

John Vincent 1943–1990

Editor of *Review of International Studies* 1985–1989

The death of John Vincent in November came as a terrible blow to everyone who knew him and has left a gap in the profession which will be difficult to fill. John's scholarship gave him an international reputation but he also established a world-wide network of friends during periods of research at Canberra and Princeton. He was a marvellous ambassador for Britain, creating a reservoir of good-will wherever he went.

John's death was unexpected and untimely. It cut short his career when it was in full flight. Although his contribution to scholarship and the profession was substantial, he had without doubt an even greater contribution to make in the future. His appointment as Montague Burton Professor at the London School of Economics in 1989 marked an important development in his career and it gave him a position of influence from which he could have made a significant impact on the study of international relations in Britain. He had already been asked to advise the ESRC on research training in the discipline.

John's international reputation as a scholar was established early in his career. After completing his BA at Aberystwyth and his MA at Leicester, he moved to the Australian National University to write his PhD. He investigated the evolution of thinking about military intervention into the affairs of other states. The thesis was examined by Richard Falk who was immensely impressed with John's work. At Falk's recommendation the thesis was published, in 1974, by Princeton University Press. *Nonintervention and International Order* has gone on to become a classic in the field. It provides a staunch defence of the principle of nonintervention, although in later years John began to consider the virtues of humanitarian intervention. His other major contribution, *Human Rights and International Relations*, published in 1986, like his work on nonintervention, reflected the conviction that serious attention must always be paid to moral questions in the study of international relations. Everything John wrote was based on a careful consideration of the evidence, contained telling insights, and was presented in enviably lucid prose. His scholarship will remain a legacy for the future.

When the British International Studies Association was established in the mid-1970s, John Vincent immediately recognised the important role it had to play in the development and defence of the profession. After he took his first teaching post in Britain in 1976 at Keele he very quickly became an active member of the Association, joining the Executive Committee in 1978 and taking over as secretary in 1980 for two years. The widespread respect for John within the Association made his appointment as editor of the *Review of International Studies* a popular move. He took over from Roy Jones in 1985 and remained editor for four years. During this period, he moved from Keele to Oxford but when he took the chair at the LSE, he resigned as editor. He felt that it was beyond even his boundless energy to run a large department and edit a journal.

John enjoyed editing the *Review*. He had no wish to innovate and accepted what he called the 'vision' of the journal passed on to him by the founding editor, Jack Spence, and his successor, Roy Jones. John successfully ensured that the *Review* provided a mirror of developments in the study of international relations. He also wanted the journal to appeal to a wide readership and so the arguments and prose of all contributions had to be crystal clear. John spent much time and trouble ensuring that this was always the case. Reading through his reports to authors, I was very impressed by the way his exacting standards were always imposed with the utmost courtesy and tact.

At a personal level, it is perhaps John's kindly concern for others together with his impish sense of humour which will most be missed. No one who heard the exposition of his eggbox theory of international politics will be able to refrain from a smile.

I telephoned John a few days before he died to ask if he would do a review article for me. He was very enthusiastic about the idea and said that it would provide a convenient springboard from which to launch himself into a new area of interest. Whatever the interest was that he had in mind, it is certain John would have opened it up in a new and intriguing way. Sadly, it was not to be.

Richard Little