I TELL YOU. RUSYNS CANNOT DISAPPEAR!

MIRO HOMA
THE RUSYNs ALONG THE DANUBE—IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Sarajevo, Bosnia, Serbia, ethnic cleansing, detention camps—these are exotic names and frightening concepts that until recently were virtually unknown to the American public. Now they have become household words as the media reports on a daily basis about the bombing of Sarajevo, the killings and rapes throughout Bosnia, and the on-going suffering of all the peoples in the ethnically-complex country once known as Yugoslavia.

Rusyns, too, live within the boundaries of the former Yugoslavia, and the military conflict has struck them directly and indirectly. Ironically, of all the Rusyns in Europe, it was those living in Yugoslavia who in the second half of the twentieth century enjoyed the best conditions for national and cultural development. Since the Revolution of 1989, however, the situation has been reversed: Rusyns in the Carpathian homeland (Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland) are enjoying more freedom to develop than ever before, while those in former Yugoslavia are seeing all their achievements undermined by financial cutbacks or physical annihilation. But how did such a situation come about?

When Yugoslavia was reconstituted after World War II, its new Communist government led by war hero, Marshal Josef Tito, tried to resolve inter-ethnic conflict by dividing the country into six national republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia) and by providing liberal support and legal protection for all national minorities wherever they lived. Aside from the six national republics, two autonomous regions within Serbia—the Vojvodina in the north and Kosovo-Metohija in the south—were in 1974 given considerable political autonomy and a status equal to the republics in the federal government. Kosovo was inhabited primarily by Albanians; the Vojvodina included an incredible mixture of peoples from all over East Central Europe. Five of the Vojvodina's peoples were given the status of official nationalities—Serbs, Magyars, Romanians, Slovaks, and Rusyns—the rest were classified as minority nationalities.

The Rusyn presence in the Vojvodina dates back to the 1740s, when immigrants from the Carpathian homeland (mostly from southern Zemplin and Ung counties in eastern Slovakia) began to arrive on the fertile plains along the Danube River. They settled both east and south of the Danube in the Backa and Srem counties of what was then the southern frontier region of the Hungarian Kingdom. Their main settlement was in Ruski Krstur, which to this day is inhabited almost exclusively by Rusyns. Both the Backa and Srem became part of the Vojvodina when, in 1918, the whole area was incorporated into the new state of Yugoslavia.

After World War II, when Yugoslavia was transformed into a federal republic, most of the Vojvodina was made part of Serbia, but the western Srem which included some Rusyn settlements became part of Croatia. By the 1970s, there were about 5,000 Rusyns in Croatia, specifically in the city of Vukovar and surrounding villages to the immediate southeast.

Thus, the Rusyns of former Yugoslavia lived in two of its constituent republics: about 25,000 lived in Serbia's autonomous province of the Vojvodina; the remainder lived in far eastern Croatia. The legal status of the two groups differed, however. In the Vojvodina, Rusyns were an official nationality; in Croatia, they were only a national minority.

But how did today's crisis come about and how has it effected the Rusyns? The Yugoslav governmental system left by Tito, with its six republics and two autonomous regions, was intended to provide a system of checks and balances so that no one republic would be able to play a dominant role in the country as a whole. This delicate balance was upset in 1990, when Serbia unilaterally abolished the autonomous status of Kosovo and then of the Vojvodina. This move alarmed the other republics, most especially Croatia and Slovenia, who feared Serbia would become too strong within the Yugoslav federation. The result was a political conflict over the future of Yugoslavia which ended with declarations of independence by Slovenia (June 1991), Croatia (June 1991), Bosnia-Hercegovina (February 1992), and Macedonia. The Serbs continued to hold on to the idea and name, Yugoslavia, although at present it comprises only Serbia (with the Vojvodina and Kosovo) and Montenegro.

For the first time in their 250-year-old history, the Rusyns along the Danube found themselves divided by an international border between two states—Yugoslavia (that is, Serbia) and Croatia. Even worse, when war broke out between Yugoslavia (Serbia) and Croatia in the summer of 1991, Rusyns from Serbia were mobilized and sent to fight their brethren in Croatia. Moreover, one of the main theaters of the conflict was eastern Slavonia and the western Srem, precisely where Croatia's Rusyns live. The Rusyn-language publishing house in Vukovar (which had published the magazine Nova dumka) was destroyed along with most of that city, and the surrounding villages were attacked by the opposing forces of Yugoslavia (Serbia) and Croatia. To this day, all of Croatia east of Osijek is controlled by Serbian forces, and an uneasy truce is maintained by United Nations troops. At the height of the conflict, however, Croatia's Rusyn minority was caught between the proverbial hammer and anvil, often assumed by one side to be cooperating with the other.

Whereas the larger group of Rusyns in Serbia's Vojvodina were not touched directly by military attack, they are nonetheless in a precarious position. With the abolition of the autonomous province of the Vojvodina, it is not clear what legal status is left for Rusyns. Also, in an atmosphere of xenophobic nationalism, it is not likely that the new Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) will be as favorably inclined toward its various nationalities and national minorities as was the old. These concerns are addressed at greater length by a Rusyn from the Vojvodina in an article, "The Destiny of Rusyns Along the Danube," written especially for this issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American.

