

*FAER ASTURIES:*  
LINGUISTIC POLITICS AND THE FRUSTRATED CONSTRUCTION OF  
ASTURIAN NATIONALISM, 1974-1999

by

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DISSERTATION

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## Dissertation Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the cultural and linguistic politics surrounding the sub-state nationalist movements that arose in Spain during the late twentieth century. In particular, it analyzes the curious case of Asturias and the frustrated history of the nationalist movement there, which contrasts with the relative success of regionalist and nationalist political parties in neighboring regions. While Catalunya, Euskadi, Galicia, and even Andalucía rapidly turned cultural revival movements into concrete political gains, taking advantage of the new constitutional structure put in place after 1978, Asturias is especially interesting because of its failure to do so.

The resurgence of regionalist sentiment during the Transition (~1975-1982) provides an interesting example of the complex struggle between various groups vying for political and cultural hegemony during an extremely fluid period. Along with other groups opposed to the Franco regime, the coalescing *Asturianista* movement attempted to carve out a political space in the region and within the structure of the reformed Spanish State. The new Statute of Autonomy, the establishment of the state-funded Asturian Language Academy, the introduction of Asturian language classes in schools, and the explicit legal protection for the language were all regionalist advances unthinkable without the political activism of the *Asturianistas*.

However, the Asturian case indicates that a separate language, while often a critical component of nationalist programs, is not in itself sufficient fuel for a long-term political project. While the nationalist movement managed to insert some elements of its linguistic and cultural program into the 1981 Autonomy Statute and its 1999 revision, the Asturian nationalists were effectively managed through a strategy of simultaneous absorption and marginalization. The ruling parties incorporated some of the *Asturianista* movement's membership and granted limited concessions to their program while simultaneously systematically frustrating any attempt to enact significant change. The *Asturianistas* never expanded upon their periodic success at mobilizing the population around a linguistic and cultural revival into a sustainable political program. This led to frustration and fragmentation within the nationalist movement, weakening its ability to influence the major parties and making it much easier for the Socialist Party to marginalize nationalist groups and maintain its dominant position.

### A Note on Permissions

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## Introduction

One of the principal legacies of the twentieth century in Europe is the continued existence of multiethnic states. Even European states that have historically engaged in an explicit policy of nation building, such as the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, and Spain, were rudely made aware of the presence of vocal and occasionally violent ethnic minorities within their borders. Some of the most prominent examples are the growth of nationalist movements in Scotland, Brittany, Italy, and the disintegration of the states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the USSR. These examples highlight a general conflict and struggle over the very definition of each “nation” and to what extent the borders of a given nation must be coextensive with the state in which it resides.

This dissertation is a case study of the nationalist movement in Asturias,<sup>1</sup> a province in the northwest of Spain with a history, culture, language (called *Asturianu* or *Bable*),<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> For reasons of simplicity and because they are more familiar to English-speaking readers, I will be using the Castilian place-names unless part of an organizational name or title. Thus, I will speak of *Asturias* and *Oviedo*, but refer to the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid* and the *Conceyu Bable Uviéu*.

I will use the most common version of personal names. Hence, while Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente was once legally “Juan José,” he is almost exclusively known by his Asturian name or the nickname “*el Roxu*” (the Red), even within the Castilian-language press.

Within quotes, I will leave all names and place-names as originally given.

With respect to the various versions of spelling and lexicon used at different times and by different groups within the nationalist movement, I have left all quotations and spelling as originally given.

<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid confusion between the English name for the language (Asturian) and the adjective for things relating to or originating in the province (Asturian), I will generally refer to the language itself by the name *Asturianu* in this text to clearly distinguish it. Although often used interchangeably, the term *Bable* is sometimes considered to have mildly derogatory connotations (although this was not the case during the 1970s). From about the mid-1980s onwards, almost no one within the cultural revival or nationalist movements referred to the language as *Bable*, almost invariably opting for *Asturianu*, *Asturiano*, *llingua asturiana*, or simply *la llingua*. The mainstream press and politicians unconnected with the movement were slower to change, but the shift is noticeable starting in the 1990s.

In linguistic circles, the language is sometimes called *Asturleonés*, and in the province of León, where it is

economic base distinct from the rest of Spain. To clarify a sometimes vague and confusing set of terms, in Spain, *nationalism* is far more commonly used to describe movements in favor of regions within the state than sentiment towards Spain as a whole, usually labeled *centrism* or *españolismo* (and occasionally in Asturias referred to as *covadonguismo*).

*Regionalism* in a Spanish context is used to refer to a moderate strain of sub-state nationalism that does not seek independence from the state as its ultimate goal, but some version of home rule. Thus, the terms are related points on an ideological continuum, and they often overlap. It is quite common for one person or group to be closer to the regionalist end of the spectrum at one point in time or regarding one particular issue and far to the nationalist end at other times or in other contexts.

Here, I will be using nationalism as a blanket term to describe any Asturian group that agitated for a greater degree of independence or self-rule from Spain. The term regionalism will apply to a more moderate subset of organizations that did not seek formal independence from Spain, but pushed for the vaguely-defined goal of *autonomy*, meaning a

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also spoken (particularly in the North and West), *leonés* or *llionés*. In Extremadura, where it is still spoken by a small population, it is called *extremeño*. In the small Portuguese municipality of Miranda do Duoro, a variety of the language goes by the name *mirandés*.

There is some dispute among politicians and philosophers whether Asturianu is indeed a separate language or a dialect of Castilian. However, the general consensus among linguists holds that it is indeed a distinct language derived from medieval Romance independently from (and likely predating) Castilian. As someone with little formal training in this area, I will accept the judgment of the professionals. See Rafael Lapesa, *Historia de la lengua española*, 9a ed. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1997); Xulio Viejo Fernández, *La formación histórica de la llingua asturiana* (Uviéu: Ediciones Trabe, 2003); Xulio Viejo Fernández, "Asturian: Resurgence and Impending Demise of a Minority Language in the Iberian Peninsula," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 170 (2004): 169-90; Xosé Lluís García Arias, *Llingua y sociedá asturiana* (Uviéu: Conceyu Bable, 1976); Xosé Lluís García Arias, *Contribución a la Gramática histórica de la lengua asturiana y a la caracterización etimológica de su léxico* (Uviéu: Serviciu de Publicaciones Universidá d'Uviéu, 1988); Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, "Aspeutos sociollingüísticos d'una parroquia xixonosa" (Universidad de Oviedo, 1988).



greater level of home-rule and control over local policies concerning topics such as official languages, education, cultural promotion, policing, taxation, and economic development. *Separatism* will apply to nationalist groups that specifically sought a short-term break with the Spanish state. However, it is important to stress that most nationalist groups in Asturias were not fixed to one position, either over time or unanimously within the membership of an organization. In general, the term “regionalist” was much more commonly used in Asturias during the early part of the Transition in the 1970s, with “nationalism” more often claimed by later groups. The term *Asturianismu* refers to a broad range of culturally-focused nationalist and regionalist movements in Asturias, focused to a greater or lesser degree on the recuperation and preservation of traditional Asturian cultural forms, most prominently the language. While not all people who defined themselves as *Asturianistas* also claimed to be regionalists or nationalists, the nationalist movement has been so deeply interconnected with the project of linguistic revival that for all practical purposes they have been identical. Thus, while, for example, the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* rarely frames its demands in terms of nationalist discourse (instead preferring to talk about linguistic rights and the Asturian “people”), it has been an integral part of the nation-building project in Asturias. Of all the explicitly nationalist and regionalist political parties in Asturias, only *Andecha Astur* (and to a lesser extent its predecessor, the *Ensamble Nacionalista Astur*) has broadly rejected the Asturianista label. Therefore, I will often use Asturianismu or Asturianista as blanket terms encompassing the entire continuum of Asturian identity politics and including both

regionalist and nationalist groups. It is particularly apt to lump nationalism and regionalism into one analytical category in 1970s Asturias, as the meaning of the terms had not yet diverged and were often used interchangeably by early groups such as the *Conceyu Bable*.<sup>3</sup>

In Spain, the imposition of a centralized vision of national identity, of “*España: una, grande, y libre*” (Spain: One, Great, and Free), was the Franco dictatorship’s solution to the violent internal conflicts that characterized the country in the years leading up to the Civil War (1936-1939). Under the regime, symbols seen as non-Castilian (such as regional flags, languages, and dances) were suppressed by the national police force, the Guardia Civil, and the military intelligence division’s *Brigada Politico Social*, among others. Public expressions of Spanish nationhood were carefully managed by the regime’s Ministries of Education and Information (Propaganda) as well as the organs of the state’s single political party, the *Movimiento Nacional*. In spite of this, since the 1960s the “question of the nationalities” has been at the forefront of Spanish politics. Accelerating rapidly after Franco’s death on November 20, 1975, these nationalist and regionalist movements presented a monumental challenge to the new king, Juan Carlos I, and his ministers as they attempted to establish political legitimacy for the newly reformed democratic system. This political struggle continues today with recent revisions to statutes of autonomy throughout Spain.

A distinct regionalist movement first appeared in Asturias with the 1974 appearance of the cultural revival group the *Conceyu Bable* and the formation of the opposition party

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<sup>3</sup> See also the discussion in Chapter 1 about the meaning of the terms regionalism and nationalism during the Transition in Asturias, p92. Also see Chapter 3, p185.

*Democracia Socialista Asturiana*. These were products of the last years of the Franco regime, when the dictator's age and sickness were public knowledge, leading to increasing debate about the future direction of the country both within the regime and in the streets of Spain. With the dictator's days numbered, exiled Republican forces, established nationalist organizations,<sup>4</sup> the younger and more relatively liberal sectors of the old regime (surrounding Prince Juan Carlos and his future Prime Minister, Adolfo Suárez), and the intransigent old guard within the regime (called the "*bunker*") all attempted to position themselves to shape the way the country would be run after Franco finally died. Along with other new and emerging peripheral nationalist groups,<sup>5</sup> the coalescing Asturianista movement attempted to carve out a political space in the region and make a name for itself within the Spanish State. At this stage, the Asturianistas' short-term goals were clearly limited to gaining more control over the process of Transition in Asturias (approx. 1974-1983), rather than ceding the protagonist's role to the backroom negotiations then occurring in Madrid. Having a highly culturalist program, the Asturianistas promoted increased political and economic autonomy for Asturias, but primarily focused on the re-establishment of the Asturian language as a key to forging a regional identity. The resurgence of regionalist sentiment during the Transition

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<sup>4</sup> Such as those in Euskadi and Catalunya, and to a much lesser extent Galicia. The case of the Gallegos somewhat parallels that of the Asturians, since, unlike in Catalunya and Euskadi, there was almost no established nationalist resistance to the Franco regime, and Galicia supplied a number of prominent politicians to the dictatorship, most notably Franco himself and Manuel Fraga Ibarne. The most prominent Asturian politician amongst the *aperturistas* was Torcuato Fernández Miranda, a native of Gijón. A major difference was that the Transition-era Gallego nationalists were able to draw upon a history of nationalist and regionalist theory stretching back to the nineteenth century, whereas the early twentieth-century Asturians had a much less developed regionalist discourse.

<sup>5</sup> Such as the Andalucíans, Canarians, Valencians, and Aragonese.

provides an interesting example of the complex struggle between various groups vying for political and cultural hegemony during an extremely fluid period.

The new constitutional order or so-called “State of the Autonomies” was established in the 1978 constitution and the individual statutes of autonomy passed over the course of the next five years. The polemical construction of this new state was Spain's attempt to forge a compromise between the conservative franquista state apparatus and the army on the one hand and the pressure from long-suppressed nationalist and regionalist movements throughout the periphery on the other. An asymmetrical federal structure, the State of the Autonomies provided for relatively high levels of self-government for the constitutionally defined “historic nationalities” of Euskadi (the Basque Country), Catalunya, and Galicia while relegating the other fourteen new “autonomous communities” to a secondary status with limited provisions for self-rule. Two separate constitutional articles were written for each case, with article 151's “fast-track autonomy” designed to apply to the three regions that had been granted autonomy statutes under the Second Republic (or pre-autonomy status, in the case of Galicia).<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Article 143's “slow-track autonomy” was supposed to specifically limit the amount of self-government available to the rest of the autonomous communities. Thus, a curious situation developed where both the Spanish nationalists in the *franquista bunker* as well as their antagonists in the historic nationalities were generally

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<sup>6</sup> Euskadi was only granted its autonomy statute by the Republic on October 6 1936, after the outbreak of the Civil War, leading some to question whether it was motivated more by a desire to ensure the loyalty of the region's soldiers to the Republic than by any real concession of Basque rights to self-government.

opposed to any other communities (such as Asturias) gaining access to full autonomy, which the latter often saw as an attempt to dilute their special status (and future arguments for independence based upon it). Thus, much of the focus of the Asturianista movement since 1978 has been on gaining recognition as a “historic nationality,” which it has so far been unable to achieve. This acknowledgment would represent much more than a simple rhetorical shift by the Spanish State, for it would provide the constitutional basis for the expansion of self-government in Asturias, particularly in areas concerning education, bilingualism, and taxation. While Catalunya, Euskadi, Galicia, and even Andalucía were able to rapidly turn nationalist movements into concrete political gains, taking advantage of the new constitutional structure, Asturias is especially interesting because of its failure to do so.

After the political achievements of the late 1970s, the influence of the Asturianista movement seemed to wane. The establishment for a vehicle to greater self-government in the new Statute of Autonomy, the reorganization of the new Autonomous Community and the restoration of the traditional name, the “*Principado de Asturias*” (replacing the old Province of Oviedo),<sup>7</sup> the establishment of a state-funded Asturian Language Academy (the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*), the introduction of Asturianu classes to primary and secondary school curricula, and the explicit legal protection for the language were all regionalist

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<sup>7</sup> The province had been re-named and the Principality done away with in the rationalist liberal administrative reorganization of Javier de Burgos in 1833, in which all provinces were re-labeled to mirror the name of their capital cities.

advances unthinkable without the overt pressure and political participation of the nationalist sector of the Asturianista movement. However, the early 1980s saw a fragmentation of some of the early nationalist and regionalist groups, and it was not until the end of the decade that the momentum of the Transition was recovered with the establishment of parties representing both moderate and Marxist strains of Asturian nationalism and a new generation of young Asturian writers, poets and playwrights. This period also coincided with a sympathetic President of the regional government, Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, and culminated in the successful electoral campaign of 1991, when a unified *Coalición Asturiana* gained access to the regional parliament for the first time along with seats in several municipalities.

Although, this coalition proved to be short-lived, fracturing soon after the elections, the weakening political power of the Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) opened a window of opportunity for the other political forces of the region. Most importantly, the Communist coalition *Izquierda Unida* rapidly moved to support the Asturianista movement, seeing it as a way to legitimate its own political project and a symbolic discourse with which it could unify the entirety of the Left in Asturias. In the mid-1990s, the Asturianistas suddenly found themselves at the center of a broad popular coalition challenging Socialist control over politics in the region and calling for a major reform of the Asturian Autonomy Statute, greater self-government, and cultural autonomy. However, after limited reform to Asturian Autonomy, including a revised “Law of Use and Promotion of

Bable/Asturiano,”<sup>8</sup> the Socialists were able to re-assert their power base in the region, and the political space into which the Asturianista coalition of the 1990s emerged was once again gradually closed off.

Today, roughly thirty-five years after the foundation of the *Conceyu Bable*, none of the six nationalist and regionalist parties<sup>9</sup> have had any recent electoral success in Asturias above the municipal level. There is an influential sector within *Izquierda Unida*<sup>10</sup> that has strong regionalist sympathies, and the *Bloque por Asturias* has representatives in the regional government (gained in coalition with IU from 2003-10, and independently after the coalition’s rupture in 2010-1).<sup>11</sup> However, the regionalist sector has recently been marginalized from the Communist coalition, and the presence of the *Bloque* in government, on its own after its rupture with *Izquierda Unida*, looks unlikely to continue after the next elections in 2011. Although furthered by the 1998 language law (usually referred to as the *Ley del Uso*) and bilingual implementation in some municipalities (most notably Gijón and

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<sup>8</sup> "Ley 1/1998, de 23 de marzo, de uso y promoción del bable/asturiano," *Boletín Oficial del Principado de Asturias*, no. 73 (1998-03-28): 3411-13.

<sup>9</sup> I am including, from roughly Left to Right on the political spectrum, *Andecha Astur*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana*, *Bloque por Asturias*, *Partíu Asturianista*, *Unión Renovadora Asturiana*, and *Foro Asturias*.

The two *Andechas* split in 2007 and are currently engaged in a legal battle over the rights to the name. For simplicity, I will refer to the first as *Andecha Astur* and the second as *Andecha Astur* (UNA) referring to its coalition with *Izquierda Asturiana* since 2007, known as *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana*. Additionally, the *Bloque* was until recently in coalition with the Communist coalition, *Izquierda Unida* and with the Green Party. The *Partíu Asturianista* is currently in a pact with the regionalist *Unión Renovadora Asturiana*, called *Unión Asturianista*.

<sup>10</sup> United Left, itself a coalition formed in 1986 around the Spanish Communist Party.

<sup>11</sup> This includes one deputy in the regional parliament, Roberto Colunga (the party’s General Secretary), who replaced Francisco Javier García Valledor (IU) after his resignation on December 12, 2009. When the *Bloque por Asturias* withdrew from its coalition with IU and the Green Party in July 2010, he retained his seat as an independent.

"Roberto Colunga deja a IU con tres diputados al pasar al Grupo Mixto," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 2010-07-15.

Avilés – the region’s largest and third-largest cities), Asturianu is not official in the province. This largely prevents it from recognition by the Spanish State for any type of official business and severely handicaps its use in any state-run aspect of life, such as the University of Oviedo, which almost exclusively uses Castilian and has often refused to accept documentation or work submitted bilingually or in Asturianu.<sup>12</sup> Asturias has many of the standard ingredients of a successful nationalist movement such as language, a distinct regional culture, a clear geographic divide facilitating differences with the rest of the Spanish State, and a history of political confrontation and mobilization. The question, then, is what went wrong? What were the factors that frustrated the consolidation of Asturianismu as a political option in Asturias, even a minor one?

### **Asturian Culture and Society**

Neither the classic image of sunny Mediterranean Spain promoted most famously by the tourist campaigns of Franco’s government in the 1960s nor the parched arid lands of Don Quixote’s La Mancha describe the Northern Coast of Iberia, bordered by the chilly

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<sup>12</sup> The July 2005 civil lawsuit by Faustino Zapico Álvarez against the University of Oviedo alleged linguistic discrimination, in violation of the University’s own statutes and the Use Law of 1998, after the university refused to accept his dissertation proposal on Asturian history titled “*El discurso de la periferia: proyectos autonomistas na Asturias contemporánea (1808-1983)*” (The Discourse of the Periphery: Autonomist Projects in Modern Asturias (1808-1983)), in spite of the proposal’s prior approval by his committee and the History Department. Both the submission forms and proposal were written entirely in Asturianu. The judge, Juan Carlos García López, ruled in favor of the University, arguing that the proposal was not written in one of the official languages of the state (Castilian, Catalan, Euskara, Gallego, and Valenciano).

Sentencia 40/2006 de 6 de febrero, del Juzgado de los Contencioso-Administrativo no. 1 de Oviedo en Recurso no. 281/2005 and Faustino Zapico Álvarez, Interview by author (Oviedo & Mieres, 2009-01-21 & 2009-01-29).



Cantabrian Sea.<sup>13</sup> Divided from the rest of the peninsula by its highest mountains, the *Picos de Europa* (“Peaks of Europe”), Asturias (as well as Galicia and to a lesser extent Cantabria) is a rain-drenched series of steep mountain valleys and rocky coastline, with an Atlantic climate’s mild temperatures even in summer and snow and hail relatively common occurrences in winter, even at sea level. The high mountains of the Cordillera Cantábrica act as a rain shadow, helping create both the arid conditions of the Spanish *meseta* to the South and a yearly rainfall in Asturias of 1140mm.<sup>14</sup> The Asturianu word for drizzle, *l’orbayu*, has entered the local vocabulary, even among Castilian-speakers, and is one of the first words learned by new arrivals to the region. People commonly joke that, as the Inuit have numerous terms for different types of ice and snow, so the Asturians have come up with new ways to differentiate between fog, drizzle, mist, and rain.<sup>15</sup>

Due to the wet and mild climate and the steep terrain, the gastronomy of Asturias is similarly distinctive, most famous for the regional dish, *fabada*, a hearty farmer’s stew of white beans (*fabes*), pork, and Asturian variations on chorizo (*chorizu*) and morcilla (*morciella*). The cold, oxygen-rich waters of the Atlantic also contribute a variety of fish and

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<sup>13</sup> For an in-depth study of the Ministry of Information and Tourism under Manuel Fraga Ibarne during the 1960s, see Sasha D. Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship: Europe’s Peaceful Invasion of Franco’s Spain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Agencia Estatal de Meteorología. Figure is for average rainfall 1971-2000 at the Aeropuerto de Asturias (OVD). <http://www.aemet.es/es/elclima/datosclimatologicos/valoresclimatologicos?l=1212E&k=ast>. Accessed 2009-08-31.

For comparison, the average yearly rainfall in Seattle is 969mm. Source: National Weather Service, “National Digital Forecast Database”, <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sew/MediaGuide/NDFD-Climate.pdf>. Accessed 2009-08-31.

<sup>15</sup> PWZ field notes, June 2006, September 2008.

shellfish to the Asturian diet, with spider crab (*centollu*) and monkfish (*pixín*) particularly prized. Equally emblematic of Asturias is *sidra*, the hard cider of which the locals consume on average over 45 liters per person per year (in some places such as Gijón and Villaviciosa, the average is over 60 liters per person per year).<sup>16</sup> Since at least the nineteenth century, *sidra* has been rather spectacularly poured in a standing position.<sup>17</sup> With the pouring hand held as high as possible over the head and the glass held as low as possible (usually around waist level) in a nearly horizontal orientation, the thin stream of *sidra* is aimed so that it hits the side of the glass (rather than the bottom) and creates a head on the non-carbonated beverage. Only a few centimeters are poured at a time, and must be drunk immediately before the *culín* (glass of *sidra*) loses its fizziness. Traditionally, only one glass is shared between a group of drinkers, with each being served in turn, but due to hygienic concerns, this has been falling out of practice. This spectacular display is virtually universal and both serves as a tourist attraction and a symbol of Asturian culture.

The “Green Coast”, with its wet and clammy weather, hearty meat and bean-based cuisine, *sidra* breweries and apple orchards, and the frequent resonating sounds of bagpipe and drum troupes has almost as many emblematic cultural features in common with Brittany and the British Isles as with León, La Mancha, Andalucía, or the Mediterranean East Coast.

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<sup>16</sup> This is for the period of July 2006-2007. Note that this is the total consumption of *sidra* in Asturias divided by a 2006 population of 1,076,896. Thus, removing those under typical drinking age (legally 18 but in practice much lower) and non-drinkers, the average yearly consumption per adult would be significantly higher.

"Gijón lidera el consumo de sidra natural en Asturias con 60 litros por persona y año," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 2007-07-21.

<sup>17</sup> Previously, *sidra* was typically served out of earthenware jars and lacked the extravagant pouring method, being drunk without any fizz.

This similarity with the Celtic countries of Northern Europe is more than simply the result of similar climates, but also of a common (although distant) history. The Northwest coast of Spain was the last area of the Iberian Peninsula to be incorporated into the Roman Empire, and even at its greatest extent, Roman control was only sporadic in this remote region. Therefore, the Romanization of the Celtiberian tribes of Asturias and Galicia was only partial, and a number of Celtic characteristics survive, most prominently in the rural architecture, art, and mythology of the area.<sup>18</sup> The influence of Muslim Spain was similarly minimal, with the only significant Moorish presence the early eighth-century occupation of the port of Gijón. Linguistically, however, the new political powers of the Iberian Peninsula did leave their mark. Asturianu and Gallego are both derived from Latin via Medieval Romance, and the pre-existing Celtic tongue left few traces apart from influencing a number of place names and some of the rural vocabulary. Because of Asturias and Galicia's lack of a Gaelic language, the Celtic League has denied both communities recognition as "Celtic countries" although people throughout Spain commonly refer to both as such. Unsurprisingly, almost from its inception, the Asturianista movement incorporated this generally acknowledged cultural and historic difference between Asturias and the rest of the Spanish State (with the exception of neighboring Galicia) as a further argument for Asturias' right to greater autonomy. However, in subsequent years *celtismu*, as this phenomenon came to be called, became a point of division between various nationalist and regionalist groups.

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of Asturian rural houses and their Celtic origins, see Ástur & Adolfo García Paredes, *La casa tradicional asturiana* (Oviedo: Ediciones Nobel, 2006).

Many Asturianistas found the philo-Celtic arguments far-fetched and chose instead to focus on other national signifiers such as Asturianu, regional dress, the flag, or more recent historical symbols (such as the 1808 revolt against the Napoleonic Army or the 1937 wartime *Consejo Soberano de Asturias y León*).

Asturias' geography also conditions the economic and social life of Asturias, with a long history of coal mining in the region giving it a solidly proletarian reputation, most famously earned during the miner's revolt of October 4-13, 1934.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Asturias is famed for its rural countryside and remote mountain villages populated by shepherds and cow pastures. Known for its artisanal cheeses (42 varieties recognized by the regional government, most famous among which are the blue *queso de Cabrales*<sup>20</sup> and to a growing extent the soft and tart *quesu d'afuega'l pitu*<sup>21</sup>) and *sidra* orchards, rural Asturias offers a cultural counterpoint to the mines and the steel mills of the country. These closely juxtaposed worlds of modern industry and (seemingly) primitive small agriculture are highly interdependent, with what would seem to be classically proletarian families almost invariably

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<sup>19</sup> For more on working-class politics, the buildup to October 1934, and the Civil War, see Brian D. Bunk, *Ghosts of Passion: Martyrdom, Gender, and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Pamela Beth Radcliff, *From Mobilization to Civil War: The Politics of Polarization in the Spanish City of Gijón, 1900-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Francisco Erice, ed. *Los comunistas en Asturias (1920-1982)* (Oviedo: Ediciones Trea, 1996); Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> From the *conceyu* (roughly analogous to a county) of Cabrales in the Picos de Europa mountains of Eastern Asturias (as well as small areas on the opposite side of the mountains in Cantabria and León). The *penicillum* used to make the cheese is the same species as the French Roquefort, and the cheeses are cave-aged from 2-5 months.

<sup>21</sup> Literally, "cheese of strangling the chicken", a play on words referring to the Asturianu "*pitu*", which can mean either "chicken" or "throat". The soft cheese, native to most of Western Asturias, has a tendency to stick in the back of the mouth or the throat, resulting in its name.

maintaining close ties with their rural origins, quite frequently to the extent of creating a gendered division of labor that also becomes one between agriculture and industry. By the middle of the twentieth century, this converted many areas of central Asturias into a curious landscape of heavy industry butting right up against rural hamlets, a gradient particularly visible as one travels along the train route between Oviedo and Gijón. While Asturias experienced a precipitous decline in its mining and metallurgical activity starting in the 1970s to go along with a continuously dwindling rural population, sheep grazing in the shadow of a (possibly derelict) steel mill is still a common sight in Asturias even today.

Asturias has three major population centers, with a few additional areas with a denser population clustered primarily in the mining and industrial zones of the region. Today, roughly 80% of the region's population resides in the urban and industrial center of the province, with the socioeconomic changes of the twentieth century leaving large areas of the East and West virtually depopulated.<sup>22</sup> Some of the more remote mountainous areas of the *Cordillera Cantábrica* are effectively wildernesses. Oviedo and Gijón have historically been contrasted with each other, with Avilés only becoming a significant urban center in the second half of the twentieth century. Nestled in a valley between two ranges of hills, Oviedo is located almost at the geographic center of region. The ancient seat of the Kingdom of Asturias from the late eighth century until the early tenth century, Oviedo has been the

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<sup>22</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Evolución de la Población por concejos. Datos censales. Período 1900-2001.," SADEI, <http://www.sadei.es/Indice%20tematico/infitema.asp?a1=C&a2=1#>. Accessed 2011-03-05.

center of political and ecclesiastical power ever since. In addition to its status as the seat of regional government and the Archdiocese of Oviedo, the city also contains the major centers of intellectual production, such as the University of Oviedo and the *Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos* (RIDEA, formerly the IDEA), as well as the major sites of “high” culture such as the Teatro Campoamor (built in 1892). Thus, the city’s historic role as the major link between Asturias and Castilla has made it by far the most heavily castilianized area of Asturias, linguistically, culturally, and politically. It has also been the most conservative area of the populated center of Asturias and is the only one of the three major cities that regularly votes in favor of the conservative Partido Popular.<sup>23</sup>

Gijón, the region’s major seaport and a major industrial and commercial center, maintained a distinctly Asturian cultural and linguistic character until well into the twentieth century. Growing rapidly in population over the course of the twentieth century as people migrated to the city in search of jobs, Gijón by the mid-1960s definitively surpassed Oviedo as the largest city in the region (the distinction had gone back and forth between the two since 1900).<sup>24</sup> Historically dominated much more by the working-class and petty-bourgeoisie, the city was the center of the limited regionalist revival of the early twentieth century and, similarly, has been the heart of Asturianista activity since the Transition. While

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<sup>23</sup> The Partido Popular has won the last five in a row, from 1991 to 2007, though the Socialists won narrow victories in 1979, 1983, and 1987.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales, “Resultados electorales. Elecciones Municipales 1979-2007.,” SADEI, <http://www.sadei.es/Pelicula%20Elec/elecciones.htm>. Accessed 2011-03-05.

<sup>24</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), “Evolución de la Población por concejos. Datos censales. Período 1900-2001.,”

many of the more prominent Asturianista activities and organizations are based in Oviedo to more effectively lobby the government and because of the association of a number of activists with the University, the major bases of social support for regionalism and nationalism in Asturias have always been Gijón and the mining districts of the *Nalón* and the *Caudal*, with some support also coming from Avilés.

As late as 1950, Avilés was a small town of 21,340, on the same scale as Aller, Grado, Villaviciosa, Llanes, Tineo, or any number of rural market centers scattered throughout the region.<sup>25</sup> That year, the public-enterprise steel giant ENSIDESA was established in the city by the *Instituto Nacional de Industria*, and the town's population exploded. Avilés attracted immigrants both from the rapidly depopulating rural regions within Asturias but also from elsewhere in Spain, in particular the South. By 1960, the population had more than doubled, to 48,620, and it would nearly double again in the following decade, swelling to 82,433.<sup>26</sup> The combination of Avilés long history as a small town and recent decades as a rapidly expanding industrial center has created a city with a curiously dual identity. On the one hand, the old town center nestled on the southeastern bank of the Ría de Avilés, with its narrow streets, characteristic buildings overhanging the city's sidewalks and their support columns, old churches, dead-end plazas, and hidden wood-raftered *sidrerías* is a classic example of an Asturian small town, quite different in character and feel from either Gijón or Oviedo. On the other hand, across the estuary, greatly enlarged to its current dimensions in

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

the 1950s to facilitate the shipping needs of ENSIDESA, an industrial landscape of rusting factories and smokestacks stands in stark juxtaposition to the old town. Additionally, surrounding the city, new urbanizations, hastily constructed to house the influx of new workers, fans out in waves of apartment blocks and wide, geometrical streets.

The late-century combination of extensive deindustrialization and migration to the cities did little to alter the *perception* of Asturias as primarily inhabited almost solely by the two extreme archetypes of the industrial worker or miner and the rural *vaqueiro* (cowherd). This is reflected in both the image that Asturians have of themselves as well as that presented (or perceived) by those outside the region. One example is the souvenir industry's promotion of figurines and clothing branded with caricatures of cows and *vaqueiros*, such as in the chain of souvenir and knick-knack shops *Les Camisetes*, which features a bilingual collection of clothing most often involving cowherds or cows drinking or pouring *sidra*.

Like the people of most places following a period of rapid industrialization, Asturians continue to see themselves reflected in rural homesteads and mountain-dwelling coal miners when by this point 80% of the population is both urban and quite modern. To cite one useful indicator, by 2008 Asturias had the highest level of internet use in Spain with 53.8% of the population having used it in the last 3 months (2% above the national average) as well as the greatest distribution of broadband internet connections.<sup>27</sup> The legacy and mythmaking surrounding the October 1934 revolution and general strike as well as the

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<sup>27</sup> "Los asturianos usan más Internet y tienen más banda ancha," *El País* [Madrid] 2008-09-12; "El 92% de los hogares asturianos se conecta a Internet por banda ancha," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 2009-07-09.



nineteenth and twentieth-century birth of folklore as both academic subject and popular entertainment almost certainly play major parts, but to attribute the situation entirely to them would be to vastly oversimplify a much more complex issue. In much the same way, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after suffering through a similar process of deindustrialization, is still largely seen as the “Steel City” both by outsiders and as the image its own inhabitants subscribe to, even though there has been no steel industry to speak of in the city of Pittsburgh for decades.

This phenomenon is hardly restricted to Asturias. As famously discussed in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, most nationalist movements have at least at one point claimed part of their legitimacy by referring to some type of pastoral purity or other essentialist set of common cultural images.<sup>28</sup> There is a certain similarity between Asturianista treatments of rural culture and the nineteenth-century German idea of *heimat*, meaning homeland in a very local sense.<sup>29</sup> To many Asturians, rural

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<sup>28</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> German nationalism was largely built upon a sense that each distinct *heimat* was part of a greater German whole, made richer by its internal variation. In this case, love of locality was usually subordinate to that of the greater nation, and in many ways was a vehicle for displaying this larger sentiment. The asturianistas treated linguistic and cultural variation within Asturias in much the same manner, as did Spanish nationalists when attempting to articulate the cultural variety within the Spanish State with necessarily unitary conceptions of Spanish nationalism.

The similarities between the Spanish and German cases may not be completely coincidental given the large number of germanophile Spanish intellectuals during the early years of the twentieth century. While the *franquista* interest in folklore and “Spanish variety” most certainly existed, and may have been influenced by the influx of German ideas, the exaltation of the *patria chica* never reached the levels under Franco that interest in *heimat* did in Imperial Germany, quite possibly because of the ever-present fear of the overt separatist tendencies displayed by the Catalans and the Basques in the years before the Civil War.

For further reading on the concept of *heimat* and its particular nesting of identities, see Celia Applegate, *A*

traditions were the highest embodiment of their culture, providing both a set of practices distinct from those of their neighbors as well as a connection to an imagined common past. This idealized pastoral heritage, shared by the vast majority of Asturians, was almost constantly referenced by the various regionalist and nationalist groups in order to argue in favor of an ancient, and therefore legitimate, Asturian nation.

Asturias is a region littered with the evidence of a strong regional movement, yet one that currently has almost no presence in the politics of the Spanish state. This paradoxical situation has been largely ignored by the academic community as well as by Spanish politicians. By considering the case of Asturias, I hope to increase the general understanding of the regionalist and nationalist movements proliferating throughout Europe. While a great deal of attention has been paid to strong ethnic nationalist movements, I think that one can learn as much from some of the weaker examples. In particular, an examination of the political collapse of Asturian nationalism highlights the limits of a cultural politics centered on language and is an example of the varied mechanisms through which liberal democratic states can undermine and eventually re-incorporate internal resistance. From the perspective of the state, this history is a success story, and the political tactics taken by the Spanish state in Asturias could potentially be applied in other conflicts.

## Historiography

In the past thirty years, academic studies of nationalism have flourished, a notable surge in interest beginning with the 1983 publications of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*,<sup>30</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rangers' *The Invention of Tradition*,<sup>31</sup> and Ernst Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*.<sup>32</sup> All, to varying degrees, served to problematize the idea of nations and ethnicities as primordial, concrete, and objective categories that had so dominated the politics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These three seminal studies together demonstrated the "invented" or "imagined" quality of much of the cultural, political, and linguistic foundation upon which modern states have based their legitimacy.

It is quite evident that we have not, in spite of a deconstructivist turn among academic historians, anthropologists, and sociologists, seen the death of the nation-state. Nationalist movements persist as a major menace to the cosmopolitan liberal ideal of multicultural states. Furthermore, the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen several states (the United States under the George W. Bush administration is a prominent example) swing radically towards an official promotion of a centralized nationalist vision to serve particular political ends. In a time of dominant discourses of globalization and international integration, the questions and problems surrounding nationalism and regionalism treated in this study still have a great applicability worldwide to political and cultural conflicts from

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<sup>30</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>31</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*.

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

Kurdistan to Québec.

Historical interpretations of the Spanish Transition have largely been from a top-down perspective, looking at the deconstruction of the franquista regime as a series of negotiations between political leaders of the regime and the opposition during the late 1970s. Various models have been used to attempt to explain the Transition in Spain as a whole, although a general history of the period in Asturias (or many other regions of Spain, for that matter) has yet to be written. At the center of a group of historians who stress the “depoliticization” of life under Franco, Raymond Carr<sup>33</sup> and Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi,<sup>34</sup> see this depoliticization as a conscious strategy by the regime, designed to pacify potential dissent and to steer it towards a “culture of evasion” centered on leisure pursuits. Most prominently, this strategy included the state sponsorship of diversions such as the cinema. The import of American films (carefully censored for moral content) and the number of movie theaters expanded dramatically during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, during the 1960s only the US had more movie seats per capita. Carr and Fusi also argue that spectator sports, particularly bullfighting and football, played a prominent role in channeling dissent into areas that were not politically threatening to the regime. Taking advantage of this previously established and safely apathetic political culture, the politicians of the Transition were able to negotiate a stable and rapid conversion to a constitutional monarchy after Franco’s death, primarily

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<sup>33</sup> Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*.

<sup>34</sup> Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi, *Spain, Dictatorship to Democracy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979).

through backroom dealings and an agreed policy of political *consenso*, a spirit of compromise. Carr and Fusi both acknowledge, however, that Euskadi and to a lesser extent Catalunya were clear exceptions to the spirit of *consenso*, and they point to the continuing persistence of Basque violence as the new regime's greatest challenge.

David Gilmour takes this view of the Transition even further, claiming that the late Franco regime was pragmatic to the point of being apolitical.<sup>35</sup> He, along with Cristina Palomares<sup>36</sup> focuses on the prominent role of the *aperturistas*, a group of reformers within the Franco regime (most prominently José María de Añelza, Manuel Fraga, Alfonso Suárez, and the future king, Juan Carlos Borbón). To both Gilmour and (more explicitly) Palomares, the key to the peaceful and successful transition was the strong sense of self-preservation among the younger members of Franco's government, who saw modernization of the country as inevitable. Fraga, in particular, as Franco's Minister of Information and Tourism for the majority of the 1960s, oversaw a phase of incredibly rapid economic development fueled by his tourist campaigns, the mass migration of the rural lower class to the cities and by seasonal emigration to the factories of Northern Europe (and its attendant remittances). As a group, they advocated a managed opening of the regime, phasing in democracy as a way of staving off another civil war (and, not coincidentally, saving most of their own positions and privileges in the process). This led to a policy of *pactismo*, which

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<sup>35</sup> David Gilmour, *The Transformation of Spain: From Franco to the Constitutional Monarchy* (London: Quartet, 1985).

<sup>36</sup> Cristina Palomares, *The Quest for Survival after Franco: Moderate Francoism and the Slow Journey to the Polls, 1964-1977* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).

Gilmour and Palomares both treat in a very similar way to Carr and Fusi, claiming that back-door dealings were critical to the non-violent success of the Transition, particularly those between the Prime Minister, Suárez, and the leaders of the Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de España*, PCE), Santiago Carrillo, and the Socialist Party, Felipe González, leading up to the 1977 Moncloa Pacts.<sup>37</sup> In these agreements, the two opposition leaders agreed to accept a liberal capitalist economic policy and withhold widespread labor conflict in exchange for participation in the political process.

Paloma Aguilar's work,<sup>38</sup> along with that of Javier Tussell,<sup>39</sup> specifically addresses the role that the memory of the dictatorship and the Civil War played in the Transition. While Aguilar's book is based on research in the NO-DO archives as well as an extensive periodical review, Tussell's work was intended to be more of a critical collection of essays than a research project. Aguilar focuses on the newsreels of the Franco regime as a primary mechanism by which, far from "depoliticizing" the population, it actively kept alive the memory of the Civil War as its basis for legitimacy. Up until the early 1960s, the regime relied primarily on this memory to remind people of the horrors of the "anti-Spain" and of the sacrifices of the Nationalist troops during the war. From 1964 onward, the message changed to "25 years of

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<sup>37</sup> In this text, the terms "Communists" or "Communist Party" and "Socialists" or "Socialist Party" will refer specifically to the PCE and the PSOE, respectively, unless otherwise noted. When discussing one of the other communist and socialist groups in Asturias, such as the *Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España* (PCPE) or the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP), I will refer to them by either their full name or the party's initials. The reason for this is simply because that has been the general naming convention since the 1970s, and it is not meant to be a comment on the content of their political platforms.

<sup>38</sup> Paloma Aguilar Fernández, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Javier Tussell, *Los hijos de la sangre: la España de 1936 desde 1986* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1986).

peace” (since the end of the war in 1939) shifting, in Aguilar’s view, from an “origins-based” theory of political legitimacy to a “performance-based” rhetoric centering on peace and economic prosperity. However, the persistent reminders of the Civil War, central to the regime’s monuments, holidays, and other sites of public memory, played a critical role during the Transition. Tussell concurs, although he focuses primarily on personal memory, rather than public memory. While many of the actors during the Transition (Suárez, González, Juan Carlos) had been born after the Civil War, a good number of important politicians had experienced the conflict first hand (most notably Santiago Carrillo, the head of the Communist Party). Even those born after the war “experienced” the conflict through lessons learned from their parents and in the years immediately following the war. Therefore, argue both Aguilar and Tussell, the Civil War was in many ways a prominent “actor” in the politics and culture of the Transition. Most importantly, as a constantly present example of the dangers of extremism, the memory of the war served to push both left and right towards political negotiation and the *ruptura pactada* (negotiated break) with *franquismo*.

Laura Eddles makes a similar argument about the prominent role of the Civil War during the Transition.<sup>40</sup> She argues that the culture of the Transition quickly sorted a variety of root paradigms into a sacred-profane dichotomy, guiding behavior of both the political elite and everyday Spaniards during the Transition. She sorts the memory of the Civil War into the profane category, along with ideas such as “dictatorship” and “extremism.” These

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<sup>40</sup> Laura Desfor Eddles, *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain: The Transition to Democracy after Franco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

ideas were consciously opposed to the root paradigms of “consensus,” “*convivencia*” (living together), “democracy,” and “a new beginning.” While it is clear that the majority of these concepts were viewed in this way, it is a gross simplification. In Eddles’ analysis, there is virtually no acknowledgement of the contested nature of any of these terms; she takes them as more or less fixed concepts. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that there was a great struggle by parties on all sides to control the definition of these root paradigms. In particular, moderate *franquistas* such as Fraga and Arielza were able to successfully re-define themselves as “democratic,” even though they had been active participants in an authoritarian regime for decades. Additionally, as Liliana Suárez-Navaz contests, the new “convivencia” that Spaniards searched for was increasingly applied along racial lines, with the growing number of African migrants in the South apparently excluded.<sup>41</sup>

Paul Preston, the leading scholar of the Leftist historiography of modern Spain, disputes this dominant analysis, claiming that the Transition was the result of an adversarial relationship between right and left, rather than any sort of consensus.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to the proponents of the “depoliticization school,” Preston claims that the Transition was not a product of consensus or reformism within the regime but should be considered the triumph of the moderate left and center over elements of the radical right, most importantly the Army and the right-wing paramilitary groups led by the neo-fascist political party *Fuerza Nueva*.

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<sup>41</sup> Liliana Suárez-Navaz, *Rebordering the Mediterranean: Boundaries and Citizenship in Southern Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Paul Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (London: Routledge, 1986).



To Preston, the Transition was characterized by the constant fear of armed insurrection (known as *golpismo*, or “coup-ism”), fuelled by the constant violence of ultra-rightist groups against prominent members of the democratic left. While Preston acknowledges the critical role of the King and moderate members of the *franquista* government (such as Suárez), he characterizes them primarily as Centrist. Furthermore, Preston argues that they were vastly outnumbered within the government by the “old shirts” of the “bunker,” who actively advocated for *continuismo*, or maintenance of absolute authoritarian rule. To Preston, the regime’s continued willingness to use military force to repress political dissent during the last years of the Franco regime was evidence that it was neither “reformed” nor were the people of Spain in any way “depoliticized.” In Euskadi and Catalunya, people were clearly highly politicized. Even in Madrid, over three million people demonstrated on the street in favor of democracy and political change in the days after Colonel Tejero’s failed 1981 coup. Thus, Preston argues, the mass parties of the Left, allied with critical elements of the political Center (such as the King), were able to successfully overcome the regime that, in contrast to the portrayals by Carr, Fusi, and Gilmour, was still very much authoritarian and repressive.

Academic histories of contemporary Asturias in publication have been for the most part histories of the working-class Left, telling the narrative of (and often sponsored by) a political party or trade union, or introductory textbooks and *manuales de clase*.<sup>43</sup> While the

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<sup>43</sup> Francisco Javier Erice Sebares and Jorge Uría, *Historia de Asturias* (Oviedo: Mases Ediciones, 1988). This is quite typical of many Spanish undergraduate-level textbooks, in that it attempts to encapsulate the history of a region (or country) from prehistoric times all the way through the end of the Franco regime.

former (even if independently researched and written) focus almost exclusively on the labor movement in Asturias under *franquismo* and during the Transition, the latter neither offer nor intend to make any kind of broad historical analysis of the process of democratic Transition in Asturias. With a few recent exceptions, this literature has almost entirely neglected the topic of Asturian nationalism. One of the few historians that deals with the subject, Valentín Brugos, focuses almost exclusively on the history of regionalists during the late Franco years. Indeed, his book *Conceyu Bable: venti años*, is probably misnamed.<sup>44</sup> His work is an excellent study of the 1960s and early- to mid-1970s, but does not actually discuss the Conceyu Bable itself until page 75 (out of 107). Indeed, the primary focus of most of his research has been organizations of the working class Left. This is a common theme among recent historians of Asturias, who almost all have devoted far more pages to the activities of the Communist *Comisiones Obreras* and radical syndicates of the far left than to the nationalist question. Francisco Javier Erice Sebares<sup>45</sup> and Rubén Vega García<sup>46</sup> both can be considered experts in this area, although only Vega has written anything on the connection between the workers' movement in the late *franquista* period and the early support for regionalism.<sup>47</sup> These two Asturian scholars have argued for the importance of working-class

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<sup>44</sup> Valentín Brugos, *Conceyu Bable: Venti años*, trans. Xosé Miguel Suárez (Uviéu: Ediciones Trabe, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> Erice, ed. *Los comunistas en Asturias (1920-1982)*.

<sup>46</sup> Rubén Vega García, *La Corriente Sindical de Izquierda: un sindicalismo de movilización* (Gijón: Ediciones de la Torre, 1991); Rubén Vega García, *Comisiones Obreras de Asturias en la Transición y la democracia* (Oviedo: Unión Regional de CC.OO. de Asturias, 1995); Rubén Vega García and Begoña Serrano Ortega, *Clandestinidad, represión y lucha política: el movimiento obrero en Gijón bajo el franquismo (1937-1962)* (Gijón: Ayuntamiento de Gijón, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> Rubén Vega García, "Los contextos de la acción sindical: franquismo, transición y democracia," *Sociología*

agitation during the 1960s and 1970s in Asturias. In the mining and metallurgical industries, a series of often violent strikes and clashes with the police and Guardia Civil forced the Franco regime to increase the level of police surveillance in the region and was fundamental in providing a focus for struggle against the dictatorship in both the region and Spain as a whole. Indeed, both Vega and Erice argue that during the late 1960s Asturias was a center of resistance comparable with Euskadi and Catalunya. As both authors argue, it is clear that Communist-led agitation amongst the workers of Asturias acted as a destabilizing factor for the country during the late Franco period as the government attempted to promote economic development and the tourist trade while simultaneously maintaining a strictly authoritarian political structure. It is probable that this destabilization contributed to the appeal of the calls for internal reform by relatively moderate *aperturista* groups within the government. The rapid decline of Asturias' role as a motor for democratic change over the course of the Transition clearly merits further investigation.

Both Erice and Vega contributed to the 2008 publication of a collection of essays that attempted to rectify this historiographical lacuna. *Llingua, clase, y sociedad*, edited by Rafael Rodríguez Valdés, Rubén Vega, and linguist Xulio Viejo and based on an interdisciplinary conference held in March 2006 at the University of Oviedo, collects contributions by historians, sociologists such as Pablo San Martín, and linguists such as Xulio

Viejo.<sup>48</sup> However, as most compilations of the kind, the work is a bit disjointed in spite of the presence of some interesting articles. In the end, however, it does not really focus much on how language, class, and social divisions interrelate. There is a great deal of discussion of *llingua*, a fair amount of Marxist analysis of *clase*, but very little treatment of *sociedad*.

Bernd Bauske's study of the standardization of the Asturian language and nationalist movement from a linguistic perspective merits particular mention as one of the only monographs dealing with the subject.<sup>49</sup> Originally published in 1993, Bauske's work covers the birth of the linguistic revindication movement and its politicization over the course of the Transition. Focusing in particular detail on the academic process of linguistic standardization, he devotes a great deal of time to the three regional surveys carried out by the *Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales* (SADEI) in 1977, 1983, and 1985. Bauske argues that the comparatively miniscule differences between the *materia prima* of all linguistic nationalisms in Spain (aside from the case of Euskadi) *vis-a-vis* their primary antagonist, Castilian Spanish, clearly shows the political character of the linguistic question in Spain. At the same time, the variance *within* each of these languages (Asturianu amongst them) has been sufficiently great to cause significant internal debates. Indeed, one of Bauske's greatest critiques of the linguistic standardization project in Asturias has been the way in which it was influenced by political concerns, and he argues that the Academia has

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<sup>48</sup> Rafael Rodríguez Valdés, Rubén Vega García, and Xulio Viejo Fernández, eds., *Llingua, clase, y sociedad* (Uviéu: Trabe, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Bernd Bauske, *Planificación lingüística del asturiano: La normativización y normalización de una pequeña lengua romance en territorio español, desde los puntos de vista lingüístico, literario y político*, trans. Máximo Martín Serrano (Xixón: VTP Editorial, 1998).

“intended to consolidate a [linguistic] norm that....corresponds to the Asturianu that ‘our grandfathers spoke.’”<sup>50</sup> He was particularly critical of the Academia de la Llingua’s policies towards the Westernmost zone of Asturias. Depending on whom one listens to, the Westernmost region of Asturias between the Navia and Eo rivers uses a version of Asturianu-influenced Gallego, a version of Gallego-influenced Asturianu, an independent language called *Gallego-Asturiano* or *Eonaviego*, or a transitional speech.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, Bauske argues that the concentration of the great majority of linguistic nationalists in Asturias in a relatively small geographic space has been a distinct advantage for their nation-building project, allowing activism and intellectual work to be coordinated in a virtually simultaneous manner.

However, other than giving a bit of historical background, he focuses almost

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<sup>50</sup> “La posición de la Academia: ésta intenta consolidar una norma que, como lengua de Asturias, se corresponda con el asturiano que «hablaron nuestros abuelos.»”  
ibid. 306.

<sup>51</sup> Due primarily to the fact that it would divert this manuscript from its primary focus, the nation-building project in Asturias and its opposition to the Spanish State, I have not covered this polemic in depth. The *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* and the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* offered a pair of classes titled “*de llingua autóctona pa enseñantes*” (Autochthonous Language for Teachers) in Navia in September 1986 and in A Veiga that November. A group of locals who considered themselves Gallego-speakers saw this as an attempt at linguistic colonization, and formed, in early 1987, the *Grupo de Eilao Pro Defensa da Nosa Lingua*. The *Grupo de Eilao* issued a series of demands to the Academia de la Llingua in mid-1987, claiming that the 18 Westernmost *concejos* of the Principado de Asturias were outside of its jurisdiction, as the ‘autochthonous’ language of the zone was Gallego, not Asturianu. On October 30, 1989, the *Mesa prá Defensa del Galego de Asturias e da Cultura da Comarca* (MDGA), commonly referred to as *A Mesa*, formally constituted to “conserve and promote the use of the Gallego of Asturias.” Subsequently, in 1990, a counter-association, *Xeira*, was founded to promote the Asturian-ness of the area.

This has remained a major point of contention between the regional government, the “purist” sectors of the Asturianista movement such as *Andecha Astur* and the *Academia de la Llingua*, and the “pragmatist” linguistic and political sectors of Asturianism, such as the *Seminariu de Filoloxía Asturiana* and the *Oficina de Política Llingüística*.

Grupo de Eilao Pro Defensa da Nosa Lingua, “Solicitud a la Academia de la Llingua Asturiana,” (Eilao: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría, 1987); Mesa prá Defensa del Galego de Asturias e da Cultura da Comarca (MDGA), “Pra que non se esqueiza a nosa cultura,” (Eilao: MDGA, 1989).

exclusively on the technical aspects of linguistic standardization and much less on the political role played by Asturian nationalism and its challenge to the State of the Autonomies. He completely ignores the more radical nationalist strain represented by the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*, *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, and *Andecha Astur*, as well as the relationship between Asturian radicals and their counterparts in Euskadi. The work is a detailed and interesting study of the process of language construction and its relationship to nation-building, but neither intends nor offers much historical analysis.

The discrediting of Spanish nationalism through its identification with the regime has almost universally been considered a critical element in the re-emergence (or, in some cases, emergence) of peripheral nationalist movements during the Transition. A recent take on the persisting effects of the Franco regime on the Transition, by Sebastian Balfour and Alejandro Quiroga,<sup>52</sup> argues that discussion of centrist nationalism became so repressed that the far Right (the only group still championing it) has gone so far as to base some of its platform on the fear that Spain, as a political and cultural unit, will soon cease to exist. In addition to Balfour and Quiroga's argument about the discrediting of Spanish nationalism by the dictatorship, they also make a strong case for the effects of globalization on Spanish nationalism. In their view, the increasing consumerism associated with Americanization, modernization, and Europeanization has created a backlash in the periphery, increasing the appeal of regional cultures. As mass culture becomes ever more homogenized, they argue

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<sup>52</sup> Sebastian Balfour and Alejandro Quiroga, *España reinventada: nación e identidad desde la Transición* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 2007).

that people have become more afraid of losing their distinctiveness, which closely parallels Fusi's argument about the late-nineteenth century Basque Country.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the Spanish Constitution, considered one of the key steps in the political modernization of the country, has systematic ambiguities that have led to many of the problems with the Spanish "nationalities." The vagueness of the document, in particular, has left open the question of whether or not Spain itself is a multinational state, a nation, or (to use a popular phrase) a "nation of nations." The structure of the state itself, with its asymmetrical system of autonomies, was bound to create a situation where regions such as Andalucía, never intended to take the path to full autonomy, saw the new constitution as an opportunity to accrue more power at the regional level. This, of course, led to the "historical nationalities" decrying the State of the Autonomies as a false sense of self-government. Along with Balfour and Quiroga, I find myself in agreement that modernization, Europeanization, and liberalization clearly have not served to minimize the problem of Spain's peripheral nationalisms, and in the vast majority of cases seem to have accelerated it.

Josep Llobera explicitly claims that the regime's official imposition of a unitary Spanish national identity resulted in a reaction by regionalists and nationalists in Catalunya.<sup>54</sup> He also takes what Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas has characterized as a "primevalist" stance towards nationalism, arguing that old cultural and linguistic differences

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<sup>53</sup> Juan Pablo Fusi, *El País Vasco: pluralismo y nacionalidad* (Madrid: Alianza, 1984).

<sup>54</sup> Josep Llobera, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004).

almost inevitably led the non-Spanish peoples of the periphery to react against the imposition of “artificial” concepts of identity. Núñez Seixas argues persuasively that the discrediting of Spanish nationalism during the 1970s and 1980s led directly to the appeal of this kind of primevalist argument by regional nationalists. It simultaneously increased the appeal of a wider European identity (although this was almost certainly also contributed to by the entrance of Spain into the European Economic Community in 1986).<sup>55</sup> The evidence from the Asturian case would seem to support Núñez-Seixas’ analysis. The publications of the Conceyu Bable indicate that the establishment of some primeval conception of the Asturian nation was one of the Asturianista movement’s priorities from its beginnings, and this stance towards establishing the *historicity* of Asturias as a nation was ubiquitous among nationalist groups across the Asturian political spectrum.

At the same time, Núñez Seixas argues that Spanish nationalism never really disappeared, in spite of the fact that some of its major proponents denied that they fit the category, preferring the alternate label “patriots.”<sup>56</sup> The latter term has been much more associated with a democratic political system, being less objectionable in a Modern Western European political environment, and those who have claimed the label of “patriot” have

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<sup>55</sup> Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, *Historiographical Approaches to Nationalism in Spain* (Saarbrücken: Verlag breitenbach, 1993); Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, *Los nacionalismos en la España contemporánea (Siglos XIX y XX)* (Barcelona: Hipotesí, 1999); Xosé Núñez Seixas, “The Reawakening of Peripheral Nationalisms and the State of the Autonomous Communities,” in *Spanish History since 1808*, ed. José Álvarez Junco and Adrian Schubert (London: Arnold, 2000): 315-30; Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, “What Is Spanish Nationalism Today? From Legitimacy Crisis to Unfulfilled Renovation (1975-2000),” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 5 (September 2001): 719–52.

<sup>56</sup> Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, *Patriotas y demócratas: El discurso nacionalista español después de Franco* (Madrid: La Catarata, 2010).



implied that the defense and promotion of their nation's identity is a secondary, rather than primary, goal. Regardless of the name change, patriotism must be considered a modern, more democratically acceptable form of nationalism, as patriots still fit within Núñez Seixas' definition of contemporary nationalism as "the ideology and sociopolitical movement that defends and assumes that a territorially-defined group is a nation and therefore disposed of collective political rights that become the basis for its sovereignty."<sup>57</sup>

Núñez Seixas argues convincingly that, never having been able to link themselves to an antifascist tradition of resistance in the post-WWII era, Spanish nationalists were faced with a monumental crisis of deligitimation after 1975 to which they responded in diverse ways. Many on the Left and Center opted for a strong turn towards the "civic" end of the spectrum, basing their patriotism in the defense of the Constitution of 1978, and have often defended Spain as a "pluricultural" or "plurinational" nation, with the diversity of its component regions adding to the mosaic of the Spanish whole. The Right was slower to adapt to the democratic realities of the post-Franco era, but Right-wing Spanish nationalists - have moved beyond a simple nostalgia for the National Catholicism of the regime, sometimes positioning themselves against the internal "other" of the sub-state nationalist movements throughout Spain, and sometimes (as in Valencia, Galicia, Aragón, and Cantabria) adopting a conservative regionalist alternative, promoting a particular region's

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<sup>57</sup> "La ideología y movimiento sociopolítico que defiende y asume que un colectivo territorial definido es una nación, y por tanto depositario de derechos políticos colectivos que lo convierten en sujeto de soberanía." *ibid.* 12.

special place within the Spanish nation.<sup>58</sup>

Núñez Seixas has recently theorized that, as discourses of sovereignty have shifted over time and sub-state nationalist movements have positioned themselves more within a framework set by the European Union, nationalists have increasingly tried to portray themselves as more “civic” and less “ethnic.” They have increasingly called for rights to sovereignty (*soberanismo*) and a “right to decide” as the old claims for “auto-determination,” “autonomy,” and independence fall out of favor.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the appeal of the model of the nation-state has not lessened in Europe, in spite of the presence of the supra-national project of European Union. Indeed, the European-wide structure has now, in part, become a new field of struggle for minority nationalist groups, as it has been clearly established that only full nation-states are eligible for all of the rights and privileges of EU membership. Additionally, the presence of the EU and its strong emphasis on democratic forms of determination clearly has conditioned the responses of its member states to problematic regions; massive military responses are now less likely (although not out of the question). Indeed, the framework of the EU has opened the suggestion that, should a dissident region clearly vote for independence in a democratic way, it might be difficult for its (former) state to either suppress such a desire or block its potential membership in the EU.

The attempt to establish the historicity of the Asturian nation has also played a

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<sup>58</sup> The *Unión Renovadora Asturiana* of Sergio Marqués Fernández from 1998-present and the new *Foro Asturias* of Francisco Álvarez-Cascos that appeared in January of 2011 both approximate this latter position.

<sup>59</sup> Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, “European Substate Nationalism and the Discourses of Sovereignty within the EU,” in *The Europe Center Seminar* (Stanford University 2011-03-02).

central role in the nationalist movement. As Patrick Geary has argued about the link between nationalism and philology in nineteenth-century Europe,<sup>60</sup> Asturian linguistic studies clearly played a central role in placing the origin of the Asturian nation in the distant past, a defining feature of any primevalist argument. While not addressing Asturias specifically, Geary's model for Europe as a whole is highly descriptive of the actions of modern Asturian nationalists. He argues that the development of scientific history and modern philology were both critical tools in the forging of myths that placed the lineages of current ethnic communities much farther back in time than they (according to him) have any legitimate right to claim. Linguistic analysis, in particular, was used to "prove" the ancient existence of modern-day language groups during the Middle Ages and has been used as a tool in the political competition to establish the "moment of primary acquisition." In essence, philology was used to establish which specific ethnicity was present in a particular territory first and who, therefore, had exclusive rights to establish a nation-state in it. Asturianista groups have evidenced a clear continuation of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophies advocating that, by their very existence, "peoples" have a right to territorial sovereignty.

Historians and social scientists both favorable towards and critical of nationalism have tended to resort to essentialist notions of regional culture. Even scholars who largely follow Anderson and Hobsbawm and Ranger's theories about the constructed nature of

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<sup>60</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations : The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

national identities, such as Daniele Conversi,<sup>61</sup> John Hargreaves,<sup>62</sup> Llobera, and Joseba Zulaika,<sup>63</sup> tend to present a depiction of contemporary nationalism that leads to its easy categorization as either “ethnic” or “civic.” Both Conversi and Zulaika make the argument that the major differences between the levels of violence in Catalan and Basque nationalism are pre-modern institutions and ideologies that persist in Euskadi. They argue, in essence, that Catalanism is non-violent because it is more modernized and integrated into Europe (and Spain). Conversi, along with John Hargreaves, goes further to contrast the (bad) ethnic nationalism of the Basques with the (good and more advanced) civic nationalism of the Catalans. Catalunya, having a longer history of liberalism and a larger bourgeoisie that was active in the nationalist movement from an early stage, developed a nationalism that was inclusive, based around a concept of citizenship (rather than ethnicity) and inherently more favorable to democratic compromise and constitutionalism. Basque nationalism, in contrast, has been primarily a rural movement, according to Conversi (conveniently overlooking the fact that Euskadi and Catalunya were the two provinces of Spain that first industrialized). This has led it to maintain many pre-modern conceptions of national identity built around community, religion, and an antagonism to foreigners.

Zulaika adds to this by arguing that the violent character of Basque nationalism and the support for ETA among the populace are both due to the persistence of ancient cultural

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<sup>61</sup> Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Political Mobilisation* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

<sup>62</sup> John Hargreaves, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity, and the Barcelona Olympic Games* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Joseba Zulaika, *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1988).

forms in the region. He argues that the *baserri* homestead is the symbolic base of Basque culture, isolated and unique. The Basque language, the most ancient in Europe, also serves to create this insular mentality. Additionally, the hunting practices and rituals of young men are seen by Zulaika as being translated into the “hunting” of the Guardia Civil and the forces of the state when those young men grow up and join ETA. While I do not entirely accept the hunting analogy, it is indisputable that Basque nationalism has been more supportive of violence than its Catalan analog.

While studies by philologists such as Xulio Viejo Fernández and Bernd Bauske and sociologists such as Francisco Llera Ramo and his former student, Pablo San Martín Antuña, and have all focused on the popularity of the Asturian language itself, very few studies have looked at the people who used the language.<sup>64</sup> While at first glance, it would seem as if regionalist organizations were predominately urban phenomena, most of the “traditional” Asturian cultural traits central to the Asturianista revival were rural in origin. The language, to pick the most prominent example, had been largely restricted to rural Asturias for most of the Modern Era. Additionally, there has been very little discussion of potential class or community connections that might have contributed to (or hindered) the growth in

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<sup>64</sup> Francisco J. Llera Ramo, *Consumu cultural de publicaciones en llingua asturiana* (Uviéu: Conseyería d'Educación, Cultura, Deportes, y Xuventú del Principado de Asturias, 1993); Francisco José Llera Ramo, *Los asturianos y la lengua asturiana: estudio sociolingüístico para Asturias 1991* (Oviedo: Principado de Asturias. Servicio Central de Publicaciones, 1994); Francisco Llera Ramo and Pablo San Martín, *II estudio sociolingüístico de Asturias 2002* (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 2003); Viejo Fernández, *La formación histórica de la llingua asturiana*; Xulio Viejo Fernández, "Sociedá y discursu llingüísticu en Conceyu Bable," in *Conceyu Bable n'Asturias Semanal (1974-1977)* (Uviéu: Ediciones Trabe, 2004): 23-35; Viejo Fernández, "Asturian: Resurgence and Impending Demise of a Minority Language in the Iberian Peninsula."

popularity of Asturian nationalism during the late *franquista* period.

There is clearly a need for renewed work on the problem of the nationalities in Spain and the importance of the new, revised Statutes of Autonomy. Asturianism, while having never adopted the violent character of Basque nationalism nor having ever possessed the political and economic weight of the Catalan movement, does not look like it is about to disappear. Its recent history has been understudied, and it can definitely be considered a problem inherited from the Franco regime and left unsolved, if not exacerbated, by the Transition. Additionally, most of the fundamental texts on the Transition written in the early 1980s (Carr and Fusi, Preston, Gilmour), even though most scholars now acknowledge that one cannot really begin to discuss the end of the Transition before 1982 (the failure of Tejero's coup and the electoral victory of the Socialists). Many people consider the Transition to democracy lasting until 1986 (Spain's entry into the EEC) or 1992 (Maastricht and the celebration of Spain's "arrival" as a modern nation through the Barcelona Olympics and Seville Universal Exposition). I find myself most inclined to use the latter date. Balfour and Quiroga's recent work probably comes closest to satisfying need for a comprehensive history of the Transition, but it is only one work, and one which attempts to cover all aspects of history at a national scope, invariably leaving gaps.

Additionally, the majority of histories of the Transition in Spain and Asturias have been written from a managed, top-down perspective. Hamilton Stapell's recent study of Madrid from a regionalist perspective offers a different twist on the standard interpretation of

the Transition. He specifically focuses on its role in re-making Spanish identity during the Transition to portray the Spanish capital as modern, cosmopolitan, and democratic: the antithesis of the authoritarian center of government that it had been under Franco.<sup>65</sup> The example of Asturias suggests that this focus on the centers of political power has ignored the experience of the vast majority of Spaniards. The *pactismo* and political pragmatism of the architects of the new Spanish constitution played a fundamental role in deconstructing the franquista state, and it has been quite rightly focused on by historians. However, there are significant gaps in the historiography of modern Spain and modern Asturias that this project will help fill.

### Theoretical Discussion of Nationalism, Politics, and Culture

I attempt to offer a non-essentialist conception of nationalist ideology, believing that one cannot ever speak of “culture” (or “nation,” for that matter) in the singular, but of various “cultures” and national visions, each promoted by particular groups within a given social space and competing for the acceptance of the population as a whole. Thus, one can see cultural politics as a contest between several essentialist visions of a particular culture (very rarely are nationalist politics non-essentialist). In the case of Asturias, then, this played itself out as a struggle between the various centrist identities (both those of the *franquista* authoritarian Right and the national Center and Left), the regionalist groups such as the

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<sup>65</sup> Hamilton M. Stapell, *Remaking Madrid: Culture, Politics, and Identity after Franco* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

*Conceyu Bable* and the *Partíu Asturianista* (focused on increased autonomy in the short-term, relegating the idea of independence to an indeterminate future date), and the separatist groups of the far left, such as the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*, the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, and *Andecha Astur*. This has taken place most prominently in the public forums of newspapers and the mass media, although it has also played itself out in the field of education (including, frequently, in the Department of Spanish Philology of the University of Oviedo),<sup>66</sup> as well as through the informal networks of local *chigres* (traditional cider bars), cultural associations, and neighborhoods. One of the chief goals of the ethnographic and interview-based component of this dissertation was to investigate these networks, something that would have been nearly impossible to do using solely archival and printed sources.

Drawing primarily on the theories of Antonio Gramsci,<sup>67</sup> Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe,<sup>68</sup> I use a concept of hegemony that views it as something which is constantly being contested and re-articulated, even within a ruling group. Dominant hegemonic systems almost invariably have to compete with multiple counter movements oppositional groups or factions attempting to change the limits of established political, cultural, and economic “common sense.” The rapid changes between Franco’s death and the promulgation of the 1978 Constitution created a situation which Gramsci described as a

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<sup>66</sup> The most recent fight over the teaching of the Asturian language at the University level took place in 2002, when the program was almost canceled, but saved by a change in the government of the province. See Viejo Fernández, “Asturian: Resurgence and Impending Demise of a Minority Language in the Iberian Peninsula.”

<sup>67</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (London and New York: Lawrence & Wishart; International Publishers, 1971).

<sup>68</sup> Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 1985); Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).



“war of maneuver,” a quickly shifting landscape in which all the political actors scrambled to define their positions to their best advantage. This was followed by a longer period, the “war of position”, in which the actors maintained relatively fixed relationships to each other, only slowly being able to eat into the resources (either socioeconomic or political) of their opponents. However, the the Socialist Party’s hegemonic grip on power in both Spain and Asturias weakened considerably by the 1990s, opening up much more room to maneuver for dissident groups, including various sub-state nationalist movements. In Spain, the moderates within the regime, most notably Manuel Fraga Ibarne and Adolfo Suárez, attempted to re-cast themselves as having been advocates of democracy within the dictatorship. Both were successful, carving out ideological positions for themselves and their parties as the Right and Right-Center political forces within the new democratic system, Fraga’s *Alianza Popular* (AP) and Suárez’s *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD). The historic parties of opposition attempted to define themselves as parties of the masses, with both the Communists and Socialists making significant and rapid moves towards a social democratic Center-Left position.

In this vein, I found the post-Marxist theories of Laclau and Mouffe very applicable to the political situation during the Transition in Asturias. In particular, their take on the concept of hegemony seemed to provide a needed theoretical elaboration upon the body of Gramscian theory. In short, one of my problems with Gramscian analysis has been the lack of any real mechanism by which hegemonic blocs are formed. Laclau and Mouffe move

beyond the classically Marxist explanation that hegemonic elites represent particular classes.

The way that political groupings coalesce around logics of equivalence (and oppose themselves to a suddenly “common” enemy via logics of difference) is useful because it completely ignores any theoretical boundary line between parts of a political grouping within the state and those within “civil society.” The concept of logics of equivalence and difference seems to me to explain quite well the ways in which various, often antithetical interests, are articulated (to borrow a concept from Stuart Hall)<sup>69</sup> into a single political community.

Indeed, “communities” (although neither Laclau nor Mouffe use this term) seems to me to be the best label to describe these hegemonic political blocs. It nicely encapsulates the amorphous nature of the program of most political groups in Asturias, particularly those of a nationalist character, and is also a way of conceiving of political groupings that does not reduce political life to the behavior of rational actors (as some sociologists and political scientists can be prone to do). This is also an excellent description of the ways in which nationalist groups in Asturias, as well as their competitors, attempted to orient public conceptions of community along particular lines and convince people to see the world in, for example, nationalist, class-based, or religious frameworks.

In particular, the Laclaudian idea that democratic politics are conceived best as a set of antagonisms is a useful way to consider the problem of popular politics. These

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<sup>69</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Amongst the Theorists,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998): 35-73.

antagonisms coalesce around “lines of fracture,” which makes the state seem much more like a set of institutions that are competed over (the Army, the Cortes, the Ministry of Culture, the University of Oviedo, etc.) than as a monolithic “them,” always seeking to repress the populace as its primary obligation. It would seem to make more sense to conceive of the state as a field of struggle between various groups (whether Laclaudian “demands”, Gramscian hegemonic blocs, political parties, or classes), which align themselves along lines of fracture. These demands (or, as I am thinking of them, political communities), according to Laclau, tend to create “empty signifiers,” or symbols that come to represent the entirety of the group. Additionally, Laclau posits that outside political forces (for him, this would seem to be always “the state” or the current hegemonic bloc) can insert “floating signifiers”, identifying symbols which cause the members of a political grouping to identify with the outside political force and become either diverted by it or subsumed within it.

In the Asturian case, similar to many nationalist movements, these signifiers were typically ethnic or cultural traits or historical myths. Most importantly, Asturias itself served as an signifier during the Transition, which competing groups attempted to empty and then re-embody, with particular meanings that fulfilled their specific political goals. Thus, the nationalists attempted to re-cast Asturias as a nation dating back at least to the mideival period, with a distinct identity centered around culture, with a particular focus on the linguistic and gastronomic uniqueness of the region. To anti-Franco Spanish nationalists, Asturias was re-cast as the cradle of the Spanish nation and the site of Covadonga, though

this was re-envisioned as a secular narrative, divorced from its National-Catholic past and the dictatorship with which it was associated. Imagined communities are often, if not always, empty signifiers, necessarily emptied of some of their content in order to encompass the natural variation within any group of people. The contest between overlapping and competing imagined communities (the various versions of Asturias and of the Spain) was, effectively, an attempt to control the re-attribution of meaning to these concepts.

## Method and Sources

This study uses an interdisciplinary approach, utilizing archival research methods as well as integrating anthropology and history through an ethnographic study of the region and a series of interviews. The *Archivo Histórico de Asturias* in Oviedo contained information on the activities of regionalist associations, theatrical productions, athletic clubs, underground labor organizations, police records, and political campaigns (after their legalization in 1977). The richest documentary stores, however, proved to be outside of the formal archive system, in the private collections of many of the militants who experienced this history firsthand. The generosity of these people in opening up their personal histories (and in many cases their homes) to a foreign researcher cannot be underestimated.<sup>70</sup> There is no doubt that without the work of the Asturianistas themselves, saving pamphlets, memos,

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<sup>70</sup> In particular, the personal archives of Fernando Álvarez Balbuena-García, Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, Adolfo Camilo Díaz, Iván Cuevas, Dulce Gil Fernández, Inaciu Iglesias Fernández, Xesús López Pacios, Xelu Neira Álvarez, Rafael Rodríguez Valdés, Cheni Uría, and Faustino Zapico Álvarez were critical to the research for this project.

news clippings, manifestos, campaign stickers, and the like over the course of their political lives, much of this history would be lost. While the danger in this type of archival material lies in that the materials were typically collected or saved for purposes other than to aid future researchers, in many cases I adjudged the richness of the material more than sufficient to justify the risk of biased selection criteria. Indeed, there are a few organizations where the only surviving original documentation exists in archives of this type (such as the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, to cite one of the more prominent examples). I did attempt to gather information on each organization from a variety of sources or from personal archives not directly affiliated with the group, when possible. In this way, I hope to have avoided the trap of basing a historical argument about a group of people on the impressions or evidence left behind by one person (whether a supporter or an opponent).

Periodical archives (both public and personal) were also important in both constructing the chronology of the Transition in Asturias and analyzing the ability of Asturianista politics to gain access to the media. The most important periodicals covered for this dissertation were the three major newspapers in the region, the Right-Center *La Nueva España* (formerly a division of the *Movimiento Nacional*)<sup>71</sup> and the Left-Center *La Voz de Asturias*, both located in Oviedo, and the Left-Center *El Comercio*, in Gijón. Since 1996, the Oviedo-based Asturianu weekly, *Les Noticias*, has provided an invaluable source of

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<sup>71</sup> After the dissolution of the party by the Law of Political Reform ("Ley 1/1977, de 4 de enero, para la Reforma Política," *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 4 (1977-01-05): 170-71.), *La Nueva España* continued as a private enterprise under the same local leadership.

information and Asturianista opinion, particularly surrounding the campaign to elevate Asturianu to the status of an official language. Additionally, there were a host of smaller papers and magazines, such as the Transition-era *Asturias Semanal* (1968-1977), a weekly magazine associated with the anti-*franquista* opposition that gave the *Conceyu Bable* its first public outlet. The magazine folded and transformed into *Asturias, Diario Regional* (1978-80), which lasted a little over a year before dwindling readership caused it to close permanently. Additionally, there were a whole host of newsletters and magazines put out by cultural associations, student groups, and political parties.

Periodical sources and pamphlets were critical to this project, as they provided the primary public arena in which competing conceptions of Asturias were aired. Unfortunately for the nationalists, the state directly owned the radio and television stations during the Transition, resulting in a significantly reduced audience for the debates on the Asturian regional question. While it is far too recent a development to do much more than hypothesize (Asturies.com, the first internet news website in Asturianu, was launched in 1996), I am quite interested in how nationalist groups will attempt take advantage of increasing penetration of internet access in the region. It would seem likely that nationalist-themed websites such as Asturies.com, InfoAsturies.net, AsturNews.com, & Glayiu.org, hold a particular appeal to younger Asturians, who sociological studies have shown are the age group most supportive of Asturian nationalism and regionalism.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Llera Ramo, *Consumu cultural de publicaciones en llingua asturiana*; Llera Ramo, *Los asturianos y la lengua*

The ethnographic study focused on the continuing efforts to politicize Asturian culture and examined the popularity of nationalist or regionalist solutions to Asturians. Ethnography is a method uniquely suited to understanding these larger questions of how people maneuver within and around the cultural, legal, and political structures that are inherent to a modern democratic nation-state. Integrating concepts and methods from anthropology, sociology, and political science increased both the variety of research materials I was able to gather as well as significantly increasing the strength and breadth of my analysis.

While the present always informs any people's knowledge and understanding of its own past, the fact that the rise (and plateau) of Asturianism occurred so recently makes the present situation of the nationalist movement an unusually important reference point for understanding the recent past. In addition, the recent timeframe of this project has some distinct logistical advantages and disadvantages. The major disadvantage is that of any historian's attempt to investigate the recent past- the decentralization or unpublished nature of documentary sources. Indeed, it was largely because of the fact that the *Archivo Histórico de Asturias* has almost no documentation past 1983 (many of the branches of government do not transfer documents to the archive until a 25-year period has passed) that I began searching for alternate sources such as personal collections.

However, one of the great advantages of such a recent topic is the fact that it occurred within living memory. Periodicals were flourishing during the Transition, and the newspaper

archives are well preserved from this period. Additionally, many of the participants in this history are still very much alive and willing to talk about their experiences. Without a doubt, the most complete “archives” of the history of Asturian nationalism are the narratives and memories of the militants who promoted an alternative vision of an autonomous and culturally distinct Asturias. Of course, there are many questions over the great influence of the recent past over memories of more distant events. In addition to being unintentionally influenced by the events of the present, interviewees can intentionally mislead a researcher for reasons of their own, not least among which is the wish to positively influence their own historical legacy. It is quite normal for any interviewee to want to present themselves in the best light possible.<sup>73</sup> However, written sources are no more inherently objective than oral ones, and contain many of the same traps. Any text was written from a particular point of view and with the interests of the writer in mind, not those of the historian. That is to say, the use of living sources, although dangerous, can add a human richness to the documentary record that is often tough to achieve simply by sifting through the paperwork left behind by government bureaucrats.

While there are clear problems with the use of interviews as historical sources, I believe that it would be inexcusable to ignore such a potential wealth of lived experience.

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<sup>73</sup> For a brief overview of the psychology of memory and its application to historical research, see Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932); Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1962): 303-22; Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (New York: Summit Books, 1985); Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).



How could one write a history of a cultural revival that constantly invoked the “*pueblu*” of Asturias without taking into account without taking into account the voices of the “people” themselves? The structures of feeling of a particular era, to use a phrase of Raymond Williams’, can be defined as a dominant attitude or structure of opinions that condition the actions and ideology of the actors of a given epoch.<sup>74</sup> These structures are, at their most basic level, composed of individual feelings, attitudes, and opinions. The written record can only tell a minimal percentage of what occurred behind closed doors or of the informal conversations, personal relationships, or the daily life of nationalist activity. That is to say, documentary evidence usually tells very little of the culture (or subculture) of the society which produced it. A great deal of the ideology and the strategy of the Asturianista parties and associations were formed in the *chigres*, bars, cafés, and schoolyards of Gijón and Oviedo, and the majority of militants joined as much for personal reasons as for ideological ones. As a study of cultural politics, the goal of my research was to attempt to understand precisely this political culture.

Thus, I undertook a series of 91 recorded interviews with 78 informants, ranging from 45 minutes in length to over 2 hours. The majority of my interviewees were former and current members of nationalist and regionalist groups, although I also talked with some of their more prominent political opponents (such as Spanish nationalist and philosopher Gustavo Bueno Martínez). These were supplemented by innumerable informal

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<sup>74</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

conversations with people for and against the nationalist movement to various degrees, as well as a large number that were largely apathetic to it. For example, there were a number of people of the opinion that Asturianu was something worthy of preservation and study, but who largely rejected the connection between the existence of an autochthonous language and nationalist politics. These conversations were not recorded, but I did take extensive notes on such interactions with a population that included civil servants, café patrons, students, faculty, politicians, activists (both *Asturianistas* and others, although there was a lot of overlap), shopkeepers, concert patrons, and bartenders, to cite a few examples. Essentially, I attempted to gather the perspective of as wide a swath of contemporary Asturian society as possible. Although it would clearly have been an impossible goal to attempt to talk to everyone, I believe I acquired a relatively representative notion of the view of the nationalist movement and its goals held by people both in and outside of it.

### **Why Language?**

In the case of Asturias, language became the dominant example of a Laclaudian empty signifier. From the late 1960s onwards, language, culture, and history were highly visible symbols available to supporters of both nationalist and centrist groups. Cultural differences were particularly apt to become representative symbols because of the fact that almost every Asturian encountered them over the course of his or her daily life. That is to say, in something as mundane as a commute to work or a trip to the post office, a citizen of

the mid-twentieth century passed through several cultural zones, generally associated with social class and political connection to the Spanish state. While dress, the conspicuous consumption of accessories such as handbags, jewelry, umbrellas, and cars all reinforced the privileged status of the urban centers such as Oviedo's calle Uría, the most noticeable difference between the haves and have-nots of Asturias during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was linguistic. Access to the ability to "speak well" was necessary for everything from a young person's career prospects to communicating with the local doctor.<sup>75</sup> An old man during the 1960s would often need to bring his grandson along with him to translate when he went to any of the local branches of government (such as the post office or the police station) or into the nicer shopping districts in Gijón. To cite one example that excellently captures Asturianu's backward connotations, an interviewee described his grandfather as "not knowing how to speak Castilian, but also not knowing how to read or write."<sup>76</sup> While the soundscape of the province had been steadily changing (from the more Castilianized centers of government and commerce outwards) for centuries, the state-led industrial development of the province in the 1950s and 1960s and its attendant influx of immigrants from the South of Spain rapidly accelerated the process. These new immigrants flooded the center of Asturias to work in the mines and steel mills. In particular, the port city of Avilés and the new steel manufacturer ENSIDESA (founded in 1950, now part of

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<sup>75</sup> The most common term used (both during the early twentieth century and today) is "*falar bien*" or "*hablar bien*" (in its Asturianu and Castilian forms).

<sup>76</sup> Xelu Neira Álvarez, Interview by author (Gijón, 2008-10-17).

Arcelor-Mittal) attracted huge numbers of workers from the South (called “*coreanos*”, comparing their hastily erected living quarters to Korean-War refugee camps). These new immigrants, for the most part, maintained their old customs and language, and unsurprisingly had little interest in nationalist politics that were primarily centered on a cultural heritage that they did not wholly share, even after more than twenty years in Asturias.

Asturianistas (in line with most nationalist groups throughout Spain) held a firm belief that cultural festivals, lectures, and minority language use were inherently political acts and, further, that the expression of cultural uniqueness was inseparable from the politics of autonomy and the construction of a new, decentralized Spain. Protest against the regime was often expressed through the use of the language in graffiti and posters. In Asturias, Castilian-language road signs were “corrected” and nationalist slogans were painted on overpasses and posted on walls, posts, and trees.<sup>77</sup> Everyday use of Asturianu became a symbol of resistance to the centralizing policies of Franco’s authoritarian regime. In many cases, polemical articles and letters to the editors of newspapers and local magazines nominally discussed linguistic details when both the writers and the audiences clearly recognized that the true subject of the debate was the region as a whole and its relationship to Spain.

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<sup>77</sup> The campaign for Asturianu place-names began in 1974 with the third of the “Conceyu Bable” sections in the magazine *Asturias Semanal*. In the end, it enjoyed moderate success. Gijón implemented bilingual street signs in 1982, and Mieres also now uses Asturianu signage. In September 2006, Gijón issued a civic decree making bilingual place-names official in the city and their use obligatory for all government institutions (20 Sep. 2006, Decreto 105/2006). See Conceyu Bable, *Conceyu Bable n'Asturias Semanal (1974-1977)* (Uviéu: Ediciones Trabe, 2004); Rafael Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable,” in *Conceyu Bable nes Fueyes Informatives (1976-1985)* (Uviéu: Ediciones Trabe, 2006): 9-29.

## Overview

In the case of Asturias, there was never one overarching or highly complicated key factor or historical force that prevented the Asturianista cultural and linguistic revival movement from becoming more of a force in regional or national politics. Rather, I argue that a series of often quite independent factors created a historical conjuncture that prevented such a development from making the jump from the politics of cultural movements to the consolidation of more or less permanent political organizations such as those of Galicia, Catalunya, and Euskadi. The majority of these factors were not particularly complicated in and of themselves, but combined created a complex situation that made it highly difficult for Asturian nationalists to bridge the gap between cultural activism and grassroots organizing to stable political participation and influence within the new established system of the State of the Autonomies.

The Asturianistas were able to gain a significant influence over the design of the new Statute of Autonomy in the critical period before the failed military coup d'état in 1981 and the subsequent 1983 *Ley Orgánica de Armonización del Proceso Autonómico*<sup>78</sup> (LOAPA) significantly dialed back the extent and rate of decentralization in the new Spanish State.

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<sup>78</sup> Organic Law of Harmonization of the Autonomy Process. First passed by the Cortes on June 30, 1982 as a much more expansive law, it was immediately held up with an appeal to the Constitutional Court, which declared 14 of its 38 articles unconstitutional, as well as its status as an Organic Law (Constitutional Amendment). See "Sentencia 76/1983, de 6 de agosto, de Recursos de Inconstitucionalidad," *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 197 (1983-08-18).

The revised law was passed the next year as "Ley 12/1983, de 14 de octubre, del Proceso Autonómico," *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 247 (1983-10-15): 27969-72.

Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente (then a regional deputy with the Socialist Party and the head of the Cultural Commission in the Provisional Government) authored and included Article 4 of the new constitution, providing for the protection and promotion of Asturianu by the new government.<sup>79</sup> However, the Asturianistas, critically, were not able to gain enough influence over the political process in the region to win “fast-track” autonomy for Asturias via article 151 of the Spanish Constitution. This critical law, already taken advantage of by Catalunya, Euskadi, Galicia, and Andalucía, was the key to the greater degree of self-government enjoyed by those regions. Instead, Asturias became the first of the new Autonomous Communities to opt for the “slow-track” route via Article 143. While originally designed simply as two different time-frames for the same level of decentralized government, in practice Article 143 became a legal provision for a much more limited autonomy, with a large percentage of Asturian affairs run from Madrid. One of the most notable effects for the Asturianistas and their cultural revival was that Asturianu was not made a co-official language of the province and that Asturias would not be eligible for a regional radio or television station in addition to the local branch of TVE (*Televisión Española*), unlike the Autonomous Communities applying fast-track autonomy. In essence, the Asturianistas suffered from poor timing, not managing to slip their nationalist project into the critical window of opportunity.

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<sup>79</sup> “*El bable gozará de protección. Se promoverá su uso, su difusión en los medios de comunicación y su enseñanza, respetando, en todo caso, las variantes locales y voluntariedad en su aprendizaje.*” – “Bable will enjoy protection. Its use, diffusion in communications media, and teaching will be promoted, respecting, in all cases, local variants and the voluntary nature of its learning.”

“Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de 30 de diciembre, de Estatuto de Autonomía para Asturias,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 9 (1982-01-11): 524-30.

I argue that the Transition, throughout Spain, was a politically fluid period with a myriad range of possible outcomes. Most importantly, between Franco's death in 1975 and the solidification of Socialist hegemony in 1982, political life was characterized by an atmosphere of change, a sense that anything was possible. Even if, from today's perspective, some of these possibilities seem far-fetched or irrational, this is the context in which the Asturian nationalist movement saw its first rapid growth. To a young Asturian in 1976, the idea of an autonomous, bilingual, Celtic, state and a flowering of Asturian culture seemed to be very real possibilities. It was not until the 1980s that this political window seemed to close. Asturias, as one of the first regions cut off from attaining the greatly increased autonomy won by Catalunya, Euskadi, Galicia, and Andalucía, is probably the best example of the mechanisms behind this retrenchment of political diversity and provides an important case study for a critical point of inflection in the history of the Spanish Transition.

## Chapter 1

### *Franquista Cultural Hierarchies and the Growth of Asturianismu to 1976*

Under *franquismo*, the hierarchical organizational relationship between Madrid and the Province of Oviedo, solidified long before this period, was mirrored by a cultural hierarchy that valued Spanish cultural symbols and norms more than local ones, specifically those from Castilla and Andalucía. While neither the cultural nor the political centralism of the late Franco period, or *tardofranquismo* (roughly 1957-1975), was particularly novel nor necessarily politically conservative, mirroring to some extent the efforts of the liberal Second Republic, it was under Franco that both reached their extreme.<sup>80</sup> Even a brief glance over the police reports from the period indicates that the repressive apparatus constructed by the regime was much more concerned with keeping the Asturian miners under constant vigilance than stamping out regionalist dissent.<sup>81</sup> However, the forces of order tended to see anyone other than a vocal supporter of the regime as highly suspect. In *franquismo's* ideological worldview, communism, separatism, and anti-clericalism were virtually interchangeable

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<sup>80</sup> For general histories of the late Franco period, see Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*; Paul Preston, *Franco, a Biography* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Stanley Payne, *The Franco Regime, 1936-1975* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Palomares, *The Quest for Survival after Franco: Moderate Francoism and the Slow Journey to the Polls, 1964-1977*.

