
The Friedrich Ebert

Foundation and the Spanish

Socialists during the Transition

to Democracy, 1975–1982

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Abstract

This article explores the activities of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Spain during the transition to democracy. It describes the financial, logistical and training support with which this German Foundation contributed to the unexpected rebirth of the Spanish Socialist Party after Franco and its meteoric emergence as the leading left-wing party. It also assesses its cooperation with the Socialist trade union, which moved from irrelevance to a position of importance greater than the powerful Communist union. Finally, the article examines how the Foundation diversified its activities in order to meet the growing needs of and challenges faced by the Spanish Socialists in their path towards power.

After the collapse of the communist dictatorships following the crisis of the Soviet Union, an influential paradigm in political science, which argued that domestic factors played a predominant role in the transitions to democracy, was called into question.¹ This, together with the availability of new primary sources, has led in the last two decades to a growing interest in the influence of international and transnational actors on the ‘third wave’ of democratisations. Spain is probably the best example of this. In recent years the long dominant view of the *Transición* as a merely autonomous process has become out-dated.² The present day narrative argues that aspirations to EEC membership was a powerful incentive for Franco’s dictatorship to liberalise; it recognises the impact of the Portuguese Revolution

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With support from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology

¹ Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives*, vol. IV (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 19.

² The pioneer study is Charles Powell, ‘International Aspects of Democratization. The Case of Spain’, in Laurence Whitehead, ed., *The International Dimensions of Democratization. Europe and the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 285–314.

and takes into account the influences that the initiatives of Western governments, international organisations, political parties and trade-unions had on the Spanish transition.³ This article builds on this previous work, shedding light on the role played by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, FES), close both to the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) and the German Trade Union Federation (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB).⁴

German political foundations are in legal terms Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). However, they are run almost entirely with state financial support and their agendas are set in accordance with those of the parent political parties, especially with regard to their international activity. Thus, rather than offering ‘parallel diplomacy’ like most NGOs, political foundations perform ‘complementary diplomacy’, which seeks to increase the efficacy of German foreign policy.⁵ Given their ability to provide aid to political parties and trade unions, German foundations proved to be extremely valuable for Bonn’s relations with countries in the process of leaving authoritarian rule. The capacity of German political foundations to influence several countries undergoing political transitions was not only due to their generous funding. Equally important was the fact that they were regarded by local actors as representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, a country that had come to be perceived – especially since Willy Brandt’s chancellorship – as an inspiring model of political stability, economic progress and social development.⁶

³ See, for example, Antonio Moreno Juste, *Franquismo y construcción europea, 1951–1962. Anhelos, necesidad y realidad de la aproximación a Europa* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1998); Julio Crespo MacLennan, *Spain and the Process of European Integration, 1957–1985* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Maria Elena Cavallaro, *Los orígenes de la integración de España en Europa* (Madrid: Sílex, 2009); Encarnación Lemus, *En Hamelin. La Transición Española más allá de la Frontera* (Oviedo: Septem, 2001); Josep Sánchez Cervelló, *La revolución portuguesa y su influencia en la transición española, 1961–1976* (Madrid: Nerea, 1995); Juan Carlos Jiménez Redondo, *España y Portugal. Los caminos de la democracia en la Península Ibérica* (Madrid: Sílex, 2009); Charles Powell, *El amigo americano, España y Estados Unidos: de la dictadura a la democracia* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011); Óscar José Martín García and Manuel Ortiz Heras, eds., *Claves internacionales en la transición española* (Madrid: Catarata, 2010); Fernando Guirao, ‘The European Community’s Role in Promoting Democracy in Franco’s Spain, 1970–1975’, in Jan van der Harst, ed., *Beyond the Customs Union: The European Community’s Quest for Deepening, Widening and Completion, 1969–1975* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2007), 163–93; Esther Martínez Quinteiro, *La denuncia del Sindicato Vertical. Las relaciones entre España y la Organización Internacional del Trabajo, 1969–1975* (Madrid: CES, 1997); Pilar Ortuño Anaya, *European Socialists and Spain. The Transition to Democracy, 1959–77* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, *El amigo alemán. El SPD y el PSOE de la dictadura a la democracia* (Barcelona: RBA, 2012); Manuela Aroca Mohedano, *Internacionalismo en la historia reciente de la UGT, 1971–1986* (Madrid: Cinca-Fundación Largo Caballero, 2011).

⁴ For the sake of readability, the Federal Republic of Germany is referred to in this article as ‘Germany’. Equally, ‘German’ stands for ‘West German’.

⁵ Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, ‘Foreign political aid: the German political foundations and their US counterparts’, *International Affairs*, 1 (1991), 33–63; Ernst Hillebrand and Uwe Optenhögel, ‘Mediatoren in einer entgrenzten Welt: zur aussenpolitischen Rolle der politischen Stiftungen’, *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 2 (2001), 165–72; Svetlana W. Pogorelskaja, ‘Die parteinahen Stiftungen als Akteure und Instrumente der deutschen Aussenpolitik’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 6–7 (2002), 29–38; Erfried Adam, *Vom mühsamen Geschäft der Demokratieförderung. Die internationale Entwicklungszusammenarbeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* (Bonn: Dietz, 2012).

⁶ On the SPD in the 1970s, see Bernd Faulenbach, *Das sozialdemokratische Jahrzehnt. Von der Reformeuphorie zur neuen Unübersichtlichkeit. Die SPD 1969–1982* (Bonn: Dietz, 2011).

The FES's contribution to the meteoric rise of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) and its affiliated General Union of Workers (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, UGT) after Franco's death has always been considered a significant example of the impact of external actors on the Spanish transition, on a par with the Portuguese case, in which the Socialist Party of Mario Soares also received massive assistance from the German Social Democrats.⁷ However, due to the traditional discretion of German political foundations, the details of the FES's involvement in Spain have long remained unknown. Moreover, the 1984 'Flick Scandal' – in which the PSOE was accused of receiving illegal funding from the FES – led to an extremely politicised and distorted view of that issue.⁸ From that moment on the PSOE tried to downplay or hide from public memory the extent of external support received during the transition; conversely, some publicists tended to exaggerate its relevance and accused Spanish Socialists of being in thrall to foreign interests.⁹ Only the accessibility of primary sources in recent years has created the possibility for a dispassionate approach to the role of the FES and other German foundations during the democratisation processes in both Portugal and Spain.¹⁰ Using new material from German and Spanish archives, together with personal interviews, this article provides an overview of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's activity in Spain

⁷ Pierre Letamendia, *L'intervention des organisations partisans transnationales dans le processus de démocratisation espagnol* (Bordeaux: University of Bordeaux, 1979); Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Die internationale Arbeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts* (Bonn: Dietz, 2007), 218–9; Juliet Antunes Sablosky, *O PS e a transição para a democracia. Relações com os partidos socialistas europeus* (Lisboa: Notícias, 2000); David Castaño, 'A practical test in the détoné: International support for the Socialist Party in the Portuguese Revolution, 1974–1975', *Cold War History*, 15, 1 (2015), 1–26.