Paul Robert Magocsi
Toronto, Canada
ANTAL HODINKA (1864-1946)

In the past and even present, Carpathian Rus' was unable to provide suitable employment for its educated and intellectual elite. The result was that many talented Carpatho-Rusyns were forced to pursue their careers elsewhere. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire was a favorite destination for educated Carpatho-Rusyns. By the end of the century, many remained within the boundaries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, most especially in its growing capitals of Vienna and Budapest. Among those Carpatho-Rusyns who reached the top of their profession in Austria-Hungary and later Hungary—while at the same time working on behalf of their native culture—was Antal Hodinka.

Antal Hodinka was born in 1864 in the Prešov Region Carpatho-Rusyn village of Ladomirov, near the town of Snina in present-day northeastern Slovakia. His father was a Greek Catholic priest who was transferred farther east to the Rusyn village of Sokyrnycja in Máramaros county (presently Transcarpathia in Ukraine), where the young Antal—or Antonij as he was known in Rusyn—grew up and attended elementary school. Following in the footsteps of his father and both grandparents, Hodinka completed gymnasium (high school) in Užhorod and then entered the Greek Catholic Seminary in that same city. Singled out for his excellence as a student, in 1882 he was sent to the Central Theological Seminary in Budapest. It was in Hungary’s capital that he discovered his true vocation, history, in particular the history of the Slavic world and his own Rusyn people.

In 1887, Hodinka completed his seminary studies and that same year published his first historical study, a work dealing with religious heresies in medieval Byzantium. After a year at home in Sokyrnycja, Hodinka accepted a year-long fellowship from the Institute for Austrian History in Vienna. He consulted in the Austrian capital with the Habsburg empire’s leading Slavists, after which, in 1891, he was awarded a doctorate for a thesis on historical sources in early medieval Serbia. For the next five years he worked as an archivist in Vienna, but then moved to nearby Bratislava where he became a professor of Hungarian history and culture at the Law Academy (1906) and later at Elizabeth University (1914). With the close of World War I, the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the creation of the new Czechoslovak republic, Elizabeth University was transferred to Pécs in southwest Hungary. From 1923 until his retirement in 1935, Hodinka held at Pécs the prestigious professorship of universal history. In recognition of his scholarly achievements, he was elected to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1910), and several decades later, when Subcarpathian Rus' was reannexed to Hungary in 1939, he was appointed chairman of the newly-founded Subcarpathian Scholarly Society (Podkarpatskoe Obščestvo Nauk) in Užhorod.

Throughout his distinguished career as a scholar, Hodinka never forgot his Carpatho-Rusyn origins. His first major work was an extended essay on Rusyn ethnography for the volume on Hungary in the German-language illustrated encyclopedia of Austria-Hungary (Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, 1900). He was particularly interested, however, in the church of his forefathers. He wrote in Hungarian a monumental history (1909) and published a collection of documents, mostly in Latin (1911), dealing with the Mukáčov Greek Catholic Eparchy. He even published a brief economic history of his people (1922) in the Rusyn dialect of Sokyrnycja, which explains the source of the pseudonym he sometimes used—an orphan from Sokyrnycja (Eden Sokyrnyč'kyj Šyrochnyj/Syrochýj).

In actual fact, many of Hodinka’s scholarly works on Rusyns were never published during his lifetime nor, because of the post-World War II Hungarian Communist taboo on publications about Rusyns, did they appear during the next four decades after his death. Most recently, however, thanks to Hungary’s leading specialist on Rusyns, Dr. István Udvari, all of Hodinka’s previously unknown manuscripts have been identified and some have already been published. These include a Dictionary of All Verbs in the Subcarpathian Rusyn Language (Hlaholnycja: sbyrka vsich hlaholov pudkarpats’ko-rusyns’koho jazyka, 1991) and One Hundred of Our Folk Songs (Sto nasých spívanok, 1991). Still in manuscript are several of Hodinka's studies of Rusyn ethnography and folklore, works on the Greek Catholic eparchies of Prešov and Mukáčov, and a monumental 1000-page Rusyn-Hungarian and Hungarian-Rusyn dictionary.

Because he continued throughout his life to write about Rusyns, in a real sense Antal Hodinka (Antonij Hodyinka) never left his homeland. And thanks to political changes in East Central Europe after 1989, as well as the initiative of younger Rusyn scholars in Hungary, the breadth of Hodinka’s scholarship is continually being rediscovered. Hopefully, some of his more important writings can someday be made available in English translation.

Philip Michaels
THE DESTINY OF RUSYNS ALONG THE DANUBE

War in the former Yugoslavia has frightened and made life difficult for the Vojvodian Rusyns. On the Croatian side of the Danube many Rusyn families have been forcibly driven from their homes. On the Serbian side of the Danube these are also hard times for Rusyn culture. Times were even worse during World War II. Rusyns deserve better.

While new international boundaries in former Yugoslavia may divide Vojvodina's Rusyns, the Danube does not. The Danube has become the symbol of the resilience and destiny of the Rusyns. They have always crossed the river. Rusyn settlements sprang up not far from the Danube: Ruski Krstur (in Rusyn: Ruskyj Krstur), Kucura, Djurdjevoj Sid, Baciuci, Petrovci, Mikloševci, Piskurevci, and others. Closer to the Danube or along its shores are cities to which Rusyns have moved: Novi Sad, Vukovar, Sombor, and Osijek.

Mighty 250-Year-Old Rusyn Trees

In the middle of the eighteenth century, one group of Rusyns migrated to the Bačka, a geographic region at the southern end of the Pannonian Plain located between the Danube and Tysa Rivers. The first Rusyn settlements were built in this region among Serb, Magyar, and German villages. At the very beginning of the nineteenth century, new Rusyn settlements were founded on the southern side of the Danube, in an area known as the Srem. Some Rusyns from the Bačka migrated to Srem, while others came directly from the Carpathian Mountains.

