FROM THE EDITOR

This summer brought with it a major change for my family and me — relocation from Pennsylvania to the state of Washington so that I could begin a teaching position at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, the capital. What a glorious place here on the southern tip of Puget Sound, with the Olympic Mountains rising to the northwest and the rugged Cascades an hour to the east! And all of this magnificent landscape is dominated by one of the most majestic dormant volcanoes on this continent, snow-covered Mount Rainier, called by the American Indians of the area “Tahoma” or “place of the gods.”

As I searched for an Orthodox church, I found plenty of Greek churches, and was also told that since the West Coast is the “pirožki” belt, Slavic Orthodoxy here almost invariably means Russian. And then I found Wilkeson and Holy Trinity. In a phone conversation, the priest’s matreshka gave me directions and added, “This parish is largely Carpatho-Rusyn and much of the singing is done in plainchant.” What? So far from my native region of the northeast? Her words were music to my ears. What must the immigrants from our European homeland have felt upon joining together here with their own people far away in a strange land?

We found the tiny Holy Trinity Church in the dusty warmth of a late summer Sunday morning, its wooden clapboard structure painted white and crowned with a sky-blue cupola and a gold cross gleaming in the sun. Nestled in the foothills of the Cascades only minutes away from Mount Rainier, the small village of Wilkeson prides itself on being the gateway to the Carbon Glacier, one of many silent rivers of ice adorning Rainier’s colossal granite flanks. Holy Trinity stands near the center of the village, itself towering above the surrounding modest old homes neatly laid out with small yards and gardens. Thick pine forests cover the hills as far as the eye can see. The bell rang as the liturgy began. I closed my eyes for a moment and felt transported back to my grandmother’s village, Ruska Vol’a, tucked in the Carpathian Mountains of far northeastern Czechoslovakia. The sensation was overwhelming.

Coal mines had brought the Rusyns here to Wilkeson and also to nearby Carbonado at the turn of the century. And as always, the Rusyns brought their church. They worked hard and survived, some staying in the area, others eventually going off to bigger, perhaps more prosperous or prestigious tasks. But they made their statement and left their mark here in this tiny gem. That is why I was so deeply grateful to be there in mid-September to greet Washington state officials when they arrived to give formal recognition to the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese as the eye can see. The bell rang as the liturgy began. I closed my eyes for a moment and felt transported back to my grandmother’s village, Ruska Vol’a, tucked in the Carpathian Mountains of far northeastern Czechoslovakia. The sensation was overwhelming.

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Mnohaja i blahaja Il’ita, Holy Trinity. Vičnaja pamjat’ to your sons and daughters who have come before us.

Patricia Králčík — Editor

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

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In this issue
Biography: Cora-Ann Mihalik
Feature: Pilgrimage to the Homelands, Part II
Lemko Vatra Festival, Bortne, Poland
Rusyn Book Corner: The Writings of Alexis Toth
Shereghy Collection Donated
Wilkeson Church on State Register
Recent Publications 1984
CORA-ANN MIHALIK

To millions of Americans, Cora-Ann Mihalik is the blonde anchorwoman who delivers Fox Television's nightly news briefs. To New Yorkers, she is the co-anchor for WNYW's "Ten O’Clock News." But for Carpatho-Rusyns, Cora-Ann Mihalik is a symbol of ethnic identity.

Mihalik readily admits that she is proud of her heritage which can be traced back to Poland and Czechoslovakia. Her father Walter's family emigrated to America from Poland (Cora-Ann does not know the exact locale), and her mother Ann Harvila’s clan came from the Carpatho-Rusyn village of Vysny Orlik in the Presov Region of northeastern Czechoslovakia.

"Ever since I can remember, I was very much aware of my roots," says the affable, energetic Mihalik. "I have to laugh that ethnic is now a trendy thing because to me ethnic has always been 'in.' I have always admired people who value their background and upbringing."

For Mihalik, 34, that upbringing included a traditional blend of Slavic foods and customs. Raised as a Roman Catholic in Elmwood Park, New Jersey, Mihalik has fond memories of holidays like Easter and Christmas. "I'll never forget the pyrohy, babka, and stuffed cabbage," she recalls. "And the soups were incredible — borsch, chicken and mushroom! But most of all, I loved the pastries. They're still a weakness of mine."

The qualities that she values most, however, are the pride and work ethic that were instilled in her. "We're proud people, there's no doubt about it," she explains. "And no one can take that away from us. I remember hearing about how hard my grandparents worked out in the fields and on the railroads. They worked for everything they got. They didn't expect anything to be given to them."

Mihalik admits that this attitude helped her climb up the television news ladder. "This is a crazy, insecure business," she says. "If you're not secure you can be led astray, you can doubt yourself. My upbringing has helped me keep my feet on the ground."

