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ALLOCUTION PROMOTION MANUEL MARÍN

On the occasion of commemorations of the origins of the European construction – or when reflecting on those – it has become usual to refer to its “founding fathers”. This distinctive epithet has surely its justification as great political and intellectual leadership was needed – and provided – by those not so many who ensured before and after the Schuman Plan that Europe firmly entered a new path of cooperation and integration: A new path which accounts for much of the peace, stability and prosperity which hundreds of millions of Europeans are benefitting from today.

Yet the reference to the “fathers” (the times did not give much space to potential “mothers”) sometimes tends to somewhat obscure the fact that throughout its history the European construction has also been very much a promise, a sign of hope and an ambition resulting in a life-long commitment for countless young Europeans who grew up when the European construction was already well under way. Some of those young Europeans – because Europe meant and means to them so much more than just a geographic, economic and cultural space – have become through the commitment of their life and work major carriers, developers and in some respects even re-creators of the European idea. They can be regarded, in a sense, as “founding sons and daughters”: Manuel Marín Gonzalez, who passed away far too soon on 4 December of last year, is not only one of the most eminent “founding sons” of the Europe we know today but he has also contributed – through the establishment of the Erasmus Programme – in a unique way to bringing Europe closer to millions of young Europeans.

This is why the College of Europe has chosen to give the name of Manuel Marín to the promotion of its students of the Academic Year 2018/19. Many of you, students present here tonight, have indeed already benefitted during your previous studies from the great vision and determination which enabled your patron in the 1980s to push through a reluctant Council an at that time revolutionary initiative. He did so – and this is another and more special link between you and him – little more than a decade after he had been a student at the College as part of the 1973/74 Giuseppe Mazzini Promotion.

Essayons de retracer brièvement une vie qui a marqué l'Espagne aussi bien que l'Europe. Né le 21 octobre 1949 à Ciudad Real dans la région La Mancha c'est durant ses études en droit à l'université Complutense de Madrid que le jeune Manolo commence à s'intéresser à la construction européenne. C'est encore l'Espagne de la dictature franquiste. Le processus d'intégration européenne l'attire à cause de ses fondements dans le libre choix des peuples et l'état de droit ainsi que les différentes orientations politiques, économiques et sociales par rapport à la réalité oppressive en Espagne. Il parvient à se faire attribuer une des rares bourses espagnoles pour continuer ses études à l'étranger et passe en 1972/73 une année de diplôme au Centre européen universitaire de Nancy. Le séjour à Nancy le marquera, non pas seulement à cause de l'orientation européenne de ses études mais aussi par l'expérience de la campagne électorale législative en France de 1973. Marín observe avec fascination la confrontation entre trois candidats de marque, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, Alain Krivine et Michel Rocard, avec lequel il nouera un lien d'amitié. Il soulignera plus tard que c'était sa première expérience d'élections vraiment démocratiques et un inoubliable « luxe » pour lui.

N'ayant pas pu trouver une ouverture professionnelle en Espagne en relation avec ses qualifications européennes Marín se décide à continuer ses études européennes et parvient à se faire admettre en septembre 1973 au Collège d'Europe dans la « dominante » droit pour le diplôme (à l'époque) « des hautes études européennes ». L'année au Collège renforce sa conviction qu'une Espagne démocratique et sociale devra prendre sa place dans la construction européenne. Il est un étudiant très motivé : Ne se limitant pas au cours de droit européen de sa dominante, il choisit bon nombre de thématiques politiques pour ses cours à option comme « Conflit et intégration européenne », « Analyse politique du système communautaire » et « Forces politiques et intégration européenne ». « Manolo » s'intègre activement dans la - par rapport au plus de 460 étudiants du Collège d'aujourd'hui - toujours assez petite communauté de 92 étudiants de la promotion Mazzini. Mais il se fait aussi remarquer par son activisme politique, et reste le seul étudiant du Collège ayant planté un drapeau rouge sur un bâtiment public à Bruges, et pas un des moindres, le majestueux beffroi de la ville. L'incident du drapeau, qui fut d'ailleurs promptement enlevé par ordre du recteur Łukaszewski, n'empêche pas qu'il se voie offrir, ayant obtenu la mention « A » (la plus haute à l'époque) dans les examens de fin d'année, un poste d'assistant académique. Le jeune assistant a laissé le souvenir de circuler à Bruges sur une mobilette vêtu en poncho. Quelques mois plus tard « Manolo » quitte le Collège pour un stage à la Commission européenne, opportunité rare à l'époque puisque l'Espagne ne faisait pas encore partie des Communautés européennes. Mais le Collège restera pour lui toujours une expérience marquante, expérience qui lui fera plus tard accepter la présidence du Conseil d'Administration de 1990 à 1996 dans une phase de forte expansion du Collège, malgré sa lourde charge de travail à la Commission européenne.

