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THE TIMES

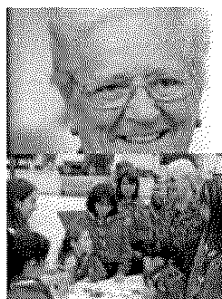
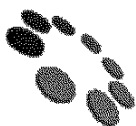
Saturday, July 9, 2011, by

Mrs. Fenech-Adami

Nation mourns 'is-sinjura Mer'

'She was always there for everyone'

Video: Mark Zammit Cordina



As the church bells chimed three o'clock yesterday afternoon, the nation mourned the loss of former First Lady Mary Fenech Adami who passed away six days after she was taken ill at a wedding reception.

Mrs Fenech Adami, 77, was hospitalised last Saturday after suffering a heart attack during the wedding reception of the Prime Minister's son at Girgenti Palace.

Her condition deteriorated along the week and she died yesterday afternoon. Cherishing fond memories of Mrs Fenech Adami, her second eldest son and Nationalist MP, Beppe, said life must go on.

"We will take it in our stride. Life has to go on. Life is beautiful and we have to make the best out of it. The emptiness she left behind is big but what we received from her will definitely help us cope with this situation," he said, adding that his father, former President Eddie Fenech Adami, was very serene, calming things down.

“Death is an integral part of life and he is strong enough to manage this situation and cope in the years to come,” he added.

“My mother had a public life but when I look back I see a mother who always put her family first irrespective of what came her way. I can never say that my mother was not there in any moment of my life.”

“Her mastery was how she could juggle her public profile with her private life, that of a mother who stood by her family in good and bad times. She shunned all the temptations that such high profile positions could bring with them,” he added.

Mrs Fenech Adami, a mother of five – John, Beppe, Michael, Maria and Luigi – is mourned by a nation.

Doris Bonnici, who lived opposite the Fenech Adami family for the past 35 years, said: “I cannot believe I will never see her again. Her usual place in church has been empty for the past days.”

“I’ve missed her terribly during the past week and now all I have left are the nice memories of a saint who never carried herself around as the wife of a former President.”

Her eyes welling up, Ms Bonnici reminisced about the days when her own children received their first Holy Communion and Confirmation with Mrs Fenech Adami’s children, fondly referred to as “is-sinjura Mer” as a close friend.

Ms Bonnici, 68, used to meet Mrs Fenech Adami on her daily errands as both of them babysat their grandchildren.

“She was a real grandma. She was a real neighbour. She was a real woman. She would not even jump the queue when people urged her to at the grocery,” she said.

Mrs Fenech Adami even visited neighbour Catherine Borg, 87, at hospital and at home when her health deteriorated.

“She treated me just like a sister. She was a woman who loved everyone and hated no one. She would encourage us to pray for those in need,” Ms Borg, who has lived in the same house on Main Street for the last 62 years, said.

Heartbroken at hearing about Mrs Fenech Adami’s loss, Ms Borg said the late former First Lady cared about everyone she met.

These sentiments were shared by television presenter Peppi Azzopardi, who worked closely with Mrs Fenech Adami during several L-Istrina events.

He described her not as “a simple woman but, rather, a woman who lived simply”.

“Mary Fenech Adami was the voice of the people,” Mr Azzopardi said, explaining how she used to talk to the man on the street she met in the town’s square and at the grocer’s.

“... in Mary Fenech Adami we... had an unelected representative, who was our voice with her husband, the leader of the country. Mary Fenech Adami was really and truly the president of the Kitchen Cabinet of Prime Minister Fenech Adami,” he added.

Her next door neighbour, Antonia Pisani, reiterated that “is-sinjura Mer” was a “saintly woman who loved everyone”.

“She wasn’t haughty. She was very friendly and I have never heard her argue with anyone. Now all that is left are the nice memories...,” Ms Pisani’s voice trailed off.

The neighbours recalled the unforgettable night of October 1979 when the modest Fenech Adami house was mobbed by Labour thugs. The neighbours helped the family out of the building and onto the roof of a house situated at the back of the Fenech Adami residence.

“I saw her approaching her house, with a loaf of bread in her hand. It is all clear in my mind. Is-sinjura Mer tried keeping them outside but they pushed her in with all their might,” Ms Bonnici recalled.

Speaking about the woman’s courage to forgive after the 1979 ransacking, close family friend and University lecturer Fr Joe Borg said: “Mrs Fenech Adami lived according to her faith. She was a woman of faith, and faith was her life. Her strength was built upon her faith.”

“I never heard her speak with hatred. One needs to be really courageous to be so ready to forgive.”

Having known the Fenech Adami family for the past 35 years, Fr Joe described Mrs Fenech Adami as “a great woman”.

“She was a strong giant hidden in the demeanour of a simple woman.”

The Speaker of the House, Michael Frendo said Mrs Fenech Adami “went through a lot in life but she always had a good word for everyone.”

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi’s wife, Catherine, described her as a “great woman”. “She was practical, with her feet planted on the ground, always close to the people. She was a source of constant support to her husband and always met her social obligations without abandoning her family commitments.

“She knew how to listen... She was an optimist and always forgave those who may have offended her or her family. She was also humorous. I believe Mary’s strength came from her values and her strong faith in God.”

President Emeritus Ugo Mifsud Bonnici said: "She was a very courageous woman who took everything the world threw at her in her stride. She was always close to the people, a generous woman, who supported her husband in very difficult moments. She was a woman of exceptional virtues."

Nationalist MP Francis Zammit Dimech expressed his sadness at the loss. "I am deeply saddened by her loss. She was always alongside her husband and family in the most difficult moments this country has gone through."

He recalled: "On Sunday, the day after she collapsed, Mary was sorely missed by the congregation at the Sacro Cuor parish in Sliema where she never failed to attend the 8.30 a.m. Mass on the feast day."

Richard Cachia Caruana, Malta's Permanent Representative to the EU and possibly Dr Fenech Adami's closest aide, said: "A lovely lady who dealt with everyone in the same warm way – from the grocer and the butcher to heads of state and their spouses. She was always there for everyone and will be missed by everyone."

The sad news of Ms Fenech Adami's death also reached the United States, with former US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec, together with his wife Carol, writing in to express their deepest sympathy to Dr Fenech Adami and his family.

"The Fenech Adamis were ever so gracious to us during our time in Malta. In listening to Mary's account of how political rancour once invaded her home and left her injured, one did not hear residual animosity but grateful relief that the times of violent political turmoil were past," Prof. Kmiec wrote.

"In this, we shall always think of Mrs Fenech Adami as being of the same stature as we in America hold Eleanor Roosevelt, the late wife of Franklin. Mrs Roosevelt once said: 'A woman is like a tea bag, you never know how strong she is until she finds herself in hot water.'

"May God welcome this wife, mother, charitable organiser and splendid example of faith-based tenacity facing the modern challenges of this century."

President George Abela and his wife Margaret too expressed their condolences, describing Mrs Fenech Adami as a refuge to those who needed her assistance. He expressed his condolences to Dr Fenech Adami, personally and on behalf of the people in a telephone call.

Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi also phoned Dr Fenech Adami to express his condolences and described Mrs Fenech Adami as a mother with strong moral values who had worked quietly for those who needed her help.

During yesterday's parliamentary sitting MPs from both sides of the House paid tribute to Mrs Fenech Adami. Labour leader Joseph Muscat and his wife Michelle said in a statement they were saddened at the news of Mrs Fenech Adami's demise.

They said they had the opportunity to meet Mrs Fenech Adami several times over the past three years and during these occasions they confirmed her human qualities and that she was an inspiration to them.

The Nationalist Party, the Labour Party, Alternattiva Demokratika, the Union Haddiema Maghqudin and the Malta Union of Teachers also expressed their condolences.

Mrs Fenech Adami's funeral will be held on Monday at 10 a.m. at St Helen's Basilica in Birkirkara.

- **US Ambassador will back Obama in 2012**



Outgoing US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec, who resigned after being criticised by the State Department for spending too much time writing and speaking about his religious beliefs, believes President Barack Obama is doing a "superb job"

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- **THE SUNDAY TIMES**

Sunday, April 24, 2011 by

Douglas W. Kmiec, US Ambassador

US Ambassador bids farewell



By now, many know that these are my final weeks in Malta. An unfortunate rebuke for refusing to either suppress the relevance of faith in my life and writing or to disregard the President's assignment to promote inter-faith dialogue has

...

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• **THE TIMES**

Saturday, April 23, 2011 by

John Guillaumier, St Julians

The role an ambassador must not have

I'd like to say goodbye and bon voyage to Douglas Kmiec but I don't feel sorry about the negative report he received from the US Office of the Inspector General for his proselytising activities while serving as US Ambassador to Malta. The last

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• **THE TIMES**

Wednesday, April 20, 2011 by

Mario Dingli, Sliema

Gentleman ambassador

I am sure the news that the US Ambassador will be resigning his post on August 15 has saddened quite a lot of people.

Malta will certainly miss this fervently Catholic man who should be a shining example to many. He is a man of no

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- **THE TIMES**

Tuesday, April 19, 2011 by

Christian Peregín

US Ambassador's resignation accepted

US President Barack Obama has accepted the resignation of his government's Ambassador to Malta, Douglas Kmiec, a State Department official said last night.

Prof. Kmiec's resignation came on Saturday in the wake of a report

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- *Monday, April 18, 2011, 23:14*

Obama accepts Ambassador Kmiec's resignation



President Barack Obama has accepted the resignation of his ally Douglas Kmiec as ambassador to Malta.

Prof Kmiec submitted his resignation late last week after a report by the State Department's Office of the Inspector General which

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- **THE SUNDAY TIMES**

Sunday, April 17, 2011 by

Michael Bonnici, Żebbuġ

Remarriage – a better alternative to cohabitation and illegitimate children (6)

The criticism by some reporters in the local media as well as other pro-divorce individuals towards distinguished Maltese subjects employed in high positions in various roles of our national institutions in their involvement in the 'Marriage

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- *Saturday, April 16, 2011, 23:52* by

Steve Mallia

Updated: US Ambassador tenders resignation



US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec has tendered his resignation to US President Barack Obama in the wake of a report by the US Office of Inspector General (OIG).

The report criticised the amount of time Ambassador Kmiec has dedicated to

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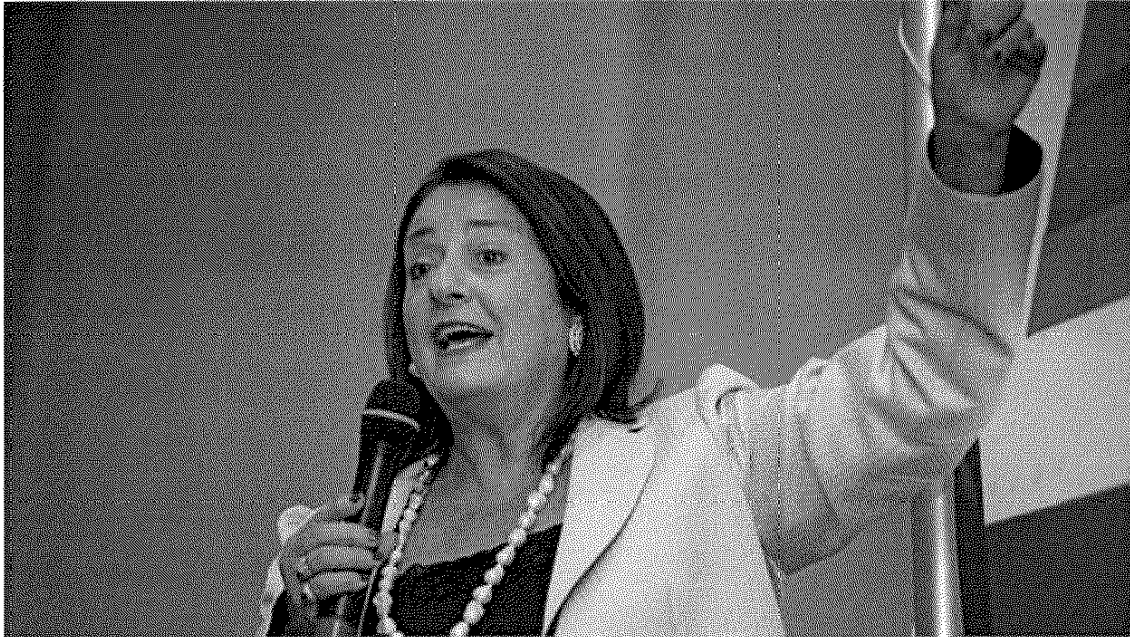
Saturday, April 16, 2011

A tender moment

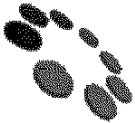


US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec speaks with patients during a visit to the Hospice Movement in Balzan. Prof. Kmiec praised the movement for the work it did, recalling his own experience when his mother, dying of pancreatic cancer, was given

Effective leaders share knowledge, shun power – organisational coach



Leadership coach Viviane Amar: “What do you want to make of Malta? Be generous with what you know.”



Effective leaders share their knowledge and multiply intelligence rather than thrive on power, industrial and organisational psychologist Viviane Amar told a business breakfast last Friday.

“Not all people at the top of organisations are leaders,” Ms Amar stressed. “Trust-based organisations are more powerful than those driven by fear and conflict or led by people of power who fight for territory. Leaders who are imperfect manage by values.”

Ms Amar, the chief executive of Montreal-based Leading Leaders Intl Ltd, was invited to Malta by Leading Talks, the venture founded by Patrick Parnis to host experts to share their knowledge and vision with local professionals.

A worldwide consultant practicing cultural change through women, Ms Amar has coached in executive leadership for nearly 30 years in the US, Asia and Europe. She has clocked 20,000 hours of coaching chief executives and their teams around the world.

More recently, she developed a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach on women's leadership which links evolutionary psychology, cultures, psycho-sociology and neurosciences.

Addressing a mostly female audience at the event themed Women At The Top: How To Achieve More Effective Leadership, at the Hotel Phoenicia, Ms Amar outlined the difference between what she dubbed 'PoPs' – People of Power– and effective leaders.

