Young man, when I was young, I too was a Rusyn!
FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* contains one of the most exciting documents to emerge from the Rusyn homeland as a result of the Revolution of 1989. It is the manifesto of the new Christian Democratic Movement of the Renaissance of Rusyns in Czechoslovakia, or simply the Rusyn Renaissance (Rusyns'ka Obroda). The group was established by representatives of the Initiative Group for the Renaissance of Rusyns formed in 1989 and by a Rusyn-oriented faction which split from the Prešov-based Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia in March, 1990. Members of the Rusyn Renaissance come from throughout the Prešov Region and eastern Slovakia, including Švidník, Humenné, Snina, Košice, and Medzilaborce.

What is so extraordinary about the emergence of the Rusyn Renaissance and its manifesto? The movement and the manifesto represent the renewal of a consciousness that was no longer thought to exist. While European national boundaries in the homeland have divided Rusyns from each other, great waves of immigration from the homeland, deportations, and assimilation have also taken their toll on the native European Rusyn population. Despite all of this, Rusyn consciousness has survived and is reemerging with an unanticipated energy.

As the founding statement of the Rusyn Renaissance, the manifesto's language and tone are infused with emotion that is characteristic of manifestos in general. The document is at once harsh and conciliatory, bitter toward those Rusyns who adopted a Ukrainian national identity at the expense of the Rusyn cause, yet welcoming back those who had to register as Ukrainians “at a time when the Rusyn nationality could not be registered otherwise.” The document rings with optimism and hope, but clearly contains a note of exceeding urgency: if a true Rusyn revival does not happen now under the new conditions of democracy, it will never happen in Czechoslovakia.

Like other highly enthusiastic manifestos, the document contains statements whose absolute accuracy may be justifiably questioned. One example is its insistence that “by the time Subcarpathian Rus’ came into being, the Rusyns had their own literary language which they had perfected.” The establishment of a standard and truly Rusyn literary language is a goal toward which several writers and poets have striven over the past years against enormous odds. It is true that Rusyn dialects have been used in a number of literary works, but some of the greatest talents from Subcarpathian Rus’ chose simply to employ Russian or Ukrainian for most of their works, and this was done precisely in the absence of a widely-accepted solid standard Rusyn literary language. The fact is that now it may be possible for Rusyns in Czechoslovakia to insist that the Rusyn language indeed be standardized for use in schools, in churches, and in the Rusyn media. Rusyns in Yugoslavia have their own standard language, and Lemko Rusyns are presently engaged in standardizing the Rusyn language in Poland. Members of the Rusyn Renaissance are aware of all this, and surely the language question will be an important topic in their discussions with Rusyns outside of Czechoslovakia.

At least some goals of the manifesto are being met. Among these is the dissolution of the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT) and the consecration of Msgr. Ján Hirka as bishop of the Prešov Eparchy—a significant step toward the restoration of rights for the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the Rusyn Renaissance has stated elsewhere that it seeks full dialogue between Greek Catholic and Orthodox Rusyns in the hope that all Rusyns can work together toward a common goal—recognition of their nationality and the human rights to be accorded it.

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

**THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN**

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General inquiries concerning the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, and all communications concerning this publication, should be directed to:

**The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, Inc.**
**Carpatho-Rusyn American**
**P.O. Box 227**
**Cambridge, MN 55008**
**Phone: 612 689-1720**

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Recent Events in the Carpatho-Rusyn Community
NIKOLAJ NAGY-NOD’ (1819-1862)

Although forgotten today, the priest, teacher, poet, publicist, and composer Nikolaj Nod’ (sometimes spelled Nagy) must be counted alongside the Serb Vuk Karadžić, the Czech Jirček brothers, and the Slovaks Ján Kollár and Karol Kuzmány as one of the most important representatives of Vienna’s rich Slavic cultural life during the 1850s. In that context it would be a mistake to consider Nod’ simply as part of regional literary history or as somehow on the periphery. His career—from poverty-stricken youth to the post of a highly-respected churchman of the imperial capital Vienna—impressed his contemporaries and successors with great respect and even wonder.

There are very few sources available about Nod’s life. Only his fellow monks from the Basilian monastery at Máriapócs [Rusyn: Marijapovc] left us some information in a moving necrology in the Viennese Rusyn-language newspaper, Vštinyk. According to that source: “Nod’ was born in the village of Nyírsavári [Szatmár county, in present-day Hungary] into a poor Rusyn family. In the spring of his youth, the poor child became an orphan and, with nowhere to go, arrived in our town [Máriapócs] where he began his studies.” The devout boy worked for the monks and was supported by the monastery.

Nod’ studied theology, became a Greek Catholic priest, and for a long time served as pastor in some god-forsaken Carpatho-Rusyn mountainous village. When the bishop of Mukačevo learned about the inspirational priest and teacher, he invited Nod’ to the episcopal seat of Užhorod to serve as prefect of the theological seminary. Nod’ was also appointed to the Užhorod cathedral chapter of canons. Then, in 1849, he was called to Vienna where for several years he served, as chaplain, then administrator (1857), and finally just before his death as head pastor of the Greek Catholic parish of St. Barbara, one of the main centers of Rusyn religious and cultural life in the Austrian Empire. Beginning in 1852, Nagy also served as spiritual advisor and then as rector of the Greek Catholic central seminary in Vienna, a post he held until his death in June 11, 1862. He was buried in the St. Mark’s cemetery, where his tombstone—paid for through a collection made by the newspaper Vštinyk—still stands.

