


Transcription of the interview with Jordi Pujol i Soley (Barcelona, 3 March 2010)

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1. Education in European affairs and political and professional career

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] First of all I’d like to thank you for being so kind as to grant us this interview: it is an honour for us to talk to someone who has been a guarantor and defender of the wealth and diversity of European culture. I would like to start off by asking about what sparked your interest in a European dimension to politics.

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Well, I’ve been pro-European all my life, since I was very young, since I was a child almost. First of all I came under the sway of strong French and German cultural influences: I went to the German school but I had lots to do with France, French culture and the French language. And that has helped me a lot. In addition I’ve loved history since I was very young and because of that I realised that the constant upheavals that Europe has experienced meant that the continent had a shared background. Also, I was greatly impressed by Churchill’s speech of 1946 — I was very young at the time, 16 years old, but I was impressed by his speech in Zurich on European Union. Another thing was that, when I was still very young, I read a book that also affected me greatly, a book by Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Paneuropa*, a United States of Europe, a vision that was my first vision of Europe; it was somewhat utopian, a kind of United States. Oh, I am quite aware that that kind of thing is an impossibility — and I learned as much very quickly, but ... So it was all these things: history, literature, etc., and politics. Europe in 1945, 1946 and 1947 was in a very sorry state, of course, and I agreed with what Churchill was saying, with what Adenauer and Schuman and De Gasperi and Jean Monnet were saying, namely that unless Europe united it would not only not be rebuilt but it would be nothing in the world.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What was the lasting effect on you of that first visit you made to Strasbourg in 1948?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Since I was 16, so since 1946 — at that time it was very unusual in Spain because of the dictatorship, the country was very closed — since then I’ve been pro-European because when I had the opportunity ... At the time it was very difficult to leave Spain, very difficult, they didn’t issue passports, Spain was a closed country, but I eventually got a passport and went to Europe for a month, to Strasbourg. My father asked me, ‘Where do you want to go?’ And I replied, ‘Strasbourg.’ Why Strasbourg? Because Strasbourg is a meeting point for German culture and French culture: I had been under the influence of both, I knew both languages and I’d read Goethe, for example, who had studied at Strasbourg University, I had a vague idea of who Herder

was, a teacher in Strasbourg, and, I repeat, the city was also very much imbued with French culture. So off I went to Strasbourg, what you might call the very core of pro-Europeanism. I also visited Paris, but my trip was to Strasbourg. The second trip, years later, was to Brussels. But at a time when Brussels was not the capital of Europe; I went there for other reasons, which were to an extent Europe-focused because since its independence in 1830, Belgium has naturally been a *plaque tournante*, as the French say, a hub around which things European flow. But apart from that I was interested in seeing a European country that worked. France was another example, of course, but Belgium was smaller and it also interested me because it had been influenced by the specialist Catholic movements the Young Christian Workers (JOC) and the Young Independent Christians (JIC), etc.; they had a very strong core in Belgium, there was *abbé Cardijn*, etc. And finally because I am a Catalan nationalist, I was interested to see how the Fleming and Walloon issue operated from the political and linguistic points of view and so on. Those were the reasons why I went to Brussels on my second trip. And since then I've travelled throughout the whole of Europe, more or less.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What ideas did you take away from the relationship between Flemings and Walloons that might perhaps be usefully applied to the situation in Spain?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] The situation between Walloons and Flemings at that time was different from what it is now, because the autonomy or the high degree of sovereignty that each group, Flemings and Walloons and the city of Brussels, has is much greater than it was in 1953; things have changed radically in that regard, you realise. Anyway, at that time Flemish was, shall we say, an overlooked language that was looked down on, sidelined and cast aside, and the Flemings also had inferior status in Belgium to some extent until the 1930s, although of course it was hugely better than the situation we had in Catalonia. It's very different today too. Now the Flemings' rights have much more recognition than the Catalans' do but our position is much better than it was then.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I wanted to ask about some key events and your reflections on the visit you made to Hungary in 1989 and your meeting with the President of Slovenia in 1991, Milan Kučan. What effect have these individuals and these events, which have changed the face of Europe, had on you?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Well, the visit to Hungary ... They are two very different things. Through the Assembly of European Regions I had contact with all non-state bodies, for example with Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia. The contact with Slovenia was special because it's a country with which we have certain things in common. And when the Yugoslav conflict broke out the President of Slovenia (who was from the Communist era, Mr Kučan, and is no longer the country's President), with whom I'd had the occasional discussion (I had been to Ljubljana at one time for a conference at the University of Ljubljana, etc., I was familiar with the subject), he knew that I understood it and he came to see me and said 'Well, what would you do?' 'I don't know, I don't know. I don't know if you are in a position to declare independence or even if you want independence, either ask for a confederation or ... I don't know. But I'll only give you one piece of advice: whatever you have to do, do it straight away, tomorrow. Don't let six months go by because this will have all gone to pot in six months.' And, well, he always says it was thanks to that advice ... that's what he says, but I'm not convinced it was entirely like that ... I had no influence on his decision, or very little. 'Pujol gave me good advice.' I was invited to Slovenia a little while ago and it was a very enjoyable trip. Slovenia is a splendid country, a model of a country. I travelled a lot as President of Catalonia, as President of the Regional Government, or Generalitat of Catalonia, I travelled a lot for trade and investment purposes: for investments by us abroad and investments here from abroad. When I went to Hungary, I went so that Catalonia could invest in Hungary; by contrast, when I went to Japan it was for Japan to invest here; when I went to China it was for Catalans to invest in China; when I went to the USA it was for both — for the Americans, I visited Hewlett Packard in Palo Alto, and for us to invest there. But the purpose of the Hungary trip was really for me to open two Catalan