⁸ Flick was a German industrial corporation that was accused of illegally funding German political parties. In 1984 the *Bundestag* appointed a commission to investigate the allegations. Some informal remarks of one of its members on how Flick money had served to fund both Portuguese and Spanish Socialists created an uproar in Spain, where also a Parliamentary Commission was set up. Proof of the PSOE having received illegal funding from FES was never found. On the Flick scandal in Germany and Spain, see Werner Abelshauser, *Nach dem Wirtschaftswunder. Der Gewerkschafter, Politiker und Unternehmer Hans Matthöfer* (Bonn: Dietz, 2009), 493–516.

⁹ A clear example of the PSOE's silence about the external support received is the autobiography of Alfonso Guerra, *Cuando el tiempo nos alcanza. Memorias, 1940–1982* (Madrid: Espasa, 2004). Alfredo Grimaldos, *La CIA en España. Espionaje, intrigas y políticas al servicio de Washington* (Barcelona: Debate, 2007) is representative for the conspiracy theory. For the Portuguese case, where the Flick Scandal caused less turmoil, see Rui Mateus, *Contos proibidos. Memórias de um PS desconhecido*, (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1996). Mateus was Secretary for International Relations in the Portuguese Socialist Party.

¹⁰ Wolfram Kaiser and Christian Salm, 'Transition und Europäisierung in Spanien und Portugal. Sozial- und christdemokratische Netzwerke im Übergang von der Diktatur zur parlamentarischen Demokratie', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 49 (2009), 259–82; Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, *Von der Franco-Diktatur zur Demokratie. Die Tätigkeit der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Spanien* (Bonn: Dietz, 2013); Natalia Urigüen López de Sandalino, 'El papel de la democracia cristiana alemana en la transición española', Ph.D. thesis, Spain's National University of Distance Education, 2016; Matthias Stenger, *Transnationale Parteienzusammenarbeit. Die Beziehungen der deutschen und portugiesischen Christlichen Demokraten von der Nelkenrevolution bis zum Vertrag von Maastrich* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2011); Ana Mónica Fonseca, 'É Preciso Regar os Cravos! A Social-democracia alemã e a transição para a Democracia em Portugal, 1974–1976', Ph.D. thesis, University Institute of Lisbon, 2011.

and assesses its contribution to the evolution of the Spanish Socialists from Franco's death in November 1975 until their rise to power in December 1982.

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation: An Instrument of Bonn's Policy towards Spain

At the beginning of 1975, with the imminent death of Franco apparent, political tensions in Spain grew steadily. After a year in office the initial reformist impulse of Carlos Arias' government was dying away under the pressure of the extreme right, while at the same time the opposition, dominated by Santiago Carrillo's Spanish Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de España*, PCE) and Marcelino Camacho's Workers' Commissions (*Comisiones Obreras*, CCOO), dreamed of overthrowing the dictatorship like Portugal had done in April 1974.¹¹ Despite being aware of the potentially radical course the entire Iberian Peninsula was taking, the West was not acting to steer it towards moderation. That was at least how the social-liberal coalition in Bonn perceived the situation, regarding with particular misgiving Washington's resignation in the face of a crisis which began to spread over the whole of southern Europe and threatened to destabilise the continental status quo. Following the radical shift left caused by the Portuguese Revolution, in March 1975 Chancellor Helmut Schmidt decided to launch a German initiative aimed at promoting stability in the Iberian Peninsula. A key element of this strategy would be the massive support to those socialist parties capable of and willing to counterbalance the influence of the communists in both Portugal and Spain.¹²

During the last years of the Franco dictatorship the Spanish socialist movement appeared quite shabby.¹³ The historical PSOE had been reduced by its leaders in exile to little more than an expatriates' club, while within Spain dozens of splinter groups stagnated under the long shadow of the PCE.¹⁴ In order to find a way out of this situation, the PSOE held a Congress in Paris in October 1974 in which the baton was passed from the exiles to a new generation of activists within Spain. Hoping to find a

¹¹ Javier Tusell and Genoveva G. Queipo de Llano, *Tiempo de incertidumbre. Carlos Arias Navarro entre el franquismo y la Transición, 1973–1976* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003); Ferran Gallego, *El mito de la Transición. La crisis del franquismo y los orígenes de la democracia* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2008).

¹² Bernardino Gomes and Tiago Moreira de Sá, *Carlucci vs. Kissinger. Os EUA e a revolução portuguesa* (Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2008); Mario Del Pero, 'La transizione portoghese', in Mario Del Pero, Víctor Gavín, Fernando Guirao and Antonio Varsori, *Democrazie. L'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Milano: Mondadori, 2010), 95–171; Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, 'Bonn et la réponse européenne à la révolution portugaise', in Antonio Varsori and Guia Migani, eds., *Europe in the International Arena During the 1970s: Entering a Different World* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), 339–53; Carlos Sanz Díaz, 'La República Federal de Alemania ante el fin de las dictaduras ibéricas (1974–1976): miradas entrecruzadas', *Hispania*, vol. LXXII, 242 (2012), 755–88.

¹³ Richard Gillespie, *The Spanish Socialist Party: a History of Factionalism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989); Santos Juliá, *Los socialistas en la política española, 1879–1982* (Madrid: Taurus, 1997); Abdón Mateos, *El PSOE contra Franco. Continuidad y renovación del socialismo español, 1953–1974* (Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias, 1993).

¹⁴ Emanuele Treglia, *Fuera de las catacumbas. La política del PCE y el movimiento obrero* (Madrid: Eneida, 2012).

suitable partner in this renovated PSOE, the SPD invited the new Secretary General, Felipe González, to talks in Bonn in April 1975. In his meeting with SPD's President Willy Brandt, the young Andalusian showed a realism and moderation quite rare among Franco's opponents. The new leader of the PSOE considered the intention of the PCE to overthrow the regime unrealistic and even suicidal, for it would inevitably unleash a coup like the one in Chile. Democracy would arrive in Spain only if the future King Juan Carlos succeeded in implementing his plan (which he had leaked to the opposition) to dismantle the regime step by step. The PSOE would therefore maintain a constructive attitude during the transition. The party's main objectives were to reunite the Spanish socialist movement and challenge the PCE domination of the left. These aims were not, however, easy to achieve. The PSOE had very few members, hardly any infrastructure and only two full-time officers, one of them the Secretary General himself. Moreover, both the party and its leader were still largely unknown among the Spanish people. Consequently, the PSOE urgently needed the support of its fellow European socialists.¹⁵

As a result of this meeting in Bonn the SPD decided to support the PSOE on a large scale, convinced that the Spanish party had the potential to contribute to a smooth transition to democracy after Franco's death. From that moment on solidarity funds began to flow, and Willy Brandt started to champion Felipe González among European socialist leaders. At the same time, Helmut Schmidt tried to prevail upon Carlos Arias to ease police pressure on the PSOE, so that the party could focus on organising and on making itself known to the Spanish people. However, this friendly request was disregarded by the Prime Minister, who had González's passport confiscated in order to prevent his participation in a European promotional tour organised by the SPD. It would not be until November, with Franco already in his death throes, that Bonn's pressure on Madrid for the return of González's passport would succeed, allowing him to take part in the SPD Congress in Mannheim. Received like a hero by Brandt and other European socialist leaders present at the Congress, the head of the PSOE thus began his unstoppable rise as the new star of Spanish politics.¹⁶

During the Mannheim Congress Felipe González met with Günter Grunwald, executive director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, who proposed sending Dieter Koniecki, one of his officials, to Madrid immediately in order to devise a programme of cooperation with both the PSOE and the UGT. In the weeks following Franco's death, Koniecki undertook an exhaustive analysis of the situation of Spanish socialism and confirmed its precarious state. Given the dimensions of the task faced by the FES, he concluded that a permanent office in Madrid was required.¹⁷ In order to obtain authorisation from King Juan Carlos's first government, Günter Grunwald met

¹⁵ Muñoz Sánchez, *El amigo alemán*, 183–8.

