FROM THE EDITOR

In my last editorial I promised that I would comment on the cultural program presented at the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns in Budapest, May 29-June 1, 1997. I have yet another issue to address in this editorial, but first to the cultural program.

The main work of the congress was the discussion of scholarly work already accomplished and yet to be accomplished by Rusyn scholars from all regions of the homeland, as well as political and social concerns. Some of these issues, such as the dire situation of Rusyns in Subcarpathian Rus’, are particularly urgent and were reported in the last issue of this publication as was the awarding of the first Steven Chepa Aleksander Duchnovyc Prize in Rusyn Literature (see the C-RA, Vol. XX, No. 2, pp. 2 and 4-9). Likewise, Rusyn delegates and visitors from a number of countries intermingled and got acquainted. In all these regards, the purpose of the congress was successfully achieved.

But it was the cultural program—a rich conglomeration of exhibits, drama fragments, folk song and dance, and poetry—which crowned the congress. In the Hungarian Culture Foundation where the congress was held, delegates were able to peruse exhibits by the brilliant cartoonist Fedor Vico, whose clever wit and work with political, social, and cultural motifs are widely known. Vico himself was there to answer questions. The Andy Warhol Clubs of Hungary and Slovakia also offered exhibits connected with Warhol’s art and their activity as an organization. Books, pamphlets, newspapers, journals, and other printed materials representing Rusyns from all regions of the homeland were available for viewing and purchase.

Performances were held the first evening after delegates had gathered, as well as on the last evening before the end of the congress. Both sessions took place in a hall kindly lent by the Slovak Cultural Center in Budapest. After a greeting by András Pavlik, Hungary’s Minister of Education and Culture, and Rusyn poet Gabor Hattinger, organizer of the congress, a young folk ensemble, Dran’, performed several fiery Rusyn and Hungarian dances and songs. A Rusyn family from Bardejov, Slovakia, the Revilaks, accompanying themselves on three accordions and guitar, then launched into a series of favorite Rusyn songs (see the front cover of the C-RA, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1997).

Particularly impressive was a series of fragments from plays offered by actors from the Aleksander Duchnovyc Theater in Prešov, Slovakia. Performing fragments of larger works back to back is not easy, for actors must be capable of creating immediately and spontaneously the mood which ordinarily is woven by previous action in the play. Language and gesture are significant in the interplay between the actors and the audience, for the audience must be able to recognize itself and its strengths and weaknesses, its emotions, its life and yearnings in the words and movements of the actors in order for it to respond to what is happening on the stage. Through the brilliance of the scripts and the talent of the actors all of this took place. It was at times as intriguing to some of us in the American delegation to monitor the responses of the audience as to watch the stage. Obviously, subtle references to and jokes about bittersweet cultural, social, and political situations known and experienced all too well by East Central European Rusyns—and frequently revealed by the actors feigning tipsiness required in the scripts—provoked everything from chuckles to outright laughter in the appreciative audience. Next time I would love to see the actors also in a fragment from some dark, somber drama in order to experience another side of their talent.

At the final presentation, two genuine peasant groups from Múcsény and Komlószó in northeastern Hungary performed Rusyn songs. I later heard one European Rusyn express some misgivings about the “amateur quality” of these groups “straight from the village.” But, on the contrary, these groups—one of mixed gender and one of young women—were amazing. Their interesting variant of the Rusyn language, the freshness of their demeanor, the truly genuine folk quality of their voices, their perfect harmony, their sensitivity to each other’s voices as they moved along phrase by phrase—all of this represented the very best of our people’s natural talent passed on from generation to generation from the earliest times. I urge future congress planners to invite other such groups. Let us never be ashamed of our people’s cultural roots.

