



CONFEDERACIÓN
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**DIRECTIVOS
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Interview

José Barea Tejeiro

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“Personal effort and pride in a job well done pave the way for success”

José Barea Tejeiro, Former Secretary of State for Social Security and former manager of the President’s Budget Office

Over several decades, José Barea Tejeiro’s professional career placed him at the helm of Spain’s major public sector institutions. Barea has been the Deputy Director General of Investment, Financing and Programming, Director General of the Treasury and Budget, Assistant Secretary for Budgets and Public Expenditure and Secretary of State for Social Security. He was also Director of the President’s Budget Office during José María Aznar’s first mandate. His contribution to budgetary planning was key in order for Spain to join the European Economic Community and he is considered to be an authority in times such as these, when doubts over the community project are emerging and the international economic sphere is demanding greater efficiency from the Spanish public sector and leadership that reinforces confidence in our country.



The current macroeconomic situation is creating tension among European countries. How would you describe the situation in Greece?

The European Union can lend a hand once, maybe twice, but if a third time comes around, it will definitely be time to establish all the necessary terms and conditions for Greece to go it alone. It is evident that the EU countries do not want to expel Greece. Of course they want it to assume its obligations, which is precisely why they are helping it. However, there are always managers, heads of state or even Governments that consider that no one should intervene in domestic matters. This is a mistake. Greece should be rescued and should remain in the European Economic Community because, if it left, it would be making twice as big a mistake. We should also be very careful with Spain. We have been walking for too long on a knife edge and we could slip and fall once more into the abyss of economic isolation. We must be aware of the advantages we have since we joined the European Union and subsequent Monetary Union and the Greeks should be, too. And when some people assert with conviction that “we should leave the Euro”, they do not realise the madness of what they are saying. It would mean cutting ourselves off again forever from world economy.

Despite the harsh measures Spain had to face in order to join the Euro Zone, were people more excited about the project then than they are today when Europe is in danger?

Society reacted favourably when it heard the news about the single currency and the enormous budgetary adjustments that would have to be made in order to join Europe. There were no demonstrations whatsoever despite the austerity of the measures imposed by the EU. The adjustment was extremely difficult and although Spanish society was not used to it, it happily accepted it. They believed in the European project. Given the difficulty of the adjustments, all of Europe thought that it was impossible for us to join. However, the Prime Minister at that time, José María Aznar, did want us to join and promoted the project from the outset. In a private conversation we had, he said to me: "Spain cannot lose sight of Europe again. It cannot be left out". And that was it. Neither Spain nor the head of Government hesitated. We mutually gave each other strength and he never undermined my authority in the budgetary plans I prepared when it came to making the necessary adjustments. It would have been impossible without enthusiasm and tenacity.

What advice could you give the European leaders?

There have been leaders who were the founding fathers of the European Union, such as Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, etc., who knew where they wanted to go and, as a result, Europe was built. The foundations they created on which to build Europe had to be renewed since it was, and still is, very difficult to change a Europe in which each nation acted independently. Building the first European Community, firstly the Coal and steel community, then the European Economic Community and afterwards Monetary Union, required enormous efforts and a lot of work to precisely overcome the clash of the sovereign nations. This is logical. Europe has centuries of tradition in which the nation constituted the cornerstone and now we are faced with a situation where some want to move forward and others want to go backward.

“I am 89 years old and I have not lost my enthusiasm. I write for the newspapers, carry our research and i lectured at university until my eighties. We should never lose enthusiasm for what we do”

You have had a brilliant career. What highlights would you choose that could be used as a reference by the new leaders?

I have never preached about what I have done. Simply, in the positions I held I tried to do the best job possible, setting a good example of what needed to be done. That attitude alone starts to rub off on all your colleagues and spreads. I started working at a tiny counter in Jaén, like a newly appointed bank employee in a small branch, and without help from anyone, with my own efforts, I started climbing the ladder little by little. I worked and studied at the same time because I knew that studying a university degree would be my salvation. I finished it and later passed the state exams first to become a tax inspector and then a university Chair. This is how I've fulfilled my life, I have always acted faithfully wherever I have worked, without causing any trouble and I have taken my work seriously.

“European leaders must forge ahead and believe in the European project in order to overcome their differences it is impossible to promote ideas if you are not fully convinced of them”

What advice can you give to young people?

You have to work and be enthusiastic about what you do. We are not born with perseverance. It is something we have to work on in order to make progress and create our own path I am 89 years old and I have not lost it. I write for the newspapers, I carry out research, and I continued lecturing at university. Teaching whatever I know, transmitting it to young people. They need to find enthusiasm in what they do and move forward. It is true that we are going through difficult times with unemployment rates that are much too high for young people and the scenario is complicated. It is extremely worrying that those with qualifications are unable to find opportunities here and choose to emigrate. Therefore, Spain's leaders need to worry about providing them with a future and young people need to remain enthusiastic about fighting for their dreams

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