'PoPs', she explained, fought the fears of their silent inner child; effective leaders had self-confidence, not over-confidence.

"What does your team say about you? Would it walk through a fire for you?" she asked the audience of chief executives, managers, coaches, finance professionals, journalists, and NGO officials. US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec was among the few men present.

Organisations were increasingly embracing a paradigm shift away from pyramids to a network of teams.

Ms Amar explained how any member of a team could be a leader: leadership required courage, intuition, emotional decoding, empathy and self-knowledge.

Women, she pointed out, used both sides of their brain to convey facts and feelings because they were natural communicators. Since childhood, their brains developed faster than men's, and had the capacity to manage complexity. Women were more intuitive, and had particular judgment skills, they were 'designed' to be socially sensitive, which was why they were more likely to manage by values and were often future-focused.

She encouraged her audience to think in terms of personal development and change as opposed to waiting for their organisations or the authorities to adapt. Women, she added, had a capacity for social intelligence and related and bonded with others to understand their emotions.

Ms Amar urged women to think globally and wisely: they were only fit for their futures if they faced up to challenges. Women needed recognition and positive feedback as cultures had not prepared them to feel good about themselves. They often developed an illusionary pattern of perfectionism.

She listed the seven traps women fell into which negatively impacted their self-confidence. The illusion of perfectionism of being good workers and mothers led to fears, inhibitions of their inner child, doubts, guilt and victimisation.

“Who will heal us if not us?” she asked. “Self-development starts within: we must heal ourselves to heal others. We must trade fear for desire. We must accept to be good enough mothers and workers. Excellence is a decision, it will not stem from unresolved conflicts.”

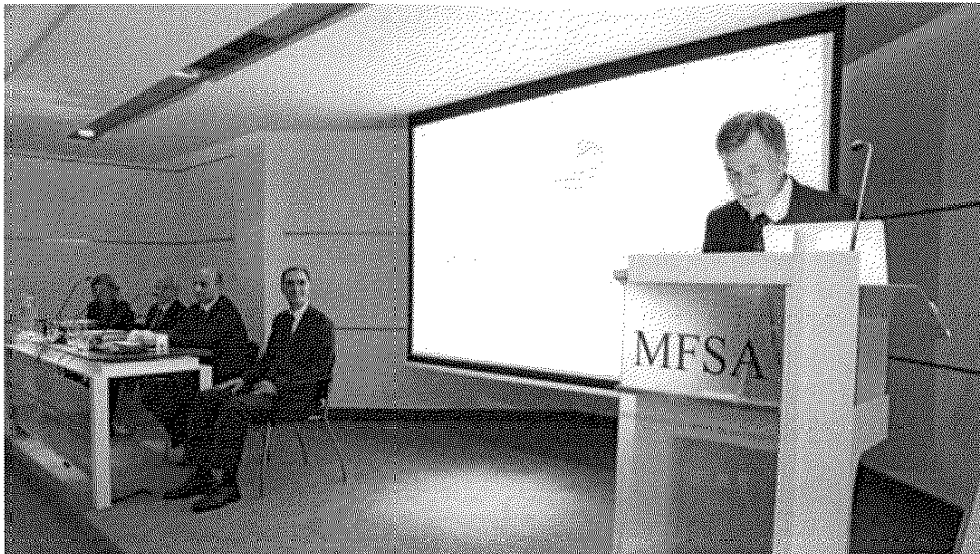
It was essential that effective leaders were contributive, generous mentors, and networkers.

Contributive leadership was about transmitting self-worth and knowledge, empowering people and bonding groups, and trading aggression for assertiveness.

Emotional maturity, she added, never stopped growing.

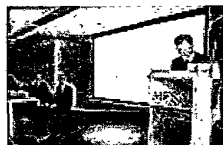
“What do you want to make of Malta?” she asked her audience. “Be generous with what you know. These are the days of androgynous leadership. Men have been told that women are dangerous but it is no longer a question of gender. It is a question of being able to empower others. You cannot make it as leaders if you impose on others. Women who thrive on power are weak and lack confidence. The ultimate objective of being a leader is to become a mentor.”

Forum examines implications of US-Malta double tax treaty



US Ambassador Douglas W. Kmiec opens the forum organised with the American Chamber of Commerce in Malta as the panel (from left) Juanita Brockdorff, Antoine Fiott, Kenneth Farrugia and Pierre Attard look on.





The implications of the newly signed double taxation treaty with the US for Maltese businesses came under the spotlight at a forum organised by the American Chamber of Commerce in Malta and the US Embassy.

Ambassador Douglas W. Kmiec gave a broad overview of the agreement and who the main beneficiaries are likely to be.

Antoine Fiott, partner at Fenech Farrugia Fiott Legal, gave insight into the economic history of Malta's tax agreements with the US, right up to and including the process leading to the signing of this current document.

KPMG tax partner Juanita Brockdorff highlighted the details and technical aspects of the treaty and also gave practical examples of its application in comparison with similar agreements the US has with other countries.

A discussion between Finance Malta chairman Kenneth Farrugia and AmCham Malta president Pierre Attard focused on the likely impact on the financial services sector. Past experiences and strategies were discussed, with future prospects for the sector now that the agreement is in force.

Wrapping up the forum, Ambassador Kmiec said the treaty provided significant economic advantages that mitigated tax burdens on the same taxable event and eliminate withholding and this should promote investment in both the US and Malta.

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sunday, March 6, 2011, by

Paula Fleri-Soler

Going all the way



Sheen (left) as journalist Vince Walker in Gandhi, next to Ben Kingsley who played the title role.



Martin Sheen (right) as Capt. Benjamin Willard in Apocalypse Now (1979) during which he had a real-life heart attack.





Award-winning actor, political activist and family man Martin Sheen speaks to Paula Fleri-Soler about humanity and his way in his latest film.

US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec introduced Martin Sheen to the 200-odd moviegoers who packed the Embassy cinema in Valletta as a “fellow parishioner, neighbour from California and distinguished actor”.

He added that many Americans call him President Bartlet, referring to Sheen’s acclaimed role in *The West Wing*, the hugely successful award-winning drama which ran for seven seasons on NBC between 1999 and 2006.

But during a flying visit to Malta last week, on the initiative of the US Ambassador and KRS Film Distributors to promote his new film *The Way*, the 70-year-old actor also came across as the Good Samaritan.

Born Ramon Estevez in 1940, Sheen launched his eclectic career in the late 1960s, working in television and on Broadway before making his debut on the big screen.

He has worked in a number of highly-acclaimed films, making his mark in director Terrence Malick’s *Badlands*, and going on to play numerous roles with many directors of note.

One of his most widely-known performances, of course, was as Captain Benjamin J. Willard in Francis Ford Coppola’s searing 1979 Vietnam drama *Apocalypse Now*, during which the actor notoriously suffered a heart attack.

Sheen has also worked with most of the legendary directors, including Richard Attenborough, Oliver Stone, Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

Sheen is also a devout Catholic and dedicated family man, breaking the template of many of his Hollywood contemporaries.

