


Transcription of the interview with Marcelino Oreja Aguirre (Madrid, 24 March 2010)

Source: Interview de Marcelino Oreja Aguirre / MARCELINO OREJA AGUIRRE, Cristina Blanco Sío-López.- Madrid: CVCE [Prod.], 24.03.2010. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (01:28:29, Couleur, Son original).

Copyright: (c) Translation CVCE.EU by UNI.LU
All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.
Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:
http://www.cvce.eu/obj/transcription_of_the_interview_with_marcelino_oreja_aguirre_madrid_24_march_2010-en-06edboff-ca11-48c6-8f86-81ad1c813b02.html

Last updated: 04/07/2016



Transcription of the interview with Marcelino Oreja Aguirre (Madrid, 24 March 2010)

Table of Contents

1. Education in European affairs after the war.....1

2. Studies, diplomatic career and political activities aimed at moving Spain closer to the European Communities during the Franco era.....2

3. The transition to democracy and the request for negotiations on Spain’s accession to the European Communities.....6

4. Experience as a member of parliament and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.....9

.....10

5. Experience as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Member of the European Parliament and European Commissioner.....10

6. The significance and consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the impact on Spain of the enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe11

7. The European Union’s external relations: Russia, the United States and Latin America.....13

8. European institutional principles and procedures, economic and monetary union, the CFSP and the challenge of a Constitutional Treaty.....14

9. Fundamental values, the development of a common European identity and the development of pro-European sentiment in Spain.....15

11. Spain’s contribution to the process of European integration and the global role and challenges of Europe today.....17

1. Education in European affairs after the war

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Hello.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Hello.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] First of all, thank you for agreeing to this interview and for your contribution to our project, which examines the relationship between Spain and the European Communities. Thank you for having us here.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Thank you.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would like to begin by asking you: when did you first become interested in a more European dimension of politics, given the emphasis when you were young on the teaching of European languages and the time you spent, also when you were young, in countries such as France, Germany and England, when you came into contact with ideas such as those of the French Resistance and the significance of the Second World War in Europe? Could you tell us a bit about your background in that regard?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] It’s very hard to pinpoint the origin of a vocation. There is education, yes, and you know when it starts and when it takes place, but a vocation is something that cannot necessarily be pinned down and the reasons for it are difficult to discern: are they related to your family, where you were born, where you lived during your childhood? From the age of two months,

I lived in a city very close to France, San Sebastián. I therefore had a very clear understanding of cross-border relations. Of course, in those days you needed a passport and you needed a visa ... but when I was very young I travelled to France. When I was barely 10 years old, my mother took me to a town in the south of France, in the Basses-Pyrénées, called Gotein, and she left me there to live with a priest for three months in the summer in order to practise my French. I already knew some French as I had begun to study it in school, and so in order to improve it I stayed there for three months with the priest. It proved to be a really interesting experience for me. Firstly, because at that time — and I'm talking about the period from 1945 to 1947 — I spent three summers in the same place, and few children from the area where I lived ever got to leave Spain. That was one difference that obviously contributed to my education, although my vocation was almost innate. Nevertheless, it was bolstered by my time in France, living among the locals and, above all, getting to know that priest, who had had a very eventful life: he was an intelligent, educated man and he was very religious but he was also forward-thinking for his time. He had suffered terribly in Auschwitz, he had suffered a great deal during the repression, he had been surrounded by people who were suffering, and eventually he was freed in 1945. But he explained to me very tactfully what it had all meant and it was a revelation for me, because children my age in Spain didn't know what had happened. So those prolonged trips had a significant influence on me. I got to know other children in the area and I was therefore able to see the differences between us. Then, the following year or two years after that, I went to England (I think I was 12 or 13). I went to stay at the house of some friends I had met in Valladolid. I boarded at the Colegio de San José de Valladolid and there I met a young man who was older than I was, who was already beginning his university studies and who lived in the middle of England, near Manchester. And I spent a summer with him, too, after having spent three summers in France. So I already had some knowledge of what life abroad was like. I can't say that I knew exactly what was going on in the newspapers and magazines, but I listened, I took an interest and, above all, I knew the language and I understood what other people were thinking. So in addition to my education and my vocation, I had an insight into realities that differed from mine. That's probably what aroused my interest in international relations, almost from the very beginning, as I thought that some day I might become a diplomat and would get to visit different countries and represent Spain. That was what guided me in my early years.

2. Studies, diplomatic career and political activities aimed at moving Spain closer to the European Communities during the Franco era

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] In terms of your more academic education, your legal studies in Salamanca and Madrid, what made you opt for international law and how was that vocation expressed once again?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Well, I studied first of all in Madrid, then in Salamanca and then at the Hague Academy of International Law. It was at the Hague Academy that I decided to follow one of two paths, which I had been unable to decide between until then: becoming a professor of international law and international relations, or going down the diplomatic path. I decided first and foremost to prepare for the entrance exam for the Diplomatic School and I thought that later on I could become a professor of international law. In any event, while studying at the Diplomatic School, I prepared my doctoral thesis on an area of international relations that, for me, was of great interest: the extension of territorial waters. For 25 years I had lived right beside the sea: my bedroom in San Sebastián had a view of Playa de la Concha and so I had thought and dreamt about what the sea represented and what it meant, I had spent a great deal of time walking around the port ... Then in The Hague, I used to go for walks around Scheveningen, where the sea is also very powerful, perhaps not as powerful as the Cantabrian, but an Atlantic sea, full of waves and full of

