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Dead  
May 30, 1953

MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS OF THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF WISCONSIN ON THE DEATH OF EMERITUS PROFESSOR A. A. VASILIEV

With the death of Emeritus Professor Alexander Alexandrovich Vasiliev on May 30, 1953, the world lost its foremost authority on the history of the Byzantine Empire. Born in Russia in 1867, Vasiliev received his scholarly training in St. Petersburg, now Leningrad, and from study and research at West European and Near Eastern centers of learning. As a young man he taught in Russian secondary schools, but he soon gained fame as a teacher and scholar and secured university appointments first at Dorpat, and later in St. Petersburg. There he held the post as professor of Byzantine history, and at one time served as president of its Archeological Commission.

In 1925 Professor Vasiliev came to Wisconsin as professor of Ancient History, a chair he occupied until his retirement in 1938. Later he was chosen research scholar at Dumbarton Oaks Research Center, Washington, D. C., and still held this post at the time of his death.

In Russia and at Wisconsin, Professor Vasiliev founded schools for Byzantine studies which won world-wide recognition. For more than half a century he taught Byzantine history, trained scholars, and produced research of lasting importance in that field. As a researcher he cast his net wide, watching for traces of Byzantine connections and influence from Iceland to India and China. With a reading knowledge of fifteen languages, ancient and modern, he combined excellent scholarly equipment and training with unusually wide cultural interests, a seminal mind, and a remarkable power of synthesis. Vigorous mentally and physically until the very end of his life, Professor Vasiliev published works which won wide acclaim for their originality, daring generalizations, and profound scholarship. His death came only a few days after he had returned to his beloved adopted country from an extensive tour of the Balkans.

At the opening of this century Professor Vasiliev published his monumental work Byzantium and the Arabs. This was followed by histories of the Middle Ages, of Medieval Civilization, and of the Byzantine Empire. The last of these, first published in Russia, was translated and published in the University of Wisconsin Studies, 1928 and 1930, and later translated into French and Spanish. A revised one-volume edition of this comprehensive work was in 1952 published by the University of Wisconsin Press. Other books by Professor Vasiliev are, The Goths in the Crimea (1936), The Russian Attack on Constantinople (1946), and The Emperor Justin I (1950). He contributed to the Cambridge Medieval History, edited three volumes of the Patrologia Orientalis, and published dozens of research articles in American and European learned journals.

Although by temperament artistic and sensitive, Professor Vasiliev was totally unembittered by his unpleasant experiences during the Russian Revolution. An accomplished musician and a world traveler, Professor Vasiliev abounded in good humor and had a great zest for life.

Editorially The New York Times of June 3, 1953, said about Professor Vasiliev (quoted in part):

Professor Vasiliev's scholarly achievements were little short of prodigious. He was one of the pioneers and leaders in the Byzantine studies that have been stirring the intellectual world over the past half-century. His notable publications, appearing in many languages,

are far too numerous to mention here. After the age of 80 he brought out his detailed and original study of the Byzantine Emperor Justin I. Last year the University of Wisconsin published his massive history of the Byzantine Empire in a thoroughly rewritten edition. His command of the tools of scholarship was unsurpassed: he was at home in all the important European languages ancient and modern, and Arabic as well. He was impeccable in his handling of his sources, to many of which he drew the attention of the learned world for the first time. He appraised those sources with a serene judgment, and with a perspective that never forgot the forest for the trees.

For thirteen years Professor Vasiliev rendered distinguished services to the University of Wisconsin and gave luster to its name. The learned world of Europe honored him; the ancient University of Prague published a Festschrift on his seventieth birthday; and he received special recognitions from Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Professor Vasiliev never married and he left no near relatives, but he is mourned by a host of devoted students, friends and admirers in many lands.

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