He has been married to Janet Templeton for almost 50 years, and they have four children; all of whom have followed in their father's footsteps – Emilio Estevez, Ramon Estevez, Renee Estevez, and of course Charlie Sheen who recently made the headlines for the wrong reasons and whom his father is reluctant to talk about.

Martin Sheen is also well-known for his political activism, and has supported many social and liberal causes; often going on the front line to defend those issues he believes in, especially matters of poverty and homelessness.

It was this cause that prompted Sheen to visit Malta for the charity premier of *The Way*, since proceeds from the film are to be donated to the John XXIII Peace Laboratory of Malta.

Fr Dionysius Mintoff's Peace Lab provides shelter for up to 50 individuals and the centre offers an internet café, a clinic, a theatre and dedicated space for prayer and reflection and a mosque.

It offers an open and unrestricted meeting place where people of all backgrounds and attitudes can mix together in peace. The stated goal is to foster solidarity and moral values based on Christian beliefs; though not excluding any other idea or person.

The funds raised from the premiere of *The Way* will provide a new gym for the many who seek some respite from the burdens of poverty or the fears and anxiety felt by refugees.

Touring the Peace Lab with Mintoff and Kmiec, Sheen has no qualms about displaying his faith, yet does so in a quiet and simple way. Three men in the centre's chapel are huddled together, talking in hushed whispers as Sheen admires the various icons and relics on display.

Dressed casually, the actor radiates vibrancy, warmth and charm in person, the same way he has come across on screen for decades.

The actor listens carefully to what Mintoff says, admiring a framed photo of Mother Teresa and examining in detail a painting depicting the Transfiguration. When Mintoff shows him a statue of Gandhi, he recalls how honoured he felt to be in the epic film depicting the Indian spiritual leader, which went on to scoop eight Oscars.

Sheen displays a genuine desire to meet the refugee residents, as he hears about the plight of the many immigrants who seek refuge at the centre.

He shakes their hands robustly, offering a kind word or cracking a joke or two, his bright blue eyes twinkling as he smiles widely.

The Hal Far centre is as far away as anyone can imagine from the glitz and glamour of Hollywood; and yet Sheen is clearly at home; even stopping at the miniature grotto dedicated to Our Lady where he says a small prayer. A visibly shy resident presents Sheen with a memento of his visit which he graciously accepts with profuse thanks.

Sitting at the canteen, he is gregarious in company, regaling those present with anecdotes, including the time his wife Janet left her prayer intentions in the supplication box in Lourdes, only to realise with horror that she may have inadvertently thrown in her grocery list instead.

“We’ve been well-provided for ever since,” he says, deadpan.

But turning to more serious matters, I ask about his thoughts about the violence enveloping different parts of the world, especially in nearby Libya.

He replies: “Look where we’re sitting,” gesturing to his surroundings and Mintoff in particular.

“The corporal works of mercy are very much alive here, and I just can’t begin to imagine the work that is done here daily with Fr Mintoff. There is a powerful spirit at work here that has attracted so many people to serve and build this place. It’s a breathing, living monument to our humanity and God among us. We are commanded to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and house the homeless and this embodies the Christian faith. It is a magnificent reflection of what we are supposed to be doing if we call ourselves Christians.”

He says he heard about the work carried out at the Peace Lab through the US Ambassador and wanted to see it for himself, prompting a visibly moved and slightly embarrassed Mintoff to thank the actor.

The interview takes place a day after Aaron Sorkin walked off with an Oscar for the Best Adapted Screenplay for *The Social Network*. Sheen had worked closely with the writer on *The West Wing*.

“For my money he’s the best screenwriter in Hollywood. He is truly extraordinary. I had met him for the first time on *The American President* (the film written by Sorkin and released in 1995); and was so pleased to be involved in *The West Wing*.

“When I started, my role was very small and was asked to do just four episodes. And when the pilot aired, it was clear that people were interested in the Oval Office and whoever works there so I was offered a regular contract and I was delighted.”

He speaks with genuine love for the show, saying he and his fellow actors in the impressive ensemble cast “were very liberal Democrats and very active people in their middle age”.

“We all realised this was a very special opportunity but the one thing we all agreed on was that we did not think the show would air on commercial TV. We had no clue that you could sell products with American politics. Who was going to be interested in that? Boy were we surprised!”

I ask Sheen about *The Way* and his involvement in what is very much a family affair since the film was written and directed by his son, Emilio.

It's a father-son story based on a pilgrimage, the 'Camino de Santiago de Compostella' in Spain, a landmark since before the Middle Ages. It used to run from Paris through France all the way across the Pyrenees to northern Spain. But in the last century or so, it covers 800 kilometres from St Jean Pied de Port in the Pyrenees to Santiago.

Sheen explains that he was always curious about this pilgrimage, ever since he had heard about it from his father, a Galician.

"The older I got, the more I realised I'd better do this soon because I won't be strong enough to do it if I wait much longer!"

He made plans to do the pilgrimage in the summer of 2003 with his grandson Taylor and his oldest friend (fellow actor Matt Clark who appears in *The Way*).

The three of them set out to see how much of the journey they could do, but Sheen had to return to the US within a few weeks to film the new season of *The West Wing*, so they were limited for time but, after eliminating the idea of doing it by bike or on horseback, they did what "every American tourist would do and rented a car and drove the Camino," he says with a laugh.

He avidly describes the journey; exclaiming the beauty of the place and the hospitality of the people he met along the way, especially in El Mulino, where Sheen said the first miracle happened because it was there that Taylor met the woman who would become his wife.

Sheen acknowledged there was something so powerful about the place that he longed to return. He spoke to his son Emilio, an acclaimed actor and director in his own right, telling him "you must investigate the Camino de Santiago de Compostella, there is something magical about it".

His enthusiasm was infectious, saying that "Emilio started reading about the place and he got transfixed by it and we started writing scenarios, and finally came up with this father-son story".

Warming to the subject of the film, Sheen explains that the father, Tom Avery, is a doctor, a conservative man, and a widower whose only son Daniel quits his doctorate to go out into the world.

Tom isn't happy about this: he wants Daniel to finish his studies. One day Tom receives a phone call that his son has been killed in the Pyrenees. He's distraught and goes to France to bring the body home and discovers that Daniel died on the pilgrimage.

Tom decides to cremate the body and take the ashes on the journey for the boy. As he makes the journey, Tom discovers it is his journey and he becomes the son.

"Usually, father-son stories are about sons becoming fathers. This is the reverse. His experiences along the Camino are really extraordinary," he says, "because they say you walk the Camino alone but you cannot do it without community. And this is very clear in the story as Tom hooks up with various people along the way, with their own problems and foibles and in a way it becomes like the Yellow Brick Road in *The Wizard of Oz*".

Sheen describes the film passionately, pointing out that despite its deep subject matter there are more than a few laughs. He talks about the plot to the extent he feels he's given away too much.

"Now I've spoiled it for you," he laughs.

Sheen talks about his long and varied career and about his future projects, striking me as the sort who does not sit around doing nothing for long.

"I'm in the middle of playing a part in the next Spiderman movie," he says, confessing he watched the first one only recently.