colour. So I eventually decided on a diplomatic career path and from then on my focus shifted to seeing places, getting to know places, getting to know other people. I was also lucky enough when I first started my diplomatic career to be placed in the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was, for me, the greatest of teachers. He was a very strong personality and a man with an exemplary character: he was a man of academia, a man of reflection but he was also a man of action. There was also another person who had a great influence on me, and that was a classmate of mine at the Hague Academy of International Law. He had already decided that he wanted to be a professor, and indeed he has become one of the leading experts on international law in Spain and in Europe. Fortunately, today he is a member of the Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, he is a very distinguished academic and he has been a great professor over the course of his life: his name is Professor Carrillo Salcedo and he lectures at the University of Seville. So on the one hand, I had my classmate and everything he taught me and showed me from the world of academia, and on the other hand, I had what I learned from my teacher, Professor Castiella, Minister for Foreign Affairs. I was head of his office for 10 years and had the opportunity to visit almost the entire world. On one occasion we travelled right around the globe: we visited the Philippines, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and came home via the United States. That trip lasted 35 days; in those days ministers were able to travel for 35 days, although it's much more difficult today. So I spent a long period in the minister's office, dealing with difficult issues, particularly at a time when the political situation in Spain meant that we were somewhat isolated: Spain was not a democratic country and it therefore came up against strong resistance. Castiella was a man who considered himself to be a democrat, but he was living in an undemocratic regime. As a result, it was much harder to implement a foreign policy, but he did so with great skill, constantly defending Spain's interests, and it was he who decided that it was time to open negotiations with the European Communities, which at the time was unthinkable, quite impossible. I remember one morning in December 1961, I went into his office and he said: 'I think we should ask for negotiations with the European Communities to be opened.' I said to him: 'Minister, that's an admirable desire, but it's unthinkable. Spain won't be able to join the European Communities now; it won't be accepted because it's not a democratic country.' And he replied: 'But we have to try. And we have to ask for negotiations to be opened.' And so he asked me to prepare a rough draft of the letter requesting the opening of negotiations. He ran it by other Directors-General in the Ministry and eventually, on 9 February 1962, he sent the letter to the Council of Ministers of the Communities (which at that stage comprised six countries). To give you some background, despite keeping Britain voluntarily out of the constitution of the Europe of Six — it hadn't wanted to join in either 1950 or 1957 — the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, was conscious of the difficulties remaining outside the Community was causing for the United Kingdom's trade and international relations, and that was why Macmillan announced the possibility of joining. The truth is that he was not the one to lead the United Kingdom into the Community; it was another Conservative Prime Minister, 10 years later. Having witnessed this, Spain was keen to request negotiations, but no response was forthcoming. Nevertheless, Castiella was a very tenacious man (we Basques are very tenacious), and he persisted. Two years later, in 1964, he made the same request and I once again accompanied him. This eventually led to negotiations not on accession, but on a preferential trade agreement, which was signed in 1970. All of this led me to follow Community affairs very closely, building on my European vocation, my previous knowledge of European matters, because I had followed them not only through the press, but through books, literature, history, geography, travel. I felt immersed in something that was a very important part of my vocation and my work: the story of how Spain came to join the European Communities. For me it was the number one challenge: Spain had to join. Why did it have to join the European Communities? For strictly economic reasons? For strictly political reasons? I believe that, fundamentally, it was for one reason: because Spain had to take a giant leap towards freedom. We didn't know when it would be able to do it, how it would be able to do it. It was very difficult to have all of this going on during General Franco's lifetime but no resolution. Nonetheless, the economic circumstances augured well; we just needed a political change. And that political change came with the arrival of the King. I always had hope and I believed that everything

had to be in place for us to be able to take that giant leap when the time was right. And I subsequently had the opportunity, along with many others, to help bring it to fruition.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How did the negotiations on the 1970 preferential trade agreement come about? Can you give us some details?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] The preferential trade agreement was an agreement that undoubtedly benefited Spain, but the European countries believed that it also benefited them. This was a time when the Community had only six members. There were a few countries in the wings — the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark — but they didn't join until later, until 1971. Spain was focused and had a very clear framework, and there were some excellent negotiators at the time. Spain did not have an ambassador to the European Communities; it had an ambassador in Brussels, but in 1963, Castiella, the Foreign Minister, decided that it should have an ambassador to the European Communities — which it was allowed to have even though it wasn't a member — and he appointed a person who had been Minister for Trade and who was extremely knowledgeable when it came to both trade and European affairs, Minister Ullastres. He became the ambassador and he had an excellent team of people who at that time played an important role. For example, one of his colleagues was Solbes, who would subsequently become a great Trade Minister, Finance Minister and Agriculture Minister. Above all, he was a great Finance Minister during two separate periods: most recently, he was Finance Minister for eight years in President Zapatero's time, and he was also Finance Minister previously, when Felipe González was in power. There were many others involved, and I must mention one of them in particular: Raimundo Bassols. Raimundo Bassols is an expert in his field, with vast knowledge of the Community sphere, and he is a person who really worked tirelessly from a young age; and even now that he is older, he has nevertheless written the best book there is on relations between Spain and the European Communities. So the entire team working with Ullastres — and he succeeded in surrounding himself with hugely capable people — all contributed to the development of a trade agreement that was very beneficial for Spain and, at the same time, was also beneficial for the European Community. The treaty was divided into two phases. First of all, the agreement was signed in 1970, just after the end of Castiella's time as minister, when López-Bravo had taken over, although it was really Castiella who had put the whole thing together. So in 1970 the preferential trade agreement was signed and it had two stages. The first stage involved promoting free trade, in other words, trade free of the obstacles of the past, because we were completely outside the Community. As we continued negotiating, we moved closer and closer from a trade perspective, but for that giant leap towards a fully-fledged free trade agreement, a number of special requirements were laid down that weren't actually included in the text; they required Spain to have a system of freedoms. Consequently, we were in a situation whereby Franco's continued reign was in doubt and we could see that when Franco was gone we could make the leap to a different legal framework. The treaty was hugely beneficial for Spain, hugely beneficial indeed. It benefited our development and it benefited our trade, both agricultural and industrial; it also contributed significantly to Spain's industrial development. What is most surprising for people outside Spain who don't know much about Spanish political life is that in such a short space of time, between the death of Franco and the arrival of the King, we were able to bring about the transition from a regime without freedoms to a regime with freedoms. Why were we able to do this? For one main reason: because Spain's economy was developing at a relentless pace. Our economic development had positioned us almost in the middle of the Community countries. So what were we lacking? A system of freedoms. It was a time when there was universal suffrage, respect for human dignity, recognition of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, in other words, there was political will; but it was not enough simply to have it, we had to demonstrate it, we had to realise it. However, we had at least consolidated our economic development, which didn't happen, for example, in the countries of Eastern Europe, where there was no economic development, and that is why it has been much more difficult for them to adapt to the European Communities. In Spain what we needed instead was the democratic

