FROM THE EDITOR

As I write this issue’s editorial, it is only a few days since the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns which I attended in Budapest, Hungary from May 29 to June 1. The sounds and sights are still fresh in my mind, the impressions vivid. I came away having made several new acquaintances, with some questions answered, and new questions yet unanswered. What occurred at the congress was a complex interaction of people who are citizens of several countries, but who share common Rusyn ethnic roots, Rusyn language, and a Rusyn cultural heritage. Most importantly, they are individuals who represent countless others not present at the congress and all of whom are profoundly serious in their intent and desire that the Rusyn language and culture—that Rusyn people—must and will survive.

Although I have travelled and lived in East Central Europe, this was my first visit to Budapest—and I was astonished by this enormous and magnificent city. Budapest, the present capital of Hungary, was truly the capital of a kingdom, with its varied and eclectic architecture, a mixture of styles, betokening the achievements of Hungarian culture at its height. We were reminded of Hungary’s history and sense of past glory on the vast tiled Square of Heroes on which rises the Millenium Monument, built between 1896 and 1929, celebrating a thousand years of Hungarian history with seven equestrian statues depicting the seven chieftains of the nomadic Magyar tribes who migrated from the east, conquering the Carpathian Basin in 896. Although Rusyns and Magyars have experienced difficult moments together in their long history within the Hungarian Kingdom, one could come to understand in the midst of Budapest why some Rusyns in the past could have supported a larger Hungarian identity.

Gabor Hattinger, a Rusyn poet and the head of the Organization of Hungary’s Rusyns, greeted us at the headquarters of his group, a chaotic smoke-filled few rooms in a building which houses several other minority organizations’ offices as well. Delegates were arriving, registering, and being shuttled off to the assigned hotel, last-minute changes being made, and complaints addressed. Gabor’s great energy and his dark eyes sparkled through all the shouting, laughter, and confusion.

After a quick supper at the hotel, we made our way to the Slovak Cultural Center which had graciously lent out space for the opening and closing cultural program. Here we were officially greeted by Hattinger, and then treated to the songs and dances of a new Rusyn folk ensemble in Hungary, as well as skits from their repertory of plays by actors from the Aleksander Duchnovyc Theater in Prešov, Slovakia, and Rusyn songs performed by the Revilak family singers from Bardejov, Slovakia.

Friday morning we gathered at the Hungarian Cultural Center (Kulturinnov) high on Buda Hill overlooking the Danube and what was once the separate city of Pest on the other side of the river. Here, across a square from the Royal Coronation, or Matthias, Church, and not far from the Castle buildings and fortifications, which are now a major tourist attraction, the congress was convened. Hattinger opened the first plenary session, which began with reports by the chairman of the World Council and by the heads of the six country delegations that make up the Congress. The rest of Friday’s activity was centered around brief presentations by various members of the congress, sharing information, experiences, grievances, and hopes with each other. Emotions sometimes ran high as delegates strove to convince the audience of their opinions.

As I sat there I was struck by a number of things. At first glance, I saw a profusion of gray heads, older men, and mainly men. While this impression was not entirely false, a closer look revealed that some delegations as a whole were decidedly younger than others and included at least some women. Slovakia’s delegation included Marija Mal’covska and Anna Pliškova, both young, stylish, creative, and intellectual women. The Yugoslav Rusyns included Helena Medješi, Irina Papuga, and Natalja Dudaš, the director of Ruske Slovo publishing house and accomplished poet who presented the newly-published anthology of Rusyn poetry. The Polish delegation brought their beloved poet, Olena Duc-Fajfer, ever young and energetic. Only the American delegation contained the same number of women and men. Surely, in the hectic life of most younger and middle-aged people, there is no time and little or no money for travel to conferences, and this in fact may account for the overall impression given by the participants.

At the same time, I was thrilled to hear Rusyn speech in all its variety. The delegations from Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia all spoke Rusyn, easily communicating with each other, but their language was clearly influenced by the sounds and linguistic features of the countries in which they live. This setting would be a veritable feast for my Slavic linguistic scholar friends, I am certain. I found myself using Russian, Slovak, and also English to speak with other delegates.

It was not long before all of us in the American delegation became aware of the problems and concerns of the various European delegations. The most vocal and urgent of these was expressed by the delegation from Subcarpathian Rus’, the members of which have felt under particular strain in light of the increasingly desperate political and economic situation of Rusyns in Ukraine’s Transcarpathia.

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ALEKSEJ L. PETROV (1859-1931)

The history and culture of Carpatho-Rusyns has long attracted the interest of scholars in many countries. Writers from Russia, in particular, have turned their attention to Carpathian Rus', since in that country many believed that the Rusyns and their homeland were part of a single ethnolinguistic culture that included Russians and other East Slavs. While some Russians may have written one or two works about Rusyns, others studied them in great depth. Perhaps the best known in the second group was Aleksej Leonidovic Petrov, described by one admiring biographer in the 1920s as “the patriarch of contemporary Carpatho-Rusyn scholarship.”

Petrov was born in 1859 in St. Petersburg, then the capital of the tsarist Russian empire. His father Leonid Petrov was a well-known professor of theology and author of many works in dogmatics and church history. The young Aleksej at first specialized in mathematics, graduating from gymnasium (secondary school) in 1876 with a gold medal in that subject. Events far away, however, were to change his plans about a career in the sciences.

