

Iskra Čurkina. *Rusko-slovenski kulturni stiki*. Trans. by Jože Sever. Ljubljana: Slovenska Matica, 1995. 286 pp. [Translation of *Rusko-slovenskie kul'turnie sviazi*.]

SSS member Iskra Vasil'evna Čurkina has been writing with distinction on Slovene cultural history for over two decades. A graduate of Moscow State University and a long-time researcher with the Institut slavianovedeniia (Russian Academy of Science), she has devoted most of her career to the study of Russian-Slovene contacts in the nineteenth century. She has authored or edited several biographies of important figures from the period, but is perhaps best known for her synoptic view of Russian Slovene relations, *Russkie i sloveny*; see Rado Lencek's *Slovene Studies* review.¹ *Rusko-slovenski kulturni stiki* (*RSKS*) is basically a Slovene translation of a later version of *Russkie i sloveny* (*RiS*), revised and expanded.²

Indeed, seven of the nine chapters in the new volume correspond to the chapters in the 1986 book—they even bear the same titles. The separate conclusion of *RiS* becomes an addendum to chapter 9 in *RSKS*. The text is augmented by an author's introduction, and a brief afterward by Vasilij Melik; the book has been translated by Jože Sever, who has done an excellent job rendering Čurkina's clear, workman-like style into Slovene. A very welcome addition are several pages of photographs of the principle actors discussed in the text. Finally, there is an index of names and a hefty list of endnotes, well over 100 more than in *RiS* (this alone is eloquent testimony to how substantially the work has been augmented). Unfortunately, the monograph still suffers from incomplete bibliographical references and the lack of a separate bibliography. It would not be easy for scholars to research this subject if all they had to go on were the author's endnotes!

Čurkina's narrative is broadly chronological. Chapter 1 ("First Encounters") discusses the earliest contacts between Russian and Slovenes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This material has been considerably expanded from 1986, and is the more valuable for it; she adds welcome detail to passages that received rather short shrift in *RiS* (e.g., the experiences of Russian troops in Slovene provinces during the Napoleonic wars, early attempts by Blaž Kumerdej

¹ Rado Lencek, rev. of *Russkie i sloveny*, by Iskra Čurkina, *Slovene Studies* 10.1 (1988): 89–92.

² Iskra Čurkina, *Russkie i sloveny* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986).

and Aleksandr Šilkov to describe Slovene for a learned Russian audience), and adds some wonderful anecdotes that cry out for fuller investigation (who would have known that the stern Tsar Nikolai I loved a “simple Slovene girl” during the 1821 Congress of the Holy Alliance in Ljubljana!).

Čurkina treats the difficult relationships between Jernej Kopitar and early Russian Slavists in chapter 2. Lencek took particular exception to her ambivalent attitude toward the great philologist in *RiS*.³ Although, in fact, very little has been changed in this chapter in *RSKS*, her discussion nonetheless comes across as more even-handed: she has added new material from Kopitar’s writings that clearly reveal a positive, even hopeful, view of Russia’s position in the Slavic world (see quote at the top of p. 27); and, then, the very title of the chapter is now less inflammatory—simply “Kopitar and the First Attempts at Russian Slavistics,” instead of “The Slavic Mephistopheles and ...” (citing Vaclav Hanka’s bilious characterization of the Slovene scholar).

Chapters 3–5 follow the same format: the 1986 text is augmented throughout by new material, including more extensive quotes from the writings of the people involved. Chapter 3 concerns the visits of the first professional Russian Slavists to Slovene territory in the 1830s and 1840s. Chapter 4 treats the 1850s to 1870s (“The Establishment of Permanent Russo-Slovene Ties”) and discusses more fully the adventures in Slovenia of I. S. Aksakov, the scion of the famous Slavophile family. Chapter 5 is devoted to Jan Baudoin de Courtenay and his work on Slovene; this remains, as before, one of the highlights of Čurkina’s book.⁴

A new chapter 6, “The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 and the Slovenes,” relates a fascinating story that was all but absent in *RiS*: the spread of Slovene Russophilism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Through carefully selected quotes from archival material and contemporary journalism, Čurkina demonstrates just how complex this attitude was: echoes of earlier, romantic Pan-Slav enthusiasm combined with genuine feelings of solidarity for the Turkish-dominated eastern Balkan Slavs, and the whole was charged with a sharp sense of political grievance against the Austro-Hungarian authorities. One cannot read this chapter in light of the current tragedy in the former

³ Lencek 91.

