Whenever one reaches out to communicate with others, it is gratifying to receive a response. Since last spring when our first issue appeared, we have gotten several notes and letters from readers—some discovering their ethnic and cultural heritage for the first time; others anxious to expand their knowledge; some asking questions and requesting that we investigate areas of particular interest to them (which we shall try to do); others offering constructive criticism. Several readers from around the country have shared with us their own unique experiences as descendants of immigrants, and we would like to encourage every reader to do this.

The strongest message in all of the letters, whether articulated as such or not, was that few people are indifferent to their origins. Another message was that Carpatho-Rusyns frequently perceive their ethnic identity in different ways. The particular experiences and background of each person or his parents and grandparents have been important in shaping that person's perception and understanding of his ethnic identity. And certainly a variety of perceptions is to be anticipated among the descendants of a population whose native homeland existed for centuries under foreign domination, experiencing the influence of several strong external and usually contradictory forces.

Let us now allow the readers to speak for themselves. The following are excerpts from several letters received over the past few months.

Dear Editor:
I have just finished reading the first issue of the "Carpatho-Rusyn American." This type of work seems to be most informative since very little has been published in the past regarding our heritage. I have taken a year's subscription and hope that future issues will be as rewarding....

Mark Turick/New Jersey

Dear Editor:
I really enjoyed the first issue of the "Carpatho-Rusyn American." My parents are from Uzhhorod and the things in your publication are so like my mom has told me. She came here in 1913. She's now 82 and she was so happy to read about her homeland. I, can speak "po-nasomu" and I'm proud!

Peggy Oakill/Pennsylvania

Dear Editor:
Your first newsletter was warmly welcomed. Keep up the good work....

Reverend Joseph M. Stanichar
Chaplain/Captain USAF

Dear Editor:
I just wished to convey how much I enjoyed receiving the first issue of the "Carpatho-Rusyn American." I found it delightful, informative, and well-written. My thanks to you and Paul Magocsi for the time and effort which you have spent initiating the newsletter and bringing it to the Carpatho-Rusyn American community. A publication dealing solely with our ethnic heritage has been wanting for some time, the need for which will become more apparent as many of the early immigrants pass away. What I enjoyed most about the newsletter was the rich variety of topics it covered, the Pascha recipe included! I would also like to suggest for future issues of the newsletter articles dealing with: (1) Carpatho-Rusyn organizations, (2) traditional dances and songs, (3) everyday life in the old country, and (4) the special place of holidays during the year. Congratulations and best wishes in your dedicated effort to heighten our awareness of our cultural heritage.

Fred C. Olday/Maine

Dear Editor:
Just a short note to congratulate you on the first issue of the newsletter which I was able to see a few days ago. I hope that the project continues well; let me know if I may be of help.

Father George Johnson/Pennsylvania
Orthodox Church in America

Dear Editor:
Enclosed is my check for $5.00 as a subscription. The first issue was OK! Best wishes and good luck.

Julian Revay/New York City
Carpathian Research Center

Dear Editor:
We indeed are gratified to encounter so authentic and informative a newsletter as the "Carpatho-Rusyn American." We are pleased also to see that its editor is a woman, and commend you for your commitment to this field.

David and Olga (Borukh) Morgan/Pennsylvania

Dear Editor:
I just received my second issue of the "Carpatho-Rusyn American" and I can't express my joy after reading it. As a first generation American, I was totally unaware of the social and historical significance of the region of my parents' birth.

Thomas Dutch
Personnel Administrator
Michigan State University/Housing and Food Services Division

Dear Editor:
I want you to know that I was delighted to learn that something is really being done to enlighten the progeny of Carpatho-Rus' that his background is the reason that we of later generations are able to fit in so well and contribute so much for the good of the USA...

John Wargo/Colorado
Avhustyn Volosyn was one of the most active national leaders of the twentieth century. There is not an aspect of Subcarpathian life—cultural, political, religious, educational, economic—in which he did not play an important and often decisive role.

Volosyn was born in the mountainous village of Kelećyn (Maramaros county) in what is today the Transcarpathian oblast of the Soviet Ukraine. Like his father, Avhustyn attended the seminary in Užhorod and was ordained a Greek Catholic priest. During the last decades of Hungarian rule, he was one of the few members of the local intelligentsia who opposed Magyarization and favored instead the use of Rusyn vernacular in publications and schools. He put these views into practice as editor of the monthly journal Nauka (1903-1914) and the annual almanac Misjacoslov (1901-1921). Volosyn had great influence over several generations of Subcarpathian youth, because from 1900 to 1938 he was a professor and from 1917 director of the Užhorod Teacher's College. For younger students he authored a series of textbooks in arithmetic, physics, pedagogy and logic, as well as several grammars and readers, the most popular being the Methodological Grammar of the Carpatho-Rusyn Language (Metodyčna hramatyka karpatorus'koho jazyka) which went through six editions between 1899 and 1930.

After Subcarpathian Rusyns joined the new democratic state of Czechoslovakia in 1919 they at last had a say in how they would be governed. From the very beginning, Volosyn played a leading role. He was chairman of the Rusyn Club (March 1919) which negotiated with American-Rusyn leaders, vice-chairman of the Central National Council of Užhorod which declared for union with Czechoslovakia (May 1919), and then a leading member of the Rusyn delegation which journeyed to Prague to meet the recently elected President Tomáš Masaryk. Between 1919 and 1920 Volosyn was one of the five members on the Directorate, the first governing body for Subcarpathian Rus', then between 1925 and 1929 he served as a deputy for the People's Party in the National Parliament in Prague. These political activities did not deter the busy Volosyn from participating in cultural and economic affairs. Besides professorial and directorial duties at the Teacher's Seminary, he served as chairman of both the Pedagogical Society (est. 1924) and the Teacher's Assembly (est. 1929), was a founding member of the pro-Ukrainian Prosvita Society (est. 1920), and was instrumental in organizing the Subcarpathian Bank and Cooperative Union. He also continued to write several scholarly works, including a study of the language question (1921) and an analysis of Subcarpathian history (1935) which was published in England by the distinguished Slavonic and East European Review in London. By the 1920s Volosyn had become convinced that Subcarpathians were part of the Ukrainian nationality and he felt they should be identified as such.

It is not surprising that when Subcarpathian Rus' finally obtained its autonomy from Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1938 Volosyn would play a leading role. He was appointed premier-minister in November 1938 and for the next four and one-half months he tried to establish a workable government for the newly baptized Carpatho-Ukraine. International pressures on the eve of World War II were too great, however, and by March 1939 the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler decided to destroy what was left of Czechoslovakia. At its first (and last) meeting, the newly elected Carpatho-Ukrainian Diet gathered in Chust in March 15, declared the country independent, and elected Volosyn president. But that same day Hungarian troops invaded the region; Volosyn and his government were forced to flee.

After crossing Romania and Yugoslavia, Volosyn reached Prague in 1940. There he spent the war years as a professor at the Ukrainian Free University in the now German-occupied Czech capital. In May 1945 when the victorious Red Army finally drove out the Germans, Volosyn was warned by his friends that he would be apprehended if he stayed in Prague, but because of his age, he decided not to leave the city. The inevitable took place. Within a few weeks he was arrested by the Soviet secret police and sent to the Soviet Union to be placed on trial. In such unfavorable circumstances, his health failed and he soon died in a Soviet prison.

In spite of his variegated political career, which has either been praised or criticized by friends and enemies, Avhustyn Volosyn is nonetheless universally recognized as one of the most important Subcarpathian Rusyn leaders of the twentieth century.
In Part 1 of this article, the author pointed out that Subcarpathian Rus' has always been a land which has drawn the attention of scholars and the creative interest of writers, journalists, and publicists. He demonstrated its geographical position in East Central Europe with the aid of a map showing the former Hungarian county divisions, and discussed the use of the terms Rus', Rusyn, and Subcarpathian. — Editor

(Part 2)

The rest of my remarks will be divided into two parts. The first will concentrate on political developments. In a short space, I cannot present a detailed history of the region, but rather mention only those events I consider to be crucial turning points in the past. In the second part, we shall turn to an eternally vexing question—the problem of national identity.

(1) The first important historical problem is the settlement of the region. Recent archeological evidence has proven that Subcarpathian Rus' was settled as early as the fifth millennium B.C. As for the direct ancestors of the Rusyns, we know that they came from the vast East Slavic world known as Kievan Rus'. From Galicia and Volynia in the north, settlers crossed the Carpathian passes, while a smaller number came from Poltava, entering the region from the south through Transylvania. There is much less certainty as to the time of their arrival. Some scholars say Carpatho-Rusyns were in their present homeland already in the sixth century. Others claim they did not begin to arrive until the eleventh century, and then only in small numbers.

Certainly by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, several waves of Rusyn immigrants had arrived, the last wave, according to local legend, coming at the end of the fourteenth century led by Prince Fedor Korjatovyc. He is considered one of the earliest Rusyn national heroes. The question of when Carpatho-Rusyns and when Slavs in general had arrived in the Danubian Basin was once a burning political issue, especially in the 1920's and 1930's when Hungary was trying to get back the territory by arguing on grounds of historical precedent that the Magyars were there first. This issue, of course, is no longer crucial. The point to remember is that the ancestors of Carpatho-Rusyns came from Rus', so that they are ethnically and culturally related to the East.

(2) The next important date is 896 when several Maygar tribes fleeing under the pressure of the other nomadic peoples in the Great Asiatic and Ukrainian steppes, crossed the Carpathians through the Subcarpathian region under the leadership of Árpád in search of a new homeland. An influential medieval Hungarian chronicler later related that when the Magyar tribes passed through what is now Užhorod, they had to fight off and eventually kill a certain Prince Laborec, who has subsequently become the first remembered Rusyn leader. Although the Magyar tribes were pagan, they eventually accepted Christianity under the jurisdiction of Rome, so that the Hungarian Kingdom became part of western civilization and development. This was to be of crucial significance for Carpatho-Rusyns, because in the eleventh century, the Hungarian Kingdom had established its hegemony over the Subcarpathian region, and Rusyn culture was henceforth to be open to the influence of western civilization.

(3) The next important turning point comes at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the Hungarian Kingdom was suffering from internal struggles between the king and nobility. In an attempt to satisfy the nobles, a new land code, the Tripartitum, was passed in 1514. For all intents and purposes, the Tripartitum gave the nobility complete control over the population living on its lands. The Carpatho-Rusyns became serfs and they were at the mercy of local landlords, the more prominent being the Drugeth, Perényi, Rakoczi, and later Andrássy and Schönbrunn families. Serfdom lasted legally in Hungary until 1848, but even after that time the economic position of the poverty-stricken Rusyn peasants did not improve. One reason is that throughout Hungary the nobility continued to control the administration, and this class refused to allow the kind of political and especially economic modernization that was taking place in other parts of western Europe during the nineteenth century. Hungary remained a backward country, and one of its least developed regions was Subcarpathian Rus'. As a result, most Carpatho-Rusyns remained in the peasant class, and poor peasants at that. Moreover, neither the so-called "Czechoslovak revolution" of 1919, the "Hungarian revolution" of 1939, nor the "Soviet revolution" of 1945 really changed anything. In 1910, 89 percent of the Rusyn population was engaged in small-scale agriculture and related pursuits; in 1930 that figure was 83 percent; and in 1950 still as high as 70 percent.

(4) Indeed, the Tripartitum of 1514 did not take effect immediately, because Hungary was suffering from an internal political crisis and was open to invasion from the Ottoman Turkish forces which in 1526 annihilated the Hungarian armies at the Battle of Mohacs. For more than 150 years, Hungary was divided into three parts: (1) the major part of the country was under Turkish rule; (2) the northern regions of Slovakia and part of Subcarpathian Rus' were controlled by the Habsburgs in Vienna; while (3) semi-independent Transylvania in the east was ruled by Hungarian nobles. Besides the harsh Turkish presence, Hungary was torn between two factions: the Habsburgs in the west were engaged in a bloody war with the Transylvanian princes in the east, both of whom claimed the legal right to the Hungarian crown. This struggle was to have a direct impact on Subcarpathian Rus' which at times was ruled by both of these conflicting forces.

Actually, during the sixteenth century Subcarpathian Rus' and neighboring Slovakia were relatively well off, since the mountainous areas provided a haven from the Ottomans who were occupying the Hungarian plain. Moreover, with the lack of an effective Hungarian central administration, serfdom as laid down by the 1514 Tripartitum could not be enforced. But the situation was to change in the seventeenth century when the Habsburgs began to enforce their control
over Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus'.

The result was a series of rebellions known as the Kuruc Wars which culminated in the great uprising led by Prince Ferenc Rakoczi II between 1703 and 1711. Rakoczi was born at his family’s estate of Mukačevo, and he later became a prince of Transylvania. He viewed the struggle as a Hungarian “war for independence” against the Habsburgs; for the Rusyn peasants who made up the bulk of his army, this struggle was an expression of anger against increased taxes and the ravaging of the countryside by troops of the Habsburg imperial armies. Rakoczi went down in defeat and fled the country, but Hungarian writers began to foster the legend that as supporters of their “beloved prince,” the Rusyns were “gens fidelissima,” that is, the people loyal to Hungary. With the final defeat of these uprisings, the Rusyn countryside was damaged, the peasants were poorer than ever, and now subject to the stringent tax and serf regulations enforced by the imperial Habsburg regime directed from Vienna and with the help of the local Hungarian nobility.

(To be continued)

Paul R. Magocsi

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Carpatho-Rusyn civilization has continued to be a subject of interest to scholars in both Europe and the United States. In this and subsequent issues we will provide a systematic annotated list of all publications that have appeared since 1975. — Editor.


This is the second volume of a proposed annual journal of scholarly articles edited by John Hvosda and published by the World Lemkos’ Federation, a recently founded organization that hopes to unify all Lemkian organizations in the western world. This issue contains 7 articles, 10 documents, 1 review, and a bibliography, all of which appear in either English, Ukrainian, Russian, or Polish. Most of the material concentrates on Lemkians north of the Carpathians and includes articles by Walter Dushnyk and Ivan Hvosda, and reprints of previously published studies by Ivan F. Evseev, Andrzej Kwielecki, and Jevhen Vrec’ona, all of which deal with the deportation of Lemkians and other aspects of their post-1945 history in Poland.


This collection of nine articles is in the words of the book’s subtitle, “a collection of studies on the development of the Ukrainian nationality in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.” Focus is on the Rusyn-inhabited Prešov Region and in particular on post-1945 aspects of politics, economics, culture, education, drama and folklore, literature, and publishing. The collection is informative, although over-optimistic in its positive evaluation of the effects of socialism.


This brief article overemphasizes the cultural achievements in the Carpatho-Rusyn inhabited Prešov Region and criticizes the results of the “Prague Spring” of 1968.


This is the first comprehensive biography of the late nineteenth century Carpatho-Rusyn writer, Stavrovskij-Popradov. Written in Russian, Dobos’ monograph provides biographical data, describes the cultural context in which Stavrovskij-Popradov grew up, and then follows with individual chapters on the poetry, prose, school texts, and language of the author.

Prince Fedor Korjatovyč, a woodcut from the frontispiece of Joanniky Basilovits’ book, Brevis notitia Fundationis Theodorii Koriathovits (Košice, 1799).

The marriage ceremony and the great traditions surrounding it in the land of Carpatho-Rusyns is a beautiful religious, joyful, and festive occasion. From county to county, whether it be Spiš, Šariš, Zemplín, Už, Beréz, Ugoča or Maramaros, the color and excitement, and the religious and social importance are always present. Each county, and often each village contains some variation in the practice of formalities. Each wedding has an individual touch effect by local Rusyn personalities, who through their local folklore give added excitement, coloration, and meaning to their village wedding.

Over many centuries our Rusyn ancestors established these customs and traditions in order to promote and protect the sacredness of the sacrament of matrimony. Tradition prescribes that a new couple achieve a solid identity as husband and wife and tradition requires them to complete their awareness of their new social responsibilities in the Rusyn community. Historically the social and cultural survival of Rusyns depended on the strength and beauty inherent in our living cultural traditions and religion.

The ceremony itself is in several stages, and we shall observe the process step by step. Let us begin with the major question: In the Rusyn village, how might a young man like Ivan Rusnak meet a nice girl like Maríčka Danko? If a young man desires to marry, he so informs his parents that he has a particular young woman he wishes to court. Sometimes the whole family and relatives act as matchmakers. They arrange for a young man and woman to meet to see if they like each other. Also, a couple could become acquainted at the Sunday afternoon dances in the springtime, at the Sunday afternoon dances in the springtime, at the Sunday afternoon dances in the springtime, at the Sunday afternoon dances in the springtime, at the Sunday afternoon dances in the springtime, at the Sunday afternoon dances in the springtime.

The next step in the direction of marriage is the betrothal announcement, or the zarúčínky. A meeting for deciding the betrothal begins after supper in the early evening at approximately seven o’clock. On the verchovyna, or highlands, the ritual of the zarúčínky is a very happy occasion. The prospective groom goes to the home of the prospective bride with two or three older men and his best friend as spokesman. The starosta, or senior spokesman, must be skillful and persuasive at negotiating a proper settlement of properties. The starosta is well versed in the betrothal formalities and is a man who has a way with words, a fine speaking voice, and an honest and convincing personality. So when they decide the dowry—perhaps so much land, hay, seeds, goats, oxen, money, linens, and so on—Ivan and Maríčka give their acknowledgement. The wedding is accepted formally, and a wedding date is set.

The bargaining for the dowry usually ends in a successful agreement between the two families and afterwards there is food, drink, singing, and dancing. Many times the zarúčínky goes on into the next morning. Immediately after the betrothal the young couple arranges for an engagement ceremony blessed by the Reverend Father, who will also fill out the marriage certificate and send the couple to the notary to register the legal marriage application. Carpatho-Rusyn weddings are traditionally held on Sundays or Holy Days so that most of the village is free from work and able to attend.

Following the betrothal the wedding usually takes place in three months. A week before the fiancée gives her fiancé a symbolic gift such as an expensive handkerchief. The preparation of food is in progress and the bride with two bridesmaids and the groom with two ushers go from house to house to invite their guests. The young women wear nice clothes and a special floral arrangement on their hats, a bugrejda, and carry two walking sticks tied with ribbons, one stick to represent each family. Usually the whole village is invited.

As the wedding date comes nearer, the families do the last of their cooking. Relatives and neighbors help by bringing gifts of cheese, eggs, meats, pirohy, kvasna kapusta, halušky, and so on. The foods are cooked and fried as prescribed by custom. Now it is the night before the wedding and there is singing and dancing to say farewell to the bride’s last day as an unmarried woman. The bridesmaids, or družky, weave wedding wreaths for the bride and groom to wear in church. After the village dance that night before the wedding, they go into the nearby woods to pick periwinkle leaves—barvinok. At about two o’clock in the morning, they meet the ushers at the bride’s house and weave the wedding wreath, or vinec. They sing and talk for hours into the night as they weave the barvinok into beautiful green crowns to be blessed and used at the crowning in the wedding ceremony. As they pick the barvinok they sing, “Periwinkle, I love to wear you, but because of a young man I must leave you to be married.” (To be continued)

Jerry Jumba
Music Director and Choreographer
Slavjane Folk Ensemble

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

When the Carpatho-Rusyns immigrated to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth, they made their homes primarily in cities along the east coast, the areas of easiest access for them when they arrived from Europe. One particularly well-known Carpatho-Rusyn community is that of Bridgeport, Connecticut. It is estimated that up to 20,000
descendants of Carpatho-Rusyn immigrants still live in the Greater Bridgeport area.

Last spring, the Bridgeport newspaper The Sunday Post featured a series of articles on the ethnic history of the Bridgeport population. The Carpatho-Rusyns, who have led an active and interesting life in the city's history, were covered in three lengthy articles by Herbert F. Geller. Who were the Carpatho-Rusyns of Bridgeport? Who are they today?

Although traditionally an agricultural people, the Carpatho-Rusyns came to Bridgeport, along with other immigrants, to work in the numerous factories in the metropolitan area. Settling on the east side of the city, an ethnic area, they took jobs and became skilled workers in such firms as the Bridgeport Brass Company, Singer Sewing Machine Company, United Metallic Cartridge (later Remington Arms), and others, some of which no longer exist after so many years.

The Carpatho-Rusyns formed fraternal and social organizations, for instance the St. Elias Society and the St. Basil Society, which provided a greatly needed place to socialize in one's own language, as well as accident, sickness, death, and burial insurance. This was followed by the founding of a church, the soul of the early community—St. John the Baptist Greek Catholic Church. Father Orestes Chornock, who came to the church in 1911, was eventually to lead a movement in the 1930's to maintain the Eastern Rite customs and traditions which the Vatican was at that time attempting to replace with those of the Western Roman Catholic Church. From this movement emerged the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in which Father Chornock was consecrated as the first bishop by the Patriarch of Constantinople, spiritual head of the Orthodox Christian Churches.

The Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist was then built on Mill Hill Avenue in Bridgeport, and its present pastor is the Very Reverend John Duranko. Two other churches were constructed soon after this in Stratford. Bishop Chornock was greatly aided in his endeavors by the late Very Reverend Joseph Mihaly, also of Bridgeport, who, among his other activities, founded the national youth club which is now the American Carpatho-Russian Youth (ACRY). The original St. John the Baptist Greek Catholic Church was eventually succeeded by St. John the Baptist Byzantine Rite Church in Trumbull, and its present pastor is the Reverend Alan Borsuk.

The Carpatho-Rusyns of Bridgeport, both Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic, have always been proud of their cultural heritage, adorning their communities with spirited Slavic song and dance throughout the years. The church was, as always, the center of their life, offering spiritual guidance, friendship, and a helpful hand in time of need, as well as sponsoring picnics, plays, and other social affairs. Church and community activities provided a welcome outlet for the people who worked long, hard hours in factories and mills, without the security enjoyed by most workers today.

A great number of Carpatho-Rusyns, seeking a more independent occupation, started their own businesses, especially in the form of small grocery stores. Whole families would participate in the responsibilities of keeping the business going. Besides groceries, Carpatho-Rusyns owned and operated other businesses, some of which still thrive: the insurance agency of John Onofrey, now run by his brother Stephen; the Peerless Aluminum Foundry of the Peter Hardy family; the Manhattan Building Supply Company of the Mahonec family which provided concrete for the construction of Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, New York; the Liberty Tool Corporation of John Cipka; Stoneybrook Florist of Nicholas Macura; the Rose Beauty Shop of Mary Pirhala; and many others. The Bridgeport community has also produced medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, educators, numerous businessmen, and outstanding sports people, such as Joseph Vancisin who has been Yale University's basketball coach since 1956.

Although the days of the old east side ethnic community where the Carpatho-Rusyns first made their homes in Bridgeport are over, the memories are rich in the hearts and minds of the descendants of the immigrants. Amidst all the difficulties of that time, there was a special peace and calm, rare in today's world; a feeling of pride in the cleanliness and safety of one's community; a close, family-like relationship among neighbors of the same language and the same blood. But let us not forget the hardships of early immigrant life—they were numerous. May the descendants of the Bridgeport Carpatho-Rusyn community always remember the sacrifices of the first immigrants, and strive to fulfill their ancestors' dreams of a better life in this country.

LANGUAGE

As we have mentioned before in this section, Carpatho-Rusyn has no single standard literary language, but consists of several related dialects. The dialects differ somewhat from village to village. Thus, if you have had contact with one dialect from your parents or grandparents, you may have learned a slightly different version of the words that are presented here. These examples are from the village of Vyšná Jablonka which is located completely within Carpatho-Rusyn linguistic territory and is not greatly influenced by Slovak dialects.

Good-bye. — Z Bóhom. (literally: God be with you.)

Have a good trip. — (Zbôh-hohm.)
(Šcastývú drahú.)

Be careful. — Uvažajte na sebe.
(Oo-vah-záh-teh nah séh-beh.)

Take care. — Merkuje na sebe.
(Mehr-kóy-teh nah séh-beh.)

Please come in. — Prošu dale.
(Proh-shoo dah-leh.)

Let me have your coat. — Prošu dajte gérok dolu.
(Proh-shoo dáh-teh géh-rohk doh-loo.)
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