<sup>81</sup> The police archives contain a number of reports from informants in the mining and steelworkers' unions reporting on the level of Communist and Anarchist sympathies as well as several analytical papers on the political situation of the province. To cite a few, see "Elecciones sindicales," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 15391/1, 1957, 1963, 1966, 1971); Jefatura Superior de la Policía, "Asociaciones -Inspección-," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 24008, 1970-04-24); Fernando Francisco Serrano Castilla, "Al Excmo. Sr. D. Pío Cabanillas Gallas, Ministro de Información y Turismo - Situación general de la provincia en lo que se refiere a los siguientes aspectos: a) político, b) turístico, c) estado de las relaciones entre las distintas autoridades entre si," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Delegación Provincial del Ministerio de Información y Turismo, Caja 19052/9, 1974-01-12).



concepts.<sup>82</sup> Thus, to be a good citizen and a good Spaniard also meant to be a fervent believer in the national unity as well as an anti-communist and a devout Catholic. Most importantly for the growth of regionalism and nationalism in Asturias, this tended to conflate the related but distinct phenomena of linguistic revival, cultural revival, regionalism/nationalism, and political opposition. Indeed, the regime's 1970 investigation of several associations and clubs suspected of subversive activities indicates the degree to which the cultural and political worlds were linked during this period.<sup>83</sup> The political opposition within Asturias adopted an almost mirror-image view of the regime's politics that articulated strains of dissent that were not necessarily connected in any previous way. That is to say, opposition to the regime tended to dictate a rejection of its ideology as a whole, and the broad discontent at the regime's crackdown on labor unrest during the 1960s and 1970s tended to connect the ideas of labor rights and cultural rights, along with vague ideas of political democracy, feminism, pacifism, and environmentalism.

While the initial studies of the Asturian language derived from a conservative tradition of folklore studies sponsored and encouraged by the regime itself, the linguistic revival movement that they spawned in the 1970s was one of the major public challenges to the regime by the time of Franco's death in November 1975. In contrast to the bourgeois and highly educated origins of the renewed interest in Asturian linguistics, poetry, and

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<sup>82</sup> See Stanley Payne, *Fascism in Spain 1923-1977* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Preston, *Franco, a Biography*; Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>83</sup> Jefatura Superior de la Policía, "Asociaciones -Inspección-."

literature, the cultural revival centering around the promotion of traditional dance, music, sports, and food had a much more grassroots origin in the local clubs and neighborhood associations that multiplied during the late 1960s and early 1970s. These festivals were both an indicator of and the primary mechanism behind the increasing interest in Asturian popular culture within the general populous.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to the later Asturianista movement, these popular celebrations made frequent use of *Asturianu* without ever making its revival or preservation a self-conscious part of their purpose. That is to say, the language had not yet become a necessary component of popular conceptions of local culture. While the Celtic and Roman artistic and musical heritage were the subject of a few scholarly studies at the University of Oviedo and the Institute of Asturian Studies (IDEA), the interest in regional uniqueness amongst the regime's academics was primarily literary and its reach limited beyond the academic elite.

The linguistic and cultural revivals were simultaneous but relatively unconnected until the appearance of the Asturianista movement in the early 1970s, which served to partially merge the intellectual and popular currents. This was the result of a conscious effort by a group of younger linguists in the University system (students and junior faculty) to connect with the wider currents of cultural revival and political opposition. While Asturias had long been considered to have a unique region, culture, and language, it was not until the first Asturianistas articulated these ideas with the politics of opposition that the idea of

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<sup>84</sup> Discussed in more detail on page 65.

Asturias as a separate nation or ethnicity appeared. The three phenomena of linguistic revival, cultural revival, and clandestine political organization combined with a certain mimicry of nationalist movements in Euskadi (the Basque Country) and Catalunya to inspire the interpretation of cultural, linguistic, and political arguments in Asturias within the framework of a nationalist ideology. By 1974, the conflation of the various strands of opposition to the regime was virtually complete; in this context, everyday use of *Asturiano* had become a symbol of resistance to the centralizing policies of Franco's authoritarian regime.

### **Economic Development and Growing Unrest**

While the Asturianista movement did not appear until the early 1970s, many of its root causes lie in the social and political structure of Asturias during the *tardofranquismo*, a period which saw the gradual economic opening up of the country as Franco shuffled his cabinet, installing first the "technocrat" cabinet in 1957 (influenced heavily by members of Opus Dei) and later promoting the tourist campaigns of Manuel Fraga Ibarne. The economic expansion of the *tardofranquismo* in Asturias had a profound effect upon the region's development during the Transition, with the heavy role of government subsidies creating an economic dependency on the central state in Madrid. Franco's new technocrat administrations saw the stagnant mining and metallurgical sector as one of the key areas in need of state subsidy. The key novelty was that pre-existing government institutions like the

*Instituto Nacional de Industria* (National Institute of Industry, INI), created in 1941, began to take an actively interventionist role in the Asturian economy. ENSIDESA, a state-run steel company founded in Avilés in 1950, was rapidly expanded from 1957 onwards using INI funds to become one of the largest producers in the country. The government's First Plan of Development, approved in 1965, began the conversion of much of Asturian industrial production into public enterprise. Soon afterwards, in 1967, the merger of several private mining corporations, most importantly the *Sociedad Metalúrgica Duro-Felguera*, into the INI-run *Hulleras del Norte, S.A.* (HUNOSA), gave the state a dominant market share of the mining sector in Asturias.<sup>85</sup> By the late 1960s, the INI, in addition to operating ENSIDESA, HUNOSA, and the *Unión Siderúrgica Asturiana S.A.* (UNINSA, absorbed in 1973 by ENSIDESA), had significant investments in the shipping (expanding or constructing the ports of Gijón, Avilés, and Luarca), automobile manufacturing (SEAT), and transportation sectors.<sup>86</sup> It is important to note that the state had actually nationalized the mining and metallurgical industries in Asturias to prevent their collapse. Thus, rather than acting as a drag upon the region's prosperity, the central government actively subsidized parts of the Asturian economy and directly or indirectly employed the vast majority of its workers

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<sup>85</sup> The INI supplied 77% of the capital for the new corporation, with Duro-Felguera the largest private party at 10%. The other members of the merger (with portion of the total capital invested) were: Hullera Española – 6%, Fábrica de Mieres – 2.4%, Nueva Montaña Quijano – 1.8%, Carbones Asturianos – 1.75%, Industrial Asturiana Santa Bárbara – 0.8%, Compañía de Carbones, Industria, y Navegación – 0.25%, Compañía Industrial Minero Astur – 0.05%. See "Decreto 486/1967, de 9 de marzo, sobre constitución de la Empresa nacional «Hulleras del Norte, S. A.» (HUNOSA)," *Boletín Oficial del Estado: Gaceta de Madrid*, no. 63 (1967-03-15): 3594-96.

<sup>86</sup> Elena Laurelo Rueda, *Los fondos históricos del INI: fuentes para el estudio de la empresa pública industrial* (Madrid: Archivo y Registro General de SEPI, Enero 2009).

to the extent that the region became jokingly dubbed “*INI-landia*.” This became a significant complicating factor in later attempts by regionalist groups to label the relationship between Asturias and the rest of Spain as simply parasitic.

As Sasha Pack argues, this opening of Spain to capitalist development and Northern European tourists brought with it imported ideas about democratic political practices.<sup>87</sup> Antonio Masip Hidalgo, son of the former mayor of Oviedo,<sup>88</sup> prominent student political activist during the 1960s, and a key figure in the *Unidad Regionalista* campaign of 1977 (although he would later renounce his regionalist sympathies), maintained that Spanish-language broadcasts of the BBC could be received and followed in the privacy of one’s own home from at least the late 1950s, indicating both an interest in outside ideas and the possibility of circumventing government surveillance.<sup>89</sup> In the same way, this increasing connection with Western Europe combined with the discontent about Franco’s repressive regime to make the University of Oviedo a center of student unrest.<sup>90</sup> As they did in Madrid, Bilbao, Paris, Berlin, and Rome, Leftist student organizations began to spring up in the university during the late 1960s and early 1970s, most prominently the *Frente de Liberación Popular* (or “Felipe”), which became the Maoist *Movimientu Comunista d’Asturies*

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<sup>87</sup> Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship: Europe’s Peaceful Invasion of Franco’s Spain*.

<sup>88</sup> Valentín Rogelio Masip Acevedo (1918-1963) was a prominent lawyer and served as mayor of Oviedo from 1957 until his death in 1963.

<sup>89</sup> Antonio Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-02-23 & 2009-03-03).

<sup>90</sup> David Cauté, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Also, Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author; Pedro de Silva Cienfuego-Jovellanos, Interview by author (Gijón, 2008-12-05); Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-01-12); José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-11-30).

after the Felipe's José (Cheni) Uría Ríos (who used the *nom-de-guerre* "León" during the *franquista* years) was put in contact with a delegate from the Basque *Movimiento Comunista de España* by Antonio Masip in 1973.<sup>91</sup> It is clear that, as much as Franco had attempted to manage the contact between Spanish society and the political and social upheaval of the late 1960s, he was unsuccessful.

This period of industrial expansion throughout Spain and its vast influx of tourists (and money) effectively ended both Spain's post-Civil War policy of economic autarky and accelerated the breaking down of its international isolation begun a few years earlier with the U.S.-Spanish Defense Agreement of 1953 and Spain's admittance to the UN in 1955.<sup>92</sup> Importantly, this opening also contributed to a growing destabilization of the regime through the increasing importation of dangerous ideas, ideologies, and personnel from outside Spain. In the area of heavy industry that dominated the Asturian economy, the Communist Party policy of infiltration had led to a heavy degree of infiltration in the state-run and (nominally) controlled yellow syndicates.<sup>93</sup> The miner's strike in April and May of

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<sup>91</sup> Masip had studied at the University of Deusto, where he came into contact with members of what was then called *Komunistak*. The organization was derived from a branch of ETA (called *ETA-berri*, or "New" ETA) that had gradually renounced its nationalism after ETA's fifth congress in 1966 in favor of prioritizing the struggle of the working class. In 1968 it changed its name to reflect this ideological shift. Between 1972 and 1976 the clandestine party fused with the Asturian group headed by Cheni Uría as well as other smaller Marxist parties throughout Spain and formed the Spain-wide Maoist party, the *Movimiento Comunista de España* (legalized just before the elections of 1977). Asturias quickly became one of the strongest areas of MCE support.

Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author; Uría Ríos, Interview by author.

<sup>92</sup> On the agreements with the United States, see Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*; Preston, *Franco, a Biography*; Payne, *The Franco Regime, 1936-1975*. For Franco's post-Civil War policy of economic autarky, see Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945*; Payne, *Fascism in Spain 1923-1977*.

<sup>93</sup> See "Elecciones sindicales."; "Ley Orgánica 4/1983," *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 52 (2-3-1983).

1962 was perhaps the greatest expression of working-class unrest in the region, but strikes and other forms of protest towards the regime were constant during the late 1960s and increased dramatically as Franco neared the end of his life.<sup>94</sup> Spain, in contrast with France, Germany, and England, saw the student movements of the “New Left” ally with, rather than reject, the pre-existing organizations of the old working-class parties.<sup>95</sup> Accordingly, this period also saw the rapid expansion of radical student groups such as the Felipe in the University of Oviedo and the penetration of the Communist trade union, the *Comisiones Obreras* (CC.OO.) into the student body.<sup>96</sup> In particular, the Communists exerted a large influence over the almost entirely middle-class university student body, although there were also groups of anarchists (CNT) and socialists (the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP) of Enrique Tierno Galván had more influence in Asturias than the historic Socialist Party, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), at this point).

### Managing Cultural Diversity under Franco: *Covadonguismo*

In Asturias during the 1960s, the Franco regime managed cultural politics significantly more successfully than it did labor unrest. The Franco regime never explicitly

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<sup>94</sup> For more on the strikes of 1962, see Rubén Vega García, ed. *Hay una luz en Asturias: las huelgas de 1962 en Asturias* (Oviedo: Ediciones Trea, 2002). Regarding clandestine syndical organizing under Franco in Asturias, see Vega García and Serrano Ortega, *Clandestinidad, represión y lucha política: el movimiento obrero en Gijón bajo el franquismo (1937-1962)*; Erice, ed. *Los comunistas en Asturias (1920-1982)*; Vega García, “Los contextos de la acción sindical: franquismo, transición y democracia.”

<sup>95</sup> For a comparative look at the student movements of the late 1960s in Europe and America, see Cauté, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968*.

<sup>96</sup> Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author; Uría Ríos, Interview by author.

prohibited the visible manifestations of Asturian culture in order to mold the region along Castilian lines, in contrast to its policies in both Catalunya and Euskadi. A systematic application of what Pablo San Martín refers to as “folklorization” occurred in Asturias, as it did in other areas of Spain, such as Galicia, where a distinct non-Castilian culture was predominant in the early to mid-twentieth century. San Martín thus credits the regime’s academic institutions, from primary school textbooks to the IDEA and the University of Oviedo, with lowering the status of both Asturianu and the regional culture, portraying it as a folkloric curiosity.<sup>97</sup> Combined with the regime’s officially sponsored cultural program (shows on state television, newspapers, concerts, folklore displays, film, books, and religious tourism), these representations of Asturian culture had the effect of reinforcing a popular conception of Asturian identity strongly associated with rural life, poverty, backwardness, and infinite variation. The proclamations by the regime’s scholars and journalists<sup>98</sup> that Asturianu was a dead or dying and archaic language only surviving amongst the most backward rural communities in the Asturian mountains severely undercut any attempts to preserve the language as an everyday form of communication and lead to a widespread sense of shame surrounding the Asturian language that still persists in some quarters today.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Pablo San Martín Antuña, *La nación (im)posible: reflexiones sobre la ideología nacionalista asturiana* (Uviéu (Asturies): Trabe, 2006).

<sup>98</sup> Such as Lapesa, *Historia de la lengua española*.

<sup>99</sup> See Emilio Alarcos Llorach, “La situación sociolingüística en Asturias,” in *Asturias y Cataluña. Actas del I coloquio sobre cultura y comunidades autónomas en España* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1984): 139-44; Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, “La situación social de la llingua asturiana,” *Lletres Asturianes* 25(1987): 165-84; Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, “La llingua asturiana na sociedá,” in *La llingua asturiana - La langue asturienne - La lengua asturiana* (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 1995): 57-73; García Arias, *Llingua y sociedá asturiana*;



Thus, the Asturian language, flag, the Cross of Victory, bagpipes, regional dances, and traditional dress were all permitted under the dictatorship, and in some cases, such as the religious symbolism of Covadonga, openly encouraged (if filtered through a particular ideology). Indeed, the first moves towards a cultural revival were predated by an expansion in the number of tolerated, if censored, cultural programs and festivals in the late 1960s. The expanding frequency of concerts, festivals, seminars, and artistic works exhibiting a specifically Asturian culture from the end of the 1960s closely mirrors the growth of regionalist politics a few years later. There were 9 permits for such events issued by the government in 1968, 6 the following year, a jump to 19 in 1970, 20 in 1971, 27 in 1972, 45 in 1974,<sup>100</sup> 78 in 1975, 85 in 1976, and 135 in 1977.<sup>101</sup> One must also note that these numbers are almost certainly low estimates, my count of public events that were granted permits by the regional government, required of all medium-to-large gatherings and for the establishment of all clubs. These were almost universally held, hosted, sponsored or overseen by some branch of municipal or regional government, that is to say by some portion of the

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Llera Ramo, *Los asturianos y la lengua asturiana: estudio sociolingüístico para Asturias 1991*; Llera Ramo and San Martín, *II estudio sociolingüístico de Asturias 2002*; San Martín Antuña, *La nación (im)posible: reflexiones sobre la ideología nacionalista asturiana*; Viejo Fernández, *La formación histórica de la llingua asturiana*; Viejo Fernández, "Sociedá y discursu llingüísticu en Conceyu Bable."; Viejo Fernández, "Asturian: Resurgence and Impending Demise of a Minority Language in the Iberian Peninsula."

<sup>100</sup> The documentary record for 1973 in the *Archivo Histórico de Asturias* is incomplete, covering only April and May. It is quite possible that the records were simply misfiled, but at the time of writing, the missing permit requests have yet to be found.

<sup>101</sup> "Festivales, Reuniones, Manifestaciones," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Cajas 20525-6, 20528-37, 28025/2, 1968-1978).

franquista state. This clearly, then, does not include any number of smaller or more politicized events that were either clandestine or ignored by the state.<sup>102</sup>

By the mid-1970s, the increasingly open political and cultural protests against the Franco regime had effectively merged into a generalized opposition, elevating the linguistic and cultural struggle of the future Asturianistas into a position where they were symbolically and ideologically linked to the new issues of electoral democracy, social justice, and modernity that would dominate the politics of the Left and Center during the Spanish Transition. Pro-democracy protest against the regime was often expressed through the use of Asturianu in graffiti and posters. In Asturias, Castilian-language road signs were “corrected”<sup>103</sup> and regionalist slogans were painted on overpasses and posted on walls, posts, and trees.<sup>104</sup> In many cases, vitriolic articles and letters to the editors of newspapers and local magazines nominally discussed linguistic details (such as whether Asturianu was a language

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<sup>102</sup> After the passage of the 1978 Constitution, the permit law was decentralized (as was the application process), with the dissolution of the old *Diputación Provincial de Oviedo* (Provincial Diputation of Oviedo) and the inauguration of the transitional “pre-autonomic” *Consejo Regional de Asturias* (Regional Council of Asturias) of Socialist Rafael Fernández Álvarez (1978-1983).

<sup>103</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Toponimia al derechos: y llegaron les pintaes...” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 319 (19-26 julio, 1975): 17; Conceyu Bable, “Lletreros pintaos,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 364 (5-12 junio, 1976): 15.

The campaign for Asturianu place-names began in 1974 with the third of the “Conceyu Bable” sections in *Asturias Semanal*. Conceyu Bable, “Los nuestros llugares llamense asina,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 289 (21 diciembre, 1974): 34-35. In the end, it enjoyed mediocre success. Gijón implemented bilingual street signs in 1982, and Mieres also now uses Asturian signage, as do a number of smaller towns. Oviedo has very little Asturianu signage, although it does exist (such as at the entrance to the Parliament Building).

<sup>104</sup> Conceyu Bable, “El nombráu “Día de la Cultura”, ” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 324 (23-30 agosto, 1975): 28; Conceyu Bable, “Seronda del 75. «Falai bable». El primer grafiti,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 336 (15-22 noviembre, 1975): 26; Conceyu Bable, “Les pegatines,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 348 (7-14 febrero, 1976): 26; Conceyu Bable, “Primer panfletu en bable,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 370 (17-24 julio, 1976): 37; Conceyu Bable, “Collacio de Conceyu Bable,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 390 (4-11 diciembre, 1976): 47; Conceyu Bable, “Conceyu Bable protesta con fuercia pela detención de tres socios de só,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 29 (ochobre 1982): 3; Conceyu Bable, “La represión escontra la llingua,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. s/n (febrero 1983): 2. NOTE- In spite of the misleading title, the events described in #336 do not predate those in #319 (note 27).

or a dialect of Castilian) when both the writers of the polemical pieces and the audiences obviously recognized that the true subject of the debate was the region as a whole and its relationship to Spain.

The linguistic hierarchy solidified under Franco had long been echoed by the historical myths surrounding the so-called reconquista of Spain from the Muslim caliphates. Covadonga, a small valley in the Picos de Europa mountains of Eastern Asturias, played a central role in the Franco regime's ideology as the site where, in 722 (some sources cite 718),<sup>105</sup> don Pelayo led a group of local chieftains in the defeat of a Muslim force (probably going to or from the briefly conquered city of Gijón). This, according to the nationalist origin myth, began the 770-year reconquista, which was seen as a single process, inevitably leading from Covadonga to the Catholic Kings, Fernando and Isabel, who finally evicted the Spanish Muslims and unified Spain. Adding to the already religious nature of the legend is the story of the Virgin of Covadonga, who purportedly appeared in a vision to Pelayo in a cave in Covadonga, telling him that he would defeat the Muslims. According to the legend, Pelayo then told his troops that "this little mountain will be the salvation of Spain."<sup>106</sup>

First promoted as early as the late eighth century by Pelayo's grandson, Alfonso I, the myth surrounding the divine nature of the battle was used to establish political and religious

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<sup>105</sup> Carolyn Boyd, "The Second Battle of Covadonga: The Politics of Commemoration in Modern Spain," *History and Memory* 14, no. 1-2 (2002): 37-64.

<sup>106</sup> The statue which bears the inscription attributes the quote to the chronicle of Alfonso III, but given that "Spain" would not exist for an additional 600 years after Alfonso's reign as King of Asturias, León, and Galicia (not of "Spain"), this claim is questionable. PWZ field notes, June 2006, October 2008.

legitimacy for the new Asturian monarchy. Notably promoted by the chronicle of Alfonso III (written sometime in the late ninth or early tenth centuries), the myth of Covadonga morphed over time into the first battle in a unified religious crusade that became one of the founding myths of Spanish nationalism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Covadonga's role in the construction of a Spanish national identity became increasingly important to both conservative supporters of the monarchy and liberal promoters of a modern, centralized lay state. Both sought new ways to manufacture the loyalty of its citizens as the old social and political order broke down in the wake of the French Revolution and Spanish War for Independence. As Carolyn Boyd convincingly argues, "Covadonga was intended to be a site of national memory, a nodal point in the memory landscape of the nation, creating bonds of solidarity among Spaniards at a time of growing political, religious, and social conflict."<sup>107</sup> A new basilica was built at Covadonga, and the site and shrine of the Holy Cave were restored under Bishop Benito Sanz y Forés with work beginning in 1872 and the basilica consecrated in 1901.<sup>108</sup> Alfonso XIII would repeatedly visit the shrine as the conservative, Catholic interpretation of Covadonga gradually won official acceptance over the liberal alternative (focusing on the roles of Pelayo and "the people" in the defeat of the Muslim forces rather than that of the Virgin Mary) during the early decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>107</sup> Boyd, "The Second Battle of Covadonga: The Politics of Commemoration in Modern Spain."

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

Thus, while Franco did not create any of the legends surrounding Covadonga, he actively promoted them and the Catholic, conservative, centrist vision of Spain that they came to espouse. In 1969, the Ministry of Information and Tourism left a plaque near the cave that reads, “Here in Covadonga, where Pelayo began the Reconquista and made possible national unity, the Provincial Delegation of the Ministry of Information and Tourism and the C.I.T.E. of Asturias dedicate this marker as a permanent homage to the Catholic Kings, Isabel and Fernando, in the V centenary of their marriage.”<sup>109</sup> The plaque is a perfect example of how the myth compresses the history of Covadonga and the Reconquista into a single narrative, almost unthinkingly jumping 753 years in a single sentence and conflates Asturian history with that of Spain and Castilla.

These ideas, collectively referred to as *covadonguismo*, did not dissipate with the death of the regime that most actively promoted them. Over thirty years after Franco's death, a regionalist politician such as Pedro de Silva, with little sympathy for the regime or its version of Spanish nationalism, still characterizes Asturias as a “grandfather (of Spain) who feels poorly treated.”<sup>110</sup> While this is certainly a regionalist expression, it clearly evolved from the idea that Asturias was, to quote another popular saying the “cradle of Spain.”<sup>111</sup>

*Covadonguismo*, taken as a set of popular myths, has proved remarkably effective at linking Asturias to the historical myths and imagined community of Spain, among both traditional

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<sup>109</sup> PWZ field notes, June 2006, October 2008.

<sup>110</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>111</sup> PWZ field notes, June 2006, September 2008-April 2009.

conservatives as well as many who would classify themselves as among the Left (such as de Silva). Thus, one of the primary ways in which the Spanish government successfully incorporated Asturian culture, language, and history was as much through a process of absorption it as was one of active repression or negation.

From at least the late Franco period onwards, covadonguismo has acted as one of the primary counterweights to the development of an independent, Asturian identity separate from that of Spain, particularly among the religious right. Indeed, it can probably be seen as one of the principal reasons that no conservative regionalist alternative developed during this period, in stark contrast to nationalist and regionalist movements in other parts of Spain. In Asturias, no analog to Jordi Puyol's Catalan *Convergència i Unió*, the bourgeois industrialist *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, Manuel Fraga's conservative version of *galleguismo*, or even the regionalist turn taken by various conservative parties and the *Partido Popular* in Cantabria, Valencia, and Aragón ever emerged.<sup>112</sup>

Under Franco, active repression of the language was not particularly necessary; the low social prestige of the language caused parents and teachers (both locals as well as the large number imported from outside Asturias) to discourage its use in their children, seeing it as a cultural handicap. During the 1970s, "Castilian was the language of the upper classes" but more importantly it also was the language "of all those who wished to ascend the social

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<sup>112</sup> For a summary of these contemporary conservative nationalist and regionalist movements, see Núñez Seixas, *Historiographical Approaches to Nationalism in Spain*; Núñez Seixas, *Los nacionalismos en la España contemporánea (Siglos XIX y XX)*; Lourdes Méndez, "Galicia, región de Europa: dimensiones europeístas del imaginario culturalista de la Xunta," *Revista de Antropología Social* 12(2003): 79-97.

scale,”<sup>113</sup> a situation where its expanded usage was not simply imposed from above but simultaneously adopted from below. Corporal and verbal punishment for “speaking badly” in primary school was endemic through the 1970s throughout the province, which was instrumental in the rapid decline in the public use of the language throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Most of the people I interviewed who attended grammar school in Asturias before the late 1980s consistently reported either physical punishment, psychological punishment (chastisement or ridicule), or both for use of Asturianu at school. As late as 2001, a primary school in Villaviciosa imposed a system of fines on any student heard uttering a word in Asturianu. Causing an uproar amongst the regionalist left (and surprise amongst much of the cosmopolitan center) both the local court of Villaviciosa (*Juzgado de Instrucción Número 1*) and the regional court of appeals (the *Audiencia Provincial de Oviedo*) acquitted the school of any wrongdoing, ruling that there was neither “discrimination nor penal infraction of any kind.”<sup>114</sup> Although this cultural hierarchy in which Castilian was considered the prestigious language and culture predates the Franco regime by several centuries, the dictatorship eagerly incorporated it into its explicit and active attempt to homogenize Spain, politically, linguistically, and culturally as a means to maintain power and impose its ideology of “*España, una, grande, y libre*” (Spain, one, great, and free).

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<sup>113</sup> “*El castellano era la lengua, digamos, de las clases altas, por supuesto, pero de todos aquellos que querían ascender en la escala social.*”

Francisco Javier García Valledor, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-03-05 & 2009-03-31).

<sup>114</sup> “*Delito de discriminación ni infracción penal alguna.*”

“Un tribunal no considera delito multar a alumnos por hablar bable,” *El País* [Madrid] 2001-11-13.

Although this centrist slogan and the ideology it represents are no longer officially promoted by the governments of Asturias or of Spain, the cultural dichotomy between a prestigious, cosmopolitan, modern, and urban Castilian culture and language and an inferior, local, rural, and backwards Asturian equivalent persists.<sup>115</sup> Particularly among older Asturians, a sense of embarrassment about the way they speak continues. An interaction between a young Asturianista (in his mid-twenties) and his grandmother (in her seventies) is illustrative of both the endurance of the relationship between the two cultures and languages as well as the generational break created by the entry of regionalism and nationalism into the mainstream political scene in the 1970s. After hearing that her grandson was headed to the upcoming *XXI Conciertu pola Oficialidá* (the XXI Concert for a Co-official Language), the old woman immediately and rather vehemently responded, “*Nun-me presta esti asturianismu nin l’asturianu*” (I do not like this Asturianismu or the Asturian language). “*Entós, güela, ¿por qué-lu falas?*” (Then why do you speak it, Grandmother?) was the amused and somewhat mocking response of her grandson, pointing out that she employed the very language she condemned.<sup>116</sup> Unlike many of the other components of the “folkloric” culture tolerated by

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<sup>115</sup> Catalunya represents the other extreme amongst the “nationalities” of Spain, provoking public outcry amongst Spanish nationalists against discrimination against Castilian-speaking immigrants in Catalunya). Euskadi, Galicia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands are all somewhere in-between, and the situations in Aragón and León are even more Castilian-dominated than in Asturias.

<sup>116</sup> PWZ field notes, 25 April 2009, Nava.

Indeed, throughout my roughly 3-hour visit with Félix and his family at their small farmhouse, not once did I hear his grandmother speak in Castilian, instead conversing in a rather un-castilianized *amestáu* (the blanket term for the many creoles commonly spoken throughout Asturias, used interchangeably with the term *mecáu*). While not conclusive, it would seem to suggest that she was not comfortably fluent in Castilian, particularly since Félix’s mother, who was present, spoke almost exclusively in the Castilian of her native Cantabria.



the regime such as traditional dance, music (especially), and dress, which have been re-cast in subsequent decades as symbols of regional pride, the language remained marginalized by Asturian society long after the Transition and the creation of the officially poly-ethnic State of the Autonomies. The contrasting policies of the Franco regime towards Asturias, Catalunya, and Euskadi would seem to suggest that assimilation paired with systematic ridicule and marginalization is a much more effective method of cultural and linguistic control than outright prohibition or repression.

### Opening Pandora's Box: The *Amigos del Bable*

The 1969 birth of the *Asociación Amigos del Bable* set an important precedent for the linguistic revival movement, representing the first tentative reevaluation of the status of Asturianu. Founded by José León Delestal, it was made up of a group of *franquista* intellectuals (primarily philologists) such as Lorenzo Novo Mier, Emilio Alarcos Llorach, and Jesús Neira Martínez, who had published linguistic studies of the language with the University of Oviedo and the IDEA. The association was in no way regionalist or nationalist in nature, fitting well within the regime's standards for a "safe" organization that studied folklore and local traditions within the overarching umbrella of "Spain." Perfectly in line with the folkloric view of his *franquista* peers, Delestal claimed that he "never pretended, as some poorly-informed critics [later] asserted, that Asturians [were] returning to the daily use of the Bable of their ancestors. [He] intended, and [continued] intending, that *literature* in

Bable should not disappear, and that it [continued] to be written.”<sup>117</sup> Additionally, the high academic prestige and solid *franquista* credentials of the Association’s members helped insulate it from interference by the regime. However, in spite of having published academic studies as an attempt to document a dying language and culture, the Amigos del Bable called for a re-adoption of the language in the traditional genres of poetry and literature and their adaptation to some of the themes of the modern world. Although at no point did the Amigos del Bable suggest that Asturianu should be either standardized or applied as a quotidian language of everyday modern life, this mild attempt to modernize the use of the language was unique in Asturias. This represented an important precedent for the regionalist groups that would soon follow (and be subsequently followed by nationalist organizations). While there was no danger that any of the activities of the Amigos del Bable would directly threaten either the regime or the cultural hierarchy that it had constructed, it did serve to open the Pandora’s Box of linguistic and cultural revival in Asturias.

Most importantly for the future Asturianista movement, the Amigos del Bable organized the *I Asamblea Regional del Bable* in Oviedo on November 19-21, 1973. The first academic congress about the Asturian language, the I Asamblea Regional del Bable attracted 150-200 scholars. This included not only established *franquista* literary scholars and linguists from the IDEA and the University such as Alarcos and Novo Mier but also many of

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<sup>117</sup> “Jamás he pretendido, como algunas plumas no muy bien informadas me achacaron que los asturianos vuelvan a hablar cotidianamente el bable de sus antepasados. Sí he intentado, y sigo intentando, que no desaparezca la literatura en bable, y que prosiga su creación.”

“Entrevista con José León Delestal,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 145 (4 marzo, 1972). Quoted in Brugos, *Conceyu Bable: Venti años*. 65. My emphasis.

the younger generation that would lead the rapid politicization of the language during the 1970s, such as Xosé Lluís García Arias<sup>118</sup> and Ana María Cano González (both future presidents of the Asturian Language Academy). The papers given at the I Asamblea Regional del Bable covered a variety of linguistic topics, from analyses of poetry or the pronunciation of diphthongs in the dialect of the *concejo* (municipality) of Ibias to sociolinguistic analyses of the relationship between language use and economic or social class.<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, neither Arias nor Cano departed greatly from the accepted *franquista* thesis that Asturianu could not be considered a unified language, but rather existed as a fragmented set of tongues in decay, a position that both would strongly reject within a year of the conference.<sup>120</sup> The conference did offer the first calls to rescue the language from disappearance, focusing on ways to interest the younger generation in study of the language.<sup>121</sup> However, it is important to note that in no case did it suggest that Asturianu should compete with Castilian as the language of daily use or government in the province. Its value, to the Amigos del Bable, existed solely in traditional Asturianu poetry and music, as well as in adding a rich diversity to the place-names of the region.

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<sup>118</sup> Usually referred to simply as "Arias."

<sup>119</sup> *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas*, (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980).

<sup>120</sup> Arias was part of the organizing committee for the conference in addition to acting as one of the presenters. José Luís García Arias, "Por que desaparece el bable," in *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980): 95-104; Ana María Cano González, "Los distintos bables de la región asturiana," in *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980): 39-66.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, José León Delesta, "Promoción y divulgación del bable," in *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980): 105-16; Bernardo Guardado Rodríguez, "Exhortación en pro del bable," in *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980): 139-40; José Benito A. Buyla, "El plan de rescate del bable," in *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980): 173-81; Carlos Sánchez Martino, "Experiencia para interesar a los jóvenes en el conocimiento, respeto, y amor al bable," in *I Asamblea Regional del Bable: Actas* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1980): 209-12.

One of the most important results of the I Asamblea Regional del Bable was to convince some of the younger, more radical participants that the Amigos del Bable would never become, as they had hoped, a vehicle for the active recovery of Asturian language and culture and their reintegration into the everyday life of the region.<sup>122</sup> That is to say, given the makeup of the Amigos del Bable, the association would never seek to challenge the *franquista* cultural hierarchy, to say nothing of serving as the germ for a regionalist or nationalist movement. Arias, in particular, sees the conference as a critical step in the decision to create a new organization, partially realized the following year with the founding of the magazine section *Conceyu Bable*.<sup>123</sup> The creation of separate organizations institutionalized the split that had developed between those, like Delastal, that viewed Asturianu only as part of the region's artistic heritage and those, like Arias, that began to see it as a "living language," the natural and current language of the Asturian people.<sup>124</sup> It was the Conceyu Bable that provided the first link between the linguistic and cultural revival movements and the Leftist politics of the still-clandestine democratic opposition. Until this point, the language and culture were not generally seen to represent a discrete ethnic group, and the group's subsequent claim that they represented the basis of an Asturian nation represented an even more radical break with the past.

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<sup>122</sup> Xosé Lluís García Arias, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-11-18).

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Nota sele - pa una defensa'l bable," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 307 (26 abril, 1975): 16; Conceyu Bable, "Nuestra llingua vive," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 326 (6-13 septiembre, 1975): 21.

In September 1974, just two months before the founding of the Conceyu Bable, Arias published an article in the Carlist magazine *Esfuerzo Común* (Common Purpose) laying out many of the ideological bases about language and regionalism that would later become the bases of the Conceyu Bable's politics. "The Importance of Language: Bable," conceived of Asturias as needing to "reanimate a dormant regionalism," in which "the language could play a role of great magnitude, being a bonding element for the individuals that form a part of this region [Asturias], at the same time as it [could be] a differentiator from the exogenous and extra-regional."<sup>125</sup> In this article, one can already see the germ of the idea that a language could be not only central to a future regionalist program, but in fact the critical element of it. Indeed, the Conceyu Bable's tendency to elide the difference between "culture" and "language" was also foreshadowed, with Arias seeming to imply that "linguistic peculiarities" comprised the most important "component of [a region or people's] personality."<sup>126</sup> By this point, Arias had clearly decided that the Amigos del Bable could never become the center of a linguistic revival. Although he mentions the *I Asamblea Regional del Bable* and credits it with the first steps towards creating an Asturianu grammar and re-popularizing Asturianu place names, he concludes by dismissing it as "still very little, almost insignificant,"<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> "reanimar un regionalismo dormido" "la lengua puede desempeñar un elemento aglutinante de los individuos que forman parte de esa región, al mismo tiempo que diferenciador frente a lo exógeno y extra-regional."

José Luís García Arias, "La importancia de la Lengua: el Bable," *Esfuerzo Común*, no. 196 (1974-09-01): 30-32.

<sup>126</sup> "el lingüístico es un campo conflictivo y no parece que deban renunciar a sus peculiaridades lingüísticas si no es dejando orillados algunos de los componentes de su personalidad."

ibid. 30.

<sup>127</sup> "En este momento podría adelantar que algo se está haciendo en este sentido: se celebró no hace mucho una

although he does not hint at the imminent formation of a new, younger, and more radical cultural association: the Conceyu Bable.

This generational split triggered a rapid decline in the influence of the Amigos del Bable, and by late 1975 it had ceased to exist as a functional group, although many of its members (in particular Emilio Alarcos and Lorenzo Novo Mier) would continue to exercise significant influence both within the academy and on public conceptions of Asturianu and Asturian culture. The last recorded activities of the Amigos del Bable were a poetry week, the *I Semana de la Poesía Bable*, from June 9-15, 1975<sup>128</sup> and an attempt to reprise the conference of 1973 with the *II Asamblea del Bable y Tradiciones Populares Asturianas*, from December 11-13, 1975.<sup>129</sup> However, these events had a limited influence outside of the old guard of the University and the IDEA. The confluence of the early 1970s between the franquista folkloric tradition and the ideology and practice of the regionalists and proto-nationalist intellectuals had broken down.

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*Asamblea regional del bable, se está procediendo a la redacción de una gramática, se está corrigiendo la toponimia asturiana que registra el Nomenclator de la Región... pero esto es muy poco todavía, casi insignificante."*

ibid. 32.

<sup>128</sup> "I Semana de la Poesía Bable," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20531, 1975-06-04).

<sup>129</sup> "II Asamblea del Bable y Tradiciones Populares Asturianas," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20530, 1975-12-10).

The assembly is also described in "Bable al habla," *Cambio* 16, no. 214 (12-1-1976): 44.

## Cultural Revival and the Birth of the *Conceyu Bable*

By the time of Franco's death in November 1975, the new culturalist radicals had already begun their own cultural, political, and intellectual project, which would in large part seek to deny the long, almost entirely conservative, tradition of regionalism in Asturias and firmly associate the new Asturianismu with the political left. While the Conceyu Bable (and its successors) would consistently seek to laud the regionalist literary, poetic, and political tradition of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, Padre Galo, José Caveda y Nava, as well as the academic and literary work of many of the members of the Amigos del Bable (particularly Novo Mier), the new radicals of the Conceyu Bable made a conscious effort to stress the new, progressive, democratic, and revolutionary (in cultural terms) nature of their project. They consistently disavowed many of the nostalgic political traditions that the thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries espoused while at the same time attempting to strongly promote nostalgia for a traditional Asturian cultural landscape in danger of disappearing through the dissemination of academic papers, literature, mythology, and poetry. Indeed, by June 1975, less than seven months after its formation, the Conceyu Bable was already underlining in explicit terms the differences between its regionalist focus on language and the “folklorism” of the Amigos del Bable.<sup>130</sup>

In the summer of 1974, Graciano García, owner and editor of the weekly magazine *Asturias Semanal*, asked Lluís Xabell Álvarez, an acquaintance of his and a junior philosophy

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<sup>130</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Folklore, ideoloxies, llingua,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 315 (21-28 junio, 1975): 15.

professor at the University of Oviedo known to be interested in Asturianu literature and poetry, if he wanted to start publishing a section in his magazine.<sup>131</sup> Graciano García was not a regionalist himself, as clearly demonstrated by his 1981 foundation of the monarchist *Fundación Príncipe de Asturias*, a yearly pageant in Oviedo in which the crown prince Felipe de Borbón y Grecia gives a series of awards similar in nature and style to the Swedish Nobel Prizes, although focused on politics, sports, and culture as much as science and medicine. *Asturias Semanal*, however, was a magazine founded in 1969 associated with the democratic opposition, very similar in both content and political perspective to the Madrid-based *Cambio 16* (founded in 1971).<sup>132</sup> Both were clearly critical of the regime, but at the same time they kept their attacks discreet enough to avoid being shut down by the censors. As mentioned above, by this point most strains of the opposition to the Franco regime tended to blend together. Thus, Garcia saw an opportunity to expand his readership by appealing to the cultural revivalists and publishing a short one-to-three page Asturianu section in his magazine. Álvarez, who had met Arias and Sánchez Vicente at the I Asamblea Regional del Bable (the three did not know each other personally beforehand),<sup>133</sup> proposed that they form a small group to take charge of the publication of the section, the Conceyu Bable.

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<sup>131</sup> Lluís Xabel Álvarez, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-10-17 & 2008-10-20); García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>132</sup> Serrano Castilla, "Al Excmo. Sr. D. Pío Cabanillas Gallas, Ministro de Información y Turismo - Situación general de la provincia en lo que se refiere a los siguientes aspectos: a) político, b) turístico, c) estado de las relaciones entre las distintas autoridades entre si." 2

<sup>133</sup> The three are consistent in maintaining that they did not know each other personally before starting the Conceyu Bable in 1974. Arias was the only one to comment that they had met at the conference, although it seems plausible.



The three young intellectuals (Arias, like Álvarez, was a junior faculty member at the University of Oviedo, in the Department of Spanish Philology, and Sánchez Vicente was a secondary school professor of philology at the *Instituto Jovellanos* in Gijón) announced their intentions in an interview with *Asturias Semanal* titled “*Hablemos en bable*” (We speak in Bable) in mid-July 1974,<sup>134</sup> and the first of the weekly sections was published at the end of November.<sup>135</sup> The Conceyu Bable had very informal beginnings. From its founding in June of 1974 until its July 1976 incorporation as a legal cultural association, the group was *alegal*, a Spanish term capturing the ambiguously quasi-legal and informal status of many groups during the tardofranquismo. Strictly speaking, the Conceyu Bable was probably illegal, since from the beginning it acted as more of a loose organization than strictly a set of pages in a weekly magazine. The three contributing writers were quickly joined by others (typically readers who had written the magazine, asking to contribute), and their meetings almost immediately morphed into discussions of politics as much as of language, local mythology, history, and culture (the nominal subjects of the Conceyu Bable pages). However, its meetings were not broken up by the *Guardia Civil* nor were its members prosecuted as long as its activities remained within the “cultural” realm. This is probably one of the primary causes behind the politicization of culture in Spain. The regime was far more relaxed in clamping down on activities that it felt posed less of a threat (than, for example, Communist Party infiltration of the state-controlled unions). Thus, throughout the periphery in

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<sup>134</sup> Melchor F. Díaz, “Hablemos en bable,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 267 (20 julio, 1974): 20-22.

<sup>135</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Presentación,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 285 (23 noviembre, 1974): 26.

Cataluña, the Basque Country, and Asturias, political dissent was often expressed through cultural channels.<sup>136</sup>

The Conceyu Bable, in addition to publishing its section in *Asturias Semanal*, began running a series of 3-4 day language classes in Gijón in January of 1975 to supplement a series of language lessons published in the magazine. The first members of the *Conceyu Bable Xixón* were, in large part, drawn from the students attracted to these language lessons (heightening the appeal was the summer practice of holding classes on the beach at the Playa San Lorenzo).<sup>137</sup> This group, in addition to contributing to the magazine pages in *Asturias Semanal*, also began a half-hour long twice-weekly radio program on Radio Gijón called “*Asturies na so llingua y na so cultura*” (Asturias in its language and its culture).<sup>138</sup> The program, which lasted a little over a year, was a cultural program hosted by Vicente García Oliva with a regionalist perspective strong enough to cause a number of the episodes to be blocked by the censor. A short five-minute editorial commentary on linguistic, cultural, or social themes preceded a grammar lesson run by Urbano Rodríguez and a literary segment which featured works by the members of the Conceyu Bable (such as Arias’ Asturianu translation of Antoine de Saint Exupéry’s *Le Petit Prince*). In addition, the program often featured Asturian music and special guests from the region. Starting in the summer of 1975,

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<sup>136</sup> ETA is an excellent example, founded in 1959 by members of the cultural group *Ekin* and retaining its largely cultural focus until 1961. See Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Political Mobilisation*.

<sup>137</sup> Vicente García Oliva, one of the founders of the Conceyu Bable Xixón and among its more active early militants, first came into contact with the Conceyu Bable after attending one of these first language lessons with his wife, taught by Sánchez Vicente. Vicente García Oliva, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-01-27).

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*

Conceyu Bable Xixón also began to write an irregular section in the Gijón daily *El Comercio* called “*Estaya Rexonal*” (Regional Section, although “estaya” was most often used to describe agricultural land partitions, not sections of written material).<sup>139</sup> While “*Estaya Rexonal*” also only lasted through May 1976, it was the first successful attempt to replicate the Conceyu Bable pages in a major daily newspaper of the region.

Initially, the Conceyu Bable did not have a fixed site, and its members seem to have never had much interaction with *Asturias Semanal*'s offices aside from the weekly submission of articles for the magazine. Instead, members most often held meetings in *chigres*, bars serving *sidra* (cider, Asturias's most distinctive beverage) that were named after the distinctive corkscrews mounted on the wall.<sup>140</sup> The group would occasionally set up a stall outside the *Mercado del Fontán* in Oviedo selling books by Arias, Sánchez Vicente, and other members.<sup>141</sup> The municipal *Casas de Cultura* acted as clandestine libraries for the group. The first two working groups were founded in Oviedo (*Conceyu Bable Uviéu*, where Arias and Álvarez lived) and Gijón (*Conceyu Bable Xixón*, surrounding Sánchez Vicente) in 1974, followed by the *Conceyu Bable Avilés* and the *Conceyu Bable Mieres* in 1976. The last group to be founded was in the mining district, the *Conceyu Bable Nalón*, in 1978.

Lacking much of the infrastructure available to a more centralized association or a political party, the Conceyu Bable relied heavily on the pre-existing social networks of its

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<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*; "Vicente García Oliva, Escritor - «La Llingua ta llegando al máximu altor posible ensin oficialidá»," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 2007-02-06.

<sup>140</sup> Rodríguez Valdés, "Crónica de Conceyu Bable." 19.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

members. Particularly during its early years, it used the buildings of other associations to meet and relied on others to both disseminate posters and pamphlets and spread news of events via word-of-mouth. These included relationships with Leftist political parties, such as the Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies, as well as the Syndical Worker's Union (USO) and the left-leaning *Club Cultural Natahoyo* (Gijón).<sup>142</sup> However, the Conceyu Bable mostly worked with a number of cultural associations, neighborhood associations, citizens' movements, and familial associations.<sup>143</sup> Many of those groups also had close connections with the clandestine political parties of the opposition, in particular the Communists.<sup>144</sup> Because of a high concentration of favorable associations in Gijón, most of the Conceyu Bable's populist activism occurred in the coastal city, rather than Oviedo, where the group concentrated more on intellectual and literary production.

The Conceyu Bable pages in *Asturias Semanal* caused a popular response vastly surpassing the expectations of its three founders. Álvarez, Arias, and Sánchez Vicente all

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<sup>142</sup> The MCA, USO, and independent members of the Conceyu Bable later formed the bulk of the *Unidad Regionalista* candidacy for the first democratic elections in Asturias in 1977. Some of the members of Conceyu Bable were drawn from USO, most prominently Vicente García Oliva. García Oliva, Interview by author.

For further connections between the Conceyu Bable and the two groups, see *ibid*; Conceyu Bable, "El nombráu "Día de la Cultura"."

<sup>143</sup> Some of the most prominent were: the *Sociedad Cultural d'El Llano*, the *Sociedad Cultural Asmeyu*, the *Asociación Cultural «el Texu»*, the *Asociación de las Cabezas de Familias de la Calzada*, the *Asociación de la Canción Asturiana*, the *Asociación Amigos de Mieres*, *El Güercu*, the *Asociación Asturiana de Pintores y Escultores*, the *Plataforma para la Defensa del Patrimonio Artístico*, the *Ateneu La Felguera*, and the *Asociación de Oviedo Antiguo*.

Rodríguez Valdés, "Crónica de Conceyu Bable." 16, 19, 21 and Conceyu Bable, "Primer alcuentru Asmeyu," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 1 (ochobre 1976): 11; Melchor F. Díaz, "Texto leído en la manifestación," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 368 (3-10 julio 1976): 5; Conceyu Bable, "Noticies pequeñes," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 404 (26 marzo-2 abril, 1977): 31; Conceyu Bable, "Presentación del «Cartafueyu Nacionalista d'Asturies» en Xixón, (Asociación de Cabezas de Familia, La Calzáa), 25-Marzu-77," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 405 (2-9 abril, 1977): 31; Conceyu Bable, "Manifestu 25 mayu," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 13 (s/f, probably xunu 1979): 4-10.

<sup>144</sup> Jefatura Superior de la Policía, "Asociaciones -Inspección-."

recount the surprise they felt at the “thousands”<sup>145</sup> of letters of support that poured into the magazine from readers asking the writers to start an association dedicated to the promotion of Asturianu and the regional culture. The strongest response came from Asturian students studying outside of the province, in places such as Madrid, Salamanca, Valencia, León, and Santiago de Compostela.<sup>146</sup> Sánchez Vicente recalls that, to their pleasant surprise, “[they] began....and discovered that there were many people who thought the same as [they] did.”<sup>147</sup> The Conceyu Bable’s principal importance in these early years was that it was the first group to print Asturianu in everyday journalistic prose. Up to that point, many of its future members, the militants who would later go on to form the bulk of the militants of the Asturianista movement throughout the next thirty years, had never conceived that the language of their parents and grandparents could be used in a “serious” manner. Even as a mere section in a regional magazine, the Conceyu Bable served above all to provide an example of “progressive” linguistic use in a modern, urban, and academic context, an almost shocking contrast to the rural and traditional associations attached to it at the time. This breaking of cultural norms served as a catalyst towards political activism in almost all of the Asturianistas interviewed who joined the movement during the last years of Franco’s life and the first few years of the Transition.<sup>148</sup> Due to this popular demand, the decision was made in 1976 to convert the small opinion section of a magazine into a formal and legal

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<sup>145</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author.

<sup>146</sup> García Arias, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>147</sup> “*Entamamos....y descubrimos que había muncha xente que taba pensando lo mesmo que nosotros.*” Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>148</sup> See p98.

association. This was more a formalization of a process that had begun soon after the group was formed, as the group had already begun running a radio program and teaching language classes in Gijón the year before (as mentioned above).

### **Constructing Regionalist Politics: Pedro de Silva and *Democracia Socialista Asturiana***

In December 1974, just as the Conceyu Bable academics were printing their first opinion pieces in *Asturias Semanal*, Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos (more commonly and informally known as simply Pedro de Silva), founded a small, but prominent, opposition group known as *Democracia Socialista Asturiana* (DSA) with a floating membership between forty and fifty active militants. A young lawyer and well-known member of the Gijonés bourgeoisie (descended from the noble Jovellanos family), de Silva had already been active in the clandestine world of the anti-*franquista* opposition for several years, collaborating principally with the Communist Party although never himself becoming a member.<sup>149</sup> As Franco's life neared an end, most of the clandestine organizations were able to at least partially come out of hiding. The Communist Party, Socialist Party, the trade unions, and the opposition groups centered around them, interpreted Franco's July-September 1974 hospitalization and his diagnosis with Parkinson's Disease as signs of his imminent death and organized broad anti-*franquista* coalitions. The PCE set up the *Junta Democrática de España* (1974-6) and the PSOE the *Plataforma de Convergencia Democrática* (1975-6), which

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<sup>149</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

later merged to form *Coordinación Democrática* (also called the *Platajunta*). By this time, the Communist Party was seen in Asturias not as a revolutionary party but rather an “anti-*franquista* platform,” a general organizer and rallying point for the opposition.<sup>150</sup> Far more so than the PSOE, the PCE was seen by intellectuals, students, and professionals as representing the best chance for democratic change, and its membership swelled throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>151</sup> Given their relative strength, both in Asturias and nationally, one can say that the rapid rise of the PSOE to power at the cost of the Communists at the end of the 1970s was the most significant unforeseen event of the Transition.

After participating in the August 1974 founding of the Junta Democrática, de Silva sensed that because of the increased tolerance and support for the opposition, there “existed an objective demand in Asturian society for a party that represented the ideas of the Left from a regional perspective.”<sup>152</sup> Choosing to form an independent group within Asturias rather than actively participate in the expansion of the Communist Party because of his wariness at the PCE’s history of tight party discipline and central control, de Silva organized Democracia Socialista Asturiana. The DSA spent most of 1974 and 1975 attempting to attract support from professional groups, taking advantage of de Silva’s network of existing

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author; d’Andrés Díaz, Interview by author; Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author; de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Uría Ríos, Interview by author.

<sup>152</sup> “*En un determinado momento percibo que existe una demanda objetiva en la sociedad asturiana de un partido que represente las ideas de la izquierda desde una perspectiva regional.*”

de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

contacts and relationships due to his family and professional life as a lawyer. The DSA joined the newly-created *Platajunta* in March 1976 after the fusion of the two exile opposition coalitions, as did many of its analogs in other regions of Spain such as the *Alianza Socialista de Andalucía*, the *Partido Socialista de Aragón*, the *Movimiento Socialista de Baleares*, the *Alianza Socialista de Castilla*, or the *Partido Autonomista Socialista de Canarias*.<sup>153</sup>

While it was clear that the DSA had a fundamentally bourgeois membership, its ideology was openly socialist and not terribly different from that of the early 1970s PSOE. Indeed, of the three basic goals of the DSA, “democracy, socialism, and regionalism,” socialism was generally focused on (rhetorically, at the very least) more than the regionalist aspect of the group’s program. However, this regionalist bent was one of the party’s major attractions, differentiating it from the Spain-wide, centralist and rather “Jacobin” (to use a phrase of de Silva’s)<sup>154</sup> PSOE. The attention to the specific problems of Asturias, principally the problems of deindustrialization, emigration, a stagnant agricultural sector, and a poor transportation infrastructure, was quite appealing to Asturians who felt ignored by political leaders in Madrid (or Paris or London or Mexico City, in the case of the opposition). Thus, although he did not grow up speaking Asturianu and never achieved fluency in the language, de Silva and his Democracia Socialista Asturiana represented for many of the cultural Asturianistas a truly regionalist organization.

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<sup>153</sup> "Democracia Socialista Asturiana se integra en el PSP," *El País* [Madrid] 1976-06-24.

<sup>154</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.



In order to have more influence on the coming political changes in Asturias, the decision to integrate into one of the larger socialist parties was made at an internal meeting of the DSA in June 1976. Both the PSOE and the PSP sent representatives to the DSA to present their cases at a meeting of the executive the day before the party congress. As an indication of the importance of this potential merger, both the PSP and the PSOE sent well-known party leaders to head their delegations. The PSP sent Raúl Morodo, their second in command after Enrique Tierno Galván, and the PSOE delegation was headed by Miguel Boyer, who would be named Minister of the Economy by Felipe González in 1982. Because the “regionalist intent displayed by the party of Señor Tierno Galván....[admitted] in some way the possibility of a regional federated party,”<sup>155</sup> the DSA’s party congress decided to integrate into the PSP, officially becoming the Asturian branch of the organization (occasionally, if rarely, using the Asturianu version of its name, Partíu Socialista Popular d’Asturies).

It is important to note that Pedro de Silva never considered himself a member of the Asturianista movement and was never an active participant in any of the cultural revival groups that made it up. However, it is clear that he became the Asturianistas’ most significant sympathizer within the major political parties (the PSP and later the PSOE). A

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<sup>155</sup> “*La voluntad regionalista mostrada por el partido que preside[sic] el Señor Tierno Galván....de alguna manera se admitió la figura del partido regional federado.*”  
 ibid.

self-described “hard regionalist,”<sup>156</sup> de Silva incorporated much of the Asturianistas' cultural and linguistic program into his calls for economic and political decentralization of the Spanish State. In spite of his upper-class (and therefore monolingual Castilian) upbringing, de Silva famously opened the yearly *Día de les Lletres* (Day of Asturianu Letters) ceremonies by publicly reading a speech in Asturianu.<sup>157</sup> His Partido Socialista Popular and later the group of regionalist opinion it formed within the largely hostile Socialist Party acted as the primary means through which Asturianista political pressure influenced the construction (and later execution) of the new post-Franco state in Asturias. It was under his administration (1983-1991) that the partial implementation of the 1981 Autonomy Statute resulted in Asturianu language classes in schools (starting in 1984) and that the Office of Linguistic Politics was formed (1986), tasked with the implementation of bilingual administration on a district-by-district basis. De Silva's claim that these gains for regionalist politics were the result of a small minority within the Socialist Party working against the centrist majority seem to be borne up by the attitude of the Party after his departure in 1991 following a dispute over excessive centralization within the PSOE's national party structure.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> “*Soy regionalista... pero duro.*”

ibid.

<sup>157</sup> “Pedro de Silva volvió a pronunciar un discurso en bable,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1985-05-04.

<sup>158</sup> ibid.

## The Opposition in Asturias

An important characteristic of the Transition and the years immediately preceding it in Asturias was that the divergence between the terms and concepts of “regionalism” and “nationalism” had for the most part not yet occurred. Although the documents published by the early Conceyu Bable generally favored the term “regionalist,” the group was also frequently claiming to be “nationalist.” If you simply change the wording, the Conceyu Bable’s 1975 “¿Un movimiento regionalista?”,<sup>159</sup> its 1977 *Cartafueyu so’l rexonalismu* (Regionalist Documents)<sup>160</sup> and Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos’ *El regionalismo asturiano* (Asturian Regionalism),<sup>161</sup> all contain many elements that would today be identified as clearly nationalist, such as a call for control of finances, identifying Asturians as a separate ethno-linguistic group, claiming that the cultural divisions between Asturias and Castilla should be mirrored by a degree of political separation, and so forth. As early as August 1975, the Conceyu Bable claimed that “a century and a half of continuous and boiling Asturian history effectively (*dafechu*) gives [it] the right to talk about [Asturias’] nationalist moment,” but in the same article defended “the construction of [the Conceyu Bable’s] regionalist political personality.”<sup>162</sup> Álvarez claims that the use of the term

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<sup>159</sup> Conceyu Bable, “¿Un movimiento regionalista?,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 315 (21-28 junio, 1975): 16.

<sup>160</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so’l rexonalismu,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 5 (febreru 1977): 2-10.

<sup>161</sup> Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, *El regionalismo asturiano* (Salinas (Asturias): Ayalga Ediciones, 1976).

<sup>162</sup> “*Mentes tantu, siglu y mediu de contina y ferbollante hestoria asturiana, dábennos dafecho el derechu de falar del nuestro momentu nacionalista.*” “...na construcción de la nuestra personalidad política rexonalista.”

Conceyu Bable, “Nota sele - de Covadonga al rexonalismo (III),” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 321 (2-9 agosto, 1975): 22.

regionalist was always somewhat of a “political tactic,”<sup>163</sup> and Arias agrees that to use the term “regionalist to indicate a divergent attitude to centralized Spanish power” was simply a way of being nationalist but at the same time “prudent.”<sup>164</sup> As Franco was still alive and the *franquista* state still very much in force, the members of the newborn Asturianista movement felt that an open claim to be “nationalist” would have run the risk of incarceration. Indeed, Álvarez claims that the police had taps on the telephones of the organizers of the Conceyu Bable pages as late as 1976.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, the contemporary distinction between “independence” and “autonomy” was still undefined, as the latter term remained highly nebulous until its partial codification in the Spanish Constitution of 1978, the *Ley Orgánica de Armonización del Proceso Autonómico* of 1982 (a retrenchment of the autonomy process), and the Statutes of Autonomy passed between 1979 (Catalunya) and 1983 (Castilla y León). It is important to stress that the current working definition of “nationalism,” based on an express desire for (eventual) independence, evolved in Spain over the course of the late 1970s and 1980s. During the early Transition, the various categories into which people and groups would later be slotted were more unclear. Equally importantly, during the period leading up to Franco’s death in 1975, the political and the cultural currents of regionalism were highly connected. Many of the prominent members of the DSA (and later the PSP) were also members of the Conceyu Bable group, most prominently Sánchez Vicente, Xosé Lluís

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<sup>163</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author.

<sup>164</sup> “*Regionalismo para indicar una actitud divergente al poder central español.*”  
García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>165</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author.

Carmona, Carlos Rubiera, and Xesús Cañedo. While Carmona would leave the PSP in 1976 to found the first nationalist party, the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*, Sánchez Vicente remained with a foot in both the cultural revival centered on the Conceyu Bable and the regionalist party politics of the PSP.

The years immediately preceding and following Franco's death saw a general increase in the support for regionalism and nationalism, both in the political and the cultural arenas. The Conceyu Bable, formed less than two years earlier as a small magazine segment, by mid-1976 had become one of the most influential and well-known cultural organizations in Asturias. Pedro de Silva and the DSA represented a political force with enough support and influence that by 1976 both of the major Socialist parties in Spain were actively recruiting it. At this point few people had openly talked either of nationalism or of independence, but the Conceyu Bable already had begun to define itself as a “linguistic and cultural society with an autonomist character,”<sup>166</sup> referencing a the somewhat nebulous concept of 'autonomy' during the Transition, which could mean anything from an extremely minor devolution of power from Madrid to a near-independent confederate model. The Asturianistas had tapped a heretofore unsuspected well of popular support, and it seemed likely that the movement would continue to grow and exert a strong influence over the future cultural politics of Asturias and its relationship with the central government in Madrid.

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<sup>166</sup> “*Sociedad lingüística y cultural de sentido autonomista.*”  
García Arias, Interview by author.

## Chapter 2

### Transition and Fluid Politics (1976-1977)

The years immediately following *Generalísimo* Francisco Franco's death were dominated by a sense of open, seemingly endless possibility. This hyper-consciousness of the opportunity for fundamental change was shared by both those repressed by the dictatorship as well as those favored by it. By the summer of 1976, intransigent elements of the old regime, called the “*bunker*,” feverishly worked to ensure that such change was prevented (or, at the very least, controlled and directed from above). However, the reawakening of the *vencidos*, the sectors of society labeled by Franco as “the defeated,” was well underway, in many cases still illegally. On the one hand, regional cultures on the periphery of the *franquista* model of a united Spanish nation saw an expressive explosion after the dictator's death, and on the other, the banned political parties of the Left began to rapidly mobilize into mass political movements.

The period between the dictator's death and the consolidation of the new State of the Autonomies in the early 1980s was a period in which Asturian nationalism saw a rapid growth in militancy, raising its public prominence enough to insert elements of its agenda into the public debates over the nature and structure of the new Spanish state. This influence over regional politics by the militants of the *Conceyu Bable*, elements of the regionalist Partido Socialista Popular, the far-Left *Movimiento Comunista d'Asturies*, and the newly founded nationalist party the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur* was most evident in the degree to which the major political groups of the region attempted to portray themselves as

open to a regionalist perspective. This was evident in the relatively rapid consensus among the political elite that Asturias would have to be given a certain degree of autonomy, although the extent to which political power would be decentralized was very much in question.

The Socialist and Communist Parties, in particular, seemed to both adopt a “wait-and-see” stance *vis-a-vis* Asturianism in the late 1970s. The Communists occasionally participated in regionalist campaigns, such as the presence of Vicente Alvarez Areces in the Conceyu Bable's 1976 *Bable nes escueles y autonomía rexonal* rally in Gijón (“Bable in schools and regional autonomy”).<sup>167</sup> During this period, the Socialists systematically absorbed political figures and groups associated with the Asturianista movement. Most importantly, Pedro de Silva, Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, Carlos Rubiera, and Xesús Cañedo Valle (the latter three all prominent members of the Conceyu Bable) were integrated along with the rest of the Partido Socialista Popular in 1978, and the Socialists convinced Antonio Masip Hidalgo, one of the major figures of the 1977 *Unidad Regionalista* campaign and son of a former mayor of Oviedo, to join the Socialist Party in 1979.<sup>168</sup>

Regionalism's increasing political prominence during the period leading up to the 1977 Constitutional Elections occurred simultaneously with the Conceyu Bable's increasing focus on the language as the key to regional identity. The Conceyu Bable's call to defend

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<sup>167</sup> See p104.

<sup>168</sup> Masip had been strongly associated with the Movimientu Comunista, although never officially a card-carrying member. He was officially a political independent until his induction in the PSOE.

Asturian culture and revive Asturianu as an everyday language had been present from the organization's inception and were the very features that made it so attractive to a certain section of largely middle-class militants in the cities of Avilés, Oviedo, and particularly Gijón. A number of former members cited general concern for the language or the novelty of the Conceyu Bable's employment of Asturianu in everyday prose, journalism, and political essays as the primary motivation for becoming members of the new association.<sup>169</sup> Thus, from its first appearance in 1974, the linguistic question was the primary motor behind a rapid growth in membership, from three people in November 1974 to over 1000 by the late 1970s.<sup>170</sup> However, this early success at attracting members simultaneously caused the association to increasingly narrow the focus of its activities and its public message to questions of language. In 1976, the Conceyu Bable was still seen as a potential political force in the region, largely because the linguistic question was still very much identified with larger questions of democracy and the political, social, and cultural opening advocated by the anti-*franquista* opposition. Over the course of the period 1976-1991, this strong symbolic

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<sup>169</sup> The following interviewees, among others, all remarked on the use of the language in this way as one of the primary motivators for their decision to join the Conceyu Bable (either in the production of the magazine section or as a member once it became an official organization in 1976):

Álvarez, Interview by author; José Rogelio (Quini) Álvarez Hevia, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-04-23); Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-10-23, 2008-11-19, & 2008-12-03); Xuan Bello Fernán, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-11-04); and Adolfo Camilo Díaz, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-03-05 & 2009-04-21); Xosé Lluís Carmona, Interview by author (Gijón, 2008-12-12); Santiago Díaz García, Interview by author (Lloriana, 2009-02-14); Xicu Xabel Díaz Yepes, Interview by author (Tazones, 2009-01-30 & 2009-04-20); García Arias, Interview by author; García Oliva, Interview by author; Roberto González-Quevedo González, Interview by author (Oviedo: 2009-02-11); Xosé Antón González Riaño, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-04-06); Neira Álvarez, Interview by author; Dubardu Puente Fernández, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-03-03); Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author; Miguel Solís Santos, Interview by author (Avilés, 2008-11-20).

<sup>170</sup> Rodríguez Valdés, "Crónica de Conceyu Bable."



connection was greatly weakened, in part due to the major opposition parties' (PSOE and PCE) gradual discarding of regionalism as a political tool but also due to the regionalists' choice to focus first and foremost on questions of linguistic standardization, particularly after the 1981 founding of the Language Academy. The influx of new militants naturally conditioned the activities and political profile of the group. As more people joined the Conceyu Bable because they were interested primarily in the social and political status of Asturianu, the association became more exclusively focused on those goals. Thus, somewhat ironically, the growth in membership to some degree prevented the Conceyu Bable from further expansion by narrowing its appeal to a smaller segment of Asturian society.

### **Legality and Consolidation: the *Conceyu Bable* during the Transition**

On June 14, 1976, the Conceyu Bable was formally and legally constituted as a cultural association. Given that the organization had no offices, it registered using Sánchez Vicente's residence at calle Arrieta, number 2, near the El Molinón soccer stadium, as a mailing address.<sup>171</sup> Conceyu Bable founders Arias, Sánchez Vicente, and Álvarez coincide in their claim that the group initially had no plans beyond a weekly magazine section. However, the letters pouring into *Asturias Semanal* from 1975 onward convinced the group that the "public demanded" the formation of an organization to expand the program beyond

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<sup>171</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Conceyu Bable reconocíu como asociación cultural," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 370 (17-24 julio, 1976): 36. This was the initial address under which the association was registered. It almost immediately opened up a locale in Oviedo, as well.

the pages of the magazine.<sup>172</sup> Thus, the Conceyu Bable took advantage of the new Law of Associations mere days after its enactment.<sup>173</sup>

In addition to clarifying its legal status, this allowed the group to expand its activities to include political rallies. The requirement of every association to publish its statutes also gave the nascent association an opportunity to consolidate its ideological program. Before this point, the Conceyu Bable had been a somewhat undefined collection of intellectuals and cultural activists loosely grouped around a short weekly magazine section. As such, most of its activity was directly focused on the recovery and dissemination of Asturianu and Asturian cultural practices. Between 1974 and the summer of 1976, the Conceyu Bable pages were primarily filled with dictionary sections, essays on Asturian folklore, and poetry. However, the Laws of Association (both 1964 and the more liberalized legislation passed in 1976 and 1977) required any applying group to submit a written constitution.<sup>174</sup> The Conceyu Bable's submission provided one of the first chances to re-define their project as one of cultural *politics*, rather than simply an academic or amateur interest in a dying language.

The members of the Conceyu Bable were fully aware that their project was to construct a new Asturian identity. One needs only look at articles published in *Asturias*

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<sup>172</sup> See Álvarez, Interview by author; García Arias, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>173</sup> The Conceyu Bable did not officially exist as anything more than a weekly magazine insert until its constitution as a formal cultural association in June 1976. However, it had effectively been acting as an organization, teaching language classes, running a radio show, sponsoring concerts, and the like, almost since its inception. Thus, like many groups during the years just before Franco's death, the Conceyu Bable was not legal or really illegal, but somewhere in-between.

<sup>174</sup> Respectively, "Ley 191/1964, de 24 de diciembre, de Asociaciones," *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 311 (1964-12-28): 17334-36; "Ley 21/1976, de 14 de junio, sobre el Derecho de Asociación Política," *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 144 (1976-06-16): 11750-52; "Ley 1/1977, de 4 de enero, para la Reforma Política.""

*Semanal* with names such as “To Make a Country”<sup>175</sup> and “We Make the Region!”<sup>176</sup> to see evidence that they were entirely conscious of the constructed nature of this identity. During its early stage, the Conceyu Bable pages had focused almost exclusively on purely cultural topics (mythology, grammar and linguistics, poetry and literature, and the like). As late as January 1976, Arias claimed that the Conceyu Bable not only had no pretensions to separate Asturias from the Spanish State, but that it was not even forming a political party (still illegal at the time) nor did it even have any desire to do so were it legal.<sup>177</sup> Its primary concern was that “Asturian culture (of yesterday, of today, and of tomorrow) gain recognition and social acceptance.”<sup>178</sup>

1976 would bring an increasing awareness of the political implications of a distinctive cultural identity. From around the time that it incorporated into a formal association, the Conceyu Bable began to espouse a belief that this foundation would lead inexorably to widespread public acceptance of Asturianu. The Conceyu Bable considered the mere existence of a distinct language, if not equivalent to, at least the beginning of, regional identity. Thus, it held that linguistic awareness would subsequently result in the “appearance of a widespread popular movement for the defense of Asturias as a differentiated community.

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<sup>175</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Nota sele - faer país,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 306 (19 abril, 1975): 20.

<sup>176</sup> Conceyu Bable, “¡Faigamos la rexón!,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 311 (24-31 mayo, 1975): 17.

<sup>177</sup> “Nosotros nun queremos esfaer l’Estau Español sinon la concesión centralista d’esti Estau presente.....nin pretendemos formar un partíu políticu nel día que puean formase co la lley (sic) nes manes.”

Xosé Lluís García Arias, “Sí, tamos «politizaos»,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 343 (3-10 enero, 1976): 22.

<sup>178</sup> “Lo que nos peta ye que la nuestra cultura d’Asturies (la d’ayer, la de güey (sic) y la de mañana) seya reconocía y tenga puxu.”

ibid.

It will be, then, *the language* that directs, stimulates, and permits the existence of nationalism in the future and the arrival of this movement to all classes and zones of the country.”<sup>179</sup>

From the beginning, the principal purpose of the Conceyu Bable was to promote “the increasing advance of Bable (*and with it regional consciousness*).”<sup>180</sup> In something like an inversion of Marx's base-superstructure concept, the literary, cultural, and linguistic movement would then inspire (or create for itself) a socioeconomic base of support. The group even acknowledged this reversal of orthodoxy, critiquing orthodox Marxists' ignorance of “our case, which many claimed to be superstructural.” This dismissal of the superstructure on the part of the traditional Left, the group claimed, was the reason that the “the case of the regional was hidden from those who, in other cases, concerned themselves day after day with the creation of a more just society.”<sup>181</sup> Thus, by late 1976 the Conceyu Bable was claiming for itself the role of inspirational vanguard of not just a cultural project but also of the emerging regionalist political scene. Additionally, the choice to associate itself with a distinctively Asturian place, the *chigre*, which became something more than a place to stop and have a drink, was an overt display of regionalism. The initial focus of the Conceyu Bable

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<sup>179</sup> “*Fue la aparición de C.B., y darréu el emplegu, defensa, y conocencia del bable, la que permitió la aparición d'un movimientu popular ampliu en torno a la defensa d'Asturies como comunidá diferenciá (sic). Será, darréu, la llingua la qu'empobine, afale y permita la existencia d'un nacionalismu nel futuru y la llegó (sic) d'esti movimientu a toles clases y les zones del país.*”

Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, “El principiu del nacionalismu y el fin de Conceyu Bable,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 376 (28 agosto-4 septiembre, 1976): 36. My emphasis.

<sup>180</sup> “*...col entamu d'aparar el creciente avance del bable (y con él la concencia rexonal).*”

Conceyu Bable, “Xataes,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 0 (setiembre 1976): 4. My emphasis.

<sup>181</sup> “*El casu nuestro, que munchos decín [sic] yera superestrutural...*”

“*...la fastera de lo rexonal taba escaecía [sic] de los que, por otra parte esguedéyense día tres día nel algame d'una sociedá más xusta.*”

Conceyu Bable, “Faite sociu de «Conceyu Bable»,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 371 (24-31 julio, 1976): 36.

was not simply on writing but also popular activism, based on the idea that “democracy and, in this case, regionalism, do not fall from sky: one must force them.”<sup>182</sup>

This kind of Marxist-inspired ideology was not particularly surprising in the Conceyu Bable, considering the participation of a large number of university students and recent graduates who had absorbed the general atmosphere of Leftism in Spanish universities of the time. Indeed, all of the significant political parties of the Spanish Left still officially espoused a Marxist doctrine (it was not until September of 1979 that the Center-Left Socialist Party would officially renounce claims to Marxism and the goal of proletarian revolution). Perhaps partially a function of timing, it is significant that in contrast with other regionalist and nationalist movements in Galicia, Catalunya, Valencia, Aragón, Cantabria, and Euskadi, there was never any significant Right-wing version of Asturianism until at least the late 1990s. Although the Conceyu Bable itself soon moved away from this kind of class-based rhetoric, the public perception of Asturianism's linkage with Left-wing politics remained.

Arias was a doctoral student and protégé of Emilio Alarcos Llorach, marking a direct intellectual inheritance between the one of the founders of the Conceyu Bable and the preeminent figure of the late-franquista academic tradition in Asturias.<sup>183</sup> The early Conceyu Bable maintained relations with the bloc of conservative *franquista* folklorists in the *Instituto*

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<sup>182</sup> “*La democracia y, nesti casu, el rexonalismu nun amiyen del cielu: hay que arrincales.*”

Conceyu Bable, “Avisu a los ñavegantes (notes de rexonalismu),” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 344 (10-17 enero 1976): 16.

<sup>183</sup> A distinguished professor of linguistics at the University of Oviedo, the major street leading to the new humanities campus was named after him.

*de Estudios Asturianos* (IDEA) and the University of Oviedo, most notably Alarcos and Lorenzo Novo Mier, until at least the early 1980s. However, the association was founded largely as a rejection of the conservative regionalist tradition they represented and its influence upon the policy and ideology of the new Asturianista nationalists was minimal (although its influence on their academic output and linguistic methodology was considerable). Even after 1998, when Asturian President Sergio Marqués Fernández (1995-1999) founded the *Unión Renovadora Asturiana* (URAS), his regionalist turn seemed to be much more the result of a political calculation after being expelled from the conservative *Partido Popular* than any particular ideological connection to either the Asturianista linguists or the pre-Civil War conservative regionalist tradition. Thus, Asturianismu became almost exclusively associated with the Left, a linkage that persists to the present day.

### **Regionalist Popular Mobilization: the *bable nes escueles* campaign**

1976 represented the high point of the Conceyu Bable's success at mobilizing popular support for the language. Begun in 1975 and continued after its incorporation as a legal cultural association, the Conceyu Bable-led campaign for Asturianu-language instruction in primary schools under the slogan “*bable nes escueles, autonomía rexonal*” (mentioned above) garnered a great deal of notice. Since its founding in late 1974, the Conceyu Bable had made language courses (sometimes several days in length, sometimes a single meeting) in Avilés, Gijón, and Oviedo one of its main areas of activity. It was not

unusual at these courses for the students to submit signed petitions calling for the increased use of Asturianu in public life and a publicly-funded project for the compilation of dictionaries and grammar books.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, the Conceyu Bable received constant letters and postcards from readers in other parts of Spain and Europe requesting language instruction and any course material available.<sup>185</sup> At the end of May 1975, through its portal in the magazine *Asturias Semanal*, the Conceyu Bable began calling for signatures to be mailed in and added to a petition to the provincial government.<sup>186</sup> By mid-June, the Conceyu Bable pages were printed with a box labeled “the following signers ask for equivalent treatment for Bable with the rest of the regional languages whose teaching in schools is authorized.”<sup>187</sup> The idea was that the readers of the section would cut out the box, gather as many signatures as possible, and mail it in to the magazine (address helpfully supplied on the petition form), as the Conceyu Bable began to make explicit in mid-July.<sup>188</sup> The legal-esque language is an indicator that by mid-1976, the Conceyu Bable was clearly aware of the need for a legal or constitutional provision for the language. Barely six months after Franco's death, the various regionalist groups within Asturias (and Spain) were already using such rhetoric to jockey for a position to influence the construction of the post-

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<sup>184</sup> For example, see: Conceyu Bable, "Pol bable: firmes n'Avilés," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 306 (19 abril, 1975): 20.

<sup>185</sup> For example, see: Conceyu Bable, "Esvilla cartes," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 307 (26 abril, 1975): 16-17; Conceyu Bable, "Cartes y firmes," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 317 (5-12 julio, 1975): 18-19.

<sup>186</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Entamu," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 312 (31 mayo-7 junio, 1975): 14.

<sup>187</sup> “Los abajo firmantes pedimos la equiparación del bable con el resto de las lenguas regionales cuya docencia en la escuela está autorizada.”

The first of these appeared in Conceyu Bable, "s/t," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 314 (14-21 junio, 1975): 18.

<sup>188</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Cartes y firmes."

*franquista* state. By mid-1976, it was already clear that the new state would have to be decentralized enough to cede language rights to some of the regions (at the very least Catalunya and Euskadi), and the Conceyu Bable was representative of several of the newer, more marginal regionalist movements in attempting from an early point to avoid being left behind. Thus, the Transition needs to be understood at least partially as a struggle between the “historic nationalities” to maintain their special status and privileges and the smaller regions (in terms of population, economic clout, and political influence) arguing for a wider application of rights. Asturias, Aragón, the Canary Islands, Valencia, Andalucía, and to some extent Galicia were all positioning themselves to be included in the special provisions of the new constitution originally intended to be applied solely in the problematic regions of Catalunya and Euskadi.

In addition to the mail-in campaign, the Conceyu Bable also solicited signatures in the major cities of Gijón and Oviedo. Beginning outside the *Museu del Pueblu d'Asturies* (Museum of the Asturian People, founded in 1968) in Gijón on Sunday, May 30, 1975, members of the Conceyu Bable claimed to have collected 450 signatories in a mere five minutes.<sup>189</sup> While that is almost certainly an exaggeration (logistically, it would seem virtually impossible to pull off such a feat), one can conclude that the initial reaction to the campaign was positive, at least in Gijón among a sector of society already interested enough in Asturian culture to visit the ethnological museum. To show the widespread support for

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<sup>189</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Entamu,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 313 (7-14 junio, 1975): 18.



this movement, the organization also dedicated some of the space in its weekly publications to printing lists of names that had been added to the petition.<sup>190</sup> With one exception,<sup>191</sup> the lists published by the Conceyu Bable under the heading “We ask that students be able to learn their homeland's language”<sup>192</sup> contained both the name of the signer and his or her profession. These published lists were not comprehensive, mainly consisting of write-in petitioners from outside of Asturias (both other parts of Spain, principally Madrid, and foreign subscribers to *Asturias Semanal*). Additionally, there seems to be no surviving list of all the signers of the Conceyu Bable's petition, and only 892 of the published names have any professional information attached (out of supposedly tens of thousands of people who had either signed up in person with one of the Conceyu Bable's street activists or whose write-in petition was not published in *Asturias Semanal*). However, in spite of the limitations of such a data set, it suggests that the Conceyu Bable had some support for claims that its message did appeal to a relatively broad sector of the population, including the working class.

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<sup>190</sup> Conceyu Bable, *Conceyu Bable n'Asturias Semanal* (1974-1977). nos. 322-329, 331, 341, & 348.

<sup>191</sup> The edition of August 16-23, 1975 (no. 323).

<sup>192</sup> Translation note: *llariega* is often taken to mean “native.” However, it literally means “of the home” or *llar*, and is connected more to a place (homeland) than a person (or ethnicity).

Like much of the Conceyu Bable's early writings, the titles are written in an interesting and sometimes inchoate mix of Asturianu and Castilian, with a good deal of experimentation.

“*Pedimos que los escolinos puean aprender la so llingua llariega*” was the most common title.

There were some slight variations such as “*firmas pa que los escolinos puean adeprender* (sic) *la so llingua llariega*” (signatures so that students can learn their homeland's language), “*firmas que nos han enviado*” (signatures sent to us), “*firmes pa que la nuestra llingua entre nes escueles*” (signatures so that our language enters in schools), “*firmen po* (sic) *la enseñanza na escuela de la nuestra llingua llariega*” (signatures for the teaching in schools of our homeland's language), and the interestingly legal-sounding “*los abajo firmantes pedimos la equiparación del bable con el resto de las lenguas regionales cuya docencia en la escuela está autorizada*” (The signers below request the equivalence of Bable with the rest of the regional languages whose teaching in schools is authorized).

The largest single group amongst the signers is unsurprisingly from the world of education, with 36.90% of the total. Indeed, students alone make up one-third of the petitioners (33.30%).<sup>193</sup> However, seemingly refuting the typical assumption that nationalism and regionalism were solely bourgeois endeavors, skilled workers and artisans made up 25.00% of the signers,<sup>194</sup> well ahead of the white-collar and upper-class participants in the campaign (13.45%).<sup>195</sup> Indeed, if the sample is representative (and I have no evidence that it was intentionally doctored), the upper crust of Asturian society participated in equal numbers to Asturias' unskilled laborers (13.45%).<sup>196</sup> Interestingly, there was relatively low participation amongst civil servants (4.48%),<sup>197</sup> barely surpassing those identifying themselves as housewives or retirees (3.70%).<sup>198</sup> It would seem that while the bulk of Conceyu Bable militants were university students and they represented an important sector of the audience for regionalist and proto-nationalist<sup>199</sup> politics, a surprising two thirds of the signers of the

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<sup>193</sup> I have included signers who listed the following professions: student, professor / teacher, & school principal.

<sup>194</sup> I have included signers who listed the following professions (in descending frequency): metallurgist, mechanic, driver, miner, telephonist, electrician, technician, railroad operator, instrumentalist, stylist/barber, carpenter, lathe operator, sheet metal manufacturer, solderer, fitter, boilermaker, clerk, confectioner, construction contractor, greaser, specialist, printer, shopmaster, tailor, translator, bricklayer, disc-jockey, electronics, mine timberman, ironworker, plumber, driller, recorder, model-maker, projectionist, steelworker, upholsterer, glassblower, nurse, treasurer, topographer, transporter, tube-maker.

<sup>195</sup> I have included signers who listed the following professions (in descending frequency): industrialist, doctor (& related professions), industrial instructor, draftsman, businessman, engineer, executive, banker, "university graduate", lawyer, physician (*facultativu m.*), doctor (non-medical), economist, painter, wholesaler, analyst, ship-owner, architect, graphic arts, accountant, promo-analyst, decorator, scientific delegate, manager, social graduate, innkeeper, commercial boss, mechanographist, minister, musician, office worker, journalist, chemist, business representative, sociologist.

<sup>196</sup> I have included signers who listed the following professions (in descending frequency): servant (*empleado*), laborer, secretary, waiter, retail salesman, farmer, cell attendant, porter, security.

<sup>197</sup> I have included signers who identified themselves as "administrative" or "functionary."

<sup>198</sup> I have included signers who identified themselves as "ama de casa", "pensioner," or "retired."

<sup>199</sup> By mid-1976 the terms had started to differentiate. "Nationalism" had begun to appear (particularly in

most well-known regionalist political platform of the day came from outside of the walls of the University. However, the Conceyu Bable's cultural politics seemed to make little headway amongst the body of civil functionaries, whose material dependence on the central government made regionalist sympathies unlikely. Until 1978, there was no regional government, in which one's career prospects could theoretically have been boosted by such attitudes.

Professional Category	Number of signers	% of total (n=892)
Education	329	36.88%
Skilled labor & artisan	223	25.00%
Other white collar	120	13.45%
Unskilled labor	120	13.45%
Civil service	40	4.48%
Housewives & retirees	33	3.70%
Other / unknown	27	3.03%

Table 1 – *Bable nes escueles* petition. August 1975-January 1976.

This petition drive represented the high point of the Conceyu Bable's ability to promote the language as a symbol for a new democratic and anti-centrist state amongst, if not the majority, at least beyond a narrow sector of the region's population. Eventually claiming to have collected more than 35,000 signatures,<sup>200</sup> the *bable nes escueles* campaign came to a climax on June 22, 1976, when between 4,000 and 7,000 people gathered in

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articles written by Arias) and seemed to imply a difference in the extent to which home rule should be taken, although the two terms were used almost interchangeably by the Conceyu Bable of this period.

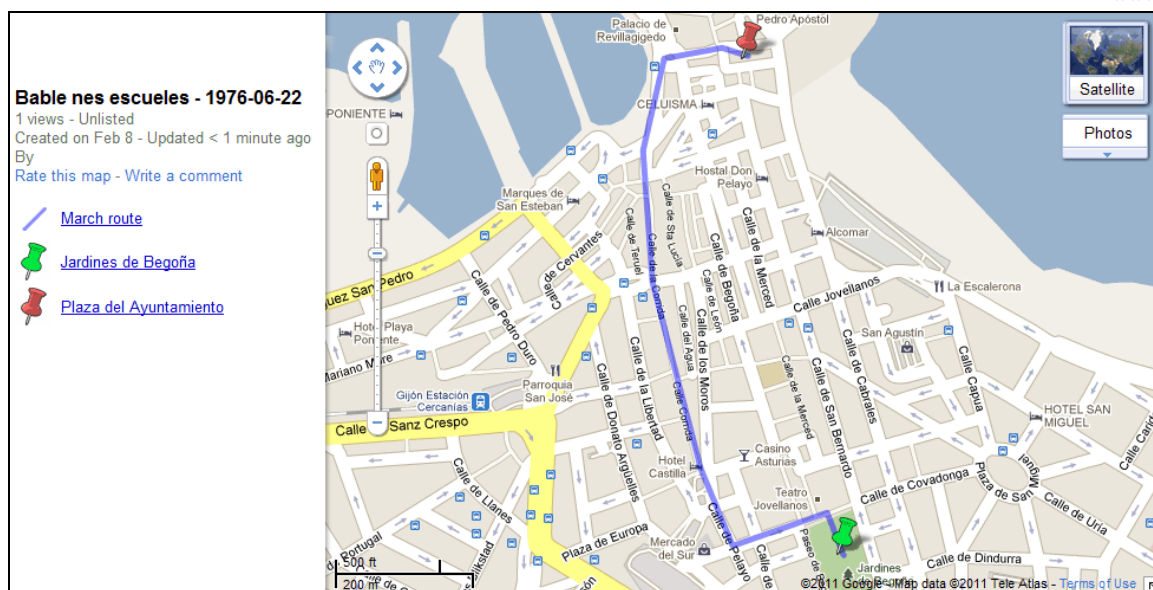
<sup>200</sup> In January 1976, *Cambio 16* cited the number of signatures at 30,000, although it is likely their source was the Conceyu Bable itself. "Bable al habla."

Gijón and marched on the town hall carrying banners and singing the Asturian anthem, “*Asturias, patria querida*.”<sup>201</sup> Starting at around 8pm in the Begoña gardens beneath a typically Asturian drizzle (see Map 1, below), the Conceyu Bable members unfolded a large blue banner with the slogan “*Bable a la escuela. Autonomía Rexonal*” and began to march down calle Covadonga. Turning down calle de la Corrida, The procession began to accumulate passers-by and a large number of people who had been hanging back, wanting to see how the march would turn out before committing themselves.<sup>202</sup> The march proceeded slowly towards the old center of the city, pausing frequently to chant “*Puxa Asturias*” and sing *Asturies, patria querida*. Continuing North up the calle de la Trinidad, the march skirted the harbor on calle de Claudio Alvargonzález, passing by the statue of Don Pelayo in the Plaza del Marqués and the Palacio de Revillagigedo, and terminating in front of the *Ayuntamiento* (Town Hall).

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<sup>201</sup> Melchor F. Díaz, “La manifestación de Gijón: el regionalismo en la calle,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 368 (3-10 julio 1976): 4-7; Conceyu Bable, “La manifestación del día 22 y «Ramiro»,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 369 (10-17 julio 1976): 34; Conceyu Bable, “Ser grandón,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 0 (setiembre 1976): 5. There was a simultaneous rally planned for Oviedo but it never occurred.

<sup>202</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author.



Map 1 – *Bable a la escuela. Autonomía Rexonal March Route*. Gijón, June 22, 1976.

Cartographic source – ©2011 Google –Map data ©2011 Tele Atlas

The demonstration was peaceful, in spite of the visible presence of the police.

Adding weight to the claim that this was part of a mass movement was the participation, albeit limited, of many of the parties of opposition in the demonstration. Prominent members of the still-illegal and semi-clandestine Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies were present, including one of its Central Committee members, Cheni Uría. The Movimientu Comunista, descended from a branch of ETA (*ETA-berri*, or “New ETA”) that had cut its ties with the Basque nationalist Left by becoming less nationalist and more Left,<sup>203</sup> had staked out a position in favor of a highly decentralized Spain with the first draft published of an Asturian statute of Autonomy (bilingually) in 1975.<sup>204</sup> The Communist Party also

<sup>203</sup> See discussion on p62.

