
TRIBUTE TO THE LATE PROFESSOR GUIDO DE MARCO

by **Dr. Nick Hopkinson**
former Director, Wilton Park,
Steyping, West Sussex, UK

Mrs. de Marco, the de Marco family, Your Excellencies, Professor Calleya, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to pay a tribute to our dear departed friend, Professor Guido de Marco. Like Professor Stephen Calleya, I first met Professor de Marco in 1992 when he addressed a Wilton Park conference on enlargement of the European Union (EU). As may know, Wilton Park (www.wiltonpark.org.uk) is an independent higher level international policy forum attached to the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Wilton Park runs most of its 50 annual roundtable conferences at its 16th century modernised house south of London, but it also has convened more than 60 residential conferences in 30 countries around the world, including 4 in Malta, 3 in Turkey and 2 in Egypt. Founded in 1946, Wilton Park's initial purpose was to re-educate German officers in the principles of democracy, from whence the 'graduates' moved on to serve in positions of influence building Churchill's vision of a renewed post-war Germany. Democracy promotion has remained a central theme at Wilton Park, most notably after the breaching of the Berlin

Wall in 1989 for Central and Eastern Europeans and many from Developing World countries.

Professor de Marco returned to Wilton Park as a keynote speaker in 1995 outlining his vision for the southern dimension of the EU and Malta's accession to the EU. As a joint initiative of Professor Calleya with the support of Malta's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we convened in Malta a series of joint higher level conferences in 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2007 with participation from across the EU and southern neighbours.

Professor de Marco spoke at all conferences in Malta in his capacity as President of Malta or Chair of MEDAC. We remember him fondly as an individual of tremendous warmth and generosity who genuinely wanted to get to know each participant individually. He would always greet me with a warm smile and long handshake saying "Hello, Wilton Park!" Professor de Marco had a great passion for Wilton Park, I believe because of the values and spirit of the institution, namely its neutrality and belief in inclusive open and frank international roundtable dialogue, and its ability to build international understanding, produce new thinking and real outcomes.

We both believed that the EU should not forget its southern vocation and dimension while the EU was preoccupied with its Central and Eastern reunification. As we have seen in the video played just now of the late Professor de Marco opening the special MEDAC conference commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Malta Summit of Presidents George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachov, the Summit was a turning point in the reunification of Europe. The phrase 'from Yalta to Malta' captures the essence of Europe's reunification which could not be whole without European countries in both the East and South. If instability in the Euro-Med region is to be superseded, the EU should pay more attention to it.

I was privileged to work with Professor de Marco, Minister Borg, Ambassador Zarb, Professor Calleya and many other friends highlighting the importance of the EU's southern dimension and Malta's role. Given the demographic explosion in North Africa and the growing disparities in wealth, unemployment, and practice of democracy between the EU and North Africa, and despite many international issues and challenges competing for Wilton Park's attention, we convened the series in the knowledge that the chances of a major political eruption in the EU's southern neighbourhood increased daily, but we did not know exactly when this might be.

This raises the question of what our dear departed friend would have thought of this year's 'Arab Spring'. The uprisings throughout North Africa and the Middle East clearly demonstrate the widespread anger of populations *inter alia* about the lack of justice, democratisation, human rights, freedom of association and expression, and gender equality.

The last time Professor de Marco spoke at Wilton Park was here in this very room in 2007. His key concern at the time was indeed the weakness of democracy and respect for human rights in the southern neighbourhood and the ways the region might help remedy this situation through a proposed Council of the Mediterranean (CM), a forum modelled on the Council of Europe. Whilst there were any number of pressing security, political or economic issues in the Euro-Med which Professor de Marco could have addressed, his preoccupation with the need to promote democracy and human rights in the EU's southern neighbours was prescient.

The CM, initially proposed by Professor de Marco when Foreign Minister of Malta in 1992, would include the EU, Arab Maghreb Union, and the Arab League. The criteria for membership were adherence to the principles of the UN Charter, respect for the

dignity of the human person and the rule of law, and respect for the establishment and development of representative institutions. The CM was to consist of a Committee of Ministers with a consultative General Assembly of elected representatives from member states to promote peace and mutual understanding. The proposal evolved into the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM). In 2006 the Jordanian Parliament hosted its inaugural session, and it was decided to establish its international secretariat in Malta.

Political reform in the Arab world has in part been retarded by the paradoxical Western advocacy of reform, yet frequent open support of regimes in power which at best paid lip service to democratic institutions and procedures. The 'Arab Spring' has exposed this contradiction, and forced the EU and the US to be more 'consistent'. The 2007 Wilton Park conference here called on the EU to stop giving open support to regimes which are clearly unpopular. It correctly foresaw the Arab world was rapidly reaching the stage at which efforts to reform would be confronted with widespread repressive violence. The impulse for political reform would come from within the countries themselves, which indeed it has.

However, that does not mean the EU has no role to play. As we have stated many times, the EU should offer partner countries improved aid, trade and investment prospects, and improve access to loans, particularly for smaller sized businesses. However, major limitations remain including the exclusion of issues of central concern to southern neighbours, namely agriculture, services and labour mobility from agreements. Furthermore, the political atrophy and instability throughout North Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East remains a hindrance to large scale, long term investment. As long as North African economies remain dependent on energy exports, the resulting lack of economic diversification will hinder development.

In large part thanks to the late Professor de Marco's vision and persuasive advocacy of the importance of the Euro-Med region, Malta has established itself as a key bridge in the dialogue between the EU and its southern neighbours, and for constructive change in the Euro-Med. As Professor Calleya notes in the Fall 2010 MEDAC newsletter "While Professor Guido de Marco is no longer with us, his legacy of promoting a more peaceful tomorrow will live forever".

