Our present issue provides a great deal of information about the pursuit and development of Rusyn roots, identity, and cultural recognition on several fronts—historically, in immigration, and at the present moment in the Rusyn homeland itself. Our biography, for instance, is of Jaroslav Kačmarčyık, a Lemko-Rusyn activist who, during the difficult period immediately following World War I, labored for the sake of the Lemko Rusyns of Poland, serving for a brief time as president of the Lemko Republic. We can only imagine what joy he would experience today at the present status of his Lemko-Rusyn people in Poland, given all they were forced to undergo in the years subsequent to World War I. The Polish government has just recently recognized Lemko Rusyns officially as a national minority in Poland and are providing financial support for the Rusyns’ culture-building activity. The Lemko vatra, or ritual bonfire, celebrated at an annual folk festival in Poland every June, now burns more brightly than ever.

The second front on which Rusyns are pursuing their identity is in terms of genealogical research among the descendants of immigrants. Immigrants’ sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, are seeking more than ever before to locate records of ancestors in order to construct family genealogical trees. Older generations, who preserve the personal stories and the group’s history—often never conveyed to others—are passing on with time. And with their passing, we are becoming increasingly aware that vital information will be lost forever if we do not act now to preserve their story, to piece together the building blocks of our own family chronicles.

The genealogist takes information provided by grandparents and goes a step further, delving into American and European archives which disclose even that which our ancestors have forgotten. What are the special concerns of descendants of immigrants. Immigrants’ sons and daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, are seeking more than ever before to locate records of ancestors in order to construct their family genealogical trees. Older generations, who preserve the personal stories and the group’s history—often never conveyed to others—are passing on with time. And with their passing, we are becoming increasingly aware that vital information will be lost forever if we do not act now to preserve their story, to piece together the building blocks of our own family chronicles.

The Yugoslav government dismissed Ukraine’s protest. It is our hope that all the other governments of countries in which Rusyns reside—Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—also be their own masters in their positive orientation toward Rusyns. As these countries take their place as rational democratic nations of the new Europe, may they not allow their own progressive attitude toward internationally recognized minorities, including Rusyns, to be distorted by the out-dated or retrogressive views of partisan interest groups.

There are some final and exceedingly positive notes regarding the Third World Congress. The setting for the congress, the small town of Ruski Krstur, was most remarkable. Located within easy driving distance of a major city and Rusyn cultural center, Novi Sad, Ruski Krstur is approximately 98 percent Rusyn in population. All aspects of the town and its society are thoroughly modern and, most significant, are linguistically and culturally Rusyn. This includes various forms of the media, shops, and the entire educational complex. In a sense, Ruski Krstur serves as a model for all Rusyns of how it is possible to live fully Rusyn in a larger non-Rusyn environment.

Yet another positive note. A large delegation of Lemko Rusyns from Poland and cultural activists from Transcarpathia were present as well as several Hungarian Rusyns who are seeking to nurture the study of Rusyn language and culture in Hungary, and who will, in fact, be hosting the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns in Budapest in 1997. Our congratulations and best wishes go to all those who participated in the Third World Congress and who, during the next two years, will continue to carry out Rusyn cultural work defined by the congress.

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**OUR FRONT COVER**

Greek Catholic Church in Ruski Krstur, Yugoslavia.
JAROSLAV KAČMARČÝK (1885-194?)

Jaroslav Kačmarčýk is regarded by Lemkos in much the same way as Americans view George Washington. While Kačmarčýk’s efforts at attaining self-determination for Lemkos did not succeed, he is nonetheless credited as one of the few who successfully drew international attention to the rights and aspirations of Carpatho-Rusyns in the Lemko Region of historic Galicia.

Jaroslav Kačmarčýk was born in 1885 in the Lemko village of Bińczarowa. His father was the renowned priest and Rusyn community activist, the Reverend Teofil Kačmarčýk (see C-RA, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, 1995, p. 3). Teofil served as a model and inspiration to the young Jaroslav, who devoted most of his early years studying hard and eventually earning a PhD in law from the University of L’viv. During World War I, Jaroslav served in the Austro-Hungarian army.

Following the end of the war and the collapse of Austria-Hungary, Lemkos together with their Carpatho-Rusyn brethren south of the mountains, and like many other peoples in east-central Europe, saw the fluid postwar international environment as an opportunity to decide their own political fate. Consequently, Kačmarčýk and other Lemko activists (primarily Greek Catholic priests, teachers, lawyers, and peasants) started an organized Lemko political movement in the Carpathians. The result was a large meeting in the Lemko village of Florynka on December 5, 1918. Kačmarčýk and other Rusyn leaders from both sides of the Carpathians declared: “We want neither Hungarians nor Poles, and we do not recognize any Ukraine.” Instead, they decided to create their own Rusyn councils in order to govern and administer the region. Within weeks, several councils sprang up throughout the Lemko Region.

