



REGINALD DE BRAY

1912-1993

REGINALD DEBRAY, who died on 29 May 1993, was a humane gentleman with a social conscience. He was a cultured European, a scholar of the old school. Born in St. Petersburg in 1912, he grew up and was educated in England, attending Marlborough College and Oriel College, Oxford.

Multiculturalism and multilingualism were essential features of his life, and he was fluent in most of the Slavic languages as well as in English, French, German, Italian (his wife's mother's tongue), and Spanish. After working in the Uncommon Languages Department of the Postal Censorship Service during the war, he became a lecturer in Comparative Slavonic Philology in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.

In 1955, he took up an appointment as Lecturer in Russian at the University of Melbourne and was later promoted to Senior Lecturer; He saw Australia as a country of great potential and, with a number of other colleagues at the University of Melbourne (including Jacob Smit and Luise Hercus), developed an interdepartmental Linguistics program and embarked on a research project to describe the remnants of the dying Victorian Aboriginal languages. In 1963, Reginald de Bray became the Foundation Professor of Russian at Monash University. Three years later, he was appointed to the Chair of Russian at the University of London. But he still hankered after Australia. Less than two years after his return to London, he told me that he wanted to return to Australia 'as soon as that terrible-Vietnam War has ended'. In 1971, the opportunity arose and he accepted the Foundation Chair of Russian at the Australian National University, a position he held until his retirement in 1977.

Reginald de Bray was an internationally acclaimed scholar. His comprehensive *Guide to the Slavonic Languages* appeared in three editions. The result of meticulous scholarship and in-depth knowledge of the relevant languages, it was the standard work on the entire family of languages. Reginald de Bray was the undisputed expert on Serbo-Croatian tones and on various aspects of Macedonian. He was a prolific translator of literary works from Russian and the South Slavic languages. He was awarded decorations and academy memberships from Poland, Macedonia, and Serbia.

At the time of his death, he was working on a Macedonian-English dictionary, which hopefully will be completed by his former student, Professor Peter Hill from the University of Hamburg.

Michael Clyne