


Transcription of the interview with Manuel Marín González (Madrid, 13 April 2010)

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1. Education in European affairs and political and professional career

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Hello. I would first like to thank you for your time, and for this opportunity to talk with you about the historic relationship between Spain and the European Communities.

[Manuel Marín González] Thank you.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Firstly, I would like to ask you how you acquired your interest in a European political dimension and to what extent it was influenced by your formative years, for example your studies at the University of Nancy and at the College of Europe in the field of Community law, and how this contributed to a strong pro-European approach to your political career.

[Manuel Marín González] Well, my philosophy of life is this: there are situations in life over which you have no control and which often lead you to pursue activities as a result of completely unexpected situations. I will explain: this all began when I was nearing the end of my law degree at the Complutense University of Madrid, when the professor of international law said to me: ‘If you get a job’ — that is what they always used to say — ‘you will become well known.’ This was Aguilar Navarro, who was a very demanding teacher. He then said: ‘Look here,’ (it was 1970) ‘you have got two options: either the bases’ — because Franco had signed an agreement with the United States regarding US bases in Spain — ‘or we complete the signature of the preferential agreement which this government’ (obviously he was very anti-Franco) ‘has drawn up with the current European Community.’ So I replied: ‘Well, I think the European Community agreement sounds more interesting.’ So off I went to the library and there was nothing there, because at that time the only reference material regarding Europe was to be found under Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory and the Munich Conspiracy. That was the official doctrine. We shouldn’t forget that at that time, in the early 1970s, the Franco regime was still very powerful. As there was no bibliography, I said to myself: ‘Where can I find it? Well, I shall go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because they have signed the agreement, that’s where I’ll go.’ When I got there, I met Messía, who was to become the great Spanish Ambassador in Strasbourg when we joined the Council of Europe and who was then Director-General for Cultural Relations; he took me to his office and I must have seemed ripe for the picking because he said to me: ‘Do you want to study about Europe?’ I replied that I did. ‘It’s just that we have a few bursaries which no one is applying for.’ That was because then, in the 1970s, investing in Europe was unheard of. It didn’t get you any employment or any prospects, sometimes university work or research, but nothing more; in other words it was merely to do practical work, which is what they called it at the time, that I enrolled at the international law faculty. I then went to study in France, at the European University Centre in Nancy, which I found very tough because I was immersed in a work system which was not the same as in Spain, but it was an amazing experience because it was at that time, in Nancy, in Lorraine, that I took part in my first electoral campaign; it seems unbelievable, my first European election campaign, with three very important candidates: the MP for Lorraine at the time was Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber, who had written *Le défi américain* [The American Challenge], which was the first book to be published postulating that Europe either needed to wake up and start competing with the United States or else it would lose the battle for the economy, technology and development in the Cold War system. Then there was the United Socialist Party, whose candidate at that time was Michel Rocard, who is a great friend of mine, because that was where I first met him. The other candidate was Alain Krivine, of the Trotskyist Party, so it was a luxury for me and I witnessed some democratic elections. Nancy also played host to the International University Theatre Festival, which no longer exists, but it was quite an event at the time. The director of that festival was Jacques Lang, who was later to become Minister for Culture under Mitterrand. I was very lucky to be in a city such as Nancy, which was regarded in France as provincial — which says it all — and to meet very interesting people. That made a big impression on me. Later I came back here and I said to myself ‘What am I going to do?’ I tried to embark on a professional career but no one was interested in European affairs so I said to myself, ‘I shall carry on studying.’ I then went to the College of Europe and found it fascinating. I was offered a contract as assistant lecturer, because I love university life, I love teaching, I love it, I enjoy preparing subjects and teaching; I then went to the European Commission as a trainee and then came back here to work for the Socialist Party, albeit secretly, so that was what set my horizons for me.

2. The transition to democracy and the negotiations for Spanish accession

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Could you also tell us how you see the interdependence and parallelism between the transition to democracy in Spain and Spain's integration into the European Communities?

[Manuel Marín González] For us ... just so that we understand each other ... you know that I am still a university professor and I always say to my students: 'Let's put things in context.' I put something important to them: the European Union — the European Community as it then was — as an institution which enabled countries which were emerging from dictatorships to recover, because in Western Europe up until the 1970s there were three dictatorships: the Greece of the colonels, Portugal and Spain. Three countries which then became part of a grand design of internal and external policy aimed at institutional stability, thereby becoming integrated in a system of values, the European system of values. A frequent topic of debate in Spain is: 'Was it a political move or was it economic?' It was both, but essentially the move was politically orientated, because Spain is a great country which used to be European and an integral part of European history and so it was coming back to its natural roots, it was coming back into Europe. This is more or less what happened with many Central and Eastern European countries when they acceded, because they recovered a part of their history, by becoming part of a system of values which incorporates freedom, democracy, human rights, parliamentary debate, freedom of the press, etc.; that is natural. So it was a major political objective, we shouldn't try to say otherwise any more. Why? Because a young Spanish democracy had just emerged from a public coup d'état — because there were two more even more dangerous ones later, which were fortunately cut short — and it was a means of anchoring ourselves, it was actually an anchoring operation. We were anchoring ourselves to a system of values and that, logically, was worth the fight.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would now like to ask you if we could talk about your experience as State Secretary for Relations with the European Communities and about the difficulties and gradual achievements of the accession negotiations.

[Manuel Marín González] Well, there was a turning point in the negotiations, because it was so intense in the Spanish Parliament, unlike the Portuguese Parliament, for example, where the Communist Party was against accession, and when we applied for accession it was in July 1977, just one month after we had established the *Cortes Constituyentes* and had made them constituent assemblies, and the first foreign policy decision taken by the democratic parliament was to request and authorise the government to go to Brussels to request and submit the application for accession. It was the first act and a unanimous one. Well, that was very robust evidence of our desire for accession but it was very hard and we have still not forgotten what we used to call '*el Giscardazo*', in other words Giscard d'Estaing's dirty trick where, in a calculated electoral move, knowing that farmers accounted for 3 % or 4 % of votes, which was a decisive proportion, he decided to halt the negotiations, taking the view that in terms of the agricultural package, Spain was an adversary which could undermine the possibilities of keeping the French farmers on board, and so that is what happened. We came back to the government and we then spent several very tough and costly years trying to turn the tables, because whenever Paris put in its veto, it was impossible to make any progress. Then internal situations arose which enabled us little by little to remove the objections of the French Government; we focused a great deal on other countries which were interested for other sorts of reasons, in particular Germany, under Chancellor Kohl. Then a turning point arose because Mitterrand himself finally realised that it was absurd to maintain that veto. There was a series of talks and bilateral negotiations and then, to cut a long story short, the government of the time, under

Felipe González, employed what was dubbed ‘the calculated ambiguity’ strategy: we wanted to be part of Europe, but the Europeans particularly wanted us to resolve the NATO problem. The issues were never linked, but by dint of this ‘calculated ambiguity’ strategy the government was sending a message: in a nutshell, ‘If you sort out the European problem, we could reconsider the defence issue at a later date’. Little by little, things worked out and it helped to resolve the situation. However, there were unpleasant moments because we would sometimes arrive at the Council of Ministers and as the ministers had nothing to offer us they would leave the State Secretaries or sometimes even the Directors-General to handle things on their own. It was a bit depressing, arriving in the negotiating room having worked through everything, only to have the President say: ‘I’m very sorry, we are not ready.’ So we all knew where the vetoes were coming from.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Apart from the issue with France, which you just mentioned, which other countries were having doubts?

[Manuel Marín González] Well, each and every one of them was having doubts, on two of the packages: the agricultural package and the fisheries package, basically, because they thought that those were Spain’s strong suits. Then, we had the immigration problem with Germany, because with the Germans, whenever there is an accession, they pull out the old Polish plumber syndrome. During the most recent elections in France, people said that there was going to be an influx of Spaniards to the country ... But as you know, the effect in Spain was just the reverse. There was no need for a seven-year transitional period. As Spain entered a period of rapid expansion, many people who were part of the immigration phenomenon returned to Spain. This brought us professional experience, qualified workers, people interested in setting up small and medium-sized businesses, etc. The return of those immigrants who had spent 20 years living and working in Europe was very useful for us too. The reverse effect occurred.

3. Spain in the European Communities: challenges and opportunities

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What were the challenges once Spain had entered Europe?

[Manuel Marín González] Just keeping our feet on the ground. Later we were very pressed for time. Don’t forget that the Spanish Presidency began just two and a half years later, in 1989. The first Spanish Presidency and, as always happens, people would ask us whether we were going to be able to manage. That cast doubts on whether we were going to be able to organise the Presidency, it discredited our country, because they even said: ‘As you are the new arrivals, we’ll skip your turn.’ That was not acceptable. So we really made an incredible effort to come to the Presidency well prepared, but it was very hard.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What would you say were the achievements of that first Spanish Presidency?

[Manuel Marín González] Well, above all, the image of Spain. Bear in mind that when it ended we had succeeded in doing some good work; people began to promote us to the top of the class. Don’t forget either that when the Presidency ended, they gave us a nickname which I, in particular, did not much like because I would say: ‘Why do you always have to portray us in a particular manner?’

Why not simply say that Spain has changed, has become a democracy, has a good workforce, one with aspirations and which believes in Europe?’ They used to give us a nickname: ‘the Germans of the south’. In other words, Spaniards who appear to be German are Germans of the south. All in all, I think that we did a good job. It is also true that back then we had a very pro-European government and a very pro-European country and in a very short space of time Spaniards were saying: ‘Gracious! We rather like our European medicine!’ It was very difficult though; don’t forget that when we entered Europe we had to implement Community policies in Spain and there was a very tough internal adjustment period which cost us two general strikes and we had a lot of difficulty in making any progress, but Spain had to modernise.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What was the theoretical basis for this Spanish pro-Europeanism?

[Manuel Marín González] At the beginning it was discussion-based, and then later we became very aware that the way to escape Franco’s autarky was to apply Community policies. I will tell you something: now that we are in a crisis situation and are being told what to do or what not to do; you sometimes have to adopt very painful measures in order to move forward. Let me explain: we inherited the Spanish iron and steel industry, which was a third-world industry at the time — the period following the autarky, a country which had been completely closed during the 40 years of the Franco dictatorship — and I came along with my portfolio saying that there was a manifest crisis, because that was the only thing we could do — Étienne Davignon was the commissioner at the time. You can’t imagine what it was like, flying back to Madrid and saying: ‘Heavens! We have two unnecessary blast furnaces and all our cold-rolling systems are redundant. We need to make the technological leap and obtain hot-rolling technology and make rolled sections, profiles and parts which can be used in the motor industry, make special steels, make the technological leap in fact, because what we are making’ — which at the time was studs and rolled wire for construction and I and U beams — ‘they are making in India and Colombia, and we can’t compete.’ Obviously it was hard coming back to Madrid but we had to close the Sagunto blast furnaces, in the Autonomous Community of Valencia, and the blast furnaces in Avilés. Later, when we implemented the fishing fleet reduction programme, you can’t imagine what it was like, going from port to port, some of which are not easy, especially in the Basque Country, some of them controlled by Herri Batasuna, and saying: ‘Well, gentlemen, this is what we’ve got for you.’ Obviously that was very hard, but it was absolutely necessary to go from being a country with a third-world economy to being a European economy. Afterwards we managed very well by applying the common policies; it modernised us — agriculture was the prime example. When we said ‘calibrations, marketing, presentation, setting up common market organisations’, people used to say: ‘That’s impossible.’ Well, we managed it, and very quickly too.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] There was a social cost at one point ...

[Manuel Marín González] At one point, yes. As there always is, that is to say, when you want to transform your manufacturing industry you have to face two, three or four initial years of very painful measures, otherwise you make no progress. I have experienced this. I believe that what the Felipe González Government did was very useful and very resolute; it is true that it had to face a few general strikes, but it had to be done. I am telling you this because there is a good side to it, but the adjustment came later. It was necessary to adapt fisheries, agriculture and industry. What can I tell you about incorporating value added tax into the Spanish system when all the shops, shopkeepers, all the small and medium-sized businesses, had no accounting? Accounting was that scrap of paper, the invoice which the lady gave you and she took the copy and put it on a kind of metal spike. And she went on spiking them, one after the other. That is what it was like: ‘Listen, we

have to introduce this value added tax,’ and after that people began to do their accounts, people began to make declarations and nothing happened. But it came at a cost.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] We managed it at least. It was costly, but we managed it.

[Manuel Marín González] Yes.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would now like to ask you about your colleagues Fernando Mansito, Vicente Parajón, Santiago Gómez Reino, with whom you had previously worked in Spain and who became new Directors-General ...

[Manuel Marín González] Some, not all, some; that is to say we had a team, we imitated the Anglo-American task force model a great deal, a model where there was a Director-General in charge of each ministry who was appointed directly by the minister and was in the minister’s confidence, and who obviously helped a great deal with problem-solving, especially in relation to interministerial positions which did not always coincide. That helped us a great deal. Some of us, those who wanted to, went to Brussels, some were Directors, others were Directors-General, some stayed here and others went into the private sector. It was a very good team, a team of very able people who were deeply committed to what needed doing, consummate professionals, very good people, yes.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How was it at the Commission, when Spain was granted two Commissioners?

[Manuel Marín González] Well, we had to choose, and in the voting in the Council, we members of the Commission and Members of the European Parliament realised something: that the institutional status which most suited us was that of a medium-ranked country aiming higher, because having studied how the voting system worked we were often in a position to tip the balance. That is a role which Felipe González played very well, that is to say putting himself in what was called the leading pack not as a major country, because we were not a major country, but we did have eight absolutely decisive votes in the Council of Ministers for reaching a qualified majority — just to explain my point. We also thought that it was much wiser to accept our limitations and not go around saying ‘we are amazing’, because that can sometimes cause very complicated situations later when you stop being so amazing. It suited us very well. So in the Commission, two Commissioners; we looked at the various models and it seemed to us that in order to maintain the consensus, which existed and which needs to exist in European matters, we decided on two commissioners: one would represent, so to speak, the family of the party in government — the political family — and the other the opposition.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What were the reasons for appointing Abel Matutes and yourself?

[Manuel Marín González] The proposal at the time came from Fraga, I believe, who was representing the Alianza Popular.

4. Experience of the development of Community public policies as a European Commissioner

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would like to ask you now about an issue on which you fought hard, namely the securing, implementation and development of the Erasmus programme, to which you actively contributed. Could you also fill us in on this story about the idea of withdrawing it from the Council ...?

[Manuel Marín González] We did withdraw it. It was a programme ... now that people are talking so much about how to involve citizens, at that time two major programmes were launched which people have forgotten about. While there is now so much talk about the lack of democratic information (something I do not believe at all but which can be attributed to political science and political science debate rather than anything else), at that time we made a Europe of the citizens, with the slogan ‘Yes for Europe’: from implementing the idea of the Tour of the European Community instead of the Tour del Porvenir — which that first year was won, I remember, by someone who was later to become a great Tour de France champion, Miguel Indurain — to a whole series of activities aimed at promoting the idea of Europe. One of those activities was the Erasmus programme. We presented it to the Council of Ministers and in particular to the British, Margaret Thatcher, who was quite convinced that what we wanted to do was legislate on the universities. We didn’t want to legislate on the universities; what we wanted to do was to break with the national system of recognition of qualifications and diplomas because the one thing it did, in fact, was to *fragment* student mobility. We were wanting to promote the autonomy of the universities: we wanted universities, not governments, to be the ones which determined the rank and value of university credits. We wanted states to be able to put a little money towards the money put in by the European Union (which was not much), in order to promote mobility, and we wanted families to contribute what they could: that was the Erasmus programme. We presented it to the Council and we realised that (it was the British Presidency) ... I remember that the undersecretary nearly had a fit and changed my programme, which was not very costly, I think it was going to be about 30 million euros — an absolutely insignificant amount for the European Union — nothing. So I took the programme, I got up and I called Jacques Delors and said to him: ‘Look, Jacques, there is a big problem here. This programme, which was very important for us and well supported by all the Member States bar two — France, because it didn’t consider that education and culture were matters for the Community, and Britain, because by definition at that time, with Mrs Thatcher, they opposed everything — they have completely changed it, but most importantly, they have added a financial support element which means that in practice we have to give two, three, four, five scholarships ... This isn’t possible. What are we going to do?’ He said: ‘I suggest you withdraw it then.’ It was the first time that the Commission withdrew a regulation from the Council of Ministers. ‘Ladies and gentlemen, if it’s what you want, we will remove it, but we will do so before you corrupt its purpose and turn it into a programme which cannot be developed, through lack of money’ — although there was money, because there was no talk about the Commission sometimes asking for sums well in excess of budget. No, there was money, the money was there, the money was already in the budget; what happened was that they didn’t want us to activate it. So then we withdrew the programme and called a meeting of all the university chancellors, and they obviously acted as a huge lobby, putting pressure on their ministers and saying: ‘Just listen, for heaven’s sake, it is not true that the Commission wants to waste money, to squander money’ — which is what they always say in Brussels: ‘they want to squander’ — ‘no, the fact is that the money is there.’ They just didn’t want to spend it. Then there was a very interesting battle and we prevailed because little by little the Ministry of Education in the United Kingdom changed. Thatcher made a mistake, because the Minister for Education at the time was Chris Patten, the one who is now Chancellor of Oxford University, and he helped us enormously. In France, they appointed as Minister for Education the former President of the Senate [René Monory], [\[1\]](#) one of the old-style Christian Democrats in France, who was very pro-European. The two of them completely disregarded the orders emanating

from their respective capitals and made a good presentation; ministers then realised that they had to cooperate: 'I couldn't resist, I was in the minority.' After putting some of the blame on the Commission, they left. Yes, it worked.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would now like to move on to another sector: fisheries. Could you talk a little about your impressions and experience as EU Commissioner for Fisheries, taking into account your previous job as State Secretary for Fisheries in Spain?

