RUSYNS IN HUNGARY

Territory inhabited by Carpatho-Rusyns at one time extended much farther south than today. There were several Rusyn villages not only on the plain of what today is southeastern Slovakia (near the towns of Michalovce and Trebišov), but even farther south in what today is within the borders of northeastern Hungary (north of Miskolc and Nyíregyháza). In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of these villages became slovakized or magyarized, although they did retain their Eastern Christian heritage in the form of the Greek Catholic Church.

In present-day Hungary, there is only one village left about which linguists agree that the inhabitants (today only the generation over sixty years old) speak Rusyn. That village is Kómloska (northeast of Miskolc—see map on outside back cover) where, despite the Rusyn speech of the older folk, Slovak is taught in the local elementary school alongside Hungarian.

There are, however, several people throughout Hungary—especially in the capital Budapest—who identify themselves as Rusyns. And, in the post-1989 democratic atmosphere within Hungary, some of these people have joined to form the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary (Organizacija Rusínom u Madjarsku). The organization is based in Hungary's capital of Budapest. Its chairman is the 34-year-old Gábor Hattinger from Kómloska, a poet, popular rock singer, and, by profession a book dealer. The Organization of Rusyns in Hungary also has a branch in Kómloska headed by associate chairman László Popovic. In a letter to the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, Hattinger described the new Rusyn organization in the following way:

Our people live in the most compact settlements in the hills of [southern] Zemplin county where there are about 3,000 Rusyns. In 1940, we were 'made into' Slovaks, because in this way the state did not have to deal with us as a distinct people. After the [1989] revolutions in Eastern Europe, when the Rusyns [in northeastern Hungary] began to experience a reawakening of their national identity, on May 3, 1991 we founded our organization. To date we have 400 members. We promote our organization in those villages where people, even if they do not speak our language (ne bisidujuj po-našomu), nonetheless do know that their forbears were Rusyns. Therefore, we have set as our main goal to have 500 registered members which will allow us to have a representative in parliament. It is really a shame that we do not have our own schools, newspapers, or office in the Ministry of Education. But this year [1992] we must try to obtain all of these goals. I believe that with the help of each Rusyn we will be able to succeed.

Since that letter was written, the membership in the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary has by the summer of 1992 increased to 520. The organization’s main short-term goals are to establish a Rusyn cultural center in Kómloska, to have Rusyn instead of Slovak taught as a second language in the Kómloska elementary school, and to have a popular history of Rusyns published in Hungarian.

It is interesting to note that Slovaks in Hungary support the work of the Organization of Rusyns and understand the Slovak-Rusyn identity problem in Kómloska and other villages in northeastern Hungary. Commenting on a recent Hungarian radio program that reported on Komloska and interviewed its inhabitants, the chairman of the Free Organization of Slovaks in Hungary, Alexander Kormos, said:

One woman responded to the questions of the interviewer in her native language....That language is Rusyn, not Slovak! It is a waste of time to force artificial questions about Slovak identity and the Slovak language upon a simple woman who, in response to the question whether she speaks Slovak at home, mistakenly responded: 'Po slovenske bešidujume'. You know what that reminds us of?—those cases when from the standpoint of national consciousness a magyarized Slovak talks about himself in Slovak with the words: 'I am a Magyar'. We know very well (and now we can freely speak out and write about it) that this is a result of forced assimilation, or the result of the false nationality policy of [Hungary’s former] Communist regime.

It is a pleasant surprise to know that Rusyns in Hungary, led by young people, are actively working to preserve their national and cultural identity. Should you wish to write them with words of moral or any other support, address your correspondence to: Mr. Gábor Hattinger Magyarországi Ruszinok Szervezete Nagymező u. 49. füz. 6 1065 Budapest HUNGARY Philip Michaels

Gábor Hattinger, chairman of the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary.

Hungarian radio program that reported on Komloska and interviewed its inhabitants, the chairman of the Free Organization of Slovaks in Hungary, Alexander Kormos, said:

One woman responded to the questions of the interviewer in her native language....That language is Rusyn, not Slovak! It is a waste of time to force artificial questions about Slovak identity and the Slovak language upon a simple woman who, in response to the question whether she speaks Slovak at home, mistakenly responded: 'Po slovenske bešidujume'. You know what that reminds us of?—those cases when from the standpoint of national consciousness a magyarized Slovak talks about himself in Slovak with the words: 'I am a Magyar'. We know very well (and now we can freely speak out and write about it) that this is a result of forced assimilation, or the result of the false nationality policy of [Hungary’s former] Communist regime.

It is a pleasant surprise to know that Rusyns in Hungary, led by young people, are actively working to preserve their national and cultural identity. Should you wish to write them with words of moral or any other support, address your correspondence to: Mr. Gábor Hattinger Magyarországi Ruszinok Szervezete Nagymező u. 49. füz. 6 1065 Budapest HUNGARY Philip Michaels

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 Phone: 412-371-3823

Patricia A. Krafteik, Editor Annual Subscription is $12.00
HRYHORIJ TARKOVYČ (1754-1841)

Hryhorij Tarkovyć is honored and remembered primarily as the first bishop of the Prešov Greek Catholic eparchy, which he headed for twenty years. In addition, Bishop Tarkovyć was a scholar and a poet, and he was respected as one of the most learned men of his time. Like his contemporary Vasyl' Dovhovyc (1783-1849), Tarkovyć is an example of a Carpatho-Rusyn who strove to raise the cultural level of his people through his dedication to universal enlightenment.

Tarkovyć was born in 1754 in the village of Pasika (Bereg county), in present-day Transcarpathia, Ukraine where his father was a cantor. He received his education in theology at the Royal Greek Catholic General Seminary at the Church of St. Barbara in Vienna. The Barbareum, as the seminary was known, was extremely influential in the cultural enlightenment of Carpathian Rus'. There Rusyns from Subcarpathia mingled with their fellow Rusyns from Galicia and with Slavs from other parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire. They attended lectures at the University of Vienna by some of the foremost Slavic scholars, including the Czech cultural activist Josef Dobrovsky and the Slovene philologist Jernej Kopitar. These teachers promoted the idea of Pan-Slavism, that is, the consciousness of a Slavic brotherhood of nations within which they asserted the individuality and cultural worth of each Slavic people. Tarkovyć maintained contacts with the Slavists he had known in Vienna, as well as with Rusyns who had emigrated to Russia, and their influence is apparent in his own understanding and expression of Rusyn national identity.