¹⁶ Bernd Rother, 'Willy Brandt und die Demokratie in Europa: das Beispiel Spaniens', in Andreas Wilkens, ed., *Wir sind auf dem richtigen Weg. Willy Brandt und die europäische Einigung* (Bonn: Dietz, 2010), 401–12.

¹⁷ Dieter Koniecki's report on his mission to Spain is reproduced in Muñoz Sánchez, *Von der Franco-Diktatur*, 239–66.

with Minister of the Interior Manuel Fraga in Madrid in February 1976.¹⁸ Although Francoist laws prohibiting the activities of foreign organisations in Spain were still in force, the government of Carlos Arias was grateful for a friendly country's interest in contributing to the political transition and allowed free movement to all German political foundations. Madrid particularly appreciated any moderating influence the German Social Democrats could exert on the Spanish socialists. In the words of Manuel Fraga, for democracy to take root in Spain and not to end tragically as it had done in the Second Republic, it was essential that the Communists should lose their weight within the left in favour of 'a trade union *à la* DGB and a party *à la* SPD'.¹⁹

Rebuilding the PSOE and UGT in Spain

When Dieter Koniecki began his work as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation delegate in Spain in February 1976, he faced two clear-cut tasks. On the one hand, he was to help the PSOE to prepare for the parliamentary election that sooner or later the government would call, and which would be decisive both for the country's and the Socialist Party's future. On the other hand, he had to contribute to bolstering Felipe González's moderate wing of the PSOE, as this was the only guarantee against any kind of alliance with the Communists, favoured by the party's Marxist wing. Koniecki was given a free hand in the party executive by PSOE leaders, who were fully aware of the significance of the FES's support. In any case, the most delicate aspects of the cooperation, primarily those related to funding, would be dealt with only by Felipe González and his right-hand man, Alfonso Guerra.²⁰

The first joint initiative between the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the PSOE consisted of establishing infrastructure to support the existing provincial committees of the party. After several weeks of preparation, on 1 April 1976 the PSOE opened local branches – under the cover of labour law practices – in twenty-seven provincial capitals, staffed by the secretary of the respective provincial committee and one office clerk. Their salaries, as well as the rent and office expenses, were paid by the FES. In the following months, with the help of its German colleagues, the PSOE made an intensive effort to gain ground in those Spanish provinces – twenty-five in total – in which it had been absent since the Civil War. Often, the re-foundation of the PSOE in those cities after almost forty years took place in a restaurant, where local progressive elements were invited to a 'political dinner' with Felipe González.²¹ Accompanied by toasts and cheers, local and provincial committees were set up, followed a few days later by the opening of a branch office financed by the FES. In this way the PSOE

¹⁸ German Ambassador Georg von Lilienfeld to Spanish Foreign Minister, José María de Areilza, 25 Feb. 1976, 19.883/3, Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid.

¹⁹ Report of the FES on the visit of Manuel Fraga to Bonn, 10 Mar. 1976, Personal files of Elke Sabiel. All quotations are translated into English by the author.

²⁰ Report of Dieter Koniecki on his activities in Spain, 20 Mar. 1976, Nachlass Bruno Friedrich 1540, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdSD), Bonn.

²¹ Alfonso S. Palomares, *Felipe González. El hombre y el político* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2005), 153–4.

was able to expand its social base very quickly and without much effort. By the time of the party Congress in December 1976, the PSOE already had a committee in each of the fifty-two Spanish provinces, but still numbered only 7,733 members across the country.²² This amounted to an average of 150 PSOE members per province. In most provinces, however, the local party branch consisted of little more than the committee members themselves, together with some of their relatives and friends. They would form the ruling core of the PSOE in their respective provinces for the years to come.

Together with the PSOE's expansion into the provinces, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation promoted the strengthening of its Central Office in Madrid, paying special attention to those aspects related to the party's public projection and the organisation of the electoral campaign. Since the PSOE was still illegal, an Electoral Techniques Institute (*Instituto de Técnicas Electorales*, ITE) was created on 1 April 1976 as a legal cover for the party's Press and Propaganda Office. Almost immediately, an ITE delegation, headed by Alfonso Guerra, travelled to Germany at the invitation of the FES in order to receive campaign training, including in propaganda techniques and electoral organisation.²³ These skills would find their practical application during the organisation of the UGT Congress just a few days later.

This Congress was initially to be held abroad, but, thanks to the intervention of the German Embassy, the government of Carlos Arias finally allowed it to take place within Spain, although without publicity and confined to a Madrid suburb. However, the attendance of several European trade union representatives gave the meeting public exposure and helped to catapult the UGT from irrelevance to the very centre of the political debate.²⁴ Unlike the CCOO, which proposed to reform the Francoist Trade Union Organisation (*Organización Sindical*) into a democratic trade union confederation, the UGT demanded the dissolution of that bureaucratic monster and the establishment of democratic trade unions in free competition with each other. This view was shared by the majority of Western European unions, which feared a repetition of the situation in Portugal, where the Communists had succeeded in seizing complete control over the unitary trade union organisation inherited from the dictatorship.²⁵ Thus, its determination to challenge the powerful CCOO enabled the UGT to win the support of its European sister unions. Likewise, at the request of the Spanish Socialists, the FES increased considerably its allocations to the UGT.²⁶ Given the vast financial requirements of a trade union which needed to build local

²² Juliá, *Los socialistas*, 442.

²³ Julio Feo, *Aquellos años* (Madrid: Ediciones B, 1993), 32–3.

²⁴ Aroca Mohedano, *Internacionalismo*, 65–70.

²⁵ On the trade union question during the Carnation Revolution, see Raquel Varela, *A História do PCP na Revolução dos Cravos* (Lisboa: Bertrand, 2011); José Maria Brandão de Brito and Cristina Rodrigues, *A UGT na história do movimento sindical português, 1970–90* (Lisboa: Tinta da China, 2013).

