

Foreword

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In remembrance of Pere Duran i Farell

As often occurs with the Club of Rome, Pere Duran was a figure never to be repeated, as was the Club's promoter, Aurelio Peccei.

This year, in which the Spanish Chapter of the Club of Rome reaches its 25th anniversary, is a good moment to recall its most significant figures. In the first place there is Ricardo Díez Hochleitner, the first Spanish member of the Club and the promoter of the Spanish Chapter and its Chairman for many years until he was appointed Chairman of the Club itself in 1990. This appointment led the Spanish Chapter to what proved to be an excellent decision, that of designating Pere Duran to preside over it.

Among the characteristics that distinguish Pere Duran, I want to highlight three which seem to me to portray him clearly. He believed in the creative capacity of exceptional, even extreme, situations; this was one reason for his repeated journeys into the world's deserts. Once he told me, "in the desert there's no room for mediocrity, either you're inspired or you die." "Invent, invent!" was a very frequent expression of his.

Equally deep-rooted was his belief in freedom, which can be no other than responsible freedom. His business management, in so many ways original and even surprising, was based on the need to convince, because nothing solid could be built without the freedom of the 'other'.

Finally, Pere Duran was a businessman with ambitions of truly international scope. Ample proof of his quality as an entrepreneur are the many testimonials of leaders in the energy field about how he foresaw the strategic importance of natural gas and introduced it into Spain. To do so he had to negotiate constantly with state leaders in various continents, and in particular in North Africa and South America. His astute manner of winning over these often distrustful leaders was to demonstrate with unquestionable facts that his company came to their country to establish itself there, not as a swallow that would be here today and gone tomorrow.

I had the opportunity of dealing with Pere Duran in various settings, although our closest relationship was framed for many years within the Spanish Chapter of the Club of Rome, of whose Board of Directors we were members,

and of which he later became Chairman and I finally had the honour of succeeding him. But we also collaborated for several years in the Prospects Seminar of the CESEDEN and later in the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.

It is well known that in his final years his business duties prevented him from attending as he would have liked to areas of civil society which he so appreciated: the Board of Trustees of the Technical University of Catalonia, the Citizens' Commission of Support for the New Botanical Garden of Barcelona, the Patronage Council of the Gran Teatre del Liceu and several more. In 1996 I was honoured to be one of the speakers at the award ceremony of the Ildefons Cerdà Medal of the Barcelona Civil Engineers' Association, and I believe I succeeded in underlining Pere Duran's qualities as an ambassador of Spain arising from his roots in Catalan society. Many others have evoked this widely-shared view.

In December 1995 we participated together in the opening of the International Congress 'Technology, Sustainable Development and Imbalance,' which he had supported since the beginning of the project through UPC and in close collaboration with the Terrassa authorities. This is one more reason why it seems so proper for the magazine *Sostenible?* to dedicate an issue to his memory. This congress was, incidentally, a landmark for the crystallisation of UPC's UNESCO Chair, which Professor Josep Xercavins succeeded in setting up with support from UNESCO and the Club of Rome in the persons of Federico Mayor and Mihajlo D. Mesarovic. *Sostenible?*, the publication which arose from the congress and appeared in circulation in 1997, is well worth re-reading.

For our part, I have proposed to the Board of Directors of the Chapter that we dedicate one of the working sessions of the international meeting of the 25th anniversary to recalling the work of Pere Duran. This initiative has been enthusiastically received by both Ricardo Díez Hochleitner, the Chairman of Honour of the Club of Rome, and Isidro Fainé, who is solidly filling the space left by Pere, which could not remain empty.

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