As with everything else, Sheen talks about the film with great enthusiasm.

"I've filmed all my scenes in California and will film more in New York in April," he continues, breaking off to ask Mintoff if he knows what he is talking about - the priest nods enthusiastically.

Sheen plays the part of Peter Parker's uncle Ben - all his scenes take place before he becomes Spiderman - and goes on to describe the intricate and amazing stunt work carried out on the film:

He talks about the young up-and-coming Andrew Garfield, recently seen in *The Social Network* and *Never Let Me Go*, who has taken over the role from Tobey Maguire. "He's a wonderful actor", remarks Sheen "and great fun to work with."

The interview draws to a close, as Sheen is keen to walk out to the tent city at Hal Far to meet more refugees, and be on time for the film's premiere.

At the Embassy cinema that evening, Sheen was the same affable man seen earlier, signing autographs, shaking hands and happily mingling with the crowd.

He addressed the audience before the film, ending his speech with a heartfelt "Buen Camino"; a blessing that no doubt all those present wished upon this charismatic man in return.

Filmography

Born Ramon Estevez on August 3, 1940, in Ohio, US, to parents of Irish and Galician origin.

Winner of one Golden Globe, two Screen Actors Guild and one Emmy Award.

Sheen has also lent his voice to numerous documentaries featuring social, political and historical subjects.

During the filming of *Apocalypse Now*, he had a heart attack and crawled out to a road for help.

After his heart attack, his younger brother Joe Estevez stood in for him in a number of long shots.

In 2004, Sheen campaigned for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry.

Classic screen roles:

- Capt Benjamin J Willard in Apocalypse Now (dir. Francis Ford Coppola – 1979)
- Vince Walker in Gandhi (dir. Richard Attenborough – 1982)
- Carl Fox in Wall Street (dir. Oliver Stone – 1987)
- Narrator in JFK (dir. Oliver Stone – 1991)
- A.J. McInerney in The American President (dir. Robert Reiner – 1995)
- Roger Stone in Catch Me If you Can (dir. Steven Spielberg – 2002)
- Captain Oliver Queenan in The Departed (dir. Martin Scorsese - 2006)




- President Josiah 'Jed' Bartlet in The West Wing (1999-Advert

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THE TIMES

Saturday, February 5, 2011, by

Douglas W. Kmiec

Corruptions of the human heart

I had the extreme honour of joining Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, members of the diplomatic corps and the Admor of Malta on January 27 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day with the opening of a stunning exhibit from the Anne Frank Museum that is on display in the vaults of Auberge de Castille, in Valletta until February 18. Admission to the exhibit and to the vaults is free.

This exhibit is one that should not be missed in this nation of families. That is after all one of the underlying messages of Anne Frank's story – how a loving family was able to survive together for as long as possible against the hatred of the Holocaust. Anne, with the love of her family, triumphed over the Nazi terror by getting the last word by way of her surviving diary. It is a powerful word, well spoken and truthful, and how fortunate we are the Prime Minister amplified Anne's voice of truth in his remarks at the opening of the beautifully done exhibit in his own historic building. The exhibit will help all of us, those who lived through those terrible years, and those fortunate enough to be born after the war, to remember the millions lost and the lessons for all human kind.

While attending the opening, I was reminded of a lesson that at root teaches something important about ourselves we dare not forget: That the failure to love our neighbour is but a short distance from ignoring our neighbour and that disregard of neighbour is but a short distance from silently tolerating political-, racial-, gender- and sexual orientation-based oppression and hate.

Karl Borg, director of Karl Borg Events, has, through this exhibit, made it possible to remember one young victim of the Holocaust – one of the estimated six million Jewish victims of murder. But the exhibit reminds us the Holocaust is not just a grievous crime against humanity; it is a warning flag against any modern practice that denigrates human life as expendable or manipulable.

The Holocaust of the 1940s is of such magnitude of death it scarcely allows comparison; but let us at least see that the suicide bomber in Moscow or Madrid or London or New York; the slave trader who imprisons young women in prostitution or the drug trade; and the tribal or ethnic madness of Rwanda, Sudan and the Balkans are cousins of the Holocaust, if not siblings.

Anne Frank's diary is not a story of defeat but of perseverance in the face of adversity. My late father was part of the B17 "Flying Fortress" squadron that is sometimes said to have "defeated Germany"; but it was not Germany that my father helped to defeat but rather Hitler's misleading madness of hate. Like the noble spirit of Anne Frank, Germany as a people persevered and today

the German nation occupies a position of international achievement in matters of economy and community.

Anne Frank's personal recounting of the story of the Holocaust puts names on the six million – it makes an otherwise incomprehensible crime capable of being felt tangibly. And in feeling the depth of her personal story and the death and fear of the others she recounts in her diary, we see that so many more victims of the Holocaust and modern hate crimes have joined those whose hair, shoes, eyeglasses and suitcases line the dismal halls of Auschwitz.

I know Auschwitz because the father of my father was a Polish intellectual who dreamed and prepared to teach at the world-renowned Jagellonian in Krakow but died when the Kmiec family scattered into the US, England and France to escape, not as Jews, but as a family of intellectuals – who often suffered the same fate.

Years later, while Dean of the Catholic University of America, I would be invited to teach at the Jagellonian and there I would see first-hand the lists of murdered faculty members – a list that very likely would have contained my grandfather's name had he not left his homeland and forfeited his scholarly aspirations and dreams. Of course, if the name Jan Kmiec did appear on the long list of murdered humanities and science faculties members, I would not be here today to remember.

Remember what?

Certainly not that any single nation was intrinsically evil.

No, that which animated the hate of the Holocaust can strike any people and any nation; it is a problem of human pride, of self-centeredness, of ego that fuels one's hatred to actions that exceed all bounds of civilised society to discard the universal value of human life.

We are also to remember that today's hatreds: genocide based upon race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, are corruptions of the human heart with collateral external effects.

It is odd we call one of those effects "irregular" migration, for what human being would consciously – "regularly" – stay put in the face of such offensiveness and risk to life, freedom and family? There is nothing irregular about escaping that.

The United States welcomed my grandfather. Today, Malta receives a significant number of migrants for the same reason.

The diary of Anne Frank asks us to remember honestly the common reason for migration – man's inhumanity to man. And having remembered, we are asked one more thing: not to look the other way in the face of persecution, prejudice, hatred and oppression but to welcome and help as best we can those who have been so mistreated. This is why Malta makes efforts to resettle migrant populations and my embassy and others have been especially privileged to do the same.

You see, it is a privilege to help the modern-day equivalents of Anne Frank persevere, for it amplifies love and, in so doing, God willing, it will also avert the seed of profound hatred represented by the Holocaust from ever again taking root in the human soul.

*Prof. Kmiec is the US Ambassador to Malta*Print Email

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sunday, July 18, 2010, by

President George Abela and Douglas Kmiec

End racial discrimination

On July 4, America's birthday, we stood together before citizens of both our nations to celebrate our mutual commitment to the self-evident truth that all men and women are created equal before the law.