explosion.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What influence did Spain's accession to the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation prior to this have on the country's economic development? Did it help?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Yes, undoubtedly, because this was just after the time when a very important process of economic liberalisation took place, in 1959. Spain went through many different stages: the period from 1939 to 1945 was a very harsh time, with a policy that was entirely inward-looking, without any communication with the outside world; then there was a period when the country began to open up a little more, until 1957–1958, but still with major restrictions on trade and extremely restricted industrial development because it was very much controlled by the state, since freedom is also very dependent on economic matters. Nevertheless, it was clear that that situation could not continue, and in 1957 there was a change of government and in came people who had a vision of what was involved in moving closer to Europe in economic terms. This period saw the beginning of a liberalisation process that was primarily driven, from 1959, by a stabilisation plan. This meant that from 1959 onwards the Spanish structures began to adapt better to the Community structures, and that is precisely what facilitated the request for negotiations to be opened in 1962 and the steps towards a free trade treaty, which began in 1965. In other words, Spain's membership of international economic bodies, such as the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, was undoubtedly a factor that contributed to the country's economic development and enabled us to become a modern country in 1975, after the death of General Franco.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] From a political point of view, what were your impressions and experiences in particular of the Munich Congress, held in 1962?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Well, when the Munich Congress took place, I was a young diplomat who hadn't spent very much time in the ministry. I was 26 years old, but I had a lot of friends who were convinced that it was necessary to take a leap and that it was also necessary to seek out something that I have always held dear: the idea of reconciliation. One thing that tormented me when I was young was the division between the two Spains. As the poet said: 'One of the two Spains will freeze your heart.' I didn't believe that either of the two Spains had to freeze my heart; I believed that the people of Spain needed reconciliation. And that has been a very important goal throughout my life. At the start I talked about my vocation, but I think that, for me, a fundamental ingredient of that vocation has been reconciliation, probably because I experienced it in the flesh, in my family. I suffered the death of my father in 1934; he was murdered in Mondragón. In fact, I was a posthumous child as I was born three months after my father died, and I am also an only child. My mother always held dear the image and example of my father. He was a Member of the Cortes and he died in the October Revolution of 1934 in the town of Mondragón in the province of Guipúzcoa. My mother never fostered in me any concept of hatred or enmity; on the contrary, she fostered in me the idea of reconciliation. She firmly believed that it wasn't possible for those two opposing Spains to exist side by side, and despite the fact that she had suffered more than anyone as a result of my father's murder, she never passed on any feelings of hatred or enmity to me, or the idea that you should treat those who don't share your views any differently. Consequently, that is perhaps one of the main ingredients of my life and my personality: on the one hand, there is that external dimension, founded precisely on my experiences abroad, and on the other hand, there is this idea of reconciliation. It was something that was a great concern for me. And so at that time, when I worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I saw the idea of reconciliation sought by those who attended the Munich Congress — some 70, 80 or 90 people inside and 70 or 80 people outside, excluding those who were intolerant as there was no place for them in that spirit of reconciliation — as a very noble objective. I knew many people who were there, not necessarily friends, because we

were very young, but people I knew; and in particular there were some people with whom I have had very close relationships in my life. They include Fernando Álvarez de Miranda, who was President of the Congress of Deputies and a member of the UCD; Satrustegui, another leading figure in the liberal world and a very likeable person, who passed away recently; and a very close friend of mine who had a house in France where he lived for many years, José Vidal Beneyto, who was one of the great promoters of the Spanish group that was there and who, as a result of his presence in Munich, was then unable to return for a long time and lived in France, where he died just a few weeks ago. For me, the Munich Congress was a huge failure for General Franco's Government and it was something that had a far-reaching impact on the development of Minister Castiella's European policy. In February Minister Castiella had presented a request for negotiations to be opened with the European Communities, and in June the Congress of the European Movement took place in Munich. Obviously, the reaction of the Spanish Government, General Franco's Government, was to prohibit those who had attended from re-entering Spain, send them into exile or order them to stay in certain towns in southern Spain or in the Canaries. It was completely ridiculous. However, it meant that many people became aware of the topics of reconciliation and Europe. So I'm very pleased that you brought up the Munich Congress because, in my opinion, it is an important element in all of this. It also represented the spirit needed for reconciliation, and one form of reconciliation was recovering the European spirit.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would also like to ask you what Francisco Franco's perception was of this rapprochement with Europe. How did it evolve?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] The rapprochement?

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] With Europe, between Spain and Europe.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Well, I think that he probably was extremely doubtful that Europe would allow Spain to join, because of course he knew very well that it was necessary to meet the conditions of a democratic state. So I think that when they spoke to him about it, he said: 'Well, go ahead, but you'll see how far you get.' And of course, thanks to the excellent negotiators, we got as far as we could have imagined, but never as far as full and complete accession.

3. The transition to democracy and the request for negotiations on Spain's accession to the European Communities

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I would imagine that the relations established when negotiating the trade agreement stood you in good stead later during the accession negotiations.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Absolutely, without a doubt, they helped a great deal, but the most important time came later, when General Franco died. In the first government, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in particular, a great minister, José María de Areilza — I had the good fortune and honour to work with him as undersecretary — visited the European capitals, but it was a time when the President of the Government, Carlos Arias, did not make the change that he should have made, nor as quickly as the circumstances warranted. The King was very much in favour of moving forward with this process, but his President was not up to the task. Within six months, it was time for a new President and this time Adolfo Suárez took over the role. Indeed, at the first meeting of the Council of Ministers, which I joined as a minister in 1976, the idea of a rapprochement with the European institutions from a political perspective was raised. But of course we were far from that because we needed development and above all we needed a general election, which cost us a year,