factories coupled with a cultural aspect — in 1999 or 2000, it must have been in 2000, I'm not sure whether it was in 2000 or in 1999, anyhow it doesn't matter — we celebrated the fact that Pope Sylvester II, who was Pope from 995 or 997 to 1003, was the person who consecrated Hungary's independence, but for us that Pope had special significance, he was French, I'm not sure that's the right word because France as we know it didn't exist at the time; he was Occitan, well from what is now France, and he studied in Ripoll, a Catalan monastery. He spent three years at Ripoll because Ripoll, Barcelona and Vic, three Catalan cities, were at that time places where Arab culture was being spread and at that time Arab culture was extremely advanced in philosophy, medicine, mathematics, agriculture, astronomy, etc. The monasteries spread it to Europe, translated it, wrote it all down, etc. for Europe, so as a result the intellectual level at Ripoll was high. Pope Sylvester II studied there and was to some extent influential in Catalonia at the time. This all meant that we wanted to celebrate Pope Sylvester II because he had lived in Catalonia and had such an impact in Hungary, so in association with the opening of two factories, in association with an act at Budapest University, I gave a speech there, involving the historical memories that had brought Catalonia and Hungary together, etc. In other words I tried to make it so that our reaching out, Catalonia's presence, was all-encompassing, ranging from Pope Sylvester II to the factories, from culture and university and translation of Catalan books into Hungarian, etc., or the creation of a Chair in Catalan in Budapest, to historical memories of the War of Succession; in short, a number of things. Above all I tried to encourage Catalans to go to the countries of Eastern Europe that at that time were still very poorly known: Poland, for example, where I've been several times, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia.

