

Autor. Jordi Pujol  
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### **Some things it is time to think about**

Thirty years ago I gave a speech in this very room, which, although it had a rather non-committal title (The Present Situation), was in fact a call for political commitment, a commitment to serve Catalonia through politics.

For very many people who had been working to build our country the time had come to engage in politics. The time had come when one way of building our country was also (particularly so at that moment) to engage in politics.

That call I made in January 1975 had an impact. There had been calls to become involved in politics (politics against the dictatorship and in defence of democracy and of Catalan institutions and identity) since 1939. But in January 1975 all this took on particular significance and urgency.

Perhaps you will now understand why, thirty years later, I wanted to come back to this same room in ESADE. First of all, to take stock. And on balance the results are good, in terms both of society and of politics, of the country in general.

Some say (and I am amongst them) that not all our expectations have been fulfilled. In some respects we are disappointed. I am myself. And everyone (starting with me, since I was president for 23 years), should analyse what it was that we did not do well enough. But in the end, when all is said and done, in general terms we can congratulate ourselves on the outcome. It is good that we are able to do so, since it raises our self-esteem and boosts our confidence in our ability to do things together.

I have spoken of stock-taking in general terms and very briefly, but it is true that one day I will have to take stock of those thirty years from three points of view: personal, that of CDC and that of the country. And I will. But that is not what I want to talk about today; rather, I want to talk about the present and the future.

Perhaps the logical order would be the opposite of what I am doing: first a very thorough analysis of what has happened—this is what I said thirty years ago, this what I have done and what we have done since then, this is how should it be assessed: that is, to come and take stock—and then make proposals for the future. But I have realised that I have my face turned more to the future than to the past. And I am more concerned with the mood of the country, with people's attitudes, than I am with strictly political or economic issues. All in all it makes me think that what I am about to say will not seem very attractive. Not very exciting, not very relevant to the present.

But what attracts attention today? Unfortunately, the Carmel affair. Or the issue of Catalan finance. Or ETA's latest bomb. Or the trip to Europe that President Bush is about to make. So much so that a friend of mine advised me not to give this speech—"What you will tell them won't interest them now"—and it is likely it will not arouse much interest. Nor make any headlines. "You'll disappoint them". But what I have to say today is not about immediate objectives. All being well what I propose today will acquire relevance with the passage of time. Therefore, now is just as good, or bad, a moment to say it as six months from now. At all events, I want to talk to you about the present and the future, but not in terms of the immediate future.

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I cannot deny that I am concerned about the present political situation in Catalonia. I regard it as confused. Contradictory and too dominated by

theatricalism. Although it is also true that something good could come out of it. As a result as it were of a cushion shot, as a result of a sort of rebound, there is a possibility, albeit clouded with uncertainty—deeply clouded with uncertainty—of taking our self-government a stage further. But I am not speaking now about the new Statute, nor about specifically political issues. If thirty years ago in this room I announced that I personally intended to put all my efforts into action in the field of politics, I will now repeat what I said some months ago: although I have not disappeared from the political scene, I have ceased to be a politician of the first order, and perhaps even of the second.

Naturally I am not giving this speech to tell you that. I am giving it to say that there are things that now need to be done, and that need to be said, and that have to be thought about. Things that are not strictly political, that are not spectacular, that attract little attention, things that do not have immediate effects (things that reside more in the area of ideas, values and attitudes), but which in the end do have important consequences for politics, for the economy and above all for society and the country as a whole, such that if we ignore them the country will grind to a halt. The country will grind to a halt, and lose confidence. So, a contribution that I can perhaps make is to say these things and even to do some of them.

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Today's Catalonia is the outcome of (apart from many centuries of history), the whole process of Catalanism, of the Civil War and its consequences, of the long and painful period of dictatorship, but also of the efforts to survive that Catalonia made in every way. Of the evolution of ideas and also of the social, demographic and economic realities of the last 70–80 years. Of the whole process—not just in Catalonia but also in Spain as a whole—of the restoration of democracy, of the re-establishment of the Generalitat, of more than 23 years of nationalist government, of the profound changes that have taken place in recent years in Catalonia and indeed in the whole of Europe.