Ordained in Mukacevo in 1779, Tarkovyć served as an instructor at the Uzhhorod theological seminary and as a priest in Hajdudorog. From 1803 until 1813, he held the influential post of censor of Slavic books for the Royal Slavic Printing Press in Buda, a position which allowed him to become familiar with contemporary Slavic literature and earned him a reputation as a stern critic. He also represented the Mukacevo eparchy in the Hungarian parliament in Bratislava. Described by historians as serious, scholarly, and reclusive, he is said to have spent his days and nights reading Latin and Greek philosophers and historians in the original languages. He was also recognized as an expert in Church Slavonic, and under his supervision in 1809, the complete Bible was published in that language. After being consecrated bishop of the newly formed Prešov eparchy in 1821, Tarkovyć continued to pursue scholarship and promote enlightenment, establishing an extensive and valuable library. And he strove to raise the cultural and educational level of the Rusyn clergy and people. When Mychail Lučkaj published his Slaveno-Rusyn Grammar (1830) and his collected sermons (1831), Tarkovyć required the priests in his eparchy to purchase copies for each parish.

Tarkovyć was also successful in making Carpatho-Rusyn culture known to the Hungarian public and the broader Slavic world. While serving as censor in Buda, he wrote a ceremonial ode dedicated to Palatine Joseph of Hungary. Written in the rhetorical style of high classicism, this ode expressed ties of kinship with Russia and encouragement for the advancement of native Rusyn literature, tempered by pragmatic homage to Hungarian culture. The poet Tarkovyć invoked the "Rusyn muses" to descend the Carpathian mountains and to take their place in the Hungarian cultural world. He called attention to the Carpathian region as "the cradle of the Slavs," the first use of an image that became a frequent motif of Pan-Slavists and Russian Slavophiles in the nineteenth century. And while Tarkovyć openly acknowledged the inspiration of the Russian classical poet Sumarokov, he also affirmed the aesthetic value of qualities natural to the Rusyn muse—sincerity, simplicity and modesty. Moreover, Tarkovyć's ode expressed a sophisticated consciousness of the political dimensions of culture, asserting a positive, individual, Rusyn national identity forced to adapt the cultural demands of the multinational Austro-Hungarian empire. The Russian historian Nikolaj Karamzin cited the ode in his well-known History of the Russian State as an example of the persistence of a Russian-oriented culture in an alien political context. As one of the first such conscious statements in Rusyn literature, Tarkovyć's poetic and political sentiments set the tone for the national awakening of the mid-nineteenth century.

History has not been especially kind to Bishop Tarkovyć. His ode was often misinterpreted according to the ideological predisposition of Russophile or Ukrainophile literary historians. And his stern nature is remembered as the cause of difficulties experienced by his clerk, the future national awakener Aleksander Duchnovyć. Nonetheless, Tarkovyć remains an example of one of the many individuals in Carpatho-Rusyn history who, by quiet, unassuming, but determined effort made a contribution to the general advancement of knowledge and to the cultural and spiritual advancement of his people.

Elaine Rusinko
Catonsville, Maryland
THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT
OR IN SEARCH OF THE PEOPLE WHO SAY “LEM”

John T. Zubal is an internationally known dealer in old, out of print, rare and unusual books and periodicals. His bookstore in Cleveland, Ohio is one of the biggest in the United States. He has actively pursued an interest in his Rusyn roots for a number of years. The following article offers his impressions of a recent trip he made to the Lemko Region.—Editor

Travellers who leave Cracow by car, driving southward and eastward into the Carpathians, soon notice that traffic is light. Small trucks, a few buses, but not many private cars traverse the highways. It is not difficult to manage 100 or so kilometers an hour along the two-lane blacktopped roads. Woods along the roadside give way to fields growing potatoes, maybe corn or some cabbage. Numerous horse-drawn wagons and carts on the roads surprise the tourists. Similarly, travellers notice that there are few tractors in the fields. A travel guide comments, matter-of-factly: “Our country’s farms are less than fifty percent mechanized.” This is not an understatement, especially taking into consideration scenes of farm folk digging potatoes or turnips without even shovels or spades.

Villages (or should they be called settlements?) are three or four kilometers apart. Most have as many as twenty houses, some outbuildings, occasionally a church, but, unlike the small farming communities of North America, no hint of commercialism can be detected. That means no signs promoting anything like Mail Pouch tobacco, Pepsi, the Rotary or the Jaycees. No gas stations, public libraries or post offices, either. Nor are there any more the slogan banners that used to stretch between utility poles proclaiming the glories of Marxism-Leninism. Most houses are substantial, sensible constructions of unpainted concrete block and tin roofs, suggesting space enough for extended families of a dozen or more members. Visitors are impressed that all are wired for electricity, but suspect that few have telephones.

Stopping from place to place to study the landscape, we were reminded of northeastern Ohio. It’s romantic to think that those who emigrated a century ago chose to settle in sections of America that brought this part of Galicia to mind. Now about fifty miles southeast of Cracow, the roads wind through valleys, some wide, others quite narrow. They cross several tributaries of the Vistula river and one remembers hearing of the “Vistula Action” (Akcija Wisła) of forty years ago which completed the “emigration” [by forced deportation—ed.] of the ancient inhabitants of this land.

The guide-interpreter has been earning his pay. His knowledge of the history and geography of the region seems to increase the further our party gets from Cracow. He explains that he has travelled into the mountains many times to increase the further our party gets from Cracow. He explains that he has travelled into the mountains many times to approach to Gorlice, visitors drive along a ridge. To left and right (remember Pennsylvania) oil rigs, none of which is pumping today. One passenger recalls his grandfather mentioning nearly fifty years ago that he had been a miner in the Old Country; is it possible grandpa meant he worked these oil fields? The guide explains that it was here, outside Gorlice, that Ignacy Lukasiewicz discovered how to refine petroleum. Once inside the town limits, the guide points out a large Orthodox church having a new tin roof installed.

Now in Nowy Sącz we become more aware that we are nearing the borderlands of western civilization. Look! There’s a large marketplace with perhaps 200 stalls offering fresh produce, canned or preserved foods, and a wide variety of hardware and household things. At first we aren’t struck by the jars of caviar with their Cyrillic indicia. Soon, though, it is obvious that many of the merchants plying their goods are foreigners, men and women from Eastern Galicia, formerly Soviet Ukraine, taking advantage of the collapse of the regulations which long restricted or denied travel and trade. The guide informs us that they come to Nowy Sącz with whatever goods they can gather at home. Clothing, tools, housewares, small jars of caviar are sold for Polish złoty, which in turn are spent on food and other items scarce at home. These new merchants return home, across the historic Curzon Line, with their Polish produce and products only to repeat the trade cycle as soon as possible. The trade is reminiscent of the trans-Mediterranean commerce on which Burkhardt long ago attributed the Renaissance in Italy!