<sup>204</sup> Movimiento Comunista de Asturias / Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies, *Anteproyecto de estatuto de la región autónoma de Asturias / Anteproyectu d'estatutu de la rexón autónoma d'Asturies* (Oviedo / Uviéu: MCA, 1975).

participated in the rally, most prominently Vicente Alvarez Areces.<sup>205</sup> Areces would later become the President of Asturias as a member of the Socialist Party and direct a strongly anti-Asturianista administration,<sup>206</sup> yet was highly visible in the first row of the march holding the lead banner.<sup>207</sup> Additionally, *Reconstrucción Socialista*, and “an independent group” of pro-democracy Leftists attended the rally.<sup>208</sup> Notable by their absence were representatives of the Socialist Party, which provided further evidence that they were already distancing themselves during this period from any association with anti-state politics.

In addition to attempting to claim a greater degree of legitimacy by pointing out the peaceful (and therefore “democratic”) nature of the rally, the Conceyu Bable went out of its way to ensure its legality, in spite of considerable bureaucratic red tape. The group had originally intended to hold the rallies Gijón and Oviedo (cancelled) on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, but their application was denied until the law was successfully pushed through the *franquista*-controlled Cortes.<sup>209</sup> In the Conceyu Bable’s request for permission, they even claimed that the protest would be cancelled if permission did not arrive from the provincial government

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<sup>205</sup> Usually simply referred to by his matronym, “Areces.”

<sup>206</sup> In office 1999-2011 (still in office at time of writing). For his administration’s policies regarding regionalism, see discussion p394.

<sup>207</sup> A cleaner, enlarged version of the press photo published in *Asturias Semanal* was provided to me by Lluís Antón González Fernández, along with a few unpublished photos of the rally. Areces appears between the A and the B of the word “Bable” on the lead banner, “*Bable a la escuela. Autonomía rexonal.*”

<sup>208</sup> Díaz, “La manifestación de Gijón: el regionalismo en la calle.”

<sup>209</sup> “Varios solicitan autorización para celebrar una manifestación en Oviedo y Gijón el día 3-6-76 con motivo ‘bable a la escuela y autonomía regional,’” (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20529, 1976-05-21). The solicitation was signed by Sánchez Vicente, Xosé Antón González Riaño, Álvarez, M. A. García Dory, Vicente García Oliva, José Ramón Díaz García, Aquilino Fernández, Álvaro Ruíz de la Peña Solar, and Ignacio Elola Cortines. Interestingly enough, Arias was not one of the petitioners.

by May 30<sup>th</sup>, because of the Conceyu Bable's desire that "the rally take place within the most absolute legality."<sup>210</sup> The rally occurred a mere twelve days after the Cortes approved the new Law of Political Associations (June 10, 1976),<sup>211</sup> its popularity and the novelty of the march attracting significant attention, both from the government and the press.<sup>212</sup> The very slogan of the campaign is indicative of the close association between regionalism, language, and the democratic opposition during the last years of the Franco regime and the first years of the Transition. The participation of the Leftist parties in the rally almost certainly owed more to their support of the second half of the slogan, "regional autonomy," than any real support for bilingual schooling. Indeed, the speech read to the assembled thousands in front of Gijón's city hall focused more on the Conceyu Bable's demands for regional autonomy than its linguistic education program, which "required no explanation of any type: [treating], simply, as one of the banners said, of returning to the people, to Asturias, the objective product of their own history: their language and their culture."<sup>213</sup> Another indicator of the Conceyu Bable's intent to expand the accessibility of the march's message as much as possible was that the speech was given in Castilian (other than the final cry of "*¡Puxa Asturias!*"), whereas by 1976 almost the entirety of the organization's published material was solely written in

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<sup>210</sup> "*Dado nuestro interés en que la manifestación se desarrolle dentro de la más absoluta legalidad, entenderemos si la manifestación no está autorizada el día 30 de Mayo en el domicilio del primero de los firmantes queda denegada.*"

ibid. The first signer referred to was Sánchez Vicente.

<sup>211</sup> "Ley 21/1976, de 14 de junio, sobre el Derecho de Asociación Política."

<sup>212</sup> Díaz, "La manifestación de Gijón: el regionalismo en la calle."

<sup>213</sup> "*....el primero de los deseos no requiere explicación de ningún tipo: se trata, simplemente, como decía una de las pancartas, de devolver al pueblo, a Asturias, el producto objetivo de su propia historia: su lengua y su cultura.*"

Díaz, "Texto leído en la manifestación."

Asturianu. The Conceyu Bable called for a still-as-yet-undefined method of gaining autonomy for Asturias (nowhere is a Statute or constitutional amendment mentioned during the speech) primarily using economic arguments. After autonomy, the region's coal, iron, petroleum and “energy” resources and the production of its industries would no longer be “victims either of a fleecing capitalism or of an alienating centralism.”<sup>214</sup> In addition, the Conceyu Bable advocated an autonomy that would permit “democratic control of municipal governments,” place “at the service of the Asturian people the funds of the Public Savings Banks (*Cajas de Ahorros*),” and permit “the rational organization and exploitation of [Asturias'] agriculture and fishing industries, now sunk in the most black and miserable poverty.”<sup>215</sup> Summing up, the Conceyu Bable claimed that “regional autonomy, in a word, will put at the service of the popular interests of the Asturian people its culture, economy, and politics.”<sup>216</sup>

In addition to the attractiveness of its focus on regional autonomy in a broad sense, the participation of people such as Areces would tend to validate Pedro de Silva's claim that the rally's support was as much due to its timing as its message.<sup>217</sup> As only the second

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<sup>214</sup> “*sin que el pueblo asturiano.....sea víctima ni de un esquilador capitalismo ni de un enajenador centralismo.*”  
ibid.

<sup>215</sup> “*La autonomía regional permitirá el control democrático de nuestros ayuntamientos y pondrá al servicio del pueblo asturiano las finanzas de las Cajas de Ahorros....La autonomía regional permitirá la organización y explotación racionales de nuestro campo y nuestra pesca, ahora hundidos en la más negra y mísera pobreza.*”  
ibid.

<sup>216</sup> “*La autonomía regional, en una palabra, pondrá al servicio de los intereses populares del pueblo asturiano la cultura, la economía y la política.*”  
ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.



permitted protest since the fall of Asturias to Franco's Nationalist Army in 1937 (the first was a pensioners' strike in May 1976), the *Bable nes escueles* rally served as an outlet for years of repression. Thus, when the Conceyu Bable was granted permission to march for language rights and regional autonomy, most of the opposition in Asturias saw it as their first chance for legal, peaceful, and public protest, one of the hallmarks of the democratic political system that they aspired to create. Thus, the rally, and the regionalist campaign in general, served both as a symbol and as a convenient vehicle for almost the entire democratic Left in Asturias. While this may have caused the march's leaders, the Asturianistas, to vastly over-estimate their support among the general public, it also served to greatly enhance their public profile. Indeed, while the Conceyu Bable may have been overly encouraged by the thousands of marchers, it is also certain that the traditional political parties of the Left also seemed to over-estimate the strength of regionalist support.

The euphoria engendered by the crowd was such that, still in the process of transitioning from a magazine section to a formal organization (the first membership cards would not be issued until the first of August),<sup>218</sup> the leadership of the Conceyu Bable began discussing the organization's future in a Cimevilla<sup>219</sup> *chigre* that night after the march. Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente argued that they take advantage of the political momentum gained by the petition campaign and the march to convert the Conceyu Bable, not into a cultural

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<sup>218</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Carné sociu nú. 1 - García Arias, Xosé Lluis," (Gijón: Archivu Personal de Lluís Antón González Fernández, 1976-08-01); Conceyu Bable, "Carné sociu nú. 2 - Sánchez Vicente, Xuan Xosé," (Gijón: Archivu Personal de Lluís Antón González Fernández, 1976-08-01).

<sup>219</sup> Gijón's old city.

association, but an out-right political party.<sup>220</sup> Arias, Sánchez Vicente, and Álvarez all agree that the long-term goal of the Conceyu Bable had been, from the start of the magazine section in 1974, to start a cultural movement that would eventually culminate in a political party.<sup>221</sup> However, by mid-1976, a division had clearly developed between the priorities of Arias and Sánchez Vicente. Arias maintained the position that the organization should focus exclusively on language and the normalization project, de-emphasizing political activism. In contrast, Sánchez Vicente argued that “political normalization was indispensable for cultural normalization,” reversing the order of priorities.<sup>222</sup> Starting in late October 1975, Arias began distinguishing his editorial articles in *Asturias Semanal* from those of his rivals by signing them with an “A.,” a practice later taken up by both Sánchez Vicente (“X.X.S.”) and Álvarez (“LL.T.” for “Lluis Texuca”, a well-known nickname).<sup>223</sup> Relatively early on, the Conceyu Bable pages had developed a pattern of starting off with a brief editorial piece from one (or more) of the three founders. Over the course of the preceding months, Arias had developed strong disagreements with the opinions (both political and linguistic) of other members of the organization (principally Sánchez Vicente), and had wanted to make it

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<sup>220</sup> Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author; Álvarez, Interview by author.

<sup>221</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author; García Arias, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>222</sup> Pablo San Martín Antuña, “El discurso socio-político de Conceyu Bable,” in *Conceyu Bable n' Asturias Semanal (1974-1977)* (Uviéu: Ediciones Trabe, 2004): 9-22. 11 and Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable.” 19.

<sup>223</sup> The first instance of this was in Xosé Lluis García Arias, “Escribir y escribayar,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 333 (18-25 octubre, 1975): 14.

Álvarez's nickname “Texuca” is derived from “*texu*,” Asturianu for yew, a native hardwood. Asturians often call people who are hardy and in good health “*el texu*” or “*como un texu*.”

known that the arguments put forth in other articles did not reflect his ideas.<sup>224</sup> Arias saw himself as the most legitimate academic authority (with some reason) within the Conceyu Bable to comment on linguistic (and by extension, *sociolinguistic*) topics and became uneasy with the influx of non-specialist articles on the language, its history, and dialects published in the name of the Conceyu Bable.

The division between the Conceyu Bable's two most visible figures has often been explained as a personality conflict, and indeed neither Arias nor Sánchez Vicente claim to have ever been close.<sup>225</sup> The majority former Conceyu Bable members I interviewed who were active during this time period ascribed to this theory. Some tended to primarily blame Arias, others Sánchez Vicente, but the fundamental conflict was most often perceived as a clash of personalities, with the ideological and programmatic differences between the two founders interpreted as *ex post facto* justifications for a pre-existing rivalry. However, this easy explanation minimizes the growing division within the organization on several important issues. On the one hand, a growing group within the organization, centered around *el Roxu*, Sánchez Vicente, began to argue that the Asturianistas needed to take advantage of the opportunity presented them by such early success at rousing multi-class popular support for the Conceyu Bable's campaigns. To this group, the linguistic and cultural issues were critical, yet still only a means to the political end of greater self-rule for Asturias. On the other hand, Arias advocated for a more cautious approach, focusing almost entirely on the promotion

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<sup>224</sup> García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>225</sup> García Arias, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

and normalization (at this point, codification and standardization) of the language, and he had previously publicly denied any desire to create a political party out of Conceyu Bable in the short-term.<sup>226</sup> The first priority was the establishment of an Asturian Language Academy and the creation and publication of an Asturianu dictionary and grammar. Additionally, Arias was highly mistrustful that the compromise and negotiation inherent to politics and political parties would inevitably dilute any bilingual legislation.

With the creation of a formal organization in June 1976, internal elections were held in order to fill the newly created association's executive (called the *Apautaores*). The linguist bloc narrowly edged out the political as Arias triumphed over Sánchez Vicente in the Conceyu Bable's first presidential elections, with Sánchez Vicente being relegated to the role of Vice President and Lluís Xabier Álvarez given the role of *vocal* (speaker).<sup>227</sup> The new association was highly decentralized, with individual Conceyu Bable Associations in Oviedo (the *Conceyu Bable Uviéu*) and Gijón (*Conceyu Bable Xixón*) with groups in Mieres (*Conceyu Bable Mieres*) formed later that year and Avilés (*Conceyu Bable Avilés*) in January of 1977.<sup>228</sup> These groups acted almost independently from each other with respect to local organizing, recruitment, and finances. Indeed, the *bable nes escueles* petition campaign, although the most well-known of the Conceyu Bable's programs, was somewhat unusual in that it was a coordinated campaign by the entire organization. Language classes, political graffiti and

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<sup>226</sup> Cited above. García Arias, "Sí, tamos «politizaos»."

<sup>227</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Conceyu Bable reconocíu como asociación cultural."

<sup>228</sup> Conceyu Bable, "La presentación Conceyu Bable n'Avilés," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 3-4 (avientu 1976-xineru 1977): 2.

poster art, pamphleteering (both propaganda and instructional), and the like were almost entirely conducted within each individual local group. The *Apaotaora* was rarely called into action, except during the yearly associational meetings (called the *Apautamientu Xeneral*). Over the course of 1976, a division of labor began to develop. The Conceyu Bable Xixón, with Sánchez Vicente still the dominant influence, tended to focus primarily on political activism, speeches, language classes in the street, and musical performances and production, including both traditional Asturian forms (such as the *tonada* and bagpipe music) and the emerging *Nueu Canciu Astur*, involving prominent Conceyu Bable member Carlos Rubiera (a solo artist) and the duo of Chus Pedro Suárez and Manolo Peñayos (later known as *Nuberu*).<sup>229</sup> The Conceyu Bable Uviéu, with Arias at its head and centered primarily on students and younger faculty at the University of Oviedo, unsurprisingly seemed more focused on linguistic normalization. It was the Conceyu Bable Uviéu that produced the majority of the group's vocabulary sheets, grammatical lessons, and linguistic essays and academic articles. It was also the branch of the Conceyu Bable that maintained the closest ties, at least professionally, with the *franquista*-era folklorists of the IDEA and the University. Most obviously, the Conceyu Bable Uviéu continued to participate in academic conferences with members of the IDEA, most prominently Emilio Alarcos Llorach, Lorenzo Novo Mier, María Josefa Canellada, and Josefina Martínez Álvarez. Although they would later become bitter enemies and academic rivals, in 1976 Arias was still on good terms with his former

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<sup>229</sup> Close to Sánchez Vicente, Rubiera was, like him, a member of first Democracia Socialista Asturiana, then the PSP, and after 1978, the Socialist Party.

doctoral advisor, Alarcos, and helped facilitate the relationship between the two groups.

The association's loose organization was both for pragmatic reasons (making it harder for the Guardia Civil to keep a close watch) and for ideological ones. The Conceyu Bable used this decentralized model to back its claim that its organization was totally democratic (in spite of its clear internal hierarchy), even hyperbolically claiming that it was "a democratic and inorganic (sic) group, that did not have leaders, either visible or invisible"<sup>230</sup> while at the same time clearly using the increasing public visibility of members such as Sánchez Vicente and Arias to promote its cause. An additional reason for the decentralization of the Conceyu Bable was purely economic. Each local Conceyu was responsible for finding local funding for all of its activities, and this often had the effect of limiting both the number and extent of the political campaigns undertaken, even during the Conceyu Bable's period of greatest activity in the late 1970s.<sup>231</sup> Economic difficulties would become a recurring theme with the Conceyu Bable, as it attempted to balance the desire to encourage membership through extremely low membership dues with the financial needs of running a political campaign. The cost of a membership was only 100 pesetas per month.<sup>232</sup> Students, who made up a large portion of the Conceyu Bable's membership,<sup>233</sup> and retirees only paid 50 pesetas per

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<sup>230</sup> "Ye un grupu democráticu y inorgánicu, que nun tien cabeces visibles ni invisibles."

Conceyu Bable, "Entamu," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 294 (25 enero, 1975): 19.

<sup>231</sup> García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>232</sup> Approximately \$1.50 in 1976 US\$.

<sup>233</sup> See Figure 1, p108.

month, and families could register at a group rate 150 pesetas.<sup>234</sup> While such low dues were clearly set to encourage new membership, they could not support a huge organizational budget.

### Radicalization and the Move towards Nationalism

After losing the internal elections of 1976, Sánchez Vicente was slowly marginalized from the group, in spite of his role as the Vice President and the head of the Conceyu Bable Xixón. He continued to publish in the Conceyu Bable pages, including a call for more press coverage and a discussion of the regional economy and its needs in the upcoming Statute of Autonomy, but he contributed with decreasing frequency.<sup>235</sup> With the increasing dominance of Arias, the Conceyu Bable's program gradually narrowed to focus almost exclusively on language and culture, while at the same time eliding the difference between culturo-linguistic issues and political ones. Far from staying out of politics, the Conceyu Bable expanded the definition of the political to include their activities, claiming that the "Conceyu Bable, in effect, does politics. Because all public activity is political."<sup>236</sup> Indeed, the group was somewhat belligerent in its defense of language revival as politics, claiming that the

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<sup>234</sup> Membership rates from Conceyu Bable, "¡¡¡Faite sociu de Conceyu Bable!!!," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 386 (6-13 noviembre, 1976): 38.

<sup>235</sup> Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, "Un llamamientu a la prensa," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 378 (11-18 septiembre, 1976): 33; Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, "Un desafiú a los partidos políticos," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 382 (9-16 octubre, 1976): 36-37.

<sup>236</sup> "C.B., *efetivamente fae* (sic) *política. Porque política ye toa atividá* (sic) *pública*."

Conceyu Bable, "Conceyu Bable y la política," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 367 (26 junio-3 julio 1976): 36-37.

“Conceyu Bable practices the politics of fear because that which goes against the established norms is alarming, and to this point one has not been able to speak in Bable nor talk of regionalism.”<sup>237</sup> From mid-1976, the Conceyu Bable's publications experienced a steady radicalization in tone and rhetoric, evolving rapidly towards a self-definition of the group as a “nationalist” one, although it still used “regionalist” as a more blanket term (including potential political allies). It also began to adopt an increasingly Marxist-sounding rhetoric, equating in many senses the concepts of “popular” and “national” or “regional.” Because Asturianu was historically the language employed by the popular classes in Asturias more than the bourgeoisie or nobility, the Conceyu Bable had a tendency (hardly unique) to equate the Marxist call for proletarian political sovereignty with the Asturianista call for national sovereignty. This occurred in both the organization's public stance in *Asturias Semanal* and the relatively private space of the newly-issued internal newspaper the *Fueyes Informatives*, first distributed in September 1976. This worldview saw Oviedo as representing the seat of the “dominant classes.”<sup>238</sup> It blamed historical bourgeois disinterest in Asturianu as critical to the establishment of Castilian as the higher-prestige language.<sup>239</sup> The Conceyu Bable thus directly blamed castilianization on dominant classes within Asturias that benefited from a close economic, social, and political relationship with the Castilian monarchy. The economic ties of the Asturian bourgeoisie with the ultramontane central

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<sup>237</sup> “Y C.B. fae (sic) política solliviega (sic), porque solliviego ye tolo que vaiga escontra les normes establecíes, y fasta (sic) güei, nun se podía emplegá-i bable nin falar de rexonalismu.”  
ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, “Combayase en Uviéu (I),” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 0 (setiembre 1976): 6-7.

<sup>239</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Nota sele - pa una defensa'l bable.”



government and the political dependency of the province created, according to the Asturianistas, a colonial relationship between the Spanish state and Asturias.<sup>240</sup> In contrast, the new nationalist movement was to represent the popular classes. The group pointed to state ownership of the mining and steel industries, which dominated the regional economy, as a modern form of seventeenth-century mercantilism, with the majority of production exported out of the province. It claimed that both under Franco and in the new Transition state, capital was prevented from leaving Spain by the Guardia Civil but was actively encouraged to move from Asturias to Madrid.<sup>241</sup> “*Lo castellano*” was specifically identified with an “ideology... of the dominant classes.”<sup>242</sup>

Sánchez Vicente’s September 1976 article on “The Principle of Nationalism and the Goal of Conceyu Bable” indicated a marked shift within the organization towards speaking of Asturias as a “nation” or “nationality,” although it qualified this shift by maintaining that it advocated a “nationalism, which is not separatism, within the plurinational state of Spain.”<sup>243</sup> The writings of Lluís Xabell Álvarez are particularly indicative of this rhetorical shift. In large part marginalized by the more charismatic and outspoken figures of Sánchez Vicente and Arias during the early years of the Conceyu Bable, Álvarez began to take a more prominent and influential role in the group’s publications after the former’s marginalization from the

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<sup>240</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Los anicios étnicos d’Asturies,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 2 (payares 1976): 6-8; Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so’l rexonalismu.” 2,7.

<sup>241</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Rispios,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 3-4 (avientu 1976-xineru 1977): 12.

<sup>242</sup> “*Güey «lo castellano» ye sobre too una ideoloxía remaná pe les clases dominantes, centralistes.*”

Conceyu Bable, “El nuestru «anti-castellanismu,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 346 (24-31 enero, 1976): 26.

<sup>243</sup> “*Nacionalismu, que non ye separatismu, dientro d’el Estau plurinacional d’España.*”

Sánchez Vicente, “El principiu del nacionalismu y el fin de Conceyu Bable.”

Conceyu Bable and Álvarez's election as *vocal* (speaker) for the organization. In particular, his editorial articles, which began appearing more frequently (and by this time were usually signed), started to push towards a more openly nationalist (although explicitly non-separatist) vision of Asturias.<sup>244</sup> In January of 1977, Álvarez was also one of the first, along with Arias, to set forward concrete items to be included in an autonomy statute, setting out a "minimal program for autonomy," while Arias and Álvarez both renewed the call for a restoration of the historic regional parliament (1388-1834), the *Xunta Xeneral del Principáu d'Asturies*.<sup>245</sup> Álvarez made explicit the growing belief amongst the Asturianistas (as well as throughout parts of Spain) that "if Asturias [did] not vote for autonomy as a country – or region or nationality, which are fundamentally the same thing – then neither [would] it vote for democracy."<sup>246</sup> Thus, while not quite claiming that autonomy (or nationalism) was equivalent to democracy, the connection between the two was quite strong. Álvarez's articles during this period are both indicative of a widening and radicalization of the Conceyu Bable's ambition and at the same time helped to promote such an ideological change.

This rhetorical shift within the publications of the Conceyu Bable indicated a growing awareness and adoption of the language being developed at a national scale to

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<sup>244</sup> Lluís Xabel Álvarez Fernández, "Asturies: del rexionalismu al nacionalismu," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 380 (25 septiembre-2 octubre, 1976): 18.

<sup>245</sup> Lluís Xabel Álvarez Fernández, "Elecciones: por un'Asturies asturiana," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 398 (29 enero-5 febrero, 1977): 34; Xosé Lluís García Arias, "Autogobiernu: Xunta Xeneral," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 398 (29 enero-5 febrero, 1977): 34-35.

<sup>246</sup> "Si Asturies nun vota pe (sic) l'autonomía como país – o rexón o nacionalidá, que a lo fondero ye lo mesmo – nin siquierá votará pe (sic) la democracia."

Álvarez Fernández, "Elecciones: por un'Asturies asturiana."

accommodate the growing demands of peripheral nationalist movements within the structure of a reformed (but still unified) Spanish state, one of the central goals of the Transition.

While the Conceyu Bable had been calling for an autonomy statute since before the beginning of the *bable nes escueles* signature campaign in 1975, after the rally in Gijón, abstract demands began to coalesce into more concrete proposals. Arias had mentioned the possibility of resuscitating the Xunta Xeneral in late 1975,<sup>247</sup> but the restoration of the medieval legislature did not become central part of the Conceyu Bable's demands until the winter of 1976-77. This marked a shift from the earlier writings of the Asturianista movement; by late 1976, the Conceyu Bable was clearly speaking of “autonomy” and “nationalities” in specific reference to political structures and concepts being negotiated in Madrid, soon to be codified in the Constitution of 1978 and subsequent Statutes of Autonomy passed by the new Autonomous Communities. Equally importantly, it was during this time that the first calls for co-official status for Asturianu and Castilian in the region were made.

The discussion of being able to legislate bilingualism (initially in education) first appeared seriously possible with the passage of a November 1975 law regulating the use of “regional Spanish languages.” The law justified its timid acknowledgment of Spain's “regional peculiarities” with a desire to incorporate them into an inclusive “Spanish

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<sup>247</sup> Xosé Lluís García Arias, “Xuntes y diputaciones,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 339 (6-13 diciembre, 1975): 28.

patrimony.<sup>248</sup> The new law provided for elective instruction of regional languages in preschool and primary school (there was no mention of any such provision at the secondary level). Additionally, the new law mentioned the possibility of opening up the use of non-Castilian languages in government more generally.<sup>249</sup> However, there was no mention of *specific* territories or languages in which these new classes would be legal or offered. Additionally, the “entities and corporations [bodies] of local character” which were to implement this new bilingualism were not specified.<sup>250</sup> Thus, it was left vague whether or not the “local entities” eligible to become bilingual referred to the existing Provincial Council (*Diputación Provincial*), appointed by the central government in Madrid, or some new locally elected autonomous government. The Conceyu Bable immediately seized upon these ambiguities within the new law, asking if “only the classic languages that cause problems” would be included in the new law. The Asturianistas were afraid that it would “continue the superficially political distinction between languages and dialects” rather than “protecting in this way some languages still without sufficient political weight.”<sup>251</sup> From this point on, the

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<sup>248</sup> “Con el propósito de incorporar las peculiaridades regionales al patrimonio cultural español...”

“Decreto 2929/1975, de 31 de octubre, por el que se regula el uso de las lenguas regionales españolas,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 274 (1975-11-15): 23877.

<sup>249</sup> “Tras esa normativa referida a los primeros niveles educativos parece oportuno abordar con un carácter más general la regulación del uso de las lenguas regionales españolas por parte de la Administración del Estado y de los Organismos, Entidades, y particulares.”

ibid.

<sup>250</sup> “Las Entidades y demás Corporaciones de carácter local.”

ibid.

<sup>251</sup> “¿Van ser sólo les llingües clásiques que plantearen problemas o van ser toes? ¿Van seguir la distinción ñidiamente política ente llingües y dielezto (sic) pa averar de esti mou a delles llingües en sin puxu políticu suficiente entavía?”

Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu: les llingües llariegues,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 339 (6-13 diciembre, 1975): 28-29.

Conceyu Bable expanded and intensified its argument to include Asturias and Asturianu in the new law implicitly written with Euskadi and Catalunya in mind. This established what would become the pattern of the Transition. The Spanish government progressively conceded new openings towards the peripheral nationalist movements but attempted to limit the application of those openings to only those regions where it became a political necessity. That is to say, the government attempted to concede a minimum of self-rule to those regions necessary to secure political support for the post-Franco constitutional monarchy. In spite of the Conceyu Bable's writing and rallies, it was never in a position to make Asturias such a political fulcrum.

The legislative recognition of Asturianu as the national language of Asturias would become from this point on an obsession of the majority of the Asturianista movement. This partially occurred because of the granting of wide powers over cultural engineering to the “historic nationalities” of Catalunya, Euskadi, and Galicia. As Lluís Xabell Álvarez would later reflect, “If these others were 'nations' [with nationalist movements], then so was Asturias.”<sup>252</sup> The Asturianistas coveted these other regions' control over education, radio and television (after 1983),<sup>253</sup> and, most importantly, the public legitimation that the bilingual publication of all government business would bring for the language. As discussed in Chapter 1, the major obstacle any attempt to revive Asturianu faced was its long-term

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<sup>252</sup> “*Si son naciones estos otros, pues nosotros también.*”

Álvarez, Interview by author.

<sup>253</sup> “Ley 46/1983, de 26 de diciembre, reguladora del tercer canal de televisión,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 4 (1984-01-05): 247-48.

rejection by the economic, social, and political elite of Asturias. The constitutional or legislative method was seen by many of the new nationalists as a way to force these elites to at least accept the presence of the language, if not embrace it or use it amongst themselves. It was hoped that this would lead to a gradual bilingualization of the province, stopping Asturianu's steady slide into disuse.

In February 1977, the Conceyu Bable published the *Cartafueyu so'l rexonalismu* (Paper on Regionalism), in which it simultaneously stressed that the organization's sole purpose was as a “sociocultural group dedicated to the recuperation and normalization of the Asturian language” and justified an active political role for itself.<sup>254</sup> Pointing to the *bable nes escueles* rally as a turning point for the group, the paper highlighted a new emphasis on the second half of protest's slogan: '*autonomía rexonal*,' to which the Conceyu Bable was now claiming Asturias had a fundamental right.<sup>255</sup> While still officially framed as 'regionalist', the *Cartafueyu* discusses Asturias as a region and people on equal footing with “other Spanish and European communities.”<sup>256</sup> It defended the group's growing activism outside of strictly cultural or linguistic topics, writing that “languages do not have ideologies – Bable is not an exception – but their speakers do.”<sup>257</sup> In the *Cartafueyu*, the political position of this

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<sup>254</sup> “«Conceyu Bable» ye un grupu sociocultural dedicau a la recuperación y normalización de la llingua asturiana.” Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so'l rexonalismu.”

<sup>255</sup> “L'autonomía a la que tenemos drechu.”  
ibid.

<sup>256</sup> “Un pueblu dafechu delante d'otres comunidaes españoles y europeos.”  
ibid.

<sup>257</sup> “Les llingües nun tienen ideoloxía – el bable nun y'esección (sic) – pero los sos falantes sí.”  
ibid.

supposedly non-partisan political action committee (to anachronistically apply a term from the first decade of the twenty-first century) was that the goals of the Conceyu Bable were only possible “within an autonomous and democratic political structure,” clearly positioning itself among the sector of the democratic opposition that promoted a decentralized state.<sup>258</sup>

The *Cartafueyu* became a kind of manifesto, pushing the organization as a whole towards a general acceptance of the idea of Asturias as nation whose exact relationship to Spain was usually quite vague, although the impression is one of a kind of idealized confederation of Spanish “nations.” Although the concept and terminology had been circulating within the inner circle of the organization for some time, the *Cartafueyu* served to breach the topic of nationalism to the membership at large via the Conceyu Bable's internal newsletter, the *Fueyes Informatives*. Prior to this point, both Álvarez and Arias report that the Conceyu Bable exclusively spoke of “regionalism”, at least partially as a kind of code, so that the still-*franquista* state, paranoid after the developments in Catalunya and especially Euskadi, would not be provoked into banning the group outright.<sup>259</sup> Indeed, there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that the Conceyu Bable was wise to proceed thus cautiously. Álvarez reported that during a period around 1976, the Guardia Civil tapped and monitored the telephone lines of at least some of the Conceyu Bable members.<sup>260</sup> At one point, when

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<sup>258</sup> “Según el nuestro análisis sólo podrá caltenese y espoxigar esa cultura dentro d'un marcu políticu autonómicu y democráticu.”

ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author; García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>260</sup> “Nosotros tuvimos, Amelia [Valcárcel, Álvarez's wife] y yo, nuestro teléfono intervenido durante mucho tiempo igual que el Roxu.”

discussing the last-minute preparations for the *bable nes escueles* rally, the voice of a Guardia Civil interrupted Álvarez and Sánchez Vicente's telephone conversation to announce, "You are being watched! Be careful what you do!"<sup>261</sup> As the Conceyu Bable's fear of surveillance and repression diminished, it opened itself up more and more to accusations that it was nothing more than a front for the Communist Party or that, in spite of its claims to the contrary, sought the independence (perhaps by violent means) of Asturias from Spain.<sup>262</sup> This was, of course, partially due to the Conceyu Bable's own adoption of Marxist rhetoric, which frequently claimed that its "regionalism (or nationalism) can be any other than one of class."<sup>263</sup> In March 1977, the Conceyu Bable even claimed that that Asturian nationalism was of an entirely new type new to Marxist theory, neither "emerging from the Third-World struggle against colonialist imperialism" (which it defined as type 1) nor "historical bourgeois nationalism" (type 2) but emerged from "the problems of industrial capitalism's regional and sectorial inequality. The popular classes impel it from the start, gathering around themselves the elements of the 'differential fact' [empirical differences of a particular people or place] and consciousness of identity."<sup>264</sup>

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ibid.

<sup>261</sup> "¿Están Ustedes siendo vigilados! ¡Mucho cuidado con lo que Ustedes hacen!"

ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Avisu perimportante," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 362 (22-29 mayo, 1976): 40; Conceyu Bable, "Conceyu Bable y la política."; Lluís Xabiel Álvarez Fernández, "Támos preocupaos," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 381 (6-13 noviembre, 1976): 36.

<sup>263</sup> "El nuestru rexonalismu (o nacionalismu) nun pue ser na más que de clas."

Xosé Lluís García Arias, "Nacionalidá asturiana," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 389 (27 noviembre-4 diciembre, 1976): 39.

<sup>264</sup> "1) El que surte de les griesques tercermundistes escontra el imperialismu colonialista. 2) El nacionalismu hestóricu



However, in spite of the Leftist origin of most of its members and the adoption of the language of class-conflict, the Conceyu Bable, even at its most radical, should probably not be categorized as a Marxist organization. From an early point, at least mid-1975, the language was seen as a potentially “inter-class asset that belongs to all of the tribes of the Asturian people.”<sup>265</sup> The idea that “a language does not belong to the Right-wing nor to the Left, but rather to the entirety of a people, whatever the ideology of each citizen” gradually became more prominent within the Conceyu Bable over the course of the Transition.<sup>266</sup> The adoption of a pseudo-Marxist colonial model to analyze the relationship between Asturias and Castilla seemed to serve as an ideological transition to a focus on regional or national identity at the expense of class identity, as did the idea (not restricted to the Conceyu Bable) that the distinguishing trait of Asturias as a nation was its working-class character.<sup>267</sup> Part of this change came from a stated need to convince Center- and Right-wing Asturians that regionalism was in their best interests.<sup>268</sup> The Conceyu Bable also began to criticize the parties of the Left, accusing them of “not realizing that the progressive classes were also

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*y burgués....3) Y hai un tercer «nueu nacionalismu» que remanez de los problemas del desequilibriu rexonal y setorial (sic) del capitalismu industrial. Empobínenu d'el (sic) aniciu les clases populares, cuayando alrededor d'elles los elementos de «fechu diferencial» y conciencia d'identidá.”*

Lluís Xabel Álvarez Fernández, "Nota de «Conceyu Bable» a la carta del Sr. García Blanco," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 403 (19-26 marzo, 1977): 8-9.

<sup>265</sup> “*Ye un bien interclasista que pertenez a toes les tribes de xente asturiano.*”

Conceyu Bable, "Folklore, ideoloxies, llingua."

<sup>266</sup> “*...una llingua nun-i pertenez a les dreches o a les izquierdes, sinon a tou un pueblu, seya cuala seya la ideoloxía de ca ciudadanu.*”

Conceyu Bable, "Xataes."

<sup>267</sup> de Silva also mentioned its working-class character as Asturias' defining identity. de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>268</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Alderique sol rexonalismu n'Asturies (I)," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 2 (payares 1976): 16-18.

acquiring a regionalist sentiment.”<sup>269</sup> Even in the *Cartafueyu*, the group distinguished between “bureaucratic-centralist bourgeoisie” (bad) and “indigenous” bourgeoisie (good), saving its criticism for “the economic arm of the central State and monopoly capitalism.”<sup>270</sup> This departure was a significant indicator of the Conceyu Bable's increasing lack of focus on the more immediate economic and political problems of Asturias, part of the eventual reason for the limited electoral success of the nationalist parties that it begat.

### Nationalism and the founding of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*

The radical turn within the Conceyu Bable was as much indicative of the changing political climate in Asturias during the period between Franco's death and the first general elections of June 15, 1977 as it was of a new ideological departure by the group itself. In that sense, the radicalization of the Conceyu Bable's stance on politics was evolutionary rather than revolutionary and very much in line with the trends within the Spanish Left, with the prominent exceptions of the Socialist and Communist Parties. It was at this time that the first Asturian nationalist party, the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur* (CNA), was beginning to form amongst a group of younger Conceyu Bable members. Dating to late-1976 discussions within a group of young Conceyu Bable militants, the party began to recruit members

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<sup>269</sup> “Nun quixo dase cuenta que tamién les calses progresistes diben tomando un sén rexionalista.”

Conceyu Bable, “¿Un movimiento rexionalista?.”

<sup>270</sup> “Habrá que lluchar escontra la burguesía burocrático-centraliega y los intereses de la cadarma económica ‘l Estau central y'l capitalismu monopolista.”

Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so'l rexonalismu.” 8.

during early 1977. There was never any *official* connection between the cultural organization and the political party, and the Conceyu Bable never endorsed the party in any public way. Indeed, it went out of its way to make sure that the two groups were not confused, as they had similar names and political messages. Stating that while the members of Conceyu Bable often (although not necessarily) had nationalist leanings, “the people of Conceyu Bable [knew] that various political options [were] admitted (amongst them nationalism) and that this [had] nothing to do with the cultural position that [united] its members.”<sup>271</sup> The Conceyu Bable was explicit that it had not converted itself into a political party nor initiated a party wing of the organization.

However, there were very real links between the two organizations, most prominently the fact that a number of the most prominent founders of the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur were members of Conceyu Bable. These militants simultaneously continued their participation in the cultural organization while running the political activities of the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur (“*alegal*” until 1979). With the presence of Conceyu Bable members Dubardu Puente, and Xosé Lluís Carmona in the central committee and founder Lluís Xabel Álvarez as a member (briefly) of the new party, the connection certainly existed, even if there is no real evidence of any real coordination between the two groups.

Additionally, a number of Asturian students living in Madrid, David Rivas Infante, Xosé

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<sup>271</sup> “*La xente de C.B. sabe que políticamente caben varies ociones (sic) (entre elles la nacionalista) y qu’ello nun tien na que ver cola posición cultural qu’arrexunta a toos los sos miembros.*”

Conceyu Bable, “Conceyu Nacionalista Astur,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 410 (14-21 mayo, 1977): 30.

Álvarez Fernández (Pin el de Madrid), Xicu Xabel Díaz Yepes, and Xuán Cándano among them, who had both joined the Conceyu Bable and founded a local group, the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid*, became the Madrid cell of the new nationalist party *en masse*. However, Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente was notable by his absence. In spite of his previous arguments in favor of converting the Conceyu Bable into a political party, he chose to remain with the regionalist Partido Socialista Popular, feeling (accurately) that he had a better chance to influence the upcoming autonomy statute from within a larger party. He served as an interesting contrast to Carmona and Xesús Cañedo Valle, a member of the PSP who was present for the founding of the nationalist party and briefly joined before returning to the PSP.<sup>272</sup>

While the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur professed many of the same cultural and linguistic goals as the Conceyu Bable, seeking bilingualism and a protection and promotion of Asturian culture, its interpretation of the “colonial” relationship between Asturias and Spain was equally focused on socialist economic considerations. To vote for the CNA, as it was more commonly known, was to support a program promoting the following: Asturian nationality, a locally managed socialist economy, the fight against colonialism, the language and culture of Asturias, a real (*dafechu*) autonomy (as opposed to the limited one under

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<sup>272</sup> Curiously, Cañedo participated in the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur's founding and its first few months of activity while at the same time remaining a member of the PSP. Relatively early on, he ceased his activity in the CNA and returned to full participation on the PSP.

Carmona, Interview by author; Xesús Cañedo Valle, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-04-02 & 2009-04-07).

discussion), “a revolutionary alternative”, the defense of Asturias' artistic patrimony, the ecological struggle, the fight for women's rights, the fight for homosexual rights, the fight for the rights of pensioners, and the fight for the integration of disabled citizens.<sup>273</sup> Thus, while cultural concerns were indeed central to the CNA's program and all of its publications were exclusively written in Asturianu, the political party made economic and social justice a central part of its program. Along with the MCA, the new nationalist party was probably the most focused on issues of gender in the late 1970s in Asturias, and it was the only group at the time calling for equal rights for homosexuals in the region.

The Conceyu Nacionalista Astur's *raison d'être* was to harness the momentum created by the previous two years of political agitation and mobilization and channel it into a political party. As such, in spite of its public focus on social programs with a relatively broad appeal that it advocated, the CNA inherited much of the Conceyu Bable's cultural nationalism. The CNA became the first nationalist organization that focused significantly on Asturias' Celtic heritage, referring to the Celtiberians resident in the area prior to the Roman conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. The Conceyu Bable had written a few pieces discussing the topic,<sup>274</sup> but had always been somewhat ambivalent about claiming Celtic roots for a

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<sup>273</sup> “*Sofitar CNA ye sofitar: la nacionalidá asturiana, el socialismu autoxestionariu, la llucha escontra'l colonialismu, llingua y cultura asturianas, una autonomía dafechu, una alternativa revolucionaria, la defensa al patrimoniu artísticu, la llucha ecolóxica. Non al ICONA, la llucha polos drechos de la muyer, la llucha pola liberación (sic) del homosesual, la llucha polos drechos de los pensionistes, la llucha pola integración de los minusválidos.*”

Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, “Conceyu Nacionalista Astur. L'únicu partíu asturianu. L'únicu camín.” (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Biblioteca de Comunicació i Hemeroteca General, CEDOC, 1979).

<sup>274</sup> Such as Conceyu Bable, “Los anicios étnicos d'Asturies,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 0 (setiembre 1976): 2-3;

movement whose primary purpose was the revitalization of a Romance language with virtually no traces of Gaelic.<sup>275</sup> It was perhaps also reluctant to fully endorse an overly-ethnically defined nationalism that would run counter to its definition of Asturian as both those who were born in Asturias and those who *work for* the promotion of the region (generally understood to mean promotion of the language). An ethnic nationalism based primarily on linguistic criteria is theoretically more open than one that refers to a cultural or genetic heritage. In theory, it is relatively easy for speakers of any Romance language to learn Asturian; its large degree of intelligibility with both Castilian and Gallego-Portuguese, often used to question its status as an independent language, makes it potentially easier for any outsider to become accepted in an Asturian nationalist movement. Indeed, a number of Asturianistas over the past thirty years were either not born in Asturias, were children of immigrants to the region, or grew up in Castilian-speaking households and acquired the language *after* they became members of nationalist or regionalist groups. Language classes and free lessons were major recruitment vehicles for the Conceyu Bable during the 1970s.

The development of a “pan-Celtic” ideology in Asturias has earlier roots, but its modern manifestation really expanded after the popularization of the *Nueu Canciu Astur* folk music movement from 1976 onwards, which was heavily influenced by Irish folk music.

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Conceyu Bable, “Los anicios étnicos d'Asturies,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 1 (ochobre 1976): 4-6; Conceyu Bable, “Los anicios étnicos d'Asturies.”

<sup>275</sup> From my conversations with various Asturian linguists (Ramón d'Andrés and Xulio Viejo, among others) there are no traces of pre-Latin Gaelic languages left in Asturias other than a few place names, names of plants and animals, and the like.

PWZ field notes, September 2008.

Although the promotion of Celtic and pseudo-Celtic cultural symbols never became the organization's central purpose, it can be said that the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur focused on them to a greater degree than the Conceyu Bable, largely due to some of the personal interests of its founders. Dubardu Puente, in particular, was strongly attracted to the idea of a Celtic Asturias and subsequently co-founded the *Lliga Celta* in 1980, a cultural organization specifically dedicated to the study and promotion of a Celtic-centric vision of Asturian culture.<sup>276</sup> The CNA made frequent use of a Celtic aesthetic, most prominently in its flag, a yellow triskele on a light blue field (mimicking the coloration of the Asturian flag). Although the triskele is not exclusively a Celtic symbol, in Asturias (as well as elsewhere) it is popularly identified with Celtic art. Additionally, rural art and architecture in Asturias has conserved many pre-Roman forms, and triskeles can be found on a number of historic and ancient buildings in the region, most prominently the iconic *horru*, a traditional farm building used for storage elevated on four pillars.<sup>277</sup> Indeed, both the Conceyu Bable and the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* derived their logos from similar decorative patterns.

### Respectable Regionalism: The 1977 *Unidad Regionalista* Election Campaign

At the same time, the Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies moved further towards a

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<sup>276</sup> Discussed further in Chapter 3.

Puente Fernández, Interview by author; Xesús López Pacios, Interview by author (Oviedo: 2009-04-13). Xesús López Pacios, "Historia de la Lliga Celta d'Asturies (Unpublished Report)," (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de Xesús López Pacios, s/f (prob late 1990s-early2000s)).

<sup>277</sup> *Hórreo* in Castilian.

regionalist position. In late 1976, the party issued an “Autonomy Manifesto” (*Manifestu d'Autonomía*) that mixed economic and cultural arguments in favor of an “autonomy that serves the interests of workers, laborers, professionals, small and medium business owners, and intellectuals. An autonomy that serves all who live in Asturias, from wherever they come, Asturians by birth or adoption.”<sup>278</sup> This document clearly connects the increasing involvement of the MCA in the Asturianista movement by citing the *bable nes escueles* march as “the start of a wide popular campaign in favor of autonomy and against all the impediments that the Right and the reformist Left are creating.”<sup>279</sup> Additionally, the MCA exhibits some the same worry about Asturias being left behind in the new asymmetric autonomy structure being hashed out between the major parties in Madrid, claiming that the Socialist and Communist Parties' lack of pressure for autonomy created an upcoming constitutional compromise that “in effect, made a true autonomy impossible for Asturias.”<sup>280</sup> This (well-grounded) fear that Asturias lacked the political muscle in Madrid to secure a level

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<sup>278</sup> “Una AUTONOMÍA que sirva a los intereses de los trabajaiores, de los llabraores, de los profesioanles, de los pequeños y medianos empresarios, de los inteletuales. Una AUTONOMÍA que sirva a toos los que vivan n'Asturies, proceden de onde proceden, asturianos d'orixen o adoción (sic).” Capitalization in original.

O.C.E. (B.R.); P.C.E. (VIII y IX); M.C.A.; P.C.O.E.; y P.C.T.A., “Manifestu d'Autonomía,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, s/f (probably late 1976 or early 1977)).

<sup>279</sup> “La manifestación de dí 23 de Xunu (incorrect date in original) tién que ser el entamu duna amplia campaña popular a favor de l'AUTONOMÍA y escontra de toos los impedimentos que la drecha y la izquierda reformista tan creándo-i.” Capitalization in original

ibid.

<sup>280</sup> “Resuelta especialmente negativa l'atitú de los partíos mayoritarios d'izquierdes – el Partido Socialista Obrero Español y el Partido Comunista de España – que, durante toos estos meses, negáron-se a presionar, mediante movilizaciones populares, en favor de l'autonomía....mientras los sos representantes nel Congresu tan paztando (sic) coles fuerces de la drecha y aprobando una Constitución que, de fechu, fai imposible una verdadera autonomía p'Asturies.”

ibid.



of independence comparable to that of its neighbors was increasingly evidenced both in the editorials and political cartoons published by cultural groups such as the Conceyu Bable but also in the slogans and political manifestos of the political parties that were beginning to become more involved in the Asturianista movement. The winter of 1976-77 saw a qualitative change in the demands of the regionalist and nationalist Left in Asturias. As the Transition progressed, their demands became more specific. No longer were militants rather vaguely demanding “autonomy” for Asturias; they began to agitate for a particular type and degree of autonomous self-government.

Soon afterwards, the *Bloque Asturiano de Izquierda* (Asturian Leftist Block), a coalition between the MCA and a two smaller parties, *Reconstrucción Socialista* and *Oposición de Izquierda*),<sup>281</sup> began tentative discussions about creating a regionalist electoral coalition for the upcoming general elections with members of the Conceyu Bable, Pedro de Silva and the Partido Socialista Popular, the Christian syndicate *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO), prominent Leftist lawyer Antonio Masip Hidalgo, the *Partido de los Trabajadores de España* (Party of Spanish Workers), and independent members of the regionalist Left. This culminated in the February 15, 1977 signing of a manifesto in which the participants (now called the Managing Committee) proposed to “promote the formation of a unitary, regional, and

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<sup>281</sup> Originally a coalition between the MCA and Reconstrucción Socialista, the OI soon joined. See Movimiento Comunista de Asturias y Reconstrucción Socialista de Asturias, “Comunicado del Bloque Asturiano de Izquierda,” (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, s/f (probably mid 1976)); Bloque Asturiano de Izquierda, “Comunicado de prensa - sin título,” (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, s/f (probably mid-late 1976)).

democratic candidacy; from this point, [they] expressed [their] willingness to open a dialog with all of the rest of the progressive forces of the region in search of the necessary unity.”<sup>282</sup>

The founding document of what would soon become known as *Unidad Regionalista* (Regionalist Unity, also known by its Asturian name *Unidá Rexonalista*) was signed with names and DNI (national identity card) numbers by all three Conceyu Bable founders, Cheni Uría (MCA), Pedro de Silva (President of the Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias), Antonio Masip, and Aida Fuentes Concheso (USO), to cite some of the more notable names listed.

The Conceyu Bable, as a cultural association and not a political party, was not formally a member of the electoral coalition. However, its heavy involvement was never doubted by either the coalition members or the electorate to which they attempted to appeal. Indeed, Unidad Regionalista's association with the Conceyu Bable was one of the ways in which it established its legitimacy as a genuinely regionalist political option. In addition to the presence of Arias, the Conceyu Bable's president, on the election list,<sup>283</sup> the Conceyu Bable helped to organize (directly or through the participation of prominent members such as Sánchez Vicente, who was on the ballot as a member of the PSP) a series of conferences, seminars, and political meetings with Unidad Regionalista (usually represented by Antonio

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<sup>282</sup> “*Los firmantes de este Manifiesto nos proponemos impulsar la formación de una candidatura unitaria, regional y democrática; ya desde ahora, expresamos nuestra voluntad de abrir un diálogo con todas las demás fuerzas progresistas de la región en busca de la necesaria unidad.*”

Comisión Gestora para una candidatura unitaria democrática y regionalista, "Manifiesto," (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1977-02-15).

<sup>283</sup> He was in the ninth position.

Masip, Aida Fuentes, or the MCA) in the months leading up to the elections. Talks were held on topics such as "Asturias before the elections,"<sup>284</sup> "Electoral Systems and Methods",<sup>285</sup> "Language and Region,"<sup>286</sup> and "Regionalism Today,"<sup>287</sup> to list a few.

The candidacy was never promoted as a party coalition because it was felt that the great appeal of the party was that its themes of democracy, unity, and regionalism were broad enough to attract a wide sector of society that the participants by themselves would be unable to reach.<sup>288</sup> Thus, the prominent inclusion of party names (primarily from the radical Left) would likely turn off more Centrist and conservative voters. Unidad Regionalista never pretended to seriously contest the general elections. It was a foregone conclusion that either the Center-Right party of Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez, the *Unión del Centro Democrático* (UCD), or one of the two larger workers' parties, the Socialists or Communists, enjoying the advantage of a loyal trade union vote, would win the most seats for Asturias in the new

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<sup>284</sup> "Juan José Sánchez Vicente comunica la celebración de una conferencia por Antonio Masip Hidalgo sobre "Asturias delante les elecciones", en el Instituto de Bachillerato de Infiesto, el día 4-3-77 a las 19'15h," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20534, 1977-03-02).

Interestingly, Masip is erroneously (according to him in 2009) listed as a member of the Movimiento Comunista de España by the civil government.

<sup>285</sup> "Juan José Sánchez Vicente comunica la celebración de una conferencia por José Girón Garrote sobre "Sistemas y métodos electorales", en el Instituto de Bachillerato de Infiesto, el día 11-3-77 a las 19'15h," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20534, 1977-03-02).

<sup>286</sup> "Manuel Ángel González Zapico, Asociación Cultural "Conceyu Bable", comunica la celebración de una conferencia sobre "Lengua y Región" por Xosé Lluís García Arias, en la Caja de Ahorros el día 23-4-77," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20533, 1977-04-19).

<sup>287</sup> Amelia Valcárcel, Conceyu Bable member (and later president), participated in the meeting, which was organized by USO, the Christian Union participating in Unidad Regionalista.

"Juan Muñoz Galiano comunica la celebración de una reunión con coloquio sobre El Regionalismo Hoy, en el Polideportivo de Blimea, el día 23-5-77 a las 19'30h," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20534, 1977-05-23).

<sup>288</sup> Comisión Gestora para una candidatura unitaria demócrata y regionalista, "Propuesta al PSP," (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1977 marzo).

constitutive legislature in Madrid. However, the regionalists believed that there was a real possibility that, “a strong vote for the Candidacy will make these parties....have to subsequently change their position.”<sup>289</sup> Thus, from the beginning, the strategy was always of publicly demonstrating the appeal of regionalist politics to enough voters to force the major parties to adopt some of Unidad Regionalista's program. In theory, this would work much as the Greens introduced a mild discourse about environmentalism and legislation about recycling into the European and American political mainstream during the latter decades of the twentieth century.

Early on in the campaign,<sup>290</sup> however, the Partido Socialista Popular began to have misgivings about whether it might not be better for the party to attempt to run independently in Asturias. As an Asturian branch of a national party with well-known figures at both the national (*el viejo profesor*, Enrique Tierno Galván) and Asturian (Pedro de Silva) level, the PSP decided that it was unwilling to sublimate its identity in such a unified project, but would only participate in a coalition that gave equal standing to the component parties and the name of the unified candidacy.<sup>291</sup> Additionally, there is some evidence to

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<sup>289</sup> “Una votación fuerte de la Candidatura llevaría a que estos partidos....tuvieran que cambiar su posición posteriormente.”

ibid.

<sup>290</sup> The PSP never referred to the campaign officially as anything other than “the unitary, regional, and democratic candidacy.” Not once does the term “Unidad Regionalista” appear on PSP stationery, indicating that by late March 1977, the campaign had not yet been branded.

<sup>291</sup> See Comisión Gestora para una candidatura unitaria demócrata y regionalista, “Propuesta al PSP.”; Comité Ejecutivo Regional - Secretaria General - Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias, “Comunicado del Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias en relación con su presencia en la candidatura demócrata, unitaria, y regionalista,” (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1977-03-31); José Manuel Álvarez, José Luís Iglesias, y

suggest that an electoral calculation was made by the party leadership in Madrid, with Raúl Morodo (second in the national party hierarchy) arriving in Asturias with survey evidence that the party could win two seats on its own. As Asturias was allotted ten seats in the new Constitutional Cortes, this would mean gaining 20% of the vote. Gambling that the popularity of de Silva and Tierno Galván would be sufficient, the Partido Socialista Popular estimated that it had no real need of Unidad Regionalista.<sup>292</sup> Thus, by mid-April, the Partido Socialista Popular had pulled out of the coalition, removing its single largest and most politically influential member.

One must remember that this was the buildup to the first free elections in Spain in 41 years;<sup>293</sup> the vast majority of the participants were very much stepping into the unknown. Estimating the strength (either absolute or relative) of the groups contesting the election was almost impossible via any method other than reading the press coverage or looking at the relative weight of propaganda. Given that pre-election polls were, literally, a foreign concept at the time, politics became as much a guessing game as it was strategic planning. Additionally, basing one's estimation of the strength of any political grouping on their public

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José Uría, "Del Comité Regional del Bloque Asturiano de Izquierda al Comité Ejecutivo Regional del Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias," (Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1977-04-01).

<sup>292</sup> I know of no surviving documentary evidence to support this thesis, but it is widely believed amongst the other members of the coalition, in particular Antonio Masip and the members of the MCA as well as amongst Conceyu Nacionalista Astur members who participated as individuals.

Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author; Uría Ríos, Interview by author. Xosé Lluís Carmona, Ignaci Llope, Patrick Zimmerman, "Nacionalismu asturianu na transición," in *Tertulia Pachín de Melás*, ed. Xelu Neira (Xixón 2009-04-16).

<sup>293</sup> The elections of January 1936 were the last ever held by the Spanish Second Republic and were one of the catalysts for the armed uprising that July.

profile was inexact at best, as most political parties attempted to exaggerate their own strength and support at every opportunity while some (such as the MCA) were still technically illegal and therefore had a very limited public presence. Even the Communist Party was still illegal until April 9, 1977, although it could not really be considered “clandestine” after the death of Franco. By the time of legalization, most of the Communist Party's members had publicly announced their affiliation, and the General Secretary, Santiago Carrillo, traveled with near-complete freedom through Spain.

As the PSP was pulling out of Unidad Regionalista, many of the members of the CNA, not yet legally able to participate in the elections of June 1977, began to participate at least passively in the campaign. Even after the split with the PSP in April, there was still a good deal of optimism surrounding the campaign, in particular because of the continued presence of Antonio Masip in the electoral list. From an early point, the Movimiento Comunista put forth his name as the “ideal candidate” to head the party list, as he had “a Leftist image that would not appeal only to the working class but also to the rest of the population,” and would be the only choice “if it [was] true that [Unidad Regionalista wished] to obtain a decent vote that would out-perform the PSOE and the PCE.”<sup>294</sup> In the end, Masip was placed second on the electoral lists, at least partially because of his own misgivings

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<sup>294</sup> “Antonio Massip (sic) es la persona idónea para encabezar la Candidatura Regionalista.” “...tener una imagen de izquierda que llegue no solo a la clase obrera sino al resto del pueblo.” “...si es de verdad queremos obtener una votación decente por encima del PSOE y del PCE.”

José Manuel y José Uría Álvarez, “Comunicado - sin título,” (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, s/f (probably abril 1977)).

about the political future of the candidacy,<sup>295</sup> although he continued to participate actively in Unidad Regionalista, both through public appearances and debates and through editorials in the local newspapers.

The election campaign was relatively short, lasting just over 3 months, from early March through June. Unidad Regionalista's propaganda, to achieve maximum diffusion and to present a "respectable" electoral profile, was written entirely in Castilian, with the exception of some slogans, well-known catch phrases such as "*¡Puxa Asturias!*," and the material produced by some of the coalition's individual components (primarily the MCA and the participation on an individual basis by militants of the Conceyu Bable and CNA). Interestingly, the campaign based much of its argument in favor of a regionalist solution on a critique of the managed and reformist nature of the Transition. Unidad Regionalista, still calling itself the awkward-sounding "*Candidatura Unitaria Regionalista*" (Unitary Regionalist Candidacy) first published its political program in the pamphlet "*Al pueblo asturiano*" (To the Asturian People). In this, the coalition claimed that "the current government's reform policies [had] brought [Asturias] towards a situation where the same people who exercised power under *franquismo* still [possessed] control over it and where the centralism that [had] oppressed Asturias during the last forty years [would] be maintained, causing the Region to greatly deteriorate economically and culturally, a suffering borne more than anyone by the

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<sup>295</sup> Masip, Interview by author.

popular classes.”<sup>296</sup> This indicated a realization that the Transition in Spain from a forty-year dictatorship was to some degree sacrificing change and popular participation in the democratic process for stability and the cooperation of the still-powerful remnants of the old regime. A popular disapproval with the post-Franco political consensus, often referred to as *el desencanto* (the disenchantment), did not really become generalized until after the October 27, 1977 Moncloa Pacts formalized the consensus between the Socialists, Communists, and Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez González to discard the possibility of revolutionary change. Thus, the evidence that by April 1977 this kind of realization and dismissal of the way the constitutional process was unfolding already existed amongst the Asturianistas is a bit surprising.<sup>297</sup> It is even possible that this rhetoric of marginalization or the seemingly constant fear of it exhibited by Asturian regionalists hampered their electoral success. If the militants themselves seemed to profess doubts about their ability to enact change through the electoral process, then it would seem logical that the public at large would have been less likely to cast their votes for such a project. While the discourse against “wasted votes” that has become a powerful way to marginalize minor political forces did not really appear in

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<sup>296</sup> “La política de reformas que aplica el actual Gobierno, nos lleva hacia una situación en la que el control del poder lo seguirán detentando quienes lo ejercieron bajo el franquismo y en la que se mantendrá el centralismo que ha oprimido a Asturias durante los últimos cuarenta años, causando a la Región un gran deterioro económico y cultural, sufrido con más rigor que nadie por las clases populares.”

Candidatura Unitaria Regionalista, “Necesidad de una candidatura regional,” in *Al pueblo asturiano* (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría, 1977 abril): 1.

<sup>297</sup> The April date is a conjectural. By the time of *Al pueblo asturiano*'s publication, the PSP had already left the coalition (placing the date after April 1<sup>st</sup>), and the name Unidad Regionalista (adopted in early May) was not yet used.



Spain until much more recently,<sup>298</sup> the effect of this kind of electoral pragmatism clearly favored the major opposition parties in Asturias at the expense of groups such as the anarchist CNT (advocating abstention from the elections for the constitutional legislature) and marginal parties such as Unidad Regionalista.

Unidad Regionalista, however, did differ from later nationalist and regionalist electoral groups and from the political goals of the Conceyu Bable in that it focused its attention primarily on the devolution of political competencies, economic solutions to deindustrialization and the decline of Asturian agriculture, and civil rights. In the campaign's 9-point political program, Asturian culture and the revitalization of Asturianu are relegated to item number 5 and listed on the last page of Unidad Regionalista's campaign pamphlet.<sup>299</sup> Unidad Regionalista did not particularly need to focus primarily on cultural themes to secure the votes of most of the members of the Conceyu Bable or the CNA, given that they were one of only two regionalist electoral options (the other being Pedro de Silva's PSP). Additionally, the active participation of prominent members of both organizations clearly established the candidacy's Asturianista *bona fides* from the start. Both the Conceyu Bable's current president, Arias, and its future president, Amalia Valcárcel Bernaldo de Quirós (president 1981-3 and Lluís Xabell Álvarez's spouse) were members of Unidad Regionalista's Control Commission for the final leg of the campaign.<sup>300</sup> Thus assured of the

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<sup>298</sup> For example, *Andecha Astur*'s explicit campaign against the "useful vote." See p336-7.

<sup>299</sup> Candidatura Unitaria Regionalista, "Programa político mínimo."

<sup>300</sup> Unidad Regionalista, "Compromiso de base de la candidatura de Unidad Regionalista," (Oviedo: Archivo

Asturianista vote, the coalition focused the majority of its attention on broader economic and political goals. Indeed, there are only two places in Unidad Regionalista's campaign literature where the language is specifically mentioned. First, the campaign points out that "special attention should be paid to linguistic recuperation, and it therefore seems necessary to make teaching of Bable obligatory in areas where it is most used, offering it as an elective course in the rest of the Region."<sup>301</sup> The campaign then goes on to demand regional control over its cultural heritage in order to "revitalize [Asturian] folklore and [the Asturian] language."<sup>302</sup>

Thus, while Unidad Regionalista did propose government promotion of Asturianu, particularly in education, its concern with linguistic and cultural issues was secondary to its much broader conception of regionalism. The candidacy focused much more of its effort on staking out its political position in favor of decentralization of power and the creation of a democratically-elected mid-level administrative apparatus, focused on government at the municipal (*concejo*) and regional level, as opposed to the *franquista* "Regional Deputation", appointed by the national government in Madrid. Accordingly, it focused much of its attention on the ending of the economic dependence of the region on the central

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Personal de José (Cheni) Uría, 1977-05-18).

<sup>301</sup> "Atención especial merece la recuperación lingüística para lo cual parece necesario la obligatoriedad de la enseñanza del bable en las zonas donde conserva mayor vitalidad, dejándolo como materia optativa en el resto de la Región."

Candidatura Unitaria Regionalista, "Programa político mínimo." 9.

<sup>302</sup> "Para que nuestro patrimonio artístico y cultural no se deteriore más allá de la triste situación en lo que dejó el viejo régimen, se impone el control racional de todo el legado artístico, arqueológico, y documental, así como la revitalización de nuestro folklore y de nuestra lengua."

ibid.

government (in particular the INI, National Institute of Industry) and the concession of regional control over the publicly run mining and metallurgical industries.<sup>303</sup> It was also strongly in favor of the more “democratic” system of subordinating the executive branch of government to the popularly elected Cortes, reversing the dynamic of the Franco dictatorship. Additionally, Unidad Regionalista campaigned in favor of lowering the age of legal majority to 18 years, legalization of divorce and civil marriage, the ending of unemployment in the region through government investment, environmental protection, women's equality “in all areas”, the right for a woman to interrupt pregnancy (although in a seeming contradiction, they specifically did not favor abortion), and restoration of the region's deteriorating agricultural landscape.<sup>304</sup>

To borrow an analytical concept from Victor Turner, the Transition was a contest over the meaning of several generally accepted “root paradigms,” symbolic concepts over which all actors in the political struggle (or, as Turner puts it, “social drama”) jostle in order to gain public and general acceptance of their definition of the paradigm's meaning.<sup>305</sup> There was a general consensus amongst almost all of the political forces active in Asturias during the Transition (the *Falange* and other far-Right groups excepted) that “democracy” was the desired outcome of the new constitutional order. However, there was strong disagreement

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<sup>303</sup> They primarily focused on the large state-run companies Hulleras del Norte S.A. (HUNOSA) and Empresa Nacional Siderúrgica S.A. (ENSIDESA, now part of Arcelor-Mittal).

<sup>304</sup> Candidatura Unitaria Regionalista, “Programa político mínimo.”

<sup>305</sup> Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974). 63-68.

over what democracy or democratic government actually consisted of. While it was universally agreed that any future political system would need to be legitimated by “the people,” there was a great deal of debate over what form this legitimation would take. The reformist elements of the old regime, most visibly Suárez and Manuel Fraga, largely wanted a situation where the Spanish people were “represented,” but that actual power would continue to be held and managed by an (ideally) benevolent and well-educated elite. To the Communists and Socialists, it meant the full participation of working-class parties (representing a quite different definition of “the people”) in the new political system.

It is no surprise, then, that the idea of “democracy” is invoked constantly in Unidad Regionalista's 1977 electoral campaign. Indeed, the word appears no fewer than 6 times in the first 21 lines of the campaign pamphlet.<sup>306</sup> The Asturian regionalists simultaneously questioned the democratic credentials of the members of the old regime participating in the political process, such as Suárez and Fraga, and argued that democracy was impossible without strong protections for equal rights and liberties both on the individual level and amongst the various regions making up the new Spanish state. In effect, Unidad Regionalista, like many of the other participants in the Constitutional elections of 1977, made the argument that most of the elements of their political program were necessary for any “true” democracy. To the Asturianistas, any devolution of power would be unequal, and therefore undemocratic, if it was restricted to only a few regions.

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<sup>306</sup> Candidatura Unitaria Regionalista, “Necesidad de una candidatura regional.”

As Laura Eddles has argued, there was a strong pressure during the Transition amongst most Spanish voters (Asturians included) to avoid any hint of extremism or political polarization.<sup>307</sup> The situation in Euskadi, with the total rejection of ETA and many Basque nationalists of the new Autonomy structure, was the notable exception to this non-polarizing, non-violent ethic. With the Spanish Civil War still looming large in memory, both public and individual, almost every political group in Asturias during these first elections cultivated an air of respectability and non-violence. Much of the political struggle of the Transition in Asturias was conducted thus on a symbolic level; in essence, politics during the Transition became an attempt to shift what was considered normal and acceptable to match one's own political program. The parties that were most successful at appealing to the center during this period accumulated the most votes, and none was more successful at this than the Socialist Party.

In the end, Unidad Regionalista was unable to match its high (and unrealistic) hopes of outpolling the Socialist and Communist Parties, gaining 11,148 votes, only 1.93% of those valid. The Partido Socialista Popular also fell far short of its pre-campaign estimation that it would be able to win two seats running alone, winning only 42,398 votes, a mere 7.34% and not even good enough for one seat from Asturias. Nationally, the PSP also had a disappointing campaign, gaining only 4.46% of the vote and winning only six seats in the

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<sup>307</sup> Eddles, *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain: The Transition to Democracy after Franco*.

Cortes.<sup>308</sup> The two Asturian regionalist campaigns ran on very similar platforms, unsurprisingly given their initial plans to run as a unified coalition. The PSP emphasized the political devolution of power more (as opposed to Unidad Regionalista's focus on economics and equal rights), but it also called for Asturias to be granted control over its economic and cultural administration. Somewhat ironically, given the Conceyu Bable's supposedly greater influence over the policies of Unidad Regionalista through Arias and Valcárcel's presence on the Control Committee, the PSP's initial campaign program actually contained much more emphasis on linguistic rights than did that of Unidad Regionalista. The Partido Socialista Popular, in which Sánchez Vicente held enough influence to be included on its list for candidates for the Senate in 1977,<sup>309</sup> included a call not only for the teaching and support of Asturianu but also for "co-official status as soon as the conditions for its re-implantation occur."<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Resultados electorales. Congreso de los Diputados junio 1977. Total.," <http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultado.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=0&cdEleccion=2&anio=1977&mes=6&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Congreso+de+los+Diputados&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=14:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=99&cdProvincia=0&descripcion=total>. Accessed 2010-09-20.

<sup>309</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Resultados electorales. Congreso de los Diputados junio 1977. Asturias.," <http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultadoSenado.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=1&cdEleccion=3&anio=1977&mes=6&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Senado&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=00:00&horaAvance2=00:00&cdCCAA=3&cdProvincia=99&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+ASTURIAS>. Accessed 2010-09-20.

<sup>310</sup> "9º - *La autonomía cultural, que exige:...c) La enseñanza y el fomento de la lengua de la región, y, tan pronto concurren condiciones de reimplantación, la cooficialidad de la misma.*"

Comité Ejecutivo Regional - Secretaria General - Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias, "10 bases para la autonomía de Asturias (borrador que propone como materia de discusión pública, el Comité Ejecutivo del Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias - P.S.P.A.)," (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1977

Even had they remained combined as Unidad Regionalista, the hypothetical coalition would still have fallen short of the 10% necessary, totaling 53,546 votes between the two of them, or 9.30% of the vote.<sup>311</sup> Of course, a hypothetical difference of 0.7% would have fallen tantalizingly short, and this “what if” counter-factual scenario has weighed heavily on Asturianista militants in subsequent years, treated by some as a myth of original sin or foundational failure to help explain (and in some senses excuse) subsequent electoral frustrations. This was a major topic of conversation at a 2009 colloquium in which I participated with Xosé Lluís Carmona (a member of the CNA who supported the campaign) and Ignaci Llope (a prominent student activist during the 1980s), both now members of the nationalist party Unidá.<sup>312</sup> Additionally, a number of the militants I interviewed focused on the failed electoral campaigns of both the PSP and Unidad Regionalista as a key point of inflection in the history of Asturian nationalism.<sup>313</sup>

### **The Possibilities of the Unknown**

The 1977 electoral campaigns of both Unidad Regionalista and the Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias were both considered failures, given their pre-electoral hopes of gaining

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<sup>311</sup> All election data for Asturias is drawn from the statistical branch of the Asturian regional government. Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), <http://www.sadei.com>. Accessed 2010-09-20.

<sup>312</sup> See Carmona, “Nacionalismu asturianu na transición.”

<sup>313</sup> Álvarez, Interview by author; Carmona, Interview by author; García Arias, Interview by author; Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author; Puente Fernández, Interview by author; de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Uría Ríos, Interview by author.

access to the constitutional legislature. However, from a historical perspective, the fact that less than three years after the Conceyu Bable's first publications and the founding of Pedro de Silva's *Democracia Socialista Asturiana*<sup>314</sup> almost 10% of the population cast votes for parties with distinctly regionalist (if not really nationalist) programs represented a remarkable political achievement. A major reason behind Asturianism's increasing political influence and public prominence during this time was that the new movement benefited greatly from the fact that it was a relative unknown. Particularly in the period of rapid political realignment immediately following Franco's death and before the consolidation of the new constitutional monarchy, the relative strength of nearly all the political groups was an unknown. Without any elections prior to 1978, no remotely objective measurement existed to gauge the strength of even the major national players such as the Socialists or Suárez's UCD. The early Transition was characterized by a great deal of guesswork, with political decisions informed by extremely rough impressions of the popularity of both one's own group and that of one's rivals, usually based solely on a group or party's public profile. Perhaps the most important effect of the unknown nature of nationalist support was that the politicians of the major parties had to take such sentiment into their calculations because they had no idea into what it could potentially evolve. Thus, the Asturian branches of the Socialist and Communist Parties adopted an open attitude towards regionalist demands, although they did so without ever committing themselves.

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<sup>314</sup> The precursor to the PSP of Asturias, discussed in Chapter 1.



This helps explain some of the disastrous campaign miscalculations that occurred during the 1977 election campaign. The decision by the PSP to run alone in Asturias, rather than remaining part of Unidad Regionalista, was based on a vast over-estimation of its support base in Asturias (and Spain) by the party leadership in Madrid. Having estimated that the party could win two seats in the lower house of the new Parliament, the *Congreso de los Diputados*, the PSP was left with none and the defeat directly contributed to its absorption by the Socialist Party the next year.<sup>315</sup> Nationally, this kind of faulty political assessment caused the country's shock by the relative success of the Socialists, who won the second-most seats behind Suárez's UCD, and the poor performance of the Communists, who most people had seen as the major threat to the maintenance of the franquista political order.

Asturianismu, in the first years of the Transition, was able to organize very public displays of support and benefited greatly from the presence of analogous nationalist revivals throughout the Spanish Periphery. Nationalism and the debates surrounding cultural revival were very much in the public mindset and seemed to dominate the political debates of the period, in Asturias as elsewhere in Spain. The Spanish Transition is a good example of how a given political movement whose strength is somewhat ambiguous has the ability to be treated as more important than is justified by its membership numbers. As Lluís Xabell Álvarez later

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<sup>315</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

reflected, the Asturianistas “were stronger before [they] were counted.”<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> “*Fuimos más fuertes antes de que fuéramos contados.*”  
Álvarez, Interview by author.

### Chapter 3 Adapting to the State of the Autonomies (1977-1981)

The period between the first democratic elections and the stabilization of the new post-*franquista* political system after 1982 was one of adjustment for the Asturianista movement as a whole and a time of divergence within the nationalist and regionalist Left. Echoing a later trend of increasing fragmentation (in particular, the 1990s), the general unity that had characterized the early days of the Asturianista movement began to break up. Since 1974, with the exception of a few people such as Pedro de Silva, Antonio Masip, and Cheni Uría, almost all of the major figures of both the birth of Asturian political regionalism and nationalism and of the cultural and linguistic revival were also members of the Conceyu Bable. However, it is clear that, beginning in late 1976, the individual groups within the Conceyu Bable began to go their separate ways, although they mostly kept their membership within the cultural association. Both Sánchez Vicente and Dubardu Puente both illustrate this trend, never officially leaving the Conceyu Bable, but diverting the majority of their time and effort to other forms of political activity.<sup>317</sup>

Since Unidad Regionalista had failed to secure enough support in the elections to gain access to the Cortes (or the pre-autonomic government appointed by it), the Asturianistas were forced to pin their hopes of a high level of autonomy in cultural and linguistic policy on indirect forms of pressure. The first elections of 1977 solidified the Asturian political landscape. The Unidad Regionalista coalition broke apart after the

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<sup>317</sup> Puente Fernández, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

elections, leaving the MCA left to pay for most of the campaign costs.<sup>318</sup> Indeed, the election was seen as such a disaster that it prompted a severe self-evaluation within the Movimientu Comunista's leadership. In its internal circular evaluating the party's performance in the 1977 elections, the MCA reflected, positively, that it "had contributed to the creation of a regional political conscience. That which until recently was a minority phenomenon, today can be said to have begun to extend itself to diverse sectors of the masses" and that its "candidacy awoke enormous sympathies that, although they were not translated into votes, constituted an important political capital for the future."<sup>319</sup> Most importantly, the MCA recognized that the Unidad Regionalista campaign "obligated....other centrist democratic political forces to incorporate regionalist approaches in their programs and declarations,"<sup>320</sup> precisely the goal of a political movement with little realistic chance of achieving a majority. However, the MCA concluded that the election had achieved none of the goals set out before the election. Most importantly, it failed to win even one seat in the new Cortes, and it determined that this failure was largely due to the fact that, "in general, the political content of regionalism has not been well explained; the immediate problems of the masses were not well linked with regional oppression and we failed to tie the regional struggle with the fight

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<sup>318</sup> Uría Ríos, Interview by author.

<sup>319</sup> "En los mítines y en la propaganda hemos contribuido a crear conciencia política regional. Lo que hasta hace poco tiempo era un fenómeno minoritario, hoy puede decirse que ha comenzado a extenderse a diversos sectores de las masas." "Nuestra Candidatura despertó enormes simpatías que, aunque no se tradujeron en votos, constituyen un importante capital político de cara al futuro."

Grupo de Eilao Pro Defensa da Nosa Lingua, "Solicitud a la Academia de la Llingua Asturiana." 3.

<sup>320</sup> "Hemos obligado, al mismo tiempo, a que otras fuerzas políticas democráticas con planteamientos centralistas, tuvieran que incorporar a sus programas y a sus declaraciones planeamientos regionales." *ibid.*

for greater democracy and socialism.”<sup>321</sup> Worse, the party leadership went on to critique that “the regionalism of the Candidacy resorted, because of this, to superficial elements, a bit clichéd, unilaterally exaggerating the use of elements such as Bable, etc.”<sup>322</sup> The MCA explained the lack of electoral support for Unidad Regionalista in thus that “all this impeded the ability of regionalism to appear to the masses as a serious option, mature and with sufficient credibility.”<sup>323</sup>

Some survivors of the coalition attempted to resurrect it as a cultural association in October under the name *Unidad Regionalista Asturiana*, but the new association lasted less than a year, with much of its purpose of cultural and political agitation already fulfilled by either the Conceyu Bable or the CNA.<sup>324</sup> The Socialists were now ensconced as the principal opposition force in the region, with a slim advantage (0.91%) over the center-right UCD. Both won four seats in the Cortes, significantly outstripping Manuel Fraga's conservative *Alianza Popular* and the Communist Party (one seat each). More importantly than the number of deputies sent to the Cortes, the election had the effect of clearly gauging the relative political strength of each of the political groups in Asturias. In the new, post-

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<sup>321</sup> “En general, no se ha explicado bien todo el contenido político del regionalismo; no se ha acertado a ligar los problemas inmediatos de las masas con la opresión regional y a enlazar la lucha regional con la lucha por la ampliación de la democracia y el socialismo.”

ibid. 4

<sup>322</sup> “El regionalismo de la Candidatura recayó mucho, por eso, en aspectos superficiales, un poco tópicos, exagerando unilateralmente el uso de elementos como el bable, etc.”

ibid.

<sup>323</sup> “Todo eso impidió que el regionalismo apareciera ante las masas como una opción seria, madura con credibilidad suficiente.”

ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Unidad Regionalista Asturiana, “Nota de Unidad Regionalista sobre su constitución,” (Oviedo: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1977 octubre).

electoral environment, the Asturian nationalist and regionalist parties seemed suddenly less threatening to the electoral chances of the major parties. This, in turn, robbed them of much of their ability to bring pressure on the majority parties as they did not, in fact, hold enough votes to potentially swing any election in the near future in favor of one of the larger parties.

Thus, the problem presented to both politically active cultural associations like the Conceyu Bable and vote-seeking parties like the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur or the Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies was how to adjust to the new political order. With the first elections of what was generally accepted by the Spanish people as a new and democratic state rather than a continuation of the dictatorship, the dynamics of political opposition changed dramatically. No longer would a group agitating for political change be by default as a force for democracy or against repression. Indeed, for a large sector of the Asturian public (most importantly, those who had voted for the Socialists or UCD), any such attitude had the danger of appearing as quite the opposite, dangerously radical. To the average Asturian, complaints about the reform taking place from the Left and the Asturianistas seemed to put at risk the newly won individual freedoms of the first years of the Transition. The military was still highly *franquista*, and made it known that it would react against any threat to what most of the officer corps saw as its primary mission: maintaining the unity of Spain as a nation-state. The specter of a violent reaction against even the limited and managed change of the Transition was an ever-present threat during the late 1970s, with

plots to re-instate a *franquista* order at times openly discussed.<sup>325</sup> This air of *golpismo*, as this feeling of impending coup d'état was called, culminated in the February 23, 1981 coup attempt led by Lieutenant General Jaime Milans del Bosch and Guardia Civil Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero Molina.

The content of the future constitution became clarified over the course of 1978 and it was approved later that year (both in the Cortes and through a general referendum).<sup>326</sup> This had the effect of focusing the demands of the Asturian nationalist and regionalist groups, which quickly shifted from demands for autonomy to focus on achieving the maximum amount of self-rule within the structure of the new State of the Autonomies. By late 1977, the fact that Asturias was going to be granted such a statute was almost a foregone conclusion. However, the Constitutional draft being debated in the Cortes was already moving towards an asymmetrical federal structure, granting relatively high levels of home rule for the constitutionally defined “historic nationalities” of Euskadi, Catalunya, and Galicia while relegating the other 14 new “autonomous communities” to a secondary status with limited provisions for self-rule. Article 151's “fast-track autonomy” was designed to apply to the three regions which had been granted autonomy statutes under the Second Republic (or pre-autonomy status, in the case of Galicia), and Article 143's “slow-track

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<sup>325</sup> For a discussion of *golpismo*, see Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*.

<sup>326</sup> Approved in the Cortes on October 31, 1978, by a public referendum on December 6<sup>th</sup>, and signed by King Juan Carlos I on December 27<sup>th</sup>. It went into effect with its publication in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* on December 29, 1978.

“Constitución Española de 27 de diciembre de 1978,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado: Gaceta de Madrid*, no. 311 (1978-12-29): 29313-424.

autonomy” was, in theory, to allow certain other regions to gain a similar level of self-government, but at a much more gradual pace. Neither article contained a list of specific autonomous communities that would be eligible to enact its provisions. Instead, Asturias’ future degree of Autonomy was to be decided by the negotiations within the new “Pre-autonomous” government between the four major parties that won seats in the first elections: the Socialists, UCD, Communists, and AP.<sup>327</sup> Minor parties such as the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur and cultural associations such as the Conceyu Bable were largely excluded from the day-to-day negotiations, although there was a period of public review and reaction before the draft was submitted to the Cortes in Madrid to be approved as a new organic (constitutional) law.

The Conceyu Bable exhibited a fundamental misunderstanding of the constitutional process. As early as the February 1977 *Cartafueyu so'l rexonalismu*, the Asturianista organization conceived of the construction of the future autonomy statute as a negotiation between *Asturias* and the *Spanish State*. Firstly, it described the proposed statute as a “negotiating framework with the rest of the countries of the State and with the State itself,”<sup>328</sup> rather than the much more limited mechanism for the devolution of power that it became (it would not be significantly modified until 1999).<sup>329</sup> The Conceyu Bable went on to call

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<sup>327</sup> Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, ed. *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, vol. 1 (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981).

<sup>328</sup> “*Creación d’un Estatutu Autonomía como marcu negicoaor* (sic) *colos demás países del Estáu y col mesmu Estáu.*” Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so'l rexonalismu.” 7.

<sup>329</sup> “Ley Orgánica 1/1999, de 5 de enero, de reforma de la Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de Estatuto de Autonomía del Principado de Asturias,” *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 7 (1999-01-08): 520-25.



for the “creation of a negotiating commission (*Xunta Xeneral del Principáu*) at the same time that the rest of the countries of the Spanish State begin the negotiation of their autonomies.”<sup>330</sup> Indeed, the hostile elements within the provisional government (primarily the UCD and the AP) saw the re-naming of the new Autonomous government (the Junta General / *Xunta Xeneral*) as a point of concession, not the prerequisite for the *beginning* of negotiations as implied by the Conceyu Bable’s statement.

Thus, it seems that, at least initially, the Asturianistas of the Conceyu Bable saw the construction of a new state as a bottom-up process through which each peripheral nationality within the Spanish State negotiated its position within the new “democratic” (decentralized) state, almost as if each were a foreign power at a diplomatic negotiating table. Even for the “historical nationalities,” a model where the Basque “people” (for example) were in some way direct architects of their autonomy statute (either in 1936 or in 1979). The Conceyu Bable seemed to fail to realize that, while popular movements can and did apply pressure to political groups in each of the peripheral nationalities, including Asturias, the negotiations determining the content of each autonomy statute would take place, not between “nations,” but rather between the political parties making up the Provisional governments. Thus, it was not the Basque people negotiating with Madrid over the concession of self-government to Euskadi, but rather the PNV negotiating with the local branches of the major political

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<sup>330</sup> “*Aniciu d’una commission negociaora (sic) (Xunta Xeneral del Principáu) pal mesmu momentu en que los demás países del Estáu Español entamen la negociación de les sós autonomíes.*”

Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so’l rexonalismu.”

parties that had emerged during the Transition, the UCD, PSOE, PCE, and AP.

More germane to the Conceyu Bable's immediate concerns, they did not seem to anticipate that the Asturian Autonomy Statute would be forged entirely within the four parties in the provisional government. That is to say, Asturian autonomy would mostly be determined locally in Oviedo. While the Asturianistas' failure to gain a more significant entry into that process through success in the June 1977 elections proved a critical failing, perhaps more important was the fact that they seemed to overlook the need quickly adapt to the new political landscape. The nationalist and regionalist organizations in Asturias maintained a critical stance towards each and every one of the parties that would determine the extent of Asturian autonomy, in spite of the fact that the official stance of the Communists and Socialists (the latter largely due to their absorption of the regionalist PSP) was in favor of "fast-track" autonomy for Asturias.<sup>331</sup> This simplistic view of the political process informed much of the Asturianistas' propaganda during the build-up to the Autonomy Statute. Seeing themselves as the mouthpiece of a widely-supported popular movement (based on the evidence of the *bable nes escueles* petition campaign and the attendance at Conceyu Bable-sponsored concerts rather than electoral results), the Conceyu Bable over the course of the period 1977-1981 constantly criticized the major parties for not including the Asturianista organizations in the process. This, unsurprisingly, did little to increase the likelihood that the Socialists or Communists would become more receptive to a

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<sup>331</sup> Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, ed. *El proceso autonómico asturiano*.

group that had been so recently shown to be rather impotent in the last election.

Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente's participation in the new government as a representative of the Socialist Party<sup>332</sup> was the major exception to the Asturianistas' general exclusion from the construction of the new Statute. Justifying his decision to remain as part of a minority regionalist bloc within the largely anti-regionalist PSOE rather than leave for the nationalist CNA (as did some of his former PSP companions such as Xosé Lluís Carmona), Sánchez Vicente was named President of the Cultural Commission of the Provincial Government (*Diputación Provincial*). From this position, he was able to negotiate for the inclusion of linguistic rights in the new Autonomy Statute, was a major factor in the creation of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*, and oversaw a (very small) budget for cultural subsidies. However, Sánchez Vicente and other regionalist politicians within the PSOE such as Pedro de Silva, Faustino Álvarez Álvarez, Xesús Cañedo, and Carlos Rubiera Tuya formed a minority, and these successes were often in the face of significant opposition from within their own party.<sup>333</sup> This eventually led to a gradual abandonment of the Socialist Party by many of its regionalist and (in the case of Sánchez Vicente, Rubiera, and Cañedo, at least) nationalist members.

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<sup>332</sup> After his integration into the PSOE along with the rest of the Partido Socialista Popular. Conversations about the merger began in late 1977, with the PSOE's general assembly approving the merger on October 12, 1977, the PSP approving the merger April 9, 1978, and the merger signed on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1978.

See "Hoy, congreso del PSOE histórico," *El País* [Madrid] 1977-10-09; "El congreso del PSP aprobará la unidad socialista," *El País* [Madrid] 1978-04-01; "Felipe González y Enrique Tierno anunciarán la unidad socialista," *El País* [Madrid] 1978-04-25; "Un PSOE reforzado," *El País* [Madrid] 1978-05-02; "Declaración de Unidad Socialista, «Voluntad de consolidar un gran partido de masas»,," *El País* [Madrid] 1978-05-02.

<sup>333</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author; Cañedo, Interview by author; Faustino Álvarez Álvarez, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-04-06 & 2009-04-20).

Largely due to the PSOE and PCE's inability to come to an agreement about a joint Left-Center government, the two parties effectively ceded the presidency of the new pre-autonomic government to the UCD in 1978. From such a position, the UCD was able to exert an enormous power over the development of the Asturian autonomy process, leverage the relatively conservative party of Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez used to limit the extent of future autonomy to the minimum concessions politically feasible. Even though, as President of the *Comisión de Cultura*, Sánchez Vicente was tasked with the disbursement of the pre-autonomic government's cultural funds, through a review and evaluation of funding petitions submitted to the Commission by various outside parties (such as the Conceyu Bable or new Academia de la Llingua), his power was highly limited. From its dominant position within the government, the UCD was able to limit the extent of Sánchez Vicente's Asturianista program through a systematic policy of delay and chronic underfunding. By late 1980, Sánchez Vicente even openly accused the UCD of "playing with the law: when [the UCD] would win, matters are voted upon, when [the UCD] would lose a vote....it is tabled. And this is the position that is being adopted constantly."<sup>334</sup> Sánchez Vicente was also frequently

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<sup>334</sup> "Creo, Sr. Presidente, que seguimos jugando con la Ley: cuando se gana, se votan los asuntos, cuando se pierde una votación, por inasistencia o por lo que sea, se dejan sobre la mesa. Y esta es una postura que se está adoptando constantemente."

The specific instance of Sánchez Vicente's outburst was Ruisánchez Frade's request that a request by the Conceyu Bable for continued funding to help run its literary and poetry competitions be tabled "for further study."

Diputación Provincial de Oviedo - Sesión Ordinaria de 30 de octubre de 1.980, "Núm. 38 - Propuesta de concesión de subvenciones para los Premios 'Fernán Coronas' y 'Teodoro Cuesta'," (Oviedo: Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Diputación Provincial, Caja 2529/10, 1980-10-30).

at odds with his vice-president on the Commission, Daniel Valentín Ruíz Sánchez Frade (UCD), with these disputes often spilling over into the general sessions of the provincial government. While Sánchez Vicente did have the official backing of the Socialist Party as their representative on the Cultural Commission, the major method by which the Socialist and Communist representatives in the *Diputación Provincial* could exert pressure on the general assembly to stop the UCD's delaying tactics or concede a funding request was through a walk-out. This tactic, dropping the legislature below quorum and paralyzing the proceedings for the day, was one that the Socialists were understandably reluctant to employ frequently, in particular because they needed the cooperation of the Communist representatives to make it work.

Although they played a role in shaping the autonomy statute, Pedro de Silva, Sánchez Vicente, and the regionalist bloc absorbed by the Socialist Party with the PSP were never a group with which the body of the PSOE felt particularly comfortable. Firstly, the PSOE, both nationally and regionally, steadily moved towards a position that advocated limiting as much as possible the concessions to the peripheral regions of Spain and focusing primarily on maintaining a stable and sustainable power base for the party in the new constitutional state. Secondly, Sánchez Vicente's charismatic but often outspoken and irreverent personality eventually became a source of embarrassment for the Socialists. Most famously, after the July 7, 1980 session of the Gijón Town Council (*Ayuntamiento*), in which the UCD attempted unsuccessfully to gain support for an official funeral ceremony for recently deceased ex-

*franquista* minister Torcuato Fernández Miranda,<sup>335</sup> Sánchez Vicente was overheard by two UCD colleagues gesturing towards a crucifix present in the room and joking with the (also PSOE) mayor of Gijón, “what’s that guy doing up there, gymnastics with his arms on a cross?”<sup>336</sup> Somewhat predictably, the conservative deputies raised a furor with the President of the *Diputación Provincial*, Agustín Antuña, and the party officially requested Sánchez Vicente’s dismissal. The PSOE complied and he was removed from his duties two days later, on July 9, 1980. Although re-instated on July 21<sup>st</sup>, after a public letter of apology and a PSOE walk-out of the government,<sup>337</sup> the outspoken Sánchez Vicente was clearly becoming a liability for a party that was competing with the UCD for the votes of a large sector of Spanish society that was still both relatively socially conservative and at least nominally Catholic.

