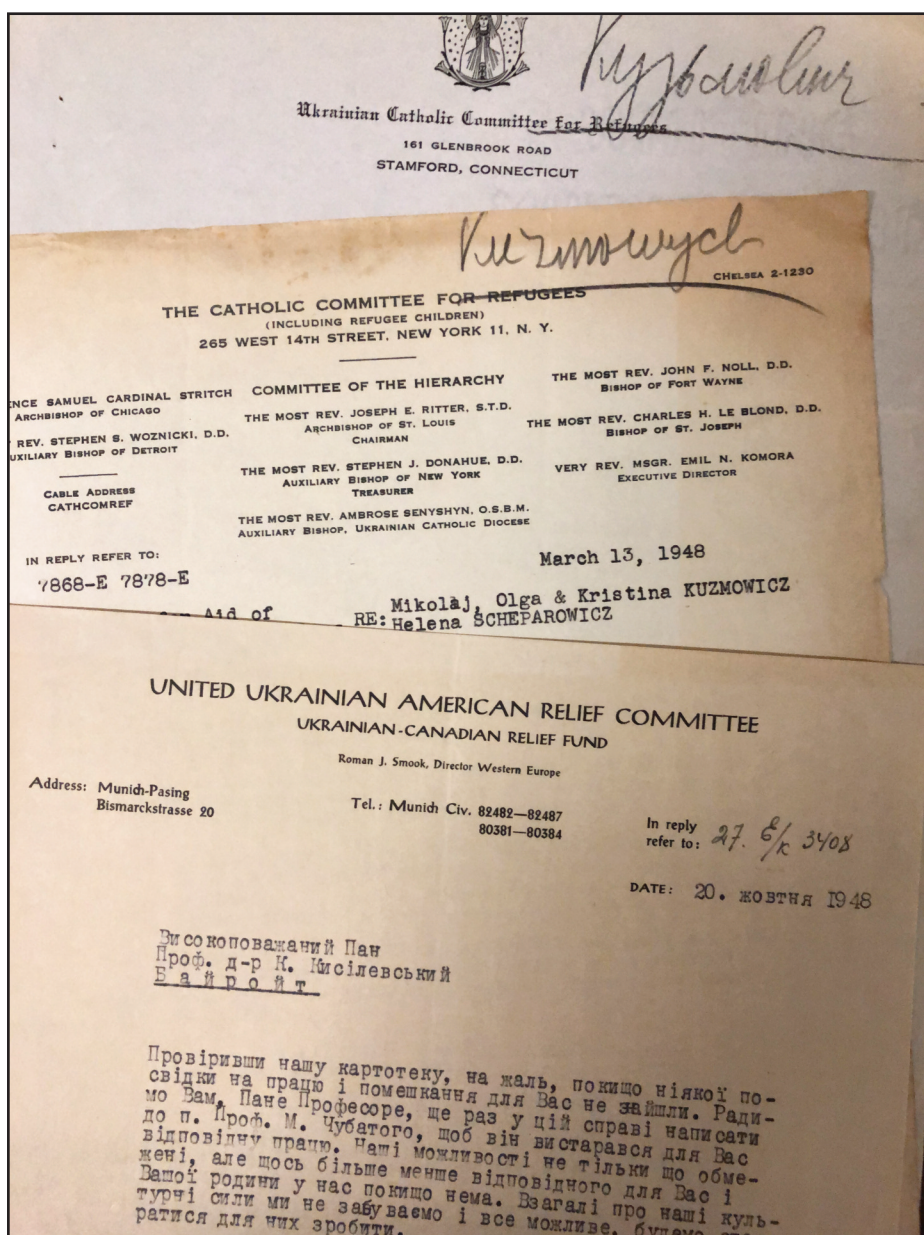


EXPLORING OUR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

November Is for Thanks, December Is for Gifts

By Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



From a letter to Prof. Dr. Kysilevsky, The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

For most of us, the last two months of the year have a meaningful quality. November is a month which gives us the opportunity to contemplate upon, recount and ponder on the events, experiences, and blessings of the past year. Often, these recollections evoke in us a feeling of gratitude and we, each in our own way, offer sincere thanks for God's providence for the benefits and good fortune that came our way. But this Thanksgiving is on a very personal, individual level. Nevertheless, we might consider at times to broaden our scope of recognition and express appreciation and gratitude to the known and unknown men and women who, decades ago, committed great acts of charity for the well-being of their less fortunate brethren, among whom many of us and our progenies were the beneficiaries.

This year commemorates the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. The devastation the war brought to Europe was of enormous proportions. Cities were destroyed, villages and countryside pillaged, millions of people perished while millions more were displaced and became refugees. Among these displaced peoples were about two million Ukrainians. Many were forcefully repatriated to the Soviet Union but about 200,000 of them remained in Germany and Austria. For these refugees, Displaced Persons camps were organized where, for a few years, they lived there under the protection and care of western allies, international organizations, e.g. UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association) IRO (International Relief Organization), and with the assistance from Ukrainian

organizations in America like the Ukrainian American Relief Committee, the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, the Ukrainian Catholic Relief Committee, and others. Eventually, the DP camps began to be disbanded and all its residents had to be resettled to countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, and South America, which were willing to accept refugees.

