In the newspapers of various churches and fraternals during the past couple of years as well as in the C-RA, we have seen numerous articles concerning the struggles of our Orthodox and Greek Catholic Rusyn brothers and sisters in the homeland. The recent Communist regimes had compounded centuries’ old problems by maliciously playing one group off against the other to provoke ill will and, it was hoped, the ultimate destruction of the Church in any form. Also, the new governments that have been established since the democratic revolutions of 1989 have not been able to solve the problems of ecclesiastical jurisdiction or to restore the dignity of the two groups in an adequate fashion. All parties continue to be victims in one way or another.

In the midst of this difficult time, however, we also find some glimmers of hope in the form of help being extended to rebuild seminaries (see RECENT EVENTS, Pittsburgh, in this issue) and in a request for contact made by a number of older and newly opened monasteries in Subcarpathian Rus’. Vladimir Handera of Toronto, Canada, recently provided the following commentary and list of Orthodox Christian monasteries in Subcarpathian Rus’ which were part of a fact-finding study conducted last June and July 1991:

In Transcarpathia just prior to the demise of Communism during the glasnost period, important changes took place that included the opening of several Orthodox Christian monastic communities. Some had been closed during the Khrushchev era of religious repression, while others were newly formed. These monasteries and convents are under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church which, until October 1990, was an Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. The men and women monastics, the majority of whom are Rusyn, practice the Russian Orthodox form of monastic spirituality. Within their Orthodox monastic tradition, Ukrainian nationalism is felt to be political, worldly, and unappealingly foreign. These religious institutions are closely tied with the convents and monasteries of the Pocajiv abbess taken over by the Greeks. Many of the women monastics in the convents Florovskij and Pokrovskij also in Kiev.

Closely tied with the convents of the Pecerskaja Lavra in Kiev; St. Vladimir Handera of Toronto, Canada, recently provided the following commentary and list of Orthodox Christian monasteries in Subcarpathian Rus’ which were part of a fact-finding study conducted last June and July 1991:

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Historically, the role of monastics from Subcarpathian Rus’ in the Russian Orthodox Church is noteworthy. During the period of the Bolshevik Revolution and the ruthless suppression of religion in the areas controlled by the Communists, Subcarpathian Rus’ was an autonomous region within Czecho-Slovakia and was not under the Soviets. In Subcarpathia, the Rusyn Orthodox preserved and continued Eastern Orthodox spirituality by supplying monks to Mount Athos in Greece and women monastics to the Russian Orthodox convents in Jerusalem. Were it not for these Rusyn monks, the monastery of St. Pantelejmon and the Prophet Elias Skete on Mount Athos certainly would have ceased to exist as Russian Orthodox monasteries and would have been taken over by the Greeks. Many of the women monastics in Jerusalem at Ein Kerim Convent were from the convents in Mukacevo and Lypca near Chust. For instance, the mother abbess [igumen] of the Jerusalem Ein Kerim Convent during the early 1980s was originally from the Lypca convent.

In America, the Holy Trinity Monastery and Seminary at Jordanville, New York, which provides and trains priests and monks for the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, was settled by monks from Ladomirová (near Svidnik) in the Rusyn-inhabited Prešov Region of present-day northeastern Slovakia. The present abbot [igumen] in Jordanville, Archbishop Laurus Skurla, was himself born in Ladomirová. He is one of the leading hierarchs in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. [Also note that the present metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America, Archbishop Theodosius Lazar, is the son of Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants from the Lemko Region in southeastern Poland.—ed]

In Subcarpathian Rus’, all of the mother abbesses and the abbots of the men’s monastery have expressed the desire for contact with Orthodox Christians in America and throughout the world. They extend an invitation to visitors from abroad. Both correspondence and pilgrims are welcomed warmly. You may write to them in English, Rusyn, Russian, or Ukrainian.

Igumena Mother Abbess Olga [20 women monastics]  
Monastery of the Nativity of the Blessed Mother of God  
Lypča, Chust rajon  
Transcarpathia, UKRAINE

Igumena Mother Abbess Mitrodora [14 women monastics]  
Monastery of Archangel Michael  
Drahove, Chust rajon  
Transcarpathia, UKRAINE

Igumena Mother Abbess Ekaterina [12 women monastics]  
Monastery of the Dormition of the Blessed Mother of God  
Uhlja, Tjačiv rajon  
Transcarpathia, UKRAINE

Igumena Mother Abbess Fiodosia [30 women monastics]  
Monastery of Saint Seraphim of Sarov  
Pryboržavs’ke, Išava Region  
Transcarpathia, UKRAINE

Igumena Mother Abbess Valentina [30 women monastics]  
Monastery of the Dormition of the Blessed Mother of God  
Domboki, Mukačevo rajon  
Transcarpathia, 295404 UKRAINE

Igumen Archimandrite Efrem [14 monks]  
Monastery of the Holy Trinity  
Horodilov, Chust rajon  
Transcarpathia, UKRAINE

(The following two convents remained open during the religious persecutions of the Khrushchev era.)

Igumena Mother Abbess Fiofania [72 women monastics]  
Monastery of St. Nicholas  
Mukačevo  
Transcarpathia, 295400 UKRAINE

Igumena Mother Abbess Evgenia [50 women monastics]  
Monastery of the Ascension of Our Lord  
Cumalevo, Tjačiv rajon  
Transcarpathia, UKRAINE

FROM THE EDITOR

Today there are almost as many Rusyns and their descendants living abroad as live in the group's homeland along the valleys and adjacent lowlands of the northcentral ranges of the Carpathian Mountains. The need to immigrate, often in search of better economic conditions, did not begin in the late nineteenth century when hundreds of thousands of Rusyns left to work in the industrial centers of the northeast United States. It was more than a century before that Rusyns began to leave their homeland in significant numbers.

