

## **Una Voce International President Remembers Michael Davies**

By Ralf Siebenbürger

In the weeks past since the decease of our late president Michael Davies, there has already been said a lot about him. And all agreed that the liturgical tradition has lost one of its most prominent and eloquent defenders. I do not intend to hold here the hundredth obituary for Michael. I would like rather speak about some personal impressions that I got in the years in which I had the privilege to fight at his side for the catholic tradition.

I met Michael Davies first in 1992 when I took part for the first time at a general assembly of the FIUV. Two years later we became closer acquainted. I had meanwhile become president of Una Voce Austria and had been invited by the Latin Mass Society of England to give the opening speech at their general assembly in London. After the general assembly Michael showed me some of the pubs in the City of Westminster. Drinking some pints we spoke about the situation in society and Church and found out that we had the same opinions. Perhaps that was the reason why Michael made me his Vice President, when he followed Eric de Saventem one year later in the Presidency of the FIUV.

Naturally, we came from different backgrounds: Michael was a convert and lived in a country in which Catholics are in Diaspora. That makes faithful in such countries automatically much more combative. I am a cradle Catholic and come from a country in which even today at least on the documents an overwhelming majority are Catholic. In Austria Catholicism is merely easy

and comfortable. And it would not have lost its former position of social strength if the uppermost representatives of the hierarchy hadn't given it up themselves.

But in the observation of the present phenomenon and conclusions Michael and I were absolutely at one.

Therefore, we had a division of labour during his presidency. He as president had to be diplomatic, and so he sometimes could not be as plain-spoken as he would have liked to be. That then was my part. He was the good cop and I the bad cop. I remember the day after my election to become his successor when we went by taxi together to our audience with Cardinal Ratzinger, when Michael said to me: "Now, you are the President and must play the good cop." And I replied: "And you have finally got the privilege to play the bad cop now."

It is one of the duties of *Una Voce* to call for the preservation of the untouched and infallibly teachings of our mother the Church which lead to salvation. Michael described the unadulterated teaching of the church in a professionally sound and precisely worded way, and he unveiled insane developments.

He was the little child from Andersen's tale about the Emperor's new clothes. The insincere assertions about a setting out of the Church on a new Golden Age could not stand before Michael's penetrating and analytical analysis. His books are precious sources for all those who are interested in where the real problems lie. There is for example one of his last works, the "Liturgical Time Bombs of Vatican II." That gives the reader a lot of information. And then,

there is his last work that I read: his book about Medjugorje. I had the privilege to be forwarded the manuscript.

Or remember his recently published biography of Saint John Fisher. Naturally, Michael had a special relation to the holy Bishop of Rochester already because his residence near London once belonged to the property of the Bishops of Rochester. But the topical point in the biography of this Martyr Bishop whom Pope Clement VII promoted to the Cardinalate in his death cell in the Tower is the question of who of our bishops hooting with the wolves of the zeitgeist would be willing to face media representatives and politicians who are far from faith if not even neo-pagan with the same brave fidelity as John Fisher faced his king Henry VIII.

And Michael has written all his critical books with a tremendous love for Pope and Church. What those in the hierarchy who criticise him most likely underestimate is Michael's merit for having kept so many disappointed faithful in the Church. Like a thread running through his works is the appeal not to lose trust in the Church and the hope of the intervention of the Holy Spirit. By that way, he drew his readers' attention to the lighthouses on the heavy seas for those who had lost their bearings. God only knows how many souls have stayed true to the Church and are not fallen into sedisvacantism because Michael had always combined his sound criticisms with his appeal for faith.

He knew that he had fought the good fight of which Saint Paul writes. For that, he was so calm and prepared in his long last disease. Already one year ago he spoke with such composure about his approaching death that only a man is

capable of who knows that he does not need to fear the last things. When I visited him for the last time in May, we sat in his house at the fireside with some good whisky and he told me almost joyfully that he wouldn't be any more with us at the next FIUV general assembly. I think, deep in his heart, he was already in heaven.