

## **CAS HITS HALF-CENTURY MARK IN 2004**

### **Bohdan Harasymiw**

CAS President, 1980-81

The Canadian Association of Slavists, which had its beginnings, surprisingly, as an American branch plant but was subsequently able to take a leading and independent role on the international stage among scholarly organizations, celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year.

Although its founding convention was held in 1954 in conjunction with the meetings of the Learned Societies (as they were then called) at the University of Manitoba, the groundwork had been prepared by the formation in 1946 of a Canadian branch of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL). A leading part in this body, as indeed in the championing of Slavic studies in Canada, was played by Watson Kirkconnell, architect of the Humanities Research Council of Canada and eventually President of Acadia University. It was at this organization's seventh annual conference that a unanimous decision was made to change the name to Canadian Association of Slavists.

The first executive was not only a distinguished group of academics, but appears to have been chosen with a degree of sensitivity to ethnic and regional considerations more commonly found in a federal cabinet. Its Honorary President was William Rose of the University of British Columbia, the internationally recognized authority on Polish history. V. J. Kaye (Kysilewsky), historian at the University of Ottawa and civil servant, was elected President. Others on that first executive were: James St. Clair-Sobell, University of British Columbia; Leonid Ignatieff, University of Western Ontario; and Theodore F. Domaradzki, Université de Montréal. Paul Yuzyk, professor of history at the University of Manitoba, became Secretary-Treasurer, and P. Wyczyński, University of Ottawa, Assistant Secretary. There was a Publications Committee chaired by George W. Simpson of the University of Saskatchewan, and including George S. N. Luckyj, University of Toronto, as well as Professors Rose and Ignatieff. A Constitution Committee was also formed, with Dr. Kaye as chair, joined by J. B. Rudnyckyj, the University of Manitoba's first head of the Slavic department, and Valentina Krotkov of Queen's University.

Shortly thereafter, with support from the University of Toronto Press, the Association's journal, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, made its appearance under the editorship of Professor Luckyj. In 1963, Adam Bromke, then at Carleton University, took over as Editor. The CSP's editorial offices remained in Ottawa under the subsequent editorship of Philip Uren, John Strong, and Carter Elwood, before returning to Toronto, where Boris Thomson and then Wayne Dowler served as editors. Since 1991, the *Papers* have made their home at the University of Alberta, first under Edward Mozejko, now under Oleh Ilnytskyj.

Among outstanding achievements of the Association's members can be counted the appointment of Paul Yuzyk to the Senate and Jaroslav Rudnyckyj to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Together with Bohdan

R. Bociurkiw, then at the University of Alberta and CAS President, 1962-63, they were responsible for transforming the Commission's initial orientation in favour of biculturalism into the government's eventual policy of multiculturalism. Another CAS member in whose reflected glory the Association can claim to bask is Timothy J. Colton, originally a Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto and now Director of the Davis Center for Russian Studies at Harvard University.

In the international arena, it was our own Adam Bromke, Professor of Political Science at McMaster University, who, after years of meticulous preparation and skillful personal diplomacy, brought together CAS, the AAASS in the United States, and Germany's Deutsches Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde (DGO) in Banff in 1974 to form the International Committee for Soviet and East European Studies (ICSEES) (now the International Council for Central and East European Studies, ICCEES). That body's second congress was held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany in 1980, the third in Washington in 1985, and the fourth in Harrogate, England in 1990. The seventh is taking place in Berlin in July 2005. For most of its existence, Stanislav J. Kirschbaum of York University, who rightly describes ICCEES as "a very strong and successful institution," and who helped make it so, served as its Secretary.

In keeping with Slavic tradition, apart from the initial inclusion of Professor Krotkov, the CAS executive remained for the first thirty years of the Association's existence an exclusively male preserve. The first to breach it was Yvonne Grabowski, York University, member of the Grants and Ad Hoc Liaison Committees in 1975-6 and Member-at-Large in 1976-7. She was followed by Jarmila Horna, University of Calgary, Sophia Skoric, University of Toronto Library, Natalia Aponiuk, University of Manitoba, and Stefania Miller, McMaster University. Professor Miller became the first woman President of CAS in 1985-6; she was followed by Stella Hryniuk (Manitoba) 1989-90; Joan DeBardleben (Carleton), 1996-8, and Natalia Pylypiuk (Alberta), 2000-04. If the present trend continues, and it was long overdue in view of the gender composition of the membership, the job of CAS President may become established as "woman's work."

Having seen a couple of generations of scholars and teachers of matters Slavic go through its ranks, the Canadian Association of Slavists can look forward to another half-century of activity and vitality.

*University of Calgary  
Winter 2004*