The last decade of this century has begun in the midst of turmoil. We all grapple with the morning and evening news, attempting to sort out the good, the bad, and the unimportant. We try to comprehend our own role in world affairs, searching for those threads which connect us with people and events which may be in our backyards or which more often seem hopelessly far away. While much of the world’s attention is presently focussed on the Middle East, the political and social situation in the Soviet Union and East Central Europe has hardly been stagnant. Events there have driven home the message that there are no easy solutions to the problems created in the past several decades. The euphoria of the Revolution of 1989 has not been forgotten, but it has surely given way to the harsh reality that positive change—if and when it comes—will come slowly, painfully slowly.

What are the positive changes for our people? They are now beginning to be able to stand up and say that they are Rusyns. They have come together in the countries in which they find themselves and have organized groups in a way that would have been difficult or unimaginable only a few years ago. Within less than a year, five new organizations that are specifically Rusyn in orientation have been established:

- Lemko Association (Stovaryšynja Lemkiv) in Legnica, Poland, founded in April 1989;
- Society of Carpatho-Rusyns (Tovarystvo Karpat'kych Rusyniv) in Uzhhorod, USSR, founded in February 1990;
- Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyn’ska Obroda) in Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia, founded in March 1990;
- Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ (Spolecnost’ přátel Podkarpatské Rusi) in Prague, Czechoslovakia, founded in October 1990;
- Rusyn Matka Society (Ruska Matka) in Ruski Kerestur, Yugoslavia, founded in December 1990.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center has greeted each of these new organizations. See, for instance, the letters to the most recently-established groups in Prague and Ruski Kerestur reprinted in this issue. In all cases, we were first contacted by the organizers, and we have responded with a concerted effort to provide what at this stage is still limited to moral support, information, and publications. We recognize the courage of our brethren in the European homeland who sometimes face formidable odds in their attempts to protect and promote Rusyn culture and social interests.

In Soviet Transcarpathia, Rusyns struggling for recognition of their identity have been unfairly accused of ties with the KGB and criticized for trying to weaken the national movement in other parts of the Soviet Ukraine. In the Prešov Region, Rusyns are called “separatists” and “extremists” by supporters of the pro-Ukrainian orientation. In Poland, Greek Catholic and Orthodox Rusyns have been harassed by a powerful Roman Catholic majority because of their faith. And finally, within the Rusyn community itself, our people face a denominational division between Orthodox and Greek Catholics, a division which has contributed to some internal struggles, but which, we pray, will eventually be resolved.

As we think about the efforts of our people in the homeland to survive and flourish, let us follow their initiative by strengthening our ties with them and by keeping ourselves informed. The C-RA will continue to bring together information about the various organizations and their activities and will continue to air the views of individuals within these organizations as they pursue their goals. A second step in strengthening our ties with our Rusyn brothers and sisters in Europe is through financial support.

At a time when other Americans of eastern European background have helped the economic, cultural, and general democratic evolution in the homelands of their ancestors, Rusyn Americans have so far been reluctant to respond in any concrete manner. For instance, each of the organizations listed above is in desperate need of the basic tools of communication which we take for granted—typewriters, photocopiers, computers, and printers.

Rusyn organizations in Europe are not asking for financial donations. They are asking for the tools to do the job. And what is that job? Namely, to promote the cultural and economic welfare of Rusyns through the traditional democratic means of informing and mobilizing their own people and lobbying the governments of the countries where they live. The C-RA is constantly asked by our European brethren for the kind of tools mentioned above. Several hundred dollars can still go a long way in achieving what the Revolution of 1989 has now made possible—the spiritual and cultural renewal of the Carpatho-Rusyn people.

Thanks to modern technology and political change, we are no longer separated by distance or by totalitarian regimes from our people in Europe. We now have a chance to contribute positively to their future. Will we, Americans of Carpatho-Rusyn background, meet the challenge?

Donations to the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center are tax deductible. Please indicate on your check of $100.00 or more, “Rusyn Cultural Fund,” so that your contribution will be earmarked for the purposes outlined above.

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

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

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

Carpatho-Rusyn American
132 Hawthorne Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15218

Patricia A. Krafcik, Editor

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The Geographer of the United States and the director of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Social Sciences at Dartmouth College are only the most recent of the many distinguished titles held by Dr. George J. Demko. Both reveal, however, an underlying theme in Demko's life: an abiding effort to apply his professional experience to the well-being of society, whether it be through government service or through higher education.

George Demko was born in 1933 in the small steel mill town of Catasauqua in southeastern Pennsylvania. His mother, Anna nee Scarba, of mixed Slovak/Polish parentage, was born in a nearby Pennsylvanian town. His father, George Demko came from the Carpatho-Rusyn village of Klokocov in the Prešov Region of what is today far eastern Czechoslovakia. “Big George the Rusnak,” as Demko’s father was known, followed the path of so many other Carpatho-Rusyns in the years before World War I. As a ten-year-old lad, he emigrated to eastern Pennsylvania in 1905 and began work immediately sifting slate in Mahanoy City, then working the coal mines in McAdoo, and finally graduating to the steel mills in Catasauqua. This meant that “little George” was raised in a blue-collar working class environment so typical for millions of Americans of southern and eastern European backgrounds.