### The Collapse of *Asturias Semanal*

One of the most important failures of the Conceyu Bable was its inability to gain

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<sup>335</sup> Fernández Miranda (1914-1980), born in Gijón, was a prominent member of the *Movimiento Nacional* and a key player during both the late *franquista* period and the Transition, where he was both speaker to the Cortes and president of the *Consejo del Reino* (Council of the Realm). Critically, he placed Adolfo Suárez amongst the three candidates for Prime Minister (according to some sources, such as Preston, at King Juan Carlos’s request), and was the author of the 1976 *Ley de Reforma Política*, key moments in the early Transition. He resigned in 1977 in protest over the legalization of the Communist Party and the move towards a decentralized State of the Autonomies. See Carr and Fusi, *Spain, Dictatorship to Democracy*; Gilmour, *The Transformation of Spain: From Franco to the Constitutional Monarchy*; Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*.

<sup>336</sup> “¿Qué fai esi paisanu ahí, facendo ginasia colos brazos en cruz?”

Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author; also “Diputado de PSOE destituido por pronunciar una frase irreverente,” *El País* [Madrid] 1980-07-09.

<sup>337</sup> “El PSOE rompe el acuerdo político de la diputación provincial,” *El País* [Madrid] 1980-07-11; “Se incorpora a su puesto el socialista destituido por el presidente de la Diputación,” *El País* [Madrid] 1980-07-22.

access to the newspapers, radio, and television of the region. Thus, it was highly dependent on *Asturias Semanal*. From the magazine's founding in 1969 until the Transition, it was almost the sole anti-regime periodical openly and widely distributed in Asturias,<sup>338</sup> although it was not radical enough to be shut down by the regime.<sup>339</sup> The Ministry of Information and Tourism described it in 1974 as "the only exception" to the generally pro-Franco stance of most papers in Asturias.<sup>340</sup> The frustration at the lack of a sympathetic regional press was a constant theme in the Conceyu Bable. The association was well aware (as was the CNA) that one its most critically important goals was to gain regular press coverage.<sup>341</sup> This was both in order to gain an audience for its political programs and publicity for its cultural events such as concerts, poetry and literature competitions, seminars, and language classes. As argued earlier, the Transition can be considered in Gramscian terms as a "war of maneuver," a brief period of extreme political fluidity in which the various political actors must rapidly move to establish their position before the structure of the new state solidifies.<sup>342</sup> For the Asturianistas, press coverage of their activities by the mainstream daily

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<sup>338</sup> The papers and pamphlets of the semi-clandestine syndical press had, for obvious reasons, a much smaller distribution. See Carlos Gordon, *La prensa sindical y política asturiana en la Transición (1975-1982)* (Oviedo: Fundación Juan Muñoz Zapico, 2009).

<sup>339</sup> It openly declared its "regionalist" perspective in issue number 8 (1969). San Martín Antuña, "El discurso socio-político de Conceyu Bable." 18.

<sup>340</sup> Serrano Castilla, "Al Excmo. Sr. D. Pío Cabanillas Gallas, Ministro de Información y Turismo - Situación general de la provincia en lo que se refiere a los siguientes aspectos: a) político, b) turístico, c) estado de las relaciones entre las distintas autoridades entre si."; Delegación Provincial del Ministerio de Cultura, "Informes sobre la prensa regional," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Cajas 28237 & 28238, 1979-80).2.

<sup>341</sup> See, for example, Conceyu Bable, "Filvanes - de prensa y radio," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 318 (12-19 julio, 1975): 14.

<sup>342</sup> Antonio Gramsci, "The Transition from the War of Manoeuvre (Frontal Assault) to the War of Position - in

newspapers was one of the crucial areas in which they failed to make much headway during this time, critically limiting the reach of their political program.

Thus, one of the greatest concerns for the Asturianista movement was the economic collapse of *Asturias Semanal* coinciding with the June 1977 elections. Indeed, the last edition to hit the streets, number 413 (June 11-18, 1977), appeared only four days before the voters went to the polls for the first time. It appears that the magazine's collapse was largely coincidental and unrelated to the election campaign. Cristobal Ruitiña Testa points to a confluence of factors that contributed to the magazine's closure, chief amongst them the fact that, with open elections, the magazine was "no longer necessary" as pro-democracy outlet, a "contradiction between the informational work [of the magazine] and the politico-economic ambitions" of its financier, Enrique Rubio Sañudo, and, in perhaps the most simple explanation, an outstanding debt of some three million pesetas.<sup>343</sup> By this point, the Conceyu Bable did publish its own newsletter internally and periodically issue pamphlets and flyers, and the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur would soon produce a few editions of its own, *Asturies Dixebrá* and *Fueyes Internes*.<sup>344</sup> However, neither could come close to matching

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the Political Field as Well," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (London and New York: Lawrence & Wishart; International Publishers, 1971): 238-39.

<sup>343</sup> "...qu'unos expliquen pol entamu d'una época na que la revista yá nun yeer necesaria, otros pola contradicción ente la xera informativa y les ambiciones politico-empresariales de Rubio Sañudo y otros más, cenciellamente, por una deuda de 3 millones de pesetes de les d'aquella."

Cristobal Ruitiña Testa, "Cuarenta años de «Asturias Semanal»," *Atlántica XXII: revista asturiana de información y pensamiento*, no. 2 (marzo 2009): 45-47.

<sup>344</sup> For a detailed discussion of *Asturies Dixebrá*, published by the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur d'Uviéu*, in April 1979 and *Fueyes Internes*, published in Mieres from August 1979-1980, see Carlos Gordon, "6.1 Asturianismo político y cultural," in *La prensa sindical y política asturiana en la Transición (1975-1982)* (Oviedo: Fundación Juan Muñiz Zapico, 2009): 187-201.



the circulation of *Asturias Semanal*, widely read inside the province and amongst the Asturian emigrant population resident elsewhere in Spain and Europe. Thus, at one of the most critical moments for the political future of Asturias, the Asturianistas lost their primary public forum. It is tough to overstate the importance of the Conceyu Bable pages in *Asturias Semanal* for the nationalist movement in the region. It served simultaneously as portal, mouthpiece, and major recruitment vehicle for both the Conceyu Bable as an organization and the culturalist ideologies that it espoused. Graciano García's attempt to resuscitate the magazine with the January 1978 launch of the daily newspaper *Asturias, Diario Regional* lasted only a little over two years and neither offered the Conceyu Bable the same kind of regular section nor reached the same audience as its predecessor.<sup>345</sup> It was not until August 1978 that members of the Conceyu Bable would reach an agreement with the Gijón daily *El Comercio* to publish a weekly section called *Alitar Asturias*,<sup>346</sup> which, although not always regular in its publication, managed to create a sustainable public forum for Asturianista ideas, if one with a much more limited reach.

Without even the weekly public forum of the Conceyu Bable pages in *Asturias Semanal*, and for the most part denied in their electoral ambitions, the mechanisms available to the Asturianistas were limited, as the newspapers, radio, and television stations of the region were still largely state-controlled and hostile to any hint of regionalism. In September

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<sup>345</sup> José Manuel Vaquero, "Asturias contará con tres nuevos periódicos," *El País* [Madrid] 1978-01-03; José Manuel Vaquero, "Admitida la suspensión de pagos «Asturias, Diario Regional»,," *El País* [Madrid] 1980-01-27.

<sup>346</sup> *Alitar* can be translated as "improve" or "maintain."

1975, *La Voz de Asturias* began a weekly page in Asturianu, and it was followed by a student paper at the University of Oviedo, *El Glayiu*, which published eight editions between March 1976 and early 1979.<sup>347</sup> Radio Gijón broadcast two Conceyu Bable shows per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30pm) for a short while in 1975 and 1976, the cultural program *Asturies na so llingua y na so cultura*.<sup>348</sup> However, both Radio Oviedo and Radio Asturias were universally hostile to the Conceyu Bable's proposals, although Radio Asturias eventually began weekly coverage of the increasingly popular Asturian-language musical movement, *Nueu Canciu Astur*.<sup>349</sup> As of 1980, only two major regional papers and one radio station had regular publications in Asturianu, and even then only weekly.<sup>350</sup> In February 1982, *La Voz de Avilés* added a weekly page. However, as the stated goal of the Conceyu Bable was to convince the press to not only publish "the page in Bable", but rather pages in Bable,<sup>351</sup> the press campaign fell far short of its expectations.

Thus, it is not surprising that Conceyu Bable veteran Anxelu Cadenas would later lament that "our communiqués came out poorly, late, or never, and in sections with little to

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<sup>347</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Los papeles rexonales y la llingua," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 341 (20-27 diciembre, 1975): 17; Gordon, "6.1 Asturianismo político y cultural." 193-5.

<sup>348</sup> Discussed in Chapter 1. See p84 and Conceyu Bable, "Filvanes - de prensa y radio."

<sup>349</sup> The program was called *Nortiando*.

<sup>350</sup> Conceyu Bable, "La nuestra llingua nos medios de comunicación asturianos," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 16 (s/f, probably abril 1980): 5.

The newspapers were *El Comercio*'s Sunday section *Alitar Asturias*. *La Voz de Asturias* (Oviedo), also published a weekly Sunday section, «Llingua y Cultura».

<sup>351</sup> "Sánchez – *Lo que nosotros queremos no es que los periódicos tengan «la página del bable», sino que publiquen páginas en bable.*"

Díaz, "Hablemos en bable." 22.

recommend them.”<sup>352</sup> Attempting to overcome this bias, in 1976 the Conceyu Bable participated as the Asturian representative in a national colloquium on the topic of regionalism and the mass media and orchestrated a letter-writing campaign to the major newspapers of the region.<sup>353</sup> This was to no avail. The Asturianistas accused the media of “silencing what was happening” by not focusing on the support that the regionalist movement was gaining.<sup>354</sup> In addition to the regional media’s hostility, the national press was hardly paying any attention to the Autonomy process in the region.<sup>355</sup> In discussions of regionalism by national papers, Asturias was occasionally even grouped with Castilla-León.<sup>356</sup> This was true even of papers known for their progressive anti-regime politics, such as *Cambio 16*. Factual errors in the national coverage of Academia de la Llingua by *El País* (another paper with a progressive reputation) indicated a lack of interest.<sup>357</sup> Even non-autonomy related events in Asturias received poor coverage, with the HUNOSA strikes in the winter of

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<sup>352</sup> “Los nuestros comunicaos salien mal, tarde o nunca y en seiciones poco recomendables.”

Cadenas, Interview by Rafael Rodríguez Valdés (Uviéu, 2005-01-08). Quoted in Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable.” 11.

<sup>353</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Nota sele- una «semana de la información» ente la calisma madrilegna,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 359 (1-8 mayo, 1976): 27.

<sup>354</sup> “Los múerganos de comunicación rexonales (???) silenciaron lo que taba pasando, que, como el Manifestu Rexonalista, fue el fechu de más importancia na historia contemporánea teórica d’Asturies.”

Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, “Combayase en Uviéu (y II),” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 2 (payares 1976): 12-13. Also see Conceyu Bable, “Nota sele- prósimu finxu: un movimientu de mases asturianista,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 394 (1-8 enero, 1977): 39; Conceyu Bable, “Movimientu asturianista nel Valle'l Nalón,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 11 (s/f, probably marzu 1979): 6.

<sup>355</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Notes seles- Asturias albintestate,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 299 (1 marzo, 1975): 16; Conceyu Bable, “Conceyu Bable en «Cambio 16»,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 347 (31 enero-7 febrero, 1976): 26; Conceyu Bable, “Entamu,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 18 (s/f, probably febreru 1981): 1.

<sup>356</sup> Xosé Lluís García Arias, “Un problema pa los hestoriaiores,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 3-4 (avientu 1976-xineru 1977): 4; Conceyu Bable, “Nota sele- el Señor Fernández tá enquivocáu,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 373 (7-14 agosto, 1976): 37.

<sup>357</sup> José Manuel Vaquero, “Constituida la Academia de la Lengua de Asturias,” *El País* [Madrid] 1982-01-21.

1975-6 given scant attention while smaller strikes in more populated Madrid and Cataluña were covered in detail.<sup>358</sup>

Although direct state control over the instruments of public opinion formation was significantly reduced by the 1970s, groups officially recognized by the state held a distinct advantage in their ability to manipulate and define public discourse.<sup>359</sup> For instance, two of the six principal daily newspapers in Asturias (including the largest, *La Nueva España*) were run by the *Movimiento Nacional* (the single party of Franco's state).<sup>360</sup> Additionally, while there was often no official pro-regime policy at major periodicals, the chief editors and owners of most major newspapers in Spain tended to be older, conservative, and strong supporters of Franco. Thus, an informal network of "collaboration," as described by the Ministry of Information and Tourism,<sup>361</sup> effectively marginalized the Conceyu Bable from significant access to the broadsheet press. In addition, the state directly owned the television stations during this time as well as Radio Asturias. The Conceyu Bable and the Asturian

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<sup>358</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Los papeles, los papeles..." *Asturias Semanal*, no. 354 (20-27 marzo, 1976): 27.

<sup>359</sup> This refers to the political parties of the regime, the AP and the UCD, as well as the opposition parties which had participated in the Moncloa Pacts of August 1977 (the PSOE and the PCE) and the "historic nationalities", among which Asturias was not included (in spite of constant appeals by the Conceyu Bable).

<sup>360</sup> After the dissolution of the party by the Law of Political Reform, *La Nueva España* (Oviedo) and *Voluntad* (Gijón) continued as private enterprises under the same local leadership.

"Ley 1/1977, de 4 de enero, para la Reforma Política."

<sup>361</sup> Serrano Castilla, "Al Excmo. Sr. D. Pío Cabanillas Gallas, Ministro de Información y Turismo - Situación general de la provincia en lo que se refiere a los siguientes aspectos: a) político, b) turístico, c) estado de las relaciones entre las distintas autoridades entre si." 2.

As late as 1979, the Provincial Delegation of the Ministry of Culture was still sending daily reports on the regional press to Madrid via telex. Delegación Provincial del Ministerio de Cultura, "Informes sobre la prensa regional."

regional question in general had, therefore, very limited success gaining access to television.<sup>362</sup>

Given the general hostility of the newspapers of the regime and the loss of *Asturias Semanal* after 1977, it is a testament to the appeal of Asturian nationalism that the Conceyu Bable was able to exert even a minimal influence over public conceptions of the region and its culture.

### **Protest and Folk Music: *Nueu Canciú Astur***

In spite of the series of setbacks in mid-1977, the general feeling was one of optimism amongst the Asturianistas. While their ability to directly influence politics seemed to wane sharply after the twin blows of the poor election campaign and the closure of *Asturias Semanal*, the Asturianista cultural movement continued to develop. In June 1975, a group of young singers (the majority affiliated with the Communist Party) in the mining district of the Valle del Nalón founded *Camaretá*, a collection of artists and writers dedicated to working in Asturianu. Manuel Asur, Nel Xiblata, Manolo Peñayos, and Chus Pedro Suárez all participated in the group's activities, which originally took place in the local *Club Cultural La Amistad* (in L'Entregu) or in the *Ateneo* of Sotrondio.<sup>363</sup> However, *Camaretá* was more than simply a group of singers; it acted as a kind of early think tank for a regionalist musical movement, in which Arias also frequently participated (as a linguistic and political

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<sup>362</sup> This was a constant worry of the Conceyu Bable, whose ongoing campaign for inclusion of Asturian in, newspapers, radio, and television featured prominently in their published materials as well as the internal newsletters of the organization.

<sup>363</sup> "El dúo Nuberu trata de rescatar el más antiguo folklore asturiano," *El País* [Madrid] 1980-10-17; Ana Vanessa Gutierrez, "Camaretá, entavía tenemos les manes," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 2004-11-16.

advisor, not a musician) along with a young Xuan Bello (who would later go on to significant success as a writer and poet). Already highly politically conscious due to their participation in the youth wing of the Communist Party, the young singers of Camaretá had begun to critique the major parties of the Asturian Left for their lack of a regionalist or nationalist consciousness.

Soon after Camaretá began meeting, Pedro García Rendueles, one of the promoters of the Gijón trade fair (the *Feria Internacional de Muestras de Asturias*) proposed a series of concerts to take place during the trade exhibition. Not directly connected to Camaretá, these “*Jornadas de la Nueva Canción Asturiana*” (Days of the New Asturian Song) brought together some younger, relatively unknown singers to the Museo del Pueblo de Asturias, including Manuel Fernández Suárez, Avelino, Xulio Ramos, Julio Reyero, and Angelines Corredera. Most importantly, Ramos invited the as-yet-little known Carlos Rubiera Tuya, member of the Conceyu Bable and Democracia Socialista Asturiana.<sup>364</sup> The collection of singers, most of whom were singing almost exclusively in Castilian at the time, were seen as “new” because of their young ages and their connection with wider folk trends in Europe and America. They were specifically identified as Asturian both because of the Asturian themes of their lyrics and also because of their intent to recuperate some aspects of traditional Asturian music in a modern and popular setting (characteristic of the folk music genre worldwide from the late 1950s onwards).

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<sup>364</sup> Manuel de Cimadevilla, “Rafa Lorenzo y la Nueva Canción Asturiana,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 2007-10-31.

While largely lacking the Left-wing political sensibilities of their contemporaries in Camaretá, the singers of what became known by the neologism *Nueu Canciu Astur*<sup>365</sup> developed a strong following in both the Asturianu and Castilian-speaking public. The music and lyrics were depoliticized to the point where Carlos Rubiera's lyrics were routinely passed by the Ministry of Information and Tourism censors.<sup>366</sup> Indeed, the Conceyu Bable criticized the *Nueu Canciu Astur* concerts at the Féria de Muestras for their lack of commitment to Asturianu, claiming that "today one cannot make a New Asturian Song that is not in Bable....Castilian – [necessary] if one wishes to maintain a place in contemporary music - needs to only be used with clearly Asturian themes or tones."<sup>367</sup> Indeed, of all of the singers at the 1975 Féria de Muestras, only Carlos Rubiera performed songs using the Asturian language. However, it is important to note the important role of this musical movement in creating a general acceptance for traditional cultural forms (music and dance, primarily) and of the language. Over the course of the next year, Avelino, Xulio Ramos, and Manuel Fernandez in particular began to expand their repertoire to include not simply songs in Castilian about traditionally pastoral (or romantic) Asturian themes but also incorporate

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<sup>365</sup> The neologisms were created to sound as Asturianu as possible (and distinct from Castilian). The more common name for the movement would have been "*Nuevu Cantar Asturianu*." The term "nueu canciu" has subsequently been taken as a proper noun and used specifically for this movement.

<sup>366</sup> José Carlos Rubiera Tuya, "Solicitando autorización para celebrar un recital de canciones asturianas," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Ministerio de Cultura - Delegación Provincial de Cultura, Caja 20535, 1976-02-19).

<sup>367</sup> "*Nun pue güei faese una Nueva Canción Asturiana como nun seya en bable....El castellán – si ye que-i quieren guardar un llugar na canción de güei – deberín (sic) usalu ná más qu'en aquélles de tema o toná claramente asturianos.*"

Conceyu Bable, "La Nueva Canción d'Asturies," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 324 (23-30 agosto, 1975): 28.

Asturianu into their work.

In spite of its initial critiques, the Conceyu Bable quickly moved to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the *Nueu Canciu Astur*'s popularity. From 1976 onwards, the Conceyu Bable was both actively promoting concerts and selling albums recorded by these musicians (especially Rubiera). By the 1976 Féria de Muestras, it was the Asturianista organization itself soliciting permission from the provincial government to hold the *Nueu Canciu Astur* concert series, now fully bilingual with Avelino and Manuel Fernández submitting Asturianu lyrics to the Ministry of Information and Tourism's censors in addition to Carlos Rubiera. While the traditional folk music of the *Nueu Canciu Astur* and the more politicized and Leftist music of Camaretá were separate in origin, a great deal of overlap and cooperation between the two groups became evident due to their common linguistic and cultural interests. Most prominently, Manolo Peñayos and Chus Pedro Suárez were part of the original lineup for the *Nueu Canciu Astur* concert at the 1976 Féria de Muestras, but had to cancel at the last minute due to complications with one member of the duo's workplace.<sup>368</sup>

The popularity of folk music and the *Nueu Canciu Astur* served an important role in habituating many people to the public use of the language, many of whom were neither subscribers to *Asturias Semanal* nor particularly fascinated with the language per se; they simply enjoyed the musical genre. That is to say, popular music consistently provided a vehicle by which the cultural nationalists and regionalists of the Conceyu Bable could reach a

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<sup>368</sup> No further detail about the difficulty is given. Lluís Xabell Álvarez Fernández, "«El Nuevu Canziu» entaina," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 380 (25 septiembre-2 octubre, 1976): 36-37.



wider audience. Taken together, the early folk music of the *Nueu Canciu Astur* and Camaretá gave the *Conceyu Bable* a significant presence in the Asturian popular music scene of the mid-to-late 1970s. While the lyrics of the former were not highly political in and of themselves, the very choice to sing in *Asturianu* and the attempt to recover traditional cultural themes was a political act. Similar to the way that the first *Conceyu Bable* pages a few years previously had acted as a political focal point simply by their very publication in a heretofore-ridiculed language, the *form* of the *Nueu Canciu Astur* was perhaps as important as its still-censored lyrical content, at least during the first few years of the Transition. Additionally, the concerts acted as focal points for regionalist and nationalist sentiment to be expressed by the public, with shouts of “*¡Llibertá, llibertá!*” (Liberty, liberty!) and “*¡Puxa Asturias llibre y dixebra!*” (Long live a free and separate Asturias) punctuating the breaks between songs at a September 24, 1976 concert in Noreña sponsored by the *Sociedad Cultural Asemeyu* that included Carlos Rubiera and Asturian pop singer Victor Manuel. Although never a member or active participant in either the *Nueu Canciu Astur* or the *Conceyu Bable*, Victor Manuel did sign the *bable nes escueles* petition (see Chapter 2) and often participated in joint concerts with members of the younger folk movement.<sup>369</sup> During Rubiera’s set, the public even specifically called for the song “*Canciu a los Llugones*,” a song that was not played for, as the *Conceyu Bable* mockingly termed it, “administrative

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<sup>369</sup> While far and away the most nationally recognized of the Asturian folk singers, he predated and always had a rather hesitant attitude towards Asturian regionalism. This is perhaps somewhat unsurprising for an artist who recorded an early album in 1966 entitled “*Franco, un gran hombre*” (Franco, a great man).

Quico Alsedo, “Cuando Víctor Manuel alababa a ‘Un gran hombre’: Francisco Franco,” *El Mundo* [Madrid] 2007-02-28.

problems” with the censors.<sup>370</sup> This indicates that, although the lyrics of the *Nueu Canciu Astur* movement were in general relatively sanitized, the political nature of the movement was in doubt to neither the artists themselves nor the attending public.

Taking Manolo Peñayos and Chus Pedro Suárez as examples, the singers of *Camaretá* were as focused on the content of their lyrics as much as the form of their music and were far more likely to take risks with the censors. The music of *Nuberu*, as they called themselves from 1977 onward, often focused on the heroic actions of striking miners (either historical or fictional), drawing upon their experiences growing up in the Valle del Nalón and influenced by their time in the Communist Party. In contrast with the majority of the folk singers of the *Nueu Canciu Astur*, *Nuberu* was far from subtle about inserting its nationalist and Left-wing ideology in the majority of its music. The most obvious example of a popular song with an overtly nationalist worldview was probably 1980’s “*Díos te llibre de Castiella*” (God save you from Castilla) from the group’s second album, *Atiendi Asturias, Atiendi* (Pay attention Asturias, pay attention!). In the song, the duo called Pelayo “the first nationalist” for his role in the Battle of Covadonga,<sup>371</sup> lauded Gonzalo Peláez for “defeating” Alfonso VII of Castilla and León,<sup>372</sup> and in general portrayed Asturias as a conquered land unwillingly

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<sup>370</sup> Xosé Lluís Carmona, “Primer alcuentru Asemeyu,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 1 (ochobre 1976): 11.

<sup>371</sup> For a further discussion of the Battle of Covadonga and the role that the legend plays in Spanish nationalism (called *covadonguismo*), see Chapter 1.

<sup>372</sup> The Duke of Asturias, Gonzalo Peláez organized four separate uprisings in Asturias between 1132 and 1137 against the Castile-leonese crown. The first three were followed by reconciliation with Alfonso VII, but he was eventually exiled and died in Portugal a year after his defeat.

ruled by Castilla.<sup>373</sup>

The new regionalist and nationalist folk music drew heavily on both the aesthetics and populist ideology of American folk music of the 1960s (in particular the songs of Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, and Woody Guthrie), and grew rapidly in popularity.<sup>374</sup> The new music

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<sup>373</sup> The complete lyrics of the song are below. The most relevant stanzas are probably #s 1, 2, and 3.

*Diez años entardó Roma  
n'afincate tola espuela  
y fuisti en Covadonga  
la primer nacionaliega*

It took 10 years for Rome  
to train you to the spur,  
and you were in Covadonga  
the first nationalist.

*Y xunto a Gonzalo Peláez  
- cutia la historia llariega –  
derrotesti tres vegaes  
al mesmu rei de Castiella*

And together with Gonzalo Peláez  
- fighting the homeland's history -  
you defeated three times  
the same King of Castilla

*Dempués el llobu extranxeru  
púnxote la cara prieta  
sacó'l oru de les mines  
dexote prove en to tierra.*

Afterwards the foreign wolf  
made your face black  
taking the gold from the mines  
leaving you poor in your own land.

*Entós solina un ochobre  
dexesti un poco la cueva  
fasta ponete en comunía  
otra vez cabezalera*

Thus one feverish October [the October Revolution of 1934]  
you left the cave a little  
until you placed the commons  
in control.

*Contra'l silenciu y el mieu  
de la posguerra cabera  
en llevantate dafechu  
tamién fuisti la primera.*

Against silence and fear  
of the tied-down postwar  
to truly rise up  
you were also the first [probably referring to the 1962 strikes].

*Per eso Asturias de alma  
el pasáu nun lu escaezas  
y lu escaeces un día:  
¡¡¡Díos te llibre de Castiella!!!*

For this Asturias of my soul  
the past is never hidden  
[but] you hide until one day:  
God will save you from Castilla!!!

Lyrics taken from official Nuberu website -  
[http://www.nuberu.com/nuberudespedida/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=71&Itemid=80](http://www.nuberu.com/nuberudespedida/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=71&Itemid=80).  
Accessed 2010-10-22. Author's translation.

<sup>374</sup> Ismael González Arias, "La banda sonora de Conceyu Bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 2004-12-01.

inspired a rising number of concerts<sup>375</sup> as well as amateur contests in the discotheques of Gijón.<sup>376</sup> Soon after the Conceyu Bable-sponsored 1976 concert at the Féria de Muestras, a September 1976 Nueu Canciu Astur concert in Los Maizales (a location historically associated with the Asturian Left) drew some 20,000 spectators.<sup>377</sup> Nearly double the number of votes cast for Unidad Regionalista, crowds of this kind illustrated the relative popularity of Asturianismu's cultural and political programs. By April 1980, the popularity of this blend of modern and traditional musical forms had elevated Victor Manuel and Nuberu to numbers 2 and 3 on the regional music charts, respectively, trailing only Pink Floyd's "The Wall."<sup>378</sup> The Conceyu Bable, after its initial hesitation about the Nueu Canciu Astur, quickly realized that music was an ideal form with which to "use language as a vehicle of transmission for the Asturian problem."<sup>379</sup> This music, ironically, sustained its success to outlast the cultural group that spawned it, with Carlos Rubiera recording a greatest hits album (*30 años*) in 2004 and Nuberu wrapping up "30 years singing in a language that does not exist, officially," with a farewell tour headlining the main stage concerts at the yearly San Mateo Festivals in Oviedo in September 2008.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> "Festivales," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Gobierno Civil de Oviedo, Caja 20535, 20536, 1966-1982).

<sup>376</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Rispios," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 357 (10-17 abril, 1976): 27.

<sup>377</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Otru «Día la Cultura» nos Maizales," *Asturias Semanal*, no. 377 (4-11 septiembre, 1976): 30.

<sup>378</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Noticies Musicales," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 16 (s/f, probably abril 1980): 6.

<sup>379</sup> "Pel so llau, la entidá musical NUEU CANCIU ASTUR (caps in original), *arrexunta a toa una retafila cantantes con un enfotu común: serví-se de la nuestra llingua como vehículu trasmisión de la problemática asturiana.*"

Conceyu Bable, "Fai cinco años que nacimos," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 15 (s/f, probably payares 1979): 2-13.

<sup>380</sup> Nuberu opens most of their concerts by introducing Manolo & Chus Pedro and announcing that "*Nuberu*

### Building on *bable nes escueles*: Asturianismu and the Teachers' Unions

The Asturianistas' successful popularization of nationalism and regionalism in folk music was, at least in part, inspired by their intent to inculcate the region's youth with a new nationalist and regionalist identity. Logically, the Conceyu Bable focused a fair amount of its effort on extending its connections amongst the region's teachers. Given the large percentage of militants drawn from the universities and from amongst teachers themselves, it is hardly surprising that the Conceyu Bable was able to effectively tailor its message to the educational demographic. Following the success of the 1975-6 *bable nes escueles* campaign among both students and educators, Asturianismu continued to make headway amongst teachers of the region over the next few years, at least in its call for the inclusion of Asturianu language classes in the region's public schools. Thus, it is not surprising that the largest independent (non-political party affiliated) teachers' union, formed in 1979, has consistently acted as a major support base for nationalist and regionalist politics. The *Sindicatu Unitariu y Autónomu de Trabayadores d'Enseñanza d'Asturies* (most commonly known by its acronym, SUATEA), from its founding in June 1977, made the "encouragement of the study of Asturian culture, contributing decisively to its development" one of its primary objectives.<sup>381</sup> The union went further in a 1979 pamphlet, singling out an "even more grave situation" in

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*lleva treinta años canciando n'una llingua que nun esiste, oficialmente."*

PWZ Field Notes, September 20, 2010.

<sup>381</sup> "f) Fomentar el estudio de la cultura asturiana, contribuyendo con decisión a su desarrollo."

Sindicato Unitario y Autónomo de los Trabajadores de la Enseñanza de Asturias, "Artículo 6. Objetivos," in *Estatutos* (Oviedo: Archivo SUATEA, 1977-06-01): 2.

“the Nationalities and Regions of the Spanish State....additionally suffering from repression against their language and culture, together with super-centralist and uniform [educational] planning that [ignored] the different socioeconomic realities in which students are immersed.”<sup>382</sup> The Asturianista influence was strong enough within SUATEA that the minutes of the First Congress of the new independent national confederation of unions (of which SUATEA became the Asturian branch), the *Unión Confederal de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de Enseñanza* (UCSTE, Confederal Union of Educational Workers Unions), was published with its title in *Asturianu* (in addition to Basque, Gallego, Castilian, and Catalan).<sup>383</sup>

SUATEA quickly became the second-largest teacher's union in Asturias (larger than the Socialist Union and trailing only the membership of the Communist CC.OO.). Thus, one of the greater successes of the Asturianista movement, and a key to the implementation of *Asturianu*-language education in 1984, was the acceptance of the importance of language education by one of the most powerful interest groups in the education sector: the teachers themselves. Unsurprisingly, the majority of future *Asturianu* teachers (first in elementary and later secondary education) joined SUATEA, which was also open to teachers of both

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<sup>382</sup> “En las Nacionalidades y Regiones del Estado Español, la problemática de la Enseñanza presenta unas características de mayor gravedad, pues a la situación general se suma la represión contra la lengua y la cultura propias, junto a una planificación supercentralista y uniformadora que ignora las diferentes realidades socio-económicas en las que alumnos y alumnas se encuentran inmersos.”

SUATEA, “Una alternativa a la Enseñanza,” in *SUATEA - UCSTE - por una escuela pública* (Oviedo: Archivo SUATEA, 1979): 1.

<sup>383</sup> Unión Confederal de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza (UCSTE), “Primeiro Congreso / Lehen Biltzarre Nagusia / Primer Congreso / Primer Congrès / Primer Congresu UCSTE (Madrid) - Ponencias,” (Oviedo: Archivo SUATEA, 1979-01-4 a 1979-01-07).

permanent and “itinerant” (year-to-year) status, a category into which almost all language education professionals fell.

### **Selling Nationalism to the Electorate**

As the Asturianista movement grew, extending its message into both popular culture (via music) and the educational system, the movement simultaneously continued to restructure itself internally. By late 1977, Asturianismu was now beginning to more visibly diverge along two axes. Firstly, those who prioritized linguistic and cultural development over politics tended to dominate the Conceyu Bable, while those who favored political action via party politics inclined either towards the new CNA or the Partido Socialista Popular (and for a brief period after the Socialist merger, the PSOE). The second split was a deepening of the distinctions between nationalists and regionalists, with the latter adapting a more pragmatic stance towards the new constitution. Although from February 1977, the Conceyu Bable had officially acknowledged a nationalist stance, it still did not see “any conceptual difference [between nationalism and regionalism] as they are used today.”<sup>384</sup> Indeed, the Conceyu Bable’s understood the difference to be purely a creation of the political tactics of the Autonomy process, claiming that “they are more used to create categories of age amongst

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<sup>384</sup> “*Les pallabres nacionalismu y rexonalismu (asina como otros asemeyaos: autonomismu, audeterminación...) nun tienen denguna diferencia concetual, talamente como s’empleguen güei.*”

Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu so’l rexonalismu.” 10n.

autonomist movements of lesser or greater consciousness,”<sup>385</sup> implying that nationalist groups in the “historical nationalities” were politically motivated to belittle younger movements in other regions that would dilute the special privileges they were expecting in the new asymmetrical State of the Autonomies. It was clear that the Conceyu Bable saw no substantial difference between the two concepts other than a purely invented political application when it went on to claim that “in this use, what they do is to introduce a separation between a first-class regionalism, or nationalism, and another second-class....from today [February 1977], the Conceyu Bable will employ the term nationalism to refer to Asturias.”<sup>386</sup> Thus, while the Conceyu Bable did adopt nationalism in an official manner, and its stance on the ideal relationship between Asturias and the Spanish State radicalized from late 1976,<sup>387</sup> it still vociferously denied any intent to separate Asturias from the rest of Spain and the change of terminology did not seem to trigger a major shift in its policies.

The Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, on the other hand, made nationalism a central part of its program from its founding. Although the CNA never developed into a party of any substantial size nor did it ever have any significant electoral success, it did serve as the first political party who prioritized the cultural and linguistic issues central to Asturianism, and is primarily remarkable for being the first party to fully embrace the concept of nationalism

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<sup>385</sup> “*Aluden a categorías d’antigüedad nes reivindicaciones autonomistes o a mayor o menor conciencia.*”  
ibid.

<sup>386</sup> “*Como, nel usu, lo que faen ye introducir una estramáura ent’un rexonalismu de primera o nacionalismu y otru de segunda....dende güei, C.B. emplega’l términu nacionalismu pa referirse a Asturias.*”  
ibid.

<sup>387</sup> See Chapter 2.



in the party name and to make self-determination for Asturias the party's central goal. Not exclusively a cultural organization like Conceyu Bable, the party also devoted a significant amount of rhetoric to calls for a socialist and decentralized model for Asturias's economic and political relationship to Spain. The CNA saw itself as a workers' party and strongly attempted to appeal to Asturians as a Left-wing organization with both regional (or "national") relevance and in international solidarity with the repressed peoples of the world.

The Conceyu Nacionalista Astur was a direct outgrowth of the debates within the Conceyu Bable in 1976 about its politicization.<sup>388</sup> While most of its initial 40-odd members had been against Sánchez Vicente's proposal to directly transform the Conceyu Bable into a political party, they all saw the need to convert a regionalist cultural movement into a nationalist political force, something that could not be accomplished within the Conceyu Bable as a cultural organization. Thus, the CNA was created by a sector of younger Conceyu Bable militants who saw the opportunity and the need to found a political party, but who also concurred in their desire to maintain the momentum of the cultural nationalist movement built up by the Conceyu Bable and therefore mostly voted against changing what was, up to that point, a clearly effective formula of popular agitation and cultural programming. The youth of the CNA's members (Dubardu Puente, 27 years old in 1977, was one of the older members of the party's leadership) and their "lack of any political experience whatsoever or any reference to model themselves after" resulted in a party that

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<sup>388</sup> See discussion in Chapter 2.

tended to produce extreme or hyperbolic political statements.<sup>389</sup> Indeed, some of the more seasoned politicians within the Conceyu Bable either spurned the invitation to join the new party (such as Sánchez Vicente, who reportedly thought it was “child’s play”)<sup>390</sup> or dropped out soon after the group’s formation (such as Lluís Xabel Álvarez and Xesús Cañedo).

Like most of the parties of the far Left, both those with regionalist sympathies (such as the *Partido de los Trabajadores de España*, the OIC and the OCE-BR) and without (primarily the anarchist CNT), the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur and the Movimientu Comunista advocated abstention in the constitutional referendum of December 6, 1978. Feeling that it was a profoundly un-democratic document, these parties attacked both the lack of transparency behind the construction of the Constitution as well as the very concept of indirect representative democracy, saying that it insulated and isolated the institutions of power from popular participation in the political process. In Asturias, these arguments found a relatively receptive audience; reflecting the general unhappiness with the reformist constitutional process, the abstention rate was even lower in Asturias (38.21%)<sup>391</sup> than the nation-wide average (32.89%).<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> “*Sin absolutamente nenguna experiencia política nin nenguna referencia en que mirase.*”

Puente Fernández, interview by author.

<sup>390</sup> “[el Roxu] *consideraba que aquello yera un xuegu de niños.*”

Puente Fernández, interview by author.

<sup>391</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Resultados electorales. Referéndum diciembre 1978. Asturias.”

<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultadoReferendum.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=7&cdEleccion=1&anio=1978&mes=12&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Refer%26eacute%3Bndum&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=14:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=3&cdProvincia=99&tipoambito=N&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+ASTURIAS>. Accessed 2010-10-28.

<sup>392</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Resultados electorales. Referéndum

The CNA campaigned in 1978 both for the right to self-determination for Asturias (in the upcoming statute of autonomy and against the Constitution of 1978's seeming denial of this right to the Asturians. The slogan "for work, for culture, for liberty. Self-government!" accompanied by Asturian flags and the agitprop-inspired imagery of intellectuals, agricultural workers, and industrial workers united together clearly identified the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur's political position and its target demographic.<sup>393</sup> It was a quasi-Marxist party of the Nationalist Left that attempted to expand its support amongst the students of the university system (with some success in Oviedo and Madrid) and amongst the large body of industrial workers in Avilés and the Valle del Nalón (with much more limited success).

### The Road to Armed Struggle

The winter of 1978-9 was a critical period for the future development of Asturianismu, as an internal struggle within the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur resulted in long-lasting effects for Asturian nationalism in both its cultural and political guises. In 1978, a radical group broke away from the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria* (LCR, Communist Revolutionary League), a Trotskyist organization founded in 1971 that was, like the Maoist

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diciembre 1978. Total.,"

<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultadoReferendum.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=7&cdEleccion=1&anio=1978&mes=12&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Refer%26eacute%3Bndum&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=14:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=99&cdProvincia=0&tipoambito=N&descripcion=total>. Accessed 2010-10-28.

<sup>393</sup> Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, "Pol trabayu, pola cultura, pola llibertá. ¡Autogobiernu!," (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Biblioteca de Comunicació i Hemeroteca General, CEDOC, 1978).

MCA, generally pro-regionalist during the late 1970s. The new group, naming itself the *Comités d'Acción Revolucionaria* (or CAR, Revolutionary Action Committees), expanded on some of its existing contacts with political prisoners in the Basque Country to begin laying the groundwork for an armed campaign modeled along the lines of both ETA in Euskadi as well as the various armed struggles in Latin America.

As exemplified by Ignacio Gerardo Sánchez Palacios (usually known by his second name, “Gerardo”), contacted by the CAR after the split with the LCR in 1978,<sup>394</sup> the new CAR attracted a number of members with a history of armed struggle in the radical Left. Born in a small village near Gijón in 1948 to a bricklayer’s family, Sánchez Palacios was politicized by his family’s Leftist politics from a very young age, listening with his family to broadcasts from Moscow (after 1955, Bucharest) by the Spanish Communist Party radio station *Radio Pirenaica* (formally known as *Radio España Independiente*).<sup>395</sup> As was the case with the distinctly upper-class Antonio Masip and the BBC,<sup>396</sup> radio broadcasts from abroad were the primary means by which people in Asturias were informed of world (or Spanish) events unfiltered by the censorship of the Franco government (although *La Pirenaica* was hardly free of censorship and continuous propaganda on the part of the Communist Party). After illegally working sporadically from the age of twelve and beginning regular legal

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<sup>394</sup> Although he denies ever having been a formal member of the group, he was both strongly associated with them during 1978-9 and involved in the Banco Herrero affair. Ignacio Gerardo Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-03-05).

<sup>395</sup> Active July 22, 1941-July 14, 1977.

<sup>396</sup> See Chapter 1.

employment at fourteen distributing medicines by bicycle 10-12 hours a day,<sup>397</sup> the young Gerardo was first and foremost aware of a classically Marxist sense of exploitation, rather than concerned with the less immediate (to him) problems of Asturian culture or nationalism.<sup>398</sup>

Moving between his native Asturias and exile in Paris (including May 1968) over the next decade, Sánchez Palacios developed diverse contacts amongst the Asturian Left, participating in a vandalism campaign initiated by the *Comunas Revolucionarias de Acción Socialista* (CRAS, Revolutionary Communes of Socialist Action, a small Asturian Leftist group) against several commercial centers that had celebrated a visit by Francisco Franco to Gijón on September 6, 1971. Breaking the storefront glass on the nights of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> (after they had been replaced), the second time with red-and-black painted bottles, Sánchez Palacios, although not a member of the CRAS, was caught by the *Brigada Político-Social* and thrown in jail. Provisionally released awaiting sentencing, he heard rumors of a twelve-year sentence for terrorism, and promptly fled the country for France.<sup>399</sup>

Sánchez Palacios eventually joined the *Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota* (FRAP, Revolutionary and Patriotic Antifascist Front), and after his capture on the French frontier in 1973 was tortured, spending eight months in the hospital. He later was transferred to Martutene Prison (San Sebastián) and later Carabanchel Prison (Madrid),

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<sup>397</sup> He began work in 1962, just after the massive mining strikes of that Spring and Summer.

<sup>398</sup> Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author.

<sup>399</sup> *ibid.*

where he first made contact with members of ETA and participated in several hunger strikes.<sup>400</sup> That autumn, the CAR, with the help of some dozen members of ETA (*político-militar*), began arming themselves with French-made weapons acquired via contacts in Algeria<sup>401</sup> in preparation for an armed campaign in Asturias designed initially to fund the group's future political and military campaign.<sup>402</sup>

On October 2, 1978, as part of seven coordinated assaults nationwide by ETA (p-m), three young men entered the Hospital General de Asturias in Oviedo, held up the cashier at gunpoint, and escaped on foot with the 6.1 million pesetas<sup>403</sup> in the hospital's safe.<sup>404</sup> It is likely that the CAR's Manuel Angel García Pita was involved in the attack in some way. He was convicted in 1980 for his involvement with the later assault on the Banco Herrero and was employed by the Hospital General, hypothetically allowing him to aid the assailants in locating the hospital safe and with the timing of the attack and getaway (at 9:30am and when the cashier was absent), with the authorities noting that the "exact knowledge of the terrain by the Commando [paramilitary group] stood out."<sup>405</sup>

While the culturalists of the Conceyu Bable lauded the CNA for being the "only autonomist, Asturianista, and clearly nationalist position" in the Asturian political landscape,

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<sup>400</sup> *ibid* and "Recuerdos d'ayeri y güei: entrevista con Gerardo Sánchez Palacios," *Güei*, no. 33 (marzu 2001).

<sup>401</sup> José Manuel Vaquero, "Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero," *El País* [Madrid] 1980-03-23.

<sup>402</sup> Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author.

<sup>403</sup> Roughly \$80,000 in 1978 US\$.

<sup>404</sup> "Nueva oleada de atracos en distintos puntos de España," *ABC* [Madrid] 1978-10-03; "Más de 13 millones de pesetas, botín de siete atracos," *ABC* [Sevilla] 1978-10-03; "Importantes atracos en Oviedo, Portugalete y Vitoria," *El País* [Madrid] 1978-10-03.

<sup>405</sup> Vaquero, "Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero."

the much more radical CAR, in Sánchez Palacios' words, derided the group as a group of "bag-pipe and drum nationalists," unwilling and unable to engage in the serious work of armed resistance to the Spanish State.<sup>406</sup> However, the CNA's moderate haul in its first foray into the electoral process convinced the CAR that it could act as the germ of a combined political and paramilitary nationalist organization in Asturias (much as Sinn Féin has occasionally worked with the IRA). Dubardu Puente received 3,049 votes (0.57% of the total) as the CNA's lead candidate for the *Congreso de los Diputados* and Nel Anxelu González Zapico (usually referred to as Anxelu Zapico) received 8,309 for the Senate (0.16% of the vote) of March 1, 1979.<sup>407</sup>

At the same time, divisions within the directorate of the CNA about the direction of the party had begun to appear. A faction led by the General Secretary of the party Anxelu Zapico and Nel Xesús (Chus) Álvarez García objected to the overly cultural focus that had characterized the party since its founding, blaming the CNA for "covering up its great

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<sup>406</sup> "Al principiu, lo que yo sabía del CNA yera que se trataba de nacionalismu más bien de gaita y tambor."  
"Recursos d'ayeri y güei: entrevista con Gerardo Sánchez Palacios."

<sup>407</sup> Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, "Conceyu Nacionalista Astur. L'únicu partíu asturianu. L'únicu camín.."  
Congress vote totals from: Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Resultados electorales. Congreso de los Diputados marzo 1979. Asturias,"  
<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultado.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=0&cdEleccion=2&anio=1979&mes=3&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Congreso+de+los+Diputados&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=15:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=3&cdProvincia=99&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+ASTURIAS>. Accessed 2010/11/24.

Senate vote totals from: Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Resultados electorales. Senado marzo 1979. Asturias,"  
<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultadoSenado.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=1&cdEleccion=3&anio=1979&mes=3&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Senado&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=15:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=3&cdProvincia=99&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+ASTURIAS>. Accessed 2010/11/24.

political incapacity with a culturalist work, almost always false (Celtism).<sup>408</sup> Referring to themselves as the “critical” group, as opposed to the “purists” (also called “the *celtista* sector”) led by Puente and Carmona,<sup>409</sup> this faction had been growing increasingly discontented about what it saw as the CNA’s lack of politics, using a Marxist criterion. This faction complained that the party was functioning as “an appendix of the Conceyu Bable,” allowing the supposedly “non-political” cultural association to greatly influence the organization’s tactics and overall goals rather than behaving as “a truly independent party much less politically aligned with the masses.”<sup>410</sup> Approached by the CAR because of their history in the working class Left (both were former PCE members from the mining town of Mieres), Zapico and Álvarez saw the influx of new members with histories of struggle against the dictatorship as a way to re-focus the party on developing a politics of class struggle, dropping “culturalist postures” to embrace a “compromise with the reality of the Asturian working class.”<sup>411</sup>

At the end of April, a general congress (*Conceyu Xeneral*) of the CNA was conducted to debate the possible membership of the CAR, with the shift in party ideology and policy

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<sup>408</sup> “*Tapecía la so grande incapacidá política con un trabayu culturalista, cuasi siempre falsu (celtismu).*”

Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, “Fueyes internes nu. 1,” (Xixón: CNA, agostu 1979). 4.

<sup>409</sup> *ibid.* 4. Also Nel Xesús Álvarez García, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-03-05).

<sup>410</sup> “*Casi como un apéndice del C.B. y arropado siempre por éste, no como un partido realmente autóctono ni mucho menos ligado políticamente a las masas.*”

*ibid.* 5. Note- of the four sections in the CNA’s *Fueyes internes*, two were written in Castilian (the intro, “Sentido de la historia y nación” and “Cuatro ejes en la política del CNA”). This would seem to indicate different authors for each section, although it was quite rare for the CNA to publish bilingually, usually producing articles or pamphlets entirely in Asturianu.

<sup>411</sup> “*Postures culturalistes...nun hai dengún compromisu cola rialidá del trabayu asturianu.*”

The section laying out the (surviving) CNA’s version of the internal struggle within the party, “*So la crisis nel C.N.A.*” was written in Asturianu, making authorship by either Zapico or Álvarez likely.



that it would entail. While its connections to ETA (p-m) were at that point unknown to the general membership of the Asturianista group, it was clear that the group was both more radically Left-wing than the CNA had been up to that point and that it emphasized armed struggle as a legitimate political tool.<sup>412</sup> According to Chus Álvarez García, one of the major attractions of the CAR was the possibility of creating a sustained armed struggle, “in imitation of both Euskadi and the movements in Latin America,” which, to certain ex-Communist members of the CNA, seemed to show that “national and social liberation came from armed struggle.”<sup>413</sup> While the April *Conceyu Xeneral* decided against the admission of the militants from the CAR, the Comités d’Acción Revolucionaria continued both their contacts with the disaffected faction of the CNA and their armed fundraising campaign, with several CAR militants (and associates such as Sánchez Palacios) receiving paramilitary training from the during the Spring of 1979, probably in San Claudio, a suburb of Oviedo.<sup>414</sup> The ETA (p-m) commando set up camp at a rented house in that location in May in preparation for the planned robbery of the Banco Herrero in early July 1979.<sup>415</sup>

The CAR began to escalate the scale of their robberies, increasing both the audacity and boldness of the robberies and the monetary haul. On May 5th, shortly after their

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<sup>412</sup> Puente Fernández, Interview by author; Suárez Palacios, Interview by author; Álvarez García, Interview by author.

<sup>413</sup> “*Hombre, yo creo que el tema de que escoja una reacción armada ye por mimetismo no sólo con Euskadi sinon por los movimientos latinoamericanos, por los Tupamaros, por todo los grupos armaos que yeran organizaciones de liberación nacional y en aquellos tiempos, en aquellos años de los setenta, se veía que la liberación nacional y social venía por la lucha armada.*”

Álvarez García, Interview by author.

<sup>414</sup> Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author.

<sup>415</sup> Vaquero, “Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero.”

rejection by the CNA, four gunmen connected to the CAR (possibly with help from the *poli-milis*) appeared at the *Hogar de San José*, a pension fund distribution point run by the *Caja de Ahorros* in the very center of Oviedo's old city. In front of a crowd of "hundreds" of retirees, who had lined up to collect their allotted pension payments, three men armed with pistols and on with a Star Z-60 sub-machine gun appeared at the very point at which the delivery van (from the *Caja de Ahorros*) had opened its doors to deliver the funds to the distribution point, taking the three guards by surprise.<sup>416</sup> The gunmen then escaped in a green Renault R6 with some 20 million pesetas<sup>417</sup> and the weapons carried by the guards just as the escorting police car arrived as scheduled at 9am.<sup>418</sup>

It is unclear if any part of the CNA knew that it was, in fact, the CAR carrying out these robberies. Both Puente and Carmona deny any prior knowledge of the connection before the Banco Herrero incident in July (by which time both had left the now-integrated CNA).<sup>419</sup> The Conceyu Bable was also, at least in its public pronouncements, unaware of any connection between the incidents at the Hospital or the Pension Fund and Asturian nationalism. There is no mention of either incident in even the party's internal newsletters from October through July. Apparently, the robberies did not even register as newsworthy or of immediate concern to the Asturianista group, which focused the majority of its activities

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<sup>416</sup> José Manuel Vaquero, "Audaz atraco en el centro de Oviedo," *El País* [Madrid] 1979-05-06; José Manuel Vaquero, "Tres acciones espectaculares en menos de dos años," *El País* [Madrid] 1980-03-23.

<sup>417</sup> Roughly \$300,000 in 1979 US\$.

<sup>418</sup> Vaquero, "Audaz atraco en el centro de Oviedo."; Vaquero, "Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero."

<sup>419</sup> Puente Fernández, Interview by author; Carmona, Interview by author.

during late 1978 and the first half of 1979 towards the twin goals of an Autonomy Statute and a Language Academy.

In June, the persistence by CAR and the critical faction within the CNA finally paid off, when a nationwide vote of the party (divided into geographic sections, *Uviéu, Xixón, Avilés, Nalón*, and *Madrid*), resulted in favor of the CAR's admission into the party, with Madrid casting the tiebreaking vote.<sup>420</sup> The admission caused an uproar, with Puente and all of the members of the old central committee (with the exceptions of Zapico and Álvarez) leaving the party while simultaneously being expelled by the new general assembly. A fight over the party's official ledgers (containing statutes, official minutes, budgetary information, and the like) ensued, ending with Zapico's faction ratified, having won a legal vote. Additionally, Zapico was confirmed as a legitimate possessor of the books, as he was an original founder of the CNA and one of the people in whose name the party had been registered with the Ministry of the Interior. Enraged and predicting that "something was going to happen" (so he maintained three decades later), Puente and his lawyer soon afterwards approached the police commissariat to explain what had happened and disavow any connection between any future action by the CNA and the members who had left.<sup>421</sup> Evidently, the CAR or the CNA (or quite possibly both) had been monitored or infiltrated by the police for some time, as the only response that he was given was that the police were

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<sup>420</sup> Xuan Cándano, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-03-31). Cándano was a member of the Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid as well as the CNA's Madrid branch.

<sup>421</sup> Puente Fernández, Interview by author.

already well aware of the events within the CNA.<sup>422</sup>

Just after 10pm on the night of Sunday July 8, 1979, a man and a woman<sup>423</sup> of the CNA and ETA (p-m) broke into the residence of José Fuertes Álvarez, the cashier of Oviedo's Banco Herrero, using a false claim that there was a water leaking from the apartment into the floor below to gain admittance.<sup>424</sup> Holding Fuertes and his wife and family captive at gunpoint in his residence overnight, unharmed but unable to communicate or leave the apartment. At 7:00 the next morning, Fuertes was escorted from his residence at 22 calle Valentín Masip to the bank by one of his captors. Arriving at the bank on calle Fruela at the center of town at around 7:10am, the cashier verified with the night watchman that he was the first employee to arrive (apparently without the watchman suspecting the presence of one of the kidnappers). After admitting the cashier, the watchman was quickly confronted with ten armed intruders (who had been parked in stolen vehicles near the entrance, in all probability a combination of ETA (p-m) paramilitaries and Asturian CAR/CNA members (eight men and two women). The attackers then obliged the watchman to admit the arriving employees normally one-by-one, and they were escorted by the assailants to the washroom area, where their papers were checked in order to identify the bank employees with the keys to the main safe, which for security reasons could only be opened by simultaneously turning three different keys, one held by the cashier and two that rotated amongst the other

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<sup>422</sup> "*Yá tamos enteraos. Yá sabemos lo que pasa.*"

ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Possibly Pita and his wife, Socorro Coto Álvarez.

<sup>424</sup> Miguel Somovilla, "Diez atracadores roban 130 millones, de pesetas del Banco Herrero de Oviedo," *El País* [Madrid] 1979-07-10. and Vaquero, "Tres acciones espectaculares en menos de dos años."

employees at the bank.

Unable to open the safe until the pre-programmed time of 8:00am (when payments were scheduled to be made to several Asturian companies, amongst them HUNOSA), the attackers quickly loaded the money from the bank into several suitcases and proceeded to enter two nearby getaway cars. As they exited the bank, the driver of one of the three armored Land Rovers waiting to deliver the bank's disbursement of funds to HUNOSA saw the attackers and sounded his vehicle's car alarm, producing a volley of 9mm gunfire from the robbers as they escaped into two cars parked out front. No one was injured during either the shootout, kidnapping of Fuertes and his family, or amongst the bank employees. Indeed, it was reported that when one of the employees, arriving to find his bank held by masked gunmen, suffered a minor heart attack, he was given a chest massage and treated by one of his attackers.<sup>425</sup> The 130 million pesetas<sup>426</sup> robbed from the Banco Herrero constituted one of the largest bank robberies in Spanish History, and it could easily have been a much larger sum, as the afternoon before, payments were made out of the bank of some 270 million pesetas, which would otherwise have more than tripled the funds gained from the operation.<sup>427</sup> Still, the size of the robbery and the spectacular nature of the event, seemingly torn from the pages of a bad action movie, were unprecedented and created a great deal of

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<sup>425</sup> Somovilla, "Diez atracadores roban 130 millones, de pesetas del Banco Herrero de Oviedo."

<sup>426</sup> Approximately \$2 million in 1979 US\$.

<sup>427</sup> Vaquero, "Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero." The 400 million pesetas available the day before the robbery amounted to roughly \$6 million in 1979 US\$.

public notoriety.<sup>428</sup>

The Banco Herrero affair was catastrophic for its Asturian participants, the CNA, and Asturianismu as a whole. Less than a year later, on March 19, 1980, ETA (p-m) Executive Committee José Ignacio Aramayo Egurola was captured by police in Valencia. One of the members of the ETA (p-m) group responsible for the Banco Herrero heist, he revealed to police the names and (some of) the whereabouts of the other participants, and six Asturians connected to the CAR and the CNA were rounded up the next day: Gerardo Sánchez Palacios, Manuel Ramos Vicente, Manuel Ángel García Pita, his wife Socorro Coto Álvarez, María del Carmen Villamediel Fernández, and Juan Emilio Carvajal.<sup>429</sup>

The Asturian nationalists did not even benefit from the proximate material gains of the bank robberies, for while a small part of the money remained stored in San Claudio for some fifteen days after the robbery, the vast majority of it was smuggled eastwards out of Asturias in a van with a false bottom, through various police controls in Asturias, Cantabria, and Euskadi, and eventually over the border into France, where it disappeared.<sup>430</sup> Even the small portion left in the rented house outside Oviedo was quickly removed when the last remnants of the ETA commando departed Asturias. Sánchez Palacios, having paid for the money with another year in prison (this time in Soria), “the worst year of [his] life,”<sup>431</sup> is still

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<sup>428</sup> For example, note the title of Vaquero, “Tres acciones espectaculares en menos de dos años.”

<sup>429</sup> Vaquero, “Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero.”; “Otra presunta terrorista, detenida en Oviedo,” *ABC* [Madrid] 1980-03-26.

<sup>430</sup> Vaquero, “Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero.”

<sup>431</sup> “*Yo creo que fue el peor año de mi vida.*”

Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author. He claims that the harassment of prisoners in 1980-1 under the

quite bitter about the whole affair, complaining vehemently, “They took the largest piles of dough from here, they took it from *here!* And what happened? They *used* us because afterwards we were left with nothing. They used us with the consent of the majority of the people who were organized here....Here they left us with absolutely nothing.”<sup>432</sup>

The Comités d’Acción Revolucionaria marked a turning point in an often fractious relationship between Asturian and Basque nationalism. Up to this point, some mimicry of the Basque country or public admiration for Basque nationalist groups was, if not common amongst the Asturianista groups, at least acceptable. Most prominently, the MCA was directly connected to the Basque-derived Movimiento Comunista (ex- ETA-*berri*), and therefore it can be said that the Basque nationalist movement at least indirectly contributed to the Unidad Regionalista campaign of 1977 through the major participation of the MCA and of Antonio Masip, another individual with connections to the Basque Left. However, after the revelations in the press about CNA participation in the Banco Herrero robbery, a split developed within the Asturianista movement.

In general, over the course of the next several decades, the radical Left would maintain its interest in (and at times active support of) Basque groups such as *Euskadiko Ezkerra* (EE, Basque Left), *Herri Batasuna* (HB, People’s Unity, ETA’s political wing), and

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UCD administration was significantly worse than the prisons under the Franco dictatorship.

<sup>432</sup> “D’equí sacaron los mayores palos de pasta, sacaronlos d’equí. ¿Y qué pasó? Qué se nos usó porque luego aquí no quedó absolutamente nada. Pero que se nos usó con...con...consentimiento de la mayor parte de la gente que estábamos aquí organizados.” “Aquí se nos dejó a nosotros absolutamente sin nada.”

ibid. Note- Sánchez Palacios spoke most of the time in Castilian, but would slip occasionally into *amestáu*, an influence notable particularly in his grammar.

later *Eusko Alkartasuna* (EA, Basque Solidarity, a social-democratic schism from the PNV).

In particular, the CNA's successor parties, the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur* and *Andecha Astur* would both maintain a certain fascination with the Basque model of independence struggles, and the MCA would actively campaign on behalf of *Herri Batasuna* in the 1987 and 1989 European Parliamentary elections.<sup>433</sup> In contrast, although there were certain notable exceptions (such as Ramón d'Andrés Díaz), the generally more moderate, more regionalist, and more culturalist sector of Asturianism embodied in first the *Conceyu Bable* and later the *Academia de la Llingua* generally rejected anything remotely associated with Euskadi and ETA's armed conflict. Even though the papers (and police) specifically stated that the Asturians arrested in March did not represent the CNA nor was the Asturian nationalist organization ever connected with that type of armed action, the association between the CNA and ETA (p-m) became quite strong in both the public memory and the individual memories of the Asturianistas themselves.<sup>434</sup>

Many of the members of the *Conceyu Bable* quickly distanced themselves as much as possible after the attack on the Banco Herrero from any connection with the CNA, effectively abandoning the political organization that until recently they had been so closely connected. Even thirty years later, many of the militants active at the time made a point to

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<sup>433</sup> See Herri Batasuna, "Euskadi lucha contigo: unidad popular al parlamento europeo," (Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1987).

<sup>434</sup> *El País* explicitly stated that the CNA had "never been implicated in this sort of action" (*jamás se ha visto implicado en este tipo de acción*). Vaquero, "Detenidos cuatro presuntos implicados en el atraco de ETA (p-m) al Banco Herrero." *ABC* was less confident with its wording, saying that "as of today, [the CNA] does not act through violent armed actions" (*hoy por hoy, no se manifiesta a través de acciones violentas armadas*). "Otra presunta terrorista, detenida en Oviedo."



draw strong distinctions between the “good”, peaceful, cultural nationalism of the Conceyu Bable and the Academia de la Llingua and the “bad”, Basque-influenced, armed struggle of the CNA.<sup>435</sup> Luis Xabel Álvarez, for one, is highly reluctant to discuss his (brief) participation in the CNA, even though it occurred during the period when the party was effectively a political extension of the Conceyu Bable, if not *de jure*, at least in terms of ideology, sociolinguistic theory, membership, and aesthetic.

The Asturian general public, rather than inspired by the heroic struggle of a group of Latin American-styled guerrilla freedom fighters, seemed for the most part to view those responsible as bank robbers, “terrorists”, and somehow perverted into something un-Asturian by association with ETA. The backlash was such that the CNA only made a timid campaign to have the political prisoners released that year, to no effect.<sup>436</sup> Unlike contemporary nationalist parties in Euskadi or Ireland, no real attempt was made to extract any political gain from the detainment of political prisoners either through a campaign to free them, to increase publicity through broadcast or public statements during their trial, nor even any real attempt to portray the CNA members as martyrs. Sánchez Palacios, indeed, blames this lack of action on the part of the CNA for its eventual collapse and for the subsequent general weakness of the Asturian nationalist movement. He laments that “at that moment there were people very capable of guiding the CNA that knew when they became involved in the project

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<sup>435</sup> For example, García Arias, Interview by author; Álvarez Fernández, Interview by author.

<sup>436</sup> Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, “Asturies puxa polos presos políticos asturianos,” (Xixón: C.N.A., 1980). “*A la hora d’implicanos en ella, [el CNA] no salió tampoco.*” Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author.

that [they] were not making comedy films.” He remains convinced that the armed struggle begun with the Banco Herrero was a stillborn revolution, that “had those people gone for it and extracted something from all that, today there would possibly be a real [Asturian nationalist] party here.”<sup>437</sup>

Most critically for the future of any hypothetical sustained paramilitary campaign, the CNA’s passivity and the view of ETA as outsiders prevented the development of an Action-Reaction-Action positive feedback loop of violence. Extensively studied in both Ireland<sup>438</sup> and Euskadi,<sup>439</sup> much of the violence, as it escalated, was based on reactions by one side against a perceived atrocity by the other, which would then, in turn, be seen as an atrocity meriting revenge. The key to this, according to O’Dochartaigh’s study of the escalation of Civil Rights’ protests in Derry in 1968, was the intentionally provocative non-violence of the march organizers. At least part of the intention behind the actions of the non-governmental side was to provoke an overreaction by the police, thereby legitimating both the movement as a “defense of the people” and giving it license to respond in kind.<sup>440</sup> In Asturias, this critically never happened. The highly publicized bank robbery could be

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<sup>437</sup> “N’aquei momentu había xente mui capaz pa siguir tirando del CNA que cuando se metieron nel proyeutu sabía que nun tábamos faciendo películes de risa.” “Si d’aquella esta xente hubieren tirao por ello y hubieren sacao rentabilidad de too esto, güei posiblemente hubiera un partíu de verdá equí.”

“Recursos d’ayeri y güei: entrevista con Gerardo Sánchez Palacios.”

<sup>438</sup> See Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Alan Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Naill O’Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997).

<sup>439</sup> The most prominent proponent of the Action-Reaction-Action theory for Euskadi is Daniele Conversi. See Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Political Mobilisation*.

<sup>440</sup> O’Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles*.

considered an attempt to provoke a violent reaction while retaining the moral high ground of non-violence (while the presence of weapons was clearly critical to all three robberies by the CAR, none was ever used to hurt or kill). However, the violent and immediate police overreaction against the local population, so necessary for this kind of theory to apply, never came. Without such a reaction and the collateral damage that resulted from intensive police searches for underground paramilitaries, the hoped-for sense of resentment against the government never appeared. When finally caught by the authorities, the CNA never seriously attempted to make the week or so of torture and interrogation suffered by its captured members at the hands of the Guardia Civil in Madrid appear to be such an overreaction.<sup>441</sup> Thus, the cycle was broken, and any hope of fomenting a sense of separate identity in Asturias based on an escalating series of violent incidents was stillborn.

In later years, Asturianism's association with the ETA attack would frequently be used by its opponents, such as philosopher Gustavo Bueno Martínez, to argue that any concession to Asturian nationalism was one step down the road to terrorism.<sup>442</sup> Later in 1980, the newspaper *La Nueva España* both attacked the Asturian linguistic revival and nationalism's populist claims as "an imitation, a reflection of what is happening in Cataluña and the Basque Country. Here the public does not ask for it."<sup>443</sup> *La Nueva España* also

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<sup>441</sup> Sánchez Palacios, Interview by author.

<sup>442</sup> Bueno Martínez, Gustavo, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-04-16).

<sup>443</sup> "No creo que tenga la fuerza y la entidad suficiente para imponerse. Es un mimetismo, un reflejo de lo que pasa en Cataluña y el país vasco. Aquí no lo pide el pueblo."

José Antonio Mases, *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1980-02-17 quoted in Conceyu Bable, "Babayes," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 16 (s/f, probably abril 1980): 6.

questioned the organization's championing of the language at the expense of other important cultural markers of the region, such as its pre-Romanesque architecture (dating to the eighth century). As late as 2005, the presence of Asturianu in schools was derided as “bale *batua*,” nominally critiquing it for the artificial nature of a centralized and standardized language but at the same time specifically attempting to connect Asturianu with Sabino Arana's *Euskara batua* and the violence associated with the Basque Country since the 1960s.<sup>444</sup> Far from Gerardo Sánchez Palacios and the (post-CAR) CNAs' prediction that Asturias was ripe for the transition from cultural politics to armed struggle, the Banco Herrero affair generally had the opposite effect. Within a year, the eleven thousand votes (between the Congressional and Senate elections) cast for the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur were a distant memory, and much of the electoral momentum built up around Asturian nationalist and regionalist politics was lost. The CNA slowly disintegrated, disbanding in 1981, and no specifically Asturianista party would even contest the next general elections of 1982. It would take until 1987 (Sánchez Vicente's *Partíu Asturianista*, PAS) before one even surpassed the 0.57% of the electorate won by the CNA in its only electoral appearance, and until 1991 before one (the PAS again) matched Unidad Regionalista's electoral haul in 1977. While other factors contributed to this electoral disappearance, most notably the fragmentation within the Asturianista movement itself and the PSOE's ability to “capture” notable figures with solid regionalist credentials such as Pedro de Silva, Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, and Carlos

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<sup>444</sup> L. Á. Vega, “Velarde: «Colocando un bale 'batua' en las escuelas no se genera una lengua»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 2005-08-13.

Rubiera, the backlash against the failed first attempt to mount an armed nationalist movement in Asturias must be seen as a significant cause.

### **Negotiating Autonomy**

Fortunately for Asturianism and its hopes of pressuring the pre-autonomic government to build official protection and promotion of Asturian culture and language into the new Statute of Autonomy, the CNA's involvement in the attack on the Banco Herrero was still unknown until the Statute was nearly complete, less than a month before the final draft was submitted to the Cortes in Madrid (April 21, 1980). Thus, while the revelations about the most extreme branch of Asturian nationalism were shocking to many people in Asturias, they did not have much of a short-term effect on the negotiations over the Statute or Asturias' position within the structure of the new state, which was much more dependent on internal wheeling and dealing between the major political parties (UCD, PSOE, PCE, and AP).

The attitude of the UCD was of particular importance, dead-set against an expansive autonomy for Asturias through the application of Article 151 of the new constitution. This effectively held up the beginning of the autonomy process from its initial agreement in the Provincial Deputation to pursue an autonomy statute on October 11, 1977 until July 11, 1979, when the Socialists and Communists capitulated, agreeing to a consensus government

and the “slow-track” autonomy of Article 143.<sup>445</sup> The wording of the new document was largely put together by an Editing Commission of 24 representatives (*Comisión Redactora del Anteproyecto de Estatuto de Autonomía*), rather than the assembly as a whole, with the members drawn from the four political parties with Parliamentary representation (in the Cortes in Madrid), the UCD, *Coalición Demócrata* (a conservative coalition led by the AP), PSOE, and PCE (six seats on the commission were given to each party).

The negotiations over the structure of the Constitution and various Statutes of Autonomy are some of the best examples of how the new democratic state was constructed in a less open way than has often been implied in the mythmaking surrounding retellings of the Transition. While the elections of 1977 did elect the representatives to the Constitutional Cortes, the Transitional provincial assemblies that determined the content of the new statutes of autonomy were appointed by the parties established in power during that election rather than elected locally. Thus, while it has been subsequently established that regionalist and nationalist parties vastly improve their results in local and regional elections (when compared to national ones like that of June 1977), there was never an opportunity during this critical period to test that effect on, for example, a group like Unidad Regionalista. The Asturian Statute of Autonomy was instead determined by a commission appointed by the Cortes in Madrid and apportioned according to the results of the 1977 general elections. Thus, while the new document was written by representatives of the Asturian people, it was an example

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<sup>445</sup> Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, ed. *El proceso autonómico asturiano*. 21-25.

of a highly indirect democratic process.

This highlights once again the importance the elections of 1977 and 1979. Unidad Regionalista's inability to achieve a parliamentary seat (hypothetically most probable in a joint candidacy with the PSP) cost it a potential place on the Editing Commission and, in large part, a direct influence upon the wording and priorities of the Asturian Autonomy Statute. However, they were not without sympathizers in the Commission. Sánchez Vicente, while a member of the General Assembly, was not selected to be on the Editing Commission, but Pedro de Silva was amongst the 24 members chosen on June 25, 1979.<sup>446</sup> However, he was not a member of the smaller Technical Commission (otherwise known as the "Commission of 8") that was in charge of the initial drafting of the document, which did not begin until November 3, and the Commission of 24's first draft was not finalized until December 17, 1979, with the Coalición Demócrata members voting against the document, but with the approval of the other three parties.

For a 27-day period after the approval of the draft (December 19, 1979-January 13, 1980), the text of the Statute was put up for public review and commentary. This period provided a unique opportunity for the Asturianistas to air their views publicly before the pre-

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<sup>446</sup> PSOE – Rafael Fernández Álvarez, Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Eugenio Carbajal Martínez, José Manuel Palacio Álvarez, Bernardo Fernández Pérez, and Francisco Sosa Wagner.

UCD – Luís Vega Escandón, Emilio García-Pumarino Ramos, José Agustín Antuña Alonso, Juan Casero Lambás, and two more to be named later "according to their specialties."

PCE – Gerardo Iglesias Arguelles, Francisco Prado Alberdi, Joaquín Lorences Rodríguez, Ignacio de Otto y Pardo, José Carlos Fernández Rozas, and Francisco Batida.

CD – Luís Fernández Vega, Juan Luís de la Vallina Velarde, Francisco Álvarez-Cascos Fernández, José Emilio Longo García, Pablo García Vallaure, and Francisco Fernández Eguibar.

autonomic government, a chance that they did not let pass. In essence, it was a chance for those who had been shut out of the autonomy process to air their complaints about both the closed nature of the process, completed entirely within commissions appointed by the parties in power. The outsiders did have an important point about the non-representative character of the Commission of 24 (and 8), which, rather than having seats allotted in proportion with each party's representation in the Cortes were divided equally amongst the four parties, amplifying both the Communists' and conservatives' influence over the autonomy process.

Perhaps the most thorough response was from the Movimiento Comunista, understandable considering that the organization had been debating the nature of a hypothetical Asturian autonomy statute for almost five years.<sup>447</sup> The MCA vehemently “globally [rejected] the *Anteproyecto* of the Autonomy Statute....as well as the method followed in its elaboration and the general politics that inspired it,” condemning the entire premise of a statute based on Article 143 as one with “extremely limited competencies and in every way insufficient to approach the enormous and pressing problems that [faced] the Asturian people.”<sup>448</sup> The MCA's complaints about the statute included its lack of provision for local control in the following areas: public enterprise (specifically, the mining and

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<sup>447</sup> Movimiento Comunista de Asturias / Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies, *Anteproyecto de estatuto de la región autónoma de Asturias / Anteproyectu d'estatutu de la rexón autónoma d'Asturies*.

<sup>448</sup> “El Movimiento Comunista de Asturias rechaza globalmente el *Anteproyecto de Estatuto*....así como el método seguido en su elaboración y la política general que lo ha inspirado.”

“...extremadamente limitado y a todas luces insuficiente para abordar los enormes y acuciantes problemas que afectan al pueblo asturiano.”

José Uría Ríos, “Movimiento Comunista de Asturias (MCA), 1980-01-07,” in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 133-34.



metallurgical sectors so important to the region), agricultural policy (focusing on the centralization of the milk industry), social policy (health care for workers suffering from silicosis, unemployment benefits, and pensions), language and cultural promotion (Asturianu classes in schools, its standardization and use in mass media), and the financial dependence of the new Autonomous government on the central state in Madrid. Additionally, they strongly objected to the continued central control over all levels of the police, “figure of authoritarianism and arbitrary centralism.”<sup>449</sup> As in its earlier campaigns (both as part of Unidad Regionalista and separately), the MCA did include linguistic and cultural policy in its demands, but they, in general, were secondary to what the party considered the more pressing issues of deindustrialization and the construction of a social welfare state. Indeed, the self-criticism of its over-emphasis on language during the 1977 elections seems to have been taken to heart by the party; it still called for both Asturianu instruction in schools and an independent University of Asturias, but it clearly had regained its original focus on economic regionalism.

The majority of Asturianista groups, on the other hand, accepted the *fait accompli* of “slow-track” autonomy, although they were not above criticizing it as “the most ruinous of possibilities.”<sup>450</sup> Indeed, the Conceyu Bable went so far as to re-write the preamble to the

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<sup>449</sup> “*símbolo del autoritarismo y la arbitrariedad centralistas.*”  
 ibid.

<sup>450</sup> “*De toes maneres siendo sabedor C.B. que los partíos mayoritarios asitiaos n’Asturies escayeron la más ruina de les posibilidaes.*”

Anxelu X. Cadenas Menéndez, “Conceyu Bable, 1980 xineru,” in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo,

statute, attempting to re-word it to read, “Asturies, conscious of its identity as a people, constitutes itself sovereignly as an Autonomous Community in accordance with the Constitution.”<sup>451</sup> The CNA’s proposal was even more bold, wanting all instances of the word “region” to be replaced by “nation” and beginning their proposed preamble “Asturias, as an expression of its identity as a people and in order to obtain its self-government...”<sup>452</sup>

Unsurprisingly given the complete lack of any nationalist presence at the bargaining table, these claims of sovereignty for the Asturian people was not included in the final document.

One area in which the period of public review did have a marked effect on the Statute was in the area of language. The large number of calls for its inclusion and the concessions made to this lobby indicate clearly that, by this point, the Asturianistas had been broadly successful in converting the language into one of the principal symbols of Asturian identity. The original draft only mentioned the language tangentially, in Article 7, Number 14, stating merely that Asturias had “linguistic peculiarities.”<sup>453</sup> Those in favor of a much more specific protection for the language or its co-official status included such surprising groups as the Department of Primary Materials at ENSIDESA in Gijón,<sup>454</sup> the Department

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1981): 134-35.

<sup>451</sup> “Asturies, consciente de su identidad como pueblo, se constituye soberanamente en Comunidad Autónoma de acuerdo con la Constitución.”

ibid.

<sup>452</sup> “Asturias, como expresión de su identidad como pueblo y para ceder a su autogobierno...”

Vicente M. Miravalles, “Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, 1980-01-12,” in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 145-48.

<sup>453</sup> Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, ed. *El proceso autonómico asturiano*. 138.

<sup>454</sup> “Trabajadores de Ensidesa - Gijón - Departamento Primeras Materias, 1980 enero,” in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial

(*Consejería*) of Culture of the Provincial Government,<sup>455</sup> PCE VIII-IX Congresos (a split from the Communist Party), and the PSOE (Histórico) (a split from the PSOE that refused the party's rejection of Marxism).<sup>456</sup> Additionally, effectively all of the groups that had been agitating for constitutional confirmation of the language revival over the previous 4-6 years sent in proposed amendments, including the Amigos del Bable (practically their last public act),<sup>457</sup> the CNA,<sup>458</sup> Antonio Masip (independently),<sup>459</sup> *Socialistes del Pueblu Asturianu* (a short-lived party formed by the culturalist faction of the CNA that left with Dubardu Puente in June 1979),<sup>460</sup> the Partido de los Trabajadores de Asturias,<sup>461</sup> and a few independent

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de Oviedo, 1981): 180.

<sup>455</sup> Consejería de Cultura, "Consejería de Cultura del Consejo Regional de Asturias, 1980-01-14," in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 163-65.

Note- the *Consejería de Cultura* was attached to the *Consejo Regional*, not the *Diputación Provincial*, and therefore part of the executive branch of the pre-autonomic government, whereas Sánchez Vicente's *Comisión de Cultura* was a legislative committee.

<sup>456</sup> Luís Enrique García Gómez, José Ignacio Fernández, Javier Fernández Romero, y Juan Manuel Freire, "Plataforma para la Autonomía de Asturias, 1980-01-12," in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 156-57.

The "Plataforma" was signed by the following groups: Andecha Ñacional, Gestora de Socialistas del Pueblo Asturiano, Asociación Cultural Conceyu Bable, Movimiento Comunista de Asturias, PCE VIII-IX Congresos, Partido Comunista de los Trabajadores de Asturias, Partido de los Trabajadores de Asturias, Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Histórico), and Sindicato Unitario.

<sup>457</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the *Amigos del Bable* and their role in the founding of the Conceyu Bable.

Lorenzo Novo Mier, "Amigos del Bable, 1980-01-11," in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 176-77.

<sup>458</sup> Miravalles, "Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, 1980-01-12."

<sup>459</sup> Marcelino y Antonio Masip Hidalgo Arbesu Vallina, "Alegaciones, 1980-01-14," in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 135-42.

<sup>460</sup> Javier Fernández Romero, "Socialistes del Pueblu Asturianu, 1980-01-09," in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 152-54.

<sup>461</sup> Francisco Roza Pontigo, "Partido de los Trabajadores de Asturias (ORT-PTE), 1980-01-12," in *El proceso*

contributors.<sup>462</sup>

Masip and Arbesu Vallina called “Bable the great absence from the *Anteproyecto*,” citing the PSP’s proposed statute from January 1977 as a model clause, allowing for co-official status as soon as conditions were deemed appropriate.<sup>463</sup> Arbesu and Masip admonished the writers of the statute, pointing out sardonically that “we cannot kid ourselves; more than one legislator speaks with Bable’s influence. And in Bable all of the political parties have written, on more than one occasion, sincerely or opportunistically.”<sup>464</sup> The Conceyu Bable proposed the insertion of a clause openly creating a bilingual region, wanting a new article saying, “The language of Asturias is Bable or Asturianu that jointly with Castilian will enjoy the same rights.” Furthermore, they proposed sub-clauses demanding that “no one will be discriminated against for the use of the Asturian language or bable, without prejudice of the rights of citizens for the utilization of Castilian.”<sup>465</sup> The Conceyu Nacionalista Astur and its

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*autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 158-63.

<sup>462</sup> Carlos Lastra López, “s/t,” in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 152; Lluís Armando y Marcelino Manuel Fueyo Llana, “Consideraciones en torno al Anteproyecto de Estatuto de Autonomía de Asturias, 1980-01-11,” in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 142-43.

<sup>463</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the PSP.

Comité Ejecutivo Regional - Secretaría General - Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias, “10 bases para la autonomía de Asturias (borrador que propone como materia de discusión pública, el Comité Ejecutivo del Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias - P.S.P.A.).”

<sup>464</sup> “No nos engañamos, con influencia bable se expresa más de un diputado. Y en bable han escrito todos los partidos políticos, en más de una ocasión, de forma sincera u oportunista.”

Arbesu Vallina, “Alegaciones, 1980-01-14.”

<sup>465</sup> “1. La lengua de Asturias es el bable o asturiano que juntamente con el castellano gozará de los mismos derechos. 2. Nadie podrá ser discriminado por el uso de la lengua asturiana o bable, sin perjuicio de los derechos que asistan a los ciudadanos para la utilización del castellano.”

Cadenas Menéndez, “Conceyu Bable, 1980 xineru.”

schism *Socialistes del Pueblu Asturianu* both proposed language clauses that were virtually identical to the Conceyu Bable's. The number and variety of supporters for such a critical component of their political program indicated that the Asturianistas found at least some receptive audiences outside their membership.

Thus, the Editing Committee "highly recommended" that because of "the diverse petitions received in favor of the recognition of Bable en the statute," the Committee was "inclined to solicit from the Assembly a decision that explicitly recounts in terms that seem opportune the existence of this peculiarity of the Region."<sup>466</sup> The Committee's recommendation was strong enough to cause the mention of "linguistic peculiarities" in the first draft of the statute to be reworded and inserted in the preamble as a new Article 4, which stated "Bable, as the traditional language of Asturias, will enjoy protection. Its use, its diffusion in communications media, and its instruction will be promoted, respecting in all cases the local varieties and the voluntary condition of its learning."<sup>467</sup> While the final draft weakened the language somewhat through the excision of the clause about Asturianu's status as "the traditional language of Asturias," it still prominently highlighted linguistic rights in

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<sup>466</sup> "Recomendación elevada por la Comisión Redactora a la Asamblea de Parlamentarios y Diputados. Las diversas peticiones recibidas a favor del reconocimiento del bable en el Estatuto inclinan a esta Comisión a solicitar de la Asamblea una decisión que explícitamente recoja en los términos que estime oportunos la existencia de esta peculiaridad cultural de la Región."

Comisión Redactora del Anteproyecto de Estatuto de Autonomía, "Informe de la Comisión Redactora sobre las alegaciones presentadas al Anteproyecto de estatuto de autonomía para Asturias en el trámite de información pública," in *El proceso autonómico asturiano*, ed. Consejo Regional de Asturias y Diputación Provincial de Oviedo (Oviedo: Diputación Provincial de Oviedo, 1981): 180-83.

<sup>467</sup> "El bable, como lengua tradicional de Asturias, gozará de protección. Se promoverá su uso, su difusión en los medios de comunicación y su enseñanza, respetando, en todo caso, las variantes locales y voluntariedad en su aprendizaje."

Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

the preamble of the Statute.<sup>468</sup> However, the new article came short of awarding Asturianu co-official status, seemingly merely a matter of semantics. However, it was a semantic point that would become highly polemic over the next several decades, as Asturianu's lack of official status became a legal precedent that would be used to systematically marginalize the language from use in public life.

Additionally, the Conceyu Bable, Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, and Amigos del Bable all successfully included in their petitions the demand for the creation of a publicly-funded *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*. First proposed in 1978 by the Amigos del Bable's Lorenzo Novo Mier,<sup>469</sup> the pressure was continued through a petition campaign by both associations and through public statements of support, both from the regionalist cultural associations and the older *franquista*-generation scholars of the IDEA and the University, such as Emilio Alarcos Llorach.<sup>470</sup> Although the negotiations over the creation of the Academia de la Llingua predate the statute review process by several months, having begun in September of 1979, it must be considered a related success, resulting effectively simultaneously from a directed public campaign by the Asturianistas and their (sometimes) allies within the academic establishment. Three of the eight members of the commission selected by

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<sup>468</sup> The final wording was "*el bable gozará de protección. Se promoverá su uso, su difusión en los medios de comunicación y su enseñanza, respetando, en todo caso, las variantes locales y voluntariedad en su aprendizaje.*"

"Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de 30 de diciembre, de Estatuto de Autonomía para Asturias." Artículo 4.

<sup>469</sup> Although Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos wrote of such an Academy as early as 1791, Novo Mier was the first to conceive of the modern institution and propose it as a branch of a new autonomous government.

<sup>470</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the relationship between the two generations of intellectuals.

Conceyu Bable, "Diccionariu de la llingua asturiana," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 10 (s/f, probably avientu 1978): 3; Conceyu Bable, "Entamu," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 14 (s/f, probably ochubre 1979): 1.

*Consejero de Cultura y Deportes*, Atanasio Corte Zapico, were members of the Conceyu Bable, with the rest coming from the more conservative (politically) Amigos del Bable.<sup>471</sup> The Academia, publically funded by the government through Sánchez Vicente's Cultural Commission,<sup>472</sup> actually predated the final approval of the Autonomy Statute in Madrid, legally created December 15, 1980,<sup>473</sup> and whose statutes were approved on April 6 of the following year.<sup>474</sup> With Arias resigning as President of the Conceyu Bable to take up a position as the first President of the new Academia de la Llingua (served 1981-2001), the cultural association's connections to the new, government-sponsored institution were manifest. Indeed, many within the Conceyu Bable considered the Language Academy, rather than any piece of legislation (even Article 4 of the Autonomy Statute), the organization's crowning achievement.

The insertion of protections for Asturianu in the Statute and the creation of the Academia de la Llingua were both the result of sustained campaigns by the Asturianistas and have to be considered major successes. The fact that this pressure was applied in spite of the

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<sup>471</sup> The members of the commission were Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, Xosé Lluis García Arias, Ana Cano (Conceyu Bable) and Lorenzo Novo Mier, Josefina Martínez Álvarez, Carmen Díaz Castañón, María Josefa Canellada, and Jesús Neira Martínez (Amigos del Bable). Conceyu Bable, "Asina tien que ser l'Academia," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 14 (s/f, probably ochubre 1979): 7; Conceyu Bable, "Notes pa una polémica," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 14 (s/f, probably ochubre 1979): 10.

<sup>472</sup> Academia de la Lengua Asturiana, "Academia de la Llingua Asturiana," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Diputación Provincial, Caja 2528/37, 1981 junio-septiembre); Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, "Sobre petición de ayuda económica," (Archivo Histórico de Asturias, Junta General del Principado de Asturias, Fondo Diputación Provincial, Caja 2531/22, 1982 marzo-abril).

<sup>473</sup> "Decreto 33/1980, de 15 de diciembre, sobre creación de la Academia de la Lengua Asturiana," *Boletín Oficial del Consejo Regional de Asturias*, no. 13 (1981-07-16): 140.

<sup>474</sup> "Decreto 9/1981, de 6 de abril, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Academia de la Lengua Asturiana," *Boletín Oficial del Consejo Regional de Asturias*, no. 14 (1981-12-22): 164-67.

fact that they had no presence inside the pre-autonomic government and virtually no direct influence over the writing of the statute is even more impressive. Indeed, the petitions submitted to the Editing Committee during the relatively brief period of public review serve as a strong indicator that, during the early Transition, an ideology of regional identity had become at least partially general amongst the Asturian Left, to the point where groups with little or no connection to the cultural revival movement were advocates of a bilingual state. However, at the same time one cannot but think that the indirect form of representation embodied in the pre-autonomic regional governments was a major way in which the Spanish State managed and limited the pace and amount of change during the Transition. Indeed, it is possible to argue that those areas in which regionalist and nationalist sentiment did not reach a certain level of the population by the June 1977 elections were heavily disadvantaged in their ability to secure the concession of decentralized political, economic, and cultural administration.

### **The Socialist “Strategy”: Accidental Co-option and Containment**

The new democratic political structure was highly effective at limiting and managing change from below. While the new system offered the promise of choice, in reality the range of realistic choices was limited and favored groups that had already established a political position by the early Transition. By 1981 (or even late 1977) it was highly unlikely that any new minority group would be able to force its way onto the political scene in any major way.



Even a group as influential as the Communist Party was progressively marginalized from power over the course of the 1980s. Most importantly, such a democratic system, based on the principal of rule-by-majority, will always be highly resistant to radical change. Except in times of major crisis, majorities rarely favor significant changes in the structure of the state, economy, or society; people are, for the most part, far too risk-averse and have too much to potentially lose.

Thus, the PSOE, during the 1980s, managed to maintain its grip on regional power, successfully managing the nationalist and regionalist discontent in Asturias through simultaneously containing majority of the politicized intellectuals in the new Academia de la Llingua and by absorbing the regionalist politicians of the former PSP. Simultaneously, the more radical visions of an Asturian nation that had begun to appear were for the most part discredited by the Banco Herrero affair and its aftermath. The political damage of that aborted campaign was noted in the rapid drop in populist participation, agitation, and organizing by nationalist political parties in Asturias. The extreme Left-wing nationalist current did not disappear entirely, but it was effectively driven underground for a few years until the appearance of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur* in 1983. Even then, the CNA/CAR's attempt to start an armed struggle was the last time to date that any nationalist group in Asturias would pretend that it could gain widespread popular support for such methods. The Banco Herrero affair was not the last armed action by nationalist groups or individuals

in the region,<sup>475</sup> but it *was* the last time any group expected support from the general populous against the Spanish State.