⁴ Lencek 90.

Yugoslavia without being overwhelmed by competing sensations of revelation and deep irony. I, for one, would welcome a separate monograph on this topic, and Čurkina would be the person to write it.

Chapters 7 and 8 in *RSKS* correspond to chapters 6 and 7 in *RiS*, and treat two different aspects of Russian-Slovene relations from circa 1875–1914: Slavic studies in Russia and the small Slovene emigration in Russia, respectively. (Incidentally, in chapter 8, p. 200, Čurkina finally identifies articles published in the St. Petersburg journal *Slavjanskij mir* [1908–11] under the name “Lev Savin” with the Slovene emigrant Janko Lavrin, the journal’s publisher, thereby correcting a major oversight in *RiS*; see Lencek 1988, pp. 90–91.) The other new chapter, “The Search for the New Russia,” rounds out the body of the text and augments Čurkina’s account of the pre-World War I era. It contains some interesting material on Slovene responses to the great Russian writers of the 1800s.

RSKS contains many of the shortcomings of *RiS*. The bibliographic difficulties have already been mentioned; here we might add that Čurkina seems to have consulted precious little modern secondary literature, and none in languages other than Russian and Slovene.⁵ This is symptomatic of a deeper problem: there is no analysis here, no synthesis of the material, no effort to delve deeply into any issue, no matter how important. All too often, *RSKS* (like *RiS* before it) becomes a dry litany of who wrote whom when and in what language, who exchanged what books with whom, who met whom when they visited the Habsburg Empire, et cetera. There were so many times when I wanted to see the details behind something mentioned almost in passing: what exactly does it mean that Austrian authorities started persecuting Slovene Russophiles in 1887 (211)? What exactly did Matija Murko and his reviewers have to say in 1897 about the first generation of Pan-Slavist intellectuals, and how does this tie in with what Čurkina herself has already told us about them (see 217 ff.)? What exactly did Ivan Prijatelj and other Slovene Russophile critics have to say about the Russian classics, and what does this say about the literary ethos in Austria at the time (219 ff.)? These examples were chosen at random from chapter 9, but the reader will feel similar frustration throughout *RSKS*. This is one book that should have been much longer than it is.

⁵ Lencek also commented on this. See p. 90.

On a less portentous note, I found myself getting lost in the last chapters of the monograph, as Čurkina's narration jumps back and forth in time. For example, on pages 186–87, in her account of the careers of two Slovenes who taught in Russia in the late 1800s, there is mention of events in the following years, in this order: 1870, 1879, 1870, 1873, 1876, 1880, 1882, 1884, 1882, 1885, 1888, 1879, 1904, 1841, 1866–71, 1867, 1871. Even allowing for the fact that two different biographies are being presented in this particular instance (the break between them comes between 1904 and 1841 in the above sequence), one can see the great potential for confusion here.

For all of that, however, *Russko-slovenski kulturni stiki* is an immensely valuable contribution to Slovene studies. Čurkina has provided other scholars with a rich array of topics for further research, presented a vast amount of crucial material from Russian and Slovene archives, and pointed the way to important writings from obscure journals and newspapers published in Ljubljana, Vienna, St. Petersburg, and Moscow. Most significantly, she has shed light on a major, but often overlooked, page in the history of Slavic studies and Pan-Slavic thought.

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Marija Stanonik, ed. *Traditiones: Zbornik Inštituta za slovensko narodopisje: Res Slovenica - Quo Vadis?* Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1997. 470 pp., 9,600 SIT [= \$52] (paper).

The subject of the twenty-sixth volume of *Traditiones* is Slovene identity—questions of Slovene nationality and Slovenia's sovereignty, with special attention to Slovenes outside the Republic of Slovenia in nearby regions and all over the world.

The collection opens with Marija Stanonik's introductory essay, "The Mosaic of Questions and Positions on Slovene Recognizability and Their Vital Impact on Our Future" (9–29). She analyzes Slovene identity as "ne toliko kot priložnost za zgolj akademsko razglabljanje, ampak - veliko bolj z željo o ozaveščanju njene življenjske odločilnosti za našo prihodnost" (9).