FROM THE EDITOR AND ASSOCIATE EDITOR

With summer 1990, we have accomplished our fiftieth issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American. Like our recent tenth-year anniversary celebration of the C-RA and the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center in 1988, this landmark issue now provides another brief moment for reflection. In our opening issue in the spring of 1978 we reached out to potential subscribers—scholars, students, churches, and fraternals. We not only encountered their interest in exploring Carpatho-Rusyn ethnic identity both in immigration and in the homeland, but we also discovered a virtual hunger for information.

Other publications have gone before us. A few continue through the present, the majority representing exclusively one or another religious denominational faction of Rusyns, or else encouraging Rusyns to espouse some non-Rusyn identity. Amid these other publications, the C-RA has consistently placed more value on an accurate and well-informed approach to ethnic identity substantiated by observable evidence than on an emotional perception of ethnicity. Furthermore, the C-RA has remained the only publication which has taken the risk of crossing over denominational barriers. Likewise, the C-RRC has sponsored symposia that have boldly brought together Rusyns representing different denominations for frank and open talk about historical events which have factionalized the Rusyn community. Both the C-RA and the C-RRC are concerned about how we might come to terms with the outcome of these events in order to preserve and celebrate our common ethnic heritage.

Recent increased Rusyn activity in the European homeland has also been given serious consideration on the pages of the C-RA. When we produced the first issue in 1978, we never imagined that within a fiftieth issue we would be presenting a column on the east European revolution in which Rusyns were participating in a renewal of their language, culture, and society at large. We never could have imagined that the C-RRC would be corresponding with Rusyn activists in the various countries encompassing our homeland, receiving their requests for support, facilitating their voice in the outside world, rebuilding bridges which many had thought were broken forever. In recent years, members of the C-RRC have met with Rusyns in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union (see GREETINGS in this and the last issue of the C-RA). New ties have been established and old ties have been strengthened. These should prove to be fruitful for us and for our brothers and sisters in the homeland.

You, our readers, have shared your comments and stories with us over the past 50 issues. Many of you joined us at the beginning or at some point along our exhilarating journey and have stayed the course with us through the present. For this we thank you. You have encouraged us by telling us that you found the information offered by our numerous writers and contributors useful and interesting. By reading the C-RA, by writing to us, calling us, and meeting us, you yourselves have helped to shape our publication. And since our publication is also read by Rusyns in the homeland, you have helped to communicate with them, as well. By supporting the C-RA and by becoming a Friend of the C-RRC, you have given life and shape to realistic cultural expectations in our future. Let us confidently reach out to our younger generations and let them be involved now with the empowering knowledge that they have a place in the network of co-workers who labor to promote the growth and sharing of Carpatho-Rusyn culture.

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

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JOHN SOPINKA

For decades Horatio Alger had been the symbol of success in American life. Alger himself was a nineteenth-century author who wrote many books about boys born into poverty and who—as the saying goes—pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps to set out upon a path of hard work and self-restraint. Their reward was a life marked by great financial success and personal happiness. Such "Horatio Alger stories" set the tone for future generations of young persons in search of fulfillment of their American dream. In other words, it did not matter how humble or poor your background, if you set your mind to something and worked hard, anything was possible in America.

Whereas seemingly impossible dreams may have been fulfilled on numerous occasions during the growth and expansion of the American economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such rapid rises from "rags to riches" have seemed less possible in the decades since World War II. If they do occur, they often take several generations, so that it is not the children of the immigrants who have come to the United States, but rather their grandchildren or great-grandchildren that are able to make their mark in society.

Perhaps because Canada is a younger country, the Horatio Alger pattern is still possible during the second half of the twentieth century. It certainly seems to have worked for one individual—John Sopinka. The son of poverty-stricken immigrants who came from a poor Lemko-Rusyn village in the Carpathian Mountains, the young Sopinka, through his energy and perseverance, was within one generation able to rise to the highest level in his chosen profession of law. In May 1988, John Sopinka was appointed a justice to the highest court in his native land, the Supreme Court of Canada.

John’s parents, Anastasia nee Kikcio and Metro Sopinka, were born in the late nineteenth century in the neighboring Carpatho-Rusyn villages of Wśibok Dolny (Vysloky Nyznyj) and Wisłok Wielki (Vysloky Velykyj) in the Lemko Region, which at the time was within the province of Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Sopinka family shared the complicated and often tragic fate of many Lemko Rusyns. Under the influence of local priests, the village of John’s father, Wisłok Wielki, accepted a Russian national orientation, while the village of his mother, Wśibok Dolny, a Ukrainian one. This was to have serious consequences when World War I broke out in the summer of 1914.

The tsarist Russian army overran much of Galicia already in September 1914. The retreating Austrian troops arrested John’s paternal grandfather, charged him with being a Russian spy, and deported him with hundreds of other Lemkos to the detention camp at Talerhof in Austria (near Graz), where he died of typhus the following year. When the tsarist army was driven out of Galicia in the spring of 1915, John’s father, Metro, was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army and served on the Russian front, mostly in the western Ukraine, where he became a prisoner-of-war. He was unable to return to his native village until nearly two years after the war had ended, that is in 1920, when the Lemko Region together with all of Galicia was forcibly incorporated into the restored state of Poland.