Finally, a mixed choir from Uzhhorod, Subcarpathian Rus’ performed stirring Rusyn hymns and featured a solo singer in some pieces. Along with the choir came what was perhaps the most intriguing performer of the entire congress, a peasant poetess Anastasija Dalida from Mizhirja (formerly Volovoje). Dressed in a brilliant white scarf, blouse, and skirt with a bright red vest and apron sprinkled with a green leaf pattern, and brandishing an evergreen branch and small tied-up bundle of soil from Subcarpathian Rus’, she boldly strode upon the stage immediately commanding the audience’s attention. Declaiming her poetry of love for her homeland and for the Rusyn people, shouting her lines, and reaching out to the audience, she instantly became the center of our rapt attention. The poet, the choir, and all of us concluded this extraordinary program with a rousing rendition of Duchnovyc’s hymns, “Subcarpathian Rusyns, Arise!” and “I was, am, and will remain a Rusyn.”

To come away from all of this to my final words here is not easy, for I know that this last subject may come as a surprise to you. After long and difficult consideration, we have decided to cease publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn American after the next issue, winter 1997. The C-RA, we believe, has fulfilled its major goal over the past twenty years of bringing Rusyn identity, culture, and history to the attention of Rusyn Americans and students of Slavic studies, especially at a time when there were no equivalent sources of information. Happily, during the last decades several Rusyn organizations and publications have appeared in the European homeland. Also, the Carpatho-Rusyn Society and its publication, The New Rusyn Times, as well as the Rusin Association with its publication Trembita came into being and today both are thriving in the United States as is a web site, Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base, on the Internet. These two publications, along with the web site, not to mention the many publications available from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, are superb sources of information and we urge you to take advantage of them.

The production of the Carpatho-Rusyn American has always required a great deal of time and expertise, the mastery of several Slavic languages, and the ability to write and translate. In other words it demands a voluntary staff with special abilities, and such people are at present no longer available. Our ceasing publication does not, however, mean that the C-RA need lie dormant forever. More on this and a final word in my last editorial in the next issue.
PETRO HATALJAK (1885-1949)

Petro Hataljak was born June 25, 1885, in the village of Berdychiv in the former Austrian province of Galicia. After graduating from high school in 1908, he left for the capital of the Habsburg Empire where he entered both the Commercial Academy and the Department of Jurisprudence at the University of Vienna. Illness forced him to return briefly to Galicia, and from there he went on to Saint Petersburg, then capital of the Russian Empire, where he was recruited for work in the Russian Far East by an immigration agent. He soon became disillusioned, however, and later admitted in his still unpublished autobiography, that “in view of the permafrost, I cannot recommend the free land offered to me for the resettlement of our workers who are accustomed to a different climate.”

During the next few years, Hataljak worked as an accountant for various businesses in L'viv, the administrative center of Galicia. Soon after World War I broke out in 1914, he came under suspicion for his Russophile sympathies, was arrested by the Austrian authorities, and was sent to a prison at Terezin in Bohemia. About the same time his father was sent to an Austrian internment camp at Talerhof. Hataljak managed to escape and made his way to the United States. In New York, he founded the Union for the Liberation of Carpathian Rus', and he organized the Russian Congress which on July 13, 1917 passed a resolution demanding the unification of Subcarpathian Rus', Galicia, and Bukovina with Russia. This resolution, however, was eventually overturned when the majority of Rusyn-American immigrants voted in favor of joining their homeland to the new state of Czechoslovakia. Hataljak was bitterly disappointed, although later he agreed that unity with Czechoslovakia was the best solution for the Rusyn people.

Hataljak soon returned to Europe and settled in Subcarpathian Rus', where he married a Hungarian woman, Etelka Meszaros, granddaughter of the nineteenth-century historian of Subcarpathian Rus' and the city of Uzhhorod, Karoly Meszaros. The couple resided for a long time in Mukachevo where Hataljak worked in the Rusyn Bank, and then they moved to Uzhhorod. Although Hataljak remained outside of any political activity during the interwar years, his writings—The Financial Situation in Subcarpathian Rus’ (1933), and Czechs and Carpatho-Rusyns (1935)—do reflect his on-going interest in political and economic developments.