As a spiritual figure and church leader, Nod’ was much more important than his relatively low position in the church hierarchy might otherwise suggest. For instance, he served as liaison between the Austrian government in Vienna and the Greek Catholic hierarchy from Rusyn, Ukrainian, and Romanian-inhabited territories whenever they were on official visits to the imperial capital. He was especially active in the negotiations to create a new Greek Catholic eparchy for Austria’s Romanians.

Even more lasting was Nagy’s role as a poet, composer, and publicist, since he was one of the first authors within modern Carpatho-Rusyn literature. He was a member of the Presov Literary Society, whose first Carpatho-Rusyn literary almanac (Pozdravlenije Rusynov [Greetings to the Rusyns], 1851) included his poetry. Besides a number of commemorative poems written for specific events, Nod’s most well-known publication was Russkij solovlj (The Rusyn Nightingale, 1851), a collection of secular songs in Rusyn vernacular with melodies which Nod’ himself put together based on his experience as choir director at the St. Barbara parish in Vienna. It is useful to note that Nod’ used the modern Cyrillic (hraždanka) and not Church Slavonic (kyryllycja) alphabet in Russkij solovlj, which in 1989 was reprinted in facsimile in Yugoslavia by the Rusyn-language journal, Nova dumka.

Also in 1851, Nod’ published in the Rusyn variant of Church Slavonic a small collection of pious poems entitled: Pamjat’ iz otpustu dobrým díjem (Remembrances from the Religious Pilgrimage for Good Children). As is evident from the title, this collection was designed as a small pocket-size illustrated book to be carried and read by children. The last poem, however, is intended for adults: an epistle against the national vice—drunkenness.

Throughout his activity and writings, Nod’ epitomized one important characteristic of his times. This was a sense of an all-Rusyn national identity and unity regardless whether Rusyns lived in the mountains and foothills of the Carpathians or on the lowlands of Galicia and the plains of Hungary where Nod’ himself was born. This sense of Rusyn unity was expressed by Nod’ in his opening poem for Russkij solovlj and also in the comment of a monk from Máriapócs who wrote the poet’s necrology: “His life’s work shows that our departed brother was a good Rusyn, even though he came from the Nyír region [in lowland Hungary near Máriapócs] where few Rusyns are born.”

Günther Wytrzens
Vienna, Austria
(translated from German by Philip Michaels)
MANIFESTO OF THE CARPATHO-RUSYNS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The situation that prevailed in Czechoslovakia before November 1989 must never happen again! With this motto Rusyns today stand side by side with Czechs, Slovaks, and other nationalities in our beloved fatherland—free Czechoslovakia. Indeed, all honest Rusyns are standing up, those living in the Beskyd mountains in our unfortunate Makovycia that has been so cherished, praised, and deplored by our national awakeners, as well as those dispersed by their Rusyn fate to live all over Czechoslovakia—from Aš in the far western tip of Bohemia to Čierna nad Tisou in the far southeastern corner of the country.

Rusyns, too, took part in the monumental protests and manifestations that marked our “velvet” November revolution. Rusyn voices were heard in Prague, Bratislava, Košice, and Prešov. Together with Slovaks and Czechs they proclaimed: “We want to return to Europe!” For forty-one years we, together with the other nationalities of our fatherland, were cut off from Europe. But our suffering began earlier in this century.

Actually, it began together with the Czechs immediately after the disintegration of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1938. Our Rusyn homeland entered the limelight and interests of the world powers for whom the Rusyns were little more than small change in their mutual dealings. The Carpatho-Rusyns, who had been the co-founders of the first Czechoslovak Republic, were now divided among several states. Nor did the post-war carving up of the map of Europe change anything in the division of our people. Hence, the present transition of our country in joining the ranks of the democratic states in Central Europe presents us with an opportunity to come to life again and to take up a respected place among the free nationalities of our fatherland—the new, democratic Czechoslovakia. To be ready for this renaissance, after so many years of social deformation, we must look back to the past and into our history in order to know what we should do and how we should shape our future.

We, the Rusyns of Czechoslovakia, declare ourselves kin to our East Slavic brethren—the Ukrainians, Russians, and Belorussians—but we do not identify ourselves with them. Our history is different because we were always geopolitically isolated from them. We belong to Central Europe where, alongside our West Slavic neighbors, the Slovaks, we survived a thousand years of Hungarian dominance. Together with the Slovaks, we remained Slavs—specifically Rusyns. We preserved our ancestral name, Rusyn, which we received from Kievan Rus’. We realize with great pride how we are part of the heritage of Cyril and Methodius, the Apostles to the Slavs and co-patrons of Europe, from whom we received Christianity a hundred years before Kievan Rus’ was baptized. Christianity was also spread among our ancestors from our neighbors the Daco-Romanians, who received it first from the Romans and in final form as part of Byzantine political and religious-cultural expansion. The Byzantine character of Christianity from Romania spread among our ancestors through the Vlach migration and colonization throughout the entire Carpathian range. Traces of this colonization are still found as far west as Válašské Meziříčí in Moravia.

