

## SLOVENE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Rado L. Lencek

Among the non-Russian Slavic languages at present offered at American universities east of the Mississippi, the Slovene language has of late been performing impressively.<sup>1</sup> Since early in the 1970s, it has been taught regularly at Kent State (Ohio), Cleveland State (Ohio), the University of Dayton (Ohio), and Pennsylvania State; and sporadically at Ohio State, the University of Pittsburgh, and Yale University. Quite recently it has been introduced into the program at Indiana University; and in Spring 1987 it will be reintroduced at Columbia University. This 'reintroduction' will occur no less than 64 years after the Slovene language was first offered at Columbia—the very first Slovene-language instruction in the United States.

Several factors have promoted academic concern for Slovene in the United States. Among the most important are the following: 1) an anticipated expansion of East European research interests at American universities from the 'major' to the 'non-major' topics, areas and languages;<sup>2</sup> 2) an increasing preoccupation with the fate of the so-called 'minor' Slavic languages in American academia, and with the development of teaching materials for these languages;<sup>3</sup> 3) an increasing linguistic interest in the Slovene language, in the production of Slovene language textbooks and Slovene-English-Slovene dictionaries;<sup>4</sup> 4) an increase in the number of good teachers of the Slovene language, with partial training in Slovenia; 5) the promotion of Slovene studies in the U.S.A. by such professional associations as the Society for Slovene Studies, with its publications and conferences;<sup>5</sup> and, last but not least, 6) a greater understanding in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, as well as in the Belgrade Commission for Educational Exchange with the U.S.A., of the need for cooperation with the United States and its Fulbright Program for Yugoslavia. During 1986 the Belgrade Commission observed the twentieth anniversary of its fruitful co-operation with the Fulbright Program.<sup>6</sup>

During the three academic years 1922-25 a two-semester course entitled *Elementary Slovene* was offered by the Department of Slavonic Languages at Columbia University. Like most Slavic languages then taught at Columbia ('Czechoslovak', Serbo-Croatian, Polish, Bulgarian), the course was offered by University Extension, a predecessor of today's School of General Studies. In the absence of the Departmental Chairman (J.D. Prince<sup>7</sup>) the course was under the general supervision of C.A. Manning,<sup>8</sup> and was taught by M.S. Stanoyevich, University instructor for 'South Slavonic'.<sup>9</sup> The course description, in part, read: "Study of grammar and syntax. Simple composition, reading and oral exercises. — Open to persons unfamiliar with Slovene."

Eleven years later, in 1936-37, Slovene was again offered in the program of the newly-renamed Department of East European Languages. The (absent) Chairman was still J.D. Prince, and his deputy was still C.A. Manning. In fact, two two-semester courses were offered that year: *Advanced Slovene* and *History of Slovene Literature*, both taught by Andrew [Andrej] Kobal, a lecturer in University Extension.<sup>10</sup> *Advanced Slovene* was described as "Exercises in Slovene with a review of the grammar and the development of the language. Prerequisite: one year of Slovene or Serbo-Croatian or the equivalent." The *History of Slovene Literature* course description read: "The course consists of a series of lectures on the development of Slovene literature from the earliest times. Special emphasis

will be laid on the development of the literature of the nineteenth century and post-war period. No knowledge of Slovene is required."

The circumstances under which Kobal was introduced to Prince—a meeting that led to his appointment in the department—are most interesting. In his autobiography<sup>11</sup> Kobal recounts that it happened in 1936, during his last year as a graduate student at New York University, where he was studying Public Law. Invited one evening to the home of Professor Lindsay Rogers, Chairman of the Department of Public Law at Columbia, he was introduced to Prince, at the time U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia and on leave from the Departmental Chairmanship. Prince happened to have one of Lucien Tesnière's books<sup>12</sup> with him that evening, and during conversation playfully quizzed the unknown graduate student, a native speaker of Slovene, on his knowledge of Slovene grammar. Prince liked both Kobal and his answers, and next day introduced him to Manning, the Acting Chairman of the Department. And so Andrew Kobal came to be appointed lecturer in Slovene, and taught both the courses in the 1936-37 year.

In 1970-71 two courses, a one semester course on Slovene language and a one semester course on Slovene literature, were offered by what was by then called the Department of Slavic Languages at Columbia. They were part of the department's graduate program, introduced upon special recommendation by William E. Harkins, Acting Chairman that year. The courses were taught by the present author. The first, *The Structure of Modern Slovene*, was described as "The phonology, morphology, and syntax of Slovene;" the second, *Introduction to Slovene Literature*, as "A general survey from the sixteenth century to World War II."

In the Spring semester 1987 the course *Slovene Language and Literature* is offered in the Columbia School of General Studies, taught by Ljubinica Črnivec.<sup>13</sup> It is described as follows: "An introduction to the language of modern Slovene literature. Balanced emphasis on reading, speaking and grammar."

