



## UKRAINIAN PRISONER-OF-WAR PUBLICATIONS

Ksenya Kiebusinski

Petro Jacyk Central & East European Resource Centre

**I**N MY MANY years working firstly as an archivist and then as a bibliographer, some of my greatest pleasures have come from acquiring gift material for the library, especially when I have had the opportunity to visit donors and see their collections lovingly arranged in their home libraries or studies. Sometimes, because of such life circumstances as deaths, sudden moves, etc., I have encountered private collections in less desirable and more chaotic settings as I look for books and documents in attics, garages, and, even dumpsters. Not until last month, however, have I had gift items slid to me across a table in an unmarked envelope. Such was the case during a delightful early October lunch meeting with a visiting colleague at our local pub, the Duke of York.

The contents of the mysterious envelope contained two publications, *Holos tabora* (Voice of the Camp), and *Liazaroni* (Vagabond), issued by Ukrainian prisoners-of-war interned following World War I in camps in Czechoslovakia and Italy, and another, a literary-art journal, *Mytusa*, published in Lviv, Ukraine. How this material made its way to Toronto from across Europe

and the Atlantic Ocean is as fascinating as the content itself.

These three publications are a posthumous gift to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library from Lubomyr (1927–2001) and Johanna (1924–2011) Mudretzkyj of Vienna, Austria. They acquired these publications from Lubomyr's parents, Demetrius Mudrecki (1887–1945) and Sophia Jaremtschak (1898–1974). Demetrius was born in the small town of Cieszanów, in eastern Galicia, then part of the Habsburg Empire, while Sophia was born in the imperial capital of Vienna. The two met in Vienna after World War I, where Demetrius studied law at the University, and were married in 1924. The Jaremtschak family and Demetrius were active in Vienna's Ukrainian community, collected Ukrainian publications, and had close ties with a variety of prominent political and cultural activists from Ukraine who had come there as refugees during the war. Demetrius and Sophia returned to Cieszanów (then in Poland) in the mid-1920s. They stayed there until 1938, when, facing the threat of arrest for his Ukrainian political activities, Demetrius took his family to Vienna. During World War II, Demetrius

was arrested by the Gestapo for aiding the Ukrainian nationalist underground, and incarcerated in the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he perished. Remarkably, the three titles survived the turbulent years following World War I. They travelled from the prisoner-of-war camps to Vienna, and then were handed down through three generations of a single family.

Aside from this provenance, there is the interesting story of their publication and content.

At the outbreak of World War I, Ukrainian territories and populations were divided between the two empires of the Romanovs and Habsburgs. Ukrainians thus fought on both of the warring sides, Austro-Hungary and Russia, with 250,000 Ukrainian soldiers serving in the Austrian forces, and 3.5 million serving in the Russian army. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian prisoners ended up in captivity during and after the war. Those who had served in the Russian army were held at camps in Austria and Germany, while those who had been in the Austrian army ended up in camps in Russia and Italy. Many of the soldiers remained interned well into the early 1920s,

OPENING PAGE: Illustration from *Liazaroni*. THIS PAGE, L TO R: Illustration from *Liazaroni*; pages from *Holos tabora*. Gift of Lubomyr and Johanna Mudretzkyj.



as in the territories inhabited by Ukrainians there were fought civil wars between Bolshevik Russia, White Russia, newly independent Poland, and vying Ukrainian factions. After defeats in 1919 and 1920, many veterans of the forces of the Ukrainian National Republic and the Ukrainian Galician Army, who had battled for an independent state, were placed in internment camps in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. Although conditions in the camps for the internees were difficult—many prisoners died from poor nourishment or unsanitary conditions—an active cultural-educational life developed. There were formed schools, dramatic-musical groups, archives and libraries, and, most interestingly for us, press organs. In total, there were some twenty Ukrainian-language periodicals issued by those soldiers interned in Austria, Germany, and Italy from 1914 to 1920, and about ninety published by those Ukrainians interned in Poland and Czechoslovakia from 1919 to 1924.

The periodicals published in the prisoner-of-war camps are not widely held, and turn up on the market rarely. Fortunately, at the Fisher Library, we already have a small core collection of similar such material thanks to the gift of Library and Archives Canada in 2011 of duplicates from the Andry Zhuk Collection. Among this collection are many pamphlets published by leaders of the Ukrainian independence movement who came to Vienna as refugees when Russia occupied Galicia in 1914 (the city was the *de*

*facto* capital of Ukrainian political and cultural life during the wartime years).

The handwritten and beautifully hand-illustrated (ink and watercolour) issue of *Liazaroni* (no. 8/9 1920) was produced in an internment camp near Cassino, Italy, the site of a prisoner-of-war camp where were held captive tens of thousands of Ukrainians who had fought in the Austro-Hungarian army. They were freed only in 1921. Even under the difficult circumstances of internment, the Ukrainians there (mostly from Galicia) managed to create in Cassino a Ukrainian community, and to publish a belletristic journal *Polonenyi* (Captive), with its satirical-humoristic supplement *Liazaroni*. The latter was described as a one-of-a-kind publication, printed at the “Five Fingers” press. As for an editor, no one was responsible, “because there is no reason.” The issues included poems, stories, letters, proverbs, jokes, announcements, and drawings. Most contributors disguised their identities with pseudonyms, with names such as Hai-hai-ko, Greg Macaroni, Cyril ‘He-himself’, and so forth, although some pieces were signed by actual writers, such as Volodymyr Iatsenkiv (1898–1938) and Teodor Balytskyi. The objects of the satirical poetry and prose were life in captivity and the political vicissitudes of the time.

The two donated issues of *Holos tabora* (Voice of the Camp) date from July–August 1920, and were published by members of the Ukrainian Galician Army in the Czechoslovak

internment camp of Deutsch-Gabel (today Jablonné v Podještědí, Liberec District, Czech Republic). Deutsch-Gabel was the largest of the internment camps in Czechoslovakia, and held Ukrainian prisoners-of-war from May 1919 to October 1921. They were later transferred to Josefov, and remained there until the camp was liquidated in 1923 after a thaw in Polish-Czechoslovak relations. Afterwards, some internees returned to Galicia, but a majority obtained political immigrant status and chose to remain in Czechoslovakia. *Holos tabora* was published by means of hectography. The articles and memoirs refer to battles the Galician Army fought in the Ukrainian-Polish War in Galicia, 1918–1919, and then in the later stages of the Ukrainian-Soviet War when they joined forces with the Army of the Ukrainian National Republic. The contents also include poems and belletristic prose, as well as announcements and reports about cultural and educational events, such as a concert by the Ukrainian Republican Kapelle, a lecture by Myroslav Sichynskyi about life of Ukrainians in the United States, and a list of books purchased for the camp library.

The Mudretzkyj gift, together with the Zhuk collection, offer a wealth of information and perspectives on Ukrainian military, political, and, even, literary, life during and after World War I. We invite faculty, students, and scholars to research this material as we approach the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War in August 2014.