²⁶ Report of Dieter Koniecki on his activities in Spain, 28 Oct. 1976, AdSD, IG Metall Archiv 1608.

infrastructures from scratch for twenty-one industrial federations, the UGT would remain highly dependent on foreign aid during the following years.²⁷

In addition to the financial support it provided for the expansion and strengthening of both party and trade union infrastructures, the most important task initiated by the FES delegate in support of the Spanish Socialists during 1976 was the organisation of training courses for party and union officials. Together with his assistant, Etelvino González, and the PSOE education secretary, Luis Gómez Llorente, Dieter Koniecki devised a comprehensive training programme for the Spanish Socialists, with the aim of preparing the party's provincial organisation for the future electoral campaign. The most important of these training courses was the PSOE Summer School, in which 120 provincial leaders participated.²⁸ As the first Summer School of the party in Spain since the Civil War, it had a huge impact on public opinion, thus achieving one of its objectives. It was even covered by Spanish Television, which for the first time broadcasted images of Felipe González.²⁹ The government's preferential treatment helped the Socialist Party, and particularly its leader, to increase their popularity and gain ground on the Communists, who were not yet allowed to appear in public, and whose leader, Santiago Carrillo, still lived clandestinely in Madrid after having returned from exile in January 1976.³⁰

The seminars played a central role in the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's strategy of helping Spanish Socialists to overcome the bunker mentality forged during the dictatorship. Only by toning down its radicalism and no longer acting like a secret society could the PSOE gain traction in Spanish society and aspire to obtain a large share of popular support.³¹ The seminars, held mostly at weekends, had an eminently practical orientation and left hardly any time for theoretical tuition, which in those years was dominated among Spanish Socialists by popular neo-Marxist authors like Marta Harnecker.³² In any case, seminar participants' interest in theoretical constructs was limited. Most of them were highly motivated young men under thirty, with a high-school or university education, who had only recently entered the party and saw Felipe González as their natural and irreplaceable leader. They felt themselves part of the great project of building democracy in Spain and were, therefore, mainly concerned with acquiring the knowledge and technical skills necessary in order to become able party officials in their provinces and future public administrators at the local, regional or national level.³³

²⁷ Rubén Vega García, *Historia de la UGT. La reconstrucción del sindicalismo en democracia, 1976–1994* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2010), 27–50; Aroca Mohedano, *Internacionalismo*, 74–104.

²⁸ Felipe González et al., *Socialismo es libertad. Escuela de Verano del PSOE 1976* (Madrid: Edicusa, 1976).

²⁹ Report of Dieter Koniecki on the PSOE Summer School, 3 Sept. 1976, AdsD, Nachlass Bruno Friedrich 1540.

³⁰ Gallego, *El mito*, 494–513.

³¹ Interview with Dieter Koniecki, Fuengirola, Feb. 2014.

³² See for instance, Marta Harnecker, *El Capital: conceptos fundamentales* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1974).

³³ Interview with Etelvino González, Villaviciosa, May 2011.

The Foundational Elections of Spanish Democracy

In July 1976 King Juan Carlos forced Carlos Arias to resign and appointed the younger Adolfo Suárez as the new Prime Minister in order to give new impetus to democratic reforms. Two months later Suárez presented his plans for a Law of Political Reform which, while appearing to respect Francoist legality, contemplated the legalisation of political parties and the calling of free elections. To everybody's surprise, in November 1976 the 'Franco Parliament' committed political hara-kiri by passing the Law of Political Reform, thus opening the door to the re-establishment of democracy. A few weeks later the PSOE was authorised to hold its first Congress in Spain after forty years. It did so in the very centre of Madrid. The attendance of the main leaders of European socialist parties, headed by the newly elected president of the Socialist International, Willy Brandt, garnered the Congress huge public impact and confirmed Felipe González as the leading figure of the Spanish left. González's moderate executive was re-elected in the Congress, but some of the resolutions passed were far to the left and, for the first time in its almost 100 years of history, the PSOE defined itself as Marxist. In any case, the soaring popularity enjoyed by the party increased confidence in its electoral possibilities, which until then had been regarded as quite modest. Some influential political scientists like Juan Linz had even predicted that Spanish democracy would replicate the Italian model, with the left dominated by a powerful communist party.

A sociological study funded by the FES at the beginning of 1977 gave the PSOE a deep insight into the electorate that would be called to the polls the following spring. According to this survey, the vast majority of Spanish people wanted no changes in the economic system, were completely fascinated by Europe and, due to the traumatic memories of the civil war, dreaded any kind of political conflict. Consequently, the PSOE executive disregarded the recent Congress's radical resolutions and devised an election strategy which aimed to appeal to the moderate Spanish voter.³⁴ The 4,000 meetings the PSOE held during the campaign became a feast of feel-good messages, music and balloons, with hardly any mention of the past. Speeches emphasised the importance of conquering freedom for Spain and the opening of a constituent process, as well as the need to build a welfare state and to bring the country into the EEC. Furthermore, on the advice of Harry Walter, the SPD electoral expert, the PSOE built the campaign around its 'charismatic leader'.³⁵ A hired jet allowed the popular 'Felipe' to attend several huge electoral meetings held in bull rings and football stadiums in the same day. The PSOE campaign thus appeared much more modern and European than its opponents, and, as a result, was highly appealing to a society longing for both democratic change and stability.³⁶

³⁴ PSOE's guide for the elections, undated, Personal files of Francisco Bustelo.

³⁵ Report of the FES on a seminar in Germany to responsables of the PSOE electoral campaign, 24 Mar. 1977, AdsD, FES Hausakten 10160.

³⁶ Juliá, *Los socialistas*, 482–6.

On 15 June 1977 the first free elections since 1936 were held in Spain. The victorious party was the recently created Union of Democratic Centre (*Unión de Centro Democrático*, UCD) of Adolfo Suárez, whose 34.6 per cent of the vote, however, was not enough to allow him to maintain full control of the democratisation process.³⁷ The PSOE obtained 29.4 per cent of the vote, far beyond anything the Socialists had dared to hope for. The great loser was the PCE, with a humiliating 9.3 per cent. The Popular Alliance (*Alianza Popular*, AP), a right-wing coalition led by Manuel Fraga, did even worse, only polling 8.8 per cent.³⁸ As for the other socialist parties, their poor results would lead to their dissolution in the following months, with most of their members moving to the PSOE. The result of the 1977 elections was thus a personal success for Felipe González and his team, who had fully achieved the objectives the PSOE had set for the first phase of the political transition: to become the dominant party of the left and to emerge as a serious alternative for government.³⁹ However, this outstanding success presented serious challenges to both the PSOE and the UGT. Most of the members of the executive, as well as the provincial party and union leaders, had won seats either in the parliament or the senate, which in practice meant a loss of qualified officials for the everyday work of both party and union. This could have serious consequences for the forthcoming local and trade union elections. Neither the PSOE nor UGT could count on a large membership or a strong local presence. This was in clear contrast to the Communists, who, undaunted by their disappointing results in the general elections, were already mobilising their numerous and experienced cadres for the next polling dates. Dieter Koniecki and his nine assistants in the Madrid delegation of the FES thus still faced a large and complex task in supporting the Spanish Socialists.⁴⁰

First of all, it was necessary to formalise the PSOE and UGT's relationship with the German Foundation and end the legal limbo in which it had theretofore existed. To this end, shortly after the 1977 elections the Pablo Iglesias Foundation (*Fundación Pablo Iglesias*, FPI) and the Largo Caballero Foundation (*Fundación Largo Caballero*, FLC) were created by the PSOE and the UGT respectively. According to the cooperation agreements signed with the FES, the Germans committed themselves to paying the expenses involved in setting up and running of the PSOE and UGT foundations' headquarters and ten sub-offices across Spain, as well as their staff's salaries.⁴¹ The cooperation between foundations would focus on the organisation of seminars and training sessions for thousands of regional and local Socialist officials. Particular attention would be paid by Dieter Koniecki to the common work with the FLC, given

³⁷ Jonathan Hopkin, *Party Formation and Democratic Transition in Spain. The Creation and Collapse of the Union of the Democratic Center* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1999).

