

# **Retirement Speech**

## **Delivered by Prof. W.E. Paterson**

### **8<sup>th</sup> January, 2009**

### **Birmingham**

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Recently Rob Burns, the Professor of German at Warwick said ‘I do so enjoy coming to your annual retirement dos’ so let me assure you this is probably the last. My son-in-law Tom describes the typical academic conversation as one in which the academic talks for 45 minutes about himself and then turns to his partner and says ‘That’s enough from me; what do you think about me?’ This order has been reversed today and I would like to begin by thanking everyone for their kind words. On matters academic it is difficult not to be amused by the chutzpah of UK economists who in a year when even the Queen has raised an eyebrow about their collective failure to anticipate the current financial meltdown awarding themselves the second highest Grade Point Average in the recent RAE.

In retrospect I have been fortunate in my academic career in the places I have worked and the historical timing. In a sense I was fortunate to get a start. In those days patronage played a great role and Frank Bealey, the Professor at Aberdeen, an LSE graduate phoned up Geoffrey Goodwin, the Professor of International Relations at LSE and a man with quite a gruff and forbidding military manner. In response to Frank’s enquiry, Geoffrey Goodwin replied that they did indeed have someone who was academically able but ‘dour and monosyllabic’. I have spent my academic career trying to live up to the first part of the statement and disprove the second. I suspect that there would be general agreement that I had been more successful in the second aim.

Timing was propitious as my initial appointment coincided with a huge expansion. There was then in the 1980s a period of quite stringent cuts when academics were becalmed. I count myself really fortunate to have spent two decades in the Warwick Politics Department. How restricted these times were is illustrated by the fact that for over a decade Richard Gillespie was the only appointment the dept made. In this period of almost total immobility’ the lunch club’ where a number of us met daily to argue about a huge range of issues assumed a great importance in our lives. So much so in my case that in order to compete with its dominant spirit, Lincoln Allison, it was my habit to eat my sandwiches beforehand. From 1989 onwards until now there has been a huge expansion of professorial posts and I moved in these years from Warwick to Edinburgh to Birmingham.

In a wider sense I benefited greatly from the post-1989 changes. Here I must record my indebtedness to John Major for his decision to locate the British EU summit in Edinburgh. On the back of that decision I embarked together with Drew Scott and Wolfram Kaiser on a flurry of activity which included events with Delors, Kohl and Gorbachev, co-launching the Lothian Lecture Series and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the JCMS that really established the Europa Institute internationally. Indeed on the

Monday after the summit someone in the rather somnolent staff club inadvertently tapped their cup with a spoon and legend has it that I was up on my feet and had given the amazed lawyers ten minutes of my 'Europe – the Great Adventure' speech before I was persuaded with some reluctance to show some mercy.

The great change which transformed my professional life was German Unity which radically increased interest in German Politics. My success in raising money in Edinburgh had come to the attention of a south coast university not unadjacent to France and I was invited down for a preliminary interview about the vacant vice chancellorship. I did think that given Sir Christopher Mallaby, a long time ally was Ambassador in Paris, it might have been possible (on the model of Warwick) to turn the geographical situation to advantage and raise resources by interesting French business. There was, however, a great clarifying moment when one of the interviewers asked why I wanted to give up being a full-time academic when my rate of publication had increased exponentially since 1990. From that point I have never wavered in my desire to concentrate on the study of this new Germany, its politics and economics and I therefore accepted the invitation of the DAAD and the University of Birmingham to become the Founding Director of the Institute for German Studies.

Before I turn to these years I can perhaps say a few words about wider activities. After the shock of my first wife Jackie's death in 1974, I was left with two young sons under four and it was not clear what the future might hold. At that point perceiving my situation, Martin Kolinsky suggested a joint edited project on social movements and set in train a pattern of collaboration which has persisted till now and which in a real sense proved a turning point. When I came to Birmingham David Marsh in the FT described me as 'by nature a collaborator' which I took to be a compliment. I like to think that something born of necessity yielded useful results and I am very grateful to my collaborators who are too numerous to mention individually but with none of whom I have fallen out and many of whom are here today. Although all of my collaborators have been uniformly excellent, I owe most to Simon Bulmer who has exercised and continues to exercise an enormous and continuing influence on my thinking. In relation to the old Federal Republic, I valued enormously working with Gordon Smith and our joint edited production 'The West German Model' is something of which I am still proud. In a wider context working with Wyn Grant on our 'Government and the Chemical Industry in Britain and Germany' ESRC project was another especially valuable collaboration. Comparative social democracy on which I cooperated at various times from the mid seventies onwards with Ian Campbell, Alastair Thomas, Kurt Schmitz, Richard Gillespie and Stephen Padgett has been a career long interest.

