

at CUC (from 1960 the ANU). In 1963 he was appointed professorial fellow in the Research School of the Social Science where he was to spend the rest of his career, latterly (since 1990) as Professor Emeritus and University Fellow.

His many publications in the field of Soviet (and post-Soviet) society and politics earned him an international reputation, as is attested by his appointment over the years to a number of prestigious visiting professorships at Oxford, Moscow, Washington, New York and Cologne. He was a founding member and first president of the Australian Association for the Study of Socialist Societies (now AACPCS, the Australian Association of Communist and Post-Communist Studies). The following tributes are reprinted with their authors' permission from the Association's newsletter in recognition of his distinguished career and outstanding achievement.

Stephen Fortescue

Reminiscences of Harry Rigby

The dedication in the recent book written in honour of T. H. Rigby (*Russian Politics from Lenin to Putin*, Palgrave, 2010) states: 'In honour of T. H. Rigby. Friend, colleague, teacher, mentor'. I would like to think that Harry Rigby filled all those roles for me.

The first contact I had with Harry was in 1970 in his role as teacher, a guest lecturer in Arthur Stockwin's Soviet Politics course in the ANU's Department of Politics. Harry was, frankly, not the greatest of lecturers, but I was hooked. Despite the somewhat halting presentation there was a clear but accessible structure and fascinating content in everything he said.

Our first face-to-face meeting was late the following year, as it was arranged for me (I was too shy in those days to arrange it for myself) that he supervise my honours thesis. I can't say I remember that first meeting vividly. I do remember the nervousness with which I approached the Mt Olympus of the ANU, the Institute of Advanced Studies, and one of its gods, and was genuinely taken aback that this god invited me any time I liked to come to his office and borrow his books – which meant that I had a major Soviet Studies library at my personal disposal. But I also learned at that first meeting that there was some stern steel behind the mild manner. As I came to the end of a tough third year of my undergraduate studies

and was dreaming of lazy days in the mountains and by the beach, Harry made it clear that my honours year was going to start very early indeed. In fact our first true supervisory meeting, at which my tasks for the summer were handed out, took place a couple of days after my final exam, and rather than in the mountains and on the beach I spent the summer in the bowels of the National Library reading Soviet journals. The other thing that Harry made clear with straightforward firmness was that my research was going to be almost entirely in Russian. It shows how good the teaching was of Rosh Ireland, Margaret Travers, Robert Jones/Dessaix and their colleagues that this very average student of languages was able, with some trepidation, to go off and do what he was told.

I'll backtrack slightly to our second meeting, which I do remember vividly. I decided early to take Harry up on his offer to borrow books from his office. Following instructions I knocked quietly and hearing no answer entered. I saw two legs sticking out from under the desk, and then Harry sprawled on the floor. 'My god, he's had a heart attack, what do I do, what do I do?' (and I'll admit to half a thought, 'and he hasn't even started supervising me'). A head suddenly popped up and Harry announced with a wry smile: 'Just having a nap.' 'The Olympian gods do indeed have their ways,' thought I.

And so it went from honours to PhD (the PhD co-supervised with Bob Miller). I got used to Harry's disconcerting habits of suddenly pausing for long periods and staring off into space in the middle of sentences and more often than not being unable to remember my name when introducing me to someone else. He was genuinely and always mild-mannered, but the no-nonsense firmness was also always there. You knew – through the gentle suggestion that more thought or reading might be required – when he didn't like something. As a good example of his firm guidance there is the story of the MGU exchange. The ANU had an exchange agreement with Moscow State University and it was taken for granted that I would go on it. At this time a lot of literature on the Soviet gulags, including graphic first-hand samizdat accounts, was appearing. At one moment I was so unsettled by what I was reading that I announced to Harry that I wasn't sure that I could handle being in a place ruled by such a regime. Harry declared curtly: 'Don't be stupid. Go and prepare an application *now*,' which I did.