These earliest immigrants went to the Bačka or Vojvodina region of what was then the southern borderland region of the Hungarian Kingdom. The group's first permanent settlement was established in 1751 in the heart of the Bačka region at the village of Ruski Kerestur. During the following decade, another large group of Rusyns settled in the nearby village of Kocur. When World War I came to an end in 1918 and the Hungarian Kingdom collapsed, the Rusyns in the Carpathian homeland joined Czechoslovakia, while those in the Bačka or Vojvodina were annexed to Yugoslavia. Most recently, civil war has raged throughout Yugoslavia, which as a result has been carved up into five new states. The Vojvodina has remained an autonomous part of Serbia which, with Montenegro, describes itself as the now smaller monastic Order of St. Basil the Great. He went to the diocese into which he was born and which has jurisdiction over Greek Catholics in Yugoslavia. Nor have the Rusyns of Kocur forgotten their proud son and his successes and tribulations in the service of the church.

The future bishop was born on October 7, 1919, and like many other Vojvodinian Rusyns who felt called to the church, the young Eugene studied at the seminary in Zagreb in neighboring Croatia. He then went to Rome and studied at the Pontifical Seminary of St. Josephat, the Gregorian University, and the Urban Pontifical College of the Propaganda Fide from which he was awarded a doctorate in sacred theology.

After ordination in Rome (March 25, 1945), Hornyak eventually moved to the United States, where beginning in 1948 he served as a priest in the Byzantine Ruthenian Exarchate of Pittsburgh parishes of Warren and Newton Falls, Ohio. After less than three years as a parish priest, Hornyak was named in 1950 a professor of moral theology, canon law, and liturgy at the newly-established SS. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary in Pittsburgh. One year later he became spiritual director of the seminary and a judge of the matrimonial tribunal of the Pittsburgh Byzantine Exarchate, posts he held until leaving Pittsburgh in 1955.

His departure was prompted by a desire to join the monastic Order of St. Basil the Great. He went to the Basilian monastery at Mundare in Alberta, Canada, where he completed his vows in 1960. When he returned to the United States, Father Hornyak was now within the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, serving first as spiritual director of St. Basil's Seminary in Stamford, Connecticut, then as superior of St. Josephat's Monastery in Glen Cove, Long Island.

It was not long, however, before Hornyak was to return to Europe. The occasion was his appointment in 1961 by Pope John XXIII to become auxiliary to the Latin-rite bishop of England responsible for Ukrainian Catholics in that country. Two years later Bishop Hornyak was named apostolic exarch for England and Wales.

The early years of Bishop Hornay's reign were productive ones for the Ukrainian Catholic community in Great Britain. It was under his leadership that a cathedral church was acquired in the heart of London, and that knowledge and respect for the Byzantine rite was increased in religious circles following Hornyak's active participation at a meeting in 1973 of England's Catholic bishops.

By the mid-1970s, however, controversy broke out within the Ukrainian Catholic communities throughout the West. The immediate cause was the decision made by the head of that church, Metropolitan-Archbishop Josyf Slipyj, to designate himself as patriarch. The Vatican steadfastly refused to recognize the title of Ukrainian Patriarch (at least as long as the Ukrainian Catholic Church could not function normally in its homeland). The response of some elements in Ukrainian communities was to organize a patriarchal movement and to oppose those hierarchs who stood loyal to the Vatican's "anti-patriarchal" position. As a result, Hornyak's church in London and his person became the focal point for criticism and often emotion-laden attacks.

Frustrated by the increasing tensions caused by the patriarchal movement, Bishop Hornyak decided to resign in 1987. Since that time he has remained a resident of his adopted city of London, England. He has never forgotten his homeland, however, and while still a bishop he returned for the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Eparchy of Križevci, the diocese into which he was born and which has jurisdiction over Greek Catholics in Yugoslavia. Nor have the Rusyns of Kocur forgotten their proud son and his successes and tribulations in the service of the church.

Ljubomir Medješi
Novi Sad, Yugoslavia
LEMKO RUSYNS: THE KURDS OF CENTRAL EUROPE

The following paper was presented at a meeting of the European Congress of National Minorities in Budapest, May 10, 1991—Editor

The letter “Р” [Р, meaning “[!”] is the last letter in all East and South Slavic Cyrillic alphabets, as well as in my native Lemko-Rusyn language. It is the last letter, but it is with this letter that I will begin my presentation at this international forum.

I am not a politician. I am not a diplomat. I am not a scholar. Some say that I am a humanist, a poet. About myself I will say that above all else I am a Homo sapiens. History has made me a member of a particular people—a small people for whom no one has had the slightest concern, an exiled people, a people wasting away in the very center of civilized Europe.

At first I thought I would give a short chronological history of my people—about its heroes and scholars who for centuries tried to pass on their own native name while preserving an unchanging love toward it. I thought about this, and then changed my mind.

All of you know very well Shakespeare, Mickiewicz, Pushkin, and Petöfi, but the surname Rusenko means nothing to you. You know Giuseppe Garibaldi, but the names Vasyl’ Bajus and Andrej Savka mean nothing to you. Winston Churchill is a familiar name, but the name Jaroslav Kačmarčík is completely exotic. It is unspeakably difficult for members of a small, nationless people to be giants in a big world. But the Lemko Rusyns named above nevertheless are giants, although unknown to you. Why is this so?

