

Tribute to Fred Halliday

By Christopher Hill

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Yesterday was the twentieth anniversary of the death of John Vincent, a close friend and major figure whose loss is still keenly felt in the International Relations Department and in the profession at large. It is therefore particularly poignant for me to be here today with the honour of being able to pay a tribute to another very good friend and exceptional colleague in Fred Halliday. Fred and I were together in the Department for 21 years, a time which passed all too quickly. Here I shall be concentrating on Fred's life in the Department, his relations with colleagues and his intellectual and administrative contribution, which was enormous. Others have dealt, here and at the moving Memorial Service in May, with his broader contribution to intellectual life. I am grateful for their insights, and to a number of friends and colleagues for sharing their private observations with me.

I wish first of all to pay a personal tribute. I had the highest regard for Fred as an intellectual, as a colleague and as a human being. He was always kindness itself to me and extended support to me on a number of significant occasions in my own life.

Despite the fact that we were both products of Oxford in the 1960s – Fred was three years ahead of me – and shared left-wing sympathies, I was only barely aware of his existence before he arrived at the School as a temporary lecturer in the early 1980's. Yet this says more about my roots in A.J.P. Taylor's brand of English radicalism than about Fred himself, as he had long been a leading figure in the more internationalist world of the *New Left Review*.

Within a short time Fred had been interviewed for a chair, and like most other people I made the bad mistake of assuming that his short-listing was more about the future than the present. When he was appointed to the chair I have to admit that my immediate reaction was one of shock and a sense of unfairness – less for myself, as I did not see myself as being ready for such a promotion at the time, than on behalf of other colleagues for whom I had great respect and who had served the Department well over many years.

It did, however, soon prove possible to have a full and frank (which in this case is not the usual diplomatic euphemism for a blazing row!) conversation with Fred about all this, as he was highly sensitive both to the situation in which he found himself and to the feelings of his new colleagues. As a result of this discussion I quickly realised that we were dealing with an unusual, indeed exceptional, person, who had the capacity to have an enormous impact on the Department for good. The personal relationship we developed, and which was then sustained over the decades to follow, was enjoyable and, I believe, of benefit to us both.

For two fairly volatile personalities our fallings out were surprisingly limited. There was only one occasion on which a serious difference emerged. I don't wish to underplay the substance of this, but it remains true that when it happened Fred was, in his own words, 'in the bad

place' which cost him so much peace of mind in the first few years of this decade. Our difference of opinion was over the appearance of the book celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Department's history, which he felt did not do his role in the Department justice, nor the sets of interests which he cared most about. He was angry because it occurred, again in his own terminology, "on your watch". Although I was not convenor at the time I had taken over responsibility for the 75th Birthday celebrations, and one of my most talented students had been a leading light in producing the book. This occasion gives me an opportunity to make public amends to Fred. I have never underestimated his importance in the history of the Department, and on reflection I agree that the book does him less than justice, even if this is also true of many other individuals. Still, the student editors did deserve thanks and great credit as they rose to the emergency caused by the absence of the authorised history of the Department, which we had expected to be finished in time for the anniversary.

Adam Roberts, in his well-crafted tribute to Fred at the memorial service last May, painted a picture of Fred as a person who had gradually been socialised by his membership of the LSE IR Department into a position where he was not so far removed from that of the English School which is so readily associated with us all. There is some truth in this but in my view it is not the whole story. Fred himself accepted that the subject of IR was virtually new to him on appointment as Professor in the Department, and he worked enormously hard to master its literature. Being the person of talent and enormous productivity that he was, this did not take him long. It led him to be attached to the subject, as he was to the Department as an institution, and to many individual colleagues, to say nothing of the hundreds of students in whose development he played a major part. But Fred had too broad interests, and too strong a commitment to sociological understandings of the world, to be satisfied with a pure English School approach, even assuming that this has indeed been the orthodoxy in recent decades in the Department - which has to be doubted. He was, however, consistent throughout his time in the Department in placing great emphasis on both the *international*, which he thought all other subjects should learn from, and on the importance of *the state* as a counter-balancing factor to more structural understandings of the world, whether materialist or ideational. And he saw the Department as the institutional guarantor of these two, inter-linked, perspectives.

