News from Uppsala

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A. A. Zaliznjak awarded honorary doctorate

On January 25th, 2013, Professor Andrej Anatol’evič Zaliznjak, well-known for his research on medieval birch-bark letters from Novgorod, was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Languages at Uppsala University.

Professor Zaliznjak is a leading linguist, especially within in the field of Russian. He is now recognized for his pioneering work in broad areas of Russian morphology, accentology, syntax, and “linguistic archaeology”.

His work on the reading and interpretation of birch-bark letters has attracted considerable attention in recent decades. These letters, written primarily on birch-bark and excavated predominantly in Novgorod, comprise everyday messages between ordinary people, composed in a language specific to Novgorod. Some letters can be traced back as far as the 11th century, although most are from the 14th and 15th centuries. Letter-writers also include women and children, indicating a considerable level of passive and active literacy in the Novgorod region entirely different from what was thought to be typical of “Standard Old Russian”. Research based on these birch-bark letters has changed views of the Slavic language situation in the medieval period and is thus of great scholarly value.

Zaliznjak’s monographs are constantly being reissued and have already become classics. Russian morphology is another of his research specializations. His now classic Grammatical Dictionary of the Russian Language appeared in 1977. Most of today’s computerized language-analysis programs for machine translation, computer-supported morphological analysis, etc., rely on principles that underlie this work. Another major research area involves accentology.
Julie Hansen appointed associate professor in Slavic languages

On October 31st, 2013, Julie Hansen received the Swedish academic title of associate professor in Slavic languages. She is a research fellow at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, specializing in Slavic literatures, and part-time lecturer at the Department of Modern Languages, Uppsala University. She holds a PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research focuses on twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature from Central and Eastern Europe. She is currently working on a monograph, funded by the Swedish Research Council, on the theme of memory in recent fictional depictions of the communist period. Her lecture for the docent title was held on October 8th and was entitled “The theme of memory in Russian literature since World War II”.

Sven Gustavsson in memoriam

Sven Gustavsson, professor emeritus of Slavic languages at Uppsala University, passed away on February 12th, 2013. He held the chair in Slavic languages from 1977 until his retirement in 2003. He studied Scandinavian languages, literature and Slavic languages in Stockholm from 1957 to 1961. In 1969 he defended his dissertation on the accent in South Slavic present tense forms. During his years as associate professor in Stockholm, his research included work on modern Russian grammar, Solženicyn’s language and the Serbian author Vasko Popa, as well as one of the first surveys of the Rusyn language in Yugoslavia.

As a professor, he knew and cooperated with many Slavists in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. After the fall of the Communist system and subsequent dissolution of the federations in Eastern Europe, he saw it as an important task to maintain connections to the scholarly community in the new states. Professor Gustavsson also held many responsibilities outside the university. During this time, he devoted a lot of attention to the discussion regarding the authorship of “And quiet flows the Don”. He was also involved in projects concerning the Bulgarian poetic language and Polish poetry, among other topics.

With time, his interest in ethnic minorities grew, encompassing minorities in the Slavic countries, as well as Slavic and other minorities in Sweden. In this connection he took active part in the activities at the Centre for Multiethnic Research, presently the Hugo Valentin
Centre. In the late 1990s, his research dealt increasingly with the language situation in former Yugoslavia.

**Eric Palmquist’s “Observations concerning Russia”**

Professor emerita Ulla Birgegård (Uppsala University) has taken part in the publication of an edition of Eric Palmquist’s album and “Observations concerning Russia”. The project was led by Elisabeth Löfstränd (Stockholm University) and also involved Laila Nordquist (Uppsala University) and Gennadij Kovalenko (St. Petersburg Institute for History of the Russian Academy of Sciences).

Eric Palmquist took part in a Swedish embassy to Russia in 1673. Palmquist was asked to draw maps, sketch defense routes and describe land and waterways to Moscow – a task that he executed exquisitely. The report that he compiled is commonly known as “The Palmquist Album”. After spending eight months in Russia, Palmquist returned to Sweden and presented his progress report to the government – a portfolio (52×41 cm) containing 53 different image formats, sixteen geographical maps and city plans, as well as a total of 48 pages of notes and comments on them.

The present project has resulted in a reproduction of Palmquist’s album in full size, as well as in the publication of his “Observations concerning Russia” in the original Old Swedish with translations into contemporary Swedish, Russian and English, with color images of the album pages in a smaller format.

The book has been presented at major libraries in St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as at the Russian embassy in Stockholm.

**Uppsala University represented at major conferences of Slavists**

Scholars from Uppsala University were well represented at the 19th Conference of Nordic Slavists in Bergen, Norway on August 7–11th, 2013. Two Uppsala Slavists were also present at the International Congress of Slavists in Minsk, Belarus on August 20–27th, 2013. The Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies 45th Annual Convention in Boston, USA on November 20–24th, 2013 and the Third International Congress of Bulgarian Studies in Sofia, Bulgaria on May 23–26th, 2013 are other two events attended by Uppsala Slavists.