[Manuel Marín González] It was a very, very tough job. Frankly very difficult. Economically, fishing is small fry; in a leading country like Spain it didn't even account for 1 % of GDP, in other words not much, really not much at all. However the level of conflict was huge, not least because the fisherman is the last free predator on the planet now that hunting is completely regulated and there are closed seasons, quotas, laws which prohibit ..., at sea this was not the case. Since the sea is free you would express your opinions and your emotions freely — in fishing terms — wherever you wanted to, and we all know what happened: fish stocks were hugely reduced and it was very difficult to negotiate. I tried to rationalise the policy by incorporating a great deal of science into the decisions, but I always had the suspicion that there was someone over my shoulder saying: 'careful, he's Spanish, the Spanish Armada' (which is another of the myths doing the rounds, which used to circulate in Europe), and I tried to get round these difficulties to the best of my ability. At any rate, we managed to conclude twenty-odd fisheries agreements; we managed it with Morocco, with African countries in particular, Latin American countries, who were the ones catching tuna at the time, the Seychelles and Mauritius and all that area. The problem of marine resources is an extremely serious one, it is a problem of environmental sustainability, very serious. Well, fisheries ministers — and I got to know this rather well — were often right behind my proposals but at press conferences they would say quite the opposite. On occasion it was a very thankless task.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] People react by blaming Europe when something doesn't work ...

[Manuel Marín González] Absolutely. If something didn't work, they would be told about it. Moreover, when we conducted the first satellite tracking experiment using GPS, which was a Community programme, we were able to offer proof so that there wouldn't be any problems or disagreements (about where the boats were located in the respective box); we carried out a programme with the Portuguese Navy in which we used satellite and GPS, which was just coming in at the time, and it was possible to detect precisely the entire course sailed by a fishing vessel. I took it to the Council of Ministers to do a preliminary presentation of the project. We were connected directly with Lisbon, with Navy headquarters, and we could show the course being taken by vessels in the North Sea. The ministers saw how effective it was so they said 'no', the reason being that if all that were published it would spell political ruin for us, because it would show that the vessels were not complying with Community rules. That was very difficult.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] In 1989 you signed the Lomé Convention, on the basis of which, in 1991, the Community approved a resolution on human rights, democracy and development which aimed to apply the principle of conditionality to the receipt of aid. In that connection, I would like to ask you how you see the role of the Community as regards the protection of human rights at international level, and how that conditionality is to be implemented, etc.

[Manuel Marín González] It was a significant achievement. I am very proud because it was the

first time that the ‘democratic clause’, as it has come to be known, was included in an international agreement. Obviously they didn’t want it, the ACP countries, indeed they often used to say: ‘You are telling us this because we are poor, third-world countries.’ That was not true, because in the end it became mandatory to include the human rights clause in all international agreements, in Maastricht, and this has now been consolidated. The Cold War period was coming to an end, the Soviet Union had collapsed, the Berlin Wall — there were huge changes. So we thought that this was something which would define the European identity in a system of values, and so the clause was included. I know that the original concept was somewhat corrupted subsequently, because now a double measurement is used, the double measuring stick. This is what happens, but at the time we felt that it was a noble battle and that it was worth waging. That is why we did it.

5. The significance and consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the impact of EU enlargement to the East

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Would you say that there was a climate of ethical reassessment with the end of the Cold War ...?

[Manuel Marín González] Yes, definitely. Bear in mind that until we Europeans lost our ‘dignity’ in the war in Yugoslavia, and then with the NATO bombing in 1995, there was a period of three years, from 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell until 1992 when the war in Yugoslavia began, when, mostly due to the explosion of joy that the news produced around the world, people started to talk about the ‘dividends of peace’ and to say that we were entering a new era, that the future would be completely different. Then along came Clinton with his flair for the big summits of Heads of State or Government, APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation] was created, ASEM [the Asia-Europe Meeting] was born, everyone was looking for ... It seemed as if we had managed to find a solution for planet Earth ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What happened?

[Manuel Marín González] What happened, quite simply, was that after the moment of truth, matters were not so easy. The old system of Cold War international relations disappeared, the old disputes were replaced, but we realised that the former ideological confrontation was beginning to be a conflict of identity and we reached a stage where we said: ‘My goodness, is this possible?’ With ethnic cleansing, which we all thought — I regret to say — was something which only happened between Rwanda and Burundi and between Hutus and Tutsis, we would shrug our shoulders, as if to say: ‘up to a point it is logical’. But no, just one hour from Madrid and one and a half hours from Brussels an ethnic cleansing catastrophe occurred in the Balkans, in Bosnia. We Europeans did nothing and we had to try to persuade the North Americans to get NATO to intervene, in 1995. But between 1992 and 1995 we did nothing, nothing of political relevance that is, to sort matters out ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] In this context, would you say that the plan for enlargement towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was a way to redress matters to some extent?

[Manuel Marín González] No, it was necessary, those countries were perfectly entitled to be members of the European Union, of course they were.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] This is the return to Europe that you were talking about earlier ...

[Manuel Marín González] Yes, absolutely. Those countries formed Central Europe and they were there. Moreover they were countries whose national dignity had suffered greatly because it was also a question of restoring a Europe prior to Yalta, if I may use the expression. Now that the matter of the Polish President and the Katyn graves are a thing of the past, it illustrates very well why those countries wanted to be part of Europe, to find an anchorage, which would enable them to some extent to lay to rest what had been a 40-year story of repression.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How does that enlargement affect the centre of gravity, for example following the enlargement to the south?

[Manuel Marín González] Radically, really. We all knew that it was possible to enlarge towards Central and Eastern Europe, but not towards the south. It was a fundamental change, as it meant that we were starting to discuss what the geographical limits were. I don't know whether or not Turkey will end up joining, that is a matter for debate, and whether, after Hungary's accession, the other Balkan countries — Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia — will also join; they probably will. And then we have to think what happens about Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, everywhere in Europe which isn't Russia, to be frank with you, since Russia will obviously never want to join because it wants to be a major power on its own account. We are getting into a discussion about limits, but one day the question of limits will have to be raised and we will have to say: 'Well now, Europe is also a closed model', I suppose.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] With frontiers ...

[Manuel Marín González] With frontiers, yes. As far as that is concerned it was logical for those countries to join.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What was the impact in Spain, in your view?

[Manuel Marín González] I don't think there was any particular impact. Probably greater economic opportunities have opened up for working with countries which now ... Some Spanish businesses are working very actively, investing. For those countries, we have acted as a model for how to use structural funds. I remember that they always came to us asking: 'How did you do it?' And all that kind of thing ... Well, it will be something that they have to learn. At the present time, Spain is in an 'outgoing' situation, in other words, in 2012 we should cease to be net recipients and with all the generosity, solidarity and financial aid which we have been receiving from Europe for all these years, we shall have to start being net contributors, that is logical. I am not at all ashamed to be explaining this. I'm just doing the sums. They gave Spain the AVE high-speed rail link and the motorways; well, just think, we shall have to pay out of our taxes so that other people who don't have such things can enjoy the same solidarity as we have ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Perfectly fair.

[Manuel Marín González] Yes, I think it is. I also think that it was a good thing to offer Greece a financial package, it was natural. I believe that Europe should bask in the principle of solidarity.

6. Spain's role in relations between Latin America and the European Union and the integration processes in the region

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would like to talk to you now about another part of the world, seeing as you worked as Commissioner for Cooperation and Development in 1993. In terms of relations between the European Union and Latin America, what role did Spain play as mediator between the two?