2. Federalist ideas and the development of pro-European sentiment in Spain and Catalonia

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You referred to Coudenhove-Kalergi and his work *PanEuropa*. What changes have there been in your view of federalism as an option for European states and Catalonia?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Well, the possibility of Europe becoming a type of United States of America is one that I have never really entertained because right from the start I realised that the historical processes involved were different. I have never believed in it and still don't. Europe will never be similar to the United States of America in terms of political organisation but it has to be more than what I term the traditional old treaties between powers, pacts, treaties, etc. It has to be something more organic, and it is. The European Union is already much more than the old treaties or old alliances were, indeed it is, but it must be so to a greater extent. And I emphasise that in the knowledge that we will not achieve the level of integration of the United States of America: that is not something that is consistent with either the history or the reality of Europe.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Has federalism ever been an option for Catalonia or the Spanish state?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Within Spain? Well, in Spain there is a constant debate or tension in both the negative and positive senses of the word; it has been there for centuries between the centre, which tries to homogenise everything or dominate everything, and a periphery, and by 'periphery' I mean not only a geographical periphery but a periphery in the sense that there is a diversity of languages. Catalonia's own language — Catalan and Castilian are spoken in Catalonia, but Catalonia's own language, the one that marks Catalonia out, gives it personality and ambition, has been and is Catalan. I am sorry that I cannot speak in Catalan right now, but anyway, all right, that's the way it is. Next time! But language, institutions, history, collective feeling ... So there is a tension in Spain that has often been difficult but has on other occasions been productive in many aspects because it has created a degree of creative tension, competitiveness. And this is where Catalonia plays an

absolutely key role. Furthermore, European ambition in Catalonia has always been very strong, for political, economic and historical reasons. And bear in mind that Spain as a whole is to a certain extent, shall we say, the product of the Reconquest of the Arabs, and as a result all the kingdoms that fought the Arabs in the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th centuries were kingdoms seeking to restore the old idea of the Kingdom of Toledo, the *Regnum Gothorum*, as the ancients termed it. By contrast, Catalonia was not among them. Catalonia was the vanguard, the most outlying fortress of the Carolingian Empire against the Arabs. Therefore it was different in its make-up when it came into being, even internally; for example feudalism was stronger than in other places because it came from Europe. And it has another language and other perspectives, it projects itself to the outside world towards the south of France, the Mediterranean, etc., a factor that has been detrimental to it historically, detrimental because it did not reach out to the same extent into Spain. And it was always a relatively small country, yet it has stood firm until today and let's hope it continues to stand firm. Moreover, Catalonia has made very significant contributions to overall Spanish advancement. For example, the role that Catalonia has played politically over the last 40 or 50 years has been very important in all fields, whether political, economic or cultural, and has done much to strengthen Spain's European ambition, to help it to integrate, because there have been times when the question of Europe has been viewed with suspicion in Spain, but not in Catalonia.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] For example, you have quoted Sánchez-Albornoz when he said 'more than any other Spanish people, the Catalans have always been anchored in European culture, they originate in and are nourished by it'...

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] That's exactly what I've just been saying, yes.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] The next question I wanted to ask you is: what changes have you seen in pro-European feeling within Catalonia?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Pro-European feeling throughout Europe has waned. Europe is not having a good spell. It is having a good spell in the sense that it has a very good standard of living, a model — the European model is the best in the world in many respects in that it provides the best way of combining wealth creation with wealth distribution and a very humanist way of organising society, yet the model is weak; it is very positive from the point of view of justice, the point of view of human rights, but it lacks solidity, it lacks, in the best sense of the word, it lacks hardness, it is soft. We, and Europe talks with pride about it, we stand for soft power, and that contrasts very neatly with hard power — a concept which relates more to brute force, but soft power too needs conviction, it needs to be capable at a given time to stand up and be counted, to address situations. And above all it needs people to be willing to feel sympathetic towards Europe, to be willing to make sacrifices for Europe, to act responsibly in respect of Europe. And that is something that is not done enough.

3. The principles of a European constitution and the European welfare state model

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Do you think that a European constitution could help in this respect?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] We already have the European Constitution. The European Constitution is a major step forward: of course, 30 years ago anyone who had said we would have a European constitution would have been told 'you're daydreaming, you've got your head in the clouds'. Well, the constitution exists. The thing is that the constitution alone — and it is of course something of a 'soft' constitution as well, not like the Constitution of the United States, but it is a major advance nonetheless — the thing is that by itself it doesn't mean that progress is being made; there has to be

