

## JANKO LAVRIN

Slavist, literary historian and critic, journalist, essayist and translator, one of the most important contemporary interpreters of Russian and Slavic literatures in the English speaking world.

Born February 10, 1887, in Krupa (Bela Krajina, Slovenia), Janko Lavrin completed Gymnasium in Novo mesto and Sušak (1899-1907); in 1908 he left for St. Petersburg (Russia) where he studied Russian language and literature. He received his academic education in Russia, partly in Scandinavia and in Paris (1908-1917). He worked as a journalist during World War One (1915-1917), as a war correspondent for Russian and later English newspapers. A book of his journalistic reports from the Balkans was published in 1916 in Russian. During World War Two he worked for the BBC. In 1917 Janko Lavrin settled in London; in 1918 he was appointed lecturer at the University of Nottingham, in 1923 its Professor of Slavonic Studies. Since 1953 he has been Professor Emeritus of the University of Nottingham, from 1956 Corresponding Member of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana, and from 1985 an honorary member of the Society for Slovene Studies at Columbia University in the City of New York. At present he is residing in London, Great Britain.

A large part of Janko Lavrin's literary studies appeared in monographs and collections of essays which interpreted Slavic, in particular Russian, literature to the West. The aspects of Slavic literatures to which he devoted most interest are the problems of society-literature relations in 19th century European and Russian letters; the psychological-critical analysis of the greatest authors of this period: Gogol', Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Balzac, Proust; and the literature of the Russian revolutionary period. Among the best known titles of Janko Lavrin's books are: *Nietzsche and Modern Consciousness, A Psycho-Critical Study* (London, 1922); *Tolstoy, A Psycho-Critical Study* (London, 1924); *Russian Literature* (London, 1927); *Studies in European Literature* (London, 1929); *Aspects of Modernism, from Wilde to Pirandello* (London, 1935); *An Introduction to the Russian Novel* (New York & London, 1943); *Dostoevsky, A Study* (New York, 1943); *Tolstoy, An Approach* (London, 1944); *From Pushkin to Mayakovsky, A Study in the Evolution of a Literature* (London, 1948); *Goncharov* (Cambridge, 1954). Some of these studies of Lavrin's are today among the most distinctive Western works on modern Russian literature.

The other side of Janko Lavrin's scholarly and publishing activity is represented by his studies on Slovene literature and its individual authors, translations of Slovene literary works, and editions of anthologies, all of which have promoted Slovene culture in the world. The very first publication of this character was his Russian translation of Ivan Cankar's "Hiša Marije Pomočnice," which already in 1909, two years after his arrival in Russia, appeared in *Slavjanskij Mir* (St. Petersburg). Among the most important publications of this special mission, which Janko Lavrin assumed as his calling in the English-speaking world, are: the essay "The Conscience of A Small Nation (On Ivan Cankar)," in his book *Aspects of Modernism* (London, 1935); an Introduction to Ivan Cankar's "Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica," in an English translation: *Bailiff Yerney and His Rights* (Nottingham Place: The Pushkin Press, 1946); a number of translations in the *Selection of Poems by Francè Prešeren* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954); Janko Lavrin, "France Prešeren, 1800-1849," a Reprint from *The Slavonic and East European Review* (London, 1955) 33:304-326; *The Parnassus of a Small Nation, An Anthology of Slovene Lyrics ... with Introduction by Janko*

*Lavrin* (London: John Calder, 1957) (a second edition, enlarged and introduced by Janko Lavrin and Anton Slodnjak, appeared in Ljubljana, 1965); *A Wanderer Went Through the Atom Age*, by Matej Bor, Translated from the Original Slovene by Janko Lavrin (London: Adam Books, 1959); *An Anthology of Modern Yugoslav Poetry in English Translations*, Edited with a Preface by Janko Lavrin (London: John Calder, 1962); *Poems*, by Francè Prešeren, A Selection, A New Enlarged Edition (London: John Calder, 1963) (and once again in 1969); *Selected Poems*, by Alois Gradnik, Translated by Various Hands, Edited and Introduced by Janko Lavrin (London: John Calder, 1964); *Some Other Land: A Poetic Miscellany*, Edited by France Filipič, Translated by Janko Lavrin (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1964); *Oton Župančič: A Selection of Poems, Translated from Slovene*, Edited and Introduced by Janko Lavrin (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1967).

**REFERENCES.** *Who's Who 1984. An Annual Biographical Dictionary* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1984), 1320-21.—*The International Authors and Writers Who's Who 1982* (Cambridge, England: International Biographical Centre, 1982), 374.—J. Glonar, "Lavrin, Janko," *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, I (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1925-1932) 624.—A. Slodnjak, "Lavrin, Janko," *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, 5 (Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod FNRJ, 1962), 496.—anon., "Janko Lavrin," *Letopis Slovenske Akademije Znanosti in Umetnosti*, Osma knjiga: 1956, 1957 (Ljubljana: SAZU, 1958), 39-42.

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## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

The following is the text of the scroll presented to Janko Lavrin at the III World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, sponsored by the International Committee for Soviet and East European Studies and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (Washington, D.C., October 30 - November 4, 1985), and of a brief biography of Janko Lavrin.

**FOR ALMOST THREESCORE AND TEN YEARS,**

**JANKO LAVRIN,**

**PROFESSOR OF SLAVONIC STUDIES  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM,  
MEMBER OF THE SLOVENE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS,  
SLAVIST AND TEACHER,  
ESSAYIST, JOURNALIST, AND TRANSLATOR,  
FOSTERED INTELLECTUAL INTEREST IN  
AND PROMOTED THE DISSEMINATION OF SLOVENE LETTERS  
IN A LANGUAGE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION.**

**IN HIS PERCEPTIVE COMPREHENSION  
OF THE CULTURAL GROWTH OF A LINGUISTIC MICROCOSM  
IN THE CROSS-CURRENTS  
OF INTELLECTUAL GIVE-AND-TAKE BETWEEN NATIONS,  
HE HAS BECOME THE MOST ELOQUENT INTERPRETER  
OF SLOVENE LITERATURE  
IN THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WORLD.**

**AS A TOKEN OF ESTEEM AND RECOGNITION  
FOR THESE CONTRIBUTIONS,  
SO CONSONANT WITH THE AIMS AND ACTIVITIES  
OF THE SOCIETY FOR SLOVENE STUDIES,**

**THE SOCIETY  
CONFERS ON JANKO LAVRIN  
THE TITLE OF**

**HONORARY MEMBER.**

New York, New York  
February 8, 1985