During the last 250 years, the Vojvodian Rusyns have prospered. They now number in excess of thirty thousand. Ever since 1751, they have educated their children in the Rusyn language. Today there is a Chair of Rusyn Studies at the University of Novi Sad. Rusyns have their own literature. The first book published in the Rusyn language appeared in 1904. Newspapers have been published in the Rusyn language since 1924. The Rusyn language has been used in the region of Vojvodina both in politics and administration since 1974. The Greek Catholic eparchy of Križevci was established in 1777, and Rusyns form the largest community in the eparchy. The oldest Rusyn cultural institutions are the libraries (1876), and there is a rich musical and theatrical heritage dating back to the end of the nineteenth century.

There are many highly educated persons among the Rusyn population, including professors in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Zagreb, and other universities all over the world. Rusyns are skilled in medicine, engineering, and agriculture, and they have many lawyers and journalists. There have been some Rusyns in the Yugoslav government and diplomatic service, and six bishops of Rusyn background: Dionizij Njaradi, Gavrijil Bukatko, Dr. Augustin Hornyak, Dr. Joachim Segedi, Dr. Joachim Herbut, and Slavomir Mikloš. Dr. Vladimir Kanjuh, who is a member of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, is of Rusyn background as is the well-known Serbian painter Steven Bodnarov.

Some actors in the Serbian National Theatres in Novi Sad, in the National Theatre in Vršac, and in the Children's Theatre in Sarajevo were of Rusyn background. Yugoslav movie star Juliana Medjesi's father is of Rusyn background from Srem. The composer Ivan Kovač, who was a professor at the Music Academy in Novi Sad and Secretary of the Yugoslavian Society of Composers, was a Rusyn. Approximately twenty Rusyn writers were elected as members of the Writers Society of Yugoslavia. At one time the director of radio broadcasters in Novi Sad was a Rusyn. A Rusyn has been director of the Ruske Slovo publishing house since its establishment in 1945.

Winds of War

The internal strife and open warfare since 1991 in former Yugoslavia has brought misfortune to the Rusyn people. Even prior to the war, Rusyns were victims in the Serbian-Croatian conflict. It is still not known how many Rusyns have died, how many were expelled from their homes, how many have fled, or the extent of material losses. Also unclear is what will be the fate of Rusyn community along the Danube. The conflict between Serbs and Croats became visible at the beginning of 1991 during republic and local level elections in Croatia. Nonetheless, people did not believe that war was possible.

The Croats were organized into the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica) and the Serbs into the Serbian Democratic party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka). These organizations represented ethnonational rather than political divisions. Rusyns in the Osijek district of Croatia, where Vukovar and two Rusyn villages are located, took a neutral stand in the struggle, but they were not able to maintain that position for long. Croats won the election and founded the Croatian National Guard, which was stationed around villages and fields. Rusyns were drafted into the new National Guard.

Open war between Croats and Serbs began in the summer of 1991. By then, Rusyns in the Vojvodina were drafted into the Yugoslav army (under Serbian control). Thus, Rusyns found themselves within two opposing armies that were soon to be at war with each other. It should be noted, however, that a few Rusyns
voluntarily joined both the Croatian and Serbian forces.

The greatest Rusyn losses took place during the battle for Vukovar. The majority of Rusyn deaths, however, were civilian and not military. During the battle, many Rusyns fled to other parts of Croatia or to the neighboring Vojvodina in Serbia. Others fled to western Europe, North America, and Australia. The result is the following. In 1991, before the outbreak of war, there were 3,023 Rusyns officially recorded in the Osijek district. Today there are almost none. This includes Vukovar, where before the war Rusyns were one of the largest national minorities.

After the Serbs took control of the Vukovar region, Rusyns who had previously fled their homes were barred from returning if any family member had supported the Croats. This meant anyone who had fought with the Croatian army, sympathized with the Croats, or was of Croatian nationality. As for those Rusyn families who managed to remain in their homes, any family member who had sympathized with the Croats was expelled. This occurred not only in Vukovar, but also in the nearby Rusyn villages of Mikloševci and Petrovci. These expulsions were carried out by Serbian paramilitary groups and by the new local Serbian authorities just after the Yugoslav army left and before United Nation's troops took up their positions.

Rusyn churches in Vukovar, Mikloševci, and Petrovci were damaged in the fighting. Many homes were pillaged, damaged, or completely destroyed. In homes temporarily abandoned, Serb newcomers were settled. The original Rusyn owners were pressured to sign papers indicating they were leaving their homes voluntarily to settle in other parts of Croatia. In the spring of 1992, Rusyns from Vukovar (April 20), Mikloševci (May 18), and Petrovci (May 22) were robbed of money and other belongings before they were deported by bus to Croatia. The villages surrounding Mikloševci and Petrovci are still inhabited largely by Rusyns. At present the area is under Serbian control and wartime conditions prevail. Basic necessities such as food and fuel are limited or non-existent.

Rusyns in the neighboring Vojvodina organized a relief campaign for the Rusyns in Petrovci and Mikloševci, as well as for those forcibly resettled to other parts of Croatia. Ruski Krstur’s school in 1992 provided materials to rebuild damaged village schools. The goal was to resume Rusyn-language education in Petrovci and Mikloševci. Some students from these villages and other places were brought to the school in Ruski Krstur.