It did not take long for Fred also to become critical of the parochial quality of much IR work, in that it often came relatively late to ideas and currents which had been familiar elsewhere in the social sciences for some time. He was also, of course, out of sympathy with the conservative bias of much English School analysis, given that he was committed to a progressive set of values with respect to the sufferings of ordinary people, and the particular concerns of women, of ethnic minorities and of diasporas. Where he did admire the traditionalists, was in their respect for history, their ability to write clearly but with subtlety – in this, as in so much, he and Susan Strange shared strong views – and in their philosophical and normative preoccupations. He always preferred the direct approach and the ability to tackle the big human issues, having little time for scholasticism, wherever it appeared, whether in the form of rational choice theory or postmodern self-indulgence.

So, in terms of his broad feelings towards the IR Department, my judgement is that Fred was deeply attached to the Department for what it was and because of how it had fostered his own development. Yet he certainly did not see it as a home, in which to retreat behind closed doors. Rather it was a castle, from which he could venture out to engage in enjoyable jousts with other academic champions, and indeed into the world of policy debate in which he continued to join so vigorously.

It is time to turn to what Fred himself brought to the Department of International Relations, rather than how it helped him. Fred was really the first proper social scientist in the Department; not in the well-known current sense of the emphasis on research methods training, let alone following the dictates of Keohane, King and Verba, but in terms of being comfortable in a number of different areas of social science and being familiar with the great works that have appeared within it. Indeed Fred would sometimes complain that IR had not produced great books to rank with the works of Weber, Keynes or Freud and thus was always going to be on the back foot in earning respect outside its immediate home patch – even if on other occasions he would acknowledge that plenty outside the field would benefit from familiarity with Carr’s *The Twenty Years Crisis*, Aron’s *Peace and War* or Waltz’s *Man, the State and War*. Had he chosen to, Fred could certainly have made a successful career in the departments of Government or Sociology and also probably in several others (well, perhaps not the Department of International History given his long and less than happy experience as a PhD student!). Few of the rest of us, coming as we did mostly from historical or straight IR backgrounds, had this range. Because of the tremendous depth of his knowledge, the breadth of reading and the sheer sharpness of his intellect, quite apart from his international contacts, Fred had the respect of many people outside the Department. We had, for the first time, not simply a good scholar in our midst, (obviously this had been true before, of key figures such as Martin Wight) but also somebody who carried personal, intellectual and political weight, and thus could never be taken for granted. If Fred entered the lists in any debate, he was always going to be a formidable adversary because he had the capacity to sway people and arguments.

This was despite the disgraceful tendency to denigrate him on political grounds when he was first appointed. Such sniping soon died away as a result of what Fred was able to do in the context both of the Department and the wider School, and it was a tremendous asset to us that we could no longer be patronised by those who saw us as at worst a slightly flaky collection of cod-philosophers, preoccupied with its cricketing metaphors and talk of pond bottoms (as Manning had been) and at best as writing the first draft of history before proper, archival, scholars got round to it. As Nicholas Sims has recently reminded us, as late as 1996 Ralf Dahrendorf was able to publish an otherwise excellent history of the LSE with hardly a mention of the IR Department. But once Fred had become established in Houghton Street, the increasing reaction in the School and outside from non-specialists was, “if Halliday does IR then we must take it seriously”. Perhaps it was true that events were moving in our direction in any case, and that, to adapt Churchill’s phrase about the British in war-time - ‘the nation had the lion’s heart. I had the luck to give the roar’ - Fred simply gave us our ‘roar’. But I rather think that Fred was himself a lion, the defender of the pride whom we

needed to lift our status and our activity onto a more confident plane. It was the combination of intellect, drive and charisma which set him apart. It must also be admitted that Fred was, in publishing terms, the most prolific of all the Montague Burton Professors – with the possible exception of the current incumbent! Four single-authored books for RAE 2001 was a staggering performance, albeit one which took a personal toll.

