

NIKANDER STRELSKY

1893 - 1946

The faculty of Vassar College mourns the loss of its beloved colleague, Nikander Strelsky, who died June 20, 1946.

He illustrates for us the fullness of life that is possible for an exile. Out of his suffering caused by the Revolution - the death of his father, the loss of his family, his own exile and the break in his engineering career - he grew in faith in the Russian people. He came to see in perspective their possibilities of long range achievement and to do his share toward it with such love for his fellowmen that we learned to know the meaning of the spirit of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and how to accept the revolution of our time. "To become a true Russian, to be a Russian fully, means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universal man," said Dostoevsky in his Speech at the Unveiling of the Pushkin Memorial.

Nikander Strelsky loved his adopted country, America, and eagerly went out to understand it. He studied Whitman; he farmed in Minnesota; he enjoyed the Vermont tradition; he joined his fellow citizens in Dutchess County in many activities. He sensed and believed in the youthful vitality of the United States. He was an incomparable friend. He liked people for themselves. He saw the best that they were trying to be and he was gifted in freeing them. He was bursting with ideas that set his friends on fire. His house was open and warm. Students, colleagues, refugees, local citizens, scientists, engineers, members of learned societies, all came to draw on his radiance. His sympathy, his wit, his laughter, penetrated any barriers or restraints in personal relations.

As a scholar he was helping to solve the great problem of our generation, the relationship of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America. He had been appointed by the American Council of Learned Societies to prepare materials for furthering mutual understanding not only in literature but in

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politics, science and other fields. He wrote and collaborated in writing books and articles on Russian civilization. A recent article is about to be translated and published in Brazil.

At Vassar College he laid the foundations for studies in Russian, not as a linguistic discipline only, but as the study of an entire civilization. He brought a background of realistic training in scientific

agriculture, the rich artist's experience of heading a dance troupe, and a Ph.D. in literature. He reached out, therefore, to work with social scientists, artists and others among his colleagues. During this last spring he started on a trip to visit universities and scholars, seeking the best experiences in developing Russian Studies in America.

All this he carried on under physical handicap. His courage and unselfishness never flagged, nor did his imagination. His work is still unfinished, but many have received inspiration from him personally to go on with it – students, colleagues, friends.

Genieve Lamson

Joseph Folsom

Helen Drusilla Lockwood

XII – 57–58