an attitude, a mentality, a decisiveness, willingness, a shouldering of responsibility. And that is where Europe's failing lies. For example, when we compare ourselves to the people of the United States we cannot understand why there is no universal system of social protection in the USA: we just don't understand it. And I think we are right, and it is part of our model, our lifestyle, etc. But the Americans don't understand, and they are right too, why it is so hard for Europeans to shoulder responsibilities in two senses: first handing over most responsibilities to the state for the state to deal with, and then shouldering responsibilities in terms of one's own personal sphere too and in terms of the European collective sphere. And of course, in order to be an actor in world politics, in order not to be gradually sidelined, you must be capable of making sacrifices, shouldering responsibilities, addressing difficult situations. And that is a hard thing for Europe to do.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You mentioned the European welfare state. Would you describe it as one of the basic values of European identity?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Yes, yes, I would, undoubtedly. As I said before, the European model provides the best way of combining, in my view, wealth creation with wealth distribution, political freedom with security. It is a reason to be proud. All I'm saying is that in fact it's a system that transfers a significant proportion of responsibilities to the state, and as a result citizens feel less responsible. The fact that citizens feel less responsible weakens the country, weakens society. That is the risk we face.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Could it perhaps be resolved through education focused on a more European curriculum, more on common values?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Well, we're talking about Europe, not Spain. What does a more European curriculum mean?

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Courses throughout Europe studying things from the viewpoint of common elements and honouring diversity ...

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Yes, yes. You're absolutely right on that, but the topic we were discussing is not in that field. It is in the field of shouldering responsibilities both individually and collectively.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Yes, it is more of a conscious decision by an individual and by society ...

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] By an individual and by society.

4. The 'four motors of Europe', the Committee of the Regions and the role of Catalan nationalist parties and initiatives in that context

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Next I wanted to ask you a question about the nationalist parties in Europe: what elements do you think they share in terms of their nature and objectives, and how do you think the European nationalist parties have developed? Can you also comment specifically on Convergència i Unió in this European context?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Well I can certainly comment on Convergència i Unió. Let's see; we, Catalanism, Catalan nationalism, at least the Catalanism I have represented during my years as a politician, seeks genuine, authentic recognition of Catalonia with full guarantees that it will be able to retain its identity from the point of view of language, politics, culture, finance, from the point of

view of being able to have the capacity it needs to integrate the immigration we have experienced, etc. That is what it seeks to achieve. The brand of nationalism that I represent, which has been and is, I believe, the most widespread in Catalonia, is not expressed in terms of secession, of separation from Spain, but simply in terms of Spain's being structured in such a way that the recognition of Catalonia as a society and as a nation — for we all think Catalonia is not just a region but a nation — recognition of Catalonia as a society and as a nation is possible within the Spanish framework. We seek to go even further: since we are going to be part of Spain we want to contribute to general progress in Spain as much as possible. And we have done so, very decisively, at various times in Spanish history. Over the last 30 or 40 years we have had a very important and, I believe, positive influence in that regard on the whole of Spain. Not at the moment; we are currently experiencing a period of tension between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. But in short our nationalism has been based on that premise. There are indeed nationalists in Catalonia in favour of separation, but our position has been the one I have set out. Not only that, not only has our objective been the Catalan framework — the identity of Catalonia, its continuity, the progress of Catalonia, a project specifically for Catalonia — it's not just that, and it's not just being able to have a part in overall progress in Spain, we have also taken an interest in the issue of Europe as well. First because, as Sánchez-Albornoz, whom I mentioned before, said, we feel European at a very profound level — a fact that can be explained by our history, our culture, etc. And as we feel European at a profound level, all that we have tried to do has been to make a very modest contribution to overall European progress. Within Europe we have advocated a position that took account of all the identities which are not states, the state-less nations, such as Catalonia, Scotland, the Basque Country, etc. Sometimes regions don't have their own language or culture, sometimes they don't have a well-defined rallying point, they are regions that have very little self-awareness; by contrast other regions have very strong self-awareness: Lombardy has strong self-awareness, Rhône-Alpes has strong self-awareness, Baden-Württemberg has strong self-awareness, Bavaria has strong self-awareness. That is what we have sought to achieve through many contacts, through conferences, through support for movements of this kind. And at one particular time we sought, with some success for a number of years, to achieve this through the Assembly of European Regions; later, though, it did not work well: although at one time there was a great deal of openness on all things in Europe, including this, later on the European states, which we have never called into question, whether it be Spain or any other, reacted against it. We sought a Europe on three levels: the European level, the level of the states and the level of the regions, with internal enhancement of the regions or state-less nations, enhancement of European bodies while of course retaining states as, shall we say, a key aspect of the general structure of Europe, but involving the states in a loss of powers domestically to the regions and to Brussels. There followed a period when the states reacted very vigorously against the idea in both directions, both against Brussels and Europe, I would say, and against the domestic situation. Significant regional movements continue to exist: Catalonia continues to play a significant part and continues to carry significant weight in Spain, it continues especially to retain its identity and the will to retain it; and Scotland and the Basque Country and Galicia and so on; and powerful entities such as the German *Länder*, like Bavaria, etc.; but the states are, of course, trying to reduce their role, shall we say. The same is happening in respect of Brussels as well. I shall call it the 'egotism of the states'; the states are losing their currency: the things that used to define states were the army, currency, frontiers, security and a number of things, and they reacted in both directions. And now among the things damaged in the process are the European spirit and progress in European unification. That is where we are today.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What role did the Committee of the Regions play and what restraints were placed on it?

