

Remembering Richard N. Gardner

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After my post-graduate studies at the Diplomatic School in Madrid back in 1976 and before joining the Spanish Diplomatic Service, I enrolled as a Fulbright-Hays fellow at a LL.M. course at the Columbia Law School. The reason for choosing Columbia was that I wanted to complete my education in the field of International Economic Law. Previously I had graduated from the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, where I had studied European Community Law and read “The Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy,” which had helped me to understand the intricacies of the Bretton Woods system.

At Columbia, I enrolled in the general course on International Law of Professor Gardner during the first semester. I discovered not only a brilliant scholar, but also a great teacher. His enthusiasm was contagious, and his sharp mind provided guidance through the intricacies of the most complex arguments. His lectures always left me waiting with expectation for his next class. Having been educated in a rather formal continental legal system, I found his teaching method a revelation.

I was not surprised when the Carter Administration appointed Professor Gardner as Ambassador to Italy. Ambassador Gardner could not have been a better choice for an U.S. envoy. Italy was at its most critical moment since the war, torn by the Red Brigades and the increasing influence of Enrico Berlinguer’s Eurocommunism. He proved to be a U.S. Ambassador to Quirinale second to none.

I lost contact with Professor Gardner for some years. In 1993, while I was European Union advisor to Prime Minister Felipe González, I heard that he was to be appointed by President Clinton as Ambassador to Spain. We met soon after his arrival, and my wife, Romana, and I were introduced to Danielle, and soon after to their children, Nina and Tony. During the following years we enjoyed many unforgettable moments in their company.

Ambassador Gardner’s mission in Spain was simply spectacular. He convinced President and Mrs. Clinton to visit Spain twice, in 1995 and 1997. He was a key figure in advancing the E.U.-

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U.S. Transatlantic Agenda, an initiative Spain launched in 1995 during our Presidency of the Council of the European Union. He promoted in Washington the candidacy of our Foreign Minister, Javier Solana, for the position of NATO's Secretary General. He also planted the seed of Aspen Institute Spain. These were just a few examples of his achievements. No doubt, Ambassador Gardner has been the best U.S. envoy to Spain that I can recall. He never actually left Spain for good after his mission. He sat on the International Board of Banco de Santander for many years, and he and Danielle visited Spain every year.

I will always remember our long chats during which he would take a piece of yellow lined paper and write down notes. His curiosity and insight were legendary, and after each conversation the old feeling of admiration from my student years at Columbia would come back.

Dick was one of the most generous persons I have ever met. He was tireless in offering advice, encouragement, and guidance. He was able to get the best of everyone because of his kindness and intuition.