The effect of the creation of the Academia de la Llingua and its officially sanctioned purview over standardization and normalization of Asturianu on the nationalist movement was to increasingly divert the energies of a generation of Transition-era Asturianistas onto the day-to-day work of the Academia. That is to say, many of the potential leaders of the nationalist movement unscathed by association with the Banco Herrero assault, principally Arias, spent much of the early years of the decade only secondarily focused on the political evolution of the Statute of Autonomy. Additionally, with the new Statute finally passed and the Academy created, a large number of moderate regionalists and nationalists were willing to wait and see how the new system worked in practice. Article 4 of the new Statute did *allow* the Autonomous government to be potentially quite expansive in its protection and use of the language and culture, although it did not explicitly *require* specific measures to be taken. Thus, it would depend greatly on the character and willingness of each individual government to expand on such a precedent.

During this period, the Socialist Party was able to absorb the influx of relatively moderate regionalist politicians, such as de Silva, Sánchez Vicente, Xesús Cañedo, and Faustino Álvarez Álvarez, without their discourse having much of an effect on the party's

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<sup>475</sup> The actions of the shadowy group *Andecha Obrera* from 1983-1988 and Fer González Rodríguez, an ex-*Andecha Astur* militant in the first decade of the twenty-first century stand out, as do isolated individual bombings (such as a FEVE train station in 1988).

overall political program. In spite of the fact that de Silva twice occupied the executive office of the Autonomous Community, the effect of his reforms were doubly blunted by resistance within his own party combined with hostile suspicion from certain sectors of the nationalists (the Academia de la Llingua was at times particularly hostile). Thus, his attempts to put Article 4 of the Autonomy Statute into effect through an introduction of Asturianu classes in the region's public schools in 1984, his creation of an Office of Linguistic Politics (*Oficina de Política Llingüística*) in 1985, and the stillborn 1988 *Ley de promoción y uso del bable* (Law of Promotion and Use of Bable) were all frustrated in the short-term. Thus, while there is no evidence that this was a conscious strategy by the party leadership either in Oviedo or Madrid, the result was a highly effective containment of nationalist and regionalist sentiment in Asturias for much of the 1980s.

## Chapter 4

### Nadir and Marginalization (1981-1984)

The 1980s were a period of restructuring for Asturian nationalism in both its political and cultural varieties. It can be argued that the tumultuous and politically fluid Spanish Transition of the 1970s in Asturias ended with the 1983 inauguration of the first Autonomous government of Pedro de Silva in 1983. However, the period from 1980-1981, with the virtually concurrent revelations about the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur's involvement with ETA (*político-militar*), the creation of the Academia de la Llingua, and the passage and final approval of Asturias' Statute of Autonomy, serves as a useful point of inflection in the history of Asturian nationalism. While the latter two can be considered major successes for the Asturianistas, the former foreshadowed the collapse of the Nationalist Left, which spent much of the decade in a slow recovery from the subsequent disintegration of the CNA in 1981. The momentum from the Conceyu Bable's political activism in the late 1970s neither developed into a wider nationalist movement with a mass electoral base, as it did in neighboring provinces, *nor* did it completely fail to attract support for its program of linguistic and cultural revival. Instead, Asturianismu was marginalized from active participation in the political process by the Socialist government but never extinguished, continuing to agitate for the concession of a "first-division" level of autonomy to Asturias, on par with that enjoyed by the constitutionally-defined "historical nationalities," Catalunya, Euskadi, and Galicia.

The extremely fluid politics of the late 1970s stabilized into a Gramscian “war of position,”<sup>476</sup> a much more stable and slow-changing system during the early 1980s.

Although change to the system was possible after this point, it generally came in an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary way, working within the framework established by the State of the Autonomies. Another way to understand the change in the political environment between late 1970s and the early 1980s is that time seemed to slow down.

While the early years of the Transition were, as I have argued above, ones where the *sense* of rapid change was both in many ways a major cause of the political fluidity of the period and one of the key descriptors of life during the period. That is to say, the general consensus that radical changes to state and society were imminent in the period surrounding Franco’s death strongly influenced the behavior of both political figures and everyday citizens. In that way, the pace of change became something of a positive feedback loop, and as the country rapidly progressed from a highly centralized authoritarian dictatorship to an asymmetrically decentralized constitutional monarchy, political and cultural groups in Asturias, as elsewhere in Spain, rushed to best position themselves to take advantage of the rapidly passing political opportunities.

However, as the State of the Autonomies became slowly established between 1978 and 1982, the pace of political change seemed to slow. As the frenetic activism and reorganizing of the late 1970s shifted to a “war of position,” time, from a political

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<sup>476</sup> See theoretical discussion in introduction. Gramsci, “The Transition from the War of Manoeuvre (Frontal Assault) to the War of Position - in the Political Field as Well..”

standpoint, seemed to slow down. Indeed, one might be able to define such a positional struggle as a situation in which rapid change does not seem possible, a period in which ideas and institutions become more or less emplaced. That is not to say that politics became static as the Transition came to a close, but rather that the relative strength and position of most of the major players in the Spanish political game became much less fluid. In some senses, the Transition can be understood as a scramble for starting position between the various political forces, each attempting to improve the position from which it would operate after the new system had solidified.

The 1981 establishment of the Asturian Autonomy Statute, the 1982 national victory for the PSOE, the first party unconnected to the old regime, and the 1983 inauguration of the popularly elected Autonomic government marked this shift, establishing the bases of the new political system. During this new war of position, the situations (in terms of both political support and ideological program) of each of the political actors were clearly established. The Socialist Party was dominant in Asturias and, unsurprisingly, the most invested in the maintenance of the new political order. The more conservative parties, such as the *Coalición Demócrata* (Right) and the *Centro Democrático y Social* (Right-Center) were relegated to the status of continuous opposition, with even their influence (as indicated by even their combined vote totals) falling short of the Socialists throughout the 1980s.<sup>477</sup>

The Communist Party, later reformed as the coalition *Izquierda Unida* (United Left), was by

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<sup>477</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales, *Atlas Electoral de Asturias, 1936-1996* (Oviedo: SADEI, 1996).

now a significant influence only in the mining districts, and even there unable to match the Socialists. The Asturian nationalists were marginalized even further at the beginning of the decade, fragmented and effectively invisible, with only the presence of a few regionalists in the Socialist administration and the linguists of the Academia de la Llingua active in regionalist politics.

Unlike the 1970s, in the post-Transition war of position it was exceedingly difficult for any new political force to quickly rise to prominence, and the Asturianistas struggled to make headway for most of the decade. It took a decade to rebuild a base of popular support comparable to the one that had seemingly sprung up out of nothing in a mere two years to march in favor of *bable nes escueles, autonomía rexonal* in 1976 and cast over 11,000 votes for Unidad Regionalista in 1977. Not until 1991 would any regionalist or nationalist formation surpass even that meager vote total, and no nationalist group would significantly influence government policy from the outside until the mid-to-late 1990s. A war of position is first and foremost one of pressure and of leverage rather than rapid mobility and growth, of working within an established hegemonic system rather than fundamentally attempting to change its structure. The Asturianistas, along with everyone else in the region during the 1980s, accepted Socialist dominance and the structure of the State of the Autonomies as a *fait accompli*, and concerned themselves primarily with how to re-interpret the new constitutional structure (in particular the linguistic clause in Article 4 of the Statute) to further limited goals of linguistic promotion and education.

The new decade saw the consolidation of regional power by the Socialist Party, which would maintain its grip on regional government from the 1982 dissolution of the *Diputación Provincial* (with the passage of the Autonomy Statute) to the 1995 nation-wide scandals that brought the PP to power (both in Madrid and Oviedo). Over the course of the decade, the regionalist bloc within the Socialist Party was gradually marginalized, and for the most part ended up leaving the party, following Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente when he left to form the “interclass” *Partíu Asturianista* in 1985. Even with regionalist politician Pedro de Silva at the head of the Autonomous Government from 1983-1991, Asturianista-backed legislation was still only fitfully passed through the regional legislature, in spite of its being controlled by his own party.

The general rejection of the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur after the Banco Herrero affair (the preceding robberies of the pension fund and the Hospital General were both much less well known and not strongly associated with the nationalist movement by the general public) highlighted the deligitimation of political movements advocating the use of physical force in Asturias. This was further reinforced after the *Tejerazo*, an attempted *coup d'état* on February 23, 1981 in Madrid and Valencia. At 6:30pm, Guardia Civil Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero interrupted a nationally televised session of Congress (in the process of electing Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, Adolfo Suárez's successor as Prime Minister) while the Captain-General of Valencia, Jaime Milans del Bosch, led tanks onto the streets and attempted to declare a state of exception, all in the name of King Juan Carlos I. At just after



one in the morning, the King appeared on national television and condemned the coup, firmly and publically endorsing the democratic transition, and Tejero and Milans del Bosch both surrendered the next day without bloodshed.<sup>478</sup> While doubts remain as to the King's role in the coup, with some suggesting that he waited so long to address the country in order to gauge the military's response to the coup,<sup>479</sup> there is no doubt that the monarchy emerged from the whole affair with vastly enhanced legitimacy and prestige and that a general condemnation of violent politics existed throughout Spain (with the notable exception of Euskadi). In particular, the failed right-wing coup clearly seems to have caused the Socialist Party to move towards centrist positions on certain issues to help pacify the military that it had earlier at least tacitly supported. While the armed forces had not risen *en masse* behind Tejero and Milans del Bosch, they were in general still strongly conservative on such issues as the unity of Spain and the appropriate response to ETA's expanding paramilitary campaign in Euskadi. Thus, in order to avoid another (and potentially successful) repeat of February 23, the PSOE modified its stance on the decentralization of power to the Autonomies and adopted a much more hard-line counter-terrorist stance in Euskadi.<sup>480</sup> In Asturias, the combination of the two events, the Banco Herrero assault and the coup, effectively

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<sup>478</sup> For further discussion of the *Tejerazo*, see Carr and Fusi, *Spain, Dictatorship to Democracy*; Gilmour, *The Transformation of Spain: From Franco to the Constitutional Monarchy*; Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain*.

<sup>479</sup> In particular, Pedro de Silva, who was present in the Cortes that night as a representative for Asturias (1979-1983), has serious questions about the way the King's actions that night have been portrayed. de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>480</sup> For more details on the PSOE's creation of the *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* (GAL) and the counter-terrorism campaign in Euskadi and over the border in France, see Paddy Woodworth, *Dirty War, Clean Hands: ETA, the Gal and Spanish Democracy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

delegitimized the idea of a violent popular movement amongst the general public. Isolated incidents would occur throughout the 1980s and again in the early 2000s, and the CNA's successor, the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, at least explored the possibility of armed struggle in the early 1980s. However, the possibility of creating an ETA or IRA-style guerrilla campaign based at least in some measure on popular support was virtually nil by this point.

Most of the moderate regionalists and nationalists focused on establishing themselves either in the newly founded Academia de la Llingua, within the political structure of the Socialist Party, or in one of the pan-Celtic groups such as the *Lliga Celta* (1980-90) or *Fundación Belenos* (1983-present)<sup>481</sup> that were beginning to appear in the region and promote its ancient Celtic heritage as a basis for cultural and ethnic identity. The question of the Celtic nature of Asturias would become increasingly central to both the debates within the nationalist movement itself and a central component of a sector of Asturianism's cultural identity, having particular influence amongst parts of the radical Left and within the nationalist and regionalist folk music scene. Celtic folk artists of the period Llan de Cubel, Xuacu Amieva, and (slightly later) José Ángel Hevia strongly associated themselves with Celtic folk music both stylistically and through their active presence at the annual *Festival Interceltique de Lorient* in Brittany.

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<sup>481</sup> Also known as the *Conceyu d'Estudios Etnográficos Belenos*.

Simultaneously, Asturias' status as the mythical "cradle of Spain"<sup>482</sup> was being actively reinforced by the newly restored Spanish monarchy's links with the province. Combined with the choice to re-name the title of heir to the Spanish throne the *Príncipe de Asturias* (analogous to the British monarchy's Prince of Wales), the creation of the *Fundación Príncipe de Asturias* in September 1980 was a major component of a continuing effort by the crown to secure its position at the head of a newly-created constitutional monarchy by linking it strongly to the traditional practices of its ancestors and also, as the Foundation openly states, to promote "the consolidation... of the existing links between the Prince of Asturias and the Principality."<sup>483</sup> The Foundation, the work of Graciano García (formerly the head of the magazine *Asturias Semanal* and the newspaper *Asturias, Diario Regional*)<sup>484</sup> and General Sabino Fernández Campo, head of the Royal Household (*Casa del Rey*), was founded as a non-profit organization bankrolled with an 11 million peseta<sup>485</sup> initial donation from some of the largest financial organizations in the region, the *Caja de Ahorros de Asturias*, the *Caja Rural Provincial de Asturias*, the *Banco Herrero*, the *Banca Masaveu*, and *Sigla, S.A.*,<sup>486</sup> which all additionally pledged in writing to up the total contribution to 500 million

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<sup>482</sup> See discussion of *covadonguismo* in Chapter 1.

<sup>483</sup> "Es objeto de la Fundación contribuir a la consolidación, de acuerdo con los tiempos actuales, de los vínculos existentes entre el Príncipe de Asturias, Heredero de la Corona de España, y el Principado de Asturias."

Fundación Príncipe de Asturias, "Capítulo I. Artículo 2.," in *Estatutos* (Oviedo 1980).

<sup>484</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the role of García in the founding of the Conceyu Bable. Both periodicals are discussed further in Chapter 2 and especially Chapter 3.

<sup>485</sup> Approximately \$150,000 in 1980 US\$.

<sup>486</sup> The amounts initially invested by each donor were as follows: *Caja de Ahorros*, *Caja Rural Provincial*, *Banco Herrero*, and *Banca Masaveu*, 2 million ptas each; *Sigla, S.A.*, 3 million ptas.

Fundación Príncipe de Asturias, "Carta Fundacional Fundación Príncipe de Asturias," (Oviedo: Fundación Príncipe de Asturias, 1980-09-24).

pesetas within 2 years.<sup>487</sup> The *Premios*, which have become Spain's version of the Nobel Prizes, have been awarded every year since 1981 in the categories of Letters, Science and Technology, International Cooperation, Communication and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts. An award for Concord (effectively, a peace prize) was added in 1986 and one for Sports a year later. Most germane to the Asturianistas, the pageantry and publicity surrounding the yearly awarding of the Foundation's *Premios Príncipe de Asturias* provides a regular and widely viewed reaffirmation of these ideas.

### Professionalization: The *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*

For the first half of the decade the Asturianistas were both less successful and spent less energy on grassroots campaigns and bottom-up political organizing than they did on the consolidation of their newly-won political gains. Most importantly, the cultural nationalists of the Conceyu Bable, newly ensconced in the Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, attempted to use it as a political platform to argue for an expansive interpretation of the language clause of the new Statute (Article 4) and as an institution to fund and continue the Conceyu Bable's projects of standardizing the various dialects (and writing conventions) of Asturianu and popularizing the new standard version of the language. In this way, the Conceyu Bable became, in a sense, institutionalized after 1981. Although it continued to exist as a separate cultural association under the presidency of prominent feminist and philosopher Amalia

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<sup>487</sup> *ibid.*

Valcárcel Bernaldo de Quirós (spouse of founder Lluís Xabell Álvarez),<sup>488</sup> the Conceyu Bable's influence waned sharply during the early 1980s, partially due to the siphoning off of its membership to positions in the Academia de la Llingua and partially because of continuing economic difficulties. Although, in general, these people did not actually leave the cultural association, their activity became concentrated in the new institution, as, in effect, "the Conceyu Bable was converted into the Academia de la Llingua,"<sup>489</sup> incorporated in a very limited way into the government.

The Academia de la Llingua, with statutes approved by legislative decree in April 1981, was formed with nine specific goals spread over two broad overarching missions.<sup>490</sup> Its principal and relatively obvious mission was to "investigate and formulate the grammatical laws of the linguistic varieties of Bable." Accordingly, it was charged with establishing norms for the literary cultivation of these grammatical laws, inventorying the language's lexicon, promote literary conferences and seminars, fund linguistic studies of Asturianu, and collaborate in the formation of primary, secondary, and adult Asturianu language teachers.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Later, as a member of the PSOE, regional minister (*Consejera*) of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth under the Antonio Trevín government, 1993-1995. Currently Vice-President of the *Real Patronato del Museo del Prado* in Madrid.

<sup>489</sup> "El Conceyu Bable se convirtió en Academia de la Llingua."

d'Andrés Díaz, Interview by author.

<sup>490</sup> "Decreto 9/1981, de 6 de abril, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Academia de la Lengua Asturiana."

<sup>491</sup> "Es una institución que tiene la siguiente finalidad: a) Investigar y formular las leyes gramaticales de las variedades lingüísticas del bable. b) Dar orientaciones y normas para el cultivo literario de las mismas. c) Inventariar su léxico...g) fomentar la celebración de concursos literarios y didácticos. h) promover estudios lingüísticos sobre el bable. i) Colaborar en la formación del profesorado específico, en conexión con las instituciones pertinentes."

ibid. Artículo 1.

Thus, the legislature granted the Academia de la Llingua broad powers to study, standardize, and promote the further use and study of the language in literature as well as everyday life.

Quickly publishing the *Normes ortográfiques y conxugación de verbos* (Spelling norms and verbal conjugation) within a year of its creation, the Academia de la Llingua's first priority was to leverage its official position into a general acceptance for the Conceyu Bable's version of standardized Asturianu. Thus, the opening of the new text exhorted "all those who write in Asturianu to agree, truly and without any type of impediment, to these thought-out norms in order to create a literary language."<sup>492</sup> Once institutionalized in the Academia de la Llingua, the linguists of the Conceyu Bable began to not only promote the use of Asturianu as a living language deserving of equal treatment by State and Society but began to strongly defend a position as an authority over the use of that very language. This desire to establish linguistic, intellectual, and political authority over the process of standardization exacerbated a preexisting tendency towards what Xulio Viejo calls "hyperasturianization",<sup>493</sup> both in the Academy and in (particular) the more extreme nationalist political groups (such as the CNA during the late 1970s and the Ensame of the early 1980s). This was another cause for the fading role of the language as a widely relevant political symbol. Unlike during the early Transition, Asturianu was increasingly no longer

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<sup>492</sup> "L'Academia pide a tolos escritores n'asturianu qu'acueten dafechu y ensin nengún tipu torga toes estes normes pensaes pa que pueda escribise una llingua lliteraria."

Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, "Entamu de la primer edición," in *Normes Ortográfiques* (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 2005).

<sup>493</sup> Viejo Fernández, "Sociedá y discursu llingüísticu en Conceyu Bable."; Viejo Fernández, "Asturian: Resurgence and Impending Demise of a Minority Language in the Iberian Peninsula."

accepted as a Laclaudian “empty signifier”<sup>494</sup> for the hoped-for free, egalitarian, democratic post-dictatorship, Spain. This was partially due to the increasing acceptance that the Transition had succeeded in creating a modern democratic state, but in Asturias, this also was due to a lack of identification with the standardized language itself.

Hyperasturianization, an over-zealous attempt to purify written Asturian of Castilian vocabulary and grammatical forms, tended to ignore whether or not the “Castilianisms” were more commonly used in actual speech than their “pure” alternatives. It could occasionally result in invented words and constantly caused the spelling and grammar used by the early Conceyu Bable to fluctuate markedly (for instance, *Castilla* / *Castía* / *Castiella* and *región* / *rexión* / *rexón*). There were also several proposed phonetic systems, with the *Conceyu d’Asturies en Madrid* proposing a system based on Asturianu Occidental (Western Asturianu) and representing the “*ch vaqueira*” (cowherd’s ‘che’) as a “ts.”<sup>495</sup> As late as 1984, The Madrid group would continue using its own grammatical norms in its publication *Restallu*, as well as its successors *Restallu 2*, and *El Picatuerneru*, while the group of Barcelona immigrants forming the *Conceyu Cultural Asturianu* more readily accepted the Academy’s authority.<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> See introduction for a further theoretical discussion of Laclaudian empty signifiers. Also, see Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*.

<sup>495</sup> In Asturianu Occidental, the majority of words which in standard Asturianu begin with a *LL* (a “y” sound) such as *llingua* are pronounced with a “ch” (thus the word is pronounced “*chingua*”). The current (and Academia de la Llingua approved) standard for writing words with this sound is: “Ll”. However, until as late as 1984, the Conceyu d’Asturies en Madrid was using the alternative “ts”. For example, in Eva y Roberto González–Quevedo González González Fernández, *Poesías ya hestorias na nuesa tsingua; Poesías ya cuentos na nuesa tsingua* (1980).

<sup>496</sup> Iván Cuevas, “Conceyu Cultural Asturianu: La reivindicación asturianista dende la emigración en Barcelona,” *Lletres Asturianas*, no. 91 (2006): 85-99.

While there was a fair amount of experimentation and debate over standardization, hyperasturianization was as much a nationalist mentality affecting regarding word *choice* as it was any desire to create or experiment. When faced with several synonyms, the early writers of the Conceyu Bable, Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, and the Academia de la Llingua were inclined to systematically choose the option that looked or sounded the least Castilian. From the very first “Conceyu Bable” section in *Asturias Semanal*<sup>497</sup> and the first of the group’s internal newsletters<sup>498</sup> (*Fueyes Informatives* #0) openly admitted that many readers would have an incomplete grasp of the language as it was written. A large majority of the articles published in *Asturias Semanal* had vocabulary sections at the end, implying that, even by the 1977 closure of the magazine, fluency in Asturianu was only partial. Furthermore, most of the letters sent to the Conceyu Bable via *Asturias Semanal* were written in Castilian; even among the most fervent supporters of the language, actual proficiency was relatively low.<sup>499</sup> Although both the Academia de la Llingua consistently promoted the belief that Asturianu was indeed a popular language, this indicates a clear awareness of the somewhat artificial nature of the normalization project.

The early choice by the Conceyu Bable to use Asturianu Central (spoken in the major cities of Oviedo, Gijón, and Avilés as well as in the mining district) because it contained the “greatest number of speakers, both current and potential,” citing “reasons of

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<sup>497</sup> Díaz, “Hablemos en bable.”

<sup>498</sup> Conceyu Bable, *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 0 (setiembre 1976).

<sup>499</sup> Conceyu Bable, “So la Frasca de les Últimes cartes (I),” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 325 (6-13 setiembre, 1975): 10.



strategy”<sup>500</sup> also marginalized the standard language from speakers of the Eastern or Western variants of the language, the latter of which included a disproportionately large number of the region’s poets and novelists.<sup>501</sup> Although the Conceyu Bable did occasionally publish articles written in the Occidental or Oriental variants of Asturian, it was understood that its focus was on the standard language.<sup>502</sup> The group itself acknowledged from an early stage that there was a noticeable difference between the Asturianu written by its group members and that spoken by the majority of the population.<sup>503</sup> While a difference between written and spoken forms exists in all languages with a writing system, the constant focus on this discrepancy in Asturianu created a general perception of artificiality. Even though this tendency towards hyperasturianization faded over time and in spite of three decades of publishing in standard Asturianu, by 2010 it was still common for people to speak of a “laboratory language” and (particularly older generations of Asturians) to disavow that the language they spoke was reflected in the written form used in Asturianu-language newspapers and books.<sup>504</sup>

While the Academia de la Llingua’s authority to dictate linguistic norms was generally accepted by the mid-1980s, the second mission established in its statutes was far more controversial. The charge “to watch over Asturian linguistic rights” was treated with

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<sup>500</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Entamu,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 291 (4 enero, 1975): 20.

<sup>501</sup> Xuan Bello, Antón García, Roberto González-Quevedo González, Taresa Lorences, and Berta Piñán are all prominent writers who either speak or have published in Asturianu Occidental.

<sup>502</sup> Such as Conceyu Bable, “s/t,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 297 (15 febreru, 1975): 18; Conceyu Bable, “¿Por qué escribayer villa de sub?,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 297 (15 febreru, 1975): 17.

<sup>503</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Entamu,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 297 (15 febreru, 1975): 16.

<sup>504</sup> PWZ field notes, June 2006, 2008-9.

equal importance by the Academia de la Llingua as its academic work of standardization.

The additional goals of “stimulating the use, teaching, and diffusion of Bable” and “work for the training of the written language so that this, freely accepted, becomes a medium of expression at all levels” were seen as a defense of the Conceyu Bable’s original call for *bable nes escueles*, causing education to be a major focus of the Academia.<sup>505</sup> Taken together, these three clauses in its statutes were interpreted by the Academia de la Llingua as a mandate to act as a public and vocal defender of bilingualism in government and society, a position that would often put it at odds with the very government that created and continued to fund it. Since its founding in 1981, the Academia de la Llingua has consistently adopted a belligerent stance, primarily over issues of funding, its inadequate headquarters, and the lack of perceived enthusiasm on the part of the autonomous government for the implementation of the language, which it sees as non-compliance with the provisions of Article 4 of the autonomy statute. In essence, having taken quite seriously its role as a defender of the linguistic rights of Asturianu speakers, the Academia de la Llingua was logically constantly coming into conflict with the group it saw as the largest impediment to the implementation of bilingualism in Asturias: the Asturian regional government itself.

One of the critical debates that surrounded the tense relations between the Academia de la Llingua and the Socialist-controlled administration of the autonomous government was

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<sup>505</sup> “Es una institución que tiene la siguiente finalidad:....d) Estimular el uso, enseñanza y difusión del bable en sus distintas modalidades. e) Velar por los derechos lingüísticos asturianos. f) Trabajar en la capacitación de la lengua escrita, a fin de que ésta, libremente aceptada, pueda llegar a ser medido de expresión a todos los niveles.”

“Decreto 9/1981, de 6 de abril, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Academia de la Lengua Asturiana.”

the issue of whether or not the linguistic institution was, in fact, a branch of that same government. Not surprisingly, the Socialists maintained that the Academia was an institution that made up part of the state that founded it, ratified its statutes, largely funded it, and that named its first members and governing board.<sup>506</sup> Pedro de Silva, in spite of his regionalist history and sympathies, found himself constantly at loggerheads with the Asturianistas of the Academia de la Llingua, and considered it one of the greatest frustrations of his two terms in office as President of Asturias.<sup>507</sup> Xosé Lluís García Arias, the Academia's first president, however, averred that "although the Academia is funded by the government, it has never been part of the government" in part because after the initial governing board, the Academia de la Llingua named its own members without any input from the government.<sup>508</sup> He argued that they were not, therefore, administrative appointees. In addition, the Academia de la Llingua pointed out that its funding level did not even remotely approach the amount of money being organized for the Fundación Príncipe de Asturias. In June 1981, just two months after its founding, the linguistic institute solicited an additional 500,000pta subsidy<sup>509</sup> from the Cultural Commission (still presided over by Conceyu Bable

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<sup>506</sup> For its first three years, the Academia de la Llingua's *Junta de Gobierno* was identical to the commission convened in late 1980 to write its statutes. Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, Xosé Lluís García Arias, Ana Cano, Lorenzo Novo Mier, Josefina Martínez Álvarez, Carmen Díaz Castañón, María Josefa Canellada, and Jesús Neira Martínez by those same statutes were named the Academia's first *académicos de número* (full members with voting rights, of which there could be a maximum of 21).

ibid.

<sup>507</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>508</sup> García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>509</sup> Roughly \$5400 in 1981 US\$.

Academia de la Lengua Asturiana, "Academia de la Llingua Asturiana."

member and *académicu de número* Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente). The very next March it was compelled to repeat its funding request (for the same amount) in order to complete the publication of the first three editions of its journal *Lletres Asturianas*, a publication required by its statutes. The request was backed within the Provincial Deputation by the regionalist wing of the Socialist Party, arguing that “the concession of this requested aid is legal and we understand it as almost an obligation if we consider the upcoming integration of this Deputation in the Junta General del Principado de Asturias, in which Article 4 of the Statute of Autonomy (Ley Orgánica no 7/81) indicates that ‘bale will enjoy protection...’.”<sup>510</sup> In contrast, the Asturianistas compared this need to constantly go to the legislature with metaphorical hat in hand and beg the for more funding to the 2 million peseta initial contribution (with a pledge for further funding) to the monarchist foundation by the regional savings bank (*Caja de Ahorros*). Additionally, rather than be given a location “befitting of its status” as a state-sanctioned Language Academy (on a par with the academies of the Spanish, Galician, Catalan, and Basque Languages), the Academia de la Llingua was allotted the second floor of a building above the Hotel Santa Cruz. Although in the center of the city just off of the Campo de San Francisco (Oviedo’s central park), the Academia de la Llingua’s offices were until recently at number 6 calle Marqués de Santa Cruz, small and

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<sup>510</sup> “La concesión de la ayuda solicitada es legal y entendemos que es casi una obligación si consideramos la próxima integración de esta Diputación en la Junta General del Principado de Asturias, en donde el Artículo 4º del Estatuto de Autonomía (Ley Orgánica no. 7/81) indica «el bale gozará de protección. Se promoverá su uso, su difusión en los medios de comunicación y su enseñanza...».”

Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, "Sobre petición de ayuda económica."

hidden, the location only noticeable from the street due to a small plaque to the right of a nondescript door.<sup>511</sup>

Whether this was by design or no, it is clear that with the creation of a relatively hidden and underfunded Academia de la Llingua, both the cultural production and the popular activism of the Conceyu Bable was effectively marginalized from any real power. The new institution, unlike the independent cultural association that preceded it, had a single location, was specifically focused on matters of academic rather than popular interest, and was by its very nature exclusionary. There could be only 21 full *académicos*, and the criteria for being named an “Academic” was, logically, largely scholarly. These important differences from the Conceyu Bable, where anyone who “worked in or for the language” could become a member and which had a number of autonomous local groups that were active throughout Asturias, caused the Academia de la Llingua to be much less effective at the kind of popular activism and recruitment that the cultural association had so excelled at. While the number of members of the Conceyu Bable probably never exceeded 1500,<sup>512</sup> it brought together a vastly wider swath of Asturian society than the Academia de la Llingua, which even in 2010 only has 57 members (of all ranks).<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> In late 2010, the Academia de la Llingua moved into its new location in the Monastery of San Pelayo, adjacent to the Cathedral on calle Águila, occupying the space vacated by the *Archivo Histórico de Asturias* when it was moved in 2009.

<sup>512</sup> Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable.”

<sup>513</sup> As of December 2010, the Academia de la Llingua has recognized 23 *académicos de númberu* (plus 3 deceased), 19 *académicos correspondientes* (plus 3 deceased), and 15 *académicos d'honor* (plus 5 deceased).

Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, “L'Academia,” ALLA, <http://www.academiadelalingua.com/comun.php?seccion=entamu#>. Accessed 2010-12-16.

In essence, both the cultural and linguistic production and, more important politically, the popular activism of the *Conceyu Bable* were safely channeled into the Academia de la Llingua. In this case, linguistic nationalism was safely contained so that it not only did not present an active threat to the growing consensus over the asymmetrical the State of the Autonomies, it was constantly pointed to by those in power as compelling evidence of significant concessions made by the new state to Asturian nationalist and regionalist demands for linguistic and cultural recognition.

### **Pan-Celtism and Cultural (but Apolitical) Activism: The *Lliga Celta***

Unlike most of the rest of the cultural nationalists who made up the *Conceyu Bable*, the nascent pan-Celtic movement in Asturias (during the late 1970s concentrated in and furthered by the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur* and its head Dubardu Puente)<sup>514</sup> was in general not institutionalized in this manner, and debates about the Celticness of Asturias has become one of the more divisive points both between the Asturianista movement and its opponents and within the nationalist camp itself. While the presence of a pre-Roman Celtiberic people is not generally disputed, the degree to which Asturias can be considered a Celtic region *today* has been a point of contention. In order to portray Asturias as distinct from the rest of Spain, some of the regionalist and nationalist groups over the last thirty years have promoted an idea of Celtic continuity in the North, downplaying or denying the influence of the

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<sup>514</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the CNA's interest in *celtismu*.

Romans and Visigoths and claiming that the first Kings of Asturias were Celtic Asturs, rather than the re-birth of the Visigoth kingdom defeated by the Moorish invasion in 711. A large number of the ethnographic and archaeological investigations (both amateur and professional) of the Asturian countryside have been cast either as proof of Asturias' Celtic heritage or as proof of its Roman legacy.

The first specifically pan-Celtic organization in Asturias, the *Lliga Celta d'Asturies*, was founded in Gijón on April 4, 1980, by a collection of amateur cultural enthusiasts, including a few of the former CNA members (most prominently Dubardu Puente) and a few people from the Conceyu Bable. In its statutes, obligatorily registered with the provincial government in Castilian, the Lliga Celta dedicated itself to “fomenting in youth an interest for the language and culture, traditional toponymy, art, folklore, customs, and games of Asturias.”<sup>515</sup> Additionally, it felt that one of its central missions was to “inform contemporary [Asturian] society about the ancient Celtic traditions” of the region.<sup>516</sup> This indicates that the Lliga Celta was quite aware that the majority of the population possessed little to no Celtic identity. However, at the same time, it indicates a belief that this was primarily a problem of education, and that such an identity would start to take hold once Asturians realized the ancient history of Celtic settlement in the region, through the Lliga Celta's future publications, expositions, conferences, and the like.

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<sup>515</sup> “*Fomentar en la juventud el interés por la lengua y cultura, toponimia tradicional, arte, folklore, costumbres, y juegos de Asturias.*”

Xesús López Pacios, “Historia de la Lliga Celta d'Asturies,” (Oviedo: Unpublished Paper, 2000?).

<sup>516</sup> *ibid.*

The league deliberately derived its name from a direct translation into Asturianu of the International Celtic League, hoping initially to become a recognized chapter of the society.<sup>517</sup> Indeed, in the summer of 1980, Alan Heusaff, General Secretary of the Celtic League International (1961-85), visited Gijón at the behest of the new association, hosted by Puente and General Secretary Xesús López Pacios (usually referred to by his matronym, “Pacios”). Over the course of several days, the Lliga Celta showed Heusaff and his wife, Bríd Ní Dhochartaigh, around the region in an attempt to convince the Bretons and the pan-Celtic international society they represented of the authenticity of Asturias’ Celtic claims.<sup>518</sup> Relying primarily on architectural, musical, and artistic evidence littered through the countryside, the Asturians found a relatively receptive audience in Heusaff and Ní Dhochartaigh, who later sponsored the attempt by the Lliga Celta and the *Liga Céltica de Galicia* (its Galician analog) to apply for membership in the Celtic League International in 1986.<sup>519</sup> However, their arguments were unable to convince the Celtic League International’s 1986 and 1987 general assemblies to revise and expand their list of “Celtic Nations” (and therefore its membership). Instead, the 1987 General Assembly “firmly [reiterated] that the Celtic League [had] a specific function within Celtia, i.e. to work for the reinstatement of our languages to a viable position.... This emphasis on the languages of our six nations [marked] us *now* as distinct cultural communities, and therefore as distinct

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<sup>517</sup> *ibid.* and Puente Fernández, Interview by author.

<sup>518</sup> Puente Fernández, Interview by author.

<sup>519</sup> *ibid.* Pacios, Interview by author.



nations.”<sup>520</sup> Rather ironically, the linguistically-focused nationalist movements in Galicia and Asturias were denied membership in the pan-Celtic organization, in spite of the support of a former General Secretary, because of an ideological conviction that they often espoused: that a separate language was the defining feature of any ethnic group or nation.

Unlike the *Conceyu Bable*, the *Lliga Celta* and the similar *Fundación Belenos* (founded in 1983 and still active) were not, in all but the widest definition of the term, political organizations. They officially advocated no particular legislation and were open to people from across the political spectrum. Most importantly, although there was a connection to the CNA (and the spin-off created by its evicted culturalist faction, the short-lived *Socialistes del Pueblu Asturianu*), the nationalist party had very little influence on the policies and program of the *Lliga Celta*, and Dubardu Puente quickly left the association, citing a lack of seriousness and rigor in its Celtic studies and deriding the group as a “Celtic fan club” that was “more superficial” in its goals and methods, never seeking to engage in what he considered proper politics.<sup>521</sup> That is to say, it never sought to alter the legal condition of the components of Asturian identity (principally the language but also the preservation of art and rural architecture), simply to promote a pan-Celtic ethno-cultural vision. Equally, the *Fundación Belenos*, while strongly connected via its membership to the late-1980s nationalist party the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana* and its successor *Unidá*

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<sup>520</sup> Celtic League International, “1987 Celtic League A.G.M. Resolutions,” *Carn*, no. 59 (Autumn 1987): 2. Emphasis in original.

<sup>521</sup> Puente Fernández, Interview by author.

*Nacionalista Asturiana*,<sup>522</sup> the *Fundación* itself never took any open political stance, choosing instead to focus primarily on studies of traditional Asturian architecture, art, and music, publishing in both Castilian and Asturianu and becoming heavily involved in the bagpipe competitions of the *Festival Interceltique de Lorient* in Brittany (unlike the Celtic League International, the annual Festival acknowledges Asturias and Galicia as “Celtic Nations.”).<sup>523</sup>

*Celtismu* found the most receptive audience during the 1980s, not in political parties (though the both the Ensame and the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana had some links) or amongst the major authors of the literary *Surdimientu*, but rather through its influence in the world of Asturian folk music, most prominently via the re-popularization of bagpipes and the modern fusion of influences from Irish and Gaelic rock and folk into the music of Llan de Cubel (founded 1984), Nuberu, and later José Ángel Hevia. These new folk musicians played an important role in popularizing the idea of a Celtic Asturias, although it was generally not explicitly politicized. This is particularly interesting given that many other aspects of their lyrics and public images were quite overtly political, such as Nuberu’s standard concert opening speech, in which Chus Pedro laments about the band’s successful musical career “singing in a language that [officially] does not exist.”<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Two of the *Fundación Belenos*’ founders, Xosé Nel Riesgo and Ignaci Llope, played prominent roles in the leadership of the XNA and later UNA.

<sup>523</sup> One of its founders, Lisardo Lombardía, has been the director of the annual festival since 2007.

"Lisardo Lombardía dirixirá a partir de hoy el Festival Intercéltico de Lorient," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 2007-04-03.

<sup>524</sup> “Nuberu lleva treinta años canciando n’una llingua que non existe.”

PWZ field notes, September 2008.

This lack of direct political activism indicates how, by the early 1980s, the role of the cultural association had changed. During the early Transition years, any public declaration of Asturian uniqueness or identity almost always carried with it an implied (or overt) political statement about the region and its role within (or independent of) the Spanish State.<sup>525</sup> The Conceyu Bable's very appearance as a group lobbying for linguistic revival was seen both by its members and by those outside of the group as having profoundly political ramifications. It was seen almost as a natural development in 1975-6, as the Franco regime began to falter, that it would take a leading role in the call for Asturian autonomy. However, a mere five years later, the political landscape had changed drastically. The two Celtic associations' promotion of the idea of a Celtic Asturias, part of a pan-Celtic Atlantic fringe, was radically different both from the predominant *covadonguista* theory of Asturias as "the cradle of Spain"<sup>526</sup> as well as the Asturianista version of identity founded in contemporary linguistic and cultural differences and using both Covadonga and the liberal uprisings of the early nineteenth century as historical referents. However, *celtismu* in Asturias was only tangentially connected to nationalism and cultural politics, through the individual affiliations of some of its promoters. Indeed, Lliga Celta founder Pacios was described by Puente (whom he convinced to join the Lliga Celta) as "not nationalist or even close," and at no point did Pacios ever claim any nationalist (or Leftist) sympathies.<sup>527</sup> It is evident that by the

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<sup>525</sup> See discussion of franquista cultural hierarchies in Chapter 1.

<sup>526</sup> See the discussion of *covadongüismo* in Chapter 1.

<sup>527</sup> "*Nun yera nacionalista nin muncho menos.*"

early 1980s, the promotion of cultural differences from the Spanish or Castilian norm did not *necessarily* imply a strong political stance *vis-à-vis* centralized government, a major change from the early Transition years.<sup>528</sup>

### **Not with a Bang but with a Whimper: the Decay of the *Conceyu Bable***

After its major figures largely abandoned the association for higher-profile positions in either the Academia de la Llingua or in regional politics from 1981 onwards, the *Conceyu Bable* went into relatively rapid decline in terms of both activity and membership under the presidency of first Amelia Valcárcel Bernaldo de Quirós (1981-83) and later Manuel d'Andrés Fernández (commonly known by his pen name, "Manfer de la Llera") (1983-5).<sup>529</sup> Now far removed from its early Marxism, the *Conceyu Bable* openly began advocating "regionalism without class" in 1982.<sup>530</sup> Along with the conscious abandonment of party politics, the *Conceyu Bable* eventually completely dropped its working-class stance in favor of promoting language as an inter-class unifier.<sup>531</sup> By 1983, the organization had moved so far as to criticize the ideology of class struggle openly as "uni-dimensional" and ignoring "the contradictions of reality."<sup>532</sup>

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Puente Fernández, Interview by author. Also López Pacios, Interview by author.

<sup>528</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>529</sup> Father of Asturianist linguist Ramón d'Andrés Díaz.

<sup>530</sup> *Conceyu Bable*, "Rexonalismu en sin clas," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 28 (xunetu 1982): 4.

<sup>531</sup> *Conceyu Bable*, "Entamando - delante les ellecciones: una alternativa asturiana," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 29 (ochobre 1982): 1-2.

<sup>532</sup> "Unidimensional....ignorando les contradicciones de la realidá."

*Conceyu Bable*, "L'home unidimensional," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 32 (abril 1983): 2.

This move away from Marxism paralleled a growing distance between the intellectual leadership of the Conceyu Bable and the population that it was trying to attract. Although it had initially seen itself as a group of progressives that would act as organic intellectuals, intermediaries “between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat,”<sup>533</sup> the organization became increasingly elitist, as evidenced by the 1976 decision to create two distinct classes of membership in the new association, “supporters” (*socios-sofitu*) and “complete” members (*socios-dafechu*).<sup>534</sup> Although not necessarily designed as such (there were some notable exceptions), in practice, this distinction served as a way to differentiate between those militants who had joined the Conceyu Bable in its early years and those who joined once the association became legalized after July 1976. Almost all of the literary and periodical production of the Conceyu Bable was conducted by *socios-dafechu*. This setup was conceived of less as a codified hierarchy than as a buffer, created both because of accusations from its opponents of “infiltration” by other political groups (primarily the Communist Party) and to some extent because of the genuine fear of infiltration by outsiders in the early years of the Transition.<sup>535</sup> In 1976, a group of primary school teachers (a critical target demographic for the group’s propaganda) issued a public warning about the Conceyu Bable, referring to it as a “satellite organization of the Communist Party.”<sup>536</sup> By 1982, the recognition of its diminishing influence forced the Conceyu Bable to reassess its membership structure, freely

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<sup>533</sup> Lluís Xabel Álvarez in Díaz, “Hablemos en bable.” 21.

<sup>534</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Conceyu Bable reconocíu como asociación cultural.”

<sup>535</sup> Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable.”

<sup>536</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Avisu perimportante.”

acknowledging that it was not a very open organization.<sup>537</sup> However, by that point, it was likely too late for even a fundamental change in its structure to resuscitate the cultural association's waning fortunes.

Additionally, the Conceyu Bable's ideological fixation upon a decentralized model hindered its effectiveness. The loose confederation that the regionalist movement as a whole envisioned for the Spanish state was applied to the organization itself from its 1976 incorporation, with autonomous Conceyos in the major cities of the region that were very loosely coordinated by an oversight committee, the *Apautaora*.<sup>538</sup> By 1982, the Conceyu Bable openly recognized that the model had problems; several of the autonomous Conceyos had failed to pursue many of the political goals established in the 1977 *Cartafueyu Rexonalista*.<sup>539</sup> This loose model not only impeded coordination, it also encouraged inter-city rivalries, particularly since the two principal early leaders, Arias and Sánchez Vicente, had bases of support in different cities (Oviedo and Gijón, respectively).<sup>540</sup>

After the Arias-led exodus to form the Academia de la Llingua in 1981, increasing fragmentation within the group led to infighting and a decrease in membership.<sup>541</sup> This was partially due to growing economic pressures and political frustration with the organization of

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<sup>537</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Autocritiques," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 23 (xineru 1982): 3.

<sup>538</sup> Rodríguez Valdés, "Crónica de Conceyu Bable." 18. Also, García Arias, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>539</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Autocritiques."

<sup>540</sup> See Chapter 2 for an in-depth discussion of the power struggle and ideological differences between Arias and Sánchez Vicente.

<sup>541</sup> Conceyu Bable, "Informe del Secretariu d'organización a la Apautaora del 18 xunu del 83," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 33-34 (ochobre 1983): 3-12; Conceyu Bable, "Cartafueyu'l VII Apautamientu Xeneral, Mieres - 8 y 9 Xineru 1983," *Fueyes Informatives*, no. s/n (s/f, probably xineru 1983): 1-26.

the Conceyu Bable.<sup>542</sup> It was chronically short of funds, both due to state disinterest and to self-imposed ideological constraints. Not surprisingly, given its increasingly nationalist tone from 1976 onwards, the Conceyu Bable had great difficulty getting bank loans from national banks, even for “strictly cultural activities.”<sup>543</sup> Repeated (unsuccessful) requests for funds from Ministry of Culture for the teaching of the Asturian language led the Conceyu Bable to complain that “the dialectic of machine guns and *goma-2* [a plastic explosive commonly used by ETA] gives good results,” referring to 2 billion pesetas given by the Ministry of Culture to Euskadi for the purpose of funding its *iksatolak* (language schools).<sup>544</sup> In spite of the lack of outside funding, the Conceyu Bable set very low fees for its members; it sometimes even cost more to process the dues than the dues brought in.<sup>545</sup> The Conceyu Bable rationalized this during its early years by claiming that it “was born poor and will remain poor” because “economic support brings with it ideological dependency [on the donor].”<sup>546</sup>

Over time, this strain began to show. Initially, the *Fueyes Informatives* were free, but from December 1976 (#3-4), the group distributed them C.O.D.,<sup>547</sup> and beginning in May-June 1981 (#19), prices appeared on the front cover. By 1982, the Conceyu Bable was

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<sup>542</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Atividaes - comunicaos,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 29 (ochobre 1982): 2.

<sup>543</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Los bancos tampoco,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 10 (s/f, probably avientu 1978): 2.

<sup>544</sup> ~\$30 million in 1980 US\$.

Conceyu Bable, “La nuestra llingua inadmisiblemente discriminá pel Gobiernu Español,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 17 (s/f, probably setiembre 1980): 8.

<sup>545</sup> In 1976, the dues were: Individual – 200ptas/mo (\$3.30), Students and Retirees – 50ptas/mo (\$0.84), Family members – 150ptas/mo (\$2.50). It is unknown whether these changed significantly over the course of the association’s life.

Conceyu Bable, “¡¡¡Faiate sociu de Conceyu Bable!!!”; Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable.” 23n.

<sup>546</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Entamu,” *Asturias Semanal*, no. 328 (20-27 septiembre, 1975): 18.

<sup>547</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Avisos,” *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 2 (payares 1976): 5.

desperate enough for funding that it decided to sell ad space to the regional government promoting the “*Día de Asturias*,” a holiday whose date on the feast day of the Virgin of Covadonga was heavily linked to *covadonguismo*<sup>548</sup> and to which the Conceyu Bable was adamantly opposed.<sup>549</sup> This financial crunch led both to declining activity and to (subsequently) declining participation. The Conceyu Bable was limited, in the end, to only “getting [itself] into campaigns for which [it] could pay.”<sup>550</sup> In October 1982, members of the *Conceyu Bable Mieres* specifically questioned the role of the executive *Apautaora* and financial transparency was demanded, so that the association as a whole could take steps to becoming financially solvent.<sup>551</sup> However, the issue of economic viability was still a major concern at the following year’s *Apautamientu Xeneral*, where the “principal duty of a militant” was redefined to be the “payment of dues.”<sup>552</sup>

After 1983, the organization went into relatively rapid decline. That year, the Conceyu Bable Avilés seceded from the group to form the *Asociación Cultural Arfueyu* (which lasted until 1990), denouncing the elitism of the Conceyu Bable and the lack of internal democracy. By the time that the Conceyu Bable recognized the error of both its economic asceticism and its elitist internal organization in mid-1983, it was too late. As the group

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<sup>548</sup> See Chapter 1

<sup>549</sup> Conceyu Bable, *Fueyes Informatives*, no. 29 (ochobre 1982): 6.

The nationalist organization chose instead to celebrate May 25 as the “*Día d’Asturies*,” commemorating the so-called “declaration of war” by the Xunta Xeneral against Napoleon in 1808.

<sup>550</sup> Miguel Solís Santos, Interview quoted in Rodríguez Valdés, “Crónica de Conceyu Bable.” 23n.

<sup>551</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Atividaes - comunicaos.”

<sup>552</sup> Conceyu Bable, “Cartafueyu'l VII Apautamientu Xeneral, Mieres - 8 y 9 Xíneru 1983.” 18.



itself stated, by the mid-1980s, it suffered from an “incapacity to define itself.”<sup>553</sup> The failure to articulate its various strains into a coherent program and organization was one of the principal reasons why it proved incapable of sustaining its cultural activism over the long-term. However, much of its project and militancy lived on in the Academia de la Llingua, the language defense organization *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana* (founded January 1984), and in the various nationalist political parties of the region (in particular Sánchez Vicente’s *Partíu Asturianista* and the late-1980s *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana*). In the end, the cultural activism of the Conceyu Bable was taken up by other groups. The *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana* (Junta for the Defense of the Asturian Language, usually simply referred to as the *Xunta pola Defensa* or the *Xunta pola*), in many ways, mirrored and continued its role as a citizens’ action association. The Academia de la Llingua, in addition to its continuance of the role of political agitator, directly continued the Conceyu Bable’s project of linguistic standardization and integration into society. The nationalist parties that survived the organization were, in both personnel and ideology, logical continuations of the political project of the Conceyu Bable, although party politics were an area that it was historically reluctant to embrace. Even the first Autonomous governments were beholden in some senses to the legacy of the Conceyu Bable, with the Socialists forced by the Autonomy Statute to make at least a minimum effort to promote, protect, and ensure the education of the language. The Conceyu Bable may have made the first calls for *bable*

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<sup>553</sup> *ibid.*

*nes escuelas, autonomía rexonal*, but it was the Socialist Party governments from 1983 that were charged with putting those ideas into practice.

### **The Majority's Minority: The "Regionalist" Socialist Governments of Pedro de Silva**

It is exceedingly ironic that one the most important instruments for the implementation of the mild regionalist reforms of the Asturian Statute of Autonomy was the PSOE, in many ways against the wishes of the majority of the party. At a time when Asturian political nationalism was mired in a period of diminished activity and militancy, one of the few prominent figures within the PSOE with a long regionalist pedigree was chosen to head the party electoral list in first elections to the presidency of the new Autonomous Community of the Principality of Asturias.<sup>554</sup> Pedro de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos did not head the Socialist candidacy because of his regionalist sympathies, but rather in spite of them.<sup>555</sup> After his role as head of first *Democracia Socialista Asturiana* and later the *Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias*, and his subsequent four years of service as one of the four Asturian representatives in the *Congreso de los Diputados*, de Silva had a political track record to go along with an instantly recognizable Asturian family name, Jovellanos, making him an excellent candidate. His relatively young age (37 on election day) also fit in with the PSOE's national image as a young, new, modern, and dynamic political force that

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<sup>554</sup> The new executive branch of the autonomous community. As Rafael Fernández was appointed to head the executive of the transitional government, the *Consejo Regional*, which was replaced with the new popularly-elected administration of de Silva, he is sometimes considered the first President of the Principality of Asturias, although strictly speaking de Silva was the first person to hold that title.

<sup>555</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

had propelled the 40-year old Felipe González Márquez to power with an absolute majority in the *Congreso* the year before (202 of 350 seats, 58%, a percentage never equaled as of 2011).

De Silva's ascension to the head of the Asturian branch of the Socialist Party, somewhat counter-intuitively, occurred as many of the Asturianistas that had joined the party as members of the Partido Socialista Popular when the two socialist groups merged in 1978 were resigning their memberships. Most importantly, Sánchez Vicente chose to leave the party altogether a year after his period as president of the Cultural Commission ended (along with the position) as part of the restructuring of government into the new Autonomous Community. On April 30, 1984, having decided that it was too difficult to work against the grain from within the party to enact meaningful change, Sánchez Vicente and the majority of his followers (such as Xesús Cañedo and Carlos Rubiera) quit the PSOE and began preparing for the launch of a new party, nationalist but not of the radical Left, "Asturianista, inter-class, and for progress."<sup>556</sup>

The de Silva administrations (1983-87 & 1987-91) implemented a number of reforms designed specifically to comply with the provisions of Article 4 of the Autonomy Statute,<sup>557</sup> most importantly the initiation in 1984 of elective Asturianu classes in public primary schools in the region, the establishment of the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* (Office

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<sup>556</sup> Alberto Menéndez, "Xuan Xosé Sánchez: «El PSOE es un partido profundamente antiautonomista», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1984-05-04.

"Asturianista, interclasista, y de progreso."

Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>557</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

of Linguistic Politics) in 1985 that was tasked with facilitating the implementation of bilingual administration at the request of any of Asturias' constituent *concejos*, and the failed attempt to draft a Law of Use and Protection for Asturianu in 1988. The language classes, initially offered in six pilot programs (involving 1,351 students) were later extended throughout the public education system, having expanded to 208 schools and 15,227 students by the 2000-01 school year.<sup>558</sup> Nine years after the Conceyu Bable began the *bablenes escueles* campaign, one of the movements around which it had accumulated significant popular support, was tentatively implemented. The program was extended to secondary education in 1988, though with less success. While registration in Asturianu classes increased by a factor of 14 in the first 12 years of the program (1984-5 through 1995-6), its popularity in secondary education was much more limited, only increasing 3.5 times over the same length of time (1988-9 to 1999-2000).<sup>559</sup> The most common rationale for such a consistent drop-off in interest as students aged was that as an elective class, Asturianu had to compete with other foreign languages, music, or computer science classes. Students and parents were therefore faced with a choice that they tended to perceive as one between culture, identity, or tradition and utility. As one parent described the situation to me, "I like

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<sup>558</sup> Xosé Antón González Riaño, "La llingua asturiana nel sistema educativu: presente y perspeutives," in *Informe sobre la llingua asturiana*, ed. Academia de la Llingua Asturiana (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 2002): 105-09.

<sup>559</sup> Looking at primary education only over the period of its first twelve years in order to compare an equivalent number of years to the secondary education. 1995-6 was coincidentally the high point during the decade for enrollment, with 19,737 students in 150 schools. While the number of schools offering Asturianu classes continued to rise steadily, there was a drop-off in the number of classes offered and the number of teachers employed.

ibid. 106.

Asturianu very much, and I want my children to appreciate it, but what use will it be? I want my children to succeed and take something useful like English or French.”<sup>560</sup>

Although one must always view it with a skeptical eye, survey evidence indicates that the implementation of Asturianu in the education system has had at least partial success at increasing the appreciation for the language amongst younger Asturians.<sup>561</sup> However, although the survey data does indicate appreciation or affection for the Asturian culture and language, the nature of such surveys (extremely common in Spain) may have led Asturianista groups to overly optimistic conclusions. It is easy to respond to a survey that politically “one feels both Asturian and Spanish” or “mostly Asturian” (19.7% and 33.2%% of 1,400 respondents in 1991) when speaking in general terms.<sup>562</sup> However, when forced to choose something with real potential consequences, such as where to cast a vote or in which classes to enroll, a general appreciation for Asturian culture or language and a strong sense of regional identity has not been the determining factor. It would seem that, in spite of high indices of linguistic interest or identity, people have acted more in line with their individual economic interests in mind, rather than collective cultural or political ones.

### Moving Beyond *Antifranquismo*

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<sup>560</sup> “*A min préstame muncho el bable y quiero que los mios fíos-lu aprecian, ¿pero de qué usu ye? Quiero que los mios fíos tengan éxitu y tomen daqué útil como l’inglés o’l francés.*”

PWZ field notes October 2008.

<sup>561</sup> See Llera Ramo, *Los asturianos y la lengua asturiana: estudio sociolingüístico para Asturias 1991*; Llera Ramo and San Martín, *II estudio sociolingüístico de Asturias 2002*.

<sup>562</sup> Llera Ramo, *Los asturianos y la lengua asturiana: estudio sociolingüístico para Asturias 1991*.

As the State of the Autonomies was consolidated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the repeated frustrations of Asturianista political campaigning (with some notable exceptions) seemed to lead to a general fragmentation of the movement as a whole. Some became “institutionalized,” or co-opted by the State, in either the Academia de la Llingua or positions in the new Autonomous Government, while the disastrous failure of armed extremism seemed to fragment the nationalist groups still further. At the same time, the center-periphery dynamic along which the anti-franquista opposition had oriented itself had significantly changed. Particularly after the 1982 ascension of the Socialist Party to power, it became increasingly difficult to equate the central government in Madrid with the dictatorship and its political and cultural hierarchies. Accordingly, much of the political association between regionalism, cultural revival, Leftism, democracy, wrapped up in the idea of “*antifranquista*” gradually dissipated once the general public had accepted that the Spanish government *was* now democratic. The more nationalist groups and parties like the MCA which denied the (at least relatively) democratic legitimacy of the new State of the Autonomies certainly represented the minority.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> This is at least true for Spain outside of Euskadi, in which the ratification vote had such low voter participation (with a 55.35% abstention rate) that it called into question the legitimacy of the results. Only 479,205 out of 1,552,737 eligible voters in the three Basque provinces (Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya, and Álava) cast votes in favor of the 1978 Constitution (70.24% of those who voted, but only 30.86% of the electorate).

Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Resultados electorales. Referéndum diciembre 1978. País Vasco,”  
<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultadoReferendum.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=7&cdEleccion=1&anio=1978&mes=12&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Refer%26eacute%3Bndum&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=14:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=14&cdProvincia=99&tipoambito=N&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+PAIS%20VASCO>.

This was a key problem faced by the nationalist and regionalist movements that had not been able to gain parliamentary representation in the brief window afforded by the early Transition, during which an anti-centralist and anti-Castilian political program was so strongly associated with the antifranquista opposition that it was almost seen as a basic component of democratic government. Thus, those movements, like the Asturian, which for the most part remained on the outside (as recognizable and independent political parties, rather than as individual members or blocs within the PSOE), were presented with the problem of how to maintain a politically united and active opposition to a widely popular new government whose inauguration was seen as a ratification that Spain had indeed become a modern Western European democracy.

Thus, as the Transition moved steadily towards the creation of a state that was, at least by partial consensus, democratic, the political associations forged in antagonism to the Franco regime began to break down. By the early 1980s, the mere existence of a distinct, non-Castilian regional identity was not, in and of itself, an inherently anti-governmental stance; in several regions, most notably Euskadi, Catalunya, Galicia, and Andalucía, a party based on such identity politics made up at least some part of the government. As the pan-Celtic cultural movements in Asturias and Galicia showed, while cultural associations *could* play a role in political movements (such as the fading Conceyu Bable or its activist successor, the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*), by this point they did not *necessarily* have to act in such way.

## Chapter 5

### The Slow Road to Nationalist Recovery (1983-1991)

In spite of Asturian nationalism's relative political weakness at the beginning of the decade, the strength of the Socialist Party, and the increasingly public prominence of conservative, *covadonguista*, mythmaking promoted by the monarchy and the more conservative sectors of society, there was a slow revival of Asturianism's fortunes over the course of the 1980s. Asturian nationalist groups benefited from a generational turnover during the late eighties that seemed to reinvigorate Asturianism at a political, social, and cultural level. The second generation of Asturianistas, many of whom were members of a broad student organization called the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionales* (Council of Nationalist Students or CEN), founded in 1986, or of the political activist association the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, formed in 1984 to fill the void left by the fading Conceyu Bable.<sup>564</sup> These new groups, in particular the CEN, looked to more radical

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<sup>564</sup> As a prominent example of what would later be critiqued as "hyperasturianization", the founding members of the Xunta pola originally thought to name it the Xunta *pela*, utilizing the third Asturianu preposition "for" incorrectly but choosing it because it *sounded* more Asturianu and less Castilian. The preposition "per" is used to refer to time (*pela nueche*) and location (*viaxando pela cai, caminando pel práu*). More detail on the modern standard grammar, see Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana*, Tercera



(though largely non-violent) solutions to the problem of nationalist marginalization. This included a far more belligerent style of political protest than their predecessors as well as an *avant-garde* attitude towards cultural revival, including the areas of literature, poetry, music, and theater. Such public critiques and were simultaneous and cannot be entirely disassociated from the cultural movement surrounding the second-generation literary *Surdimientu* (emergence),<sup>565</sup> the experimental theater of troupes like *Camaretá* and *Telón de Fondo*, and the popular music of groups such as punk band *Dixebra* (Asturianu for “division”, “separation”, or “independence”) and the experimental music of the so-called “*Xixón Sound*.” Through this cultural revival and their concurrent participation in the slowly recovering Asturianista political movements, this new generation attempted to demonstrate that Asturianu was a language that was not restricted to rural or traditional contexts but in contrast could be employed in an aggressively modern context.

This second wave of nationalist organizing and cultural activity led to an increasingly unified nationalist political movement, culminating in a period of consolidation from 1988-1991. Consciously attempting to break with a decade of often sectarian fragmentation within the nationalist movement, the students of the CEN pioneered a process of unification among the nationalist Left and Center, exporting this trend to the political arena through its

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edición ed. (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 2001).

There is also at least one example of it being referred to (by two of its founders) as the “Xunta *pala* Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana.” Arturo Xosé & Teresa Fernández Lorences Bermejo García, “Al Ilmo. Sr. Decano de la Facultad de Filología,” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1985-02-15).

<sup>565</sup> For more on the *Surdimientu* and a synopsis and analysis of its principal authors, playwrights, and poets, see Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, *Crónica del Surdimientu (1975-1990)* (Oviedo: Barnabooth Editores, 1991).

members' participation in the 1988 merger of two nationalist political parties, the *Ensemble Nacionalista Astur* and the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*, to form *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana*, (tellingly named Asturian Nationalist Unity and often referred to by its acronym, UNA or “one”). From their positions in the executive of the new party, the members of the CEN then helped negotiate the 1991 electoral coalition *Coalición Asturiana* with the only other significant Asturianista political force, Sánchez Vicente’s *Partíu Asturianista* (PAS), who had rejected a formal merger proposal in 1987. This coalition successfully placed the PAS's president, Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, in the regional legislature in 1991, the first significant electoral success in 14 years of nationalist electoral campaigns.

### **Growing up in a Linguistic Borderland**

This new generation of Asturianistas that would form the bulk of the nationalist movement’s militancy in the 1980s and 1990s were, like their predecessors, acutely aware of the profound cultural, linguistic, social, and economic changes that had taken place in Asturias from the 1950s onwards. This second generation of activists, typically teenagers or children during the Transition and less influenced by the politics of opposition and the methodology of the Old Left, were more willing to experiment with both the form and the content of protest, and became involved more heavily in environmentalist, feminist, and gay rights movements. They were far less concerned, at least initially, with the portrayal of Asturian nationalism as “respectable,” and seemed at times to be employing the tactic of

trying to shock Asturians into paying attention to them. Unlike their predecessors, most of the political activism of these younger Asturianistas took place without the significant threat of a military coup and within the established structure of the State of Autonomies, that is to say, within a “war of position.” Their principal opposition was no longer the old regime, long since evolved beyond recognition, nor even the central state in Madrid, but rather the *covadonguista* beliefs within Asturian society itself. By the 1980s, the Asturianistas no longer were convinced, as they had been during the Transition, that the revival of Asturianu, in and of itself, would awaken a nationalist consciousness amongst the rest of the Asturian people.

Many of the activists who would later form the bulk of the cultural revival movement came from a particular background that inclined them towards this kind of cultural nationalism. Most grew up in a liminal space between a rural, traditional, local, Asturian world and an urban, industrial, state-wide, Castilian one. One spoke *amestáu* (also called *mecíu*), an Asturianu creole at home and in the street, but in formal situations such as school, with the police, or with the company, one was required to speak exclusively in Castilian, lest ridicule or corporal punishment ensue.<sup>566</sup> The Asturian case strongly supports the idea that nationalist sentiment can most often arise in times of rapid social change, when the traditional practices of a region, often specific to a region and strongly linked to a disappearing rural world, seem to be disappearing in favor of a dominant modernism that is

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<sup>566</sup> Xulio (Xune) Elípe Raposo, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-01-22); García Valledor, Interview by author.

perceived as commercial, broadly homogenous, and likely to erase the unique and special character of a particular place.

The case of Xune Elipe Raposo is a fairly typical example. He was born in Villalegre in 1962, a time when the former small rural town was being transformed by ENSIDESA, the state-run metallurgical corporation, into a working-class suburb of Avilés. During the 1950s and 1960s, the area around Avilés dramatically increased in population, with some of the influx coming from the surrounding hinterland or other parts of Asturias but many of the new industrial workers immigrating from Andalucía and Extremadura in Southern Spain. During the mid-1950s, the hastily erected housing and poor living conditions of the first immigrants was said to resemble that of a Korean War refugee camp, earning the newcomers the nickname “*coreanos*,” a term later applied to all workers who immigrated to Avilés during the 1950s and 1960s to work in the ENSIDESA factories.<sup>567</sup>

This experience with both worlds is a key characteristic in the profile of the Asturianistas. With a few exceptions, they tended to have either been born in a rural Asturianu- or *amestáu*-speaking area and then moved to the city (either in childhood or for university), or they were born to a family of recent immigrants to the city. Either way, a vast majority of the militants I interviewed cited this awareness of this distinction between the private world of home and the public one of the major cities of Oviedo, Gijón, Avilés,

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<sup>567</sup> The *coreanos* are notably referenced by Elipe in Dixebra's 1997 song “Indios”, arguing that people “should not call us ‘coreanos’.... to Capital we are all indians of the same land (*nun nós llaméis coreanos...pal Capital somos toos indios de la mesma tierra*).”

Madrid, or Barcelona, as a major motivation behind their political activism. The fact that this change was most easily understood (particularly during childhood) as a *linguistic* shift may have also helped condition the centrality of the language question to the Asturian nationalist movement. Thus, language, rather than acting primarily as a signifier for a wide range of cultural, political, economic, or social controversies, came to be considered the issue itself. By the 1990s, the call for linguistic rights had become almost the exclusive concern of the Asturianista political parties, lobbying groups, and cultural institutions.

### Reorganizing: *Ensame* and the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*

Although the historical conjuncture that favored the rise of cultural politics and the Conceyu Bable had passed, the Asturianista movement itself did not disappear with the dismantling of the association that had spawned it. The various currents of political and cultural activism became fragmented in the wake of the stabilization of the Autonomic system and the political fallout of the Banco Herrero affair, but they did not disappear. After the disintegration of the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur in 1981, there was a brief period of a few months where there was, in fact, no party that defended Asturian nationalism. During this nadir, the Academia de la Llingua, small groups of Asturian expatriate students in universities scattered throughout Spain (such as the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid* and the *Conceyu Cultural Asturianu de Barcelona*),<sup>568</sup> and the small but vocal regionalist and

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<sup>568</sup> For a detailed analysis of the *Conceyu Cultural Asturianu* and the particular dynamic of linguistic revival in

nationalist group within the Socialist Party were the only groups openly questioning the coalescing post-Transition political system and the level of autonomy granted to Asturias by the 1981 Statute.

In March 1982, at a conference in Deva (in the *concejo* of Gijón)<sup>569</sup> a group of ex-CNA militants, along with a number of disaffected Asturian members of the Communist Party and parties of the radical left (such as the *Organización Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores*, *Partido de los Trabajadores de España*, and the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria*), and a handful of radical students at the University of Oviedo established the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur* (Asturian Nationalist Assembly)<sup>570</sup> which effectively continued the late CNA's radically Leftist political line (and analysis that Asturias was a colonized nation) without openly engaging in any of the highly publicized (and condemned) violence of its predecessor. The Ensame, using the territory claimed by the medieval Kingdom of Asturias (but now administratively part of the provinces of León and Cantabria) as evidence, also claimed that the State of the Autonomies divided Asturias into three parts, at least in part in

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an emigrant population, see Cuevas, "Conceyu Cultural Asturianu: La reivindicación asturianista dende la emigración en Barcleona."

<sup>569</sup> "...al nuesu primer alcuentru en Marzu'l '82 en Deva."

Ensame Nacionalista Astur, "III Conceyu Nacional. Unidá y organización, Enanchando camín," (Xixón: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, marzu 1988).

<sup>570</sup> It can also be translated in a significantly more menacing way as *Asturian Nationalist Swarm*, as the Asturianu word is most often applied to "assemblies" of bees.

Carmona, Interview by author; Miguel Lago Santillán, Interview by author (Pola de Siero, 2008-10-23 & Pola de Siero/Villaviciosa, 2008-12-09); Marcos Abel Fernández Marqués, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-02-13, 2009-02-20, & 2009-03-05); Arturu Xosé Bermeyo García, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-01-20); Ignaci Llope Fernández, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-01-30).

order to hinder the coalescence of national identity in Asturias.<sup>571</sup> In its first published pamphlet, the new organization denounced the “folkloric” label that the major parties of the region labeled any attempt at “Asturian national revindication.”<sup>572</sup> Simultaneously defending class struggle and the “battle for the national liberation of the peoples [of Asturias and the world],” the Ensame condemned “exploitation of man by man be it of any kind whatsoever.”<sup>573</sup>

Responding to Asturias’ progressive deindustrialization and rising unemployment, the Ensame at times conceived of “Spanish colonialism” primarily in economic terms, focusing on an economic system that favored the export of raw materials out of Asturias (primarily coal and steel) while leaving the communication and transportation network within the province (and with its coastal neighbors) underdeveloped. Differing significantly from the rhetoric of its predecessors, the Ensame issued a call to Asturian workers that attempted to appeal to their economic interests, focusing specifically on the defense of endangered jobs in the region.<sup>574</sup> Indeed, part of their evidence, that the transportation

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<sup>571</sup> “*Tando Asturias xebrada en tres comunidaes autónomes (Castilla-León, Cantabria, y Principado de Asturias)...*” Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “III Conceyu Nacional. Unidá y organización, Enanchando camín.” 3.

The Ensame maintained this claim as late as 1988, and there are sectors of the nationalist movement that promote this idea of a greater Asturias today, most prominently seen in the writings of Xaviel Vilareyo y Villamil. See Xaviel Vilareyo y Villamil, *Los ámbitos de la Nación Asturiana* (Xixón: Espublizastur, 2008).

<sup>572</sup> “*Esta organización política... quier denunciar dende esta fueya, la etiqueta de folclorismu que los partíos clásicos españolistes manganón (sic) siempre a cuala quier atisbu de reivindicación nacional asturiana.*”

Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “s/t,” (Xixón: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1982-08-08).

<sup>573</sup> “*Tantu nel tarrén de la llucha de clases a la gueta'l socialismo, como la griesca pola liberación nacional de los pueblos... por tou ello nós tamos y tarémos siempre, escontra cualaquier (sic) tipu d'espoltación del home pol home seya del tipu que seya.*”

ibid.

<sup>574</sup> “*¡Defendemos el puestu de trabayu!*”

network systematically favored this economic relationship with the Spanish center was echoed for decades amongst the Left in Asturias (not just amongst nationalists).<sup>575</sup> By early 2009, there was only one completed major superhighway in Asturias, the A-66 leading from the port cities of Avilés and Gijón, through the capital Oviedo, and connecting the province with the *meseta* and Madrid. The coastal highway was still incomplete (in particular the Western section connecting Asturias with Galicia). The Ensame also took up the Conceyu Bable's and the CNA's tradition of campaigning for the official (and popular) recognition of Asturianu place names, something in which they were consistently joined by the Movimiento Comunista d'Asturies (which felt the need to justify this regionalist stance to its central committee in Madrid).<sup>576</sup> One of its first pamphlets, in published in early 1983, was dedicated to the topic.<sup>577</sup>

While not discarding the belligerent language of the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur (there are plenty of references throughout its publications of the "struggle" against "oppressive colonialism" and "Spanish colonialism," the Ensame was more cautious in its public stance on violence, rarely *openly* advocating any kind of armed struggle or even any illegal political activism beyond the level of graffiti. However, there are hints that the group

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Ensame Nacionalista Astur, "Per una Asturias llibre del colonialismu," (Asturies: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1984).

<sup>575</sup> Most notably by Andecha Astur from 1990 onwards.

<sup>576</sup> "*Debemos començar a ir normalizando la toponimia y así pasaríamos a ser de Uviéu, Xixón, Llangreu, etc.*"

Comité Regional del Movimiento Comunista de Asturias / Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies, "Notas para el debate sobre lo asturiano," (Oviedo: Archivo personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1987-03-10). 3.

<sup>577</sup> Ensame Nacionalista Astur, "Per una toponimia n'asturiano," (Asturies: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1983).



seriously explored the possibility of launching a paramilitary campaign. Former militant Nel Chus Álvarez (also a veteran of the CNA), claimed that in 1983, the Ensame's Xunta Nacional met with representatives of ETA (*militar*) in Biarritz.<sup>578</sup> Additionally, Marcos Abel Fernández Marqués claims that the possibility of converting the Ensame into a clandestine organization was carried to the point of a vote at the party's second *Conceyu Nacional* (February 25-26, 1984, in Gijón),<sup>579</sup> with the measure narrowly failing.<sup>580</sup> There is no evidence that the group pursued the idea any further, and it is clear that the Ensame at no point openly engaged in any paramilitary operations in Asturias of the sort performed by the CAR in 1978-9.

Still, it is clear that the Ensame continued the Asturian nationalist Left's traditional interest in and contacts with Basque nationalism. The Ensame even went as far as to actively campaign (along with the MCA, *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria*, and some individuals associated with the Asturian linguistic, cultural, and musical movements),<sup>581</sup> on behalf of *Herri Batasuna's* 1987 European Parliamentary campaign.<sup>582</sup> Appealing for Asturians (and other non-Basques) to vote "where it hurts them the most" and promising "reciprocal

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<sup>578</sup> Álvarez García, Interview by author.

<sup>579</sup> "II Conceyu Nacional del Ensame Nacionalista Astur," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1984-02-28.

<sup>580</sup> "Incluso nel segundu Conceyu Nacional del Ensame llegó a falase de la posibilidá de pasar a ser una organización clandestina...[y la votación] perdióse."

Fernández Marqués, Interview by author.

<sup>581</sup> Most notably Ramón d'Andrés Díaz (later Secretary of the Academia de la Llingua), Xune Elipe (an Ensame member and lead singer of the punk rock group *Dixeбра*), and Adolfo Camilo Díaz (member of several experimental theater troupes, founder of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*).

<sup>582</sup> Herri Batasuna, "Euskadi lucha contigo: unidad popular al parlamento europeo." The pamphlet, although mostly written in Castilian, was notable for its pentalingual introduction and the endorsements in multiple languages from supporters throughout Spain (including Asturias).

solidarity,” the campaign successfully placed one HB deputy in the European Parliament.<sup>583</sup>

This continuing fascination with Euskadi that has characterized the radical (and sometimes the not-so-radical) Left in Asturias is difficult to explain, but the trend is clear. From the indirect early role of the Basque Nationalist movement in the formation of MCA, through the “capture” of the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur by ETA (p-m), the Ensame’s reputed contacts with ETA (m) and clear support of *Herri Batasuna*, Andecha Astur’s links with *Herri Batasuna* in the 1990s, and Fer González Rodríguez’s interest in ETA in the early 2000s, the Asturian Left has a history of looking to Euskadi as a model. In contrast, although expatriate groups in Barcelona and Santiago de Compostela played a role in the cultural revival of the 1970s and early 80s, the Asturian nationalist movement as a whole has never had extensive contacts with either Catalan or Galician groups.

However, while the Ensame’s Basque connections may have hurt its initial electoral appeal (particularly coming so soon after the Banco Herrero affair), the group did manage to carve out a miniscule but reliable electoral niche, tallying 2,519 votes (0.44%) in the 1983 Autonomous Governmental elections and a mild increase to 2,809 (0.49%) in 1987.<sup>584</sup> The Ensame was well aware of its relative weakness and therefore chose to focus only on the elections for the Autonomous government of Asturias. Thus, it saved the money that would have been spent on constant campaigning for activities such as publication of its newsletter,

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<sup>583</sup> “*Ye lo que más-yos duele.*” “*Solidaridad recíproca.*”

ibid.

<sup>584</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales, *Atlas Electoral de Asturias, 1936-1996*.

Compared to the totals of Unidad Regionalista or even the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, these numbers do represent a significant drop in support from the late 1970s. See Chapters 2-3.

fomenting contacts in the wider pan-Celtic movement in Brittany, the purchase of books, rent for its party headquarters in Oviedo, the production of stickers and banners, pamphlets, posters, paint (some of which possibly was destined for graffiti).<sup>585</sup> Indeed, seemingly a rarity for such a small political party, the Ensame actually often operated with a small surplus.<sup>586</sup>

Like the Conceyu Bable (although not its immediate predecessor the CNA), the Ensame focused on popularizing its ideas amongst younger Asturians. The Ensame was founded with the specific intent to create a “university commission,” with its student members required to “function politically within the university.”<sup>587</sup> Some of its earliest members were students at the university, such as the future general secretary of *Andecha Astur*, Marcos Abel Fernández Marqués, a biology student at the time (and now a cardiologist), and played a fundamental role in laying the groundwork for the future interparty *Conceyu d’Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, founded in 1985. Indeed, some of the student organization’s more successful propaganda techniques (such as the creation of political pamphlets that were styled as comic strips) were pioneered by the Ensame. If one compares the first pamphlets produced by the Ensame for its toponymy campaign,<sup>588</sup> they remarkably foreshadow in their format, aesthetics, and mildly humorous tone, those produced during

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<sup>585</sup> Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “Informe económicu anual de l’ayalgería xeneral del E.N.A.,” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1984).

<sup>586</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>587</sup> “*Creación de una comisión de universidad; los miembros del ENA que sean universitarios, tendrían que funcionar políticamente dentro de la universidad.*”

Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “Organización,” (Xixón: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, prob. 1982 or early 1983.).

<sup>588</sup> Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “Per una toponimia n’asturiano.”

the latter part of the decade by the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*.<sup>589</sup> The Ensame's specific focus on the University of Oviedo made it the choice, along with the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana* (founded in 1985), of radical students during the latter half of the 1980s. In many ways, the Ensame and the XNA's most important historical role was to serve thus as a generational bridge between the older activists of the late 1970s Conceyu Bable, now generally moving to more moderate political positions in Sánchez Vicente's new *Partíu Asturianista* (1985-present) as they aged into their 30s and 40s, and a new, second generation of Asturian nationalists, which would play a critical role in the revival of Asturianista fortunes during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

### Re-popularizing Cultural Activism

Towards the middle of the decade, as the reforms of the autonomy statute and the government of de Silva were beginning to take effect, Asturianismu, marginalized either to the political fringe, an apolitical *celtismu*, or institutionalized in the Academia de la Llingua, began to coalesce around a new generation of militants. While the period saw the dissolution of some of the more important Asturianista cultural organizations of the Transition, such as the Conceyu Bable and the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid*,<sup>590</sup> it

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<sup>589</sup> Such as Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes, "C.E.N. - Por una verdadera enseñanza asturiana," (Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1986).

<sup>590</sup> The organization rapidly faded following the expulsion of its president, Xelu Neira Álvarez, for being insufficiently nationalist and supporting the Spanish World Cup Soccer team. Principally, however, the group was unable to overcome the primary barrier to any student organization's stability: its members either graduated or otherwise moved on with their lives and in many cases relocated back to Asturias.

simultaneously saw the coalescence of a new generation of politically active associations and political parties, born out of a combination of discontent at the political *status quo* and an increasing political awareness amongst the students of the University of Oviedo.

The first of the new political activist organizations was the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, in many ways the heir to the Conceyu Bable (although the latter still existed until 1985). The *Xunta pola Defensa* (as it is more commonly known)<sup>591</sup> was formed out of a loose collection of social groups and political parties. In late 1983, the anarchist *Comuña Llibertaria* initiated the discussions about a “Front or Coordinator for the Full Social Normalization of the Asturian Language,”<sup>592</sup> hosting a meeting on November 23 in the headquarters of the anarchist trade union (CNT).<sup>593</sup> Indicating the Xunta pola Defensa’s origins in some of the more radical and experimental cultural and social groups in the region, the initial invitees were representatives from the MCA, the *Mocedaes Revolucionaries d’Asturies* (Revolutionary Youth of Asturias), the *Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores* (which also played a role in the regionalist movement of the 1970s),<sup>594</sup> the *Candidatura Allerana Independiente* (Independent Candidacy of Aller, one of Asturias’ *concejos*),<sup>595</sup> the Ensame, the *Coletivu Alternativa* (Alternative Collective), the CNT teacher’s union, *l’Asociación cultural*

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Neira Álvarez, Interview by author.

<sup>591</sup> It is also often called the *Xunta pola* or its initials are used (XDLLA).

<sup>592</sup> “*Frente o coordinadora pa la plena ñormalización del bable.*”

<sup>593</sup> El secretariu la Comuña Llibertaria, “Azta No 1,” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1983-11-24).

<sup>594</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>595</sup> Probably Xosé Suarez Arias-Cachero, known as “Felechosa,” a university student at the time and councilman in his home *concejo* of Aller.

*d'Infiestu* “*La Curuxa*” (a cultural association from Eastern Asturias), and a few independents.<sup>596</sup>

On January 31, 1984, an expanded assembly was held in the Salón de Actos of the Muséu de Bellas Artes de Asturias, generally considered the founding of the new political association.<sup>597</sup> Originally (briefly) named the hypercorrected “Xunta *pela* Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana,”<sup>598</sup> the organization was founded with a much narrower political focus than its forerunner, the Conceyu Bable. Also a “citizens’ organization,” the Xunta pola Defensa was explicitly formed as a group designed to apply political pressure on the Asturian government for the fullest possible implementation of linguistic equality, much more targeted on legal reform and the language than the Conceyu Bable, which even during its campaigns for *bable nes escueles* and *autonomía rexonal* simultaneously engaged in the promotion of a more general idea of cultural revival, at least during its early years. The Xunta pola Defensa’s earliest manifesto, published in mid-1984, clearly indicated both its focus on legal (as much as social) status for the language and its view of Asturian culture as subject to “centrist colonization” (following in the footsteps of the Conceyu Bable, the CNA,

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<sup>596</sup> El secretariu la Comuña Llibertaria, “Azta No 1.”

<sup>597</sup> Among those present at the meeting were Taresa Fernández Lorences (on behalf of the MCA), Dolfu Camilo Díaz (from the Comuña Llibertaria), Xuan Bello, and Felechosa (Candidatura Allerana Independiente). Bello Fernán, Interview by author; Camilo Díaz, Interview by author; Taresa Fernández Lorences, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-10-20 & 2008-11-21); Xosé Suárez Arias-Cachero (Felechosa), Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-02-25 & 2009-04-07).

<sup>598</sup> The original name incorrectly attempted to use the third form of the word “for”, which exists in Asturianu, Portuguese, and Latin (among other languages), but *not* in Castilian Spanish. In addition to *para* and *por*, Asturianu uses *per* for the following situations: physical location (*pela cai*, *pel camín*), time (*pela tarde*, *pela mañana*), ratios (identical to its use in English. e.g. *per capita*, *per diem*).

Xunta pela Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, “...y nun preguntes por qué.” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal de Adolfu Camilo Díaz, 1984).

and the Ensamble).<sup>599</sup> In its manifesto, the Xunta pola Defensa demanded that “Asturianu [needed] to be in schools and in the communications media, as a minimal condition on equal footing with Castilian.” As did its predecessors (both cultural associations and political parties), the Xunta pola Defensa placed a great deal of importance on the use and popularization of Asturianu place-names. Now working completely within the hegemonic framework of the new political system, it specifically referred to the legal provisions of the Asturian Statute of Autonomy, dedicating itself to ensuring that “the Official Organs comply in every way with Article 4 of our Statute of Autonomy.” Even further, its long-term goal was to “achieve for Asturias a Decree of Co-officialism or Bilingualism.”<sup>600</sup> Thus, in addition to agitating for expanded legal provisions for the use and protection of the Asturian language, the Xunta pola Defensa was one of the first organizations in Asturias adopt the tactic of accusing the government of incomppliance with an existing law. Over the course of the next several decades, one of the more common legal arguments between the Asturianistas and their opponents (often carried to court by the Xunta pola Defensa) was over whether or not the government had, in fact, ensured the protection of the language and “promoted its

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<sup>599</sup> “colonialismu centraliegu...del propiu pueblu astur.”

Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, “Sopelexu (a Mou de Manifiestu),” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, 1984-05-05).

<sup>600</sup> “Per ello, una serie xente, entamada’n XUNTA POLA DEFENSA DE LA LLINGUA ASTURIANA, soplexa que:

*L’asturiano tien de tar na escuela y nos medios de comunicación, cómo mínimu al empar que’l castellán.*

*La toponimia ASTURIANA, ha tar –de xaciu- N’ASTURIANO*

*Afalaráse tamién a los Muérganos Oficiales pa que se faiga cumplir en toles estayes l’artículu quartu del nuesu Estatutu d’Autonomía. Amén d’otra riestra posibilidaes que dirán espardiéndose según vaiga xorreciendo’l puxu d’esta Xunta.*

*Too ello col enfotu d’algamar p’Asturies un Decretu de Coficialidá y Billingüismu.”*

ibid. Emphasis in original.

use and diffusion” in the educational system and in communications media (initially state-controlled, but increasingly private over the course of the 1980s and 1990s).

The Xunta pola Defensa would slowly increase in prominence over the next decade, becoming one of the most important activist groups in the region and attracting attention from 1988 onwards with its yearly *Conciertu pola Oficialidá* and the yearly protest march in favor of bilingualism (*manifestu pola oficialidá*). Unusually for a non-partisan organization, the Xunta pola Defensa would even enter into explicit political coalitions such as the *Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá* (1997-8) and the *Conceyu Abiertu pola Oficialidá* (2004-present), playing a central role in the formation of the latter, along with the Communist-led coalition *Izquierda Unida / Izquierda Xunida*.<sup>601</sup> By the mid-1990s, the Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana had become the most well-recognized Asturianista cultural association, and it would be the center of language-centered political activism from then on.

### **Respectable Nationalism: Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente’s *Partíu Asturianista***

Upon leaving the PSOE in 1984, Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente was by far the most recognizable politician who openly identified himself as an Asturian nationalist. His legacy as the founder of the Conceyu Bable and a visible member of the Transition government (President of the Cultural Commission), he was the only one of the early “bablistas” who was

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<sup>601</sup> IU took a strongly Asturianista turn from the mid-1990s onwards under the direction of Gaspar Llamazares and Francisco Javier García Valledor, formally adopting a bilingual name, in part as a way to distinguish itself from the PSOE, which had for over a decade been severely eating away at its electorate as the IU moved further and further from the revolutionary discourse of Marxism. See Chapter 5.



simultaneously well-known as a cultural nationalist and a “serious” politician. He was known both for backing issues of Asturian language and culture but also acted in some senses as an heir to the old Partido Socialista Popular’s broader concept of regionalism, encompassing economic and governmental regionalism (primarily the devolution of administrative branches to local control) as much as cultural and linguistic activism. Thus, in the mid-1980s, he was perhaps ideally situated to launch a new nationalist political project, with one foot in the “respectable” world of party politics through his history with the DSA, the PSP, and the PSOE and his working relationship with President de Silva<sup>602</sup> and one in the world of Asturian cultural nationalism.

While Sánchez Vicente had been considering the idea of launching an Asturianista party since at least 1976, he took an unusually slow and careful approach to the foundation of his new party. Indeed, there was roughly a year of preparation between his departure from the PSOE and the foundation of the *Partíu Asturianista*, a period during which Sánchez Vicente seemed to go out of his way to reinforce his connections within the world of the Asturianista cultural movement, publishing a number of books, short stories, and anthologies in and about Asturianu and Asturian culture,<sup>603</sup> including a play “*El Pelayu*”.<sup>604</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>602</sup> Both affirmed that they worked together during their time in DSA, the PSP, and the PSOE, although neither claimed to be close friends. De Silva described Sánchez Vicente, when they first met in 1974 as “one of those with whom one had to speak in Bable” (“*el DSA incluía también unos con quienes era necesario hablar en bable.*”).

de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview with author.

<sup>603</sup> “«La muerte amiya de nueche», novela corta de Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1984-11-30; Pedro Pablo Alonso, “Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente: «Nos estamos jugando la supervivencia de la cultura popular asturiana»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-05-10.

Sánchez Vicente often explicitly used the public presentations of his literary works to lay the groundwork for the launch of his new political party.<sup>605</sup> Additionally, Sánchez Vicente, along with Cañedo and Rubiera, rather than immediately registering the party, decided to form a cultural association in Gijón called *Andecha Asturianista* (founded November 6, 1984) and use this group as a platform from which to send out feelers to potential members, intending to accumulate a certain level of support before going on to “create the brand” of the party by making it public.<sup>606</sup>

The new *Partíu Asturianista* (PAS),<sup>607</sup> founded in November 1985 by Sánchez Vicente and other members of *Andecha Asturianista* and registered with the Ministry of the Interior on February 14, 1986,<sup>608</sup> was distinctly Left-Center, attempting to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, defining itself as “interclásist, Asturianista, and of progress.”<sup>609</sup> Indeed, while Sánchez Vicente and the party’s literature explicitly defined Asturias as a nation and the party’s goal as the “creating and fomenting national identity,”<sup>610</sup> the party’s

<sup>604</sup> Pedro Pablo Alonso, “Sánchez Vicente presenta hoy en Gijón «El Pelayu», la «primera obra de teatro en bable»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-11-07.

<sup>605</sup> Manuel Fernández, “Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente: «ni el PSOE ni la oposición demuestran interés por la cultura asturiana»,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1984-12-15.

<sup>606</sup> “...intentar agrupar un número mínimo de personas enantes de la fase de crear la marca, de crear el partíu.” Cañedo Valle, Interview by author.

<sup>607</sup> Up through its first two election campaigns, the municipal elections of 1987 and the elections to the European Parliament of 1989, the party went by the initials “PA,” but since then has opted for “PAS” or “PAs.”