Our ancestors provided refuge to their East Slavic brethren from the northern slopes of the Carpathians, from the principality of Galicia, when it was being oppressed and pillaged by the Tataro-Mongol hordes. Considerable support for our ancestors came in the fourteenth century with the arrival into the Hungarian Kingdom of Prince Fedor Koriatovych of Podolia and his entire retinue. The arrival from Podolia of our brethren, the Boikos, was a milestone in the history of our people, because in view of the circumstances prevailing in those times, the administrative, ecclesiastical, and cultural aspects of our ancestors’ life was improved substantially. Following the arrival of Prince Koriatovych south of the Carpathians, the Rusyns entered a centuries-long struggle for the preservation of their national identity. For Rusyns, a great support in this struggle was their Christian faith according to the Byzantine rite, which, thanks to its Church Slavonic liturgical language, was understandable to the people. The long-term proximity with the Catholic nations of Central Europe—the Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles—brought our ancestors into union with the Roman Church while at the same time preserving their Eastern rite and liturgical language. The possibility to draw from the spiritual culture of the western church and from the cultural heritage of neighboring peoples brought our own national enlighteners to the fore—Dukhnovych, Stavrov’skyi-Popradov, Luchkai, Mitrak, Dobrians’kyi. And led by the best representatives of our people, we Rusyns made a truly correct decision in 1918: we established, together with the Czechs and Slovaks, the first Czechoslovak Republic. The territory on which most of the Rusyns were living was designated by the Rusyn co-founders of this new Slavic state in the heart of Europe—Subcarpathian Rus’. In this way, Rusyns revealed that they were East Slavs whose common cradle was Kievan Rus’ of the grand duke Vladimir of the Rurykide dynasty. Through their loyalty to the spiritual heritage of Cyril and Methodius, the Apostles to all the Slavs, the Rusyns proved that even under difficult circumstances they were able to preserve their faith and rite in the form they had received it from the saintly brothers from Salonika.

By the time Subcarpathian Rus’ came into being, the Rusyns had their own literary language which they had perfected and in which Rusyn linguists and bellettrists like Luchkai, Dovhovych, Stavrov’skyi-Popradov, and Mitrak wrote. And so it seemed to all honest Rusyns that the words of challenge from the Rusyn national anthem would finally be realized: “Subcarpathian Rusyns, Arise from Your Deep Slumber....” Although Rusyns never had the opportunity for independence within the Hungarian Kingdom, they now hoped to gain for Subcarpathian Rus’ full autonomy, which would serve as a guarantee for the improvement of the social status of all classes.

The democratic character of the first Czechoslovak Republic offered a real hope that the yearning of Rusyns for life as a free distinct people would materialize. Nobody would have thought at the time that history would grant only twenty years for this free life. In retrospect, we must admit that in the first Czechoslovak Republic several errors were committed by the leadership of the young state. A shortsighted nationality policy was implemented concerning Rusyns. Part of this was related to humanitarian concerns, which allowed vast numbers of Ukrainians and Russian emigrés to settle within the Czechoslovak republic. These peoples sought ways to earn a living, and hence both groups were unleashed among the Rusyns whom they tried to attract to their respective sides. However, instead of a peaceful
development in a democratic state, the Rusyns were saddled with a language problem that split the people into Ukrainophiles and Russophiles. The Rusyn nation, which for centuries had preserved its unity, was suddenly split up into two parts. Instead of further developing and embellishing the heritage of its ancestors and enlighteners, foreign shepherds started like wolves to tear the nation asunder. And no one was able to foresee the tragic implications this would have for the fate of Carpathian Rus' as a whole. Although there were warning voices, especially among priests and respected scholars, no one could hear them above the heat of political passion.

In the meantime, the year 1938 was drawing near. Difficult times had arrived. The weak and cowardly leadership of the young Czechoslovak republic permitted the arbitrary actions of the great states of Europe to deprive two of the nationalities of Czechoslovakia—the Czechs and the Rusyns—of their independence. We Rusyns were divided among several states. This was the first division of Rusyns in modern history. But the spirit of Czechoslovak patriotism and the spirit of unity with the Czechs and Slovaks could not be easily extinguished and driven out of the Rusyns. Young Rusyns, who deep in their hearts realized the danger for all Slavs in the expansion of German and Hungarian fascism, searched for ways to get involved in the resistance against these old and new enemies of the Slavs. The whole world knows what a difficult path Rusyns were forced to follow in order to get weapons to fight against the common enemy. Rusyns were unable to join the resistance in the West. Hence, they sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Czechoslovakia as part of the resistance in the East. The gravestones at the cemetery near the Duklja Pass graphically reveal the nationality of the soldiers in the Czechoslovak Army Corps that was formed in the Soviet Union. In fact, the patriotism of the Rusyns drew them into the struggle already in the years 1939-1941. Only later did the other peoples of Czechoslovakia think of resistance, that is, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Fighting for the freedom of Czechoslovakia, the Rusyns would not have imagined even in their worst dreams that their destiny was decided already in December 1943, and later definitely sealed at Yalta. The victory over fascism brought neither freedom nor unification for the Rusyns. Instead, Rusyns continued to remain separated in the same way as they were separated by the Fascists. Only now it became evident whom the Ukrainianizers and Russifiers of the Rusyns actually served. With a single stroke of the pen, the bloodhounds of Stalin's nationality policy blotted out the Rusyns from history, declaring them Ukrainians. What the Hungarians could not achieve in a thousand years, Stalin's servants managed to accomplish in a few years and in some instances even in a few months or weeks. The tragedy of wiping out the Rusyns as a people is accentuated by the fact that this was committed by those whom they had welcomed as their liberators. And, regrettably, among those who joined them were traitors from within the nation itself, who in the process of eliminating Rusyns changed their wolves’ clothing from Russifiers to Ukrainianizers. These wolves in sheep’s skin contributed to the resettlement of their own people from Eastern Slovakia to Volhynia in the Soviet Ukraine, a region with which the Rusyns of Czechoslovakia never had any relation. The propagators of this campaign were not Slovaks, as now some people would have us believe. Rather, it was Ivan Rohal'-Il'kiv and people of his ilk who were well known to those Rusyns who had gotten a taste of Stalin’s so-called paradise in Volhynia and who after many difficult years finally got back to Czechoslovakia.