[Jordi Pujol i Solel] I think it played an important role at one time; since then, well, I don't follow it much now, but I have the impression that it has lost a lot of weight and a lot of its strength.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You also referred to the group of the ‘four motors’ of Europe: Baden-Württemberg, Lombardy, Rhône-Alpes, Catalonia ...

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Baden-Württemberg, Rhône-Alpes, us and Lombardy. Well, it was a way for bodies that have strong self-awareness — some of us regarded ourselves as nations and others did not, but we all had strong self-awareness, to illustrate what things could be like: the strengthening of Baden-Württemberg, a very powerful, very strong *Land*, Lombardy, us ... It’s still in operation but it’s lost some of its freshness, as, unfortunately, has Europe. For example, 20 years ago the idea of the euro was mooted (although its origin was earlier, its origin was with a Luxembourgish Minister, Werner); there were ambitious plans: Werner’s didn’t succeed, then came Delors. European politicians were more pro-European than they are now, for example, Delors did things very well, but he had an advantage; he did things very well with a great deal of hope and ambition, he was something of a visionary which helped, but he had something else: he had Kohl, he had Mitterrand, who were strong leaders in their own countries and in Europe; Spain also had a politician who played that card to its best advantage and did so at European level too, and made a positive contribution, and that was Felipe González; Holland had Lubbers; in Belgium they had Dehaene. In short there was a prowess among the leaders, a capacity for leadership, that does not exist today. It just doesn’t exist, there are some eminent politicians but the situation now is not the same as it was then. Also bearing in mind the fact that Europe won’t be the United States of America, but must instead be something more, it has to have something more than just a conventional treaty. Like it or not, for it to function there has to be agreement between the French and the Germans; in other words, Europe has worked when the Franco-German axis has worked. By contrast, when the Franco-German axis has not worked, then Europe hasn’t worked. And at the moment it’s not in full working order; it’s working better than it has at some points in time, but less well than it has at others. For example it worked very well with Mitterrand and Kohl; it worked very well with Giscard d’Estaing and Helmut Schmidt; it worked very well during the Schuman and Adenauer and De Gasperi period; it worked well, despite the fact that the individuals involved had very different political backgrounds, between de Gaulle and Adenauer. But then when it hasn’t worked, Europe has stagnated. And at the moment it is not in full working order.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I wanted to talk to you about initiatives such as the establishment of the Patronato Catalán Proeuropa [Pro-European Catalan Board], the delegation that exists now ...