After getting married in 1921, Metro Sopinka, like thousands of other Lemkos, hoped to improve his young family’s finances by working a few years in the New World. Since after 1924, access to the United States was effectively cut off because of restrictions against immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, Sopinka went instead to Canada. He arrived there in 1926 to work on his uncle’s farm in the fertile plains of Saskatchewan. In the end, he decided not to return home, and three years later his wife and their two oldest children followed him to Canada. The Sopinkas worked Saskatchewan’s rich farm land during the 1930s, and it was there, in the small town of Broderick, that their fourth child John was born on March 19, 1933. John spent only his youngest years in the midwest, because in 1941 the Sopinka family moved eastward in search of better employment, settling in the industrial town of Hamilton, Ontario—the Pittsburgh of Canada.

After completing his elementary and high school education in Hamilton, John Sopinka graduated from the University of Toronto, where he received a B.A. in 1944 and a law degree in 1958. Besides study, John was so talented a football player at the university that he was drafted to play professionally as a halfback for the Toronto Argonauts in the Canadian Football League (1955-1958). He successfully completed his bar requirements in 1960 and began law practice in Toronto.

Since that time, Sopinka has had a distinguished career as a defense attorney. He acted successfully on behalf of such clients as the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Bell Canada, the Canadian Football League, and the Prime Minister of the Bahamas. He reached Canadian national prominence in 1983, when he defended the nurse, Susan Nelles, wrongfully accused of contributing to the deaths of several infants in a Toronto hospital. Since 1965, Sopinka has lectured to law students at several Canadian institutions, including the distinguished Osgoode Hall Law School (1974-1982) and the University of Toronto Law School (1976-1984). His expertise has reached even larger audiences through his publications, including the book, The Trial of an Action (1981), and another work of which he is co-author, The Law of Evidence in Civil Cases (1974). Considering these professional achievements, it is not surprising that in 1988,
when an opening presented itself, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed John Sopinka to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Honorable Justice Sopinka has always been conscious of his ethnic origins. Both his parents spoke at home their native Lemko-Rusyn dialect; and although the Ukrainian community in Canada is a well-organized one, as a youth John never participated in its activities, feeling always somehow different. In response to the request for a biography for the Carpatho-Rusyn American and to our gift of the volume Our People, Justice Sopinka commented: “I will read with interest and some amazement the background to a people that I thought were quite forgotten.” No, Mr. Justice, the Carpatho-Rusyns in North America are not forgotten, nor have they forgotten you.

Philip Michaels

**REVOLUTION OF 1989 UPDATE**

**Ternopil’, USSR.** On January 20, 1990, a branch of the Lemkivščyna Society was established in the town of Ternopil’, located in the far eastern section of the historic province of Galicia which since 1945 has been part of the Ukrainian S.S.R. The Lemkivščyna Society was established on April 1, 1989, in L’viv to serve those Lemkos who were resettled eastward to the Soviet Ukraine just after the end of World War II (see the C.RA, Vol. XII, No. 1). Unlike the central L’viv branch of the Lemkivščyna Society, which under the leadership of Petro Kohutov and Ivan Krasovs’kyj has adopted a determined Ukrainian orientation, the new Ternopil’ branch is still in the process of searching for an appropriate national orientation. At the founding meeting, the Lemko writer Vasył’ Petrovaj, author of the Russian-language novel Rusiny (Moscow, 1987) who is now working on a Rusyn language dictionary, called for a “return to the people of their own literary language.” Volodymyr Barna was chosen head of the Ternopil’ branch of the Lemkivščyna Society.

**Warsaw, Poland.** In February 1990, the Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society (USKT), which for nearly four decades of Communist rule had served the cultural needs of Ukrainians in Poland, was replaced by a new organization: the Union of Ukrainians in Poland (Ob’jednannja Ukraininčiv Pol’sči—OUP). The new organization reported that Ukrainian-language schools have been set up in 9 villages in the Lemko Region, serving at present 180 pupils. The cost of Ukrainian books, audio-visual aids, and other teaching materials is being covered by the Ukrainian Social Service in Toronto, Canada and the Lemko Aid Committee in Detroit, Michigan.

**Prešov, Czechoslovakia.** Mychajlo Popovyč, long-time inspector for Ukrainian-language schools throughout the Prešov Region, has admitted the following in an article published in Nove žyttja (February 16, 1990). A survey conducted in 1987 by the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Rusyn villages revealed that the policy initiated in the 1960s of giving the parents “the right to choose the language of instruction in their elementary schools . . . led to a decline in the number of Ukrainian-language schools.” This is because only 24.2 percent of Rusys (known officially as Ukrainians) considered Ukrainian their native language; while 59.1 percent responded that Rusyn was their native language. Moreover, even among those “who said they spoke Ukrainian well did not consider it but rather Rusyn as their native language.” Popovyč also called for a revision of textbooks for local schools in which Ukrainian writers and history should be replaced by Rusyn authors and local history.

**Prešov, Czechoslovakia.** On February 17, 1990, Msgr. Ján Hirka was consecrated bishop of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Prešov. Responding quickly to the political changes following the November “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia, on December 21, 1989, the Vatican appointed three bishops for the former Communist country. Although the Greek Catholic church had been legalized in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring of 1968, it did not have a bishop. Msgr. Hirka served as the eparchy’s administrator since early 1969.

