

# ÁRPÁD PASSED AWAY ... PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON A QUIET BUT EFFICIENT HUNGARIAN INTERNATIONAL LAWYER – IN MEMORIAM ÁRPÁD PRANDLER (1930-2014)

*Péter Kovács\**

Árpád Prandler [Photograph courtesy of the ICTY]



## WHO IS A GREAT INTERNATIONAL LAWYER?

Is a great international lawyer the author of innumerable articles, regularly cited or referred to, or a habitual key-note speaker of conferences? Or is he the professional who participates at diplomatic conferences discussing and voting the others' proposals or amending or even substituting them? The expert in the small ministerial rooms who signs hundreds of boring notes each week but who also thinks, planifies and settles small issues in order to implement his aim i.e. serve his country by trying to enlarge its possibilities? Or should we look for such a person among those who are accepted and appreciated by ministers, state-secretaries whether coming from the right or from the left, who will unmistakably do everything in

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their power when promotion of solemn ideas is hindered by simple legal obstacles which threaten the success of a diplomatic meeting?

Or simply, is a great international lawyer a person who can multiply the small number of international legal practitioners, by teaching and helping them either in the department of international law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in other departments or in embassies and missions?

Árpád Prandler was all of them, a real, great practitioner assuming important posts; the most important of which was probably his under-secretary general position in the United Nations (1983-1990) where he took care of the portfolio of disarmament. He was also the secretary general of the 4th revision conference of the non proliferation treaty (1990). But he also participated in the negotiations on the Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea as the chief of the Hungarian delegation and assumed the same function during the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. He was an *ad litem* judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yougoslavia and member of the Advisory Committee on Nominations in the International Criminal Court and also member of the Hungarian National Group of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

In Hungary, he was several times head of the department of international law and he was appointed ambassador. He was a dedicated supporter of the promotion of international humanitarian law and he organized or initiated several conferences, study programs for the IHL.

Moreover, he did not forget about his academic ambitions: he found the time to make scientific researches and prepare and edit textbooks on international organizations. His doctoral dissertation and his book written on the Security Council was for a long time the material that international lawyers could not neglect when researching the first three decades of the United Nations. He was also professor at the Law Faculty of Eötvös Lóránd University and he also taught international relations at the University for Economic and Social Studies.

Árpád Prandler was a person who was always there when work was to be done. He never referred to his previous UN under-secretary general's responsibilities, he never gave orders, he just gave advice and invited colleagues to work with him. He never rebutted opinions expressed by younger colleagues, he simply asked whether the given legal position has a real chance to be adopted by partners.

In the XXIst century, he was already one of the old chiefs of the diplomacy and a highly respected representative of the Hungarian perception of public international law. He never sought fame or distinction and wore his titles with modesty trying to avoid speaking about his own person concentrating rather on concrete international legal or diplomatic problems important for him.

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He was a good colleague, a good boss, a real master and a good, always accessible professor, an elegant gentleman equipped with a *silver top walking cane* in the last years.

He was a great international lawyer. Quiet, but efficient.