After completing his high school education in Catasauqua, the young Demko joined the U.S. Marine Corps (1951-1955), serving in the Korean War where he was wounded in action. After returning home to eastern Pennsylvania he attended nearby West Chester University (1955-1958) and then went on to Pennsylvania State University where he received his Ph.D. in 1964. Throughout these formative years, Demko was able to pursue his love of geography and to focus, in particular, on questions related to demography and the movement of people. Beginning in 1965, he was able to share his knowledge with students and professional colleagues for nearly two decades as professor of geography at the Ohio State University.

Always keenly aware of his eastern European background, Demko has done some of his most important scholarly work on areas in that part of the world. For instance, his book on the Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan (1970) remains the standard work on the subject. He also travelled and taught widely as a visiting professor at Moscow State University (1981) and earlier at Comenius University in Czechoslovakia (1975)—an experience, as he says, which helped to clarify his identity as an American of Carpatho-Rusyn background.

But Demko has never been an ivory-tower academic. An energetic organizer, he has served on innumerable governmental and professional advisory boards. He was the first executive director of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, and at his initiative it was transformed into an international scholarly, membership organization. The capstone to such activity was his appointment in 1984 as director of the Office of the Geographer at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. Within five years, Demko transformed the little-known four-person operation into a dynamic and innovative office with a staff of 24 specialists. Under his direction, the office provided for State Department officials a whole host of analytical studies on contemporary issues, such as the “geography” of terrorism, AIDS, drugs, refugees, and territorial conflict. The aim of these studies was to discover how past and current spatial patterns might help foreign policy analysts predict where future problems might arise.

Despite the intellectual and professional challenges of Washington D.C., working in the center of high-level governmental decision making has its costs. It was, in particular, the need to avoid the restrictive and often deadening impact of bureaucratic maneuvering that Demko was drawn to accept the directorship of the newly-established Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Once again in an academic environment, Demko has been able to devote most of his energies to writing and teaching. His next book, The Why of Where: Modern Geography for Everyone, to be published next year by Doubleday, will in large part fulfill Demko’s dream of bringing the discipline he knows so well to the largest number of people. Another project he is determined to complete is a regional and cultural geography of Slovakia. This, as he says, would make it possible to apply his professional expertise in order to understand further the richness of his Carpatho-Rusyn heritage.

Philip Michaels
THE RUSYN-UKRAINIAN DEBATE IN THE PREŠOV REGION

As the democratic process unfolds in Czechoslovakia, supporters of the pro-Rusyn and pro-Ukrainian orientations have increased their criticisms of each other. Those who favor the Rusyn orientation argue that forty years of Communist rule and a Ukrainian nationality policy have caused widespread Slovakization. A return to a Rusyn identity is the only way to save the people from Slovakization. Those who favor the Ukrainian orientation also admit certain mistakes of the past—for which they, too, blame the former neo-Stalinist Czechoslovak Communist regime—but they argue that “creating” a Rusyn nationality will lead to further assimilation with Slovaks.

The pro-Ukrainian orientation consists primarily of the intelligentsia in Prešov. They have been increasingly critical of what they describe as Rusyn “separatists” and “extremists” in Medzilaborce. Even those who agree that the name Rusyn should be used, see this as a temporary measure until a Ukrainian identity is fully established among the rural masses. Dr. Mykola Mišynka (*Družno vpered*, No. 4, Prešov, 1990, p. 2), who was recently reinstated to a research post at the Šafárík University in Prešov, summed up his understanding of the problem by inadvertently using a popular image from Lenin: “Sometimes it happens that in order to make two steps forward, it is necessary to take one step backward. We have taken such a step backward [at the congress of January 20, 1990, in Prešov, which established the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia—SRUCH]. We have done this in the sense that from a pure Ukrainian platform we have accepted a Rusyn-Ukrainian platform. It was absolutely necessary to do this, because if we will distance ourselves from the popular (though not political) Rusyn orientation, then we will lose what little we still have. I would say this: if there is a group of Rusyns who want to be Rusyns and not Slovaks, then in ten years they will probably sing [the Ukrainian national anthem], ‘Sće ne vmerla Ukrajina’ (The Ukraine Has Not Yet Perished); that is, they will become convinced Ukrainians. But if we reject them, they for certain will become Slovaks.”

