, but the far right Francoists (the "bunker") and the military. As the left grew more optimistic about the possibility of real democracy, these two groups began to dig in even more against such change. Both the "bunker" and the military would need to be convinced that a law of political reform would not contradict the Fundamental Laws of Francoism, but constitute a necessary evolution of these laws wholly supported by Franco's heir, the King. For his part, while Juan Carlos was "Confident that the young members of the officer corps would accept democracy, he was equally aware that the presence of a large number of generals who had fought alongside Franco in the Civil War demanded several years of caution. (...) As he later put it, 'I did not want at any cost that the victors of the Civil War should become the

¹⁴⁰ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 219.

defeated under democracy.”¹⁴¹ In this type of rhetoric we can see once again that the trauma and animosity of the Civil War still hung heavy on the thoughts of those involved in the transition, that above all, those guiding the transition process wanted to avoid the bloodshed and violence that occurred some forty years prior. To do so, Suárez’s government would employ the strategy outlined by Fernández-Miranda. That is, they would attempt to execute change through the reform of the existing Francoist Fundamental Laws and not through *ruptura*, the desired strategy of the left opposition. They would navigate a middle road between continuity and a sharp break with the past, in doing so keeping both left and right in dialogue and involved with the reform process. Thus, while some contested the point, the Fundamental Laws allowed for their own reform, and therefore this was the necessary path of democratic change. Any creation of a new law that did not originate within the Francoist establishment would be seen as a sign of *ruptura*, and was sure to alienate both the “bunker” and more dangerously, the Armed Forces. It was with this theory in mind that Suárez and Fernández-Miranda prepared the presentation of the new law of political reform to present to the Cortes.

The King, for his part, made himself very visible in the months leading up to the vote on the Law of Political Reform, making trips to Latin America, France and more visits around Spain.¹⁴² While Juan Carlos was busy maintaining his popularity both at home and abroad, Suárez and Fernández-Miranda began to attempt to convince the members of the Cortes to support the new law. Given his strong Francoist credentials, “Suárez spoke to the most hardline members of the

¹⁴¹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 364.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 370.

Movimiento. Many were persuaded by arguments to the effect that the process did not stray from Francoist legality, permitted a decorous end to the dictatorship and was the King's will."¹⁴³ The prime minister also "made much of the fact that the proposed democratic Cortes and the Senate would have the same number of seats combined as the Francoist Cortes."¹⁴⁴ In addition, Suárez made sure to reach out to the opposition, speaking to such men as Felipe González. In doing so Suárez strongly set himself apart from his predecessor, Carlos Arias Navarro, who had been heavily criticized for failing to dialogue with the opposition as at all as well as the fact that he seemed unwilling to initiate any real change.

The real test would come in the debate in the Cortes leading up to the vote on November 18. Those arguing against the bill, notably staunch members of the "bunker" such as Blas Piñar, declared that the law was directly opposed to the Fundamental Laws of the *Movimiento Nacional* and thus contradicted the will of Franco.¹⁴⁵ He and his like-minded colleagues did not oppose any change, simply not *this* change, which they saw as a form of *ruptura* and the illegal destruction of the Francoist regime.¹⁴⁶ For its part,

"the government presented the Reform Bill as an expression of the king's wishes and hammered home the idea that to disobey the king was tantamount to disobeying Franco's will. The most effective pro-government speaker was Primo de Rivera, a good friend of the king, who argued that it was possible for those who had served Franco to transfer their loyalty and obedience to Juan Carlos, as the former had wished. More importantly, he underlined that only the monarchy

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 373.

¹⁴⁵ Fernández-Miranda Lozana, *Lo que el rey me ha pedido: Torcuato Fernández-Miranda y la reforma política*: 240.

¹⁴⁶ "Comenzaron los debates sobre la reforma política," *Arriba*(17/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

could guarantee the transition from ‘a personal regime to one based on participation’.”¹⁴⁷

Miguel Primo de Rivera was a lifelong friend of Juan Carlos, the grandson of the Spanish dictator also named Miguel Primo de Rivera, and the nephew of the founder of the Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. In this choice of a spokesman, as well as Primo de Rivera’s words themselves, it is clear that both supporters and opponents of the Law of Political Reform sought to legitimize the law by invoking Franco and his authoritarian regime. Clearly part of this invocation was a result of the fact that all were speaking to a Cortes in which many representatives had been appointed under Franco and were still loyal to the old regime. In addition, Primo de Rivera declared that the greatest obstacles to change were those who did not believe that the Fundamental Laws could be reformed as well as those who desired a sharp break with the past. However, he argued that “En medio de estas dos posiciones ... está la dignidad del pueblo español, que sabe que la muerte de Franco quedan las opciones de reformar, evolucionar, o romper con el pasado, pero el pueblo sabe también que la mejor opción es la evolución, porque, muerto Franco, hay que sustituirle por la voluntad de los españoles, a los que hay que pedirle que exprese esa voluntad.”¹⁴⁸ In this way the government presented the bill as an evolution of the existing system, a necessary step for the Spanish nation and not a break with the Francoist past.

One of the most interesting parts of the debate over the Law of Political Reform was the use of the King to drum up support for the bill. For while the previous year had seen Juan Carlos consistently succeed in increasing his association

¹⁴⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 121.

¹⁴⁸ "Comenzaron los debates sobre la reforma política".

with change and democracy, the debate over the reform bill saw the King consistently invoked as heir to the previous regime, as the link between Franco and the present political reality in Spain. This therefore represented a contradiction in which Juan Carlos was explicitly depicted as the heir to Franco in order to secure the passage of a reform bill that would essentially abolish the Francoist Cortes; it is in this contradiction that we can fully understand the meaning of Fernández-Miranda's strategy of "de la ley, a la ley", of initiating reform from within the existing Francoist infrastructure. And, ultimately, this strategy was successful as the Cortes decidedly agreed to pass the bill, with 425 votes in favor and only 59 opposed, and provide the infrastructure necessary to create a functioning democratic government.¹⁴⁹ The improbability of the success of the Law of Political Reform is perhaps best explained by Paul Preston, when he writes that, "In general, the vote in favour of the political reform project was a collective suicide based on the ingrained habits of obedience to authority, an inflated sense of patriotism and, above all, tempting promises whispered in the ears of those to whom Suárez later referred as the '*Procuradores del harakiri*.'"¹⁵⁰ Many of those still loyal to the ideals of Franco (with the obvious exception of the "bunker") believed that in voting for the bill, they were supporting a necessary evolution of the Fundamental Laws that was endorsed by the King, who had been charged by Franco with perpetuating his regime. For example, "the Minister for the Navy, Admiral Gabriel Pita da Veiga, a close personal friend of Franco, remarked, 'My conscience is clear because the democratic reforms will be carried out through

¹⁴⁹ "Las Cortes de Franco inician el cambio del sistema orgánico," *Diario 16*(19/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁵⁰ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 373.

Francoist legality.”¹⁵¹ The reform therefore clearly represented another success of the King’s overall strategy for the transition period, that is, to be the King of all the Spaniards. By pursuing democratic change through the existing Francoist structures, Juan Carlos both fulfilled his previous oath to remain loyal to the principles of the *Movimiento* as well as his intentions to bring about true democratic change.

Among politicians the Law of Political Reform received mixed reactions. Many of those on the left saw the passage of the reform bill as “una reforma neofranquista aprobada por unas Cortes franquistas.”¹⁵² The main opposition on the left however, the PSOE and the PCE, took the most exception at the implication that the Monarchy was a prerequisite to any democratic change; they still held out some hope for the establishment of a republic. In some sense these parties still viewed Juan Carlos as the heir to Franco, although this perception was beginning to change. Santiago Carrillo himself “admitted that ‘everyone knows we disapprove of the way the king came to the throne’, but went on to add that ‘the king is there; it is a fact’.”¹⁵³ Thus these opposition parties had begun to accept the fact the any democratic change would have to be channeled through the monarchy, and while they may have yet held out hope for the establishment of a republican system, this was becoming more and more unlikely.

While Suárez, Fernández-Miranda, and Primo de Rivera were able to convince a large number of right wing Francoists in the Cortes that the Law of Political Reform marked an evolution of and not a break with Francoism, the King

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 373-74.

¹⁵² "Opiniones de líderes políticos sobre la reforma política," *Ya*(20/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁵³ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 123.

still faced some backlash from those who remained loyal to the legacy of Franco. In addition, Juan Carlos worried about the possible reaction of the Armed Forces to these reform measures. Therefore, “fully aware of the need to placate right-wing opinion, the King [took] part in an important event in the basilica of the Valle de los Caídos. In the aftermath of the Cortes vote in favour of the reform project, it was a carefully calculated gesture towards those Francoist elements distressed by the signs that the dictator’s legacy was being demolished.”¹⁵⁴ This event was a memorial service for Francisco Franco on the day that marked the one-year anniversary of his death. Members of the government as well as the Armed Forces were also present.¹⁵⁵ Thus Juan Carlos sought to retain the support of those he had potentially alienated with the passage of the Law of Political Reform through maintaining the link between himself and the former dictator. In particular the King wished to ensure that in paying homage to Franco he would be able to count on the continued loyalty of the Armed Forces.

Overall, the success of the Law of Political Reform not only provided a means by which a democratic system could be put in place but also contributed to the creation of a new legitimacy for both the new Suárez government and the monarchy. In his proclamation speech, Juan Carlos had outlined three sources of legitimacy for his rule: the historic tradition of the monarchy as a Spanish institution, the authoritarian regime of Franco, and the popular will of the Spanish people. While the King’s link to previous Spanish monarchs remained unchanged, during the transition

¹⁵⁴ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 374.

¹⁵⁵ "Funeral Oficial en el Valle de los Caídos," *El Alcázar*(20/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

period he began to distance himself and the monarchy from its Francoist roots while seeking to establish a stronger source of popular legitimacy. And despite the fact that the government presented the reform bill as simply an evolution of the Fundamental Laws and the King as the political heir to Franco, Juan Carlos hoped that the passage of the law would solidify for the country the link between the monarchy and democracy. This was reflected in the press as well, as one newspaper wrote that, “Las Cortes de Franco abrieron paso ayer a la liquidación de las instituciones Franquistas y transfirieron la legitimidad basada en la victoria de 1939 al Congreso y al Senado que surgirán de las futuras elecciones.”¹⁵⁶ In an effort to substantiate this legitimacy the government organized a referendum to be held on December 15, 1976 on the new Law of Political Reform, and through this law, the position of the monarchy in the transition process. This strategy was designed before the creation of the reform law, as “Suárez would later acknowledge that the bill contained explicit references to the king in four of its five articles so as to allow its subsequent endorsement in a referendum to be presented as an indirect democratic legitimation of the monarchy.”¹⁵⁷ Another factor that contributed to the link between the monarchy and the referendum on the reform bill was the timing of these events. The vote on the reform law and the referendum were scheduled in such a way so that the results of these would appear as either a legitimation or a rejection of the first year of Juan Carlos’s rule. The success of Juan Carlos’s yearlong campaign to become a King of the Spanish people, of both the left and the right, can be seen even before the referendum in the vocabulary used by numerous newspaper articles which referred to

¹⁵⁶ “Las Cortes de Franco inician el cambio del sistema orgánico”.