The episcopal consecration was a historic event. Four cardinals, 40 archbishops and bishops, nearly 400 priests and monks, and an estimated 30,000 faithful crowded in and around Prešov’s indoor sports arena where the event was held. Czechoslovak television broadcast the full three-hour ceremony live throughout the country.

The Greek Catholic Eparchy of Prešov was established in 1816, at which time it was separated from the Eparchy of Mukachevo. Since its founding, every bishop of the Prešov Eparchy has been of Rusyn background. Bishop Hirka is the first bishop of Slovak background. Having the right to choose his consecrators, bishop-elect Hirka invited the Slovak Cardinal Josef Tomko from Rome and Bishop Michael Rusnak of the Slovak Byzantine Catholic Church of Canada to perform the consecration. Thus, he passed over Bishop Ivan Segedi from the mother Eparchy of Mukachevo and Metropolitan Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko of Pittsburgh, the senior hierarch representing the Greek Catholic church jurisdiction deriving from territory south of the Carpathians.

Nonetheless, the Rusyn aspect of the region’s Greek Catholic heritage was emphasized during a special liturgy held the evening before (February 16) in the cathedral church of Prešov led by Metropolitan Kocisko and three Byzantine Ruthenian bishops from the United States: Michael J. Dudick, John M. Bilock, and Thomas V. Dolinay. The Rusyn-American hierarchical delegation was accompanied by 40 priests and faithful, who were greeted by local Rusyqs led by Ivan Bycko, a Rusyn deputy in the Slovak parliament. The presence of the American delegation made an enormously positive impact on the local populace, and together they transformed the Friday evening liturgy at the Prešov Cathedral into a Rusyn spiritual and cultural event.

**Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia.** Dismayed by what it considers the continued Ukrainian orientation of the Prešov-based Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia (SRUCH), the Initiative Group for the Renaissance of
Rusyns met in Medzilaborce on March 25 to found a new organization, the Rusyn Renaissance (Rusyn's'ka Obroda). The organization was formed by combining branches of the Initiative Group from Svidnik, Humenné, Snina, and Košice as well as from Medzilaborce.

The gathering attended by over 200 delegates opened with a speech by Slovakia's parliamentary deputy for the Medzilaborce district, Ivan Bycko. Those present also accepted the ideas of the Manifesto of Carpatho-Rusyns of Czechoslovakia issued by Deputy Bycko on December 30, 1989 (see the full text in the C-RA Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1990).

The new organization, Rusyn Renaissance, has as its primary goal to raise the cultural life and educational system of Rusyns and to instill in them pride in their distinct Rusyn nationality. All speakers at the Medzilaborce founding meeting denounced the Ukrainianization policies of the past four decades under Communist rule.

The Rusyn Renaissance has formulated the following goals: (1) that Greek Catholic and Orthodox liturgies be conducted in Church Slavonic, but the homily, Epistles, and Gospels in Rusyn; (2) that the Ukrainian National Theater in Prešov and Ukrainian Museum in Svidnik change their names to Rusyn; (3) that the weekly Nove žyttja and monthly Dukľa change their names and be published largely in Rusyn; (4) that the SRUCH organization in Prešov change its name from the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians to the Union of Rusyns and Ukrainians; (5) that the Rusyn language be codified and introduced as the language of instruction in schools; and (6) that the upcoming 1990 census include a separate statistical category for Rusyn that is distinct from Ukrainian.

Užhorod, Soviet Union. On February 17, 1990, under a banner with the Rusyn coat of arms and the words of Duchnovyč, “Ja Rusyn byl, jsem y budu,” the chief architect for the city of Užhorod, Mychajlo Tomčanij, was elected chairman of a new organization, the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns (Tovarystvo Karpats'kych Rusyniv). This is the first time since 1945, when the Soviet Union annexed historic Subcarpathian Rus' (Transcarpathia), that any organization calling itself Rusyn has come into being on Soviet territory.

In a letter to the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center (dated April 9, 1990), the 30-year-old Tomčanij wrote:

With great pleasure we wish to inform you that on February 17 in Užhorod a founding meeting for the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns took place, at which time the statutes and governing officers were unanimously proclaimed by those present.

Our society is a cultural-civic organization, whose basic goal is the rebirth of our history, culture, language, traditions, and distinct name Rusyn.

In its official statement to the local Transcarpathian press, Tomčanij declared that the “aim of our society is to transform Transcarpathia into an ecologically clean nuclear-free zone; to oppose all manifestations of chauvinistic nationalism in whatever form; to preserve historical, archaeological, architectural, and cultural monuments; to promote traditional crafts and industries; and to create at Užhorod State University a Rusyn Research Center, a library, and a literary, historical, and ethnographic fund for Rusyn studies.”

In an interview with the Soviet Ukrainian news agency (RATAU), chairman Tomčanij declared:

A large number of emigrants from our homeland, who until this day consider themselves Rusyns, live in various countries. They have their own organizations with which we wish to cooperate in the name of the renaissance of our culture, history, and traditions; we urge them to work with their ancestral homeland and together with us to care for the preservation of our heritage.

Political and social commentary through the mode of satirical cartoons is flourishing once again in Czechoslovakia. Here and on the next page, from cartoons published in Nove žyttja, the nationality question among the country’s Rusyns is viewed by Michal Bycko, an artist, cultural activist, and founding director of the Andy Warhol Museum project in Medzilaborce.