In contrast, the Rusyn perspective was summed up by Dr. Michal Bycko, initiator of the Andy Warhol Museum Society and founding member of the Rusyn Renaissance in Medzilaborce. In an article for the “Voice of Rusyns” page of *Nove žytia* (April 20, 1990), he wrote:

“Recently my name has been mentioned several times among Rusyns and Ukrainians. I receive all kinds of letters at home, even some whose authors threaten to liquidate me physically. I really cannot understand why. One letter writer says it’s because I am trying to make Slovaks out of Rusyns. Another informs me... that it is Rusyns who have Rusynized villages in the Svidník region and other areas that were originally Slovak. In the end, a hundred letters will have a hundred different points of view. But for me it doesn’t make any difference because what I am and what I will remain is simply a continuation of what my grandfather, grandmother, father, and mother were. They were simply Rusyns.

“Since the beginning of the Revolution [of 1989] I have taken part in the Rusyn renaissance movement. ... When two months ago we declared that we want to codify the Rusyn language on the basis of the dialects in the Medzilaborce or Snina regions we knew it would not be easy.

“...And what is my view of the Ukrainian language? I respect and consider it the literary language of Rusyns, since we have no other... However, I am sorry if Prešov’s Rusyns disagree, but I really cannot accept the name Rusyn-Ukrainian nor the name of our new organization [Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia—SRUCH]. I believe SROUCH should include both Rusyns and Ukrainians. If that were the case, even those who declare themselves Slovak would return to their Rusyn identity. But I am convinced that not one of those would declare him or herself Ukrainian. ... Let there be two official nationalities—Rusyn and Ukrainian.

“In conclusion, it seems to me that democracy is not going to be for everyone for much longer. In any case, democracy doesn’t exist so that we can insult or threaten one another. With regard to the Rusyn problem, I do not divide people into Communists, supporters of the Public Against Violence party or Civic Forum, or liberals. I am concerned with all honest Rusyns, regardless of their politics. But one thing really bothers me—that many talented Rusyns, intellectuals, and working class people still are afraid to say openly: ‘I Was, Am, and Will Remain a Rusyn’.”

A more serious aspect of the Rusyn-Ukrainian struggle is the political fate of Ivan Bicko of Bratislava (no relation to Dr. Michal Bycko). Ivan Bicko was delegated as a deputy of the Slovak Parliament after the November 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia, and in that capacity he represented the Medzilaborce district and was part of a delegation of Rusyns from the Prešov Region who visited Rusyn Americans in the United States in April (see the C-RA, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1990, p. 11).

Upon his return home, Deputy Bicko actively entered the election campaign as a Rusyn candidate from the Medzilaborce district on the ticket of the Public Against Violence party in Czechoslovakia’s first free elections in nearly four decades. Just two days before the elections (June 6, 1990), Deputy Bicko was removed from the electoral slate of his party. No explanation was given, although everyone knew what such a move signified: Ivan Bicko ostensibly had been an informer for the secret police during the years of Communist rule.

Ivan Bicko called for an investigation, and one month later the highest officials in the present non-Communist government Czechoslovakia—including the Vice-Premier of Slovakia Dr. Jan Carnogursky, Federal Minister of Interior Jan Langoš, and the chairman of the Slovak parliament, Dr. František Miklošek—all publicly declared that there is absolutely no foundation for any suspicions or accusations that Ivan Bicko was at any time an informer for the secret police. On the contrary, because of his involvement in the pro-Christian Democratic underground movement, both he and his family had been persecuted by Czechoslovakia’s Communist regime. The conclusion of a recent article in the Public Against Violence daily newspaper, *Verejnost*’ (July 25, 1990), makes the poignant observation:

“We believe that now, in response to the requests of our numerous readers and supporters who have inquired about this matter, we [the Public Violence party] must find out just who on the eve of the parliamentary elections was interested in undermining the reputation of Ivan Bicko.”

The result of this unfortunate incident was that in the absence of former Deputy Bicko, the Communist party can-
THE RUSYN-UKRAINIAN DEBATE INsoviet Transcarpathia

Mikhail Gorbachev’s call for glasnost (openness) in Soviet society has prompted during the early months of 1990 a spirited debate in Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus’) on the pages of existing as well as new publications about the revival of the Rusyn movement. In an interview with Uzhhorod’s Magyar-language newspaper, Kárpáti igaz szó (January 25, 1990), Mychajlo Tomčanjij, head of the new Society of Carpatho-Rusyns, declared: “The word ‘Rusyn’ is indubitably linked with Transcarpathia, and if it disappears from our life then we will finally be cut off from that root which is the unifying strength of our national identity. Even more insulting for us is the fact that we feel that recently certain circles in our society wish to forbid entirely the right for a Rusyn orientation to exist by stating that the Rusyn language is only a dialect of Ukrainian.”

“The problem is not that we learn Ukrainian in schools as our mother tongue. The sad fact is that the very existence of Rusyns is put in doubt; we are not organized. It is as if before the unification with the Ukraine [in 1945] Rusyns never had their own culture, nor literature, nor language, as if they did not exist independently; that is, Rusyns are placed in the situation of being the ‘prodigal son’.”

Unfortunately, the RUKH movement, which is itself trying after decades of Stalinist and neo-Stalinist oppression to improve the status of Ukrainian language and culture in the Soviet Ukraine, is not sympathetic and at times even antagonistic to the new Society of Carpatho-Rusyns. RUKH’s informational bulletin for Transcarpathia (Kárpáts’ka Ukrájiná, May 1990) addressed the local populace with the following arguments:

‘Historically we were the people of Rus’, that is, Rusyns, like all Ukrainians. . . . Now that we are returning to our history, culture, and traditions, we must not separate ourselves from our Slavic, Ukrainian “Rusynness”; we must not allow the revival of Rusynism to become a kind of Muscovite, neo-Magyarone, or neo-Czech political phenomenon whose further goal would be to tear Transcarpathia away from its mother Ukraine.

“We are for Rusynism in the historical-cultural sense. We are for Rusynism in the context of the all-Ukrainian movement for restructuring society [RUKH].”

Less flattering is the open attack on all those who favor a return to Rusynism that has appeared in a new satirical publication called Zakárpats’ka hurka—The Transcarpathian Bunch. The “bunch” or mafia is, in this case, the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns in Uzhhorod, whose members are described as “renegades,” “Quislings,” and “mad dogs,” “who are turning their attention not toward this side of the Carpathians [i.e., eastward toward Kiev], but rather somewhere abroad.” (Zakárpats’ka hurka, No. 2, 1990).

Somewhat less emotional but no less damning was a speech by the University of Užhorod professor Pavlo P. Čučka at the general council of RUKH held in Chust in March 1990 (and covered widely in the western media). Čučka, himself a long-time supporter of the official Soviet Communist interpretation of Rusyn history and culture, implied that the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns was a KGB-inspired organization (Interfront) designed to divide Transcarpathia’s population from the Ukrainian movement (Visnyk Ruchu, No. 4, pt. 1, Kiev, 1990, p. 21). And as for the cultural goals of the society’s supporters, Čučka remarked: “Already some Rusyn writers have even refused to use Ukrainian and have begun to write in dialect in order, thereby, to hide their own limited literacy from the people” (Visnyk Ruchu, No. 4, pt. 2, Kiev, 1990, p. 1).

One response to these attacks comes from Volodymyr Fedynysynec (b. 1943), a poet and literary critic from Soviet Transcarpathia, who since 1983 has been a member of the Union of Writers of the USSR and since its founding in 1990 a member of the board of directors of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns in Uzhhorod. He recently published an article “Our Rusyn Orientation is a Peaceful One,” in the Užhorod newspaper, Visti užhorods’ki (May 22, 1990). He addressed the seemingly unending criticism by Ukrainians of the Rusyn movement:

“Rusyns are a distinct Slavic people, who have rights of a sound theoretical basis. They have their own territory (whose boundaries we will not define today); and in Europe they already created their own national symbols—a distinct culture, language, and literature.

“Perestroika has given us Rusyns the chance to build our own state and to attain the autonomy we have dreamed of for at least 1,500 years—and are not those 1,500 years enough to reveal our distinctiveness? The new nationality policy of Mikhail Gorbachev within the context of perestroika is bringing us closer to the fulfillment of our dreams. Subcarpathian Rus’, or Rusinia (the latter term may not please some of our linguists), can have its own place in a renewed federation of free Soviet republics.

“And as for language. . . .

‘What will be this so-called Rusyn language?’ This is simply an uneducated way of posing the question. The Rusyn language exists; all you have to do is listen to it. And to do that you can go to any village you like. . . . Because if there is a people—and there is a people—then there is a language. It is another question if our opponents are talking about a literary language. However, a literary language is after all but a synthesis of dialects.

“As the Rusyn movement goes forward we need a true...
REVOLUTION OF 1989 UPDATE

Bialy, Bor, Poland. On August 18-22, 1990, the first world forum of the Ukrainian diaspora (Ukrainians living outside the Ukraine) was held in Poland. Organized by the World Congress of Free Ukrainians (based in Toronto) and the Association of Ukrainians in Poland (based in Warsaw), the forum included 140 participants from most countries in which Ukrainians live. Most of the discussion focused on the political and cultural revival of the Ukrainian homeland and its relationship to Ukrainians living outside the Ukrainian S.S.R.

Among the issues discussed at the forum was the problem of the status and relations between Rusyns, Lemkos, and Ukrainians. No representatives were present from any of the Rusyn-oriented organizations in either the Soviet Ukraine (Society of Carpatho-Rusyns in Užhorod), Czechoslovakia (Rusyn Renaissance Society, Medzilaborce), Poland (Lemko Society, Legnica), or the United States (Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, New Jersey). The Rusyns of Yugoslavia were represented and reported in their press the discussions on this matter. It is interesting to note that Ivan Drač, the influential Ukrainian national leader and head of the Kiev-based RUKH movement in the Soviet Ukraine, stated the following: "More and more I am coming to the conclusion that the Ukraine should be called Rus'-Ukraine. Only such a name could resolve many problems. If our country will only go into any details other than to say that the idea of a contemporary Rusyn grammar must be up-to-date in scholarly terms. . . ."

"This, then, is my answer to those who consider the Socie-
mission, at which the deputies stated that the local population has the right to have the identity it feels, and it is with this in mind that authorities should deal with them.” Dr. Hyrjak went on to say that he personally favors a unifying “Rusyn-Ukrainian orientation” and not one that considers Rusyns a distinct group.

Užhorod, Soviet Union. On September 29, 1990, the executive committee of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns ratified the Status of an Autonomous Republic.” The declaration was sent with specific demands to: Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, and the United Nations.

Since its establishment in February 1990, the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns has moved rapidly from a program of cultural and ecological concerns to one that includes concrete political goals, in particular the need to respond to “the cultural and ecological concerns to one that includes concrete Rusyn American, XIV, 2 (Spring 1991).

Svidnik, Czechoslovakia. On October 9, 1990, the national committee of Svidnik county held a one-day seminar on the status of schools for Carpatho-Rusyns in which the Ukrainian language is taught. The seminar revealed that the status of the schools has worsened. In the 1989/1990 school year, there were only 22 elementary schools throughout the Prešov Region in which some subjects were taught in Ukrainian for only 1,234 students. In 1990/1991, that number declined further to only 19 schools and 919 students. The trend among Carpatho-Rusyn parents to demand Slovak-language schools, which began in earnest in the 1960s, continues unabated.

Most officials in the Ukrainian-language school system blame the low level of national consciousness among the population, inadequate textbooks, and poor programs and teachers as the reasons for the decline in numbers. No official seemed willing to question the fundamental problem: the use of Ukrainian language and subject matter instead of Rusyn. In 1948/1949, before Ukrainian was administratively imposed as the language of instruction, there were 275 village elementary schools, 47 municipal (town) schools, 4 high schools, and 2 special schools throughout Czechoslovakia’s Rusyn-inhabited Prešov Region.

Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. In early October 1991, the first session of the Government Council for Nationalities in the Slovak Republic was held in Bratislava under the chairmanship of Slovakia’s deputy prime minister Jan Čarnogurský. The new council includes four Carpatho-Rusyn representatives: Ivan (Ján) Bicko, Vasyl’ Dacej, Mykola Mušynka, and Vasyl’ Turok, who is also vice-chairman of the council. The main topic of discussion was the bill before parliament to have Slovak made the official language of the Slovak republic.

The government council also discussed several issues pertaining specifically to Carpatho-Rusyns. The three Rusyn delegates present (Mušynka was absent) approved the suggestion that Rusyn be the language of instruction during the first four years of elementary school. In this regard, they were critical of the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians (SRUCH) in Prešov, which has no policy on schools, and of Ukrainian scholars at the Ukrainian faculty of Prešov’s Šafárik University, who are against the use of Rusyn since they “do not wish to return to the nineteenth century.” The delegates also proposed in the upcoming Czechoslovak census that there be separate rubrics indicating the number of people reporting their nationality as Rusyn and those reporting Ukrainian.

Prague, Czechoslovakia. On October 27, 1990, the first plenary session of the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ (Slovenská stráž Podkarpatské Rusí) was held in Prague. Over 320 persons, mostly post-World War II Rusyns from Subcarpathian Rus’ and their descendants, as well as Czechs who worked in Czechoslovakia’s former eastern province, attended the meeting. The Society of Carpatho-Rusyns in Užhorod was also well represented. The goal of the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ is “to promote cultural, economic, and social relations of Czechs and Slovaks with the Subcarpathian Rusyns.”

The creation of the new Society prompted a revival of interest on the pages of the Czech press about the long-forgotten Carpatho-Rusyn problem. The popular Prague newspaper, Lidová demokracie (November 2, 1990), published a commentary under the title, “Subcarpathian Rus’ Still Lives,” by the well-known Czech journalist and historian from the interwar years, Ferdinand Peroutka. He argued that the 1945 treaty recognizing the Soviet annexation of Subcarpathian Rus’ is not valid according to principles of international law. Peroutka also described the Subcarpathian Rusyns as a distinct nationality which he believes wants to live within the borders of Czechoslovakia.

This viewpoint was also echoed by the head of the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’, Alexander Velíčko, whose organizational statement released to the Czech press states that “there is no international treaty regarding the annexation [in 1945] to the Soviet Union. The only treaty is the one signed at St. Germain [1919], according to which Subcarpathian Rus’ was united to Czechoslovakia.” The statement also suggests that “at present there is a campaign for collecting signatures in Subcarpathian Rus’ demanding its separation from the Soviet Union,” and that supposedly “90 percent of the population is for unification with Czechoslovakia” (cited in Kanadské listy, XXIII, 11, 1990). In the absence of a referendum or vote in Soviet Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus’) there is, in fact, no way to confirm or deny the validity of the above statement.

OUR FRONT COVER

The church of St. Mary in Dobroslava in the former Šariš County, Prešov Region, erected in 1705.
I AM A RUSYN, MY SON IS A RUSYN

The following are excerpts from an article by Volodymyr Fedynysynec in Zakarpatska pravda (Uzhhorod), 14-15 August 1990. Fedynysynec is a poet and literary critic from Soviet Transcarpathia, a member of the Union of Writers of the USSR, and a member of the board of directors of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns since its founding in Uzhgorod in 1990. —Editor

Every people has its heaven, even if the big sky is common for all peoples. And every people has its star in this heaven. My good, hardworking, and proud Rusyn people have such a star—Aleksander Duchnovyc. This star will still shine for a long time in our native Rusyn patch of heaven.

Duchnovyc is a unique figure in the socio-cultural and literary life of Subcarpathian Rus’ during the past and present century. Thanks to him our people have preserved to a significant degree their national consciousness. Their roots have not withered. Destiny sent us Duchnovyc during a difficult period when our native people stood on the brink of extinction. I do not doubt that my people will arrive in the twenty-first century by means of Duchnovyc’s work, that they will arrive precisely as Rusyns, that they will live as Rusyns—happily, in the circle of Slavic peoples, with their wings widespread. And the skies: there they are, above us! Now, fly!

And thanks to perestroika, I can call myself that which I am, a Rusyn. And I don’t have to look around me at those who will whisper curses at me. I can even shout above the Racists. In our veins flows Slovak, Hungarian—in a word, European—blood. Rusyns are Europeans. . . .

I am a Rusyn! And just maybe the genius of Gorbachev has saved my people from a quiet death, a so-called “blending,” an assimilation. Maybe my people would have been forgotten in some lethargic sleep lasting a thousand years, or maybe they wouldn’t have awakened at all. But my people remembered the words of Duchnovyc: “I was, am, and will be a Rusyn!”

I have nothing against those peoples whose names some pseudo-scholars of past times used for my people—Ugrorossy, Ukrainians, Russians, and so on. These were historical whims, caprices. I want to call myself that which I am, and I will—that which my ancestors already for two and a half thousand years have called themselves, that which Duchnovyc called himself.
I am not repeating myself as much as defining my message more precisely. I love all the peoples of the world and have no hard feelings toward a single one. But more than any other, I love my native Rusyn people. Somewhere someone failed to understand my opinion about the Ukrainian language. Somewhere someone got the message all muddled. Therefore, I want to clarify specifically my position as a citizen and a writer, as a Ukrainian-language Rusyn writer.

I love all the languages of the world. . . . Scholars don’t give an exact number [of world languages] because there is not agreement about which languages ought to be considered dialects, and which are authentic languages. I love them all—from dead Latin and the language of the Kechua tribe to Ukrainian, Russian, German, French, Spanish, English, Italian, and so on. But I love my mother Rusyn tongue with the greatest love. And precisely as a writer I must do a great deal in this area. And I will. Without turning away from Ukrainian, I will write in Rusyn. I believe that the Rusyn language has a future, and that with time it will have the status of a national language on its territory.

And here is the bridge to Duchnovyc. I love all the writers of the world who summon us to humanism, to that which is good, to honesty—and who through their creativity emanate love. I love [the Slovak] Kollár, [the Hungarian] Petőfi, the Ukrainians Ševčenko, [the Pole] Mickiewicz [. . .]. But I will never forget that I have Duchnovyc. And I love him with the greatest love, because in my veins flows Rusyn blood. . . . It is possible that Duchnovyc’s school text [A Reader for Beginners] will serve as a model for a future Rusyn reader, the first national book of the future masters of the Carpathian mountains in the twenty-first century. I would like [I would be happy!] if my grandson, who has not yet been born, would go to his first class in a Rusyn school with a Rusyn reader in his schoolbag, along with his mini-computer whose display would show Rusyn letters, words, phrases.

I do not doubt that the time will come when Rusyns will have their own language, grammar, and dictionary analyzed and supported by scholarly study. The time will come when a literature in Rusyn will blossom—poetry, prose, works in translation, publicistics, scholarly studies. The first Rusyn encyclopedia will be established, and on its pages it will record all those who worked during the course of the past two and a half thousand years on the Rusyn idea, on the development of the Rusyn idea.

The time will come when we will read Chekhov and Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and Whitman in Rusyn. . . just like in the countries of Europe and Asia these geniuses of the spirit are read in French, or in Japanese, or in Chinese. . . . Of course, I harbor a wish that the Ukrainian reader also have the opportunity to read all of this wealth in his native tongue as well.