Hataljak also demonstrated his literary talents. While still in New York City, he published a collection of poems and stories in Russian entitled, Na oltar’ otcizny (On the Altar of the Homeland, 1917). The poems concern primarily Galician cultural activists, although one of them, “Hungarian Rus’,” is about the Subcarpathian Rusyn national awakener Aleksander Duchnovyc. Hataljak wrote about his love for his homeland and expressed the hope that the “dark years” were coming to an end, for “Mighty Rus’ is bringing a banner to you [Subcarpathian Rus’].” This banner, he thought, would be the flag of brotherhood and freedom. Such a declaration on his part reflected his political views and was cast in the style of those times. Hataljak’s stories contain similar autobiographical elements.

Hataljak was multilingual and lived briefly not only in the United States and Russia, but also in France, Portugal, Switzerland, Italy, and even China. By the time World War II engulfed Europe, Hataljak was back in Subcarpathian Rus’ which was under Hungarian occupation. He was viewed by the authorities with suspicion for his Russophile leanings. Neither was fate kind to him in the first years after the war ended and Subcarpathian Rus’ was annexed to the Soviet Union. When he died on September 29, 1948, at the age of 64, his unexpected passing was subsequently thought to be the result of poisoning by a KGB secret agent during a routine hospital check-up for heart problems. As we now know for sure, KGB laboratories produced various toxic substances which were approved for use by the agents in Subcarpathian Rus’ in the first years after the war.

Among the unpublished works that Hataljak left at his death was a 96-page typed manuscript “With My Face to the Great Ocean.” He was inspired by the idea of shoring up the Bering Strait with a damn in order to change the climate of the Russian Far East. As strange as it may seem, he even suggested that atomic energy could be used to heat the waters of the Arctic Ocean. Hataljak gave his project to the Soviet government, and it is my guess that this is what attracted the attention of the KGB. After all, here was an individual writing about atomic energy precisely at the time when both the Soviet Union and the United States were working on the atomic bomb. They may have also asked why this strange character from Uzhhorod was so interested in the strategic Bering Strait. Hence, the KGB saw no choice but to get him out of the way.

Petro Hataljak was a writer, a politician, and a visionary. And although he has been overlooked by Soviet and present-day Ukrainian historians, he should not be forgotten in our people’s history.

Volodymyr Fedynyszyn
Uzhhorod
RUSYNs IN ROMANIA

The author of this article, Tom Trier, is an ethnographer from Denmark. He is a long-time member of the Rusin Association in Minnesota, whose president Larry Goga suggested many years ago that he try to find out whether there were any Carpatho-Rusyns still living in Romania. Trier not only took up this challenge, he also visited Rusyns in neighboring countries, completed recently a film about Andy Warhol, and in November 1997 arranged in conjunction with the Danish Cultural Institute a Week of Rusyn Culture in Copenhagenn. At present he is beginning a doctoral program at the University of Aarhus in Denmark, where he is writing on the image of Andy Warhol as a symbol of the recent Rusyn national revival.—Editor

When I first saw Dr. Paul R. Magocsi’s detailed map of the Carpatho-Rusyn settlement last year, I studied the villages in Romania with particular interest insofar as this region probably is the least researched area seen in a Carpatho-Rusyn context. Until now, the only contact with Rusyns in Romania which I had was with Jaroslava Kolotilo, a functionary of Rusyn background in the Romanian Ministry of Culture, who attended the Second World Congress of Rusyns in Krynica in 1993 (see the interview with Mrs. Kolotilo in Narodny novinky, June 16, 1993, or in English translation in Trembita, Vol. 5, No. 5). When in April 1997 I had a chance to go to Romania I decided to visit the northern Carpathians in order to get an impression of this little known part of the Rusyn-inhabited homeland.