During this period Kačmarčýk headed the Rusyn Council (Ruská Rada) in his native village of Bińczarowa. Like many Lemkos of his day, he felt a strong cultural affinity toward Russians and he advocated political union with Russia. Since at the time this was politically unrealistic, Kačmarčýk and others supported instead union with Czechoslovakia as a temporary political expedient until such time as they could unite with Russia. In January 1919, Kačmarčýk assumed control of the Grybów county Rusyn Council. Before long, however, he became leader of the entire Lemko Region and eventually president of the Lemko Republic. The Grybów Rusyn Council that he headed was recognized by Lemkos as the governing authority of the region.

The government of the newly-independent state of Poland had other plans, however, and it decided to take control of the Lemko Region. This led to numerous conflicts. Hundreds of Lemkos who were called to serve in the Polish army fled abroad with the army in pursuit. Lemkos were also expected to provide material support to the Polish military in the form of clothing and food. Kačmarčýk’s Council refused such demands and advised the Lemko population to follow suit. In attempting to address and mediate this increasingly difficult situation, Kačmarčýk met in March 1919 with both Lemkos and Poles. As a result of his efforts, in June the Polish military command in Tarnów ordered that Lemkos be exempted from service in the army.

By the fall of 1919, however, Lemkos were again being drafted into the Polish army. Together with the Rusyn-American immigrant, Victor P. Hladyk, Kačmarčýk travelled to Warsaw to discuss this matter with Polish military officials. Another promise to cease drafting Lemkos was offered, but again it was not kept. Lemkos were with increasing frequency being beaten or even killed for resisting the draft. As the situation deteriorated, the Polish secret police placed Lemko activists under surveillance. In early 1920, Kačmarčýk publicly declared in Gorlice that the Lemkos had a right to self-determination in their national affairs. He raised this issue in Florynka in March 1920, but this turned out to be an exercise in futility. Lemkos simply had neither the political nor military power necessary to implement their self-declared rights. Finally, in September 1920, the Polish military command formally ordered the full integration of Lemkos into the Polish Army. At first many Lemkos were reluctant to join, but with time more and more did so.

The fate of the Lemko Republic was decided at the outset of 1921. On January 8, Kačmarčýk was arrested and put on trial six months later. Kačmarčýk defended himself and his activities by emphasizing that he was following the wishes of the Lemko people; was attempting to uphold Wilson’s principle of self-determination for all peoples; and was working to live in friendly relations with Poles. In the end, he was acquitted of all charges and set free.

After his release, Kačmarčýk opened a legal practice in the Lemko Region town of Muszyna. From this point on, he ceased to be a force in Lemko community life. He did resurface briefly during a visit to the United States in 1923, but he turned down an invitation to head the Lemko Congress in New York. Kačmarčýk’s departure from public life dismayed many Lemkos. It is likely that he was disillusioned and exhausted after the intense and disappointing events of 1918-1921. After 1923, not much is known about Kačmarčýk other than that he continued to be active in the legal profession at least until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Despite his early retirement from political life, Kačmarčýk and his patriotic activity on behalf of Lemkos at the close of World War I continue to be remembered and held in high regard.

Bogdan Horbal
New York, New York
Mr. Peters, please tell us something about your own ethnonational heritage and how you first became interested in genealogical research.

On my father's side, I am Acadian French, Irish, and Scottish. On my mother's side, I am Slovak and Carpatho-Rusyn. I have been able to trace my Acadian ancestry to the early 1600s; my Scots ancestry to about the late 1700s, and my Irish ancestry to about 1830. With the assistance of the archive in Prešov, my Hirkala/Kačmar Slovak ancestry has thus far been traced to the early 1500s. My Carpatho-Rusyn ancestry is stalled with the names of my great-grandparents: Vasyl and Hafija (Geggyo) Kovach, both from Packan'ovo in the former Bereg county, Transcarpathia. I expect records to be available for Transcarpathia within the next few years as a result of recent microfilming in Ukraine by the Genealogical Society of Utah (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or Mormon Church).

Actually, I got started in genealogy by hearing stories about my wife's ancestry from her late grandmother. She was always telling stories about her grandfather who was an early iron miner in Morris county, New Jersey. I decided one day to try to find out more about these miners. I used the United States Federal Censuses to verify their occupations, the names of children, birthplaces, etc. I soon knew more about my wife's family than they did. My wife, Jessica, became interested as well. This all began in 1980. We are now both professional genealogists. I work as a freelancer specializing in German, Slovak, Polish, and Carpatho-Rusyn ancestry. My wife works for the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark as the staff genealogist. Of course, both of us are so involved now in helping others that we rarely get time to work on our own family histories.

Tell us something about genealogy, your methodology, and the tools you use as a genealogist. If I come to you with a confused "not-this-not-that, Carpathian-something, Russian-but-not-Russian" heritage and one or two family or place names on an old yellowed, illegible letter, what do you do? How do you start?

Initially, I ask people to provide me with the vital statistics on themselves. You should always begin research with yourself and work backwards. I would of course, ask his/her birthdate and birthplace; the names of his/her parents, including maiden name of the mother; their places and dates of birth; their marriage date and place; their places and dates of death and places of burial. I continue this process until we reach backwards to the immigrant ancestors.

