

Marie-Louise Rossi

1956 - 2014

Marie-Louise Rossi died peacefully on 27 October. Despite years of difficulty from misdiagnosed cancer, she had been determined not to appear a victim, pushing her body beyond the limit in pursuing her life of so many parts, particularly family and friends, politics and Faith, and her professional career in insurance.

In the City, Marie-Louise was a pioneer for women. For a decade CEO of the international wholesale insurance representative body, she inspired the Reinsurance Directive. Her mastery of geo-politics - including a more evolved grasp than most of the current Cabinet's of the post-1945 post-Westphalian global order - and of the technicalities of insurance was complemented by, for example, detailed knowledge of environmental policy.

Most readers of course knew Marie-Louise through her politics for which there were two big formative influences: family and Roman Catholicism, the latter itself informed and deepened by exceptionally insightful understanding of the First Century. She saw post-1945 European construction in part as ecumenical triumph over totalitarian devilry.



She was immensely proud of both her parents' professional achievements. Circumstances increasingly made her own choices a modern equivalent of those made by her journalist paternal grandfather: rather than indulge Italy's Fascists, he chose

economically straightened but ethically uncompromised life in London.

In other times, Marie-Louise would have headed towards the Cabinet but she was far too principled to develop a Tory political career by even pretending to indulge, after 1997, the Tories' pandemic Europhobia and growing Marxist materialism.

Her political début had been in a One Nation pro-Europe Conservative party and she admired Ted Heath. That never meant being soft on Marxism, the political opposite of liberalism. As a Westminster councillor, for example, she was indefatigable in cleaning out ILEA's Marxist mess. And, on one of so many eventful international tours, she could in a clumsily bugged DDR hotel room - her will was stronger than theirs and, when apt, she had an hilariously impish sense of drama and the absurd - dish it to the Stasi by prolonged gushing about cosmetics.

Active in the Pro-Euro Conservative Party in 1999, she then led its merger into the LibDems, always retaining the warmest regard for Charles Kennedy.

Until the Coalition Government, she was happy and fulfilled in the LibDems, whether on the Federal Executive, standing in 2005 as a super-enthusiastic Candidate in Cities of London and Westminster, helping younger women to get established, rescuing the European Movement and generally helping out with no "Tory" sense of entitlement. Indeed, LibDems who thought her "really" a Tory over-simplified: in some ways she out-liberalled the LibDems, for example wanting rather faster and bolder constitutional modernisation.

For her, and others, the Coalition's Europhobia was by 2012 intolerable. Following the Tories' departure in 2009, the EPP was an absence in British life there was an emerging duty to seek to restore - something we could actually do and not such a jump as there is, through British eyes, much in common between parts of the EPP and of ALDE - and she was prominent in writing the early chapters.

Marie-Louise's private character assessments were accurate, compassionate and, sometimes, as gently iconoclastic as her Faith allowed. She was good at keeping friends, she was overwhelmingly benign and she wanted her life to be useful as, of course, it was.

So many of us would so much rather still have her than wonderful memories of her but, more than a very few can yet know, if Britain's status in the EU is normalised, Marie-Louise will be one of the heroines.

Dirk Hazell: Chairman British Committee, EPP

Very sorry to hear that Marie-Louise lost her battle with ovarian cancer. She was extremely helpful and supportive to me and all of us in our Westminster and City of London Lib Dems campaign leading up to 2010, having stood for parliament herself in the Borough in 2005. And she never said a word about her illness.

Mark Blackburn