

## Slavic Studies in Canada

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This year, the Canadian Association of Slavists (CAS), Canada's scholarly association for Slavic and Central and East European Studies in all disciplines, celebrates its 50th anniversary, an anniversary that was commemorated at its annual meeting in Winnipeg (Manitoba) at the end of May. It has a proud and very productive history of encouraging and fostering research and the study of the languages, cultures, history, society, and political life of the Slavic nations, but also of other states and peoples that were under Communist rule in the post-war era. Although called an association of Slavists, its activities also extend to non-Slavic peoples and states like Hungary, or the Baltic States. Through the CAS, Canadian scholars participate in world congresses like those of the International Association of Slavists, the International Association of Ukrainian Studies, and the International Council for Central and East European Studies. The CAS also publishes annually four issues of the *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* and a bi-annual newsletter.

Two main variables have determined the extent and intensity of research and teaching of Slavic studies in Canada: (1) academic access and (2) political considerations. Three main institutions currently stand out as centers for Slavic studies: the University of Toronto, the University of Alberta, and Carleton University. Each has an institute that organizes conferences, invites speakers, and also coordinates both undergraduate and postgraduate study in the field. Toronto's Centre for Russian and East European Studies, in conjunction with the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, is very active, polyvalent, and particularly strong in Slavic languages and literatures. It also has one of the best libraries in the field not just in Canada, but in North America. Its newsletter, as well as its reports to the Newsletter of the Canadian Association of Slavists, indicate the breadth and scope of its activities. At the University of Alberta in Edmonton, the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies and the Department of History and Classics work together with the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, created in 1976, to study and research not just Ukrainian, but Slavic studies generally. The institute is acknowledged as a leading center for Ukrainian Studies. The university also houses the recently created Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies. Finally, in Ottawa, Carleton University's Institute of European and Russian Studies fulfills much of the same functions as its sister institutions. Carleton's institute is very active in teaching and research and also involved in well-established bachelor's, master's and diploma programmes (the latter in European Integration Studies).

However, the study of Slavic studies is not limited to these three institutions. Across Canada, the teaching of Slavic studies, generally in a limited

form, is found in a series of academic departments that specialize in or combine languages and the social sciences. At the University of Calgary (Alberta), it is the Department of Germanic, Slavic and East Asian Studies; at the University of Victoria (British Columbia), it is the Department of Slavonic Studies; at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, it is the Department of German and Slavic Studies; and at the University of Waterloo (Ontario), it is the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures. Some institutions have specialized centers or chairs like the Centre for Ukrainian Canadian Studies at the University of Manitoba, the Prairie Centre for the Study of Ukrainian Heritage at the University of Saskatchewan in Regina, the Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa (Ontario), and the Chairs of Ukrainian Studies at the Universities of Toronto, Ottawa, and York University in Toronto, the Chair of Slovak History and Culture at the University of Ottawa, and the Chairs of Hungarian Studies and of Estonian Studies at the University of Toronto.

Slavic studies in Canada have experienced the vagaries of international politics. The creation of the Canadian Association of Slavists was primarily the work of academic and educated émigrés from post-war Communist Europe and it is their sons and daughters, educated in Canada, the United States and elsewhere in the West, who made it possible for the field to develop. With the intensification of the Cold War, interest in the field grew from the 1960s to the 1990s. The centers mentioned above were created, and the study of the Russian language, but not only Russian, became a standard offering in many Canadian universities. This intense interest, however, could not be sustained. With a decrease in university funding after a period of growth, many positions disappeared as their incumbents retired and many programmes, as a result, were closed. Still, teaching and research in the field continues, often linked directly to individual specialists. For example, York University in Toronto, one of Canada's biggest universities, currently has a specialist in Russian studies, one in Ukrainian studies, and one in Slovak studies.

Canadian academics, Canadian institutions like the ones mentioned above, and the CAS have also sought to respond conceptually to the political changes that have affected the field. Three periods are clearly distinguishable, with two currently overlapping: the Cold War period (1954–1989); the post-Communist period (1989–); and the European unification/united Europe period (1999–) with the enlargement of NATO and the European Union eastward. Carleton University best exemplifies the conceptual shift that has taken place: the Institute for Soviet and East European Studies that was created in 1970 became, in 1991, the Institute of Central/East European and Russian-Area Studies and again the Institute of European and Russian Studies in 1998.

Whither Slavic studies in Canada in the years to come? There is a generational change occurring in many universities in Canada in the next few years as the second generation (the sons and daughters of the post-war émigrés) approaches retirement. It is their graduate students who will determine the new

directions. They are able not only to rely on the rich history of Slavic studies in Canada, but also on the international contacts Canadian academics and scholars have established over the years; the International Council for Central and East European Studies, it should be remembered, was created in Canada, in Banff (Alberta), in 1974.

Given today the access that was so difficult during the Cold War to the peoples, states, and documentation of the old Communist world, the process of European unification, and other challenges that the region faces, Canadian scholars, working together with scholars around the world, will undoubtedly develop new approaches, and the field will, hopefully, experience growth once more in Canada.