Rusyns are under various kinds of pressure to leave not only villages such as Mikloševci and Petrovci in Serbian-controlled eastern Croatia but also to leave the Vojvodina. Serbian pressure takes various forms: pleas to repatriate national minorities; settlement of Serbian refugees in or nearby Rusyn villages; threats that Rusyns will be punished if caught celebrating Christian holidays according to the Catholic calendar; looting Rusyn churches (Bačinci) and beating priests (Bačinci, Ruski Krstur).

War has brought a drastic reduction in the standard of living. All regions in the former Yugoslavia have suffered and are much poorer as a result of the internal strife and fighting. It is feared that Rusyn amateur and professional cultural institutions may become victims of the economic drain caused by the war. The Rusyn community may be even more severely hurt than others because it is small and has no independent economic base. Signs of an impending crisis are already in evidence.

The Rusyn publishing house Ruske Slovo in Novi Sad is in a very poor financial state. Three years ago the weekly Rusyn newspaper, Ruske slovo, contained twenty pages. now it has only eight. The monthly youth journal Mak was a separate publication, now it is just a supplement to Ruske slovo. The year 1992 was the fortieth anniversary of Svetlosc, a journal for literature, culture, and the arts. From 1972 to 1991, it appeared once every two months, but in 1992, there was only enough money to publish one issue. In previous years, Ruske Slovo regularly published between ten and twenty books on poetry, prose, arts, science, and popular culture, but in 1992 the number was reduced to five.

In Croatia, the offices of the journal Nova Dumka in Vukovar have been destroyed. As a result, the publication was moved to Zagreb, and in 1992 only one issue was published as compared to four to seven issues a year before. In the last few years, the Rusyns in Croatia published two books and an annual almanac, but in 1992 no books were published.

Every year the Society for Rusyn Language and Literature in Novi Sad published a scholarly journal, Tvorcosc (in 1988 the name was changed to Studia Ruthenica), but in 1992 this journal did not appear at all. In 1991, a program where Rusyns from abroad could study in the Rusyn language in the gymnasium (high school) in Ruski Krstur was started. When war broke out later that same year, however, these foreign students were sent back home.

In former Yugoslavia, Rusyns held positions in all levels of government: the provincial (Vojvodina); the republican (Serbia and Croatia); and the federal (Yugoslavia). Now there are no Rusyns left at any level of government in either Serbia or in Croatia. Nor are there any Rusyns in upper-level management positions in major corporations, whether in communications, transport, metallurgical, energy, or other important fields. There are also no longer any Rusyn mayors in major cities, even though at one time there were mayors of Zagreb, Novi Sad, Kula, Sid and so on.

Today economic depression is all pervasive. Most Rusyns still live in rural centers and work in agriculture. High inflation and the country's disastrous economic policies have impacted negatively on agricultural communities. The largest and, until recently, the most prosperous "Rusyn" economic institution in Ruski Krstur was in 1992 split into two separate organizations. Both now are severely underfunded and have little economic power. The Rusyn print shop Ruske Slovo in Ruski Krstur cannot carry out its modernization plan and is working at a
They respect their elders. They always use the respectful plural form when speaking to their elders, or address them as uncle and aunt. Young people greet with deference their elders on the street. Children must take care of their parents in later life.

In Ruski Krstur, the school and dormitory are well cared for, much more so than in the rest of the Vojvodina. In 1992, students at this school obtained the highest grades in standardized testing. Despite their talent, Rusyn students do not get the necessary financial support in order to continue their studies at the best educational institutions, especially abroad.

In 1971, Rusyn amateur theatre was considered among the best in all of Yugoslavia. A Rusyn children's group has for many years been the best in all of Serbia. Although Rusyn theatre is staged in the Rusyn language, there are no professional directors of Rusyn background. There are some students who are interested in studying theater and film but no funds are available.

Almost all Rusyns are bilingual and many speak more than two languages. Exclusively Rusyn schools exist in Ruski Krstur, Djrudevo, and Kucura; however, only forty percent of all Rusyn pupils are educated at these schools. Whereas the other sixty percent might be able to study Rusyn language, literature, and culture at Serbian or Croatian language schools, there is a shortage of books for such purposes, especially at the high school level. This shortage could be overcome by photocopying the required materials. None of the Rusyn schools, however, has equipment with sufficient capacity to reproduce these materials in sufficient quantities.

The Ruska Matka Society is an organization founded in 1990 and dedicated to the protection and promotion of the Rusyn heritage and culture. In addition to its other activities, the organization has set up a Rusyn Archives and the Rusyn Library, whose goal is to collect and document the lives and times of well-known Rusyn persons and institutions. Rusyn publications have never been consolidated in one location. No computer program exists in any Rusyn organization or institution which is suitable for setting up a proper reference system for such materials.

The Ruska Matka Society is also instrumental in collecting Rusyn artwork and sculpture. A gallery will be opened shortly in Ruski Krstur. Together with the existing national museum and church museum the new gallery and library will be the only cultural center for Rusyns outside the Carpathian homeland.