³⁸ Lourdes López Nieto, *Alianza Popular: estructura y evolución electoral de un partido conservador, 1976–1982* (Madrid: CIS, 1988).

³⁹ Abdón Mateos, 'La transición del PSOE durante los años setenta', in Rafael Quirosa-Cheyrouze Muñoz, ed., *Historia de la Transición en España. Los inicios del proceso democratizador* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2007), 285–99.

⁴⁰ First half-year report 1977 of the FES delegation in Spain, AdSD, Nachlass Bruno Friedrich 1541.

⁴¹ Cooperation Agreement between FES and FLC, 26 Oct. 1977, Fondo UGT 3245-006, Archivo de la Fundación Largo Caballero, Alcalá de Henares.

the disadvantaged position of the UGT compared to the CCOO in organisational matters, as well as the union leaders' disinterest in educational tasks. Contrary to the PSOE, whose qualified staff had in a short time been able to take over the organisation of seminars, Koniecki complained that the majority of the UGT executive members were 'self taught craftsmen' for whom 'pedagogical questions or any methodical system' were 'alien and an invention of work-shy intellectuals'.⁴² Correcting this situation would take a long time and would eventually force the FES to shift the weight of its activity in Spain from the PSOE to the UGT. The training seminars organised with the trade-union were mainly addressed to the provincial leaders of the twenty-one industrial federations, as well as the – by 1981 – more than 45,000 shop stewards.⁴³ At the same time, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's cooperation with the FPI focused on the training of PSOE cadres. Until 1982, and in cooperation with the Spanish socialist foundations, FES would organise and finance more than 2,000 seminars and training courses all around the country for PSOE and UGT members.⁴⁴

Backing the UGT in the First Trade-Union Elections

In spring 1977 Adolfo Suárez dissolved the Francoist *Organización Sindical* and legalised all workers' associations. This was a defeat for the Communists, who, as mentioned above, had strived to transform the dictatorship's labour organisation into a unitary democratic central union. However, the CCOO was still the most prominent trade union and the most likely to dominate the labour movement in democratic Spain.⁴⁵ Neither the anarchist CNT nor the socialist UGT had played any role under the dictatorship and a rebirth initially seemed unlikely.⁴⁶ This would certainly continue to be the case with the CNT, but the UGT fared differently thanks to the support of the PSOE, its European partners and even the Spanish government, who had a strong interest in weakening the Communists. The PSOE's good electoral results in 1977 bolstered UGT chances in its struggle with the CCOO. The fact that its leader, the until then relatively unknown Nicolás Redondo, was seated next to Felipe González in Parliament allowed the UGT to claim for itself the representation of the workers who had voted for the Socialists. Meanwhile, the PCE's poor results could only reduce the appeal of the Communist trade union, whose leader Marcelino Camacho was seated beside the defeated Santiago Carrillo. As a matter of fact, after the elections UGT membership experienced an enormous boost, reaching in few weeks 600,000. With its prestige enhanced and its membership expanding, the Socialist union began

⁴² Report of Dieter Koniecki on his activities in Spain, 10 Jan. 1977, AdsD, FES Hausakten 10749.

⁴³ First half-yearly report 1981 of the FES delegation in Spain, AdsD, FES Hausakten 13600.

⁴⁴ *30 años de la Fundación Friedrich Ebert en España* (Madrid: FES, 2006), 24.

⁴⁵ David Ruiz, ed., *Historia de Comisiones Obreras, 1958–1988* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1993).

⁴⁶ Ángel Herrerin López, *La CNT durante el franquismo. Clandestinidad y exilio, 1939–1975* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2004); Abdón Mateos, *Exilio y clandestinidad. La reconstrucción de UGT, 1939–1977* (Madrid: UNED, 2002).

to believe in the possibility of becoming a real alternative to the CCOO in the few months left before the first democratic union elections.⁴⁷

The UGT's calls to its fellow European socialist trade unions for help had increased since its legalisation, raising the stakes in the event of a big CCOO victory in the elections. The German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), deeply convinced that Spain was a key part of a crucial fight between socialists and communists in southern Europe, responded generously to the UGT's appeal.⁴⁸ Besides direct donations, the DGB arranged for the Spanish comrades a \$4 million credit from a German bank.⁴⁹ Though solidarity funds were essential to build up the weak provincial and local organisational networks of the UGT, assistance in the training of union cadres was no less important, and in this area the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's support played a fundamental role. Already at the beginning of 1977 the UGT leadership had proposed Dieter Koniecki boost cooperation on education and training, given the union's 'dramatic' need in this area.⁵⁰ To this end, the FES devised, organised and funded a special training programme for the UGT's local and provincial chairs. The programme took off in the summer of 1977 with four seminars in which the heads of the five newly constituted FLC delegations were trained in group dynamics, seminar organisation and the giving of training courses, as well as political meetings and propaganda techniques. The seminars also dealt with the central questions of how to integrate the flood of new members into the local committees and how to meet the likely communist infiltration. The next step was for the FLC delegations to organise seminars in all Spanish provinces for the local managers of the election campaign. The seminars dealt with the history of the UGT, its organisational structure, union work at shop-floor level and the recruiting of new members, as well as teaching techniques in expression and group dynamics. By the end of 1977 hundreds of UGT members had been trained as local chairs and election managers in this special programme of the FES.⁵¹

The German foundation's contribution to the creation of and support for the UGT election campaign's coordination committee was also decisive. It rented and equipped the premises for the election committee, put together the campaign team and designed most of the informative and propaganda materials handed out to participants in the training courses for provincial campaign managers.⁵² Moreover, the FES bought a printing press for its Spanish comrades, which in the following years would be used to publish most of the UGT and PSOE education and propaganda materials.⁵³ The election campaign was hard and intense, with the UGT and CCOO bitterly attacking

⁴⁷ José María Marín Arce, *Los sindicatos y la reconversión industrial durante la Transición* (Madrid: CES, 1997), 59–71.

⁴⁸ Oskar Vetter, DGB's President to all German affiliated trade unions, 29 Sept. 1977, AdsD, DGB Archiv 24/1369.

⁴⁹ Aroca Mohedano, *Internacionalismo*, 99.

⁵⁰ Note of the executive commission of the UGT, undated [c. Jan. 1977], AdsD, FES Hausakten 12791.

⁵¹ Report of Dieter Koniecki, 7 Feb. 1978, AdsD, DGB Archiv 24/1369.

⁵² Interview with Etelvino González, Villaviciosa, May 2011.