She says that as a youngster she never dreamed of becoming a television newscaster. "I attended William Paterson College in New Jersey with the goal of majoring in Spanish and becoming an interpreter at the United Nations," she explains. "But during my junior year a professor persuaded me that I had a real chance to succeed in journalism."

Upon graduating with a B.A. in Communication Arts, Mihalik's career gradually escalated. She served as the first female anchor/reporter at WGGB-TV in Springfield, Massachusetts. She also anchored for WHP-TV in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; for WJKW-TV in Cleveland, Ohio; for WTCN-TV in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she was also the first female anchor; and for WLS-TV in Chicago. Prior to joining permanently Fox TV in 1987, Mihalik was a reporter and fill-in anchor for that network's "A Current Affair," a nightly news magazine program.

Mihalik is surprised that none of her employers have requested that she change her obviously ethnic name to a more “all-American” one. "I'm very proud of my name and happy that a lot of people all over the country get to see it. In fact, because of it, I regularly get calls from viewers who want to know if I'm related to other Mihaliks they know. It's too bad that my grandparents are not still alive to see my name on the screen. They would have been so proud."

Since Mihalik has such a high-profile career, she is often honored by ethnically-affiliated groups. "I get a real kick out of that," she says, "especially when little kids and older people come up to me to talk. I feel very fortunate to be in the position I'm in, and I think it's only fair of me to give back whatever I can to the community."

Mihalik, in fact, does give back by participating in a mammoth share of charity work. As a board member of the New York Leukemia Society, Mihalik co-hosted the first nationally televised "Leukemia Televent" in 1987, and for the past seven years, she has co-hosted the "Jerry Lewis Telethon For Muscular Dystrophy" at various stations around the country.

Mihalik, who lives on Manhattan’s upper east side, is in no hurry to abandon her single lifestyle. "I'm married to my work," she laughs. "My career and charity work take up most of my life, but I'm not complaining. I'm having too much fun to settle down now."

Mary Huzinec
New York, New York
A PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOMELANDS

Part Two: Poland and the Soviet Union

This is the conclusion of a two-part article by the Reverend Bryan Eyman, a priest of the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma. He and the Reverend Serge R. Keleher undertook a journey in the summer of 1988 along with a small group of Byzantine Catholic pilgrims, travelling through Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and concluding with Poland and Soviet Transcarpathia.

As soon as we entered into Poland, our guide Jan Stecov tried to settle our nerves, rattled from our difficult experiences in Czechoslovakia. He immediately gave us the numbers of our consulates in Cracow so that we could protest our treatment at the hands of Czechoslovak officials. On our trip through the branch of the Carpathians called the Beskyd Mountains, we again relished the beauty of the region. Within a few kilometers of the border on a winding country road, we came to the village of Zydranowa where we visited the privately-owned Museum of Lemko Culture. When we arrived at the museum, we found the owner, Fedir Goć, busily working in his farmyard. Overjoyed to welcome a group of North Americans to his museum, he ran into his home to change from his work clothes into his formal native garb.

With Fedir we entered a museum unlike any I had ever been in before: a courtyard of former farm buildings that have been converted into a rustic enclosure. One room displays the recreation of a typical Lemko farm house interior. Another contains relics of old Eastern-Rite vestments and liturgical equipment. Fedir is clearly proud of the cultural preservation that he is attempting to do against very great odds. (See also the C-RA, Vol. X, No. 2, 1987). He shared with us the story of the expulsion of the Lemko-Rusyn people from their historic homeland following World War II. He also recounted the battle of the Dukl’a Pass in great detail and showed us the graves of soldiers who had been killed on the farm during the battle.

Most gripping was the expulsion of the Lemko-Rusyn people and the destruction of their cultural artifacts. This destruction is what makes the Lemko Museum so unique in its collection. It has the three-bar crosses that the Polish government, the Roman Catholic Church, and local hooligans had cut off of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches of the region. Many churches were burned, pulled apart for construction supplies, or converted into other uses in the area. Over half of the Greek Catholic churches of the area now serve as Roman Catholic churches with their icon-screens removed, desecrated, or burned. Untold numbers of Lemko Rusyns were killed at this time for refusing to leave their homes, and untold numbers were sent into the Soviet Union and western Poland. How extraordinary to see the Lemko Rusyns struggle to return and reclaim the region that is historically theirs.

Adjoining the museum is St. Nicholas Church built by Fedir early in the 1980s. The picturesque white-washed temple replaces a church destroyed during the expulsion. The iconscreen is made up of icons saved from a variety of destroyed Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches. Some of the framing also is from these churches. The church was constructed over the objection of the local Roman Catholic authorities and with some help from abroad.