It has not been so difficult for the peoples of the Amazon, of Guinea, or the Yakuts in the Siberian taiga (even during Soviet times) to preserve their distinctiveness. But for a small people in the very center of civilized Europe, as I have said, preserving individuality to this day has been entirely impossible in the absence of great local personages. And insofar as this was possible even in Europe of the late middle ages, later, in order to live, in order to preserve one’s former national culture, in order to avoid assimilation into neighboring peoples, a group had to have its scribes, writers, in general its cultural activists and even its national avengers.

Polish scholarship almost unanimously considers Lemko Rusyns late arrivals, as mountain shepherds. I, of course, will not argue with that proposition here. I hope, however, that in the future we will begin to state the truth about the ethnogenesis of my people and will assure the world that we are the indigenous population of our land.

But not even that is my subject today. Whatever our ethnogenesis may be, we want the world to understand that we consider ourselves a distinct people, and not as the Ukrainians want, when others insist for them that we are a branch of the Ukrainian people.

We began the struggle for national independence almost at the same time as those very Ukrainians and alongside the Slovaks. We had no less a chance of becoming a completely independent people than the Slovaks. In his time, our great awakener, Aleksander Duchnovyč, even worked with the Slovak L’udovít Štúr. A little while later, our northern Carpathian Rusyns (those who adopted the name Lemko) began, after their pan-Slavic-Russophile meanderings, to return to their native language gradually and to raise it to artistic and even scholarly levels, as in the case of Mychail Astrjab.

In order to complete this process, a degree of historical luck was necessary. But for the Rusyns there was absolutely no such luck. For our people, the twentieth century literally has been apocalyptic. In the concentration camp at Talerhof in Austria, between 1914 and 1917, almost all of the northern Lemko-Rusyn intelligentsia perished or had their health ruined. It is sufficient to say that while the Lemkos constituted only 2 percent of the larger surrounding population, much of which was indifferent to the politics of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, in Talerhof they comprised 30 percent of all the inmates. Every fifteenth resident of the Lemko Region was a prisoner in Talerhof.

The twenty-year period of Polish rule between the two wars was inadequate for educating a new intelligentsia upon the ruins of a national culture. Nevertheless, such an intelligentsia did arise, and more importantly, set out along its own distinct path. Truly, had it not been for the misfortunes and even cataclysms about to overtake them, the Lemko language would already have been fully codified and the Lemkos themselves would have been a group with a completely formed national vision.

For Lemkos, World War II was tragic not primarily because of war’s natural tendency to destroy a people in both a biological and economic sense. From a national point of view, the greatest misfortune that the war brought was that, just as during World War I, the fiercest opponents of Lemko national autonomy, the Ukrainians, with the full acceptance of the German Nazi aggressor, became the actual ideological rulers of the Lemko Region. It was a mockery of fate that the Ukrainians chose precisely the town of Krynica as the center of their “enlightened” political activity, the very place that previously had been the center of Lemko national life.

The horribly sad fact is that when World War II finally ended, those who had not long ago been beaten down, but were not in a position of strength, acknowledged the Lemkos against their will as Ukrainians and then drove them off their native land. They tore out an entire people, roots and all, and drove them piece by piece into distant foreign lands, from the Oder to the Don rivers.

I do not hesitate to call this forced resettlement of the Lemkos from their native land the greatest crime of the past centuries. I will not compare individual misfortunes, for every crime is after all a crime. Some crimes can at least be explained if they happened in time of war or if they took place in some wilderness or tundra well beyond the normal sphere of civilization. But this crime was perpetrated under peaceful conditions and not far from centers of highly developed cultures.

Before long, a half century will have passed since those days, yet still, in these supposedly new and more open times it is hard to find anyone who has the desire to correct this “mistake.” The word “mistake” sounds ironic here, but this crime is called precisely that: “a mistake due to difficult times.” It is as if there were no guilty parties, for the communist regime has fallen and this alone is considered its sufficient punishment. New offices and officials reluctantly plan to revive that which at one time was intentionally intended for destruction.

My native land cries out with its vacant and desolate lands. The wonderful Carpathian forests are being decimated. For over forty years powerful bulldozers annually have been carrying away hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of
wood products. This includes the production of paper, although it was not destined as books printed for my people! Why should my people have books in their native language when this language is not even considered a language, and when they were commanded by the decree of some general or other to be numbered as members of another people, a big people with whom they are compelled to identify?

In the 1950s, already several years after their exile, when my people were regaining consciousness from the horror, attempts again were made to reestablish Lemko culture. An educational organization was founded but failed. So the government created the Ukrainian Social-Cultural Organization (USKT) with a division called the "Lemko section." This was a parody of cultural autonomy, and after two years it was liquidated. Only in the weekly Ukrainian-language newspaper, Naše slovo [Our Word], was one page set aside for Lemkos. This page was intended to fulfill a "humanitarian" role: to inform the Lemkos about who they actually were. After thirty five years, some of them understood something about their identity, but the overwhelming majority did not understand and remained "without a [national] consciousness." Some observers might think that, indeed, these Lemkos must be slow witted, for already one hundred and twenty years ago the Ukrainian Prosvita Society [Enlightenment] had in mind the same goal, yet it, too, failed.

In 1989, on the fiftieth anniversary of their "non-existence," Lemkos were allowed to create their own association, the Lemko Society (Stovaryščja Lemkiv), which was a direct result of the new democracy. But there were no means provided for them to live or to develop. Everything had to start from scratch. Our people did not even have a means of mass communication? How can we find them, how can we reach them without any financial means offered for them to live or to develop.