⁵³ FES's final report on the printing press project, 27 Nov. 1979, AdsD, FES Hausakten 11375.

each other. Felipe González played a visible role, appearing with Nicolás Redondo in mass meetings and undertaking joint visits to big factory floors in order to mobilise those workers who had voted for the PSOE. Every publicity device was used on a large scale: during the campaign the UGT handed out five million leaflets, 1.5 million political posters, two million stickers, 100,000 books and 100,000 tapes with political and protest songs.⁵⁴ Despite the large amount of external funding, the huge cost of the campaign stretched UGT's financial capabilities to the limit, forcing them once more to turn to Dieter Koniecki, who obtained for them a small grant from the FES.⁵⁵

The first trade union elections after the end of Francoism were held at the beginning of 1978. The victory went to the CCOO, which polled 34.5 per cent of the vote and obtained 66,500 representatives. Nevertheless, this result fell short of the Communists' objectives. For its part, the UGT polled 21.7 per cent of the vote, winning 41,900 representatives, while the other votes went to minority organisations and independent candidates. For the Socialist union, the results amounted to an extraordinary achievement, since it assured them a firm position within the Spanish trade union landscape, and frustrated the Communists' aspiration to unchecked dominance over the Spanish workers' movement. Still, the CCOO's victory was clear, and the PCE could not but profit from it. Support for the UGT would therefore continue to be the FES's main priority in Spain and over the subsequent years German cooperation with the Spanish union would grow both in intensity and scope.

Democracy and Local Power

The first local democratic election would prove of vital importance for the Spanish Socialists. After four decades the PSOE had for the first time the chance to rule and prove that its promises of good and clean government were not empty rhetoric. Furthermore, given the strength of local identities in Spain, the achievement of a solid position in local administration, with its close contact to citizens' everyday problems, was the first step on the road to national government. The PSOE therefore doubled its efforts to widen its still thin presence at the local level. As we have seen above, at the end of 1976 the PSOE numbered only a few thousand members organised in 120 local branches, a meagre number considering that there are over 8,000 municipalities in Spain. The party had experienced a great boost after its legalisation in February 1977 and had been able to open branches in most of the 500 Spanish towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, after the June general election the PSOE still lacked any significant presence in the wide rural areas of Galicia, León, Castilla, La Mancha or Aragón.⁵⁶ The establishment of party branches in these areas, together with the preparation for the municipal elections required a huge logistic, human and

⁵⁴ Vega García, *Historia de la UGT*, 43.

⁵⁵ Note of Dieter Koniecki, 23 Dec. 1977, AdsD, FES Hausakten 12810.

⁵⁶ Mónica Méndez Lago, *La estrategia organizativa del Partido Socialista Obrero Español, 1975–1996* (Madrid: CIS, 2000), 172–5.

economic effort, which the PSOE could only undertake with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The 1977 PSOE Summer School provided the first push for the massive training of local Socialist cadres. All together, 250 party officials took part, including the provincial secretaries for education and organisation issues. Some weeks later, fellows from the official School of State Administration taught a three-week intensive course to fifty-two Socialist municipal promoters. Once back in their provinces, each of these promoters would organise several weekend courses for groups of around thirty-five of their comrades, passing on the skills learnt in Madrid and handing out thick folders filled with party materials and information on questions related to local policy. By funding and organising these seminars, the FES played a decisive role in the training of Socialist candidates for the forthcoming municipal elections.⁵⁷ Fully aware of the party's shortcomings at the local level, Felipe González used the opportunity of a visit to Bonn at the beginning of 1978 to solicit support from the FES's leaders for the creation of an institute whose single function would be the training and advising of future Socialist councillors.⁵⁸ After several preparatory seminars, the Centre for Administration Studies (*Centro de Estudios de la Administración*, CEA) was launched in Madrid in autumn 1978.⁵⁹

The municipal elections were held in April 1979. Adolfo Suárez's party was the clear victor, obtaining in total 29,000 councillors against the PSOE's 14,000. The Socialists, however, polled more votes in the towns and a post-election agreement with the Communists helped them obtain power in 1,125 municipalities, including almost all industrial centres and most of the provincial capitals. Two thirds of Spaniards were now ruled by a Socialist mayor. However, the elections proved once more the structural limitations of the PSOE. Despite the enormous efforts invested in the creation of local branches, the party was still absent from thousands of villages and small towns, where it had been unable to present candidates. Furthermore, nearly all of the new elected Socialist councillors lacked experience of government and therefore needed assistance and support in order to assume their new responsibilities. To face these challenges and contribute to the PSOE's consolidation in the whole country became the CEA's task.⁶⁰

With financial aid from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the CEA set up an office in Madrid with a director and a staff of six. It also created a studies centre to solve complex technical and juridical questions that municipal councils might be confronted with, and produced a number of publications like the 'Guidebook for Socialist Mayors and Councillors' and two collections of educational pamphlets for local and regional politicians which were to be circulated among party branches all over the country.⁶¹ All the seminars organised by the CEA in 1979 were funded by the FES. A bank credit at the end of that year allowed the PSOE to open CEA delegations

⁵⁷ Report of the FES on the special training program, 29 July 1977, AdsD, FES Hausakten 18765.

⁵⁸ FES to Ministry for Economic Cooperation, 8 Mar. 1978, AdsD, FES Hausakten 11036.

⁵⁹ Report of CEA on its aims, 20 Oct. 1978, AdsD, FES Hausakten 11375.

⁶⁰ Interview with Josep Vallés Ferrer, first CEA director, Seville, Jan. 2014.

⁶¹ All these publications can be found at the Archivo de la Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Alcalá de Henares.

in all of the fifty-two provincial capitals, which cooperated with the Madrid office in the organisation of seminars and, apart from the handing out of publications, tried to solve, either by person or by telephone, any question raised by a Socialist councillor. With the launching of the monthly magazine *Ayuntamientos Democráticos* in 1980, to which 7,000 local councils subscribed, the CEA started moving towards economic independence.⁶² Its ability to find alternative sources of funding meant that by 1983 the CEA could end its reliance on German aid, much earlier than the other socialist foundations, FPI or FLC, which would still be dependent on the FES's financial support for some years.⁶³

Municipal corporations provided the PSOE with an extraordinary platform for its policies. The best example was Madrid, where in a short time the cultured and open minded professor Enrique Tierno Galván transformed the grey Francoist metropolis into a symbol of the young, modern and European Spain that the PSOE promised to create once Felipe González became Prime Minister.⁶⁴ The experience of local government was also a brilliant school for the political education of the inexperienced PSOE activists. As a general rule, Socialist mayors pursued a reformist and modernising policy for their towns and cities, most of which still suffered from the effects of their chaotic growth in the last decade of the dictatorship. Thus, the building of health centres, schools, libraries, parks and sewage facilities, as well as the promotion of popular culture, became the main objectives of the local councils ruled by the PSOE. The conquest of municipal power in 1979 therefore meant an important advance towards ideological maturity for the Spanish Socialists and the definitive transformation of the PSOE into a party with mass appeal.⁶⁵

Social Dialogue and the Ascent of the UGT

The lack of legal channels to solve labour conflicts during the dictatorship had resulted in a belligerent labour movement, on the one side, and employers in the habit of calling the police in order to impose their positions, on the other.⁶⁶ The great chasm between unions and entrepreneurs prevented any improvement of labour relations after Franco's death.⁶⁷ In order to promote dialogue between the two sides, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation proposed a joint seminar to the UGT and the newly created Spanish Confederation of Employers Organisations (*Confederación Española de*

⁶² Annual report 1980 of the delegation of the FES in Spain, AdsD, FES Hausakten 16023.