We are now within a few miles of our destination, the villages of Desnicza and Jaworze. It was from these two settlements that our ancestors migrated to America, nearly one hundred years ago. A right turn off the main Jasło–Dukla road, over a few hills, and suddenly the village limit sign: Desnicza. The village clings to the side of a hill. Perhaps twenty-five houses and an equal number of barns, stables, and other outbuildings, that is Desnicza, or Dosnyeja as it had been known to the original inhabitants. And a church dedicated to St. Dmitrij, where grandpa was baptized and confirmed more than a century ago when he was two days old. The church is about 100 feet up a steep driveway. Its Byzantine-style exterior has recently been replastered and painted white. It was closed from 1948 until 1990 when the Roman Catholic diocese exercised title to St. Dmitrij (now St. Demetrius) and stationed a fulltime priest there. There is a new rectory and the parish priest has a car at his disposal. This pastor is quite pleased that we have stopped to visit his church which he opens for us to explore. He proudly reminds us that this was also the birthplace of Cardinal Syl’vester Sembratovycz, Greek Catholic Metropolitan of Galicia in the late nineteenth century. The chapel, which comfortably seats a congregation of eighty or so, has been Romanized except for dim traces of a few icons on side walls. The priest tells us that the iconostasis and all church records were taken away by members of the old congregation when the church was closed in 1948 during the Akcija Wisła.

The authorities were not able to deport the church’s cemetery, however. It occupies about two acres, overgrown with weeds and grass, immediately in front of St. Dmitrij’s main doors. Many large stone and metal gravemakers are intact but badly weathered. The hope that we might find long forgotten ancestor’s gravestones is soon abandoned. The names which are readable, whether in Cyrillic or in Latin characters, hold no surprises. That there are many elaborate and expensive markers indicates that in the distant past there may have been a thriving money economy in the area. The pastor confesses he has not been able to take care of the cemetery. We wonder where the recently deceased of this reactivated parish are buried, but, in light of the dilapidated tombstones, perhaps the question is unfair. On the south side of St. Dmitrij’s, there is another graveyard in which are
buried about forty unknown soldiers of Emperor Franz Josef's Austro-Hungarian army who fell in battles in the area in 1915 and 1916. How considerate that the new priest recently planted a wooden cross over each grave and the vegetation has been trimmed. There is yet another smaller gravesite at St. Dmitrij's, a bit of the east of the soldiers'. In this plot are buried some of the church's earlier priests. Father tells us that one of his predecessors was executed by Polish partisans in 1944, apparently for having supported the UPA [Ukrainian Insurgent Army] in those years.

We move on, two kilometers westward to Jaworze. Some geese chase our car a few yards and young kids walking home from school are startled by a shiny red Ford moving up the road. We continue on the road, now hardly paved, looking for house No. 14. Orchards alternate with tilled fields and meadows, all on steep hills. Across the valley, to the south, can be seen the higher mountains towards Slovakia. Suddenly the road gives way to a narrow, mostly overgrown, trail. This must be the village limits! The driver realizes it is not prudent to force the car further westward. There are three women and a man working the potato crop up the hill, and the guide asks them about No. 14 and the people who live there.

It's the house down the hill, to the south some one hundred yards. So here, finally, on the edge of Jaworze (or Javorje) is the place where our ancestors lived until 1947, according to the present inhabitants. That was the year in which the authorities visited these settlements in hills and valleys whose people had hidden Gomuška from the Nazis. Those representatives of the newly founded Polish Peoples' Republic gave the inhabitants two hours to gather their most prized possessions and climb onto wagons which would relocate them far beyond their ancient lands. This was the Akcija Wisła about which we were continually reminded.

There are three buildings at Jaworze, No. 14, and they clearly show an evolution in housing. The oldest, now used as a storage facility, is a large log cabin with a tin roof and two or three windows. The design vaguely suggests it was erected early in this century. In front of these two older homes is a modern two-story concrete block house with basement. It is still under construction, now about 95 percent complete. Three generations of occupants are at work on this mid-afternoon, sawing wood, feeding chickens.

They quickly tell us that their family has been living at No. 14 since 1952. That year the authorities in "overpopulated" Gorlice told them to move into the "better land" of Jaworze! The settlement had been closed and the property had been vacant since 1947. Moreover, they reminded us that when the village was closed by authorities, there were about fifteen more houses to the west in an area now overgrown with vegetation. The officials demolished those houses and reduced the size of Jaworze by half.

They complain that life is never easy here; it is almost impossible to sell their produce and they have no money. Judging by the lack of mechanization (except for an electric drill which one man was using to install a porch railing), they are stating the truth. A village without cars, trucks, or tractors. What an irony, we think! How fortunate that our ancestors made the trip to America, otherwise they probably would have been shipped to former East Prussia or Silesia. It is soon obvious that we aren't particularly welcome to this sad place. We decide that we have gathered as much information as is available in settlements where record keeping and historic memory are not very high priority items. We move on, towards Dukla for a visit to the Lemko Museum.

The Lemko Museum is the lifetime labor-of-love of Fedor Gocz (Gocz) in Zydrandowa (see the Carpatho-Rusyn American, Vol. X, No. 2, 1987, pp. 4-6). It is a Lemko whose family refused to leave the area forty-five years ago. His story is dramatic and curious. As a child he witnessed the 1944 battle in what became known as the Valley of Death, the route to the Dukla Pass and, through it, to Budapest. That battle has been memorialized in one of the museum buildings which contains war relics Gocz has uncovered farming and scavenging over decades in the area. Helmets, shell casings, canteens, boot fragments, epaulets—all are on display together with wall mountings which record the history of the great battle.

For us, the more interesting sections of the museum are the recreations of life on a Lemko farm prior to the Akcija Wisła and the expulsion. There is a cottage with thatched roof, dirt floor, one room serving as kitchen, parlor, bedroom. Gocz points out that it lacks in complete authenticity: note that the hole-in-the-roof long used in place of a chimney is not present. There are some icons, folk art, photos of church dignitaries from long ago, framed quotations, a picture of the naive painter Nikifor (and his story), a litho of Taras Ševčenko, mannequins dressed in festive peasant garb. A quarter mile down the road is the Orthodox wooden church Gocz rehabilitated. It is a tiny chapel with room for perhaps fifty worshippers, canonically correct except for a markedly Latin-rite porcelain statue of the Virgin Mary as a side altar. A Ukrainian Orthodox priest celebrates the Divine Liturgy on a regular basis for the Gocz family and for interested neighbors and visitors.

The Gocz sons today are ripping logs to make boards with which they will repair the sheeting over which a thatched roof is woven. Curator Gocz and his wife, an elementary school teacher, invite us for tea and horilka (brandy). They confirm what others have said: there is little to buy, commerce is almost non-existent. If country folks are to survive in Poland, they must make their own food and shelter. The family prides itself on the self-sufficiency it has achieved in this valley. That curator Gocz developed his Lemko Museum and historic farm during a time when the state policy of Poland was to deny the very existence of the Lemkos is a worthy and remarkable accomplishment.