[Manuel Marín González] An important role, because at a particular moment in time ... Traditionally, Asia and Latin America had been marginal elements in the working structure for cooperation policies, so what we did was to say: 'Listen, we are going to separate the Asian situation from Latin America because there is obviously no connection between them.' So budget lines were separated and we tried to orientate the Directorates-General towards Latin America in a different way. This we managed to do. We then implemented a series of initiatives, some of which worked and some didn't, as is usually the case, especially when the Strategic Partnership between the European Union and Latin America was decided on at the 1995 summit, as a point of reference for emerging nations. It was 'the dividends of peace' all over again, open regionalism, that period of three, four or five years when we were thinking that the world had really changed, with the information society, the whole world growing, economic expansion ... Then Latin America started to stake its claims as an emerging continent, not all of it, but certainly some countries did. Then there was the wager with Clinton's free-trade agreement with the Salinas Government in Mexico which raised Mexico to the status, let's say, of a front-ranking country, although later circumstances showed that it is complicated being at that level ... I am thinking about Argentina, about those stories about converting to the dollar and thinking that because the dollar is your national currency, you are automatically like the North Americans; it seems childish, but decisions were taken along those lines. We implemented a number of initiatives, of which the only ones to gel were the free-trade agreement with Mexico and the agreement with Chile — until I left it; then there was the Mercosur Agreement, but it could not be concluded due to the differences between Argentina and Brazil, which were fundamental in my view and were making things very difficult. We did provide a lot of backing for cooperation policies; that we were able to do, nothing more.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] As regional development projects, how do you see the role of Mercosur or the Organisation ...?

[Manuel Marín González] We managed a great deal of development at that time: there were the major treaties, following the American model of agreements, with one country after another entering into the free-trade agreement. We said: 'No, our vision is what we used to call open

regionalism back then.’ It was hard to understand it here: Latin America is a unitary concept in terms of history, language and culture, but in Latin America there are several Latin Americas, so we were going to integrate them into regional areas. Thus the policy known as open regionalism developed, regional areas were created in various parts of the world, in the image, as far as possible, of the European Union. In the context of this open, participatory regionalism, where there was free trade, freedom of movement, the information society, etc., agreements would be concluded which provided progressively greater stability on the world stage; that was the plan. However, it couldn’t work because Mercosur very quickly ceased to operate at an institutional level. The Treaty of Asunción was not applied. Because they created the Court of Justice. They had a unique opportunity to make the Court of Justice operational with that dispute about Argentine exports of milk products (yoghurt, milk, etc.) when the Brazilians unilaterally imposed a very high tariff barrier. In response, Menem said, ‘All right then, I am going to impose a 40 % duty on all your car exports,’ which was a mistake. Instead of saying: ‘All right, seeing that we don’t agree, let’s go to the Court of Justice and let the Court of Justice decide’ — which is how a supranational system, such as the European system, works — they decided that the decision on what was to happen would be taken outside, by the WTO, a WTO panel in Geneva, in other words negotiations which were external to the case, alien to the case. That was an admission that your customs union could not work, because by definition your customs union does not require outside arbitration, it needs your own domestic institution, which had moreover been created for the purpose, but it never operated in that way. This was the explanation. From then on Mercosur began to be regarded as a customs union, but it was not actually managed by a common authority, the Trade Commission — which set itself up in a delightful modernist hotel in Montevideo Bay, near Carrasco — but was governed by the interests of the four national administrations.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What about the Organisation of American States?

[Manuel Marín González] Well, we collaborated with it a great deal, starting at the time of César Gaviria; we undertook mine clearance operations which I think were some of the most successful such operations ever undertaken, especially as we were dealing with the post-war situation in Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. We worked a great deal with the OAS and it was certainly not easy, because there were some very delicate negotiations, some of which went well, others not so well, but we did it together with the OAS.

7. The common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and development cooperation in the European Union

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Could you tell us what, in your opinion, are the ideas behind a European development cooperation policy as part of the common foreign and security policy?

[Manuel Marín González] This was something which took shape in the Maastricht Treaty, where for the first time development cooperation was given a Community dimension, at least in terms of an objective, and acquired its own personality, but there is no doubt that it is one more instrument in the armoury of the European Union for the role it is called on to play today, that of global actor. This is because we are the principal donor of food aid, of humanitarian aid, and in terms of

development cooperation, where we are always slightly in competition with Japan. I believe that this demonstrates an important facet of the European identity, namely a very profound sense of the solidarity and generosity involved in being European. Remember that a large proportion of the most powerful non-governmental organisations in the world are European, because they receive direct funds from the people, and that is good. Very good.

8. Euro-Mediterranean policy and intercultural dialogue

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What is your position with regard to Euro-Mediterranean policy?

[Manuel Marín González] We made a huge effort for the Barcelona Process. The Barcelona Process achieved progress with bilateral agreements: Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Israel. Gradually all of them were concluded, but there we had the problem which threatens to become never-ending, which was the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. When the Barcelona Process got off the ground, since we were enjoying the euphoria of having concluded the Oslo, Cairo and Washington Agreements, we had the feeling that we had found the solution; but we realised that this was not the case. In two or three years the reverse phenomenon occurred: the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, especially after the assassination of Rabin, took a turn for the worse. That ended up contaminating the Barcelona Process and it was impossible to hold sectoral meetings because, in general, the Arabs did not want to meet the Israelis at any level and they did not want to cooperate until Israel returned to the Washington, Oslo and Cairo Agreements. That was very difficult. When Netanyahu arrived, that was the end: Israel made every effort — or rather the Netanyahu Government did — to break up the Barcelona Process, because it was very inconvenient for him. That is why they always used to say to us: ‘No, it is because Europeans are pro-Palestinian.’ No, we are not pro-Palestinian, that is untrue, it is just that the Netanyahu Government continued to be profoundly wrong on many matters. We then had several major incidents. The French became angry. I don’t know whether you remember when Chirac was about to go into the Alliance Française in Tel Aviv, I think it was, or Jerusalem, and behind him were two Israeli army officers who were providing protection and Chirac turned on them very angrily and said: ‘No, clear off, this is French territory and I do not need your assistance.’ He was showing his unease, because we had carried out a project with Électricité de France, a very expensive project, to reinstall the entire electricity supply system from Lebanon, from the north (the Bekaa Valley) to the south. One morning — this was when Shimon Peres was Minister for Defence, and we used to get very angry with him — because the army got the idea, for security reasons, that those electric cables were going to help launch Hezbollah rockets and goodness know what else, so three armed helicopters arrived and took all the posts on board. That was the beginning of that sort of conflict. However, I have very happy memories of that time, I used to admire Rabin very much, Rabin was a soldier, he was a general and he was prepared to have a referendum on withdrawal from Lebanon, and he would have won it and sought an international solution for the Golan Heights. He had already reached an agreement with the Turks for tripartite use of water, for diverting water from Turkish rivers by canal towards parts of the West Bank in order to find a balance. It was probably because he had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do that they killed him. That was a turning point.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How do you see the Barcelona Process, the Mediterranean policy,

today?

[Manuel Marín González] Well, it has changed. The new project, launched by Sarkozy, is now called the Union for the Mediterranean; we shall see what happens in June. At the previous Summit of Heads of State or Government which was due to be held, the Presidents were Mubarak and Sarkozy; it was due to be held in Cairo but it wasn't possible to hold it because of the Gaza war, the last one when the Israeli army invaded Gaza; it could not be held. So it is now planned for June. Between now and June something is going to happen, otherwise I'm afraid that people are going to say once again: 'If Israel is coming, I am not going.' The Arab leaders don't want photographs of themselves with Netanyahu, I am sure of this, quite sure.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] In terms of intercultural dialogue, has regional integration made any progress?

[Manuel Marín González] Yes, to some extent, yes. I think that there has been some progress. There were a few early moments which were very complicated, very difficult. However, we have made progress, I believe so. But as far as reaching a stable situation is concerned, let's say that I don't think that the relations of any Mediterranean country are in a critical situation with any other European country. Yes, there is a tense situation in terms of radicals, with the Mohammed cartoons in the Danish newspaper, there was a problem with that. But in general terms the situation is fairly stable. I can't think of any example of a very complicated situation where there is tension.

9. Relations between the European Union and ASEAN

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Moving on now to the Asian and Pacific region, you have worked to promote the development of relations between the European Union and the Asian and Pacific region. From the point of view of ecological sustainability, what progress do you think there has been on this front?