Having studied several works on the Rusyns in Subcarpathian Rus’, especially the authoritative Shaping of a National Identity by Paul Robert Magocsi, I knew about the existence of a small number of Rusyn villages in the southern part of the Maramaras region (Romanian: Maramureș; Rusyn: Maramoroș) referred to in the Austro-Hungarian censuses in 1900 and 1910. The inhabitants of these villages were separated from their fellow Rusyns north of the Tysa River after World War I, when the former Hungarian county of Maramaras was split between Czechoslovakia (Subcarpathian Rus’) and Romania. Romania’s presence in the area goes back to August 1916, when a treaty of alliance was signed in Bucharest between Romania and the Entente. Accordingly, Subcarpathian Rus’, including the northern part of Maramaras county, was recognized in international law as part of Czechoslovakia. As for Romania, its new borders did not follow ethnic criteria, even though the principle of the people’s right to self-determination had been one of the main goals at the Paris Peace Conference. Nearly two million Magyars/Hungarians were left within Romania’s new boundaries as well as more than half a million Ukrainians. With regard to Maramaras county, the Tysa River was chosen as an appropriate natural frontier between Subcarpathian Rus’ and Romania, since it roughly separated the Slavic Rusyns to the north from the Romanians and Hungarians to the south. Four Romanian and several Hungarian villages were, nevertheless, left on the Czechoslovak side, whereas a dozen Slavic villages south of the Tysa ended up in Romania. These villages thereby became, at least politically and administratively, separated from the major part of the Subcarpathian region by a new international border along the Tysa and farther to the east by the peaks of the high mountains in the Hucul region.

Divided villages

Nowadays not only the Romanian boundary but also the railroad track from Bucharest to Sighetul Marmatiei runs for a while along the Tysa River. During my journey to the Maramureș region, I enjoyed the company of a certain Mr. Baran, a native of the village of Luh (Romanian: Lunca la Tisa). Mr. Baran gave me a personal account of the troubled waters of the Tysa, on the banks of which his village is situated. After World War I the villages of Velykyj Byckiv (Romanian: Bocicoiu Mare) and Luh were divided along the river between Subcarpathian Rus’ in Czechoslovakia and Romania. Initially, the border had little effect on the life of the villagers, who continued their daily affairs without taking particular notice of this political line. It was not until after World War II that a real frontier split the villages of Romania and what was by then Soviet Transcarpathia. From
then on the river was regularly patrolled by Soviet and Romanian border guards and trespassers severely punished. In the case of Mr. Baran’s family, his brother lived on the northern, that is to say the Soviet bank, and as a result he lost the contact with his relatives for more than 40 years. Although relatives could see each other and shout to each other across the river at any time of the day, visits were nearly impossible. If visits were arranged, the visitor from Soviet Ukraine, and then back westward to the northern bank of the Tysa in Transcarpathia. In other words, a detour of more than 500 miles. The aging Mr. Baran first met his brother again in 1988, when Gorbachev’s reform policy of perestroika found its way to the Carpathians.

Today the Ukrainian-Romanian frontier crossings are open. Although the villages along the Tysa remain politically divided, a crossing point for car traffic has been established near Tjačiv and an international train connecting Sighetul Marmatiei in Romania to Rachiv in Transcarpathia now passes the border at the village of Poljana. Due to the topography of the Tysa valley there is but one railroad track along the river—on the Romanian bank. This track not only carries Romanian trains, but also Ukrainian trains on transit through Romanian territory from Tjačiv to Rachiv. Ironically, this transit route was also in use during the Communist era, when the border was otherwise all but hermetically shut.