¹⁵⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 118.

the monarch “el Rey de todos los españoles”.^{158,159,160} The results of the referendum were clear: 94 per cent of the voters approved the reform project orchestrated by Juan Carlos and the government of Adolfo Suárez. In the wake of this great success, the King addressed the nation in his annual Christmas speech, reflecting on the previous year of change and looking ahead to the future. On this occasion Juan Carlos called on all Spaniards “a recorrer juntos la nueva etapa de nuestra historia que se iniciaba.”¹⁶¹ He noted that he and the Queen Sofía had travelled the country in order to maintain a close relationship with the different regions and peoples of Spain, becoming familiar with the problems of each in its own way. And while he admitted that “los tiempos que vivimos aunque prometedores, no son fáciles,” the King emphasized that “nuestra vida política está en pleno proceso de adaptación, necesaria a los cambios sociales operados en España.”¹⁶² In conclusion Juan Carlos echoed the themes he had reiterated during the past year, stating that “La Monarquía, como forma de Estado más adecuado para España, es capaz de asegurar la unidad de todos los españoles, la libertad y el ejercicio de los derechos humanos en el orden y en la paz.”¹⁶³ Thus while enormous difficulties still lay in the path to true democracy, the creation of the Suárez government and the passage of the Law of Political Reform marked significant steps towards this goal. With pressure from both the left and the

¹⁵⁸ José María Bermejo, "López Rodó: "La democracia es la mejor garantía de la continuidad monárquica"," *Ya*(07/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁵⁹ "Pensamiento Político del Rey Juan Carlos I," *Ya*(21/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁶⁰ "Rey de todos los españoles," *Arriba*(21/11/1976), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁶¹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Navidad de Su Majestad el Rey," (Speech 1976).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

right the government would need to ensure that in the coming year elections could be peacefully carried out that allowed for the full participation of the Spanish people. To do so they would have to find an answer to the ever-pressing question of what to do with the Communist Party.

Chapter 3: Creating Democracy (1977)

*“La democracia ha comenzado. (...) Ahora hemos de tratar de consolidarla.”*¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Cortes en la apertura de la Legislatura constituyente," (Speech1977).

The most divisive issue facing Spain prior to the country's first democratic elections in forty years was the potential legalization of the Communist Party. Throughout the first year of Juan Carlos's rule the King and his government had attempted to tread a middle ground between the Communists and other left opposition groups and the "bunker" and the military on the right, making progress towards democracy without alienating either side. That is why the question of the legalization of the PCE was such a controversial topic: it meant that the government had to declare itself on one side or another of the reform process. By not legalizing the PCE the government would put its intentions of true democratic reform in doubt while jeopardizing any relationship it had built up with the left. On the other hand, the legalization of the party would signify that they had truly broken with Francoism, and while the Law of Political Reform had accomplished a similar goal without implying *ruptura*, this new action would leave the "bunker" and the military with no doubt that the King and the government intended to do away with the principles of Francoism and return to a democratic government reminiscent of the Second Republic. In the end though, Juan Carlos's goal was to establish a functioning democratic parliamentary monarchy, and the only way to truly accomplish this goal would be the eventual legalization of the Communist Party.¹⁶⁵ Opinion abroad was split on the issue. In mid-1976, "the European Parliament reminded the Spanish government that 'the legal existence of Communist parties is a characteristic which is common to our Western democracies, and in the nine countries of our Community Communist parties

¹⁶⁵ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 371.

are recognized as lawful organizations.”¹⁶⁶ However, the United States, another important ally of Spain, had a different opinion. In keeping with their Cold War foreign policy, the US State Department wrote that, “it would be absurd to make the legalization of a party dedicated to authoritarian principles a litmus test as to whether or not democratization is taking place.”¹⁶⁷ Its ideal for Spain “is a docile parliamentary monarchy and limited democracy that prevents the existence of a legal Communist Party and brings the country into NATO.”¹⁶⁸ Thus, after the passage of the Law of Political Reform, the King and the Suárez government faced stiff pressure from several sides with regard to the legalization of the PCE. However, in retrospect, it seems clear that the party’s legalization at some point was inevitable; the question would be, when would this legalization occur, and would the government be able to maintain the loyalty of the Armed Forces?

With this in mind, it is important to examine the King’s speeches to the Armed Forces as an attempt to maintain their loyalty to the new government in the face of more and more democratic reform. This can be seen, for example, in the King’s annual speech to the military given in the beginning of January, the *Pascua Militar*, in which Juan Carlos above all emphasized discipline. Describing himself as a soldier, as a member of the Armed Forces (he begins a sentence for instance, with “Nuestra profesión”), the King declared that, “La disciplina, difícil de conservar en algunas circunstancias es el fundamento más firme en el que se tienen que apoyar nuestras Fuerzas Armadas. Sin ella no es posible la acción de mando. El principio de

¹⁶⁶ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 102.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁶⁸ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 60.

autoridad debe prevalecer en todo momento y circunstancia.”¹⁶⁹ We can see then that Juan Carlos, while also touching on subjects of his previous speeches to the military such as honor, justice and service to Spain, focused above all here on the importance of discipline and adherence to authority as the most essential quality of the Armed Forces. In doing so the King was relying on the loyalty of the military to “Franco’s heir” and hoping that no matter what reforms were to come, and no matter how personally opposed to these reforms members of the military were, they remembered that their first duty was discipline and obedience to the authority of the King, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

In February the government planned to amend the country’s Law of Association (for which Suárez had spoken so eloquently the previous June) to allow individual political parties to register for legalization with the Ministry of the Interior. The PSOE and the PCE were certain to be among these. It was in February as well that Adolfo Suárez “first approached Juan Carlos with the suggestion that the PCE be legalized in time for the first elections.”¹⁷⁰ The King in turn expressed his view that “The Army won’t give us any problems so far as the Socialist Party is concerned, but it might well give us problems, and major ones, when it learns that we intend to legalize the Communist Party.”¹⁷¹ The first part of this prediction initially proved to be completely accurate. The legalization of the PSOE on February 10 provoked little reaction from the right other than continued concern over the status of the Communist Party. For their part, the PSOE indicated their desire to participate in the

¹⁶⁹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Fuerzas Armadas en la Pascua Militar," (Speech 1977).

¹⁷⁰ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 126.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

democratizing process and the upcoming elections, but added that they would only participate, ““si se dan las condiciones mínimas de garantías democráticas.””¹⁷² It seems that both the left and right had their sights on the bigger issue of the PCE and neither treated the PSOE’s legalization as an overwhelming success for democratic consolidation in the face of staunch Francoist loyalists.

With the future legalization of the Communist Party on his mind, Juan Carlos spoke to the Military Academy at Zaragoza, where he himself had studied, on February 20. While in his previous speech to Armed Forces, the King had attempted to maintain their loyalty through an emphasis on discipline, Juan Carlos here went further in linking himself to the military and the previous regime. He began by noting again that he identified strongly with the soldiers before him, that this event marked his return to the Academy, where he grew and learned his love for this country, and the importance of honor and sacrifice.¹⁷³ Then, the King made a declaration that exhibited his concern about the loyalty of the Armed Forces. During the first year of his rule Juan Carlos had attempted to distance himself from Franco and the previous regime, neither completely professing his desire to abandon the Fundamental Laws for democracy, nor his desire to perpetuate Francoism. Here however, in the face of mounting pressure from the right and the military, the King declared that he desired to pay homage to “el esfuerzo de dos grandes soldados que pasaron ya a la Historia y que fueron los artífices del acontecimiento que festejamos: el general Primo de Rivera, creador de la Academia General Militar, y el Generalísimo Franco, su primer

¹⁷² M. A. I. , "Los partidos inician la carrera hacia la legalidad," *Informaciones*(11/02/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁷³ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey en la Academia General Militar," (Speech1977).

director.”¹⁷⁴ We can see then a pattern emerging in the King’s speeches, in which his references to Franco and to Spain’s authoritarian past correspond directly to his desire to maintain the support of either the Armed Forces or the remaining Francoist politicians. It is here that we find the King referred to as “Franco’s heir”. Thus far this strategy had been wildly effective, as the monarchy had managed to oversee the successful liquidation of the Francoist Cortes without significant backlash against the King. It remained to be seen however if speeches such as these words to the Zaragoza Academy would be enough to maintain the tranquility and loyalty of the Armed Forces if the government were to legalize the Communist Party in time for the elections.

After deciding in February that the Communist Party would be legalized in time for the first elections, the question for the government became: on what conditions would this legalization be accepted? Here again Suárez demonstrated his skill as a politician in dialoguing secretly with Santiago Carrillo and the PCE, something that his predecessor, Carlos Arias Navarro, had refused to do. It is likely that Suárez saw the legalization of the PCE as a necessary step in the consolidation of an authentic democracy in Spain, because to some extent, both Suárez and Carrillo “need democracy to survive and ... they need each other, because neither of the two holds the key to democracy but each of them holds a part – Suárez has power, Carrillo legitimacy – which completes what the other holds...”¹⁷⁵ Thus the incorporation of the PCE into the government would provide the first elections with a legitimacy that they might otherwise lack with the party’s exclusion. In discussing

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 166.

the possible legalization of the PCE, Carrillo agreed that in return for legal status, the Communists would “[undertake] to recognize the monarchy, adopt the red-yellow-red monarchist flag of Spain and offer [their] support for a future social contract,” as well as accept “Spain’s national unity and the integrity of the armed forces.”^{176,177} This amounted to the acceptance of some elements of the Francoist heritage of the monarchy, something the government hoped would possibly assuage the fears of the military and the “bunker”. In addition to the PCE’s willingness to support a future social contract, Carrillo added that despite its preference for a republican form of government, the PCE would accept “a king capable of establishing a fully democratic constitutional monarchy under which Communists could freely compete for office. ‘If the king acts as a hinge between dictatorship and democracy he will have created a situation which, in practice, will be irreversible’, Carrillo observed.”¹⁷⁸ This assessment of the King’s potential role by Carrillo seems to accurately reflect the view held by Juan Carlos himself of the monarchy’s position in the turn towards democracy. It would not aid in a sharp break with the past but a smooth swing from past to future, from dictatorship to democracy; this was the strategy of “de la ley, a la ley”. Thus through dialogue with the left the Suárez government seemed poised to incorporate the PCE into the new Spanish democracy, ending the neutrality the government had assumed between left and right following the death of Franco. The issue then turned to the Armed Forces and the “bunker”; could the government

¹⁷⁶ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 384.

¹⁷⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 117.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

continue to count on the participation of the right in the transition process or would this decision put the entire process of transition in danger?

We can see how seriously Suárez took the potential threat from the military in the timing of the PCE's legalization. The prime minister wanted to announce the party's legalization when least expected, so as to take the right by surprise and not allow them to organize in preparation for such a move. To do so Suárez decided to make the announcement over Easter weekend. In addition, "So as not to arouse suspicion, Suárez urged his ministers to leave on holiday as planned and encouraged Juan Carlos and Sofía not to cancel a private visit to France. Although this was left unsaid, it had crossed his mind that if the Army staged a coup it would be best if the king and other ministers were not trapped in the capital."¹⁷⁹ While this certainly protected to some extent against an immediate coup, Suárez's decision to move the monarchs and the ministers out of the capital meant that the prime minister shifted the majority of blame and hostility that would result from the PCE's legalization onto himself. By physically distancing Juan Carlos from this decision, Suárez politically distanced the King from it as well. Thus, with the monarchs and the ministers out of Madrid, Suárez announced the legalization of the Communist Party on April 9, 1977.