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] We in the Convergència i Unió Government, the Catalanist, nationalist government of 23 years, established the Patronato. The Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia and Spanish legislation did not allow us to establish an embassy-style body at the time so we established the Patronato, which played the role of an embassy and did so very well, very well, I think. Then when the new government came into power in Catalonia in 2004 (it’s also a Catalanist government but of a different political persuasion) there was also a new statute and it allows Catalonia greater power from the point of view of its projection in the wider world, and so the Patronato has changed but it is the continuation of what we did then, of the body that performed well and does so today as well, I believe.

5. The Treaty of Lisbon and the challenges Europe faces in respect of enlargement, Euro-Mediterranean policy and immigration policies

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What is your view of the future in relation to the new Lisbon Treaty?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] In relation to?

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] The Treaty of Lisbon.

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Well, the Treaty of Lisbon is a step forward, it is very important and that fact is a ground for hope, because at the moment the Treaty of Lisbon has not improved anything, nor introduced any improvement; but that is because it has not been implemented yet. In reality the Treaty of Lisbon laid the foundations for better internal solidity or consistency within Europe and for defining more ambitious shared objectives; the Treaty of Lisbon contains those elements but we'll have to see what happens. We have only just begun. For example, President Van Rompuy must be given time. He's not a man I know, but everyone speaks very well of him to me. Just one thing at the outset: it is obvious that neither France nor Germany nor any other country wanted a powerful President, and that's a bad sign. They've installed Van Rompuy, and people who know him say he has the advantage of being a man of great qualities in terms of politics, humanity and character. He's a very tenacious man, an intelligent man and a man who instils respect, therefore I hope that Van Rompuy will prove wrong those who think he will be a weak President, an insignificant President, but he's only just started in the job. Lady Ashton, well, things didn't go so well for her because Van Rompuy is respected by all but one stupid British MEP, including the Spanish Prime Minister, who probably thought he was about to be President and suddenly found he wasn't, as if Prime Ministers took turns being President as they used to. That was not the case with Lady Ashton because she has had setbacks, a series of things. But look, I don't know if Lady Ashton will do a good or a bad job, I just don't know. At the moment there's something strange going on in the European Union, the European Parliament says that Lady Ashton has to travel on a commercial aircraft, well OK, perhaps; it's true that the European Union has wasted money, that it has maybe done so a bit too freely. But Lady Ashton, who in theory is the counterpart of Hillary Clinton and the counterpart of the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, the counterpart of President Lula and Putin and Lavrov, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, has been told by the European Parliament that she must not have an aircraft. Solana didn't have one but he himself says 'This is ridiculous. I've done it and all that but this makes no sense.' It's obviously not just the matter of an aircraft, the question is whether Mrs Ashton will do a good job, and that remains to be seen. It remains to be seen because if I can put it like this, viewed from the outside in, her first acts have not been brilliant. But anyway, she must be given support. In any event it's clear that in Europe at the moment there is a degree of suspicion as to what strong leadership might be. And strong leadership can only be exercised in those circumstances by France and Germany.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What role has Catalonia played in the development of a Mediterranean policy in the European Union?

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] An important one. Bear in mind that there are three reference points, three forces in Catalonia, I mean Catalonia came into being, as we are told by the historian ...

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Sánchez-Albornoz ...

[Jordi Pujol i Soley] Sánchez-Albornoz, yes. It came into being with a European-looking perspective. Our first capital, I always say this and gave a speech on it, our first capital was Aquisgrán. I went to give a speech in 1985 shortly before Spain acceded to the European Union; we always fought hard for it. I went to give a speech aimed at Catalans, but instead of giving it in Catalonia I gave it in Aquisgrán. I gave a speech that began with the words, 'I have come from the furthest outpost of the empire.' And I had to explain what it meant, and then tell them, 'Listen, we are coming home, we are coming back to Europe,' because of course, Spain had been right on the fringe of Europe since the 16th century, either fighting Europe or on the fringe of Europe, or involved in itself or fighting not against Europe as such but at least against the Europe, the type of Europe, that ultimately emerged. But we want to be part of this Europe and so we are returning home. The three elements are therefore European influence, Mediterranean influence

