



Myron Rush

January 1, 1922 – January 8, 2018

Myron Rush was born in Chicago, Illinois on New Year's Day 1922 and studied at the University of Chicago, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1942. During World War II he served in the Army Air Forces as a meteorologist and later as an encryption specialist. Upon discharge, he resumed his studies at the London School of Economics and the University of Chicago where he received his Ph.D. in 1951 with a dissertation on "Disillusion in American Social Thought 1880-1920." He is best known as a scholar of the Soviet Union and a pioneer in the methods of "Kremlinology."

Rush began working on the Soviet Union in the 1950s as an analyst at the US Central Intelligence Agency and its Foreign Broadcast Information Service, where he learned to read Russian and developed his ability for close scrutiny of the public Soviet press as well as classified intelligence materials. In 1955, Rush joined the staff of the RAND Corporation, a think tank founded by the US Air Force in Santa Monica, California after the war, primarily to analyze Soviet foreign and military policy and develop strategies for nuclear war.

In 1965, Rush co-authored a RAND study, *Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy*, with fellow RAND analyst, Arnold Horelick. When published as a book it became his most cited work. That same year he was hired to Cornell's Department of Government.

Rush's subsequent work focused on leadership succession in the Soviet Union and other communist states and relied on Kremlinological techniques such as observing the line-up of top leaders at funerals, as well as textual analysis, to identify the likely successor. He applied his close scrutiny of texts to the work of his students and colleagues, as well, and could be quite liberal with the use of his red pen. He was even known to improve the prose of quotations from published works cited in his students' papers.

Professor Rush taught popular courses on Soviet domestic politics and foreign policy. In the long-past era when Cornell prided itself on expertise in Russia across the disciplines, he cotaught a survey course on Russia with George Staller of the Department of Economics and George Gibian, the successor of Vladimir Nabokov in the now-defunct Department of Russian Literature. Some of Professor Rush's students, such as Jack Bielasiak, James Richter, and Jeffrey Checkel, went on to become prominent scholars, who supplemented their expertise on Russia and Eastern Europe with broader contributions to the study of political science and international relations.

Throughout his career, Professor Rush maintained his relationship with the CIA, including as its first scholar in residence in the 1970s, and he would take leaves up to two years at a time to spend at the Agency. His involvement with the CIA angered some of the Department's graduate students, who worried that it might jeopardize their employment opportunities. When the students asked that the Department formally prevent Rush from associating with the CIA, however, the faculty declined, maintaining that the Department could not supervise what professors did in their private time.

Rush's retirement from Cornell coincided with the demise of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1993, he published an article in *The National Interest* that argued that even though "it might appear that the Soviet Union was rotten and ready to expire in 1985," when the reformist leader Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, "to my knowledge, no Sovietologist offered that judgment." Nevertheless Sovietologists contributed a great deal to our knowledge of the USSR, not least among them the Kremlinologist Myron Rush.

Known for his devotion to his family, Myron Rush cared for his wife, Theresa, a fellow University of Chicago graduate, in her declining health until her death in 2012. He is survived by three children and several grandchildren, nieces and a great-granddaughter.

Written by Matthew Evangelista (chair), Valerie Bunce and Isaac Kramnick