It is late afternoon and we decide to begin the trip back to Cracow, about 100 miles to the northwest. The experience of travelling through this Lemko land, mostly forgotten by time and man, has been both saddening and illuminating. Among ourselves the emigrants of 1890-1913 may have talked about their early life in these hills. Many, however, did not share those experiences with their children and grandchildren. After visiting these ancestral lands it is easier to understand why their memories were poor, why they were so silent about the old days. It is now also much easier for us to empathize with the American Indian or the Yaqui or the peoples of Ethiopia or Europe's Jews and Palestine's Arabs, deprived of their ancestral lands, their churches and temples, their languages and their lives, sacrificed like the Lemkos, to demonstrate the power of some foreign state and a culture or ideology it thereby sought to defend.

John T. Zubal
Cleveland, Ohio
WHAT TO MAKE OF THE JOURNAL RUSYN AND THE RUSYNS THEMSELVES?

the summer of 1990, the first issue of a Rusyn-language publication under the title Rusyn appeared (see the appendix Rusyn American, Vol. XIII, No. 3, 1990, p. 9). It Medzilaborce at the initiative of several local activists—Dr. Mychajlo Bycko, the Reverend František Krajnjak, Stepanko, and Dr. Mychajlo Turok-Hetěš, who were invited from Prešov by Dr. Vladyslav Grešlik and Andrij Zozuljak. Since its second issue, Rusyn has appeared in Prešov as the bi-monthly organ of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyns'ka Obroda) under the editorship of Andrij Zozuljak. The following critique appeared in Prešov's Ukrainian weekly newspaper, Nový žytisť, on September 28-October 3, 1990 (while Zozuljak was its editor). The critique is written by a literary historian from Bratislava, Dr. Vasyl' Choma.—Editor

Even as the Medzilaborce group of intellectuals together with the journal Rusyn has barely managed to emerge, the editorial and literary staff have already come under fierce attack from scholars as well as other writers. They are accused of being incompetent, uncollegial, and ungrammatical; and together with a host of greater or lesser sins, are accused of subscribing to "political Rusynism." But these critics have not identified the actual heart of the matter. Not one critic has pointed out what compelled this group of activists to proclaim to the world to hear, that they are Rusyns. How did we arrive here?

In my opinion, this is due to a mindset so ingrained by the past that we are not capable of freeing ourselves from it. For example, there are articles of contentious articles who do their best first to conjure up the image of an antagonist, and then deftly and expertly proceed to charge him with the most grievous of crimes. Once such an image is invented, it is then a simple matter to ascribe to this enemy of all things Ukrainian, non-existent ambitions, misdirected energies, and so on.

But is it a sin or a crime to seek a way out of this impossible situation in which a large segment of our Rusyn population does not accept "Ukrainian" as its national name? The polemics above ignore the one fundamental problem—the attitude of much of our populace to the names "Rusyn" and "Ukrainian.

In the question of Rusynism, these accusations are commonly confused to the artificial process of assimilation of our co-ethnic, accelerating it rather than slowing it down. How could it be unclear that the main concern of the Rusyn activists is to arrest the process of assimilation and not to oppose matters Ukrainian? The Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyns'ka Obroda) was attempted to restore to our people their historically accurate name; to preserve it and to insist in our youth a love toward it; to cultivate our Rusyn culture; and to cherish our neglected heritage. But this side of the Rusyn activist's initiatives remains unrecognized. Yet it is precisely in these efforts that the relevance of their existence lies. I believe it is necessary to provide support to these efforts, thereby affording them an opportunity to carry their message to the rest of population.

From the days of totalitarian rule we are still accustomed to believing in the existence of an enemy who must be destroyed. If the antagonist is a nonexistent enemy created by a mindset mentality, there is no argument of so-called "political Rusynism." Is it an argument of the fact that this accusation of "political Rusynism" was most intense during the cult of personality, when to call oneself a Rusyn was considered one of the worst possible crimes.

In those not so distant times, when Rusyns were obliged to call themselves Ukrainians only, there was no room to doubt the correctness or fairness of the ruling party's national policy. The unhappy consequences of that forced ukrainization are a vivid memory for all. Instead of a Rusyn population totaling nearly 250,000 in the prewar years, in the Prešov Region there now remain fewer than 50,000 Rusyn Ukrainians. The decline in the Rusyn population was due primarily to political factors. A significant role was played by the government program encouraging Rusyns to emigrate to Ukraine in 1946-47, by ukrainization, and by forced adherence to the Greek Orthodox faith.

These brutal policies, which evoked a passive resistance in our people, for some reason are disregarded. But the cause cannot be blamed on the effect. It is necessary only to visit our villages and ask people who they are. The majority will reply that they are Rusyns. What sense is there in ignoring this practical and pragmatic fact?

What the term "Rusyn" means today is one matter, but how it evolved historically and what it signified during its development in our history is another. Here, to some degree, one might find some justification in the arguments of the above-mentioned critics. But we are dealing with the present, not with ancient history. The turbulent political events in our country demand an honest analysis of the past and present, and oblige us not to exclude any segment of the population from the political process, nor to resolve its problems secretly, behind closed doors. It will become evident that it is precisely Rusyns who live in these villages, and it is a mistake to force them to call themselves Ukrainians once again. It is more reasonable to conclude that if Rusyns live there today, they will continue to do so in the future. And if Rusyns are found in those Carpathian villages, there will also be Ukrainians; however, not under coercion, but of their own free will.

I am far from defending or justifying the concept of Rusynism put forth in the journal Rusyn. In reality, a concept in the full sense of the word does not yet exist. It can be deduced thus far only from the magazine's text. On the whole, it is still somewhat rudimentary. It is clear only that the authors wish to revive the spirit of Rusynism among our people. As we near the end of the twentieth century, this might seem anachronistic. But given the specific historical conditions and sociocultural and political-economic development of our populace, in the absence of political freedom, the tendency toward a blossoming of Rusynism is by no means reactionary. On the contrary, it provides an environment for the flourishing of creative energies among people who consider themselves Rusyns and who wish to assume an active role in the reconstruction of a society based on the principles of self-determination.

