

Alexander Vucinich, 1914–2002

The death of Alexander Vucinich leaves us with a profound sense of personal and professional loss. Professor emeritus of history and sociology of science at the University of Pennsylvania, Alex died peacefully at his Berkeley home on 25 May 2002 at the age of 87.

Alex was born to Serbian immigrant parents in Wilmington, California. When he was only four, however, his parents were struck down by the flu epidemic of 1918. An uncle took Alex and his brother Wayne back to Serbia, where Alex received his schooling until his graduation from the University of Belgrade. After returning to the United States in 1938, Alex served in the United States Army during World War II. He then went on to receive a Master's Degree at the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. at Columbia University (1950).

A skilled and devoted teacher, Alex began his amazing teaching career at San José State College (1950–1964), followed by several years at the University of Illinois (1964–1970), the University of Texas (1970–1976), and the University of Pennsylvania (1976–1985). After retiring from Penn, Alex and his wife, Dorothy, moved to Berkeley, California, where he remained active as a scholar and as a participant in the activities of Berkeley's Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

Alex was a world-renowned pioneer in his field, the history of science and social thought in Russia and the Soviet Union, and his books have enjoyed a worldwide audience, one that is by no means restricted to specialists in the history of science. Alex wrote seven pioneering books on the history of Russian science and social thought, including: *Science in Russian Culture* (in two parts: 1963, 1970); *Social Thought in Tsarist Russia* (1976); *Empire of Knowledge: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR* (1984); *Darwin in Russian Thought* (1988); and, his last and perhaps most distinguished work, *Einstein and Soviet Ideology* (2001). (Einstein was, in a sense, Alex's greatest hero). Alex also authored many articles and book reviews for *Slavic Review*, *Russian Review*, *Isis*, *Speculum*, *Science*, *Survey*, *American Anthropologist*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, and other publications. Most recently, he published a masterful series of essays on the history of Russian mathematics in *Historia Mathematica*. In his writings, Alex consistently approached the history of science from the perspective of cultural as well as institutional history. His writings were characterized by their meticulous attention to detail, broad comprehension of historical context, and evident respect for the achievements of the scientists whose life and work, often undertaken under the most difficult circumstances, he investigated. Like others, we have been amazed by the intensity and lucidity with which Alex continued to pursue his research and writing well into his eighties, indeed, almost to the day of his death. In 2001 the AAASS recognized Alex's many lifetime accomplishments by awarding him its Distinguished Contributions Award.

Over and beyond all his outstanding scholarly virtues, Alex always stood out as a very special kind of human being. We both met him when we were graduate students at Stanford University, over forty years ago. Alex was a professor at nearby San José State, but like us, he spent a good deal of time doing research at the Hoover Institution on the Stanford campus. Along with other graduate students in Russian history and related fields, we had the privilege of joining Alex for countless cups of coffee at the Hoover's little cafeteria, and we often accompanied him, sometimes together with Wayne Vucinich (Alex's brother and our Stanford professor), on lunchtime excursions to "hamburger joints" in the nearby hills, where Alex instructed and advised us in matters scholarly and personal. Alex and his wonderful, equally sociable wife Dorothy, his companion and close collaborator of over six decades, had a lovely home in Los Altos Hills in those days, and some of our warmest memories are of the many hours we and our wives spent there sipping martinis, eating delicious dinners, admiring the Vucinichs's apricot grove, and communing with Rex, the Vucinichs's splendid German Shepherd, who seemed to share in Alex's quiet sagacity (even if, unlike Alex, he could not share any words of wisdom). In those happy days an invitation to stop off for a drink after the library closed was almost invariably followed by an invitation to stay at the Vucinichs's for dinner, and we knew it.

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Fate and friendship kept all of us in close touch in the decades that followed, Vartan as Alex's colleague at the Universities of Texas and Pennsylvania, Reggie during regular visits to Philadelphia to attend the Lewin-Rieber seminars on Russian and Soviet Social History and, during Alex's last years, as his fellow resident of Berkeley, where they visited weekly. No matter where he was teaching, or whether he was teaching or in retirement, Alex was always known for the enormous amount of "unofficial" assistance he would give to colleagues and especially to students, even those he barely knew. He was always a true friend. In a statement read at the moving memorial service for Alex held at Berkeley's Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies on 21 July, Moshe Lewin, his close friend and colleague of many years, singled out his sense of humor, friendliness, generosity, and "cult of mastering details" as among his many special traits.

Alex is survived by his wife, Dorothy, their daughter Andrea Stevens of Lafayette, Louisiana, their son John of Chimayo, New Mexico, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and his brother Wayne.

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The editor wishes to add to this notice our own recognition of Alexander Vucinich's fifty years of distinguished participation in the life of *Slavic Review*. His work first appeared in these pages with "The Kolkhoz: Its Social Structure and Development" (*American Slavic and East European Review* 8, no. 1 [February 1949]: 10–24) and most recently with his review of Martin A. Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (*Slavic Review* 58, no. 4 [Spring 1999]: 917). His own work *Einstein and Soviet Ideology* is reviewed in this issue (852–53).