You might ask: where are your people consolidated? Is it easy to ask this question, but much harder to answer it. They are scattered here and there throughout the entire country. How can we find them, how can we reach them without any means of mass communication? How can we awaken their national feeling after more than forty years among other peoples and foreign cultures?

Speaking of foreign cultures which have been imposed on Lemko Rusyns, I have in mind Polish culture—understandable considering where the Lemkos live—and Ukrainian culture, which does not fit organically into this picture. Contrary to common opinion, the bigger threat, especially for the contemporary young intelligentsia, is the influence of Ukrainian culture, because with it, as with any close fellow minority culture, comes a natural but not always conscious solidarity. This is especially true in big university towns. Lemkos and Ukrainians go to the same churches and meet in the same clubs—Ukrainian clubs, because there have been no Lemko clubs and at present only one city has one. We are told that is impossible to organize Lemko clubs because of the housing problem. The Ukrainians have clearly flourished for a long time according to the tenets of the "good" socialist times. Coming into Poland more often than before are professional Ukrainian song ensembles and theaters. Among our youth more and more Ukrainian music and video recordings circulate. And young people cannot live without these.

Alongside these natural processes, there is a strong, intentional propaganda campaign being carried out by the Ukrainian weekly, Naše slovo. Normally, every organization ought to have the ability to propagate its own beliefs. But when this propaganda, as the major means of "enlightenment" of the lesser brother, consists of tendentious information and even lies, then clearly it is no longer propaganda, but insolence. Such "cultural" activities, as a historical rule, have always been carried on by military force. And while these propagandizing "hordes" consist of only ten people, they have obvious success, because they are not fighting with honesty on an open playing field. That is the first point. The second point is that behind them stands a strong army, the name of which is professional politics.

I cannot help bringing up the example of the Kuwaitis and the Kurds. The first need to be protected, although this is not a question of preserving a particular distinct culture, for the Kuwaitis do not have one. Nor is the question here the preservation of people, or people in general. For the big powers, both people and culture translate into oil and then money. Protecting the Kurds has been a kind of empty promise on the part of the great powers, and it has been attempted solely in order to avoid shame before the entire world. It has taken place only in a physical sense, like the preservation of elephants in Africa or the aurochs in the Belovež virgin forests, although the Kurds definitely have their own ancient and rich culture.

Rusyns are the Kurds of central Europe. The Transcarpathian Region is the Ukrainian "Rusynistan," the Prešov Region is the Slovak "Rusynistan," and the Lemko Region is the Polish "Rusynistan." In this last Rusynistan, that is, in our native Lemko Region, an empty and desolate land awaits us. Will we need American tents? Probably so! But first of all we must be considered, not like aurochs or elephants, but as a people with its own culture, language, literature, national pride, and identity!

Petro Trochanovskij
Krynica, Poland
SUBCARPATHIA'S MASTERS: THE ART OF ADAL'BERT ERDELI AND JOSYF BOKŠAJ

The work of the famous Subcarpathian Rusyn artists Josyf Bokšaj and Adal'bert Erdeli ranks among the best of European art. They were truly pioneers in the world of professional art in Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus'), and it is thanks to their creative work that the people and nature of the Carpathians have been celebrated in art. Like Robert Burns, Bokšaj and Erdeli loved the mountains, and in their work they captured our landscape, our history, our culture, and the Rusyn soul. Bokšaj and Erdeli offered their talent and art in service to their homeland and to their people. Both of them dreamed of creating a thriving Subcarpathian school of art and worked for the blossoming of their native culture.

In the history of fine arts in Transcarpathia, the destinies of Bokšaj and Erdeli are inextricably linked. They were both born in 1891, and their creative paths have much in common. Nonetheless, each of them, as a person and an artist, is original and distinctive. Bokšaj is a consistent realist. Erdeli is a passionate admirer of modernism and impressionism. And both masters, as models of the highest professionalism, brought to their pupils and followers an abundant supply of optimism and love for people and nature. Under the Soviet regime, however, Erdeli the modernist endured many difficulties. Official attempts to compel all artists to conform to one ideology and style created much hardship and grief for him. Bokšaj, with his more traditional style, managed to live a more peaceful public life.

While numerous commentaries and articles have been written about Erdeli, the primary witnesses to the artist's position and to his perception of the world were his paintings. He was born into a teacher's family in the village of Zahattja in the Iršava region. He studied at the Mukáčevo gymnasium and later at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest (1911-1916). His first paintings were exhibited in 1913. It was at the artist colony in the Hungarian town of Kecskemét that Erdeli came under the decisive influence of the Hungarian painter, Béla Grünwald. Erdeli travelled extensively throughout Europe, and in 1923 at Munich’s “Glass Palace” he experienced great success from an exhibit of his work.

From 1929 through 1931, Erdeli lived in Paris and continued his studies. He returned home in 1931, and together with Bokšaj founded the Society of Artists and Fine Arts of Subcarpathian Rus'. Already in 1927, the two of them had opened a private school of drawing where talented young artists studied under their direction. Erdeli was a true leader and teacher, and students were drawn to him like a magnet. Erdeli himself loved people, often choosing for his artistic subjects people near and dear to him, parents, acquaintances, and even strangers. He has a whole gallery of such images, among them portraits such as “Mother” (1914), “Father” (1916), “Gypsies” (1928), “A Young Artist” (1928), “Anders Osterland” (1931), “A.C.” (1930), and “A Female Relative” (1937). Erdeli convincingly demonstrates in his works that he has complete mastery over the human form. In his portraiture he follows his own temperament. He
paints simple folk with no less inspiration and respect than any others. In them he perceived the strength of an inherent purity which emerges in such paintings as the "Old Stableman" and "Portrait of an Old Hucul" (1940s).

