

Allan Kenyon Wildman, 1927–1996

Allan K. Wildman, professor of history at Ohio State University, died of cancer in Columbus on 31 October 1996, at the height of a distinguished career as a scholar, educator, and editor. Although diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia in 1988, he tolerated the leukemia well and his condition was stable until the spring of 1996, when he developed a sarcoma. In June the tumor was removed, with indications of success, but subsequent tests revealed that the cancer had already metastasized.

Allan Kenyon Wildman was born on 16 November 1927, in Wooster, Ohio, where his father was a physician at Wooster College. Allan was the youngest of three brothers. In 1945 he entered the U.S. Navy's officer training program, but at the end of the war he was reassigned to boot camp at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Before his discharge in 1946 he served on a Liberty ship bringing military personnel home from the South Pacific.

After his discharge, Wildman followed his brother Arthur to the University of Dubuque, where he studied for two years before transferring to the University of Michigan, from which he received his B.A. degree in 1950. Pursuing the interest in religion that was shared by all three Wildman brothers, he then moved to the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, where he received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in 1953.

It was during his Divinity School years that Wildman was first attracted to the study of Russia. By his own testimony, the prime influence was a two-term course in Russian ethical theory taught in 1952–53 by Professor George L. Kline, then a visiting assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, on leave from Columbia University. Wildman's B.D. thesis, for which Kline served as reader, reflected the linkages in his intellectual development between religion, philosophy, and Russian history, and it foreshadowed his later work on the revolutionary period: its title was "Berdyaev's Interpretation of the Meaning of the Russian Revolution in Terms of His Philosophy of History."

In 1953 Wildman transferred to the Committee on the History of Culture at the University of Chicago, and a year later he traveled to Germany to study at the universities of Tübingen (1954–55) and Munich (1955–56). A shipboard romance on the return trip led to marriage in 1957 with Helga Spiegel of Munich, with whom he was to share almost forty years of close and happy family life. He is survived by Helga and their three children—Juergen, Thomas, and Tatyana.

Wildman's return to the University of Chicago in 1956 coincided with the appointment of Leopold Haimson as assistant professor of history, and Wildman became Haimson's first doctoral student. In addition to studying with Haimson at Chicago over the next three years, he worked under the latter's direction in 1959–61 as a member of the research staff of the Inter-University Project on the History of Menshevism at Columbia University. He received his doctorate in history from the University of Chicago in 1962.

Wildman's teaching career was spent at two institutions. Appointed instructor in history at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in the fall of 1961, he rose to the rank of professor by 1976. In 1978 he returned to his native Ohio as professor of history at Ohio State University, where he taught until his death. In 1988 he was named editor of *Russian Review*, and from 1992 to 1995 he served with determination and great energy as director of Ohio State's Center for Slavic and East European Studies, during one of the most difficult periods in the center's history.

Wildman's historical writings were solidly grounded in his work with original sources at many locations around the world, from the Hoover Institution to Helsinki,

Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Saratov. The first major fruit of this research was *The Making of a Workers' Revolution: Russian Social Democracy, 1891–1903* (1967), which immediately won him the admiration of his colleagues in the field of Russian history. Still broader acclaim came with the publication of his two volumes on the Russian imperial army. For the first volume, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March–April 1917)* (1980), he received the Ohio Academy of History's annual publication award for 1981, and for the second, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Road to Soviet Power and Peace (May–December 1917)*, he was awarded the Wayne S. Vucinich Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies for the best book published in any area of Slavic studies during the year 1987. In 1992 he received the Distinguished Research Award from Ohio State University.

In recent years Wildman had shifted his focus from workers and soldiers to the Russian peasantry. His last publication, which appeared just before his death—a major article entitled “The Defining Moment: Land Charters and the Post-Emancipation Agrarian Settlement in Russia, 1861–1863” (Carl Beck Paper No. 1205)—was based on extensive archival work in Saratov. Just a year before his death he had identified some 5,000 archival *listy* in Saratov for future research on the peasantry.

Wildman's students and junior colleagues at Ohio State were inspired not only by his passion for his work and his high professional standards but also by the warm interest he took in them and their progress. Their respect and affection for him, combined with his own democratic instincts, helped to shape the graduate program in Russian and East European history at the university into a close-knit partnership based on shared scholarly goals. The same spirit pervaded the staff of *Russian Review*, which under Wildman's leadership further enriched its history of distinguished contributions to Russian studies.

Wildman's personal influence as a scholar was by no means confined to the colleagues at his own institution. At a memorial meeting in his honor held at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Boston on 16 November 1996 (which would have been his 69th birthday), speaker after speaker testified to the role he had played in their professional lives, whether as an enthusiastic collaborator, a critical but encouraging reader of their monographs, a model of scholarly excellence and dedication, an understanding panel chairman, or a generous counselor. Russian colleagues, too, benefited from his kindnesses. In 1975, to cite only one example, he led a campaign among American scholars to protest the imprisonment of the young Soviet writer Mikhail Kheifets.

Allan Wildman will be remembered not only because of his professional accomplishments but because he was a profoundly decent human being. He was an eminent scholar utterly devoid of pedantry and pretense. He was an academic colleague almost preternaturally free of professional jealousies and pettiness. He was a demanding teacher who always respected the personal dignity of his students. He was truly, in the words of Robert Burns's all-too-seldom appropriate epithet, a gentleman and a scholar.

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