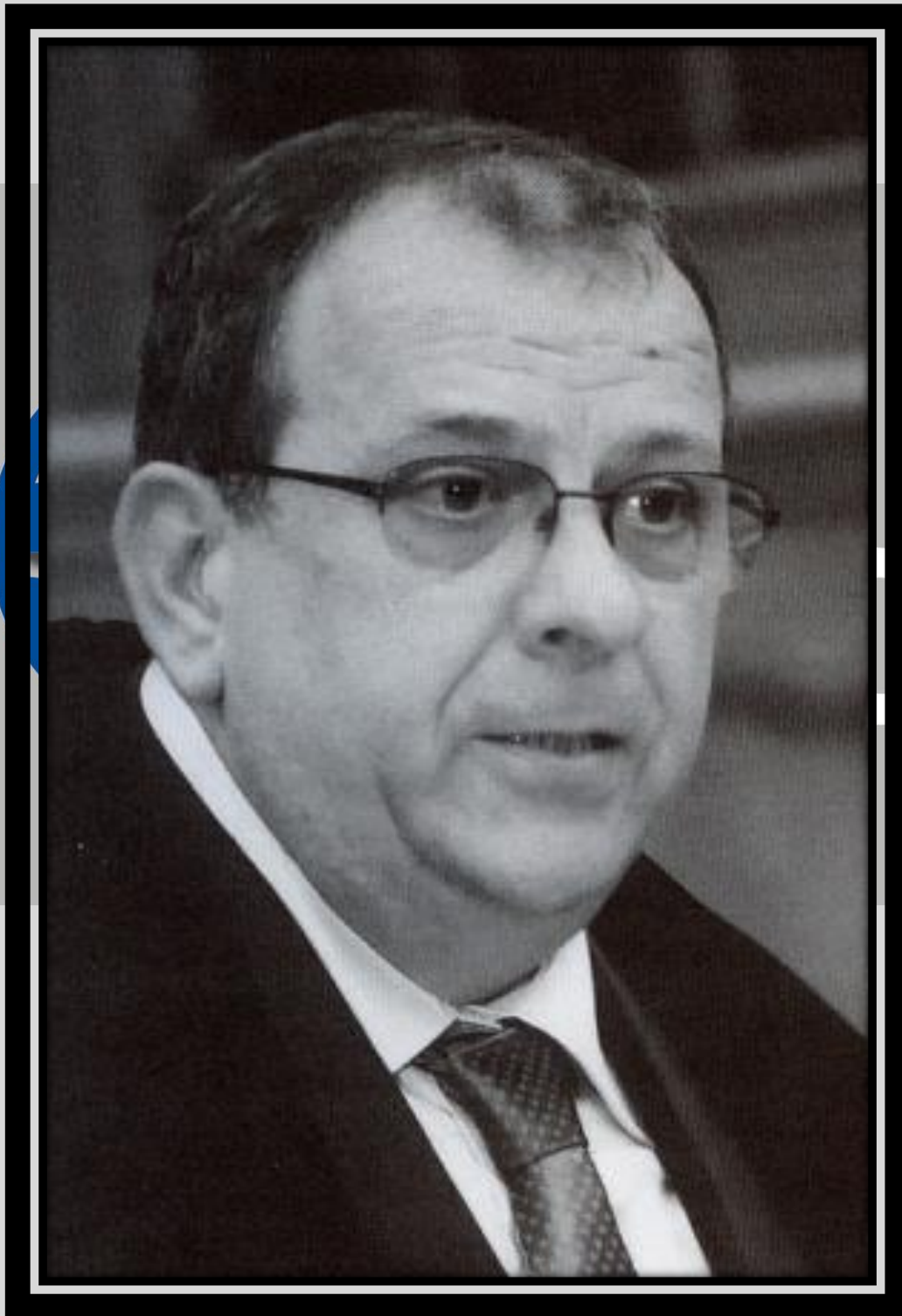


INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CRIMINOLOGY

In Memoriam – Prof. Dr. Tony Peters (1941-2012)

President of the International Society for Criminology



Building bridges in criminology

This is a slightly revised version of the speech delivered by Stephan Parmentier (KU Leuven) at the funeral service for Tony Peters, on 26 March 2012 at the Saint John the Baptist Church in Leuven, Belgium.

Nederlands

Geachte familie Peters,
Geachte collega's en vrienden van Tony Peters,

Deze warme lentedag is ook een dag van rouw en verdriet, waarop we Tony Peters gedenken en eer betuigen aan zijn werk en zijn persoon. Wie was deze kleine man met het grote hart en het scherpe intellect? Namens de decaan en de Rechtsfaculteit heeft Ivo Aertsen zonet een tipje van de sluier opgelicht over Tony's achtergrond en zijn bijdrage tot de Belgische criminologie; op dezelfde manier wil ik mij richten op zijn buitenlandse activiteiten, ... en voor Tony was er heel veel buitenland in de wereld. Men zou hem een internationalist avant la lettre kunnen noemen.

English

The one metaphor that consistently comes to mind when trying to grasp the enormous diversity of Tony Peters' work in criminology is that of a 'builder of bridges'.

