

Pere Duran Farell

A visionary in 20th century Spain

Pere-A. Fàbregas has published the biography of Pere Duran Farell, the first president of Gas Natural SDG, the first company to introduce natural gas in Spain.

t. Pere-A. Fàbregas i. Photograph Library Fundació Gas Natural Fenosa and Archivo Pere-A. Fàbregas

Pere Duran (Caldes de Montbui, 1921-Barcelona, 1999), came from a family of farm owners who were forced to move to Barcelona by the Civil War. After the war, he moved to Madrid, where he graduated as a road engineer, collaborating as a student with Banco Urquijo, headed by Juan Lladó, and exploring the possibilities of producing artificial rain. Hidroeléctrica de Cataluña (HECSA), subsidiary of Catalana de Gas y Electricidad, contracted him in 1947 as an engineer to lead the construction

of new hydroelectric power stations in the Pyrenees. The following year, he married Montserrat Vall-Ilosera Vilaplana, his inseparable companion, with whom he had six children. The success of the new power stations and the company's development contributed to his appointment as managing director of HECSA in 1956.

Collaboration with *Association Eurafricaine Minière et Industrielle* (ASSEMI) in the early seventies brought him in contact with Algeria, the desert and the natural gas that had just been discovered in the country, and he started working with Catalana de Gas, the parent company of HECSA. Pere Duran was appointed Managing Director of the company in 1961, and four years later, became its Chairman.

The revolution brought about by Pere Duran was to replace traditional factories, where gas was produced from coal, with modern catalytic naphtha cracking facilities in 1963 and 1964, and to form, with Exxon, the company Gas Natural S.A. in 1965, to bring natural gas from Libya, and later from Algeria, into Spain via Barcelona. This was achieved despite strong opposition from the old guard of the Franco regime, which



1. 1962. Switching on a computer. 2.1970. Opening a Gas Natural plant in Barcelona. 3. 1983. Gas Natural Technical Meeting. 4. 1989. Opening of the ESADE course.

1921

Pere Duran was born in Caldes de Montbui, into a family of farm owners.

1947

Hidroeléctrica de Cataluña (HECSA), a subsidiary of Catalana de Gas y Electricidad, contracted him to head the construction of new hydroelectric power stations.

1956

After the success of the new power stations, he was appointed Managing Director of HECSA.

1965

He became president of Catalana de Gas y Electricidad and formed the company Gas Natural S.A. with Exxon.

he finally overcame, and the first natural gas shipment arrived in 1969. Also during these years, Pere Duran was president of Hispano-Francesa de Energía Nuclear, which developed the nuclear power station of Vandellòs en Tarragona with French natural uranium technology provided by Electricité de France. He maintained a good relationship with the Minister for Industry, Gregorio López Bravo. He was Manager of Comisión Promotora de Autopistas, in the Ministry of Public Works, Director of RENFE and the Nuclear Energy Board, and Chairman

focus its efforts on the promotion and development of new companies in the context of a swiftly approaching economic crisis. In the transition to democracy, Pere Duran was one of the most active and best placed individuals because of his well-established relationships across the entire political spectrum.

The failure to fully complete ENAGAS projects, which had multiplied commitments to purchase gas, with little rigour, triggered a serious crisis with Algeria in the eighties. The resulting



PERE DURAN FARELL. BIOGRAPHY.
Author: Pere-A. Fàbregas.
Published by RBA.

Pere Duran played a leading role in the **internationalisation** of the company **Gas Natural**, especially in America, and in the completion of the major **Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline project**

of La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, leading Shell projects for a petrol refinery in Catalonia.

At the start of the seventies, the regime again considered that natural gas should be controlled by the State, creating ENAGAS, which finally forced Catalana de Gas to sell the Barcelona plant and the Libyan and Algerian supply contracts in 1975. The transfer was signed only ten days after Franco's death, which implied that the new Gas Natural needed to

government interventions that slowed down investments in the nuclear industry stimulated the growth of the natural gas sector in Spain. In 1984, Pere Duran stood down from the Chairmanship of the Catalana de Gas Administration Board, and was appointed Chairman of the General Shareholders Meeting. In 1991, La Caixa and Repsol, major shareholders, decided that Catalana de Gas should absorb Gas Madrid, changing its name to Gas Natural SDG, and proposed Pere Duran as first Chairman.

Pere Duran led Gas Natural SDG's growth in Spain and the internationalisation of the company, acting in Argentina, and later in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. He also completed the acquisition of ENAGAS, recovering the Barcelona plant and other assets and contracts. He also brought the hugely important Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline project to fruition. Pere Duran stood down from the Chairmanship of the company in 1997, was appointed Chairman of Fundación Ortega y Gasset in Madrid, and died in 1999. ■



5. Pere Duran, in his last years.

Leadership

Without Pere Duran, the natural gas sector in Spain would not have attained its current status. His leadership and knowledge was recognised by all, including in Algeria, where he designed the Algerian section of the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline. Pere Duran Farell. In the photo, with King Juan Carlos I.



1975

Catalana de Gas was forced to sell the Barcelona plant and the Libyan and Algerian supply contracts to ENAGAS.

1984

He stepped down as president of the Catalana de Gas Board of Administration and was appointed president of the General Shareholders Meetings.

1991

He again led the company Gas Natural SDG, which arose from the absorption of Gas Madrid by Catalana de Gas.

1999

He died in Barcelona during his term of office as Chairman of Fundación Ortega y Gasset.