We ended our very full first day in Poland by driving through the Polish countryside on our way to the city of Nowy Sącz. This city is on the western end of the traditional Lemko Region. Its Greek Catholic church was blown up at the time of the expulsion at the end of the 1940s according to the people I spoke with in the city. The few remaining Lemkos must go about thirty miles away to the city of Gorlice to worship. We visited the Church of St. Margaret which houses the Chapter of Canons of the city. The Nowy Sącz city hall is a very beautiful Baroque style building overlooking the market square of the city. It was very pleasant to walk through the streets of the old part of the city, and those who wished to shop found much at their disposal. A small group of us spent the evening at the Roman Catholic church next to the hotel. There we met the members of two youth groups, one visiting from Hungary. We sang various Marian hymns, each group translating for the others what their particular songs meant. It was a glorious chance to share with peoples of other cultures in a completely unplanned, open manner.

On August 19 (old calendar feast of the Transfiguration) our group travelled to the Basilian Sisters’ convent in the city of Gorlice. For years the Greek Catholic Rusyns have tried to build a church in this city. It would replace another church seized after the war and now reportedly used as a Roman Catholic church. For a number of years the Sisters’ chapel has served as the gathering place for the city’s Greek Catholic community. The community has far outgrown the previous chapel, so the Sisters received permission to construct a more adequate temple on their grounds. The building is really an addition to the rest of the convent structure, the former residence of some wealthy people.

When our bus arrived, we climbed up the steep unpaved path to the convent. Many other people had already gath-
erated there. Father Serge and I went into the sacristy where we were asked to concelebrate the dedication liturgy. I had expected that all of the Greek Catholic clergy from the area would be concelebrating, but to my surprise only Father Serge and I were to concelebrate with Mitred Archpriest Josaphat Romanyk, O.S.B.M., one of the Greek Catholic Vicar Generals (Protopsynckeli) for Poland. The Roman Catholic hierarchy in Poland has repeatedly denied the Greek Catholic Church in Poland the right to have their own bishops. As the blessing ceremony continued I saw that the local Greek Catholic clergy were seated with the Roman Catholic clergy in the front of the congregation.

The chapel itself was finely appointed, with a beautifully carved icon screen and Holy Table. The icons were in the classical Byzantine style with the symbol of the 1000 years of the Baptism of Kievan Rus’ on the wall behind the Holy Table. At the end of the liturgy the traditional blessing of fruit took place, and then we led the congregation of the crowded chapel on the paternal procession around the convent building. After Archpriest Josaphat blessed the icon murals on the side of the building, the Sisters and their pupils presented a short program: Many of the hymns sung were of a clearly pro-Ukrainian “political” nature, much to the apparent discomfort of the Polish Roman Catholic clergy present.

My knowledge of Polish is too inadequate for me to have participated completely in the conversations with the other priests at the lavish supper that followed. Instead I had to speak German, but fortunately a couple of the younger priests spoke German quite well. They seemed to be very interested in the Byzantine Catholic churches in America and I filled them in as well as I could. They told me how difficult it was for them to operate the local Greek Catholic parishes using apartments and rented facilities for services. In some places they must even rent buildings from the Roman Catholic churches that for centuries had been theirs. They claimed that the Roman Catholics continue to try to keep them tightly controlled, fearful that if the Greek Catholic Church were free to operate in Poland they could lose their monolithic control and vision of the Church in Poland.

The next day we visited the beautiful city of Sanok on the River San. There we spent some time at the Orthodox cathedral of the city. Father Serge had a long conversation with His Grace, the Bishop of Sanok, Adam Dubec, who then came out to meet the other members of our tour. He gave us beautiful icon pins as memorials of the Baptism of Kievan Rus’. Poland has its own Autonomous Orthodox Church with a Metropolitan in Warsaw and about 500,000 people scattered around the country. They celebrate the Divine Liturgy in modern Polish as well as in Church Slavonic.

The outdoor museum in Sanok was a real treat with at least three villages reconstructed in beautiful detail. The three churches on the museum grounds all appeared to be in operating condition, which is what one of the museum guides said was the case. With the vast numbers of people attending services in Poland on Sunday, I did not doubt that this was true. Each of these wooden churches had been moved to the site and formed the center of the two Greek Catholic villages and one Roman Catholic village recreated there.

Przemyśl was our next stop and our center of operation for the next three days. The Polish government’s tour agency Orbis has no hotel in the Przemyśl region so we were housed in a privately-owned pension and a local Sporthotel. We were not far from the Baroque center of the city and thus were able to walk to the Roman Catholic cathedral, the former Basilian Monastery (now the Regional Archives), and the Greek Catholic cathedral (now a Roman Catholic church). The Roman Catholic cathedral was cold and dark but had a constant stream of faithful visitors. The former Greek Catholic cathedral looked naked with its icon screen taken out a few years ago and hidden away from public view. The outside of the former Basilian monastery was undergoing massive reconstruction with the copper domes and gold crosses being restored. I do not know if that church will ever return to sacred use, but I found it ironic that the Communist regional government was rebuilding a Greek Catholic church while the Roman Catholics were taking icon screens out of Greek Catholic churches a few hundred yards away.

On Sunday we travelled to the medieval city of Jarosław to worship in the Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Transfiguration (the “Lemko cathedral”) in the center of the old city. I marvelled at the number of people walking for miles along the road on their way to the various churches of the region. We saw the temple across a rather steeply inclined square, sitting amidst a small cluster of trees. The outside seemed in good repair, thanks to the work of allegedly government supplied restorers who worked on the outside as part of a Millennium project, but the inside was in ruins. The floors had been dug out, reportedly in an attempt to prove that there originally had been a Polish Roman Catholic church on the site. The windows had been removed, and for many years the elements had been able to invade the temple destroying its icons and causing the icon screen to be covered with a strange black mold-like substance. Because the present temporary “floor” is several feet lower than the original floor grade, one must walk up and down a series of ramps and ladders to enter the vestibules, then the nave, and for the priests finally the altar. The Holy Table in the altar had been constructed of stone set down to the bedrock. Since the floor around the Holy Table had been dug away, the mensa (top of the Table) was some ten feet above the floor upon which we were standing. A temporary altar had been erected outside the icon screen, which was partially covered by plastic and a curtain.

An elderly priest with symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease served the Divine Liturgy with Father Serge and a lay assistant. A small choir led the singing for a congregation that seemed to appear out of nowhere. After the liturgy was over many of the people were anxious to find out where we were from and why we were there. They seemed surprised that we would be interested in looking into their little corner of the world. So there amidst the flaking remains of an ancient church we shared our lives with an oppressed people.

Outside of the city of Przemyśl, we visited the Greek Catholic Monastery of SS. Cyril and Methodius. It is located atop a beautiful hill overlooking a fertile valley of farms. Two of the cousins of one of our party drove a small group of us there in his Polish-made Fiat. As we passed through a
village near the monastery. We saw banners protesting the arrival of monks coming to live near this community. These monks, Fathers Atanazy Dębowsk and Nikodem Makara, were ordained by Bishop Innocent, the Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic Bishop in Chicago. When we arrived they were in town filing a complaint against a group led by the local Roman Catholic pastor that threatened to burn down the monastery if the monks did not leave immediately. Waiting for the monks to return we spoke to several young men who said that they were there to protect the monks from the protest group.

When they returned, the monks told us of their difficulty with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Przemysl, Ignace Tokarczuk. Bishop Ignace has been well known as a harasser of the Greek Catholic faithful within his diocese, even bragging about the hundreds of Greek Catholic churches he had destroyed. At the same time, the local bishop and pastor were upset because the Greek Catholic monks were serving the local people in both the Polish and Ukrainian languages and attracting a large group of mainly younger people to their services. The monks pointed out to us the former Greek Catholic church in a nearby village, now used as a warehouse by the local Roman Catholic pastor. They complained about how this pastor had tried to turn the Greek Catholic church into an “animal auction house,” but had been stopped by the local authorities after the monks filed complaints in Warsaw. The monks conduct services in part of a converted barn where Father Serge and I celebrated the Divine Liturgy the next day. Father Serge did have an audience with Bishop Tokarczuk to discuss his side of the situation, but I was too scandalized and upset with the actions of the Bishop to attend.

Leaving Father Serge behind in Poland, the rest of us crossed the Soviet border on the Przemysl-L’viv road about ten kilometers from the city. Polish customs were largely perfunctory, but Soviet customs were very thorough. I crossed the border in a traditional cassock because I was carrying various vestments with me. The customs agents were both courteous and curious. They asked me if each set of vestments was complete, how many sets I had, and so on. I was then whisked off to the Intourist office at the border to finalize plans with their official. While that was going on, the bus was taken apart as a team of customs officials and our driver went through every nook and cranny, including the air conditioning unit.

The border station Intourist official did not speak English, so we conducted our conversations in German until Aleksandr, the customs official who had gone through my baggage, came to interpret. Aleksandr continued his interrogation about the size of my congregation and the activity of the Orthodox Church in America. He even asked about the lack of a Slavic suffix in my name. The interview, which lasted over an hour, was “highlighted” by the discovery of a Ukrainian religious newspaper on the bus. They wanted to know who was sitting in the area where they had found it in the trash can. I told them that it was probably left by some of the people who rode on our bus in Poland, relatives of people on the tour. Aleksandr excused their curiosity by stating that he was “interested in all matters of religion.” In order to end this now public interview, I offered him and the other guards my blessing, and they put us back on our bus with a clear instruction not to pick up anyone along our way to L’viv.

L’viv is a typical western Ukrainian city. Although surrounded by the “instant ruins” of Soviet apartment complexes, the center of the city has retained much of the charm of its past. We were met at the Hotel Dnestr by our Intourist guide Tanya. She was a very cheerful Ukrainian woman, apparently a L’viv native who clearly loved the city. As I got off of the bus she told me the times of divine services at St. George’s Cathedral around the corner from our hotel. Our rooms in the hotel were quite adequate. Friends had told us of the listening devices hidden in the walls, but being a simple tourist I cannot think of anything interesting they could have heard in my room except my reading aloud from the Book of Revelation.

The next morning one of the other members of the tour and I went to the Cathedral of St. George for Divine Liturgy. I was forbidden to take pictures of the Baroque architecture of the cathedral because the building is surrounded by microwave or radio towers which are not supposed to be photographed. Inside the cathedral we joined the early morning congregation, giving a Ukrainian Bible to a woman who had previously met Father Serge. We then struck out across the city to visit His Beatitude, Volodymyr Strenjuk, the Greek Catholic Archbishop resident in L’viv. The archbishop’s home is really a 12’ by 12’ room in a communal apartment. He was at prayer when we arrived, and when he had finished we gave him the prayerbooks and vestments, including a set of hierarchical vestments I had brought for him. With tearful eyes he thanked us and shared with us some of the hardships he has as the archbishop of an illegal church in the Soviet Union. As we left I felt I was leaving the presence of a truly holy man.

Returning to the hotel I joined the group on its way to a collective farm or rather an “agricultural firm,” as Tanya and the “firm’s” officials insisted. We were shown new apartments for the firm’s members that were being built out of the “profits earned by our exports last year.” The firm’s whole facility turned out to be a greenhouse complex for fresh and canned vegetables. Our hosts showed us the latest in Soviet agricultural technology, while extolling the benefits of glasnost and perestroika. They were interested in having their pictures taken with us as they showed us what clearly was their pride and joy. We were then taken to a reception center for a sumptuous lunch of the firm’s produce. We washed our food down with generous tumblers of vodka that seemed to refill magically every time they were emptied. My mouth was numb by the time we bade our hosts good-bye. They could not have been more hospitable.

That afternoon Tanya took us on a tour of the city. We walked all over the center of the old city, dropping in for souvenirs at the Kashchan or hard currency store. We visited the Church of the Dormition near the city armory. There we met with a locked door, but when Tanya found the door buzzer and rang it an elderly woman opened the door and we went in. A group of women was cleaning the church —no different than the ladies in my parish back home. They were excited to show off the church’s lovely iconscreen and were amazed to hear our group sing hymns for them in Church Slavonic. Several of our group were astounded that these church cleaners could understand “our language” and they found out just how far a little Carpatho-Rusyn could go toward making oneself understood in L’viv.

One place that we did not get to see, even when we asked, was the Museum of the History of Religion and
Atheism. It is housed in the former Dominican church near the center of the old city and the words, “Built for the glory of God,” still show over the original entrance. Even though we saw people going in and coming out, we were told that the museum was closed. Later someone told me that the museum is an embarrassment to the Communist Party. The saying goes: “Atheists go in and believers come out.” Perhaps that is why they did not want us to see it.

The L'viv Museum of Wooden Architecture, which we did visit, was founded by the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Andrej Šeptyc'kyj in the late 1930s on his personal estate. Now run by the state, it contains the reconstructions of several Ukrainians and Rusyn villages. In the center of the complex is a massive Greek Catholic church dedicated to the Holy Protection of the Mother of God. The temple had been moved there by Metropolitan Andrej on the eve of World War II. It was the largest wooden church that we saw on our tour. Entering the church, we were greeted by the ever present elderly woman who cared for the church as if it were still functioning. She would not permit us to take pictures inside the church, which was not unusual, but after she found out that I was a Byzantine Catholic priest she took me behind the iconscreen. There she pointed out that there was no protection of the Mother of God. The temple had been moved there by Metropolitan Andrej on the eve of World War II. It was the largest wooden church that we saw on our tour. Entering the church, we were greeted by the ever present elderly woman who cared for the church as if it were still functioning. She would not permit us to take pictures inside the church, which was not unusual, but after she found out that I was a Byzantine Catholic priest she took me behind the iconscreen. There she pointed out that there was no Holy Table in the altar area. She then asked me to pray for her and she knelt down to receive a blessing. After that we sang a couple of hymns for her in Church Slavonic, took a few photos, and wandered through the rest of the museum. The villages in the museum appeared to be still in an agrarian setting even though we were within the city limits.

We spent the afternoon wandering the city of L'viv. I discovered, hidden away on a back street of the old city, the Armenian Catholic cathedral. In the courtyard I found the sanctuary of the cathedral to be a small jewel of Armenian architecture. The nave was a much more recent addition. The cathedral served the very old community of Armenians in the L'viv area. It had been closed since the war, but the laborers working in the structure claimed it was being restored for use as a church for the several thousand Armenians still in the city. I also discovered a former church building near the city center serving as a furniture store. Entering the Baroque structure, I found it amusing to compare the rich, though whitewashed interior with the poor quality of “modern” Soviet furniture displayed.