After all this, Catalonia is going through a crucial moment. It is in a different political situation. Different in Catalonia itself, but also in Spain, and in the setting of a generally problematic Europe. Catalonia lives subject to the revolutionary economic and technological effects of globalisation. It is facing an immense challenge that could greatly affect its social model and, even more, its identity as a country: namely, immigration. It is immersed in changing ideas and sensibilities. All in all, this is an extremely decisive and complex moment. Probably full of promise, but also full of risks, because we are a small country, with insufficient political power, and hence with little protection. For example, our ability to act effectively to deal with the immigration issue is greatly hampered. Or our ability to avoid the financial plundering to which we have been subjected. However, in spite of all this, the whole of the 20th century, and the 19th too, are testimony to exceptional Catalan creativity and success. Here in Catalonia there is a source of creativity and a consistency that has made important, cultural, economic and social development possible, and which, above and beyond this, has made possible a positive national paradigm. In fact, we are a successful country. We would not have the political problems we do, nor would we be so closely observed, nor would we receive so much immigration if, as an economy and as a society, we were a failure.

It would be rash to try to hide from ourselves the risks we are running. But it would not make sense to ignore the other side of the coin. That is, the self-esteem to which we have a right and hence our confidence and ambition. But let us not put the emphasis on this. All in all, however, everything could turn out well as long as the country has good ideas, solid values and positive, dynamic attitudes.

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But the fact of the matter is that to respond in this way we have to update our intellectual instruments and our way of experiencing and feeling about our

society and country. Because the way of thinking that is currently dominant in Catalonia is not ideal if this response is to be forthcoming.

Amongst other reasons, because it does not make Catalonia the priority, because it is not the result of our own, original efforts and because it is the outcome of a decaffeinated concept of country and of society. And indeed of the individual.

The current dominant and politically correct way of thinking will not save us. Nor protect us. Nor prevent us from grinding to a halt.

The challenges Catalonia has to face, like any country immersed in economic globalisation, waves of migration and breath-taking developments in every area of technology, will not find our society equipped with the values and attitudes it needs, because it is a society that has been hijacked by the theatrical strategies that impose a social duty not to offend anyone while continuing to believe in the validity of utopias.

And that is the source of the widespread insincerity to be found in our political life above all, but also in the media, and even at times in academic circles. People say things and make assertions they do not believe in. Or they believe the opposite of what they say or do.

This occurs in relation to issues that are vital to our future: in education, immigration, family policy, the environment, with regard to values in general, with regard to solidarity, energy policy and even housing, etc. There is too much fiction in political discourse and action. And too many conditioning circumstances, too many pressures, for people to say what they think.

What I have just said might seem exaggerated to some. I would be delighted if my speech succeeded in shocking someone. Some of them. Many of them. And

what would be even better would be for them to question themselves. I fear this will not happen. But the time will come when we have to do it, because otherwise we will be contributing to our collective failure.

I think an example will make my meaning clear. An important politician came up to me and said in private, "If we don't put the brakes on the ecological movement, the country will come to a standstill" (more precisely, he said "they are bringing the country to a standstill"). But the fact is that this politician and his allies have been prompting all sorts of ecological protests and platforms against just about everything: roads, high-voltage lines, wind farms, dumps, irrigation projects, ski resorts, industrial estates or any little factory, etc. And even now they are prompting them. In public they do not say what they say in private. Nor do they act in consequence.

This is par for the course. It happens all the time. With people that would astonish you. And that is what we have to fight.

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We have to work decisively towards a way of thinking independent of the acquiescent parroting that is the rule. A way of thinking that is fearless. And for many people who do not now dare to defend it to be capable of doing so and acting in consequence.