The more information that the person has, the easier it is to do the research. It is very important to have the names of the places where the immigrant and his family lived. Records in the United States are generated in these places. I will check the United States Federal Censuses taken in 1920, 1910, 1900, and 1880. Our Carpatho-Rusyn ancestors began coming to the United States about 1880 or later. Sometimes, I will check the New Jersey State Censuses taken in 1885, 1895, 1905, and 1915. New York had censuses as well in 1905, 1915, and 1925. These censuses place our ancestors in their ethnic neighborhoods, particularly in the industrial cities of the northeastern seaboard.

I also ask if the immigrant male became a U.S. citizen, since this engenders naturalization records which can provide an array of useful data including birthplaces, birthdates of the immigrant, his wife, his children, when he/she came to America, and the name of the ship and date of arrival.

If the immigrant was in the U.S. prior to the First World War, I check for a World War I draft registration card. At that time all males, whether citizen or alien, were required to register for the draft. I check Passenger Arrival Records in the port of New York, especially in the period 1897-1943, which has an index. Depending upon the time period, the manifests can list the last place of residence in Europe and/or the birthplace, age, sex, marital status, personal description, place of settlement in the United States, and names of next of kin in Europe.

Byzantine Catholic or Russian Orthodox registers almost always give the ancestral village in Europe in marriage, baptismal, and death registers. They are the best record source in the United States for determining ancestral village names. I check the civil registers of births, marriages, and deaths in New Jersey, New York, or wherever the persons lived. I bear in mind the fact that many immigrant births were unrecorded. That is why ethnic church records are so important in chronicling our ancestry in the United States.

I also ask my clients if they have any documents which their immigrant ancestors may have brought with them to the United States. Frequently, these documents are abstracts of baptismal and marriage records given to them by priests before they left Europe. Many immigrants also wrote home to their priests to obtain these documents. Often descendants do not realize that these precious papers contain information that is vital to them in their ancestral search. These documents can be written in Latin, Hungarian, or Slavic Cyrillic. They are important to your research because our ancestors sometimes came from small villages that did not have their own parishes. In such circumstances, our ancestors were likely to have worshipped at the next largest village.

Once I have ascertained the following information, I can begin to perform research in European records (provided that they are available to me):
1. The full name of the immigrant ancestor that he/she received at birth. For example: Vasyl Takach, not “Bill” Takach.

2. The religion. If we are dealing with an immigrant born prior to 1900, this will always be Greek Catholic. If we are dealing with a 20th century birth, the person could be Orthodox as well.

3. An approximate date of birth—at least the year.

4. The name of the ancestral village. No research can be performed without the village name.

5. The names of the immigrant’s brothers and sisters. A surname may be very common in the ancestral village and received at birth. For example: Vasyl Takach, not “Bill” be performed without the village name.

Can you share with us any “good stories” of a particular genealogical search that called for especially challenging or improvised “detective work”?

Most immigrant research of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is straightforward. My clients may already know the ancestral village name. This is the most critical piece of information that I need to begin a European search. The only problem that might come up is the fact that a particular immigrant ancestor may have been illegitimate.

We should remember that those who came before us were not always saints and may have lived in crowded homes while serving as servants. Temptation was always there! If you are pursuing your family history, you must be prepared for this eventuality. Few families can escape this problem. You are no less a person because of something your ancestor did!

What special difficulties or unique aspects are there that set genealogical research on Lemkos and other Rusyns apart from research on other groups?

If you are researching your Lemko heritage, it can be simple or it can be quite complex. Greek Catholic Church records were maintained in Galicia from probably the early 1700s. Copies of church records were maintained from 1784 on and served as civil records of birth, marriage, and death. The problem is that no one seems to have definitive information regarding the location of church records maintained by the Byzantine Catholics and the more numerous Orthodox churches.

Operation “Vistula,” the forcible relocation of the Lemkos to western and northern Poland, is the culprit. The people of an entire region were physically uprooted. Where were the church records sent? Some may have been taken to the new localities by the priests. Some may have been turned over to Roman Catholic priests in Poland for safekeeping. Perhaps some are in church archives such as in Przemysl.

Additionally, civil records offices called USC (Urzad Stanu Cywilnego), have vital statistics for each town. There should have been records from at least the mid-nineteenth century down to 1947, at the time of the relocation. I would think that these records should have been sent to a Polish archive or some other type of repository.

The Mormon Church has microfilmed Greek Catholic church records for about 60 Lemko villages out of a possible 300 or so. These 60 villages may have a partial series of records. For example: Komaricza has excellent records from about 1764 to the 1880s. The town of Tylawa has birth records only for the period 1831-1855. They are quite remarkable birth records, though, in that they give information on up to four generations!

To use these records, you would probably have to know the name of your great-grandfather born prior to 1855. More records are constantly being “discovered” in archives and local registry offices. An inquiry to the Polish State Archive in Warsaw can be made to determine what, if any, records are available for research on your Lemko families. I suspect that Greek Catholic records for the Lemko Region may be found among the holdings of the Ukrainian State Archives in L’viv or Kiev. This will become known in the next few years as microfilming in Ukraine proceeds. There may be census or other records that can be consulted in local Polish archives—particularly the archive in Rzeszów. An inquiry there can determine their record holdings.