Après le Collège et le stage à Bruxelles son engagement politique rappelle Marín en Espagne. Inscrit depuis 1974 dans le parti socialiste ouvrier espagnol (PSOE), à une époque où le parti était encore dans la clandestinité, il joue un rôle actif dans la transition démocratique de son pays après la mort de Franco en novembre 1975 et est élu député de Ciudad Real le 15 juin 1977, dans les premières élections démocratiques en Espagne depuis 1936. Déjà il est reconnu comme un expert sur les

questions européennes dans son parti, et se lie d'amitié avec d'autres jeunes socialistes visant un avenir européen de l'Espagne comme le futur Commissaire Joaquin Almunia. Il expliquera plus tard que même s'il y avait aussi des raisons économiques pour sa conviction que l'Espagne devrait adhérer aux Communautés européennes la raison principale pour lui était d'ordre politique : il fallait « ancrer » la jeune démocratie espagnole dans le système de valeurs européennes que représentait l'intégration européenne, regroupant droits fondamentaux, liberté, démocratie et état de droit. Avec cette perspective – et conviction – Manuel Marín peut être considéré comme un représentant des générations de jeunes européens, pour lesquels - ayant grandi sous de dictatures des couleurs les plus diverses, ayant vécu l'absence de ces valeurs - la construction européenne est à la fois un point d'orientation moral et une terre promise politique. Ce qui le distingue c'est que même dans les batailles politiques les plus dures – et parfois désagréables – il a toujours su garder cette hauteur de vue sur les valeurs du projet européen.

Réélu député de Ciudad Real en 1979 et 1982 Manuel Marín se trouve finalement à partir de 1982 dans une position clé pour aider à concrétiser la vocation européenne de son pays : Nommé secrétaire d'état pour les relations avec les Communautés européennes il est chargé des négociations pour l'adhésion de l'Espagne aux Communautés. Même si la responsabilité gouvernementale suprême pour le processus d'adhésion reste dans les mains du premier Ministre Felipe González, même si c'est le ministre des affaires étrangères, Fernando Morán qui place l'adhésion au cœur de la politique étrangère du premier gouvernement socialiste après la transition, c'est Manuel Marín qui sera le principal responsable des négociations d'adhésion, étant à la tête de l'équipe des négociateurs. Auteur d'un rapport parlementaire très remarqué de 1980 sur les conséquences institutionnelles, industrielles et agricoles de l'entrée de l'Espagne au sein des Communautés il aborde la tâche avec une maîtrise aussi bien technique que politique des différents dossiers.

Yet to make progress in difficult negotiations – and the Spanish accession negotiations were very difficult, not only because of the major French objections – you need more than a sense of purpose and expertise: you also need strategic thinking and tenacity. Manuel Marín brought both into the negotiations which had started under the preceding Spanish government but were at the risk of stalling. On the strategy side he quickly realises that in addition to the negotiations with the European Community negotiators parallel bilateral negotiations with the governments of the ten EC Member States are essential, and undertakes numerous trips to the capitals where he emphasizes the political importance of EC accession for the young Spanish democracy as well as Europe while at also trying to reassure the Member States about the perceived economic costs and risks. Also on the strategy side he does not hesitate to forcefully link the current Spanish NATO membership with the aimed at membership in the EC. At the same time Marín also shows great tenacity in what he later would describe as an “Arab style” negotiation in which those with the stamina to defend their key objectives longest during “marathon” negotiations have a greater chance to prevail. When the act of accession is finally signed on 12 June 1985 it is marked throughout by hard-found compromises, most visibly in the 110 out of 403 articles dealing with agriculture and fisheries, and Marín is widely seen as one of the key actors having made the positive result possible.

Given Marín's key role during the accession negotiations and his wide-ranging EC expertise and contacts it is not altogether surprising that he is nominated by his government to serve as the first Spanish member of the European Commission after Spanish accession on 1 January 1986. He was to remain a member until September 1999, in charge first of the portfolio of social affairs, education and employment (1986-1989), followed by that of development cooperation and the Common Fisheries Policy (1989-1992), of development cooperation and humanitarian aid (1993-1994) and external relations with the Southern Mediterranean, Latin America and the Middle East (1995-1999). Throughout these nearly 14 years at the Commission Marín was elected to serve also as one of its Vice-Presidents, and he ended his time in the Commission as its President during six months of crisis in 1999.