There has to be political thought. Political in the broad sense of society. And hence, also economic, historical, cultural, social, etc. But it all comes down to politics.

It should be said that this is so because any assertion that is not utterly politically correct will bring down instant, fulminating rebuke. I have experienced this many times. For example, every time I said that the public authorities and

the teachers have important responsibilities for the education of children and young people, but that the chief responsibility lies with the parents, I was the object of severe criticism from politicians, the media and sometimes the unions. So, when a short time ago I wanted once again to remind parents of their responsibilities I did so by literally quoting a phrase from Saramago. Since Saramago, apart from being a Nobel laureate, is very left wing and has been a Stalinist Communist, nobody said boo. I have had to use this technique many times when speaking about education, the environment, demographic policies, family policy, etc.

It is a bad sign for me, and for society, that this stratagem is necessary. It means that the single, politically-correct way of thinking is too suffocating. Experience has shown me that it can even suffocate the action of the government.

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There are many specific issues to apply such thought to. Some practical issues and some more theoretical ones (which in the long term might have implacable effects).

Amongst the more theoretical issues I would like to devote a few words to that of individual and collective rights.

Some of our current political problems, in Spain and in Europe, are due in part to the dominance of a political and social doctrine that stresses individual rights and pays little attention to collective ones. And in general pays little heed to responsibilities. This is so in a great deal of European thought, and particularly so in Catalonia. The concept of disengagement comes hand in hand with this individualism. Disengagement means that individuals do not relate to anything other than themselves, to their personal fulfilment, and even then in terms of the immediate future. The sense of the common good and collective responsibility

are greatly weakened and concern for the future disappears. And furthermore there is a tendency to suppress what there is, or might be, between the State and the individual. The individual becomes merely the subject of legal rights and responsibilities, and a receiver of services, disconnected from the context of collective cultural, social and human relations.

Now politics ceases to be at the service of the common good and becomes a technique for providing services. The politician becomes a vendor of services and the citizen a mere consumer of them.

I have said that concern for the future disappears. In a manifesto directed to the German people in 1992, Helmut Schmidt and a number of intellectuals and other politicians accused them of what they called "emptying the future". The people were emptying the future. It was nothing to do with them. The authors said, "The negation of future interests has become a threat to existence". That is happening here too.

All this leads us to consider another concept that is vital for us, namely that of identity. It was with every justification that a Catalan writer recently contrasted the concept of citizenship based on equality of rights and responsibilities as the only basis for coexistence, on the one hand, with that of identity based more on a sense of community and the will to build a common heritage. Naturally identity cannot dispense with the interplay of rights and responsibilities, but he adds the bond of a feeling of collective loyalty, of human solidarity that gives it more weight and substance than it has when all there is citizenship, in which while rights are claimed very forcefully, there is less enthusiasm to meet responsibilities. Because citizenship alone is weaker without that underlying basis of loyalty and solidarity I mentioned.

By the way, it is a shame the European Constitution was drawn up at a time when men like Helmut Kohl and Jacques Delors do not have the influence they

had a few years ago. They would have been able to counterbalance the statist and individualist tendencies that are now dominant. Take for example what former chancellor Kohl said the other day: "The EU is not a mere association of citizens but an association of countries that respect all identities". And he was claiming the right for them to be, as well as Germans and Europeans, Bavarians.

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But in a country like ours, this factor (cohesiveness, the feeling of belonging, the will for there to be a real community) must be constantly reinforced. And a prime fount of cohesiveness, at the same time as being a way of responding to the interplay of rights and responsibilities that befits a just society, is what we call the Welfare State, which has been a policy vigorously pursued since the transition to democracy and in Catalonia particularly since the restoration of the Generalitat de Catalunya. This is an issue that calls for a frank debate throughout Europe, but which in Catalonia necessarily has special characteristics.