While generally surprised by the timing of the announcement, the reaction from both the left and the right was swift and passionate.^{180,181} Many saw the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁸⁰ "La legalización del P.C.E. sorprendió a todos en vacaciones," *Informaciones*(11/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁸¹ *The Times* of London did report on April 6 that the PCE would be legalized during the following week in an article titled, in Spanish, "Una España impensable para Franco", although it is unclear how many within Spain read or believed this to be true at the time.

legalization of the Communist Party as a necessary step in the consolidation and legitimation of Spanish democracy and as a step towards integration with the rest of Europe. Indeed, the newspaper *Ya* wrote that “Sería suicida cerrar los ojos a la gravedad de la situación que se plantearía si se negase la legalización del Partido Comunista,”; however, “no porque creamos en la sinceridad democrática del partido, sino porque pensamos que los inconvenientes de su clandestinidad son muchos y, en cambio, las ventajas de su legalización son grandes,” that is, “por razones estrictamente políticas.”¹⁸² This then was the practical argument for legalizing the PCE. It was not a matter of political opinion, but rather the fact that the Communist Party would be easier to deal with in the open, and not as a clandestine organization. There was also a concern that had the PCE not been legalized, all of the left would have boycotted the first elections.¹⁸³ This belief that the legalization of the Communist Party represented an important step towards the creation of a true democracy was echoed among various politicians who thought that “Es perfectamente justo y correcto que hayan legalizado al Partido Comunista” and that the move was “un paso muy positivo del Gobierno.” In addition, these politicians felt that “una democracia en España no sería auténtica, como las europeas, sin la legalización del PCE, como lo está en todos los países europeos.”¹⁸⁴ This was another popular view among those in favor of the government’s decision: in order to become a functioning democracy resembling others in the European community, Spain would need to

"Los comunistas serán legalizados la próxima semana," *Arriba*(06/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁸² "La legalización del Partido Comunista," *Ya*(31/03/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ "Las primeras reacciones," *ABC*(10/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

incorporate the Communists into the new government. In fact, this had been the request of the European Parliament months earlier.¹⁸⁵ Obviously the Communists themselves were very pleased and surprised with the news, commenting that it represented a credible step towards the strengthening of democracy in Spain. Santiago Carrillo, leader of the PCE, still refused to endorse Suárez as prime minister, but noted that while he considered Suárez an anti-communist, he was at least an intelligent anti-communist.¹⁸⁶ In a meeting with other PCE leaders, “Carrillo went on to praise the crown’s role in the democratizing process and hinted that the PCE might endorse the monarchy in the future constituent Cortes. ‘Today the option is not between monarchy and republic’, he declared, ‘today the option is between dictatorship and democracy’.”¹⁸⁷ Thus we can see that at least for the left, the legalization of the PCE was a benchmark for the true intentions of the King and the Suárez government. This was the hard evidence that Juan Carlos was dedicated to producing an authentic democracy in Spain with open participation for all. For the first time since the fall of the Second Republic, the Communist Party would be allowed to participate in the national government.

On the other hand, the legalization of the PCE produced a strong backlash from the “bunker” and the Armed Forces. For them, this decision went beyond a break with Francoism; it represented an attack on the unity of Spain and put the country itself in great danger. Juan Garciacarrés, a loyal Francoist, declared that, “Me parece un grave error la legalización del Partido Comunista Español, cuyas

¹⁸⁵ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 102.

¹⁸⁶ "Un acto que da fortaleza al proceso democrático," *Arriba*(10/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁸⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 129.

consecuencias pueden ser trágicas para España. (...) Se ha dinamitado el 18 de julio con esta legalización. En una palabra, se ha traicionado a España y a todos aquellos que murieron en nuestra cruzada.”¹⁸⁸ We can see here that the anger that this move evoked from the right derived directly from the tensions of the Civil War. By allowing the Communists back into the government, those on the political right thought that the government, which in their mind was still linked to the previous authoritarian regime, had betrayed the principles on which the regime was founded. Newspapers such as *El Alcázar* insinuated that upon their legalization the Communists were slowly attempting to take over Spain and corrupt the Spanish people. They painted a picture of a Madrid covered in Communist and Republican flags and full of demonstrations.¹⁸⁹ For the “bunker” and the Armed Forces, the blame for this decision lay mainly with Adolfo Suárez. They believed that Suárez had in some sense betrayed them; while his strong Francoist credentials had allowed him to successfully manage the passage of the Law of Political Reform, it also made him much more open to criticism of betrayal from the right. It also appeared as though Suárez’s strategy of removing Juan Carlos and Sofía from the country before the legalization of the PCE separated the King from the decision. Newspapers wrote that the government and Suárez had legalized the Communists, but blame was not publically laid on Juan Carlos for this “betrayal”.¹⁹⁰ In doing so, “Suárez ha roto la baraja reconociendo al PCE y ha puesto el tren de la reforma y la transición en la vía

¹⁸⁸ "Las primeras reacciones".

¹⁸⁹ "Banderas rojas y republicanas," *El Alcázar*(12/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁹⁰ Varela, "La legalización del P.C.E. (y su futura estrategia)," *El Alcázar*(12/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

muerta del abismo.”¹⁹¹ The Suárez government now faced what some saw as the greatest crisis since its creation in 1976.¹⁹² However, the King did not escape criticism for this decision, especially within the military. In fact, some felt that, “The scale of anti-Communist feeling within the Army was such that there was a real danger of a military coup and the overthrow of the monarchy,” and “The council [Army’s Supreme Council] also sent a confidential letter to the king warning him that his standing amongst Army officers had suffered a severe blow.”^{193,194} Despite this backlash however, the King’s ties to both Franco and Armed Forces, as well as his attempts to distance himself from the decision to legalize the PCE, ensured, at least for the time being, that this anger would not immediately boil over into violence against the monarchy. The prime minister, on the other hand, took the majority of the blame for this decision; “the military never forgave Suárez for legalizing the Communist Party and from that moment on did not stop plotting against the treacherous Prime Minister...”¹⁹⁵ Some saw in this crisis an opportunity for Juan Carlos, for “Si el Rey Juan Carlos es capaz de capear con coraje esta crisis que ahora vivimos, si es capaz de seguir manteniendo la nave del Estado camino de la paz por encima de los dolores y y miedos del pasado, su legitimidad histórica enraizará en la conciencia nacional.” In this way the King could utilize his monarchical role as moderator in the face of the resurgence of Civil War hostilities between the left and the right. With the legalization of the PCE, “Los dos bandos de la guerra tiene razón

¹⁹¹ "Un golpe de Estado," *El Alcázar*(12/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁹² "El coraje de la Corona," *Diario 16*(13/04/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

¹⁹³ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 385.

¹⁹⁴ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 128-29.

¹⁹⁵ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 172.

para recordar sus heridas y hasta para reclamar su venganza, pero aquí tenemos que pasar por encima de la guerra para construir nuestro futuro en paz.”¹⁹⁶ The King, institutionally above the world of petty politics (at least in theory), was positioned to play the key role in facilitating the construction of this future. He would continue to speak to the military, using his personal contacts as well as his standing as Commander-in-Chief to stress his identification with the Armed Forces. For example, on May 14, “he presided at the ceremony to mark the end of the academic year at the Army general staff college in Madrid. His speech on the role and virtues of the Armed Forces stressed his identification with military concerns.”¹⁹⁷ And, while the furor over the Communist Party’s legalization would die down, the resentment towards Suárez would remain, as well as an inkling of doubt as to the King’s loyalties to the Armed Forces.

In May of 1977 another event occurred that had direct implications for the complex issue of the legitimacy of Juan Carlos’s monarchy. On May 16, in a small ceremony at the Zarzuela Palace in Madrid, Don Juan de Borbón officially renounced his dynastic monarchical rights in favor of his son, Juan Carlos. While some historians see this renunciation as an important step towards the legitimization of democracy, we can see in the views of Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda themselves that the issue was much more complicated.¹⁹⁸ The problem was that

¹⁹⁶ "El coraje de la Corona".

¹⁹⁷ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 389.

¹⁹⁸ Paul Preston writes that Don Juan’s renunciation “went some way to wiping out the ‘original sin’ of Juan Carlos’s kingship – the fact that it was Franco’s invention rather than the consequence of dynastic succession.” *ibid.*, 390.

throughout the transition process that King had ambiguously acknowledged three sources for his legitimacy: the will of the Spanish people, the history of the monarchy in Spain, and the Fundamental Laws of Francoism.¹⁹⁹ However, there is an inherent contradiction between the last two sources here, as the Franco regime wished to establish Juan Carlos as the King of a monarchy entirely separate from that of his father, Don Juan. It is also clear in the strategy of Fernández-Miranda that this was the legitimacy from which the transition process would stem; the new Spanish democracy would originate from and through the existing Francoist institutions – “de la ley a la ley”. It was for this reason the Don Juan described Fernández-Miranda as “horrified” at the former’s renunciation, for ““he regarded my renunciation as something which shattered the existing legal order...it was like telling them that what they were doing was not legal’.”²⁰⁰ Fernández-Miranda realized that

“On becoming king on 22 November 1975 Juan Carlos had also become head of the new dynasty; strictly speaking there was no legal or dynastic link between the king and Don Juan, who merely happened to be his father. It was therefore absurd for the state to acknowledge the latter’s renunciation, since this would mean questioning Juan Carlos’s previous right to the throne, and by extension the legality of everything carried out in his name since his investiture. The government’s entire strategy had been based on the principle of respect for the existing legal order and its own mechanisms of reform. In Fernández-Miranda’s view, if those in power failed to observe this maxim, they would release others from their obligation to do likewise, thereby endangering the entire transition process.”²⁰¹

Juan Carlos agreed with Fernández-Miranda on this subject, and we can see that he did not ascribe significant political importance to this ceremony as he had already

¹⁹⁹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

²⁰⁰ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 132.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

given his son, Felipe, the title of Príncipe de Asturias in January of 1977.²⁰² In addition, the ceremony itself, held at the Zarzuela Palace, was a very brief, private and “intimate” affair; the only people present outside of the King’s family were a few important politicians such as Suárez and Fernández-Miranda.²⁰³ One newspaper even went so far as to describe the ceremony as having a “clima de frialdad protocolario.”²⁰⁴ By not making this ceremony public, the King and his advisors emphasized its purely ceremonial nature and downplayed any potential political significance of the renunciation. During the ceremony itself, Don Juan gave a rather long speech in which he emphasized both his and Juan Carlos’s positions within the lengthy dynastic tradition of Spain. He focused on the democratic possibilities and necessities on the monarchy: the need to respect the rights of all citizens and all regions, to serve one’s country, “En suma, el Rey tiene que serlo para todos los españoles.”²⁰⁵ After acknowledging the progress Juan Carlos had made so far in establishing an authentic democracy, Don Juan declared that this was now the appropriate time for him to renounce his dynastic rights in favor of his son who he hoped would continue the turn towards democracy under the final words of Don Juan’s father, Alfonso XIII: “sobre todo, España.”²⁰⁶ In response, Juan Carlos accepted this renunciation of dynastic rights in a much shorter speech. He repeatedly thanked Don Juan for his service and loyalty to Spain and acknowledged that he

²⁰² Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 390-91.

²⁰³ "Don Juan renuncia por amor a España y al Rey," *Informaciones*(14/05/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁰⁴ "Don Juan cedió su corona al Rey," *Diario 16*(14/05/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

himself had learned these values from his father and during his own education (a significant portion of which had taken place in Spain, under Franco's guidance). He stated that "La educación que he recibido ... me ha formado en el cumplimiento del deber, en el servicio al pueblo, en la entrega absoluta a ese gran ideal que es nuestra patria, con su espléndida pasado, su presente apasionante y su futuro lleno de esperanzas."²⁰⁷ Finally, the King reiterated some of the most important themes and goals of his reign, declaring that, "Respetaré la voluntad popular, defendiendo los valores tradicionales y pensando sobre todo que la libertad, la justicia y el orden deben inspirar mi reinado."²⁰⁸ Thus Juan Carlos acknowledged his father's renunciation of dynastic rights without emphasizing the long tradition of Spanish monarchy, but briefly repeating the central message of his reign as King: his interest in respecting the will of the Spanish people while defending the values traditionally important to Spain and above all adhering to a code of liberty, justice, and order.