⁶³ Emilio Alonso, PSOE's secretary of Administration, to Dieter Koniecki, 9 Jan. 1984, AdsD, FES Hausakten 16041.

⁶⁴ Hamilton M. Stapell, *Remaking Madrid. Culture, Politics and Identity after Franco* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

⁶⁵ Rafael Quirosa-Cheyrouze Muñoz and Mónica Fernández Amador, *Poder local y transición a la democracia en España* (Granada: CEMCI, 2010).

⁶⁶ Carme Molinero and Pere Ysàs, *Productores disciplinados y minorías subversivas. Clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España franquista* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1998).

⁶⁷ On the limits of the collective bargaining introduced by the regime in 1958 and its unexpected outcomes, see Jon Amsden, *Collective Bargaining and Class Conflict in Spain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972).

Organizaciones Empresariales, CEOE), to which the CCOO was not to be invited. This was the origin of the First International Encounter of Trade Unions and Employers from the German Federal Republic and Spain held in Madrid in February 1978. Five entrepreneurs and two specialists in labour law from Germany explained their experiences with social dialogue and joint management to a group of sixty Spanish guests which included employers, unionists, economists and Members of Parliament. The huge contrast between German and Spanish labour conditions encouraged the Spaniards to enter into the discussion and express their views openly. Once the ice was broken, the participants could go into the issue of the dialogue between trade unionists and employers. For the Spaniards this was a completely new world: prejudices were dispelled and both parties discovered a mutual wish to reach agreements.⁶⁸

The seminar was received very positively by the UGT and CEOE, and both organisations asked the Ebert Foundation to organise more events along the same lines. Thanks to the enthusiastic support of the German Ambassador in Spain, who had attended the Madrid meeting, the FES received extra funding from the Bonn government to organise six more seminars in 1978 that should ‘promote de-ideologisation, something very necessary both for our trade-union partner and the extremely conservative Spanish employers’.⁶⁹ The seminars were organised in cooperation with different Spanish universities and special attention was paid to the specific situation of the particular region in which each was held. The attendance of important politicians, businessmen and prestigious European scholars helped to give relevance to the seminars and drew the attention of the local media, which praised the encounters as an important landmark in the search for solutions to the crisis that the country had been suffering since 1974.⁷⁰

The encounters organised by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation facilitated the collaborative approach of the UGT and CEOE, to the extent that, in the summer 1979, both organisations signed a joint text demanding the end of state intervention in labour relations and calling for the autonomy of social agents. This Basic Interconfederal Agreement (*Acuerdo Básico Interconfederal*, ABI) was welcomed by the media as the beginning of the end of the historical confrontation between capital and labour, which would not only help to overcome the recession, but also to consolidate democracy and bring Spain closer to the European socio-political model. The ABI had a huge political impact and opened the door to the creation of a framework of labour relations based on social dialogue, which would be sanctioned at the beginning of 1980 by the Workers’ Statute (*Estatuto de los Trabajadores*) passed in Parliament with the support both of the PSOE and UCD.⁷¹ Encouraged by this success, the UGT and CEOE signed the Interconfederal Framework Agreement (*Acuerdo Marco*

⁶⁸ Fundación Friedrich Ebert, *Empresa y sindicatos en un estado social de derecho. Versión grabada del primer encuentro entre representantes empresariales y sindicales de España y la RFA* (Madrid: FES, 1978).

⁶⁹ FES to the German Ministry of Cooperation, 15 Mar. 1978, AdsD, FES Hausakten 11036.

⁷⁰ Reports of Dieter Koniecki on seminars in Andalusia, Asturias and Catalonia, summer-autumn 1978, AdsD, FES Hausakten 13597.

⁷¹ Antón Saracibar et al., *25 años del Estatuto de los Trabajadores, 1980–2005* (Madrid: Fundación Largo Caballero, 2005).

Interconfederal, ABI) the first collective wage agreement during the Spanish Transition. It was valid for two years and aimed for an increase in productivity, an average wage rise of 15 per cent, and a reduction of 126 work hours per year.⁷² The AMI enjoyed an extraordinary reception, becoming the reference point for most of the collective agreements signed during 1980 and 1981, and helped to reduce the number of strikes by half.⁷³

By opting for a policy of social partnership, and by turning its back on the combative tradition of the Spanish labour movement, the UGT was taking a risky gamble. Convinced that the policy of dialogue with employers would be rejected by the workers, the CCOO launched a campaign protesting against the ABI and AMI and accused the UGT of betraying the working class. However, the Socialists would win this particular contest with the Communists. By siding with social agreement, perhaps without being aware of it, the UGT had aligned itself with the *Zeitgeist*. After having achieved the longed for democratic order, those Spanish workers who had, to different degrees, engaged in the left-wing organisations' struggle during the last years of the dictatorship were ready to lower the tension. A telling sign of this relaxation within the labour movement was the reduction of the degree of unionisation, which decreased from 54 per cent in 1978 to 22 per cent in 1980. Beyond a general feeling of having achieved their aims, other factors including the fear of unemployment (which increased from 2.8 per cent in 1976 to 7.1 per cent in 1978) and the awareness of democracy's fragility, contributed to a general reduction in labour conflicts.⁷⁴

Thus, through its preference for social dialogue over confrontation, the UGT managed to escape from the long shadow of the CCOO and come into its own as a trade union, clearly distinct from its Communist rival and with a solid backing among workers. Equally important, the Socialist trade union no longer appeared – as it had during the dictatorship – as a mere appendix to the PSOE with no life or will of its own. The next trade union elections, in 1982, proved the UGT's growing popularity. While in 1978 the Socialist union had polled 12 per cent less than the CCOO, in 1982 they beat the Communists by three points. (UGT 36.7 per cent, CCOO 34.4 per cent). This victory was the finishing touch to the extraordinary ascent of the UGT during the years of democratic transition. Furthermore, in breaking the Communists' hegemony over the trade-union movement, the Spanish Socialist union had achieved an exceptional feat in southern Europe. This would prove to be essential for the viability of the painful economic reforms that Felipe Gonzalez's governments would initiate in 1983 in order to prepare the country for the entry into the EEC.⁷⁵

⁷² *Balance del Acuerdo Marco Interconfederal* (Madrid: FES, 1980).

⁷³ Fabián Márquez, 'La concertación social (1979–1989)', in Fernando Valdés Dal-Ré, ed., *30 años de libertad sindical* (Madrid: Fundación Largo Caballero, 2007), 114–33, 119.

⁷⁴ Vega García, *Historia de la UGT*, 73–103.

⁷⁵ Donald Share, *Dilemmas of Social Democracy. The Spanish Socialist Workers Party in the 1980s* (Westport: Greenwood, 1989); Holm-Detlev Köhler, *El movimiento sindical en España. Transición democrática, regionalismo, modernización económica* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1995); Sergio Gálvez Biesca, 'Modernización socialista y reforma laboral, 1982–1992', Ph.D. thesis, Complutense University of Madrid, 2013.