I feel it is inadvisable to arrest this process, unwise to approach it with hostility, and senseless to expend energy in fruitless argumentation. The real question is not to defend each individual argument, but rather to deal above all with the broader all-encompassing issue of how our population perceives its identity. This is the primary concern, and all remaining questions flow from this essential problem. A segment of our population considers itself Rusyn, the remainder—Ukrainian. Historically, both share a common
SUBCARPATHIAN RUSYNS APPEAL TO THE PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

Subcarpathian Rusyns constitute one of the oldest Slavic peoples of Central Europe whose roots are among the Slavic peoples of the Tysa River and the Carpathian Mountains. The literature and ancient culture of the Subcarpathian Rusyns are closely tied with the enlighteners of the Slavic peoples, Cyril and Methodius. It was these two brothers of the Tysa River and the Carpathian Mountains, and, after the World War II, Ukrainians, Russians, and others also reside in the region. Despite the denationalization and assimilation policies of various regimes and leaders, the Rusyns have succeeded in preserving their national pride and consciousness, their native language, and their history. They have succeeded in creating a rich material and spiritual culture.

Our people have given Slavic culture such outstanding awakeners and enlighteners as Aleksander Duchnovyc, Aleksander Pavlovyc, Aleksander Mitrac, Mychail Luckai, Anatolij Kralys'kyj, Arsenij Kocak, Evhenij Fencyk, Andrey Repai, Ivan Sil'vaj, and Julij Stavrovs'kyj-Popradov. Many scholars have come from the Rusyn intelligentsia. Among these are Ivan Orlaj, the first specialist in the Russian literature of Nikolaj Gogol'; Petro Lodij, a philosopher; Nestor Kukol'nyk, a writer; Vasyl' Kukol'nyk, an activist in the Russian Enlightenment; Aleksander Dudrovyc, a rector of Kharkiv University; and Vasyl' Dovhovyc, a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, a scholar, and a poet.

Outstanding artists have contributed to the national culture of Subcarpathian Rus' by founding a Rusyn school of art and thereby honoring the Rusyn people far beyond the borders of our native homeland. Among these artists are the Academician Igor Grabar' and painters Adal'bert Erdeli, Josyf Boksaj, Fedir Manajlo, Andrej Kocka, Ernest Krotrovyc, Anton Kassaj, and others.

The totalitarian regime in our land after World War II supported the complete denationalization and systematic ukrainianization of the Subcarpathian Rusyns. All Rusyn schools, newspapers, journals, and publishing houses were order to codify the literary language of Rusyns, representatives of Prešov Region meets must first reach a consensus and work out a system for this language. After discussion and debate by scholars and representatives of the entire cultural community, the proposed standard would then be introduced as a possible norm to the entire population for its rejection or acceptance. Success of this project would depend on the calibre of the finished product. But what can be done until such a project is undertaken?

This work could be conducted spontaneously in the press, where various proposals would be debated over under the supervision of specialists. On the other hand, various materials could appear in dialect with the progressive introduction of all local forms of vernacular. Leading philologists, well acquainted with the process of codification of other Slavic languages, are aware that only after numerous attempts can the one language most acceptable to the intelligentsia and general populace of the group in question gradually gain broader usage. The most influential in the process of language codification and acceptance have traditionally been the works of writers, poets, and cultural activists. In our situation, a consistent role can be played by our press, radio, and television. Clearly this type of work cannot be conducted under force or duress. We certainly recall clearly the consequences of the forced introduction of the Ukrainian language from the early 1950s. A similar approach to the institution of a Rusyn literary language could also meet an uncertain end. The time has come for us to learn from our past mistakes.
closed down. The education of Rusyn children in the schools was and continues to be conducted at the present time in Ukrainian and Russian. The history of our people and classic works of Rusyn literature are not taught.

The totalitarian regime also deported many who disagreed with the new politics. Among them were Rusyns, Magyars, Slovaks, Germans, and others. At the present time, despite any democratic progress in our society, Subcarpathian Rusyns are not full and equal masters of their own land. They are not recognized as a people. Yet, Subcarpathian Rusyns were officially recognized as a distinct people who had the right to decide their own fate according to the principle of self-determination when they were accepted into the Union of Oppressed Peoples of Central Europe on October 23, 1918. At that time, the Rusyn homeland was defined as a republic with the name, Rus'ka Krajina—the Rusyn Land.

On May 20, 1919, the Central Rusyn National Council expressed the will of the Rusyn people to form a delegation for negotiations in Prague with then President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk concerning the annexation of Subcarpathian Rus' to the Czechoslovak Republic. Shortly thereafter, a peace conference also agreed with the annexation. After the Treaty of Saint Germain on September 10, 1919, conditions to bring Subcarpathian Rus' into Czechoslovakia with the rights of autonomy and self-rule were determined.

Subcarpathian Rus' had its own governors: Gregory Žatkovčy, Antonij Beskyd, Konstantyn Grabar, and Ivan Parkanj. On October 11, 1938, Prague appointed the first six-member government in the history of Subcarpathian Rus' headed by Andrej Brodij. Avhustyn Vološyn followed Brodij as the second prime minister in the history of the government of Subcarpathian Rus'. On March 15, 1939, in the city of Chust, the Diet of Carpatho-Ukraine was called and Vološyn was chosen president of the republic which within several hours ceased to exist when Hungarian troops occupied the city and the remaining territory of Subcarpathian Rus'.

In autumn 1944, the territory of Subcarpathian Rus' was occupied by Soviet troops, and under their control a new government was formed, calling itself the National Council of Transcarpathian Ukraine. On January 22, 1946, however, in violation of international law, the Transcarpathian Republic/Subcarpathian Rus' was transformed into the Transcarpathian oblast of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. From that time, the Rusyn people were subject to national economic and political genocide. Our Carpathian forests have been disappearing, cut down in a barbarous way, and our national resources have been mercilessly squandered. Timber, marble, mercury, kaolin, salt, a series of other minerals, and hundreds of millions of liters of unique curative mineral waters—all of these have been removed in enormous quantities.

At the same time, in a heavily populated region not far from the village of Pistrjalovo, next to the city of Mukačevo with its hundred thousand residents, a powerful Radiolocation Station was built. And the Carpathian mountains, with their Runa and Stoj peaks, are now crowned with powerful radar equipment. Colonial-style politics and the destruction of our ecology are reasons for the general worsening of the health of our people, the increase in illness, and a diminished life expectancy. And the ability of the people to defend themselves is on an extremely low level.

During the years of Soviet rule, several ecologically damaging industries were established, creating conditions for the artificial influx of population from other regions of the Soviet Union, especially from western Ukraine. This resulted in a resettlement of the area and its transformation into the most heavily populated region of Central Europe. The last action of the previous regime's colonial politics was the decision to extract gold from the Mužževs'kij mountains near the city of Berehovo. The technology of this operation is dangerous to the surrounding environment and the health of the population, since highly toxic substances are released as a result of chemical reactions involved in the extraction process. All efforts to have an impact on these processes of the distorted economics of the land have been impossible, since all the governing power is held by the central authorities. The opinion of the people carries no weight.