Overall, The King and his advisors were successful in downplaying the importance of Don Juan's renunciation, and what articles the mainstream press did print did not pick up on the contradictions inherent in the ceremony.²⁰⁹ The majority saw this as further consolidation of the democratic legitimacy of the monarchy in the person of Juan Carlos. One newspaper wrote that "La Monarquía constitucional que encarna don Juan Carlos va a quedar rebustecida con la cesión voluntaria de don Juan de Borbón...", an act interpreted by some as an attempt to strengthen an institution at

²⁰⁷ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey al Conde de Barcelona en la renuncia de sus derechos dinásticos a la Corona de España," (Speech 1977).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 391.

a difficult moment, following the tensions surrounding the legalization of the Communist Party.^{210,211} While these newspaper were generally of center-left ideology, “the bunker newspaper, *El Alcázar*, took the opportunity to remind its readers, many of whom were Army officers, that Juan Carlos’s monarchy had been ‘installed’ by Franco, that Juan Carlos had, in 1969 and 1975, sworn to uphold the fundamental principles of the *Movimiento*, and that the monarchy could therefore only be regarded as legitimate if it remained true to those principles.”²¹² Even those articles which referenced the Francoist legitimacy of the Crown did not fully understand the complicated implications of Don Juan’s renunciation, as we can see when one writer asserts that, “La misión histórica de la Monarquía de Don Juan Carlos I ha de completar la legitimidad conjugando la dinástica ... – y la legal – esta última heredada del franquismo –, con la legalidad democrática, única que justifica auténticamente a los poderes públicos en una sociedad moderna.”²¹³ While this is a fairly accurate description of Juan Carlos’s interpretation of his monarchy’s legitimacy, it doesn’t acknowledge the contradictions inherent in this process. These are what worried Fernández-Miranda. Prior to this ceremony, the King had used enough ambiguities in his speeches to make the three sources of legitimacy appear simultaneously viable; this ceremony threatened to shatter that illusion. However, we can see that the presentation of the ceremony as a private affair allowed the King to downplay the implications and importance of Don Juan’s renunciation. Besides, the

²¹⁰ "La cesión de don Juan fortalece la Monarquía constitucional," *Informaciones*(10/05/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²¹¹ Carlos Iglesias Selgas, "La abdicación del Conde de Barcelona," *Pueblo*(16/05/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²¹² Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 391.

²¹³ Iglesias Selgas, "La abdicación del Conde de Barcelona".

King was much more concerned with the third source of legitimacy he had mentioned in his proclamation speech: popular legitimacy.

Despite the significance of this ceremony, the event on everyone's mind was the upcoming elections in June. In the months leading up to the elections it was clear that the "bunker" still had not forgiven the Suárez government for legalizing the PCE, and continued to accuse them of betraying the country. *El Alcázar* discussed the upcoming election and quoted staunch Francoist Blas Piñar as declaring that "El pueblo ha sido engañado ... por un gobierno que prometió continuidad en el referéndum y ha legalizado el Partido Comunista." The paper wrote that even the transcendental legacy of Franco "no ha podido sobreponerse a la traición de sus colaboradores," by which they specifically meant Suárez and his government.²¹⁴ Therefore these hard-line Francoists saw the elections, in which the PCE was allowed to freely participate, as an attempt to dismantle Francoism, implying as well that this was a definite step towards democracy. In the fears of the "bunker" we can also see the hope that these elections inspired in other parties. Many viewed the upcoming elections as an historic moment in Spanish history and hoped that these new Cortes would be used for the establishment of an authentic democracy and the creation of a new Constitution. For despite the achievements in reform thus far, all of these changes had been carried out under the Fundamental Laws originated by Franco.

Some worried that regional violence and the terrorism of groups such as ETA could possibly derail the election process or at least dissuade numerous voters from

²¹⁴ JASA, "El franquismo ha muerto. El pueblo ha sido engañado," *El Alcázar* (11/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

going to the polls. To that end the government put in place “Operación Ariete” in which the Civil Guard and police were deployed at various stations around the country in an effort to minimize any impact of terrorism. The government assured the people that there was no cause for alarm, that such measures were only used to ensure a peaceful election process.²¹⁵ For his part, the King remained in Madrid during the few weeks leading up to the election. While he made no large public appearances related to the upcoming elections, the King met with leaders of various political parties in the Zarzuela Palace, as well as members of the Armed Forces.^{216,217}

Then, on June 15, 1977, the Spanish people participated in the first democratic elections that many of them had ever experienced. Even Santiago Carrillo, the old leader of the PCE admitted that “tiene cierta emoción votar por primera vez a los sesenta y dos años,” (he had been a few years too young to vote in the last elections of the Second Republic).²¹⁸ In all, the elections were a huge success for the government as they occurred very peacefully and with an exceptionally high turnout; most regions averaged around 80% of eligible voters.^{219,220} There was an overall excitement in the population that was reflected in this high turnout, which delighted

²¹⁵ "El ejército español ocupa los puntos clave," *Informaciones*(13/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²¹⁶ "El Rey, con Felipe González," *Arriba*(20/05/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²¹⁷ "El Rey recibió a Gutiérrez Mellado," *Arriba*(19/05/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²¹⁸ Elvira Daudet, ""Es la primera vez que voto en mi vida"," *Pueblo*(15/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²¹⁹ "Casi todos a votar," *Diario 16*(16/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²²⁰ "Más de 81 por 100 votó en Madrid," *Diario 16*(16/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

Juan Carlos.²²¹ There was a notable eagerness in the voters, who formed huge lines in anticipation of the opening of voting centers, adding to the general atmosphere of democracy that seemed to characterize that day.²²² While Juan Carlos had long espoused the importance of participation in Spain's government, this was the first experience of many with such democratic participation, and it seemed to have a profound effect on them. Despite the large changes instigated by the Law of Political Reform and the legalization of the PCE, many people expressed the feeling on June 15 that "La democracia empieza hoy."²²³ They believed that such elections in which all political parties could freely participate would help to end the violent tensions between the victors and the vanquished of the Civil War, "porque la democracia no es el grito salvaje de la victoria sobre los perdedores, sino que la mayoría se dé cuenta de que puede ser minoría mañana y se comporte como ese día desearía que se comportasen con ella."²²⁴ This was the first Cortes of democracy and of the King, as the previous Cortes, while they had enacted some reforms, had been appointed by Franco, and thus many felt that in these elections the Spanish people had recovered their sovereignty and their ability to decide their own future. Interestingly, although not unexpectedly, the monarchs did not vote in the elections, but remained in the Zarzuela Palace. The purpose of this was "para mostrar de hecho su no vinculación a ninguna de las candidaturas o partidos que se presentan en las elecciones, ya que se

²²¹ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 134.

²²² "Ambiente democrático," *Diario 16*(16/06/1977),

<http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²²³ "La democracia empieza hoy," *Ya*(16/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

considera que la Monarquía lo es de todos los españoles.”²²⁵ In addition, this was a practice that was already an established tradition among other European parliamentary monarchs.

The biggest winners at the voting booths were the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) and the PSOE, in short, “los españoles han votado por la moderación.”²²⁶ The more radical parties, on both the left and the right, despite all of their rhetoric, would not form a large part of the new Cortes. In addition, the elections marked the end of Torcuato Fernández-Miranda’s direct participation in the government, as the former advisor to Juan Carlos had decided to resign from his positions as President of the Cortes and of the Council of the Realm a few weeks prior. It is not clear why Fernández-Miranda chose to resign, but it is possible that in doing so the politician assured that the new Cortes would not be identified in any way with the previous Francoist regime. For while Suárez was again confirmed by the King as prime minister, this was due to the great success of his party, the UCD, in the democratic elections. Fernández-Miranda was replaced in his posts by Antonio Hernández-Gil, a man whose background was largely in academia and not associated with the Franco regime.²²⁷

The new Cortes opened on July 22, 1977. These were the first Cortes of the monarchy, and their opening was marked with a lengthy speech by Juan Carlos. This speech was in fact even longer than his proclamation speech and represented a

²²⁵ "Los reyes pasaron el día en la Zarzuela," *Arriba*(16/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²²⁶ Juan Cruz, "Los españoles han votado por la moderación," *El País*(17/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²²⁷ "Antonio Hernández Gil, nombrado por el rey presidente de las cortes," *ABC*(16/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

definitive turning point in the King's rhetoric during the transition period. Juan Carlos began by noting that this was clearly no longer the Spain of Franco, naming the Cortes "la primera Legislatura de las Cortes de la Monarquía."²²⁸ This in itself was a turning point, as in previous years any reform efforts had to be made through the existing Francoist institutions. Now the King had his own institutions, albeit created from the relics of the Francoist regime. The King then stated that in the creation of these Cortes, "veo cumplido un compromiso al que siempre me he sentido obligado como Rey: el establecimiento pacífico de la convivencia democrática sobre la base del respeto a la ley, manifestación de la soberanía del pueblo."²²⁹ This sentiment was then echoed in various newspapers during the days surrounding the opening of the new Cortes: this democracy was the fulfillment of a promise made by Juan Carlos to the Spanish people upon becoming King in November, 1975. Unfortunately, this claim was not exactly true. The King had never explicitly declared his intentions to establish a democratically elected Cortes; this would have undermined the entire strategy of Fernández-Miranda. It is very likely that the change thus far executed by Juan Carlos's regime would have been either impossible or much more difficult had he immediately declared his desire to break from the Francoist past and install a democratic system with full participation. Thus while Juan Carlos presented the opening of the new Cortes as the fulfillment of a promise to the Spanish people, this was actually an exaggeration. The King had promised a vague increase in participation in the government for the population, without an

²²⁸ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Cortes en la apertura de la Legislatura constituyente."

²²⁹ Ibid.

exclusion of peoples or a denial of rights to any one group.²³⁰ Despite this exaggeration it was clear in this speech that Juan Carlos would no longer hide his democratic intentions behind the type of ambiguities characteristic of his proclamation speech. After declaring that this new democracy had been his vision from the beginning of the transition process, the King reiterated several themes of his previous speeches, such as the participation of all peoples, the plurality of ideas, and the recognition of the sovereignty of the Spanish people. He also emphasized that this process of transition had not been a break with the past, a *ruptura*, but an “evolution”, an idea that reflected Fernández-Miranda’s idea of achieving reform through the existing Francoist infrastructure.²³¹ As a process of evolution, the opening of these Cortes marked a milestone in the growth of democracy in Spain. Juan Carlos stated that between the death of Franco and this moment in mid-1977, “hemos construido los cimientos de una estructura sólida para la convivencia en libertad, justicia y paz,” and that from these foundations the Spanish people could construct the future Spain that they all desired. With these foundations, the King declared, “La democracia ha comenzado. Ello es innegable.”²³² This would be a central theme of Juan Carlos’s speech. The opening of these Cortes did not represent the culmination of democracy in Spain but rather a beginning, part of an evolution that would continue in the coming years. This was arguably the beginning of real democracy in Spain, but as the King stated: “Ahora hemos de tratar de

²³⁰ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

²³¹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Cortes en la apertura de la Legislatura constituyente."

²³² Ibid.

consolidarla.”²³³ In order to do so, it would be necessary for the Spanish people to put aside the great differences that had divided them for the previous forty years; the future success of the Cortes lay in the ability of both sides to dialogue with the other. With both the left and the right represented in the new legislature, this seemed like a real possibility to many Spanish citizens.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this speech was Juan Carlos’s definition of the nature of the new Cortes. Up until this speech itself, the new legislature did not know what its role would be after its opening; essentially, would it or would it not be charged with creating a new constitution to replace the old Fundamental Laws? Here however, Juan Carlos declared for the first time that he considered himself a constitutional monarch, and that it was the desire of the Crown for the new Cortes to create “una Constitución que dé cabida a todas las peculiaridades de nuestro pueblo y que garantice sus derechos históricos y actuales.”²³⁴ This was a clear declaration of the purpose for this new legislature and signaled a definitive turn towards authentic democracy. For while the elections of June had done away with the previous Francoist Cortes, a new constitution written by the first Cortes of the monarchy would replace the Fundamental Laws that had governed the transition process thus far. In addition, the statement by Juan Carlos acknowledging this mission also reiterated his desire, expressed in his proclamation speech, to be King of all the Spaniards, of each in his culture, history and tradition.²³⁵ However, in the context of this speech opening the new Cortes, this statement takes on even more significance. While the first

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey a los españoles en su proclamación."

statement in 1975 promised Juan Carlos's desire to acknowledge the individuality of each of Spain's unique and different regions, especially those excluded under Franco such as Cataluña and the Basque Country, in 1977 the King's statement represented a promise to constitutionalize these differences with some sort of autonomy for each region. We can see that defining the new Cortes as constitutional also affected the rest of the King's speech.

Throughout the speech, Juan Carlos again and again referred to the desires of "the Crown", and not himself or "the King". In doing so he emphasized that the monarchy would be a lasting institution in Spanish politics; knowing that the new Cortes would be charged with creating a new constitution, Juan Carlos wanted to impart on his audience the necessity that this constitution define Spain as a monarchy and not as a republic. The King even made this desire explicit during his speech, stating that "En ese esfuerzo estará siempre presente la Corona, que permanecerá en estrecho contacto con el pueblo y con los representantes legítimos del pluralismo de nuestra sociedad que han de realizar una tarea ardua, pero apasionante." Later, he added that "en esa ilusionante tarea no les faltará el estímulo y el impulso de la Corona. Yo pido a Dios que me ayude siempre a cumplir con mi deber en el servicio de España."²³⁶ Thus Juan Carlos linked the institution of the monarchy with the fulfillment of this "promise" to establish an authentic democracy in Spain in the hopes that these Cortes would constitutionalize the monarchy in the coming months. This was the most reliable way of assuring the continuation and consolidation of the monarchy in Spain. By linking the Crown with the successes of democratic reform

²³⁶ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Cortes en la apertura de la Legislatura constituyente."

thus far, Juan Carlos all but assured the elimination of a republican option in the future constitution. In addition, the creation of a republic could have jeopardized the reforms already realized, as it could have provoked a serious reaction from the far right and the Armed Forces, who saw in any republic the very government they had worked to overthrow in 1936. Thus after making such dramatic democratic declarations, the King added that he hoped he could count on “la lealtad y disciplina de nuestras Fuerzas Armadas” before officially opening the first session of the new Cortes.²³⁷

Overall, the King’s speech was very well received by the members of the new Cortes. People remarked at the upbeat and hopeful atmosphere that permeated the legislature as the monarchs entered the room. Even such historically oppositional figures as Dolores Ibárruri, “la Pasionaria”, a prominent Communist leader of the Second Republic applauded the King upon his arrival. For one writer, “el mayor símbolo de que en España hemos cerrado definitivamente una página de la Historia hoy es esta mujer, emocionada ante su Rey, esta mujer con tal carga de símbolos.”²³⁸ However, not all parties expressed their satisfaction with the King. The socialists chose not to applaud the King’s arrival in the Cortes, as did a few members of other parties as well. Despite their initial skepticism, by the time Juan Carlos finished his speech, all stood to give a warm applause, led by Felipe González.²³⁹ As one member of the PCE noted, at the beginning of the speech, “Existía cierta desconfianza, pero como en el discurso se ha dicho que iban a ser unas Cortes Constituyentes y que se

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Pilar Narvi3n, "La madurez del Rey," *Pueblo*(22/07/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²³⁹ Ibid.

iban a legalizar todos los partidos políticos, nuestra referencia ha cambiado.”²⁴⁰ The socialists and communists also responded well to the King’s insinuation that the state might recognize the autonomy of various regions of Spain. By making such dramatic declarations of his democratic intentions, assertions that Juan Carlos had avoided previously, he succeeded in winning over those who were initially skeptical at the possibilities of the new Cortes. Thus while the King had aided in various accomplishments in reform during his first year on the throne, this speech at the opening of the first Cortes of the monarchy marked a decided turn not only towards democracy but in the public’s perception of Juan Carlos’s role in this transformation. Newspapers reiterated the King’s sentiment that the new legislature represented the fulfillment of a promise to the Spanish people (despite the exaggerated nature of this claim), and wrote that the King had acquired and consolidated a base of popular legitimacy.²⁴¹ As he had hoped, Juan Carlos’s success in dismantling a number of Francoist institutions had greatly linked the monarchy and democracy in the minds of the public, and as such, it would be extremely difficult for legislators to create any sort of constitution that did not establish Spain as a parliamentary monarchy. For many, this turn of events was wholly unexpected. The newspaper, *Informaciones*, wrote following the King’s speech that,

“El Rey Juan Carlos ha sorprendido, desde su entronización, a muchos. Los que tal día como hoy aplaudían en las mismas Cortes – ¡pero tan distintas! – la decisión de Franco de hacer a don Juan Carlos sucesor a título de Rey y los que aquel día no aplaudieron, contaban

²⁴⁰ "Primeros comentarios de los políticos sobre el discurso del Rey," *Informaciones*(22/07/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁴¹ "Ha ganado España," *Arriba*(16/06/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

con un Rey ‘domesticado’, continuador del viejo Caudillo. Ha sido todo lo contrario.”²⁴²

The King had largely succeeded in allying the monarchy with the emerging democracy in Spain and distancing himself from the title of “Franco’s heir”. He had done so by adhering to the broad strategy outlined by Fernández-Miranda of “de la ley, a la ley”, that is, enacting democratic reforms through the existing Francoist infrastructure. By neither alienating the left nor the right during the first year of his rule Juan Carlos was able to oversee the creation of a political reform law that called for the dismantling of the Francoist Cortes and democratic elections for a new Cortes. The success of these elections in June of 1977, in which the long excluded Communist Party participated was yet another step in the turn towards democracy that Juan Carlos hoped would ensure the consolidation of the monarchy in Spain. The King’s speech at the opening of the new Cortes demonstrated Juan Carlos’s opinion that this moment was a landmark in the transition process. He had assembled a cabinet of the monarchy in July of 1976, led by his own prime minister, Adolfo Suárez. In June of 1977, the King had his own legislature, one not of Francoist but of popular origins, in which all parts of the political spectrum were represented. In doing so he had “laid to rest Franco’s policy of deliberately maintaining the hatreds of the Civil War and keeping alive the festering divisions between victors and vanquished.”²⁴³ In his speech to the first Cortes of the monarchy, Juan Carlos charged the legislature with carrying out the next crucial step in the turn towards democracy: the creation of a new Constitution. Again, this would have to be

²⁴² Abel Hernández Dominguéz, "El Rey, en las Cortes," *Informaciones*(22/07/1977), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁴³ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 396.

accomplished in such a way as not to antagonize the “bunker” and especially the military. The forces of the right could not be made to feel as though the country was returning to the government of the Second Republic, especially after what the Armed Forces saw as the betrayal of Adolfo Suárez with the legalization of the PCE.

Chapter 4: The Pillar of Democracy (1978-81)

“Con ella se recoge la aspiración de la Corona, de que la voluntad de nuestro pueblo quedara rotundamente expresada. Y, en consecuencia, al ser una Constitución de todos y para todos, es también la Constitución del Rey de todos los españoles.”²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey al pueblo español al promulgar la Constitución," (Speech1978).

As politicians debated the structure and details of a new Constitution, the King was most concerned with the monarchy's place under this new system. While he had worked hard since his proclamation to associate the monarchy with positive, democratic change in Spain, especially in his speech at the opening of the Cortes in July 1977, the parties of the left still insisted on supporting a republic option over that of a parliamentary monarchy. In fact,

“The king's fears were confirmed when, at a special meeting held at Sigüenza (Segovia) in early August 1977, the PSOE leadership adopted a constitutional draft that included the republican form of government amongst its clauses. It was also agreed that the party would defend a republican amendment until it was publicly defeated at some stage in the constitutional debates. By forcing a vote on the monarchy, the PSOE sought to emphasize that in the future the institution would owe its existence to the will of the democratically elected constitutional Cortes and not to that of General Franco.”²⁴⁵

Thus this was largely a symbolic gesture on the part of the PSOE, meant to demonstrate to Juan Carlos that his future legitimacy would be reliant on his support in the Cortes and amongst the Spanish people, and not on the Francoist institutions from which it originated. The preference for a republican option though, was very real, and was based in part on the actions of the previous monarch of Spain, Alfonso XIII, who had tolerated a military coup of General Miguel Primo de Rivera in 1923.²⁴⁶ The democratic results that Juan Carlos had helped to produce thus far were surely helping to assuage this fear, but the PSOE's proposal would have to be officially defeated before they would support a monarchical system. Interestingly, despite their strong initial opposition to Juan Carlos, the PCE, and especially Santiago Carrillo, defended the monarchy during the constitutional debates. Carrillo admitted

²⁴⁵ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 142-43.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

that as long as the King agreed to respect the new Constitution and the popular sovereignty of the people, the PCE would respect and defend the monarchy. He even “praised Juan Carlos’s role during the transition as: ‘the hinge between the apparatus of the State and the authentic democratic aspirations of civil society’. He absolved him of his Francoist past, describing him as, ‘a young man who has shown that he is more identified with the Spain of today than with that of the past.’”²⁴⁷ Carrillo had no illusions about the King’s role, and recognized the strategy that Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda employed (“de la ley a la ley”) when he called the King the “hinge” between dictatorship and democracy. This type of terminology insinuates a turn towards democracy, not the *ruptura* that the Communists had originally insisted on. Such statements mark the success Juan Carlos had achieved since becoming King in dialoguing with the left opposition and helping to form a government in which all could freely participate. Ultimately, the UCD introduced a draft of the Constitution stating that the Spanish state would be a parliamentary monarchy, and this eventually became the agreed upon version that appeared in the Constitution.²⁴⁸

The most important objective for Juan Carlos in the months during which the Constitution was being written would be to win over the left while continuing to appease the right, as well as the military. As we have seen, he was having a good deal of success strengthening his relations with the left; however, the King would have to work harder to maintain the loyalty of the right. For example, “The government had been careful to introduce a clause [in the proposed Constitution] acknowledging the armed forces’ role in guaranteeing ‘the sovereignty and

²⁴⁷ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 417.

²⁴⁸ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 143.

independence of Spain' as well as 'its territorial integrity and the constitutional order', and another enabling the king to 'exercise supreme command of the armed forces'."²⁴⁹ The government and Juan Carlos both realized that the key to consolidating democracy would be the support or at least the tacit acceptance of the Armed Forces. However, there were a few parts of the proposed Constitution that would prove to be very controversial within the military establishment. Primarily, the more conservative members of the military were very concerned that the new Constitution would concede the term "nationalities" to various regions of Spain in recognition of some degree of autonomy. Such concern became realized when,

"Between 13 and 16 September, the assembled generals discussed the political situation and drew up a memorandum to Juan Carlos. Widely circulated throughout the Armed Forces, this document called upon the King to place 'the spirit of order, discipline and national security higher than the misnamed constitutional order'. He was also requested to appoint a government of national salvation under the premiership of General Santiago. In the event of Juan Carlos refusing, he was to be asked to sack Suárez and suspend parliament for two years. The document was accompanied by the clear threat of outright military intervention 'even against the crown'. To agree to such 'requests' would amount to a bloodless coup d'état. Ministry of Defense spokesmen denied unofficially that any such memorandum had been presented to the King but there were widespread rumors about the meeting."²⁵⁰

Thus we can see that these generals were still angry with Suárez and his allies for legalizing the Communist Party and leading the reforms that worried them so greatly. They had tacitly accepted many of these changes, but the formalization of such democratic reforms and the addition of certain others in a new Constitution threatened to push this opposition towards a real coup attempt. Despite so many successes in the

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 146.