From 1919 to 1941, Rusyns financed their national cultural institutions from their own resources. During this period, the economy flourished in Rusyn communities. Rusyns were educated at well-known European universities (Prague, Berlin, Paris, and Odessa). They applied their knowledge to the advantage of their people. For example, in Ruski Krstur, electrical power was in use earlier than in some other places (1924). Ruski Krstur had its own printing press in 1936, even though at that time such presses were usually located only in large urban centers. Rusyn doctors were able not only to prescribe medicines, but many could also perform surgery. In other words, Rusyns had friends and contacts throughout the world. They had information and know-how regarding the most modern practices. Well-educated persons thus assisted their people in establishing a prosperous economy. In the Vojvodina (Backa and Srem) such traditions continue to exist. These traditions are like embers waiting to be ignited again.

Rusyns know that there is a sun above the horizon. It is necessary to blow away the clouds of war which are holding back the warm rays of the sun. Rusyns need the sun, they need a new perspective. Without the sun, the mighty oak withers. Without the sun, the Rusyn seed may still fall to the ground but it will not grow. What will be the destiny of the Rusyns along the Danube without the sun?

YUGOSLAV RUSYN YOUTH FUND

In response to the difficult and often horrendous conditions that have prevailed in former Yugoslavia since war began in 1991, a Yugoslav Rusyn Youth Fund has been established to assist Rusyn elementary, high school, and university students in the Vojvodina (Serbia) and Croatia during their difficult times. The Youth Fund will attempt to fulfill requests from the Ruska Matka Society in Ruski Krstur, which must now undertake activity on behalf of educational programs that previously had been the responsibility of the Yugoslav government. Among the society's needs are the following: (1) copier, laser printer, and scanner to print schoolbooks and newspapers; (2) two FAX machines for communication between Rusyns in the Vojvodina (Serbia) and Croatia; (3) two scholarships for Rusyn students to study at the University of Novi Sad or abroad; (4) travel grant for a teacher from the United States or Canada to provide instruction in English at a summer school in Ruski Krstur.

A donation of fifty dollars or more can go an incredibly long way. A list of donors (unless anonymity is desired) and the materials provided to Rusyns in former Yugoslavia will be published in future issues of the Carpatho-Rusyn American. Please be generous and send your donations to:

Yugoslav Rusyn Youth Fund
Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center
Box 131-B
Orwell, VT 05760
SINCE THE REVOLUTION OF 1989

Bratislava, Slovakia. On December 9, 1992, a five-member delegation of the Rusyn Renaissance society (Rusyns’ka obroda) led by its chairman Vasyl’ Turok met with representatives of the new Slovak government headed by Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, which came to power earlier in the summer. Discussion focused on the request that Rusyns have their own program on the Prešov radio station. The Deputy Prime Minister Roman Kovac informed the delegation that the government will request that Slovak State Radio provide a Rusyn-language program. He also stated that the Slovak government will continue to support the Rusyn Renaissance Society and its publications.

OUR FRONT COVER

Cartoon by Miroslav Homa, a reader of the Carpatho-Rusyn American in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia.


RECENT EVENTS

Nyíregyháza, Hungary. The 1992-1993 academic year began in October with the inauguration of a Department of Ukrainian and Rusyn Philology at the György Bessenyei Teacher’s College in Nyíregyháza. The head of the new department is Dr. István Udvari, a linguist by training whose many publications deal with the history of the Rusyn language, in particular the variant spoken and written in the Vojvodina. The department treats Rusyn and Ukrainian as distinct linguistic phenomena, and it has plans for developing the study of both languages in Hungary. Under Dr. Udvari’s direction, the department is preparing: (1) a Rusyn-Hungarian phrasebook (using the Vojvodinan variant of Rusyn); (2) a bibliography of Rusyn studies in Hungary; and (3) the republication of little-known works on Rusyns by Hungarian Slavists, among them the well-known scholar of Rusyn origin, Antal Hodinka. Alongside the University of Novi Sad in Yugoslavia (Serbia), Nyíregyháza is the second institution of higher learning that has its own department specializing in Rusyn studies.

Prešov, Slovakia. On December 2, 1992, the Aleksander Duchnovyc Society and the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Prešov co-sponsored a seminar on the 130th anniversary of the Society of St. John the Baptist. Established in Prešov in 1862, the St. John the Baptist Society was the first legal cultural and educational organization for Rusyns living south of the Carpathians in what was then the Hungarian Kingdom. In its early years it published school texts, and throughout its existence it functioned as a residence for students attending the Greek Catholic Seminary and gymnasium (high school). In 1948, Czechoslovakia’s Communist government closed the student residence as part of its eventual plan to liquidate the Greek Catholic Church. The main speaker at the anniversary seminar was Dr. Olena Rudlová, who traced the history of the St. John the Baptist Society.

Prešov, Slovakia. In January 1993, an Institute for the Study of the Rusyn Language (Naucno-vyskumnyj instytut rusyns’koho jazyka) was established under the auspices of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyns’ka obroda). As a result of its establishment, the new institute, based in Prešov, has already fulfilled one of the goals set at the “first congress” of the Rusyn language held in Bardejovské Kúpele in early November 1992 (see Carpatho-Rusyn American, Vol. XV, No. 4, 1992, pp. 4-5). The institute is headed by Dr. Jurij Pańko, an associate professor (docent) at Safářík University in Prešov. Among the first members are Stefan Bunganyć, Professors M. Rohal’, V. Jabur, and M. Mika, Dr. J. Smarža, Dr. P. Sička, and J. Hryba. In its efforts to codify a standard Rusyn literary language, the institute intends to concentrate first on publishing the Rusyn grammar by S. Bunganyć and the rule book (Pravylo) with dictionary by Jurij Pańko. The institute also will coordinate the international terminological and orthographic commission for the Rusyn language established at the first congress.
I am a Ph.D. candidate in political science with the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto. The topic of my doctoral dissertation is the 1947 Operation Vistula, that is the involuntary resettlement of Lemkos from their Carpathian homeland to other parts of northern and western Poland. In particular, I am interested to know how and why governments choose involuntary population resettlement as a means of dealing with ethnic minority problems, and how minorities who are subjected to resettlement respond in an attempt to ensure their own long-term collective survival. The collection of data necessary to answer fully these questions required me to conduct interviews with Lemko survivors of Operation Vistula and their descendants, as well as to visit national, provincial, and municipal archives in Poland. To achieve these goals, I spent two years in Poland, the first of which (1990-1991) was funded by a generous grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) based in Princeton, New Jersey. What follows is a summary description of my experiences in Poland. For the sake of clarity, I have divided the discussion about my research activity into three categories: interviews, archives, and libraries.