Descendants of Rusyns from the Prešov Region in Slovakia have an easier time in researching their ancestry. As far as I am aware, all Rusyn parishes there have at least some records available. These records may begin as early as 1727 in Kojsov or as late as 1885 in Miková, the birthplace of Andy Warhol’s parents.

These church records are housed in the state archives in Levoča and Prešov and have been microfilmed by the Mormon Church. They should be available to the public sometime this year. You will have to go to a Family History Library of the Mormon Church. For instance, there is one located at 125 Columbus Avenue, opposite Lincoln Center, in New York City (telephone: 1-212-873-1690). Mormon or LDS Family History Libraries are also located in many other cities in the United States. Check your yellow pages under Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Anyone can use their libraries. You can order microfilm at a cost of $3.00 per roll. Most records will be in Latin with occasional entries in Hungarian or Slavic Cyrillic.

The Rusyns of Transcarpathia, Ukraine will have a chance to research their ancestry within the next year or so. Microfilming of church records is a priority. You can also visit the archives in Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine, and attempt to do the research yourself.

Are people with a more complex heritage or who are often confused about their heritage—like Carpatho-Rusyns—more likely to become genealogists?

There is no doubt in my mind that doing one’s genealogy enables one to understand oneself better. I did an oral history interview with my aunt who is now 81 years old. The more that I learned about my Slovak grandfather, the more I felt that I really had many of his characteristics. He was very soft spoken and calm. He did not raise his voice often. He left the children’s disciplining to his wife. He was a man of few words. He knew who he was. His daughter in
anger once said to him: “Papa, who do you think you are?” He said: “I’m me. Who are you?” Today everyone is looking to discover who they are, but he already knew.

The descendants of Carpatho-Rusyns are starting to discover that they can learn much about their family heritage. They are discovering that not all of the records were lost during World War II. They are seeking their heritage along with other “ethnic” Americans.

Would you tell us about any research projects you have undertaken which were/are specifically related to Carpatho-Rusyns?

I am always working on some type of Rusyn project. I have compiled a partial list of Rusyn and Slovak residents of Passaic, New Jersey who registered for the draft during World War I. I noted only those who cited a specific village of origin. This list comprises about 300 men.

I am working on three projects now: the first is a listing of all of the residents of Passaic county, New Jersey who came from Austria-Hungary and who became citizens during the period 1875-1906. In this survey, I will identify Rusyns who became citizens during this time and should find Slovaks and Jews, as well.

I am also compiling a list of all Christian given names that appear in Rusyn or Rusyn-American church baptismal records. Most of these names are in Latin. I will attempt to provide Rusyn Cyrillic cursive script examples as well as printed Cyrillic transcriptions and English language translations. Some of our Rusyn given names are unusual and are not found in any standard texts. Of course, this will be most helpful to those doing genealogical studies, particularly those of us who do not know the language.

I have also been transcribing the baptisms and marriages from the registers of Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church in Passaic. This church was established by former members of St. Michael’s Greek Catholic Church in Passaic who were dissatisfied with the actions of their priest. The parish was Greek (Byzantine) Catholic from 1902-1909. In 1909, it became an Orthodox Church as a result of parishioner dissatisfaction in connection with the trusteeship struggle with the Latin-rite hierarchy as well as the celibacy issue. The parishioners of this church were Lemkos from Galicia and Rusyns primarily from the Presov Region. Occasionally, there are entries for Transcarpathian immigrants and also people from the more southwestern counties of Borsod and Abauj. I intend to transcribe the period from 1902 to maybe 1915. The families will be reconstructed from the registers. I may also write a short history of the church along with the family data. I have newspaper articles pertaining to the church as well. Eventually, I hope to elicit the cooperation of St. Michael’s Byzantine Catholic Cathedral in allowing me to access data on their early families, particularly for the period 1890-1902.

In this manner, I will have accumulated data on the early Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants in the city of Passaic. I will then be able to illustrate where in the homeland these immigrants originated, how they were related to one another, and so on.

Finally, what kind of assistance or advice can you offer Carpatho-Rusyn root searchers?

You must be persistent in your search. You must seek alternative record sources if the church books are “lost.” You can always research your entire family, that is, not only your grandparents, but their brothers and sisters, and trace their families down to the present. This is your extended network of families.

Last but not least, you owe it to your children and grandchildren to put down in writing or on tape your own memories of your childhood, stories about your parents, grandparents, and other relatives. This is not difficult to do. If you do not write down these thoughts for your offspring, our culture will eventually be totally assimilated. Perhaps you are aware of your heritage, but are the younger members of your family aware of it? Be proud of your heritage! You are truly one of the unique ethnic groups in the United States and the world!

Mr. Peters offers a slide lecture, “Researching the People From ‘No-Mans Land’: The Carpatho-Rusyns of Austria-Hungary,” which he is willing to present to any group that requests it. The lecture covers basics, including an introduction to the Rusyn people themselves and to record sources in the United States and Europe. Readers interested in arranging for a presentation, or in procuring Mr. Peter’s genealogical services may contact him at: Thomas A. Peters, C.G.R.S., 59 Tracy Avenue, Totowa, New Jersey 07512-2041; tel. 1-201-790-5053.