unquestionably, and Spanish influence. The Mediterranean influence is absolutely fundamental to us: absolutely fundamental historically, absolutely fundamental culturally and absolutely fundamental in terms of mentality, etc. Because we of course are in the Mediterranean, not the Atlantic, with all the advantages and disadvantages that that fact implies. It was often the case that our centre of gravity, the centre of gravity of our world, the European world, was the Mediterranean, then it moved to the Atlantic, and we were marginalised. But at the moment no one knows exactly where the centre of gravity is, it's not in the Atlantic any more, it would appear, but in the Pacific. And this of course could mean that the Mediterranean might carry less weight, because the Pacific is even further away, or it might not mean that, it might not carry less weight. Because of course if the displacement of power is at least in part moving towards Asia and bearing in mind the fact that Asia ... I mean Europe, will be left a bit on the sidelines, but Europe will always be important in any case. But if Europe wants to continue to be important it will have to forge a major relationship with Asia; and the relationship with Asia, in economic and trading terms, is via the Mediterranean. Therefore the Mediterranean is regaining importance. So we did what we could given our non-powers, for example in terms of speeches, conferences, exhibitions, contacts, investments, etc. And we then succeeded in convincing the Spanish Government, I don't know if we convinced Felipe González or if he was already convinced, that I don't know, but he bought our idea that Spain had to be a leader at European level and Catalonia wanted to play a part in it, and this led to the Barcelona Conference in 1995 and the Barcelona Process; but this has ground to a halt too because after Felipe González Spanish policy did not go down that route and the Mediterranean has experienced many problems: Arab–Israeli conflict, the conflict between Morocco and Algeria, the conflict, well not so much conflict nowadays but the past tensions between Greece and Turkey, the whole conflict in the Balkans which is part Mediterranean and part non-Mediterranean, it's Central European in part, but not least because it also had huge repercussions for Italy, which is a major Mediterranean country, and what happens in the Balkans has a huge effect on the Italians and on the Greeks too. The whole thing. And the Arab world has stalled. And Europe has lost its ambitions in that regard, not that it ever had any, it was always difficult to convince even the French. The French wanted to take up the flag they once had because Spain had got ahead, they wanted to take up the flag with Sarkozy's 'Union for the Mediterranean'; we'll have to see what it's all about but at the moment it's doubtful. It's doubtful in its intention and it's doubtful in how it will develop.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Do you think that the enlargement of the European Union towards the East has weakened the Mediterranean centre of gravity in Europe?

[Jordi Pujol i Solel] The European centre of gravity used to be in France and Germany. Then there was a period when the Mediterranean gained weight because Italy gained weight (before entering the current somewhat turbulent period, which has so far lasted 20 years) ^¾ because Italy had gained weight. Spain, Portugal and Greece joined. They too developed well, and indeed North Africa began to be thought of as important. I always used to say as I travelled through Europe that the Mediterranean was Europe's most delicate frontier, especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Mediterranean frontier is the frontier with under-development, demographic explosion, major migration and ideological risk from Islamists and so on, but Europe finds this very difficult to understand; Northern Europe won't hear anything of it. I have given conferences in Hamburg and Stockholm on the subject or in England and noticed that they weren't interested. Anyway, the centre of gravity moved south, but now it has moved back north, of course, because Poland has joined, the whole of Eastern Europe has joined [...] powerful Central Europe, Eastern Europe. In short, Italy, France and Spain have not done things well but it's difficult because there are many problems in the Mediterranean.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What is your view on a European immigration policy?

