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The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

A RARE PUBLICATION IN OUR COLLECTION

by Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Our Ukrainian Museum and Library has been fortunate in receiving many private libraries of book collectors who want to make their collections available to the general public by donating them to our Library and thus preserving them for posterity. Very often these collections contain real gems rare, hard to find publications which very few libraries have and which are sought after by researchers and scholars.

One of the first extensive and valuable collection of books and publications that we received was from Father Maxim Kinash (1879-1949). He was born in the Lviv region, and studied at the seminary and university in Lviv. He was ordained a priest in 1896 and served in various parishes in Halychyna. In 1912 he went to Canada to do

missionary work and in 1914, at the invitation of Bishop Soter Ortynsky, he came to the United States. He served as Rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, in Philadelphia, and in a few other parishes, the last being St. Michael's Parish in Yonkers (1933-1949). He was known for his

excellent sermons, a collection of which he published, as well as a series of educational brochures. He became the editor of the Misionar, (a Ukrainian Cathlic monthly, published in Philadelphia). He also contributed articles to the Providence Association newspaper entitled America, and served as the Association's chaplain. During his lifetime he amassed a large and valuable collection of publications, mostly from western Ukraine, among which were journals, magazines, newspapers to which he subscribed and collected; and he even had most of them bound!

Among the treasures of Father Kinash which we inherited is the Newsletter of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (Vistnyk Soyuzu Vyzvolennia Ukrainy), published in Vienna from 1914-1918. This Union was founded by noted political activists from East-

ern Ukraine (who because of political repression by the tsarist regime they would be exiled or emigrated) sought refuge within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They settled in Lviv and later moved to Vienna. The outbreak of World War I and the revolutionary movements of various downtrodden nations gave them hope that finally the time had come to break away completely from Russian domination. This time, they believed, would occur with the help of western powers, and would unite eastern and western Ukraine into one free and independent state. With this in mind, they founded the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine in 1914, established its headquarters in Vienna, and conducted its activities. In order to make its aims known and to popularize its ideas, the Union began publishing the Newsletter. In its statements we read the following: "The joint life of Ukraine with Russia is an endless chain of suffering, exploitations, disaster up to the tearing out the soul of the Ukrainian people – their national language. Therefore, the most dreadful threats will not frighten nor stop conscientious sons of Ukraine in the fight to break that chain, throw off

the yoke of bondage, and in this struggle against our tyrant, our allies will be everyone who is his enemy ... we know that no one will give us anything if we ourselves do not obtain it". These words, written a hundred years ago, still ring

true to this today. During its four years of existence, the Union did an enormous amount of campaigning for the Ukrainian cause. It published over 50 books and brochures in many languages, sent their representatives to the Central Powers to plea for its cause, and conducted lectures within the Austro-Hungarian and German territories and in Bulgaria. One of a major accomplishments in these various attempts was the ability to convince the Minister of Turkey of the necessity to have a free Ukraine and the need of the Turkish government to help Ukrainians in this cause. The Turkish government did send about 30,000 Turkish soldiers to fight the Russian army on the borders of Ukraine, in the vicinity of the city of Berezhany. Together with the Sichovi Striltsi they fought valiantly. Many of them died and were buried in Berezhany cemeteries. The natives took care of these graves until 1939. When the Bolsheviks came, they destroyed many of the graves. Members of the Union also conducted humanitarian work among the prisoners of war. Soldiers of the Russian tsarist army became German and Austrian prisoners of war. Among these soldiers there were thousands of ethnic Ukrainians. At the request of the Union, German and Austrian military authorities allowed ethnic Ukrainian soldiers to be separated from Russian soldiers and organized separate camps for them. Members of the *Union* then began providing religious, medical, and cultural services for these POWs. They even established

schools, libraries, choirs, theaters, courses in Ukrainian culture, etc.

Articles in the *Newsletter* covered the following: detailed news of the War, news from the front, review of situations in occupied territories, special attention to the Ukrainian Sichovi Striltsi soldiers and their heroic deeds in battles, their cultural and educational accomplishments in the villages of Volyn, etc; articles dealing with political situations, developments, and problems, the struggle of enslaved nations for their freedom, historical analysis of centuries-long atroc-



ities committed by Russians against Ukrainians; a review of articles printed in German and other European newspapers about Ukraine; appeals to people of the world to aid Ukrainians in their struggle for independence. There were also articles dealing with Ukrainian literature and culture, including poems and short stories of known writers, as well as literary attempts of young, still unknown writers. In addition to the regular subscribers to the Newsletter, it was sent to soldiers at the front, to various military stations, and to all of the Ukrainian POWs in Germany and Austria. It is interesting to note that quite a few of the poems, songs, and short stories by the Sichovi Striltsi were first printed on the pages of the Newsletter, e.g., the works of Lev Lepkyi, Roman

The wealth of material dealing with the turbulent years of war and nationbuilding in this publication is enormous and fascinating. Even by perusing just a few issues of the Newsletter, one becomes immersed in the important historical events which lead to a much better understanding of the times, the people, their limitations and failures, but at the same time of their dedication, accomplishments, and hope for the future.

Kupchynskyi, and others.



Theatrical performances in the Ukrainian POW camp

Explore and Experience Our Past