Two of Erdeli's favorite genres were still-life and landscape. He was in love with beautiful flowers, which he rendered in three-dimensional tones that resembled pictorial music. He very rarely employed half-tones or minor shades in his painting. What dominates his work is a markedly lyrical declaration of love and an admiration of the beauty of nature.

In the second half of the 1940s, Erdeli had become the recognized leader of the Subcarpathian school of painting, a teacher whose pupils were already achieving their own public fame: Andrej Kopča, Ernest Kondratovyc, Adal'bert Boreckij, and Zoltan Šoltés. In the immediate postwar era, Erdeli continued to play a leading role in Subcarpathian cultural life. In 1946, when an art school was opened in Užhorod, he became the first director and taught at the school until 1952. He also became president of the Transcarpathian branch of the Union of Artists of the Ukrainian SSR. It was not long, however, before Erdeli's own artistic principles were rejected in favor of the "principles" of socialist realism. The official press began to publish unfair criticism and to describe him with degrading labels. All of this pained him greatly and most likely contributed to his untimely death at the age of 64 in 1955.

As for Josyf Bokšaj, his artistic work is also a treasure of our culture. Bokšaj's art reflected his deep roots in Rusyn national culture, and throughout his career he strove for the development of all aspects of national self-consciousness and dignity. Indeed, Christian ethics and morals were an integral part of Rusyn national life, and Bokšaj's commitment to the moral idea in life and art led him to create a whole series of outstanding paintings on religious themes during the 1920s and 1930s. These works became the apotheosis of Bokšaj's humanity and love of humanity. Many paintings, altar compositions, and sketches are preserved in the churches of Užhorod, including the main cathedral, as well as in the Iršawa and Bereznyj regions of Transcarpathia, in churches in neighboring Slovakia, and the monastery church of Máriaπcs in Hungary.

Bokšaj's native Subcarpathian Rus' inspired him to create wonderful poetic landscapes. The charm of this national artist's painting lies in the timbre of his colors. The so-called "Bokšaj autumn" can be immediately distinguished in an exhibit. The artist himself during the course of his creative work was very consistent in his themes and subjects and in his sincere attachment to various places, such as particular corners of the Rachiv and Bereznyj regions. Parts of the city of Užhorod also frequently figure into his artistic work. Bokšaj often sought his subjects high in the mountains. His teaching career, which commenced in 1919, was of great significance to the development of art in Transcarpathia, and his pupils were constantly amazed at the strength of his will, energy, and capacity for work.

The life and work of Bokšaj and Erdeli are a model of service to the Rusyn people. Their names have been immortalized in Subcarpathian Rus' in the titles given to art museums and art schools. It is their artistic legacy, however, which will continue to enrich present and future generations.

Ljudmila Bikšej
Užhorod, Ukraine
As a geographer, I have long been fascinated by Subcarpathian Rus' and its association with East Central Europe. For hundreds of years this region was part of Hungary (later the Austro-Hungarian Empire), and between World Wars I and II it was a part of Czechoslovakia known as Subcarpathian Rus', or Ruthenia. Only after 1945 was it absorbed into the former Soviet Ukraine as the Transcarpathian oblast. In 1990, I began to study its historical geography, and that fall my wife and I drove there from Munich, Germany.

Subcarpathian Rus' reflects in its history and landscape a major world problem of political and ethnic conflict in a strategic multinational environment. Relics and current forms in the cultural landscape reflect the ideologies of four societies. The first of these constitute Rusyns, the majority of inhabitants in the area who speak a variant of the Ukrainian language but who remain culturally distinct from Ukrainians. The other three societies were external, although they ruled Subcarpathian Rus', and therefore affected decision making, spatial organization, and social change largely at the expense of the Rusyn population. Each of these external powers—Hungarian, Czechoslovak, Soviet—were interested in the strategic potential of this borderland and treated it accordingly.

The Hungarians controlled it before World War I as a series of largely feudal-like fiefdoms or counties in which they instituted a policy of magyarization carried out by administrators, aristocratic landowners, Uniate priests, and Jewish money lenders whose rule contributed to widespread poverty among the Rusyn population. During the interwar years (1919-1938) the area came under Czechoslovakia which used it as a link to Romania against their common enemy, Hungary. Although the Czechoslovak government made promises of autonomy to the Rusyns and carried out major improvements in education and economic development, these social changes were insufficient to satisfy the Rusyn population which became dissatisfied with the number of Czech administrators and their involvement in local affairs.

After World War II, the Red Army took over Subcarpathian Rus' and integrated it into the Ukrainian S.S.R. as its Transcarpathian oblast. Thus, the Soviets moved over the Carpathian Mountains into the Danubian basin, a geopolitical location they used to advantage in the East Europe revolutions against their rule in 1956 and 1968. As a strategic border area after 1945, Transcarpathia (except for Užhorod) was closed to Westerners, and certain restrictions were also imposed on the Rusyn population. Nonetheless, considerable social change has taken place under Soviet rule in the form of collectivization of agriculture industrialization, and the expansion of health and education facilities. Transcarpathia has also developed some of its potential for tourism and recreation.

Reaching the area by car proved easier than anticipated. Professor Paul R. Magocsi of the University of Toronto had not only provided advice but also suggested English-speaking contacts (German is my second language and my Russian is limited to a few phrases plus the ability to transliterate). In addition, I had worked through a travel agent in the United States who had been born in the area. Anticipating the lack of lead-free gasoline in what was still the Soviet Union, we purchased containers in Vienna for transporting gasoline with us from Hungary. A major delay confronted us at the Hungarian-Soviet border when we encountered long lines of cars and trucks. I was told by the Hungarian border guard to bypass the lines, however, for as Westerners we did not have to suffer the detailed inspections of those in line. These included primarily Hungarians visiting relatives and then Soviet citizens who had permission to travel in adjacent countries.