The Welfare State is not merely a set of services and measures at the service of the citizens, at the service of their health, their education, their housing, or to protect them against old age or disability, or to guarantee quality of education. It is all this, but it is also a whole concept of society. It is even a whole concept of the individual. In reality the Welfare State boils down to applying certain humanist values to the organisation of society (and hence also of the economy), but in Catalonia it also responds to the need to bring cohesion to a diverse country that is subject to great pressures.

Now, all this poses problems of sustainability. First, sustainability from the economic point of view. This is the issue behind the social reforms that are now the subject of so much discussion in Europe, particularly the social reforms being carried out in Germany. Personally I feel that in Spain and Catalonia there

is more margin to maintain and even improve the Welfare State than there is in other European countries. Perhaps my inveterate tendency to be anti-Malthusian helps to support this feeling, and in our case believing that for some time we will continue to experience faster growth than the European average. But it is also supported, without a doubt, by our need to continue to create social cohesion.

However, there is also a problem of sustainability from the point of view of personal and civic values. In principle the Welfare State ought to improve, not just the condition of people in society, but also their condition as citizens. This is not a minor issue. It is a question, as the Scandinavians say, of not allowing the Welfare State to blunt people's sense of responsibility. And the society we have to build from now on is just the opposite of that; one of its prime aims must be to stimulate people's sense of responsibility. Now we must progress towards what they call the responsible society.

And as we are speaking of the Welfare State it is a good idea to recall something that is already accepted in many European countries, though still not here: that without solid families the Welfare State will go into crisis, and the country's general progress will be adversely affected. So there are those who say, as I do, that to prioritise a good family policy is to pursue a progressive policy and that not to do so is reactionary, that is, it runs counter to general progress and social cohesion. It seems we want to hide the family because it does not fit in with the new times. But the family is the driving force behind the construction of society. The family is society's main infrastructure. One of Catalonia's policy aims now must be to seek improvements in Spanish legislation—which has more power in this area than Catalan law—and in our own legislation, but above all an improvement in the way Catalonia is financed, in order to enable us to greatly strengthen family support policies in Catalonia.

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Everything to do with education and training also forms part of a country's backbone and that is so mainly because they are the foremost tools for personal development; it is very much worth bearing in mind that the opportunity for personal development, and that of the family, is an essential ingredient of cohesion and the collective spirit as well as being a fundamental factor for a country's general progress. That is why I mention it; and also because education is one of the areas in which Catalonia has been most disturbed by politically correct thought and because it is here that the 'double speak' I mentioned before is most frequently employed. For a time, modernity meant experimenting in the field of education as a way of brushing aside the excessive rigidity that had been the hallmark of the education system during the period of dictatorship. This reaction has led us to confuse method with content. Discipline and the dynamics of effort were thrown out of the window. Educational experimentation has increased creativity and initiative but it has distanced us from values which are essential for getting ahead with any sort of project, not now an educational one, but one for life; values such as endeavour, hierarchy, responsibility. All this has had a negative effect on education and, by extension, on the whole of society. For years no one, or almost no one, has dared to challenge the sometimes head-on, sometimes sarcastic, but always very strong criticism that any divergence from the dominant pedagogic philosophy has unleashed.

All this has helped to cause a disorientation that has seriously prejudiced not only the education of generations of young people but also the integrity of the collective mentality.

There are things in our education policy that must be improved. But let us not fall into the easy trap of just asking for more money. More money is necessary but the PISA report itself states that, considering the amount of money Spain

devotes to education, the results should be better. Consequently, there is something else that is not working properly, almost certainly some Laws, which in all honesty it should be said that *Convergència i Unió* also voted for, and the kind of mind set I have just mentioned (shyness with respect to endeavour and commitment, the denial of hierarchy and so forth).

