



Conferência Internacional Os Novos Desafios da Advocacia Europeia

Jornadas em Memória do Bastonário Coelho Ribeiro

IN MEMORIAM

ELEGY OF JOSÉ MANUEL COELHO RIBEIRO

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by Ramon Mullerat OBE²

Vir bonus, disceptandi peritus,

qui non solum scientia et omnia facultate dicendi perfectus,

sed moribus.

Quintiliano, Institutiones Oratoriae (definition of a lawyer)

José Manuel Coelho Ribeiro was a good person. This is the best compliment that can be made to a lawyer.

I would like to point out some virtues that have distinguish his life:

a) his versatility/multifaceted. José Manuel outstand in law, in teaching (teacher at Economic University), in sports (gym, golf, rugby and football; he was the President of Benfica C.F.) and in business (Social Security, Rádio Televisão Portuguesa, General Electric, where I meet him)

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b) his link to law, public and private, local and international, as much *clients' law* as *lawyer's law*. Coelho Ribeiro founded Coelho Ribeiro e Associados. He was a good lawyer, competent and right/clear conscious. *"En el abogado, la rectitud de su conciencia es mil veces más importante que el tesoro de su conocimientos* – said the great Spanish lawyer Osorio Gallardo – *primero es ser bueno, luego ser firme, después ser prudente; la ilustración viene en cuarto lugar; la pericia en el último*". Being a lawyer is very important. The great lawyer Ripert said about himself *ni filosof, ni technicien, seulement juriste, qui est déjà beaucoup*. José Manuel was aware of the importance of being a lawyer. Remembering the words of Calamandrei in his delicious *Elogio dei giudici scritto da un avvocato*, when said *solo la dove gli avvocati sono indipendenti i giudici possono essere imparziali*. José Manuel was a complete lawyer. Curiati, in his *Ars forense*, sublimes the profession of a lawyer stating/saying *donnez à un homme toutes les qualités de l'esprit, toutes les aptitudes du caractère; faites qu'il a tout vu, tout appris, tout retenu; qu'il ait travaillé pendant trente ans de sa vie; qu'il soit à la fois un homme de lettres, un critique, un moraliste ; qu'il possède l'expérience d'un vieillard, l'audace d'un jeune homme, la mémoire infallible d'un enfant ; faites enfin que toutes les fées sont venues s'asseoir successivement a son berceau et l'aient doué de toutes les facultés et peut-être avec tout cela parviendrez vous a former un avocat complet*.

c) his diplomatic touch, because he was a man of word/ dialogue/ speech and compromise. A man who knew how to unified the people. According to Antoine St. Exupéry "the most beautiful (noble) task of a men is to unify the people". In politics, the analysers measure the politics from the amount of words that dominate/ high light their speeches (democracy/ peace/ war/ values) If in CCBE we did the same kind of exercise, I don't have any doubt that the word with more success would be compromise. This notion stands out in the vocabulary of José Manuel.



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d) his patriotism. Coelho Ribeiro was truly charmed, with this beautiful country, his homeland, his history and his values. Like Fernando Pessoa, who said *each nation and world alone*.

e) his gift of friendship. Friendship for José Manuel had an uncommon dimension. He had great friends. This was his biggest capital. He worship friendship and more than that, he would made his friends became truly friends among them. St. Paul said to the Gálatas what a man spread, he harvest. José Manuel spent his life recollecting friendship and he achieved an enormous amount of friends. Thoreau stated that we could not say a man had success in his life without at least making a friend happy. Let's think about the enormous amount of success that José Manuel achieved.

f) Above all José Manuel was a gentleman. A man who would speak with everyone and wouldn't lose his common touch. A man, as the one defined by Kipling:

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
'Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
.....
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!*

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I spoke with some people who meet him and their statements couldn't be more exciting. For example, David Edward, president of CCBE and later on judge of the European Court of Justice:

"I was President of the CCBE when the Portuguese Bar joined together with the Spanish Bar. So it was during my Presidency that Jose Manuel attended his first meeting – perhaps in Madrid.

