

Bob Miller

**Working With Harry:
Friendship and Scholarly Collaboration**

I. The Beginnings

My first meeting with Harry was in the Harvard University Russian Research Center in 1969, where I spent a summer editing my Ph.D. thesis on the Machine-Tractor Stations and Soviet agricultural controls for publication by the Harvard University Press. I, of course, knew his work and had been using his book on Communist Party membership for courses that I had been teaching at Washington University, St. Louis, at SUNY at Stony Brook and at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. I was surprised at how young and vigorous he seemed – and how approachable.

At our first meeting, we discussed the possibility of my coming to the ANU for an extended period. Under the conventions applying in the Department of Political Science, RSSH, it was his turn to nominate a candidate for the Department in the Russian and East European studies sub-section headed by Harry.

Talk proceeded over the next year or two, culminating in an offer in 1971, when I was in the middle of a Fulbright year in Yugoslavia in 1971–72. Under the terms of my Fulbright, I had to return to my home institution for the following academic year. My wife Ellen and my two little daughters, Juliet and Katya, and I arrived in late July 1973 to a warm welcome by Norma and Harry, with a stocked fridge and a bouquet of sweet-smelling daphne, which we had never seen before. We had expected to stay for three years, the minimum period for which the ANU would pay toward our household removal expenses.

The rest, as the saying goes, is history. Illinois had held open my Associate Professorship for the customary two years, but I was so impressed by the working conditions in the IAS and the warmth of Harry's friendship and collaboration that I decided to stay; I say 'I', because my wife and children did not find it quite so easy to make the change of cultures, friends and family. That came in time.

II. Patterns of Collaboration

From the beginning, Harry and I established a division of labour. Harry concentrated on Soviet domestic political and personnel matters. I worked on Soviet public administration theories and practices, on agricultural policies and foreign policy and on related issues in Yugoslavia and the Euro-communist movement.

We had substantial differences in orientation. Harry was much more focussed on conceptual approaches and classifications, attempting to link Soviet studies to more general theoretical models of politics, particularly Weberian analyses of bureaucracy. I have recently published an essay on Rigby's idea of 'goal rationality' in relation to the understanding of Soviet and Russian foreign policy.

Steve Fortescue, in his Introduction to the festschrift he edited in honour of Harry, tends to downplay the consistency of Harry's conceptualisation of Soviet politics, but I think Harry was more genuinely committed to the exercise of conceptualisation than that. Harry's critique of some of the more modish contemporary approaches, such as interest-group theory and the East-West convergence hypothesis, was not entirely dismissive, as Steve rightly points out. Indeed, Harry's adoption of some of Gordon Skillings's version of these approaches shows a sensitivity and openness that was characteristic of his scholarship. Harry took theory very seriously.

My own more modest theoretical pretensions were concentrated on analysing how Marxist-Leninist ideology informed much of the thinking of Soviet, Yugoslav, Euro-communist and other communist regimes as they tried to reform or modify practice to address the growing evidence of systemic failure in the post-Stalinist period.

Both of us took ideology more seriously as an explanatory factor than did the majority of Western Sovietologists. That was, I think, one of the main reasons for our collaboration being so close, and, for me, at least, so rewarding.

III. Some Examples of Our Collaboration

Perhaps the best examples are the series of peer-reviewed Occasional Papers published by the Department of Political Science, RSCS. Looking at some of them now, I admit to being impressed by the quality and perceptiveness we both displayed. For example, the 1976 Occasional Paper No. 11, entitled *Political and Administrative Aspects of the Scientific and Technical Revolution in the USSR*.

Harry wrote the first section on the Communist Party of the USSR (CPSU) and the STR. I wrote the second section entitled 'Organizing for the STR', which looks at administrative changes dictated by the Party leadership and its perceptions of the opportunities and potential dangers inherent in the STR because of the necessary Western influence it connoted. We both wrote the Conclusions. In the Introduction, I should add, Harry inserted a comment that the separation between party and governmental institutions involved in the STR 'is, of course, somewhat artificial', an elliptical reference to his major conceptual contribution, the 'mono-organizational system'.

Another good example is Occasional Paper 19, published in 1986, entitled *Religion and Politics in Communist States*. Harry was for a considerable period the Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the Anglican Church. He brought me in to comment on Yugoslav and other experience of communist regime control of the various national and minority church bodies. We were both active in supporting Keston College and its director, Rev. Michael Bordeaux to promote 'the Right to Believe' in Marxist-Leninist systems.

