

Hommage to Dick Marty and John Pilger

by Guy Mettan*, freelance journalist



Guy Mettan
(picture ma)

cc. In his homage, the author pays tribute to Dick Marty and John Pilger – both highly esteemed defenders of the truth with great strength of character, calm tenacity and uncompromising steadfastness. Both passed away at the end of December last year.

Let us at this moment revisit the death of *Dick Marty*, the distinguished jurist and state councillor, and special rapporteur, who died 28 December last year in Fescoggia, canton of Ticino. On the one hand, the honours bestowed on him did not do justice to his merits. On the other, I reproach myself for not having kept my promise to visit him last spring.

As is so often the case, eulogies frequently serve more to praise the merits of those delivering them than to emphasise the qualities of the deceased. I knew little about Marty as a public prosecutor, as a state councillor of the canton of Ticino, or as a member of the Swiss Council of States, apart from what the press reported about him at the time. But I was very interested in the Marty, who was the Council of Europe's rapporteur on the Central Intelligence Agency's secret prisons and who reported on the shameful contraband smuggling by the UÇK (Kosovo Liberation Army) during the Kosovo war. These were two undertakings that had a profound impact on the last third of his life and of which the media remembered very little. Something else that was very close to his heart and was also kept quiet was his civic engagement in the service of popular initiatives such as those against multinational corporations and for the proposed micro-tax on electronic financial transfers to reduce excesses on the financial markets.

In recent years, we had exchanged views in the Committee for the Micro-tax, of which he was also a member, and in e-mails. This was only a few weeks



Dick Marty (1945–2023)
(picture Wikimedia Commons)

after he had been placed under police protection with 24-hour police presence and telephone surveillance following the *International Criminal Court's* imprisonment of *Hashim Thaçi*, the Kosovar leader, and in the wake of an abstruse affair about a murder allegedly planned against Marty by Serbian extremists, of which the Kosovars were then to be accused – a story that is unclear to say the least.

Our last exchange took place at the end of February 2023. I had promised to visit him in Ticino to talk about his latest book, "Sous haute protection" (Edition Favre, 2023), after returning from a trip to North America. It was a project that never materialised due to a culpable procrastination that I regret today. We tend to think that people live forever and waste our time until it's too late.

In hindsight, I realise that he made choices and suffered consequences that, in my view, demand respect and fatefully transformed his life. The first of these choices seems insignificant, but it is not an everyday occurrence: Why did a conservative politician who had succeeded in everything and who had attained the highest offices in all three branches of power – the judiciary as a public prosecutor, the executive as a state councillor, and the legislative branch as a member of the Council of States and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – renounce the honours and sinecures that his prestigious career could bring him to become an uncompromising defender of the truth and someone who would right the wrongs done to the most invisible victims of our society?

Instead of joining the board of a bank or chairing a prestigious cultural institution at the end of his career like so many politicians, Marty made the hard



John Pilger (1939–2023)
(picture Wikipedia)

choice of solitude, criticism, and exposing the outrages of the powerful. To honours and attendance fees, he preferred the risk of ostracism, which usually befalls those who break with caste and disapprove of its privileges. And not to defend special interests, but to restore the truth and bring justice to those who had been tortured in the illegal prisons of the first world power as well as to those who had been tortured in the notorious dive bars of guerrillas that financed themselves by selling the organs of its prisoners.

This decision, very consciously made, deserves our full respect.

Marty's second choice, which requires great strength of character, was his decision to take action against the various aberrations and misdeeds committed on our doorstep. In his latest interviews and the Italian version of his book "Verità irriverenti" (Edizione Casagrande, 2023) he denounced the threats to democracy here in Switzerland and in Europe – not in China, Russia, or North Korea. At the risk of being seen as a conspiracy theorist, he was concerned about the diktats of the European Commission and various European governments that massively restricted civil liberties without any real justification and imposed vaccines through treaties so confidential that neither the citizenry nor their elected representatives could take note of them, let alone approve them.

With his calm tenacity, he was one of those who would rather see the beam in his own eye than the mote in another's, unlike so many boasters who would rather gossip about mistakes on the other side of the world than remove the stones in their own garden. That is a convenience to which Marty never succumbed.

* Guy Mettan is a journalist and member of the Grand Council of the Canton of Geneva, which he chaired in 2010. He worked for "Journal de Genève", *Le Temps stratégique*, *Bilan*, and "Le Nouveau Quotidien", and later as director and editor-in-chief of "Tribune de Genève". In 1996, he founded the *Swiss Press Club*, of which he was president and later director from 1998 to 2019.