A KSUT or SRUCH cultural activist addressing an audience: I want to report important information. Duchnovyč, when he said “I was a Rusyn...” was really thinking that he was a Ukrainian!

Prešov, Czechoslovakia. On February 21, 1990, at the Rusyn Cultural Center (Russkij Dom), a group of forty Carpatho-Rusyn writers and cultural activists from Užhorod in Soviet Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus’) met with their counterparts in the Prešov Region. Much of the discussion centered on the nationality question. The guests from Soviet Transcarpathia reported that in their homeland, as in the Prešov Region, there are today two orientations: pro-Rusyn and pro-Ukrainian. The poet Ivan Petrovcij described the recent establishment of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society (Tovarystvo Karpats'kych Rusyniv) in Užhorod as a major historical event in the history of Subcarpathian Rus’, especially since many rural people were present at the founding meeting where they proclaimed their loyalty to a Rusyn identity.

Chust, Soviet Union. On March 24-25, a two-day meeting of the grand council of RUKH was held in the Transcarpathian town of Chust. RUKH (which means movement in Ukrainian) is the acronym for the Kiev-based Popular Movement for Restructuring the Ukraine. Founded in September 1989, RUKH’s goals are to Ukrainianize all aspects of society in the Ukrainian S.S.R., which for decades has suffered under the Russification and assimilatory policies of the Stalinist and Brezhnevite regimes in the Soviet Union. Because of nearly half a century of such policies, RUKH’s greatest challenge is
to convince Ukrainians themselves of the value of their language and to instill in them pride in their national identity. Only in the historic region of Galicia in the western Ukraine is a sense of Ukrainian identity and self-pride widespread.

Regional differentiation and particularism in a country as large as the Ukraine is an especially serious challenge for RUKH. Thus, in its first major meeting outside Kiev or L'viv (in Galicia), the organization chose to make its presence felt in Transcarpathia, in particular the little town of Chust, where in 1939 the short-lived Carpatho-Ukraine was declared an independent state. RUKH called for the rehabilitation of the Carpatho-Ukraine (condemned since 1945 by the Communist authorities) and its leader, Msgr. Avhustyn Volosyn. The object of such demands is to show that the Transcarpathian populace was supposedly pro-Ukrainian even before the Soviet Red Army arrived toward the end of World War II in 1944.

Reports indicated that during the RUKH meeting in Chust, residents in the larger towns of Uzhhorod and Mukačevo gathered to protest the building of a nuclear plant in their region as well as the presence of Ukrainian nationalist activity in their midst. Reportedly, thousands of signatures were collected and sent in a petition to President Václav Havel demanding the return of Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus') to Czechoslovakia.

During the RUKH proceedings in Chust, a manifesto was prepared by Transcarpathian affiliates of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and sent to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian S.S.R. and to President Havel of Czechoslovakia. The manifesto (published in the Ukrainian press in the West, Homin Ukrainy, April 25, 1990) admitted that even local Transcarpathian members of RUKH and their own Ukrainian Helsinki affiliates, not to mention thousands of unaffiliated citizens of the region, have “conducted illegal agitation among the local population for the union of Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia.” Not surprisingly, the Transcarpathian affiliate of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and RUKH declared their opposition “against separatism and violation of the unity of sovereign states including the Ukraine and for the maintenance of the present borders in Europe.”

L'viv, Soviet Ukraine. In March 1990, the first issue of a new Carpatho-Rusyn publication, Budýtel' (The Awakener), appeared in L'viv. It is the organ of the Society of Transcarpathian Students in L'viv (Zemljactvo zakarpats'kych studentiv u L'vovi), the western Ukrainian city where the members attend the university. The goals of the group are the following: (1) to return home after completing study as a true Transcarpathian intelligentsia in the service of the people; (2) to know the history and culture of Transcarpathia and not to be ashamed of our native language; (3) to revive the old popular traditions (Bethlehem plays, Easter egg painting, etc.); and (4) to raise the spiritual and cultural level of our people without which we cannot hope to be a civilized society.

The new publication is in literary Ukrainian and, according to the author (Marija Majerčyk) of one article: “We proclaim to the whole world that we, Subcarpathian Rusyns, are a part of the great Ukrainian people and that our language and literature is and will remain the same as our brethren on this [northern/Galician] side of the Carpathians, and that we will struggle against all efforts to Russify us or to make us into some kind of distinct group which would thereby tear us away from our maternal roots.”

Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. On May 12, 1990, a Union of Rusyns and Ukrainians (Sojuz Rusnacoch i Ukrajincoch) was established under the chairmanship of Professor Julian Tamaš, holder of the Chair of Rusyn Language and Literature at the University of Novi Sad. This is the first organization that hopes to unite all Rusyn and Ukrainian communities throughout all of Yugoslavia. Spokespersons for the group have said that their goal is to defend the cultural and national rights of Rusyns and Ukrainians within the rapidly changing political circumstances of Yugoslavia. Despite the proposed cooperation, there is no attempt to unite or consider that Rusyns and Ukrainians form a single people. The major press, cultural, and other media organs are still in the hands of the Vojvodinian Rusyns, with whom the Yugoslav Ukrainian community hopes to cooperate.

