

CAS President's Report, 2009

4 May 2009

Dear Colleagues:

I would like first to thank every individual member and the Executives of the Canadian Association of Slavists. As a group, we are strong, diverse, and healthy; we work well both together and alone. In order to prove this point, let me refer you to the CAS Newsletter, once again excellently prepared by Dr. Elena Baraban.

CAS enjoys a respectable position amongst other associations in the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. This was evident from the Federation's AGM that Dr. Allan Reid and I have attended in Ottawa (March 7-8, 2009). Not only are we on the larger side of the Federation's associations, but our past executives have incessantly worked on behalf of the organization even if they are officially out of the office. Commemorating their efforts, let me express our gratitude to all of them, and in particular, to Drs. Heather Coleman, Bohdan Harasymiw, Gust Olson, Natalia Pylypiuk, and Allan Reid. The Federation's conference was a great learning experience for me. For its details and documentation please visit www.fedcan.ca. This was my second visit to Ottawa on your behalf. Dr. Andrea Chandler and I attended an initial meeting for the Congress's preparation in November 2008.

This year we will have an unusual turn out for our conference, in terms of numbers as well as in the range and richness of panels and individual papers. Other noticeable good news is the diversity of age and experience in the participants. Together with the old guard we have plenty of new blood, and what other indications do we need to have high hopes for the vitality of our disciplines? Our Canadian scholars who work abroad continue to be involved in CAS, and it is wonderful to see them home. We also have some very welcomed guests from Europe.

In addition to our yearly scholarly and social activities, which will take place during the conference, CAS has prepared two cultural events for the Congress:

May 23-31. Art show: *Canadian Artists of Slavic Origin*. Mr. Terry Sametz is a prominent Canadian artist, and he is serving as our curator. Location: Baker's Grill and Bookstore (Unicentre).

24 May Performance: Classical: *Duet Cantabile (Violin and Guitar)* and Folk group: *Javarovy Liudzi (Music, Songs, Dances)*. 12:30-1:30 Location: Kailash Mital Theatre, Southam Hall. Organized by CAS and the Belarusian community. This is going to be a real treat for your ears, eyes, and soul.

Some of the work related to the Congress and all of it for the conference has rested on the very capable shoulders of our Program Chair, Dr. Andrea Chandler. This most difficult job in the Association (please do not discard putting up with me), has been carried by Dr. Chandler with elegance, patience, and knowledge. She deserves a standing ovation at the AGM, where I hope to see many of you. Please keep in mind that every single voice is important, and if you want to

contribute to the CAS operations, the AGM is the first place to start. Please send your items for the Agenda to Dr. Bohdan Nebesio, our capable Secretary-Treasurer. Please note: we will have a visitor at the AGM—Federation President Nathalie Des Rosiers. And before I forgot: we will have our AGM the day after our annual banquet, for which Dr. Chandler has organized an amazing after-dinner speaker, Dr. Carter Elwood, who will tell us all about “What Lenin Ate.”

Now, when I hopefully wetted your appetite for praise, let’s have a word in honour of our jewel, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, and its keepers. We will have the usual routine report by CSP’s distinguished editor, Dr. Oleh Ilnytzyj, at the AGM and will see his talented right hand—PhD candidate Ms. Svitlana Kryś. Ms. Kryś, the editorial assistant of CSP, has knowledge and patience to balance her time between finishing her thesis, CSP, and managing most of CAS’s affairs. Let me, on your behalf, tell the whole impressive team, which also includes book-review editors Drs. Heather Coleman, Gary Toops, and Mark Conliffe, how much we, the membership, appreciate this excellent scholarly journal. We also value the personal professionalism, integrity, and enthusiasm for our disciplines of the team that continues to shine in the journal.

CAS does not live in isolation, and our members are not always in agreement with each other on some major issues. There were, for example, differences of opinions in relation to the Georgia—South Ossetia/Russia conflict. Our members are knowledgeable scholars and passionate people; everyone had an opinion about this unfortunate conflict. Although, I personally support the Georgian people (not their president), many members were against the official Georgian stand. CAS did not take a position, but members were encouraged to support their personal choice of “the right” side of that sad event.

We also decided to go individually on the issue of the funding for Social Sciences and Humanities Research in Canada. I would like to thank Dr. Olga Mladenova for her leadership in this matter. In addition, here is a quote from the Federation’s Newsletter, which is straight and clear:

Further to a motion put forward at the March Annual General Assembly (which I supported on behalf of CAS), the Federation has continued to pursue its advocacy activities on behalf of our community by meeting with the Minister of Finance and several Members of Parliament. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the future of the funding of social sciences and humanities research in Canada. We also discussed the last budget and the targeting of the new Canada Graduate Scholarships in the social sciences and humanities. **Specifically, the Federation asked that the federal government increase the base budget of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and adopt a balanced funding approach that includes support for basic research.** In discussion with the Minister of Finance and opposition critics for finance and industry, **Federation President Nathalie Des Rosiers stressed that while Canada is facing serious economic challenges, it is essential to look to the future and recognize the significant contribution of research in all the social sciences and humanities in order to remain competitive and prosper in the knowledge economy. She also explained that SSHRC serves as a gateway to excellence and its funding plays a key role in ensuring that Canadian**

scholars are fully engaged on the international scene. Members of Parliament expressed their support for the work of our community. They also encouraged the Federation to continue its advocacy activities to raise the profile of research in our disciplines among parliamentarians.”

I am happy to announce the results of our 2009 Student Essay Contest. The committee, consisting of Drs. Natalia Pylypiuk, Olga Mladenova, and Alison Rowley (the longest service in this capacity, thanks, Alison!), came to the unanimous decision. The CAS essay prize for the best graduate essay “Andropov and the Hungarian Complex” is awarded to Timothy Sayle, an MA candidate in History at the University of Toronto (nominated by Prof. Robert E. Johnson). The undergraduate essay prize is awarded to Megan Butler (BA 2008, University of Lethbridge, AB; joint major in History and Art History). Meagan’s essay, “The Prayers of the Soviets,” was nominated by Prof. Christopher Burton. Congratulations to our winners and their professors! Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the readers of many excellent essays, and for making this tough and just choice.

In conclusion, I hope you have seen in this report the many ways in which CAS is a living proof of the old saying *No one works alone*. I am very grateful to every member of CAS for their contributions, hard work, excellence, collegiality, and trust.

Respectfully submitted,

Zina Gimpelevich
President