
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

CHARLES EUSTIS BOHLEN, 1904–1974

With a twinkle in his eye, his handsome craggy face crinkling with an appreciative savor of the anecdote, “Chip” Bohlen illumined the fraternity of Sovietology by his sparkling raconteur’s wit. After more than four decades of toiling in the sometimes dreary vineyards of Kremlin-watching, “Chip” never lost his zest for the mysteries, the ironies, the byplay of personalities which enlivened his accounts of the fateful events he witnessed and recorded. Leaning back in his chair—whether at the embassy in Moscow or in Washington—with his feet on the desk, puffing his pipe, Bohlen loved to trade theories, rumors, and stories; he was fascinated by the human side of his subject. As a diplomat, “Chip” had style—a certain elegance, a cool professionalism—and in equally fluent French or Russian he could make his point with precision and with grace.

We are fortunate that he was able before his death to complete his account of the historic events in which he participated, from the opening of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, through the wartime conferences and the uncertain thaw of the Khrushchev era. His book, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York, 1973), is testimony of a mind equally free of illusions and dogma. His work will be a valuable resource for those who seek to untangle the web of relations between Washington and Moscow during those still little-understood years. It will be remembered that Bohlen bore with dignity the vicissitudes of the McCarthy madness, despite craven lack of support from leaders of our government. Indeed, his inner strength helped the nation to regain its sanity.

It was the nation’s good fortune that the brilliant trio of Bohlen, Llewellyn Thompson, and George Kennan emerged in the diplomatic service during the late twenties. Although they differed from one another in temperament, they shared a sense of high calling, and they demonstrated how vital it is to have diplomats so dedicated and so thoroughly prepared.

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JOHN LOTZ, 1913–1973

John Lotz, formerly of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. (1967–73), and a member of the faculty of Columbia University from 1947 until 1967, died on August 25, 1973, in Chevy Chase, Maryland. His background, both personal and academic, was as varied as his activity as an educator. He also concealed a number of extraordinary traits beneath an unostentatious exterior. The fact that he was born in Milwaukee (on March 23, 1913) and lived there and in Detroit until he finished the first grade (in a German Lutheran school), but was taken to Hungary by his parents when he was about seven years old, somehow sets the scene for his entire life.

Lotz continued his elementary education in a village in Somogy County, Hungary, and attended secondary school (*gimnázium*) from 1923 to 1931 in Bonyhád, a town of about seven thousand inhabitants west of the Danube and northeast of the city of Pécs, in the 1920s. While at the University of Budapest from 1931 on, he was a member of the select Eötvös College, an institution founded in 1895 on the model of the *École Normale Supérieure* of Paris. Lotz's doctorate (1935, officially awarded in 1937) was granted *sub auspiciis Gubernatoris*, a distinction which indicates that the candidate had never received a grade other than excellent throughout his entire career as a student.

In 1935 Lotz went to Stockholm, where he held a fellowship from the Swedish government for Germanic studies and philosophy (1935–37), while also serving (1935–39) as lecturer (later *docent*, 1939–47) in Hungarian and director (1936–57) of the Hungarian Institute at the University of Stockholm.

Lotz joined the Columbia University faculty in 1947, first as a visitor (1947–49) and later as a permanent member of both the linguistics department (until 1967) and the Department of Uralic and Altaic Languages (1953–65), which he founded and chaired. These were the years when American universities were feverishly expanding. Many readers of the *Slavic Review* will remember John Lotz during that period as an energetic mobilizer of “human resources,” as William Riley Parker said when he described Lotz's role in launching and seeing through a vast program in the Uralic and Altaic languages, as director of research of the American Council of Learned Societies, from 1959 to 1965. This project yielded grammars, manuals, and many other research tools which opened the Uralic and Altaic fields to an entire generation of students. In fact, it can be thought of as having introduced the bulk of the Uralic-Altaic field to the Anglo-Saxon world, which until then was only minimally preoccupied with it. All this happened at a time when the study of East European languages was in the upswing. At present, a certain irony attaches to Lotz's erstwhile program: the materials and study aids which he helped launch have made English one of the languages of the Uralist and Altaist, with the result that in order to enter these fields German and Russian—not to speak of less widely studied languages—are no longer essential.