Prešov, Czechoslovakia. Since the beginning of 1990, the weekly newspaper, Nove žytja, published by the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia (SRUCH) has conducted a series of interviews (Dr. Zuzana Hanudel', Dr. Jaroslava Zakres'ka, Dr. Jurij Mulyčak) with local linguists concerning the language question. Virtually all the respondents, who consider themselves Ukrainian linguists, responded that the idea to create a distinct Carpatho-Rusyn literary language is neither possible nor practical. One exception is the otherwise pro-Ukrainian cultural activist and professor Dr. Jurij Bača, who in the March 2 issue of Nove žytja stated: “I believe it is quite possible to codify our language. The easiest way would be to choose from our various [Rusyn] dialects—Snina, Medzilaborce, Makovycja, Stará Lubovňa, etc.—those elements that are common in all our dialects and thereby write in the spoken speech using the Ukrainian [Cyrillic] orthography.”

(The sign reads: Rusyn-Ukrainians.) I don’t want to insult anyone... but it seems to me that someone now has the professional skills to create hybrid people.

OUR FRONT COVER

Greek Catholic cathedral church of St. John the Baptist, Eparchy of Prešov, Czechoslovakia, built 1753-1754, and remodeled 1846. (Photo 1984: courtesy of Bishop Ján Hirka)
GREETINGS FROM THE CARPATHO-RUSYN RESEARCH CENTER

Bishop Ján Hirka
 Грекокатолicky Biskupsky Urad
 Prešov, Czechoslovakia

Dear Bishop Hirka:

On behalf of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, we wish to extend our warmest greetings on the occasion of your consecration as bishop of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Prešov. For over two decades you have guided the eparchy through often very difficult times, and it is in large part through your efforts that the Greek Catholic Church survived in Czechoslovakia.

The Carpatho-Rusyn community in America, which today numbers 700,000 persons, has for nearly a century followed carefully the fate of its brethren in the homeland. Our Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center with its more than 6,000 supporters has, in particular, been concerned with the status of our people in Europe since the close of World War II.

On two occasions you and our center have communicated at some length concerning the problem of national assimilation among Rusyns in the Prešov Region and the potential role the Greek Catholic Church can play in alleviating that problem. We fully realize the difficulties you have faced in the past. But now, in the favorable political circumstances of the new Czechoslovakia and in the context of your status as bishop, we are certain you will act in the best interests of all the faithful in your eparchy, whether they are of Rusyn or Slovak background. Our heartfelt prayers and best wishes are with you.

Paul R. Magocsi, President
Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center
17 February 1990

Published in Rusyn on the "Voice of Rusyns" page of Nove žytija (Prešov), March 23, 1990. —Editor

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH ON RUSYNS IN AMERICA

Howard F. Stein, a psychoanalytic anthropologist, is professor in the Department of Family Medicine, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City, OK 73190 USA. Former editor of The Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology, he is author of 130 scholarly and clinical papers, and of twelve books, including most recently Maps from the Mind and Developmental Time, Cultural Space (both published by the University of Oklahoma Press). —Editor.

Mr. Mychajlo Tomčanij
Tovarystvo Karpats’kych Rusyniv
Užhorod, USSR

Dear Mr. Tomčanij:

It was with great pleasure that we received your letter of April 9 and further news about the creation of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns in Užhorod earlier this year. We were particularly gratified to learn that the aims of your society are to encourage the study of the specific history, culture, and language of our Carpatho-Rusyn people and to encourage the rebirth of a Rusyn awareness among the Slavs of Transcarpathia.

Hopefully, you will be able to have Rusyn history and language taught once again to young people in the schools, so that younger generations will know that their own historical and cultural ancestors are Prince Laborc, Fedor Korjatovyc, Bishop Andrej Bačyn’s’kyj, Mychajlo Lučkaj, Aleksander Duchnovyc, Adol’f Dobrians’kyj, Hryhorij Žatkovyc, and Avhustyn Vološyn among others, and not those who come from beyond Subcarpathian Rus’.

We were also very happy to learn that your organization hopes to maintain contacts with Carpatho-Rusyns in other parts of the world, especially the United States where the largest number of our people abroad reside. This will renew the long-standing historic ties between our peoples in America and the homeland, which unfortunately were disrupted by political circumstances beginning in 1939.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center is now twelve years old. It is the largest and only cultural organization which promotes specifically a Rusyn understanding of the historical and cultural past of the Carpathian Rus’ homeland. Thus, we welcome the work of all organizations which are concerned with fulfilling the precept of our national awakener, Aleksander Duchnovyc: "I Was, Am and Will Remain a Rusyn."

Paul R. Magocsi, President
Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center
21 May 1990

Published in Rusyn in Otcj chram (Užhorod), No. 2, July 1990, page 2. —Editor

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to stimulate ethnographic research among Rusyns in North America by identifying areas of theoretical and applied interest among graduate students in the social sciences. The background for this prospectus is the intensive (1968-1972) and intermittent (1972-present) field research that I have conducted among Rusyn- and Slovak-American families in the Steel Valley region of western Pennsylvania over the past two decades.

For the study of Rusyns (in eastern Europe or North America), the crucial theoretical issue is "What is a Rusyn?" and "What are the determinants of this group identity (as
well as of changes in this identity?" The crucial methodological issue is "How does one go about answering these questions?" In The Ethnic Imperative (co-authored with R.F. Hill, the Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977) and in The Psychoanthropology of American Culture (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1985), I have addressed a number of theoretical issues in the dynamics of group (not only ethnic or national) identities. Excellent methodological sources are Michael Agar's The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography (New York: Academic Press, 1980) and his Speaking of Ethnicity (Beverly Hills, Ca: Sage, 1986), and James Spradley's The Ethnographic Interview (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1979). Most recently, a clear, succinct enumeration of ethnographic field methods and issues has been offered by Stuart Plattner (Anthropology Newsletter, American Anthropological Association, January 1989, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 32, 21) and George N. Appell (Anthropology Newsletter, September 1989, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 48, 39).

The "glory" of the ethnographic method is that through long-term (many months to several years) living and working with a group—through techniques ranging from participant observation to open-ended and focused interviews to the study of documentary material and artifacts—one learns the richly contextual story that could not be told or learned via a strictly problem- or hypothesis-oriented approach, or via a one-time survey questionnaire. By working with people on a day-to-day basis, one learns their world, and thereby one learns better what kinds of questions to ask.

Fieldwork Topics

I suggest the following as topics for ethnographic research:

1. Traditional anthropological emphasis on descriptive accounts of peoples' customs, dress, music, rituals, values, symbolism (e.g., pysanky), kinship structure, and their persistence/change over time; systematic inquiry into health beliefs and practices during illness episodes; life history studies of individuals as cultural exemplars (e.g., from "ordinary" people to charismatic leaders); research into language structure, usage, and boundaries; studies of individual and family life cycles, and of organizational (e.g., occupational, religious) cycles of activity; the exploration of inter-group relations over history; archaeological studies to establish continuities/discontinuities between temporal strata.

2. The question of "Rusyn-ness" as an ethnic or national or religious identity, that is, how one classifies oneself, interacting with how one (and one's putative group) is classified by others. Where does being a Rusyn begin and end, historically and geographically, not only in eastern Europe but in the United States and Canada? What are the boundaries of a group identity, what are its markers, and what are the conditions whereby group boundaries become more permeable and more rigid? What is the relationship between such cultural identities as Rusyn, Slovak, Ukrainian, Russian, Soviet, American, Canadian, etc.? To borrow from Shakespeare, What's in a name? What do people prefer to call themselves (and what is the personal and intra-group significance of such choice?), and how do others label one's group? For instance, in the United States many people choose to call themselves Rusyns, others Carpatho-Rusyns, others Ruthenians or Ruthenes, yet others Rusnakas, still others Slovaks (or, more specifically eastern Slovaks; or more specific yet, Slovaks from Presov or Uzhhorod, etc.), yet others Slovak Americans, Rusyn Americans, Ukrainian Americans, others still, "100% Americans," others yet Byzantine Catholics or Byzantine Slavs, and finally, "our people," albeit without a designated referent.

For many people, their ethnic or national identity is not "all" that they are, or how they identify themselves all of the time; that is, ethnicity or nationality is not always "all-or-nothing." It is often situational, which leads to the question: In what situation(s) do people identify themselves as Rusyn, or otherwise? In many steel mill towns, many millworkers not only work for a company, but identify themselves as loyal unionists or as steelworkers, etc., that is, they assume an occupational identity as well as, if not superseding, their ethnic one. In what circumstances, then, does a person's Rusyn-ness take on significance, public or private?

Scholars should inquire into the developmental, situational, interpersonal, institutional, and political context(s) of such choices, as well as their personal meanings. What is the relationship between seemingly objective, structural social facts (e.g., ethnolinguistics, village or region of origin, group nomenclature, customs [e.g., naturalistic versus abstract designs on Easter eggs] and what we might deem to be more subjective, interpretive assessments about what is and what is not authentically one's religion or ethnicity or nationality? Further, what is the relationship between one's "roots" and what might be called the "root seeking" of one's origins? Scholars would do well to know their own biases and preferences as to what they think and feel a group "really" is or should be called, and proceed to try to understand others' labels as these people select and experience them. In sum, the question is: What (and who) is a Rusyn (etc.)? According to whom? What is the meaning of being a Rusyn (etc.) to oneself and to others? This question of group labels leads to a further issue of personal and group meanings.

3. Is one's ethnicity or nationality a pan-human, primordial, constant, unchanging, continuous, or permanent if not eternal identity? Or are such identities and identifications contextual, modern rather than trans-historical, changing, situational, ideological, discontinuous in nature? When we say, for instance, that being Rusyn is what one "is," is it possible for one to change or modify one's ethnic affiliations, loyalties, meanings? What is the relationship between group identities, at a given era, and sociocultural change such as acculturation (becoming culturally like people different from one's "own") and assimilation (becoming structurally absorbed into another population, such as in the Soviet Union or the United States or Canada)? Both within a person's sense of self, and in one's relationships with others, what is the relationship or the boundaries within, say, one's Rusyn-ness and his or her Americanness, or maleness or femaleness, his or her occupational identity (mill worker, executive, secretary), and so on? While at one time in eastern European history, for many populations, religion and ethnicity were fused, such is rarely the case now; so, what then would be the relationship between one's Rusyn-ness and one's own Catholic-ness or Orthodox-ness, etc.? Further, we may ask not only what is changed in cultural change, but what are the feelings and meanings associated with the change?