The Ukrainians of Romania

During World War II the Soviet Union annexed the former Romanian-held territories of northern Bukovina and Bessarabia. Romania was therefore left with only small Ukrainian-inhabited enclaves in southern Bukovyna, Dobruja, the Banat, and Maramureș. The Soviet Army also attempted to appropriate the Maramureș region in 1944, but for reasons yet unknown these efforts ended in the spring of 1945. After the Communist takeover of Romania in 1947, the borders were closed and the country’s national minorities were now regimented both politically and ideologically. Following Soviet guidelines, the Romanian authorities considered Rusyns and Ukrainians to be the same people and therefore identified the East Slavic inhabitants of the Maramureș region as Ukrainian. Although the Ukrainians along with other minorities were formally recognized, their opportunities for cultural and political self-expression were subjected to strict control by the new regime.

Conditions for minorities as a whole improved somewhat during the 1950s. Ukrainian-language schools were allowed in certain villages, and at one point there were 120 Ukrainian schools with an estimated 10,000 pupils. Even a Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature was established at the University of Bucharest, which still functions to this day. Beginning in 1960 and particularly from the ascent to power of Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1965, efforts to assimilate Romania’s national minorities increased, and an aggressive policy aimed on the dissolution of their collective identities was introduced.

It was only in the wake of the December 1989 revolution that the population of Romania was relieved from harsh totalitarian rule, and the situation of the national minorities considerably improved. Tense relations, especially between the Romanian authorities and the large Roma (Gypsy) and even larger Hungarian minority (some eight percent of Romania’s population of 23 million) continue. Despite the reluctance of the Romanian government, Ukrainians and other minorities have since the Revolution of 1989 gained certain rights. Minority groups have been allowed to open new schools, build their own churches, and establish a range of cultural and political organizations. In the national elections held in 1992 and 1996, each of the minority parties was guaranteed a seat in parliament, including a representative of the Ukrainian Democratic Party of Romania.

Ukrainian organizations also participate in the work of the Council of National Minorities, which also includes a variety of other national groups with official status in the country: Hungarians, Roma (Gypsies), Germans, Serbs, and the small groups of Bulgarians, Tatars, Slovaks, Croats, Russian Lipovans, Turks, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Poles, and Albanians. Each minority is represented by three members in the council, but general discontent among the minority representatives prevails. Less than six months after the National Minority Council was established, in March 1993, the Hungarian organizations withdrew their representatives, arguing that the council was little more than an instrument of propaganda for the Romanian government. The other minority groups have, however, remained members. The most important goal for the minorities now is the establishment of a Ministry of Minority Affairs in the Romanian government and the ratification of a law that would guarantee collective minority rights in accordance with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Romania’s relations with the newly independent Republic of Ukraine are as problematic as with the Soviet Union before the collapse of communism. The possible return of the territories that were annexed by the Soviets during World War II has been debated in the Romanian parliament more than once, and since this issue remains unresolved nationalist political parties have opposed the passing of a friendship treaty with Ukraine. Territorial claims are also bolstered by the presence of some 135,000 Romanians living in compact communities in Ukraine near its border with Romania. Both countries claim their fellow nationals face discrimination, but despite the controversies

Typical street scene in Rus'-Poljany with Carpathian Mountains in background. (photo by Tom Trier)
between Bucharest and Kiev negotiations are still continuing on a bilateral treaty to settle national and territorial issues.

Where are the Rusyns?

The present number of Ukrainians (including Rusyns) in Romania varies between the official figures of 66,000 (according to the census of 1992) and estimates that range from 150,000 to 300,000 in the Ukrainian press. The latter seem to be heavily exaggerated. There are no separate figures for the Rusyn population, but it is noteworthy that the Romanian censuses at least mention Ruthenians figures for the Rusyn population, but it is noteworthy that the Romanian censuses at least mention Ruthenians (Rusyns) and Huculs alongside Ukrainians in one common category, thus at least indicating the presence of Rusyns in Romania. This is in contrast to certain other states in East Central Europe, where the very existence of Rusyns is completely ignored.