from July 1976 to 1977. That year saw some major changes, notably the Law for Political Reform, which was approved in September, although work on it began perhaps slightly earlier, in August. It was eventually put to a referendum in December 1976 and it paved the way for a reform. It was a reform that was on the right track, according to its main instigators, and I worked on the Law for Political Reform with other colleagues in the government and, above all, with President Suárez, who pointed us in the right direction. We achieved it by moving ‘from legislation to legislation’, as they called it then, in other words, not by introducing a completely new regime, but by making such far-reaching legal changes that the primitive, undemocratic legislation was transformed entirely into democratic legislation. And this was approved by the Francoist Cortes. A very important role was played in this regard by a Member of the Cortes at the time, who is today the Secretary of the Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, Fernando Suárez. He gave a brilliant speech, encouraging the Members of the Francoist Cortes to agree to a transformation ‘from legislation to legislation’ and pave the way for a democratic system in Spain. There was an Amnesty Law and another very important step, the legalisation of all political parties. The only doubt surrounded the Communist Party, and whether or not it would be legalised. Some people thought that Suárez was very hesitant at the start, but I don’t agree. I think that from the start he felt that it was essential to legalise all parties, including the Communist Party, but the fact is that some movements wanted to go forward and some wanted to go backwards. Finally, in April 1977, the Communist Party was legalised, along with all the political parties, and the Amnesty Law was declared, which covered anyone involved in non-violent crime. And so we entered a phase of normality, thanks to the application of that Law for Political Reform, which enabled us to hold a free and democratic general election on 15 June 1977. The Council of Ministers met (after the law was approved and after the elections were held) and at that meeting one of the first topics raised was the fact that Spain was a European country, a democratic country, a Western country and that it was therefore time to request the opening of negotiations on accession to the European Communities. And that’s what happened. Indeed, the Council of Ministers set out its programme soon after, at the start of July, and on 20 July it met for a second time and asked me to go to Brussels to request the opening of negotiations with the European Communities. I must say that it was one of the most exhilarating times of my life, because it was a hope that I had had for so long, practically since my youth, since I was a student. Thus on 28 July 1977 I found myself in Brussels, meeting the President representing the Council (the Belgian Foreign Minister, Henri Simonet). He met me at Brussels Airport and I remember him saying: ‘Usually, the formal session to open negotiations takes place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but in your case it will take place in a palace that has a somewhat unpleasant history as it’s where the heads of some Spanish noblemen rolled during the Spanish conquest, when Spain controlled part of the Netherlands.’ I said to him: ‘Well, I hope that they won’t roll again and that they’re all firmly in place at the moment; I’m delighted that that’s where we are going to go to open the negotiations.’ And that’s what we did. The signature took place there, I handed over the letter from the government to the Communities requesting the opening of negotiations and they were formally opened some time later, in February 1979, although that was merely a formality, as they had been announced when the letter was delivered and had been very warmly welcomed. They were very much welcomed from a political perspective because the countries were very pleased that Spain was joining the group of economically developed countries, democratic countries, countries that had the same aspirations and the same ideals and that respected the same European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. So they were certainly welcomed. But soon the economic problems began to appear, and that’s really when we had to deal with numerous setbacks. The explosion in enthusiasm across Europe in 1977 had by 1979 turned into doubts and hesitation, notably among French farmers, who were very unhappy about the impact Spain’s accession would have on France’s agricultural development and position within the Communities. So the French Agriculture Minister, who was later to become Prime Minister and, eventually, President of the Republic — I won’t mention his name — said that Spain’s accession to the Communities would cause trouble for the common market. Of course, this upset us a great deal. The President of France himself, Giscard d’Estaing, who was to run for re-election in 1981 against

François Mitterrand, sought to bring the process to a halt by arguing that the accession of new members required a further deepening before any widening could take place, and that there could be no widening without a deepening of the European Communities. This was a good pretext for bringing Spain's negotiations to a standstill, but it was viewed very negatively by Spain and by the general public. There were other problems, too, in the relations with France, including its attitude towards harbouring ETA terrorists, who saw France as a friendly country and one that therefore offered them cover to some extent. This was extremely displeasing not only to the government, but to Spanish society as a whole. So that created an uncomfortable situation. I had many serious problems in my negotiations with the then Foreign Minister, François-Poncet. All of these things eventually changed and now, for example, we can say that relations with France are wonderful and that there is excellent collaboration between us, especially in the fight against terrorism. But at that time things were very uncomfortable and the negotiations therefore came to a halt. At the end of 1980 I left the government. I felt that there had been a great deal of progress on the economic and political fronts in Europe and, above all, on an aspect that was an excellent experience for me and one that was to have a profound effect on much of life, namely Spain's accession to the Council of Europe, which took place in 1977. We were very aware — and I was in no doubt about this — that Spain was going to take a while to join the European Communities. We didn't know when it would happen but we thought that it might take three, four, five years; in actual fact it took nine years, but at the time we had no idea that it would take so long. However, we felt, in the government, that we needed to take some kind of initiative that would speed up Spain's accession to a European institution, and Europe's political institution *par excellence* was the Council of Europe. It was the institution that was responsible for the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and that had the European Court of Human Rights, so it was the most reputable passport to democratic legitimacy. I contacted the Austrian Foreign Minister — a great jurist and expert on the Council of Europe — while he was visiting Spain and said to him: 'Tell me what steps Spain needs to take, what steps Spain can take to speed up its accession to the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe has been hugely critical of Spain. Since the 1962 Munich Congress it has monitored Spain very closely and strongly criticised the lack of democracy. So now we need that approval, that backing, and it would be very beneficial for Spain and for its entire political development if it were to join.' He told me that he would think about it and come up with a formula to help speed things up. So I spoke to him and he told me that the only solution that he could see, and that his compatriots, including his Chancellor, could see was for Spain's main political leaders to go to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe — which had been extremely hard on Spain — and, in the light of the new situation, to agree to include in the future constitution the principles on which the European Convention on Human Rights was founded. So that's what they did, and all of them, from Manuel Fraga, Felipe González, Santiago Carrillo to the nationalist Basque and Catalan leaders and, of course, the Union of the Democratic Centre, which was the ruling party, appeared before the Parliamentary Assembly. As a result of the subsequent negotiations that we held — in which I was involved very directly and over a long period of time — with parliamentarians from various countries and from Spain, who took a very positive approach, Spain eventually joined the Council of Europe on 24 November 1977. That was extremely exciting for me. Indeed, I think that the two most special moments for me were my trip to Brussels to request the opening of negotiations with the Communities and that moment in November 1977 when Spain joined the Council of Europe. It was all the more special because upon meeting me, before the signatures, the Secretary General of the Council reminded me of a paragraph from Don Quixote, in which the Ingenious Gentleman says to Sancho: 'Freedom, Sancho, is one of the most precious gifts that heaven has bestowed upon men [...]; for freedom, as for honour, life may and should be ventured.' And with those words Spain was welcomed into the Council of Europe. We could see on the large platform in front of the Council the Spanish flag flying alongside the flags of the other countries. We were the 20th country to join; today there are 56 countries but at that time we were the 20th member, and it was a very emotional moment. The very day we joined there was a meeting of the Committee of Ministers, of which I was a member, and two years later the rotating

chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers passed to Spain, and I thus became Chairman of the Committee in 1979. Spain has been a very active member of the Council of Europe and I couldn't have dreamt that years later I would return to the Council of Europe as Secretary General.