After a week in the Zakarpattja Hotel in Užhorod, my wife and I concluded that one priority for economic development and tourism in Subcarpathian Rus' must be a hotel for Westerners. The Zakarpattja Hotel served largely visitors from local areas and tour groups from throughout the former Soviet Union. The accommodations and services were substandard, especially in relation to the high prices and lack of expertise among the staff. Moreover, some of the personnel of the government tourist agency, Intourist, were neither friendly nor helpful, and few dining room personnel had any knowledge of other languages. The dining menu remained the same for the six days we were there and was limited to four main courses. Although a tourist rate existed for exchanging dollars in cash, we were told that travellers checks could not be exchanged, a decision that was altered when I objected vociferously. No attempt was made to provide information about daily cultural events, and when I tried to buy a picture book of Užhorod for sale by Intourist, I was told that it was not available to Westerners. My complaints about drunken parties in rooms on our floor went unnoticed by Intourist personnel. I was amused to find in reading Hedrick Smith's The New Russians that our experiences were not unusual in the former Soviet Union and were, in part, related to the prevailing importance of "group" service over that for individuals.

Our trip was successful despite all of this, and a major reason was the help provided by the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns. Through Dr. Magocsi, we met a representative of this society, Margarita Mihailova, who served as our guide and friend during our stay. Through her we gained much insight regarding the problems of the Rusyns and their attempt to seek a national identity, a struggle so well portrayed in Professor Magocsi's book, Subcarpathian Rus', 1848-1948: The Shaping of a National Identity (Harvard University Press, 1978). Margarita explained the current Ukrainian attempt to change all Rusyn place names to a spelling using the Ukrainian alphabet, and we saw evidence of this on town and village signs throughout the region.

During our stay in Užhorod we also made several trips throughout the region. In Užhorod, we found well-preserved architecture from both the Hungarian and Czechoslovak periods plus, of course, the newer socialist forms developed since 1945. Surprisingly, the core of the city has been preserved in its Hungarian form. According to one planner, the decision to preserve this historical character was made deliberately by the Soviet authorities after the war. In part, this may have been done to satisfy the many Hungarians living in the area. I had the feeling of being in a provincial town of the pre-1918 Hungarian Kingdom like Timișoara (now in Romania) or Zagreb (now in Croatia). Indeed, many buildings in Užhorod are painted in the "Maria Theresa
yellow,” a symbol of the “absolute” rule of the Habsburg emperors. Outstanding architecture includes the country administrative building (Megyeházá) from 1809, the Reform Calvinist Church of 1908, the Hotel Koruna of 1908, and other buildings on Theatre Square. Additional architectural monuments from the Hungarian period, but which have definite associations with the Rusyns, include the Užhorod castle with its adjoining folk museum of village architecture from various parts of Subcarpathian Rus' and the Greek Catholic cathedral. The Jewish synagogue, now a concert hall closed for repairs, reflects the importance of this ethnic group (approximately 95,000 before World War II), which was virtually eliminated in the Holocaust.

During the interwar decades, the government of Czechoslovakia took over Subcarpathian Rus'. A geopolitical aspect of this acquisition was the attempt by three countries—Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia—to surround revanchist Hungary and contain any attempt on its part to regain its former mountainous region of Subcarpathia. The Czechoslovak government was in a delicate position, for it was aware of the resentment felt by the indigenous nationalities of Subcarpathian Rus' who felt external control had merely shifted from Budapest to Prague. There was, however, a serious feeling held in Prague that modernization in Subcarpathian Rus' was necessary and would benefit not only that area but also the whole country. Consequently, evidence of the Czechoslovak presence remains to this day in the cultural landscape in the form of social and economic facilities like schools, hospitals, factories, and transport installations. For example, in Užhorod we saw the large Galago district of office and apartment buildings built by the Czech government for their administrators. The buildings are still used for the same purposes.

With the decision to preserve and utilize the Hungarian and Czechoslovak portions of Užhorod, Soviet urban construction took place predominantly outside the central core. This development consisted of large apartment projects with nearby retail and service facilities, plus a number of factories. The residential areas resemble those built all over the former Soviet Union according to standardized plans. A planner told us that this homogeneous architecture, which was cheap and also intended to reflect the ideology of a classless society, is frustrating to planners and architects. Standardized plans leave no room for imaginative building designs, especially those such as peaked roofs that fit into the natural environment of forested mountains.

We made three trips out of Užhorod: (1) up the Latorycja River to Svaljava and on to the Poljana spa; (2) to the cities of Mukachevo and Berehovo with additional views of the Hungarian plain; and (3) to Jasinja via Chust and the Tysa River valley. Since Subcarpathian Rus' had been closed to travel for most years since World War II, we felt fortunate to travel at will. Instructive maps showing roads and places of interest were available in kiosks. The trip to the Poljana spa gave us a chance to penetrate the Carpathian Mountains. We were impressed with the beauty of the forests, particularly the autumn colors dominated by beech at lower levels and spruce higher up. Pasture areas could be seen above tree line, but we had little chance to investigate whether the traditional grazing activities are still carried on there in the summer. In driving up the Latorycja valley, we stopped and visited an outstanding feudal site in the region—Beregvár, the former large palace of Count Schönborn. In actuality, the structure was more of a hunting lodge for this aristocrat who at one time owned some ten percent of Subcarpathian Rus', most of which was forest. The palace had been converted by the state into a sanatorium. On this brief trip was lacked time to see other historical sites, but we did notice the large secondary school built in the 1930s by the Czech government in Svaljava, which was yet another example of the serious attempts by the Prague regime at modernization in what at the time was the backward eastern part of the Czechoslovak republic.