The Rusyn-inhabited regions in the eastern parts of historic Romania (Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Bukovina) were during the rise of national ideologies from the latter part of the nineteenth century more influenced by Ukrainian nationalism than the western regions, (Maramureș, Banat). Moreover, during the era of Communist rule in Romania no attempts to organize Rusyns in Romania were made. With this in mind, I was eager to get a first-hand impression during my visit of the present state of the ethnic aspirations of the East Slavic villagers in the Maramureș region. Would they consider themselves Ukrainian or, against all odds, possibly Rusyn? And to what extent would they have assimilated into the dominant Romanian culture?

I arrived in Sighetul Marmăției, the northernmost town of Romania near the border with Transcarpathian Ukraine, on what I was told was the first sunny day of the spring. The snow had only disappeared from the fields a week earlier. In Rona de Sus (Rusyn: Vsijna Runa), the first village I was about to visit, the dirt roads were still muddy in the cold April morning. As I made my way into the village on foot, I immediately felt welcome when an old man greeted with the words Dobre rano. Vsijna Runa is a large village inhabited by over 3,000 people. Remarkably, there are relatively few Romanians or other non-Slavic dwellers and, as I was to discover later, this is also the case in most other neighboring Rusyn villages.

Eventually I made my way to Professor Pavlo Romanjuk, a poet and writer who works as a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature in the local village school. It was only by chance that I had managed to get in touch with him. In a recent issue of the magazine Rusyn (No. 3-4, 1996), I read excerpts from a novel written by Romanjuk in the local vernacular. Knowing his name and the village in which he lived, I was able to trace his address and telephone number through the Romanian telephone information service. Romanjuk kindly invited me to stay at his house in his picturesque native village during my visit to Romania’s Maramureș region.

Pavlo Romanjuk, 44, is married and has two sons. He is the author of four collections of poetry and a novel—all written in literary Ukrainian. He is currently busy working on a novel, which, as he said, he is writing po-našemu. He is also the author of a new Romanian-Ukrainian/Ukrainian-Romanian phrasebook, and a member of both the Romanian and Ukrainian writers’ unions. Since 1996 he has been studying as a Ph.D. candidate in Ukrainian literature at the University of Cernivci in Ukraine. The theme of his dissertation is the work of the early twentieth-century writers, Ol’ha Kobylyan’ska and Sylvestr Jariquevskyj, both from the historic region of Bukovina that in the twentieth century has been disputed by Romania and Ukraine. In his leisure time Romanjuk plays in an amateur folk ensemble that performs in the village dialect. There are a number of such groups in the Rusyn-inhabited region of Romania, he told me. Some perform in the local language, others in Ukrainian, and still others with a mixed repertoire.

To the Hucul Region

Professor Romanjuk suggested we make a trip to the eastern part of Maramureș where the Huculs live. Romanjuk was once a teacher in the Hucul villages of Luhei (Rusyn: Lyh) and Poienile de Sub Munte (Rus'-Poljany), so that he was well acquainted with the cultural and political situation in that part of Maramureș. Since he did not have a car, we made our way by whatever means of transportation were available—private cars, buses, trucks, and any other vehicle that would give us a lift for a modest payment. In this way we covered, although at slow speed, the 15 miles to the road that led into the Ruscova River valley, from where we eventually would continue along the only road to the remote and rather inaccessible Hucul villages.

Most of the East Slavic villages in Maramureș are situated along the Tysa River, the Vișeu River, and its tributary, the Ruscova. Due to the gradual expansion of the villages along the rivers, the inhabited areas have to some extent grown together so that several constitute a continuous chain of villages. One such chain is made up of Tisa (Rusyn: Mikovo), Crăciunești (Kračunovo), Bociociu Mare (Velykyj Byčkiv), Lunca la Tisa (Luh), together inhabited by some 3500 predominantly East Slavs. Another chain is situated in the Vișeu valley, where the villages of Valea Vișeului (Poljana), Bistra, and Crasna Vișeului (Krasna) are home to another 3500 Slavic residents.