A Social Democrat Think-Tank for the PSOE

Once the new constitution had been sanctioned in December 1978, a general election was called for March 1979. Fearing the ascent of the PSOE, Adolfo Suárez made a dramatic speech on Spanish Television three days before the election, painting a gloomy picture of the future in the event of a victory for Felipe González's 'Marxist party'. The resort to the scare of a radical turn to the left in Spain had the desired effect and the election result was a repeat of 1977, with UCD once more in the position of forming a minority government. Given their expectation of success, the result was taken badly within the PSOE and revealed the until then silent fight between the moderates who controlled the executive and the left wing who were keen on preventing the party's drift towards social democracy, preferring instead to enter into an strategic alliance with the Communists. Both sides clashed dramatically during the two party Congresses held in 1979, which would end in a decisive victory for the moderates.⁷⁶

The German Social Democrats were, however, rather relieved by the PSOE defeat in the second general election. In their opinion, the Spanish Socialists were still far from ready to take on the responsibility of ruling the country. The party suffered from both an excess of ideology and a lack of technical expertise. The internal debates were still extremely theoretical, quite emotional and, to a large extent, out of touch with reality. Moreover, there existed few studies, or even hard data, on Spanish social and economic conditions, crucial to enabling the moderate PSOE executive to shape their proposals. Fully aware of this problem, the party leadership decided to create a think tank to provide a solid base for their political initiatives and once more asked the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for help. The project received the immediate support of the German partners, who envisaged the research centre as a way of boosting the sense of reality within the PSOE and of preparing the party for the day it would finally assume control over the government.⁷⁷

Thus, at the beginning of 1980 the Friedrich Ebert Foundation created the Institute for Applied Social and Economic Research (*Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales Aplicadas*, IESA) in Madrid. Rather than doing research on its own, the institute, under the direction of Harald Jung and Joaquín Arango, acted as a broker between social scientists and the Spanish Socialists.⁷⁸ In the two years before the assumption of power by the Socialists in 1982 IESA would enlist the help of several research centres and academic institutions, both within Spain and abroad, to produce studies on topics such as economic politics, public administration, relations between Spain and the EEC, education and so on. Around seventy of these studies were published and distributed among the regional federations of the PSOE and UGT. Other papers were confidential and only for the eyes of the party and trade union

⁷⁶ Juan Antonio Andrade Blanco, *El PCE y el PSOE en (la) transición: la evolución ideológica de la izquierda durante el proceso de cambio político* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2012), 146–53.

⁷⁷ Annual report 1978 of the FES delegation in Spain, AdSD, FES Hausakten 11037.

⁷⁸ FES to the Ministry for Economic Cooperation on IESA, Aug. 1979, AdSD, FES Hausakten 10747.

leaders. IESA regularly organised workshops in which paper authors and other experts could meet and discuss their findings with those responsible for different areas of PSOE and UGT. Joaquín Arango claims that the great majority of IESA studies contributed to some degree to the decision-making process both within the party membership and amongst the trade union executives.⁷⁹ Beyond this, IESA organised research trips for Socialists to EEC countries, including the visit of a delegation of ten Members of Parliament to Germany in order to study the theory and practice of federalism.⁸⁰

Several examples reveal the prolific and successful work of IESA as the think tank of Spanish socialism in the early 1980s. A study on the administrative reform of the state, together with the report of the Members of Parliament who visited Germany, were instrumental in shaping the position of the PSOE on the regional question, one of the key issues in Spanish politics during the transition. After defending a confederation of Spanish regions during the final years of the dictatorship, the PSOE favoured now a partially decentralised state. This would eventually find its way into one of the most important, and controversial, laws of the democratisation process, the Organic Law on the Harmonisation of the Autonomy Process (*Ley Orgánica para la Armonización del Proceso Autonómico*, LOAPA), the fruit of a pact between the UCD and PSOE which sought to control the growing wave of regionalism in Spain.⁸¹

Similarly, an IESA report on the funding of the state school system provided the PSOE with concrete arguments to oppose the government Education Bill in Parliament, with the final law eventually incorporating many of the Socialists' proposals.⁸² The UGT would also use an IESA study about alternative models for Social Security to determine its official position on the issue. Above all, a large number of IESA studies on aspects of social, educational and environmental policy (productivity, nuclear energy, labour relations, etc.) found their way into the October 1982 election manifesto, and helped afterwards to establish the main political programme's of the PSOE ministries responsible for these areas.⁸³ Finally, how important this scientific counselling was for the PSOE is conclusively demonstrated by the fact that more than a third of the researchers employed by IESA would end up joining different Ministers' advisory teams.

Conclusion

At the time of Franco's death, Spain provided fertile ground for European socialists, particularly the FES. Its main partner, the PSOE, had huge potential due to both

⁷⁹ Interview with Joaquín Arango, Madrid, July 2014.

⁸⁰ Report on the visit to Germany of a delegation of PSOE Members of Parliament, Apr. 1981, AdsD, FES Hausakten 20187.

⁸¹ Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, *Patriotas y demócratas. El discurso nacionalista español después de Franco* (Madrid: Catarata, 2010), 83–125.

⁸² Report of IESA on its activities, spring 1981, AdsD, FES Hausakten 13599.

⁸³ Annual report 1982 of IESA, AdsD, FES Hausakten 11377.

its historical prestige and the charisma of its leader. The party had a coherent and realistic strategy to contribute to a peaceful transition and to gain the control of the left from the Communists, who had played the leading role during the struggle against the dictatorship.

The political, financial and technical support offered by the German Social Democrats, primarily channelled through the FES, was crucial in the PSOE's rebirth as a significant political organisation and helped to shape its image as the party best qualified to fulfil Spain's vocation for entering European modernity. The positive results in the first democratic elections turned the PSOE into a viable alternative for government and sparked a frantic regional and local expansion, an ideological evolution towards a more moderate outlook and a growing influence in Spanish society. In all these events the FES played a very important role.

The significant involvement of German foundations, particularly that of the FES, during the transition to democracy, cannot only be explained by the need to consolidate and defend Germany's interest in the country or by Bonn's fears of an eventual communist expansion in southern Europe. For German democrats, contributing to the recovery of freedom in Spain also became a moral duty, a way to compensate for the ignominy of the Third Reich's role in the destruction of the Second Republic in the 1930s.⁸⁴ At the inquiry commission set up by the Spanish Parliament following the Flick scandal, Dieter Koneiecki summed up this feeling by stating that the total amount granted by Germany to the Socialists in Spain 'did not reach even half the cost of the bombs fallen on Guernica an afternoon'.⁸⁵ Altruism was, therefore, one of the factors behind Germany's impressive display of soft power in Spain from 1975 onwards. For once, those usually incompatible terms in international relations, solidarity and *realpolitik*, came together and worked towards the same end.

⁸⁴ Bernd Rother, 'Sozialdemokratischer Internationalismus – Die SI und der Nord-Süd-Konflikt', in Bernd Rother, ed., *Willy Brandts Außenpolitik* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), 259–334. See also the TV interviews of the representatives of German Foundations in Spain in Friedrich Mager and Paul Mautner, *Stiftungen im Dienst der Politik. Am Beispiel Spanien*, Bayerischer Rundfunk, 12 July 1977.

⁸⁵ 'El maletín que nunca existió', *El País*, 27. Jan. 1985.