[Manuel Marín González] Let's see, I had the portfolio for ASEAN affairs. We launched ASEM, the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the European Union with their ASEAN opposite numbers. I was also in charge of relations with India and Pakistan, which were very difficult at the time of Mrs Bhutto. I think that Mrs Bhutto treated me worse than any other woman in my life because there was that European or World Championship in England, I don't remember which it was, and the BBC put out that broadcast in which you saw Pakistani children chained at the ankle and sewing balls for the event which was a terrible scandal for the ILO, for the whole world really. A decision was therefore taken to suspend the cooperation agreement with Pakistan and so the Pakistanis were no longer able to export what they do best, namely their carpets, to England, especially carpets made with silk thread, and they — apparently — use small children to make the silk threads because, having more slender fingers, they are able to make the knots more quickly, and time is money ... Later the big football boot and ball multinationals took a step back and signed the ILO codes of conduct whereby they undertook not to use women and children in the manufacturing process. Obviously someone had to go and give her the bad news and the task fell on me. It is a job

which Brussels manages to do very well, when someone has to go over there to convey bad news; generally the minister who is supposed to accompany you has a very full diary, and all of a sudden you become a highly competent person and don't need to be accompanied by the minister. That is another thing that you learn there: the ease with which governments often offload the problems in their midst. So I went over there to see Mrs Bhutto and the interview lasted five minutes! She said horrible things to me and then said: 'Well, that's all.' I just stood there staring, I couldn't manage another word and had to leave. She must have repented because later that night she had someone call me at the hotel and, although it was already late, she invited me for a Coca-Cola or something similar — because she used to drink Coca-Cola — and the tension unwound; she showed interest in the 40 female ILO monitors which the European Union was going to finance to go out there to perform verifications, both in the carpet factories and, more particularly, where the footballs were being made. To come back to your question, I will say this ... In Asia there are many Asias: because you've got China, you've got Japan, you've got all the ASEAN countries and, let us say, the ASASEC countries — India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. What contribution did we make there? Well, it was difficult for us to make a contribution but what we were trying to do was to provide a framework for relations, because when the Asians thought that we might be going to use the democratic clause, they said: 'No, we will have a discussion if you like, but we uphold Asian values.' Asian values were economy first, then democracy. The first human right is that human beings should have food to eat, progress economically, enjoy living standards similar to their peers. Therefore my logic says that Asian values mean economic development first and then I will make an effort to achieve your democratic standards. At the time that is what they called Asian values. It was a debate which stalled from the outset.

10. Experience as President of the European Commission in the context of the Santer Commission

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Now, to change the subject completely, I would like to go forward to 1999 and ask you about your experience in those four months of European Commission Presidency ...

[Manuel Marín González] They were horrible. I think that that was the biggest mistake of my life. The biggest mistake of my life, firstly, because a lot of pressure was put on me by certain Prime Ministers and Heads of Government, because half of the Commission said 'Well, this is pointless, relations with the European Parliament have sunk to such a low level, and we are not as bad, as corrupt, as wasteful, all those things that they talk about ... I have got an offer to do this, I have got another offer ...' And everyone left. Some of them wanted to stand for the European Parliament elections just to show that they could still stand for elections: Santer himself stood, Emma Bonino stood, so did lots of people ... so there were about five or six of us left, that's all. As I was the senior Commissioner and the Vice-President first and foremost, various Heads of Government called me as part of a neat operation mounted by the Belgian Prime Minister of the time, Dehaene, in a box at Heysel football stadium. That's how it was: he invited me to the football, but he didn't invite me to see the football, he invited me there to the box and they phoned me and persuaded me that I should do the responsible thing, and make the transition until the someone stepped in — no one then knew who it would be — and it turned out to be Prodi. I had one meeting with Prodi and then two further meetings and I said to him: 'Look, I am going to do what they asked me to do, but this seems to me a huge injustice because Santer doesn't deserve this treatment.' It seems

completely unfair to me. Politically, you may think he is a better or worse man, more or less forceful, but that man is not the one you see in the photograph taken by the European Parliament, where everyone is trying to get on the list of election candidates again and make a name for themselves in their own national press. So I stayed there, I signed the 27 cases of corruption, of squandering. Something terrible happened, but it has to be said: I took the 27 cases, because they asked me to, to the Court of Appeal in Brussels. I chaired the disciplinary committees and the 27 cases were dismissed as unfounded. Some of the cases were purely politically motivated, further aggravated by the yellow, very violently anti-European, atmosphere of the period ... Well, it was one of the worst decisions because I stayed there for four months, almost five, the butt of criticism, showered on me by the whole world. So I did that job and I came away thinking to myself: good gracious, how low can politics sink! All the issues in which they tried to implicate poor Santer were dismissed as unfounded. The years have passed and I thought I would hear someone say: 'Listen, let's think about what we did to that good man Santer, how about at least writing him a letter and saying to him "Look, we overdid it."' Nothing. Nothing, it was all very unfair.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How did it affect Parliament–Commission relations?

[Manuel Marín González] Well, the European Parliament at that time thought that a major political operation had to be waged in order to establish that in future it would take the leading role in European integration. So, to overcome the famous democratic deficit, they wanted to show what they could do, and what they could do was make the Commission resign. At the beginning of the Santer Commission — and this is the truth — just imagine, there were five Commissioners who failed the investiture vote, five, which meant that it started from a very weak position, because of the five who failed, because the European Parliament needed to show that it had punch. It was a legislature in which they wanted to come to the European elections of June 1999 as the institution which was putting its mark on the European leadership, to the extent that there were moments when it had to confront the Member States — the Member States are not to be disturbed — and when there is a confrontation with the Member States the telephones start buzzing and everyone stays very quiet because otherwise they do not get put up for re-election. It is a dramatic situation, and I experienced it. I saw this without wanting to show any disrespect for anyone, much less the institution itself, but that's how it is. I've rather lost the thread of what I was telling you ... We got to a situation where they were wanting to interpret this leadership role, and in the end that was the justification for everything; they took a very harsh decision, one that was groundless, unjustified ... In terms of the mad cows, in other words the two debates, because as you know there were two votes prior to the final vote of censure; the debates were about the handling of the mad cow situation, and once again the impotence of the European Parliament was turned against the Commission. I remember the day that they summoned the UK Minister for Agriculture, whose name was Gummer, and before calling poor Santer they must have summoned the British Prime Minister, John Major, because the authority which had systematically, so to speak, been sending in veterinary certificates which failed to comply with the regulations on compound feed, especially as regards heating it to 800°C in order to kill all the viruses, the authority which had systematically been failing to do this was the British administration. It is true that our officials in Europe thought the certificates were acceptable, but they were veterinary certificates which were being sent by the UK Ministry of Agriculture. 'Ah! But the *culpa in vigilando* lies with you' was a concept which arose at the time. 'Yes, they deceived us, but you should have realised that they were deceiving us.' Listen, yes, I am responsible at best for having been naive or for having been excessively ... but the origin of all this is the British administration. Then the British Government said: 'I am certainly not going to appear before the European Parliament' — I remember this very well — 'our ministers are not going to be inspected.' Then the European Parliament vented all its anger against the Commission. It was then that I realised that this was going very badly ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] In the context of the Lisbon Treaty, how do you think the interinstitutional relationship might evolve?

[Manuel Marín González] It has improved. I think that it will be very difficult for the European Parliament, you will see, to try to repeat what they pulled with Santer, politically, I don't think they would dare ... I have talked to many of them in private and they say: 'Good gracious!' They even say: 'What you must have had to put up with!' because I did put up with one particular situation, among other things, because they held me responsible for matters for which I was not responsible. This happens in life, but it taught me a great deal about the way the Community institutions can behave in a certain situation, about the way in which they often change tack in response to very local or very national requirements. That is the worst scenario. I read a statement made to *El País* either yesterday or the day before by Van Rompuy, who was saying the same thing: 'The greatest threat to the European Union is national populist movements,' and this is what often kills the idea of integration; obviously you say to your electorate: 'those soulless Brussels bureaucrats, those Eurocrats who earn pots of money, those squanderers, some of whom are corrupt ...' I remember poor Santer when they made that accusation: 'You have oil exploration platforms in Norway', a completely fabricated story, for which there was no basis. There was another matter which confused me when I had to deal with it, and I said: 'Goodness, you have changed tack ... you cannot be serious!' In the European Commission's first security team we asked for help from the Member States about how to install a security system: 'Send us police officers from your countries so that they can come and provide this service.' I won't name the country, but there was one country which availed itself of that opportunity to send us four extremists, let's say, from a very violent nationalist party which was active in one of the European countries at that time; the minister who got them off his back was a socialist and a great friend of mine — I am not talking about Spain — and he sent them to us in Brussels. We then discovered that those police officers were raving fascists in their off-duty hours, highly xenophobic, and that they pursued, let us say, rather inappropriate activities. Until then people wanted to blame us: 'Listen, the minister will take the blame, because he is the one who sent us these people, knowing full well who they were.' There were ridiculous cases, really quite ridiculous, but, well ...'