The long road trip through the Carpathian Mountains to the city of Užhorod took place the next day. In Užhorod we stayed at a newer hotel, the Zakarpattja. It was, by Soviet standards, the top of the line. It had been built by the Hungarians for the Soviet government. Here we met our local Intourist guide Sylvestra, a Russian from the Moscow region rather than a Ukrainian and clearly someone who did not enjoy her assignment to Užhorod. When I met her I was handed an itinerary change that dropped our trip to Jasinja and had us going to a collective farm on Sunday instead of on a pilgrimage to Mukačevo.

First, our tour of Užhorod took us to the city’s market square where Sylvestra pointed out the “Old Philharmonic Hall.” She mentioned that while the New Philharmonic Hall was near our hotel, this old one was being restored. But she did not reveal that until 1939 the old hall had been the Old Central Synagogue of Užhorod until she was pressed for this information. We then drove past the Užhorod cathedral, which Sylvestra ignored, on our way to the art museum in the former Užhorod Castle. Sylvestra gave us a detailed account of the castle’s history until the mid-1770s, leaving out the fact that the Union of Užhorod was signed there. She also completely neglected to tell the group that the castle had served as the Greek Catholic seminary for over 150 years until it was closed by the Soviets in 1949. She was amazed that we knew such information.

Next to the castle is the local museum of wooden architecture. There, alongside the kinds of homes that many of the ancestors of today’s Carpatho-Rusyns lived in, we saw one of the most beautiful wooden churches on the tour. The spire of this temple rises gracefully above the entrance of the temple. Church bells seized from area churches sat lined up on the ground, their sound stilled until another time and place. The picture of that church is for me the real city of Užhorod.

Saturday evening, without the help of our Intourist guides, we made our way to the Greek Catholic (now Orthodox) Cathedral of the Holy Cross. The All-Night Vigil Service for the Feast of the Dormition had already begun. The clergy were following the “Russian usage” for both the format of services and vestments. I did not see in Užhorod the “Greek style” vestments common among Carpatho-Rusyns and Ukrainians elsewhere, for instance in L’viv. Near the front of the Užhorod cathedral several elderly men were cantoring in traditional Carpatho-Rusyn plainchant, aided by the sweet voice of a young boy who could be no more than ten years old and who seemed to know the service as well as the elder cantors.

The cathedral was nearly full for the service. Many in the congregation were elderly women, but we saw young people and even a few soldiers in the crowd, evidence of the religious revival going on in the Soviet Union. One of the soldiers was a huge young man, well over six feet tall. He stood in the cathedral weeping through most of the service. When the youngster on our tour left his jacket in the pew,
the soldier picked it up, brought it to him, and then quickly left the cathedral.

The highlight of our tour was the pilgrimage to the Orthodox Monastery of St. Nicholas just outside the city of Mukachevo for the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. We saw crowds of people making their way toward the city, streaming up to the holy mountain — young and old, soldiers and peasants, and even some well-dressed city folk. Beggers and the disabled lined the steps leading from the gates to the main courtyard. I thought that there were not supposed to be any beggers in the Soviet Union, but here they were receiving charity and alms from the believing pilgrims in the atheistic state.

The blue and white walls of St. Nicholas Cathedral soared above the faithful. Solid rivers of believers were entering and leaving the building. The Divine Liturgy was being celebrated and thousands of people were trying to receive Communion. I joined the line entering the cathedral, but my glasses steamed up because of the warmth of the people inside, and when I stopped to clean them, I was caught by the river flowing out of the cathedral and was pushed out. I would try later to get a glimpse from a side door.

Several of us then climbed the hillside to attend the Divine Liturgy being celebrated at the top of the hill. People in the crowds pressed up against one another so tightly that if one had lost consciousness he would still have been standing up supported by neighbors on all sides. The clergy were not prepared for anywhere near this crowd and ran out of Communion after less than a third of those wishing Communion had received it. The bowls of Antidoran did not go much further. A miracle of loaves and fishes would have been needed to handle this multitude.

We came back into the courtyard for a rest. The crowds kept on coming, for the principal liturgy with the bishop of Mukachevo was scheduled for noon. I decided not to brave the crowds on the hillside again and instead visited with some local people who wished to find out about America. Several people asked why I as a priest did not assist at the liturgy there that day. When I told them that I was a Byzantine Catholic priest, they said I could serve anyway, but as Greek Catholics themselves they understood my reluctance. Meanwhile, our Sister Cecilia visited with the nearly 100 Orthodox nuns housed in the monastery who treated her like an honored guest.

That evening we dined on black and gold caviar at the gala banquet in Uzhhorod heralding the end of our stay in the Soviet Union. The next morning we proceeded to Budapest for the evening and the next day left for Vienna and home.