²⁵⁰ Preston, *Juan Carlos: Steering Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy*: 404.

turn towards democracy, the King would need to continue to work hard in order to maintain the loyalty of the Armed Forces. One manner of doing so, which Juan Carlos had used various times before, was to speak directly to the Armed Forces in events such as the annual “Pascua Militar” or at places such as the Zaragoza Military Academy. For example, speaking at the Pascua Militar on January 6, 1978, the King stressed the importance of discipline, actually quoting, without explicitly mentioning it, Franco’s farewell speech to the Zaragoza Military Academy on July 14, 1931.²⁵¹ He declared that the military had to show that “somos capaces de vivir en la paz, en la democracia, y en la libertad.”²⁵² Juan Carlos would continue to emphasize that discipline was the most important aspect of the Armed Forces as the debates over the Constitution continued.

The final draft of the Constitution was ratified on October 31, 1978. It established Spain as a parliamentary monarchy, conceded the term “nationalities” to certain regions of Spain, and granted these regions some degree of autonomy. On December 6, the Constitution was put to a referendum and garnered 88% approval among the nearly two thirds of the population who voted.²⁵³ The ratification and the popular legitimation of the Constitution were seen as yet another step towards true democracy in Spain. The government would no longer be operating under the Fundamental Laws of Francoism. Implied in this reform was the fact that Spain would now be governed by a Constitution created and approved by the entire

²⁵¹ Ibid., 413-14.

²⁵² Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Fuerzas Armadas en la Pascua Militar," (Speech 1978).

²⁵³ "El Referéndum Constitucional de 6 de Diciembre de 1978," Dipòsit Digital de Documents de la UAB, <http://ddd.uab.es/pub/expbib/2003/lce/referendum.pdf>.

population and by all parties, not a set of laws imposed by one faction on another. In an article titled “La Constitución de todos los españoles”, one writer declared that the new Constitution “ha trazado un marco para las futuras confrontaciones, gracias a cual tendremos la garantía, en primer lugar, de que ninguna opción política salirse del marco ni hacia la derecha ni hacia la izquierda; en segundo lugar, de que siempre se respetarán los derechos de las minorías; en tercer lugar, de que ningún cambio será irreversible.”²⁵⁴ The author recognized that even a new Constitution was not an end to conflict or disagreement, but that it would provide a framework within which such conflicts could be resolved. This framework could not have been more different from the former Fundamental Laws in its allowance of debate and its recognition of minorities. Above all, the fact that such a Constitution could continually be altered and amended meant an end to the authoritarian structures that had governed Spain since 1939. As Emilio Attard, President of the commission in charge of editing the Constitution stated after the referendum, “Hoy ha quedado superado el parte oficial de guerra entre los vencedores y vencidos.”²⁵⁵ The success of the Constitution was seen as a personal triumph for Juan Carlos as well, who was congratulated by various world leaders, such as President Jimmy Carter and French President Giscard d’Estaing among others.²⁵⁶ However, there remained a few who were still very opposed to this change, notably Blas Piñar and other hard-line Francoists of the “bunker”. Piñar, in fact, stated that “La Constitución es desconstituyente, significa

²⁵⁴ "La Constitución de todos los españoles," *Ya*(07/12/1978), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁵⁵ "Superado el parte de guerra entre los vencedores y vencidos," *ABC*(07/12/1978), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁵⁶ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 155.

tritular y deshacer a España. El pueblo debe oponerse a que España desaparezca.”²⁵⁷

Much like the Armed Forces, Piñar and other members of the “bunker” were concerned above all with the degree of autonomy that the government was willing to grant Spain’s various regions, as they thought that this decision, as well as the inclusion of all parties of the left would destroy the national unity of Spain that Franco had worked to establish by suppressing these very groups.

One of the big questions left on the mind of many following the success of the referendum was whether or not the King would swear some sort of oath to the new Constitution. While such an act was legally unnecessary, some believed that as Juan Carlos had previously sworn to uphold the Fundamental Laws, another oath to the new Constitution would reinforce the image that the King was subject to the sovereignty of the Spanish people.²⁵⁸ Any such debate was resolved however when Juan Carlos let the public know that he planned to officially sanction the new Constitution in a speech on December 27, after the results of the referendum became publically available. Even before this official speech, citizens praised Juan Carlos for helping to facilitate some sort of national reconciliation, embodied in the new Constitution, which brought together those who had been separated by the Civil War and the ensuing authoritarian regime. Juan Carlos’s desire and effort to be seen as “King of all the Spaniards” was here successful, at least among those Spaniards who believed that, “ese es, en definitivo, el sentido histórico de la Monarquía, que él ha sabido conectar con la auténtica realidad social de nuestro pueblo, convirtiendo a la

²⁵⁷ "La Constitución significa destruir España," *El Alcázar*(07/12/1978), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁵⁸ "El Rey debe jurar la Constitución," *ABC*(07/12/1978), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

Corona en seguro insustituible de la naciente democracia española.”²⁵⁹ Clearly this feeling, that the monarchy was important to Spanish democracy, was held by a large portion of the population who approved the new Constitution, which unequivocally and democratically established the parliamentary monarchy as the political system of the Spanish state. Thus while he still faced mounting pressure from the “bunker” and the Armed Forces, Juan Carlos had succeeded in consolidating support for the monarchy among the center and the left.

Although he still planned on giving a speech promulgating the new Constitution on December 27, Juan Carlos also gave his annual Christmas Eve speech to the Spanish people. In this first speech, the King stuck to the large, broad themes that had defined all of his speeches during his reign. He emphasized above all the importance of unity among the population as well as the importance of ensuring that popular sovereignty was returned to the people.²⁶⁰ The King thought that this objective had been fully achieved in the acceptance of the new Constitution. While this speech touched on broad, somewhat vague issues, the King’s speech on December 27 was far more important. First and foremost was the very nature of the speech; Juan Carlos used the occasion to promulgate the Constitution, putting the document into effect through his official proclamation. In addition, the King unequivocally answered the skeptics who had wondered if he would sanction the new Constitution and swear to abide by its various articles. He stated that, “Con ella se recoge la aspiración de la Corona, de que la voluntad de nuestro pueblo quedara

²⁵⁹ Carlos Seco Serrano, "El Rey y la reconciliación nacional," *ABC*(16/12/1978), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁶⁰ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Navidad de Su Majestad el Rey," (Speech1978).

rotundamente expresada. Y, en consecuencia, al ser una Constitución de todos y para todos, es también la Constitución del Rey de todos los españoles.”²⁶¹ Here the King made clear his willingness to abide by the Constitution as simply another citizen of Spain and as King of all the Spaniards. He also emphasized the popular aspect of the new Constitution by stating that it was by and for all the people of Spain. This all helped to reinforce the image of the King as the facilitator of national reconciliation and of participation of all sectors of the population. Juan Carlos also focused on a theme that he had stressed in his speech at the opening of the new Cortes in July of 1977: the fulfillment of a promise and of his duty as King of Spain. In his 1977 speech the King had stated that he had promised to create an authentic democracy in Spain in his original proclamation speech (an exaggeration) and that in the opening of the Cortes he saw this goal, this duty, accomplished.²⁶² In sanctioning the new Constitution the King would repeat this theme, with statements such as: “Con ella se recoge la aspiración de la Corona, de que la voluntad de nuestro pueblo quedara rotundamente expresada,” “Si ya en el mismo instante de ser proclamado como Rey, señalé mi propósito de considerarme el primero de los españoles”, and “El día de mi proclamación tuve ocasión de decir que ‘el Rey es primer español obligado a cumplir con su deber’.”²⁶³ In continually referencing statements made in his own proclamation speech the King reminded those present that he had overseen all of the reforms that had led to the creation of this new Constitution. He once again portrayed

²⁶¹ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey al pueblo español al promulgar la Constitución."

²⁶² Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Cortes en la apertura de la Legislatura constituyente."

²⁶³ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Su Majestad el Rey al pueblo español al promulgar la Constitución."

the successes of democracy as the fulfillment of a promise made to the Spanish people and in doing so continued to link the monarchy with democracy and progress in the mind of the Spanish public. After all, as Juan Carlos declared at the opening of the new Cortes, “la democracia ha comenzado ... Ahora hemos de tratar de consolidarla.”²⁶⁴ And while he certainly recognized the need to consolidate the new democracy, the King wanted as well to consolidate the monarchy itself; the most effective way to do so would be to strongly link the two ideas, democracy and monarchy, so that the consolidation of one would also mean the consolidation of the other.

While Juan Carlos had been very effective thus far in consolidating support among the center and left of the Spanish population, by the end of 1979 he was struggling to maintain the previously strong loyalty of the Armed Forces. During the first years of his reign the King had successfully maintained this loyalty by helping to enact reforms through the existing Francoist infrastructure. However, as this infrastructure disappeared and the government began to enact more drastic democratic reforms, the Armed Forces felt as though the country was returning to a style of government reminiscent of the one that had been toppled by Franco in 1936. In facing these changes, the Armed Forces faced a kind of contradiction. First, for many years the Armed Forces

“were, by Franco’s explicit mandate, the guardians of Francoism. (...) It was an order: after his death, the Army’s mission was to preserve Francoism. But shortly before he died Franco gave the military a

²⁶⁴ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Cortes en la apertura de la Legislatura constituyente."

different order in his will, and it was that they should obey the King with the same loyalty with which they'd obeyed him. Of course, neither Franco nor the military imagined that the two orders could come to be contradictory...²⁶⁵

This was the problem that divided the military as greater democratic reforms were passed. With growing tension, expressed in ways like the memorandum circulated by the more conservative generals, the King had to focus even more on consolidating the Armed Forces' support. For example, shortly following his promulgation of the new Constitution, Juan Carlos gave his annual speech at the Pascua Militar on January 6, stressing discipline above all else. He had emphasized this theme various times in the previous months, but this time Juan Carlos expanded on the idea even more. He explained that, "En uno u otro caso el inferior debe obedecer, puesto que no tiene los elementos de juicio que posee el jefe supremo. Y si éste se equivoca, tengamos presente que los peligros de la indisciplina son mayores que los del error. Un error se puede corregir. Un militar, un ejército que ha perdido la disciplina no puede salvarse. Ya no es un militar, ya no es un ejército."²⁶⁶ This extremely strong language seems to reflect Juan Carlos's growing concern that he was losing the confidence and support of the military with the dismantling of the Francoist establishment. In response, the King tried to explain that the most important quality in a soldier and in an army was discipline, whether or not one agreed with a specific decision.

The most divisive decision in provoking the anger of the military was the introduction of Statutes of Autonomy for various regions of Spain over the second half of 1979. Most worrisome for the Armed Forces were the statutes awarded to

²⁶⁵ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 30.

²⁶⁶ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey con motivo de la Pascua Militar," (Speech 1979).

Cataluña and the Basque Country, two regions historically suppressed under Franco. For, “As far as the more intransigent sectors of the armed forces were concerned, the statutes of autonomy negotiated by the Suárez government merely confirmed the fears raised a year earlier by the introduction of the term *nacionalidades* in the constitution and marked the beginning of the end of Spanish national unity.”²⁶⁷

Aware of such concerns, Juan Carlos made reference to the new statutes in his annual Christmas Eve speech of 1979, reminding all those listening, especially the military, that, “Somos españoles, españoles de todas las regiones de nuestra patria, y hemos de sentir orgullo de serlo, lo mismo en las penas que en los éxitos o en las dificultades.”²⁶⁸ The King tried to clarify for the right that such reforms were not attacks on Spain’s national unity, but part of a new kind of national unity, based around democracy and the participation of all Spaniards in government.

Unfortunately, not all members of the “bunker” or the Armed Forces even accepted democracy, and many of those who did only did so reluctantly; the military had relished its role under Franco as a force largely outside of politics and did not enjoy now finding itself under a civilian power.²⁶⁹ In his speech to the Armed Forces at the Pascua Militar in 1980, Juan Carlos chose not to focus solely on the importance of discipline, but made an effort to personally identify with the military. He stated that, “No me siento extraño en vuestra compañía, ni mi función se limita a ser vuestro Rey y a ostentar el mando supremo de las Fuerzas Armadas. Soy también vuestro compañero. Vuestro compañero, con todo el emocionante y hondo contenido que

²⁶⁷ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 159-60.