Both of us reflected in our remarks how Malta is known today, and we trust shall always be known, for its kindness. Our two nations' founding principles embrace all people - of whatever colour or ethnicity or belief - as unique; each of us holds within our hearts the desire to know, love, and serve others; each of us tries to find our way in this world, and we rely upon God and each other to carry us at times farther than we can go ourselves.

This is realised every day in Maltese and American homes alike where mothers and fathers silently hope their children will see the meaning of life more clearly and purposefully than they have.

It is thus with sadness of heart that we note in some places a worrisome acceptance of the discredited idea that it is all right to treat people of different colour or of different ethnicity or of different faith less well than ourselves.

We both know in our respective countries that individual acts of discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity and religion are occurring; that these acts are hurtful to their victims and corrosive to the public commitment to equality. This prompts us to put pen to paper.

We also write now because the meaning and hope symbolised by July 4 remains fresh in our minds and because it is but a few months since Pope Benedict XVI reminded us upon his farewell to not cease to welcome the stranger, including the migrants that come to Malta's shores from Africa, and by parallel reasoning, the families from many lands that are drawn to America.

Yes, the presence of migrants in our respective lands requires responsibility on the migrants' part to observe our laws and to seek gainful employment, but there are correlative obligations on the part of each of our countries as well.

There is no justification for treating another with less than full respect, in recognition of our "common humanity", as President Barack Obama in his greeting to Malta.

We no longer see July 4 only as an American holiday; Obama rightly urged in his letter to US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec, which he read at the Upper Barrakka gardens, to see the day as a celebration of the common ground upon which our two nations and all nations must stand.

It has been suggested to us that the ill treatment of people of colour only results when a person is perceived to be an irregular migrant - that is, someone who has only recently made the sea crossing to Malta or traversed the borders of the US in a way said to 'burden' scarce resources.

This view invites invidious distinction and denies the intrinsic worth and respect due each person. It is not a view easily reconciled with the welcoming kindness that is the hallmark of the Maltese character or the self-evident truths proclaimed in America's Declaration of Independence.

As individuals given leadership roles in our countries, we pledge never to tolerate a policy built upon animosity and hatred. Of course, individual incidents of discrimination based on race, ethnicity or religion do not constitute policy, but the failure to clearly object to such discrimination might be so perceived, and it is important for any such specious inference to be thoroughly and completely disavowed.

This is especially important to say because in our countries, where the virtue of solidarity thankfully remains strong, we know that there is a tendency among victims to "turn the other cheek." We commend the victims of discrimination for their generosity of heart and willingness to forgive, but any form of racial discrimination or epithet is worthy of our mutual concern and resolution to oppose its recurrence.

At the July 4 celebration, reference was made to the words of prayer and blessing upon the Maltese people in the anthem of the Republic, L-Innu Malti.

Malta has been abundantly blessed, but we should never lose sight of the anthem's call to 'confirm us all in unity and peace'.

Likewise, the ambassador's recounting of Abraham Lincoln illustrated how devastating America's losses were when she tolerated the tyranny of slavery.

In the spirit of L-Innu Malti, let us together work toward a renewed ethic of non-discrimination 'with', as Lincoln observed, "malice toward none and with charity for all".

Mr Kmiec is US Ambassador to Malta

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sunday, May 2, 2010, by

Frances Camilleri Cassar

No room at the top

Although women in Malta make up over half the electorate, there has been no significant change in the pattern of women's representation as MPs in the past 60 years.

For example, in 1950 there were three women out of 40 MPs (7.5 per cent), in 1951 there were four women out of 40 MPs (10 per cent), and today there are six women out of 69 MPs (8.7 per cent). Moreover, Malta is the only country among the EU 27 with an all-male representation in Brussels. And only recently, after long-drawn insistence, one woman was finally nominated among Malta's candidates for the European Court of Human Rights. What explains the phenomenon?

Studies that explore views and experiences of male and female candidates, and factors that determine patterns of gender selection suggest that despite similar qualifications, skills, and motivation for standing for Parliament, women experience prejudice and bias, and few are nominated.

Political parties are the crucial channels to be elected to office, and they guard jealously their monopoly over the selection of candidates, with the levels of reported discrimination varying according to political party.

Although voters have the final say over who becomes a member of the legislature, they make their choice only after political parties have limited the options.

Repeated studies of sex and voting indicate that men's predominance among elected representatives is not the result of voting in general elections, but of party nomination practices that determine the composition of elected assemblies. Thus, much of the explanation of the male dominance of legislatures and governments that characterise Malta's politics results from party decisions about who their candidates will be. In this sense, it is parties, not voters, who determine the composition of elected assemblies.

While in an ideal world women should be selected in proportion to their number, based on the general principles of democracy, reality is such that this does not happen automatically. Positions on party lists are scarce political goods, and are often considered a reward for past performance.

The selectors tend to be men, who themselves have worked their way up. The issue is: how can results of past discrimination be overcome? As evidenced in the high levels of women representation in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, the most effective measure to overcome the gender imbalance in political parties is the quota policy.

The system of quota targets should be used as floors below which women's representation is not allowed to fall, rather than ceilings above which it cannot rise. Opponents claim they are discriminatory, promote token women, and undermine the ethos of equality.

However, arguments for the equality approach without positive discrimination have failed to increase the representation of women, and there is consensus that it is necessary for women to have other women, and not men, speak on experiences and interests that concern women directly.

Although designed as a temporary measure to overcome the imbalance existing between women and men, Malta is divided over the quota strategy. Perhaps to appease opponents of the system, US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec referred to the quota policy as an 'outreach' in his presentation to a seminar at the Malta office of the European Parliament recently.

Research on gender politics shows that understanding the combination between a traditional 'gender regime, and the constraints women face in life, contributes to understanding the barriers that stand in the way of women who aspire to active participation in national politics.

The place of women in elected assemblies is a good indicator of how much society values their political contribution. Scholars of political science generally agree that a traditional gender ideology is a major barrier to women's access to political decision-making, and there is evidence to suggest that party support in Malta is not always there to facilitate women's candidacy but rather to increase party popularity among voters.

Women deal with issues that men are less likely to encounter. By bringing these different experiences and knowledge to Parliament, women will be able to effect change on issues that concern them.

However, women in the House are operating in a largely male dominated structure, and are too few to improve the situation or press for change in Malta. The UN signals that the effect of women on high-level decision-making will only be felt when their representation exceeds 35 per cent.

The gender distribution of MEPs in member states rose from 16.6 per cent in 1979 to 35 per cent in 2010. When will Malta look abroad for lessons in achieving a more balanced representation of women and men in politics?

Dr Camilleri Cassar is a senior lecturer at the University of Malta.

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THE TIMES

Friday, March 26, 2010 , by

Douglas W. Kmiec

Healthcare as a human right

Lyndon Johnson famously favoured the von Bismarck quote that "laws are like sausages, it is better not to watch them being made".

That pretty much sums up the final crucial days of deal making the President of the United States had to endure to establish what Malta has known and enjoyed for many generations: that the provision of medical care is a basic human right. Earlier this week, by a vote of 219 - 212, the US Congress extended health care to some 32 million Americans who, because of poverty, unemployment or pre-existing or chronic illness had been literally priced out or excluded.