This collaborative bent was expressed in co founding the journal *German Politics* and co-editing the *Journal of Common Market Studies* with Jim Rollo and at different times I co-founded (with Geoffrey Roberts) and chaired the Association for the Study of German Politics and chaired UACES where it proved possible to negotiate a very generous contract with Blackwells for the production of the *Journal of Common Market Studies* which secured the financial future of the association. In relation to the ASGP, I have been delighted to see the way in which Charlie Jeffery and now Simon Green have taken the

ASGP to a higher plane of collaboration together with our close American friends in the IASGP. I also invested a lot of effort in the Research Priorities Board of the ESRC and initiated an unprecedented number of Programmes with a political science and European focus. The last academic activity I should like to mention is participating on the Editorial Board of *International Affairs* under its incomparable Editor, Caroline Soper

One of the great collaborations of my life has been with Steven Kennedy, publisher *sans pareil*. The centre point of our collaboration has been the European Union Studies Series where Steven brought together the late Vincent Wright, Neill Nugent and myself. At the outset I found working with Steven challenging since no other publishers takes such a determined influence in all aspects of book production but very quickly I came to see just how valuable his input was. Neill Nugent, an incomparable editor has tolerated my less ordered temperament and together with Michelle Egan, a leading US Europeanist and former Warwick student, we founded a new series Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics. Outside the European Union Series my principal collaboration with Steven was in the New Developments in German Politics Series. My memory is that the idea was originally Gordon Smith's and Gordon, myself and later Stephen Padgett co-edited what was a very widely used series Through Steven I met Alison Howson, an Oxford German graduate and Alison conceived and guided this new series and was central to a third series 'New Perspectives in German Studies' which I co-edited with the late Michael Butler. This series has now been refounded as the New Perspectives in German Political Studies edited by Charlie Jeffery and myself. While Alison was on extended leave her place was filled by Amy Lankester-Owen – a whirlwind of purposeful activity. Working with the Palgrave team has been a privilege.

### **Birmingham and UK–German Relations**

Another great collaboration has been with the DAAD and the University of Birmingham in building up the IGS. Here I am enormously grateful to Christian Bode, Dorothea Fitterling, Gisela Schneider and Annette Julius in Bonn and Britta Baron, Christiane Ebel-Gabriel, Sebastian Fohrbeck, Nina Lemmens, Antje Schlamm and Andreas Hoeschen in London. I regard the collaboration with the DAAD as the high point of my professional life. I had had a previous collaboration with the DAAD whose support for the ASGP from its foundation in terms of conferences and election trips has been fundamental. It has been a continual pleasure to work with an organisation of such high professional standards and which takes such trouble to make partnerships work. In that context the DAAD has invested a great deal of effort in building a network of centres of excellence. The IGS was the first to be established outside the United States and it was a huge privilege for me to work with the other founding directors, Sam Barnes (Georgetown) the late Gerry Feldman (Berkeley) and Charlie Maier (Harvard) three figures at the absolute peak of world scholarship. Subsequently I have enjoyed working with a whole range of new centres as the network has expanded. It has been an especial pleasure also to work on a number of projects with the absolutely unique Jackson Janes at AICGS. At the University of Birmingham I am deeply grateful for the unceasing support of the former Vice Principal David Westbury and former Registrar David Holmes.

I am also deeply grateful to all the members of the Institute for German Studies .In the founding years Eric Owen-Smith, Michael Kaser, Peter Pulzer and John Roper contributed greatly to the IGS through their teaching as Visiting Professors. The axial relationship in the IGS for the first decade was that between Charlie Jeffery and myself. Charlie bought into my original vision with gusto and his extraordinary dedication and brilliance meant that together we were able to continually expand on it. My total confidence in Charlie meant that from 1995 -1999 I was able to devote a huge amount of time to the ESRC, secure in the knowledge of my total trust in Charlie and his role at the IGS.