Interviews

The original purpose of my interview projects was to compile a representative and comprehensive oral and written sample of the past experience and present state of ethnic consciousness among Lemkos both in their pre-resettlement Carpathian ethnic homeland (the eastern village project) and in the western part of Poland (the western village project) to which they were resettled in 1947.

The usefulness of individual interviews varied with the quality of a respondent's memory and with a particular respondent's willingness to speak openly. My experience ran the gamut and included: (1) talkative, helpful individuals with astonishingly detailed memories ("the soldiers came at 8 am," or "it was raining that day"); (2) suspicious subjects who had convinced themselves that I was working for the Polish security police; and (3) those who could remember little, but who out of personal enthusiasm or "political" conviction still wanted to be included. Because many of the respondents were rural farmers, the settings and circumstances reflected the natural rhythms of their lifestyles. Hence, interviews were conducted everywhere—in barns, kitchens, gardens, forests—with respondents doing everything from sawing wood to shoveling manure.

Originally, I had hoped to record the interviews on tape, but soon I found that shyness or fear (especially in the case of the eldest subjects) made this more harmful than beneficial. I felt that I received more honest answers and freer speculation when respondents saw that their comments were not being recorded. The only alternative was to make rapid, discreet notations during the interview. There is, unfortunately, a certain loss rate inherent in this procedure, which I tried to mitigate by rewriting the notes and filling in the spaces as quickly as possible following the conclusion of the interview.

The majority of interviews were with villagers old enough to have been adults during the resettlement (now in the 60 to 90 age-old bracket). These interviews focused mainly on recalling the events just prior to, during, and immediately after resettlement. Interviews with middle-aged people were the least fruitful. Because they were small children or young teens at the time of resettlement, they were too young to remember much. Moreover, by now this middle-aged group was too old to speak with the impetuous freedom and honesty of my younger subjects. As a result, I chose to deemphasize the middle-aged group and to concentrate primarily on the eldest generation and on their grandchildren (mostly ranging in age from 18 to 30, therefore, not yet born during the resettlement period.) Contrary to expectation, this youngest group was a gold mine of information.

A separate aspect of the interviews were those conducted with individual Lemko community leaders who I decided to meet because of their political or academic activity, the popular press, hearsay, or other people's recommendations. These interviews were spaced out irregularly throughout the year, and as often as not they occurred by chance when I happened to be in a particular city or at a particular gathering. Some were structured (I had interview questions and tape recorder at hand); others were little more than chance, informal discussions.

The interview portion of my research was the most distracting and injurious to my work. I was not able to function in the hoped-for atmosphere of benign neglect, but instead in one of intellectual warfare. By some, I was not treated as an academic, but rather as a political activist attempting to forward a certain agenda. Depending on the point of view of the individual, I was received either with the kind of warmth that Americans typically reserve for friends or I was subjected to petty snubs and suspicions. Such an atmosphere was sometimes humorous and sometimes annoying.

The situation has its roots in the unresolved question of Lemko national identity. There is quite a bit of controversy and friction between those who consider Lemkos to be part of a larger "Rusyn" nationality and those who consider them to be a Ukrainian regional subculture. Almost invariably, the prevailing academic, political, public, and private behavior of participants in this conflict reflect a "he-who-is-not-with-us-is-against-us" mindset. It is difficult to find a common meeting ground or vocabulary. For those who consider that there is a Rusyn nationality, no "proof" is ever necessary. For those who reject such a notion or feel that Rusyns are
really Ukrainians, no "proof" is ever sufficient.

My own sense is that, for purposes of academic research, the identity question is just that, an unsettled "question," whereas any portrayal of Lemko ethnic origin as anything but solidly within the Ukrainian fold is seen (and described in Poland's Ukrainian press) as the result of cultural ignorance, or of "Ukrainophobic" or "pro-Polish" inclinations. My willingness to incorporate into my research both the Ukrainian and Rusyn orientations (as these points of view are referred to in Poland) antagonized some with whom I spoke.

My own ethnic heritage (I am an American of Lemko Rusyn background) did not help matters. I had at first hoped to keep my heritage private, but when asked directly, as I invariably was, I felt uncomfortable taking "evasive action." I originally tried to present myself as a nice, neutral "American," but too many people wanted me to "choose" (or to chose for me) from among the "available" regional identities. Subsequent to revealing my heritage, I found myself variously subjected (depending on the individual) to some form of negative behavior—gentle friendly inducements and implied welcome into the Ukrainian fold, appeals to my "common sense," ridicule, or, most frequently, simple malevolent silence, neglect, and/or evasions.