The confirmation of the independence of Subcarpathian Rus' and its original population, the Rusyns, is found in the research of scholars and historians such as Nikolaj Karamzin, Vladimir Ključevskij, Sergej Solov'ev, Mychail Lučka, Julij Huca-Venelin, Aleksander Duchnovič, and many others. It can also be traced in the works of contemporary historians. Hence, Ivan Pop, former Soviet historian and chief editor of the journal *Sovetskoe slavjanovedenie* (Soviet Slavic Studies), described the historical development of Subcarpathian Rus' (Transcarpathia) in the following way: Transcarpathia is a unique region. It was never a separate administrative unit of the Hungarian crown during Austro-Hungarian rule. A decisive increase in the development of Transcarpathia took place in the period during which it was part of Czechoslovakia. When it was annexed to the Soviet Union, it was one of the most developed oblasts in Ukraine. But for political reasons, the inhabitants were made to believe that they, as a forgotten and backward people, were being joined to the rich Ukraine... For instance, from where in this region has the broad movement of the Ukrainian language of Ševčenko emerged in society if Ukrainian is a bookish language for Transcarpathian Rusyns and not their own? Their own Rusyn language is far from the Ukrainian literary language.

The official and vapid “ukrainianization” which was initiated after World War II has had precisely the opposite of its intended effect. It is not by chance that in Užhorod the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns has now arisen, “fighting for the fourth East Slavic nation.” (From the newspaper, *Poisk*, Moscow, No. 12, March 15-21, 1991).

On September 29, 1990, at the meeting of the leadership of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns [now: Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns] a declaration about the return to the Transcarpathian oblast of the status of autonomous republic was discussed and accepted. [See the full text in the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, 1991, pp. 4-5.] This declaration found a response in the newspapers of Transcarpathia and Ukraine, as well as beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. And, on March 23-24, 1991, the First World Congress of Rusyns was held in Medžilaborce, Czechoslovakia. At that congress Rusyn delegates from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Subcarpathian Rus' (in the former USSR), and the United States and Canada accepted the following appeal: “The national politics of the totalitarian regimes in eastern Europe after the World War II have had tragic consequences for the Rusyn people. We have been witnesses to the forcible intent to liquidate the Rusyn language, the cultural and religious traditions of our
ancestors, the falsification of Rusyn history. . . . We proclaim that the Rusyns are not a segment of the Ukrainian people, but a distinct Slavic people. Within the family of free nations of the international community, the Rusyn people desire to walk their own road and independently to decide their own fate."

The appeal of the First World Congress of Rusyns was sent to the heads of the governments of the former Soviet Union, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, the former Yugoslavia, and the United States of America. Based on the above, we Subcarpathian Rusyns declare: We are a people with its own history, language, culture, traditions. We desire to live in peace and friendship with all nationalities and ethnic groups in our land, just as with our neighbors—Magyars, Slovaks, Romanians, Ukrainians, and Poles—with whom we want to continue to strengthen cultural and economic contacts. We, Subcarpathian Rusyns, consider that as a recognized people in Europe, we have a constitutional right to recognition and self-determination, and that in our native land we have the right to realize freely our national, economic, religious, social, and cultural development. Therefore, we appeal to all peoples and parliaments of Europe and the world with a request to support our inherent rights as a people, guaranteed by international agreements, and likewise to support our genuine striving for national revival and self-determination. God help us in our honest and lawful strivings!

This appeal was accepted by the leadership of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns on August 3, 1991.

Ivan Turjanyecz, Chairman Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns Užhorod, Ukraine

SINCE THE REVOLUTION OF 1989

Prague, Czecho-Slovakia. On December 7, 1991, the second annual general meeting of the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus' (Společnost Práteľ Podkarpatské Rusí) took place in Prague. The society represents Rusyns and Czechs who were born in Subcarpathian Rus’ but who since World War II reside in Bohemia and Moravia. During its first year of activity, the Prague-based society has: (1) published three issues of a Czech-language bulletin, Podkarpatská Rus: zpravodaj; (2) organized several lectures, film showings, and press conferences about Rusyns for the Czech public; (3) led two group visits (in September and October) to Subcarpathian Rus’; and (4) secured funding from the Czecho-Slovak federal and Czech republican governments for its further cultural and informational activity.

The society considers the 1945 annexation of Subcarpathian Rus’ (Transcarpathia) to be illegal and believes that its future should be decided by a referendum carried out through a free ballot. It has also petitioned the Czecho-Slovak federal government and parliament to open a consulate in Užhorod, to have President Václav Havel visit the city and restore there the former statue of Czechoslovakia’s founding President Tomáš G. Masaryk, and to increase economic, cultural, and informational activity.

The appeal of the First World Congress of Rusyns was sent to the heads of the governments of the former Soviet Union, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, the former Yugoslavia, and the United States of America. Based on the above, we Subcarpathian Rusyns declare: We are a people with its own history, language, culture, traditions. We desire to live in peace and friendship with all nationalities and ethnic groups in our land, just as with our neighbors—Magyars, Slovaks, Romanians, Ukrainians, and Poles—with whom we want to continue to strengthen cultural and economic contacts. We, Subcarpathian Rusyns, consider that as a recognized people in Europe, we have a constitutional right to recognition and self-determination, and that in our native land we have the right to realize freely our national, economic, religious, social, and cultural development. Therefore, we appeal to all peoples and parliaments of Europe and the world with a request to support our inherent rights as a people, guaranteed by international agreements, and likewise to support our genuine striving for national revival and self-determination. God help us in our honest and lawful strivings!

This appeal was accepted by the leadership of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns on August 3, 1991.

Ivan Turjanyecz, Chairman Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns Užhorod, Ukraine

Prague, Czecho-Slovakia. On December 7, 1991, the second annual general meeting of the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ (Společnost Práteľ Podkarpatské Rusí) took place in Prague. The society represents Rusyns and Czechs who were born in Subcarpathian Rus’ but who since World War II reside in Bohemia and Moravia. During its first year of activity, the Prague-based society has: (1) published three issues of a Czech-language bulletin, Podkarpatská Rus: zpravodaj; (2) organized several lectures, film showings, and press conferences about Rusyns for the Czech public; (3) led two group visits (in September and October) to Subcarpathian Rus’; and (4) secured funding from the Czecho-Slovak federal and Czech republican governments for its further cultural and informational activity.

The society considers the 1945 annexation of Subcarpathian Rus’ (Transcarpathia) to be illegal and believes that its future should be decided by a referendum carried out through a free ballot. It has also petitioned the Czecho-Slovak federal government and parliament to open a consulate in Užhorod, to have President Václav Havel visit the city and restore there the former statue of Czechoslovakia’s founding President Tomáš G. Masaryk, and to increase economic, cultural, and educational contacts with Transcarpathia.