The traces which Lotz left at Columbia covered a large area. He encouraged and founded Uralic (Finno-Ugric and Samoyed) studies, especially Hungarian, and guided students into and within these fields. One tangible result of his activity consists of two dissertations on the Hungarian periodical *Nyugat*, which served as a repository of West European intellectual currents from 1901 to 1941, and one on the Hungarian populists (“literary sociographers”) between the two wars, not to speak of various master's essays and dissertations on purely linguistic subjects (Hungarian phonology and grammar, Ostyak and Vogul, and Samoyed). He also helped build a strong program in instrumental phonetics at Columbia. Once in Washington, he concentrated on revising his Hungarian grammar (*Das ungarische Sprachsystem*, Stockholm, 1939) and on working on a large-scale plan for describing the languages of the world.

The origin of Lotz's connection with the Slavic field seems to lie in his interest in the history of Hungary and the Hungarian language, in his interest in the languages of the USSR (especially the Uralic ones), but primarily, I think, in his association with Roman Jakobson, whom he first met in Sweden during the war and with whom he overlapped at Columbia from 1947 until 1949, when Jakobson went to Harvard. Though Jakobson and Lotz never completely shared any one particular

theoretical credo, their interests intersected in many areas; they seemed to have stimulated each other's thinking enough to have written two joint papers on rather disparate subjects, but in areas which occupied each of them over many years. One of these papers is on Mordvinian metrics and was first published in German in 1941 and later in a slightly expanded version in English as "Axioms of a Versification System, Exemplified by the Mordvinian Folksong," *Linguistica* (Stockholm), 1 (1952): 5–13. The other paper is on phonological theory: "Notes on the French Phonemic Pattern," *Word*, 5 (1949): 151–58. Both papers are landmarks; the latter is a precursor of generative phonology. The only more direct connection with the Slavic field that I know of is a translation of Nikolai Berdiaev's *Novoe srednevekov'e: Razmyshlenie o sud'be Rossii v Evropy*, on which Lotz collaborated with Géza Sebestyén while he was still a student (Budapest, 1935). See also "Jakobson's Case Theory and the Russian Prepositions," in *To Honor Roman Jakobson* (The Hague, 1967, pp. 1207–12). For more details on Lotz's contribution to linguistics see the obituary in the *Linguistic Society of America Bulletin*, no. 60, March 1974.

Lotz's lasting interest in Hungarian and Swedish linguistics took him back to Hungary and Sweden during the latter part of his life. He was visiting professor in Stockholm in 1962–63 and guest professor in Budapest in 1966 and again in 1972. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences elected him to honorary membership in 1973.

All those—students, colleagues, administrators—who came in contact with Lotz were struck by his uncanny ability to formulate problems in any field: he would do this economically, in large strokes, and sometimes with a certain amount of entertaining and humorous cynicism, but without malice. There are few others, even if they had as discerning and incisive a mind as his, who knew how to blend culture with life so successfully.

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RODERICK PAGE THALER, 1927–1974

Roderick Page Thaler was born and raised in Tennessee and graduated with a B.A. degree in history in 1947 from the University of Tennessee. Upon receipt of the M.A. degree from the University of Illinois in 1948, he attended Harvard University and was one of Professor Michael Karpovich's first students to earn the Ph.D. (1955). Following brief service as an instructor at the University of Rhode Island, Thaler accepted a call to Bishop's University in Canada, where he served until his death in mid-January 1974. Professor Thaler's principal fields of scholarly interest were Russian and Byzantine history. His superb editorship of Leo Wiener's translation of Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* has set standards which his colleagues will long seek to emulate. Those of us who have had the privilege of knowing Roderick Thaler will also deeply miss the warmth and the sincere interest which he brought to his associations with colleagues and friends.

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