One of Manuel Marín's most lasting achievements came early during his time in the Commission, and it was again due to his strategic thinking and tenacity: Taking the lead with the backing of Jacques Delors in the fight for the adoption of a first ever EC programme to encourage student mobility – the "Erasmus Programme" – he encountered considerable opposition on both budgetary and legal grounds, in particular from the responsible British, French and German ministers. When the Commission's Erasmus proposal was cut down on 1 December 1986 in the Council of Ministers to less than a third of the initially proposed budget with no provision for financial aid to students Marín decided to withdraw the entire proposal. This dramatic act enabled Jacques Delors to bring the issue on the agenda of the December 1986 London European Council during which the position of several Heads of State or Government evolved sufficiently for Marín being able to reintroduce the proposal, but it still needed six months of hard legal and budgetary wrangling before the first Erasmus Programme for 1987 to 1989 could be adopted by the Council on 15 June 1987. Renewed ever since it has changed the perspectives – and arguably also lives – of millions of European students, reflecting at its core Manuel Marín's own eminently positive experience of having studied abroad as a student and his conviction that studying abroad makes you better understand the community of values and history that Europe represents.

But Marín's achievements as a Commissioner were far from limited to his "fatherhood" of the Erasmus Programme: On the internal EC/EU policy side he played a key role in the launch of the "Europe against Cancer" programme and action plans, the adoption of the first EC tobacco control measures and in the elaboration of the "Charter of Fundamental Social Rights" presented by the Delors Commission in 1989 to enhance the social dimension of the internal market. On the external policy side much of the further development in the 1990s of the ACP Convention, the establishment of a new Generalised System of Preferences in favour of the developing countries, the 1995 launch of the Barcelona Process aimed at a Mediterranean free trade area and the conclusion of the free trade agreements with Tunisia, Morocco, Israel, Egypt and Jordan are largely due to his leadership.

All of these – and other achievements – would not have been possible without a high sense of responsibility. But Manuel Marín showed his sense of responsibility never more strikingly than in the dark months of the 1998/1999 crisis of the Santer Commission over fraud and mismanagement accusations which led to the first and so far only mass resignation of the Commission on 15 March 1999. As senior Vice-President of the Santer Commission Marín was asked - and accepted - to serve as interim-President of

the European Commission until a new Commission would be put into place in September. There was no scope for this terribly weakened, discredited and widely attacked care-taker Commission to make progress with any political initiatives, the sole prospect being to keep the ship reasonably afloat amidst often vitriolic attacks, some of which put Marín's own integrity into question. But someone had to stay at the helm, and to do so in these circumstances and not to have flinched should forever count amongst his main services to the European Union. But it left Marín, who also took charge of the Commission's disciplinary committee and signed the 27 indictments of Commission staff, with a bitter memory: While fully accepting that there had been failures and cases of misconduct on the side of the Commission he always maintained that in particular President Jacques Santer, who was later cleared of all wrongdoings, had been treated very unfairly for purely political reasons. In a 2010 interview he remembered this period of his career as a "horrible experience" and an example for "how low can politics sink".

From Brussels Marín – who never sought again a European office – returned to Spain where he was re-elected member of the Cortes for Ciudad Real in 2000 and 2004. On 4 April 2004 he was elected for a full-term of four years President of the Congress of Deputies, one of the highest offices of the Kingdom of Spain. He continued to be an advocate of further European integration, often stressing the need for a stronger solidarity element in EU policies, but also showed a growing interest in and concern about climate change and energy transition. In 2008 he retired from politics to invest most of his time in his chairmanship of the major charity foundation set up by the Spanish Iberdrola energy company. It allowed him to focus on initiatives in favour of the sustainable development of the planet and of the most vulnerable people, to make a positive difference in the lives of people, something he had always been aiming at. Up to his final illness Europe also remained very much on his mind, with Marín often deploring the lack of loyalty towards the European Union shown by national governments and political leaders. His increasing "pessimism of reason" – as former Commissioner, friend and colleague Joaquín Almunia has called it – did not prevent him from often going to schools to bring the European construction nearer to the younger, part of the European youth for which he had also fought for the Erasmus Programme. Suffering from an illness which he bore with great fortitude Manuel Marín had to withdraw more and more from public commitments and passed away, far too prematurely, on 4 December 2017 in Madrid.

Chers étudiantes et étudiants, Manuel Marín, le patron de votre promotion était un homme qui n'aimait pas trop montrer ses sentiments. Sur la plupart des photos, même quand il était étudiant au Collège, on le voit avec un regard sérieux et observateur, mais avec une certaine réserve et rarement souriant. Cette réserve couvrait – peut-être même protégeait – des convictions très fortes, concernant la démocratie, la vocation européenne de son pays, les valeurs européennes, la solidarité et notre responsabilité pour la planète. Elle couvrait aussi une vie privée épanouissante et soigneusement gardée avec sa femme Carmen Ortiz, et le père du programme Erasmus était aussi – et beaucoup plus – un père tendre et très dédié pour ses deux filles, Paloma – elle aussi ancienne du Collège – et Alejandra. Le bonheur d'avoir eu « Manolo » comme mari et père appartiendra pour toujours à la famille. L'honneur de porter le nom de Manuel Marín, grand homme d'état espagnol et européen, appartiendra pour toujours à vous, étudiants de la promotion Marín. Soyez-en digne.