The postwar history of Rusyns within the second Czechoslovak Republic is actually the story of a nation divided between the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and Hungary. Because of this division the Rusyns became in a sense the Kurds of Central Europe. The only Rusyns not affected by the postwar slicing up of Europe were those in Yugoslavia. No wonder, then, that the Rusyns living there remained Rusyns and that until the present they have enjoyed the greatest freedom of their national life with no one compelling them to change their nationality. Thus, they created optimal relations with other nations and have not had to complain to the world to their own disgrace that other nations supposedly have assimilated them or that, heaven forbid, genocide was being committed against them.

On the other hand, in postwar Czechoslovakia, after the violent separation of Subcarpathian Rus', Rusyns were represented by the Ukrainian National Council, which was transformed into the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT). The activities of this organization have led to a situation in which the number of Rusyns has, according to the last Czechoslovak census in 1980, sunk to a mere 38,500 people. In contrast, back in 1910, more than 150,000 Rusyns lived on the same territory. Today, officials of the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers are proclaiming to the world that the fault for this situation lies with the Slovaks, who allegedly Slovakized the Rusyns. But we should look truth in the face and recall the Rusyn proverb: the mirror cannot be blamed if somebody has a crooked mug.

Today all honest people in Czechoslovakia know that it was the totalitarian dictatorship of a single party, the Communist party, that was responsible for all deformations in the last forty-one years. And the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers was a submissive servant of this party throughout the whole period. Now officials of KSUT are lamenting and yammering that the Greek Catholic Church should not have been liquidated, because it had been the only organization that defended the national life of the Rusyns and that gave the nation its best sons—the leading enlighteners and creators of the national revival.

And who liquidated the Greek Catholic Church? There can be only one answer: Czech and Slovak Communists assisted by Rusyn traitors of their own nation did this on Stalin’s orders. These are the very same people who are now running around in Ukrainian coats. Ironically, the children of these gentlemen, as a rule, declare themselves of Slovak nationality. Hence, we must honestly acknowledge that the greatest Slovakizers of the Rusyns were not Slovaks, but those Ukrainianizers who deprived the Rusyns of their nationality, their church, and their language.

Why did the Rusyns never feel ashamed of their nationality throughout the thousand years of Hungarian domination prior to 1918, and why did they suddenly start to be ashamed of it during the mere forty years of life in the Communist paradise? Even the Slovak state that existed during World War II was hardly favorable to Rusyns; yet Slovakization never reached such proportions as it did under the rule of the Communists.

The Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers became and remained the instrument for maintaining the leading role of the Communist party in Rusyn society. Therefore, it was suffi-
cient for corrupt pseudo-scholars like the Czech Zdeněk Nejedly and others like him to declare that there exist no Rusyns, only Ukrainians. The Ukrainian National Council and its successor KSUT immediately committed themselves to turning this statement into reality. The Rusyns had their own language, grammar, and literature, but all this was declared imperfect. Instead, the language of the Rusyns was labelled scornfully by philologists working for the Communist regime as a macaronic jargon (jazycke).

It is with great sorrow and shame that we have to acknowledge before the world that all this was perpetrated not only by Slovak and Czech Communists, but primarily by traitors from among our own people. And why then should we Rusyns be surprised or angry at other peoples if everybody in Czechoslovakia considers us country bumpkins? Does a nation so easily deprived of everything—its nationality, faith, and language—deserve to be treated otherwise? Everything was taken away from us. All that was left to us was “culture” in the form of folkloric festivals in our mountains and, in addition, we were allowed to pursue the most difficult industrial work in weekly shifts at the Ostrava-Karviná mines in Moravia and at the iron works in nearby Košice. These two aspects of life that were permitted to us feature in the very name of KSUT—the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers.

The policy toward Rusyns was carried out all this time by political creatures who were not even capable of properly sewing a pair of trousers. [Vasyľ Bilak, former member of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist party, was a tailor by profession.] Such functionaries in the totalitarian dictatorship were able to attain the highest posts in the state, because it was advantageous for both the Czech and the Slovak Communists to shift responsibility for all errors of the former regime to these so-called “politicians.” This, in fact, as everybody knows, is what actually happened. It’s no wonder, then, that during the November 1989 revolution malicious cries such as the following were heard: Rule under Vasyľs has finally come to an end! [Vasyľ is a popular first name associated with Rusyns, the most infamous of whom is the Communist leader, Vasyľ Bilak]. In seeking an answer to this problem, we must face the truth and find in ourselves enough inner strength to identify those who were responsible for creating such a situation, regardless if they come primarily from among our own Rusyn ranks or from elsewhere. We will not solve the problem of the present situation of our people by blaming the entire Slovak nation for the downfall of the Rusyns.

