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IN MEMORIAM

Loren Raymond Graham

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Loren Graham, a leading historian of science and technology, born June 29, 1933, died in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on December 15, 2024. Graham's broad interests covered intellectual, institutional, social, and cultural history. With a focus on the former Soviet Union, his work was explicitly and implicitly comparative. The author of more than a dozen books, he was fascinated with understanding the rapid development of Soviet science after the revolution, and in identifying factors that handicapped better performance in many fields.

Graham was born in small town Hymera, Indiana, and was delivered by his father at home. He enjoyed reading from an early age. He attended Purdue University to study chemical engineering. He worked as a gandy dancer on the railroad to support himself. At Purdue Graham's classmates were future test pilots and astronauts, including moonwalker Neil Armstrong. But after he served in the Navy as a communications officer, Graham decided to turn to the history of science. At Purdue Graham met his wife, Patricia Albjerg, who became a dean at Radcliffe and Harvard, and president of the Spencer Foundation.

Graham attended graduate school at Columbia University in Russian history. He studied with Henry Roberts, Alexander Dallin, and Marc Raeff. His dissertation was published as *The Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Communist Party, 1927–1932* (1967). Loren taught briefly at Indiana University, returning to Columbia University from 1965 until 1978. Graham supervised Kendall Bailes, whose book *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin* (Princeton, 1978) won the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize of the American Historical Association (AHA). In the late 1980s, as Bailes was dying of AIDS, Graham secured funding for a research assistant to support Bailes in completing his final book on Vladimir Vernadsky that was published posthumously. In 1978, Graham joined the MIT Program in Science, Technology, and Society (STS), later also joining Harvard's History of Science department.

Graham's career spanned the Cold War. He participated in one of the first research exchanges to the USSR in 1960–61 through the forerunner of IREX, and again through IREX in 1975–76. (IREX opened an office in Moscow in 1989; the Putin government closed it in 2015.) Graham actively promoted US-Soviet scientific cooperation. He was rapporteur for a National Academy of Sciences panel which reported to Congress that the interacademy scientific exchange program with the Soviet Union (the "Kaysen Panel," 1976) was worthwhile to continue. After the collapse of the USSR, Graham redoubled efforts to keep exchanges alive and to support natural scientists whose institutes fell into poverty, working with the MacArthur Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, IREX, the Civilian Research and Development Foundation, and the International Science Foundation (ISF) in this effort.[1]

[1] Irina Dezhina, *The International Science Foundation: The Preservation of Basic Science in the Former Soviet Union* (New York, 2000).

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Graham's publications had far-reaching impact. High scientific citations indices are just one measure of this influence.[2] Graham's study on *The Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Communist Party, 1927–1932* (1967) explained the communist takeover of the bastion of basic research in the USSR and the tension between experts and the state.[3] (The Academy maintained a degree of autonomy even under Stalin until its ultimate subjugation to state power under Vladimir Putin.)

In *Science, Philosophy and Human Behavior in the Soviet Union* (1987; 1st ed. 1972), the standard work on Soviet science and Marxist philosophy, Graham explored the significance of dialectical materialism across several fields (relativity theory and quantum mechanics, the origins of life, cybernetics, genetics, chemistry, and cosmology) and argued for its importance to Soviet scientists. Given its stultifying impact on many fields of science, many critics thought that Graham put too much store in the argument that dialectical materialism was an important stimulus to discovery. One of Graham's articles in the philosophy of science stands out for framing internalist versus externalist arguments through the discussion of the contributions of Boris Gessen to history of science.[4]

Graham's *Between Science and Values* (1981) offered a series of stimulating case studies in physics, biology, and cosmology. One chapter shed light on the embrace of eugenics in two countries whose biology establishments and ideologies could not be more different, Weimar Germany and the USSR, but whose scientists found reason to embrace it for providing hope for racialist and proletarian futures, respectively, for the betterment of humankind. *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer: Technology and the Fall of the Soviet Union* (1993) addressed the big questions of the human and environmental costs of the Soviet industrialization effort. In *Ghost* Graham returned to a subject that had intrigued him from his first research visit to the USSR, the fate of the engineer Petr Palchinsky, who was executed in 1929 for publicly opposing flagrantly wasteful and flawed Stalinist hero projects. He placed such later technological failures, including that of Chernobyl, within his analysis.

One of the fascinating questions about Soviet science is why the nation that was first to build a civilian nuclear reactor, orbit a satellite and put a woman and man in space could not claim more significant achievements. In *What Have We Learned about Science and Technology from the Russian Experience?* (1998) and *Lonely Ideas: Can Russia Compete?* (2013) Graham examined this paradox. In *What Have We Learned*, Graham asked how robust science under stress is and showed how organization, funding, and political interference affect the practice of science from country to county. In *Lonely Ideas*, Graham discussed the rich history of initial advances in technology in tsarist, Soviet, and contemporary Russia, yet the persistent challenges in building on those innovations. A variety of factors served as brakes on innovation, but most importantly the absence of a cultural, social, and legal environment to spur innovation.

Graham tackled the resurgence of interest in the quack agronomist Trofim Lysenko in contemporary Russia in *Lysenko's Ghost: Epigenetics and Russia* (2016). He argued that any of Lysenko's successes were coincidental and that his impact was entirely negative. Unfortunately, Russian scholars have attempted to resurrect Lysenko to find good in the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics through epigenetics, an effort connected to the rise of authoritarianism in Russia and determination to overcome the embarrassment of Lysenkoism.

[2] Loren Graham, Google Scholar, at https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=GnN6d9sAAAAJ&hl=en.

[3] See also Graham, "The Formation of Soviet Research Institutes: A Combination of Revolutionary Innovation and International Borrowing," *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1975): 303–29.

[4] Graham, "The Socio-political Roots of Boris Hessen: Soviet Marxism and the History of Science," *Social Studies of Science* 15 (1985), 705–722.

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Graham was a member the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Russian Academy of Natural Science. He was awarded the George Sarton Medal of the History of Science Society (1996) and a medal by the Russian Academy of Sciences (2012). He was on the board of trustees of the International Foundation for Science (ISF) and the European University at St. Petersburg whose library holds a special collection based on thousands of books he donated from his own collection. Unfortunately, in the 2010s Russia designated a series of NGOs such as the Open Society Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation as "undesirable organizations," which made further cooperation in science and education impossible.

Graham's PhD students included Kendall Bailes (UCLA), Nathan Brooks (New Mexico State University), Slava Gerovitch (MIT), Michael Gordin (Princeton University), Karl Hall (Central European University), Paul Josephson (Colby College), Linda Lubrano (American University), James M. Swanson (University of South Florida), and Douglas R. Weiner (University of Arizona).

Loren was survived by his wife, Patricia Albjerg Graham, and by his daughter Marguerite and son-in-law Kurt Peterson. The following people made contributions to this éloge: Nathan Brooks, Slava Gerovitch, Michael Gordin, Karl Hall, Douglas R. Weiner, Harley Balzer, Irina Dezhina, Bruce Parrot, Gershon Sher, Asif Siddiqi, and Susan Solomon.

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