In large part because of the activity of the society’s co-chairpersons, Dr. Jaromír Hořec and Dr. Agáta Pišťálová, both of whom are professional journalists, the Czech press has since 1990 been filled with a wide variety of articles by them and by other authors about Rusyns and Subcarpathian Rus’. For information and copies of the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ bulletin, contact: Dr. Agáta Pišťálová, ed., Podkarpatská Rus-Zpravodaj, Evropska 156, 16000 Prague 6, Czecho-Slovakia.

Prešov, Czecho-Slovakia. On December 20, 1991, the Aleksander Duchnovýč Society (Obščestvo Aleksandra Duchnovýča) met to review its first year of activity. The society claims to have revived the organization of the same name that functioned in Prešov before World War II. The organizers state that during their first year of activity they had their official statute approved by governmental authorities, they published a small almanac for 1992, and they plan to issue a newspaper, Holos Karpat (The Voice of the Carpathians).

Unlike the Rusyn Renaissance Society and the Union of Rusyn-Ukrainians in Czecho-Slovakia (SRUC), both of which have a clear understanding of the Rusyn and Ukrainian identity of the local population, the Duchnovýč Society is quite vague on this matter. It refers to “Carpatho-Russian tradition” and holds its meetings using Ukrainian and sometimes literary Russian in its deliberations. According to Stefan Kuško, the organization’s secretary, the Duchnovýč Society “is open to everyone who feels him/herself a Rusyn, Ukrainian (Rusyn-Ukrainian), Rus’, Russian, or who has become a Slovak or Czech. The most important thing is that the person’s roots are in our villages and towns, and that they recognize our Eastern rite and the statutes of our organization.”

Medzilaborce, Czecho-Slovakia. On February 1, 1992 the executive committee of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyns’ka Obroda) met under the direction of its chairman Vasyl’ Turok. It was decided that in the future the official location of the society will be in Prešov. The chairman also reported on several recent developments: (1) increased funding from the Slovak government for publication of the weekly newspaper Narodný novynky and the bi-monthly magazine Rusyn; (2) the decision by the central authorities of Slovak radio in Bratislava that the Rusyn-Ukrainian radio station in Prešov will be transformed into a station for all national minorities in the region, and that Rusyn as well as Germans, Gypsies, and Ukrainians will each have their own programs; and (3) the demand by the Rusyn Renaissance Society that the Museum of Ukrainian Culture in Svidnilk, whose name was tentatively changed to the Aleksander Pavlovyč Regional Museum, be renamed the Aleksander Pavlovyč Museum of Rusyn Culture.

Jasło, Poland. If recent events in this small town of Jasło are any indication, we may see the creation—in fact if not in name—of a “Rusyn Free Trade Zone.” An official communiqué released in early February 1992, on the occasion of a three-day cross border inter-
regional trade fair which brought together small businessmen from Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Ukraine, and Hungary, stresses the need to enhance opportunities for regional economic cooperation.

Specifically mentioned is the creation of "a Carpathian subregion, incorporating the four contiguous areas of Polish Subcarpathia, eastern Slovakia, Transcarpathia, and northern Hungary." Plans to move in this direction include the upgrading of regional telecommunications systems and the establishment of an investment bank to fund economic development. A Carpathian Interregional Cooperation Council has been established, to meet for the first time in April, in the Polish city of Krosno.

These developments are significant for Rusyns because the ease of economic (and thus, cultural and political) communication which will become possible under the new plan, represents a return to pre-communist historical norms, when for centuries Rusyns enjoyed relatively easy cross-border contact with one another in matters economic, cultural, and political. The proposed Free Trade Zone roughly approximates Rusyn ethnographic territory.

—Sysyn Mihalasky

Užhorod, Ukraine. In March 1992, an Institute of Carpathian Studies (Instytut Karpatyka) was established at the Department of History of Užhorod State University. This is the first university-level institution specializing in Carpatho-Rusyn studies to be founded in Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus'). The institute is headed by Professor Ivan Pop, the distinguished Slavist and editor of the respected Moscow-based scholarly journal, Sovetskoe slavjanovedenie.

The goal of the new institute is to foster scholarship and knowledge about all aspects of the Rusyn historical and cultural past, most of which was omitted or distorted in writings that appeared during the Communist era (1945-1990). The Institute of Carpathian Studies has already published the first issue of a new scholarly journal, Karpatyka/Karpatica, whose aim is to investigate the uniqueness of Transcarpathia without—as before—having to describe it in terms of its cultural, economic, or political. The proposed Free Trade Zone roughly approximates Rusyn ethnographic territory.

—Sysyn Mihalasky

Mukačevo, Ukraine. On March 21, 1992, over 100 delegates and supporters met in Mukačevo, Transcarpathia's second largest city, at the founding congress of the Subcarpathian Republican party. The initiator and ideologist of the party, Vasyl' Zajac', was elected chairman; Vasyl' Levkaj and Stepan Ač, vice-chairmen.

The party's platform addressed ten basic issues: political orientation; economic life; social programs; individual rights; scholarship and culture; religion; ecology; military and defense; nationality policy; and international relations. Among the 149 specific points raised in its platform, the Subcarpathian Republican party calls for:

—freedom of Subcarpathian Rus' with the status of a republic;
—consolidation and cooperation with all peoples in Subcarpathian Rus' in its effort to become a republic;
—official recognition of the Rusyn nationality and of the name Subcarpathian Rus' (Podkarpats'ka Rus');
—recognition of a Subcarpathian Rus' state and its membership in the United Nations;
—the creation of a ministry of foreign affairs and of missions from other countries in Subcarpathian Rus';
—full economic independence;
—the immediate adoption of a market economy;
—the return gratis of land to the farmers for their unlimited use, including its transfer without cost or taxes to their children or heirs;
—encouragement to businesspersons of Rusyn descent living abroad to invest in the economy of Subcarpathian Rus';
—a full range of social services for the population, including free universal medical care;
—guarantees for freedom of speech, the press, and association;
—the transformation of Užhorod State University into a National Academy of Subcarpathian Rus';
—the establishment of an institute for the Rusyn language and culture, whose primary task would be the codification of a Rusyn literary language and the promotion of the history and culture of Rusyns in cooperation with Slavists elsewhere in the world;
—the establishment of the proposed National Academy of branches to study the culture and history of all the other national groups in the region: Magyars, Romanians, Slovaks, Germans, Jews, Czechs, Gypsies, Ukrainians, and Russians;
—the separation of church and state with, however, recognition of the need to guarantee a spiritual and moral education for the citizens of Subcarpathian Rus';
—recognition of the Church as a distinct body which plays an incomparably important role in the upbringing of the individual and, therefore, recognition of the need for the complete rehabilitation of religion in society;
—the transformation of Subcarpathian Rus' into a nuclear-free and ecologically clean region of Europe;
—the complete withdrawal of all troops of the Ukrainian army and of the army of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the transformation of Subcarpathian Rus' into a peaceful European buffer-zone;
—to see that Subcarpathian Rus' is a state without any need for military forces nor the need to be part of any military alliance;
—recognition of the equality of all peoples and nationalities regardless of their origin or history;
—the juridical and political recognition of Subcarpathian Rus' as a free state and the Rusyn people as equal to all other peoples;
—the inclusion of Subcarpathian Rus' in a common European home.