<sup>608</sup> Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Registro de Partidos Políticos - Partíu Asturianista,” 1986-02-14, <http://servicio.mir.es/registro-partidos/loadDetallesFormacion.htm?protocolo=762>. Accessed 2011-01-21.

<sup>609</sup> “Presentado el Partido Asturianista (PA), que nace para «acabar con el complejo de inferioridad regional»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1986-10-01.

<sup>610</sup> “aniciando y desendolcando una identidá nacional”

name, “Asturianista,” was in part a conscious strategy to attract more votes and avoid potentially negative connotations of the word “nacionalista” with older and more conservative voters.<sup>611</sup>

The PAS was primarily formed out of ex-members of the Socialist Party who, like Sánchez Vicente, had become frustrated with the possibility of pursuing a regionalist or nationalist policy (depending on the person) within the PSOE, along with a handful of old Partido Socialista Popular members who had never joined the Socialist Party in the first place (or had left after very brief stays).<sup>612</sup> While it would later absorb aging former members of the (generally) Leftist student groups or the Ensame, initially its membership was strictly clustered around the political center, although weighted more to the Left of center (the number of militants that defined themselves as Rightists were few and had limited influence).<sup>613</sup>

Unlike the more radical Ensame or student-heavy Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, founded earlier that year, the PAS was effectively a bilingual group.<sup>614</sup> Publishing much of its literature in both languages, the PAS clearly intended to attract the widest number of followers possible. The bilingualism was also part of the PAS’s strategy to attract the vote of people who either did not consider themselves Asturianistas, speak or read the language well,

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Partíu Asturianista, “Partíu Asturianista, «Tamos faciendo Asturias: Ven a trabayar con nosotros.»,” (Xixón: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, s/f (prob 1991-4)).

<sup>611</sup> Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>612</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> Cañedo Valle, Interview by author.

<sup>614</sup> Although it almost invariably went by the Asturianu version of its name. The only time the term “Partido Asturianista” is used with any frequency is in the Castilian-language press.

or even feel terribly concerned about it one way or the other, the party hoping to win such voters over with its arguments for greater regional economic and political autonomy.<sup>615</sup> The Partíu Asturianista is perhaps most notable, then, for being the first Asturianista group that specifically attempted to appeal to those who were *not* necessarily interested in linguistic or cultural rights.<sup>616</sup> Indeed, the PAS took the unprecedented step (for an Asturianista group) of publishing all of its press communiqués in Castilian Spanish (rather than bilingually or in Asturianu), specifically as a political strategy, as “if one wants to even minimally reach society, one needs to utilize the language in which people are accustomed to reading, which is only Castilian.”<sup>617</sup>

From its earliest beginnings, the Partíu Asturianista has exhibited a strong tendency towards political pragmatism, at times drawing criticism from within the Asturianista movement. In addition to objecting to its frequent use of the dominant language in Asturias, Castilian, purists within both the political and cultural sectors of Asturianismu have frequently accused the PAS, and in particular Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, of being more interested in the acquisition and maintenance of political power than in the advancement of the party’s own program. Of course, the Sánchez Vicente’s rebuttal has consistently been

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<sup>615</sup> It is safe to say that any voter strongly opposed to bilingualism or to the Asturianista cultural program would never have considered voting for the party anyways.

<sup>616</sup> Unless one counts the PSP as “Asturianista”, which is a difficult case to make. Certainly it had many Asturianistas amongst its members, but its regionalism was of a much more general type, not even focused as much as the PAS on issues of language. See Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>617</sup> “*Si quies llegar minimamente a la sociedá has d'utilizar la llingua que la xente está acostumbrada a leer, que ye únicamente el castellano.*”

Cañedo Valle, Interview by author.

that he has chosen political compromise (such as voting in favor of slow-track autonomy when a member of the PSOE or working closely with the conservative President Sergio Marqués in 1998) because of the political realities of Asturias, because compromise “was better than nothing.”<sup>618</sup>

This tension between purists and pragmatists has been one of the central struggles within the Asturianista movement, and during its eras of increasing fragmentation (the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and the 2000s) this debate has often been cited as a principal division between the various Asturianista groups. Indeed, this dispute has been played out not only in the field of political compromise and party politics but also within cultural institutions (such as the *Conceyu d’Asturies en Madrid* and the expulsion of its then-president Xelu Neira in 1983) and in the seemingly more elite realm of linguistics. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the Academia de la Llingua has tended to maintain a more “purist” position, both evidenced in its standardization work and in the public hostility it has exhibited towards reforms of the legal code that have stopped short of full co-official status (such as the proposed laws of 1988 and 1998). Even in the twenty-first century, a struggle has developed between the Academia de la Llingua and a group of philologists at the University of Oviedo over both the standards used for the language and control over the education of Asturianu

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<sup>618</sup> “*Yera meyor que nada.*” (referring specifically to his support for Article 143 and slow-track autonomy for Asturias).

Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

language teachers, with the latter group advocating a more pragmatic (and castilianized) version of the language that more closely approximates “how people actually talk.”<sup>619</sup>

### Unity as a Political Program: *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*

The third of the Asturianista political parties to be formed during the mid-1980s was the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana* (Asturian Nationalist Junta, XNA). During late 1984 and early 1985, a series of discussions took place in the Literature Faculty between Asturianista student groups, members of the *Conceyu Bable* (by now for the most part past university age), and individuals with a reputation for nationalist or regionalist politics (such as Xosé Suárez Arias-Cachero, known as “Felechosa,” then a 23-year old student at the university and member of the town council in his home *concejo* of Aller).<sup>620</sup> Facilitated by Prof. Álvaro Ruíz de la Peña (many of the conversations and debates took place in his office), the more centrist sectors tended to end up forming part of the Partíu Asturianista, while the more radical (and younger) groups gravitated, for the most part, together to form the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*.<sup>621</sup> According to Felechosa, these discussions about the formation of a new party included Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, but that after the initial overtures by Ruíz de la Peña

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<sup>619</sup> d’Andrés Díaz, Interview by author.

<sup>620</sup> In a common Asturian custom, Suárez is more commonly known by the name of his hometown, Felechosa, a small village in the mountainous *concejo* of Aller.

He was elected running as part of the *Candidatura Allerana Independiente*. By this point, Felechosa considered himself either a Centrist or Center-Left, depending on the issue at hand, although in the late 1970s he had been much more radical as a militant of the MCA (which he had left in 1979).

Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>621</sup> Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

he decided to proceed ahead with his own political project, the PAS.<sup>622</sup> Indeed, Felechosa implies that the coalescing nationalist group had initially preferred Sánchez Vicente as to head the new party, and only subsequently decided to form the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana in 1985 as a “reaction to that lost opportunity.”<sup>623</sup>

The Xunta was formed out of a somewhat eclectic mix of radical students, students from distinctly middle-class backgrounds, veterans of the Asturianista political campaigns of the 1970s (most importantly Xosé Lluís Carmona),<sup>624</sup> and whose founders included an Asturianista Catholic Priest (called *Monchu el Cura*).<sup>625</sup> Thus, ideologically, it was a bit hard to define. Although it clearly defined itself as nationalist, it drew its members from various parts of the political spectrum, from Left (such as Ignaci Llope, coming from the Trotskyist *Liga Comunista*)<sup>626</sup> to Right (Felechosa and Inaci Iglesias, for example). Additionally, the

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<sup>622</sup> Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>623</sup> “*Dempués de los primeros reuniones del 84-85, cuando apaeció el PAS....entós nosotros, como reacción a aquella oportunidad perdida, foi cuando montamos la Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana.*”

Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>624</sup> Carmona joined the XNA soon after its formation having left the Ensame the previous year. Carmona was one of the younger members of the Conceyu Bable as well as militant in the Partido Socialista Popular, and one of the founders of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Asturiana* (forming part of the “culturalist” group that was expelled or left in the build-up to the Banco Herrero affair. See Chapter 3).

<sup>625</sup> Otherwise known as José Ramón García Fernández. Although he had extensive contacts with the Ensame, he was never a member, and ended up joining the XNA.

The Church in Asturias was, for the most part, highly hostile both to the Asturian nationalist movement as a whole and any suggestion that Asturianu be integrated into the Church’s rituals or publications. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, he regularly petitioned his superiors for permission to perform Catholic mass in Asturianu, a request that was repeatedly denied. His reaction was, most of the time, to perform the majority of the mass in Castilian and Latin, and to finish with a rendition of the Lord’s Prayer in Asturianu (*Padre nuesu, que tas en cielu, santificáu seya’l to nome...*)

José Ramón García Fernández (Monchu el Cura), Interview by author (Pola de Siero, 2008-10-23 & Villaviciosa, 2009-02-04).

<sup>626</sup> He abandoned the group “because of the national question” and was present at the Ensame’s foundational meeting in Deva, but never became active in the party. Llope, Interview by author.

XNA represented, for many of its participants, their first foray into political activity, further contributing to the lack of a ready-made, concrete, ideology.<sup>627</sup>

Although a small group, likely at no point exceeding 100 militants, the XNA was particularly interesting in that, from the beginning, one of its long-term goals was to bridge the gap between the Ensame and the PAS in order to form one unified Asturianista bloc, attempting to overcome years of electoral fragmentation. Inaciu Iglesias even goes as far as to suggest that the very name, which can be translated as “Junta” but also literally means “together” or “group,” was intended to imply that the group hoped to “act as a bridge.”<sup>628</sup> In 1986, soon after its formation, it entered into discussions with the Communist Party about the possibility of integrating in *Izquierda Unida*, the re-structured, Communist-centered coalition that was being formed for the 1986 elections, rejecting a similar offer from the Ensame.<sup>629</sup> The negotiations broke down due to a dispute over the division of spots in the electoral list, but it was a clear signal that the XNA intended to pursue a policy of coalition.

Indeed, considering that the Asturianista vote was significantly split between Unidad Regionalista and the Partido Socialista Popular (although there was only one “officially” regionalist candidacy), even the 1977 elections had been held with a divided nationalist vote. The XNA, although small in number, thus was able to play an important role during the late 1980s, popularizing the rhetoric of unity that began to prevail amongst the nationalists in

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<sup>627</sup> Álvaro Ruíz de la Peña Solar, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-04-14).

<sup>628</sup> Inaciu Iglesias. Interview by author (Valdesoto, 2009-01-18).

<sup>629</sup> “X.N.A....al pocu del so iniciu formaron y llueu abandonaron I.U., non por desavenientes ideolóxicos sinon por nun llegar a un alcuerdu satisfatoriu nel repartu de los primeros puestos nes llistes eleutorales.”

Ensamé Nacionalista Astur, “III Conceyu Nacional. Unidá y organización, Enanchando camín.”



Asturias during the period and serving as the principal motor of the progressive unification of the Asturianista movement.

### The Resurgence of Asturian Nationalism in the University: The *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*

Regardless of party affiliation, most of this second wave of Asturianistas responsible for the reinvigoration of the nationalist political movement in Asturias during the late 1980s were members of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, a broad student union that was a significant protagonist within the nationalist movement during the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>630</sup> The CEN was founded in the spring of 1985 from a fusion of several student groups, including the XERA, or Junta of Revolutionary Students of Asturias (*Xunta d'estudiantes revolucionarios d'Asturies*), from the history and geography departments, and *La Quintana*, a group focusing on traditional music, which had formed and begun holding discussion groups the previous year.<sup>631</sup> Its first general congress took place in the Education Faculty the following December at a meeting at which the CEN publicly defined itself as a “leftist nationalist organization” which was dedicated to the fight for a “democratic and Asturian” university. As a university-affiliated organization, it was able to hold the majority

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<sup>630</sup> That said, most members of the organization, if affiliated with any party, tended to be in the Ensame, XNA, and MCA, in descending order. The Partíu Asturianista was relatively underrepresented amongst the students (not terribly surprisingly, given its middle-class and Centrist appeal).

<sup>631</sup> Llope, Interview by author; Camilo Díaz, Interview by author; Xosé Nel Riesgo Fernández, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-02-10).

of its meetings in the university's student center<sup>632</sup> and in seminar rooms on campus, primarily in the philology faculty, where it had the largest support base. The CEN, as a student organization, primarily focused its short-term goals on issues specifically related to the University, announcing in a 1986 recruitment pamphlet that “only through education can we manage to recuperate and promote our culture and at the same time begin the national reconstruction of Asturias.”<sup>633</sup> The CEN loudly denounced an educational model that it saw as “colonialist, authoritarian, sexist, and *españolista*” and complained that the pedagogical style of lectures “prevent[ed] the active and real participation of students in the educational process.”<sup>634</sup> In 1985, 24 members were elected as student representatives to the *clausuro*, representing roughly one-quarter of the university's legislature, and used this leverage to amend the University's statutes to include “the cultural recuperation of the Asturian Country (*país asturiano*)” as one of the University of Oviedo's primary goals<sup>635</sup> and the insertion of Article 6, which declared “the University of Oviedo, because its historical, social, and economic links to the Principality of Asturias, will dedicate special attention to the cultural aspects and collective interests of Asturias. The Asturian Language will have

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<sup>632</sup> The *Casa de la Juventud*, c/Calvo Sotelo no. 5.

<sup>633</sup> “Sólo al través de la educación podremos llograr recuperar y alitar la nuesa cultura y al empar entamar la recostrucción nacional d'Asturies.”

Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes, “C.E.N. - Por una verdadera enseñanza asturiana.”

<sup>634</sup> “Una educación colonialista, autoritaria, sesista ya españolista. Amás torguen la intervención ñidia ya real de los estudiantes nel procesu educativu.”

Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes, “Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes,” (*Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1987-04-10*).

<sup>635</sup> Article 5, Section 1 states: “Son fines de la Universidad de Oviedo....k) La recuperación cultural del País Asturiano.”

Universidad de Oviedo, *Estatutos* (Oviedo: Ediciones de la Universidad de Oviedo, 1986).

adequate treatment, in agreement with legislation. No one will be discriminated against because of its use.”<sup>636</sup> In August 1986, the CEN’s significant bloc within the university legislature was able to present a list of further demands to the rector of the university.<sup>637</sup> First and foremost, the members of the CEN demanded co-official status for Asturianu in the University and criticized the existing “non-discrimination” policy because of its vague wording, allowing it to be in large part ignored. Additionally, the students demanded a more rapid turnover of the faculty, as they claimed that the attitude of the current faculty members was one of the main obstacles both to the introduction of Asturianu in the university and the renovation of the educational system to be more accessible to women, a claim made with some justification given the structure of the Spanish tenure system; even more than a decade after Franco's death, the majority of the faculty at the University of Oviedo had been appointed during the dictatorship. Thus, even in the early 1980s, an adherence to an anachronistic (by this point) version of Spanish nationalism and the rigid

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<sup>636</sup> “*La Universidad de Oviedo, por su vinculación histórica, social y económica al principado de Asturias, dedicará especial atención a los aspectos culturales e intereses colectivos de Asturias. La Lengua Asturiana tundra el tratamiento adecuado, de acuerdo con la legislación. Nadie será discriminado por razón de su uso.*”

ibid.

The 2003 Statutes significantly backed off of these wide protections (although it was published bilingually), eliminating the clause about the recuperation of the culture, and re-wording the linguistic protection phrase in Article 6, Section 2: “*La llingua Asturiana sedrá oxetu d'estudiu, enseñanza ya investigación nos ámbitos que correspuendan. Asina mesmo, el so emplegu tendrá'l tratamientu qu'aften l'Estatutu d'Autonmoía y la llexislación complementaria, dándose seguranza de la non discriminación de quien la emplegue.*” (The Asturian language will be an object of study, instruction, and research in the areas to which it corresponds. At the same time, its use will have the treatment given to it in the Statute of Autonomy and accompanying legislation, assuring the non-discrimination of those who use it.)

Universidá d'Uviéu, *Estatutos* (Uviéu: Ediciones de la Universidá d'Uviéu, 2003).

<sup>637</sup> The list of demands is recorded by Inaciú Iglesias, one of the CEN's representatives at the meeting. See Inaciú Iglesias, “Entrevista col Reutor. Martes 19 - 10 hores,” (Archivu Personal d'Inaciú Iglesias, 1986-08-19).

social model espoused by the old regime was two of the criteria necessary to gain a professorship or advancement to the senior rank of *catedrático*.

Its call for a greater emphasis on women's rights, its involvement in the green movement, and the non-partisan nature of the CEN, in addition to its youth and confrontational style, were representative of an attempted break with the nationalist groups of the past. The CEN's feminism, if not particularly emphasized, was at least visible, in contrast to some of its predecessors.<sup>638</sup> The CEN included calls for equal rights in several of its pamphlets and its 1987 manifesto, although it seemed to focus no direct action or propaganda campaigns on the subject. The CEN's environmentalism seemed to be more at the forefront of their program after Australian eucalyptus trees were imported to Asturias beginning in the late 1980s to compensate for over-harvesting of the region's forests and to prevent soil erosion. The nationalist movement as a whole coincided with the environmentalists' condemnation of the policy during the 1988 anti-eucalyptus campaign, in which it participated along with the Ensame and the MCA. The three organizations were highly visible in the coalition that criticized the disruption of local ecosystems and its interruption and alteration of the traditional Asturian landscape.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> The *Conceyu Bable* after 1981, having named outspoken feminist philosopher Amalia Valcarcel to the presidency, was a notable exception, as was the Ensame, which made feminism a central part of its social justice campaigns.

<sup>639</sup> This later provided the subject for Dixebra's 1993 song "Asturalia (Asturies + Australia)", mocking the government's vision of "green tourism."

However much they attempted a break with the past, much of the nationalist and Marxist ideology of the students drew heavily upon that of the previous generation. Much like its European and American precursors of the 1960s and 1970s, the Asturianista student movement tended to consider regional, cultural, social, economic, generational, and gendered inequalities to be, if not the same phenomenon, highly related as to be incapable of being dealt with separately. Indeed, the CEN differed little from the rhetoric of either the Ensame, the Conceyu Nacionalista Asturiana, or even the Conceyu Bable of a decade before when it directly connected many Marxist-influenced viewpoints on class struggle to the national struggle of Asturias, maintaining that “a process of national liberation such as Asturias' is linked to the process of social liberation within Asturias, a specific product of class struggle.”<sup>640</sup> Again linking the two concepts, the CEN's first point on its 1987 manifesto was a denunciation of the Spanish Constitution of 1978, claiming that it was an “empty, poor colonial legal framework where the nations who today are under the dominion of the Spanish State cannot achieve the right of self-determination nor protect the popular classes.”<sup>641</sup> This protection and promotion of the working class is presented as something at which an Asturian state would “naturally” be more effective than a Spanish one, as “the

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<sup>640</sup> “*Camentamos qu'un procesu de lliberación nacinal (sic) comu l'asturinu vei apareyáu al procesu de lliberación social dientru d'Asturies comu marcu específicu de llucha de clas.*”

Iglesias, “Entrevista col Reutor. Martes 19 - 10 hores.”

<sup>641</sup> “*Denuncia de la Constitución española comu marcu llegal escosu, probe, colonizaor onde les naciones qu'anguaño tan baxu'l dominiu del Estáu Español nun son a algamar el drechu a l'autodeterminación nin abelluga los intereses de les clases populares.*”

ibid.

working people are those worst affected by centralism.”<sup>642</sup>

### Attempting “Change from within the Monster”

In addition to his attempts to implement (as he saw it), the provisions of Article 4 of the Autonomy Statute, Pedro de Silva systematically engaged in symbolic gestures such as incorporating Asturianu into his speeches at the yearly *Día de les lletres asturianes* (Day of Asturian Letters, held every May),<sup>643</sup> and welcoming the Prince of Asturias in Asturianu during a visit in 1986.<sup>644</sup> These were intentionally symbolic turns of phrase, as de Silva was not fluent in Asturianu, although he could understand it fairly well.<sup>645</sup> In spite of this, de Silva was continually subject to the criticism of the Asturianistas, both those within the Academia de la Llingua and those in the various political parties.<sup>646</sup> Heckled by the Ensame during his address at the first two *Día de Asturias* celebrations in 1983 and 1984, the nationalist party caused further disruptions when members of the Ensame set fire to a barricade that they built blocking traffic on the main highway into Gijón in mid-1986 to

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<sup>642</sup> “*Ye'l pueblu trabayaor el más perxudicáu pol centralismu.*”  
ibid.

<sup>643</sup> “Pedro de Silva volvió a pronunciar un discurso en bable.”; Pilar Rubiera, “Las intervenciones en bable de los niños cargaron de emotividad el acto,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-05-04.

<sup>644</sup> Reading the beginning of his speech, de Silva opened his speech conferring the *Medalla de Oro de Asturias* on the Crown Prince thus: “*El respetuosu afeutu col que-y facemos la entrega institucionalmente ye, a nun dudar, preba del respetu y ciñu de tolos homes y muyeres d’Asturies pa con so Alteza Real, en quien atopen al xoven que s’afita, col natural enfotu del que se crió ente ellos, comu tola xovenzú del so tiempo, na crianza y nel exerciciu de los valores de llibertá, xusticia y progresu.*”

“Pedro de Silva se dirigió al Príncipe Felipe en bable,” *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1986-09-21.

<sup>645</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>646</sup> Among others: Pilar Rubiera, “Xosé Lluís García Arias: «La política lingüística asturiana es decepcionante»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-01-19; “Ramón d’Andrés: «El Gobierno asturiano no cumple sus promesas de apoyo al bable»,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1985-05-25.

protest the judicial denial of their petition to be allowed to submit ballots in Asturianu.<sup>647</sup>

Although this was technically the purview of the judicial system, the nationalists had a tendency to view the government (as well as political parties) as monolithic, and thus the executive branch was equally accused of linguistic repression. De Silva also appointed several regionalists to positions within his administration, most prominently Manuel Fernández de la Cera as Consejero of Education, Culture, and Sports and Faustino Álvarez as director of the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* (Antonio Masip preceded de la Cera under the Transition government, but by this point had effectively renounced his regionalist sympathies of the late 1970s). Having initially to use public support from Asturianista groups to balance out the resistance he faced from within his own party, de Silva later claimed that the consistent hostility from groups such as the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa that he expected to be his major source of support was one of the more difficult aspects of his time as President of Asturias.<sup>648</sup> In particular, although the language was introduced into schools from 1984 onwards, it was criticized as not having the same backing (either financially or in terms of political will) as the equivalent programs in Catalunya, Euskadi, or Galicia.<sup>649</sup> The majority of the Asturianistas insisted that the language classes would continue to see a major drop-off in matriculation (and therefore social acceptance) as children aged as long as it

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<sup>647</sup> "Ensame exige que se pueda utilizar el bable para votar," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1986-06-01; "Los bablistas cortaron el tráfico en la autopista," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1986-06-12.

<sup>648</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>649</sup> Such as "Fuertes críticas al Gobierno regional en el «VI Día de les lletres asturianas», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-05-04; Pedro Pablo Alonso, "García Arias: «Sólo pedimos que el Gobierno regional cumple sus compromisos con la lengua», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-05-04.

remained an elective language class. The nationalists considered it appalling that the native language (*llingua propia*) of Asturias was taught, effectively, as a foreign language in the region's schools.

Another major source of conflict between the Asturianistas (in this case, principally the Academia de la Llingua) and the de Silva administration was his creation, in September 1985, of the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* (Office of Linguistic Politics),<sup>650</sup> a branch of the government tasked with overseeing the social and political normalization of the language (as opposed to the linguistic standardization, which was the purview of the Academia de la Llingua). After initial discussions with Félix Ferreiro about taking over as head of the new department, de Silva settled on Faustino Álvarez Álvarez, author and regionalist member of the PSOE.<sup>651</sup> De Silva hoped to mollify some of his critics amongst the Asturianistas by specifically choosing “one of their own” as director of the Oficina de Política Llingüística, first with the choice of Álvarez and again in 1988 with his successor, Asturianista author Antón García.<sup>652</sup> He saw the office as a way to further the integration and protection of the language (fulfilling the Statute of Autonomy's “promotion” clause). However, it was seen as

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<sup>650</sup> Similarly to the Academia de la Llingua, its name is officially bilingual, but it is more common, even amongst Castilian-speakers (and even the Castilian-language press), to refer to it by its Asturianu name.

<sup>651</sup> Ferreiro would later become the director of the Office during the 1990s.

de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Álvarez Álvarez, Interview by author; Antón García, Interview by author (Oviedo: 2008-10-27).

<sup>652</sup> “*Uno de los suyos.*”

de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.



a very direct threat by the Academia de la Llingua, who saw the department as an attempt by the Socialist Party to limit the role of the Academy.<sup>653</sup>

Most importantly, while the administration (including both de Silva and Álvarez) felt that the creation of the Oficina de Política Llingüística would allow the Academia de la Llingua to “concentrate on those labors which belong to it, related fundamentally to the normalization of the Asturian language,”<sup>654</sup> Arias and the Academia took the institution’s charge to defend the *rights* of Asturianu speakers, mentioned in its legally approved statutes,<sup>655</sup> as of nearly equal importance to its linguistic mission.<sup>656</sup> Thus, far from the creation of a liaison for the Asturianistas within the Socialist government, the Oficina de Política Llingüística prompted what amounted to a turf war between the Socialist Party and the Academia de la Llingua. Since its creation, the Academia de la Llingua has, more often than not, seen the Oficina de Política Llingüística as an attempt by the government (whether controlled by the Socialist Party, Popular Party, or the *Unión Renovadora Asturiana*)<sup>657</sup> to exert control over the Academia and neutralize its political activism.<sup>658</sup> In essence, it has

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<sup>653</sup> García, Interview by author.

<sup>654</sup> Pilar Rubiera, “Faustino Álvarez: «Sin el apoyo de la Academia, el proyecto lingüístico asturiano es inviable»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-09-18.

<sup>655</sup> “Decreto 9/1981, de 6 de abril, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Academia de la Lengua Asturiana.”

<sup>656</sup> García Arias, Interview by author.

<sup>657</sup> The *Unión Renovadora Asturiana* (URAS) is a conservative regionalist party founded by then-President Sergiú Marqués Fernández after his expulsion from the Partido Popular in 1998. Because of the somewhat unusual situation of a sitting president expelled from his own party (but not impeached or otherwise forced to resign his post), the URAS became the governing party of Asturias between 1998 and 2000, in spite of never having more than 3 representatives in the regional parliament.

<sup>658</sup> This situation developed almost immediately after the Oficina’s creation. See, for example, Pedro Pablo Alonso, “El Gobierno regional recibió todos los ataques en el debate sobre normalización toponímica de

been often seen as an analog to a yellow union, a “collaborationist organ”<sup>659</sup> designed more to enact government policy (assumed to be hostile) rather than act as a protector of the rights of minority-language speakers from within the government.

The criticism of the Oficina de Política Llingüística was fairly constant, eventually prompting the resignation of most of those who have taken the role of director. Álvarez resigned in September 1987 after two years in the role, granting the public demands of critics such as the Xunta pola Defensa.<sup>660</sup> His successor, Antón García, lasted a bit longer (though he was not as surprised by the criticism, having the prior example of Álvarez). He served in the role from March 1988 through June 1991, resigning because of his unwillingness to work under de Silva’s successor, Juan Luís Rodríguez Vigil. The constant tension between the Oficina de Política Llingüística and the Academia de la Llingua is a bit hard to understand as anything other than a struggle over political territory, given that the identity of the director seemed to matter little. Indeed, one former director of the Oficina de Política Llingüística, Ramón d’Andrés Díaz, described his acceptance of the post as an attempt to “change things from within the monster,”<sup>661</sup> but he was equally subject to the public

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Asturias," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1985-10-23.

<sup>659</sup> “*La Oficina de Política Llingüística ye un muérganu colaboracionista y sofítáu’n sindicatos reaccionarios y antiasturianos (SAE).*”

Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, “El Gobiernu Asturianu nun ta Faciendo ná Pola Llingua Asturiana,” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, mayu 1985).

<sup>660</sup> “*Esiximos:.... Dimisión inmediata del responsable de la Oficina de Política Llingüística.*”  
ibid.

<sup>661</sup> “*Cambiar les coses dende dientro del monstruo.*”  
d’Andrés Díaz, Interview by author.

critiques of the Academia, in spite of his long history as an Asturianista militant (even serving as the Secretary of the Academia de la Llingua from the mid-1980s until 1999).<sup>662</sup>

One of the best examples of the constant struggle within Asturianismu between pragmatists and purists is the polemic surrounding the proposed “Law of Protection of Bable” that was advocated by Pedro de Silva’s and his government from late 1987 through 1989 (there were at least two attempted bills, largely similar, one proposed in April 1988 and the second in June 1989). Working closely with Faustino Álvarez and the Oficina de Política Llingüística, de Silva elaborated a proposal for a law that would further reinforce the existing article in the Autonomy Statute, providing additional protections for Asturianu speakers, and, in the opinion of de Silva, Álvarez, and García (who took over the project after a seven-month hiatus due to Álvarez’ resignation), the law would have continued the steadily increasing integration of Asturianu into everyday use in official functions (with signs on public buildings, increased presence in schools, and the like).<sup>663</sup>

However, the proposed law did not declare Asturianu a co-official language, nor did it explicitly state that the language could ever attain such a status (although neither did it prohibit it from doing so). Additionally, the first attempt at introducing a bill, in April 1988, was retired at an early stage due to hostility from within the PSOE to many of its provisions, resulting in a second version (approved June 1989) that was sufficiently diluted

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<sup>662</sup> Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, "Carta a la Academia de la Llingua Asturiana," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal de Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, 1999-12-08).

<sup>663</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Álvarez Álvarez, Interview by author; García, Interview by author.

to win the partial approval of the PSOE.<sup>664</sup> The Xunta pola Defensa, for one, focused specifically on what the bill was not, a declaration of bilingualism, critiquing the law as a “ruin.”<sup>665</sup> The Xunta pola further illustrated the Asturianistas’ general complaint about the new proposed laws, that neither the first proposal nor the revised version actually obliged the government to do much of anything, but rather tended to use the wording “will be able to (*podrá*),” in most of the more important areas of the bill.<sup>666</sup> Thus, while education, a bilingual administration and civil service, and toponymy are all included in the new law, each of the articles is couched in terms of what *may* be done by the administration in question. Thus, the implementation of bilingualism in the civil service would depend on the will of both the functionary and each individual department head seeing it as “necessary” for his or her department to learn how to read and write in standard Asturianu. Additionally, a provision for a translation service was included in the new law, but only for the translation of written documents from Castilian into Asturianu, not the reverse.<sup>667</sup> This sets up a clear hierarchy between the two languages, with the assumed default to be Castilian and an extra effort (and expense) needed for each and every item produced in Asturianu.

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<sup>664</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>665</sup> “¿Por qué ye ruín el «Proyeutu de Llei de Proteición del Bable» que mos presenta'l P.S.O.E.? - Porque nun reconoz que l'asturianu pueda algamar la condición de **llingua oficial** n'Asturies.” Emphasis in original.

Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, “Oficialidá: Un pasu alantre,” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, mayu 1989).

<sup>666</sup> “Si reparamos nos aspectos más sustantivos nel articuláu del Proyeutu, vemos que'l términu que se repite más vegaes ye'l de ‘podrá.’”

Servicios Xurídicos de la Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, “Informe xurídicu sol Proyeutu de Llei de Proteición del Bable,” (Uviéu: Archivo Personal de José (Cheni) Uría Ríos, xunetu 1989). 2.

<sup>667</sup> *ibid.*

Thus, instead of focusing on what the law did do, which was provide specific examples of areas in which the protections for Asturianu speakers in the even-vaguer Statute of Autonomy could (and implicitly, *should*) be applied, the Asturianistas for the most part were radically opposed to the proposed law for what it did not provide. The long-sought after decree of bilingualism (a term that over the course of the 1980s was gradually replaced by “*oficialidá*” amongst the Asturianistas, adapting themselves to the language of the State of the Autonomies) was probably, as de Silva, Álvarez, and García all maintain, and Sánchez Vicente later admitted, a political impossibility given the makeup of the Junta General at the time.<sup>668</sup> In the end, the proposed law never even reached the floor of the legislature for debate, as without the support even of the Asturianistas for the new legislation, the project eventually became, as Faustino Álvarez had put it when he first took office in 1985, simply “unviable.”<sup>669</sup>

The failure of the *Ley de Protección del Bable* was probably the most significant (but not the only) issue where tension between purists and pragmatists amongst the Asturian regionalists and nationalists clearly caused a major setback for the Asturianistas. Indeed, in spite of the yearly protest rallies and concerts convened by the Xunta pola Defensa from 1988 onwards in favor of *oficialidá*, the government attempted no law or Statute revision that even approached the limited expansion of linguistic rights included in the 1988 bill for

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<sup>668</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author; Álvarez Álvarez, Interview by author; García, Interview by author; Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>669</sup> Rubiera, “Faustino Álvarez: «Sin el apoyo de la Academia, el proyecto lingüístico asturiano es inviable».”

another decade. It was not until the 1998 internal crisis within the PP that Sánchez Vicente, then a representative in the Junta General, was able to introduce and pass a “Law of Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturiano,”<sup>670</sup> which ended up differing little from the proposed project of a decade before. In essence, by attacking the 1988 project for what it lacked, the Asturianistas set such legislation back a decade.

### Rowdy Protests, Raucous Music

Direct action was an important part of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes's* program, and remained a significant part of the group's rhetoric until it eventually faded from the scene in the mid-1990s.<sup>671</sup> Most notable were the multiple “invasions” of the *Paraninfo*, the University's assembly hall, where students of the CEN occupied the proceedings, accompanied by banners, firecrackers, and shouting, possibly at the urging of Ignaci Llope.<sup>672</sup> This began with an interruption in support of Asturianista linguist and Language Academy president Xosé Lluís García Arias in his unsuccessful hearing for promotion to the rank of *catedra*. His attainment of the highest rank of tenured professorship at the University was blocked by a tribunal that included the linguists Gregorio

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<sup>670</sup> "Ley 1/1998, de 23 de marzo, de uso y promoción del bable/asturiano."

<sup>671</sup> As with the earlier *Conceyu d'Estudiantes en Madrid*, this was due, primarily, to the student turnover inherent with any university organization.

<sup>672</sup> The claim seems reasonable, as he was both a major figure in the first years of the CEN and had a history of involvement in Trotskyist Parties (the *Liga Comunista* and later the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria*) which advocated direct action.

“¿Lo del Paraninfo? Foi la mio idea.”

Llope Fernández, Interview by author.

Salvador and Emilio Alarcos Llorach (his former advisor and an important member of the *Amigos del Bable*),<sup>673</sup> by this point virulently hostile to any studies of Asturianu suggesting that it was a viable contemporary language. The students interrupted the proceedings with chants and a banner condemning the university as engaged in active repression of Asturianu.<sup>674</sup>

The group's activities became further focused on responding to anti-nationalist intellectuals after May, 1988, when a group of prominent academics (amongst them Salvador and Alarcos) signed a series of pronouncements in the local press condemning the standardization and politicization of Asturianu, and specifically criticizing Pedro de Silva's proposed law of April 1988.<sup>675</sup> Somewhat predictably, de Silva was harshly criticized both from the more extreme wing of the Asturianistas and from Spanish nationalists, radically opposed to any suggestion of bilingualism or the promotion of regional distinctiveness. Beginning with an open petition to the regional government in the local press on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1988 citing "the linguistic reality of Asturias," the group of anti-Asturianista academics centered around Alarcos, Salvador, and the philosopher Gustavo Bueno described themselves

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<sup>673</sup> See Chapter 1 for further discussion of the *Amigos del Bable* and the importance of the links between Arias and Alarcos to the regionalist movement in the 1970s

<sup>674</sup> "Catedra polémica," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1987-10-28.

A picture of the event and the banner appears in "Averamientu a la hestoria del CEN," *El CENciellu*, no. 2 (Avientu 1995): 17.

<sup>675</sup> See "La realidad lingüística de Asturias," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1988-05-30. Further signatures were published a month later in "Adhesiones al escrito «La realidad lingüística de Asturias», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1988-06-27. The motivation for the open letters was also discussed in Xosé Lluís García Arias, "Breve reseña sobre la lengua asturiana," in *Informe sobre la llingua asturiana*, ed. Academia de la Llingua Asturiana (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 2002; reprint, 2002): 15-25.

as “the Thinking and Sensible Asturias (*la Asturias pensante y sensate*).”<sup>676</sup> The authors of what would come to be known popularly as “the manifesto of *los sensatos y pensantes*”<sup>677</sup> came to call themselves more formally the *Amigos de los Bables*, emphasizing the connection to the *Amigos del Bable* of the late 1960s, in which Alarcos and his wife Josefina Martínez had both participated. Central to the *Amigos de los Bables*’ argument was the belief that Asturianu could not and should not ever compete with Castilian in part because of its many variations within the province. Long cited as an argument against the aggressive standardization of the language undertaken by the Asturian Language Academy (and, previously, the *Conceyu Bable*) was the idea that ‘every valley has its bable’, that, indeed, the language was so fragmented as to be incapable of being considered one language, and therefore only confusion would result from the proposed implementation of bilingual legislation.

In early 1989, a series of graffiti in glowing florescent paint appeared in the streets around the University (and the old city center), condemning the Amigos de los Bables and signed with a cartoon, “*El Merucu Xusticieru* (The Avenging Worm)”, and the slogan “*Merucu Xusticieru. ¡Poder popular!* (Merucu Xusticieru, Power to the People!)” The Merucu Xusticieru was a figure lifted from a contemporary comic strip and adorned with a traditional asymmetrical Asturian mountain cap (the *montera piconu*), mask, cape, and a can of spray-paint. The figure also occasionally appeared dressed more menacingly as a revolutionary miner from October 1934, one of the famous *dinamiteros asturianos*, armed

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<sup>676</sup> “La realidad lingüística de Asturias.”

<sup>677</sup> A large number of those interviewed on the topic referred to the *Amigos de los Bables* as such.



with a dynamite belt and a lit fuse. The graffiti campaign was not triggered by a specific event (at least not as a proximate cause),<sup>678</sup> but rather a general desire among a group of students to “convince people and publicize [their] message in an attractive way....using a sense of humor.”<sup>679</sup> Given that it was “a moment in which Asturianu had very little presence in the media, [the CEN's] method of expression was more often the wall, painting on walls.”<sup>680</sup> Seeing the paintings, CEN member and Dixebra co-founder Cesareo García Fernández, “César el Maniegu,”<sup>681</sup> converted a few drawings into a popular trope within the nationalist movement through their popularization in the band's 1990 song “Merucu Xusticieru.” Since then (assisted by the popularity of the song), the Avenging Earthworm has become a kind of folk hero, and it is frequently used as a pseudonym or *nom-de-guerre* for everything from nationalist graffiti to avatars in online forums or Facebook pages. Another reason for the use of pseudonyms and the anonymous forum of graffiti by the CEN was that the students felt, individually, rather powerless against the ability of professors to dismiss them from school and hamper their future career prospects. Feeling that appeals to

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<sup>678</sup> Much of the CEN's activity from 1988-1993 was clearly inspired by and directed against the activities of the Amigos de los Bables.

<sup>679</sup> The original idea for the Merucu Xusticieru was a “collective project” developed by a group of students over the course of several weekends in the bars, *chigres*, and cafés surrounding the university.

Iglesias Fernández, interview by author; Fernando Álvarez-Balbuena García (Fernando Balbuena). Interview by author (Oviedo, 2008-11-26 & 2008-12-01).

<sup>680</sup> “*Si queríamos convencer a xente y facer públicu al nostru mensaxe pues quería que facelu atractivu....usando el sentíu d'humor.*”

“*Yera un momentu'n que l'asturianu tenía mui poca entrada nos medios, y entós la nuestra manera d'espresión yera más la pared, la pintada na pared.*”

Iglesias Fernández, Interview by author.

<sup>681</sup> César el Maniegu, although he composed the song, was not a participant in the graffiti campaign. Cesaréo García Fernández (César el Maniegu). Interview by author (Avilés, 2008-12-04); Iglesias Fernández, Interview by author; Balbuena, Interview by author.

the University and the government had largely proved ineffective, they decided on more direct forms of action, either anonymously or through the safety and anonymity of a crowd.

Soon after the appearance of the *Merucu Xusticieru*, on April 19, 1989 a mass of students violently disrupted an academic conference organized by the *Amigos de los Bables*, during Gregorio Salvador's paper presentation.<sup>682</sup> Throwing fireworks, shouting, and attempting to tear down some of the tapestries adorning the walls of the *Paraninfo*, the members of the CEN forced the suspension of the conference, with one student issuing a threat on Gustavo Bueno's life (of questionable seriousness). The scene repeated itself on June 24, 1993, at another conference organized by Bueno and the *Amigos de los Bables*. The teacher's unions (SUATEA and the educational branch of the CC.OO.) had organized a protest of some 500 people in the Plaza de Riego, adjacent to the University, about the failure of a petition to create an optional course of study in Asturian Philology at the University. Joining the demonstration were members of the CEN as well as several younger faculty members at the university (Arias, among them) and a few Asturianista politicians (such as Sánchez Vicente). The protest spilled over into the University itself and the members of the CEN subsequently forced their way into the Assembly Hall.<sup>683</sup>

Curiously enough, in spite of its sometimes aggressively leftist rhetoric, the CEN was open to students from the political center and had a few prominent members adhering to a

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<sup>682</sup> Javier Neira, "Estudiantes nacionalistas irrumpen y boicotean las Jornadas sobre la lengua," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1989-04-20.

<sup>683</sup> "Graves incidentes en el *Paraninfo* tras la concentración por el veto al bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-06-25.

classically liberal ideology, such as Felechosa and Inaciu Iglesias. After graduation, Felechosa would become a businessman and, after acting as the General Secretary of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* between 1989 and 1991 and a period abroad in the Americas, he would return to politics as an Oviedo city councilman for the Partido Popular (*Concejal de Cultura y Deportes*, 2007-2011). Iglesias was a law and business student who would go on to run his family business<sup>684</sup> and found *Les Noticies*, an Asturianu weekly newspaper in 1996, as well as stand in elections as a candidate for first the Partíu Asturianista and later the conservative *Unión Renovadora Asturiana*. Indeed, the CEN aspired to be a blanket organization for any student at the University of Oviedo or (with less success) one of the region's secondary schools with nationalist leanings, regardless of political affiliation. Although the bulk of its members were members of the radical Ensame, there were also significant numbers from the MCA and the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, as well as a number of independent students.

There was a great deal of overlap between Asturianista cultural organizations and the various political parties, with *polimilitancia* more the norm than the exception for most of the new generation of young activists. This was most prominent in the unsurprisingly large overlap between the CEN and Xunta pola Defensa. The case of Xune Elipe again serves as an illustrative example. Joining the Conceyu Bable at the age of 16, Xune became an active member of the local group in Avilés. In the early 1980s, he, along with fellow avilesino

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<sup>684</sup> *Cartonajes Vir*, a manufacturer of cardboard boxes.

César el Maniegu, ran the first Asturianu “pirate” radio station in Avilés, *Radio Marea*.

When Xune moved on to University in Oviedo, he became one of the founding members of the Xunta pola Defensa in January of 1984, the student CEN in 1985, and the *Xunta pola Autodefensa Nacional Asturiana* (XANA), a short-lived Avilés group active in 1987. In addition to all of this, he was also a member of a nationalist political party, the Ensame, and again with César el Maniegu, founded the Asturianu punk-rock band *Dixebra* in 1987. If the students of the CEN were relatively few in number, they attempted to make up for this deficiency by an astonishing capacity for creating new organizations, some of which proved quite enduring.

The students of the CEN had a far wider audience than their predecessors, at least partially connecting the arenas of cultural revival and political opposition, if one takes as a rough indicator the political success of Asturianismu in the late 1980s and early 1990s along with the commercial popularity and critical acclaim for some of the CEN's members' achievements in literature, the arts, and popular music. Xuan Bello Fernán, for example, is generally regarded as one of the region's greatest contemporary authors, and Dixebra has been a sustained commercial success, releasing its eighth album, *Amor incendiariu*, in December 2009.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> *Dixebra's* albums to date (and their translated titles) are: *Grieska* (street struggle) 1990, *¿Asturies o trabayes?* (Do you Asturias or do you work?) 1993, *Apúntate a la llista* (Join up) 1995, *Dieron en duru* (They gave it hard) 1997, *Glaxa un país* (Scream of country) 2000, *Sube la marea* (The rising tide) 2002, *Ensin novedá* (Without novelty, a greatest hits compilation) 2005, and *Amor incendiariu* (Incendiary Love) 2009. In addition, they also have produced a compilation album, *Cróniques d'un pueblu* (Chronicles of a people) 2003, and a live album, *Dixebra n'acción* (*Dixebra Live*) 2006.

Dixebra attempted to fuse elements of traditional Asturian music (most notably through the use of Asturian bagpipes) with ska and punk rock to create a modern sound that was conspicuously different from the traditional Asturian *tonadas* and the folk music coming out of the earlier *Nueu Canciú Astur* movement of the 1970s.<sup>686</sup> The combination of punk's frenetic energy levels and electric guitar with bagpipes and a brass section created a unique sound that was an almost immediate hit. Dixebra espoused an overtly proletarian, nationalist, and radically leftist ideology, romanticizing many of the standard archetypes of Asturian life, such as the coal miner, steel worker, and the rural *vaqueiro* (cowherd). The titles of popular songs such as “*Grieska* (street struggle),” “*Rapaza nacionaliega*” (nationalist girlfriend), “*Independencia*”, “*Salú ya dixebra*” (Cheers and Independence), “*Da-yos caña*” (Give them hell), and “*Esto ye Asturias*” (This is Asturias), are hardly subtle about their political perspective. Concerts were (and continue to be) raucous affairs, often combined with *espichas*, public block parties sponsored by one of the Asturianista groups involving the consumption of crates of Asturian *sidra*.<sup>687</sup> Dixebra's concerts are typically punctuated by chants of “*¡In-de-pendencia! ¡Puxa Asturias dixebra!* (Independence! Long live a separate Asturias!)”

## Towards Nationalist Unification

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<sup>686</sup> For example, one can compare Dixebra's music to that of Nuberu or Carlos Rubiera. See Chapter 3.

<sup>687</sup> Dixebra is a frequent headliner for the yearly *Conciertu pola Oficialidá* sponsored by the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana* every April since 1988, as well as other festivals around Asturias.

The mid-to-late 1980s were a period where the majority of younger nationalist militants accumulated generally positive experiences working with militants from other political parties. These came from joint membership in common unions and organizations such as the CEN and the Xunta pola Defensa, as well as from the experiences gained from joint political campaigns such as the anti-eucalyptus campaign with the ecological activist associations the *Coordinadora Ecoloxista d'Asturies* and the *Amigos de la Naturaleza de Asturias*. Additionally, the support by the Ensame, Movimientu Comunista, and the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana (at an individual, though not official, level) of *Herri Batasuna* in the two European Parliament elections in 1987 and 1989 (with the nationalist parties by this point united in UNA) provided yet more joint political experience. Additionally, the presence of several former members of the Ensame in the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana (such as Carmona and Miguel Lago) served to some extent to facilitate ties between the XNA and the Ensame. Thus, through most of the latter half of the decade, relations within the Asturian nationalist Left steadily improved, although the Partíu Asturianista remained aloof from many of the nationalist campaigns (with the major exception of its participation in the pro-bilingualism rallies, by this point typically initiated by the Xunta pola Defensa).

Although this seemed to not hold for the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, the PAS maintained a relatively aggressive attitude towards the Ensame, seeming to consider it neither a serious political party and accusing it of “Euskaditis,” of an obsession with and of mimicking the

nationalist movement in Euskadi.<sup>688</sup> The Ensame, for its part, displayed a good deal of hostility towards the party of Sánchez Vicente, labeling it a group of “contrary agents to the movement of national liberation, whose only intent is to give an ‘Asturianista’ tint and a few more competencies to our country’s current situation of colonial dependency.”<sup>689</sup>

While the Xunta had at least maintained the idea of a merger with the Ensame from a relatively early stage, by 1987 it the latter party was beginning to consider the possibility, as well, and General Secretary Xicu Yepes was particularly in favor of the idea.<sup>690</sup> Soon after breaking off negotiations with *Izquierda Unida* in 1986, the XNA proposed a joint nationalist bloc with both the Ensame and the PAS (which at the time was rejected by both).<sup>691</sup> However, the idea of a merger, at least between the two more radical groups, would continue to percolate throughout 1987, culminating in a formal union. The negotiations for the merger of the Ensame and the XNA took place between November 1987<sup>692</sup> and December 1988.<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

“*Comu correspuende a la llinia política d’anantes (sic) siempre mostró una desmedida agresividad haza (sic) la nuesa organización.*”

Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “III Conceyu Nacional. Unidá y organización, Enanchando camín.”

<sup>689</sup> “*La dirección del P.As. son axentes contrarios al movimiento de liberación nacional, que lo único que pretenden ye da-y un matiz más ‘asturianista’ y con dalguna competencia más a l’actual situación de dependencia colonial del nuesu país.*”

ibid.

<sup>690</sup> Díaz Yepes, Interview by author.

<sup>691</sup> Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “III Conceyu Nacional. Unidá y organización, Enanchando camín.”

<sup>692</sup> The minutes of the November 13th meeting of the Conceyu d’Uviéu of the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana mention a paper being circulated entitled “*Iniciativa pa la unidá d’acción de los nacionalistes.*”

Conceyu d’Uviéu Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, “Actos de reunión,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, 1987-11-13).

<sup>693</sup> Xuan Carlos Fernández Castañón, “Carta a los militantes del Secretaría Xeneral d’Unidá Nacionalista

Simultaneously, the Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana held discussions with the Partíu Asturianista about a total unification of the three nationalist parties in Asturias. There were at least two meetings between representatives of the new coalition and the PAS on November 12 and in mid-December 1987. Quini Álvarez Hevia, on behalf of the XNA, unsuccessfully attempted to convince Xesús Cañedo and Carlos Rubiera (representing the PAS), who refused to enter any permanent merger with the Ensame, and by January of 1988, the <sup>694</sup>

However, negotiations with the Ensame about a possible nationalist bloc or unified party met with much more success, and eventually depended upon the results of the Ensame's III National Congress, scheduled for March 1988.<sup>695</sup> At that meeting, the executive argued in favor of a potential union, proclaiming that "Unity being a basic component of the tactics and strategy of our organization, one must intend to push forward with joint projects" such as that proposed by the XNA, and the executive urged the members of the Ensame to "leave by the wayside personal mistrust" and consider the XNA as "an organization for special treatment."<sup>696</sup>

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Asturiana," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, xineru 1989).

Also Díaz Yepes, Interview by author; García Fernández, Interview by author; Iglesias Fernández, Interview by author; Llope, Interview by author; Ruíz de la Peña, Interview by author; Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author; and Zapico Álvarez, Interview by author.

<sup>694</sup> José Rogelio Álvarez Hevia (Quini). Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-04-23), Cañedo, Interview by author.

Additionally, the meetings are mentioned in two of the Conceyu d'Uviéu of the XNA's meeting minutes. Conceyu d'Uviéu Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, "Actos de reunión," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1987-11-27).

<sup>695</sup> "No que cinca al ENA... por ellos nun hai dengún problema'n sentase. Puen llegar a acuerdos con nós. Munches d'estes coses dependen del so III Conceyu Nacional."

Conceyu d'Uviéu Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, "Actos de reunión," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1988-01 (s/f)).

<sup>696</sup> "En siendo la 'Unidá' component básicu de la Táutica y Estratexa de la nuesa organización, tien d'intentase llevar



The Ensame initially proposed the name “*Bloque pola Unidá de los Nacionalistes*,”<sup>697</sup> eventually agreeing to *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* for the new party, with the group’s initials (UNA, or “one”) and name reflecting the culmination of a several-year process of unification in the Nationalist Left (and a name registered by members of the XNA in February 1987 with the Ministry of the Interior).<sup>698</sup> In December 1988, the two organizations formally merged, selecting a new *Xunta Nacional* on December 12, with a three-person rotating General Secretary, alternating between Xosé Lluís Carmona, Xicu Yepes, and Xuan Carlos Fernández Castañón.<sup>699</sup>

The new party quickly set about forming local chapters<sup>700</sup> and preparing for the elections of June 15, 1989. At its first National Congress in Oviedo on April 1, 1989, the majority of the assembled members voted to push ahead with the political project and run a campaign at the first available opportunity, which happened to be the elections to the European Parliament that year.<sup>701</sup> Somewhat ironically, Felechosa, chosen to head the party’s candidacy,<sup>702</sup> actually opposed the party’s participation in the elections of 1989, citing

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*allantre xeres conxuntes. Tocántenes al X.N.A. hay de dexar al delláu roces presonales y d’otra triba, faciendo por da-y a tala organización un calter de tratu preferente.”*

Ensame Nacionalista Astur, “III Conceyu Nacional. Unidá y organización, Enanchando camín.” 16.

<sup>697</sup> Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana, “Actos de reunión.”

<sup>698</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Registro de Partidos Políticos - Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana,” 1987-02-10, <http://servicio.mir.es/registro-partidos/loadDetallesFormacion.htm?protocolo=839>.

<sup>699</sup> Fernández Castañón, “Carta a los militantes del Secretaría Xeneral d’Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana.”

<sup>700</sup> Responsable de Prensa - Conceyu d’Uviéu, “Constituyose'l Conceyu d’Uviéu de la U.N.A.,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, 1989-03-12).

<sup>701</sup> Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana, “Valoración pola Xunta Executiva del resultáu de les eleiciones al Parlamentu Europeu,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, prob. xunu 1989).

<sup>702</sup> Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana, “UNA - Sólo asturianos defenderemos Asturias,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal de

the expense required to run such a campaign and the short time available in which to do

so.<sup>703</sup>

The results of the elections, in which the PAS also presented a candidacy, made it clear that the two groups were effectively dividing the Asturianista vote, with the PAS winning 5,430 votes to UNA's 4,645.<sup>704</sup> The results were evidence to both the Partíu Asturianista and UNA that it was in the best interests of both parties to attempt a union, as dividing the vote it was unlikely that either would be able to accumulate enough support by the next autonomic elections in 1991 to gain representation in the Junta General.<sup>705</sup> According to Xicu Yepes, Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana always intended to continue the process of unification by eventually either merging or entering a coalition with the Partíu Asturianista, but the elections provided the evidence necessary to convince the bases of both parties that such a union was both advantageous and necessary.

Discarding the possibility of a fusion of the two parties, the PAS pushed for an electoral coalition, feeling that any fusion would dilute the political position that they had

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Xavi Vilareyo, 1989).

<sup>703</sup> Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>704</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Resultados electorales. elecciones Parlamento Europeo junio 1989,"

<http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultado.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=6&cdEleccion=7&anio=1989&mes=6&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Parlamento+Europeo&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=14:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=3&cdProvincia=99&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+ASTURIAS>. Accessed 2011-01-29.

<sup>705</sup> Both Sánchez Vicente and Felechosa cited the elections of 1989, where the two parties were "practically tied," as a major motivation for the move towards a coalition.

Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author; Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

established over the course of the previous 6 years.<sup>706</sup> The PAS agreed to a division of the hypothetical seats won in the 1991 elections (autonomic and municipal concurrently), with Sánchez Vicente heading the electoral list of *Coalición Asturiana* (as the coalition was named) in the elections to the regional Junta General (with Felechosa #2) and the UNA's Xosé Lluís Carmona topping the electoral list for the town council of Gijón (both Asturias' largest city and the primary base of support for Asturianism from the Transition onwards). According to the UNA, *Coalición Asturiana* also agreed that, should the coalition win seats in the two constituencies, the parties would rotate halfway through the four-year term, with Felechosa replacing Sánchez Vicente in the Junta General and the PAS' representative swapping with Carmona in the Ayuntamiento of Gijón.<sup>707</sup>

A major hurdle to the union was the distrust felt by some sectors of UNA, both those representing the former Ensame as well as the old XNA, towards Sánchez Vicente. Even in agreeing to the division of seats and potential rotation, the leaders of UNA were quite conscious of the possibility that “there would never be any rotation...because [they] did not have confidence in the word of Xuan Xosé [Sánchez Vicente],” however they proceeded with the arrangement because they were convinced “in any case that [the UNA] would successfully win a seat in Xixón, and that made the proposition worthwhile.”<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> Cañedo, Interview by author.

<sup>707</sup> Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>708</sup> “*Yo taba convencíu qu’esa rotación nun se diba a facer nunca....porque nun tenía confianza na pallabra de Xuan Xosé, pero’n cualquier casu sí taba convencíu que dibamos a sacar el conceyal en Xixón, y qu’eso llibraria el plantamientu.*”  
ibid.

A notable exception to the overall support for the coalition within Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana (albeit with some misgivings), a dissenting sector within UNA's Xunta Nacional loudly protested, citing a mistrust of Sánchez Vicente and the steady movement of the party to the political Right as its primary objections.<sup>709</sup> Nine members of the Xunta Nacional were subsequently expelled from the party during a late-night meeting on March 22, 1990.<sup>710</sup> The expelled members, along with Arturu Bermeyo (a former member of Ensame who had never joined UNA), went on to form *Andecha Astur*.<sup>711</sup> This group mostly consisted of former members of the Ensame, and included Marcos Abel Fernández Marqués, and the organization's treasurer Dulce Gil Fernández.<sup>712</sup> With the loudest opponents to the project now removed from the Xunta Nacional, the executive was able to successfully convince the majority of the remaining militants in the party, and in May 1990, the Partíu Asturianista and Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana formed Coalición Asturiana.

Building up to the elections of 1991, the Asturianistas had never been more unified (with the prominent exception of Andecha Astur), nor had they ever had more access to the

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<sup>709</sup> "Los nueve expulsados de Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana acusan al partido de «derechización»," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1990-03-28. Also, Fernández Marqués, Interview by author; Zapico Álvarez, Interview by author; Dulce Gil Fernández, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-01-20).

<sup>710</sup> The nine members expelled were: Marcos Abel Fernández Marqués, Carme Pérez Antolín, Dulce Gil, Naciu Gayol, Faustino Zapico Álvarez, Fernando Rubio, Paco Iglesias, Ezequiel Sánchez, and Fernán Gonzali Llechosa.

"El comité ejecutivo de Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana acordó expulsar a nueve militantes," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1990-03-24.

<sup>711</sup> An *andecha* is a project for which the members of an Asturian village would traditionally pool their labor, such as repair of the road into town, the digging of an irrigation canal, and the like.

<sup>712</sup> "Los expulsados de UNA preparan la formación de un nuevo partido," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1990-03-28; "Los expulsados de UNA crean un nuevo partido nacionalista, Andecha Astur," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1990-05-25.

mainstream press. *El Comercio* (since the late 1970s the most open of the major papers in the region to the Asturianistas), *La Voz de Asturias* (Oviedo), weekly paper *La Hoja del Lunes*,<sup>713</sup> and even *La Nueva España* regularly covered the Asturianista parties in the build-up to the May 26, 1991 elections, often in a relatively favorable light.<sup>714</sup> It was not a huge surprise, then, that in both the autonomic and municipal elections of 1991, Coalición Asturiana appealed to percentages of the population not seen since the Unidad Regionalista campaign, 14 years previously. Most importantly, the two parties' calculation that there would be an additive effect, with the unified coalition accumulating more political support than even the sum of the two individual candidacies of 1989. Additionally, it made sense for the Asturianistas to focus the coalition on the autonomic and municipal elections, as the electoral history of the State of the Autonomies, particularly in Asturias, has indicated that people are most willing to cast votes for regionalist and nationalist parties in more localized election campaigns. Virtually, across the board, the performance of these parties drops significantly in general and, particularly, in European elections.<sup>715</sup> The Coalition won 14,569 votes (2.77%) in the autonomic elections, and 2,830 (2.53%) in the municipal elections in the *concejo* of Gijón.<sup>716</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> J. A. Bron, "El nacionalismo resurge en Asturias abandonando la radicalización," *La Hoja del Lunes* [Oviedo] 1990-12-10.

<sup>714</sup> For example, see "Arias-Cachero: «Es posible y necesario lograr la coalición nacionalista en Asturias», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1990-05-17.

<sup>715</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Base histórico de resultados electorales," <http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/index.htm>.

<sup>716</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales, *Atlas Electoral de Asturias, 1936-1996*.

Most importantly, although it failed to win a seat in the Ayuntamiento of Gijón (needing a minimum of 5% of the vote), the elections to the Junta General only required a party to win 3% of the vote in any one of the three electoral divisions within Asturias (Eastern, Central, and Western) to win a seat in the regional parliament. Thus, in spite of the total vote falling below the 3% minimum, Coalición Asturiana drew 12,672 of its votes from Central Asturias, good enough for 3.17%.<sup>717</sup> Thus, the campaign was successful enough to place Sánchez Vicente in the Junta General, the Asturianista's first representative in the regional parliament.

### The End of *Unidá*

For the majority of Asturianistas, it was difficult to reconcile the growing appreciation for the language's use in the cultural arena, with their inability to translate this approval into mass political support for the implementation of bilingualism, much less serve as the germ for a sustained nationalist party. Coalición Asturiana had indeed achieved the unprecedented feat of placing a deputy in the regional legislature, but it, too, fell short of the expectations of the members of both parties, particularly UNA.<sup>718</sup> Buoyed by the momentum and growing success of both the political and cultural campaigns, Coalition Asturiana's failure to win more than one deputy and especially the defeat in Gijón came as a rude surprise to many of the Asturianistas and helped to magnify the general sense of

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<sup>717</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>718</sup> Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author; Carmona, Interview by author.

disillusionment after the rupture of the coalition. It would be unreasonable to assume that every person who attended a Dixebra concert, bought their albums, who read the literature and poetry of Xuan Bello, Antón García, or Berta Piñán, or who enjoyed the theatrical productions of Telón de Fondo was in favor of Asturian nationalism. However, it is probably safe to assume that, given the overtly political nature of much of the popular culture produced by this generation of Asturianistas, the vast majority of the people who consumed it were at least not radically opposed to its message. Thus, the paradox that is presented is: why did the commercial and cultural success of Asturianista musicians, authors, and theater troupes not translate into votes for the political parties in which they participated?

Since the 1970s, unity and party discipline on the part of the Socialist Party, when combined with their effective control of the large union vote, served as a key to their ability to maintain their grip on local and regional power in Asturias, contrasting starkly at most times with the fragmentation within the Asturian nationalist movement. Much of the 1990s were characterized by an almost dizzying array of parties, groups, and initials, many of whom spent a great deal of time fighting with each other. Aside from the obvious problem of dividing up the nationalist vote at each election, political campaigns and lobbies became vastly less effective and consequently much easier to ignore by the political establishment. In addition to the formal political parties, the 1980s saw an expansion in the number of quasi-political cultural groups, associations, lobbying organizations, and governmental organisms

all claiming to treat with the problem of promoting Asturian culture. Thus, if anything, the constantly changing initials of the nationalist political spectrum served only to confuse and turn away potential supporters, contributing greatly to the general consensus that Asturianismu was not a “serious” political option.

The aggressive attempt to expand the purview of Asturian nationalism beyond the linguistic question by the PAS, Ensame, and the student movement was one of the reasons behind the relative success of Asturianismu during the late 1980s, in terms of activity, recruitment, and at the polls. However, in spite of their efforts to change Asturianismu’s reputation, it is clear that nationalism was still strongly identified with linguistic politics, which severely hampered their efforts to expand their political appeal to a larger sector of the population. In the end, the young Asturian nationalists of the late 1980s found it highly difficult to bridge the gap between cultural activism and grassroots organizing to stable political participation and sustained influence over the structure of the Spanish State. In Asturias, the commercial and artistic success of the Asturianistas in some senses actually detracted from their political influence, diverting a great deal of militancy (and public interest) from nationalist political parties into institutions such as the Asturian Language Academy, literary and artistic creation, and citizens' organizations such as the Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana. Simultaneously, Pedro de Silva and the Socialist Party's partial implementation of concessions to the Asturianistas, often over the protests of most of



the PSOE's members, allowed the party to limit the loss of its electorate to the nationalist Left.

In 1991, with Asturianismu seemingly well on its way to carving out a stable and sustained niche in the political landscape of Asturias, Coalition Asturiana abruptly shattered. This triggered, at the same instant that Asturianismu made its first inroads into the government, a period of intense disillusionment and frustration amongst most of the Asturianista Left, a period that lasted at least a decade and out of which Asturian nationalism is just recently showing signs of emerging. As Xosé Lluís Carmona, General Secretary of the UNA and principal candidate in Gijón reflected, "this [rupture] frustrated, I think, the consolidation of an Asturianista movement in the 90s."<sup>719</sup>

Both Felechosa and Xesús Cañedo have concluded that the UNA's inexperience in party politics was a major cause of its downfall. Felechosa admits that "we made an error in calculation, and in confidence," in that the party assumed that "in order to gain [regional] parliamentary representation, one needed a good result in Gijón [Asturias' most populous city]. The calculations that we made at that time were that [Coalición Asturiana] would only gain a deputy if they had enough support to gain a *concejal* in Gijón."<sup>720</sup> Cañedo pointed to the PAS's greater experience with the electoral system, with the majority of its leadership

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<sup>719</sup> "Eso frustró, yo creo, la consolidación de un movimiento Asturianista en los años 90."

Carmona, Interview by author.

<sup>720</sup> "Allí tuvimos un error de cálculo, y de confianza. Nosotros tabamos convencidos que para tener representación parlamentaria había que tener un buen resultáu en Xixón. Los cálculos que ficimos en aquel momento yeran que solamente tendríamos un diputáu si tenemos un conceyal en Xixón."

Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

veterans of campaigns with either the PSP, the PSOE, or both, as the difference between the two parties. It seems as if the UNA was basing its negotiations, conceding the head of the combined lists for the Junta General to Sánchez Vicente and leading the candidacy in Gijón in return, on a misreading of the electoral law. Critically, the two elections were *not* equal, as in municipal elections 5%, not 3%, of the vote was needed to secure a spot on the town council. Thus, Coalition Asturiana would have had to almost double its autonomic electoral performance in the municipal elections in order to elect Carmona, which was highly unlikely, as the PAS was well aware.<sup>721</sup>

Carmona claims that the Coalition only really survived one day past the elections, as Sánchez Vicente told him that, having won the seat in the Junta General, “he was not disposed to comply with one of the provisions of the agreement [between the two parties], which was that in the event that seats should be won in the government, they would form a single and equal organization.”<sup>722</sup> In the year following the elections, members of the UNA attempted to convince the PAS to merge the two parties but were consistently rejected in their overtures. Felechosa and José Antonio Fernández Alonso even went as far as to register the *Partido de Coalición Asturiana* with the Ministry of the Interior in June 1992,<sup>723</sup> although

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<sup>721</sup> Cañedo Valle, Interview by author.

<sup>722</sup> “*El pacto duró una noche porque una vez de que se obtuvieron los resultados el propio Sánchez Vicente me dijo a mí, personalmente, que uno de los acuerdos del pacto, que no estaba dispuesto a cumplirlo, que era el que en caso de representación institucional los dos partidos formarían una organización unitario e igualitario.*”  
ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Registro de Partidos Políticos - Partido de Coalición Asturiana,” 1992-06-16, <http://servicio.mir.es/registro-partidos/loadDetallesFormacion.htm?protocolo=1291>.

nothing ever came of it, and Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana eventually disintegrated. While the representatives of the Partíu Asturianista (primarily Sánchez Vicente and Cañedo) have never acknowledged having made either an agreement to rotate seats or a formal agreement to unite after a successful campaign, it is certain that the militants and direction of the UNA operated under one or both of those assumptions, contributing mightily to the mass exodus from politics of many of its militants after 1991. Dubardu Puente, Xosé Nel Riesgo, Carmona, Paco Mori, Álvaro Ruíz de la Peña, Quini Álvarez Hevia, and many other prominent members of Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana abandoned politics (in some cases, permanently) after the disintegration of the party, disenchanted and without the energy or interest to start over. Carmona characterized the sentiments of many Asturianistas following the rupture of Coalición Asturiana, looking back and describing “the period of the 90s” as “the history of an enormous frustration. That which was born, that could have been developed, but that, for what it was, because of our lack of ability, because of our errors, because of society itself, remained in the field of frustration.”<sup>724</sup>

It is difficult to say definitively whether or not this frustration was a result of the seemingly constant trend towards fragmentation that the Asturianistas exhibited or in fact was a primary cause of it. Although the nationalists were (at some points) able to overcome for brief periods of time this tendency, any coalition seemed to eventually disintegrate in a

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<sup>724</sup> “Ese periodo de los años 90 son la historia de una frustración enorme. Aquello que nació, que pudo ser desarrollado, pero que, por lo que sea, por las incapacidades, por los errores, por la propia sociedad, se quedó en el ámbito de la frustración.”

Carmona, Interview by author.

blaze of infighting, often taking any political momentum built up along with it. I hypothesize that, in fact, this kind of constant frustration and fragmentation is one of the major features of a dissident movement in a contemporary democratic political system. A modern multi-party democracy with a 50%+1 governing principle seems to evidence a tendency to move towards a dual-party system, as it did some time ago in the US and is increasingly trending towards in the UK and in Europe (France and Spain provide two clear examples). In such a system, the difference between the two major options often becomes largely symbolic, more of the degree to which each party seeks to regulate or control a free-market consumer society. This effectively marginalizing any minority group (including almost all those that question the more basic structures of state or society) through the argument that any vote for, say, an Asturian nationalist party is “wasted,” having not been cast for a party with a realistic chance to govern.

Even though the Asturianistas, at times, showed an ability to mobilize a not insignificant sector of Asturian society, this did not really matter as much as they would have hoped. Under the authoritarian Franco regime, popular mobilization was the *only* real way for opposition groups to engage in the practice of politics. *However*, in a modern democratic system, the only legitimate gauge of political strength has become through the accumulation of votes. Political strength is, in large part, now equated to *electoral* strength, something that the Asturianistas have been unable to tap into in any real way. Thus, stuck in this war of position and frustrated in their inability to translate their mildly successful cultural

movement into an equivalent bloc of political votes, the Asturianistas, like the Communists, environmental groups of the Left, and the radical Right of *Fuerza Nueva* and the neo-Falangist parties, tended to turn inwards and fragment.

## Chapter 6

### Fragmentation, Popular Mobilization, and Statute Reform (1991-1999)

By the 1990s, the long-term structural changes taking place in Spanish and Asturian society since the Transition had begun to be evident in the region. The entry of Spain into the European Economic Community in 1986 both signaled Spain's "return" to Europe and

significantly re-oriented some of the policies, primarily economic, of the Spanish and Asturian governments. Most importantly, European funds were now available for the development of Asturias' transportation infrastructure, industrial production, and agriculture. However, at the same time, Asturians from 1986 onwards were part of a much larger market and now needed to adjust to the provisions of the rules laid down in Brussels regarding environmental, industrial, fishing, and agricultural policy.

Asturias experienced a steady decline in population over the course of 1981-2001, declining from 1,129,572 people in 1981 to 1,093,937 people in 1991 and 1,062,998 in 2001.<sup>725</sup> Most importantly, in line with the rest of Europe, the population significantly aged over the same period. The population between 0-19 years of age dropped dramatically, from 30% of the population in 1981 to a mere 15.56% in 2001.<sup>726</sup> At the same time, the percentage of the population of retirement age nearly doubled, from 12.78% in 1981 to 21.92% in 2001.<sup>727</sup>

Importantly, while unemployment held steady during the 1990s (decreasing slightly from 7.6% in 1990 to 7.2% in 2000),<sup>728</sup> Asturias was an exception to the general Spanish

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<sup>725</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (INE), "Población según Sexo y Edad desde 1900 hasta 2001," Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, [http://www.ine.es/inebmenu/mnu\\_cifraspob.htm](http://www.ine.es/inebmenu/mnu_cifraspob.htm). Accessed 2011-03-04.

<sup>726</sup> 1981 – 338,724 people between the ages of 0-19 (29.99%). 1991 – 262,295 people (23.98%). 2001 – 165,431 (15.56%).

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Evolución de la Población según Edad. Datos censales. Período 1981-2001.," SADEI, <http://www.sadei.com/Indice%20tematico/infteima.asp?a1=C&a2=1#>.

<sup>727</sup> 1981 – 144,385 people over age 65 (12.78%). 1991 – 183,055 people (16.73%). 2001 – 233,035 (21.92%).

ibid.

<sup>728</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Paro Registrado en Asturias. Ambos

trend of continued rising prosperity during the 1990s. While overall unemployment numbers were steady and the construction boom (particularly in the major cities of Avilés, Oviedo, and Gijón) held through the decade,<sup>729</sup> the industrial, agricultural, and fishing industries, long the bases of the Asturian economy and in a good measure its identity, were hammered, massively reducing their employment numbers. Over the course of the decade, industrial jobs in Asturias (including a large number of public-sector jobs) were reduced 30%.<sup>730</sup> The agricultural and fishing sectors were hit even harder, cutting 40.8% of their jobs between 1990 and 2000.<sup>731</sup> The progressive disintegration of the traditional economic and social pillars of the region had a hugely symbolic effect as well as causing a very real social change, shifting workers into the service sector and early retirement.<sup>732</sup> Asturias, like Spain as a whole, became much more of a consumerist society during the late 1980s and early 1990s, with a moderately expanded social sector and an increasing dependence on

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sexos. Periodo 1991-2009.," SADEI,

<http://www.sadei.com/Indice%20tematico/inftema.asp?a1=I&a2=2&a3=3&a4=2#>. Accessed 2011-03-04.

<sup>729</sup> From 35,920 construction jobs in 1990, the industry expanded slightly to 43,439 in 2000.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Evolución del empleo en Construcción por concejos. Periodo 1990-2009.," SADEI,

<http://www.sadei.com/Indice%20tematico/inftema.asp?a1=I&a2=2&a3=2&a4=1#>. Accessed 2011-03-04.

<sup>730</sup> From 88,587 industrial Jobs in 1990, the sector shrunk to 61,745 jobs in 2000.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Evolución del empleo en Industria por concejos. Periodo 1990-2009.," SADEI,

<http://www.sadei.com/Indice%20tematico/inftema.asp?a1=I&a2=2&a3=2&a4=1#>. Accessed 2011-03-04

<sup>731</sup> From 64,678 jobs in 1990, the agricultural and fishing sector shrunk to just 38,299 by 2000, and would continue to contract, with just 17,430 jobs left by 2009.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Evolución del empleo en Agricultura y pesca por concejos. Periodo 1990-2009.," SADEI,

<http://www.sadei.com/Indice%20tematico/inftema.asp?a1=I&a2=2&a3=2&a4=1#>. Accessed 2011-03-04

<sup>732</sup> Employment in the service sector expanded 13.3%, from 196,391 in 1990 to 222,706 in 2000.

Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales (SADEI), "Evolución del empleo en Servicios por concejos. Periodo 1990-2009.," SADEI,

<http://www.sadei.com/Indice%20tematico/inftema.asp?a1=I&a2=2&a3=2&a4=1#>. Accessed 2011-03-04

tourism. However, unlike, for example, Catalunya, Asturias did not really have the expanded economy to support the socially-driven insistence on consumer goods, resulting in large numbers of discontented would-be middle class consumers heavily criticizing the economic policies of the Socialist governments in Asturias, in particular focusing on the highly visible and symbolic crisis of the industrial and agricultural sectors.

These massive socioeconomic changes were simultaneous with the steady weakening of the Socialist Party's ability to maintain its hegemonic ability to fragment and co-opt internal dissent, presenting itself as the only real political option to the majority of Asturians (and Spaniards, as this was occurring nation-wide). While, unlike in much of the rest of Spain, Asturias did not see a significant expansion of the number of resources available (aside from EU funding of various types), the progressive crisis of the PSOE opened up a window of opportunity for other groups, most importantly the Communist-led coalition *Izquierda Unida*, to challenge Socialist control of the region. The PSOE saw its electoral support drop sharply during the 1990s, allowing the conservative Partido Popular to govern the national government from 1996-2004. Additionally, the Socialist Party was hit with a major scandal in mid-campaign in May 1993, causing its already slipping credibility nationally to take a major hit in the region and resulting in the resignation of the sitting President, Rodríguez-Vigil, and his temporary replacement by Antonio Trevín.<sup>733</sup> Thus, it is possible to argue that

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<sup>733</sup> Rodríguez-Vigil resigned as the consequence of a massive confidence scheme, known popularly as *el Petromucho*. Approached by a French intermediary calling himself Jean-Maurice Lauze and claiming to represent the Saudi International Bank in October of 1992, Rodríguez Vigil's government secured the funding



the rise in popularity of moderate Asturianism as a political alternative was as much the result of a disenchantment with the PSOE as it was one of increased appeal of either the Partíu Asturianista or the newly-regionalist Izquierda Unida.

In spite of the fragmentation of the Asturian nationalist Left, IU spearheaded the formation of a broad-based Asturianista coalition during the middle of the decade, seeing the traditionally nationalist claims for statutory reform, self-government, and cultural autonomy as potential political leverage. Long-removed from its role as the principal party of the anti-*franquista* opposition, the Communists had become marginalized politically, both nationally and regionally. This adoption of regionalism was, at least partially, a way for the party to distinguish itself from the Socialists, who had progressively and severely eaten away at the party's electoral support over the course of the 1980s. Under the leadership of Gaspar Llamazares and Francisco Javier García Valledor,<sup>734</sup> IU elevated questions of linguistic rights

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for the construction of a massive oil refinery in Gijón's El Musel port facilities. Announced on May 19, 1993 as part of the PSOE's electoral campaign in Asturias, Lauze promised a 366 billion ptas (~\$2.9 billion in 1993 US\$) investment on the part of the Saudi bank, and Rodríguez-Vigil secured a promise of a further 108 billion ptas (~\$850 million) from Madrid to finance the project. Three days later, the Saudi International Bank and the country's consulate in Madrid denied any knowledge of the project or of Lauze, and Rodríguez Vigil announced his resignation on May 25, 1993. In spite of the fact that no funds had actually transferred (nor spent on construction), the incident was a massive embarrassment for the PSOE in Asturias and was a major topic during the 1995 autonomic election campaign, won by the Partido Popular and Sergio Marqués Fernández for the first and only time in Asturias' history.

Javier Cuartas, "El presidente de Asturias anuncia una inversión de 360.000 millones de un grupo saudí en una refinería," *El País* [Madrid] 1993-05-19; Javier Cuartas, "El Gobierno asturiano se compromete a que Madrid subvencione con 108.000 millones la inversión saudí," *El País* [Madrid] 1993-05-20; J. Cuartas and J. Moreno, "El presidente asturiano dice que no pagó a los intermediarios de la supuesta inversión saudí," *El País* [Madrid] 1993-05-22; Javier Cuartas, "Dimite en pleno el Gobierno de Asturias," *El País* [Madrid] 1995-05-25; Carlos Castro, "«Sólo Dios sabe lo que ha aquí»: Entrevista a Juan Luís Rodríguez Vigil, Presidente del Gobierno de Asturias," *El País* [Madrid] 1995-05-27; J. Cuartas and J. Moreno, "El hombre que dejó a Asturias con la boca abierta," *El País* [Madrid] 1993-06-02.

<sup>734</sup> Commonly referred to by his matronymic, "Valledor."

and statutory reform to the forefront of their political program, both at the regional and municipal levels. Indeed, any political coalition in favor of bilingualism active during the 1990s or early 2000s was almost certain to involve IU to a greater or lesser degree, and the few *concejos* that moved towards the local implementation of bilingualism (Langreo and Gijón, to cite two prominent examples), most often did so during periods of either governance or strong influence by Izquierda Unida. Both Izquierda Unida and the Partíu Asturianista saw these arguments as a way to establish political legitimacy by positioning themselves as "more popular" (and therefore more democratic) than either the PSOE or the PP. The 1990s were, if not quite another "war of movement," a significantly more fluid period, primarily due to the crisis of the PSOE and the need to adapt to these changing socioeconomic realities. While the basic tenants of a modern capitalist consumer society or a parliamentary democracy were not up for question, the balance of power *within* the established structure of the Spanish state most certainly was in a state of flux. Thus, the Asturianistas found willing allies amongst the Left (and even, in isolated instances, amongst the PP and the Socialists) in their attempt to challenge established hierarchies. In this situation, the linguistic hierarchy once again began to serve as a ready shorthand for the questions being raised about the power relationships in Asturias and Spain as a whole. Language, in this sense, served as an existing, condensed symbolic arena in which these shifts in regional and national power were debated. Similarly to the Transition, most people from the Left or Center who questioned the Socialist hegemony in Asturias began to associate

statutory reform and minority language rights with a more democratic, less corrupt, form of government.

Thus, the latter half of the 1990s was marked by a sudden coalescence of a broad coalition in favor of regionalist reform, in particular agitating in favor of official status for the language and the defense of its place in the University. In spite of the more radical Asturianistas' weak position, Izquierda Unida provided a unifying force and well-established channels of popular mobilization via its connections with the trade unions of Asturias, the very groups who felt most threatened by the large socioeconomic changes taking place in the region. With the combined participation of the trade unions, the Communist Coalition, the Partíu Asturianista, and the Asturianista cultural organizations, a series of massive rallies (with estimates of as high as 25,000 participants in 1996)<sup>735</sup> in Oviedo during the middle of the decade put significant pressure on the reeling Socialists as well as on the newly elected conservative Partido Popular. However, although the political system bent, conceding a moderately reformed Statute of Autonomy<sup>736</sup> and the passage of a mildly expanded "Law of Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturiano,"<sup>737</sup> these reforms did not constitute co-official status or require the implementation of bilingualism (and thus was passed over the objections of the "purist" sectors of Asturianism as well as those of Izquierda Unida), although they did expand the protections against discrimination for use of the language, effectively passing the

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<sup>735</sup> Curiously, this involved vastly more people than participated in the politically much more significant *bable nes escueles* rally of June 1976.

<sup>736</sup> "Ley Orgánica 1/1999, de 5 de enero, de reforma de la Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de Estatuto de Autonomía del Principado de Asturias."

<sup>737</sup> "Ley 1/1998, de 23 de marzo, de uso y promoción del bable/asturiano."

bill proposed by Pedro de Silva ten years before. Thus, there was no major restructuring of the State of the Autonomies. Asturias, even after the popular upheaval and relative political fluidity of the 1990s, remained a second-tier Autonomous Community, denied equality with the “historic nationalities.”

### **The Fragmentation of UNA and the Restructuring of the Nationalist Left**

The rupture of *Coalición Asturiana* resulted in a general feeling of frustration and disillusionment that permeated the Asturian nationalist Left throughout the 1990s. This was largely a result of the way in which *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* effectively disintegrated after the elections of 1991 and serves as a significant point of inflection in the internal history of political Asturianism. This fragmentation of roughly half of the Asturianista constituency into a number of smaller parties reversed the trend towards consolidation of the late 1980s and established a cycle of political division and restructuring that would characterize Asturian nationalism for the next fifteen years (with the partial exception of the Partíu Asturianista). The memory of the coalition’s abrupt rupture has become, in some senses, a cautionary tale about unification amongst nationalist organizations over the last twenty years. In some retellings, the story seems to have evolved into a tale of original sin, with the rupture used to explain the subsequent electoral failures of Asturian nationalists.<sup>738</sup> Some, such as Carmona, directly blame the contemporary lack of a politically significant

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<sup>738</sup> PWZ field notes 2008-9.

nationalist party on the rupture of the coalition in 1991, in spite of the fact that the PAS retained its seat for another term in 1995.<sup>739</sup>

Although both some of its principal participants (such as Carmona) and most versions of the popular myth surrounding the event give the impression that the rupture of Coalición Asturiana followed soon on the heels of its electoral success, the organization actually survived for roughly another year. As the UNA's Felechosa and Pepe Fernández Alonso tried to save the coalition by proposing a fusion of the two parties, it continued to lose members as time wore on. As a last-ditch effort, Felechosa claims to have even offered that the new, integrated party would adopt the name *Partíu Asturianista*, with the UNA disappearing after a short transitional period.<sup>740</sup> However, the negotiations broke down, according to the PAS's Xesús Cañedo, because of fundamental differences in organizational structures of the two parties and some significant ideological barriers.<sup>741</sup> Rupturing definitively in early 1992, after roughly a year in office (as, technically, Sánchez Vicente's seat from 1991-5 was representing *Coalición Asturiana*), the UNA continued to bleed members until it finally dissolved in April 1993, with some of its members (such as Felechosa and Fernández Alonso, and Xicu Yepes) going on to participate in the *Lliga Asturiana*.<sup>742</sup> The dispute continued until 1995, when the now-defunct UNA settled its financial debts with the PAS that it had run up during the course of the campaign. The coalition formally

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<sup>739</sup> Carmona, Interview by author; Carmona, "Nacionalismu asturianu na transición."

<sup>740</sup> Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>741</sup> Cañedo Valle, Interview by author.

<sup>742</sup> Andecha Astur, "Liga Asturiana: ¿Otru proyeutu más?," *Puxa*, no. 3 (abril 1993): 2.

dissolved with the delivery of 438,810ptas<sup>743</sup> and the control of a savings account of unknown contents by Quini Álvarez Hevia (on behalf of Coalición Asturiana) to Inaciu Iglesias (on behalf of the PAS).<sup>744</sup>

A few of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana's* members ended up jumping ship to the Partíu Asturianista, such as Inaciu Iglesias (although he left the organization much earlier, in December of 1989)<sup>745</sup> and Pepe Fernández Alonso.<sup>746</sup> Others attempted to start new political projects such as *Izquierda Asturiana* (Asturian Left, IAS)<sup>747</sup> or the short-lived *Lliga Asturiana*.<sup>748</sup> A number joined their former comrades in Andecha Astur, which became the principal party of the radical nationalist Left.<sup>749</sup> Most significantly, a large number of people politically mobilized by UNA abandoned active participation in politics altogether, either permanently or for significant periods of time.<sup>750</sup> Indeed, nearly twenty years later, a number

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<sup>743</sup> ~\$3,500 in 1995 US\$.

<sup>744</sup> "El Partíu Asturianista (PAS) RECIBE, de Rogelio Álvarez Hevia, representante de la Coalición Asturiana PAS-UNA (CA) nes Elecciones Autonómiques de 1991, la cantidá de #438.810# pesetes en metálicu, más una orde de tresferencia del saldu de la cuenta nº 3403073547 de la Caxa d'Asturies, O.P. de Xixón.

*Y, con esta única cantidá recibida, considera CANCELADA la deuda que, en conceptu de subvención electoral, venía calteniendo ente les partes dende les citades Elecciones de 1991.*" (Emphasis in original).

Partíu Asturianista, "Cancelada la deuda ente Coalición Asturiana y el Partíu Asturianista," (Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1995-11-11).

<sup>745</sup> Inaciu Iglesias, "Carta al Secretariu d'Organización d'Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1989-12-19).

<sup>746</sup> Currently the Secretary of Organization of the Partíu Asturianista.

<sup>747</sup> Founded by Faustino Zapico Álvarez, Iván Huerga Antuña, and Faustino Fernández Pereira, all former members of UNA (Zapico was also one of the founders of Andecha Astur, but soon left).

<sup>748</sup> Carmona, Felechosa, and Xicu Yepes were all involved to varying degrees.

<sup>749</sup> Xune Elípe is an example.

See Chapter 5 for the origins of Andecha Astur.

<sup>750</sup> Dubardu Puente, Álvaro Ruíz de la Peña, Xosé Nel Riesgo, Paco Mori, and Monchu el Cura are all good examples. After another failed political experiment, Felechosa and Carmona both also chose this route.

of former UNA members still reported feeling “*quemáu*” (burnt-out or embittered) by the experience.<sup>751</sup>

Since its formation in 1990, Andecha Astur has consistently represented both the most radically national and the most purist strain of Asturian Nationalism and can be considered a direct descendent of the Ensame Nacionalista Astur of the 1980s (and indirectly, of the earlier Conceyu Nacionalista Astur). This connection is relatively natural, as the majority of the earliest militants of Andecha Astur were former members of the Ensame, and so provided both personal and ideological connections to the defunct party. This is evident in both the form and content of its political pamphlets, speeches, and rallies. One of Andecha’s first campaigns, a protest in front of the parliament building on May 12, 1991, underscored this connection, as it was a direct continuation of the Ensame’s campaign to be allowed to fill out ballots in Asturianu.<sup>752</sup> Some of the people involved (such as Marcos Abel Fernández Marqués, Dulce Gil, and Arturu Bermeyo) were even veterans of the 1986 campaign.

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<sup>751</sup> Among many, Francisco (Paco) Alonso Mori, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-03-26); Álvarez Hevia, Interview by author; Carmona, Interview by author; García Fernández, Interview by author; Puente Fernández, Interview by author; Riesgo Fernández, Interview by author; Ruíz de la Peña Solar, Interview by author; Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.

<sup>752</sup> "Andecha Astur se manifestó delante del Palacio Regional," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1991-05-12.

Andecha was also denied in its attempt to submit its electoral lists for the March 3, 1996 elections in Asturianu by the Electoral Commission. The only vote (of 5) in favor of their admission was cast by PSOE member and former mayor of Oviedo Antonio Masip, who argued that although not official, the language “was recognized in the Autonomy Statute, and one should not impede the exercise of a constitutional right.” Francisco R. Álvarez, "La Xunta Eleutoral mantién el vetu a la candidatura n'asturianu d'Andecha Astur," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-02-06; "La Junta Electoral rechaza la lista de Andecha Astur presentada en bable," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1996-02-06. Masip Hidalgo, Interview by author.

Defining itself as a “project of the nationalist Left,” Andecha Astur simultaneously claimed to be “characterized by an ideological pluralism.”<sup>753</sup> The party held, as an ideological “starting point,” that “Asturias is a Nation, and as such must be sovereign.”<sup>754</sup> Implying an eventual goal of independence (typically using the term “*dixebra*”), Andecha Astur held that its short-term aims were to consistently work towards the increase of local power and control in Asturias.<sup>755</sup> As most of the membership considered themselves *independentistas*, Andecha Astur founder Marcos Abel Fernández was open about the party moderating its official position in order to reach a wider audience.<sup>756</sup> Andecha Astur dismissed the “non-belligerent” stance with the Spanish State taken by the PAS and UNA, criticizing their “electoral obsession” and claiming that it would only give “the current situation of colonial dependency of Asturias an ‘Asturianista’ tint.”<sup>757</sup> The Statute of Autonomy was equally dismissed as a tool by which “the political parties that signed [it]

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<sup>753</sup> “...un proyeutu d’izquierda nacionaliega....que tien de carauterizase pol pluralism no ideolóxico.”

Andecha Astur, “Unidá del nacionalismu y la izquierda,” *Puxa*, no. 2 (marzu 1993): 1.

<sup>754</sup> “El puntu partía ye la costatación de qu’Asturies ye Nación, y que comu tala, tien de ser soberana.”