Our second trip—through the plain of Subcarpathian Rus'—gave us an opportunity to view two other major towns, Mukachevo and Berehovo, plus the agricultural aspects of the region. Mukachevo is dominated by several historic sites which we visited: the massive fifteenth-century castle with numerous associations to Hungary's past; an eighteenth-century monastery, now a convent, on Černeňa Hora, a site with even earlier Rusyn religious connections; a city council building in the Hungarian style; and the White Palace, a former residence of the Rákóczi and Schönborn noble families. We observed that the plain is predominantly Hungarian in both historical relations and even present-day population. This is especially true of Berehovo, where we noticed numerous bilingual signs on the stores and offices. We also saw the large collective farms in the plain which included especially cultivation of wheat, corn, and vineyards. Finally, the former Black Marsh, north of Berehovo, is now drained, a project completed by the Soviets after 1945.

Our last trip took us across the region to Jasinja, a large town in the mountains close to the Jablunyc'kyj pass into the Ivano-Frankivs'k region. The road from Užhorod first crosses the plain to Chust and then enters the valley of the Tysa River passing through the towns of Buštna, Tjačiv, Teresva, and Solotvyna. In this stretch, which parallels the Romanian frontier, the former Soviet Union had maintained
a security fence and watchtowers along the river. At one point, the valley becomes so narrow that the railroad must cross over to Romania at Velikij Byëkiv before returning to Subcarpathian Rus’ at Dilove. In this area we saw the historic salt mining installations at Solotvyna. At Dilove the road turns abruptly north and follows the Tyza and its tributary, the Black Tysa, through Rachiv to Jasinja. Jasinja is a linear mountain village which has historically been the center of the Huculs, a distinct Rusyn ethnic group. Here we visited the historic wooden stave church from the eighteenth century.

What of the Rusyns? They remain a forgotten people, listed as Ukrainians in official statistics and apparently ukrainianized to a considerable degree under Soviet rule. The Rusyns were slow to feel the surge of nationalism and to take leadership in Subcarpathian Rus’ either under the Czech or the Soviet governments, both of which used centralized forms of control. The Rusyn peasant culture of handicrafts, logging, grazing, and village celebrations is disappearing, and the people are finding it difficult to adapt to a modern industrial society. Many Rusyns still live in villages of unique architecture, and some commute to cities and towns in order to work. The primary Rusyn symbol—the wooden stave church—has a precarious existence, but is protected by a fairly progressive program of historical preservation.

During our trip we heard much about the deteriorating state of the former Soviet economy, and we found it visible in Subcarpathian Rus’. We especially noted that shelves in stores from Użhorod to Jasinya were bare of goods. The few Western visitors we met in the Zakarpattja Hotel said that their relatives in nearby villages were experiencing economic hardships. On the collective farms, much of the harvest labor force that we saw consisted of women and school children. Construction standards were clearly poor as exemplified in the crumbling masonry of a recent concert hall in Użhorod along the River Už. The absence of technology is visible in the many factories which are dispersed throughout the region. While they take advantage of local lab, r, they also lack the proper means of preventing pollution. We were impressed, however, with the efforts to develop a recreational environment with new hotels, cabins, camping and fishing areas, hiking trails, and sanitariums in these beautiful mountains. Overcutting of trees apparently has been avoided and little erosion is visible. We also saw road signs urging the protection of wildlife.

Our primary impression is that modernization and social change, whether under the Hungarians, Czechs, or Soviets, have not been successful. Too much centralized control from Budapest, Prague, Moscow, and Kiev has been a disaster. As Zbigniew Brzezinski had implied in an issue of World Monitor: The Soviets should have learned that economic reform cannot take place unless decision-making is more decentralized to take into account especially the desires of regional ethnic groups. This conclusion certainly applies to all the independent countries that have replaced the Soviet Union, including Ukraine and its many regions like Transcarpathian which, hopefully, will benefit from political, social, and most importantly economic decision-making at the local level.

Dean Rugg, with June Rugg
Lincoln, Nebraska

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**RECENT EVENTS**

**Minneapolis, Minnesota.** On February 1, 1992, the Rusin Association presented its seventh annual Duchnovýč Dinner in honor of the nineteenth-century Rusyn national awakener Aleksander Duchnovýč. The nearly 100 guests enjoyed a full-course Rusyn dinner and a comedy skit by John Super. Rusyn folk music was performed by David Lucas and also by the Rusin Singers under the direction of John Sery.

**Maribor, Slovenia.** On February 3-5, 1992, an international conference on the “Nation and State: Small Nations and Ethnic Minorities in the Emerging Europe” took place. Among the speakers was Dr. Lyuba Shishelina from the Institute of International Economic and Political Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow who spoke on the topic: “Carpatho-Ukraine: Ways and Means for a Peaceful Solution of Ethnic Disputes.” She focused, in particular, on recent developments within the Cultural Society of Carpathian Magyars and the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns in Użhorod.