All of Czechoslovak society is going through a renaissance. And do not the Rusyns in Czechoslovakia need this renaissance most of all? If now, under conditions of democracy, the Rusyns will not revive, then the Rusyn character will perish completely in this country. This sad statement is the result of the fact that in the course of forty years the Ukrainian language, which is alien to Rusyns, has been forced upon them, although only for the benefit of a handful of people. For the majority of Rusyns, this language was good for nothing. In effect, the school system became a family enterprise for corrupt Ukrainianizers.

Hence we, members of the Christian Democratic Movement for the Renaissance of Rusyns, located in Bratislava, have approved of this Manifesto at our founding meeting held on December 30, 1989, and we call upon all honest Rusyns in Czechoslovakia—including those who in the past declared themselves Slovaks, as well as those who voluntarily registered themselves as Ukrainians in order to avoid becoming Slovak—to support the following demands and goals:

1. We demand the official rehabilitation of the Rusyn nationality; this means that everyone declaring himself or herself a Rusyn should have this nationality registered in his identity card.

2. We demand the reorganization of the school system so that, following the example of Switzerland, our children in elementary schools may receive obligatory education in their mother tongue for at least five years concurrently with instruction in the Slovak language. From the sixth year onward, parents will have the choice to decide in which language their children should continue their studies. Ukrainian high schools should remain, but only for those who wish to seek their livelihood elsewhere.

3. We demand that the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT), as a product of Stalinist nationality policy, should dissolve itself, and that, instead, the Rusyn language and culture should be cultivated by a new Matica Rusynska, following the example of the Matica Slovenská, whose bylaws, as is known, have also been issued in the Rusyn language.

4. We demand a full restoration of freedom and rights for the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, which for centuries has been concerned with the spiritual life of our people. We demand that all buildings be returned to our Church, so that it can continue its mission without obstacles.

5. We demand that the newspaper Nove Zyttyja (New Life) be given again its original name, Ruske slovo (The Rusyn Word), and that it be published in the language of our people. This also applies to the monthly magazine, Duklia. An example for us could be the press of our brethren, the Rusyns in Yugoslavia, where, for instance, articles in the journal Nova dumka are published in three languages: Rusyn, Ukrainian, and Croatian. For us, instead of Croatian, the third language could be Slovak, so as to enable our Slovak brothers to read our press and contribute to it.

6. We demand that the dominant role of Communists in public organizations which represent Rusyns in Czechoslovakia be brought to an end.

7. We call upon Christian-minded Rusyns to rally around branches of the Christian Democratic Movement for the Renaissance of Rusyns, so that Rusyns will finally be represented by a political force that would enjoy the real support of the Rusyn community. Thus, we could cooperate with the Christian Democratic Movement throughout Czechoslovakia in the spirit of brotherly Christian love and ecumenism, while at the same time preserving our Rusyn identity.

8. We hold out a hand of friendship to all Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia who sincerely feel themselves to be part of our great brother—the Ukrainian nation north of the Carpathians. We consider as Rusyns all those who registered themselves as Ukrainians at a time when the Rusyn nationality could not be registered otherwise.

9. We welcome all endeavours toward the renaissance of Rusyns in countries adjacent to our Czechoslovak fatherland. We want to improve contacts with representatives of our people in those countries.
welcome among us all of our brothers who are struggling for the renewal of our people in their respective countries.

10. We call upon all other national minorities in Czechoslovakia to gather together in an association for the protection of the interests of national minorities in Czechoslovakia. Then we could seek ways for cooperating with similar associations in other countries of Europe. Such a pan-European union of national minorities would best represent, in our view, the interests of all minorities in the individual countries of the common European home to which we belong.

11. We proclaim a competition for the creation of a coat of arms and flag for the Rusyns of Czechoslovakia, which would mirror the history of our people as well as the spiritual unity with Rusyns in other countries of Europe and other parts of the world.

The Initiators and Founders of the Christian Democratic Movement for the Renaissance of Rusyns in Czechoslovakia, Ivan Bycko, Chairman

REVOLUTION OF 1989 UPDATE

Events have continued to move rapidly in East Central Europe during the first few months of 1990. The changes are affecting Carpatho-Rusyns as well, in particular those living within the borders of Czechoslovakia (Prešov Region) and the Soviet Union (Subcarpathian Rus'/Transcarpathia). For background information, consult the article, “The Revolution of 1989,” in the last issue of the C-RA, Vol. XII, No. 4, 1989. The following are some of the events that have occurred since that article was prepared in late January.

Prešov, Czechoslovakia. On January 20, 1990, the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT) ceased to exist. It had been established by the Communist authorities back in 1951 in order to promote the Ukrainian national orientation and Ukrainian language and culture among the Carpatho-Rusyns of Czechoslovakia. KSUT’s members, influenced by the radically changed political atmosphere in Czechoslovakia, realized that any association with the country’s Communist past would make further work among the Rusyn populace impossible. Thus, at the January 20 convention in Prešov, a new organization was established, the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia (Sojuz Rusyniv-Ukrajinciv Čechoslovakčyny—SRUCH), headed by the folklorist Mychajlo Hyrjak.