Lesser men, certainly public figures concerned about their own political fortunes, would have either not taken up the topic or given up in the face of orchestrated opposition. President Barack Obama did neither. Instead, he invited his opponents to discuss their opposition and offer alternatives. Most every opponent who had a constructive suggestion, such as those addressing the avoidance of fraud and keeping federal money from being misdirected in support of abortion, found the President amenable to making a responsive change. Unfortunately, some in the opposition were chiefly interested in labeling the President a socialist. These obstructionists persist in their unhelpful ways, as evidenced by over a dozen lawsuits challenging the new law.

Many readers know that my prior life was teaching and practising Constitutional law for prior presidents and private clients. I can say without fear of contradiction that these cases should be easily dismissed as frivolous. Because they lack all reasonable prospect for success, they also merit no preliminary relief interfering with the extension of benefits.

As this is written, the opposition is engaged in yet another effort which would make even Machiavelli blanch. The new law still requires a final Senate vote reconciling differences between the House and Senate. As part of that process, the opposition offered up a Trojan horse: an amendment for a public option as a competitive check on the market. The opposition finds the public option distasteful but is making this effort to draw off progressive votes and unravel the overall reform. This should fail.

Returning to President Obama's transformative achievement: What are the law's main benefits? Primarily, again, this is legislation that extends health insurance; it does not create a government-run health programme, cancel the existing insurance policies many upper income Americans enjoy through their employments or dictate that one change doctors.

In the immediate, the new law extends insurance to children with pre-existing conditions, allows parents to keep their older children up to age 26 on their health plan and offers a tax credit of up to 35 per cent to small businesses to insure their ranks, a responsibility that will be made more affordable by purchasing pools that spread risk.

Senior citizens will begin to have access to prescriptions at a deep discount reaching 50 per cent in 2011.

All Americans will benefit from the more uniform and responsible regulation of the insurance industry, including an accountable appeals mechanism to challenge treatment denials, an explicit requirement that 80-85 per cent of premium dollars be spent on medical service, not corporate bonuses, and the provision of monies to increase the numbers of primary care physicians, nurses and medical assistants. There is also funding for doubling the capacity of community health clinics over five years.

Healthcare is never "free" and the cost of the new law is borne largely by those making in excess of \$200,000 per year, with the bulk of assistance directed at individuals earning less than \$88,000. The high-end tax increase phases in gradually, beginning in 2013, with the so-called Medicare tax going from 1.45 per cent to 2.35 per cent. Once the funds are on hand for the

needed subsidies, the requirement that all Americans have insurance or face a fine begins in 2014.

Will Americans appreciate the significance of using the government for this act of health care solidarity? Yes, Fox television notwithstanding. This American, in particular, shall always be grateful to have carried to the White House and to our home town of Los Angeles, through some thoughtful writing by my wife Carol, the healthcare lessons from this island of "uncommon kindness". As one doctor articulated in the health forum our embassy held at Mater Dei Hospital earlier this month: "You know, Mr Ambassador, in Malta we train for medicine because it is a unique way to be needed, to be of service and, in that service, we are fulfilled."

Well said and, by the vote this week, a lesson learned.

The author is the US Ambassador to Malta

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THE TIMES

Tuesday, January 19, 2010 , by

Joseph Vella Bonnici

Neutrality is far from dead

US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec has stirred up a hornet's nest in seeking "clarifications" on Malta's neutrality. He could not have selected a more sensitive issue in presenting his credentials to the public. Overall reactions confirm that the Maltese still care about neutrality; it is closely associated with our national identity and sovereignty. We are proud of who we are, even if, at times, it appears that we would sell our souls for economic gain.

The Ambassador proved that he is a quick learner. In his contribution to The Sunday Times (January 3) he quoted our Constitution: Malta is "a neutral state actively pursuing peace, security and social progress among all nations". This is the essence of our neutrality, the rest is form.

Modern European neutrality dates back to 1815 when, during the Congress of Vienna, the Great Powers sought to prevent small buffer states from being a cause of conflict and formalised the "neutralisation" of Switzerland. Belgium (1831) and Austria (1955) are other examples of states that were bound by treaty to remain neutral. By contrast, Sweden's neutrality is voluntary.

Malta's neutrality is more of a political statement than a legalistic one. Neutrality is about credibility and is defined by its context. Malta sought to underwrite its being "permanently neutral" by bringing together elements from various streams of "neutrality" and incorporating neutrality into our Constitution. The issue of "guarantees" by foreign powers (Italy) is a feature of "neutralisation". The proactivity of our neutrality arose out of "neutralism", which emerged out of the post-World War II decolonisation process. Newly-formed nation states like ours felt that the political, military and economic world orders were alien to their needs and interests.

These new states joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which not only rejected power politics (as inspired by Mahatma Gandhi) but actively sought to create a new world order. Non-aligned nations could not enter into a military alliance or serve as a military base for any superpower as this would inevitably help to maintain the existing world order. Equidistance, though desirable, was not of fundamental importance as evidenced by the membership of Yugoslavia, Cuba, Singapore and Egypt. Until it joined the EU, Malta was a member of NAM. The US, under President Barack Obama, is working towards increased multilateral diplomacy and a peaceful, disarmed world. This brings it closer to the aspirations of NAM.

Of course, there were times when the US flirted with neutrality. During the inter-war years, the Neutrality Acts were intended to safeguard its commercial interests. During World War II, it was only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour that the US abandoned neutrality and started to treat it with suspicion and hostility. In the 1950s, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, described neutrality as "obsolete", "immoral" and "short-sighted". As President George W. Bush more recently put it "you are either with us or against us". In fairness, Ambassador Kmiec admitted that this "was a very simplistic way of knowing who the enemy was but, today, we realise this was a deeply flawed way of looking at the world" (The Times, December 5).

Since the 1980s, Malta has changed and so has the world around us. Superpowers are today gauged by economic, rather than military strength. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the demise of ideology, globalisation, 9/11 and its aftermath have changed the world. The rise of terrorism has redefined security. Threats are more likely to originate from

"non-state" organisations such as al-Qaeda and, today, include those of the economic, political, societal and environmental kind.

Global governance and the absence of adequate regulatory frameworks remain a primary challenge for the international community. The answer lies in strengthening the role of the United Nations so as to promote collective security, human rights and global solidarity. No single power has the credentials and track record to take this role upon itself. The Maltese Constitution allows that, at the request of our government, foreign forces can use local military facilities "in pursuance of measures or actions decided by the Security Council of the UN".

Neutrality has been pronounced dead on many occasions. It survives. Neutral states are increasingly playing the role of facilitators and brokers of peace. The biggest question for Malta is not the continued relevance of neutrality but the way that EU foreign and security policy will evolve. This issue is relevant to all the "neutral" EU member states (Sweden, Ireland, Finland, Austria and Malta). The biggest hurdle is faced by Austria which, technically, requires the approval of its 1955 Treaty "guarantors" to relinquish its neutrality. Let us hope that in defining the way forward in this field, the EU will give due thought to Malta's needs, a micro-state at the EU's periphery facing a predominantly Muslim hinterland.