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I have already briefly mentioned the environment. It is one of the main issues in our society. Concern about the environment is the result of a healthy and necessary reaction to the level of abuse and ignorance our society has managed to achieve. In order to understand the point to which the ecologists' reaction was a necessary one we only have to recall the ecological and human disasters there were in the former communist countries, where the unbridled urge to produce, unfettered by technical stipulations and un beholden to public opinion or the exercise of democracy, led to catastrophic situations. We need not, however, go so far afield. We know that here too the situation has sometimes been alarming. The mark has been overstepped by far and in response to this overstepping of the mark a forceful ecological response was called for. But, over the years, this movement has produced an ideology that is extremely radical and one that has come up with positions that are neither rational nor coherent, positions that have become negative in many ways and many cases. As that politician said, with the insincerity I mentioned before, they are dangerously hampering the country. But these excesses are applauded and encouraged by the political parties and by many media with a passion and force that are truly impressive. And, as I mentioned before, often with great insincerity and with the will to twist things. As a consequence of all this it is necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff within the ecological movement, that is to say, to promote an ecological policy that is effective and rational but not fundamentalist and not one that can be used as a weapon for running down the political parties. (And I am pleased to be able to say that say this knowing that

my government adhered amply to the terms set down by the EU with regard to waste water treatment and was the first government in the whole of Spain to create a Ministry of the Environment.)

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In a summary such as this of the main themes to bear in mind in the necessary reconsideration of our ideas about what Catalonia is as a country, it is absolutely necessary to talk about immigration. And for two main reasons.

Firstly, because it represents an extraordinary challenge to our identity, our cohesion and our sense of living together side by side. Immigration is also the consequence of two objective facts of great importance, namely: the demographic, economic and developmental imbalance there is in the world; and the economic needs of Catalonia and, in general, the whole of Europe. It is a matter of great importance; even large countries with statehood and all manner of resources find it difficult to deal with it efficaciously.

What is to be done? With regard to population and immigration Catalonia has always worked along the lines of integration and identity (identity in terms not only of the past but as a project for the future) and in terms of rights and responsibilities. And always with political proposals for the development of the countries from which immigration emanates. Furthermore, we have emphasised the value of cohesion, ways of living together harmoniously, and we have promoted people and the family, that is to say, the most human aspect of the matter.

We must continue to work along these lines bearing in mind that new situations continue to arise: new sources of immigration, and above all, social alarm that is ever more pronounced, in addition to concepts that might represent a risk for Catalonia as a people and as a nation such as multiculturalism, radical

relativism and so forth. And within all this, and this is the second of the reasons I mentioned, a very worrying horizon, filtered through politically correct thought, opens up to reveal a viewpoint that is very much inclined to dismiss the collective point of view and with a high degree of what I have called double-speak with all its capacity for political and media pressure.

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Underlying a large part of what I am decrying is an eager anti-system attitude that is nourished by a variety of sensibilities and currents of thought. An anti-system attitude may be all well and good but only if it is capable of formulating a proposal.

But the bad thing is also that, either because of fear or the desire to please people, we do not know exactly whom, these anti-system attitudes receive support from unlikely quarters. A case in point is the squatter movement, which for a long time has received support from people occupying positions of high political responsibility.

There are many things that can be defended in the criticism of the system but until now the movement has not managed to progress beyond transgression without proposal and, far from being efficacious, this makes it more of a distortion, not so much a motor as a brake.

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All the things I have mentioned, the ethic of disengagement, timidity and fear when confronted by large problems, the idea that it is acceptable always to take the line of least resistance, insincerity, lack of concern for the future, dejection in the face of major challenges—all this has led to a crisis in the sense of responsibility, both personal responsibility and collective responsibility. There is

a deep crisis in the concept of the common good. There is, as I said, a great difficulty in broaching matters of great importance for the future. Only the present matters. There is a bloated demand for rights and a denial, a ducking of responsibilities; that is to say, an avoidance of contributing to the common good. Such attitudes imperil the Welfare State, the future awaiting the new generations and Europe's role in the world because it should be said that many of the problems I have mentioned are by no means restricted to Catalonia but are applicable to many European countries, and sometimes more so than here at home.