Based on ethnographic studies of national and ethnic identification in Quebec and Hawaii, Handler and Linnekin...
argue, for instance, that "there is no essential, bounded tradition; tradition is a model of the past and is inseparable from the interpretation of tradition in the present... [The] invention of tradition is not restricted to such self-conscious projects [as cultural revivalism or nativism]. Rather, the ongoing reconstruction of tradition is a facet of all social life, which is not natural but symbolically constituted" (Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," Journal of American Folklore, vol. 97, no. 385, 1984, p. 276). As a marker of personal and social identity, "ethnicity," in this view, is a mode of thought and feeling, not an autonomous category in nature. Human groups are continuously forming, changing, breaking up, assimilating cultural materials from other groups, and revising their very way of representing and defining themselves. Scholars unwittingly often become apologists for, rather than interpreters of, ideologies of group identity. Far from being an invariant, universal "thing" that all people somehow "have" or are, ethnicity and national identity can be understood as symbols of ongoing processes. We human beings perceive and experience our group boundaries to be our social skins. This cultural epidermis—for Rusyns, for us all—has the function of protecting the vulnerable inside from what people perceive to be threats to it from the outside. Thus, rather than looking only to cultural content, we would do well to examine the dynamics and functions of group boundaries for Rusyns in eastern Europe and in North American societies. In sum, then, ethnic or national Rusyn-ness as an identity referent can be (variously) relatively fluid or rigid, regressive or progressive, all encompassing or situational, inclusive or exclusive. Ethnicity "is" what ethnicity "means" to those who invoke and manipulate its meaning.

4. Rusyn culture (which I am now using as a shorthand for the diversity of terms and views which might be used) can be studied ethnographically in a variety of institutional contexts: families (extended, nuclear; in eastern Europe, in North America; in rural or urban settings), ethnic fraternal or mutual assistance organizations, churches, workplaces, community festivals, work-related organizations (e.g., local and national unions), folklore, cultural medical beliefs and practices (its ethnomedical system), the visual and musical arts, political systems (e.g., the interplay between Rusyn political organization in eastern Europe and that of the Ukraine or in North America, that of local Rusyn community organizations in a city, and the politics of the ward system, the state, etc.). An ethnographic approach would facilitate both intensive studies of individuals, families and local communities, and comparative studies or perhaps studies of Rusyns in widely varying social contexts. Such studies would not only expand available knowledge about Rusyns, they would also contribute to the construction of social science theory about group identities, what they are, how they come about, how they change, and what their functions are for those who fuse their ethnicity with the definition and sense of their very humanity.

5. How does one, from infancy, become a Rusyn or Rusyn American or Rusyn Canadian? What are the patterns of parent-family-child interaction that become the developmental substratum upon which rests the foundation of subsequent Rusyn religious, political, occupational, and other beliefs and practices? For instance, in my own study of evil-eye beliefs and apotropaic rituals among Slovaks and Rusyns in western Pennsylvania (ETHOS, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1974, pp. 15-46), I found that projected hostility between mother and infant played a crucial role in establishing the plausibility for that later cultural belief in the power and danger of the evil eye. Through the careful study of family interactions, and of the socialization of the young, one can discover how Rusyn culture becomes part of the self, how the culture is modified, how cultural institutions serve and express personal needs, and so forth.

6. There is yet another, often neglected, dimension to the issue of "becoming" a Rusyn, one that is part of the dynamics of adulthood rather than exclusively of childhood. From my ethnographic and historical study of Slovak and Rusyn Americans in western Pennsylvania, I discovered that many if not most members of the great immigration from central and eastern Europe (1880-1914) did not originally think of themselves in ethnic or national terms, but instead, in terms of the local village, town, or county (župa) from which they originated. The sense of ethnicity and of nationalism was one largely created in North America rather than in Europe, and which process in turn intensified nationalistic sentiments and political movements back in the homeland. This suggests that greater attention be paid to the process of becoming a Rusyn (or another ethnonational identity) in relation to adult, in addition to childhood, issues of identity. Here, a crucial institution for study is the ethnic parish and the fraternal or self-help organization (e.g., Greek Catholic Union), as an instrument alternately of Americanization and of ethnic revitalization.

Methodological Concerns

I suggest the following as theoretical problems researchers need to keep in mind:

1. An ethnographic approach can help the observer—and the group being studied—to understand problems and pathologies of the group, and perhaps even to design interventions or recommendations for addressing these issues. It will, of course, be important for the observer to distinguish between his or her construction of a problem as an outsider to the group, from the perceptions and approaches to solution (ranging from religious to clinical treatment to political) held within the group under study. Examples that come readily to mind are alcoholism, depression, child abuse and neglect, marital discord, magical beliefs such as the evil eye and other locally named folk etiologies, and so forth.

It is important to identify constituent or sub-groups within the Rusyns, and to determine which cultural markers or boundaries are most significant to its members, e.g., nationality, religion, regionalism, political affiliation, etc. Thus, one must investigate intra-Rusyn identities (and their interplay with Rusyn-ness), such as Byzantine or Greek Catholic or various eastern Orthodox belief systems and affiliations; local groups as Bojkos, Lemkos, Huculs, etc.; local variants of ideological or pragmatic communism or socialism; various occupational identities; etc.

