

FAREWELL WORDS FOR PROF. PAUL WILKINSON

Dear Colleagues and Friends,
Dear Paul and Sue,

The idea that Paul goes into full retirement is somehow unreal, despite the fact that he has some hobbies like walking, painting and poetry. We hope we will see him around for many years and we at the CSTPV will reserve a desk for him so that he always can feel welcome now that he has become an Emeritus Professor. Paul will continue to serve as Chairman of the Advisory Board of CSTPV. He has also begun work on a new book dealing with “State Terrorism”.

Let me use this occasion to recall some aspects of Paul Wilkinson’s academic career which began in 1959 when he got his first degree in History and Politics in Wales. What a career it has been. Few of us can hope to equal it.

Simply put: the way we view terrorism has been influenced by Paul Wilkinson. He has left his mark in the field of Terrorism Studies. While some question whether Terrorism Studies is a field in its own right or should not rather be part of conflict studies¹, or at best a sub-field, there is little doubt in my mind that he is one of the fathers of this field.

To prove that, let us go back in time. In the early 1970s, the attack on the Lod Airport in May 1972 and on the Munich Olympic Games in August were the first major wake-up calls. A seemingly new mode of conflict waging was entering the international arena. At Lod, Japanese Marxists were killing Puerto Rican Catholic pilgrims in order to raise the revolutionary fervour of the Arabs, as the only surviving Japanese perpetrator confessed. There were only a handful of academic researchers who took ‘terrorism’ seriously at that time – George Bouthoul in Paris, in the United States Eugene Walter in Boston, David Rapoport in Los Angeles, and Brian Jenkins at St. Barbara and Martha Crenshaw who is now at Stanford.² In the United Kingdom it was Paul

¹ Actually, Paul Wilkinson was Director of the London-based Research Institute for the Study of Conflict from 1989-1994.

² They were later followed by Yonah Alexander (1976) and Walter Laqueur (1977).

Wilkinson who took the lead. Each of these scholars brought something new to the study of terrorism.

Eugene Walter, a Boston-based anthropologist who had studied terrorism in the Zulu kingdoms provided some of the early conceptualizations and noted in 1969 that “Rule by terror, a familiar process in history, has virtually escaped systematic analysis”.

David Rapoport followed two years later, in 1971, with “Assassination and Terrorism” in which he first noted the links between terrorism and religion.

In 1972 Martha Crenshaw, who was writing her dissertation on the Algerian liberation struggle, came out in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* with a seminal article on “The concept of revolutionary terrorism”.

Both George Bouthoul in his *Etudes Polemologiques* and Brian Jenkins at RAND began to develop chronologies of terrorist incidents. Brian would later apply statistical techniques to them.

Brian Jenkins started his RAND terrorism research programme in 1972. His chronology would later, under Bruce Hoffman and his wife Donna, become the RAND-St-Andrews database.³ I am glad to see Bruce and Donna here for this occasion.

David Rapoport and Paul would later become the founders of *Terrorism and Political Violence*, now a leading journal in the field.

Paul, who in the early 1970s was a Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University College in Cardiff, came on the scene in 1974 with his book ‘Political

³ After the departure of Bruce Hoffman and his wife, the database was run under the name CSTPV Database project mainly by students. It has been discontinued in the original form due to the fact that MIPT continued the RAND database with more manpower than available at St. Andrews while at the same time the University of Maryland’s START centre of excellence also started a large database, based on the Pinkerton database. CSTPV donated its events and profiling databases to START and now focuses its data gathering efforts on the collection and analysis of primary full-text and audio-visual documents from terrorist groups.

Terrorism’. It was the second of sixteen monographs that would come from his hands, not to count nine other volumes where he was an editor and contributor (including one on Aviation Terrorism and Security, co-edited with Brian Jenkins), He also wrote at least 17 book chapters and many more articles and research reports in his long career.

It is difficult to see now, looking back more than three decades, how important ‘Political Terrorism’ was at the time. Yet for those who then entered the field – which I did in 1977 – it was bringing much needed conceptual clarity and historical depth which had been largely missing until then (Walter Laqueur’s volumes on the history of guerrilla warfare and terrorism came out only later, in 1977).

Criminologists had largely neglected terrorism because it was ‘political’. Students of War and Peace like Brian Crozier (*The Rebels*, 1960) and Frank Kitson (*Low Intensity Operations*, 1971) had been interested in terrorism mainly from the angle of counter-insurgency. Paul looked at terrorism neither in terms of crime nor war but more in terms of the politics of extremist segments of legitimate social movements.

One of the chapters in Paul’s first volume on terrorism addressed the issue of “Terror against liberal democracies” - a theme that would occupy him for the rest of his life. How could you remain an open – rule of law-based, liberal society when under attack from intolerant fanatics? That was the question. To quote Paul himself: “If the government is provoked into introducing emergency powers, suspending habeas corpus, or invoking martial law, it confronts the paradox of suspending democracy in order to defend it

The question: how can a liberal state cope with terrorism without losing its liberal character has been the main theme and focus of Paul’s research in his long academic career. Another strand of his research, understandably after Lockerbie, has been his focus on aviation security.