One of the most active Ukrainian institutions in the United States to help the refugees dealing with charitable aid and the complicated logistics of resettlement was the Ukrainian Catholic Relief Committee for Refugees, with its headquarters in Stamford CT. The Committee was founded by Metropolitan Constantine Bohachevsky with Bishop Ambrose Senyshyn as its executive director. Bishop Bohachevsky, for better handling and understanding of the refugee difficulties, sent Rev. John Stock to Europe as his representative to deal directly with the demands of the situation. Many of those Ukrainian refugees who came here as the third wave of immigrants were the recipients of the committee's often self-sacrificing and dedicated work, without which their lives and the lives of their already American born descendants (children, grandchildren and great grandchildren) could have taken a very different turn.

In our Archival collection, we have 39 boxes (20 linear feet) of correspondence of the Ukrainian Catholic Relief Committee dealing with their efforts to help resettle Ukrainian refugees to America. Within the committee there was a sub-section which was mainly concerned in helping cultural activists -

scholars, artists, writers, physicians emigrate to America for whom sponsorship and affidavits were more difficult to get compared to an average refugee applicant. The work of this sub-section was in the hands of Prof. Nicholas Chubaty (1899-1975) - scholar, historian, pedagogue, civic activists, journalist. The correspondence between Prof. Chubaty and the applicants is fascinating. Not only do we learn details of the applicants' life and achievements, but also their concerns as to the future of the cultural development of Ukrainian life in America and the preservation of its identity. For example, Prof. Yevhen Chraplyvy (1898-1949, father of Lesia Chraplyva, writer and educator) in a letter to Chubaty, besides asking for the necessary affidavits to emigrate, he immediately turns to more significant matters. In his letters, he underscores the importance of the revitalization of the Shevchenko Scientific Society in America, which was abolished by the Soviets in Ukraine. This, he believes has to be done to prove to the world that Ukrainian national scholarship exists and thrives in exile. Sadly, Prof. Chraplyvy died just before coming to America, but his concerns and plans lived on. In a letter from the sculptor Serhii Lytvynenko (1899-1964), asking for assistance to emigrate, certain little known interesting facts come to light. Apparently, in 1939 Rev. Procko, then Rector of St. Basil Seminary commissioned Lytvynenko to do a monument of Markian Shashkevych for the Seminary grounds. War broke out and, regrettably the plan never materialized. The noted artist and educator Damian Horniatkevych (1892-1980) asked for assistance but explained the difficulties the committee might have in finding a sponsor for him. During his escape from the Bolsheviks, he managed to bring with him his large collection of rare books dealing with the history of Ukrainian art, artists, and Ukrainian culture, 2500 extraordinary embroidery samples, a unique *pysanka* (Easter egg) collection, a photograph collection of important historical monuments, etc. The committee did find a sponsor and all of these items did come to America together with the artist and his family. A sincerely heartwarming letter asking for assistance came from a Bohdan Bozemsky (1923-). While a student at the Art Academy in Lviv, he as well was abducted by the Nazis in 1944 and forced to work in German factories. At the end of the war and the coming of the American Army, he managed to get work at the American Red Cross painting portraits of American soldiers. His dream was to come to America and continue with his art studies, which he did and sub-

sequently became a noted Ukrainian artist. Our museum is proud to have a large collection of his works. Not all sponsorships and arrivals were smooth and easy. For example, a sponsor was found for Kost Kysilevsky (1890-1974) - a linguist and pedagogue and his family. But when their ship docked in 1949 at the New York City Pier, the sponsor did not come to pick up the family. Fortunately, an emigre officer at the pier helped and advised them what to do (telling them to get change for the one-dollar bill they had into dimes in order to have the exact amount for subway or bus rides). They managed to get to the apartment in downtown New York City of a family member who had arrived a few months earlier. One would think an experience of this nature would discourage them from any engagement in community activities. Not so! Most of the refugees who arrived in New York lived in the downtown area of the city near the Tompkin's Square Park. After school, most of us youngsters would go to the park to play. Our parents would come for walks there, to meet other newcomers, exchange information, etc. Prof. Kysilevsky came to the park, and upon seeing so many youngsters doing nothing useful, decided it was time to organize a Saturday Ukrainian School for them. This is how Ukrainian Saturday Schools began thanks to Prof. Kysilevsky and his concern for the future of the Ukrainian community in America. In the 1950's we had Ukrainian classes on Tuesday and Friday evenings and Saturday mornings.

These are just a few stories retrieved from the correspondence of the Committee. There are thousands more and each one more fascinating than the other, which we will present in next month's issue. The unifying quality of these stories display the fact that most of the applicants did not express worry about their personal wellbeing but underscored their concerns about the future of Ukrainians in America, the preservation of their identity, their intellectual development, the production of objective scholarly works, etc., and were ready and did work towards these aims.

The members of the Committee to Aid Refugees, the many sponsors willing to offer their services, priests and parishes of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in America under the guidance and directives of Metropolitan Constantine Bohachevsky and Bishop Ambrose Senyshyn and the tireless secretary Prof. Mykola Chubaty - all deserve, albeit belatedly our deep gratitude.

To be continued

An ad in *The Way*, The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford