ЛЕМКИ

МИ ІВАН РУСЕНКО

ВІДПИС, УВ ЖІНОЧА ДРІЖКА, ТО ДУШОМ ХОЛО ДУШО СЖАТІ СИЛА, ХОМІ ПОЧУВ САМОЧІВ ДРІЖКА, ДРІЖКА! ТО ДУШОМ ХОЛО ДУШО СЖАТІ СИЛА, ХОМІ ПОЧУВ САМОЧІВ ДРІЖКА, ДРІЖКА!

ЗАШТІ Проєкт "Воз участь в конкурсі" (Ст. Р.8)
FROM THE EDITOR

As we complete our eleventh year of publication and look forward to the twelfth, we ought to take a moment to contemplate our perspective and direction as an organization, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, and as a publication, the Carpatho-Rusyn American. We began to function in the late seventies, motivated by a yearning to seek out the roots of the Carpatho-Rusyn community in emigration and to trace the steps of our grandparents from the European homeland to the new world. Such an exploration naturally required and still requires intense academic study and examination of primary and secondary printed source materials, as well as an ongoing scrutiny of the activities and ethnic awareness of our community.

As a result of our efforts, numerous books and articles on Carpatho-Rusyn history and ethnic identity have been published, symposia have been held allowing discussion and an exchange of ideas, and links have been forged between our center and various interested individuals and communities across the country. Also, in the course of our explorations, we have discovered that some individuals who trace their origin back to the Carpathian region number among the outstanding talents and personalities of our day, and we have recognized them in brief biographies in the C-RA. Now in folk festivals throughout the country, our people proudly exhibit their pysanky, embroideries, icons, and books — often acquired from the C-RRC — and perform their songs and dances. They speak more confidently and knowledgeably about their Carpatho-Rusyn background and heritage. On another level, Carpatho-Rusyns are now represented in a separate article in the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups as a specific ethnic group. Likewise, Carpatho-Rusyns will now be recognized officially in the 1990 U.S. Census as a group with which numerous American citizens have an ethnic affiliation.

Clearly, we have come a long way in our understanding of our background and in our ability to articulate our knowledge about this background to others. Yet, in the midst of all this activity, we ought to recognize the fact that much of our yearning to know our background has been motivated by a sense of nostalgia for the past — for some kind of golden past. There is no question that immersing ourselves in a contemplation of this past has been necessary for our community. It has been psychologically satisfying, and has served to reinforce our knowledge and respect for the beauty and struggles of our forebears. Luxuriating in a nostalgia for the past has in a strange way has also helped us to understand ourselves in relation to our Slavic cousins and in relation to the larger American context. The crumbling iron curtain, however, now reinforces another direction we have ventured upon more tentatively in our eleven-year history — and that is our relationship to the homeland here and now. In this regard, the Revolution of 1989 has with astounding speed led us to a time of reassessment [see below THE REVOLUTION OF 1989].

What do we need to reassess? Most immediately, we need to consider to what degree we should simply follow the course of events in eastern and central Europe from afar and to what degree we ought to contribute, as the need arises, to our people's efforts to assert themselves in the midst of the remarkable changes now taking place. This is not a question of supporting armed struggle. Furthermore, the issue of helping our people in the homeland has, in fact, already been discussed on the pages of the C-RA in past issues. Help for our people means strengthening the support for our own Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, which serves not only as a symbol for Rusyns struggling to preserve and maintain their identity in the homeland, but also as a tangible and trustworthy source to which they may continue to turn for aid.

What might be the nature of this aid? Recent issues of the C-RA have clearly demonstrated how Lemko Rusyns in Poland, as well as Rusyns in Transcarpathia and now in Czechoslovakia, have established organizations to represent themselves as a definite ethnic group to their societies and governments. In Poland, standardization of the Lemko-Rusyn language has been initiated, and the standardization of Rusyn language in Czechoslovakia may also be underway with the publication of newspapers and religious materials in Rusyn. We can help this process by donating funds toward the purchase of computers, as well as toward the publication of relevant materials. We have given small amounts of financial aid to scholars, such as Petro Trochanovskij and Olena Duc, who are actively pursuing projects designed to codify the Rusyn language and to preserve and develop the literature. Now is the time to increase such support.

Finally, let us proudly continue to participate in folk festivals and display our ethnic heritage. This is a concrete way to make Rusyns in the homeland known to the greater American public. Let us keep contact with our Rusyn relatives in Europe not only by writing, but also by visiting them and inviting them to visit us here. And let us be generous in our support of our people's activities in the homeland. For specific information on how to help, write to the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 355 Delano Place, Fairview, New Jersey 07022.

ROBERT MAXWELL

"Ian Robert Maxwell of Headington Hill Hall, Oxford, England, multi-millionaire, began his life as Ludvik Hoch, eldest son of a Ruthenian laborer and his wife who had no money at all. Half a century ago, in the small village of Solotvino in the Carpathians of eastern Czechoslovakia, Maxwell's dream was to own a field and a cow. These terse encyclopedia-like lines begin a recently-published biography of a truly remarkable man.

As the young Ludvik Hoch, Maxwell never succeeded in owning either a field or a cow. But half a century later — and as Robert Maxwell — he has created an information and communications empire comprising of printing, publishing, and cable television companies that employ over 15,000 people in sixteen countries and that is estimated to be worth $1.2 billion. How did this transformation from a poor Subcarpathian village boy into a multi-million dollar international businessman take place?

The future Robert Maxwell was the third of nine children born to Mehel and Hanka Hoch on June 10, 1923, in the village of Solotvino along the northern bank of the Tisa river in Subcarpathian Rus', today the Transcarpathian oblast of the Ukrainian S.S.R. At the time of his birth, Subcarpathian Rus' was part of Czechoslovakia — hence Maxwell is often described as a Briton of Czech origin — and his native
village Solotvino (in Czech: Slatina) was best known for its salt-mines and as a stop-off point for smuggling across the Tisa river with Romania.

In fact, the future Maxwell was ethnically neither Czech, nor Carpatho-Rusyn. The Hochs were Hasidic Jews, one of the more important groups within the 100,000 strong Jewish community that lived in Subcarpathian Rus' in the early decades of the twentieth century. Unlike in most parts of eastern Europe, Jews in Subcarpathian Rus' owned and worked land as peasants, and although Mehel Hoch remained a landless farm laborer, his son Ludvik set as his early goal to attain what his father could never achieve.

But fate intervened and drew Ludvik away permanently from his Subcarpathian roots. After completing his elementary education in local state-run schools, in 1936 he went to the traditional Jewish academy (the Yeshiva) in far-away Bratislava. Within two years, however, he left the strict atmosphere of the Yeshiva and gave up as well any commitment to a traditional Jewish life-style. Then, in March 1939, German aggression destroyed Czechoslovakia and his Subcarpathian homeland was forcibly reannexed to Hungary.

After spending a few months in Budapest, where he was arrested on charges of spying for western powers and sentenced to death, Maxwell escaped from prison, fleeing on a round-about journey that brought him to Belgrade, Istanbul, and Jerusalem. In March 1940, he arrived in southern France determined to fight against Hitler's Germany. Following a stint in the French Foreign Legion (he was not yet the minimum age of 17), he fought with the Czech Legion until the fall of France in May 1940, when he was evacuated and joined the British Army. Before the war was over, Maxwell was promoted to captain and awarded the Military Cross for his bravery during a rescue mission he led in 1945. It was while he was still fighting in France that he changed his Czech-sounding name. The reason was simple: whenever members of the Czech Legion were caught by the Germans, they were not considered soldiers but snipers and were shot on sight. His first choice for a new name was du Maurier, which he later changed to Robert Maxwell before his evacuation to Britain.

Even before the war was over, Maxwell was convinced he would spend the rest of his days in Britain. There was certainly nothing to return home to: his family was deported with the rest of the Subcarpathian Jewry in the spring of 1944 and perished at Auschwitz (only two sisters survived). In 1945, Maxwell married the French-born Elisabeth Meynard, and as part of his new life in peacetime Britain, he decided to embark on what had been a life-long passion — books and learning. His first major breakthrough came in 1951, when he gained control of a company he renamed Pergamon Press. Before long Pergamon became one of the world's leading English-language publishers of scientific and technical books and encyclopedias, and it remains today the world leader in the production of scholarly journals in a wide variety of fields ranging from medicine to ethnic studies.

Despite his enterprising and capitalist inclinations, Maxwell could never forget his poverty-stricken roots. And in an attempt to change the social and economic imbalances in Britain, he joined the Labor party and was elected Member of Parliament in 1964. Although he lost in the general election of 1970, his commitment to the Labor party remained strong as does his generosity to philanthropic causes of all kinds.

After leaving the British Parliament, Maxwell returned full-time to the publishing business. Already by the late 1960s, he entered full force into the spirited British newspaper world based on London's Fleet Street, where he clashed head-on with his bitter business rival Robert Murdoch in several attempts to take over London’s profitable tabloids. In 1984, Maxwell finally realized his dream when he became owner of the Mirror Group Newspapers, whose six papers include the Daily Mirror. Characteristically, he adopted from the outset a hands-on approach, getting involved in every aspect of his newspapers' operations.

By the end of the 1980s, Maxwell turned his attention to the United States where he has already invested over $500 million in several printing and publishing companies. Nonetheless, Maxwell's own incredibly aggressive business ambitions have their limits. For instance, he has not entered the arena of American TV because of the United States citizenship requirement of owners of television stations and networks. Whereas his rival Murdoch became an American citizen to acquire the Fox Television network, the loyal if not royalist Maxwell quipped: "No prize is so great that I would relinquish my British citizenship."

Despite his fierce loyalty to Britain, not all of the old-style British business circles appreciate what they consider Maxwell's rough-hewn approach and tactics. But in business it is success, not style, that ultimately counts, and few would disagree that the poor boy from Solotvino has already and will continue to make a profound impact in the world of international communications.

Philip Michaels
April 1, 1990 is census day. This is the day that happens every ten years when the Bureau of the Census takes stock of the population of the United States. Nor does the bureau simply count the number of people living in our country. It seeks a whole range of information about income, the type of housing we live in, our employment, and education.

Ten years ago, in 1980, the Bureau of the Census inquired about another kind of question as well. For the first time it asked Americans of all generations about their ancestry or ethnic background. This was a question distinctly different from where one's parents were born. The place of birth of parents was frequently asked on previous censuses and it referred to existing or past countries or states. The new 1980 ancestry question was less concerned with what country one's parents came from than with knowing how the respondent identifies him or herself in terms of cultural or ancestral heritage. For example, a person whose parents were born in Great Britain might identify his or her ancestry as Welsh instead of English, or a person from Spain might claim Basque or Catalan ancestry instead of Spanish.

In 1990, the census will once again ask the following question: What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin? Also as in 1980, the census form will provide a blank line into which the respondent can write anything he or she wishes. The Census Bureau will then tabulate all the responses, grouping them into ancestry categories. For instance, people who write in one of the following responses — Belorussian, Byelorussian, White Russian, White Ruthenian (answers that actually were returned on the 1980 census forms) would be classified as Belorussians. Quite likely, many people will answer with more than one ancestry/ethnic response, such as Italian-Irish-German. In cases of such multiple responses, only the first two groups mentioned will be counted.

Most unfortunately, because of the manner in which the information from the 1980 census was tabulated, it was not possible to determine the number of Americans who identified themselves as Carpatho-Rusyns, since the name and the variants Rus, Rusin, Rusnak were all classified under Russian. The Census Bureau realized its mistake on the background of his or her ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents), there are also some very practical implications for governmental policy, whether at the federal, state, or local level, all of which are based on information gathered from the ancestry question. The Census Bureau had this to say about the matter when recommending to Congress its intention to include the ancestry question once again in the 1990 census:

Ancestry data are used to implement provisions of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act. Also, ancestry data are used by state and local officials and private organizations to identify ethnic groups' needs for social services; to plan and implement education, housing and health programs; and to allocate funds for services in ethnic communities.

Americans of Carpatho-Rusyn background, whether as individuals or as a group, could also qualify for such programs. However, we first must be counted. But we will not be counted if our people provide answers to their ancestry such as Slavish, East European, Byzantine, Slovak, Russian, Czechoslovakia, or Austria-Hungary!

One last matter. While every American receives a census form, not every one receives the so-called "long form." Only 1 in 6 Americans, that is 45 million inhabitants (17.7 million households) will receive the "long form." It is only the "long form" that includes the ancestry question.

But whether or not you receive the "long form," talk to your friends, to your relatives, and to your family. Urge those who do receive the "long form" and who are of Carpatho-Rusyn background to write in the most appropriate answer to describe their ancestry: Carpatho-Rusyn, or simply Rusin, Rusnak, Ruthenian, Lemko, and if they really prefer it, Carpatho-Russian.

There are an estimated 700,000 Americans who have at least one ancestor of Carpatho-Rusyn background. Only we can make our presence known in the United States — a country where everyone has at some time come from somewhere. On Census Day — April 1, 1990 — Rusyn Americans will have their chance to stand up and be counted.

Paul R. Magocsi

GET YOUR COPY

The invaluable study, "Are the Armenians Really Russians — Or How the U.S. Census Bureau Classifies America's Ethnic Groups," is available for $3.75 from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 355 Delano Place, Fairview, New Jersey 07022.
THE REVOLUTION OF 1989

The Revolution of 1989 is a phrase that has not been seen much in the press, but it is the kind of formulation that will probably enter the history books our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be reading in the twenty-first century. Yes, a revolution has been occurring before our very eyes — one that started ever so slowly, even imperceptively, in the early 1980s, but which culminated with breathtaking speed in the last months of 1989.

Could anyone have ever predicted at the outset of the decade that before it was over relations between the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, would be better than they have been since World War II. But more stunning and virtually unimaginable was that the Soviet Union under its dynamic leader Mikhail Gorbachev was willing through words and deeds to adopt a hands-off policy over its sphere of influence in East-Central Europe.

The result, as we all now know, is that one by one — Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania — have set out on what seems an irreversible path to end one-party rule by the Communist regimes and to return to the fold of what again is becoming one Europe.

One Europe figuratively and literally. The “iron curtain” that in 1946 Churchill claimed had “descended across the Continent from Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic” was finally torn down in 1989. Can we ever forget those televised images of the barbed-wire being cut between Hungary and Austria, later between Czechoslovakia and Austria and, of course, between East and West Berlin where in a surge of human euphoria the seemingly impenetrable wall came tumbling down.

Remarkably, all this, with the exception of Romania, took place in the absence of bloodshed. Yes, these are heady times we live in, times to savor, times that mark the end of a harsh era in history that had stripped millions of people of their most basic freedoms. Freedom — svoboda/szabadság/libertate in its various linguistic forms — has after half a century finally come to Europe’s other half.

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The Impact on Carpatho-Rusyns

But what does the Revolution of 1989 mean for the Carpatho-Rusyn homeland? Have the changes reached Carpatho-Rusyns and, if so, what specific forms have they taken? What can or should be the role of Rusyn-Americans vis-à-vis events in the ancestral homeland? These are questions which many Americans of Carpatho-Rusyn background have been asking, and despite the still early stages of the “revolution,” they deserve some initial answers, however tentative those answers might be.

Attention here will focus on the three countries where the vast majority of Carpatho-Rusyns live — the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. A few words also need to be said about the unique situation of the Rusyns in Yugoslavia and their relationship to their brethren in the Carpathians.

Like other inhabitants of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, Carpatho-Rusyns have been affected by the general demands for political freedom and economic reform. But because they are a national minority, Carpatho-Rusyns in all three states have an additional concern about their status as a minority people. In short, what if any effect have the changes sweeping Eastern Europe had on the Carpatho-Rusyn sense of ethnic and religious identity and their desire to preserve it?

Actually, the so-called Rusyn problem was supposedly settled in all three countries — the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland — after World War II. And in all three the solution was the same. The nearly century-old question concerning the national identity of Carpatho-Rusyns was settled by governmental decree. All Rusyns were simply declared to be Ukrainians. At the same time that the nationality question was seemingly resolved, the religious question was tackled as well. By the mid-twentieth century, Rusyns were adherents of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches, but atheistic Communism was opposed to religion of any kind. Following in the footsteps of its imperial Russian predecessor, the Soviet government was, in particular, ill-disposed toward Greek Catholicism. Thus, between 1945 and 1950, Greek Catholicism was outlawed in the Carpatho-Rusyn homeland. All former Greek Catholic churches were either closed or made Orthodox. As for the parishioners, they were all declared to be Orthodox.

Poland and its Lemko Rusyns

But how has the Revolution of 1989 changed what were supposedly resolved national and religious problems? Changes were to begin first in Poland, where reformist experiments were initiated already at the very outset of the 1980s by the Solidarity movement. Despite the imposition of marshal law that in 1981 temporarily crushed Solidarity, as the decade progressed the Communist authorities were less and less able to keep a firm grip on events in the country. By the mid-1980s, an atmosphere of relative free speech had returned and the Carpatho-Rusyns in Poland, known locally as Lemkos, began to act.

First came questions, then a search for answers, finally actions aimed at rectifying mistakes of the past. Why, it was asked, were Lemkos forcibly deported from their Carpathian homeland in 1947? Why can they not return to the lands of their forefathers? Why was the Greek Catholic church liquidated and its property seized by fellow Catholics of the Roman rite? Why does the Polish government recognize Lemkos only as Ukrainians and why may Lemkos not have their own organizations?

As early as 1983, Lemkos began to address these and other questions in public through the medium of an annual cultural festival called Vatra, which since that time has been held for two to three days each summer. The Vatra festivals have contributed to a spirited debate between those Lemkos who feel themselves to be Ukrainians and those who consider that they comprise a distinct group that is neither Ukrainian nor Polish.

The Ukrainian-oriented Lemkos, headed by the older generation of cultural activists like Fedir Goć, Pawlo Stefanovskij, Michal Donskij (all of whom in the 1950s had claimed their distinctiveness from Ukrainians), want a general improvement in the status of the Ukrainian minority in Poland of whom they consider the Lemko people to be a part. As for cultural activity, they argue that Lemkos should work through the existing government-funded Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society (USKT) based in Warsaw and with its several branches throughout Poland. Beyond purely cultural matters, in January 1989 Pawlo Stefanovskij took the initiative to establish the so-called Citizen’s Circle
were deported to the Soviet Ukraine in 1945-1946. The cultural society was founded in L'viv by those Lemkos who wish to press for that identity among Lemkos will increase rather than decrease. The non-Ukrainian Lemko orientation is made up primarily of people from the younger and middle generation who, although exposed to a Ukrainian identity in schools, have become convinced that continuing done without having to identify as Ukrainian. The Lemko Association also has branches in the Carpathian valleys in Transcarpathia and Czechoslovakia (the Prešov Region) have been much more modest so far. In Soviet Transcarpathia (historic Subcarpathian Rus'), one main concern has been the status of the Greek Catholic church. This problem is not limited to Transcarpathia, but is part of the larger problem of Greek Catholicism in the western lands of the Soviet Ukraine, that is, in historic Galicia and Subcarpathian Rus'. Although it was forced underground in the late 1940s, the new environment of perestroika and glasnost created by Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev has allowed Greek Catholicism to come out of its "catacombs."

In August 1987, some bishops declared publicly that they represented the ruling hierarchy of the outlawed church. By 1989, the full hierarchy of eleven bishops was reconstructed, weekly services attended by thousands of the faithful were being held without interference by the authorities, and before the revolutionary year was over communities were taking advantage of a new Soviet law (proclaimed on December 1) that allowed individual Greek Catholic parishes to be registered. In Soviet Transcarpathia, several Greek Catholic communities are now functioning openly, and demands have been made for the return of the cathedral church in Užhorod which has been in the hands of the Orthodox since 1949. Nonetheless, despite these developments and the historic visit of Soviet President Gorbachev with Pope John Paul II in November 1989, as of this writing (January 1990) the Greek Catholic church as a body has not been given legal status in the Soviet Union, although this eventuality seems virtually inevitable.

One problem that is specific to Transcarpathia and, in particular the question of Lemko identity, it seems that as in the past most Greek Catholic priests are of a Ukrainian orientation. The result is often an atmosphere marked by friction and tension. In short, the ecumenical movement and dialogue that has marked recent Catholic-Orthodox relations in the larger world seems not to have filtered down to the Carpathians at all.
bishops in the western Ukraine now often refer to their church as Ukrainian Catholic instead of the traditional name Greek Catholic. However, it is known that three bishops from Transcarpathia, Ivan Margityč, Ivan Semedi, and Josyf Holovač, are opposed to this name change. Based on the little we know, it is not clear whether opposition to the name change reflects simply traditional attitudes or a reluctance to associate with a Ukrainian identity. We do know that regional patriotism remains widespread in Soviet Transcarpathia and that the Greek Catholic church had until its liquidation in 1949 been a stronghold of a distinct Carpatho-Rusyn national orientation.

There is also a jurisdictional question. Despite efforts in the late eighteenth century to unite with their Greek Catholic brethren north of the Carpathians in Galicia, the Carpatho-Rusyn eparchy of Mukačevo with its seat in Užhorod was never under the jurisdiction of the metropolitans of L'viv that has authority over the rest of the eparchies in what is the Ukrainian S.S.R. Instead, the eparchy of Mukačevo, like the neighboring eparchy of Prešov in Czechoslovakia, was under the direct authority of the Vatican. Now that the church is on the verge of being legalized in the Soviet Union, the Vatican will have to decide whether the soon-to-be-restored eparchy of Mukačevo will remain jurisdictionally independent or be made subordinate to the metropolitans of L'viv. As for the latter, the thorny question of its own relationship to the Ukrainian Catholic church in the West, headed by Cardinal Myroslav Lachivsky (who is resident in Rome but still holds the title archbishop of L'viv), will have to be resolved as well. Both issues — the church’s name and its jurisdiction — are sure to have an effect on the identity question.

In one sense, the identity question in Soviet Transcarpathia might seem a moot issue. When the Soviet Union annexed what was formerly Subcarpathian Rus' in 1945, local people who until then called themselves Rusyns or Russians were declared Ukrainian. After forty years of Soviet rule, it seems most people in Transcarpathia accept the official view that Rusyn is simply the older name for Ukrainian and that both terms effectively mean the same thing with regard to ethnic or national identity. On the other hand, the era of glasnost has prompted questions about this matter as well; namely, why were the historic names Rus'/Rusyn given up? Indication of concern among people about this matter is evident in a lengthy 5-part article that recently appeared in the official Communist regional newspaper, Zakarpats'ka pravda, which attempted to explain and justify the name change. In the end, it is not clear whether these developments have any significance other than the natural tendency to inquire about past injustices that now are able to be discussed relatively openly in Soviet society.

Carpatho-Rusyns in Czechoslovakia

Lastly, we turn to Czechoslovakia, which experienced a ten-day revolution in November 1989 that removed the Communist party from its dominant role in the government. Here as well it is too early to know concretely what impact these political changes will have on the status of Carpatho-Rusyns — or Rusyn-Ukrainians as they are officially known — in the Prešov Region of northeastern Slovakia.

Ever since the 1950s, the major problem for Rusyns in Czechoslovakia has been assimilation with Slovaks. Some blame this trend on the Ukrainian nationality policy that was forcibly imposed in 1951. Others suggest assimilation is a natural and inevitable phenomenon for a small people, whether or not the process is encouraged by the dominant nationality, in this case Slovak. Whatever the reason, assimilation is a fact of life. For those who do not wish to give up their ancestral Rus’ identity, a Ukrainian identity has since the early 1950s been the only permissible alternative. But by 1980, a mere 37,000 people identified themselves as Ukrainian in the Prešov Region (down nearly two-thirds from 1930 when there were 91,000 self-professed Rusyns). Even more ominous for the future was the fact that by 1989 only 1,100 students were enrolled in schools that taught some courses in Ukrainian. All complaints by the local Ukrainian intelligentsia to reverse this trend have failed.

For a few months in 1968, when the Prague Spring under Alexander Dubček allowed people to speak out openly, there was a widespread grassroots movement to have newspapers and schools publish and teach in Rusyn, instead of Ukrainian. But the Soviet invasion in August of that year put an end to all such Rusyn activity, which was thereafter branded as “counterrevolutionary.” Now, in the new environment of the 1989 Revolution, there is a return to the kinds of demands made during the Prague Spring two decades earlier and for a rectification of the mistakes made in the two decades since then.

Even before Czechoslovakia’s ten-day November revolution was over, Carpatho-Rusyns began to act. On November 27, a new organization was established in Presov called the Initiative Group of Czechoslovakia’s Rusyn-Ukrainians for Reconstruction (Iniciatívna Hrupa Rusyniv-Ukrajinciv ČSSR za Perebudovu). Its first meeting made clear that despite the claims of the Communist authorities, the nationality problem among the Rusyns of Czechoslovakia “has never throughout history been justly resolved.” At subsequent meetings held in December and January 1990, the Initiative Group has called for a complete change of leadership in the Communist-dominated Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT), which until now has been the only organization to represent Carpatho-Rusyns in Czechoslovakia. The Initiative Group has also demanded that KSUT receive a new name — the Union of Ukrainian-Rusyns in Czechoslovakia — and has called for the passage of new laws that would require Ukrainian-language schools in all villages where Rusyn-Ukrainians live.

Based on the statements of the Initiative Group, there seems to be much internal debate about the Ukrainian or Rusyn orientation of the movement. The new organization is headed by a young 30-year-old journalist Aleksander Zozuljak, but so far its leading spokespersons have been Dr. Jurij Baća and Dr. Mykola Mušynka. Both were also in the forefront of the 1968 revival (and since then forced out of their former academic posts), and both accept the view that Rusyns belong to the Ukrainian nationality. On the other hand, the branch of the Initiative Group in Medzilaborce — the same town where work on an Andy Warhol Museum of Contemporary Art is under way — has openly called for the immediate introduction of Rusyn vernacular in the press, radio, and theater because, as they say, “our
people” continue to complain that they cannot understand literary Ukrainian and do not want to receive materials in that language.

The role of the church in Czechoslovakia’s Prešov Region is also of interest. In contrast to Poland and the Soviet Union, the Greek Catholic church (forcibly liquidated in 1950) was made legal once again in 1968. Moreover, it survived the Soviet invasion and managed to get back and hold 205 of the 292 Orthodox parishes then in existence. The cost of survival, however, has been the transformation of the Greek Catholic church into an instrument of Slovakization.

Priests are trained only in Slovak seminaries, and apart from liturgies in Church Slavonic the rest of the services, including homilies, are more often than not given in Slovak. This happens even in pure Rusyn-speaking villages as well as during the so-called “Rusyn liturgy” at the cathedral church in Prešov. Since the early 1970s, the Greek Catholic eparchy had no bishop, but was under an eparchial administrator, the Reverend Ivan Hirka. For nearly two decades, the Reverend Hirka has either been unwilling or unable to stop the Slovakization process. One alternative has been to allow Ukrainian-language religious books and church bulletins to appear, but parishioners do not want to read them for basically the same reasons most Prešov Region Rusyns reject secular Ukrainian-language publications.

One very interesting development has been a privately-initiated movement by Greek Catholic priests and laypersons to save the Rus’ character of their church by translating religious books into Rusyn. This process began already in 1983, but it was not until the last months of revolutionary 1989 that the first texts — only in typewritten and mimeographed form, although handsomely hand-bound — became available in at least a few dozen copies. The difficulties in attaining this important translation achievement were summed up in a letter to the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center by one of the compilers (dated December 13, 1989):

I am a priest in the Greek Catholic Church. For several years now we have been translating several parts of our Church Slavonic liturgy into the Rusyn language. In the churches of the Prešov eparchy there is much Slovakization, but in these Rusyn translations we see some kind hope for survival. And as is evident from the volumes I am sending, not only survival, but spiritual and cultural growth as well. . . . The language of our translations is based on the Laborec valley [Rusyn] dialect, supplemented with many words from all the Rusyn dialects in Czechoslovakia.

I am sending you the Gospels, the Epistles, and The Way of the Cross. The greatest problem for us is that we cannot get our works published because to do so we first need the necessary ‘imprimatur’ of the church hierarchy. The ordinary of the Greek Catholic church, Ivan Hirka, is a Slovakizer, and for several years now he refuses to give any ‘imprimatur’ for Rusyn works.

I am turning to you because perhaps you know how to help us and that these works may be published by you.

With the change in political climate within Czechoslovakia during the last months of 1989, the Vatican acted quickly to fill some of the several bishoprics that had remained vacant because of negative relations with the previous Communist governments. On December 21, Pope John Paul II named three new bishops for Czechoslovakia, one of which is now bishop-elect Ivan Hirka of the Greek Catholic eparchy of Prešov. Perhaps now that he is recognized as a full-fledged hierarch, Bishop Hirka will feel more confident in protecting the interests of all members of his eparchy and therefore not be reluctant to support those efforts to have Rusyn vernacular instead of Slovak used in church services in Carpatho-Rusyn parishes.

The Vojvodinian (Bačka) Rusyns of Yugoslavia

Finally, there is the unique situation of the Rusyns in Yugoslavia. Unique because ever since World War II they are the only group of Carpatho-Rusyns who have been recognized officially as a distinct nationality with their own literary language which is taught in schools and used for legal, administrative, and cultural discourse. Their favorable status is a direct function of the liberal policy toward national minorities established immediately after World War II by Yugoslavia which, although a Communist country, had since 1949 remained outside the Soviet bloc.

For this reason, developments in Yugoslavia have not been influenced by the recent turn of events in the Soviet Union and East Central Europe. On the other hand, Yugoslavia has had its own rather serious economic and political problems which have had a potentially negative effect on all peoples living within its borders, including Carpatho-Rusyns. The political problem has to do with the Yugoslav republic of Serbia and the status of the two autonomous regions within that republic. One of these regions is called Kosovo, inhabited primarily by Albanians, with whom Serbs have been in conflict for several years. Since 1988, the Serbian government has been trying to control the “Albanian” problem by reducing the autonomous status of its two regions, Kosovo and Vojvodina, the latter being the area where most Rusyns live. Although there was no particular problem in the Vojvodina, local leaders began to fear that the official and rather privileged status of the region’s four non-Serbian nationalities — Rusyns are one of these — would be reduced. By the end of 1989, this had not happened.

Also during this larger Yugoslav political crisis, there were some talks at the governmental level suggesting that the Ukrainian national minority, which lives primarily in the neighboring republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, should be treated as one group with the Vojvodinian Rusyns. Since the Ukrainians are not considered a regional nationality in the republics where they live — and therefore they do not receive special funding for cultural and educational activities — it would be an advantage for them to be considered as one group with the Rusyns. This, moreover, has been the long-time goal of the Union of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Croatia, which publishes the journal Nova dumka. However, the Rusyns of the Vojvodina protested against any efforts to lump them together with Ukrainians, arguing they have been and should continue to be treated as a distinct Slavic nationality. It seems that the views of the Vojvodinian Rusyns have prevailed.
The very existence of the Vojvodinian Rusyns as an officially recognized national group in Yugoslavia is of great symbolic and practical importance to Rusyns in the Carpathian homeland. Symbolically important because they show that, given favorable political circumstances, small national groups (Vojvodinian Rusyns number only about 35,000) can exist and even flourish. They are of practical importance because their scholarly and popular journals and newspapers can — and do — publish materials by and about Rusyns that cannot for political or financial reasons appear in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Soviet Union. Mutual awareness and greater contacts between the Vojvodinian Rusyns and their brethren in the Carpathian homeland — a process initiated, in part, by the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center in 1987 — can in the future assist all Carpatho-Rusyns in their on-going struggle to survive as a national minority.

How can Americans of Rusyn background help?

What, if anything, should Rusyn Americans do to assist their brethren in the homeland? First, they should try to learn as much as possible about what is transpiring in the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution. This can be done in various ways: by corresponding with relatives and friends; by visiting them, whether in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, or Poland; or by inviting them to visit you. By the way, the political changes have made visiting the West relatively easy.

Armed with awareness of what is going on in Europe, some Rusyn Americans may wish to respond concretely to assist certain developments. In this regard, it should be kept in mind that Rusyn Americans should never expect to dictate what happens in the ancestral homeland. They should, however, feel encouraged to respond to requests received by cultural and religious activists who now are finally able to make their needs known.

For instance, Lemko Rusyns in Poland who have begun to publish the quarterly Besida are in desperate need of a computer with Cyrillic-language software to facilitate the appearance of that new magazine as well as other publications that underline the distinctness of Carpatho-Rusyn culture. Funds are also needed to support the completion of a dictionary for standardizing the Lemko-Rusyn language and for the appearance of an anthology of Lemko literature. As for Czechoslovakia, Rusyn Americans — especially those of Byzantine Catholic orientation — should be the first to help publish religious texts in the Rusyn language. This includes texts that are already translated and need to be published as well as texts like the Bible which await translation. These are only a few examples of projects already underway or completed in the European homeland and which can be brought to fruition by funds channelled through the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, an institution that has a proven record of experience in publishing and promoting scholarly activities.

Rusyn Americans should know that their parents and grandparents living in the United States since the early years of this century have traditionally been concerned with the fate of the families and land they left behind or in some cases never even knew firsthand. After World War I, it was Rusyn Americans who initiated the political process that led to the union of Carpatho-Rusyns living south of the mountains with the new state of Czechoslovakia. Then, during the interwar years, Rusyn Americans generously donated money, whether individually or through their secular and religious organizations, to help families and institutions in the homeland. After World War II, Rusyn Americans once again wanted to help, but by then Soviet hegemony cut off normal ties between the European homeland and their relatives in the “capitalist West.” Contacts of all kinds, familial as well as institutional, withered or ceased entirely.

Now the Revolution of 1989 has changed all that. Americans of Rusyn background today, like their parents and grandparents of years gone by, should take pride in the fact that they can once again act in a positive way by responding to the needs of cultural and religious leaders in the homeland who remain committed to the spiritual and educational welfare of their people. In the absence of assistance from the authorities in their countries, we have a duty to assist them in whatever way we can. For further information on how you can act, write to the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 355 Delano Place, Fairview, New Jersey 07022.

THE LORD’S PRAYER IN RUSYN

The following excerpt is from Krestna Doroha (The Way of the Cross), translated by the Reverend František Krajnjak and Helena Vac’ova of Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia. The original text is in the Cyrillic alphabet; we provide a Latin transliteration for our readers.

Otcе naš, što perebyvaš na nebesach, naj svjatyt’sja tvoje imja. Naj priyde tvoje carstvo, naj dijesja tvoja volja, jak na nebi, tak i na zemli. Chlib naš potribnyj k žyivotu daj nam dnes’; i odpust’ nam našy dovhy, jak i mьj odpusčame našym dovžnikam, I ne ved’ nas do pokušinja, no sochran’ nas od zloho. Bo tvoje je carstvo, mie’ i slava:
Otcja i Syna i Svjatoho Ducha, teper i na vse i na viky vikiv. Amin’.

UPCOMING EVENT

The Fifth Annual Polish Dance, Music, and Folklore Camp at Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, will be held from June 27 to July 2, 1990. The camp will include sessions on Lemko-Rusyn culture of southeast Poland and northeast Czechoslovakia. The instructor for these sessions is Jerry Jumba. For further information contact Polish folklorist Basia Dziewanowska at 305-296-6099; or from late spring on: 617-926-8048.

OUR FRONT COVER

Cover page of the first issue of Besida, the official organ of the Lemko Society (Legnica, Poland), written in the Lemko-Rusyn language.
RECENT EVENTS

Wyandotte, Michigan. On July 7-9, 1989, the Carpatho-Rusyn Cultural Society of Michigan participated in the 12th Annual Czechoslovak American Festival held at the Benjamin Yack Arena. This annual event allows visitors a chance to see and experience the culture and heritage of the four regions of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs, Slovaks, Moravians, and Rusyns had display booths showing their individual traditions. Each participating group exhibited numerous items from its region for sale. In addition, the Rusyns had a display of crosses, icons, and other religious items characteristic of the Eastern rite. Printed flyers with explanations about Rusyn culture were available and Society members answered many questions about Rusyn ethnic and religious culture. The festival opened with the Detroit Sokol Choral Group singing the national anthems of each region, including Aleksander Duchnovyc’s “Ja Rusyn byl.” Society members report a great show of interest in Rusyn culture on the part of visitors to the festival.