My academic associations likewise provoked negative responses. My thesis advisor, Professor Paul Robert Magocs, who is sympathetic to the Rusyn orientation and, ironically, the holder of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto, is seen by many of Poland's Ukrainian community leaders as a one-man disinformation campaign, participating with Poles in a historic anti-Ukrainian divide-and-conquer strategy through the popularization here and abroad of a Polish-conceived fictitious "Rusyn" nationality. When I could, I tried to avoid mentioning my academic affiliation.

That this sort of atmosphere had an injurious impact on my work goes without saying. It is difficult, however, to produce the sort of concrete examples that would satisfyingly illustrate the prevailing atmosphere. This is because some conflicts are fought more with the carefully dropped word, the concealing smile, or the ephemeral promise than with "polite," objectively-refereed and footnoted academic debates. The following examples, then, may be said to be intuitively rather than rationally acquired.

Given the small size of the academic and cultural community that is actually involved in Lemko matters and the intensity of the controversy troubling this community, "reputations" are quickly acquired on the strength of relatively minor pretexts such as personal background. Although I arrived in Poland as an unknown with regard to professional accomplishment or personal acquaintance, I seemed to have acquired a "political" reputation. Some individuals seemed biased against me without our ever having met previously. Others refused to talk to me either by not appearing at a pre-arranged time or by canceling at the last moment without explanation. As one colleague cynically advised me, I should just "show up" at the doors of certain Ukrainian-oriented Lemkos, so as not to give them time to inquire among themselves about my background and refuse to see me.

The Rusyn-Ukrainian conflict affected my grassroots work as well. In a "western" village, I had the odd experience of having those who declined to be interviewed mutter about being afraid, especially if others find out." Among those who did willingly speak to me, a few later came back to retract comments or opinions and, in one case, was desperate even to the point of forcing twenty US dollars into my hand and begging me with tears and trembling hands to destroy the tape of our interview.

Why these peculiar, fearful behaviors? One reason is the advanced age of some respondents, which makes their memories of past interethic conflict more real to them than is the rather different present-day situation within Poland. Among younger respondents, ignorance of their own heritage or feelings of inferiority, vulnerability, and isolation (perpetuated partly by a relative lack of community leadership), pushes them into a traditional evasive reaction. In short, many Lemkos act like shyghosts, visible only to "believers." In the face of hostile observers, they simply disappear into the Polish background. Unfortunately, there are many hostile observers from both the Lemko-Ukrainian and Ukrainian communities, who are better organized and who have higher profile leaders and more financial resources than the Lemko Rusyns are themselves able to muster.

Given my somewhat discouraging experiences in the western village interview project, I decided at the urging of a colleague to cancel planned interview work at the eastern village that I had originally chosen. My colleague, who came from the eastern region, informed me that my arrival might be anticipated by some local hostile Lemko Ukrainians, who could possibly use their influence to discourage villagers who otherwise might have been inclined to cooperate with me.

As a result of this concern, I selected instead a very isolated hilly Lemko village (no near or direct bus or car contact—the only paved road access was being completed while I was there) in the same region. To my pleasant surprise, the villagers were very cooperative and tried their best to answer my difficult questions. Shyness and natural rural reticence were the only difficulties.

To the extent that a Rusyn "movement" can be said to exist in Poland, it is astonishingly decentralized and peopled by a somewhat disorganized and motley assortment of dedicated die-hards. The average person active in this Rusyn renaissance is young (age range 20 to 40s), college educated, employed full time in an unrelated profession, married to a working spouse, and supporting children. A disproportionate number of these Rusyns are engineers, scientists, and the like, perhaps reflecting a tendency observed often among repressed minorities to avoid the more overtly politicized "soft" sciences and humanities for the relatively unbiased, dispassionate, and esoteric comforts of mathematical formulae and physical laws. The most important thing to understand from the above "personnel profile" is that the Rusyn movement is essentially a part-time movement driven by people who otherwise bear the standard burdens of home and office plus the frustrations of a still quite inefficient, bureaucratized, and impoverished socioeconomic
system. Given such arduous conditions, the Rusyn community leadership's stubborn and apparently irrational commitment to such a precarious looking future, not to mention a low-profile but loyal following at the grassroots, can only be explained by the depth of the emotional need that a long-denied Rusyn consciousness fills among some Lemkos.

Archival Research

Overall, I would rate this part of my work as the biggest success. The array of archives open to me was much greater than I had anticipated. Political liberalization of the recent past has resulted in the gradual lifting of formal and informal restrictions on the public debate and private academic inquiry into the traditionally sensitive topic of the past and present condition of ethnic minorities in Poland. These developments meant that I had easy access to archival collections which, I was told, would have been denied to me as recently as four years ago on account of my foreign citizenship and "political unreliability." Quite inadvertently, then, my arrival in Poland was perfectly timed.

Based on my research needs, the archival geography looked something like this: archives in the east (e.g., Rzeszów, Przemyśl) contain excellent material on different aspects of the pre-1947 situation among Lemkos, as well as on the conduct of the resettlement itself at the sending points. The situation at the receiving points and the subsequent experiences of the Lemko Rusyns are to be found in records located in the northern and western parts of the country (e.g., Wrocław, Zielona Góra). The archives in Warsaw are the richest, whether those of the Polish Military Archives, the Polish Communist party, or the governmental agency which oversaw resettlement. I decided to work my way from the broadest (national) to narrowest (regional) kind of archival sources, and backwards in time, meaning that I started in Warsaw and then planned to move west to east.