The new organization’s goals are to participate in the political and economic transformation of Czechoslovakia; to preserve the cultural monuments of the Rusyn-inhabited Prešov Region; to promote cooperation and tolerance between Orthodox and Greek Catholics; to maintain contacts with Ukrainian organizations throughout the world; and to promote the Ukrainian language in schools. The SRUCH organization is dominated by cultural functionaries, most of whom were active during the last twenty years of Communist rule, and who believe that, despite certain distinctive characteristics, Rusyns are part of the Ukrainian nationality.

Prešov, Czechoslovakia. The decision of January 20, 1990, to liquidate the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT) raised the question of what to call the new organization. Participants at the Prešov convention realized that the “old ways” would not do anymore and knew that the name Rusyn must somehow be “rehabilitated.” Dr. Mykola Musynka provided the justification for the organization’s new name in an article published January 26 in Nove žytja, “Who are We?” Should the name for the new organization—and therefore for the group as a whole—be Rusyn-Ukrainian, or Ukrainian-Rusyn, or Rusyns and Ukrainians, or simply Rusyn? Dr. Musynka concluded: “We are Rusyn-Ukrainians; however, we do not forbid anyone from considering himself only a Rusyn or only a Ukrainian. Since there is no Rusyn literary language, we must use the Ukrainian literary language, bringing it as close as possible to our rich dialects which we must use with pride.”

The position of the new Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia (SRUCH) regarding the national name and orientation caused great dissatisfaction among the Rusyn public at large, which in the democratic conditions of present-day Czechoslovakia can now speak out openly. On February 16, Nove žytja published on its front page an article by Jelyzaveta Mižlíčko, “Let’s Listen to the Heart.”

I belong to the older generation and I am writing you as only I know how. I want to say that I read with interest Nove žytja and I am overjoyed that our nationality question is beginning to be resolved. Still there is one thing I don’t understand: Why do those ‘scholars’ philosophize so much about this! I am a former teacher and have lived many years among the...
Rusyn people near Bardejov and the Duklja Pass. I am a witness to the fact that our people proclaim: 'We are Rusyns'. They carry that conviction deep in their hearts. Therefore, I wish to comment on the article of Dr. Mušynka, 'Who Are We,' which appeared in Nove žytija.

His 'wisdom' does not do anyone any good; his historical references going back to the tenth century are not relevant. Also the example of 'two brothers' is illogical. To say that 'Rusyns and Ukrainians in our context form one nationality' is incorrect. A Rusyn is a Rusyn, and a Ukrainian is a Ukrainian, just as a Slovak or Czech is not a Czecho-Slovak, so is a Rusyn or a Ukrainian not a Rusyn-Ukrainian. You can't dance in the guise of two nationalities, because the people don't like it and will get nothing from it. Instead, you should listen to the heartbeat of Makovycja, the Beskyds, and our other [Rusyn-inhabited] regions—and not that of Kiev. Perhaps the conjunction 'and' (i.e. Rusyns and Ukrainians), which Mr. Mušynka does not want to allow, will in fact bring satisfaction and trust to our people as well as reveal a greater number of Rusyns than Ukrainians in [this year's] census.

Doesn't the Laborec or Snina region have its own beautiful Rusyn speech? It could easily represent the cultural life of our people. I know from reading Nove žytija that the first steps in this direction have already been made by young priests with great initiative in the Laborec region. Philosophers [the ironic term for scholars] and writers, write your works in Rusyn, build our culture in Rusyn! Then we won't need, as Mr. Mušynka says, 'to use the Ukrainian literary language'.

Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia. Several cultural activists from this small Rusyn town who were present at the January 20 meeting in Prešov that created the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia (SRUCH) expressed great displeasure with the orientation of the new organization. Their point of view was summed up by Volodymyr Roháč from Njagov (a village near Medzilaborce) in his speech at the January 20 Prešov convention:

We live among the people and hear what they demand: 'We want Rusyn books, Rusyn newspapers, Rusyn schools...'

History teaches that he who does not listen to the voice of the people will fail.

To give Rusyn books, newspapers, and schools to the people means to codify the Rusyn language. For us Rusyns, the Rusyn speech is not comical, we are not ashamed of it! We want our own Rusyn literary language.

The Rusyns of Yugoslavia have not disappeared thanks to the fact that they codified their language. And there are only 30,000 of them...

We need capable, intelligent people, people to codify the Rusyn language. Until now very little has been done. We turn, therefore, to you, our scholars, philologists, and teachers. Codify the Rusyn language! If you will not do that for your people, Rusyns will become Slovaks, because our people say they never were and never will be Ukrainians and that they do not understand the Ukrainian language. They don't want something foreign, but their own. (From the Holos rusyniv page in Nove žytija, February 2, 1980)

In response to the voice of the people, cultural activists from Medzilaborce returning from the January 20 Prešov convention decided to create an Initiative Group for the Renaissance of Rusyns. Among the demands of the Initiative Group are the following: (1) to guarantee in the Czecho-Slovak constitution the status of a distinct nationality for Rusyns; (2) to create a Rusyn literary language and then make it a required subject in the first five classes of elementary school, after which parents could decide whether they want the Ukrainian language for upper grades; and (3) to join in the federal party for Czecho-Slovak minorities in order to defend Rusyn political interests.