The Reverend Bryan R. Eyman
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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LEMKO VATRA FESTIVAL

The Seventh Annual Lemko Vatra again took place this summer amid the rolling green hills of the Low Beskyd Mountains in southeastern Poland from July 21-23. Up until now the Vatra Folk Festival has been the only form of cultural self-expression permitted the Lemko branch of the Carpatho-Rusyn people in post-World War II Poland. At the insistence of Moscow after the war, the Communist authorities proscribed any manifestation of Lemko identity and separateness and ordered them to function under the auspices of the Ukrainian Social Cultural Society. As a nation repressed, the Lemkos nevertheless have been able during the past few years to organize spontaneously an annual gathering which has served both as a social and cultural function and which, for unknown reasons, the authorities have tolerated or simply ignored.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Lemko Vatra was organized in the remote mountain village of Bortne (in Polish, Bartne) in Gorlice county, first mentioned in historical sources under the year 1629. As I neared my destination, I found myself in a small mountain valley amid farmland and forests. Here on a hillside pasture next to the Bortne River, swiftly flowing down from the mountain, was pitched a colorful camp of hundreds of tents. The site also included a stage and food booths located at the bottom of the hill. Several thousand Lemkos from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union, as well as friends and guests from elsewhere, were milling around, ready for a weekend of fellowship in their ancestral Carpathian home — Lemkovyna (the Lemko Region).

A rich and varied three-day program kept the audience emotionally enraptured. The program included such events as Lemko cultural competitions stressing knowledge of Lemko language, history, and geography; poetry and folk-song and dance competitions and performances; soccer play-offs and a mock Olympics; a Miss Lemkovyna pageant; and a social dance.

One of the highlights of the Vatra was the performance of a three-hour play, “Severed Roots,” by Andrej Kopca, president of the new Lemko Association in Poland. It was presented by the Lemko Amateur Theater of Legnica. “Sev-
"Red Roots" portrays the fate of a small nation constantly misunderstood and mistreated as the helpless pawn of bigger, more powerful neighbors. Thus, Lemkos were put in a concentration camp (Talerhof) by Austrian authorities during World War I for "Russophile" tendencies; imprisoned by tsarist Russian forces because family members were conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian army; harassed by authorities of the reborn Poland for participation in a short-lived Lemko Republic; terrorized and handed over to Nazis by Ukrainian nationalists for unwillingness to give up their separate Lemko identity; and finally deported by Polish Communist authorities to the Soviet Union and northern and western Poland for supposedly being Ukrainian terrorists.

The Vatra’s master of ceremonies was Petro Trochanovskij, and all the major Lemko activists were in attendance: Stefanovskij, Kopca, Duc, the Trochanovskij family, and others. A point of added excitement was an announcement of the formation of the Lemko Association in Poland—the first independent Lemkophile group to be legally registered since World War II and permitted to emancipate itself from involuntary Ukrainian tutelage. The creation of this new organization served to emphasize the underlying tension existing between the two groups in Poland. When five young Ukrainian nationalists appeared at the Vatra and attempted to display Ukrainian tridents, the symbols were taken down and the activists were asked to leave. At least one fist fight broke out later because of intergroup tensions.

The Vatra was also visited by the newly-elected Ukrainian senator Volodymyr Mokryj, who hoped by his presence to solidify support for the pro-Ukrainian orientation. But as one Lemko activist put it: “The Ukrainians resent being called ‘Little Russians.’ Why do they try to make the Lemkos ‘Little Ukrainians’?”

On Sunday, Divine Liturgy was served at Bortne’s picturesque old wooden church of SS. Cosmas and Damian. Concelebrating was Father Anatolij, the local pastor and the son of the famous Carpatho-Rusyn Orthodox martyr, the Reverend Maksym Sandovyc, who was executed by the Austrians in Gorlice during World War I. A Polish Roman Catholic priest, who had brought a sound system from his monastery to aid in the service, was also present behind the iconostasis. During the sermon, the aged and venerable Reverend Sandovyc, Jr., recounted the sad trials of the Lemko people. It is interesting that he used exclusively the terms “Lemko” and “Rusnak” when referring to his people. His sermon was remarkably free of bitterness and filled with a sense of Christian love and forgiveness. After the liturgy, a procession of clergy and faithful went to a nearby cemetery for memorial services at the grave of Melanija Sobyn, a Lemko woman poet, and on to the Talerhof victims’ monument.

The program concluded with a moving concert by the Lemkovyna Folk Ensemble, representing Lemko artistic expression at its finest. Summer breezes carried the enchanted notes across the lonely mountain peaks and filled the lovely alpine valleys with sounds to comfort the reposing ancestral spirits. The participants left for home spiritually rejuvenated for yet another year with dreams of a cultural renaissance, now at least feasible because of positive changes in Poland’s political situation.