In the meantime, Malta, within the limits of its resources, should continue to strive for an equitable world from within EU. The reference to bipolarity has become anachronistic but this is not of essence to neutrality to induce us to rush in changing our Constitution. We should wait to see how the global and EU scenarios will evolve. Unless there is a hidden agenda for Malta to join a military alliance.

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THE TIMES

Tuesday, December 22, 2009, by

Douglas Kmiec

An important step forward

As political leaders in Malta, Europe and around the world have recognised, the agreement reached in Copenhagen this weekend may not be the perfect, comprehensive and legally binding accord hoped for, but it is an important step forward towards addressing the causes and effects of climate change. For the first time in history, the world's major economies have come together to accept their responsibility to take action to confront the threat of climate change.

President Barack Obama's leadership was a key factor in securing this historic accord. He came to Copenhagen thinking the Danish Prime Minister had articulated a framework for political and immediately operative steps towards addressing climate change and found the discussion had bogged down over endless speculation about the hundreds of billions of dollars of mitigation that would be desirable for developing countries to have, but that no developed country could pony up now given the economic circumstances around the world. There were also some last-minute concerns with verifiability in China.

Those wishing to rectify the serious imbalances between the haves and have-nots know that more mitigation will be needed than that which is on hand, but to simply bemoan that fact would be to sacrifice the chance to address any present need simply because we anticipate greater needs in the future. Similarly, while perfect verification would be desirable on the part of all nations, the discussion about verifiability would be altogether moot in the absence of any workable agreement.

Throughout the summit and the lead-up to Copenhagen, President Obama pursued an approach of "principled pragmatism". As Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi thoughtfully observed, there is more to do but the change in perspective in favour of sound environmental practice should not be dismissed as a "failure", because that unwisely makes the perfect the enemy of the good.

Allowing the US, the EU and 194 countries to agree on the need for reducing emissions with a mitigation target of 2°C, forging a commitment to provide significant sums to developing countries to meet the hardship costs related to slowing development and acknowledging an obligation and understanding of the importance of transparency were all important steps forward. As President Obama said at the conclusion of the summit, if the countries had waited to reach a full, binding and comprehensive agreement, "there might be such frustration and cynicism that rather than taking one step forward we would have ended up taking two steps back".

Mr Obama is clearly not his predecessor, who seemed to lack the necessary ability to reconfigure a game plan when an original one planned in the Oval Office simply wasn't working. Contrary to the all-or-nothing, you're-either-on-our-side-or-against-us previous mentality, the Obama method involves continuous study and reconfiguration of strategy in order to lead to practical judgment. Older forms of diplomacy would have likely led to stalemate, with both sides posturing and neither side committing. This is what was occurring between the developed and developing nations before the President's arrival.

Even some of the US bargainers seemed more transfixed by China's unwillingness to verify its promised reductions over its still-increasing rate of emission than in finding common ground, whereby China would commit to making an environmentally-sensitive promise closer to that of developed nations than emerging ones. In other words, pig-headedness about measuring standards was causing negotiators to lose sight of the fact that China, at least in announced intention, was signalling a move closer to US and EU standards.

The essence of the Copenhagen agreement calls for some of the largest greenhouse producers - China, the US, Brazil, India and South Africa - along with all participating countries, to list specific actions they have taken to control emissions and the commitments they are willing to make to achieve deeper reductions. There is also a method for verifying reductions of heat-trapping gases.

Environmental perfection? Not yet. A genuine, tangible step toward environmental sanity? "Yes, we can!"

The author is the US Ambassador to Malta. Print Email

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sunday, December 6, 2009

Editorial

Settling the neutrality issue

Malta has hosted many resident am-bassadors. Some view their stay as a break, enjoy the sunshine and leave as inconspicuously as they arrived. Others adopt a different approach altogether; they learn about the country's traditions and culture and contribute to its development by sparking debate.

The new US Ambassador, Douglas Kmiec, has already shown that he will belong to the latter category. He started the past week urging Malta to contribute to the US's campaign in Afghanistan by offering training to Afghans in agriculture and good governance, and he ended it by entering into a subject that has been a hot potato on our shores for a number of years: neutrality.

Prof. Kmiec said: "While I respect how Malta values its neutrality, the question I ask is: neutral to what? Is it neutrality to peace? Is it neutrality to assisting those striving for peace?"

Critics will argue it is only natural for a US ambassador to try and get Malta to play a bigger role in a week when America announced it was sending an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan. There may be some truth in this. But that does mean his comments should not be used as an impetus to resolve our long-standing debate, particularly since they mirror remarks made by former President and Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami at the start of the decade, who said: "The Constitution states that Malta is a neutral state actively pursuing peace. (But) being neutral means sitting on the fence and not pursuing anything. This is a contradiction in terms."

There is as much significance in what Prof. Kmiec said as where he said it, since he was speaking at a seminar organised by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies to mark the 20th anniversary of the Bush-Gorbachev summit - the historical meeting that put an end to the Cold War; which was the state of affairs used to justify the tenuous wording in our Constitution in the first place.

It is not just world affairs that have made certain provisions in this section of the Constitution obsolete, but our own as well. When the terms were drafted and accepted in 1986, the then opposition Nationalist Party's priority was to ensure there would be no repeat of the 1981 election debacle when it was deprived of power after gaining the majority of votes. In the political climate that prevailed at that time, when Malta's democratic credentials were being put to the most severe test, making this compromise was a small price to pay because it allowed Malta to step back from the brink.

However, the neutrality provisions have caused problems ever since, both in the context of our new reality which is the European Union as well as in economic terms. The issue should have been resolved when it reared its ugly head in 2001, after the General Workers' Union ordered

dock workers not to honour a lucrative contract to carry out work on the US military vessel La Salle.

The union was forced by the government of the day to capitulate, but an intransigent Labour opposition ensured there was no change in the Constitutional position.

Joseph Muscat has a golden opportunity to put that right, by taking up the long-standing offer to debate this issue. Malta has in the past only discussed neutrality when there has been a crisis. This time let us use a historical anniversary to resolve the matter once and for all

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sunday, November 1, 2009

US school heads in Malta

A delegation from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) arrived in Malta last Friday. During their visit, the delegates will meet local education officials, visit a number of schools and meet with officials from the University and the Malta College of Arts Sciences and Technology. The group leaves on Thursday.

US Ambassador Douglas Kmiec will host a reception at his residence on Tuesday during which the AASA delegates will be able to hold discussions with local counterparts in education as well as representatives of the different religious faiths in Malta.

The ambassador is keen to facilitate the introduction of comparative religion in school curricula as a means to encourage understanding between faiths.

Prior to their arrival in Malta, the AASA members were in Sicily to take part in the 36th Invitational International Seminar on Schooling (IISS). The seminar was aimed at bringing together senior Sicilian education policy makers and North American educational leaders to discuss policies and issues that affect national and primary schooling worldwide.

The IISS has enabled and enhanced collaboration efforts between and among educational organisations worldwide and has facilitated constructive dialogue on important issues affecting education and society

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