As a colleague Fred was kind and concerned with individuals who had problems, whatever their differences from him of approach and temperament. On the other hand he did not shy away from difficult decisions and was a firm believer in the necessity of clear leadership. He made no secret of his view that it was both his right as a senior figure, and intrinsically desirable, to build up a group of colleagues who shared the same broad approach to IR. If there was never quite a ‘Halliday School’ within the Department, he was certainly able to spot young talent and to promote those who shared his outlook. Justin Rosenberg, Katerina Dalacoura, and George Lawson are prominent examples of whom he was proud. Fred’s influence was also felt through the remarkable number of PhD students he supervised – certainly over 50 - which is a tribute not only to the way he was able to inspire the young but also to his phenomenal dedication and work rate.

It would not be fair to say that Fred ran the Department when convenor on the basis of democratic centralism, but he squared the circle between consultation and decisiveness partly through working well with his valued administrative colleagues, and partly through talking personally to academic staff when facing difficult decisions and grand strategy. This was especially true of the senior members. After all, if agreement could be reached among the Readers and Professors – of whom the number steadily grew on Fred’s watch – this was likely to be decisive in a wider Department Meeting. It also ensured that Fred in turn would be consulted fully when no longer Convenor – although it would have been a foolish person indeed who ignored him. On the other hand, Fred did not have the desire to ride roughshod over colleagues or to ignore their serious concerns. Indeed the heterogeneous nature of the Department led him regularly to make concessions and to rethink his own positions even if it led to a significant personal disappointment. In other words the element of democracy was rather more prevalent in Fred’s style as that of centralism.

Fred showed a remarkable degree of generosity towards colleagues, in terms of furthering their careers. With his encouragement people regularly went forward for promotion and, when he backed them as often as not they achieved it. This was after many years in which deserving cases for the Department had run aground at the crucial stage of the Standing Sub-Committee of the Appointments Committee. I was a personal beneficiary of this generosity when Fred encouraged me to put myself forward for the Montague Burton Chair after the devastating shock of John Vincent’s death only a year after John’s arrival in that position – while at the same time standing back himself. Fred could easily have taken the named chair while using the vacant post to appoint someone in his area of interest at a more junior level, but he did not.

It is difficult to separate out Fred's intellectual contribution to the Department of IR from his wider role in the School and the profession as a whole. However, given our particular strengths, weaknesses and gaps at the time of his arrival, it is possible to measure some of the ways in which he strengthened us, as he undoubtedly did. Firstly, Fred's unparalleled ability to teach and advance research on the international politics of the Middle East, built on strengths which Philip Windsor and others had brought, but greatly outstripped them to the point where our Department attracted top-class research students through being one of the best places in the world to study the international politics of this highly complex and divided region. In his ability to relate the dynamics of a particular region to the overall international political system Fred was of course working in parallel with Michael Leifer and Michael Yahuda who had already blazed the trail in relation to their own interests in East and South East Asia.

Secondly, Fred brought together his interests in social upheaval, in international politics, in political ideas and in foreign policy analysis in his work on revolutions and international politics. Fred was disappointed that his book on this subject never seemed to get the attention which it merited particularly (if not unpredictably) in the US, but it remains a splendid achievement which ought to shape thinking about the interplay between domestic and international politics for many years. If he had not used Marx's term 'the sixth great power', or even the word 'revolutions', in the title, it might have seemed less alarming to those of a particular political disposition. But Fred would have scorned such timidity. The book, apart from anything else, displays Fred's deep understanding and knowledge of modern history, and his ability to relate historical data to ideas without falling into the all too common tendency to pick and choose convenient examples on an inductive basis. Fred worked through the great events of history from the inside and was able to strike the balance between particularity and commonality in a rare way.