As a people, we slept not in some stagnant, distant, and depressed epoch. Rather, we have been sleeping deeply for centuries! Perestroika has awakened us. It has pulled at Duchnovyc’s sleeve: Awaken, Rusyns! You must revive your ethnos on the highest level in terms of life and knowledge. You must preserve your distinctiveness, renew your culture, language, song, folktales, and scholarship.

Rusyns! Awaken from your age-old sleep! Perestroika and the new national politics of Gorbachev has given us a historical chance to achieve that which we never had, to build our nation in the framework of autonomy. . . . And we hope that the phenomenon of Duchnovyc will bring new thoughts our way, will rouse us to new steps on the virgin territory of Rusynness in the new age of perestroika. For it is now that we can hope for the fulfillment of our dream, as well as for the happiness that comes in knowing the deep quality of our [nation-tree’s] roots, crowns, and fruit. Now we can hope for the renewal of these concepts with the new spring.

After my announcement at the founding meeting of the Society of Capatho-Rusyns that I would write not only in Ukrainian, but also in my native, mother tongue—Rusyn, I was overwhelmed with letters and telephone calls: How on earth does a Ukrainian writer, a member of the Writer’s Union plan to write also in Rusyn?!! What kind of language is that? Where on earth has it suddenly come from? What group does it belong to? From people I know and don’t know I heard both approving and, of course, disapproving reviews.

But do readers and my opponents know that in the textbook, more precisely the handbook by Adam Suprun and Aleksander Kaljuta, entitled Introduction to Slavic Philology (Minsk, 1981), written and published in Russian and recommended to students, “The Rusyn Language” is given its own separate section? . . .

In establishing the existence of the Rusyn language, I am proceeding from the fact that Subcarpathian Rusyns are a distinct Slavic people living in the center of Europe. This people is at the very least over two thousand years old. From the depth of the centuries to this day Rusyns are connected to all the Slavs alike—to the Ukrainians, the Serbs, the Slovaks, the Croatians, the Belorussians, the Slovenes, the Russians, the Montenegrins, the Poles. . . . Such connections were created on the one hand by the isolation of the Subcarpathian Rusyns within the larger Slavic group, and on the other hand by their contacts with neighboring peoples in the course of a thousand years. And once there is a people, there is a language.

And there is a language!—a living, beautiful language which has not allowed itself to be eradicated. This language lives in every Carpathian village and in places in the Balkans, Canada, the United States, and even in Brazil, Argentina, and Australia, not to speak of Belgium and Germany. Almost 800,000-900,000 people living in the cradle of the nation—in the Carpathians—speak the language of the Subcarpathian Rusyns, and as many in the diaspora. Is this really a small number?! It has not been eradicated either here or there. Rusyns are tenacious! Their language is tenacious! The language has been recognized by UNESCO!

For instance, on September 11-15, 1986, a UNESCO-sponsored international symposium was held in L’viv on the theme “Ivan Franko and World Culture.” The symposium’s working languages were Ukrainian, Russian, Belorussian, Polish, Serbo-Lusatian, and Rusyn (a wonderful constellation of Slavic languages), as well as English, French, and German. And the first volume of materials from this symposium has just come out, entitled Ivan Franko i svitova kultura (Ivan Franko and World Culture, Kiev, 1990). On pages 365-369 is printed a scholarly article by Jevhenija Barić, “Ivan Franko and Yugoslav Rusyns”—in Rusyn.

Secondly, the Rusyn language is a language of a fine European people living under the Carpathians and along the western territory of the Carpathians, and unfortunately dispersed abroad. Therefore, the statement in the above-mentioned handbook [Suprun] that the Rusyn language is the language of a people in Yugoslavia . . . is inaccurate.
From this comes the opinion of some that this is a micro-language. But how could it be a micro-language when it is spoken by nearly two million people? In Yugoslavia, Canada, and the United States there are Rusyn schools, textbooks, journals, newspapers, and so on. The 200th anniversary of Rusyn Grammar (Lučkaj’s and Kocak’s) is coming soon. In the course of one and a half centuries Rusyn grammars have been published by Sabov, Vološyn, Kostelnik, Pan’kevyč, Harajda, Kočiš, Dubičenko, Jevhenija Barič, and other linguists.

The Rusyn language exists! It must be seen in a broader context than Soviet linguistics has perceived it. And how paradoxical it is that the living Rusyn language now needs immediate defense. It is even more pitiful that the propagators of the Ukrainian language do not recognize the Rusyn language and mock those for whom Rusyn is the mother tongue. It has been justly noted by someone that the Ukrainian orientation [vis-à-vis] Rusyns is now taking on the role which the Russian orientation played during the last century when it tried to stifle Ukrainian. But a natural process cannot be stopped.