Prešov, Czechoslovakia. On February 2, 1990, the newspaper Nove žytija, formerly published by the Cultural Union of Ukrainian Workers (KSUT), but now published by the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia (SRUCH), began to include a special section, Holos rusyniv (The Voice of the Rusyns) in the Rusyn language.

In the words of the opening article, "The People's Spirit has Triumphed," by Nove žytija's new editor, Oleksandr Zozuljak:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Rusyns! I am very happy that after several years I can speak to you in our newspaper and in our own language. The somewhat older folks still remember how in Nove žytija there was a page written in dialect that they loved to read, and when it stopped appearing [circa 1972] they were very upset... .

The blame for this goes to those people who forcibly Ukrainianized the Rusyns. Even more blame goes to the [Communist] party and government, which overnight forcibly outlawed the Greek Catholic faith, changed our nationality from Rusyn to Ukrainian, and decided to set up Ukrainian schools even though our people were not ready for this. And still today they have not convinced everyone that was the way it had to be. No, you don't have to teach our people who they are. They know that they were and will remain Rusyns.

A KSUT or SRUCH cultural activist addresses the audience: I wanted to tell you the truth...but I forgot which one!
GREETINGS FROM THE CARPATHO-RUSYN RESEARCH CENTER

Mr. Václav Havel, President
Prague, Czechoslovakia

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Carpatho-Rusyn (Ruthenian) community in the United States, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center sends its warmest greetings to you on the occasion of your elevation to the office of president of Czechoslovakia. It was with great joy that we learned of your election to the presidency, because we know that your presence marks a return to the great democratic tradition of your predecessor, the founding president Tomáš G. Masaryk.

Carpatho-Rusyns in America, who with their descendants now number nearly 700,000, have had a long tradition of close ties to Czechoslovakia. It was, after all, our leaders under the direction of Gregory Žatkovič, who in 1918-1919 negotiated with President Woodrow Wilson and future president Masaryk and who raised for the first time the possibility that Rusyns living south of the Carpathians might join the Czechs and Slovaks in their new state. This actually happened and our community followed with great interest the fate of its countrymen in Subcarpathian Rus’ (Podkarpatska Rus) during the first Czechoslovak republic.

Alas, ever since 1939, Rusyns in America have because of war and political changes been effectively cut off from their brethren in the European homeland. Nonetheless, we have remained deeply concerned with the situation of our people in the Prešov Region of northeastern Slovakia, where because of undemocratic administrative policies initiated after 1948 they were for many years deprived of their Greek Catholic Church and the possibility to express themselves in their own local Rusyn vernacular. One result of this was a rapid decline in their numbers (or their inability to identify openly as Rusyns) from 91,000 in 1930 to only 30,000 in 1980.

We are convinced that with the recent political changes in Czechoslovakia that are taking place under your humani­
tarian leadership, the Rusyns of Czechoslovakia will also be able to develop freely in an open pluralistic environment.

On behalf of Carpatho-Rusyn Americans and all people of good will we wish you all the best in the recreation of a democratic Czechoslovakia.

7 February 1990

Mr. Oleksandr Zozuljak, Chairman
The Initiative Group of Rusyn-Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia
Prešov, Czechoslovakia

Dear Mr. Zozuljak:

On behalf of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, its 6,000 supporters, and the entire Rusyn-American community which numbers today 700,000 persons, we convey to you every best wish during the revolutionary changes that are taking place within Czechoslovakia. We learned with great interest about the formation in Prešov on November 27, 1989, of the Initiative Group of Rusyn-Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia and about its intention to restore pride in the language, culture, history, and religious traditions of our Rusyn people.

We, your brethren in the United States, are convinced that beginning in the early 1950s, the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church (restored only in 1968) and the forced implementation of Ukrainian cultural policy were major factors contributing to the rapid decline in the number of our people and their tendency to assimilate with Slovaks. We witnessed the efforts during the unfortunately brief Prague Spring of 1968 to reinstitute a Rusyn cultural policy in Czechoslovakia and were dismayed how these attempts at positive change were crushed.

We trust that with this experience, the Initiative Group will not repeat the mistakes of the past and that it will be concerned primarily with promoting knowledge specifically of the Rusyn culture of the Prešov and Carpathian region. In this regard, we urge you to respond to the voice of the people expressed in 1968 and now once again in 1989-1990: to standardize the Rusyn vernacular and to introduce it into the press, radio, theater, and most importantly, into elementary schools. Rusyns have Duchnovyč, Pavlovyč, Dobrians’kyj and other cultural figures from the twentieth century of which to be proud. They need to know about themselves and do not need to depend on the achievements of neighboring peoples, whether Ukrainians, Slovaks, or Czechs.

Respect for others must begin with respect for oneself. Respect for oneself demands first a knowledge of oneself. We trust that you and your colleagues will keep this in mind and be ready to act according to the precept of our great national awakener, Aleksander Duchnovyč. Ja Rusyn byl, jesm i budu.