Third, perhaps the single most important addition from Fred's point of view which he brought to the Department was the subject of gender and IR – not that Fred saw it as a specialised or optional subject. For Fred gender ran through the whole of politics, domestic or international, like the word 'Brighton' in a stick of rock. (The words '*Brighton*' and '*Rock*' of course immediately bring Graham Greene to mind - another worldly intellectual from a Catholic upbringing all too willing to write a '*J'Accuse*' when faced with injustice). Fred was completely straightforward about his support for introducing the study of gender to IR, never showing the slightest embarrassment about giving the lead as a man. He knew he was doing it neither to ingratiate himself with women, nor for the pleasure of pioneering. He struck me as a natural feminist, and indeed – on the normative side - as someone who saw that the interrogation of gender attitudes would benefit men as much as women. He seemed completely gender blind in his dealings with colleagues and students, except in his readiness always to help those he saw as structurally disadvantaged. In pedagogical and research terms it is well known that Fred's initiative in launching gender as a dimension of IR in this department rippled outwards, through BISA and other channels, thus encouraging many young scholars to work in the area. This happened in parallel to the steady increase in the

number of women studying IR – a phenomenon which was happening independently of Fred, but to which he certainly gave a big helping hand.

The last major dimension of Fred's contribution to the work of the IR Department – and there were many other aspects which I do not have time to touch on – was his stress on the importance of peoples as much as states in international affairs. This was most evident in his enthusiasm for work on human rights, itself deriving from what he liked to see as a proselytising for 'Enlightenment' values. The latter led him to oppose vigorously any hint of relativism and/or postmodern playfulness. For Fred, human rights and the fate of peoples suffering under oppression were far too important for playfulness, or for sentimental 'guff' about a global civil society. It was Fred's understanding of the irrevocable command power of states on the one hand, and of the need not to abandon the helpless on the other, which fostered his consistent opposition to Saddam Hussein, which in turn led to that support for the US in the first Gulf War which cost him so many friends on the left. This was a position in which he demonstrated his characteristic intellectual and personal courage. He was completely clear sighted about the damage which most forms of regime, notably in the Middle East, are capable of inflicting on their own as well as on other peoples. And he was resolute in his opposition to them. At the same time his political realism and his growing understanding of the state system as a key level of analysis, led him to be sceptical of mere ideological posturing, whether of the standard anti-Israel variety, or the patronising, semi-racist attitude towards Arab societies evident in too many quarters in the West. In this he persistently gave the lie to those who, like Hedley Bull (in a typically half-serious insult) had cast him at the start of his academic career as a 'Marxist rat bag'.

As a teacher Fred was virtually unparalleled. We all have different styles and make our own distinctive contributions to the rich mix which is the teaching of IR in the School, especially in what became during the 80's and 90's a large and important department, but Fred still stood out. He was charismatic, dynamic and well organised. He was also, of course, a brilliant time-manager, which enabled him to take on the heavy load in every aspect of his job. He understood the importance of timing, of humour and of the combination of carrot and stick needed to bring PhD students to the finishing line. He spoke and wrote the English language beautifully, quite apart from his remarkable command of foreign languages, which left the rest of us open-mouthed (or rather, with mouths firmly shut when he was chatting to a foreign visitor in his or her own language!). He could deconstruct a text with the best of them and add, where necessary, a touch of rebel rousing oratory. He had none of the bullshit, cant or droning garrulity all too common in the lecture hall.

Fred's effectiveness as both colleague and teacher was, in my view, partly through the interest in psychoanalysis which he used to throw light on his own behaviour and on that of others. Fred was not crudely reductionist, but at the same time the Freudian tradition helped him to make sense of colleagues whose political positions alone he found baffling or indefensible. It meant that even at his most decisive and rambunctious he was aware of the way in which all our behaviour is to some degree the product of private misery. But I have no doubt that his effectiveness and decency as a colleague was also the product of his long partnership with Maxine Molyneux. Even Fred could not have sustained the pace and

intensity of his professional life without affection and wisdom at home, a point he several times made to me, while stressing his own good fortune in that respect.

Fred was a one-off, and a man who made an enormous contribution to everyone who worked and studied with him. In the history of the IR Department, when it is rewritten for the 100th anniversary in 2027, he will be a shining light, one of the key figures in accounting for the Department's quantum leap to its current position of strength. Despite the shenanigans over the 75th anniversary book, I think that most of the time Fred did realise how highly he was valued by the Department as an institution, by his individual colleagues and by the many friends he had made during his years in Houghton Street and Clement House. It is a terrible shame that he has been robbed of more years in which to make even more significant contributions to our subject, and indeed to the substance of international politics. His brilliance and expertise are sorely missed. But he remains an unforgettable presence amongst us.

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