For a time Rusyns employed Church Slavonic as a literary language which was referred to as the jazyčje [a macaronic language]. Rusynophobes who hate the Rusyn language call it exactly this—a dialect, jibberish—and do not understand or do not want to understand that it is a living language. Blind zealots of the Ukrainian language groundlessly juxtapose the language of the great and glorious Ukrainian people with the Rusyn language, attempting to insinuate something in this comparison. They distribute in a pseudo-Rusyn language lampoon verses against artists and writers, and write “humorous” parodies concerning the news of the day, and likewise inspire so-called translations of texts of classical literature.

The Rusyn language still does not have a grammar defined and elaborated in a scholarly way, with the exception of the Yugoslav Rusyns who use the Kostelnik-Kočiš variant up to the present. There was such a grammar in several variants that has been used by Subcarpathian Rusyns abroad even now in certain varieties and parallel variants. But the present moment demands an in-depth study of all aspects of the problem. The Rusyns use the Cyrillic alphabet. There have also been logical and-solidly based attempts to translate Rusyn writing into Latin script, and this is perfectly within the European tradition.

What is needed now is quite literally a defense of the Rusyn language. Dear Rusyns, speak the language which your parents and grandparents spoke. Do not be ashamed or embarrassed about your language! “Without a native language... there is no native people!” wrote the outstanding Ukrainian poet Volodymyr Sosjura in his defence of the Ukrainian language. We, Rusyns, will follow this precept in relation to our Rusyn language. . . . I am very glad that this time of perestroika has awakened me to work intensively on the study of the history of my native land and its culture, and to touch upon questions of the life of the Rusyn mother tongue. Of course, for a long time now I have been concerned with the history of the literary process in Subcarpathian Rus’ from time immemorial to the present day. My native language is Rusyn! And in the future, I see [many kinds of literary] works in Rusyn. . . . My native language is Rusyn! And yours?

Volodymyr Fedynsyyne
Uzhhorod, USSR
(Translated by Patricia A. Krafck)

RECENT EVENTS

Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. The tenth anniversary of the quarterly Carpatho-Rusyn American is the subject of a long article in Svetlosc, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4 (1990), pp. 487-495, the literary bi-monthly journal for Vojvodinian Rusyns. The author of the article, Ljubomir Medješi, describes the origins of the C-RA in the wake of the “roots” revival in America during the 1970s and comments that while all work on our quarterly is done on a voluntary basis, the results have consistently been “on a high professional level.” The Yugoslav commentator is particularly impressed with the “exceptional manner in which the C-RA communicates with its readers. The texts are written in such a way that the reader has a sense of intimacy with authors of the articles.” This is particularly the case with the personalized editorials. The commentary in Svetlosc is another example of how the C-RA has had an impact on readers not only in the United States but in the Rusyn homeland as well.

Johnstown, Pennsylvania. On September 1, 1990, Carpatho-Rusyns were represented at the National Folk Festival’s opening National Heritage Parade in Cambria City by organizations of Christ the Saviour American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Cathedral. The groups in-
The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center had its own booth at the C-RRC exhibit in Washington, D.C. on October 18-21, 1990, the 22nd National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies was held in the nation’s capital. This largest of academic conventions, which hosted nearly 2,000 specialists on eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, also included extensive book displays where the largest American publishers exhibited their recent books in the field. The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center had its own booth at the convention, where hundreds of academics and government officials had the opportunity to learn about Rusyns in America and Europe. The success of the display was made possible by C-RRC advisory board member Patricia A. Onufrak who was assisted by Mary Onufrak.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia. On March 22-24, 1991, the Union of Rusyns (Sojuz Rusyniv) will host the first World Congress of Rusyns to bring together representatives of Carpatho-Rusyn organizations in every country where they live. The primary goal of the congress will be to discuss ways in which the national revival in the homeland might be better promoted and improved. The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center and other fraternal and religious organizations that include members of Rusyn background are invited to attend the first World Congress. For further information, or to announce your intention to attend, write Dr. Michal Turok-Heteš, Kulturné a Osvetové Stredisko, 06801 Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia.

Fairview, New Jersey. The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center announces its sponsorship of four one-day seminars that will take place between March 17 and 26, 1991 in Uzhhorod, Soviet Union; Cracow, Poland; Prešov, Czechoslovakia; and Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. The seminars will bring to the Rusyn public in the homeland the scholarly papers presented in a panel at the World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies held at Harrogate, England last July (see the Carpatho-Rusyn American, XIII, 3, 1990, pp. 6-7). The speakers include: Dr. Oleksa Myšanyé (Kiev, Soviet Ukraine); Dr. Mykola Mušynka (Prešov, Czechoslovakia); Olena Duc (Cracow, Poland); Dr. István Udvari (Nyíregyháza, Hungary); Ljubomir Medješ (Novi Sad, Yugoslavia); and Dr. Paul R. Magocsi (Toronto, Canada).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS 1985 (concluded)