Susyn Y. Mihalasky
Clifton, New Jersey

A sheep-herder and tanner from the Presov Region Carpatho-Rusyn village of Dubovica, Slovakia (1966).
THE CARPATHO-RUSYNS

This is the first part of a general introductory article on all aspects of Carpatho-Rusyn life which we intend to run in the next several issues of the Carpatho-Rusyn American. We ran a similar series in the very first issues of our publication back in 1978. Considering the enormous changes that have taken place in the European homeland during the past few years, we feel it appropriate to provide our readers with new and updated information. This first part will deal with geography, the economy, and religion. Subsequent issues will cover language, identity, culture, and history.—Editor

Carpatho-Rusyns live in the very heart of Europe, along the northern and southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains. Their homeland, known as Carpathian Rus’, is situated at the crossroads where the borders of Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland meet. Aside from those countries, there are smaller numbers of Carpatho-Rusyns in Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Czech Republic. In no country do Carpatho-Rusyns have an administratively distinct territory.

Geography and economy

Three-quarters of the Carpatho-Rusyns in Europe are found within the borders of Ukraine, specifically in the Transcarpathian region (historic Subcarpathian Rus’). In Slovakia, Carpatho-Rusyns live in the northeastern part of the country which is popularly known as the Prešov Region. On the northern slopes of the Carpathians, they had traditionally lived in southeastern Poland, in an area known as the Lemko Region. After World War II, the Lemko Rusyns were deported from their Carpathian homeland. Among those who remained in Poland, a few thousand have managed to return to the Carpathians, although most reside in scattered settlements in the western (Silesia) and northern regions of the country. Finally, there are several Carpatho-Rusyn villages just south of the Tisza River in the Máramureș region of northcentral Romania, and a few scattered settlements in northeastern Hungary.

Beyond the Carpathian homeland, Rusyns live as immigrants in neighboring countries. The oldest immigrant community, dating back to the mid-eighteenth century, is in the Vojvodina (historic Bačka) and Srem regions of former Yugoslavia, that is, present-day northern Serbia and far eastern Croatia. In the Czech Republic, Carpatho-Rusyns reside primarily in northern Moravia and the capital of Prague, where most immigrated just after World War II. The largest community outside the homeland is in the United States, where between the 1880s and 1914 about 225,000 Carpatho-Rusyns immigrated. They settled primarily in the industrial regions of the northeastern and north-central states where most of their descendants still live to this day. Smaller numbers of Carpatho-Rusyns immigrated to Canada and Argentina in the 1920s and to Australia in the 1970s and 1980s.

Carpatho-Rusyns do not have their own state. At best they function as a legally recognized national minority in some—but not all—of the European countries where they live. As has historically been the case with stateless minority groups, Carpatho-Rusyns have been reluctant to identify themselves as such or have simply not been recorded by the governments in the countries where they have lived. Therefore, it is impossible to know precisely the number of Carpatho-Rusyns in any country. A reasonable estimate would place their number at 1.5 million persons worldwide.

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TOTAL 1,547,500

Until 1945, the vast majority of Rusyns in the Carpathian homeland inhabited about 1,000 small villages that averaged in size between 600 and 800 residents. Aside from Carpatho-Rusyns, each village also had a small percentage (usually 5 percent to 15 percent) of people belonging to other national groups. These generally included a few Jewish families (small shop and tavern keepers as well as farmers); Roma/Gypsies who often lived on the outskirts of the village; and a Magyar, Polish, Slovak, or Czech official (gendarmerie, notary, schoolteacher).

The Carpatho-Rusyns were mostly employed as farmers, livestock herders (especially sheep), and in forest-related occupations. The mountainous landscape that characterized Carpathian Rus’ never allowed for extensive agricultural production. As a result, Carpatho-Rusyns were usually poor and were often forced to survive by working in neighboring countries or by emigrating permanently abroad, most especially to the United States.

After World War II, industrial enterprises were established in or near the Carpathian homeland, and many Rusyn villagers moved to nearby cities. Those cities (Užhorod, Mukachevo, Prešov, Humenné, Košice, Michalovce, Sanok, Nowy Sącz, Gorlice, Novi Sad) were most often located outside Carpatho-Rusyn ethnolinguistic territory. As a result, many Rusyns who migrated to cities intermarried, attended schools using the state language, and eventually gave up their identity as Carpatho-Rusyns.