Columbia University

## REFERENCES

1. The most recent reliable data on Slovene language offerings in U.S. universities are for 1965-67. According to these statistics—in Howard Aronson, "Survey of West and South Slavic Languages," in Charles Jelavich, ed., *Language and Area Studies. East Central and Southern Europe. A Survey* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1969) 411-49—which were based on responses to questionnaires sent to 166 U.S. institutions, Slovene language was then offered by three universities: the U. of Chicago, Indiana U., and Stanford U. The then distribution was as follows: Serbo-Croatian was taught at 29 institutions (30% of the total in the U.S.A.); Czech at 20 (21%), Bulgarian at 9 (10%), Slovene at 3 (3%) and Slovak at one (1%).
2. Cf. Rado L. Lencek, "Yugoslav studies in the United States today," *Serbian Studies* 2/2-3 (1983) 41-50.
3. Cf. the roundtable discussion, sponsored by the Society for Slovene Studies and chaired by W.W. Derbyshire, "Meeting the needs of the minor Slavic languages," at the 1978 AAASS Convention, Columbus, OH; also Rado L. Lencek, *Conference on the Development of Minor Slavic Language Materials: Slovene. Columbia University, New York, 1978. Discussion and Documentation Materials*, and Henry R. Cooper Jr., "The Slovene textbook project," *Papers in Slovene Studies* 1978 (New York: Society for Slovene Studies, 1981) 67-77.
4. Cf. Rado L. Lencek, *American Linguists on Slovene Language. A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography (1940-1975)* (New York: Society for Slovene Studies, 1975). Modern textbooks: H. Jug-Kranjec, *Slovenščina za tujce* (Ljubljana: Seminar slovenskega jezika, literature in

- kulture, 1978); E. Andoljšek, L. Jevšenak & T. Korošec, *Povejmo slovensko* (Ljubljana: Državno založba, 1973); J. Toporišič, *Zakaj ne po slovensko. Slovene by the Direct Method* (Ljubljana: Slovenska izseljenska matica, 1969) + Album: 12 phonodiscs (Ljubljana: Helidon, 1969); Rado L. Lencek, *The Structure and History of the Slovene Language* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1982). Dictionaries: A. Grad, *The Great Slovene-English Dictionary. Veliki slovensko-angleški slovar* (Ljubljana: Državna založba, 1982); A. Grad, R. Škerlj & N. Vitorovič, *The Great English-Slovene Dictionary. Veliki angleško-slovenski slovar* (Ljubljana: Državna založba, 1978).
5. See *Slovene Studies* 5 (1983) 17-26 and 27-42, respectively, for an exhaustive listing of the Society's conferences and publications.
  6. Instruction in Slovene at U.S. universities was first included in the Yugoslav Commission for Educational Exchange program in 1979-80. At first there was one and since 1985-86 two lecturers per academic year. To date four U.S. universities have availed themselves of this program in their efforts to promote Slovene language and literature. The Slovene scholars who have participated to date: at the U. of Kansas—Velemir Gjurin (1979-80), Dragica Bešlin (1980-82), Ljubinica Črnivec (1982-83), Anka Dušej Blatnik (1983-84), Mag. Miran Hladnik (1984-85), Dr. Helga Glušič (1985-86); at Yale U.—Marta Pirnat (1985-86); at Indiana U.—Dr. Helga Glušič (1986-87); and at Columbia U.—Ljubinica Črnivec (1986-87).
  7. John Dyneley Prince (1868-1945), Professor of Slavonic Languages, was U.S. Minister to Denmark 1921-26 (and subsequently first U.S. Minister, then Ambassador to Yugoslavia), cf. "Prince, John Dyneley," in J.S. Roucek, ed., *Slavonic Encyclopedia* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949) 1059-1060.
  8. Clarence A. Manning, Ph.D. (Columbia) 1915, was at first Instructor in Slavonic Languages, from 1924 Assistant Professor of East European Languages.
  9. Milivoj S. Stanoyevich, A.B. (Zaječar) 1902, A.M. (Belgrade) 1907, M.L. (California) 1914, Ph.D. (Columbia) 1921. For the course announcements see *Columbia University Bulletins of Information, University Extension. Announcements* for 1922-23, 1923-24, 1924-25.
  10. Andrej Kobal (b. 1899), Ph.B. (Chicago) 1930, M.S. (Columbia) 1932, Ph.D. (New York) 1936. In 1942-44 he worked for the Office of Strategic Services, Washington, D.C. and in 1944-46 as a member of the Federal Controlling Commission for the Balkan States, thereafter for the department of Defense and the U.S. Foreign Office in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Bangladesh. In 1962-65 he was Director, Research Division, Hoover Institution, and Professor, Stanford U. See his autobiography: Andrej Kobal, *Svetovni popotnik pripoveduje I-II* (Gorica: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1975-76), also M. Jevnikar, "Kobal Andrej," *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon VIII* (Gorica: Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1982) 76-79. Jevnikar's statement (p. 76) to the effect that Kobal initiated courses in Slovene at Columbia is, of course, not accurate.
  11. Kobal, I: 146.
  12. Presumably, Lucien Tesnière, *Les formes du duel en slovène* (Paris: Champion, 1925).
  13. Ljubinica Črnivec is a graduate of the Filozofska Fakulteta, Univerza Edvarda Kardelja, Ljubljana, and has a postgraduate diploma from the English Studies for Overseas Students Program, Nottingham University. She is both Secretary for the Seminar in Slovene Language, Literature and Culture, and Secretary of the Faculty of Philosophy Commission for Slovene Lectureships Abroad. She taught in Nottingham in the period 1974-75 - 1976-77, and at the University of Kansas in 1982-83.