I submitted my PhD thesis in 1976, and left Canberra and the ANU for a number of years. We certainly didn't lose contact in those following years – it's a time I'll come back to later. I returned to the Department of Political Science

in the RSSS in late 1981, this time as a colleague. It says something about the democratic spirit, not just of Harry but of the Department, that there wasn't much difference between being a student and a colleague. Harry still seriously listened to what you said, and seriously responded and presented his own view. He still gave total access to his library and wonderful card indexes. He still used seminars as an excuse to have another cigarette on top of the one a day he allowed himself at morning tea – and once set fire to the ashtray in the seminar room.

I won't go into detail here on the intellectual debt that I and my colleagues in Soviet and post-Soviet studies all over the world have to Harry. I tried to do that in the Introductory chapter to the book mentioned above, but I will mention his book *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917–1922*. It appeared in 1979 and I read it after I returned to the ANU. It's probably the book that has influenced me more than any other I have read, and in a way that was typical of Harry. Firstly, it's an absolute model of what an academic book should be: crystal clear, easy to read and understand, and with as much depth to it as you are capable of giving it. Secondly and more personally, it didn't bring a revolution to my life. I didn't suddenly turn to Soviet history, or radically change what I had been doing for the previous decade. The effect was, like Harry himself, modest but persistent. Sometimes at the back of my mind, sometimes at the front, that classic account of Lenin's struggle to set up a way of getting things done has stayed with me always.

I'd like to think that Harry was my friend throughout the time that we knew each other. But there was one time when I effectively lived with him and Norma, and so perforce we were particularly close. Harry had a study leave in Cologne – was it 1978? I was living in London, happily 'resting' between jobs. Harry and Norma invited me to come and stay with them – for about three weeks if my memory serves me correctly. They were idyllic days. I suppose Harry did some work, but I don't remember it. We seemed to spend our whole time wandering around Cologne, going to museums, galleries, churches, and so on and on – with me being taught and mentored all the time. Of course we had to be home in the early afternoon for the obligatory nap. I had a room separate from the apartment and would lie awake, hearing Sherbet's 'Howzat!' being played over and over, presumably by some young resident of the building. I don't know whether it made me nostalgic for home or not, but 'Auf wiedersehen Charlie' certainly did. The three of us would religiously sit before the TV at 4.30, to watch 'Auf wiedersehen Charlie', a children's program about the adventures of a young German travelling

in Australia. I couldn't even understand the dialogue, but it was good to see the gum trees. Harry and Norma seemed to think so too. And of course on Sunday Harry would take me to a church of a different denomination each week. This long-lapsed Catholic nevertheless experienced a shudder of foreboding as in the Catholic cathedral Harry took communion – would the lightning bolts that the nuns had promised us if a heathen took communion strike? Well, no they didn't. God obviously forgave Harry his ecumenical impertinence.

I left the ANU and Canberra for good at the end of 1984, and meetings with Harry became more sporadic, at conferences and seminars and as time went by more and more at his home on La Perouse Street. I remember very well the last time I visited him at home. I'd been warned by Richard that he was becoming very frail, and so was pleasantly surprised when over a couple of hours he joked, told stories and on one occasion pranced around the room impersonating someone or other. Richard brought me back to earth by telling me that his father tried hard to get himself up for visitors. It was indeed not long after that that I saw Harry in much less happy circumstances, in hospital and the nursing home.

Over the years as I got to know Harry better, I learned that things had not always been easy for this most gifted of men – gifted not just in the sense of his intellectual gifts, but also gifted with a wonderful family, working conditions that embarrassed him when I whinged about the lot of the hack lecturer, generally a nice and comfortable life. But there were bad times, which he revealed to me by chance over the years. Clearly they were overcome with the same mild mannered and gentle exterior combined with a tough and accountable inner core.

I fear that these reminiscences might be as much about me as about Harry. It's that way because he was a very important part of my life, a wonderful friend, colleague, teacher, mentor indeed.