A. Dryja
Windsor, Ontario
The Archives of Americans of Russian Descent in Minnesota (AARDM) has recently announced that a four-volume collection of the works of the Reverend Alexis G. Toth, entitled Letters, Articles, Papers and Sermons, is now available for purchase in English translation. Toth, a seminary professor and chancellor of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Presov, was sent to the United States in 1889 to serve St. Mary's parish in Minneapolis. After a bitter struggle with Roman Catholic authorities who refused to recognize his legitimacy as a priest and threatened the traditions and validity of the Greek Catholic Church, Father Toth and his entire parish requested acceptance into the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, which took place in March of 1891. As a result of his writings and extensive lecturing, more than 25,000 Carpatho-Rusyns were subsequently brought into the fold of Orthodoxy. Since then, these original immigrants and their descendants have formed the largest portion of the membership in the Orthodox Church in America (the former Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America). For this activity, Father Toth has been hailed as the "father of American Orthodoxy." (See the C-RA, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1985).

The present volumes contain valuable information about the life of Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants in Minnesota and Pennsylvania during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including photographs, selected correspondence and sermons, the history of St. Mary's parish in Minneapolis, and Toth's account of the beginnings of the movement of the Uniates away from the Roman Catholic Church. In his various writings, Toth comments on both the Roman Church and the Protestant Reformation. He also expands on his idealistic vision of Russia, a country which he never visited, but respected deeply as the only powerful, independent Slavic nation which for centuries protected not only the Orthodox faith, but also other Christians from non-Christian forces.

Also published in the volumes is Toth's most well-known work, "Where To Seek the Truth," which details the history of Christianity and explains the differences between Orthodoxy and other Christian denominations. The simple and non-academic language of this work reflects Toth's intention that it serve as a kind of catechism for immigrants from Carpatho-Rusyn villages who might be reading and studying this information for the first time. The final volume contains Toth's original correspondence with Orthodox officials, as well as documents concerning his own parish's move to Orthodoxy. Included also are a number of his opinions on political and religious matters and a sad and ironic story about immigrants who left Minneapolis and returned to their native village of Becherov, only to be arrested and accused of treason against the state because of their Orthodox orientation.

While not intended as sophisticated, scholarly works, Toth's writings nonetheless have substantial historical and religious significance and represent a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of Carpatho-Rusyns in American emigration.

SHEREGHY RARE BOOK COLLECTION DONATED

The Slavic and Baltic Division of the New York Public Library recently acquired a collection of eighteen rare printed books plus a manuscript dating from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries. Formerly in the collection of Monsignor Basil Shereghy, S.T.D., of the Byzantine Ruthenian Metropolitan Province, the items include some striking examples of printing in Church Slavonic type. Many of the books are in their original bindings and contain important marginal notations that often document the migrations of these books through Eastern Europe and the West. Of particular note is the earliest Bulgarian book printed in Romania, the 1806 edition of Kiriakodromia (Edificatory Teachings for Sunday). Other books in the collection are distinguished by their striking engravings, particularly those illustrating a 1669 edition of the sermons of the homileticist Innokenti Gizel, Archimandrite of the Kievian Monastery of the Caves.

"Printing in Church Slavonic was dominant through most of the East Slavic areas through the seventeenth century," said Edward Kacinec, Chief of the Library's Slavic and Baltic Division. "The acquisition of the Shereghy collection enhances the New York Public Library's holdings of Church Slavonic manuscripts and printed works, which are already the most extensive in the United States, adding many examples of Church Slavonic printing from the Ukraine and South Slavic areas."

Monsignor Basil Shereghy was born in the Carpatho-Rusyn village of Dorobratova and educated in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and France. From the late 1940s until his death in 1988, Monsignor Shereghy was a notable figure in Eastern Christian studies in the United States. He was well-traveled, a master of numerous languages, and an avid collector of Eastern Christian art and antiquities. His holdings of old books constituted only a small portion of his collection, which also included precious icons, paintings, crosses, and coins. He taught at St. Procopius Seminary in Lisle, Illinois, the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Pittsburgh, was a popular guest lecturer, and was the author of many books and articles on Eastern Christian theology and spirituality. (See the C-RA, Vol. XI, No. 4., 1988).

OUR FRONT COVER

Logo design from the 1989 Lemko Vatra Festival in Bortne, Poland.
WILKESON CHURCH ON STATE REGISTER

On September 16, 1989, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Wilkeson, Washington, was enrolled on the State Register of Historic Places during a special Service of Thanksgiving celebrating the event. Presenting the Certificate of the State Register to Father John Pierce, the church’s rector, was Jacob E. Thomas, State Historic Preservation Officer. Also present was The Right Reverend Tikhon, Bishop of San Francisco and the West (Orthodox Church in America), as well as a delegation of eleven Soviet clergy and monastics headed by The Right Reverend Alexei, Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod (The Russian Orthodox Church). The Soviet delegation were guests of the Seattle Clergy Association. Holy Trinity, a small white clapboard church founded by Carpatho-Rusyns at the turn of the century, was filled to capacity. The service was sung largely in Carpathian plainchant. On behalf of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, Dr. Patricia Krafcik, a member of the parish, presented Metropolitan Alexei with a copy of Our People: Carpatho-Rusyns and Their Descendants in North America, which contains a photo of the church.

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