4. Experience as a member of parliament and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Could I ask you why you resigned as minister in 1980? Was it to follow your European vocation?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Yes, I certainly intended to pursue my European vocation when I resigned as minister but I had another responsibility alongside my European vocation: I have a very strong Basque vocation, and so when the President of the Government offered me a number of possible posts, I refused all of them until there came a time when he said to me: 'I want to ask you to do something that will not be easy, but I am pleading with you. I want you to become the first Government Delegate in the Basque Country.' I told him that, as the Deputy for the province of Guipúzcoa, I couldn't say no to becoming the Government Delegate in the Basque Country, and so I accepted his offer. It was probably the hardest job I've had from both a personal and a family perspective, because it was of course very difficult and we were inevitably isolated. At the same time I wanted to get closer to society and to the people, but that created serious security problems. Those two years establishing the figure of Government Delegate, who is the government's representative in an autonomous community, were very intense. At that time, the Basque Government was led by the Nationalist Party, and there was great hostility towards the central government, the national government, which was expressed through the Basque Government. Nevertheless, I put all of my energy into the two main concerns: rebuilding the economy of the Basque Country and the policy of autonomy. And the truth is that both objectives were achieved. I was there for two years; I didn't continue because I wanted to stand in the 1982 elections and that was incompatible with my role as Government Delegate. I ran in the elections as a representative of the Basque Country, of the province of Álava. One outcome of those elections was that the Socialist Party triumphed; the other was that the Union of the Democratic Centre practically disappeared. It was the party that had contributed so much to democracy, along with the other parties and the Spanish people, but in a very significant way through the actions of Adolfo Suárez. When I became a Member of the Congress of Deputies, the Spanish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was formed and the party, which was already on its last legs but still had the possibility of having a party member in the delegation, elected me. So after having contributed to Spain's accession to the Council of Europe, I found myself in the Parliamentary Assembly, and I was there from 1982 until the end of 1983 or the start of 1984. It was very interesting, my life was much calmer than it had been when I was a Government Delegate or minister, and I got to travel to many European countries as a member of the delegation. In late 1983 and early 1984 I really didn't have a clear idea of what I was going to do, but the UCD party had already practically fallen apart and there didn't seem to be much point staying there, so I asked if I could pursue my diplomatic career. However, various things happened and when the President of the Government, President González, learned that I wanted to work in that area, he called me on the phone and asked me to come and see him. He told me that there was going to be an election for the post of Secretary General of the Council of Europe. He said that although I was a member of the opposition, he wanted to offer me the government's backing in the race for the post. I thanked him for the gesture, but obviously I knew that I still had to win the election, because he had merely nominated me. I had a look at the field and saw that there were two candidates: one from Norway and one from Austria. Then I began to visit the European countries and, in fact, I visited all of the other 19 countries in the

Council of Europe. I spoke to the members of parliament and governments and then I ran in the election. I was very lucky, because one never knows what will happen, and the voters comprised all of the parliamentarians who were members of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, almost 300 in all. I was elected by an absolute majority at the first round and I thus became Secretary General of the Council of Europe, which enabled me to continue my European trajectory, in other words, the path I had been on since I was a child, then during my time at university, my travels abroad, my studies in England, France and Germany, my period as a minister and the request for the opening of negotiations, etc. I ended up in a role that made me enormously happy because the Council of Europe is not a very big organisation — it has around 1 000 officials — and it is located in a wonderful city, Strasbourg, one of the loveliest cities you can live in anywhere in the world, in my opinion, a city that is extremely enjoyable, beautiful ... and again I found myself in a European place, surrounded by a spirit of reconciliation. Indeed, if there is a city that symbolises reconciliation, it's Strasbourg. It has been at the centre of various wars between France and Germany and changed hands between the two several times: after Louis XIV it became part of Germany in 1870; in 1914, after the war, it became French again; Germany won it back in the war of 1939; and it became part of France — for good — in 1945. Consequently, I really appreciated those changes of hands and ownership but also that spirit of reconciliation, and I lived there for five years while carrying out an extremely rewarding role.

5. Experience as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Member of the European Parliament and European Commissioner

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What were your main expectations and plans for that role and how did you realise them?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] My main goal was to promote cooperation between European countries; that is what the Council of Europe does. The core idea is to defend human rights and freedoms, and it is the reason for its institutions, such as the Commission and the Court, although only the Court exists today as the Commission has disappeared; the Commission of Human Rights is today the European Court of Human Rights. So that is the main goal. However, its activities extend to numerous areas, covering all aspects of culture: images, audiovisual policy, music, poetry, theatre, art in all its forms, including one aspect that I made every effort to promote, which was cultural routes, especially the Camino de Santiago. For me, the Camino de Santiago was a key objective. On my visits to the capitals, I always included the Camino among the topics that I wanted to discuss with the head of government, foreign minister or members of parliament because, in my view, it is a representation of a pilgrim Europe, a travelling Europe, an intercultural Europe, a Europe of human relationships, of true relationships. Of course, there were other routes, too, such as the Silk Route, but in 1987 it was the Camino de Santiago that was declared the first European Cultural Route. We placed a stone in the middle of Plaza del Obradoiro in Santiago de Compostela, which reads, and will always read: 'Camino de Santiago, first European Cultural Route, Santiago de Compostela, 1987'. That was an extremely rewarding time for me because my entire European vocation could be reflected and developed in a space that was much calmer and much more peaceful than the European Communities. The European Communities are much more electric, much more vibrant and often much more stressful; the Council of Europe is calmer, things perhaps happen at a slower pace, but at the same time it's very stable in terms of its objectives and its intentions. It has greatly enhanced cooperation, not in terms of the economy or defence, but everywhere else; in other words, in the legal sphere, the political sphere and the social sphere. I think that its contributions have been enormously important. Today the institution has faded into the background because it has been replaced to some degree by the European Communities, which also have a cultural dimension: although culture is not strictly part of the treaty in so far as it is not a