What is necessary, therefore, is education for responsibility. The ethic of responsibility must be strengthened and the ethic of disengagement must be combated; that is to say, the ethic whereby the individual feels no bonds with anybody or anything and feels no responsibility towards anybody or anything else other than the self.

A society with an enfeebled sense of the common good cannot prosper. Without a feeling for the common good a society is created that is constantly protesting, constantly dissatisfied even when it has achieved a considerable level of well-being with more material resources and a better social position than ever before. Such things have very positive qualities but without a feeling for the common good neither the people nor society itself manage to take full advantage of them.

So, if there is an aim worth reaching for, it is this one: the responsible society. We talk about the welfare state. That is all well and good. We talk about a progressive society and that too is a fine thing. The leisure society. That can be a good thing too depending on how it is organised. The opulent society likewise. But what we really need is a responsible society. One of the most primary aims of our society must be education for responsibility with all its consequences,

from the school to the media, from the academic to the political worlds. And we are not doing it.

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It is not necessary for me to stress the role civil society must play in all this.

It is quite usual to say that Catalonia has a consolidated civil society. And that is the case. What is more, Catalan civil society has always been considered as playing an especially important role as a consequence of the country's deficit in political power. It is precisely because of this that Catalonia must have a very clear idea about its project as a country, its cohesion, its leadership, its ambitions. It is especially because of this that it must be an example, a model to follow and a motor for what I have called the responsible society.

There is something that civil society must bear in mind and that is the danger it sometimes faces of defending private or sectorial interests rather than the general interest. This is the logical consequence of its diversity but it is precisely because of this that I said a moment ago that an effort must be made to define its project for the country and for society and to consolidate its cohesion and leadership.

And there is something else that must be borne in mind, namely that depending on the kind of decisions that must be taken or the kind of projects that are to be launched, it is not civil society that can make the decision. Civil society often cannot, for example, decide between opposing interests. Such decisions must be made within the organised political system. And perhaps now is the moment for me to say that while I personally am retiring from politics that does not mean that I have in any way ceased to believe that all the people we need, and the very best of them, should devote themselves to politics.

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Another thing we all have to work to preserve is the country's morale. Perhaps my words so far have done nothing to raise the country's morale. On the contrary, perhaps.

And I was conscious of the risk I was running in this respect. But you will understand that to speak of these matters in such terms, which will bring me more criticism than acclamation, is only possible when the need for it is evident. And the need is evident. Because a great challenge is facing us. It is here now. It is possible if one has a fighting spirit (which I have) and if one believes that it is really possible to create a way of thinking and a moral attitude that will enable us to make real progress (which I believe). In short, if one believes in the country (which I do).

In his last speeches as President of the German Federal Republic Johannes Rau stressed that one of the problems now facing his country is that of *Stimmung*, mood or morale, which in his view is not good enough. A good morale is necessary if a country is to make progress.

For a great many years Catalan morale in general was good. But now we have to ask ourselves whether this is still so or not.

First of all, I feel that there is now a hint of insecurity, self-doubt and concern. In some sectors the new political situation may have contributed to this. But surely there are other factors at work. There is a certain confusion (even the question of the reform of the Statute has been posed in confused terms). There is disappointment about the way the European issue has played out, regarding which we had held out more hope. The later Aznar years brought a feeling of depression, and while the advent of Zapatero has for the moment created a greater optimism, it has above all brought puzzlement. And the intellectual and

value message that reaches us neither urges us forward nor points us in the right direction. Furthermore, as I was saying, all this fits in with a European mood that is not very stimulating either.

Let me draw your attention to the study published a few days ago by the Prefects of all the French provinces about the attitudes of the French people. It is a devastating report, so much so that I can scarcely believe it. It says literally, “*les français ne croient plus en rien*”, and that they are dominated by fear, apathy and “*la sinistrose*”, a difficult word to translate but one which has a dire ring to it. I have to say—and I do know France a bit—that I cannot believe that things are so bad no matter what all those Prefects might say. But it is clear that the country’s morale is not good.

