



## IN MEMORIAM

George Lenczowski  
Professor of Political Science, Emeritus  
Berkeley  
1915 — 2000

The death of Professor Emeritus George Lenczowski brought to a close a distinguished career in political science and Middle Eastern studies that spanned more than four decades, of which 33 years were spent on the faculty of the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. Lenczowski died on February 19, 2000, at his home in Berkeley.

Of Polish parentage, Lenczowski was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on February 2, 1915, at a time when the land of his ancestors was still part of neighboring empires. His father worked there as an engineer until the revolution, and one of the earliest memories of young George was a perilous escape from the Bolsheviks through war-torn Russia, that took the family back to what soon was to become an independent Poland. It was there that Lenczowski had his education from primary school to the faculty of law, where he took his LL.M degree in 1936. He continued his studies in France, where he earned a Certificate in Civil Law at the University of Paris (1936) and a Doctorate in Juridical Science in Lille (1937), for a dissertation on Contracts in Private and International Law, written in French and published in Paris by Domat-Montchrestien in 1938. In the same year he entered the Polish Foreign Service, and as a junior diplomat was stationed in British Palestine, acting as consular officer and liaison between the British authorities and Jewish immigrants from Poland.

When his country was invaded and occupied by Germany and the Soviet Union, Lenczowski's Palestinian assignment came to an end. In 1940 he volunteered to serve in the Carpathian Brigade of the Free Polish Army, under the general command of Field Marshal Montgomery. He saw action in Egypt and Libya, most prominently at the siege of Tobruk, advancing to the rank of second lieutenant. At the end of the same year, however, he was recalled by the Polish Foreign Service to be stationed at the Polish Embassy in Tehran, Iran. There he was part of the effort to receive, process and assist some two million Poles just released from Soviet concentration camps upon the intervention of Britain. It was there that he met his future wife, Bronia, née Szylkiewicz, who herself had been prisoner of the Soviets near the city of Gorky. They were wed in March 1943, and were married for 47 years until her death in 1990.

In 1945, with their homeland facing imminent communist rule, the Lenczowskis became immigrants to the United States. After a year of graduate study at The Johns Hopkins University, and occasional work for the Foreign Broadcasting Division of the Department of State, Lenczowski found employment as instructor, and later assistant professor, at Hamilton College in New York State. It was in this capacity that he came to the attention of Peter Odegard, then one of the pivotal figures of the discipline of political science and chair of the Berkeley department. It was upon Odegard's invitation that Lenczowski came to Berkeley as a visiting associate professor, and, after another year of research and language study in Lebanon, as a tenured member of the faculty.

Lenczowski made his scholarly debut in the United States by publishing *Russia and the West in Iran* (1949), soon to be followed by his path-breaking work, *The Middle East in World Affairs* (1952). The latter has been republished in three further editions, and with appropriate revisions, has remained an authoritative text on the politics of the region for over three decades. Altogether, between 1949 and his death, Lenczowski authored

six books and monographs, coauthored and co-edited two others, and published close to 100 scholarly articles on critical facets of Middle Eastern politics, both domestic and international. His scholarship was characterized by the accumulation of massive amounts of data, most of which he collected in the course of personal encounters on field trips. In his scholarship he was aided by the mastery of a great number of languages: Polish, English, French, German, Russian, Arabic, and Farsi. He was a master interviewer, who could develop unusual rapport with his subjects, and, with his reputation for objectivity, would be as welcome by royalty of Moslem countries as by the academic community and political leaders of the new state of Israel. The same personal qualities earned him the respect of U.S. administrations of both political parties, and made him a frequent visitor to the White House under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

As he was gaining international recognition, Lenczowski was invited to serve on the governing boards of numerous learned societies and centers of research, and was a frequent speaker and resident lecturer at diverse academic institutions: St. Antony's at Oxford University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the universities of Geneva, Tehran, and Toronto, the American University of Beirut, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), the National War College (Washington, D.C.), the Army War College (Pennsylvania), and Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

In Berkeley, Lenczowski pioneered his field as the founder and first chair of the Committee (later Center) of Middle Eastern Studies. Over the years, he served as vice chair and graduate advisor of his department, was member of the Senate Rules and Jurisdiction Committee, and was active in curricular affairs. As an undergraduate teacher he was respected for his precision and openness; as a mentor of graduate students he raised a generation of scholars who, in 1985, acknowledged their debt to him by publishing the volume, *Ideology and Power in the Middle East: a Festschrift in Honor of George Lenczowski*. His contributions are aptly summarized by Chalmers Johnson, past chair of his department. In Johnson's words, "it was the quiet effectiveness and unshakable integrity of people like him who made Berkeley one of the most outstanding academic institutions in the world."

Next to being a professional scholar and trusted advisor in and outside academia, Lenczowski was a true humanist, with a love of the law, and with his belief in social justice and hope for world peace. Though never blind to flaws in American society, he was throughout the decades a devoted and public-spirited citizen of his adopted country. He and his wife were generous and stylish hosts and very much part of the Berkeley social scene. For many years he was a popular member of the Bohemian Club, appreciated as much for his love of the arts and letters as for his courtly manners and political sophistication. His family knew him as a dedicated husband and father, his friends as a gentleman of the old school who rose to the challenges of novelty with natural ease. He departed after a long and debilitating illness, which he bore with dignity and strength, continuing his labors and keeping his home open to visitors to the very end. He will be remembered fondly by former students and missed by family, friends, and the many others whose lives he touched during his remarkable career.

Andrew C. Janos