[Jordi Pujol i Solel] It's a major challenge. One of the problems in Europe, incredible though it is, is that European politicians have never attached importance to demography. I'm one of those who think that there are many elements in politics but that three are more necessary than others: a knowledge of history, a knowledge of geography and a knowledge of demography. How many of us are there? Who are we? How many of us will there be? — that's an easy one to calculate — how many of us will there be in 20 years? We know that now. How many young people will we have in 20 years' time? We know that now. How many elderly people will we have in 20 years' time? We know that now, more or less. And that is the basis for constructing policy. Not in Europe ... There are only three countries, four at the most, which have had a birth-rate policy: France and the Scandinavian countries; Ireland has not implemented a birth-rate policy, but has had a birth-rate policy; Spain has experienced complete resignation and complete disinterest in this matter. So that's the situation on the one hand, and on the other we have ageing. Then there is immigration because there are major imbalances between our world and the African world, the South American world, the Asian world, Filipinos and Pakistanis come here, etc. Immigration is really very high, it's a major challenge in Catalonia because, so I believe, Catalonia is the European country where immigration is highest, we have little political power and we're a small country and it is therefore a problem from many points of view, including in terms of identity. Leaving Catalonia to one side for a moment, it is an issue that has been very difficult for Europe and much more so for Spain to understand that it is a matter — let's not call it a problem, because it's true that it's also a challenge, a chance or an opportunity, but it is something that we have to manage well, conduct well, because although it could be an opportunity it could also become a huge drawback. I believe it would be good for Europe to have the most uniform immigration policy possible; one hundred per cent uniformity will clearly not be possible because the countries are different. But this question must be examined seriously.

6. The constituent elements of a common European identity

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What, in your opinion, are the ideas or aspects underpinning a common European identity, one that complements regional and state identity, a bit like the principle of subsidiarity?

[Jordi Pujol i Solel] Well, let's see, this posed a very serious problem during the negotiations on the constitution. On the one hand identity everywhere is based on history and a set of values, and there were people who, justifiably, I think, argued that Europe was the result of Greek culture, Christianity or Judeo-Christianity, in other words that it was the product of the Jewish world, the Christian world, Greek culture, Roman influence, etc. Superimposed upon this later there was the Enlightenment: the French Enlightenment and the German Enlightenment and the American Enlightenment. People talk of two great Enlightenments but in fact there are three, I would say: the French and the American Enlightenments and then Goethe and Kant who also made an absolutely key contribution. Together with the Christian roots and the influence of Greek philosophy, etc., they shaped Europe; but when we were framing the constitution there were people who did not want any reference whatever made to Christian roots and the non-inclusion of Christian roots led to the removal of references to Greek roots and the Enlightenment. In other words the constitution does not tell us where we came from and I think that that is a very serious error. George Steiner said — says, because he's still alive — that Europe can be explained by three hills: Golgotha, the Parthenon and Capitolio. I would add to those the Enlightenment because I believe it belongs in the list. None of those elements is in there but that is the truth of the matter, whether they are in the constitution or not; the thing that does appear in the constitution and official documents is human rights. And I would say there's nothing else in there, with all that means for democracy, respect for people, etc. Nothing more. In practice I believe there is something else that shapes Europe to a certain extent, to

put it in reductionist form, not just human rights: it's the welfare state; the idea that there must be a safety net for people stems from the ideas of the Enlightenment and even more so from socialist and Christian ideas. In other words I believe that the two major parties that have shaped Europe since 1945 have been Christian democracy and social democracy, not outraged socialism, not communism of course, and not very conservative ideas, but Christian and social democracy with a sprinkling of liberalism shape our political outlook and lead us to what we call the 'welfare state'. That is Europe's message, and it's a good one — I think we said that earlier at the beginning of this interview, it has only one drawback: it is constructed and can be constructed and the European Union is a miracle and European reconstruction is a miracle and the fact that there are no longer wars in Europe is a miracle but we forget that that has in part been built as a result of aid, it's a secondary factor because the aid was fleeting, but a more decisive role was played by American protection, American military and economic protection, but especially military protection. As a result we have been able to create a mentality and society over the last 30, 40, 50 years which, as I said before, I believe to be the best model in the world and might well be copied by South Africans, South Americans and perhaps in time by the Chinese, I don't know. This gives Europe a prestige and a presence, but its only drawback is that it was constructed on the basis of people's huge need for security, for comfort and a handing over of personal responsibilities. The European economic social model should therefore be supplemented by a shouldering, a revival or an enhancement of the basic values of responsibility, self-reliance, etc.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Thank you very much for your contribution. It is much appreciated and we consider it an honour to have heard the views of someone who views friendship between peoples as the core of European integration.