Religion

Carpatho-Rusyn churches share elements from both the eastern (Slavica Orthodoxa) and western (Slavica Romana) Christian worlds. Religion has remained for Carpatho-Rusyns wherever they live the most important aspect of their lives. This is so much the case that in the popular mind Carpatho-Rusyn culture and identity have often been perceived as synonymous with one of the traditional Carpatho-Rusyn Eastern Christian churches.
The earliest ancestors of the Carpatho-Rusyns believed, like other Slavs, in several gods related to the forces of nature. The most powerful of these pagan gods was Perun, whose name is still preserved in the Carpatho-Rusyn language as a curse. Christianity first was brought to the Carpathians during the second half of the ninth century. Popular legends supported by scholarly writings suggest that Carpatho-Rusyns received Christianity in the early 860s from the “Apostles to the Slavs,” Cyril and Methodius, two monks from the Byzantine Empire. As would be the case throughout the Slavic world, several pagan customs practiced by Rusyns were easily adapted to the Christian holy days. Thus, the mid-winter festival of koljada was merged with Christmas and Epiphany; the festival of spring with Easter; and the harvest and summer solstice festival of Kupalo with the feast of John the Baptist.

Cyril and Methodius as well as their disciples were from the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, when the Christian church was divided after 1054, the Carpatho-Rusyns remained within the Eastern Orthodox sphere nominally under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Religious affiliation helped to distinguish Carpatho-Rusyns from their Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish neighbors who were Roman Catholic or Protestant. As Eastern Christians, the Carpatho-Rusyns used Church Slavonic instead of Latin as the language in religious services; followed the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom; received both species (leavened bread and wine) at Communion; had married priests; and followed the old Julian calendar so that fixed feasts like Christmas eventually fell two weeks later than the Western Gregorian calendar, on January 7. The Carpatho-Rusyns were distinguished as well from fellow Eastern Christians (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians) by certain practices and rituals borrowed from their Latin-rite neighbors, but in particular by their liturgical music. That music, still in use today, consists primarily of congregational and cantorial singing (no organ or other instrument is permitted). Based on traditional East Slavonic chants and influenced by local folk melodies, it is known as Carpathian plain chant (prostopinje).

In the wake of the Protestant Reformation (which affected neighboring Magyars and Slovaks) and the Catholic Counter Reformation, the government and local aristocracy began in the late sixteenth century to try to bring the Orthodox Carpatho-Rusyns closer to the official Roman Catholic state religion of the two countries in which they lived at the time—the Hungarian Kingdom and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The result was the creation between 1596 and 1646 of a Uniate Church, that is an Eastern Christian Church in union with Rome. The Uniates were allowed to retain their Eastern-rite traditions, but they had to recognize the Pope in Rome, not the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as the ultimate head of their church. Hence from the seventeenth century, Carpatho-Rusyns were either Orthodox or Uniates. In 1772, the Uniates were renamed Greek Catholics. Eventually, in the United States they became known as Byzantine Catholics.

Although in practice there is not much difference between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic religious service (Divine Liturgy), there has nonetheless been constant friction between adherents of the two churches from the seventeenth century to the present in both the European homeland and the United States. The situation was made worse by the intervention of European secular authorities who at certain times persecuted and even banned entirely either the Orthodox or Greek Catholic Church.

Today, many Carpatho-Rusyn villages and cities have both a Greek Catholic and Orthodox church. Also, in each country where Rusyns live there is at least one Greek Catholic and one Orthodox bishop. In general, among Carpatho-Rusyns worldwide, there are today equal numbers of Greek Catholic and Orthodox adherents. In Ukraine’s Transcarpathia, the region with the largest number of Carpatho-Rusyns, the situation is more complex. Of the 1,210 parishes registered in 1993, 38% are Orthodox and 17% Greek Catholic. The rest are Roman Catholic (5%) and Reformed Calvinist (7.5%)—both primarily for Magyars—as well as a growing number of Jehovah’s Witnesses (17%), evangelical sects (6.6%), and Baptists (4%), all of whom have become widespread among Carpatho-Rusyns, most especially during the last decade.

With regard to church jurisdiction, the Greek Catholic eparchies of Mukačevo (Ukraine), Prešov (Slovakia), Hajdúdorog (Hungary), and Kríževci (former Yugoslavia), as well as the Archdiocese/Metropolitan Province of Pittsburgh (United States) are each self-governing and under the direct authority of the Vatican. The Orthodox eparchy of Mukačevo-Užhorod is part of the Ukrainian Orthodox (not Autocephalous) Church; the eparchy of Prešov is within the Czechoslovak Autocephalous Orthodox Church; and the eparchy of Sanok-Przemysł is in the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. In the United States, the Orthodox are either within the self-governing (autocephalous) Orthodox Church in America, or the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church under the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

Paul Robert Magocsi
Toronto, Ontario
SINCE THE REVOLUTION OF 1989

Mukasevo, Ukraine. On January 21, 1995, the Christian-Democratic party of the Republic of Subcarpathian Rus’ was formally constituted. Representatives from several districts in Transcarpathia approved the party’s program and statute, and elected an executive committee with the jurist, Petro Hodnáš, as party chairman.

The party operates on the principle that Subcarpathian Rus’ had the status of an autonomous republic until it was illegally abolished by the Soviet Ukrainian government in January 1946. The party’s goals, therefore, are: (1) to have Subcarpathian Rus’ recognized as an autonomous republic within the framework of present-day Ukraine; (2) to have Rusyns recognized as a distinct people (narodná nacija) by the Ukrainian government; and (3) to rehabilitate citizens who were illegally prosecuted and to restore property confiscated by the Soviet authorities after 1945. The Christian-Democratic party hopes to achieve its goals by cooperating with other parties within Ukraine and beyond its borders in order to pressure the government of Ukraine to respond positively.

Ruski Krstur, Yugoslavia. On May 26-28, 1995, the Third World Congress of Rusyns took place in the town of Ruski Krstur, which this year is celebrating the 250th anniversary of the settlement of Rusyns in the Bačka—the present-day region of Vojvodina in the northern part of the Yugoslav republic of Serbia. The congress was organized locally by the Rusyn Cultural Foundation (Ruska Matka) under the chairmanship of Michal Varga. Over 100 delegates and guests from Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United States, and Yugoslavia were in attendance. The participation was especially remarkable considering the present difficult international status of the host country, Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav federal government and the Vojvodinian regional government provided generous financial and moral support for the Third World Congress of Rusyns. Among those present who took an active part in the discussions were the federal cabinet minister, Margit Sovoví, and the Vojvodinian secretary for national minorities, Pavol Domenyi. Among the many greetings were those from Józef Kalman, vice-premier of Slovakia, who urged the congress to continue its work on behalf of Rusyn culture and language.

In contrast to the two previous congresses (Medzi-odarom, Slovakia 1991 and Krynicza, Poland 1993), the Third Congress included both plenary sessions and separate sessions for the work of three commissions: scholarship; culture and education; and economic development. Within each commission there were reports about achievements during the past two years and discussion of future projects. At its conclusion, the Third Congress issued the texts of a declaration and resolutions (see the full texts in this issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American) and each commission issued a report of its work. The local organizers issued a printed program for the congress and a handsome color-illustrated magazine about Ruski Krstur. The Ruske Slovo Publishing House in Novi Sad also published and distributed to all participants a tri-lingual version (Vojvodinian Rusyn/Serbian/English) of the general brochure on Carpatho-Rusyns published earlier this year by the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center as well as a second brochure on the Rusyns of Yugoslavia.

The World Congress of Rusyns is governed by the World Council of Rusyns (formerly the Interregional Council of the World Congress), comprised of one organization from the seven countries where Carpatho-Rusyns live: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, United States, and Yugoslavia. Vasyľ Turok of Slovakia was re-elected chairperson of the World Council. The next World Congress will be held in May 1977 in Budapest, hosted by the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary.

RECENT EVENTS

Nyíregyháza, Hungary. On May 25, 1995, the Scholarly Commission of the World Congress of Rusyns held its second meeting. It was hosted by the Department of Ukrainian and Rusyn Philology at the Bessenyeyi Pedagogical School in Nyíregyháza. Among those present were scholars from the Institute of Carpathian Studies in Užhorod, Ukraine; the Department of Ukrainian and Rusyn Philology in Nyíregyháza, Hungary; the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center in the United States; and Professor Ivan Pop from the Czech Republic. The working discussions focused on three projects: (1) a collection of documents on the history of Rusyns during the first half of the twentieth century, under the editorship of Ivan Pop; (2) an encyclopedic dictionary of Rusyn history, also under the editorial direction of Professor Pop; and (3) a large-scale map of Carpatho-Rusyn settlement being prepared by Professor Paul Robert Magocsi. It was also decided to establish an International Association of Rusyn Scholars (Míznaordinas asociacia rusynesvistov) comprised of institutions devoted to the study of Carpatho-Rusyns as well as interested individual scholars working in the field.

Taking advantage of the presence of members of the Scholarly Commission, the Department of Ukrainian and Rusyn Philology organized a seminar to inform the Hungarian public about recent scholarly developments. Speakers included Dr. Mykola Makara (Užhorod, Ukraine), Miron Žiroš (Novi Sad, Yugoslavia), Professor Paul Robert Magocsi (Toronto, Canada), and Professor István Udvari (Nyíregyháza, Hungary). For the occasion Professor Magocsi presented on behalf of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center several books and forty reels of microfilm (10,000 frames) of rare Carpatho-Rusyn newspapers and journals dating from 1848 to the library of the Department of Ukrainian and Rusyn Philology. The public seminar was widely covered by the Hungarian local and national press and television. The scholars also visited the Greek Catholic Seminary of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog and discussed with the rector and students the current status of the church and Rusyn religious traditions in Hungary.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On May 26-28, 1995, the Slavjane Folk Ensemble of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, and members of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society participated in the 39th annual Pittsburgh Folk Festival. In conjunction with the festival’s folklore theme, the Carpatho-Rusyn display featured information on the twentieth-century “Rusyn Robin Hood,” Mykola Suhaj, and on other legendary figures from the Carpathian Mountains. Paintings of folktales from Transcarpathia, as well as books and informational brochures on Rusyn history and culture, were also available.
RESOLUTIONS OF THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS OF RUSYNS (RUSNAKS/LEMKOS)


The congress expresses its special appreciation to the numerous scholars, writers, and cultural activists whose efforts have fulfilled one of the main goals announced at the Second Congress—the codification of the Rusyn language in Slovakia declared before an international audience in Bratislava [January 1995].

The congress requests that more intense efforts be undertaken to publish the proposed anthology of Rusyn poetry and anthology of Rusyn prose, which at the very latest should appear by the time of the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos).

The congress requests that all Rusyn organizations which are members of the World Congress continue their efforts to introduce the study of Rusyn language, culture, traditions, and history in those countries where Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) live and where education today is still not provided in our mother tongue.

The congress requests that its various commissions prepare (and the Interregional Council approve) a two-year work plan in the fields of culture, scholarship, and economic development among Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) in those countries where there exist appropriate conditions and that the various commissions coordinate the realization of such a plan.

The congress requests that, in cooperation with journalists where Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) live, the magazine Rusyn will continue to function as an informative organ for the congress and that it report on the work of the Interregional Council and the commissions of the World Congress as well as the work of the individual organizations that comprise the congress.

The congress requests that the individual Rusyn (Rusnak/Lemko) organizations form a commission for economic development and that before the end of 1995 this Commission for Economic Development compile statistical data on Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) active in business worldwide as the first step toward future cooperation between business persons.

The congress expects that the Interregional Council will prepare a concrete program of coordination in order to realize the above resolutions, and that at the conclusion of the congress both the Resolutions and Declaration of the Third World Congress be sent to the governments and parliaments of all countries where Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) live.

The congress approves a change in the name of the highest organ of the World Congress: from Interregional Council to the World Council of Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos).

DECLARATION OF THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS OF RUSYNS (RUSNAKS/LEMKOS)

The congress recognizes the governments and parliaments of those states which have assisted the cultural and educational development of Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos), most especially following the First and Second World Congresses.

The congress takes the position that in the context of strengthening democracy throughout the world it is necessary that Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) be guaranteed all rights to express freely their national identity and aspirations in all countries where they live according to accepted international norms and standards.

The congress believes in the right of Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos) to use their own name, to participate actively in their own national emancipation, and to develop and cultivate their national and cultural identity in all countries where they live.

The congress calls upon all Rusyns (Rusnak/Lemkos), Rusyn organizations, academics, other members of the intelligentsia, and educational and cultural activists to increase contacts among themselves in the interest of their own people as well as to build bridges of communication between other peoples and states in order to promote a spirit of trust and tolerance for the benefit of general human progress.

The congress recognizes the government and parliament of the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the moral and financial support it provides the Rusyn Cultural Foundation (Ruska Matka).

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of C-RA are available for $12.00 per year, or a complete set of all back issues from 1978 until 1994 is available for a special price of $100.00 (including shipping charges). Send your check to the address below.

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.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH
ABOUT CARPATHO-RUSYNS, 1986-1987

With this issue we wish to renew a column that since 1991 has not appeared in the Carpatho-Rusyn American. Eventually, all works about Carpatho-Rusyns will be listed in the second volume of Carpatho-Rusyn Studies: An Annotated Bibliography, covering the years 1985 through 1994. This second volume will not appear; however, for another two years. In the interim, we intend to list at least those titles that have appeared in English.

We will indicate those items available from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center. Others can be obtained on request through Interlibrary Loan from many local libraries or directly from research libraries of major universities (California at Berkeley, Harvard, Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Indiana, Toronto, Yale), or the Cleveland Public Library, Library of Congress, and New York Public Library.

—Editor


DONATION FOR BROCHURES

At the outset of 1995, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center published a handsome 24-page pocket brochure on Carpatho-Rusyns. The publication is intended to answer basic questions about the geography, economy, language, identity, culture, religion, and political life of Carpatho-Rusyns in Europe and North America. Also included is a chronology of the 93 most important events in Carpatho-Rusyn historical development from the sixth century AD to the present, and a list of addresses of all Carpatho-Rusyn cultural centers, scholarly organizations, journals, magazines, and newspapers worldwide.

The brochure is intended for use by Carpatho-Rusyns worldwide, and aside from the English-language edition the C-RRC hopes minimally to have it issued in the state language of every country where Carpatho-Rusyns live. Thanks to a generous donation by Steven Chepa of the Cheppa Corporation in Toronto, Ontario, these hopes have begun to be realized. The Cheppa Corporation funded the printing costs of a Slovak edition and a Ukrainian edition which have already been printed in Slovakia as well as a Polish edition that is now in print.

In conjunction with the Third World Congress of Rusyns, the Ruske Slovo Publishing House in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia issued a tri-lingual Vojvodinian Rusyn/Serbian/English edition of the brochure. The Organization of Rusyns in Hungary intends to publish a Hungarian edition. At some point in the future it would be desirable to publish editions in German, French, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese, so that the vast majority of people in the world would have at their fingertips basic data on Carpatho-Rusyns.

Copies of the English-language edition of the brochure are available for $1.00 from your local Carpatho-Rusyn organization: the Carpatho-Russian American Center (Yonkers, New York); the Carpatho-Rusyn Society (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania); or the Rusin Association (Minneapolis, Minnesota). Multiple copies (minimum of 10) are available for $1.00 each from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, Box 131-B, Orwell, VT 05760.
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