Paul has played an important role in the development of the study of International Relations in the United Kingdom and here at the School of International Relations. In 1979 he was appointed to the first Chair in International Relations at the Aberdeen University. In 1989 he was appointed to the first Chair in IR at the University of St. Andrews and remained chairman of St. Andrew's Department of International Relations until 1996 (between 1994 and 1996 as Head of the School of History and International Relations).

Yet Paul's work was not only focused on doing something for the discipline of International Relations. He wanted to make a difference in the world, based on the insights gained from academic study and research. Paul has been doing a great deal of advisory work. After Lockerbie he advised the British Department of Transport. He also assisted the American Federal Aviation Administration and was serving on the US 'Terrorism 2000' Expert Panel.

He also gave his advice to the governments and parliaments of Australia, Canada, India and Japan and to international bodies like the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, NATO and agencies of the United Nations. Most of his advice and expertise, however, went to the British government. He served, for instance, as Advisor for Lord Lloyd of Berwick in his Inquiry into Legislation against Terrorism . Paul authored one of Lord Lloyd of Berwick two reports. He must have been gratified that the government accepted most of the Inquiry's recommendations.

In 1994 Bruce Hoffman and Paul Wilkinson founded the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. It was pretty unique in Europe. Thanks to Paul, and Bruce and Magnus it gained a reputation which far outstripped the resources at its disposal. The gap between the demands made on CSTPV and its resources to deliver them has haunted CSTPV for many years.

Until we moved to this building, the premises of CSTPV at North Street were hardly more luxurious than those in Bin Laden's presumed cave. When Magnus Ranstorp's parents saw the headquarters of the director of CSTPV they were shocked and donated him some new furniture. Paul strategy was that

whenever he had important visitors he would receive them at a more stately place in the University rather than at 118 North Street.

Paul was always an optimist, hoping for better times. To broaden the resource and manpower bases of CSTPV, Paul had the idea of setting up an E-learning programme to generate some steady income and to become less dependent on research council grants and other externally funded project-based research. He believes in the importance of “independent research” that is policy-relevant but not partisan to any given policy or interest group – a notion that you will find back in our mission statement on our website.

Paul has been a much loved lecturer. He hardly needed notes to speak for one or two hours without a pause. His eloquence also serves him well in the many interviews he gave and continues to give – which made him, according to one count, the most quoted academic in the United Kingdom. Media from all over the world call him almost on a daily basis – even at night. One night, it must have been beyond midnight, he got a call at home from Down Under “This is Sidney calling”. Sue, who took the call just answered “I don’t know anybody called Sidney” and hung up.

After 9/11 he has been a consultant, advisory and contributor to many current affairs programmes and documentaries, including “Panorama” and “CBS News”. He has a knack for the felicitous phrase. To quote one: “Fighting terrorism is like being a goalkeeper. You can make a hundred brilliant saves but the only shot that people remember is the one that gets past you”.

He has always liked travelling and there has never been a lack of invitations. He has been a Visiting Professor at the Simon Fraser University in Canada in 1973. Ten years ago, in 1997-98, he was a Visiting Fellow at Trinity Hall, in Cambridge.

Fate has been kind with Paul. A bomb which the IRA had placed under his speaker’s desk in 1991 was discovered just in time by a sound technician checking the microphone Paul was to speak into. “The police are delighted to be

able to study an intact bomb”, was Paul’s dry comment after this close encounter with death. In a strange way the incident was also a compliment to Paul. He had something to say that the terrorists did not want to be said. He was taken seriously, both by the terrorists and by the government. His views carried weight and continue to count. ⁴

In recent years, I Qaeda forced him to study the basics of “fundamentalism” which involves taking some words of holy scriptures quite literally. I understand that in the future Paul will take the concept of “scholarship” quite literally. It will carry him to new horizons or rather shores – as he has been asked to become an occasional lecturer on cruise ships - but not the Achille Lauro, I presume.

It has been said that behind every successful man there is a caring and understanding woman. Paul has been married for 47 years to Sue and despite the fact that he has been a bit of a workaholic, it has been a happy marriage. Sure, he would sometimes be late for diner. One evening Sue got a phone call from him and he said he would not come to diner at all that night - because he was not in St. Andrews but in Bogota. He had forgotten to tell Sue in advance. In fact, he had forgotten himself that he had to be in Colombia that day but Gillian, our secretary, had managed to get him on the plane just in time.

So today we not only want to thank Paul for what he has done for the University of St. Andrews in general and the School of IR and CSTPV in particular - we also want to thank Sue for standing all these years by her man.

Alex P. Schmid
10 October 2007

⁴ Paul Wilkinson also got his share of unfair criticism as he was labelled a “propagandist for the counter-terrorism industry” (cf. www.sacc.org.uk/sacc/docs/wilkinson_oct_2005.pdf), a “terrorologist” “deeply embedded in the elite power structure” (<http://aangirfan.blogspot.com/2005/09/professor-paul-wilkinson-frank-kitson.html>, 06/07/2006. or a “Terrorism academic” by some ‘critical’ theorists who still place ‘terrorism’ between quotation marks and would prefer to ban the term altogether from our vocabulary.