²⁶⁸ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Navidad de Su Majestad el Rey," (Speech 1979).

²⁶⁹ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 95.

esta palabra encierra en el ámbito militar.”²⁷⁰ The King here tried to use his double role as both a civilian and military leader to reassure the Armed Forces, who worried that they were losing their influence over Spanish life, and that this would lead to a destruction of the principles they had shared and defended under Franco. Clearly by identifying himself as the companion of the soldiers before him, Juan Carlos was trying to show that he related to the problems facing the military, and would not abandon them in the future, although he also emphasized the need to obey and respect the Constitution at all times.²⁷¹

Unfortunately, the growing tension between the military and civilian establishments was only exacerbated by an increase in terrorism around the country, often aimed specifically at the Armed Forces. The majority of attacks came from terrorist organizations such as ETA, a paramilitary organization that supported Basque nationalism and separatism. For this reason, the military saw the new Statutes of Autonomy as, in some sense, a betrayal of the Armed Forces and an aid to these terrorist groups fighting to destroy the unity of Spain. In addition, the civilian government was largely unsuccessful at putting a stop to this violence and seemed, in the military’s eyes, to place a greater importance on granting these regions even more autonomy than on protecting the Armed Forces. Thus, “the consequence of that error was that the Armed Forces felt abandoned by a considerable part of democratic society and that putting a stop to that slaughter became, in the eyes of a considerable part of the Armed Forces, an irresistible argument for putting a stop to democratic

²⁷⁰ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Fuerzas Armadas en la Pascua Militar," (Speech 1980).

²⁷¹ Ibid.

society.”²⁷² We can see then that an increase in democratic reforms combined with more and more violence directed against the military led some within the Armed Forces to recall Franco’s rebellion in 1936, and caused some to think that the only solution to what they saw as the disintegration of Spain’s national unity, aided by the federal government, was to move against democracy, or at least the democracy represented by the Suárez government. As a result, “Throughout the autumn of 1980 La Zarzuela continued to gather evidence of mounting military unrest.”²⁷³ With this rising unrest in the front of his mind, Juan Carlos gave a very serious speech on Christmas Eve of 1980. Unlike previous years, in which the speech had been somewhat festive, in 1980 the King addressed his people without his family, alone at his desk in La Zarzuela.²⁷⁴ In a brief message, Juan Carlos named the crises facing Spain at that moment (terrorism, an economic crisis, for example), and admitted that “estamos inmersos en un proceso de transformación y de cambio en todos los órdenes, complejo y difícil, que demanda un intenso esfuerzo de comprensión, de confianza, y de responsabilidad.”²⁷⁵ The King went on to urge all those involved with the major institutions of Spain as well as the various political parties either in power or opposition to put “la defensa de la democracia y el bien de España por encima de limitados y transitorios intereses personales, de grupo o de partido” and went on to add that all should strive “en proteger y consolidar lo esencial si no queremos

²⁷² Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 105.

²⁷³ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 162.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁷⁵ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Mensaje de Navidad de Su Majestad el Rey," (Speech 1980).

exponernos a quedarnos sin base ni ocasión para ejercer lo accesorio.”²⁷⁶ Here the King did away with the subtleties of many of his previous speeches in an exhortation that the Spanish people put aside their differences and work together to consolidate democracy. The brevity of this speech as well as its setting reflected the seriousness of the situation and the very real threat Juan Carlos perceived from those who he felt were working against democracy and against the strength and unity of Spain. Such fears were also apparent in a similarly brief speech the King gave to the Armed Forces in the annual Pascua Militar on January 5, 1981. In it, Juan Carlos stated that he hoped that, “si permanecéis unidos, entregados a vuestra profesión, respetuosos con las normas constitucionales en las que se basa nuestro Estado de derecho, con fe y confianza en los mandos y en vuestro jefe supremo ... conseguiremos juntos superar las dificultades inherentes a todo período de transición...”²⁷⁷ Above all, the King, in seeking to consolidate democracy, and therefore the monarchy, wanted to ensure that the Armed Forces would act within the Constitution to express whatever anger it felt over the rising violence and the Statutes of Autonomy. As in other speeches, Juan Carlos wanted to emphasize that the “transition” was not complete, that it was an evolutionary process without a clear ending. Unfortunately for the King, many in the Armed Forces saw this process evolving towards a government reminiscent of the one overthrown by Franco in 1936, and thus thought that the government, at least as currently constituted, needed a change.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey a las Fuerzas Armadas en la Pascua Militar," (Speech 1981).

Even many of those outside of the military looked for a change in government towards the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981. While Adolfo Suárez had been instrumental in deconstructing the old Francoist regime and installing the infrastructure of democracy, by this point many felt as though he had run his course as prime minister. There were the obvious machinations against Suárez from the far right, who had hoped to do away with the prime minister ever since he had legalized the Communist Party in 1977. These “far-right journalists are plotting, attacking Suárez daily because they consider that destroying him equals destroying democracy,” and while they do not make up a large portion of the population, their newspapers, “are almost the only ones that get inside the barracks, persuading the military that the situation is even worse than it actually is and that, unless out of irresponsibility, egotism or cowardice they allow themselves to be complicit with an unworthy political class that is driving Spain to the brink, sooner or later they’ll have to intervene to save the endangered nation.”²⁷⁸ In addition to this expected resistance though, were the socialists, who hoped to seize the premiership and began to maneuver more and more against Suárez, unknowingly helping those who were simultaneously maneuvering against democracy itself.²⁷⁹ The result of such animation and political maneuvering was an increase in speculation over the imminent demise of Adolfo Suárez. One rumor that began to circulate was that Suárez would be replaced by some sort of unity government led by a military figure that could take control of the spiral of violence and resentment that was taking over the country. The more serious and dangerous possibility though, was of a military

²⁷⁸ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 35.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

coup d'état (in Spanish, a *golpe de estado*), a threat that had a long history and tradition in Spain. Javier Cercas explains it well when he writes that,

“Less than an accident of history, in Spain the *golpe de estado* is a vernacular right: all democratic experiments in Spain have been finished by coups d'état, and in the last two centuries there have been more than fifty; the last had been in 1936, five years after the installation of the Republic; 1981 was also five years since the starting point of the democratic process; combined with the difficult time the country was going through, that chance turned into a numerical superstition and that numerical superstition gnawed away at the coup d'état psychosis among the ruling class.”²⁸⁰

In the face of these possibilities, Suárez announced his resignation on January 25, 1981 in an effort to protect democracy. The prime minister stated that, “‘As often happens in history,’ ... ‘the continuity of a project demands a change of personnel, and I don’t want the democratic system of coexistence to be, once again, a parenthesis in the history of Spain.’”²⁸¹ Suárez was clear in this statement that he resigned specifically because of legitimate threats to democracy, and while he hoped that his resignation would put an end to such schemes, this gesture was ultimately too little, too late. A week after Suárez’s resignation, the “bunker” newspaper *El Alcázar* wrote that,

“‘We are at the critical point, the countdown has begun. Political irresponsibility has culminated in a sad process in which the crown is inescapably obliged to intervene.’ The anonymous author lamented the constitution’s reduction of powers left to the King by Franco’s fundamental laws and went on to incite Juan Carlos to exploit ‘the great freedom of action’ given him by his prestige. ‘The crown finds itself with the historical opportunity to initiate a substantial change of direction, the oft-mentioned touch on the rudder that would permit the formation of a government of national regeneration, enjoying all the authority needed in the exceptional circumstances in which we live.’ Such a government would be supported, it was hinted coyly, but

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 30.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 128.

unmistakably, by the Army. If nothing was done about what was described as political paralysis, ‘it would provide the opportunity for a legitimate intervention by the Armed Forces’.²⁸²

This is an accurate summary of the “bunker’s” opposition to the current government. The far right wished to end the series of reforms that they saw as dangerous for the unity of Spain and move back towards a government that more closely resembled that of Franco. However, they did not wish for a hard, or violent, coup, but a “touch on the rudder”. There was not an opposition to the King here, but simply the direction in which the country was moving. Also evident was the clear threat of military intervention if such changes were not made. The King himself did not do much to assuage fears of a coup attempt. Although we have seen how he spoke to the Armed Forces, urging discipline and obedience, Juan Carlos did not strongly defend Suárez or speak out against the rumors of a caretaker government as a replacement for the prime minister.²⁸³ The result of all of this was that despite Suárez’s resignation, the people of Spain felt, in early 1981, as though a coup d’état was in the air, and given Spain’s history with such insurrections the possibility of military intervention did not seem unlikely.

These speculations became reality on February 23, 1981, when armed military personnel, led by Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero burst into the Cortes, interrupting an investiture vote for a new prime minister and essentially holding the members of the Cortes hostage. Tejero did not act alone; his action was part of a plan for a “soft” coup, a “touch on the rudder”, in which a senior general, Jaime Milans del Bosch would put the tanks at his command into the streets of Valencia, and General

²⁸² Ibid., 459-60.

²⁸³ Ibid., 140.

Alfonso Armada, previously Head of Household at the Zarzuela Palace, would attempt to gain access to the Palace and convince the King to back the coup. Initially the coup was a success, as Tejero had stormed and taken control of the Cortes without any violence (although some shots had been fired and were heard over the radio, giving some the impression that this was a “hard” coup), Milans del Bosch’s tanks were in the streets, and an armored division outside of Madrid was preparing to leave its barracks.²⁸⁴ All of this thus far had been accomplished in the name of the King; the *golpistas* did not wish to act against the monarchy, and hoped that once Armada made his way into the Zarzuela Palace, he would be able to convince the King that such a coup was in the best interest of the country. Unfortunately for the *golpistas*, Armada was refused entry to the Zarzuela, and the coup attempt began to fall apart as the King began to make known that he did not in any way endorse the coup or support those then in control of the Cortes. Before videotaping a statement to be televised later that night, Juan Carlos first made contact with the country’s military hierarchy, sending out messages to the Captains General of Spain’s regions in which he reiterated his defense of democracy and his condemnation of the coup.²⁸⁵ In doing so, Juan Carlos acted not in the largely symbolic manner outlined for him in the Constitution, but as Franco’s heir, as the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, and hoped that this would be enough to ensure that the majority of the military would not join in the coup attempt. In addition to contacting these top generals, Juan Carlos called for a video crew to record a message to be broadcast to the Spanish people. While the message was not broadcast until a few hours after the coup had started (due

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 139.

²⁸⁵ Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*: 169.

largely to the fact that the television studios had been held until then by the *golpistas*), it echoed the previous message sent to the Captains General in its denunciation of the coup and unequivocal support of democracy.²⁸⁶ The King, wearing his Captain General's uniform, declared that, "La Corona, símbolo de la permanencia y unidad de la patria, no puede tolerar en forma alguna acciones o actitudes de personas que pretendan interrumpir por la fuerza el proceso democrático que la Constitución votada por el pueblo español determinó en su día a través de referéndum."²⁸⁷ Juan Carlos left no doubt as to his position in the transition process. If his early speeches as King had been marked by vagueness and ambiguity, Juan Carlos responded to this crisis by unmistakably making clear his support of democracy and effectively shutting the door to any hope for a return to a more Francoist government. In addition to this message to the Spanish people, Juan Carlos also sent a personal message to Milans del Bosch in which he stated that, "Any coup d'état cannot hide behind the King, it is against the King," "I order you to withdraw all the units that you have mobilized," "I order you to tell Tejero to desist immediately," and finally, "I swear that I will neither abdicate the Crown nor abandon Spain. Whoever rebels

²⁸⁶ Some would later argue that the great length of time between the beginning of the coup and the King's televised address showed that Juan Carlos had been either initially complicit with the coup, or had simply waited to see whether or not it would succeed before officially denouncing it. However, "It is an absurd accusation: if the King had organized the coup, if he'd been implicated in it or had wanted it to triumph, the coup would have triumphed without the slightest doubt. The truth is obvious: the King did not organize the coup but rather stopped it, for the simple reason that he was the only person who could stop it." Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 139.