**State College, Pennsylvania.** On March 27-29, 1992, Pennsylvania State University celebrated its 13th Annual Slavic Folk Festival at the University Park campus. For the fourth consecutive year, the Byzantine Catholic Student Ministry of Penn State presented an exhibit of Carpatho-Rusyn culture. Organized by Richard Custer and David Felix, the Carpatho-Rusyn booth offered a photographic montage and video presentations of Rusyn cultural and religious life in Subcarpathian Rus’ and the United States, a display of Rusyn-American folk wedding scenes, and literature about Rusyn culture and events in the homeland. In addition the Slavjane Folk Ensemble of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, performed Carpatho-Rusyn and other Slavic folksongs and dances.

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.** On May 7, 1992, the Archdiocesan Byzantine Catholic Seminary joined forces with the Brother’s Brother Foundation, one Carpatho-Rusyn American fraternal (United Societies) and eight Slovak fraternal insurance organizations, as well as private donors in order to send more than 10,000 books to Greek Catholic seminaries in Slovakia and Transcarpathia. The initial organizer of the project, Marge Fetsko, a retired librarian from Mount Lebanon, Pennsylvania, was aided in the endeavor by Baslian Sister Demetria Zober, librarian at Saints Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary, and Jerry Jumba, Rusyn Chant Director for the Byzantine Catholic Archdiocese.

**Svidník, Czech-Slovakia.** On May 8-9, 1992, the Slovak Ministry of Culture, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Matica Slovenská, and the Rusyn Renaissance Society co-sponsored a seminar entitled, “Partners in History,” which was attended by Slovaks and Rusyns from various parts of Europe and North America, as well as by Slovakia’s visual and print media.

On the first day of the symposium, two talks were given by academics from Prešov. Professor Michal Popovyč’s presen-
Vasyl’ Sočka from Užhorod addresses the “Partners in History” conference in Svidnik, Czechoslovakia. Seated are Vasyl’ Turok, chairman of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Prešov); Ljubomir Medješi, chairman of the Rusyn Matka (Ruski Kerestur); and Dr. Ivan Turjanyeczja, chairman of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns (Užhorod). Photo: Susyn Mihalasky.

The media subcommittee is headed by Alexander Zozuljak.

Brothers in Slovakia and Ukrainian Transcarpathia favor a more aggressively political agenda. Some Rusyns from their own difficult domestic circumstances, favor academic activity as the best means of bettering their peoples’ lot. Their comparatively better-off Rusyn land and the Vojvodinian Rusyns in Yugoslavia, driven by strategy rather than over strategy, inasmuch as the Lemko Rusyns in Transcarpathia favor an independent Subcarpathian Rus’ state.

Moreover, they revealed a deep split in the Rusyn leadership exacerbated by such recent events as the potential break-up of the Czecho-Slovak federation, and the establishment of the Subcarpathian Republican party, based in Užhorod, which seeks an independent Subcarpathian Rus’ state.

The split might be conceived as disagreement over tactics rather than over strategy, inasmuch as the Lemko Rusyns in Poland and the Vojvodinian Rusyns in Yugoslavia, driven by their own difficult domestic circumstances, favor academic and cultural, not political activity as the best means of bettering their peoples’ lot. Their comparatively better-off Rusyn brothers in Slovakia and Ukrainian Transcarpathia favor a more aggressively political agenda. Some Rusyns from

Since the Revolution of 1989

Medzilaborce, Czechoslovakia. On December 6, 1991, the coordinating committee of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyn’ska Obroda) met in Medzilaborce to establish its working strategy for the coming year. Three subcommittees were set up to deal with education, the media, and the churches.

The education subcommittee is headed by Dr. Vasyl’ Turok and includes Professor Jurij Pan’ko and Helena Lapišákova. Its primary goal is to negotiate with the Ministry of Education in Slovakia in order to have a program in Rusyn culture introduced in schools. The two-hour weekly program would include an introduction to Rusyn history, literature, architecture, and folklore conducted in Rusyn.

The media subcommittee is headed by Alexander Zozuljak and includes Marijan Charytun and Jan Baka. Its goal is to negotiate with the Slovak State Radio and Ministry of Culture in order to have the Ukrainian-language radio station in Prešov divide its weekly programming: four days in Slovak and three days in Ukrainian. These percentages would reflect the proportion of people who responded that their identity was Rusyn or Ukrainian in the March 1991 population census. The subcommittee on the church is headed by Ivan Bicko and includes Andrij Varjan and Andrij Vladyka.

Its goal is to maintain contacts with the Pope and with the Prešov Region Greek Catholic (Jan Hirka) and Orthodox (Nikolaj Kocvar) bishops in order to assure that the Church Slavonic liturgy and local traditions be maintained in Rusyn parishes.

The language consultant to the Rusyn Renaissance Society, Professor Jurij Pan’ko of the Šafárik University in Prešov, suggested the following approach to the development of a Rusyn literary language. First, a 10,000-word Rusyn dictionary should be published before the end of 1992 to be followed by an elementary primar (bukvar) of the Rusyn language. This would be followed by the appearance of a standard grammar of the Rusyn language authored by Stepan Bunganyć that is presently being revised by Professor Pan’ko.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On May 10, 1992, the Golden Triangle Junior Tamburitzans, an Eastern European performing ensemble affiliated with the famous Duquesne University Tamburitzans, performed a complete Carpatho-Rusyn wedding set as the finale of their annual concert held in the town of Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania. The performance featured a wedding from the highlands of Verchovyna. The group developed authentic costumes from the Volovce’k’jy region and performed the entire wedding in the Rusyn language. The costume design and choreography were done by guest choreographer, John Righetti, of Mars, Pennsylvania. Last year, the Junior Tamburitzans also featured Rusyn dances in their annual concert, choreographed by Mr. Righetti, including a karička, čapašt, and čardaf.