In this Occasional Paper, I wrote the Introduction and the chapter on 'The Church and State in Yugoslavia and the Spectre of "Clerico-Nationalism"'. Harry wrote the chapter on 'Regime and Religion in the USSR' and the 'Conclusions', entitled 'How Communist States Deal With the Problem of Religion'. Among the contributors, Eugene Kamenka wrote the chapter on 'Marxism and Religion'; Audrey Donnithorne, the chapter on 'Religion in China'. Others included John H. Miller, Norbert Zmijewski, Leslie Holmes and David Marr.

Another example was Occasional Paper 16, *The 26th Congress of the CPSU in Current Political Perspective*, published in 1982. This was again a highly collaborative endeavour. Harry wrote the sections on Party leadership and internal Party developments. I wrote the sections on foreign policy and current economic problems. Harry pointed out in the Preface that the Congress had at first seemed devoid of any special interest, but on reflection, much had been going on to prepare for the forthcoming transition to a post-Brezhnev era and a period when serious economic, social and political problems had to be confronted. Therefore, the fact that the publication had been delayed for a year, despite initial intentions to bring it out shortly after the event itself, was actually a virtue, rather than a shortcoming. The hagiographic treatment of Brezhnev's 'Leninist course'

and tributes to his personal 'erudition' proved to be merely a premature funeral oration.

A further case of collaboration was the book on *Khrushchev and the Communist World*, edited by myself and Ferenc Feher (Croom, Helm 1984). Harry wrote the seminally important second chapter on 'Khrushchev and the Rules of the Game', in which he argued that Khrushchev was a dictator manqué, not a despot and that his conduct in office showed that the mono-organizational system could continue to function without the personal despotism of a Stalin. My role was to write the Introduction, Chapter Four on Khrushchev and the Soviet economy and Chapter Seven on Khrushchev and Tito.

Finally, I should mention a book edited by me, *The Developments of Civil Society in Communist Systems* (Allen & Unwin, 1992). Harry wrote the important examination of the politics of the penultimate days of the USSR under Gorbachev in Chapter 2, 'The USSR: End of a Long, Dark Night?' He analysed the works of a number of Western and Soviet political scientists on whether the growing activism of some previously moribund 'public organizations' could be equated to the development of civil society and concluded that they could, particularly with the dismantling of central features of the mono-organizational system of party domination from the late 1980s.

My own contribution to the book was the Introduction, Chapter 6 on Yugoslavia, and a Concluding Essay on the legacy of the Communist system on the functioning of transitional societies and the path dependency of their subsequent changes on previous national experiences.

I should end this catalogue of our collaboration by mentioning that I dedicated my book on *Soviet Foreign Policy Today* (Allen & Unwin, 1991) to 'My friend and colleague Harry Rigby'.

IV. Conclusions

Our formal retirement from Pol. Sci., RSSS in the early 1990s did not end our collaboration, let alone our friendship. In the late 1980s, at the end of one of our semi-annual dinners with Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the Lodge, the PM asked us if there was anything he could do for us to foster the study of the changes taking place in the communist world. This was something he had long been interested in and had followed in his frequent meetings with communist politicians. This

was the genesis of the Transformation of Communist Systems Project – a fund for conferences, research travel and invitations to foreign scholars for joint work on relevant projects and to attend conferences organized by us in Australia.

This fund is still in existence, through the Contemporary China Centre and, most recently, the Division of International Politics and Security Studies. Harry and I continued to consult on the fund's use until his second stroke prevented him from coming in to the office on a regular basis.

Meanwhile, we continued to talk on the phone once or twice a week. We discussed recent events in Russia, agreeing, more often than not, on current politics and politicians. I think he tended to agree with his old mate Archie Brown on the relative merits of Gorbachev and Yel'tsin more than I did. I also used to pass on some of the rather ribald jokes my various email correspondents in Australia and overseas sent me, and I am sure his laughter was genuine.

My wife Ellen's and my visits to see Harry and Norma, first on La Perouse Street and then, in the Brindabella Gardens nursing home became increasingly discouraging. I used to bring him newspaper clippings or printouts from the Russian press and copies of *Argumenty i fakty*. However, he confessed to being less and less able to read them, because of failing eyesight and declining comprehension.

The one thing we remember most of the last few visits was the way his face would light up when he saw us coming into his room or the lunchroom for a visit. That was a flash of the old Harry Rigby, my older brother-in-arms. I miss him.