Andecha Astur, “s/t,” *Andecha Astur*, no. 2 (payares 1990).

<sup>755</sup> “El nuesu finxu nun pue ser desixir que xuba’l techu de les competencies, nin algamar mayores cotes de xestión alministrativa.”

ibid.

<sup>756</sup> “Sí, sí, Andecha Astur yo creo que ye mayoritariu el conceyu independentista. Otra cosa ye que por motivos, por los motivos que sean, prefierose un marcu más ampliu y defiendose el conceutu de soberanía y de autodetermin.”

Fernández Marqués, Interview by author.

<sup>757</sup> “Les forcies polítiques d’ambetu asturianau (sic), PAs y UNA....ufiertando una alternativa de non belixerancia pa col Estáu Español. Estes forcies, esin otra llingia política que nun seya la osesión elletoralista....lo único que pretendén ye da-y un matiz más ‘asturianista’ a la situación de dependencia colonial d’Asturies.”

Andecha Astur, “s/t,” *Andecha Astur*, no. 0 (setiembre 1990). 2.



(PSOE, PP, PCE-IU, UCD-CDS)....utilize the Statute and the Asturian institutions [of government] as a mechanism of assimilation” of the nationalist struggle in Asturias.<sup>758</sup>

Thus, it called for a new “National Statute” as an “intermediate step,” and defined its short-term goal as “national sovereignty,” which needed to include “the political and territorial unity” of Asturias (continuing the Ensamé’s claim that several counties in Cantabria and León should rightfully be part of Asturias). It also demanded an acknowledgement in the statute of the “national reality of Asturias” (declaring that Asturias is a nation), the right of self-determination, and the elevation of Asturianu to the status of official and “priority” language.<sup>759</sup> The party drew up a draft of a hypothetical “Decree/Law of Official Status of Asturianu” in May 1994 (during the yearly *Selmana de les Lletres Asturianas*),<sup>760</sup> and has consistently rejected any statutory reform that fell short of these goals. Andecha Astur is the only Asturianista party that still makes the call for the “territorial unity” of all historically Asturian (and Asturianu-speaking) areas a significant part of its political platform. One of the party’s first public acts, on the “Day of the Asturian Nation” (September 8, 1990),<sup>761</sup> was to hold a flag-raising ceremony in Laciana (*L.laciana*, in

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<sup>758</sup> “*La complicidad de los partidos políticos que firmaren esti estatutu (PSOE, PP, PCE-IU, UCD-CDS) permite-yos utilizar l'Estatutu y les instituciones asturianas co mu mecanismo d'asimilación de la problemática nacional asturiana.*” Andecha Astur, “s/t.”

<sup>759</sup> “*La clave fondera pa un Estatutu Nacional, comu pasu intermediu, ye: SOBERANIA NACIONAL, con unos fundamentos enforma nidios, nos que s'afite la unidá política y territorial, la rialidá nacional asturiana, el drechu d'autodetermin, y la condición del asturianu comu llingua oficial y prioritaria.*” Emphasis in original. *ibid.*

<sup>760</sup> Andecha Astur, “Andecha Astur presenta un Decretu Llei d'Oficialidá del Asturianu,” *Puxa*, no. 15 (xunu 1994).

<sup>761</sup> By the late 1980s, most nationalist groups had conceded the public acceptance of the Day of the Virgin of Covadonga as the “Day of Asturias” and ceased heavily promoting the Conceyu Bable’s secular holiday of May

Asturiano), an Asturian-speaking municipality on the southern side of the Cordillera

Cantábrica and administratively part of León.<sup>762</sup>

In addition to its wide demands on the subject of Asturias's nationhood and relationship to Spain, Andecha Astur consistently has promoted itself as the true party of the "working people of Asturias."<sup>763</sup> Andecha continually focused on the disparity between the overall prosperity in Spain during the 1990s and the situation in Asturias, calling particular attention to the deteriorating situation of the industrial working class. It often included sections in its monthly newsletters in support of strikes occurring in Asturias,<sup>764</sup> and joined the support of the January 27, 1994 general strike (called by the two major unions, UGT & CC.OO.).<sup>765</sup> The party vocally supported the protests at the statewide layoffs during the early 1990s, in particular those occurring at Duro Felguera, S.A., and HUNOSA, two of the

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25. However, to this date, the majority of the nationalist groups, including Andecha Astur, UNA (2008-present), the Partíu Asturianista, and the Bloque por Asturias consistently rename the date "Día de la nación asturiana" (my emphasis), and Andecha Astur does still occasionally commemorate May 25, 1808, as an important date in the nationalist mythology. Andecha Astur, "25 Mayu ¡Asturies soberana!," *Puxa*, no. 5 (xunu 1993): 2.

<sup>762</sup> "Con motivu'l Día la Nación Asturiana, ANDECHA ASTUR rializó un actu simbólicu consistente'n llantar la bandera d'Asturies en Llaciana, Santalla d'Ozcos, Ribadeva, y Xixón, afitando'l nuesu enfotu de que la nuesa bandera tea presente'n tou Asturies comu representación d'un braeru poder políticu del Pueblu Asturianu." (Emphasis in original).

The four locations of Andecha's symbolic flag-raising represented the four corners of Asturias: South (Llaciana), West (Santalla d'Ozcos), East (Ribadeva), and North (Xixón).

Andecha Astur, "s/t."

<sup>763</sup> "El pueblu trabayaor d'Asturies" is invoked constantly in Andecha Astur's early pamphlets.

<sup>764</sup> Such as in: Andecha Astur, "Confeiciones Xixón," *Andecha Astur*, no. 1 (ochobre 1990): 2; Andecha Astur, "Du Pont," *Andecha Astur*, no. 3 (avientu 1990): 2; Andecha Astur Llangréu, "Defender la Duro: defender Asturias," *Puxa* (ochobre 1993): 1; Andecha Astur Llangréu, "Conforme mos ven, ansina mos traten," *Puxa* (ochobre 1993): 2.

<sup>765</sup> Andecha Astur, "Andecha Astur sofita la Fuelga Xeneral," *Puxa*, no. 10 (xineru 1994): 2; Andecha Astur, "27-X: La Fuelga Xeneral foi un ésitu n'Asturies," *Puxa*, no. 11 (febreru 1994).

region's largest industrial employers.<sup>766</sup> The party also consistently supported the position of the most pro-Asturianista of the major unions in Asturias, the *Corriente Sindical d'Izquierda* (CSI).<sup>767</sup>

Additionally, Andecha Astur (like the Ensame before it and similarly to its contemporary *Izquierda Asturiana*) took pains to portray itself as an environmentalist party. It has consistently campaigned for the end of waste incineration in Asturias as massively harmful to the environment.<sup>768</sup> During the early 1990s, Andecha Astur participated in the majority of the environmentalist rallies in the region, such as the 1993 protest against the construction of a breakwater on the Eo river (at Ribadeo, on the Galician side),<sup>769</sup> and the 1994 protests against the lack of environmental regulation of the Du Pont Corporation's production facilities in Asturias.<sup>770</sup> It also consistently opposed the construction of new high-tension wires,<sup>771</sup> the hunting of the endangered wolf population in the *Picos de Europa* National Park,<sup>772</sup> and continued the Ensame (and XNA's) participation in the campaign

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<sup>766</sup> Andecha Astur Llangréu, "Defender la Duro: defender Asturias."; Andecha Astur, "Duro-E: ganen los trabajadores," *Puxa*, no. 11 (febreru 1994); Andecha Astur, "L'Estáu español quier lliquidar HUNOSA," *Puxa*, no. 14 (abril 1994); Andecha Astur, "HUNOSA: la traición de SOMA-UCT y CC.OO.," *Puxa*, no. 15 (xunu 1994).

<sup>767</sup> Andecha Astur, "Alcuentros sindicales," *Puxa*, no. 3 (abril 1993): 2; Andecha Astur, "La CSI enfréntase a la mafia de CCOO y SOMA-UCT," *Puxa*, no. 20 (avientu 1994).

<sup>768</sup> Andecha Astur, "Asturies incinerada," *Puxa*, no. 1 (febreru 1993): 2; Andecha Astur, "Incineradora en Corvera," *Puxa*, no. 11 (febreru 1994): 2.

<sup>769</sup> Andecha Astur, "Salvar la ría del Eo," *Puxa*, no. 2 (marzu 1993): 2.

<sup>770</sup> Andecha Astur, "¿U'l control a Du Pont?," *Puxa*, no. 10 (xineru 1994): 1.

<sup>771</sup> Andecha Astur, "Non al tendíu d'alta tensión," *Puxa*, no. 12 (marzu 1994): 1.

<sup>772</sup> Andecha Astur, "Andecha Astur sal en defensa los llobos," *Puxa*, no. 26 (setiembre 1995): 2.

against deforestation (and the stopgap measure of planting rapidly growing, non-native, eucalyptus and pine trees).<sup>773</sup>

The language of the organization (and many of its members) shows a tendency to echo the purist and de-Castilianized forms of its forerunners. This so-called “hyper-asturianization”<sup>774</sup> is evident in both in the organization’s published printed material, in my interviews with Andecha Astur militants, and in the web publications of both the organization and its members.<sup>775</sup> Andecha almost invariably replaces the sound of the Greek-derived “x” (in Castilian represented with either a “cc”, as in “elecciones,” or an “x”, as in “*existente*”) with a more Asturianu-sounding alternative (“*elleiciones*” and “*inesistente*,” respectively).<sup>776</sup> The party’s first newsletter uses the word “*Hinu*” (hymn) instead of “*Himnu*,” “*haza*” instead of the more common “*hacia*,” and replaces the word “*persones*,” most often written identically in Asturianu and Castilian, with “*presones*,” transposing the second and third letters.<sup>777</sup> Andecha Astur also consistently converts words ending in “e” in standard Asturianu to “i”, and has a tendency to change “l” to “ll” (a “y” sound for an English-speaker) to an even greater extent than standardized Asturianu, as in “*nuechi*” and “*llechi*” (instead of “*nueche*” and “*lleche*”), and “*cellebrar*” and “*elletoral*” (instead of “*celebrar*”

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<sup>773</sup> Andecha Astur, “Llei de Montes,” *Puxa*, no. 21 (xineru-febreru 1995): 2.

<sup>774</sup> See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the background of this phenomenon.

<sup>775</sup> See, for example, <http://www.andecha.org/> or <http://www.darreu.org>.

<sup>776</sup> Amongst other examples, Andecha Astur, “Premios Borbones,” *Andecha Astur*, no. 1 (ochobre 1990); Andecha Astur, “s/t.”

<sup>777</sup> Asturianu does this in some words used almost universally, such as “*vienres*” (Friday) or “*probe*” (poor).

and “*electoral*”).<sup>778</sup> Both the Dictionaries published by the Academia de la Llingua and Arias (in cooperation with *La Nueva España*) list most of Andecha’s “hyper-asturianized” words as regional varieties.<sup>779</sup> Thus, while not *inventing* new words, the group has systematically tended to use the regional varieties that *sounded* or *looked* the most Asturianu (or least Castilian), continuing a trend noticeable in the early Academia de la Llingua and Conceyu Bable and popularized amongst the Nationalist Left by the CNA and the Ensame during the 1980s.

Thus, the distinctive linguistic patterns of modern Andecha Astur militants function both to distinguish the more radical nationalists as a group from more moderate Asturianu-speakers but also as a way to reaffirm their connection to a historical nationalist subculture. Even in the name of the party, the inclusion of the word “Astur,” mirroring the name of the earlier parties but by 1990 already uncommon amongst cultural and political associations,<sup>780</sup> was a specific reference to this particular nationalist tradition. This style of language has served both as a way for nationalists to identify themselves with a particular political community but also as a way for the group as a whole to situate itself (more or less) along the nationalist political spectrum. Today, one can place someone’s political position with relative accuracy by listening to the form of Asturianu (more or less de-Castilianized) in

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<sup>778</sup> Andecha Astur, “I Alcuentros d’Andecha Astur,” *Andecha Astur*, no. 2 (payares 1990): 2.

<sup>779</sup> Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, *Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana* (Uviéu: Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, 2000); Xosé Lluís García Arias, Javier Rodríguez Muñoz, and La Nueva España, *Diccionario general de la lengua asturiana* (Oviedo: Editorial Prensa Asturiana, 2002).

<sup>780</sup> By this point, most favored the term “Asturiana.”

which they speak.<sup>781</sup> This continuity of the radical and purist line in Asturianista politics is a large component of the identity of Andecha Astur, and at least some of its appeal to younger Asturians (often through its youth organizations, first *Andecha Mocedá* and later *Darréu*) depends on its radical reputation.

Over time, Andecha's distinctive language has come to be associated, in a way, with its Leftist politics. This is an extension of how the history of Asturianismu as a whole, lacking a prominent conservative analog to the generally Left-wing regionalist and nationalist traditions that emerged from the Transition, has functioned until recently to associate the Asturian culture and language simultaneously with an older rural population (often quite conservative politically) and with a young, radically Leftist demographic. Although a few Right-wing groups espousing a mild form of regionalism have broken off from the PP in the last decade (notably the URAS of Sergio Marqués Fernández and the new *Foro Asturias* of Francisco Álvarez-Cascos Fernández), the bulk of support for Asturian linguistic and political reform maintains political positions of the Left or Center.<sup>782</sup>

During the mid-1990s, one of the main focuses of Andecha Astur was distinguishing itself from both the PAS as well as the increasingly regionalist Izquierda Unida. In its 1995 campaign literature, the party specifically argued that Asturian workers would be better served voting for Andecha Astur than Izquierda Unida in its campaign program for the 1995

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<sup>781</sup> The interviews and ethnographic research for this project both consistently confirmed this impression.

<sup>782</sup> In addition to Andecha, the current UNA (revived in 2007) and Bloque por Asturias both define themselves as parties of the nationalist Left, while the Partíu Asturianista, although having moved to the right over the last twenty-five years, is still relatively Centrist and "inter-class."

autonomic and municipal elections. Attempting to cast doubts on the sincerity of the Communist Party's newly-declared "compromise for Asturias," Andecha Astur accused Izquierda Unida of "collecting" nationalist positions in its political program but failing to follow through with them.<sup>783</sup> The party then went on to list how Andecha Astur had a stronger track record in defense of Asturias' environment, support of the *insumiso* movement against obligatory military service,<sup>784</sup> its campaigns against layoffs, and its history of supporting bilingualism (a position towards which IU had recently gravitated). Interestingly, with the PAS now represented at an institutional level, Andecha's primary electoral concern seemed to be combating the phenomenon of the so-called "useful vote." It openly admitted in its 1995 campaign pamphlet that "IU, from the [perspective of the] Left, and the PAS from [the perspective of] Asturianism, indeed can be seen as authentically 'useful' options, and carry with them a good part of the Asturian Left."<sup>785</sup> The campaign pamphlet was even

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<sup>783</sup> "Lo que sí ye rial ye que, dende l'intentu d'aglutinar a tolos seutores progresistes, IU recueye nos sos planteamientos munches sensibilidaes y nagueares compartíos dende'l nacionalismu d'izquierda. Recuénenlos, pero nun los siguen."

Andecha Astur, "Elleicones autonómiques y municipales. Primeres reflexiones," (Xixón: Archivu Personal de Xelu Neira, 1995). 2.

<sup>784</sup> Andecha Astur and the Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies (from November 1991 called *Lliberación*) were the strongest defenders of the *insumiso* movement, providing funding, legal help, and, in some situations, hiding fugitives from military service (which was abolished in 2001). IU moved to a position more in favorable to the *insumisos* during the mid-1990s.

Fernando González Rodríguez (Fer G.R.), Interview by author (Candás, 2009-03-02); Ernesto Avelino Suárez Sáez, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-02-23); Lluís Miguel Orviz. Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-02-25); Uría Ríos, Interview by author. Francisco R. Álvarez, "IU afirma que la mayoría de los jóvenes asturianos está contra el militarismo," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-02-09; Fernando "Fer" González Rodríguez, *Amarraza: 102 días baxo la llei antiterrorista* (Uviéu: Sofitu, 2008).

<sup>785</sup> "Por supuestu, el PP o el PSOE ensiquiera nun puen ser consideraos comu una posibilidá, pero IU dende la izquierda, y el PAS dende l'asturianismu sí que puen ser vistos comu auténtiques opciones 'útiles', y ser a llevar pa consigo bona parte de la izquierda asturiana a la que va empovínáu 'l mensaxe d'Andecha Astur."

Andecha Astur, "Elleicones autonómiques y municipales. Primeres reflexiones." 2.

printed bilingually, a highly unusual concession for Andecha to make. The focus on preventing “the famous useful vote”<sup>786</sup> displayed an interestingly realistic assessment of the political situation in Asturias, that the party felt it needed to focus as much on the immediate worries of staving off the loss of its electorate to the much larger Izquierda Unida and PAS (at the height of its public visibility) as much as, if not more than, the more radical long-term goals of creating a sovereign and socialist Asturian state.

Andecha’s radical politics have had a consistently limited appeal, and its purist stance towards both the language and political practice has had a divisive effect within the group. In 1997, *Andecha Astur Llangréu* broke off to form *Izquierda Nacionaliega d’Asturies* (INA, Nationalist Left of Asturias).<sup>787</sup> In 2007, the party split again, leading to a protracted battle over the party name, recently won by the “purist” faction that rejected the proposed coalition with *Izquierda Asturiana* (currently united as the reincarnation of UNA).<sup>788</sup> The numbers that Andecha Astur was able to draw to its protests (such as the yearly rallies on the *Día de la Nación Asturiana*) were similarly low, with 300 people in 1994 and an estimated 500 people in 1995 considered successes.<sup>789</sup> Similarly, the party has had very little success at the polls, although its results have been consistent over nearly 20 years, indicating that its appeal to a

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<sup>786</sup> “*el famoso voto útil*.”

ibid. 3.

<sup>787</sup> Now the *Bloque por Asturias*.

<sup>788</sup> The component of Andecha Astur within the UNA coalition (and now party) has campaigned under the name *Andecha Nacionaliega*.

<sup>789</sup> The estimates of the number of supporters were made by the organization, so attendance may, in fact, have been lower.

Andecha Astur, “8-Set.: “Vamos a paralos”. 300 presones desixen l'autodetermín d'Asturies,” *Puxa*, no. 18 (ochobre 1994); Andecha Astur, “Esitu de la manifestación d'Andecha Astur,” *Puxa*, no. 26 (setiembre 1995).



small niche of the population remains constant. It has never gained more than 0.31% of the votes in any general election (in 2000, with 2,036 votes) nor topped 0.62% of the vote in any autonomic election (in 2003, with 3,821 votes), strikingly low totals even when compared to other parties in the history of the nationalist movement (such as *Unidad Regionalista*, the CNA, UNA, and the Partíu Asturianista).<sup>790</sup>

Andecha Astur was and continues to be an irredentist group within the Asturian nationalist Left. It participates in the electoral process while simultaneously dismissing the structure of the State of the Autonomies as a new version of the old Spanish centralism. Its militants, quite accurately, see the current semi-decentralized political structure as effective at limiting radical change, whether of a cultural, political, or socioeconomic nature. The party has never figured out a way to escape this highly marginalized niche, and it has never seriously considered attempting to broaden its appeal by modifying its rhetoric significantly. Unfortunately for Andecha Astur, the party arose during a time when the structure of politics became more flexible, but not so flexible as to be open to the kind of radical changes that it advocated. Even in the context of the weakening grip of the Socialist Party on Asturias and the adoption of a regionalist stance by Izquierda Unida, Andecha's maximalist calls for sovereignty and self-determination were never going to interest a majority of

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<sup>790</sup> Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, "Resultados electorales. Congreso de los Diputados marzo 2000. Asturias.," <http://www.elecciones.mir.es/MIR/jsp/resultados/comunes/detalleResultado.jsp?tipoAmbito=1&tipoEleccion=0&cdEleccion=2&anio=2000&mes=3&numVuelta=1&nombreEleccion=Congreso+de+los+Diputados&horaCierre=20:00&horaAvance1=14:00&horaAvance2=18:00&cdCCAA=3&cdProvincia=99&descripcion=Autonom%26iacute%3Ba%3A+ASTURIAS>.

Asturians. While the sovereignty of each Autonomous Community may have been a topic of debate during the Transition, the political upheaval of the 1990s was not nearly so profound, and the basic structure of Asturias' relationship to the rest of the Spanish State only open to limited reform.

### **Adapting to Life in Government: Sánchez Vicente and the *Junta General***

As the nationalist Left underwent a progressive fragmentation, the Center steadily became more moderate. The PAS continued to practice its characteristic pragmatism, as likely to negotiate with the conservative Partido Popular as the Socialist Party or Izquierda Unida. The elections of May 1991 represented the first presence of any nationalist party in the institutions of government, a position the PAS owed in part to the support and momentum generated by Coalición Asturiana, but that it would, importantly, maintain in the next elections of 1995 (running independently).

The Partíu Asturianista's electoral successes in 1991 (and again in 1995) represented a critical advance for moderate nationalist politics in Asturias. To some extent, it was a sign that Sánchez Vicente had achieved his goal of making nationalist politics seem respectable and a "serious option" politically. The PAS did not win its seat without significant outside help, namely the simultaneous weakening of the PSOE's political hegemony, the importance of the UNA in 1991, and the advantage in 1995 of being the incumbent party. However, the PAS was able to achieve something which no other political party running on a

nationalist platform had ever managed: direct access to the political institutions of the region.

While Sánchez Vicente himself had served as the President of the Cultural Commission during the Transitional government, and a number of Asturianistas had served in the governments of Pedro de Silva, their actions had always been limited by the fact that their presence was due either to their membership in a party that was largely anti-regionalist (the Socialist Party) or because they had been appointed by the Socialist government. In contrast, in 1991 Sánchez Vicente took his seat on the floor of the Junta General del Principado de Asturias with the clear support of his constituents. Sánchez Vicente's presence as a member of the Socialist Transition government was, in many ways, a concession by that party to regionalist voters, and Pedro de Silva's regional sympathies placed him in a distinct minority within the Socialist Party. However, from 1991-1999, Sánchez Vicente was both the undisputed leader of his own party and clearly elected by a constituency that wanted him to pursue a broadly nationalist agenda.

Having won a seat in Parliament, one of the major focuses of the party was to reinforce its image as being both part of the government and a legitimate political alternative. The slogan at its second *Congresu Nacional* (February 18-19, 1994), "*Fuerza de gobiernu*" (Strength of government), indicated that the party explicitly intended to leverage its presence in the legislature into votes (and a continued presence in the Junta General).<sup>791</sup> One of the achievements that it trumpeted was of having "radically changed political Asturianism's

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<sup>791</sup> Partíu Asturianista, "Fuerza de gobiernu. II<sup>a</sup> Congresu Nacional. Uviéu / Xixón 18-19 de Febreru de 1994," (Xixón: Archivu Personal d'Inaciú Iglesias, febreru 1994).

public image of marginalization” through increased access to the media.<sup>792</sup> Of course, while it can be said that the Partíu Asturianista had gained significant access to the regional media, and that Izquierda Unida’s increasingly frequent pronouncements on the subject of cultural and political policy were well covered, parts of the Asturianista movement remained very much marginalized from the public view. In particular, the activities of smaller parties such as Andecha, *Izquierda Asturiana*, and the *Lliga Asturiana* were infrequently covered by the press, particularly during the early part of the decade. By 1995, Asturianismu, linguistic politics, and statutory reform were hot topics, but that was probably due more to the sudden involvement of the trade unions and Izquierda Unida in cultural politics than the PAS’s mild electoral success in 1991.

Thus, one of the Partíu Asturianista’s principal goals was to maintain its air of respectability, and that often put it at odds with more radical sectors of the nationalist movement (adding to the divisions arising from the breakup of Coalición Asturiana). Sánchez Vicente publically condemned the direct action tactics of the Conceyu d’Estudiantes Asturianistes, claiming that their disruption of the conference paper of Francisco Ayala and the seminar organized by the Amigos de los Bables was the work of a group of “uncontrollables” supported by a “professionals of political agitation.”<sup>793</sup> Indeed, he went so

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<sup>792</sup> “*Ye un trabyu extraordinariu que fexo, entre otres coses, que cambiara radicalmente la imaxe pública de marxinalidá que se tenía del asturianismu políticu.*”

Inaciu Iglesias, “Informe de la necesidá de reclutar xente ‘de prestixu’ pal Partíu Asturianista,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, prob. xunu 1994).

<sup>793</sup> “*En ese grupu de incontrolados había un sector radical, que siempre existió, por otra parte; unos cuantos profesionales de la movilización, que están donde haya barullo y, juntos a ellos, unos mozos irritados.*”

far as to deny that any member of the PAS participated in the act, and “if there were....this supposed militant would leave the PAS because he would realize that he was out of place.”<sup>794</sup>

While Sánchez Vicente was not present at the act, there are eyewitness accounts that at least some members of the CEN who “invaded” the University’s assembly hall (*Paraninfo*) were indeed younger members of his party.<sup>795</sup> Whether or not he was aware of that, it is clear that the head of the Partíu Asturianista’s primary goal was to distance the party from an act that he judged would be largely condemned by the Asturian public.

In some ways, the boisterous method of protest favored by the CEN was diametrically opposed to the image that the Partíu Asturianista was intending to project: respectability, seriousness, competence, and experience in the day-to-day workings of politics. Indeed, one of the PAS’s circulars on political strategy from 1994 specifically explored the possibility of attracting “people of prestige”<sup>796</sup> to the party through methods such as the absorption of smaller regionalist and nationalist parties (such as the *Lliga Asturiana* or *Centristas Asturianas*).<sup>797</sup> In addition to elevating the party’s public profile, the Partíu Asturianista hoped to “enrich the internal life of the party, cover [with qualified and

“«Fueran a por Ayala como hubieran ido a por una corista»»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-07-11.

<sup>794</sup> “*Si lo hubiera...yo creo que ese supuesto militante marcharía del PAS porque se daría cuenta de que entre nosotros estaría fuera de sitio.*”

ibid.

<sup>795</sup> Iván Huerga Antuña, Interview by author (Oviedo, 2009-01-28 & 2009-02-04).

<sup>796</sup> Both the terms “*xente de prestixu*” and “*xente de categoría*” are used.

Iglesias, “Informe de la necesidá de reclutar xente 'de prestixu' pal Partíu Asturianista.”

<sup>797</sup> *Centristas Asturianos* was a short-lived party founded by Alfonso Román López González in 1995 that ran in the Autonomic elections and quickly disappeared.

Ministerio del Interior. Dirección General de Política Interior, “Registro de Partidos Políticos - Centristas Asturianos,” 1995-03-07, <http://servicio.mir.es/registro-partidos/loadDetallesFormacion.htm?protocolo=1574>. Accessed 2011-02-18.

recognizable figures] the new public offices that [the PAS] will [soon] attain, and attract large new groups of voters.”<sup>798</sup> Indeed, the party was seen as lacking a significant number of “people who look good in photos, with all that implies.”<sup>799</sup> The party’s youth (the average age of active militants was 30), while beneficial in the long-term, was seen as hindering the PAS’s ability to attract outside votes, to be seen as a serious political option. Thus, the circular recommended that the party target not only people of “prestige,” but also specifically people who were over 40 years of age, “esteemed in their profession and well known in their constituencies,” such as “businessmen, civil servants....university professors, or sports figures” (referencing the endorsement of the Unidad Regionalista’s campaign by Enrique Castro González “Quini,” a star striker for soccer team Real Sporting de Gijón in 1977).<sup>800</sup>

The Partíu Asturianista’s public and private statements indicate that it held an overwhelmingly optimistic view of its future prospects in the years immediately following the success of Coalición Asturiana. Indeed, it not only promoted itself to the public as the only serious Asturianista option, but seemed to internally hold that opinion, as well. The 1994 strategy paper discussed the party’s early growth as “a clear symptom of the ascendant march of [the PAS’s] project,” the party having doubled its vote total between its first and second

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<sup>798</sup> “Ello, con tres oxetivos principales: enriquecer la vida interna del partíu, cubrir los nuevos cargos públicos que vamos algamar y atraer grandes y nuevos colectivos de votantes.”

Iglesias, “Informe de la necesidá de reclutar xente ‘de prestixu’ pal Partíu Asturianista.”

<sup>799</sup> “Tenemos que fichar xente que dea bien na foto, con tolo qu’eso implica.”

ibid.

<sup>800</sup> “Anantes adelantamos lo qu’entendemos podía ser el perfil del candidatu: xente de más de cuarenta años, de prestixu, valoraos na so profesión y conocíos nos distintos llugars onde se presenten. Puen ser xente d’Empresa, altos funcionarios, profesionales lliberales, profesores d’universidá, inclusu deportistas famosos.”

ibid.

campaigns in each electoral cycle (autonomic/municipal, general, and European).<sup>801</sup> In 1994, the party saw its future as an almost inevitable march towards significant political influence. Thus, its short-term goal for the coming 1995 elections was equally ambitious, with the Partíu Asturianista's "priority objective" surpassing the 100,000 votes of Izquierda Unida in order to become the third largest party in the region and win a parliamentary group of its own (instead of being relegated to the "Mixed group"). The party estimated that "in a reasonable period of time....[the PAS] needs to multiply its present number of votes by a factor of 7. It [will not be] not easy, but [the party] will not aspire to any less."<sup>802</sup> The PAS's optimism did not stop at the predicted surge past Izquierda Unida at the polls. In 1994, Sánchez Vicente predicted that "it would not take long" before a nationalist politician became president of Asturias, and that his party "would have to be the Partíu Asturianista, it could not be any other."<sup>803</sup>

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<sup>801</sup> "Ye un síntoma claru de la marcha ascendente del nuesu proyectu."

Autonomic and Municipal elections occur simultaneously (as do elections to the Senate and the Congreso de los Diputados). The paper gives approximate totals, citing a jump from 7,000-14,000 in the autonomic elections (1987-1991), 6,000-12,000 in the general elections (1989-1993), and 5,000-10,000 in the European elections (1989-1994).

ibid.

<sup>802</sup> "El retu agora ye doble. Lo primero, conseguir grupu parlimentariu propiu unes autonómiques del añu qu'entra. Y, enseguida, pasar a ser la tercer fuerza política del país. Esto último ye mui importante y ye inseperable de lo primero. Cuento que tenemos que poenlo como oxetivu prioritariu. Pa conseguilo tenemos qu'algamar y superar los actuales 100.000 votos d'Izquierda Unida. Esto ye, nun plazu razonable, qu'empiez ya, tenemos que multiplicar los nuestros votos d'agora por 7. Nun ye fácil, pero nun vamos aspirar a menos."

ibid.

<sup>803</sup> "...y nun tardará muncho en verse, ya seya baxo la forma d'una fuerza política mayoritaria (y tien que ser el Partíu Asturianista, nun pue ser otra) o ya seya baxo la fórmula de coalición."

Francisco R. Álvarez, "Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente: «El PSOE siente un absolutu despreciu pol pueblu asturianu y pola so cultura»," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1994-04-04.

This triumphalist rhetoric significantly hindered the party's explicit goal to absorb other Asturianista groups, however.<sup>804</sup> As it had with the UNA in 1991 and 1992, the Partíu Asturianista maintained that it would not be the junior partner in any coalition, and that any other nationalist group would have to "integrate in the political project of the PAS."<sup>805</sup> Thus, in spite of conversations between Iglesias (representing the PAS) and Felechosa (representing the *Lliga Asturiana*), the talks were in many ways a repeat of those held a few years earlier between the Partíu Asturianista and the remnants of UNA and subsequently broke down.<sup>806</sup>

The PAS's (and Sánchez Vicente's) increasingly frosty relations with other members of the Asturianista community also hurt its ability to rally popular support amongst Asturianistas. These growing divisions within the Asturianista movement (in some ways breaking down along "purist" and "pragmatist" lines) came to a head surrounding the public debate over Sánchez Vicente's right to speak in Asturianu on the floor of the Junta General del Principado de Asturias. While the four parliamentary groups in the legislature had all agreed that *de jure*, under the provisions of Article 4 of the Autonomy Statute, any representative would have the right to speak in Asturianu, an officially "protected"

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<sup>804</sup> Inaciu Iglesias, "Informe de la conveniencia de mandar un mensaxe integrador a otres fuerces polítiques con resultaos peores qu'el nuestro nes elecciones de mayu del 95.," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, prob. xunu 1994).

<sup>805</sup> "En toles negociaciones qu'el PAS tuvo con otres fuerces nacionalistes (XNA, ENA...) siempre se mantuvo que la solución yera que «s'integraren nel proyectu políticu del PAS.»"

Inaciu Iglesias, "Epílogu al Informe o de la necesidá de recultar xente tamién dientru del mundu nacionalista," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1994-06-16).

<sup>806</sup> Inaciu Iglesias, "Continuación del Informe o les conversaciones con miembros de Lliga Asturiana," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1994-07-15). Suárez Arias-Cachero, Interview by author.



language.<sup>807</sup> However, the actual process of incorporating his speeches into the daily practice of government triggered a public debate when the legislature's transcription service claimed to be "resistant" to their transcription. Claiming to be unsure whether the language in which Sánchez Vicente's statements were made was Asturianu or "Asturianized Castilian," the transcription workers downed tools, protesting that they had no obligation or ability to transcribe "something that [did] not exist."<sup>808</sup> Thus, the standard practice of recording and publishing the minutes of every session of the Junta General del Principado de Asturias was interrupted from the first day of the new legislature (June 10, 1991) until mid-October 1991.

In September, the President of the Asturian Parliament, Laura González (IU),<sup>809</sup> authorized four outside studies of Sánchez Vicente's speech in parliament, by the Academia de la Llingua, the Faculty of Philology at the University of Oviedo, the Oficina de Política Llingüística, and the highly hostile *Amigos de los Bables*.<sup>810</sup> Institutions such as the Academia de la Llingua and the Oficina de Política Llingüística, whom one assumes would naturally defend Sánchez Vicente in such a situation, instead publically critiqued him. First, Arias

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<sup>807</sup> "Las intervenciones en bable de Sánchez Vicente impiden redactar las actas de la Junta," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-09-24.

<sup>808</sup> "La polémica del bable en la Junta, a debate entre los distintos partidos," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-22.

<sup>809</sup> Not to be confused with the President of Asturias (head of the executive branch of government), who at the time was Rodríguez-Vigil. González's position was analogous to that of a Speaker of a unicameral State legislative system.

<sup>810</sup> The anti-Asturianista group continued to promote its ideas (though with diminishing frequency), primarily through the press and academic conferences, from 1988 through 1998, such as Emilio Alarcos, "Asturotropismo y bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-11-06.

The group effectively ceased activity with the death of its primary linguistic authority, Emilio Alarcos Llorach in 1998.

chastised the PAS representative for speaking in a “mixed” language, which was “not the best way to speak in a place such as the Junta General del Principado or other type of official act,” recommending to his former Conceyu Bable colleague (and Academia de la Llingua member) that “it would be better to speak directly in Asturianu or Castilian.”<sup>811</sup>

Furthermore, in the Academia de la Llingua’s analysis, Sánchez Vicente had a “historic opportunity to use solely Asturianu and [was] not taking it.”<sup>812</sup>

The studies submitted by the Oficina de Política Llingüística and the Faculty of Philology a few days later were only slightly more flattering. The Oficina de Política Llingüística categorized his speech as resulting from an “interference between Asturianu and Castilian,” and Dr. Alfredo Álvarez, on behalf of the University, similarly described it as a “cross between Asturianu and Castilian,” using Castilian phonetics and vocabulary on top of an Asturianu syntax and grammar.<sup>813</sup> However, both the Oficina de Política Llingüística and Álvarez offered the Partíu Asturianista some justification, pointing out that Sánchez Vicente’s used the “most extensive form of speech in the center of Asturias” and “coincided with the variety of Asturianu used in the cities and villages of the center of Asturias.”<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> “No es la mejor fórmula para hablar en un lugar como la Junta General del Principado o en otro tipo de actos oficiales; sería mejor hablar directamente en asturiano o en castellano.”

“La Academia de la Llingua juzga inadecuado el uso que hace Sánchez Vicente del asturiano en la Cámara regional,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1991-10-01.

<sup>812</sup> “Tiene en la presente legislatura una oportunidad histórica para utilizar únicamente el asturiano y no lo está haciendo.”

Alfonso Suárez, “La Academia critica a Sánchez Vicente por mezclar el asturiano y el castellano,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-01.

<sup>813</sup> Alfonso Suárez, “El informe de Filología dice que Sánchez Vicente habla «asturiano castellanizado»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-05.

<sup>814</sup> “La Oficina de Política Lingüística coincide con la Universidad en que la forma de hablar del parlamentario es la

Thus, in a way, by using the *amestáu* creole of his native Gijón, Sánchez Vicente was more representative of his constituents than if he spoke in either standardized Asturianu or Castilian.

The study requested by the Amigos de los Bables was, probably due to its foregone hostility, kept under wraps by the government until eight days after it had submitted its report to the Junta General.<sup>815</sup> Unsurprisingly, the association headed by Emilio Alarcos came to a relatively harsh judgment, concluding that “Sánchez Vicente [spoke] Spanish, with sporadic grafts of Bable.”<sup>816</sup> To Alarcos and the anti-Asturianistas, neither standardized Asturianu nor the day-to-day *amestáu* was something to protect. Eventually, after a protracted debate in the parliament, the decision was made to transcribe Sánchez Vicente’s speech, however he chose to form it. Translations for words and phrases in Asturianu were inserted in the footnotes of each page, with the judgment justifying the pragmatic solution by declaring that the majority of his speech was “perfectly understandable.”<sup>817</sup>

Not surprisingly, Sánchez Vicente refused to alter his speech patterns during the debate, as the presence of an Asturianu-speaking representative in the regional parliament

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*más extendida en el centro de Asturias.”*

“El estudio de la Universidad de Oviedo asegura que el tipo de asturiano empleado por Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente «coincide con la variedad de asturiano usada en las ciudades y villas del centro de Asturias.”

ibid.

<sup>815</sup> Alfonso Suárez, “La Junta quiso ocultar un informe sobre el bable de Sánchez Vicente,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-17.

<sup>816</sup> “Alarcos: «Sánchez Vicente habla español, con esporádicos injertos bables»,” *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1991-10-18.

<sup>817</sup> “La Junta autoriza la transcripción del asturiano a las actas oficiales,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-16.

was an important political symbol.<sup>818</sup> In spite of the fact that he eventually won the right to speak as he wished in official functions, the effect of the refusal by a group of civil servants to accommodate him and the resulting public examination of his speech was hardly flattering to his public image.<sup>819</sup> The implication made by both his critics in the Asturianista movement and amongst other political groupings was that the head of a supposedly nationalist party that made linguistic rights so central to its program did not himself even know how to speak the language. The Communist president of the Junta General, Laura González, embodied this backhanded critique by claiming that “one can speak Bable, but one must do so correctly....because parliamentary publications should be dignified and well-written.”<sup>820</sup> These persistent implications severely undercut the slowly rising prestige of standard Asturianu as well as the Partíu Asturianista’s campaign to win recognition as a serious political force. Additionally, the public mudslinging amongst the Asturianistas themselves (at the same time that the PAS-UNA coalition was in the process of disintegrating) cut into the public image of unity that the Asturianistas had built up over the preceding half decade. Of the Asturianista associations and political parties of note, only the *Asociación de Escritores*

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<sup>818</sup> "El Partíu Asturianista (PAs) dice que el uso del asturiano en la Cámara regional es una decisión política, no lingüística," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1991-09-27.

<sup>819</sup> "La Junta autoriza la transcripción del asturiano a las actas oficiales."

<sup>820</sup> "*Se puede hablar bable, pero debe hacerse correctamente....porque las publicaciones parlamentarias deben ser dignas y estar bien escritas.*"

"La presidenta del Parlamento declinó participar en el acto," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-22.

*Asturianos* (Association of Asturian writers), with Adolfo Camilo Díaz as its president, came to the PAS' defense and condemned the "humiliation of Sánchez Vicente."<sup>821</sup>

Although Asturianismu had a representative in the regional parliament (if a highly divisive one, even amongst the nationalists themselves) from 1991 onwards, it simultaneously lost its most important regionalist sympathizer within the Socialist Party when Pedro de Silva retired from active political life at the conclusion of his second term as President. His retirement was in large part due to a continuous frustration with the PSOE's strict organizational hierarchy, which minimized the freedom each individual regional group had to set local policy.<sup>822</sup> The de Silva administrations gave way to that of the much more hostile Juan Luis Rodríguez-Vigil Rubio (1991-3), who was neither an Asturian native (born in Ciudad Real), nor sympathetic to regionalist cultural movements. With the change of administration, a number of Asturianistas who had previously been willing to attempt to work with the Socialists distanced themselves from the party, most notably Antón García. Head of the Oficina de Política Llingüística since 1988, he resigned his post, unwilling to work in a situation where, at best, he would have enjoyed extremely limited institutional support.<sup>823</sup> As an additional consequence of Rodríguez-Vigil's rise to power, the already frosty relations between the Socialist government and the Asturianistas (principally the

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<sup>821</sup> "Escritores Asturianos considera que la Junta humilla a Sánchez Vicente," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-10-03.

<sup>822</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

<sup>823</sup> García, Interview by author.

Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa), continued to be quite belligerent, and the Socialist party's anti-regionalist stance became overt.

The PAS's Asturianista agenda was helped by the Antonio Trevín government (July 1993-1995) and its official reversal of its predecessor's negative attitude towards the Asturianista groups, making it known that it intended to return to "the policy of promotion of Bable" of the Pedro de Silva governments in the 1980s.<sup>824</sup> The new government did make some concessions to the Asturianistas in the new administration, appointing ex-Conceyu Bable president (and PSOE member) Amelia Valcárcel Bernaldo de Quirós as the *Consejera* of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth.<sup>825</sup> The new government also appointed Asturianista writer Félix Ferreiro as the new head of the *Serviciu de Política Llingüística*, attempting to mirror de Silva's use of the position as an attempted outreach to regionalist and nationalist groups.

In another highly visible attempt to win over the support of Asturianista groups, Valcárcel and Ferreiro created a one-month advertising campaign in favor of the use of Asturianu in day-to-day interactions. Under the slogan "*Les coses pol so nome, di-y-lo n'asturiano*" ("Things by their own name, say it to them in Asturianu"), the 8 million

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<sup>824</sup> "Recuperar la política de promoción de la enseñanza, el aprendizaje y el uso del bable."

"Las tareas pendientes," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-07-28.

<sup>825</sup> Pilar Rubiera, "Amelia Valcárcel: independiente, filósofa, feminista y asturianista," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-06-16; "El nuevo Gobierno asturiano," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-06-16; "Amelia Valcárcel, Consejera de Educación, principal novedad en el Consejo de Gobierno que presidirá Antonio Trevín," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1993-06-16.

peseta<sup>826</sup> campaign ran from December 1, 1993 to January 1, 1994, and consisted of television, newspaper, and radio ads, along with posters and pamphlets distributed in public areas.<sup>827</sup> Claiming to merely “recover the names which [Asturians] have always given things,” the campaign promoted the use of terms such as *fabes* (fava beans), *güelu* (grandfather), *llabrador* (laborer), *carbayu* (oak), o *pixin* (monkfish).<sup>828</sup> According to the Regional Director of Education, Ángel Luís García García (who worked under Valcárcel), the *Consejería* of Culture and Education specifically designed the campaign with the goal of encouraging people to “lose the fear of *aldeanismo* [small-town-ness]....and become conscious that speaking in Asturianu does not signify membership in any particular social group.”<sup>829</sup> The Valcárcel-led *Consejería* also continued the distribution of signs with common phrases such as *abiertu* (open) *peslláu* (closed), *nun fume* (no smoking), *homes* (men), *muyeres* (women), and the like, a campaign started in 1987 by the Faustino Álvarez-led Oficina de Política Llingüística.<sup>830</sup> The campaign encouraged local bars and shops, and institutions to either replace or supplement their existing Castilian signage, and the campaign has, over the course of subsequent decades, enjoyed moderate success (most notably with the free distribution of post-Christmas “*rebaxes*” signs, which are often used by shops with no other outward sign of

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<sup>826</sup> ~\$63,000 in 1993 US\$

<sup>827</sup> Carolina G. Menéndez, “«Dí-ylo n'asturiano», nueva campaña del Gobierno para promocionar el bable,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-12-02.

<sup>828</sup> *Fabas*, *abuelo*, *labrador*, *roble*, and *rabe*, respectively, in Castilian.

<sup>829</sup> “Por ejemplo, es normal que digamos *fabes*, *güelu*, *llabrador*, *carbayu*, o *pixin*. Hay que perder el miedo al *aldeanismo*...y concienciarnos que hablar en asturiano no significa pertenecer a un grupo social determinado.” Menéndez, “«Dí-ylo n'asturiano», nueva campaña del Gobierno para promocionar el bable.”

<sup>830</sup> Roberto González-Quevedo, “Normalización y sentido común,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-01-08.

Asturianu use).<sup>831</sup> During the following year's *Selmana de les Lletres* (the first week in May), Trevín published a communiqué in Asturianu in the Gijón paper *El Comercio*, in which he stated the government's intent to "continue to work in favor of the language,"<sup>832</sup> and Valcárcel's *Consejería* proceeded to provide funds for any of the Asturian *concejos* (municipalities) that wished to erect bilingual signage (such as Langreo/Llangréu, in the Nalón mining district).<sup>833</sup>

However, the Socialist Party under Trevín's pro-regionalist stance was limited, particularly when faced with the PAS's explicit attempt to test its willingness to accommodate the Asturianista linguistic agenda, publically declaring his intent to "see if there [had] been real change in the PSOE."<sup>834</sup> In particular, Sánchez Vicente (like many of the other Asturianistas) criticized the Socialist government's lack of specifics in its plans for cultural politics.<sup>835</sup> Soon after the reorganization of the Socialist government, on August 14, 1993, the Partíu Asturianista inserted an Asturianu paragraph into a motion it submitted to the floor of the Junta General. The motion was rejected by the governing body on the basis that "as the document used non-Castilian terms other than toponyms, the names Asturian

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<sup>831</sup> PWZ field notes 2008-9.

<sup>832</sup> "Trevín diz que'l Principáu seguirá trabayando en pro de la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1994-05-06.

<sup>833</sup> Roger Díaz, "Los pueblos de Langreo serán identificados con su nombre en asturiano," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-09-07.

<sup>834</sup> "Veremos si ha habido cambio real en el PSOE."

Xuán Xosé Sánchez Vicente, quoted in Pilar Rubiera, "Sánchez Vicente presenta a debate una nueva ley de uso del bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-06-26.

<sup>835</sup> Carolina G. Menéndez, "Valcárcel no concreta cómo va a normalizar socialmente la «llingua»," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-10-18.



institutions of government, or dates, the motion could not be admitted.”<sup>836</sup> Calling the “regressive politics” of the majority parties “reactionary and anti-Asturian,” the PAS remained unconvinced by the new government’s regionalist turn.<sup>837</sup>

Sánchez Vicente, having experienced an analogous situation as the President of the Cultural Commission a decade before, was skeptical about the influence that Valcárcel could have as an isolated Asturianista in the government.<sup>838</sup> By March of the next year, the relationship between the new *Consejera* and the PAS had seemingly broken down completely. During a presentation by the *Consejería* in the Junta General, Sánchez Vicente accused her and the PSOE of intentionally delaying the implementation of the Plan for the Promotion of Asturian Folklore (approved by the Junta General a year previously) and of “not appreciating Asturian culture,” to which the Socialist replied that Sánchez Vicente “should not claim to represent [all of] Asturianism.”<sup>839</sup> Somewhat farcically, the first ever debate entirely in Asturianu in the regional parliament consisted mostly of sniping between

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<sup>836</sup> “Como en el documento se utilizan términos no castellanos que no se concretan exclusivamente a topónimos, a la designación de las instituciones de la comunidad autónoma, a la sede del Parlamento y mes de la fecha, no se puede admitir la iniciativa.”

B. Gutierrez, “La Junta rechaza una iniciativa del PAS por llevar un párrafo en bable,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1992-08-14.

<sup>837</sup> B. Gutierrez, “El PAS llama «reaccionarios y antiasturianos» al PSOE y PP,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1992-09-23.

<sup>838</sup> “Poner de relieve si hubo algún cambio en el PSOE con la entrada del nuevo equipo de gobierno y la presencia en la *Consejería de Cultura* de una mujer ligada a la tradición cultural asturianista.”

Rubiera, “Sánchez Vicente presenta a debate una nueva ley de uso del bable.”

<sup>839</sup> “No se atribuya la representación del asturianismo.”

Amelia Valcárcel to Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, quoted in B.G., “Valcárcel y Sánchez Vicente mantuvieron el primer debate en bable de la Junta,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-03-19.

two of the most visible Asturianista public figures.<sup>840</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the repeated polemics involving Sánchez Vicente and the PAS during its first years in office strongly reaffirmed to the majority of the voting public that the Partíu Asturianista (and, by extension, Asturian nationalism) was still almost exclusively concerned with linguistic issues.

### **Rallying the Masses for Linguistic Reform**

Although the Asturianista revival of the mid-to-late 1980s and its attempt to renovate the nationalist movement had resulted in a boost to Asturianismu's popularity for both its cultural and political program, the nationalists of groups such as UNA, the PAS, the CEN, the Xunta pola Defensa, and the Academia de la Llingua were unable to completely break free from Asturianismu's established tendency to reduce political and cultural arguments to discussions of linguistic rights. Fifteen years of cultural activism had the effect of so strongly identifying the nationalist movement with linguistic politics that, by the 1990s, public opinion largely considered the two identical. While a number of Asturianista groups, in particular Andecha Astur and *Izquierda Asturiana*, strongly incorporated a green ideology and a socialist economic system into their political programs, their simultaneous participation in linguistic activism did little to change the perception that Asturian nationalism was only interested in cultural (as opposed to economic or political) change.

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<sup>840</sup> Adding to the atmosphere of farce, Luis Ángel Cuervo, a deputy for the PP, requested the “simultaneous translation” of the debate “in all three [regional] varieties of Bable.”

ibid.

Additionally, the highly public activism of the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, both typically lumped together with Asturianista political parties in the minds of many Asturians, helped to reinforce this impression.<sup>841</sup> While it seems natural that both the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola were organizations exclusively concerned with the language, other Asturianista groups and parties gained such a reputation through association, in some part justifiably given their largely overlapping membership. At the same time, the issue of language rights continued to resonate amongst a steady niche population, a minority, but not an insignificant one by any means. In particular, the Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua was able to garner relatively wide support for the inclusion of Asturianu as a course of study in the University of Oviedo, resulting in a back-and-forth battle with the University administration for its inclusion that garnered a good deal of public attention.<sup>842</sup>

During the mid-1990s, with the PAS helping to constantly provoke public debate over the issues of language rights and statutory reform, the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana (typically with the participation and support of Izquierda Unida, amongst others) demonstrated the ability to attract large numbers of people to movements in support of increased linguistic rights and self-government in Asturias. The Asturianista cultural associations and institutions were by this point fully invested in a

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<sup>841</sup> PWZ field notes 2008-9.

<sup>842</sup> "Filología aprueba por amplia mayoría la especialidad de Lengua Asturiana," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-05-01; "La Universidad de Oviedo cierra las puertas a los estudios de llingua asturiana," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1993-06-19.

discourse of human rights, which they affirmed through public speeches (such as at the 1993 *Día de les Lletres Asturianes* ceremony),<sup>843</sup> newspaper opinion articles, and a series of appeals to the European Union's Commission on Regional and Minority Languages (generally transmitted through the IU's representatives in the European Parliament).<sup>844</sup> The concept was worked into the title of many of the rallies of the period, such as the 1994 *Día de les Lletres Asturianes* protest march held by the Xunta pola, "Official-status, a social reality, an undeniable right."<sup>845</sup> A 1997 article published by the Academia de la Llingua in the Gijón daily *El Comercio* decried a situation where, "Asturians, both Asturianu-speakers and non, who respect the generalized employment of the Castilian language, are denied in their own country the right to do the same with their historical language, the Asturian language."<sup>846</sup> Only a few months later, Ramón d'Andrés Díaz, Secretary of the Academia de la Llingua, would feel compelled to submit another article to the judgment of public opinion, arguing, "for the umpteenth time," in favor of "linguistic rights" to be enshrined in the reformed statute of autonomy.<sup>847</sup>

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<sup>843</sup> Javier Neira, "Arias afirma que la libertad de utilizar el asturiano es un derecho humano," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-05-08.

<sup>844</sup> Such as the petition by the *Tertulia El Garrapiellu* in early 1996. Francisco R. Álvarez, "Piden la presencia de la llingua en Bruselas," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-02-07. Also see "IU pide que la UE reconozca el asturiano como «lengua minoritaria»," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-01-25.

<sup>845</sup> "La oficialidá, una realidá social, un drechu irrenunciable."

"Manifestación en Oviedo y títeres y música en Candás," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-05-06.

<sup>846</sup> "...a los asturianos, asturfalantes o non, que respeten perdafechu l'emplegu xeneralizáu de la llingua castellana, niéguen-yos el drechu nel propiu país a facer lo mesmo col so idioma hestóricu, la llingua asturiana."

Academia de la Llingua Asturiana, "Comunicáu oficial de l'Academia de la Llingua Asturiana," (Uviéu 1997-08-01).

<sup>847</sup> Ramón de Andrés Díaz, "Por enésima vez: derechos lingüísticos," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1997-10-18.

They were particularly successful at rallying support around the inclusion of Asturianu in the University as a course of study, specifically that the university should offer degrees in Asturianu Philology and in the teaching of Asturianu as a Second Language, in order to provide teachers for the primary and secondary schools of the region. This issue came to a head because of a series of rejections by the University of Oviedo's governing body (the *Junta de Gobierno*) of both proposals, starting in June 1993.<sup>848</sup> In spite of a recommendation by the Faculty of Philology approving the creation of a specialty degree program in Asturianu philology,<sup>849</sup> the University's Governing Board rejected the proposal in June 1993.<sup>850</sup>

This prompted a wide backlash in Asturian society, reaching beyond the small sector of active nationalists and regionalists and including a number of Left-wing parties and trade unions with a far greater capacity for popular mobilization than the Asturianistas had ever demonstrated on their own. Initially based upon their support of their educational divisions, both the major Communist (CC.OO.) and Socialist (UGT) unions prominently participated in the Asturianista-led rallies for the presence of the language in the University. More importantly, this support expanded over the course of the mid-1990s to include public support of both statutory reform and bilingualism. The support of the trade unions for the

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<sup>848</sup> There were 23 votes against, 10 in favor, and 2 abstentions.

"Rechazado el asturiano," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1993-06-20.

<sup>849</sup> "Filología aprueba por amplia mayoría la especialidad de Lengua Asturiana."; B. A. Gutiérrez, "Filología lucha por implantar el asturiano," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1993-06-30.

<sup>850</sup> Javier Neira, "La Universidad rechaza la inclusión del asturiano en los estudios de Filología," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-06-19.

Asturianista movement would later play major roles in pressuring the majority parties in the Junta General del Principado de Asturias to adjust their positions to accommodate increasing nationalist and regionalist pressure from the Left. It was no coincidence that the largest rallies ever held in support of Asturianu as a co-official language occurred in 1995, 1996, and 1997, when trade-union participation in the movement was at its highest.

Starting in 1993, for the first time since the late 1970s, the Asturianista movement began to mobilize a broad segment of Asturian society around the twin demands of greater self-government and linguistic rights. Starting with the rather modest results of the campaign in favor of co-officiality in early 1993, the Asturianistas slowly gained momentum (and allies). The Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua initiated a poster campaign in March and continued with the yearly *Conciertu pola Oficialidá* on April 23, concluding with the rally on the *Día de les Lletres* in early May.<sup>851</sup> While the number of attendees at both the concert and the rally was very small (the latter estimated at a mere 500-1000),<sup>852</sup> the Asturianistas were able to attract the participation of Izquierda Unida (for the first time publically labeling itself “*Izquierda Xunía*” on its banner at the march).<sup>853</sup> Both Gaspar Llamazares, the Asturian branch of IU’s General Coordinator, and Amalia Maceda (IU representative and Vice

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<sup>851</sup> Mercedes Marqués, "La Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua pide al Gobierno respeto para el asturiano," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-03-19.

<sup>852</sup> Indicative of their general attitude towards the Asturianista movement, La Nueva España’s reporter estimated 500 participants, while El Comercio’s put the figure at 1000. Javier Neira, "Quinientos manifestantes piden en Oviedo la oficialidad del bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-05-08; "Mil personas reivindicaron en Oviedo la oficialidad de la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1993-05-08.

<sup>853</sup> Neira, "Quinientos manifestantes piden en Oviedo la oficialidad del bable."

President of the Junta General) were present, foreshadowing IU's evolution into one of the strongest influences within the Asturianista movement for the next decade.

On June 24, in response to this decision by the University and in the context of a renewed anti-Asturianista campaign by the Amigos de los Bables, the Asturianistas staged a protest rally outside the old university building in the center of town. Representatives of the Partíu Asturianista, the Academia de la Llingua, the Xunta pola Defensa, the Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes, Izquierda Unida, and the major trade unions (UGT, CC.OO., CSI, and SUATEA) were all visibly present amongst the 1000 or so people gathered in the Plaza de Riego,<sup>854</sup> a location chosen for its Liberal and progressive symbolism as well as its proximity to the university building.<sup>855</sup> A group of the protestors, mostly belonging to the CEN, subsequently staged the most famous of their several "invasions" of the university's *Paraninfo*, showering writer Francisco Ayala's audience with firecrackers, eggs, and coins.<sup>856</sup>

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<sup>854</sup> "IU, PAS, CC. OO., SUATEA y UGT, indignados por el rechazo a la llingua en la Universidad de Oviedo," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1993-06-23; "La comunidad educativa asturiana se manifiesta hoy en Oviedo en defensa de la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1993-06-24; "Un millar de personas apoyó ayer en Oviedo la presencia de la llingua en la Universidad," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1993-06-25.

<sup>855</sup> Named after General Rafael Riego y Núñez, from Tineo in Western Asturias, the Plaza commemorates his key role in the 1820 uprising which forced absolutist King Fernando VII to re-institute the liberal Constitution of 1812. Constitutional government remained in effect for three years, the so-called *Trienio Liberal* (1820-1823), until the French Army entered Spain (known in Spain as the 100,000 sons of Saint Louis) to put down the incipient republicanism in Spain and evade the possibility of a potentially destabilizing force in Metternich's post-Napoleonic Europe. Riego was found guilty of treason and hanged on November 7, 1823. For his role in the restoration of Constitutional government, the anthem of the First (1873-4) and Second (1931-39) Spanish Second Republics was the *Himno del Riego*.

<sup>856</sup> The PAS's stance vis-a-vis this incident is discussed above. The direct action of the CEN is covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

"Graves incidentes en el Paraninfo tras la concentración por el veto al bable."

The students were not concerned with Ayala himself but rather were reacting to the conference organizers, the Amigos de los Bables. Ayala's presentation seems to have simply been chosen for logistical reasons rather than any particular objection or interest in his work.

The following year, the Xunta pola Defensa's poster campaign was so extensive that the organization received a fine from the *Consejería* of the Environment of Oviedo after repeated complaints by the waste collection agency that it was having to spend inordinate amounts of time scraping the organization's posters off of public buildings in February 1994.<sup>857</sup> The fine, at 15,000 pesetas per poster, was estimated to exceed 1,500,000 pesetas.<sup>858</sup> The Xunta pola Defensa was again fined for the same offence later that year.<sup>859</sup> As a result of the relatively steady pressure both in the street and inside the Junta General (now both from Izquierda Unida and the PAS), the University announced that it would be permitting "specialist" titles to be available for students majoring in Spanish philology and the title of "Expert in Asturianu" to be offered to students taking courses in primary education starting in the Fall of 1994.<sup>860</sup>

Over the course of 1995, the Asturianistas steadily began to mobilize more organizations and people behind a cause that had expanded beyond the issue of language instruction in the University to encompass the broader ideas of statutory reform and the inclusion of a declaration of Asturianu as an official language. Now with the full and active participation of both the third- and fourth- largest parties in Asturias (IU and the PAS,

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See the section on the CEN's ideology of direct action, Chapter 4.

<sup>857</sup> "Medio Ambiente multará a una plataforma asturianista por pegar carteles," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-02-11.

<sup>858</sup> ~\$11,200 in 1994 UD\$.

<sup>859</sup> "Medio Ambiente retira por segunda vez los carteles de un colectivo asturianista," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1994-11-12.

<sup>860</sup> Universidad de Oviedo, "Convocatoria de preinscripción a los títulos propios de la Universidad de Oviedo," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1994-09-06.



respectively),<sup>861</sup> the Xunta pola Defensa and the Academia de la Llingua built up a group of support in favor of bilingualism. They were helped greatly by the public reaction against an October 1995 decision by the Spanish Ministry of Education's Council of Universities (*Consejo de Universidades*),<sup>862</sup> which rejected a proposal by the University of Oviedo to include Asturianu as one of the courses to fulfill the requirements for a degree in Spanish Philology or Romance Philology (*asignatura troncal*), meaning that it could only be used to fulfill an elective requirement.<sup>863</sup> The following day, the Junta General passed a motion condemning the decision, with even the PSOE adding its assenting votes (the PP representatives abstained out of "respect for university autonomy").<sup>864</sup> The IU representatives even threatened to carry the decision to the Supreme Court.<sup>865</sup>

Within a month, the slowly expanding niche of Asturianista support had exploded, with 33 political parties, trade unions, linguistic groups, cultural associations, ecological groups, musical groups, and folklore troupes signing a manifesto on November 11 (published on the 18<sup>th</sup>).<sup>866</sup> Eventually, more than 100 added their names to the call to a

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<sup>861</sup> There was still a significant gap between the voting totals and membership numbers of two parties.

<sup>862</sup> The coordinating body for the Spanish University system.

<sup>863</sup> "El Consejo de Universidades rechaza la propuesta del asturiano como lengua troncal," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-10-20.

<sup>864</sup> "*al respeto de la autonomía universitaria.*"

"La Junta critica el «desprecio» al bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-10-21.

<sup>865</sup> Francisco R. Álvarez, "IU quier llevar ante'l TC al Conseyu d'Universidaes pol vetu al asturianu," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-23.

<sup>866</sup> The signees of the original manifesto, sorted by category (in order listed in original):

Political parties – Izquierda Unida, Partíu Asturianista, Lliberación, Andecha Astur, Izquierda Asturiana, Lliga Asturiana.

Trade unions – Unión Xeneral de Trabayadores (UGT), Comisiones Obreres (CC.OO.), Unión Sindical Obrera (USO), Sindicatu Unitariu Autónomu de los Trabayadores de la Enseñanza d'Asturies (SUATEA).

protest rally on November 25, 1995.<sup>867</sup> In addition, 29 of the 78 Asturian mayors publically endorsed the rally, and, by extension, its goal of bilingualism, including 15 Socialists and even 5 members of the Partido Popular who broke party ranks to support the initiative.<sup>868</sup>

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Linguistic and cultural organizations – Academia de la Llingua, Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, Tertulia «El Garrapiellu», Sociedad Cultural Gijonesa, Coleutivu «Manuel Fernández de Castro», Coleutivu «Llingua y Enseñanza», Conceyu d'Estudios Etnográficos Belenos, Asociación d'Escritores Asturianos  
 Student groups – Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes  
 Working-class community groups – Atenéu Obrero de Xixón,  
 Ecological groups – Asociación Asturiana d'Amigos de la Naturaleza, Grupu de Montaña «El Garrapiellu»

Musical groups – Conceyu de Gaiteros d'Asturies, Grupu «Avientu»  
 Folklore groups – Grupu «Muyeres», Grupu «La Quintana», Grupu «Na Señardá», Grupu «Xorreced», Grupu «L'Aniciu», Grupu «Concetsones», Grupu «Xurgar nas Costumes», Andecha Folclor d'Uviéu  
 "Manifestación unitaria pola llingua y la cultura asturianas," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-18.

<sup>867</sup> In addition to those listed above, the following groups signed onto the call to protest:

Political parties – Izquierda Republicana-Asturies, PCPE  
 Student unions – Asociación "GER-22F"  
 Linguistic and cultural organizations - ADICA, Asociación Cultural "La Folkquina", CEPLA, Conceyu Bable, Asociación de Escritores y Traductores en Llingua Asturiana, Xeira, Xusticia y Paz d'Asturies, A.C. Secha, Radio Sele, A. X. Sechoriu, Teatru del Trebolín, A.C. Entemecer.

Ecological groups – Coleutivu Ecoloxista d'Avilés, Coleutivu Ecoloxista "La Llavandera", Conceyu Ecoloxista de Xixón, Coordinadora Ecoloxista d'Asturies, Los Verdes, Freixo

Musical groups - Los Aguarones, Andurrial, Asturtralla, Balandrán, Los Berrones, Cambaral, Dixebra, Felpeyu, Llan de Cubel, Llibardón, Merlín, La Martaleña, Tambor d'Abadía, Trebeyu, Vocibrán, Xaréu, Xéliba  
 Theatre groups - U. Actores d'Asturies, Telón de Fondo

Folklore and ethnographic groups - Alitar, Asociación d'Intérpretes de la Canción Asturiana, El Cabo, Los Cocéñones, Federación d'Agrupaciones de Folklore Asturianu, Escrontra'l Raigañu, Esbardu, Folclor Ayerán, Fontenova, Noce, La Paloma, Reija, El Ventolín Xaréu d'Ochobre, Xentiquina, Xuno

Bagpipers - Banda de Gaites "Avanti Cuideiru", Banda de Gaites "Candás", Banda de Gaites "Fonte Fuécará", Banda de Gaites "Mieres del Camín", Banda de Gaites "Naranco", Banda de Gaites "Noega", Banda de Gaites "Occidente", Banda de Gaites "Tabladar", Banda de Gaites "Valdés", Banda de Gaites "La Viga Travesá", Banda de Gaites "Villaviciosa", Banda de Gaites "Xaranzana"

"25 Asturies. Manifestación. ¡Llingua asturiana, llingua oficial! ¡Cultura asturiana, cultura de toos!," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal de Xelu Neira, 1995-11-24). NOTE – The Conceyu Bable had been defunct for over a decade by November 1995. The name, however, does appear in the notice, both in the pamphlet and the nearly identical ad run in the newspapers. "25 Asturies. Manifestación. ¡Llingua asturiana, llingua oficial! ¡Cultura asturiana, cultura de toos!," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-11-24.

<sup>868</sup> By party, the mayors who endorsed the manifesto (*Conceyu* in parenthesis):

PAS (1) – Xulián Fernández Montés (Nava)  
 IU (5) – Joaquín García Gutiérrez (Bimenes), Joaquín Raimundo Fernández (Carreño), José Manuel Fernández (Degaña), José María García (Langreo), Juan Rionda Mier (Morcín)  
 PSOE (15) – José Ramón García Sáiz (Ribera de Arriba), Belarmino F. Fervienza (Somiedo), Antonio García

With a wider base of organizational support than they had ever known, the rally was double the size of any previous protest on matters of linguistic, cultural, or regional identity, including the politically important rallies of the early Transition. Under the slogan “Asturian language, official language! Asturian culture, culture of all!” the march attracted somewhere over 10,000 people to the streets of Oviedo.<sup>869</sup>

Beginning at just after noon on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup>, the march gathered in front of Oviedo’s train station (see Map 2, below), and, led by the attention-seizing power of 100 bagpipers, 42 drummers, and a violinist, proceeded down the city’s central avenue, calle Uría, to the gates of the Junta General.<sup>870</sup> From there, the march turned left up the calle San Francisco past the University, where the bagpipers paused for a few minutes to firmly emphasize the protest’s immediate grievances. The mass of people then proceed to the Plaza

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Vega (Candamo), Francisco González Zapico (Cudillero), José Manuel Alonso Delgado (Muros del Nalón), Manuel Millán García González (Parres), Antonio Cachán Losas (Pesoz), Juan Priede Llano (Piloña), Agustín Farpón Alonso (Quirós), José Manuel Menéndez Fernández (Salas), Eduardo Lastra (Taramundi), José Ramón Álvarez Argüelles (Teverga), Jesús Landeira Álvarez-Cascos (Valdés), Servanda García Fernández Vegadeo, José Antonio González Braña (Villanueva de Oscos)

PP (5) – José María León Pérez (Castrillón), Gervasio Acevedo Fernández (Tapia), Julio Ramón Menéndez Gallego (Colunga), Agustín Dacosta (El Franco), Asensio Martínez Covián (Villaviciosa).

Independent (3) – José Cachafiero Valladares (Grandas de Salime), Julia García López (Cuaña), Manuel Bedía (Navia)

Francisco R. Álvarez, "Ya son 29 los alcaldes d'Asturies que sofiten la oficialidá de la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-24; Javier Neira, "Rozada niega que los 4 alcaldes del PP apoyen la cooficialidad del bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-11-24.

<sup>869</sup> This is based on the estimate by newspaper *El Comercio*. According to the Xunta pola Defensa, the attendance was 15,000, ABC cited “more than 7,000,” and the police 4,000.

"Miles de personas se manifiestan en apoyo a la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-26; Francisco R. Álvarez, "Miles de persones tomen les cais d'Uviéu pa esixir la oficialidá del asturianu," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-26; "Más de siete mil personas piden en Oviedo la cooficialidad del bable," *ABC* [Madrid] 1995-11-26; "Multitudinaria manifestación por el bable en Oviedo," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1995-11-26.

<sup>870</sup> Javier Neira, "El rechazo académico provoca la mayor manifestación en apoyo del asturiano," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-11-26.

del Porlier, and down through the Plaza del Riego to finish in front of Oviedo's town hall.

Originally planning to close the event with a concert at the Plaza del Porlier, folk band

Nuberu<sup>871</sup> was forced to cancel their appearance when, at the last minute, the mayor of

Oviedo, Gabino de Lorenzo (PP), denied the concert permit and ordered the deconstruction

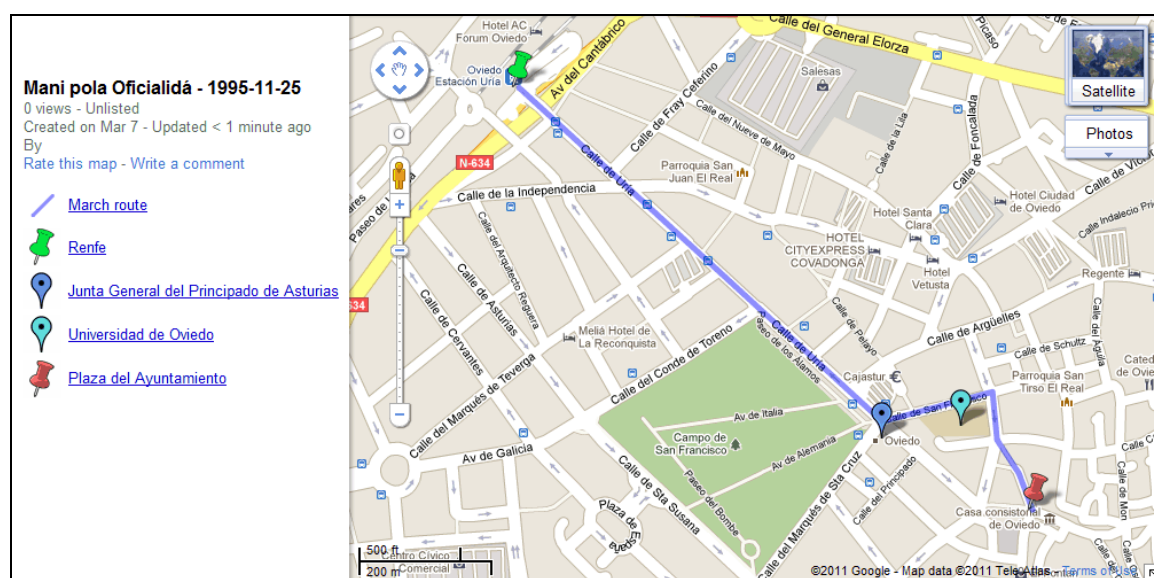
of the stage.<sup>872</sup> Thus, the rally finished with speeches read by the Academia de la Llingua's

Ana Cano from a balcony at the corner of calle Peso and calle Jesús, right in front of the

Ayuntamiento, in a clear challenge to the hostility from the Oviedo town council. At the

conclusion of the proceedings, a few "young radicals" (likely belonging to the CEN, Andecha

Mocedá,<sup>873</sup> or both) hurled firecrackers at the Ayuntamiento as the crowd dispersed.<sup>874</sup>



Map 2 – *Manifestación pola Oficialidá* March Route. Oviedo, November 26, 1996.

Cartographic source – ©2011 Google –Map data ©2011 Tele Atlas

<sup>871</sup> See Chapter 3 for Nuberu's connections to the *Nueu Canciu Astur* movement and Asturianismu.

<sup>872</sup> "«Nuberu» no pudo cantar," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-11-26; Francisco R. Álvarez, "El vetu de De Lorenzo a Nuberu," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-26.

<sup>873</sup> The youth corps of Andecha Astur.

<sup>874</sup> Neira, "El rechazo académico provoca la mayor manifestación en apoyo del asturiano."

This movement culminating in a mass popular demonstration, not just by Asturianistas, but by a relatively wide swath of Asturian society, was immediately taken by both the Asturianistas and some of their opponents to mean that the population of the region was beginning to care about linguistic issues. Indeed, there were predictions that the Asturian nation had finally started to internalize the discourse of linguistic and cultural identity and begun to imagine themselves as, if not separate from a Spanish nation, as a distinct and separate category within Spain. The Asturianistas were overtly optimistic about the wave of popular support continuing to rise, carrying their political fortunes along with it. “In 1996 co-official status for Asturianu will be achieved,” confidently declared Arias in January, basing his prediction “not just on the political support [displayed in 1995 for the linguistic movement], but also on the social [support].”<sup>875</sup> This reflected the attitude of most Asturianistas, convinced they had found the ingredients that had eluded the movement for two decades.

The following year, the organizers of the 1995 march formalized their relationship, creating a platform called the *Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá* (Pact for Self-Government and Official Status), or simply *el Pautu*.<sup>876</sup> Formed on October 26, 1996, the

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<sup>875</sup> “1995...un año favorable para el asturiano, no tanto por el apoyo político como por el social.”

Marisol Llano, “Xosé Lluís García Arias, Presidente de la Academia de la Llingua, «En 1996 se logrará la cooficialidad del asturiano»,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-01-07.

<sup>876</sup> Originally, the organization listed its name bilingually in its letterhead, but it soon publically became known practically exclusively by its Asturianu name. Thus, while also called the *Pacto por el Autogobierno y la Oficialidad*, I will refer to it in the Asturianu. An example of this early bilingualism is found in Comisión Coordinadora, “Invitación al PAS a participar en el Pacto por el Autogobierno y la Oficialidad,” (Oviedo: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, Ochobre 1996).

Pautu included most of the main coordinators of the march the year before, including political parties, trade unions, linguistic institutions and activist groups, ecological groups, folklore organizations, and musical groups, amongst others.<sup>877</sup> Calling for an even larger march on Oviedo for November 30, 1996, the Pautu framed its demands as “not asking for Asturias any special treatment,” but only “exhorting that Asturias be granted the same rights as other communities of the State such as Galicia, Baleares, Valencia, Euskadi, Andalucía, Cataluña, Canarias, Aragón, [and] Navarra” (listing the other Autonomous Communities that had either originally or via a revision of their Autonomy Statute enacted Article 151 of the Spanish Constitution’s maximum level of self-government).<sup>878</sup> Specifically, the Pautu demanded the following: 1) a re-worked financial model between Asturias and the Spanish government that would allow greater local control of revenues and budgets, 2) “the recognition of our collective identity as a Nationality and of the Official Status of the Language, not only as a basic right of the Asturians, but as a contribution to the cultural and linguistic richness of the State,” 3) that Asturian institutions be granted the maximum level of independent decision-making powers and concretely that the President be granted the power to dissolve the Junta General and convoke elections on a schedule of local choosing, rather than conforming to the Spanish electoral calendar, 4) the decentralization of political

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<sup>877</sup> Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá, "Informe. ¡¡¡Por Asturias, polo que ye nustru!!!," (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, Ochobre 1996).

<sup>878</sup> “*El Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá nun pide p’Asturies ningún tratu privilexiáu. Namás esixe que se-y reconozan a Asturias los mesmos drechos que tienen otres comunidaes del Estáu comu Galicia, Baleares, Valencia, Euskadi, Andalucía, Cataluña, Canarias, Aragón, Navarra...*”

Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá, “¿Qué ye lo que pide'l Pautu?,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, prob. payares 1996).

control to the regional level over health, education, environment, social security, public enterprises, and economic policy.<sup>879</sup> The demand for the equal treatment of Asturias as a “historic nationality” was a constant feature of the Pautu’s speeches, press communiqués, and publications.

The organizers of the Pautu gathered an impressive mass of people and organizations to the November 30<sup>th</sup> rally in Oviedo, effectively mirroring the event the year before, but on an even larger scale. For the first time, a dissenting group within the Socialist Party officially endorsed and participated (in a secondary role) in the movement. Two days before the march, on November 28<sup>th</sup>, a manifesto appeared in the local papers signed by 120 PSOE party members, including former president Trevín, José Luís Iglesias Riopedre (Trevín’s director of education), Faustino Álvarez (former director of the Oficina de Política Llingüística under Pedro de Silva), Eduardo Donaire (Secretary General of the Socialist trade union, the UGT), and Jesús Landeira Álvarez-Cascos.<sup>880</sup> Reflecting the distribution of attitudes towards Asturianu, the majority of the signees came from rural areas or the mining districts of the Caudal and the Nalón, with some notable names from Gijón. Justifying his participation in the march on November 30<sup>th</sup>, Riopedre argued that “the PSOE needs to listen to its militants, because there are many of us who support the ‘*llingua*’, and [it should]

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<sup>879</sup> “*El reconocimiento de nuestra identidad colectiva como **Nacionalidad** y de la **Oficialidad de la Llingua**, no sólo como derecho básico de los asturianos y asturianas, sino como aportación a la riqueza cultural y lingüística del Estado.*” Emphasis in original.

Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá, “La oficialidá de la llingua: daqué irrenunciable ya irreversible,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, 1996).

<sup>880</sup> Vicente Bernaldo de Quirós, “Un centenar de destacados militantes del PSOE cuestiona la política del partido sobre la *llingua*,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-11-29.

not maintain a closed attitude.”<sup>881</sup> The Socialist group, unlike the Pautu, did not advocate immediate bilingualism, but saw it as a process whose end would come as a part of reform of the Statute of Autonomy. Most importantly, the public display of support by some of the Socialist Party’s more prominent members was a sign that the year of agitation on the part of the Asturianistas and Izquierda Unida had applied significant political pressure on the Socialists. Unused to being a party in the minority, some within the party were now advocating an accommodation to nationalist sympathies as a way to restore their political prominence, a tactic employed by the PSOE during the Transition in areas such as Catalunya and Euskadi.

The protest march mirrored the rally of a year before (see Map 3, below), with the crowd assembling at around noon in front of the Renfe train station at the head of calle Uría, proceeding down the street, turning past the parliament building, and past the university. The estimates of the number of participants varied greatly, between the police’s guess of 4,000-5,000 and the Pautu’s figure of 25,000.<sup>882</sup> The major papers simply estimated that the crowd was in the “thousands”<sup>883</sup> or acknowledged that the crowd was “the most numerous of the ones to this point in favor of Asturianu.”<sup>884</sup> Unlike the last-minute diversion to

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<sup>881</sup> “El PSOE tiene que escuchar a su militancia, porque somos muchos los que apoyamos la ‘llingua’, y no plantear posturas cerradas.”

Quoted in Mercedes Marqués, “Multitudinaria manifestación en Oviedo por la oficialidad del asturiano,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-12-01.

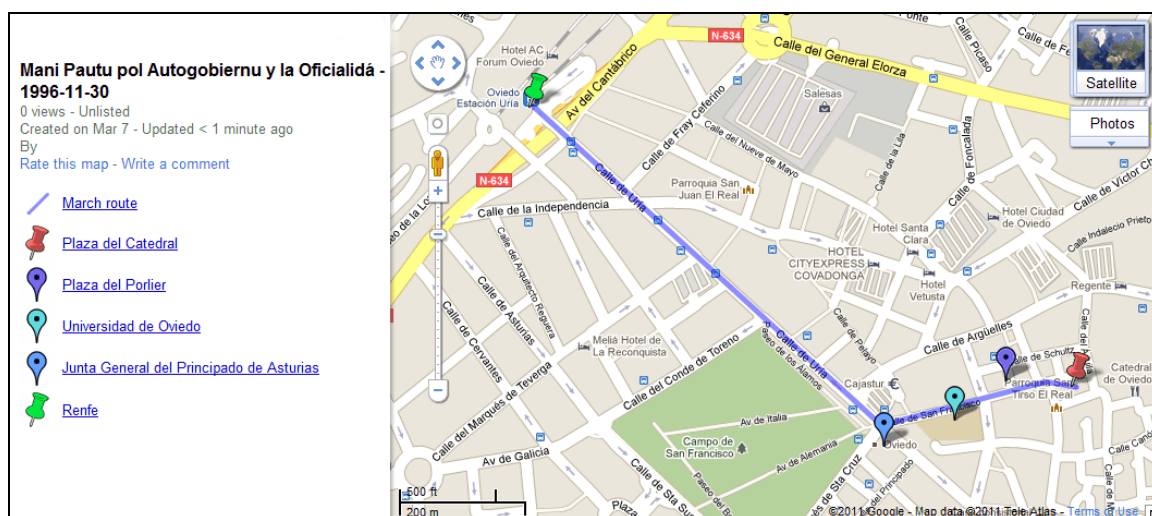
<sup>882</sup> *ibid*; “Multitudinaria manifestación por el bable en Oviedo.”

<sup>883</sup> Vicente Bernaldo de Quirós, “Miles de asturianos claman en las calles de Oviedo por el autogobierno y la oficialidad,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-12-01.

<sup>884</sup> “la marcha más numerosa de las realizadas hasta ahora a favor del asturiano.”



symbolically challenge the Town Hall in 1995, the protestors proceeded through the Plaza del Porlier and Academia de la Llingua member Ana María Cano González read a speech on behalf of the Pautu that declared that “the time of political and linguistic indifference [was] past.”<sup>885</sup> The Pautu demanded “respect for [Asturias’] history, for its language, and for its culture as the undeniable patrimony of free people and of modern and cultured societies.”<sup>886</sup>



Map 3 – *Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá* March Route. Oviedo, November 30, 1996.

Cartographic source – ©2011 Google –Map data ©2011 Tele Atlas

The 1995 and 1996 marches in Oviedo would become reference points within the Asturianista movement, as future political campaigns modeled themselves after everything from their broad coalitions of citizens’ organizations, cultural groups, trade unions, and political parties to the form in which political activism became manifest (a protest march) to

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Marqués, "Multitudinaria manifestación en Oviedo por la oficialidad del asturiano."

<sup>885</sup> “*El tiempu d’indiferencia política y llingüística n’Asturies ye’l pasáu.*”

Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá, “Testu lleíu comu pieslle a la manifestación del 30 de payares de 1996,” (Uviéu: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, 1997).

<sup>886</sup> “*...el respetu a la so historia, a la so llingua y a la so cultura comu patrimoniu irrenunciable de la xente llibre y de les sociedaes cultes y modernes.*”

ibid.

the very route taken by the protesters. These marches, in addition to drawing from a strong Spanish tradition of political marches (a particularly popular form of political action since the Transition), also continued a specifically Asturianista tradition of frequent protest marches begun in 1988 by the Xunta pola Defensa. That tradition, in turn, was an attempt to replicate the success of the 1976 *bable nes escueles y autonomía rexonal* march in Gijón. In some senses, the Asturianistas have been victims of their success at mobilizing people into this specific form of protest; over the years, the impact of each successive march has lessened. The 1995 and 1996 marches represented a vast jump in the visible level of support for Asturianismu, significantly increasing the movement's pressure on the government, as evidenced by the increasingly accommodating postures of the PSOE, the PP, and especially IU. The Partido Popular's position changed significantly more during the mid-1990s than the PSOE's, in spite of Asturian PP head, Senator, and *Amigos del Bable* member Isidro Fernández Rozada's flat denial that any of his compatriots' could be interested in such politics, that "the truth is that none of our mayors supports co-official status. Full stop."<sup>887</sup> It was clearly no coincidence that barely a week after the November 25, 1995 rally, the Junta General opened discussions on the reform of the Asturian Statute of Autonomy.<sup>888</sup> In July 1997, the Socialist Party's Asturian branch, the *Federación Socialista de Asturias*, even debated

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<sup>887</sup> "La verdad es que ninguno de nuestros alcaldes apoya la cooficialidad y punto."

Neira, "Rozada niega que los 4 alcaldes del PP apoyen la cooficialidad del bable."

<sup>888</sup> Blanca Gutiérrez, "Autonomía: café para Asturias," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-12-04.

the party's stance on bilingualism.<sup>889</sup> However, over the course of the following years, without the movement expanding further, the pressure on the majority parties, the threat of a mass nationalist movement, has waned.

The impact of each successive protest has diminished, in part because the form of protest, the march itself, has become ritualized. To this day, there are one or two marches per year, called by the Xunta pola Defensa or the Academia de la Llingua (or both), that almost invariably start at the Renfe station, move down calle Uría, the city's most prominent street, pass outside the building of the Junta General del Principado de Asturias, and most often end in the plaza in front of the Cathedral. The frequency and similarity of the forms of protest have, over time, allowed them to be increasingly ignored by the Asturian people as well as the government. After years of convoking marches, people who attended the rallies in the mid-1990s have seemingly tired of Asturianista politics.

This period of wide popular interest in questions of linguistic rights and the protection of Asturianu as a minority language saw a renewed flourishing of Asturianista organizations with less overtly political agendas, and the re-founding of an Asturianu-language media. Aside from the biweekly *Alitar Asturias* sections, which had been appearing at mostly regular intervals since 1978 in the Gijón daily *El Comercio*, the paper began to increasingly write any articles on themes of cultural or linguistic interest in Asturianu. On

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<sup>889</sup> The measure did not win over a majority.

Alfonso Suárez, "La FSA abogará por la promoción del asturiano, pero elude pronunciarse sobre la cooficialidad," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-07-06.

August 16, 1996, *Les Noticies* appeared on the streets of Asturias, the second regularly appearing newspaper written entirely in Asturianu and the first since the brief appearance of the Gijón weekly *Ixuxu* from 1901-2.<sup>890</sup> Commencing regular publication on September 6, the newspaper promised to be “independent” of political parties<sup>891</sup> and at the same time act as an outlet for the Asturianista linguistic and cultural movement. It has published continuously since then, and offers one of the few regular outlets for journalists who wish to work in the language, as well as a consistently sympathetic point of view for Asturianista political and cultural movements. A few months later, on November 28, Asturies.com was registered, the first internet news site in Asturianu. Although its traffic and advertising revenue has been relatively modest, it served as an important pioneer for Asturianu outlets on the web, an area that has seen increasing activity over the course of the last fifteen years.<sup>892</sup>

However, these new media and publication outlets for Asturianu-speakers and writers were not solely reflective of a new interest amongst the Asturian population in consuming such publications; they were heavily dependent on subsidies from the *Consejería* of Culture

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<sup>890</sup> Quique Faes, “El director de *Les Noticies* diz na so presentación que'l periódicu «ye independiente y vien pa durar»,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-08-17.

<sup>891</sup> There was, however, a noted influence by the Partíu Asturianista over both the early days of *Les Noticies* and Asturies.com, as the two founders of the newspaper, Inaciú Iglesias and Sixto Cortina, were both PAS members, as was Fernando de la Fuente of Asturies.com.

<sup>892</sup> Almost every Asturianista political organization, from *Foro Asturies* and URAS on the Right to Andecha Astur and UNA on the Left, currently heavily relies on internet outlets and social media such as Facebook for organizing and mobilizing members, in addition to using the web as a means to issue pronouncements that would formerly have had to rely on a sympathetic mainstream press.

There are also currently a number of highly active Asturianu news portals (such as Asturies.com, Asturnews.com, Infoasturies.net, Aruelu.com, and Glaiyu.org, as well as the web portal of newspaper *Les Noticies*). Additionally, there is an active forum scene and an Asturianu Wikipedia portal, *Uiquipedia* (ast.wikipedia.org).

and the Oficina de Política Llingüística. Indeed, Iglesias and Asturias.com founder Fernando de la Fuente Trabanco are both frank that neither project would have survived during its early years without substantial support from the regional government.<sup>893</sup> The same is true for the publication business, and the Asturianu-language publishing houses have undergone a recent consolidation in spite of state subsidization, with Antón García's *Ediciones Trabe* bought out by Iglesias's *Ámbitu* in 2007.<sup>894</sup>

This rising interest in Asturianu both as a political project and as a means (and object) of cultural consumption during the 1990s, and the Asturianistas were, for a brief time, able to mobilize numbers of citizens on a par with (and with the significant help of) the labor movement. The size of the November 1996 march was comparable to a major labor protest march in Mieres organized by the CC.OO. and the UGT just a few months later in May 1997, protesting the deindustrialization of the mining district. Using an Asturianu-language slogan at the head of the march, the 15,000-25,000 protesters proclaimed that “*Defender les Cuenques ye defender Asturias*” (“to defend the mining districts is to defend Asturias”).<sup>895</sup>

It is probably no coincidence that the mining districts of the Nalón (centered around the towns of Langreo and La Felguera) and the Caudal (with Mieres at its center), were the

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<sup>893</sup> Iglesias Fernández, Interview by author; Fernando de la Fuente Trabanco, Interview by author (Gijón, 2009-02-17).

<sup>894</sup> Inaciu Iglesias, “Ámbitu adquiere Trabe y conforma el primer grupo editorial en asturiano,” in *InaciuIglesias.com* (Uviéu: Blogger.com, 2007-09-21).

<sup>895</sup> “Más de 15.000 personas reclaman un futuro para las cuencas,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-05-16; Luis Gancedo and José Luis Argüelles, “Veinte mil personas responden a Marqués y le exigen que rectifique sobre las Cuencas,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1997-05-16.

areas where the implementation of effective bilingualism was most successful.<sup>896</sup> With the strong influence of the trade unions, a relatively visible collection of nationalist groups (Andecha Astur and Izquierda Asturiana among them), and Izquierda Unida control of a number of municipalities, there was institutional and social backing in many areas for increased use of the language. Additionally, the mining districts were the areas of Asturias with the highest percentage of students enrolled in Asturianu language classes by 1996, with 80% of all primary students opting to take the language and 90% of the schools offering classes in the subject.<sup>897</sup> This indicates, at least at that moment in time, a very high degree of linguistic consciousness both amongst parents and children in the still largely working-class towns of the Nalón and the Caudal, and the elected officials of the region increasingly began to reflect that attitude. With the apparently increasing influence of the Asturianista movement and considering the two groups' shared political and geographic space in the cities of Gijón, Avilés, and the mining district, it is perhaps no accident that the labor movement, led by Izquierda Unida, took for the first time a serious role in Asturian nationalist politics.