Community policy, it can be a common policy. There are also 27 EU Member States today and so the Council of Europe's role has been partly eroded, although that was not the case back then because there were far fewer countries in the Communities, just ten until Spain and Portugal joined in 1986. So life in the Council of Europe was much more dynamic than it is today and I was very happy during that period.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] The topics you have referred to, on which you focused much of your efforts, seem to be similar to those in which you were involved later at the European Commission: images, audiovisual policy, culture, etc. Could you also tell us a bit about your responsibilities in the Commission and what you thought of that experience?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Firstly, when I finished my time in the Council of Europe I was elected as a Member of the European Parliament in 1989. In the European Parliament I was head of the delegation of the People's Party in 1989, and after becoming an MEP I was appointed Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, which was the area that most interested me. That committee dealt with everything related to the treaty, so I was able to participate in the Treaty of Maastricht and I was closely involved in all aspects of the major constitutional transformation that was required in Europe. At that stage we had the Single European Act. The Single Act had played a very important role, but we needed to take the leap towards the single currency. This issue arose again in 1989, primarily as a result of the fall of the wall. In 1990 the European Parliament was thus a hugely dynamic parliament because a whole series of changes were needed, and those changes were laid down in the Treaty of Maastricht. And that treaty was mainly prepared in Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs, whose members included a number of key figures. There I met one member who attended, took notes and spoke: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. I also met leading teachers whose work I had read and studied while a student, such as Maurice Duverger. In other words, it included some excellent people who to some extent had found refuge for their European interests in the European Parliament. I was lucky enough to be in close contact with them. Indeed, I was there until 1993, when the leader of the People's Party asked me to stand again in the national elections for the province of Álava. So I stood in the elections and after that I was elected head of the Joint Congress–Senate Committee on European Affairs, enabling me to pursue my interest in all things European. But I wasn't there for long because in 1993 (at the end of the year) the government and the opposition had to reach an agreement on the appointment of a Commissioner. Spain had two Commissioners: one was from the Socialist Party, the other had to be from the People's Party, and the Commissioner from the People's Party was leaving. I was appointed a Member of the European Commission, and so I left the European Parliament and the Joint Congress–Senate Committee to join an institution of which I had no previous knowledge, or at least no previous involvement. And indeed, I liked it, because it is after all the European executive and to some extent it was therefore the European government, and I had no hesitation in accepting that role in 1993. I was also extremely fortunate to have a magnificent President — I believe the best President the Commission has ever had — Jacques Delors. I was in his Commission for some time and then I continued into the next Commission with Jacques Santer. So I spent a long time in the European Commission and had different responsibilities: energy, transport, audiovisual issues, institutional topics; in other words, I dealt with a whole range of issues over that six-year period. I also had the good fortune to live in Brussels, to spend quite a bit of time in Luxembourg and once again to visit the city that is so dear to me, Strasbourg.

6. The significance and consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the impact on Spain of the enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You've talked about key moments in the process of European integration and you mentioned the year 1989. What was your experience of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, and how do you think they changed the European institutions and our continent in general?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Well, firstly I should tell you that in 1989, on 8 November 1989, I was in a hotel in Brussels during my time as an MEP, and I watched a TV programme in which Anne Sinclair interviewed President Mitterrand. She asked him: 'When do you think the Berlin Wall will fall?' And he replied: 'I think that my generation will see the fall of the Berlin Wall.' The wall fell the very next day. That just goes to show that a President of the Republic, who was President of the European Council at the time and a man of great wisdom and great experience, didn't even know 24 hours beforehand that the Berlin Wall was going to fall. As far as I'm concerned, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a hugely important event. I think that it was as important as the major revolutionary movements of the past, even more important than the historic events of 1789. It was a change that was highly anticipated for a such a long time, and it was another reconciliation — as you can see, reconciliation is a recurring theme with me — a reconciliation of countries that had been ripped from the heart of Europe because of their antidemocratic systems — against the wishes of their people — a reconciliation with the countries that shared their ideals, their history, their culture ... Eventually, in such an unexpected manner, but thanks to the efforts of so many millions of people who had the desire for this reconciliation, it came to pass. Then, of course, those countries didn't want to be separated from the rest of Europe any longer, so we had to look at how we could integrate them. And so we come to one of the arguments put forward nowadays in response to suggestions that these countries joined the European institutions too soon. I don't believe that that's true. I honestly don't think that it was too soon. I don't think that we could have left those countries on the fringes; we could have laid down more conditions, we could have left more time between the accessions rather than rushing to approve ten accessions and then another two, we could have allowed more time. I don't know. It's very hard to say. I was in the European Commission at the time; in 1989 I was in the European Parliament and in 1998 I was in the Commission. The Commission had to examine this, study it, analyse it, and it was very difficult. There were some countries that undoubtedly had to join: Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which was still one country at that time. Then there were two countries standing alone in the Mediterranean: Cyprus and Malta. We probably should have waited for reunification in Cyprus before approving its accession but it doesn't matter now. It was probably fine for those two islands to join. Then Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. And there were also a few countries in the north that had suffered from being in Russia's clutches and deprived of their freedom: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. So it was to some extent natural to allow them to join the European project, the democratic project, too. Then there were two countries that were perhaps more in doubt: two Balkan countries, Romania and Bulgaria. We could have waited a little longer to allow them to develop further, but in the end it was decided that they should join, although not at the same time as the other ten. But all of this means ... Was it too soon? It's possible. But was it necessary? I believe that it was. It was logical for them to join and to seek the reconciliation desired by their people, who had been isolated as a result of the communist hold over them. They were regaining their freedom.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How do you think that the accession of the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe affected Spain?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Well, as you can imagine, Spain is a country that received a great deal

of aid. It used that aid to develop its infrastructures and it now has wonderful roads, bridges; in short, an extraordinary level of economic development. Of course, the Spanish people played a crucial role, but alongside them, the Community aid totalled one billion — that's billion with a 'b' — pesetas per year, which allowed these improvements and this development to take shape. Spain has fulfilled all of its duties, with a Socialist Party, with a People's Party, in other words, Spanish society and the Spanish people have acted as they should have. I believe that that is a source of pride among Spaniards and we have achieved a very high level of development. So when other countries join, it's only natural that they should receive those Structural Funds or Cohesion Funds and use them for the development of their infrastructures, for modernisation; in short, for the welfare of their citizens, and as far as I'm concerned, it's only logical that that should happen.

7. The European Union's external relations: Russia, the United States and Latin America

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] During your time as minister, during the transition, you reignited the relationship with the Soviet Union. How do you think that the relationship between the European Union and Russia has evolved?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Additional efforts are made to cope with the difficulties surrounding a country that has taken some steps towards democracy but is not the same sort of democratic country as the Western countries, of course, or European countries in general. Therefore, it's always hard to fully normalise relations, but I think that Europe has to play an important role and it cannot abandon its relationship with Russia. We have to strengthen it, firstly because it is important to us from an economic perspective, from an industrial perspective, from an energy perspective above all — the relationship with Russia is vital from an energy perspective — but also, I believe, from a political perspective and from a human perspective. Europe has to ensure that it doesn't forget about Russia. I have great faith in our transatlantic relations, in Europe's relations with the United States, but I also have great faith in the relations between the Western world and Russia.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What role do you think the United States played in Spain's accession to the European Communities?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I think that it barely played any role at all. Spain had good relations with the United States. It had relations in General Franco's time: there were a number of defence agreements, security agreements and economic agreements in 1953 that were very positive not just for the Spanish regime but, I believe, for Spain as a whole. These weren't top-level political agreements because Spain wasn't a democratic country, but there were very close economic ties. Those agreements were refined over the years and renewed in 1963 and again in the 1970s. Then, crucially, an agreement was signed in January 1976, followed by updates to the defence, security, economic and cultural agreements. As regards its relationship with the European Communities, this was something that Latinists call a *res inter alios acta*, in other words it was something that didn't affect the United States. Consequently, it didn't intervene, nor did it put up any resistance to a rapprochement between us and the Communities; I think that it would be wrong to say that it did. Nor was there any special assistance for our subsequent rapprochement; it was an issue that Spain, Spaniards, the Spanish Government and the Spanish people controlled.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] To what extent did Spain act as a mediator in the relations between Latin America and the European Communities?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I believe that its role was extremely important. Spain's accession to the Communities highlighted the importance of the Americas. Summits were held with Latin

