

Eulogy for Norbert Reich; Hamburg, 6 November 2015

Norbert Reich was a great friend and companion, and one of the most distinguished legal scholars of his generation. His last appointment – as Visiting Professor at Groningen – was, as one might expect from such a learned and well-read man, enormously successful: he was a hit with everyone who met him. Rare indeed is it to find someone who combines personal modesty, academic rigour, and a detailed and also highly conceptual mastery of so many areas of law. Norbert was not a man of ‘airs and graces’. He was thoroughly down-to-earth and approachable, and wore his learning lightly in a pan-European, even slightly British manner.

Norbert’s academic career has been well-described by Hans Micklitz. It falls, unlike ancient Gaul, into four natural parts. The *first* part, with its emphasis on socialism and civil law, saw him offer new perspectives on the market, opening a dialogue and drawing skilfully on legal theory. This resulted in his first two appointments in Hamburg. His studies in Frankfurt, Geneva, Washington DC and Moscow are indicative of a man of broad yet deep learning, with an entirely international and internationalist vision, covering law and political science. His achievements bear testimony to Norbert’s ability to traverse scientific boundaries in search of the broader picture, enabling colleagues to develop and understand new insights.

The *second* part, the Bremen years, saw the establishment and flowering of the ZERP, which became in its heyday one of the most powerful legal research institutes in Europe. Norbert led the ZERP to great heights for nine years. Norbert’s vision, drive and energy were legendary; so too his support for and encouragement of young scholars, many of whom now

occupy Chairs themselves, with great distinction. The Reich School, as it may well be called, is a distinguished and lasting legacy to law and lawyers in many fields.

Norbert raised consumer law in particular to new heights, and was very influential in its development within Europe, often critical of shortcomings in the Commission's proposals and the subsequent legislation. That he should be so much the champion of improvements at European and national level is entirely in line with his concern for others, particularly those less fortunate or articulate: with Gladstone, he spoke for those who themselves cannot speak.

The Bremen years also saw Norbert serve a very successful period as Speaker – to non-Bremenites, Dean of the Law Faculty - at Bremen. All this went hand-in-hand a huge number of publications, witness to his boundless energy and commitment, and his books would go into several editions, each testament to his mastery of his subject. Norbert wrote prolifically in German and in English, and his contributions were widely read and discussed. His standing was rightly acknowledged at a conference at Rostock which coincided with his 60th birthday. Great was his surprise when he was presented with a *Liber Amicorum*; Norbert was caught totally off guard, and his surprise, his modesty, and his gracious acceptance thrilled and warmed the hearts of everyone who was there. It was a glorious occasion indeed! Often a Festschrift signals a retirement to Emeritus status – not so in Norbert's case: his time at Bremen continued with publications streaming from the fountain of a youthful mind. During this period Norbert served a term as President of the European Law Faculties Association(ELFA); shoes which I at present try to fill.

But even the most youthful mind could not resist new challenges, and Norbert took leave from Bremen to become Rector of the Riga Graduate School of Law, and so began the *third*

part of Norbert's career, administrator of an institution. Here too, he worked his magic, and his experience in earlier senior administrative functions stood him in good stead.

On returning to Bremen, his energy was still boundless, and, as Emeritus status was conferred, the *fourth* part of his career was characterised by so much in the way of publications, teaching, and other activities, that a person of much younger years would have been challenged to match Norbert's pace. Only a couple of months ago, in the last semester, Norbert was in Groningen, talking about the next things to do, and in August the third edition of his *Understanding EU Internal Market Law* appeared hot off the press.

With youth comes enthusiasm, with age, comes wisdom, but both of these qualities were high among Norbert's many gifts throughout his career. Norbert bubbled with ideas, always thinking critically, and offering perspectives which others had not (or not yet) seen. You couldn't talk with him without starting to think in a new light about something you thought you knew. It was in his fourth part of his career that Norbert came to Groningen regularly, usually with Renate who supported him, encouraged him, and gently tweaked him in the way that only spouses who are also the best of friends can do.

Of course, Norbert had been to Groningen before, for conferences and for the defence of Doctoral theses. The train journey he thought awful – it is, or at least part of it. 'Now I know what you had to put up with, Laurence, when you came to Bremen.' 'There's always Grashoff as a reward in Bremen', I said, and promptly ensured that he visited 'Onder de Linden' in Aduard from time to time in order to reward his faithful travels. Norbert promptly started working on projects – with Bart Krans in particular, who is here today. The students and doctoral candidates soon found that they had a legal heavyweight in their midst who

challenged assumptions and broadened their horizons. A rich time indeed, and one on which we in Groningen look back with gratitude and admiration, and deep affection.

My remarks have concentrated perhaps too much on Norbert's scholarly activities, but he could also sit down and watch a football match along with younger colleagues with real enthusiasm, enjoying a little refreshment. That made a huge impact on my colleagues who were with him. 'Wow!', they told me, 'That was a real surprise and great fun.'

Norbert was a Visiting Professor in so many places: Stanford, Montpellier; Sydney; Fribourg, Luzern, Tartu, and Vilnius to name but a few. Everyone wanted Norbert's time and ideas, and he gave generously of both. Academic honours duly followed: Honorary Doctorates recognising his countless achievements. When he came to Groningen already he had one, and I duly had an appropriate nameplate on the room which he modestly shared with colleagues: Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Norbert Reich. He didn't notice – as I said at the beginning, he didn't stand on ceremony. During his stay his second h.c. rolled in, and he and Renate went off to Bucharest for the ceremony. Quietly, I arranged that by the time that he returned, the nameplate had been duly changed: Prof. Dr. Dres. h.c. Norbert Reich. He didn't notice that either, although when someone pointed it out there was a slight, and very modest, glint in his eye.

Being with Norbert was always a wonderful experience, whether it was over a cup of coffee, or undertaking fundamental and mostly empirical research into the functioning of the European common organisation of vini-viticultural products. That glint in his eye, his gentle prodding, his wonderful and generous contributions, enriching the lives of all who came into contact with him, that memory will live on. May he rest in Peace, and may his memory be immortal!

Laurence Gormley.