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What did you learn from it ...?

[Manuel Marín González] What you learn on a personal level is often that the battleground is becoming confused, because I believe that it was legitimate for the European Parliament to say: 'Listen, we want to take the lead in representing European sovereignty.' Well, this is legitimate, it can be debated. Subsequent history has shown, following the Santer crisis, which was in 1999, that participation in the most recent elections, the ones in 1999 and 2004 (I think that's right) and then in 2009, has been falling dramatically. If a European citizen had to take a view on the democratic deficit, he would probably say: 'You explain to us what is going on, because you are the ones we are voting for.' In other words, there were a few fairly major failures there which created a situation that ended up getting us nowhere at all. I am not saying this on my own behalf, because I have put all this behind me and I have had a lot of luck in life since then. I came to Spain, I have been President of Congress, of the Cortes Generales and now I am working peacefully at the university and in a private foundation. But as far as Jacques Santer is concerned, I have to say, people were very unfair to Jacques Santer, very, very unfair. Very unfair. Indeed, I think that the European Parliament, in view of all that happened, should have approached Santer and said to him: 'Listen, my dear Jacques, I think that we were too harsh, the Brussels court did not find any actual evidence of criminality or swindling or corruption.' I think that would have been the correct thing to do, but

don't think that being politically correct is easy.

11. The principle of solidarity and the realisation of the plan for a European Constitution

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You just mentioned your new job at the Fundación Iberdrola. Your work is based on seeking strategies for improving the material, cultural and intellectual well-being of our common environment. From this point of view, what are the keys to applying a principle of solidarity, which is also very important at European level?

[Manuel Marín González] The principle of solidarity — what happened in Greece is an example — I welcome the establishment of the principle of solidarity, but it needs to be taken much further. If there is a lack of solidarity, I think that the problem basically lies not with the European Parliament or with the European Commission but with the Member States; in other words, arguments often arise between states which make it very difficult for the general public to understand this solidarity. Let me explain: Greece was in a non-compliance situation for years because it sent in false economic and financial data, apparently falsified by Lehman Brothers, which is another joke, but anyhow it acted very badly. But this has to be dealt with in a certain way, according to the principle of solidarity, avoiding any gratuitous humiliation. As a result, those statements by certain German leaders — ‘sell off your islands then’ — were deeply offensive, just as the statement by the Vice-President, Theodoros Pangalos, who I know very well, was excessive and so far from the truth, when he accused the Germans of trying to revive the issue of Nazi domination in Greece, or the comments of certain Greek MPs who said that the German position was dictated by racism and xenophobia. If this is how national leaders interpret the problems of the European Union, it is very hard to create solidarity ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How can it create understanding between national leaders, European leaders and citizens, how can it work?

[Manuel Marín González] European citizens ... The first point was the great debate about the famous democratic deficit, which I never believed in: I think it was an invention, which lasted as long as it lasted — the proof being that nowadays no one remembers it — because when the European Constitution, which contained all the necessary elements for removing this democratic deficit, was rejected by the French and Dutch ‘no’ votes, well, if that was progress, citizens should have applauded ... But what happened? There was a fight between Fabius and Sarkozy to determine who was to be the candidate in the presidential elections, there was a plebiscite against Chirac, there was the Polish plumber story and the issue of the Services Directive. In Holland there was the death of Pim Fortuyn, the assassination of Theo Van Gogh and later the fundamentalism issue with the Somali-born MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Does that have anything to do with the European Constitution? No. But if national leaders interpret European integration in those terms, it is very hard to get citizens involved.

12. The role of education and new information and communication technologies in promoting participative democracy in Europe

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What role might information and communication technologies play in achieving balanced communication, in this context?

[Manuel Marín González] I will offer you my opinion here too, because I have dealt with this topic recently in university debates and I have contributed to them. At the present time, the efforts being made by the Community institutions, and particularly the Commission, are incredible. In Brussels there are 1 500 authorised means of communication which publish millions of news items about the European Union on a daily basis. The websites and web pages of the European institutions are the most powerful in the world: they operate multilingually using 25 languages simultaneously, there is open access to documentary and digital information and anybody can access it. The problem is not how to access information, that is not true. The problem is most probably the reverse: an information overload. In addition there are the social networks, which formerly did not exist: servers for Google, Tuenti, Twitter, Facebook, where the capacity for information has become an individual right; in other words, I really think that in Europe, the information problem in the world we live in ... A Congolese person, a Bangladeshi, they have information problems, but in Europe, in Community Europe, in a Europe of 27, to talk about lack of information is a joke. I don't think this can be justified. It is pure politicians' talk, in my humble opinion. The problem is this: is there really a European public opinion which can be identified as a European public good? I don't believe that there is. This is to some extent the theory expressed by Habermas in relation to the European public sphere, which has so permeated the work of the European Union in recent years. In a model such as the German one, the German public sphere operates very well as a permanent interactive dialogue between municipalities, between the *Länder* and the *Bund* (the federation), because many years ago the Karlsruhe Constitutional Court established a doctrine of the principle of loyalty to the federation, the principle of loyalty to the state and the principle that, in the case of an internal dispute, it must always be resolved in favour of the superior interests of the federation, the state. If you transfer that doctrine to the European Union, you realise that that principle does not exist. Unless that principle exists, it is useless. I will give you some examples: is what happened in Ireland conceivable under the Treaty of Nice or the Constitution? A country which is what it is thanks to Europe, a country which has been helped, more than any other, with 4 % of GDP nearly every year, which has obtained fiscal exemptions which have enabled it to develop — and I am very glad, because they have done it very well — could they vote 'no'? I am talking about the Treaty of Lisbon: when it was signed at Los Jerónimos, the Prime Minister was not going to sign with his colleagues; he signed later in the day, furtively, in a room with no press in attendance, because he was afraid that a picture of him with Cameron would be damaging ... So, a Prime Minister who signs furtively, who does not want to be seen; the leader of the opposition, Cameron, who says: 'If I get into power, I am going to hold a referendum to reject the Treaty.' Well, do you think that if Van Rompuy went to London and started to defend the Lisbon Treaty he would stand any chance? No. Really? I will tell you this. In the case of the Czech President, how could the 20-20-20 package — later approved under the French Presidency — succeed when President Klaus has written a book completely challenging climate change? Then there is the President-in-Office of the European Union who spends six months in office without ratifying the treaty and who says that he is not going to ratify it because it is contrary to the national interests of his country. This happened. Why? Because there is not that institutional loyalty towards European integration, and if that is the case, it is impossible for public opinion to react favourably. That is what's wrong, unfortunately, that is what's wrong. Who is now backing European integration as a solid and necessary project? No one. I have many Irish friends, I get on very well

with them, and they have had significant responsibilities at European level, in government, in the Commission, etc., and they reacted with complete dismay and distress. Consider Spain, which the Eurobarometer rates as one of the most pro-European countries — this is logical, because here you don't bite the hand that feeds you and a large proportion of Spanish development is due to Europe, because here we have been receiving aid from the Structural Fund to the tune of 1.5 % of GDP for the last 20 years. So you have to be thankful, which does not mean that you agree with everything, but at least be thankful.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How do you think that this issue could be worked into education, into curriculums ...?

[Manuel Marín González] Into curriculums, yes. But especially through the educational process: I often go into schools to talk about Europe Day and all that kind of thing. You realise what the general feeling is, but then when it comes down to it, voting citizens are very dependent on their political or ideological leanings, and if your favourite teacher tells you that there is absolutely no point, that it is contrary to the interests ... It is bit like the expression used by the old-timers in Brussels. I arrived there young and inexperienced and they would say to me 'You'll see, you will very soon discover that the main problem with European integration is *everyone for himself and everyone against Brussels*': that expresses the matter very well, so it is very difficult. Why was there so much progress in the time of Kohl, Mitterrand, Lubbers, Martens, Andreotti, Felipe, Cavaco, in the period when Europe was making great strides? It was because those leaders were very committed to the idea of Europe and they were also very lucky: they were much more vociferous in their pro-Europeanism because they had an adversary who brought it out in them: Mrs Thatcher. Mrs Thatcher will never admit that by acting as a counterpoint, as she did, sometimes by making really forceful declarations, she heightened the unity between the others, but there was a majority of Heads of State or Government who wouldn't have dreamt of saying the things that many of them say now ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] A lack of historical knowledge, perhaps?