Chicago, Illinois. At the 21st National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, held in Chicago on November 2-5, 1989, several papers were delivered on Carpatho-Rusyn themes. A whole session was devoted to Vasyli Grendža-Dons’kyj, the leading Ukrainian-language writer from Subcarpathian Rus’ during the interwar years. Three presentations dealt with various aspects of Grendža-Dons’kyj’s creative corpus: his political thought by Vasyl Markus (Loyola University); his poetry by Dan Bohdan Chopyk (University of Utah); and his prose by Dmytro M. Shtohryn (University of Illinois). Critical comments were provided by Miroslav Sembchyszyn (Chicago) and Leonid Rudnytzky (La Salle University). In a another panel devoted to Ukrainian ethnic communities in Poland and Czechoslovakia, Paul R. Magocsi (University of Toronto) spoke about the independent Lemko Republic of 1918-1920 and its relationship to Carpatho-Rusyns in Czechoslovakia.

Warsaw, Poland. On December 1-2, 1989, a scholarly conference took place in Warsaw entitled “Political and Social Orientations Among the Lemko People in the Twentieth Century.” Sixteen speakers took part, most of whom were Polish scholars familiar with the Lemko problem (Professor Andrzej Kwielecki, Tadeusz A. Olzański, Dr. Kazimierz Pudlo, among others). Among the Lemko participants were Bogdan Horbal (University of Wroclaw) who spoke on the Lemko Republic of 1918-1921, and Ivan Krasovsky (Lviv) who discussed Lemkos in the Soviet Ukraine. Also on the program were Professor Paul J. Best (University of Southern Connecticut), a long-time supporter of C-RRC. and Professor Paul R. Magocsi, whose essay on the current relations between Lemkos, Poles, and Ukrainians was read in absentia.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On December 2, 1989, the Russian Nationality Room in the University of Pittsburgh’s Cathedral of Learning hosted a Carpatho-Rusyn Holy Night supper as part of the Annual Nationality Rooms Christmas Celebration. Chairpersons Andrew and Georgia Zeedick presented cantors from Pittsburgh area Byzantine Catholic churches and students from Saint Nicholas Byzantine Catholic School in a program of Carpatho-Rusyn carols in Rusyn and English. They were directed by Jerry Jumba, director of the Carpatho-Rusyn Liturgical Chant Renewal Program. The invocation was given by Auxiliary Bishop of the Byzantine Catholic Archdiocese. John M. Bilock. The Russian Nationality Room was founded in 1938 by Pittsburgh residents of both Russian and Carpatho-Rusyn origins.

Eckley, Pennsylvania. On December 3, 1989, the Eckley Miners’ Village Associates sponsored a holiday program featuring ethnic and religious customs of the residents of Eckley and nearby anthracite mining communities. Saint
Michael's Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church of Freeland, Pennsylvania gave a presentation about the traditional Rusyn Christmas Eve Supper. The church's choir sang carols and demonstrated a Christmas liturgical service. The pastor of St. Michael's is the Reverend Lawrence Barriger, a past contributor to the C-RA.

McKeesport and Clairton, Pennsylvania. On December 9 and 28, the St. Nicholas School students presented a full-length Bethlehem Play in these two cities. A one-hour quality video cassette of the play is available for $35.00, including program notes, postage and handling. Send a check to: Maryann Kostrubanic — Bethlehem Play, St. Nicholas School, 407 Shaw Avenue, McKeesport, Pennsylvania 15132.

Toronto, Ontario. On December 21, 1989, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center held a reception for Petro Trochanovskij, the Lemko poet and cultural activist from Poland. Trochanovskij received a two-month fellowship from the C-RRC to do research in Toronto in order to complete his anthology of Lemko literature. Among the several guests who participated in a spirited discussion about the current status of Lemko Rusyns in Poland and Carpatho-Rusyns in the United States were: Jerry Jumba, associate editor, C-RA; the Reverend Brian Keleher, church historian and frequent contributor to the C-RA; Pavel Lopata, painter and commentator on Carpatho-Rusyn affairs; Michael Lukas, president of the Carpatho-Russian Society of Canada; and Joseph Terelja, recently-arrived Greek Catholic dissident from Soviet Transcarpathia. Trochanovskij, who during the gathering also read some of his newest Lemko-Rusyn poetry, is one of the organizers of the annual Lemko Vatra folk festival, co-founder of the new Lemko Society in Poland, and editor of its quarterly, Besida.

Editor's Request

I encourage all our readers to send me short notices on any Carpatho-Rusyn related events in which you have participated. Photos are also welcome. The date, place, and a brief description of the event are sufficient. It is especially important that we share news of our activities with each other on a regular basis. A sincere thanks to those who lately have sent both articles and photos for our Recent Events section.

Our Appreciation

The following donations have been received in 1989 by the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center's Rusyn Cultural Fund to aid the linguistic and cultural projects currently being undertaken among the Lemko Rusyns of Poland.

Carpatho-Russian American Center (Yonkers, New York). $200.00.
John Petro Garbera (New York, New York), $50.00.
John Ryzyk (Yonkers, New York), $100.00.

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

The Carpatho-Rusyn American (ISSN 0749-9213) is a quarterly publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, Inc., a non-profit cultural organization whose purpose is to promote knowledge about all aspects of Carpatho-Rusyn culture through the publication and distribution of scholarly and educational material about the Carpatho-Rusyn heritage in Europe and America. General inquiries concerning the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, and all communications concerning this publication, should be directed to:

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Annual Subscription is $12.00

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