

Reginald E. Zelnik, 1936–2004

The sudden and unexpected death of our dear friend Reggie Zelnik on 17 May 2004 has left many of us in the profession of Slavic studies immensely saddened and bereft. Reggie occupied a special place in our community: as a leading scholar of the history of late imperial Russia, as a brilliant teacher and mentor of graduates and undergraduates alike, as a dedicated leader and participant in the workings of the profession. A friend to many, Reggie lived a life that was a model of living generously, in a way that always provided for others, that put others first, that was always inclusive. His own interests always took second place, and he believed in fair play. As historian, adviser, and commentator Reggie was brilliant and incisive. His prose was rich, resonant, and clear. His voice radiated warmth and wit, humor and compassion. A firm and helpful critic, Reggie generously offered guidance and direction to anyone who sought him out. Most of all he loved his family, his work, and his life at Berkeley. And, I believe, his students and his friends as well.

Born in New York City on 8 May 1936, Reggie attended Princeton University (B.A. 1956) and then Stanford University (M.A. 1961, Ph. D. 1966), where he worked with Anatole Mazour and Wayne Vucinich. From 1957 to 1959, he served in the U.S. Navy, spending time in Japan. After teaching one year at Indiana University, he moved to the University of California, Berkeley, which remained his home until the end. There he shaped and nurtured the premier graduate program in the history of imperial Russia in the United States. Reggie set a standard of collegiality and intellectual excitement that we may not see again. His deep concern for his students affected many aspects of their lives. But his consideration extended beyond the circle of his own students to embrace many others who benefited from his wisdom, support, and appreciation.

Reggie cared deeply about the life of Berkeley as a living institution. He worked hard to serve that community and indeed made many sacrifices for it. Among his formal positions at Berkeley were chair of the Department of History, director of the Center for Slavic and East European Studies (now the Institute for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies), and, at the time of his death, director of graduate studies in the Department of History, a position he recently assumed despite his very senior status just because he saw it as a calling and because he enjoyed working with all the students in the department. Alongside this Reggie was a major force in the profession. His advice and participation were widely sought after. When he wrote or spoke on behalf of a cause or individual, people listened. A leader in such organizations and agencies as the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), the American Historical Association, and the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Reggie was also a central figure in such pioneering endeavors as the National Seminars in the History of Twentieth-Century Russia, the ongoing international colloquia of historians held triennially in St. Petersburg, Russia, and the Allan K. Wildman Group for the Study of Workers and Society. He received many honors and awards, among them fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Fulbright Scholar Program, American Council of Learned Societies, and National Endowment for the Humanities; and residencies at the Stanford Center for the Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and the Harriman Institute of Columbia University. His wide circle of students, former students, friends, and colleagues gathered around him at the annual meetings of the AAASS or indeed wherever the opportunity arose. In his turn, he always thought of ways to bring people together. The loss of this charismatic man leaves a huge void.

Reggie was a pioneer in the study of Russian labor. His first book, *Labor and Society in Tsarist Russia: The Factory Workers of St. Petersburg, 1855–1870* (Stanford, 1971) was based on deep archival research and broke new ground in defining the meaning of the Russian worker at a relatively early stage in the development of the factory regime. In this work we can already see his interest in pushing labor history beyond the confining and polarizing categories of material or cultural determinism. Above all, he was interested in living be-

ings, in people, not in abstract movements or sociopolitical categories. Agency and the creation of identities, the subtle workings of the individual within multiple and overlapping contexts had captured his historical imagination. And Reggie was a masterful storyteller who appreciated the power and beauty of narrative. These intellectual concerns were clearly expressed in his next two major works: *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia: The Autobiography of Semen Kanatchikov* (Stanford, 1986) and *Law and Disorder on the Narova River: The Kreenholm Strike of 1872* (Berkeley, 1995). Both of these works reveal individuals whose political motivations are rooted in their personal experiences. Rarely have the texts of historical lives been explicated with such empathy and verbal skill. Reggie was a master at reconstructing or constructing the chain of causality leading to a particular act in history. He loved to play with the probabilities, to think through a plausible explanation in the form of a series of steps resulting in a satisfying portrait of historical choice. He extended this kind of thinking to current events and politics as well. Most recently Reggie was working on a comparative history of strikes in Russia and Europe and a fascinating biography of the life of Anna Pankratova, a leading Soviet labor historian who lived a life of multiple identities and made some surprising choices during the Stalin era.

The fortieth anniversary of the Free Speech Movement (FSM) that began at the University of California during the fall term of 1964 will be commemorated this autumn. When the action began, Reggie was in his first semester as an assistant professor. As a member of the Committee of 200 and as a mediator and inspirational presence to student activists and faculty alike, Reggie helped make history. This experience shaped his life in many ways. His enduring friendship with FSM leader, Mario Savio, is well known. Less well known is his long labor to secure the memory and meaning of the movement on the Berkeley campus and beyond. In 2002, Reggie and Robert Cohen published *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley, 2002), an important document on the history of the United States in the 1960s. In November, Reggie, Todd Gitlin, and Jo Freeman were to commemorate the FSM at a major symposium at Southern Methodist University.

Reggie is survived by his wife of forty-eight years, Elaine Zelnik; his son, Michael; his daughter, Pamela; his son-in-law, Mark; his grandson, Jaxon; and his brother, Martin. Words cannot express how much we shall miss him.

DANIEL ORLOVSKY
Southern Methodist University
July 2004