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Tribute to Jean-Pierre de Morant (1933-2014)

Head of Cultural Affairs and External Relations of the Collège de France
from 1972 to 1998

André Miquel



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EDITOR'S NOTE

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- 1 **When an institution or a society – or both in the case of the Collège de France – must say goodbye to one of its most loyal supporters, the words it chooses are fitting for the circumstances.**



Jean-Pierre de Morant in 1998

- 2 Fitting? This holds true only if they indeed are so, but not if they are spoken with their full meaning. Commitment, dedication, wisdom, competence, availability, firmness and courtesy, authority and discretion are all words which suddenly recover their full impact when referring to Jean-Pierre de Morant. All these words, and many others, attest to the loyalty of our memory of him.
- 3 Ultimately, they can all be summed up by a single word: passion, the passion for the Collège de France. Jean-Pierre de Morant put remarkable philosophical and literary culture at its service, open to the world all the way to Asia. But that is not all. Destined for a career in one of the most prestigious State institutions, Jean-Pierre de Morant forewent it fully and definitively – I will use the term again – to put himself at the Collège de France's service. Countless times over the years, those involved in daily life at the Collège de France, or who came to discuss situations or project of interest for the Collège's external relations, witnessed this man's exceptional qualities. He was a perceptive leader, who was wholly inspired by a higher interest of which he made himself a spokesperson throughout his life, and as such was unanimously listened to and respected.
- 4 Jean-Pierre de Morant not only paid careful attention to what we call current affairs. He also played a decisive role in advising, supporting and informing the Collège de France when it had to find new resources for its internal functioning and its teaching and research activities. Be it the creation of the Governing Board (*Conseil d'Établissement*), the extensions of the rue d'Ulm or of the École Polytechnique [to create the Cardinal-Lemoine site], or the lectures given outside Paris, first in France and then in Europe and beyond, Jean-Pierre de Morant was present and active in discussing the proposals submitted to the Faculty.

- 5 Of the many initiatives owed to Jean-Pierre de Morant at the Collège de France, the programme to renovate, modernize and extend the premises of the Marcelin-Berthelot site remains engraved in the very walls of the institution. When the time came to name the new teaching rooms, the first one being the lecture theatre, it was decided that it would be named after the sister, confidante and advisor of our founder, Marguerite de Navarre – a name suggested by none other than Jean-Pierre de Morant himself.
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