11 February 1990

OUR FRONT COVER

Political cartoon by Michal Bycko, cultural activist from Medzilaborce, published in Nove životja (January 26, 1990).
The bishop discussed with Havel of the arts and crafts of a number of Slavic peoples, in-Kapitanoff, the festival included exhibit booths and displays coordinated and moderated by Professor Lorraine T. Pennsylvania State University's Department of Slavic Languages and the Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society sponsored the Twelfth Annual Penn State Slavic Folk Festival. Described and moderated by Professor Lorraine T. Kapitanoff, the festival included exhibit booths and displays of the arts and crafts of a number of Slavic peoples, including Carpatho-Rusyns. Featured during the course of the festival were demonstrations of the art of pysanky, Slovak weaving, Belorussian straw encrustation, and a Slavic ethnic food bar. A number of song and dance ensembles performed at the festival, and books, souvenirs, pysanky decorating

**Recent Events**

**New York, New York.** On February 22, 1990, Bishop Nicholas Smisko of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church met with President Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia. Bishop Smisko was the only Rusyn-American to meet with President Havel during his well-publicized state visit to the United States. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Bishop Smisko later reported how he greeted the popular Czechoslovak leader "with the words 'Slava Isusu Christu' and began to talk to him in our Rusyn tongue. He seemed delighted that I could speak to him in the language of our people."

The bishop discussed with Havel the situation of the Orthodox and Greek Catholics in eastern Slovakia and "finally I expressed that the Rusyn people of the region be allowed to perpetuate their own unique identity."

**State College, Pennsylvania.** On March 23-25, 1990, Pennsylvania State University’s Department of Slavic Languages and the Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society sponsored the Twelfth Annual Penn State Slavic Folk Festival. Coordinated and moderated by Professor Lorraine T. Kapitanoff, the festival included exhibit booths and displays of the arts and crafts of a number of Slavic peoples, including Carpatho-Rusyns. Featured during the course of the festival were demonstrations of the art of pysanky, Slovak weaving, Belorussian straw encrustation, and a Slavic ethnic food bar. A number of song and dance ensembles performed at the festival, and books, souvenirs, pysanky decorating...
supplies, and various crafts were available for purchase. Polka music for dancing was offered Friday and Saturday nights.

Students from the Byzantine Catholic Student Ministry of Penn State under the leadership of Richard Custer, a junior at the university, organized a display of Carpatho-Rusyn artifacts and distributed literature, including information about recent developments in the Rusyn homeland. The display was staffed by Richard Custer, Lisa Cognata, Keith Koshute, Roseanne Freese, Laura Bulazo, and Dave Felix, and it contained items from the personal collections of the staff, as well as from Jerry Jumba and John Kelnock. Books from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center were on display and were available for purchase. During the festival a Divine Liturgy in Old Church Slavonic was celebrated in the Eisenhower Chapel on the university campus. Guest cantor John Kelnock of Marion Heights, Pennsylvania, sang the traditional Carpatho-Rusyn Slavonic plainchant (protopopini-je). The festival administration has announced that the Thirteenth Annual Penn State Slavic Folk Festival is scheduled for April 5-7, 1991.

**Johnstown, Pennsylvania.** On March 24, 1990, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center was represented at the Fifth Annual University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (UPJ) Ethnic Festival. Books and other publications from the C-RRC were displayed and offered for sale as part of a Carpatho-Rusyn exhibit organized by Keith Koshute of Windber, Pennsylvania with the assistance of Dave Felix of Johnstown. Cultural items from the collections of Jerry Jumba and Keith Koshute were also exhibited. Among the items displayed were icons, Rusyn costumes, pysanky, embroideries from Subcarpathian Rus', and books borrowed from the Penn State library. Videos relating to Carpatho-Rusyns were shown at the booth throughout the day, and informational flyers were distributed to festival visitors. Keith and Dave answered numerous questions about Carpatho-Rusyn history and culture.

Carpatho-Rusyn churches from the area also participated in the festival. The Carpatho-Russian Folk Dancers of Christ the Saviour Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Cathedral (Johnstown Diocese) performed. The Cathedral also staffed a religious and ethnic display and were available for purchase. During the festival a Divine Liturgy in Old Church Slavonic was celebrated in the Eisenhower Chapel on the university campus. Guest cantor John Kelnock of Marion Heights, Pennsylvania, sang the traditional Carpatho-Rusyn Slavonic plainchant (protopopini-je). The festival administration has announced that the Thirteenth Annual Penn State Slavic Folk Festival is scheduled for April 5-7, 1991.

**Cambridge, England.** On April 21, 1990, Professor Christopher Hann of the Department of Anthropology, Cambridge University, spoke at a conference on Poland: Cultural, Economic, and Political Perspectives for the 1990s. His topic was “Ethnicity in the New Civil Society: the Lemko Case.” Professor Hann is the author of a recent important book, *A Village Without Solidarity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), that describes in great detail a Carpathian village after its Lemko inhabitants were removed in 1947 and replaced by Poles.

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.** On April 21, 1990, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center held its annual meeting at the University of Pittsburgh. Ten members of the C-RRC advisory board were joined by several observers from the Pittsburgh area, as well as by the Rusyn deputy from the Slovak Parliament in Bratislava, Ivan Bycko. At a reception following the annual meeting, Rusyn religious and cultural leaders, including Metropolitan Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko, Dr. Michal Turok-Hetěš of Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia, John Warhola of the Andy Warhol Foundation, and Andrew Zeedick of the University of Pittsburgh's Russian Nationality Room met with C-RRC advisory board members.

![C-RRC Advisory Board meets with Deputy Ivan Bycko.](image-url)
Carpatho-Rusyn American
P.O. Box 227
Cambridge, MN 55008