First of all, bridges between disciplines and subdisciplines His double major in sociology and criminology provided him with a clear understanding of the societal dimension within total institutions like prisons, and the young researcher already in the 1970s visited prisons in Paris, New York and California to learn from other countries. In the 1980s, he shifted his attention to victims and victimology, and ten years later to practices of restorative justice between perpetrators and victims. He was able to integrate and even shape these three fields in a very creative and pragmatic manner. During four decades he travelled the world to give lectures on issues of detention, victimhood and restorative justice, and inspired many audiences with his vision of crime and justice.

Secondly, Tony Peters also liked to build bridges between institutions. In Leuven in the 1990s, he served as one of the founding fathers of the Erasmus programme in criminology, the coordinator of the EU-funded student and staff exchange project between Europe and Canada on Victimisation, Mediation and Restorative Justice, and the first director of the English Master Programme in European Criminology at the Faculty of Law. In his last years he was also the creator of the Observatory of Academic Criminology Programmes, aimed at providing information about such courses to students and scholars from all over the world.

Several generations of young students, researchers and professors have been given the opportunity through his work to broaden their horizons and develop a truly comparative perspective on crime, criminology and criminal justice.

Tony also strongly supported the development of criminological research and teaching in Europe and beyond. The Hungarian colleagues reminded us recently how he worked with them “since the middle of the seventies, i.e., long before the fundamental changes in Central and Eastern Europe” had even surfaced; as a result of this commitment, he was offered in 2010 the Honorary Membership of the Hungarian Society of Criminology. The same happened in his ‘second home’ Spain, where during many years he worked closely together with colleagues from San Sebastian, Barcelona and other places, resulting in several honorary awards.

It should be clear that Tony viewed the practice of building bridges in a very integrated way: he was not only the inspiring architect who would design the constructions and accompany their implementation from afar, but also the careful ‘master of the wharf’ who would supervise the building activities on a regular basis; and he was never afraid to act as the diligent construction worker who would not rest until the last nail was put in the right position.

His impressive international career culminated in his 15-year long service to the International Society for Criminology. He became the President of its Scientific Commission in 1998 and the general President of the Society in 2006 until his untimely death of last week. Not coincidentally, in the past days multiple messages with condolences and expressions of deep sympathy and high esteem have reached us from the four corners of the globe, including from many countries of the European Union as well as Serbia and Turkey, Canada and the United States, China and Japan, South Africa and Australia, and several other places.

Although a giant in criminology, Tony always remained a very modest person. Both in his academic and personal life his Leitmotiv was ‘respect and tolerance’ for all persons, ideas and practices, except the ones that are intolerant and disrespectful themselves; and being a wise man he was always able to make that distinction.

Français

En troisième lieu, Tony était un bâtisseur de ponts entre les individus. Source inépuisable de connaissances scientifiques et de contacts personnels, il était très généreux pour les partager avec quiconque, sans distinction de titre ni de couleur. Comme le disait un collègue suisse: «Tony était le parfait exemple du savant humain et humaniste, généreux et rayonnant. Il n'aimait pas l'idéologie et ses conséquences exclusives, et visait l'idéal et ses conséquences inclusives. Pour nous, ses collègues et amis, il était un réconfort dans la recherche ardue de la vérité scientifique, et pour les jeunes criminologues et pénalistes, un modèle à suivre.» Et les collègues canadiens ajoutent: «Avec son départ, c'est un monument qui s'éteint, (...). Le monde de la criminologie est en deuil.»

Or, avoir eu l'honneur de travailler avec un homme si aimable et d'une telle sagesse devrait nous tous remplir de joie. D'autant plus que ses avis ne se limitaient pas aux domaines de la criminologie et de la victimologie, mais s'étendaient aussi à la littérature et aux voyages, et il était grand connaisseur des guides Michelin et GaultMillau, tout en jouissant d'un certain style de vie bourguignon.

Qui dit Tony, dit Maggy ... et Charlotte, Gunnar, Tom, Noelle et leurs enfants. Ils l'ont accompagné sur ses multiples voyages à l'étranger et lui ont apporté une couverture douce et réconfortante, son lieu de retrait au milieu du va-et-vient quotidien. Innombrables sont les collègues, jeunes et moins jeunes, qui se sont réjoui autour de la table familiale pour déguster la haute cuisine de Maggy et, tout d'une haleine, construire des nouveaux projets en criminologie.

Castellano

Para terminar, no sería posible hablar de Tony Peters sin hablar de su interés y amor profundo por el universo de Miguel de Cervantes y Pablo Neruda, así como por el desarrollo de la criminología en España y América Latina. Tony fue profesor invitado en San Sebastián, Las Palmas y Oporto, y dio –en castellano por supuesto- conferencias en México, Colombia y el Cono Sur.

Sus esfuerzos intelectuales y personales fueron claves para el establecimiento de programas de criminología en varias partes de la península ibérica y en el mundo hispanohablante. El doctorado honoris causa recibido de la Universidad del País Vasco en el 2009, lo consagró como «maestro» en el verdadero sentido de la palabra, un honor que él apreció muchísimo hasta el final.

Slot

Beste Tony, bruggenbouwer in de criminologie, traveller of the World, homme sage, maestro, uitzonderlijk man, wat een formidabele eer is het geweest om met jou te mogen samenwerken! Hier scheiden onze wegen, ... of misschien toch niet, ik denk dat ze gewoon verder lopen, maar van nu af aan volg jij vanaf de overzijde van de brug.

Bedankt voor alles en rust in vrede. Un saludo para siempre.