On that basis we were able to secure a continual expansion in the staff of the IGS. Our key areas were Germany and the EU which was a major focus for Charlie, myself and now Carolyn Moore. Over a long period Vladimir Handl has been to our great benefit closely associated with us. In Germany we cooperated very closely with the Institut für Europäische Politik, Hanns Maull and Sebastian Harnisch at Trier, Gunther Hellmann in Frankfurt and Josef Janning and the CAP .Our other major focus was on Germany and security studies the field of Adrian Hyde-Price and Kerry Longhurst. Interestingly and in a way reflective of the collegial atmosphere of the IGS, the work of the two areas has been seen from outside by Jim Sperling as ‘the Birmingham School’ though he added Simon Bulmer into the mix .This is I think a shrewd judgement about Simon’s influence. Simon Green focussed on German domestic politics and immigration. A final and innovative area was the German economy where we were very lucky to have had Jens Hoelscher, Lothar Funk, Rüdiger Wink, Heiko Fritz and Rainer Hillebrand as DAAD Senior Fellows.

For me the IGS has proved to be a site for further intensive intellectual collaboration. Firstly with Charlie Jeffery and Simon Bulmer on Germany and the EU., and then with Dan Hough, James Sloam and Marcin Zabarowski on a Leverhulme Project on policy and programmatic transfer in post communist Europe. This project allowed me to revisit my long established interest in German social democracy, the subject of my doctoral thesis and a topic on which I had later cooperated with Stephen Padgett and where I now work together with James Sloam. In the more recent period my work has been concentrated on working with Simon Green and a team of leading experts on exploring Peter Katzenstein’s concept of semi sovereignty in a post unity context. It was a huge gain in the context of that project to refresh my friendship with Peter Katzenstein and Wolfgang Streeck with whom I have collaborated further. I have just published an edited book with Alister Miskimmon and James Sloam on the recent challenges to the German Model which Gordon and I had celebrated in our conceptualisation of a West German Model

The IGS was set up to provide a successor generation in the study of Germany in the UK and a central value of the IGS was the close involvement of our doctoral students in all our scholarly endeavours. We are enormously proud of the achievements of our doctoral students and the way in which so many of them – too many to list individually have already made such a contribution to the study of German politics and economics. It seems especially fitting that today coincides with an oral examination of our doctoral student,

Laura Chappell by Emil Kirchner. Thanks are due also to Nat Copsey and Carolyn Moore for organising today's event.

One especially admirable tradition in the University of Birmingham is the way that it has involved some of the best and brightest of the FCO in our affairs. The contribution of Julian Bullard, Christopher Mallaby and Paul Lever to the IGS has been immeasurable. I am also personally grateful to Sir John Kerr for his support for the ERI bid.

The achievement of German Unity and the sometimes ambivalent response in the UK have guided my wider public activities. This ambivalence provides part of the explanation for a certain tone deafness in relation to the symbolic dimension of UK–German relations displayed on occasions by UK governments. Conscious through Königswinter of the bruised feelings held by many Germans in relation to the reaction of the UK Government to German Unity, I responded in a laudatio for Willy Brandt on behalf of the University of Warwick and I invited Helmut Kohl to an Honorary Degree Ceremony at Edinburgh University as I judged it important that someone expressed a positive view of German Unity directly to the German Chancellor. It helped that Christopher Mallaby was our ambassador in Bonn.

Since the mid-1990s, I have been intensively engaged with the Koenigswinter Conference. Working with Sir Nigel Broomfield, Maxine Vlieland, Jackie Newbury, Alan Watson, Paul Lever, Edwina Moreton, Gisela Stuart, Timothy Garden, our German partners and the whole Königswinter family has been a great privilege. Concerned by the overheated rhetoric of UK–German relations, David Marsh founded the German British Forum in 1995 to provide a sensible counterweight and I was happy to be involved. A particular highlight for me was the conference we held in November 2008 in Hamburg to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Helmut Schmidt which allowed us to reflect on the financial crisis and pay appropriate tribute to the most distinguished post-war European leader .

The final great collaboration is my marriage to Phyllis and the united family that she has created. Without that nothing else would have been possible. It may have felt to them all as if the Rhine flowed through our sitting room but they put up with that and my many eccentricities without complaint. I am hugely proud of them all.

William Paterson