The contrast between José Manuel and his Spanish counterpart, Don Antonio Pedrol Rius, could not have been more marked. But both of them were very special people in their own way. Although I ceased to be a member of the CCBE quite soon thereafter, I kept in touch with Jose Manuel and greatly appreciated his sharpness of mind and his sense of humour. I was very sad indeed to hear that he had died when he still had so much to give."

And Janice Webster, General Secretary of CCBE when José Manuel was the president:

"He was President during my second year as Director-general of the CCBE and was a pleasure to work with. He was always available if needed, but otherwise not afraid to delegate responsibility to me for the day to day running of the organisation.

He was a man of integrity, devoted to maintaining the best ethical standards of the profession whilst preparing for the challenges of change.

I remember, with affection, the very happy Plenary Session in Lisbon when he went out of his way to ensure that everything was in place to make the visit pleasant and productive.



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As an example of his thoughtfulness, he was kind enough to make a car and driver available to my husband and me to do some sight-seeing after the business was concluded.

He was a credit to the profession and will be very much."

* * *

I am sure that José Manuel would have liked/enjoyed to be here today among us and with his concern and insight, that was ...taking care of the future of law and law practice.

I believe he would make us part/aware/sensitive of his concern for a law that allows an unfair, violent and unequal world; a world dyed with poverty, ignorance, war, corruption and hedonism; where half of his population/ habitants are downcast in poverty and one billion in absolute poverty.; where in each 6 seconds a child dies of hunger.

On the subject of law practice, he would advert us of the risks of a profession too much marketed, **business** and hyper competitive.

But, he would also made us part of his **illusion**/believes and enthusiastic, his hope that the Declaration of Human Rights could become the Decalogue of this new century and that the profession could be a decisive artifice in a world of peace, justice and concord. *Le futur n'est pas dans les mains du destin, mais dans les nôtres*, said Jules Jusserand.

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Remembering the greatness/ know how of the grandee it's necessary to transmit to the new generations the model of their lives. Showing with facts and realities that a life of work, honesty and professionalism compensates, that you can thrive in his profession being honest



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and fair, and that you can be a fair lawyer and at the same time be great in other matters of life.

All of this reminds me of José Manuel. I am reading a book of William Damon (*The Moral Advantage*) that analysis the life of characters that triumph. The author said that all of this characters are distinguish for having this moral advantage, all of them had this moral character, their success came as a consequence of their high ambitions and they always acted with humility, trustiness, trueness and an authority based on the respect for others.

I must confess, that when in this stage of my life, I make a self exam of my conscience, without falling in a useless nostalgia, I see that law practice could have been better. And that the responsibility of not being better it's not on the new generations but ours who are almost in retirement, because most of us didn't knew how to thrill them with our example and excitement.

I would like to end quoting Ecclesiastés 44, 10-15, *Elogio de los antepasados*:

*Mas de otro modo estos hombres de bien,
cuyas acciones justas no han quedado en olvido.
con su linaje permanece
una rica herencia, su posteridad.
En las alianzas se mantuvo su linaje,
y sus hijos gracias a ellos.
Para siempre permanece su linaje,
y su gloria no se borrara.
Sus cuerpos fueron sepultados en paz,
y su nombre vive por generaciones.*



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Su sabiduría comentaran los pueblos,

Su elogio lo publicara la asamblea

* * *

The death of a man is what give sense to his life. Dag Hammarskjöld, general secretary of the UN, said that *in the last analysis, it is our conception of death which decides our answers to all questions that life puts us.*

José Manuel is still among us. Samuel Butler said that *to die completely, a person must not only forget but be forgotten, and he who is not forgotten is not dead*

We are six millions of lawyers in the world (1,2 in USA, 0,7 in the EU, 0,6 in India, etc). We are an important team. All of them/us, in different places, time and languages, one day made the oath of defending the law and justice. If this team would gather, without any doubt we could make a better world and we would honour the oath of our profession, the profession of José Manuel Coelho Ribeiro.