[Manuel Marín González] No, it was just that they were very attuned to the reality of the times, an electoral reality certainly.

13. The constitutive elements of a common European identity

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would like to ask you a question on the subject of identity because you have talked about the European identity as being a 'process involving cultural, historical and emotional relations, customs and language within a framework of rights and obligations'. How would you define the European cultural *acquis*?

[Manuel Marín González] There is an EU document which sets out what European values are and I think that that is what defines us; we are defined by our history, which has very positive aspects but also horrible aspects. This is how I explain it to my university students: we Europeans created the French Revolution: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, we invented the musical symphony, we

invented the printing press, we invented the Greek tragedy, democracy, law ... a whole range of good and useful things, but alongside those good, useful and extraordinary things we also invented intolerance, the Inquisition, religious wars and horrendous things like the two most intolerant ideologies ever created on earth, namely Nazism and Fascism, which are a purely European creation. Europe has suffered great tragedies such as the Holocaust; in other words, our history contains some very positive and some very negative elements and we have to live with them, but after the Second World War there was a more genuine effort to view European integration — historically a very long-term project — as a great success, because it is an area of stability, peace, progress, and also difficulties, which enables 500 million people to live under the rule of law. That is a hugely positive achievement and I think, basically, that we owe this to the European Union. If I am explaining this, let's say, very correctly, with a certain degree of loyalty, this is because I do not want anyone to interpret my words in a way in which I do not intend. It is perfectly normal to disagree, but it is one thing to disagree and another to criticise and harp on about the European Union. There are some things which surprise me, but I am still convinced, despite all the difficulties and problems that we have managed to create, that the process will continue. I think it is irreversible, even with its contradictions. I don't know how it could end, but I do know what should not happen. The problem comes when you conclude that certain things should not be done, because then projects ... In Europe everything has been invented. Have we got a single currency? Yes we have. But is monetary policy necessary? No, we need economic governance, this we know, so people say. It will come. After the Greek problem, it will come, little by little, you will see. In terms of identity, European values are what they are. It should be much easier to control the excesses of racism and xenophobia, to reach a basic agreement on the immigration issue in order to provide some equilibrium in the matter, to consolidate the systems for protecting European citizens; this can also be achieved and we will then be able to guarantee the applicability of these systems to all Europeans and then to the rest of the world, because we are a peaceful continent and one which above all wants to export its values and to help and cooperate, but if you mix all this up with politics which is often, as they say in French, *minable*, pathetic, in order to win your constituency and so on, the system breaks down, really breaks down.

14. Environmental sustainability and the geopolitical dimension of the energy sector in the European Union

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Turning to your work here, at the Fundación Iberdrola, maybe we could talk about the massive energy dependence in Europe today. Which do you think is the most suitable economic model for attempting to reduce this dependence?

[Manuel Marín González] Europe has a significant Achilles heel, and that is the lack of a common energy policy. It is a big Achilles heel, and since there is no common energy policy, the Member States are operating an 'every man for himself' policy, meaning that each one has its own energy dependence systems that it has freely decided upon. The European Union is therefore losing its whole potential to negotiate jointly as the European Union, and so, obviously, we get problems with Russia — which handles matters very well with some countries and badly with others — and likewise with the Gulf States, and either we overcome this problem and it becomes a policy that we implement (the common energy market and a common energy policy) or we will have problems, because energy dependence cannot be resolved solely by using renewable sources. Renewable energy is the future — I do defend this line of thought — but for the time being renewable sources

have to be helped financially because they are expensive. They will develop further — wind power is becoming profitable, solar energy, photovoltaic energy will follow suit, we will have electric cars ... I believe that this is going to happen in the next five, ten or fifteen years, but there is a debate over which energy model to adopt; some countries have gone nuclear, others are anti-nuclear, and so it is very difficult to arrive at a solid position. Firstly, I think that European needs to come down firmly in favour of renewable energy; secondly, until we manage to develop it, and there will need to be a great deal of research, development and innovation, we will inevitably have to continue with combined-cycle systems, and I think that for the moment we have to keep nuclear energy. We have to go for a mixed energy model, in which this structure is maintained but renewable sources play a central role. This will come.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What implications does this energy model have for European security?

[Manuel Marín González] It is crucial. I think that one of the reasons why Copenhagen failed was that people were unable to grasp that in addition to climate change and global warming there is a geopolitical overlay which is absolutely crucial: the Kyoto non-signatories — China and the United States, the famous G2 — think that a binding United Nations international agreement radically affects their economic interests. We will have to see about this geopolitical overlay; a new world leadership is forming, the Chinese are denying it, the Americans are denying it, but a very curious relationship is developing between the Chinese and the Americans in energy terms: on the bilateral level there is confrontation, there are definitely going to be quarrels, but at international level there is cooperation, a new leadership is being sketched out. The European Union failed to understand this and was left out. Just think, when Obama signed at the meeting in Copenhagen, the European Union was not even invited to the signing of this piece of paper, this *de minimis* agreement which was ratified just yesterday or the day before by a hundred and one signatories. The United States was there, China, South Africa and Brazil were there, but not the European Union. Well, we have to draw our own conclusions.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What role do ecological values play in the current European Union plan?

[Manuel Marín González] A fundamental role. The most attractive package in terms of the Third World, in terms of aid to Third World countries — in terms of both financing and technology transfer — the best was the European package, the famous 20-20-20 package. Although the European package was the best intellectually, the best technically and the best financially, you can't play the role of global actor if you are divided. Situations arise which I hope will not arise again with Van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton. Bear in mind that when Obama started to hold bilateral talks he met with Europeans, but this wasn't the Council, it was just three people: Sarkozy, Merkel and Brown.

15. The balance between the large and small countries and the notion of a ‘hard core’ in the European Union

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Tell us a little about the relationship between large and small countries in the European Union. How do you think a balance can be achieved?

[Manuel Marín González] The balance is what we have; by that I mean that it is logical and inevitable that Germany should play a leading role, France too, and that to a certain extent they should consider that the only way to lead Europe ... The smaller countries clearly have room for manoeuvre, because a group of small countries can often be decisive, but it has to be like that. Institutional balance was already achieved by the Lisbon Treaty and it is better to forget Nice — the tragedy of Nice — so now all that’s left is to get the mechanisms running smoothly and to show a greater level of loyalty.

16. Assessment of his political career at European level

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How would you sum up your European career?

[Manuel Marín González] It has been fascinating. I am very grateful, I think I have been very lucky. I was there for fourteen years, plus the four accession years; eighteen years in all. I have seen very good things, less good things, ordinary things. The most deplorable thing, and we see this in an exercise that I do at the university, when I ask them: ‘Give me examples of dictators’, and they reply — the first example is obviously in Spain — ‘Franco’. ‘Give me some more examples.’ ‘Pinochet’ — Spanish culture — and then ‘Hitler’ and then ‘Mussolini’, so I say to them: ‘the two most evil people I ever met in my life were black, and there was another whom I saw at a distance with eyes like this. [2] My students look baffled. The evil people I have known: Mobutu and General Aidid in Somalia. Later, with the peace process in Cambodia, Pol Pot. They stare at me: ‘But those people are not what we think of as dictators.’ They are dictators though. It is one of the things that I have learned. I have also got to know fascinating people, extraordinary people ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Which people have made the greatest impression on you during your career?

[Manuel Marín González] The one who impressed me the most was at the last meeting we had with Rabin and Juppé. The determination of that man impressed us greatly when he said: ‘We have reached a point where action is the only solution.’ It was at the end of the negotiation agreement with Israel: ‘We are withdrawing from Lebanon; I am telling you this because I want you to know; we are going to do it by means of a referendum and I think I am going to win it. On the matter of Syria I am counting on the European Union because in addition to the satellite, we are going to put an international interposition force on the Golan Heights, so that the Syrian forces withdraw and the Israeli forces withdraw, but you have to sort out the water problem for me.’ That is when we made

the plan to take water from the Yarmouk and the River Jordan. ‘But I need to have reliable guarantees of water supplies.’ The Turks replied: ‘Very well, we will come into the package.’ Everything was planned and I believe that he would have won the elections. He impressed me a great deal. I liked Clinton very much, as a person, I have never met anyone who was more of an artist. He was an artist: he was congenial, extrovert, he didn’t know you from Adam but he had the trick of looking at the minutes to know whether your name was Ana or Manuel. ‘So, Manuel!’ and so on. He could say that hundreds of times a day and yet could convey that immediate human quality. I think one has to be that sort of person. It takes a lot of effort for me because I am very shy. I also remember Kohl very well. I saw him at the Florence European Council when the euro was about to be launched and the Governors of the Central Banks had to finally set the convergence criteria and the three stages in motion by signing the Delors Report, which was also signed by the Governor of the Bank of England against the orders of Mrs Thatcher — he then left his post, but he had already signed it — but there was one person who did not sign it and that was the President of the Bundesbank (the Bundesbank is in the Constitution, it is constitutionalised in the Bonn Basic Law), that person being [Karl] Otto Pöhl, and Kohl said to him: ‘Look, Germany is part of the same currency, on the one side you’ve got Europe and on the other side Germany. This is a historic project, so if you want to resign, then resign.’ And he did resign. Which European leader would be able to do that now? No one. You remember that kind of thing. The spirit and tenacity of Jacques Delors were also extraordinary ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What events most impressed you during your career and gave you a sense of witnessing an historic moment?