Like many other Russians of his day, Petrov was profoundly moved by the uprisings among the South Slavs that began in 1875 against Ottoman rule. Within a year, those uprisings led to a war between the Ottoman Turks and Russia’s Balkan allies, Serbia and little Montenegro. These events were enough to encourage Petrov to want to learn more about the Slavic world, most especially outside the borders of the Russian Empire. He therefore enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philosophy at St. Petersburg University, where he studied with the leading Slavists of the day, including Vladimir I. Lamanskij.

It was under Lamanskij’s influence that Petrov became interested in Carpathian Rus’, which many in tsarist society considered to be the farthest western “Russian” land beyond the borders of Russia. To learn more about the “Rus’ abroad,” Petrov made his first visit to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1885. He headed specifically to Carpathian Rus’, where he stayed for several days in the Presov Region village of Cerčižně (present-day Slovakia) at the home of the Carpatho-Rusyn political and cultural activist, Adol’f Dobrians’kyj. Before World War I, Petrov returned three more times to Carpathian Rus’ (1890, 1897, and 1911), visiting scholars and archival holdings in Užhorod and Mučačěvo.

By the 1890s, Petrov began to publish in Russian scholarly journals the first results of his research on Carpatho-Rusyns. His output was prodigious and by World War I he had published seven volumes in a series called Materiały dla istorij Ugorskij Rusi (Materials on the History of Hungarian Rus’, 1905-14). These works included descriptions of archives and demographic analyses of the Carpathian region, documents dealing with the fourteenth-century leader, Fedir Koriačev, and the impact of the Reformation on the Orthodox Rusyns. With these works, Petrov’s reputation was firmly established. He was awarded a doctorate in 1911, and was appointed to a professorship in the history of the Slavs at St. Petersburg University.

Petrov’s life as an “ivory-tower” scholar was interrupted by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Civil War. Ever since the outbreak of World War I in 1914, his research trips abroad were forced to end, while at home in the new Soviet Russia after 1918 it became increasingly difficult to remain aloof from politics. In 1922, Petrov was granted a research leave by the Bolshevik authorities to travel abroad. He welcomed the opportunity and travelled to Prague, the capital of the new state of Czechoslovakia. He was never to return home.

As part of the “White Russian” emigration that sought refuge in several European countries, Petrov was able to take advantage of the special assistance that the Czechoslovak government provided to fellow Slavs from the former Russian Empire. After settling in Prague and until his death in 1931, Petrov was able to visit almost once each year Czechoslovakia’s new eastern province of Subcarpathian Rus’ to carry out further archival research and to consult with local Rusyn scholars.

Throughout his life, Petrov was a Positivist, that is, he believed that by uncovering concrete documentary evidence the “true” historical record could be told. Therefore, most of his published work consists of texts of archival documents, religious polemics, and other early literary monuments (all with extensive commentaries) as well as compilations of topographic names. He often used linguistic and geographic data to justify his tentative conclusions about historic events, but he avoided for the most part archaeological evidence and folkloric traditions. All in all, Petrov was reluctant to generalize or to speculate on matters that were not documented in the written material he collected. It is only in the last work published before his death The Oldest Documents on the History of the Carpatho-Rusyn Church and Hierarchy, 1391-1498 that he finally drew some generalizations and posed various hypotheses for other scholars to reflect upon and to research further.

Because of his exclusive reliance on written documentation, Petrov challenged what he called historical myths and he reached conclusions that were not always popular among Rusyns. For instance, he dismissed the view that Cyril and Methodus or even their disciples brought Christianity to the Subcarpathian region; he argued that Rusyns settled the region after the arrival of the Magyars; and he was convinced that no independent medieval state such as the Marchia Ruthenorum had ever existed. Such “radical” views have subsequently been challenged and in some cases refuted by new archaeological, historical, and linguist research. In the end, this would have made Petrov happy, because he had always argued that Carpatho-Rusyns were deserving of a history based on all the facts available and that was written without any preconceived ideological or political agenda. Present-day researchers writing about Carpatho-Rusyns would do well to follow the scholarly precepts of Aleksej L. Petrov.

Philip Michaels
The following essay is by Professor Myron Sysak, a literary historian and critic who is chairman of the Department of Russian Language and Literature at Šafárik University in Prešov, Slovakia. In 1996, Myron Sysak (not to be confused with his brother Jaroslav, director of the Duchnovč Real Theatre) was elected vice-chairman of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyn’ska Obroda). This essay, translated by Paul Robert Magocsi, first appeared in Rusyn in the newspaper Narodny novynky, January 1997.—Editor

When speaking about national identity, we often hear our local Ukrainians proclaim that they are at the same time Rusyns. The issue is one of equivalent terms, which effectively is a needless redundancy: a Rusyn is the same as a Ukrainian, that is, when one says “Rusyn,” one automatically thinks “Ukrainian.” They have even created an organization which reflects the above logic and is called the Union of Rusyns-Ukrainians (Sojuz rusyniv-ukrajinciv).

Little is said, however, that the opposite should also apply: when one says “Ukrainian,” one should think “Rusyn.” This the local Ukrainians do not mention for fear of being laughed at, since the implication would be that a Ukrainian from the Poltava region or from Kiev or Zhytomir is a Rusyn. Our local Ukrainians know quite well that Ukrainians have never recognized Rusyns as something distinct, and that they have no intention of doing so. Rusyns are simply Ukrainians.

Such an anomalous situation can only occur among us. Not too long ago, before 1989, whenever the word Rusyn may have been mentioned, the general reaction was categorical: “There is no such thing.” Then, after the revolution of November 1989, Rusyns and therefore a Rusyn nationality was reluctantly recognized as perhaps something from the past, but . . .

What followed were explanations of the closeness between Rusyns and Ukrainians, of how the Rusyn language is a dialect of the Ukrainian language, and of how we have similar folk customs and a common religion. What our Ukrainians do not want to hear is that such statements are without foundation and untrue.

If national identity were determined on the grounds of ethnographic similarities, then the Slavic, Germanic, and Romance peoples would represent single nationalities. And are not Ukrainians technically close to the Russians? In fact, they are so close that not too long ago they were known as Little Russians. Although our local Ukrainians have an aversion to such historical facts, this does not stop them from employing the same tactics toward us Rusyns. According to them, we are simply “Little Ukrainians” who have not yet reached the level of nationally conscious Ukrainians.

The fact that many words in the Rusyn language are similar to Ukrainian does not prove the existence of a single people. In this regard, we only need to mention the closeness of the Slovak and Czech languages, not to speak of the virtually identical languages of Serbs and Croats, of Germans and Austrians, or of the English and the Americans. The difference between the Rusyn and Ukrainian languages is certainly greater than between Slovak and Czech. And yet no one among the Ukrainians would question the national distinctiveness of the Czechs and the Slovaks. More than 70 percent of the Ukrainian vocabulary is incomprehensible to a Rusyn, and for that reason we have to learn Ukrainian as we do a foreign language. Moreover, no one here uses Ukrainian for daily communication, and less than one percent write or read it. In the end, even our so-called Rusyn-Ukrainian elite speak among themselves in Rusyn and use it for communication among their family members.

With regard to the originality and distinctiveness of Rusyns vis-à-vis Ukrainians, one needs to look in particular at folklore. For better or for worse, Ukrainian folklore reflects the historic suffering of that people, its wars on the steppeland against nomadic invaders, and the Cossack campaigns against the Ottoman Turks, Russians, and Poles. Shaven heads with a long single braid of hair, silken loose-fitting pants that are as flowingly wide as the sea, a sword at the side, footwear designed for long travel, and bright ornamental colors are all elements that are integral to traditional Ukrainian dress. Among Rusyns such garments are unknown and at the very least seem comical.

Rusyns, in contrast, did not experience such a harsh historical past. The family, the home, the fields, the pastures, the church, children—these were the focus of their everyday lives. The traditional clothing of Rusyns derived from sheepswool, linen, and hemp. Rusyns generally had shoulder-length hair and the men almost always wore small-brimmed felt hats. Their shirts were modestly decorated with a colored cross-stitched embroidery, that fit over heavy straight-fitting pants, and they wore sewn leather moccasins. It was only later under the influence of Magyars and Slovaks that Rusyn men began to wear heavy boots with spurs.

And what about our music and dance? It is up-beat, rhythmic, light, and dominated by bass and counterbass instruments. What does this have in common with Ukrainian epic poetry recited to the accompaniment of the high-pitched stringed bandura, or with the beautiful kožacok and hopak dances? Nothing.

Religious faith was and will continue to be a matter of individual choice. The fact remains, however, that our ancestors left the Orthodox world, which continues to dominate most of Ukraine and most Ukrainians. The revival of Orthodoxy in our lands has only brought problems, from which even the local Orthodox church has distanced itself.

Rusyns have never had a common historical past nor have they shared a common state with Ukrainians. Separated from them by the Beskyds and other Carpathian ranges, we have evolved in our own manner. Most of Ukraine has traditionally been oriented toward the East, while we have been oriented toward the West. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Europe was experiencing national revivals and the formation of modern nationalities, we remained separated from Ukraine not only by mountains but also by state borders. That was a time when Ukrainians became a distinct people, while among us the sacred words being heard: “I am, was, and will remain a Rusyn.”

The person who wrote those words, Aleksander Duchnovč, was no less educated than we are today. He was well aware of the ethnic and national situation of his day. He knew about Ukrainians and that we were ethnically close to them. He even wrote that beyond the mountains the people are not foreign to us. But it was precisely because he knew all this that he deliberately defined himself and us by the formulation: I am a Rusyn . . .

We know who Duchnovč was referring to—the Rusyns of Subcarpathian Rus and us in northeastern Slovakia, the Lemkos of Poland, and the Rusyns of Galicia and Bukovina. Duchnovč also knew quite well that for an
ethnic group to become a distinct people, it had to have its own language, ethnic identity, history, and folklore, as well as recognition as a nationality within the state in which it lived. Austria-Hungary was such a state as was later Czechoslovakia. These historic developments are, moreover, well known to the present-day propagators of a so-called Unified Ukraine (Soborna Ukrajina). Nevertheless, they simply want to do the same thing they did in 1944 to the Rusyns of Subcarpathian Rus’ and Bukovina—to absorb us into Ukraine.

But believe me when I say that we were, are, and will remain Rusyns. We do not want to be Ukrainians, nor become a part of a “unified” Greater Ukraine, to which we have never belonged.

In contrast to our local Ukrainian enthusiasts, we do not consider the land we inhabit to be Ukrainian territory which somehow is waiting for the day when it can join its “true fatherland.” Rusyns and their homeland form an integral part of Slovakia, that is, the Slovak Republic whose borders are inviolable. We do not have any other “mother country”; we are at home here in Slovakia.

Although we speak differently, we consider Slovak to be the language closest to us and one that every Rusyn [in eastern Slovakia] speaks. For us, Ukrainian is a foreign language which we are willing to learn just as we would any other foreign language. That one should study the Ukrainian language is obvious, since Ukraine is the largest state with which we have a common border. We, therefore, recognize the need for the Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature at Safarik University in Presov as an institution that will train Ukrainian specialists, just as a Department of English trains specialists in English. On the other hand, if the Ukrainian Department will continue to exist with the primary goal of training teachers for our Rusyn schools, then we do not need such an institution. For our part, we will continue to work on behalf of the establishment of our own university Department of Rusyn Language and Literature, so that finally our children and grandchildren will be able to study their own mother tongue like any other children in the world.

Despite the presentations of our local Ukrainophiles and their foreign sponsors, our culture, with its icons and unique wooden architecture, and our villages and towns have never been considered, nor does anyone now consider them, to be Ukrainian. All these rich elements evolved as Rusyn and will remain Rusyn. The entire region of north-eastern Slovakia is a territory that for ages has been inhabited only by Rusyns and Slovaks.

And just who are those people who for the past half century have been trying to implant among us the Ukrainian nationality, who have forced and who are still forcing upon us the Ukrainian language, and who have denigrated the Rusyn language and dismissed the existence of Rusyns?

For the most part they are Ukrainian emigrés and their descendants who for various reasons settled here after World War I. We welcomed their parents and grandparents, since at the time they were fleeing the evils of Bolshevism and were threatened with losing their nationality by force. They have shown their gratefulness by trying to “denationalize” us. Their descendants and our own local Ukrainizers find themselves in a different situation, however. There are no more Bolsheviks, and Ukraine is united and independent, something they had always wanted. Why, one might ask, are they still hesitating and why are they not rushing to Ukraine?

What’s keeping them here? Why don’t they return to where they would have everything their parents and grandparents were denied? Is it only the widespread poverty and disorder in Ukraine that keeps them from going there? On the other hand, wouldn’t those same conditions provide them with great opportunities for new initiatives to realize their conception of what an organized Ukrainian national life should be? Or is it because they fear they would not be accepted, wouldn’t be considered Ukrainian enough, and would be immediately singled out for their Rusyn and Hutsul accent?!

Of course, the real reason is that life for them is much better in Slovakia. This is especially the case for those who receive handsome salaries as functionaries simply because they declare themselves to be Ukrainian, who dismiss the tolerant attitude of our state toward the nationality question, and instead try to intimidate Slovak officials by reminding them of their big Ukrainian brothers in the East. If, indeed, this little piece of Slovakia is for them sweeter and more pleasant, then the least they could do is be quiet and not repeat that we are somehow a part of Ukraine.

The basic difference between the Rusyns and the local Ukrainians in Slovakia is the following. For Rusyns, the year 1952 marked the beginning of forcible Ukrainianization which we consider a national tragedy. As a result, out of the more than 250 Rusyn schools that existed before 1952, not a single one remains today. One searches in vain to place the blame on specific individuals, and much of the explanation is found in the process of gradual national assimilation and the loss of population in Rusyn villages. But even in those towns and villages that remain vibrant today, the past and present inhabitants rejected and still reject the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian schools.

In great contrast, all local Ukrainian spokespersons, both those who were Communists and those who were persecuted by the Communists, consider the year 1952 and the program of Ukrainianization as the most important event in our entire recent history. They consider it to be the fulfillment of historical truth and justice. But does it bother them that as a result of Ukrainianization we as a national community now stand on death’s doorstep? Does it mean anything to them that as a result of what happened in 1952 the defenders of Rusynism—village teachers and Greek Catholic priests—were persecuted for their beliefs?

Persecution meant the loss of one’s self-respect, one’s position in school or in the local parish, separation from one’s family, and isolation from students and the church. It meant arrest and forced labor in the Czechoslovak gulag. And it meant that those who were forced to leave were replaced by teachers trained in the Ukrainian language and by Orthodox priests. All this contributed to the devastation of our national community, increasing national assimilation, and loss of one’s identity. That, my dear colleagues, is what you call “historical truth and justice.”

A half century of such a policy has forced many of our people to adapt in order to survive and somehow preserve something of their ancestral traditions and religion. In that regard, we do not consider anything bad if someone in those days identified as a Ukrainian and may have become Orthodox. That is a matter for each individual and his or her conviction. But let not those who have changed deny others the right to be what they wish to be, that is, Rusyns without any other identity added on.

Myron Sysak
Presov, Slovakia
This year at the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns the Steven Chepa Aleksander Dučnový Prize in Rusyn Literature was awarded for the first time. The recipient was Djura Papharhaji, a Rusyn writer from Yugoslavia, who was chosen by an international jury that included Dr. Maria Pavlovszky (Indiana University), Professor Elaine Rusinko (University of Maryland), and Professor Myron Sysak, (University of Prešov). The jury received works from thirteen authors, which speaks well for the growth of Rusyn literature. The criteria for judging were purely aesthetic, and jury members were impressed by the profundity and originality of the authors’ thoughts. This diversity made choosing a winner especially difficult, since the works were not entirely comparable.

Among the submissions were sophisticated poetry and intellectual fiction, folk-style lyrics, political satire, and children’s verse. Some of it was directed at a broad audience and therefore written at an accessible level in carefully crafted colloquial language, while the sophisticated thematics and imagery of other works apparently addressed a cultural and intellectual elite. Obviously, both approaches are necessary for the development of this young literature.

Djura Papharhaji’s poetry combines high aesthetic merit with themes and images that can be read on many levels, and thus it allows access to his poetic world for a broad range of readers. He combines traditional poetic themes, such as love, “Ars poetica,” nature, philosophical and religious reflection, with personal and national motifs, such as the legacy of his Rusyn ancestors, his emotions on visiting a local cemetery, and depictions of his native town, Ruski Kerestur. The simplicity of his language, his mastery of rhyme and meter, and the aphoristic expression of his thoughts makes one want to recite his poems and to learn them by heart. As Professor Sysak said, “That is the highest praise for a poet.”

Papharhaji’s book, _Putovanje na juh_ (1991), is the culmination of a long career in literature and the theater. Born in Ruski Kerestur, Yugoslavia, in 1936, Papharhaji worked as a teacher and then as an editor in the publishing house Ruske Slovo. From 1966 to 1995, he was executive editor of the Vojvodian-Rusyn literary journal _Svetlosc_ (Enlightenment). His literary corpus, going back to his first collection of poetry from 1969, includes poems, short stories, songs, children’s literature, and plays, and several of his works have been translated into many East European languages.

In our conversations, Papharhaji indicated that he thinks of himself as a dramatist, and has worked as playwright and director in several theaters. He has received many awards, including in 1995 the prestigious “Vuk Award” (named for the nineteenth-century Serbian national awakener Vuk Karadžić). This is the highest literary award given in Yugoslavia, and Papharhaji is the only Rusyn to be so honored. Therefore, it is fitting that he should also be the first recipient of the Aleksander Dučnový Prize for the best work in Rusyn literature. A most reassuring and gratifying note is that a number of other candidates for the prize shared their support for Papharhaji’s nomination, stating that he was the most suitable and deserving choice this year. On receiving the prize, Papharhaji recited his poem, “In the Beginning was the Word.” I hope to translate some of his poetry for a future issue of the _Carpatho-Rusyn American._

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A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

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“Ruténeke sohasem vallottam magam, de azt tagadtam, hogy a kárpátaljaí orosz népből származom. ... Magyar vagyok a test országában, görökkatolikus a lélek birodalmában.”/“I never identified myself as a Rusyn, even though I never denied that I was a descendant of the Carpatho-Rusyn people. ... I am a Magyar in body and a Greek Catholic in soul.” These words were spoken nearly a century ago by a young Rusyn journalist living in Budapest, Ivan Prodan, or as he preferred to be called János Prodan.

But why did our János use such words and also act in a way that many of us would criticize as an act betrayal of one’s own Rusyn people. The reasons are related partly to the general social and political environment within Hungary at the time, and partly they reflect what might be called the shortcomings of the Rusyn national character.

It was in 1905 that Prodan made the above statement, when he was editor of the Budapest Greek Catholic newspaper Görögkatolikus hírlap. But the origins of such an attitude go back to the late 1890s, when Prodan was a student at the University of Budapest and president of a Rusyn student group called the Ung County Circle. While a university student, Prodan experienced first hand the period of intense Magyar nationalism that was sweeping the entire old Hungarian Kingdom, from Transylvania, Subcarpathian Rus’, and Slovakia, to the Burgenland, Croatia, the Vojvodina and everywhere in between. The nationalistic fervor culminated in 1896 at the millennial celebrations which commemorated the crossing of the Magyar tribes in the year 896 through the Verec’kyj pass in the Carpathians, their capture of the fortified town of Ungvár (Úzhorod), their settlement in the Danubian Basin, and their eventual establishment of the Hungarian state.

One of the highlights of those millennial celebrations was the plan to construct the Great Square of Heroes in Budapest. When the square was finally completed 35 years later, it featured in the center the powerful equestrian figures of Árpád and the leaders of seven other Magyar tribes that came to settle in the heart of Europe at the very end of the ninth century. Just last year, the whole square was refurbished on the occasion of the 1,100 year of the Magyars’ arrival, and I suggest that all of us at the Fourth World Congress visit the square.

I believe such a visit would remind us of two things. First, we would see how the statues in and around the square instill a powerful sense of national pride that allows Magyars to be proud of themselves and the state of Hungary that has existed for over a thousand years. Rusyns, who have traditionally had a strong sense of national inferiority, might do well to learn something of Magyar pride and self-confidence.

On the other hand, national pride can sometimes lead to arrogance and intolerance toward others. This was certainly a characteristic of Magyar nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, which in turn encouraged and reinstated a sense of inferiority among non-Magyars. This was the kind of environment that led to people like our Ivan/János Prodan to want to give up his identity and more than anything else to be a Magyar. We should also remember that in the late nineteenth century some of the leading assimilationists—teachers, priests, and journalists—were not Magyars, but the Rusyns themselves.

But that was nearly a century ago, and much has transpired since then. In this same Budapest, which one hundred years ago was celebrating the glories of Hungarian culture and the desirability of being Magyar, we find ourselves today meeting at the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns to proclaim the glories of Rusyn culture and the desirability of being Rusyn. The very congress and the Organization of Rusyns that is our host has in large part been made possible by the positive attitude of the present post-Communist Hungarian government. That government has come to realize that like the vast majority of countries throughout the world, Hungary is a multicultural country. Aside from Magyars, its citizens represent several other nationalities, including Rusyns, and all of them are equal citizens of the Hungarian state. Respect for all peoples, even this country’s few thousand Rusyns, reveals the degree to which present-day democratic Hungary accepts and abides by the highest political and social standards that are considered the norm for Europe on the eve of the twenty-first century. It is very gratifying to be in a country which recognizes the fact that Rusyns are a distinct people.

Turning to my specific role as president of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center in the United States, I would like to say a few words about Rusyn life in North America since the last world congress two years ago. The general goals of our center remain what they have always been since we came into existence twenty years ago: (1) to inform Americans of Rusyn background about the history, culture, and present developments in the lands of their forefathers; and (2) to promote awareness of Rusyns as a distinct people and culture among the society at large, including governments, media, universities, and international organizations worldwide.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center is primarily a publishing house for scholarly books and other popular material about Rusyns. We also provide limited support to researchers and writers worldwide. For instance, in the past two years, we published: (1) a large-scale map of all villages where Rusyns lived between 1806 and 1921; (2) a collection of essays on the codification of the Rusyn literary language in Slovakia with an introduction by the renowned Slavist, Nikita Tolstoj; and (3) popular brochures about Carpatho-Rusyns in English, Polish, Slovak, and Ukrainian, which were reproduced by other Rusyn organizations in Hungarian, Serbian, and Vojvodian Rusyn. At present our most important projects are to publish English translations of three outstanding monographs about Rusyn history and culture by Petr Bogatyrev, Maria Mayer, and Aleksiej L.
Petru: the second volume of the "national bibliography" of Carpatho-Rusyn studies for the years 1985-1994; and to complete the Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture under the editorship of Professor Ivan Pop and myself. With regard to assistance to Rusyn scholars and writers, our center continues to send hundreds of books, brochures, and maps gratis to individuals and Rusyn organizations in Europe, and we have helped to establish the annual Duchový Prize for the best work in Rusyn literature, the first one of which will be awarded at this congress.

Although we are not a political organization, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center does provide information about current problems in the Rusyn homeland, primarily through our quarterly publication, the Carpatho-Rusyn American. During the past two years, our public relations officer issued an inquiry to the Government of Slovakia regarding the status of Rusyns in that country, for which we received detailed responses from two ministers (culture and education) as well as the vice-premier of Slovakia. At present our Center is making available information to the United States Congress, the American media, and international organizations regarding the recent government of the United States Congress, the American media, and international organizations regarding the recent government of Ukraine’s "Plan for Resolving the Problem of Ukrainian-Rusyns."

I should stress that the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center with its approximately 6,000 supporters, does not do all of the above alone. There are at least three other organizations in the United States—the Lemko Association in Youngers, New York; the Rusin Association of Minnesota; the Carpatho-Rusyn Society in Pittsburgh—and in Canada the Rusyn Society of North America in Kitchener, Ontario, each of which functions as a social and cultural organization for Rusyns who came from a particular area in Europe or who represent a group living in a particular part of the New World. The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center works especially closely with the Rusin Association and the newer, rapidly growing Carpatho-Rusyn Society based in western Pennsylvania.

Finally, the past two years have seen Carpatho-Rusyns become part of the new world of communications technology. There is a Carpatho-Rusyn page on the World Wide Web. As a result, Rusyns have made it into cyberspace. And this is not merely some kind of technological game. Thousands of people of Rusyn background and non-Rusyns have found out about Carpatho-Rusyns on the internet and are able to follow the most recent events happening to Rusyns wherever they live. Some of you here today may think no one knows about us, but I can assure you news of this very congress will be accessible throughout cyberspace tomorrow, if not already today.

May I conclude with a few words about cooperation. I just noted the successes of the past two decades achieved by American and Canadian Rusyns. This has been possible because, even if Rusyns are separated from each other by thousands of kilometers throughout North America, each of our organizations tries to follow closely what each other is doing, to cooperate wherever possible, and to avoid duplication of efforts. Fortunately today, in all countries but one where Carpatho-Rusyns live, they are allowed to organize themselves and to carry out activities with some degree of state support. The result has been a burgeoning of new publishing houses and new scholarly organizations. Cultural work, in particular, has been able to transcend borders. Rusyn theaters and folk ensembles share their expertise and they travel to other countries where our people live; Rusyn publishing houses in different countries have produced joint publications; scholars have met for debate at conferences; and certainly the four world congresses serve as outstanding examples of interaction and cooperation among Rusyns.

More attention, however, needs to be given to cooperation among scholars. To be sure, the new Rusyn scholarly organizations in each country should remain independent and determine their own programs, but they should also try to avoid duplication, whether it be the production of several anthologies of poetry, or research projects on the very same topics but carried out in different places. And is it not time for another congress of the Rusyn language? I believe the time has come to assess what was achieved since the first language congress back in November 1992 and to determine what should be undertaken jointly or individually in the future.

In a real sense, we as Rusyns have come a long way. For the first time we can all meet together periodically, regardless of what country we live in, and we can even plan and carry out joint projects. This was unheard of, even five years ago. Many Rusyns have justifiably acquired a new sense of self-confidence of the kind their predecessors never had before.

For this reason, it is so satisfying to be in Budapest. This is no longer the capital of a culture and state that suppresses Rusyns, but one which welcomes them and encourages them in their cultural endeavors. This is no longer the city which has a János Prodan, who like many Rusyns of the past—and also still some at present—had an ingrained sense of inferiority and therefore shame about their Rusyn origins. Instead, this is the city of Gabriel Hattinger and his young colleagues, all fully certain of both their Rusyn identity and their Hungarian citizenship.

Do Rusyns in Hungary still have problems? Probably so. But since the Revolution of 1989 and the rise of a new generation of young Rusyn activists we now know two things. Yes, there will always be problems, but solutions can always be found. In the past five years alone how many problems have each of you faced in Slovakia, in Poland, in Ukraine, in Hungary, in war-torn Yugoslavia, yes, even in America? And how many of those problems have been partially, if not fully resolved? Your success and your presence as Rusyns here today is the reality we must carry into the twenty-first century. There is no doubt that whether in the Carpathian homeland, in other cities and regions of Europe and North America, or in cyberspace, Rusyns are and will be.

Robert Paul Magocsi
Toronto, Ontario
SINCE THE REVOLUTION OF 1989

Tartu, Estonia. On October 14-15, 1996, the Organization of Non-Represented Peoples held a regional conference at which the status of Subcarpathian Rus’ was discussed. The conference sent a letter to Ukraine’s President Leonid Kuchma expressing its “great discontent with the fate of the Subcarpathian Rusyn people who, for the longest time, have been unable to exercise their right to self-determination.” The Tartu regional conference also issued a resolution calling on the Executive Committee of the Organization of Non-Represented Peoples to consult with the European Court so that it might eventually hear the case for restoring Subcarpathian Rus’ the status of an autonomous republic.

Kocur, Yugoslavia. In January 1997, the Kostelnik Rusyn Cultural and Artistic Society of Kocur, a town with the second largest concentration of Rusyns in Yugoslavia, issued a formal declaration to the authorities in the Vojvodina Region requesting that the name of the annual Červena Ruža Folk Festival of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Yugoslavia be changed. They wish that the original name used until 1968 be restored: the Červena Ruža Folk Festival of Yugoslav Rusyns. As reported by the local newspaper, Ruske slovo (February 14, 1997, p. 8): “The festival was created by Rusyns [Rusnaks]; consequently, there is no need to add the phrase ‘and Ukrainians’, since the latter are not the organizers of the festival but only appear as guest performers. Ukrainians should continue to be invited, but be welcomed like all other invitees as participating guests and not as the organizers whose name is featured in the very name of the festival.”

Mukachevo, Ukraine. On January 1, 1997, Auxiliary Bishop Ivan Margityc of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo in Subcarpathian Rus’ (Transcarpathia) issued a statute in the name of “Transcarpathian Greek Catholic parishes that wish to attain Church Unity with all Greek Catholics in Ukraine under the Archbishop Patriarch Myroslav Cardinal Lubacivs’kyj.” In response, the bishop of Mukachevo, Ivan Semedi, published a rejection of the illegal act of Bishop Margityc, pointing out that the question of the jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Mukachevo was studied in detail by the Vatican, which in 1992 reasserted the particular status (sui juris) of the eparchy directly under the authority of the Holy See. This decision was reiterated by the Vatican in October 1995 and underscored by the special favor accorded to the eparchy on the occasion of its 350th anniversary celebrations held in Užhorod (April 1995) and Rome (October 1995).

Nevertheless, Bishop Margityc who is a fervent Ukrainian nationalist, continues a campaign to detach parishes from the Eparchy of Mukachevo and to unite them with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Archeparchy based in L’viv in neighboring Galicia.

Belgrade, Yugoslavia. On April 30, 1997, Ivan Sedlak, Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities in the government of Serbia, received a delegation from the Ruske Slovo publishing house in Novi Sad, the administrative center for the Vojvodinan Rusyns. In a discussion concerning the status of Rusyns in present-day Yugoslavia, Minister Sedlak stated: “The more one looks at the historical past, at language, and at culture, the more one realizes that there is a difference between Rusyns and Ukrainians. In effect Rusyns have their own specificity, which in our country has made them into a distinct national minority. . . . Each person has the right to look for his or her roots and to discuss and debate such matters, but no one has the right to impose or force upon another that which is not considered to be his or her own. In essence, according to our laws and constitution, Rusyns are one people and Ukrainians are another people. There is no reason to believe that such legal norms will change.” (Cited from Ruske slovo, May 30, 1997, p. 7).

Budapest, Hungary. On May 29-June 1, 1997, the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns took place in Budapest. Over 200 delegates and guests from twenty countries took part in the proceedings which were funded by the government of Hungary and hosted by the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary, headed by Gabriel Hattinger. On the first day, Natalija Dudaš presented the handsomely designed anthology of Rusyn poetry (Rusinski/Ruski poeziji), which was commissioned at the second congress in 1993. Also, the first annual Duchnovỳ Prize for the best work in Rusyn literature, funded by Stephen Chepa of Toronto in the amount of $1,000, was awarded to Djura Paparhaji of Yugoslavia for his collection of poetry, Putovanje na juh (On the Road to the South).

A scholarly conference took place the second day, sponsored by the Rusyn Research Institute of Hungary under the direction of Dr. Tibor Mikloš Popový. Conference participants were invited to the installation of a memorial plaque at the entrance of the last residence in Budapest of Professor Antal Hodinka, a leading Hungarian historian of Rusyn origin active during the first half of the twentieth century.

Two nights of cultural performances featured the newly-founded Rusyn dance ensemble, Drin, from Budapest; choirs from two Rusyn villages in northwestern Hungary, Komlóška and Mőcsény; the Greek Catholic Choir from Mukachevo in Subcarpathian Rus’; and from Slovakia the Aleksander Duchnový Theater of Prešov and the Revilak Family Singers from Bardejov.

The World Congress of Rusyns is directed by an Executive Council (Svitova Rada) comprised of the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Slovakia), the Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns (Ukraine), the Lemko Association (Poland), the Ruska Matka (Yugoslavia), the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center (United States), and the Organization of Rusyns (Hungary). A seventh member organization was elected to the Executive Council at the Fourth Congress, the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ (Czech Republic). Rusyn organizations from Germany, Latvia, and Russia were accepted as candidates for possible full membership at the next congress. The Fifth World Congress is designated to be held in 1999 in Ukraine (Subcarpathian Rus’). Vasyl’ Turok of Slovakia was reelected chairman of the Executive Committee (Svitova Rada). The resolutions of the Fourth World Congress will appear in the next issue of the C-RA.

OUR FRONT COVER

The Revilak family singers from Bardejov, Slovakia, in performance at the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns.

(photoby Richard Custer)
From left to right: Ivan Turjanycja, head of the delegation to the World Congress of Rusyns from Subcarpathian Rus’; Gabor Hattinger, head of the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary; and Vasyl Turok, president of the World Congress of Rusyns. (photo by Richard Custer)

RECENT EVENTS

Prešov, Slovakia. On March 27, 1997, the Greek Catholic Bishop of Prešov, Ioann Hirka, gave his imprimatur for the publication of a Rusyn translation of three religious texts: the Apostoly, Jevanhelija, and Tajny. The texts were translated under the direction of Father František Krajnjak of Medzilaborce, and although completed in 1988 they have been awaiting since then approval (an imprimatur) from the church hierarchy for publication. In 1992, the Rusyn Renaissance Society published 10,000 copies of Father Krajnjak’s Rusyn-language Malý hrekokatolyckýj katechizm pro rusynškyj dity (Small Greek Catholic Catechism for Rusyn Children), which is available from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center.

Prešov, Slovakia. For the past few years, a Slovak-Czech Historical Commission has been meeting annually to investigate past problems that are of common interest to the Czech Republic and Slovakia. On April 9, 1997, the commission met at the University of Prešov, and its theme for this year was “Subcarpathian Rus’ in the History of Czechoslovakia, 1918-1939.”

For each topic there was a presentation by a scholar from the Czech Republic and from Slovakia. Among the topics analyzed were: historiography—Jan Harna (Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague) and Michal Danilák (University of Prešov); the unification of Subcarpathian Rus’ with Czechoslovakia—Péter Švorc (University of Prešov) and František Kolář (Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague); Czech and Slovak relations with Rusyns—Robert Holec (Comenius University, Bratislava); socioeconomic, cultural, and political problems—I. Zadansky (Regional Museum of Trebišov), Ľudovít Haraksim (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava), and Bohdan Zilinskýj (Charles University, Prague); the 1938-1939 period of autonomy—Ladislav Suško (Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava) and M. Borák (Silesian Institute, Opava); and the Soviet trial of Carpatho-Ukraine’s government leaders—Mykola Musynka (University of Prešov). The presentations and following discussion were at a high level and the proceedings are expected to be published.

Košice, Slovakia. From May 9 to 13, 1997, the fourth annual Festival of Professional Theaters in Slovakia was held in Košice and neighboring Prešov. Over 25 professional theaters performed. The first prize (100,000 Slovak crowns) for the best dramatic production was awarded to the Aleksander Duchnový Theatre of Prešov for its production in Rusyn of a play by the Slovak dramatist Martin Kukučín. Since its change to a Rusyn orientation in 1990, the Duchnový Theatre has performed in several countries abroad (Great Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Romania), while at home its performances have become some of the best attended throughout Slovakia. The theater’s artistic director is Osyf Tkac.
PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH ABOUT CARPATHO-RUSYNS, 1992

Items available from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center are indicated as such. Others can be obtained through Interlibrary Loan at many local libraries or directly from research libraries of major universities or from the Cleveland Public Library, Library of Congress, and New York Public Library.—Editor


PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH ABOUT CARPATHO-RUSYNS, 1993