America. So how did they work? They were quite unbalanced. Were they effective? Sometimes barely, but at least the spotlight was being put on those countries, not just the continent as a whole but groups of countries, such as the members of the Andean Pact and, currently, the countries of Central America. Some trade agreements were concluded and free trade agreements, for example with the Central American countries, made very significant progress. Mercosur hasn't entirely fulfilled its potential and probably needs a body, a supranational body in my view, to play a key role similar to that of the European Commission. The European Commission's role is a crucial one, because it is the institution that defends the common interest; it's natural for national interests to be defended by governments, but an independent institution is essential, too. That doesn't exist within the various mechanisms of the bodies that aim to be supranational but are actually intergovernmental in the American context.

8. European institutional principles and procedures, economic and monetary union, the CFSP and the challenge of a Constitutional Treaty

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You have said that the greatest innovation of European integration was, in fact, supranationalism. Can you tell us a bit about that idea?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I think that it was. I believe that the great innovation of people such as Monnet, De Gasperi and Schuman was an institution that defended Europe's common interest. The states defend their national interests, but the fact that there was an institution that moved away from intergovernmental procedures towards a formula for the common interest was the key innovation, and it goes back as far as the European Coal and Steel Community. Remember that when they established the Commission, Europe's founding fathers didn't call it the Commission, they called it the High Authority. Why? Because it is a high authority; it is an authority that, despite being appointed by the governments, once created and established has a set of criteria, a set of principles and a set of powers that it imposes on the governments. Nevertheless, the name was a bit off-putting and when the European Coal and Steel Community became the European Economic Community it was not called the High Authority because the governments were afraid of the name and said: 'No, we're going to give it a small name, "commission"'. However, the Commission has played a crucial role in promoting European integration, although this has very much depended on who was in charge. In 1984 Europe seemed to be at a standstill until Jacques Delors came along, and through the European Commission, in a very short space of time — between 1983 and 1989 — he succeeded in getting 283 decisions adopted that paved the way for the single currency. It did not arrive until 1999, but it was thanks to that momentum. Why? Because the Commission can lay the foundations for the adoption of a range of decisions that are then imposed on the Member States.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I'd now like to ask you about two policies that you saw as fundamental: economic and monetary union and the common foreign and security policy. In that respect, what role was played by Spain's accession to NATO and these two policies in general?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Economic and monetary union is obviously something that is provided for in the treaty and, as far as I'm concerned, it was essential. What's happening, and I'm going to borrow a phrase used by Jacques Delors, is that we have developed one leg, but not the other; we have developed the monetary leg but not the economic leg to the same extent. Everyone is saying this now, but Jacques Delors was saying it back in 1984 and 1985: we have to develop the economic leg, in other words the governance of economic Europe. It's very important: the monetary leg alone is not sufficient because we will only be able to limp along. I therefore believe that the crisis, and all of the damage that it's causing, may have a silver lining, and that lining could be that we develop

economic governance through that economic leg. The foreign and security policy has hitherto been primarily a governmental activity, not a Community activity as such. There was a Commissioner in the Commission — undoubtedly a very capable and very intelligent Commissioner, Mrs Benita Ferrero — and there was an extremely talented High Representative, Solana, but it did not function properly because there was not a sufficiently developed common European policy. I trust that now, with the High Representative in both the Commission and the Council, it will be able to function as it should.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What are your thoughts on the co-decision procedure in the European institutions?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] The Constitution?

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Co-decision.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Ah, co-decision. Well, co-decision is crucial. I think that the most important new element in the Treaty of Lisbon is co-decision. It existed before but it was incomplete, and now it is practically complete. The Council has certain powers. To put it one way, it's like a type of senate: it is one chamber and Parliament is the other chamber. It's unacceptable for Parliament to be constantly dependent on the Council; it needs to be on a more or less equal footing. And that co-decision is what creates a truly European spirit, which Europeans understand. In my opinion, another important step was involving the national parliaments, in other words the idea of an early warning, which came from a Spaniard, Iñigo Méndez de Vigo. He is a leading Member of the European Parliament from Spain and I was lucky enough to have him as head of my office during my time in Strasbourg. Today he is one of the most exemplary Members of the European Parliament. The idea of an early warning system, which allows the national parliaments to raise question marks about a draft law, a directive from the Commission, is a very significant step forward, in my opinion.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Moving on to another issue, the Constitutional Treaty, what is your opinion of the Convention method, opening the debate to Europeans, and what do you think are the prospects of reopening the debate to bring the citizens closer to the institutions?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I think that, first and foremost, the Convention was a wise move. The method we had used previously, the method we had in Maastricht, then in Amsterdam and then in Nice was inadequate, and the states realised this. That's why there was a widespread desire in this regard. They didn't quite know how to express it, but eventually a successful formula was found: there was a Convention comprising representatives of the Commission, Parliament, the national parliaments and the heads of state or government, and that Convention laid the foundations for what would be the European Constitution. The European Constitution wasn't approved, for reasons that had nothing to do with Europe, but the reality is that the Treaty of Lisbon was extracted from it; although it lost the name, it retained most of the content. I would rather have the content than the name; well, I would like to have both — I had nothing against calling it a constitution — but in the end it had to go. However, I think that we are now seeing the blossoming of the idea sown in the Treaty of Lisbon, which is — as it says in a book presented yesterday in Madrid by the Dean of the Political Science Faculty of Complutense University, Francisco Aldecoa: *La Europe que viene* — that we need to confront the Europe of the future and move towards it. To do that, we need the citizens to be more closely involved, which is why I believe that the legislative initiative option is very sensible.

