

Slavonic Studies in Canadian Universities

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THERE is not much point in comparing Slavonic Studies today in Canada—or for that matter in the United States—with the developments in this sphere in the Old World. Slavonic Studies in the United States are a century younger than they are in Europe, and in Canada we can speak of notable development in this sphere only during the last decade—since the end of World War II. The reasons for the growing importance attached to this field of investigation and study are varied, but to most people no doubt the great political strength of the U.S.S.R. and the Slav countries under the direct influence of the Russians is the most important one. It is also worthwhile keeping in mind the cumulative effect of some two centuries of growing political prestige of the Tsarist empire, and the remarkable cultural development in the field of literature, music, the theatre, and the fine arts, which took place in nineteenth century Russia, not to mention the other Slav countries. There is also the factor of the not inconsiderable Slavonic immigration element which has blended with the Canadian population. Perhaps foremost, however, is the very practical consideration that in the world of today it is vitally necessary for young Canadians to learn more about a great group of peoples who, either directly or indirectly, have position and authority in the destinies of nearly half of the population of the world.

Pre-War Studies

Though Slavonic Studies in Canadian universities have become an integrated part of normal academic programmes only in the last ten years, it would be misleading to give the impression that work in this field was not done in Canada before the last war. One has only to recall the achievements of such pioneers as the late economist and political scientist, Professor James Mavor of Toronto University, to whom we owe the valuable study "An Economic History of Russia", or of Dr. Watson Kirkconnell, now President of Acadia University, whose skill as a poet has enabled him to become a gifted interpreter of Slav verse, not to mention his numerous translations from other languages, especially Hungarian. Professor George Simpson of Saskatchewan has long been a leading figure in historical studies, particularly in the Ukrainian field; this scholar's pioneer work has been a great stimulus of Slavonic Studies as a whole in Canada and his scholarly interest and devotion to the Ukrainian people is widely admired. Professor William J. Rose, now of the University of British Columbia, is a Canadian scholar of Polish literature, culture and civilization who before 1939 enjoyed a reputation second to none in this field. At the University of Saskatchewan Professor C. H. Andrusyshen, Chairman of the Department of Slavonic Studies, has devoted many years of painstaking work to the preparation of a large modern Ukrainian-English dictionary. This ambitious project has been supported financially by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation.