FROM SOCIAL SCIENCE TO LITERARY NARRATIVE: TERENCE EMMONS AND THE WRITING OF IMPERIAL RUSSIAN HISTORY, 1968-2004

During the second half of the twentieth century Terence Emmons was one of the world's most distinguished historians of modern Russia. Among his achievements were two sprawling monographs on imperial politics, expert editions of three revelatory diaries and memoirs by observers of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, a series of perceptive essays on Russian politics and Russian historians, and a cardinal reference work on Russian memoirs published abroad. In nearly forty years at Stanford University he trained an impressive cadre of graduate students whose intellectually varied scholarship - a tribute to Emmons' diverse interests and catholic outlook - has enlivened the Russian field and helped shape its current parameters. Throughout this period he was held in unusually high esteem in Russia itself where he was regarded as the leading historian in the "American branch" of Petr Andreevich Zaionchkovskii's school of scholarship.

Given Emmons' intellectual distinction, strategic position at a major graduate institution, deservedly wide reputation in Russia and also given his participation in some of the century's most significant historiographical trends, analysis of his career is justified. The article that follows will provide a review, at once critical and sympathetic, of Emmons' scholarship in its principal contexts - American, Soviet and post-Soviet. The author, a Stanford undergraduate and graduate student of Emmons from 1968 to 1978, will take the liberty of mixing personal observation with critical evaluation, a bow to the tradition in Russian scholarship licensing students to assess their mentors.

1. These publications will be analyzed below. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Thomas Sanders and Semion Lyandres, who kindly consented to read a draft of this essay and who over a number of years have shared their insights into Emmons and his place in modern Russian scholarship. The author also thanks participants in the March 2003 conference at Stanford University organized in honor of Emmons. Chief amongst them are Martin Malia, Emmons' Doktorvater, whose short essay situated Emmons in the "American" school of Mikhail Karpovich; and Larisa Georgievna Zakharova, Emmons' friend of forty years, whose clear-eyed but still emotionally riveting accounts of Emmons and Zaionchkovskii provided a perspective on Emmons from Russia itself.
Terence Emmons was born on February 4, 1937 in Oregon, a state with a proud frontier ethos built on democratic yeoman individualism and on prickly resistance to fashions of the day. During his high school years (1951-1955) in the small town of Albany, Emmons became friendly with displaced university academics who had lost their jobs in what David Caute has called the "great fear" of McCarthyism. Out of sympathy with them and out of his growing anger toward U.S. foreign policy toward China, Emmons became a "boy communist." This early ideological commitment naturally led to curiosity about Russia and the Soviet Union. At Reed College, a liberal arts academy dedicated to rigorous education in the spirit of "equality and secularism," Emmons took his first courses in the Russian language and became one of Oregon's few individual subscribers to the Soviet newspaper Pravda and the party journal Kommunist. To pursue his budding knowledge of Russia, he transferred in 1957 to the University of Washington, where he majored in Russian language and literature. There he studied the classical writers – Nikolai Gogol', Ivan Turgenev and Lev Tolstoi – under Victor Erlich, and there as well he had a memorable encounter with Doktor Zhivago, Boris Pasternak's great literary summa of the Russian Revolution and civil war.

At Washington Emmons began to entertain doubts about the Soviet experiment. The chief factor behind his critical apprehension was Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech" to the XX Party Congress, the reports of which Emmons encountered in the leftist journal New Leader. Another factor in his disillusionment with communism was exposure to a university course in Russian history taught by Donald Treadgold. According to

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4. The phrase can be found on Reed College's official website. It represents the educational philosophy of the college's founder Amanda Reed.