9. Fundamental values, the development of a common European identity and the development of pro-European sentiment in Spain

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] You have also said that it is not treaties that create a European spirit, rather the European spirit creates the treaties. What are the defining elements of that spirit and what, in your opinion, would be the elements of a common European identity?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I believe that it is what the people of Europe want and that we therefore need to involve them in the creation of Europe. In other words, it's not enough simply to have governments, it's not enough simply to have members of parliament: we need to involve the citizens, and that's where the media have a crucial role to play. In my opinion, we need to generate interest and we need to start generating interest in schools. I remember when I was in Brussels and in Strasbourg, but particularly in Strasbourg, there was a lot of emphasis on understanding and learning your neighbour's language. That idea of learning and finding out about your neighbour — and our neighbour today is every European — is essential. We need to involve the people in the idea of Europe. Europe can't be a rigid concept, an isolated, distant concept; it must be tangible. When they say 'because Europe this or that ...', that is not right: Europe is all of us, every European citizen, and we have to contribute to its formation, its development and its momentum.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What role can new information and communication technologies play in creating a more participatory democracy?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I believe that they're crucial. New technologies are essential in this age of globalisation. The internet and new technologies are vital in that respect and we need to move them closer to the citizens, and that is in fact what's happening today. It's very difficult for me to write anything on the internet, but it's very easy for young people and it's their ordinary language, so I think they are getting much closer. Nevertheless, we shouldn't forget the traditional methods either: e-books, internet books and networked books are all very well, but I also want to have a hard copy of a book that I can underline, though that's probably only because I'm older, because I'm old. I think that it's very important for young people to master these types of new technologies, but they shouldn't forget about the old methods. And in this regard, we should avoid any split, ensuring respect for the new elements without forgetting about tradition.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What, in your opinion, are the fundamental European values: perhaps solidarity, responsibility?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I think that the main one is respect for the individual. The individual is the great discovery; in other words, that is where the essence lies. We need to ensure respect for human dignity, for human values: we can't lose our European values. And I believe that those European values — which are not confined to Europe — cannot be held dear and seen as values purely for Europe. They are universal values, human values, and those human values are the ones that should guide our lives when dealing with human beings.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] How can we avoid what you have described as 'mass universalisation that can be caused by globalisation'?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I think that that means respecting your fellow man wherever you are. I think that when it comes to universal institutions, which are crucial at the moment, we can no longer talk solely about European law; we have to talk about global law. For example, there should be such institutions within the framework of the United Nations, which needs to improve its mechanisms. In my view, the United Nations has become stagnant and outdated; it needs to be

modernised. The major institutions like that must have as their primary goal respect for the individual, and they have to ensure that their institutions move closer to the citizens.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Ortega y Gasset referred to Europe as a great European house. How, in your opinion, has pro-European sentiment evolved in Spain over the years?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I think that at the moment it is a bit like breathing: it used to be that we didn't even need to think about European matters. All of us who live in Europe and who share its ideals, its aspirations and its values are Europeans. In the past, people used to say: 'Who is pro-Europe and who is anti-Europe?' There is still that divide. There are some people who complain about Europe now, who are disappointed in Europe, but that's probably because they don't know enough about it, because we haven't explained it properly. Europe is all of us.

10. Role as President of the Institute for European Studies at San Pablo-CEU University

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Back to the present day and a more personal matter. Could you tell us about the work carried out by the Institute for European Studies at San Pablo-CEU University?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Yes, I believe that its work is very important. It has developed very successful courses in all of the areas relating to Community law: we have Master's degrees in International Relations, in European Studies, in Community Law and we also have joint doctorates with the José Ortega y Gasset Foundation. European issues permeate the university as a whole: we have close relations with the professors, with European constitutional experts ... In short, Europe is to some extent at the heart of the university's activities.

11. Spain's contribution to the process of European integration and the global role and challenges of Europe today

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] I now come to one of my last questions: in your opinion, what overall role should Europe play in relation to today's challenges, such as immigration, relations with third countries, etc.?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I believe that Europe must play a leading role in European issues, which are also universal issues. It has to find solutions to the major problems facing humanity, including climate change, which is a hugely important topic, and our position in Copenhagen was completely inadequate. I am also thinking of immigration issues, and in this regard we should lay down guidelines within a global legal framework that guarantees respect for human dignity. We also need to find solutions to the problems of the continents that are deprived of a decent standard of living, such as Africa; we need to ensure that the focus is on those who are in need and those who are neglected. We can't forget that there is a continent that is completely on the margins when it comes to human welfare, and that is a responsibility. Europe has to be aware of the idea of universality. In other words, Europe is differentiation, because it has specific characteristics of its own, Europe is humanity, it is respect for individual rights and it is universality: that means that we have to be open to the rest of the world and be a continent that welcomes people rather than excluding them.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] What, in your opinion, has been Spain's most important contribution to European integration?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] In my opinion, European integration has taken place throughout its history; in other words, we can't just think about what is happening now. The notions of universality, humanity and diversity had already been formed by the theologians of the University of Salamanca who in the 15th and 16th centuries laid the framework for what were the major schools of humanism. Consequently, that is when the first seeds of what the European institutions represent now were sown. I think that today's pro-Europe activities can be traced back to past generations, such as the Generation of '98, which was a generation that spent a great deal of time analysing European issues, and to an even greater extent, the Generation of '14, the generation of Gregorio Marañón, of Ortega y Gasset, of Pérez de Ayala. Then the Generation of '27 once again focused on European matters. And today's generations have Erasmus, for example, which perfectly illustrates the meaning of intercommunication between European students. I therefore believe that Spain can and must play a key role in that regard.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] To conclude, I would like to refer to a quotation that you took from Doctor Laguna's work, *Discourse on Europe*, which states that 'Europe is an unfinished work, driven by constant dissatisfaction'. What, in your opinion, are the main steps that we should take now to cope with the challenges of that Europe, which must always prevail?

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] I believe that it is unfinished because Europe is constantly being created. However, in my view, what we have to do is ensure that we do not forget about European values: there are economic ideas, technological ideas and so on, but European values — freedom, solidarity — are the most important values, and we must help to develop them, promote them and improve them. We must never rest if someone else is cut off from the civilised world, not just within Europe, but outside it, too. That is Europe's duty and its primary goal; it must put an end to the global apartheid of peoples, races and civilisations who at this moment in time do not have a decent life, a life that encompasses respect for the individual. That is our primary goal and until we achieve it Europe will always remain unfinished.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] Thank you very much for your contribution.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Thank you.

[Cristina Blanco Sío-López] And for giving us such an insight into the notion of reconciliation and European values. Thank you very much.

[Marcelino Oreja Aguirre] Thank you.