Unfortunately, I did not know before going to Poland what I knew about the archival landscape, and a fair amount of time was lost. I came to learn only after having finalized arrangements and having arrived in Poland that it would be have been more convenient and useful to have based myself in Warsaw rather than Cracow.

Whatever difficulties I may have had in the archival aspect of my research were administrative, not political, in nature. The one exception was the Archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which during my stay became embroiled in a national controversy unrelated to my research. As a result, certain sensitive collections of the Archive were subsequently placed under temporary restriction, affecting even those researchers, such as myself, who had earlier been granted access.

While one might be philosophical about the impossibility of surmounting political hurdles, bureaucratic hurdles required more trial-and-error learning. For example, appearing in person in order to expedite archive access was sometimes the worst thing to do. Officials always seemed to find that you lacked some piece of paper, or that someone significant was out that day. Then there were the archives which were closed for "renovation" or which officially did not exist anymore—actually reasonable excuses given the fragile state of the Polish economy and building ownership quandaries opened by recent property reforms.

Searching for material turned out to be a much slower process than I had expected. Limited hours of access, occasionally indifferent staff, and less than optimal work conditions (low daily maximum number of requests allowed, occasionally poor lighting, or broken microfilm readers) really slow down a normally fast and efficient worker. As one archivist commented: "They pretend to pay us, so we pretend to work."

Libraries

In the two years previous to my departure for Poland, I had been compiling a multilingual bibliography. Many of these sources were in Polish and unavailable in North America. Thus, part of my time was spent working through this list at various libraries, copying those which were useful (on quick inspection) and eliminating the irrelevant ones. Together these activities formed the bulk of what I considered "in between" research; that is, Cracow-based work which was neither archival nor field (village) research. This work was interspaced between the other two types. I used these times as rest periods, since they relieved me of the stresses of Polish public transportation or getting lost in strange cities. The Jagiellonian University Library with its friendly, helpful staff is highly recommended for such "rest periods."

Summary

The material I collected over the last year will be indispensable to answer the questions posed in my dissertation. The oral and written interviews will help me understand the individual and group-level survival strategies which ethnic minorities use to sustain their communities following displacement from their homes. The archival material will help to explain how governments select and revise ethnic minority policies. In the end, my research will hopefully provide useful insights into a watershed event in the difficult modern history of the Lemkos.

Would I encourage anyone to follow in my footsteps? Most definitely. I regard my research, especially the two years spent in Poland, as higher education at its best: a life-affirming, people-oriented exercise in intellectual discipline and simple hard work. I have had the opportunity to make a contribution to my profession, as well as to challenge myself and my beliefs. I have come to know many courageous, gentle people with humorous quirks, quiet commitment, clear eyes, and beautiful faces. I learned to see what their eyes see, and to feel some part of what they feel. I am privileged to count some of them as personal friends. Now back home, I can still see with their eyes and feel with their hearts. What could matter more?

Susyn Yvonne Mihalasky
Toronto, Ontario
FIFTEEN YEARS OF SERVICE

With the end of 1992, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center (C-RRC) has completed fifteen years of scholarly and cultural activity on behalf of Carpatho-Rusyns in North America and Europe. The primary function of the C-RRC has been and remains the publication and/or distribution of books, pamphlets, and a quarterly magazine dealing with all aspects of Rusyn history and culture.

During its first fifteen years of existence, the C-RRC has fulfilled 12,046 orders which represent the sale of 22,887 books and pamphlets. We have published as well 60 issues of the Carpatho-Rusyn American quarterly, which reaches several hundred individual subscribers as well as 25 leading research libraries in North America and Europe.

Since our tenth anniversary report (see the Carpatho-Rusyn American, Vol. XI, No. 3, 1988), the Carpatho-Rusyn homeland as well as all of East Central Europe has been rocked by profound political and social changes connected with the Revolution of 1989 and its aftermath. The C-RRC has responded to the new situation by reporting on and participating in the changes that have taken place.

For instance, the Carpatho-Rusyn American is the only publication that has covered systematically since 1989 the political and cultural activity in all countries where Rusyns live—Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia—activity which has resulted in a virtual rebirth of a Rusyn nationality. Aside from reporting, the C-RRC has: (1) participated in the First World Congress of Rusyns in Medzilaborce, Slovakia (March 1991); (2) co-sponsored scholarly seminars at the Fourth World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies in Harrogate, England (July 1990) and at universities in Užhorod, Cracow, Prešov, and Novi Sad (March 1991); and (3) co-sponsored the Working Seminar or First Congress to codify a Rusyn literary language in Bardejovské Kúpele, Slovakia (November 1992).

The C-RRC has also helped in the publication of Rusyn-language books in Slovakia and sponsored research visits to North America for Rusyn scholars and writers from Poland, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia. In all these activities, the C-RRC has maintained cordial and cooperative relations with Rusyn religious and secular organizations in the United States, and it has responded to requests for cooperation from newly-established Rusyn cultural organizations in Užhorod, Ukraine; Prešov and Medzilaborce, Slovakia; Legnica, Poland; Prague, Czech Republic; Budapest, Hungary; and Ruski Kerestur, Yugoslavia.

In the years ahead, the C-RRC hopes to continue its role as a source of information about Rusyns for all interested parties, whether they be governmental bodies, libraries, the media, students, scholars, or descendants of Rusyn immigrants living in various parts of the world.