²⁸⁷ Juan Carlos I de Borbón y Borbón, "Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey al pueblo español," (Speech1981).

is ready to provoke a new civil war and will bear responsibility for doing so.”²⁸⁸

This message effectively ended Milans del Bosch’s participation in the coup, as he immediately order his troops to return to their quarters.

While the King’s televised speech was not the only decisive event in stopping the coup, it did prove to be a turning point in the public perception of the coup. Prior to Juan Carlos’s statement, there had barely been any public rejection of the *golpistas* by any major parties, newspapers, or other institutions. Javier Cercas attempts to explain this silence when he writes that during the transition period the history and the violence of the Civil War was on the minds of all Spaniards, and “that is precisely one of the reasons why no one or hardly anyone opposed the 23 February coup: during those years everyone wanted to avoid at any price the risk of repeating the savage orgy of bloodletting that had happened forty years earlier.”²⁸⁹ Spaniards had heard for weeks of the possibility of a “touch on the rudder”, and no one wanted to transform a “soft” coup into a potentially “hard” one through staunch and immediate opposition. It is also possible that in not immediately opposing the coup, citizens or institutions hoped not to be counted among the vanquished if the coup should succeed. Whatever the reason, the majority of Spain simply watched in silence as Tejero took the Cortes and the coup’s initial plans succeeded. There were many reasons why the coup attempt ultimately failed, and it is unclear the extent to which the King’s speech aided in this failure. What is undeniable though, is that, “after the King’s appearance on television ... cascades of condemnations of the coup poured forth from political and professional organizations, trade unions, regional

²⁸⁸ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 355.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

governments, municipalities, county councils, the press and from a whole country that had remained silent until it glimpsed the failure of the *golpistas*.”²⁹⁰ Thus the King’s unequivocal denunciation of the military coup signified in that instance the triumph of democracy, as those who had been wary to intervene for whatever reason knew that without the King’s support, the coup could not succeed.

The result of the King’s speech to the Spanish people was that Juan Carlos was largely seen as the key to stopping the coup and preserving democracy in Spain. One newspaper wrote the following day that, “Frente a los locos y sus panegiristas, amamos la vida libre, siguiendo a nuestro Rey.”²⁹¹ After the attempted coup most of the population looked to the King as the leader of Spain, and not to the prime minister or anyone else in the government; Juan Carlos was seen as the savior, the “pillar” of democracy in Spain.²⁹² In some sense, it was Juan Carlos’s use of his role as Franco’s heir and his seizure of this somewhat extra-constitution power in the face of the coup that led to this further consolidation of democracy. And, as a result of Juan Carlos’s efforts to link the monarchy with the growing democracy, the King’s speech on the night of February 23 helped to consolidate the monarchy as well. Ultimately,

“The coup d’état reinforced the Crown: acting apart from the Constitution, using a powerless King’s last trick of power – which he held as symbolic commander-in-chief of the Army and Franco’s heir – the King stopped the coup and became democracy’s savior, which lavished legitimacy upon the monarchy and turned it into the most solid, most appreciated, most popular, most safeguarded from criticism and, deep down, most powerful institution in the country.”²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 356.

²⁹¹ "Todos con la ley, todos con el Rey," *Pueblo*(24/02/1981), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁹² "El Rey Don Juan Carlos, pilar de la democracia española," *ABC*(25/02/1981), <http://www.march.es/ceacs/linz/>.

²⁹³ Cercas, *Anatomy of a Moment*: 373.

The transition to democracy, as Juan Carlos emphasized in his speeches, was an evolutionary process; it is impossible to either mark an ending point or to specify a moment in which democracy or the monarchy was definitively consolidated.

However, the failed coup attempt of February 23, 1981 clearly marked a turning point in Juan Carlos's reign. Since the death of Franco the King had attempted to slowly shed the mantle of "Franco's heir" for that of a parliamentary monarch by overseeing democratic reforms carried out through the existing Francoist institutions. While he had clearly not won over all factions of the right and of the Armed Forces, the King's response to the coup attempt showed that he would not accept any challenge to the democratic system he had helped to create. With this in mind, Javier Cercas wrote: "23 February not only brought an end to the transition and to Franco's post-war regime: 23 February brought an end to the war."²⁹⁴ Juan Carlos would need to continue to work with both the left and the right to consolidate the institutions of democracy, but he had succeeded in acquiring a legitimacy that came his rejection of his Francoist past as well as his aid in returning sovereignty to the Spanish people.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 374.

Conclusion

Juan Carlos's overriding goal upon becoming King of Spain in 1975 was to consolidate the monarchy and ensure the success and longevity of this institution. He realized that the only long-term way to achieve such a consolidation would be to initiate authentic democratic reforms, and not to continue the regime of Francisco Franco. In some sense, this process that played out in the years after Franco's death was a search for legitimacy. While Juan Carlos began his reign as King with a legitimacy derived from the previous Francoist institutions, he knew that to attempt to consolidate the monarchy based on this legitimacy would amount to a continuation of Francoism. Therefore the King made it the goal of his first few years to establish a base of popular legitimacy derived from the enactment of democratic reforms, from which the monarchy could be consolidated.²⁹⁵

In addition, Juan Carlos and his long time advisor Torcuato Fernández-Miranda had developed a broad strategy for achieving this goal. Fernández-Miranda labeled this strategy "de la ley, a la ley", which can be literally translated as "from the law, to the law"; the basic plan was to enact authentic democratic reforms through the existing Francoist institutions. This plan was established prior to Juan Carlos becoming King, and its origins most likely lie in the years surrounding Juan Carlos's acceptance of the role of Franco's heir. With the knowledge that he would one day succeed Franco as Head of State, Juan Carlos knew that in order to consolidate the monarchy he could not simply continue the policies and the regime of Franco;

²⁹⁵ There was also the issue of dynastic legitimacy, but this was contradictory to the Francoist origins of Juan Carlos's rule, and was not emphasized by Juan Carlos nearly as much as his pursuit of popular legitimacy.

however, he also could not immediately break with Francoism for fear of alienating and provoking those still loyal to Franco on the political right and in the military. Such an immediate rejection of the previous regime could have incited a spiral of resistance and violence among the population not seen since the Civil War. The transition process, whatever it ultimately led to, would have to be an evolution. With this in mind, Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda intended to institute their policy of “de la ley, a la ley”, using the existing infrastructure to implement democratic reforms. It is important to note that while both the King and Fernández-Miranda agreed upon this strategy, neither had any specific idea of how the first few years of Juan Carlos’s rule would play out. It is therefore impossible to view the transition as a period of time with a specific and assumed conclusion, but an evolutionary process that was changed and altered as it went along depending on the circumstances. Democracy was not a foregone conclusion in 1975, but the ultimate success of Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda’s broad strategy of reform.

The result of this strategy between 1975 and 1978 was that reforms had been carried out while placating both the left and the right, as well as the Armed Forces; all sides had to buy into the reform project. In essence, the Crown and the government had to assure the left that true democratic reforms would be put into place while informing the right that nothing substantial would change. Juan Carlos and those close to him were aware that a new government would only be legitimate, or have a democratic legitimacy, if it were born from a dialogue of all sides and not the imposition of reforms from one side over another. This was the key part of Fernández-Miranda’s strategy; by enacting democratic reforms through the existing

infrastructure, Juan Carlos hoped to keep both the left and the right involved with the new government. If either side refused to participate or were excluded from participating, the new government would simply be a continuation of the type of regime that had controlled Spain for the last forty years. It could not be a government of the victors or the vanquished of the Civil War, but must be created with all sides on an even footing; this was the only way to achieve true democratic legitimacy and consolidate the position of the monarchy. The new government would have to be a government of all the Spaniards, just as Juan Carlos wished to be the King of all the Spaniards.

Juan Carlos's speeches during these transition years were both a reflection of the broad strategy he and Fernández-Miranda employed as well as an essential part of this strategy. The King made sure to emphasize aspects of both continuity and change in his words so as to placate the left while reassuring the right at the same time. In addition to the evolutionary process of the transition itself, the King's speeches also underwent an evolution during this time period. In the months after assuming the throne in late 1975 Juan Carlos made sure to pay homage to Franco and the previous regime, and while he acknowledged his intentions for reform, he provided no specifics and did not insinuate that such change would necessarily be dramatic. However, as the government enacted more and more democratic reforms the King began to insert more democratic rhetoric into his speeches and began to offer more specifics as to his exact intentions for reform. In this way, these speeches formed a part of the King's strategy of placating both sides without antagonizing either. In addition, Juan Carlos's speeches were often a reflection of the moment and

the location in which they were given. For example, any time in which the loyalty of the right or the Armed Forces seemed in doubt, Juan Carlos would make many more references to Franco in his speeches and struck a generally more conservative tone, emphasizing the unity of Spain and the importance of discipline for the military. Also, during the beginning of his reign the King was much more willing to admit to his democratic aspirations outside of Spain than within the country, where he had to be more cautious with his rhetoric. Therefore, Juan Carlos catered his speeches to his audiences and to the moment itself in order to preserve the nature of the transition as an evolutionary process that kept both the left and the right in dialogue.

Despite the success of these efforts during the first years of his reign (in which Juan Carlos oversaw the creation of a popularly elected Cortes and a new Constitution), the strategy of peacefully enacting democratic reforms through the Francoist system by ensuring the participation of the left and right broke down in early 1981 with an attempted coup by a segment of the Armed Forces against the government. It was not a coup against the monarchy, but against Adolfo Suárez and his government, a result of the legalization of the Communist Party and the violence perpetrated by ETA. However, the King had made strong attempts previously to link the monarchy with democracy in the mind of the public (it was in this way that he hoped to secure popular legitimacy for the Crown), and in the face of this coup he stuck to this script. In a move that was seen by many as definitively putting an end to the coup, Juan Carlos declared his unequivocal support for democracy and his denunciation of the *golpistas*, using his role as commander-in-chief and as Franco's heir to maintain the loyalty and obedience of the majority of the Armed Forces.

While the strategy Juan Carlos had constructed with Fernández-Miranda had been very successful in establishing an authentic democracy through the existing Francoist infrastructure, the King's response to this attempted coup gave the monarchy an even stronger base of legitimacy. Thus, although it is probable that Juan Carlos could have fully consolidated the monarchy and democracy without the coup attempt, the King's highly visible rejection of this coup, which amounted to a rejection of his Francoist legitimacy, directly led to an immense strengthening of his popular legitimacy.

Ultimately, the strategy designed by Juan Carlos and Fernández-Miranda was successful in establishing and consolidating democracy (and the monarchy) in Spain without any eruptions of violence from the left or the right, and used the only true crisis of the transition period to further consolidate these institutions. The broad strategy did not have specific goals or some sort of timeline, and many of its institutional changes were carried out with the political skill of Adolfo Suárez. One can assess the King's role within this strategy, though, by examining his speeches during the transition period, which both reflect this strategy as well as form an integral part of it. Seen in retrospect, this strategy of reform through the existing Francoist institutions was most likely the only possible way for such a peaceful transition to democracy to succeed. Given the situation in which the monarchy of Juan Carlos was born, any successful transition would have had to be an evolution, not a break with the past. Such a *ruptura* would have immediately alienated and excluded a significant portion of the Spanish population and would only have continued the policy of the last forty years of Spanish history: the government of one

faction over another. The solution to this situation, which was at the heart of the strategy used by Juan Carlos and reflected in his speeches, was to incorporate all sides in the reform efforts, to create a government not of the left or of the right, but one of all the Spaniards.

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