[Manuel Marín González] The fall of the Berlin Wall. On 1 May — it happened in November — but on 1 May I got the car and I said to my wife: ‘As we’ve never seen what is going on in Eastern Europe ...’ It was the time when all the little Trabants were coming in, those little German cars, with a fridge and a television, they went to the Austrian border to buy things, etc. The embassies of the Member States were packed with people, we didn’t know what to do ... but we went. On 1 May we took the car through Prague in the morning and sped on to Budapest and in the late afternoon-evening we arrived in Budapest. In Prague and Budapest we saw the two 1 May demonstrations and we realised that it was definitely coming to an end. Then Kohl called Jacques Delors and said to him: ‘Jacques, the wall is going to come down and I am asking the European Commission to meet in order to implement the Berlin Clause of the Treaty of Rome.’ This was the clause which Adenauer himself wrote, saying: ‘Take note, if German unification comes about one day, the Treaty will have to ...’ I remember that meeting very clearly. I remember it. The Chernobyl night was a momentous occasion. That night they convened us because they had had information from NATO, which came from Canada and Sweden, and we had to take decisions that same night — horrible decisions — which were to order all abattoirs, all slaughterhouses to despatch thousands and thousands and thousands of head of cattle and other livestock, we had to give orders to get rid of thousands of tonnes of cereal, thousands of tonnes of alfalfa, maize, etc. They had to be withdrawn, because they had been irradiated and contaminated by the Chernobyl explosion. That was a terrible night. I had never heard about becquerels before, I confess. Then those Generals started up, one was Canadian, [...], and another [...]. I remember that there was a hearing to explain to us what had happened and we were horrified. Fortunately matters began to calm down, initial samples were already arriving, initial information from those laboratories which witnessed the disaster; it was the Swedes who gave the alarm, I remember. We were appalled. All the governments were calling in alarm, saying: ‘What measures are you going to take?’ ‘They are telling us to uproot, to eliminate, to kill animals.’ Fortunately we didn’t do it. We didn’t do it but it was a horrible night. Especially when you realise that although you have perfectly well-established protocols, at the end of the well-established protocol is the decision of those in charge. You find yourself in very dramatic circumstances. I remember one of our colleagues, one of those responsible, saying: ‘This decision,

either we've got it right or we are going to bring about an economic disaster of the first order.' If it is correct, according to the maps of Europe that they are showing us, that everything is irradiated from there to there, and everything is contaminated, then we have to order all farmers to stop work, to go to hospital, to start to take samples. All the livestock needs to be taken to the slaughterhouse and eliminated, burned, ground up. The land has to be stripped of crops, cleaned, you can just imagine. In the end you realise that it is also individuals who have to interpret the security protocols. It was very hard, but we took the right decision. We didn't have any problems with European citizens who had been contaminated directly. We got it right, as we usually do. Just imagine if we had taken the opposite decision.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What do you think are the parameters for this balance between individuals and institutions?

[Manuel Marín González] It depends. Bear in mind that a lot has been written about the nature of the work of the institutions. In actual fact — in my personal experience — there is so much pressure from the Member States, from external negotiators, from the internal situation, the trade unions, employers, etc., in other words it is very difficult for you to follow your own course. You can go for months being a real robot; schedules are so firmly fixed that you hardly have any free time to take your own decisions, because everything has its place in a very well-defined system. The problem on many occasions was how to fit everything in. Later, when I had responsibilities for foreign policy, Latin America, the Mediterranean, Asia, etc., I took advantage of Wednesdays when I would finish at the Commission, I had Thursday and would leave at midday and return to Brussels the following Tuesday. I took advantage of the weekends to carry out bilateral missions, especially in the Arab countries, because the feast day for them is on Friday so weekends worked very well for us. The institution wins. The institution is stronger than you. The government is stronger than you. Having been President of the Spanish Cortes, the Cortes Generales, I can tell you that the institution is stronger than you. Your margin for manoeuvre is very small ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Would you say that there are times when you feel that managerial tasks weigh more heavily than actual politics or political initiative?

[Manuel Marín González] Oh yes, definitely. You have to resolve so many issues that it is very difficult, unless you find yourself a highly extemporaneous working method, like issuing sound bites for media effect, which may be the way in which Sarkozy works because he is the most remarkable person, hyperactive really. This hyperactivity means that the Republic operates according to its own rules but they manipulate that media element. This is to some extent the *modus operandi* of Obama, who I like and admire very much, but for the sake of his health he has had to revert to the typical mechanisms employed by an American President, talking with Congressmen, talking with Senators, getting them into his office, putting pressure on them ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Yes, so in the end procedure saves the day ...

[Manuel Marín González] Procedures, the institution; you read columns which give you the idea that those in government, when they are in their room, with their secretaries and their heads of cabinet, are plotting all sorts of things ... In my experience, I was very surprised when they asked me things: 'My goodness! If you knew what really happened ...!'

17. Academic career and experience as President of the Spanish Parliament

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How did you feel about coming back to Spain as President of the Cortes?

[Manuel Marín González] Very good. I was not expecting it. I went to the university, I ran as a member of parliament out of friendship with the socialist leaders of the time, but I never thought ... I then spent four very hard, momentous, very difficult years. I reached a certain level of saturation and when you reach that level of saturation you have to recognise: this is my limit, this is starting to get my back up, I can't carry on with politics in this way, I have reached saturation point. So, when you have reached your saturation point, you realise it and you have to decide.

CNL: Did this point perhaps come about because you noticed a difference in procedure between European and national politics?

[Manuel Marín González] No, no, no, because I didn't enjoy how politics were being handled in Spain, there are still many aspects which I do not like, but you get to a point when you say: 'What is the point in my working in an environment which gives me no satisfaction and where my opinion is often dictated by considerations of political correctness? So, I have reached this saturation point, I have got other ideas and I am going to live in a different way.' That stupid remark to the effect that there is no life after politics is not true. It just is not true. Such platitudes, those things they say ... Is there life after politics? Of course there is, there are endless things to do!

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Do you have a little more freedom of initiative now?

[Manuel Marín González] Yes, I certainly do. I am enjoying it very much. I regard myself as fortunate because I have had a great deal of luck, that is the truth.

18. Spain's contributions to the European integration process and the challenges of today's Europe

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] To conclude our interview, I would like to ask you a twofold question: what effect do you think the accession of Spain has had on the European Communities, and what contributions has Spain made to the process of European integration?

[Manuel Marín González] What we were able to bring was probably a fairly pro-European public opinion, in general terms, a country which has always cooperated and which has always supported the major decisions. Also an abundance of history and culture, which is obviously a reflection of what Spain has been in the past, for better, for worse. In your second question, you were saying

‘what did we ...?’

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What effect did Spain’s accession have on the Community? How did it change that Community ...?

[Manuel Marín González] It certainly brought a certain sensitivity to the Community which it did not have before, especially in terms of the Mediterranean, and in the context of Latin America, basically. We also brought our cultural heritage, our heritage of extraordinary achievements and, well, we are proud of them. We have received a great deal from Europe: we have modernised, Community policies have been extremely helpful to us in becoming a modern country, the Structural Funds have allowed us to develop beyond our potential, thanks to Europe we have the stability we have and that is good.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] If you had to define European integration in just a few words, what would you say?

[Manuel Marín González] A historic achievement. It is a historic achievement, and for Spain, entry into the Common Market of the time, into the European Community, was the most profitable external policy decision we ever made. It has been really profitable because we have turned towards Europe without any wars of religion with anyone, we have turned towards Europe peacefully and it has been highly beneficial for our interests. A very profitable operation for Spain. Very, very profitable in all spheres.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Thank you very much for your participation. It has been a real pleasure to listen to you. Thank you again.

[Manuel Marín González] Thank you.

[1] [Bourgès-Manoury]

[2] Almond eyes.