Let me say that my conclusion is that we are better off in Catalonia, plainly better off, in this respect, than France or Germany. But at all events our mood—*Stimmung* or morale—requires our attention. Above all three things are needed. First, to find satisfaction in what we are. Believe in what we are, and in what we can be, and in what we can do. The second is to use what we have well, and value it. The third is to improve what we have.

In Vallès i Pujals wrote a very simple but educational book entitled *Elogi de Catalunya*. It helped me to love my country and to become a Catalanist, and to put myself at its service. Now another one needs to be written, with greater depth and rigour.

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It could be called *Elogi de Catalunya*, or *Ambició de Catalunya*. Because although I am sure that some will censure the critical tone of my speech, you will not be surprised when I tell you that I feel pleased to be Catalan, that I am experienced in using what we have (and I know we have more than a little) and

that I know it can be improved, and hence I believe that we *will* make progress, through the new Statute, through improved financing or through good political and economic progress for Catalonia, the whole of Spain and the whole of Europe. But above all through good motivation, a good project and a very responsible Catalan society. The responsible society I mentioned earlier.

Such a book—*Elogi de Catalunya*, or *Ambició de Catalunya*—could also have an other title: *Missatge de Catalunya*, or “Catalonia’s Message”.

In aspects such as the mutual respect among its citizens, or the ability to combine identity with internationalism, or quality of life, or response to the waves of immigration we have always received, can Catalonia offer itself as an example? I believe so.

Catalanism (or perhaps simply Catalonia) has always felt the need to formulate and transmit a message that transcends itself. It has always wanted to make its voice, its message, heard elsewhere. It has addressed itself to Spain, to Europe, or to the world. Or to history.

This can be almost poignant in view of how things have sometimes turned out. And some might say ridiculous. But it is a good thing for us to continue this tradition for at least three reasons. Firstly because it is not true that our message has no external relevance. Secondly, having to draw up and disseminate a message for external use obliges us to make an effort to achieve quality. Thirdly, because such effort gives us life and meaning, and gives us identity.

What message can Catalonia draw up and propagate at this time? There is a danger of its being a message inspired by the mood that is now dominant in Catalonia, so evidently politically and intellectually correct.

But such a message would be of no interest. Because it would in turn be subordinate, a copy of the general way of thinking, correct but obsolete. Very correct, at least.

That is what happened with the Fòrum: it was an architectural and town planning success, it made people talk a bit more about Barcelona, so am I am not mentioning it out of a desire to criticise it. But as a message it went unnoticed. Because the political and intellectual thought it carried with it was disoriented and confused.

We can and must be more ambitious. Since we are so proud of the creativity we say we have, let us be inventive on the basis of the more solid foundations I have mentioned: identity, but also the idea of the “welcome society”; quality of life but also economic ambition; diversity but at the same time cohesion.

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It is everyone’s job to work on these issues. And it is urgent. There are already too many people who say one thing in public and another in private about many of the issues I have described. Aware, and they say so, that the decisions that are taken, or not taken, as a consequence of this sort of slothfulness or fear are harmful to the common good. Bad for society and for the country.

I am one of many people who can make a contribution. With little political responsibility—and even less institutional responsibility—and above all without any need to scrape up votes or to please anyone, I can perhaps do so with more freedom than others. What I can do from now on will be more modest than what I did over the last thirty years. Therefore, while that speech on 21 January 1975 has been remembered because it marked the beginning of important political activity, today’s will resonate less. Or not at all. But as you know, and as it says in Ecclesiastes: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every

purpose under the heaven”: a time to fight and a time to love, a time for work and a time for rest, a time to ask and a time to give. The important thing is to do well whatever is in hand at the moment, and in my case what the country needs and can expect of me. With that mixture I mentioned of modesty and self-confidence.

Your presence here tonight raises my spirits and encourages me.