The sudden appearance of such a broad coalition cannot be credited solely to the actions of the Asturianistas themselves. While Sánchez Vicente and the PAS were present in the legislature, and the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa carried on constant agitation campaigns, most of the rest of the Asturianistas were as fragmented as they

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<sup>896</sup> J. E. Mencia, "Langreo encargó nuevos indicadores en bable para materializar ya la oficialidad," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1997-09-28.

<sup>897</sup> J. E. Mencia, "Las Cuencas tienen las tasas más altas de escolarización en bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-05-06.

had ever been. Indeed, it is doubtful that militancy in specifically Asturianista groups was any higher in 1996 than it had been at the close of the 1980s. Thus, it seems clear that their sudden success at transforming their fight for linguistic rights and greater self-government was as much due to the *context* in which the various strands of Asturian nationalism and regionalism operate during the 1990s as it was to the content or form of those activities. Precisely when the PSOE's was undergoing a major restructuring of its leadership (Felipe González resigned as the party's General Secretary in June of 1997), its hold on the political framework was at its weakest both nationally and in Asturias. Not only was the party's vote totals at their lowest point (1995 would be the only Autonomic election ever lost by the PSOE), but, most importantly, their ability to control the terms of political discussion was failing. The PSOE's regional power from 1982-1995 had seemed so unassailable that it was able to influence even the tactics and discourse of its opponents; every dissident or counter-hegemonic political force, be it the AP/PP, the Communists, environmentalist groups, radical Leftist organizations, or nationalist groups, was obliged to structure its political activity in response to the Socialists. When this hegemony began to break down, the Socialists began to lose control over political debate in the region, and both the PP and Izquierda Unida scrambled to take advantage of the opening. It is no accident that at precisely this point, the working-class Left suddenly jumped onboard the nationalist bandwagon, followed by a broad swath of Asturian society. Even the PP would flirt with incorporating a mild regionalist discourse by the end of the 1990s. Equally, once the PSOE

re-established its political control during the 2000s, this broad nationalist coalition, which the Asturianistas assumed to be the result of their own campaigning, gradually disappeared. The PAS, Academia de la Llingua, and Xunta pola Defensa had not really changed their message, methods, or personnel that much; it was the political arena in which they operated that had changed around them once again.

### **Hegemony and Communist Strategy: *Izquierda Xunida's* Nationalist Gamble**

The Communist-led coalition *Izquierda Unida* had been progressively evolving a more favorable attitude towards the Asturianistas' cultural and linguistic agenda since the late 1980s, with the Communist Party's official stance one of "valuation of Asturianu, of defending it, but without its being a priority."<sup>898</sup> The PCA never collaborated as an organization with the Conceyu Bable or any other cultural activist group during the Transition, but a fair number of its members did so as individuals, in particular participating prominently in the *bable nes escueles* rally in Gijón in 1976. As the Communist Party at the time organized itself into cells centered on places of work or study, the "greatest sensibility" towards linguistic issues was, paralleling other organizations of the late 1970s, amongst student groups.<sup>899</sup> This organizational structure was developed during the clandestine period

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<sup>898</sup> "La posición del partido oficial era de valoración del Asturiano, de defensa, pero sin ser una prioridad." García Valledor, Interview by author.

<sup>899</sup> *ibid.*



of the dictatorship and early Transition, and persisted after the PCE's *de facto* (and later *de jure*) legalization.

This attitude of passive support for the language began to change as in the early 1990s. With the rise of Gaspar Llamazares Trigo and Francisco Javier García Valledor to prominence within the coalition, Izquierda Unida adopted an increasingly pro-nationalist stance in Asturias. In 1988, Llamazares was elected General Secretary of the Partido Comunista de Asturias and General Coordinator of Izquierda Unida de Asturias, positions he held until taking over the national leadership of Izquierda Unida in 2000. Valledor, whose Asturianista connections dated from his time as a member of the Conceyu Bable,<sup>900</sup> won the election for General Coordinator of IU in Asturias' largest city, Gijón, in 1991. He subsequently won a seat in the Junta General in 1995, becoming the Second Vice-president of the Asturian parliament and head of the parliamentary commission on cultural politics from 1995-1999. In 2000, Valledor succeeded Llamazares as the speaker (*portavoz*) for Izquierda Unida in Asturias. The two were instrumental in the nationalist turn of IU during the 1990s and were able to exert significant influence over the entire Communist orbit in Asturias from their positions at the head of the coalition. Valledor claims, with some justification, that "the two people who had a vision....that one of the greatest problems that Asturias had was precisely its fault....of a national project, of a global project, were Gaspar

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<sup>900</sup> *ibid.*

Llamazares and myself [Valledor].”<sup>901</sup> As early as late 1993, Llamazares sounded a distinctly regionalist tone when describing Asturias’ deindustrialization as provoking “a regional identity in crisis, an amputated identity when what one questions is our manner of creation and our modes of relating to this country and to each other.”<sup>902</sup> Although he largely conceived of the “identity” to which he referred in terms of class, his conception of Asturian identity would progressively widen to include cultural politics over the next few years. By the time of the 1995 march on Oviedo, Llamazares was writing an article in the local newspapers (in *Asturianu*) defining the language as “something essential for our identity as a people and for our capacity to give a future to this Country of Asturias.”<sup>903</sup>

First calling itself by the *Asturianu* version of its name in 1993, from 1995 onwards the coalition initiated a campaign promoting its “Commitment to Asturias.”<sup>904</sup> It adopted a bilingual policy, officially renaming itself *Izquierda Unida de Asturias / Izquierda Xunida d’Asturies*, adopted the initials IU-IX, and began public calls for the co-official status of

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<sup>901</sup> “*En la dirección en aquel momento estábamos, digamos, dos personas que teníamos una visión en sentido de que uno de los grandes problemas que Asturias tenía era precisamente su falta, de la falta de un proyecto de país, de un proyecto global, que eran Gaspar Llamazares y yo mismo.*”

García Valledor, Interview by author.

<sup>902</sup> “*...identidad regional en crisis, una identidad cercenada cuando lo que se cuestiona son nuestras formas de crear y los modos de relacionarnos con este país y entre nosotros mismos.*”

“La oposición reclama más autonomía política y financiera y medidas efectivas contra la crisis,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1993-09-08.

<sup>903</sup> “*...daqué esencial pa la nuesa identidá comu pueblo y pa nuesa capacidá de da-y un futuru a esti País que ye Asturias.*”

The identical article was published the day before the march (November 24) in all three of the major papers. Gaspar Llamazares Trigo, “El 25 payares y el futuru d’Asturies,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-11-24; Gaspar Llamazares Trigo, “El 25 payares y el futuru d’Asturies,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1995-11-24; Gaspar Llamazares Trigo, “El 25 payares y el futuru d’Asturies,” *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1995-11-24.

<sup>904</sup> IU’s campaign slogan during the 1995 autonomic elections was “*Compromiso por Asturias.*”

Asturianu. IU increasingly tied its political fortunes to the promotion of a nationalist agenda, and by the organization's Seventh Assembly in March, 1998, the coalition's short-term goal became "to Broaden the Left by Building a Country" (*Faciendo país*).<sup>905</sup> According to Valledor, organization did not so much take a "nationalist turn," as a "federalist turn." It re-evaluated its model of an ideal Spanish Federal Republic, advocating a more decentralized system that allowed for the encouragement of cultural, and political, diversity.<sup>906</sup>

It seems evident that Izquierda Unida came to its position regarding Asturian identity through a desire for a decentralized political model, in much a similar way to the way the Partido Socialista Popular of the 1970s gradually adopted a regionalist attitude over the course of the early Transition.<sup>907</sup> By the time negotiations began on the increase of the autonomy statute in January 1996, Izquierda Unida was fully supportive of a maximum level of autonomous self-government.

Llamazares and Valledor also became increasingly personally tied to the linguistic movement, even requesting and subsequently enrolling in Asturianu language classes offered to the representatives of the Junta General (along with Noemí Martín, also an IU deputy) in early 1996.<sup>908</sup> It was telling that, of the four parties present in the Junta General, only IU had its members bother to take the courses. The sole Partíu Asturianista representative, Sánchez Vicente, obviously had no need to take the course, and none of the PP or PSOE

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<sup>905</sup> Izquierda Xunida, *Ampliar la Izquierda....Faciendo País* (Asturies: Izquierda Unida de Asturias / Izquierda Xunida d'Asturies, marzu 1998).

<sup>906</sup> García Valledor, Interview by author.

<sup>907</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the PSP.

<sup>908</sup> "IU pide clases de asturiano para los diputados de la Junta," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-10-17.

representatives were either interested enough or willing to risk the disapproval of their party leadership by enrolling. Thus, only six members of the government availed themselves of the classes, the three IU deputies, Sixto Armán (in charge of coordinating social movements for IU), and the two secretaries for the IU and Mixed parliamentary groups (the latter comprising the PAS). Over the course of 10 weekdays (January 26-February 2, from 9-11 in the morning), the classes were conducted in the Parliament building by Academia de la Llingua members Ana Cano, Ramón d'Andrés, and Xosé Antón González Riaño.<sup>909</sup> The IU representatives all completed the course, and from that point on, Llamazares and Valledor frequently spoke and published in the language. The 'pupils' were even diligent enough that Riaño remembers Llamazares as one of the finest students he ever had.<sup>910</sup>

In March 1994, IU's municipal representatives requested the declaration of bilingualism in the Eastern *concejo* of Ribadesella.<sup>911</sup> While the motion failed (with a PSOE councilmember declaring that he would "sooner vote for the co-official status of English"),<sup>912</sup> the municipal branch of IU in Gijón (under Valledor) made a similar attempt a month later. The IU's motion requested that "the Town Council conduct all of its publications and institutional publicity bilingually, and [that the Gijón government] establish a forum for debate with the social organizations that work in the field of linguistic politics."<sup>913</sup> This

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<sup>909</sup> Francisco R. Álvarez, "Los diputaos diéron-y a la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-02-04.

<sup>910</sup> González Riaño, Interview by author.

<sup>911</sup> "IU de Ribadesella pide la oficialidad del asturiano," *La Voz de Asturias* [Oviedo] 1994-03-25.

<sup>912</sup> "Un conceyal socialista diz que votaría enantes pola cooficialidá del inglés."

"L'ayuntamientu de Ribasella rechaza l'usu del asturianu," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1994-04-01.

<sup>913</sup> "El ayuntamiento debe realizar todas sus publicaciones y publicidad institucional en bilingüe, así como establecer

request was formally repeated two days before the 1995 march on Oviedo, and, although not completely successful, resulted in the legalization of bilingual toponyms in the *concejo* and a significant boost in the funding (49 million pesetas was budgeted in 1995) for the installation of bilingual traffic signs and labels in the city.<sup>914</sup>

Almost inevitably, a contest developed between the IU and the Partíu Asturianista for the favor (and votes) of moderate Asturianistas. As IU moved more towards an openly pro-nationalist position, and the two groups began to support broadly similar types of legislation, the parties increasingly came into conflict.<sup>915</sup> In effect, the larger and more politically influential Communist coalition began to eat away at the very core of the Partíu Asturianista's identity. The PAS had built its entire purpose and electoral appeal on its being both nationalist and a legitimate political force. The relatively sudden appearance of another group, with far more political weight and quickly becoming just as nationalist, represented a serious threat. The Partíu Asturianista, logically, responded by attempting to undercut the newcomers' nationalist legitimacy, denouncing "the hypocritical and electoralist attitude of

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*un foro de debate y propuesta con las organizaciones sociales que trabajen en el campo de la reivindicación lingüística."*

"El Ayuntamiento debe pedir la oficialidad del asturiano, según IU," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1994-04-30. Also "Izquierda Unida pide-y al Ayuntamientu de Xixón la cooficialidá del asturianu," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1994-05-06.

<sup>914</sup> ~\$393,500 in 1996 US\$.

"Fueron atendidas más del setenta por ciento de las solicitudes de placas bilingües," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-01-20.

<sup>915</sup> Vicente Bernaldo de Quirós, "El PAS e Izquierda Unida ponen en marcha diversas iniciativas en defensa de la llingua," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1995-07-29; Guillermo Caso de los Cobos, "IU y PAS: un conflicto político," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-12-17.

IU with respect to the defense of the Asturian language.”<sup>916</sup> The PAS furthermore bluntly claimed that “the discourse of IU in favor of the Asturian language and its normalization is not anything more than a cynical strategy....directed at capturing the vote of many well-intentioned but credible and gullible Asturians.”<sup>917</sup> By 1996, the PAS was even accusing the IU in its proposal for a legal protection for the language<sup>918</sup> of “plagiarizing” the Law of Asturianu it had first submitted in 1993 (which, in turn, borrowed heavily from the failed bill submitted by the Oficina de Política Llingüística in 1988 under the de Silva government).<sup>919</sup> The PAS, quite accurately, accused Izquierda Unida of an “invasion of its political space,”<sup>920</sup> although Sánchez Vicente claimed that “the posture of IU with respect to co-official status does not take votes from [the PAS], but rather gives them to [it].”<sup>921</sup> PAS General Secretary Xesús Cañedo called IU “a recent arrival to the linguistic culture,”

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<sup>916</sup> “*El Partíu Asturianista-PAS quiere denunciar la actitud hipócrita y electoralista del IU con respeto a la defensa de la lengua asturiana.*”

Mario San Martín Fernández, “s/t,” (Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, 1996-01-10).

<sup>917</sup> “*el discurso de IU en favor de la lengua asturiana y su normalización no es más que una estrategia cínica....tendente de captar el voto de muchos asturianos bienintencionados al tiempo que crédulos e incautos.*”  
ibid.

<sup>918</sup> Marisol Llano, “IU propone una ley de protección de la llingua,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-06-20.

<sup>919</sup> “El PAS acusa a IU de plagiar su proposición de ley del asturiano,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-07-13; “El PAS acusa a IU de plagiarle una iniciativa sobre asturiano,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-07-14.

The PAS’ original law was presented in June 1993. Rubiera, “Sánchez Vicente presenta a debate una nueva ley de uso del bable.”

<sup>920</sup> “El PAS acusa a IU de plagiar su proposición de ley del asturiano.”

<sup>921</sup> “*La postura de IU con la cooficialidad no nos quita votos, sino que nos da.*”

Blanca Gutierrez, “Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, «El electorado del PAS ha superado las reticencias a pactar con el PP»,” *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1997-11-16.

pointing out the PAS's strong connection to the linguistic revival movement since its inception.<sup>922</sup>

As Izquierda Unida pursued its strategy of unifying the entirety of the moderate Left in Asturias, including the nationalists, the PAS continued its steady progress towards the Center-Right. Its pragmatist attitude towards both political power and its nationalist goals increasingly led it to explore the possibility of working with the conservative Partido Popular. By 1997, Sánchez Vicente openly admitted that "[the PAS's] image changed. Citizens now consider [it] of the Center-Left," and that its members were open to an agreement with the PP.<sup>923</sup>

The PAS' negotiations with the PP, leading to the 1997 concession by the Asturianista party that it would have to drop its demand for the inclusion of bilingualism in the revised Statute in favor of a Law of Asturianu, eventually caused the struggle between the Partíu Asturianista and Izquierda Unida to come to a head. This official retreat from the demand for *oficialidá* provided the pretext for the PAS's subsequent eviction from the Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá on September 2, 1997.<sup>924</sup> That day, PAS members Luis Sánchez and José Fernández were informed by representatives of IU and the Academia de la

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<sup>922</sup> Daniel Serrano, "Xesús Cañedo, Secretariu General del Partíu Asturianista, «IU es un recién llegado a la cultura llingüística», " *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-11-16.

<sup>923</sup> "Nuestra imagen cambió. Los ciudadanos nos consideran ahora de centro izquierda."

Gutierrez, "Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, «El electorado del PAS ha superado las reticencias a pactar con el PP»."

<sup>924</sup> Executiva Nacional del Partíu Asturianista, "Sobre la inasistencia del PAS a la manifestación del día 5," (Archivu Personal d'Inaciu Iglesias, 1997-10-06); M. F. Antuña, "La postura del PAS sobre el bable provoca su exclusión del Pautu," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-09-06.

Llingua of their exclusion, with the PAS claiming that they were furthermore told to claim that they withdrew of their own accord.<sup>925</sup> When the PAS sent Sánchez and Xulián Fernández Montes<sup>926</sup> to the Pautu's planning meeting for the yearly march in Oviedo, they were expelled from the room by members of IU along with, according to the PAS, the threat of physical violence if they should attempt to show their flags on October 5.<sup>927</sup> Izquierda Unida, for its part, denied both that the PAS was excluded from participating in the march and the threat of physical violence.<sup>928</sup>

Although IU had, from the beginning, been more involved in the Pautu than the PAS,<sup>929</sup> the latter's eviction left it as the clear political representative of the coalition. Thus, by late 1997, Izquierda Unida's strategy of extending its influence over the Asturianista movement was at least partially successful. It had succeeded in wresting the protagonist's role from the PAS and appearing, to at least some of the Asturianistas, most prominently those in the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa, the most likely party to

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<sup>925</sup> "EL PAUTU COMUNICABA AL PAS QUE, TAMBIÉN POR DISENTIR DE LOS MÉTODOS DEL PAUTU, QUEDABA EXCLUÍDO DEL PAUTU, «PERO QUE NOSE LE OCURRIESE AL PAS DECIR QUE ERA EXPULSADO, SINO QUE SE RETIRABA ÉL MISMO.»" Emphasis in original.

Executiva Nacional del Partíu Asturianista, "Sobre la inasistencia del PAS a la manifestación del día 5."

<sup>926</sup> Mayor of Nava at the time and future founder of *Asturianistes por Nava*, which seceded from the PAS in the wake of the electoral losses of 1999.

<sup>927</sup> "El PAS envió al Pautu a dos nuevos representantes, los señores D. Luís Sánchez y D. Julián Fernández, alcalde de Nava, para decir que participaríamos en la manifestación. La respuesta de los representantes de I.U. y la Academia fue la de expulsar de la sala a nuestros representantes y AMENEZAR CON VIOLENCIA FÍSICA SI AL PAS SE LE OCURRÍA ACUDIR A LA CABEZA DE LA MANIFESTACIÓN O LLEVAR PANCARTA ALGUNA."

Executiva Nacional del Partíu Asturianista, "Sobre la inasistencia del PAS a la manifestación del día 5."; M. F. Antuña, "El PAS afirma que el Pautu lo amenazó con «violencia física» si acudía a la manifestación," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-10-07; M. F. Antuña, "El PAS responsabiliza a IU de su veto en la manifestación por la cooficialidad," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-10-10.

<sup>928</sup> M. F. Antuña, "El Pautu dice que ni vetó ni invitó al PAS a participar en la manifestación de Oviedo," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-10-09.

<sup>929</sup> García Valledor, Interview by author.



bring about linguistic and political reform. Although the causes were different, by the late 1990s moderate Asturianismu was beginning to fragment, just as the more radical sector had after the breakup of Coalición Asturiana at the beginning of the decade. By the late 1990s, Izquierda Unida, at least at the level of its leadership, had fully evolved from a passive supporter of regional diversity to an active promoter of a nationalist ideology, to the point where it adopted a position on linguistic reform more irredentist than that of nationalist pioneer Sánchez Vicente and his Partíu Asturianista.

Although Llamazares stepped down at the end of his term as General Coordinator of Izquierda Unida in 2009 and Valledor eventually left the party in 2010 because of an increasing hostility to his cultural nationalism, the party still officially advocates bilingualism. It is still a major part of the Conceyu Abiertu pola Oficialidá and still maintains a bilingual organizational statute, including in Article 4 of its preamble that the coalition will “adopt and employ as languages the Castilian and Asturianu tongues....with the goal of augmenting the social prestige and visibility of the currently marginalized and discriminated against Asturian Language.”<sup>930</sup> However, since the disastrous electoral results of 2004 and 2008,

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<sup>930</sup> The full article states that “IU-IX adopts and employs as languages the Castilian and Asturianu tongues, both in the area of internal communication and relations as well as in the institutions [of government] and in its relations with society, having the goal of augmenting the social prestige and visibility of the currently marginalized and discriminated against Asturian Language. In its territory, *la fala* / Gallego-Asturianu will have the same treatment. IU-IX will seek to employ, both in its Castilian and Asturianu texts, Asturianu toponyms.”

“IU-IX adopta y emplea como lenguas de uso los idiomas castellano y asturiano tanto en lo que concierne al ámbito de las comunicaciones y relaciones internas como en el ámbito institucional y en su relación con la sociedad, de cara a lograr aumentar el prestigio social y la visibilidad de la actual minorizada y discriminada Lengua Asturiana. En su ámbito territorial la fala/gallegoasturiano tendrá el mismo tratamiento. IU-IX procurará emplear, tanto en los textos en castellano como en asturiano, la toponimia asturiana.”

Izquierda Unida de Asturias / Izquierda Xunida d'Asturies, “Título I. Definición de IU-IX de Asturias.

discontent with the nationalist gamble within the Partido Comunista de Asturias has increased, and opponents of Llamazares and Valledor's policies such as PCA Secretary General Francisco de Asís Fernández Junquera have become increasingly outspoken in their criticism.<sup>931</sup>

### **'Café para Asturias': Statute Revision and the 'Law of Asturianu'**

The complaints of many Asturians were summed by *La Nueva España* on its front page the day after the announcement in December 1996 that negotiations would begin on revisions of the Asturian Statute of Autonomy, that "the expression 'café for all', born during the pre-autonomic period of the Transition, ended up with café only for the Basque Country, Catalunya, Galicia, and Andalucía....Asturias and the rest of the communities had to adjust to a decaffeinated Statute."<sup>932</sup> While the PAS and IU both made Statute reform a central part of their political program, even the PP from 1995 onwards favored the idea, although objecting to the idea of co-official languages and the definition of Asturias as a "historic nationality."<sup>933</sup>

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Artículo 4. Idiomas," in *Estatutos d'Izquierda Xunida d'Asturies* (Asturies: Izquierda Unida de Asturias / Izquierda Xunida d'Asturies, 2008).

<sup>931</sup> Often using the Internet to publicize their positions, such as in Francisco de Asís Fernández Junquera, "Terminator Llamazares y el viaje de «Izquierda Xunida» a ninguna parte," Partido Comunista de Asturias, 2008-10-31, <http://www.pcasturias.org/node/143>. Accessed 2011-02-20.

<sup>932</sup> "La expresión «café para todos», acuñada durante el periodo preautonómico de la transición, se plasmó finalmente en café solo para País Vasco, Cataluña, Galicia, y Andalucía... Asturias y el resto de las comunidades tuvieron que conformarse con un Estatuto descafeinado."

Gutiérrez, "Autonomía: café para Asturias."

<sup>933</sup> B. Gutierrez, "El presidente del Principado podrá disolver la Junta General," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-01-26.

The primary alternative to a declaration of bilingualism or co-official languages was the so-called "Law of Asturianu," originally suggested by the Pedro de Silva government in 1988, revived in 1991 by the *Asociación de Escritores y Traductores en Llingua Asturiana* (Association of Writers and Translators in the Asturian Language),<sup>934</sup> again in 1993<sup>935</sup> by the PAS, and by IU in 1996.<sup>936</sup> However, by 1996, flush with confidence gained from the popular mobilization in favor of statutory reform and bilingualism, both the PAS (temporarily) and IU were adamant that the declaration of co-official status needed to be directly written into the revised Statute and thus be enacted as a constitutional, rather than legislative, change.<sup>937</sup>

The political lever to open one of the two major parties to negotiations over a compromise with the nationalists was provided by the May 1996 resignation of Antón Saavedra, representative for IU in the Junta General, of his membership in the party (but *not* his seat in parliament). He thus passed from IU's parliamentary group to the Grupo Mixto, of which Sánchez Vicente was the speaker. This altered the balance of the parliament so that the PAS, if they were to come to an agreement with the PP, would give the ruling party a sufficient number of votes to pass the government's yearly budgets, to that point generally

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<sup>934</sup> "Traductores y Escritores en asturiano piden a González una ley de uso del bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1991-12-04.

<sup>935</sup> Rubiera, "Sánchez Vicente presenta a debate una nueva ley de uso del bable."

<sup>936</sup> Llano, "IU propone una ley de protección de la llingua."

<sup>937</sup> Enrique Arenas, "Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, Presidente del PAS y diputado, «Pediremos televisión asturiana y cooficialidad»,\" *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-04-29; "El debate debe ser la oficialidad, no la Ley del Asturiano, según Izquierda Unida,\" *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-05-09.

blocked by the combined opposition of IU and the Socialists.<sup>938</sup> Thus, the need for a budget became the key to statutory reform. Sánchez Vicente, ever the pragmatist, decided in late 1996 that the proposed Law of Asturianu was the maximum level of protection possible given the political realities of the late 1990s Junta General.<sup>939</sup> In exchange for the PAS' cooperation on the Marqués government's budget, the two parties entered a protracted negotiation over the reform of the Autonomy Statute.<sup>940</sup> The negotiations dragged on over the course of 1997, including a failed two-day summit in Covadonga at the end of July that finished without agreement because of intractable positions over the language.<sup>941</sup> As the process stalled, tensions between the PAS, under increasing pressure to conclude an agreement, and the rest Asturianistas gradually increased. The IU critiqued the Partíu Asturianista for renouncing its historic position,<sup>942</sup> as did Andecha Astur.<sup>943</sup> The Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana classified the proposed Law of Asturianu "an insult to the Asturian people."<sup>944</sup> Sánchez Vicente, for his part, defended his compromise, claiming that it "could only count on 6 votes" in favor of co-official languages, thus making anything more

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<sup>938</sup> J. M. Piñeiro, "Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, «No seremos la garantía de la estabilidad del Gobierno regional», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1996-05-05.

<sup>939</sup> "Porque yera la única posibilidad."

Sánchez Vicente, Interview by author.

<sup>940</sup> Vicente Bernaldo de Quirós, "Marqués y el PAS rubrican su acuerdo político," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1996-12-11.

<sup>941</sup> Enrique Arenas, "El inicio de la 'cumbre de Covadonga' deja la reforma del Estatuto al borde de la ruptura," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-07-31; Enrique Arenas, "La llingua bloqueó la reforma del Estatuto y la negociación se 'aparcó' hasta septiembre," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-08-01.

<sup>942</sup> "IU critica la renuncia del PAS a la cooficialidad inmediata del bable," *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1997-08-17.

<sup>943</sup> "Andecha califica de «paso atrás» la nueva postura del PAS sobre el bable," *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-08-22.

<sup>944</sup> "La Xunta pola Llingua pide al PAS que no firme «un insulto al pueblo asturiano», " *La Nueva España* [Oviedo] 1997-08-30.

“an impossibility.”<sup>945</sup> However, the party’s relationship with other Asturianista groups continued to deteriorate. In particular, the tension between the PAS and the Academia de la Llingua in part reflected the old rivalry between Sánchez Vicente and Arias, and was in part an embodiment of the struggle between pragmatists and purists within the nationalist movement.

The final compromise between the PP and the PAS (and with the reluctant consent of the Socialists and the vocal objections of IU) was that while Asturias’s revised autonomy statute would include a greater level of political autonomy, it would neither define Asturias as a historical nationality nor incorporate stronger provisions for linguistic rights in the document.<sup>946</sup> It awarded Asturias significant gains in self-government, such as the ability to dictate environmental policy, health care, create an independent regional television channel, and set economic plans for the mining and metallurgical sectors, but fell short of the whole-scale reform sought by the Asturianistas and Izquierda Unida. Protection of linguistic rights was conceded to the nationalists by Marqués and the PP, but in the Law of Asturianu, mildly diluted from the PAS’s proposal of July 1995.<sup>947</sup> The changes were mild, consisting in general of changing the name of the language to “*bable/asturiano*” and generally changing many of the clauses that required something of the government to wording that focused on

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<sup>945</sup> “*La cooficialidad era imposible (no cuenta más que con seis votos).*”

Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, “La Ley de Promoción y Uso del Asturiano,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-11-08.

<sup>946</sup> “Ley Orgánica 1/1999, de 5 de enero, de reforma de la Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de Estatuto de Autonomía del Principado de Asturias.”

<sup>947</sup> Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, “El Grupo Parlamentario Mixto presenta proposición de ley sobre protección y uso del asturiano,” (Oviedo: Archivu Personal d’Inaciu Iglesias, 1995-07-10).

the *possibility* of, for example, official documents being published in both Castilian and Asturianu. Other minor changes included adding the conservative bastion the *Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos* (RIDEA) to the institutions that were given competence over the standardization of the language (along with the University, the Academia de la Llingua, and the Junta of Toponymy, a committee sponsored by the Oficina de Política Llingüística).

However, the new law *did* include significantly strengthened legal provisions for the protection of the rights of Asturianu-speakers. Most importantly, it wrote that the Principality of Asturias will “insure the free use [of the language] and prevent the discrimination of citizens for this reason.”<sup>948</sup> It also guaranteed the education of the language in primary and secondary schools (the University remained under the jurisdiction of the Council of Universities in Madrid), and affirmed that all citizens had the right to employ the language in their dealings with the government, whether in written or spoken form. Asturianu place-names were made default, except in cases “when a toponym’s traditional and Castilian forms are generally used, the name [in such cases] can be bilingual.”<sup>949</sup> Additionally, it also included the declaration of Asturianu as “the traditional language of

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<sup>948</sup> Art 3. Objeto de la Ley. “d) Asegurar su libre uso y la no discriminación de los ciudadanos por este motivo.”

“Ley Orgánica 1/1999, de 5 de enero, de reforma de la Ley Orgánica 7/1981, de Estatuto de Autonomía del Principado de Asturias.”

<sup>949</sup> Art. 15. Topónimos. “1. Los topónimos de la Comunidad Autónoma del Principado de Asturias tendrán la denominación oficial en su forma tradicional. Cuando un topónimo tenga uso generalizado en su forma tradicional y en castellano, la denominación podrá ser bilingüe.”

ibid.

Asturias,” Sánchez Vicente’s original wording of Article 4 of the 1981 Autonomy Statute.<sup>950</sup>

Neither the nationalists, the Socialists, nor an important sector of the PP were particularly happy about the new law. Izquierda Unida coincided with the Academia de la Llingua and the Xunta pola Defensa in condemning it, saying that such a law just “obfuscated” the lack of co-official status for the language in the new Statute.<sup>951</sup> The PSOE, quite correctly, accused Marqués of simply using the law to “content the PAS,” a party that he needed as an ally within the Junta General.<sup>952</sup>

However, the law did represent a significant advance in the protection of linguistic rights, at least on paper, and it has become the basis for many of the legal challenges to the administration and the University in subsequent years. It also clearly was the result of the ability of the Asturianistas to put pressure on first the Socialist, then the PP government to force an accommodation. As Sergio Marqués put it in 1997, the PP would be open to a debate over the language’s official status “when it became a tangible social necessity.”<sup>953</sup> However, by that point, the debate about the language had clearly already mobilized Asturian society to an unprecedented extent; Marqués and the PP eventually compromised on the issue precisely *because* it had become such a tangible social demand.

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<sup>950</sup> Art. 1. Lengua tradicional. “*El bable/asturiano, como lengua tradicional de Asturias, gozará de protección. El Principado de Asturias promoverá su uso, difusión y enseñanza.*”  
ibid.

<sup>951</sup> García Valledor, Interview by author.

<sup>952</sup> Laura Fonseca, “El PSOE acusa a Marqués de presentar la ley de uso del bable para «contentar el PAS»,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-12-07.

<sup>953</sup> Miguel Fernández, “Marqués abordará el debate sobre la llingua cuando sea «una necesidad social tangible»,” *El Comercio* [Gijón] 1997-09-21.

### **The Resilient Structure of the State of the Autonomies**

The popular pressure for equal treatment, manifested most pointedly in the rallies in Oviedo at the end of 1995, 1996, and 1997, not only convinced the leadership of Izquierda Unida that riding the nationalist wave could help arrest the twenty-year political slide of Communism in Spain, it also forced the majority Popular Party, and to a lesser degree the Socialists, to accommodate nationalist demands. In the end, the Popular Party and the Socialists accepted that, by conceding limited statutory reform, the stability of the increasingly two-party Spanish political system could be maintained in Asturias. Essentially, through limited reform, the structure of the still-largely asymmetrical and centralized State of the Autonomies could be maintained, and the lid could be pushed back down on the uncomfortable “problem of the nationalities,” at least in Asturias.

Repeating the strategy that the majority parties of the Spanish State had employed when faced with a counter-hegemonic cultural project during the Transition, the PSOE and (to a lesser extent) the PP effectively managed to contain the threat of a sustained nationalist project establishing itself in Asturias during the 1990s. The political landscape in Asturias of the 1990s in some senses resembled the Transition. While the political situation was not nearly as fluid as during the 1970s, the scandal-filled fall of the PSOE from power at both the national and regional levels did unlock a window of political opportunity that the Asturianistas and other opposition groups were able to exploit. The “war of position” that



had characterized the 1980s had loosened considerably; the Asturianistas were unable to re-negotiate the basic relationship between their imagined nation and the Spanish State, but they were able to push for significant concessions. If the 1990s did not represent a period with an atmosphere of wide-open political possibility, the Asturianista movement counted on a significantly wider social and political basis of support after twenty years of cultural campaigning and backed by the political muscle (reduced but still significant) of the working-class Left.

The fragmentation of the PP in 1998 and the expulsion of the standing President of Asturias, Sergio Marqués, from his own party was caused in part by Asturianista pressure and the reaction against Marqués' increasingly accommodating stance towards nationalist demands. Somewhat ironically, this split within the PP was a major factor in the downfall of the Partíu Asturianista in 1999. From the 20,669 votes (3,18%) collected by the PAS in the 1995 elections,<sup>954</sup> its vote total dropped in 1999 to 15,998 (2.58%),<sup>955</sup> dropping the party below the threshold necessary to maintain Sánchez Vicente's seat in the Junta General. Having based so much of its legitimacy during the 1990s on the party's presence in the institutions of government, the loss of this position sent it into a slide from which it has yet to recover.

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<sup>954</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales, *Atlas Electoral de Asturias, 1936-1996*.

<sup>955</sup> Sociedad Asturiana de Estudios Económicos e Industriales, "Resultados electorales. Elecciones Autonómicas 1999," SADEI, <http://www.sadei.es/Pelicula%20Elec/elecciones.htm>. Accessed 2011-02-25.

Marqués, exiled by the PP, decided to employ the Manuel Fraga strategy<sup>956</sup> and re-cast himself as a conservative regionalist in 1998. When he did so, the new *Unión Renovadora Asturiana* (URAS) not only pulled a section of the PP along with Marqués into the new party, but it also attracted a sector of the increasingly conservative PAS, such as Inaciu Iglesias and Xicu Yepes. With the new URAS siphoning votes off both the PP and the PAS, collecting 3 seats in the Junta General, the PSOE was able to regain regional control in 1999, inaugurating 12 years (to this point) of unbroken Socialist political hegemony in Asturias under the former mayor of Gijón (1987-1999), Vicente Álvarez Areces.<sup>957</sup> The three administrations of former PCE member-turned-Socialist Areces have represented a return to the relatively anti-regionalist attitude of the Vigil years, and the Areces governments have had very little interest in exerting the political will to pursue the possibilities allowed for in the 1998 Law of Bable/Asturianu to anything more than the minimum extent required. With their political position much more secure in the changed political context of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Socialists have had no pressing need to do so.

The administration has also benefited from the frequent internecine battles amongst the Socialist Party's opponents. Until the last years of the 2000s, the Asturianistas were fragmented to an even greater extent than during the aftermath of Coalición Asturiana's

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<sup>956</sup> Minister of Information and Tourism under Franco, he was the founder of the Alianza Popular and its leading political figure through the 1980s. Restructured, and renamed the Partido Popular, Fraga extended his political career an additional two decades by re-casting himself as a regionalist and serving as the PP President of his native Galicia from 1990-2005. He has been a Senator for Galicia since 2008. See Méndez, "Galicia, región de Europa: dimensiones europeístas del imaginario culturalista de la *Xunta*."

<sup>957</sup> Referred to most often by his matronymic, "Areces."

disintegration. Andecha Astur has seen two major divisions, in 1997 and 2007, the late 1990s coalition between *Izquierda Nacionaliega d'Asturies*<sup>958</sup> and Izquierda Asturiana (the *Bloque de la Izquierda Asturiana*) disintegrated in 2003 over disagreements regarding an alliance with Izquierda Unida. The PAS has continued to bleed membership since its high point in the 1990s, and in 2004 entered a coalition with URAS, fading as Sergio Marqués's political career came to an end, called *Unión Asturianista*. Thus, the never-plentiful Asturianista vote has been divided into (at points) up to six different parties and coalitions, making the already-marginalized group even less able to exert any influence over the policy of the Socialist Party. By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the State of the Autonomies was once again well entrenched, and the ruling political groups in Asturias had effectively managed and marginalized the alternative identity proposed by the Asturianistas. Frustrated and largely divided, the nationalists now found it difficult to even force the political structure to bend, and radical change seemed out of the question.

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<sup>958</sup> In 2003 renamed *Bloque por Asturies*.

## Conclusion

A fundamental issue in the history of the Asturian nationalist movement has been a contest over the rights of minorities in democratic systems based on the principle of majority rule, played out in the field of linguistic struggles. How should minority groups (linguistic, ethnic, political, sexual, racial, cultural, or any other variety) interact with the states in which they reside? To what extent should the systems of law and government be structured to explicitly protect such differences? Spain has struggled since the Transition with the question of whether or not a heterogeneous state is more “democratic.” Certainly, the cultural engineering of the Franco regime strongly associated the ideas of decentralization, cultural diversity, and democracy. More than thirty years after the dictator’s death, do ideological linkages forged in opposition to his regime still apply? Additionally, in a state such as Spain, with more than one linguistic group clamoring for attention, is one group inherently any more legitimate than any other? What is the minimum number of speakers needed for cultural legitimacy? What is the earliest date at which a community must have begun the process of linguistic codification and standardization? The asymmetrical nature of the Spanish constitutional system seems to have placed the Asturians on the wrong side of each of those divisions.

Asturian nationalism (like all such movements) articulates a number of apparent contradictions. This, in part, allows many of its goals to remain vague (“autonomy,” most of all), perhaps a necessary feature of these kinds of sub-state movements that have to appeal to

as broad a sector of the population as possible. It is a movement that has, at times, encompassed a Celtic cultural movement but at the same time centered itself on the revival of a Romance language. It is a movement that has simultaneously tried to be traditionalist and ultra-modern. The self-image of many Asturianistas, as well as the face they have presented to the world, is of a young, modern, European, and progressive group of people. They generally favor environmentalism, diversity, and democracy. They make heavy use of modern technology and the internet, with all of its social-media potential. At the same time, the Asturianistas are part of a nationalist movement that trades in nostalgia for an idealized past, calling for the revival and protection of local distinctiveness in the face of the homogenizing forces of cultural and economic globalization and the modern nation-state. The movement legitimizes its claims for cultural rights in part with the age of the language itself, dated by some back to the eleventh-century *Fuero de Avilés*, but it equally has referred to recent documents such as the EU's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996). The internet embodies some of these contradictions, as it has provided a forum in which Asturianu-speakers can easily connect and publish and played a crucial role in forging the modern version of this imagined community. At the same time, the internet is one of the major vehicles for the penetration of both the English language and American pop culture into Asturias.

Asturian nationalism is a movement based upon ethnic and cultural differences that has historically been identified with and drawn almost all of its militancy from the Left, with

the long tradition of *internationalism* that implies.<sup>959</sup> At the same time, this leftover association from the years of anti-*franquista* opposition has persisted, with various Asturianista groups and even elements within the Communist Party itself (in the 1990s) adapting the Marxist model of class struggle and applying it to a struggle between nations, languages, and cultures. Thus, in this ideological construction, the Asturian people assume the proletariat's role as protagonists, with the Spanish state the oppressive and hegemonic ruling capitalist bloc. Abstracted, this is often presented as a conflict, not as a contest between *people* or groups of people, but between the *languages*, as if the Castilian and Asturian languages were themselves distinct classes, ethnicities, or states.

The Asturian case highlights the struggle between a minority group arguing for its communal rights as a collective and an advanced capitalist state seeking to govern through its relationships between individual citizens. Modern nation-states, almost by definition, seek to monopolize the communal ties of their citizens; an ideal type of a nation-state would be the only political community to which a member felt any significant attachment and the borders of the state would be coterminous with the national community. Internal ethnic and linguistic differences are potentially problematic to any nation-state, and they have historically employed varying strategies to deal with internal variation, from the cultural

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<sup>959</sup> Former Izquierda Unida of Asturias spokesman Valledor alluded to this when discussing the major objection in the 1990s to his party's nationalist turn, claiming that the loudest objections came from a sector of classical Marxists who dismissed nationalism as a bourgeois fiction. García Valledor, Interview by author.

assimilation of the French Third Republic<sup>960</sup> to Imperial Germany's portrayal of the national *kultur* as composed of varied-yet-related *heimaten*.<sup>961</sup> Modern multi-party democracies seem to manage, if rarely eliminate, such differences through an emphasis on the relationships between state and citizen, tending to reject appeals to communal rights. By dealing exclusively with questions of *individual* rights, implicitly denying the right of any other type of group identity to, in essence, negotiate with the state, it seems that the modern democratic state successfully limits the ability of dissident internal groups to maintain political pressure and pursue grievances. The 1998 Ley de Uso explicitly protects any individual from discrimination because of language choice, but at the same time, the state has consistently protected the rights of individual Castilian-speakers to *not* learn other languages (Asturianu is simply one case of several). Thus, while civil servants are obligated to accept written and oral communication in Asturianu, there is no impetus for them either to respond in the same language or to provide bilingual paperwork. Thus, a number of daily interactions for Asturian citizens have remained almost exclusively monolingual, such as those with the post office, provincial administration, taxes, and public schools. From a cynical point of view, it seems that the Spanish state has decided to manage dissent by conceding that minority groups have the right to speak in whatever language they wish, but that the state has an equal right to not listen.

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<sup>960</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

<sup>961</sup> Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*.

The Asturianista cultural and linguistic revival movement never became a consistent force in national or regional politics, but this was not because of one single predominant factor (either structural or strategic). Rather, a series of occasionally unconnected trends created a historical conjuncture that kept Asturian nationalism from ever really expanding significantly beyond a relatively marginalized cultural and linguistic movement. If the alternative identity offered by the Asturianistas never convinced large numbers of Asturians to participate actively in nationalist politics, neither was it totally without resonance within Asturian society. Thus, the nationalist movement in Asturias has been weak, but has provided a language and ideological framework that different groups have used to legitimate their claims to the resources and jobs of the region.

Asturianismu has periodically shown the ability to appeal to relatively wide sectors of Asturian society and apply significant pressure on the majority parties of the Spanish State, causing at least minor readjustments of to the structure of the Spanish State of the Autonomies, most prominently during the late 1970s and the mid-1990s. However, the Asturianista movement has been unable to consistently sustain this political pressure, for reasons both internal to the Asturianistas and outside of their control, such as deindustrialization and the fundamental flexibility of the State of the Autonomies and modern liberal democracies.



### Possibly Too Little, Definitely Too Late

During the Transition, Asturianista cultural politics took advantage of a political structure in flux. The history of the anti-*franquista* opposition associated broadly popular concepts like “democracy” and “freedom” with regionalism, cultural revival, and a decentralized political model during the first years after Franco’s death. During the early Transition, these connections were strong enough that, to an extent, to be in favor of a democratic state in 1976 implied that one also broadly identified as a Leftist and was in favor of some degree of cultural, linguistic, and political diversity. These strong political links greatly assisted the Conceyu Bable in its campaign for greater autonomy for Asturias and greater recognition of linguistic rights for Asturianu in politics and (especially) education. In the fluid period between Franco’s death and the consolidation (and solidification) of the new asymmetrical democratic order during the first years of the 1980s, the Asturianistas were able to exert a significant political influence, successfully lobbying for the language’s explicit protection in the 1981 Asturian Autonomy statute and the creation of a new state-funded institution to oversee the standardization and linguistic study of the language. The early nationalists of the Conceyu Bable raised the language’s profile and prestige to the point that it was recognized by most people as a distinct language worthy of some degree of preservation and promotion by the local government.

However, the legacy of the *franquista* state and its persisting cultural hierarchy were a pre-existing state of affairs that the idealists of the Asturianista movement had to overcome.

Unlike the situation in Euskadi or Catalunya, there was virtually no sense of an Asturian regionalist or nationalist opposition to the regime before 1974. Concurrently, there was no real corresponding historical identification of Asturianu with opposition to the regime until relatively late in the dictatorship. Minority language and democratic opposition, an association that did not become generalized within Asturian society until the early 1970s, was therefore a less resilient symbolic link than in corresponding situations elsewhere in the Spanish periphery. While Asturianismu was able to clearly define itself as a legitimate opposition to the Franco regime, it was never able to effectively do the same under a democratic State of the Autonomies.

Thus, the nascent Asturian nationalist movement probably arrived too late to radically effect the form of the new State of the Autonomies. Asturias' timing seemed to just miss the cut-off, in fact, and was the first of the new Autonomous Communities to be diverted down the "slow-track" autonomy path in late 1981. It thus missed out on the privileges reserved for those regions whose pre-autonomic governments had opted for the provisions of Article 151 of the 1978 constitution, most importantly official bilingualism, an independent television channel (after 1983),<sup>962</sup> greater control over regional economic policy and planning, and an independent police force. The 1983 Organic Harmonization Law (LOAPA)<sup>963</sup> effectively built this two-tiered hierarchy into the constitutional foundations of the young state. Thus, after the critical period of the Transition, it became very difficult for

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<sup>962</sup> "Ley 46/1983, de 26 de diciembre, reguladora del tercer canal de televisión."

<sup>963</sup> "Ley 12/1983, de 14 de octubre, del Proceso Autonómico."

any region that had not already been conceded a first-class autonomy to subsequently break into that category. Even for regions, such as Asturias, that subsequently revised their Autonomy Statutes, it was still difficult to extract more than a partial reform of their relationship to the Spanish State. In the case of Asturias, this was symbolically reinforced in the unwillingness of any of the various majority parties with Spanish-wide constituencies (IU, if it could still be considered “majority” in the 1990s, was a significant exception) show a willingness to label Asturias as a “historic nationality” in either the 1981 or 1999 versions of the Autonomy Statute. In part, this was less because of a genuine fear that simply calling Asturias a nation would lead to any seriously threatening independence movement in the region, but rather because of the potential ramifications that a further weakening of the symbolic structure of Spanish identity could have for the vastly more problematic areas of Catalunya and Euskadi. From Franco’s death in 1975 through approximately 1981, the structure of the Spanish state was in flux and open to various degrees of modification; afterwards, the door was effectively slammed shut on further radical change.

### **The Socialist Party and the Flexibility of Liberal Democracies**

The Socialist Party, which would dominate political power in the region from the Transition onwards, moved quickly to occupy the new political space left by the discredited *franquista* government. A party with a very minimal presence in Asturias during the 1960s and 1970s, the Socialists grew rapidly in prominence and popularity after his death, largely at

the expense of the Communist Party. At least initially, the Socialist governments from 1982 onwards also benefited greatly from the prominent memory of the dictatorship. Indeed, much of their political legitimacy was underpinned by the party's connections to the nostalgia-colored perceptions of the Spanish Second Republic and its history in exile during the Franco years. With the symbolic return of the exile government in the person of "*el Mexicano*," Rafael Fernández, the PSOE was able to achieve an instant legitimacy, which combined with the rising political star of Felipe González and his modernist, progressive political program, seemed to represent the antithesis of the dictatorship. After the 1978 absorption of the smaller (but influential in Asturias) *Partido Socialista Popular*, the Socialists effectively staked out a wide political territory covering everything from the Right-Center to the traditional Marxist Left. Effectively, they carved out for themselves almost all of the considerable space between the Communist Party and the ex-*franquista* *Unión del Centro Democrático* (UCD). Even more than in the rest of Spain, the Asturian Socialists were able to unify the moderate vote (in favor of their recent rejection of Marxism, the European program, and the emphasis on modernization), with the "historic vote" of the socialist trade unions. Specifically, one of the keys to the rapidity and ease of the PSOE rise to prominence was the role of the SOMA (*Sindicato de Obreros Mineros de Asturias*), the Asturian miner's union. The SOMA not only could take advantage of its large presence in a key industry, but also had a mythological attachment to it as one of the key protagonists in the October

Revolution of 1934.<sup>964</sup> Thus, with the moderate and union vote alone the PSOE was capable of controlling political power in Asturias throughout the 1980s. Therefore, unlike the situation in Catalunya, Euskadi, or Galicia, the PSOE was only occasionally obliged to adapt its politics to accommodate a regionalist perspective.

In Asturias, the new liberal Spanish State has had a remarkably successful record at dividing, marginalizing, and re-integrating a number of dissenting populations. In particular, the willingness of the Socialist Party to incorporate outside individuals into its structure, even placing them in prominent roles in Asturias, has, for the most part, been the most effective way to neutralize its political opponents from the Left and from the nationalist or regionalist movements. Pedro de Silva, Xuan Xosé Sánchez Vicente, Antonio Masip, and Vicente Álvarez Areces were all (relatively) high-ranking PSOE members in Asturias who originated in competing political parties. Masip and Areces quickly adopted and internalized the centrist (and centralized) ideology of the Socialist Party, while de Silva and Sánchez Vicente both attempted to pull the PSOE in a more regionalist direction. The latter two were largely unsuccessful in this endeavor, effectively marginalized, and ultimately left the party in frustration. Just two examples of a general phenomenon, the Asturian PSOE has managed to maintain its hegemonic grip on power (1995-1999 excepted) in part because of its tendency to absorb the personnel and policy of its opponents in this way.

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<sup>964</sup> This historic symbolism was best expressed to me by Lluís Xabell Álvarez, when he said that “people here continue living out the fourteen days in October of their grandfathers.”

*“La gente aquí sigue viviendo los quince días de octubre de sus abuelos.”*

Álvarez, Interview by author.

While the administrations of ex-PSP and DSA member Pedro de Silva did see a partial implementation of some of the provisions in the Statute of Autonomy (most prominently the 1984 initiation of Asturianu instruction in public schools), he was representative of a small group of regionalists within the PSOE (inherited from the old PSP), rather than of the party as a whole. Indeed, he described the Statute of Autonomy, the Academia de la Llingua, and the Asturianu classes as progress achieved “in spite of the PSOE rather than because of them” and maintained that the PSOE was, throughout this period, a “Jacobin” and inherently centrist organization.<sup>965</sup> However, as a political maneuver, the calculated few concessions towards Asturian autonomy served to brilliantly stall the growth of a nationalist movement. In effect, by absorbing the regionalist group within the PSP and implementing in a limited way a few of their proposals, the Socialists were able to co-opt some of the nationalist movement’s symbols, language, and capture the votes of a good portion of its potential electorate.

Even when faced with periods of more intense opposition (such as the late 1970s and mid-to-late 1990s), the party representatives of the Spanish state showed a remarkable ability to bend, concede limited reforms to nationalist demands, and re-absorb the bulk of the protesters back into the fabric of consenting society, all without having to make fundamental changes in the established cultural or political hierarchies. The multi-party system inherent to modern liberal democracies, in particular, allowed often minor differences in policy

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<sup>965</sup> de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Interview by author.

between the PSOE and the PP to be presented as major ones in personnel. Thus, the periodic shuffling of the administration of such states creates the illusion of more fundamental change than really takes place, keeps much of the potential discontent within any political system focused on a particular party, administration, or individual political figure, and diverts it from more fundamental aspects of the system's basic design. The regular cycle of parties through a liberal democracy also tends to obscure any common social and economic policies pursued (with more or less zeal, more or less openness), by several or all of the major groups likely to rotate through power.

Importantly, the constant and regular cycle of elections both maintains in an electorate the constant expectation that a different cycle will bring hope and positive change and, somewhat contradictorily, a pervasive political apathy, in part brought on by the constant electoral cycles. To take modern Asturias as just one example, people have a sense that they are living in a constant electoral campaign, and with some reason.<sup>966</sup> From the first elections of the new political system in June 1977 to the Autonomic and Municipal Elections of 1999, there were *fourteen* years with some sort of electoral campaign (many with more than one) compared to only eight without any kind of election.<sup>967</sup> Between General, Municipal, European, and Autonomic elections, the constituents of the modern Spanish State are constantly overstimulated by electoral propaganda. In such an environment, it is

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<sup>966</sup> PWZ field notes 2006, 2008-9.

<sup>967</sup> Elections were held in 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1999. The only years in which ballots were not cast (not necessarily campaign free, of course) were 1980, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1997, and 1998.

significantly difficult for any political movement to grab the attention of an oversaturated electorate, strongly favoring incumbents.

### **Marginalization, Frustration, and Fragmentation**

Unity and party discipline from the PSOE contrasted starkly with the fragmentation within the Asturianista movement. It was not a coincidence that two of Asturianismu's periods of greatest political influence (and potential) were moments of moments of relative political unity under the electoral coalition *Unidad Regionalista* in 1977 and the broad citizens' movement built up around *Izquierda Unida* in the mid-to-late 1990s. The nationalists' inability to re-negotiate the relationship between their imagined nation and the state in which it was contained resulted in a growing frustration and manifested itself concretely as a constant tendency towards fragmentation of the movement. Even during the Nineties, a time when *Izquierda Unida* was building a broad Leftist coalition in support of reform and linguistic rights (and beginning to come into conflict with the *Partíu Asturianista*), the nationalists themselves were still experiencing the aftermath of the breakup of *Coalición Asturiana*. Much of the history of Asturian nationalism has been characterized by an almost dizzying array of parties, groups, and initials, many of whom spent a great deal of time fighting with each other. Aside from the obvious problem of dividing up the nationalist vote at each election, political campaigns and lobbies became vastly less effective and consequently much easier to ignore by the political establishment. To cite an illustrative



contemporary example, the October 4, 2008 march in Oviedo organized by the *Conceyu Abiertu pola Oficialidá* (Open Council for Official Status)<sup>968</sup> counted on the support of a number of the nationalist and regionalist parties of Asturias, including IU; however, *Andecha Astur* staged its own, simultaneous protest march, in the mining town of La Felguera.

Anyone attempting to vote in favor of, say, increased local control over taxes or in favor of bilingualism during the period 1974-1999 encountered (at different times) the following series of parties at the voting booth, all claiming to represent the Asturian people: CNA, Unidad Regionalista, ENA, XNA, PAS, UNA, Coalición Asturiana (PAS-UNA), AA, IAS, Lliga Asturiana, INA, BIA, URAS, Bloque por Asturias (BpA or BA), and UNA (again, from 2008-present). Thus, if anything, the constantly changing initials of the nationalist political spectrum (and the Spanish habit of using initials in place of a party name on most propaganda) served only to confuse and turn away potential supporters.

The continuous cycle of consolidation and fragmentation has both frustrated the Asturianistas' ability to mobilize their target demographic on a consistent basis and greatly hindered their ability to engage in coordinated political campaigns. From the mid-1980s onwards, almost any regionalist or nationalist initiative was critiqued by at least some sector of the nationalist movement. Thus, to cite some of the more prominent examples, the creation of the Oficina de Política de Llingüística was considered a power-grab by the Socialist Party and its directors accused of selling out the nationalist cause. The more

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<sup>968</sup> A successor to the late 1990s Pautu pol Autogobiernu y la Oficialidá. See Chapter 6

‘authentically’ nationalist Partíu Asturianista dismissed Izquierda Unida’s adoption of pro-bilingual and pro-autonomy positions as electoral machinations. The latter’s negotiated 1998 Law of Asturianu was, in turn, lambasted for not requiring more of the state, namely, a declaration of official bilingualism. It is telling that a number of my interviewees reflected that the history of Asturianismu at times more closely resembled Monty Python’s slapstick parody of revolutionary movements in the troupe’s 1979 film, *The Life of Brian*, than any kind of unified nationalist bloc.<sup>969</sup>

Conversely, most people outside the Asturianista movement see it as monolithic. To most non-militants, there was little difference between the state-sponsored philological institution the Academia de la Llingua, the citizen’s action group the Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana, and any of the political parties. In this situation, the effectiveness of the group as a whole tended to be of paramount importance, and this fragmentation contributed greatly to the general consensus that Asturianismu was not a “serious” political option. Because Asturianismu was generally viewed from the outside as a single group, the poor public relations fallout of the radical nationalist Left’s flirtation with and (at times) open admiration and imitation of ETA and the nationalist movement in Euskadi had repercussions for the entire spectrum of nationalist groups. The infiltration of the first nationalist party, the Conceyu Nacionalista Astur, by a cell of ETA (*politico-militar*) and the subsequent armed robbery of Oviedo’s Banco Herrero in 1979 by the group led to a public

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<sup>969</sup> Both Lluís Xabiel Álvarez and Inaciu Iglesias made this comparison explicit in their interviews, while several others brought the movie up informally. Álvarez, Interview by author; Iglesias Fernández, Interview by author.

association between the culturalist (and often pacifist) groups such as the Academy of Asturian Language and the Conceyu Bable with the armed insurrection in Euskadi.<sup>970</sup> Additional public evidence for the argument that all peripheral nationalism would end up in violent revolution was provided by the active 1987 and 1989 campaigns in favor of *Herri Batasuna*,<sup>971</sup> by elements of the nationalist *Ensame Nacionalista Astur* and the regionalist *Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies*. This public fascination was rather sensationally covered by the press, serving to alienate vast sectors of the Asturian population from the nationalist movement as a whole at a critical time in its growth.

Asturias provides an example of how, as Nikolas Rose argues,<sup>972</sup> liberal democracies are particularly good at governing through the twin strategies of cooption and incorporation of dissent and the simultaneous division and fragmentation of any counter-hegemonic political movement. As parts of the Asturianista movement were coopted and incorporated into the structure of government to various extents, the rest of the nationalist movement was riven by fractures between extremists and moderates, purists and pragmatists, students and “respectable” citizens, and political and non-political philosophies. These divisions worked at all levels, between individuals, and even within the politicized academic process of linguistic standardization (most commonly framed as “purists” contrasted with “realists”).

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<sup>970</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>971</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>972</sup> Nikolas Rose, “Governing “Advanced” Liberal Democracies,” in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government*, ed. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 37-64; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Asturianismu has thus been effectively reduced into a group of overlapping, partly competitive, occasionally cooperating groups struggling over highly limited sets of resources (mainly funding, public attention, and voters). Fragmented into smaller and smaller groups, people have acted more as political individuals, a phenomenon which has tended to magnify the effect of the “useful vote.”

### **Language as an Empty Signifier**

The almost exclusive concern with linguistic politics on the part of nationalist and regionalist parties at times severely hampered the Asturianistas’ efforts to expand their political appeal to a larger sector of the population. At the same time, the linguistic conflict offered an easily referenced analytical framework through which Asturians could understand the constant struggle over resources at the heart of the political and economic changes taking place within Asturias and Spain as a whole since the Transition, or even the late 1960s. This metaphor has clearly served as one of the more common “empty signifiers” developed in Asturias over the last three decades.<sup>973</sup> Over most of this period, the content of pieces written in Asturianu and even the nature of the language itself were much less important politically than the fact of its existence and the social, economic, and political connotations that have been built up (and deconstructed) surrounding the people who have used it. Additionally, language (and occasionally the particular variety employed) serves as a readily visible means

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<sup>973</sup> See detailed theoretical discussion in Introduction. Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*.

of identification within a particular community, political movement, culture, or neighborhood, both for the speaker and for those around him or her, usually in combination with dress and behavior. It has become a relatively simplified point of public debate around which people have been able to orient themselves, and thus one's stance on bilingualism has become a proxy for a shifting collection of positions. This, in part, helps to explain the persistent popularity of the linguistic rights paradigm in Asturias, as it has at various times served as a convenient reduction of political debates about dictatorship and democracy, regionalism, diversity, modernity, capitalism, and environmentalism.

However, it would seem that people do not vote for reasons of language alone; rather, it needs to serve as a symbol for something else. The points at which the argument for linguistic rights gathered the most support were not coincidentally also the periods where the political system controlling the distribution of state funds, jobs, and patronage was at its most unstable. Much of the linguistic survey evidence conducted by both SADEI and sociologist Francisco Llera Ramo contribute to the conclusion that, since the Transition, the majority of Asturians have been sympathetic towards the language, though (like the Communist Party during the 1970s and 1980s), they did not necessarily make it a high priority. The Asturian case would seem to indicate that language, while often a critical component of nationalist programs, is not in itself sufficient to elicit popular support. A possible explanation for this is that in the contemporary period, the language in question is almost always in decline or has a very low social status, even among native speakers. At least

initially, language seems to play a complementary role in successful nationalist movements, folded into a wider concept of regional culture that has more mass appeal by promising direct redistribution of resources and power. The Asturianistas as a group consistently reduced much of their political platform to questions of language rights and cultural politics. While there were a few exceptions, this overall trend has earned the movement as a whole a reputation of being exclusively concerned with such issues, alienating a large block of voters concerned with the real-world problems of job loss, pensions, an increasing income gap, and a post-industrial landscape. In a region in a long industrial decline, voters, with many parties to choose from and only one vote each, were less willing to commit themselves to parties with less promise of an immediate economic benefit.

The late-franquista conversion of much of Asturian industrial production into public enterprise and the heavy role of government subsidies created a sense of economic dependency on the central state in Madrid. The successful Basque and Catalan nationalist movements both focused on economic differences between each region and the rest of Spain, portraying Castilla as dependent upon Basque or Catalan industry and wealth. In stark contrast, the early Asturianistas (especially the *Conceyu Bable*) made economic arguments a relatively minor component of their propaganda. While the *Conceyu Bable*, as well as later groups of the nationalist Left such as the *Ensame* and *Andecha Astur*, attempted to portray the state-run mining operations as the rape of Asturias' natural resources, the state had actually nationalized the mining and metallurgical industries in Asturias to prevent their

collapse. The central government under Franco had also heavily invested in the region, naming it an INI (National Institute of Industry) “pole of development.” Thus, rather than acting as a drag upon the region’s prosperity (as Basque and Catalan nationalists were able to claim), the central government actively subsidized parts of the Asturian economy. Whether this had a positive or negative effect (through the creation of a dependency relationship) on the region has been disputed by regionalist groups, but the role of public enterprise in Asturias was, at the least, a significant complicating factor in any attempt to label the relationship between Asturias and the rest of Spain as simply parasitic.

Though the CNA and its successor parties amongst the more extreme nationalist Left (the Ensame and Andecha Astur) consistently espoused a colonial model for the relationship between Spain and Asturias, this received very little support amongst those outside such parties. Indeed, the more popular imagining of Asturias’ link to the rest of Spain is precisely the inverse, the conservative *covadonguista* idea that Asturias, in fact, was the ‘cradle of Spain,’ the birth of the *reconquista* and the font from which a primeval Spanish nation spread.<sup>974</sup> The ideas of *covadonguismo*, although toned down significantly since their heyday under Franco, persist in Asturias, often nested with a strong sense of regional identity with little or no internal conflict. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Asturianistas was in “de-nesting” these paired Asturian-Spanish imagined nations, in which Asturias, the *patria chica*, coexists within the umbrella of Spain. To this point they have not been particularly

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<sup>974</sup> See Chapter 1.

successful at doing so, either through revised history challenging Pelayo and Covadonga's historical meaning or through a (much more emphasized) attempt to tie Asturian identity fundamentally to the use and understanding of the autochthonous language.

### **What Next for *Asturies*?**

The legacy of over three decades of Asturianismu is mixed. The linguistic, cultural, and political revival begun in the 1970s was never extinguished, but neither did it enjoy *sustained* political or social success. While the Asturianistas have occasionally built up enough support to pressure the Spanish state into limited reform, each of those movements subsequently dissolved and the momentum was lost. The maintenance of any such collective project over the long-term in Spain's modern individualizing democratic system is difficult; the State of the Autonomies seems to be relatively mature, and, unless major unrest were to once again develop in Euskadi and Catalunya, it is unlikely that nationalism as an identity project will experience a similar explosion to the one that occurred upon Franco's death. In the immediate future, it does not seem likely that such a favorable climate for regionalism will appear.

The turn of the millennium saw a fragmented nationalist political scene, with both moderates and extremists, pragmatists and purists, all seeing a substantial reversal of fortunes after the seeming successes of the 1990s. While enrollment in Asturianu classes in primary and secondary schools continues to be promoted by the government and maintains an



important constituency, particularly in the mining districts, students continue to drop the subject in secondary education, and the language itself continues to decline in frequency as older members of the population dies off. Even if a hypothetically resurgent Asturianista movement were to secure a declaration of bilingualism, the legislation, in and of itself, would not guarantee the languages' continued use as a vehicle for everyday communication, art, politics, and music. One needs only look at the example of the Republic of Ireland, where Irish has been official for nearly a century and a required course of study for all students but still continues a slow and steady decline into disuse.<sup>975</sup> Languages and cultures in and of themselves do not have rights, but the people who speak, practice, and live them do. It is up to the Asturian people themselves whether or not to continue to practice the everyday use of the language.

Over the last four years, there have been persistent attempts amongst a sector of the nationalist Left to unify the movement, resulting in the creation of first *Unidá* (Unity), a coalition between Izquierda Asturiana and a faction of Andecha Astur, and then the resurrection of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* after the two groups merged in 2008. The new party has since entered a coalition with the *Bloque por Asturias*, a position advocated by a group of nationalists forming the *Coleutivu pola Xuntanza* (Collective in favor of Joining). At the same time, both Andecha Astur and the Partíu Asturianista have so far remained aloof

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<sup>975</sup> John Walshie, "Academic Claims the Forced Learning of Irish 'Has Failed'," *The Independent* [Dublin] 2006-01-19; Mary Regan, "End Compulsory Irish, Says FG, as 14,000 Drop Subject," *The Irish Examiner* [Cork] 2006-01-19.

from these overtures, although they have begun a few initiatives with each other.

Additionally, Andecha split over the merger with Izquierda Asturiana and the Bloque por Asturias renounced its coalition with Izquierda Unida in 2010, indicating that the trend to fragmentation may still win out. The Asturian nationalist movement *may* be entering another period of consolidation just as the economic shocks of the late 2000s have begun to really hurt the Socialist Party's once-unassailable political position.

While general acceptance both politically and socially for the practice of a distinctive Asturian language and culture seem like laudable goals for the movement in the long-term, it remains to be seen whether or not the Asturianista political project can recover enough momentum to effect even such relatively harmless change to the structure of the Spanish state. Historically, Asturianism's influence has depended as much on the (often unconnected) fortunes of the majority parties in Asturias as it has on the movement itself, and the nationalists have been most prominent in politics and society during periods when the established political positions in Spain were shaken, as they were during the Transition and the mid-1990s scandals that cut away the political legitimacy of the Socialist Party. Major problems confront the nationalist movement; most importantly, the Asturianistas are faced with the basic challenge that has faced them since the Transition: how to convince a substantial enough portion of Asturian society that identity politics and debates over the *llingua* are applicable to or representative of the struggles of everyday life. Asturianism survives after three decades of mixed political and social acceptance, and I do not see it

disappearing in the short-term. However, in order to carve out a stable political niche, the Asturianistas will have to overcome both resistance from the beneficiaries of the Spanish state's political *status quo* and their own frustrated history.

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 Martínez Arango, Plácido  
 Neira Álvarez, Anxelu  
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 Uría Ríos, José  
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## Interviews

The interview portion of the research consisted of 91 interviews with 78 people. They were recorded into a digital .wav format and average roughly an hour and a half in length. The interviewees are listed in alphabetical order below, along with the location and date of the interview. Additionally, with each interviewer, I have added a brief listing of their professions and relationship to the Asturianista movement. While not all of the interviews were cited or directly quoted over the course of the dissertation, their contribution both to the framing of the project and to my overall knowledge of the terrain was invaluable. Without the help of these people, I would not even have known what questions to ask, much less where to look for the answers.

Abad Cuadriello, Germán – Oviedo – 2009-01-26 – Mathematician and politician.

Representative in the Junta General del Principado de Asturias for *Izquierda Unida* (1991-93), and as an independent (1993-5), member of *Andecha Astur*, executive board member of *Andecha Astur* (UNA).

Abogado, Robert – Gijón – 2009-03-25 – Member *Andecha Astur* (UNA).

Alonso Mori, Francisco (Paco) – Oviedo – 2009-03-26 – Candidate #1 for Senate for *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* in the elections of 1989.

Álvarez Álvarez, Faustino – Oviedo – 2009-04-06 & 2009-04-20 – Author and politician.

Representative in the Junta General del Principado de Asturias for the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (1993-present), Director of the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* (1985-7).

Álvarez Fernández, Ánxel – Oviedo – 2009-04-09 – Teacher. Member SUATEA.

Álvarez Hevia, Jose Rogelio (Quini) – Gijón – 2009-04-23 – Member of the *Conceyu Bable Xixón*, member of *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*, executive board member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1988-92).

Álvarez García, Lluís Xabel – Oviedo – 2008-10-17 & 2008-10-20 – Aliases *Texuca* and *Lluís Texuca*. Philosopher and writer, faculty member at the University of Oviedo.

Founding member of the *Conceyu Bable*, member and Secretary of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*, briefly member of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*. Secretary of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (1981-1999). Spouse of Amelia Valcárcel.

Álvarez García, Xesús (Chus) – Gijón – 2009-03-05 – Executive board member of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*, member of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*.

Álvarez-Balbuena García, Fernando – 2008-11-26 & 2008-12-01 – Linguist. Faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Spokesperson for the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana* (1996-2003), member of the *Xunta Asesora de Toponimia*, member of the *Seminariu de Filoloxía Asturiana*.

d'Andrés Díaz, Ramón – Oviedo – 2008-10-23, 2008-11-19, & 2008-12-03 – Linguist and writer, faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Member of *Conceyu Bable*, member of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (1984-1999), and Secretary of the *Academia de la*

- Llingua Asturiana* (19??-1999), member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, Director of the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* (2003-2007), member of the *Xunta Asesora de Toponimia*, Director of the *Seminariu de Filoloxía Asturiana*.
- Arias-Cachero Cabal, Álvaro – Oviedo – 2009-01-23 & 2009-01-29 – Linguist, faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes* and *Izquierda Asturiana*.
- Bello, Xuan – Oviedo – 2008-11-04 – Poet and writer, newspaper columnist for *Les Noticies*. Member of the *Conceyu Bable*, *Camaretá*, anarchist collective *Comuña Llibertaria*, *La Güestia* theater troupe, founding member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, founding member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*. Member of the second generation of *Surdimientu* writers.
- Bermeyo García, Arturu Xosé – Oviedo – 2009-01-20 – Bookseller. Proprietor of the *Llibrería la Paraxuga*. Founding member of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur* and founding member and General Secretary of *Andecha Astur*.
- Bueno Martínez, Gustavo – Oviedo – 2009-04-16 – Philosopher and faculty member at the University of Oviedo (1960-1998). Marxist supporter of the anti-*franquista* opposition in Asturias. Major proponent of “philosophical materialism.” Director of the *Fundación Gustavo Bueno* (1998-present), founding member of the *Amigos de los Bables* (1988-1998). Spanish nationalist.
- Camilo Díaz, Adolfo – Oviedo – 2009-03-05 & 2009-04-21 – Playwright, writer, and journalist. Member of *La Güestia* theater troupe and rock band. Member of the anarchist collectives *Coleutivu Llibertariu* & *Comuña Llibertaria*. Founding member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*. Director of *Al Bellume* literary magazine (1986-9), member of administration of *Radiotelevision del Principado de Asturias* (2005-present).
- Cándano, Xuan – Oviedo – 2009-03-31 – Publisher and journalist. Member of the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid*, *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*. Reporter for *La Voz de Asturias*, *La Hoja Universitaria*, and *Televisión Española*. Editor of the magazine *Atlántica XXII*.
- Cano González, Ana María – Oviedo – 2009-01-16 – Linguist. Participant at the *I Asamblea Regional del Bable*. Faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Chair of the Department of Spanish Philology (1997-2008). President of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (2001-present).
- Carmona, Xosé Lluís – Gijón – 2008-12-12 – Politician and Red Cross worker. Member of *Democracia Socialista Asturiana*, the *Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias*, the *Conceyu Bable*, founder and member of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*, member of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*, and *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992). Mayoral candidate for Gijón for *Coalición Asturiana* in the municipal elections of 1991. Member of the *Lliga Asturiana*.

- Cañedo Valle, Xesús – Oviedo – 2009-04-02 & 2009-04-07 – Politician and writer.  
Member of the *Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias*, and the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*. Founder and General Secretary of the *Partíu Asturianista* (1985-present).
- Díaz García, Santiago – Lloriana (Oviedo) – 2009-02-14 – Breeder of native Asturian fauna.  
Member of the *Conceyu Bable* and the *Partíu Asturianista*.
- Díaz Yepes, Xicu Xabel – Tazones (Villaviciosa) – 2009-01-30 & 2009-04-20 – Politician and tavern owner. Member of the *Conceyu Bable*, the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid*, and the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*. General Secretary of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*. Member of *Unidá Nacioanlista Asturiana* (1989-1992). Candidate #2 for Congress for *Unidá Nacioanlista Asturiana* in 1989. Member of the *Lliga Asturiana*, and councilman in Villaviciosa for the *Unión Renovadora Asturiana* (2003-present).
- Elípe Raposo, Xulio (Xune) – Oviedo – 2009-01-22 – Musician and newspaper columnist. Founder and lead singer of nationalist punk band *Dixeбра*, columnist for *Les Noticies*. Member of the *Conceyu Bable*, host of *Radio Marea*, host of *Radio Sele*, member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Asociación Cultural Arfueyu*, the *Xunta d'Autodefensa de la Nación Asturiana*, founding member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, member of *Andecha Astur*.
- Fernández, Xosé Antón (Xosé Ambás) – Oviedo – 2009-04-14 – Singer, bagpiper, expert on regional folklore and oral traditions, and televisión host. Member of folk bands *N'Arba* and *Tuenda*. Host of television documentary series *Camín de Cantares* and television folklore program *Canta l'uxu*.
- Fernández Conde, Francisco Javier – Oviedo – 2009-04-21 – Historian of Medieval Asturias and faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* and the *Colectivu Manuel Fernández de Castro*.
- Fernández Lorences, Taresa – Oviedo – 2008-10-20 & 2008-11-21 – Linguist and poet, faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies* (and its successor, *Lliberación*). Founding member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, member of the *Seminariu de Filoloxía Asturiana*. Spouse of Cheni Uría. Member of the second generation of *Surdimientu* writers.
- Fernández Marqués, Marcos Abel – Gijón – 2009-02-13 & 2009-02-20 – Medical doctor (chiropractor). Member of *Camaretá*, the *Conceyu Bable*, the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1990), founding member and General Secretary of *Andecha Astur*.
- de la Fuente Trabanco, Fernando – Gijón – 2009-02-17 – Founder and director of Asturias.com. Member of youth group *Xorrez*, *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, and militant of the *Partíu Asturianista*.
- García, Antón – Oviedo – 2008-10-27 – Writer and poet, editor and publisher (founder of *Ediciones Trabe*), producer of Asturianu television for TPA. Member of the second



- generation of the *Surdimientu* writers. Director of the *Oficina de Política Llingüística* (1988-1991).
- García Arias, Xosé Lluís – Oviedo – 2008-11-18 – Linguist and writer, faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Founding member and first president of the *Conceyu Bable*, participant at the *I Asamblea Regional del Bable*, member of *Unidad Regionalista*, first president of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (1981-2001).
- García Cosío, Xosé Firmu – Pola de Siero – 2008-10-23 – Linguist. Representative of the *Serviciu de Normalización Llingüística* for Pola de Siero, member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*.
- García Fernández, Cesáreo (César el Maniegu) – Avilés – 2008-12-04 – Linguist, musician. Doctoral student in philology at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Asociación Cultural Arfueyu*, the *Xunta d'Autodefensa de la Nación Asturiana*, illustrator and author of the comic series *L'Esperteyu*, founder of nationalist punk band *Dixebra*, member of *Izquierda Asturiana* and *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (2008-present).
- García Fernández, José Ramón (Monchu el Cura) – Pola de Siero & Villaviciosa – 2008-10-23 & 2009-02-04 – Priest. Member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana*, closely associated (although never a member) of the *Ensamble Nacionalista Astur*, the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*, and the *Lliga Asturiana*.
- García Oliva, Vicente – Gijón – 2009-01-27 – Writer and poet. Host of radio show *Asturies na so llingua, na so cultura* and coordinator of “*Estaya Rexonal*.” Member of the *Conceyu Bable* and the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*.
- García Valledor, Francisco Javier – Oviedo – 2009-03-05 & 2009-03-31 – Teacher and politician. Member of the *Juventudes Comunistas* and the *Partido Comunista de Asturias*. Member of the *Conceyu Bable*. Member of *Izquierda Unida* (1986-2010). Coordinator of *Izquierda Unida de Gijón* (1991-5) and Spokesperson for *Izquierda Unida de Asturias* (2000-9). Representative for *Izquierda Unida* in the *Junta General del Principado de Asturias* (1995-2009) and Second Vicepresident of the *Junta General del Principado de Asturias* (1995-9). *Consejero* of Justice, Public Security, and External Relations of the *Principado de Asturias* (2003-7).
- Gil Fernández, Dulce – Oviedo – 2009-01-20 – Bookseller. Proprietor of the *Llibrería la Paraxuga*. Member of the *Ensamble Nacionalista Astur*, member and treasurer of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1990) and founding member of *Andecha Astur*.
- González Fernández, Ignacio (Nacho) – Oviedo – 2009-02-13 – Teacher. Asturian language play-by-play commentator for Real Oviedo soccer matches on *Radio Sele*. Member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, the *Coordinadora Ecoloxista d'Asturies*, and militant of the *Bloque por Asturias*.
- González Fernández, Lluís Antón – Gijón – 2009-03-30 – Playwright. Member of the *Conceyu Bable*, the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, and a founder of the

- Grupu de Teatru Telón de Fondo*. Member of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur* and later the *Partíu Asturianista*.
- González-Quevedo González, Roberto – Oviedo – 2009-02-11 – Linguist and anthropologist, faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid*, Secretary of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (1999-present).
- González Riaño, Xosé Antón – Oviedo – 2009-04-06 – Linguist and teacher. Member of *Conceyu Bable*, *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*, and *Colectivu de Maestros en Llingua Asturiana*. Writer for *El Glayú*. Member of *Unidad Regionalista*.
- González Rodríguez, Fernando (Fer G.R.) – Candás – 2009-03-02 – Skilled laborer. Member of *Andecha Astur* and *Andecha Mucedá*. Part of the *insumiso* movement, for which he was jailed in 1996-7. Arrested on September 13, 2005 with a lit home-made explosive in his automobile outside the PSOE party headquarters in Infiesto and charged with an additional 18 unresolved terrorist acts in Asturias from 2001-5. Held under the Antiterrorist Law without trial for 102 days, and released in January 2006 on bail of €10,000. Subsequently tried in January 2009, the prosecution demanded an 8-year prison sentence. Refusing to testify in Castilian Spanish and responding only in Asturianu, he was held in contempt of court and evicted from the trial process, returning home to await sentencing. For lack of evidence, on March 3, 2009, he was acquitted on all counts but the Infiesto incident. He was additionally acquitted of terrorism, having attempted an attack against a party headquarters at 3am (an attack on property rather than one on people). Thus, his sentence was reduced to 10 months, 3 of which he had already served. The rest of the sentence was provisionally commuted.
- González García, Humberto – Gijón – 2009-03-25 – Writer. Member of the *Conceyu Bable*. Secretary of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, and member of the *Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos*. Founder of the *Asociación de Escritores y Traductores en Llingua Asturiana* and later the President of the *Sociedad d'Escritores en Llingua Asturiana* and Coordinator of the *Conceyu d'Escritores Asturianos*. Member of the *Partíu Asturianista* and now member of the Gijón branch of the *Partido Popular*. Currently the PP's representative on the Gijón Municipal *Conceyu Asesor de la Llingua Asturiana*.
- González Fernández, Juan Manuel (Heve) – Oviedo – 2009-02-20 – Member of the *Liga Comunista*, currently a member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*.
- Guardado, David – Oviedo – 2009-02-16 – Writer, journalist, and musician. Member of the youth group *Xorrez* and the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*. Member of the *Partíu Asturianista*, and later member of *Izquierda Asturiana* and *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (2008-present). Coordinator of the digital edition of *La Nueva España*. Founder of *Asturies.com*.
- Huerga Antuña, Iván – Oviedo – 2009-01-28 & 2009-02-04 – Linguist and Secondary School Teacher. Doctoral student at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, early host at *Radio Sele*, member of the *Ensame Nacionalista*

- Astur*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992), *Izquierda Asturiana* and *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (2008-present).
- Iglesias, Francisco (Paco) – Avilés – 2009-04-21 – Union leader. Member of the *Ensame Nacioanlista Astur*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1990), founding member of *Andecha Astur*, member of *Izquierda Nacionaliega d'Asturies*, and a union member of the *Corriente Sindical d'Izquierdes*.
- Iglesias Fernández, Inaciu – Valdesoto (Siero) – 2009-01-18 – Businessman and Publisher. Owner and founder of *Ambitu* publications and *Les Noticies*. Member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989), the *Partiu Asturianista*, the *Lliga Asturiana*, and Senatorial Candidate in 2000 for *Unión Renovadora Asturiana*.
- Lago Santillán, Miguel Ánxel – Pola de Siero – 2008-10-23 & 2008-12-09 – Member of the *Partido Comunista de los Trabajadores de España*, founding member and later executive board member of the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, executive board member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992), member of *Bloque por Asturies*.
- Llano Montes, Xabel – Gijón – 2009-03-27 – Member of *Izquierda Asturiana*, later member of *Izquierda Unida*. Member of the *Xunta Moza*, youth wing of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*.
- Llavandera Díaz, Pachu – Oviedo – 2009-02-27 – Trade unionist for the *Corriente Sindical d'Izquierdes*, member of *Andecha Astur*, founder of the *Ensame Socialista Astur*.
- Llope Fernández, Ignaciu – Oviedo – 2009-01-30 – Psychiatrist. Member of the *Liga Comunista*, the *Liga Comunista Revolucionaria*, founder of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, member of the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992), founder of the *Fundación Belenos*, member of *Izquierda Asturiana* and later executive board member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (2008-present)
- López Álvarez, Juaco – Oviedo – 2009-04-24 – Director of the *Museu del Pueblu d'Asturies*.
- López Pacios, Xesús – Oviedo – 2009-04-13 – Founder and General Secretary of the *Lliga Celta d'Asturies*.
- Marino, Xuan Xosé – Oviedo – 2009-02-09 – Director of *Radio Sele* (Asturianu radio station). Former taxi driver fined for speaking on the cab radio in Asturianu.
- Marqués Fernández, Sergio – Gijón – 2009-02-19 – Lawyer. Founder of *Alianza Popular* in Asturias and President of Asturias for the *Partido Popular* (1995-8). Founder of the *Unión Renovadora Asturiana* and President of Asturias (1998-9).
- Martínez Arango, Plácido – Oviedo – 2009-04-16 – Businessman. Founder of *Lliga Asturiana*.
- Martínez Fernández, Antón – Noreña – 2009-03-06 – Member of *Andecha Mucedá*, *Darréu*, and *Andecha Astur*.
- Masip Hidalgo, Antonio – Oviedo – 2009-02-23 & 2009-03-03 – Lawyer. Member of the *Frente de Liberación Popular* (FELIPE), and the connection between *Komunistak* and what would later be the *Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies*. Candidate #2 for *Unidad*

- Regionalista* in the 1977 elections. Joined the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* and served as the *Consejero* of Education, Culture, and Sports from 1982-3 under the pre-autonomic government. President of the *Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos* in 1983. Mayor of Oviedo (1983-1991). Representative in the *Junta General del Principado de Asturias* for the PSOE (1983-7). Secretary General of the Oviedo PSOE (1997-2003). Member of PSOE's Federal Committee (2000-4). Currently representative in the European Parliament (2004-present).
- Mata, Xicu – Avilés – 2009-01-14 – Television technician. Member of *Andecha Astur* and *Andecha Astur* (UNA).
- Miranda Fernández, Penélope – Oviedo – 2008-12-09 – Linguist. Representative of the *Serviciu de Normalización Llingüística* for Pola de Lena, spokesperson for the *Asociación de Trabajadores de la Normalización Llingüística*.
- Neira Álvarez, Anxelu (Xelu) – Gijón – 2008-10-17 – Computer Scientist, faculty member at the University of Oviedo. President of the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid* (1982-1983).
- Neira Estrada, Javier – Oviedo – 2009-04-22 – Journalist. Reporter for *La Nueva España*.
- Orviz Menéndez, Lluís Miguel (Lluismi) – Gijón – 2009-02-25 – Member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Xunta Moza*, and the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*. Jailed for *insumisión*. Member of *Izquierda Asturiana*, *Unión Renovadora Asturiana*, and currently a militant of the *Bloque por Asturies*.
- Palacios García, Rafael Avelardo – Oviedo – 2009-02-26 – Member of the *Colectivos de Jóvenes Comunistas*, member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992) and *Andecha Astur*. Founding member of *Izquierda Nacionaliega d'Asturies* and *Bloque por Asturies*. Director of the *Agencia Asturiana de Cooperación al Desarrollo* (2007-present).
- Paredes, Astur – Oviedo – 2009-02-18 – Architect and expert on traditional Asturian architecture. Founder of the *Fundación Belenos*.
- Puente, Dubardu – Oviedo – 2009-03-03 – Founder of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur* and leader of the “culturalist” faction that left the party in May 1979. Member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-92). Member of the *Conceyu Bable*, and the *Lliga Celta d'Asturies*.
- Riesgo Fernández, Xosé Nel – Gijón – 2009-02-10 – Writer. Founder of *Fundación Belenos*, writer for the literary magazine *Al Bellume*, member of the *Asociación Cultural Arfueyu*, member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992).
- Rivas Infante, David Manuel – Phone interview – 2009-04-30 – Economist, sociologist, and anthropologist. Faculty member of Economics at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). Member of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*. Member of the *Conceyu d'Asturies en Madrid*. Member of the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*, *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992). Candidate for President of Asturias for *Andecha Astur* in 1999 and 2003. Candidate for European Parliament for *Andecha Astur* in 2004.
- Rodríguez Alonso, Pablo – Gijón – 2009-02-17 – Journalist for *Asturies.com*.

- Ruíz de la Peña Solar, Álvaro – Oviedo – 2009-04-14 – Writer and literary expert. Faculty member of the University of Oviedo. Founding member of the *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana* and *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (1989-1992).
- Sánchez Vicente, Xuan Xosé – Gijón – 2009-01-12 – Alias *el Roxu*. Politician and writer. Founder of the *Conceyu Bable*, member of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*. Member of *Democracia Socialista Asturiana*, the *Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias*, *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, head of the Cultural Commission of the Provisional Government (1979-81). Founder and President of the *Partíu Asturianista*. Representative in the *Junta General del Principado de Asturias* for the *Partíu Asturianista* (1991-9).
- de Silva Cienfuegos-Jovellanos, Pedro – Gijón – 2008-12-05 – Lawyer, politician, and writer. Founder and head of *Democracia Socialista Asturiana*, member of the *Partido Socialista Popular de Asturias*, member of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, representative for Asturias in the *Congreso de los Diputados* (Spanish lower house of Parliament) (1978-1983), President of Asturias (1983-1991).
- Solis Santos, Miguel – Avilés – 2008-11-20 – Biologist, cartoonist, and writer of children's books. Founder of the *Conceyu Bable Avilés*, member of the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana*.
- Suárez Arias-Cachero, Xosé (Felechosa) – Oviedo – 2009-02-25 – Businessman. Member of *Conceyu Bable*, the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, and the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*. Town councilmember in Aller for the *Candidatura Allerana Independiente* from 1983-1991) and for *Coalición Asturiana* (1991-5). Founder of *Xunta Nacionalista Asturiana*. Executive board member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana*, Candidate #1 for Congress for *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* in the 1989 general elections. Candidate #2 for the *Junta General del Principado de Asturias* for *Coalición Asturiana* in 1991. Member of *Lliga Asturiana*. Member of the *Partido Popular*. *Consejal* of Culture in Oviedo for the PP (2007-2010).
- Suárez Palacios, Inaciu Gerardo – Gijón – 2009-03-05 – Chef. Connected to the *Partido Comunista de España* and the *Comunas Revolucionarias de Acción Socialista*. Member of the *Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota*. Spent time in Martutene and Carabanchel Prisons where he made contact with members of ETA and was involved in several hunger strikes. Connected to the *Comités de Acción Revolucionaria* and the *Conceyu Nacionalista Astur*. Imprisoned in Soria for a year for involvement in the *Banco Herrero* robbery.
- Suárez Saéz, Ernesto Avelino – Oviedo – 2009-02-23 – Musician and artist. Member of the *Colectivos de Jóvenes Comunistas*. *Insumiso*. Member of the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana* and *L'Espaníu Cultural Astur*. Member of *Izquierda Asturiana* and *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (2008-present).
- Uría Ríos, José (Cheni) – Oviedo – 2008-11-30 – Secondary school teacher. Member of the *Frente de Liberación Popular* (FELIPE), founding member and General Secretary of the

*Movimientu Comunista d'Asturies* (and its successor, *Lliberación*) and member of the Central Committee, member of *Unidad Regionalista*.

Viejo Fernández, Xulio – Oviedo – 2009-01-15 – Linguist and writer. Faculty member at the University of Oviedo. Member of the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana*, the *Xunta Asesora de Toponimia*, and the *Seminariu de Filoloxía Asturiana*.

Zapico Álvarez, Faustino – Oviedo & Mieres – 2009-01-21 & 2009-01-29 – Historian and teacher. Member of the *Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España*, the *Conceyu d'Estudiantes Nacionalistes*, the *Ensame Nacionalista Astur*, *Unidá Nacionalista Astur* (1989-1990), founding member of *Andecha Astur*, founder of *Izquierda Asturiana* and executive board member of *Unidá Nacionalista Asturiana* (2008-present).

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