Užhorod, Ukraine. On April 13, 1992, the recently-created Ukrainian National Council of Transcarpathia (Ukrains'ka Narodna Rada Zakarpattja) issued a declaration to the Ukrainian parliament in Kiev, the president of Ukraine, and the latter's representative in Transcarpathia. The Ukrainian National Council, made up of pro-Ukrainian political and cultural organizations in Transcarpathia, should not be confused with the official governmental body, the Transcarpathian National Council (or regional parliament) in Užhorod.

The April 13 declaration of the Ukrainian National Council of Transcarpathia ended with five recommendations:

(1) to classify the activity of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns as anti-Ukrainian and directed toward the break-up
of the Ukrainian nation and state;

(2) to recognize that the activity of Transcarpathia’s National Council (regional parliament) is also anti-Ukrainian;

(3) to demand that the Ukrainian parliament in Kiev as well as the Ukrainian president and his local representative use all means to stop the anti-Ukrainian activity of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns, the Association of Non-Radical Democrats, and the Subcarpathian Republican party;

(4) to consider the removal of the anti-Ukrainian directors from the Transcarpathian radio and television stations and the regional parliament’s official newspaper (Novyny Zakarpattja), which continually provide a platform for anti-Ukrainian groups and Ukrainophobic agitation;

(5) to consider laying criminal charges against those persons in authority who promote any ideas calling for a change in Ukraine’s borders.

Užhorod, Ukraine. On May 8, 1992—seventy-four years to the day that Rusyns voluntarily joined the then new state of Czechoslovakia—another newspaper for Rusyns has begun publication. Called Podkarpats’ka Rus’ (Subcarpathian Rus’), it is the most ambitious of the new Rusyn papers to appear in Ukraine’s Transcarpathian region. The paper is the official organ of what is now called the Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns (in Rusyn: Obščestvo Podkarpats’kyh Rusynov), whose name has been slightly altered from what it had previously been called, the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns (in Ukrainian: Tovarystvo Karpats’kyh Rusyniv).

In an opening statement of purpose published in a Transcarpathian variant of Rusyn by the editor, Volodymyr Fedynyšynec’, the goals of Podkarpats’ka Rus’ are the following: “to assist in the national renaissance of Rusyns; to stimulate their civic and national activity; to fill in the ‘blank spots’ in the history of the Rusyn people; and to develop the publicistic and literary works of Rusyns.” Of particular importance is the need to encourage the development of a distinct Rusyn literary language, which will be used on an experimental basis in Podkarpats’ka Rus’.

The four-page newspaper is initially intended to appear once every two weeks. The language varies depending on the author, with many articles in Ukrainian, some in Rusyn, and a few in Russian. Eventually, the goal is to have the paper appear entirely in Rusyn. Letters of congratulation, support, and other materials may be addressed to: Vladymyr Fedynyšynec’, redakcija Podkarpats’ka Rus’, ul. Haharina 42/1, h. Užhorod, 294006 UKRAINE.

RECENT EVENTS

Medzilaborce, Czecho-Slovakia. On June 27-28, 1992, during the 30th Annual Festival of Rusyn Culture and Sport, the Slavjane Folk Ensemble of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, became the first Rusyn-American folk group to perform in the Rusyn homeland. They performed before a capacity crowd of 7,000 at the outdoor amphitheater of Medzilaborce, a Rusyn town tucked in the Carpathian mountains of northeast Slovakia which is also the home of the Warhol Family Museum of Modern Art.

Slavjane’s 39 performers ranged in age from 6 to 19 years. The high degree of artistic athleticism displayed by boys so visibly young was well received by the audience. As songs were performed, the usually chatty audience remained silent, and approving nods could be seen here and there from people who perhaps did not expect much from a group of performers which is so geographically and linguistically distant.

Approving comments centered particularly on what was interpreted here as the “American accent” on Carpatho-Rusyn cultural forms. Namely, this was not the non-linear, loosely structured way in which the dancers moved and utilized the performance area. This sort of “controlled chaos,” in which the entire stage is filled by scattered individuals not always moving in exact synchronization, is in marked contrast to the exacting regimentation, synchronization, and controlled emotional discipline of East European folk dancers. The perceived “American style” gave Slavjane’s performance a more authentic feel of spontaneity and excitement, which was especially well communicated to the audience in the boys’ background “shenanigans” and the girls’ “teasing” handkerchiefs. Hot as the sun was, and hard as the physical strain must have been, the performers’ smiles looked more real than is normally “required.”

The Slavjane Ensemble was founded thirty-four years ago, and it has for half of that time appeared under the name Slavjane. The ensemble’s program director is Jack Poloka, who has been active for the past three decades in promoting Rusyn folk culture in the Pittsburgh area. Approximately twenty-five percent of the ensemble’s performers are drawn from the Pittsburgh area’s Carpatho-Rusyn Byzantine Catholic community, with the rest coming from other Slavic-American, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox backgrounds. The ensemble’s program generally reflects its demography, in as much as the emphasis is on Carpatho-Rusyn culture, but with a strong representation of other diverse Slavic folk traditions. Slavjane’s appearance in Medzilaborce and elsewhere in Slovakia was sponsored by the Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania and by the Greek Catholic Union.

—Susyn Mihalasky

Užhorod, Ukraine. On June 28, 1992, Bishop Ivan Semedi blessed the foundation stone of a new seminary in Užhorod, the seat of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo. The former seminary in the castle of Užhorod was liquidated in 1949, when the Soviet authorities outlawed the Greek Catholic Church throughout Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus’). Clergy from the American Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church and from neighboring Greek Catholic eparchies in Czecho-Slovakia (Prešov eparchy) and Hungary (Hajdúdorog eparchy) were well represented at the blessing. The Archdiocese of Pittsburgh, headed by Metropolitan Archbishop Thomas V. Dolinay, donated $150,000 collected among the faithful in the United States for the new seminary.

OUR FRONT COVER

Front page of the first issue of the newspaper, Podkarpats’ka Rus’, the official organ of the Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns in Užhorod, Ukraine.