3. The converse of (6) is to determine the appeal, at different historical eras, of various supra-local or pan-ethnic movements and identities, e.g., Ukrainian identity, Russian or Soviet identity, eastern Slovak assimilation, and numerous Pan-Slavic currents.

4. Finally, an important component of any study is "locating" the observer or scholar in relation to the subject. In psychological terms, this is called "countertransference,"


which consists of the observer's or therapist's often unconscious reaction to the group being studied or patient being treated. To help diminish observer bias, it is essential that one studying Rusyns (or any group) become familiar with his or her own attitudes toward the group being studied, how one feels about them, the relationship between one's own values and those held by the group. Greater self-knowledge, often obtained through lengthy discussion of the process of fieldwork with one's social science supervisors or even through personal therapy, helps reduce the inevitable biases and distortions brought to the study of a group—even if one is in fact studying one's very own ethnic or national group (see George Devereaux, *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*, The Hague: Mouton, 1967).

**Conclusion**

For both Carpatho-Rusyns in North America and in eastern Europe—and their historic interaction—there is a rich, untapped field of ethnographic research. To summarize, that field ranges from (1) particularistic ethnohistorical or ethnolinguistic reconstruction and the recording of cultural materials before they recede beyond memory, to (2) interpretive contributions toward the understanding of the process by which ethnic and national nomenclatures and their subjective meanings come about and change, to (3) comparative studies that will deepen our understanding, for instance, of populations inhabiting border regions and identity issues associated with them, studies that will in turn advance our understanding of the significance of psychological as well as geographic boundaries in human affairs. Such ethnographic inquiries will simultaneously help Rusyns better understand themselves and help scholars understand what is uniquely Rusyn and what Rusyns share with other groups by virtue of their membership in the human species.

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**RECENT EVENTS**

**St. Paul, Minnesota.** On February 4, 1990, a celebration entitled “Eastern Europe at Freedom’s Gate” was held in the Capitol Rotunda. The celebration was sponsored by representatives of sixteen central and eastern European ethnic groups honoring the democratic advances in Europe and the contributions of those cultures to Minnesota and to their own countries. Included were displays detailing the histories of the people of the region and news of current events. A variety of ethnic dance and music groups performed throughout the afternoon. Following a procession of flags and people in ethnic costume, Governor Rudy Perpich and representatives of each of the participating groups spoke briefly on how the changes affect Minnesota and the European countries. Representing Carpatho-Rusyns was Lawrence Goga, president of the Rusin Association of Minnesota.

![Lawrence Goga (far right), President of the Rusin Association of Minnesota, at the "Eastern Europe at Freedom's Gate" celebration, alongside Susan Masley Hartwigsen, Governor Rudy Perpich, Peter Hnath, and Lola Perpich.](image)

**St. Paul, Minnesota.** On April 11, 1990, Governor Rudy Perpich announced the creation of a Commission on Eastern Europe. He created the commission to promote the study of eastern European history and geography in Minnesota schools, increase Minnesota’s understanding of the cultural and ethnic diversity of eastern Europe, and provide recommendations to increase public and private business opportunities between Minnesota and the people of eastern Europe. The commission will continue the work begun by the operating committee for the “Eastern Europe at Freedom’s Gate” celebration that was held at the State Capitol on February 4. Among appointees to the commission, Lawrence Goga, president of the Rusin Association of Minnesota, will represent Carpatho-Rusyns.

**Minneapolis, Minnesota.** On April 29, 1990, the Rusin Association of Minnesota sponsored a lecture by Dr. Paul R. Magocsi, “Religion and Nationality in the Carpathians.” The speaker discussed the historical background and present status of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches among the Rusyns of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

**Bratislava, Czechoslovakia.** On June 16, 1990, The Rusyn Renaissance (Rusyn'ska Obroda) organization hosted a conference for Rusyns from all parts of Czechoslovakia at the Friendship Center (Dom Družby) in Bratislava in order to meet with Dr. Paul R. Magocsi, president of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center. The event was advertised in local newspapers and among the attendees were Carpatho-Rusyns living in Prague, Olomouc, Bratislava, and other Czech and Slovak cities as well as from the Prešov Region in eastern Slovakia. The meeting was hosted by Dr. Ivan Bycko, deputy in the Slovak Parliament for the Medzilaborce district. Dr. Magocsi spoke about Carpatho-Rusyns in the United States and answered questions about his scholarly works and the publications of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center which were on display.
With this issue we begin a new year in our on-going survey of recent publications. These are from 1985 and are listed alphabetically. Many are published in eastern Europe and are difficult to obtain, but most can be found in research libraries of major universities (California at Berkeley, Harvard, Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Indiana, Toronto, Yale) or in institutions like the Library of Congress, New York Public Library, and Cleveland Public Library. Although these places allow limited access, do note that many local libraries can obtain these works upon request through Interlibrary Loan. Titles which can be purchased will be designated as such. —Editor


Fedaka, P.M. ‘Vnutrišnje planuvanja ta inter’jer narodnoho žytla Zakarpattja druha polovyna XIX—počatok XX stolit’ ’ (The External Plan and Interior of Traditional Dwellings in Transcarpathia During the Second Half of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Centuries), Narodna tvorčest’ ta etnografiya, XXIX, 5 (Kiev, 1985), pp. 32-39.