The Hucul villages of Ruscova (Ruskova), Repedea (Rus'-Krývivýj), Poienile de sub Munte (Rus'-Poljany) and Luhei (Lyh)—all located in the Ruscova valley—are inhabited by a total of more than 20,000 people. Some villages are large—more than 13,000 people live in Rus'-Poljany alone. The character of these large settlements is rather similar to the Rusyn villages north of the Tysa River in Subcarpathian Rus' (Ukraine’s Transcarpathia), with a significant number of traditional peasant wooden houses mixed with modern stone buildings constructed since the 1989 revolution. A significant number of East Slavs also live in Sighetul Marmăției, today a busy town of 43,000 inhabitants. Slavs originating from the region are also scattered in Vișeu de Sus, Baia Mare, Bucharest, and other Romanian towns and cities.

A bus took us the last 10 miles to Rus'-Poljany, the principal Hucul village in the Maramureș region. During the drive through the Ruscova valley we passed several scenic Hucul villages tucked between the snow-covered mountains that rose on either side of the narrow road. It was only in the early 1980s that the mountain village of Rus'-Poljany was connected by an asphalt road to the main road...
in the Vișeu valley. Before then the connection to the outer world was maintained only by a slow-moving train. This railway was abandoned soon after the road was constructed. In the aftermath of the Revolution of 1989 these villages seem to have become more isolated once again. The public means of transportation have been cut back to an absolute minimum with only two daily buses going to and from Rus’-Poljany. During our visit we almost had to stay overnight in the village until finally one of the very few outbound cars offered us a lift.

Like the Huculs of Rus’-Poljany, most of the East Slavs in Romania are indigenous peasants and shepherds who have had limited opportunities to improve their socioeconomic status. This fact, in addition to the isolated locations of the mountain villages, is probably the primary reason for the relatively limited assimilation of the East Slavs with the Romanian majority population. Needless to say, the Hucul vernacular was heard everywhere, not Romanian or literary Ukrainian.

**New and old churches**

In the villages of the Hucul region considerable church construction could be observed. Since the Revolution of 1989, a significant number of Ukrainian Orthodox churches have been built in the region and are still being built. Although the villages of the Ruscova valley used to be a stronghold of the Greek Catholic faith, not a single new Greek Catholic church has been erected so far. It seems that worshippers here have not returned to their original faith to the same extent as in Ukraine’s Transcarpathia and the Prešov Region of eastern Slovakia. As in those countries, the Greek Catholic church was banned in Romania shortly after the communist takeover and annexed to the Orthodox church. Today there are only three traditional wooden churches left in the entire Maramureș region, two in Rus’-Poljany and one in Rus’-Krývýj. The characteristic Hucul church of Rus’-Poljany with its majestic spire is, however, now being converted to the Greek Catholic faith, since the Orthodox community has built a new church nearby. Also in Sighetul Marmăției a room in the town’s House of Culture has recently been consecrated for Greek Catholic services.

**The language question**

During the course of our journey around the Carpathian villages, Professor Romanjuk introduced me to several of his fellow teachers. Our conversations were largely occupied with the language question, which presents similar problems in Romania as for Rusyns elsewhere in the Carpathians. Children are taught Romanian and Ukrainian simultaneously from the first class in primary school. Romanian is generally the language of instruction for most subjects with the exception of a few that can be taught in Ukrainian (or other national minority languages) according to a new 1994 Law on Education. During lessons in these subjects the children are supposed to speak literary Ukrainian and are corrected by the teachers if they switch over to their local dialect. In fact, as Professor Romanjuk explained, children from their early years must learn no fewer than three languages: Rusyn vernacular at home, Ukrainian and Romanian at school. In spite of his fluency in Ukrainian, Romanjuk said he thinks in the Rusyn vernacular, and when writing he first has to translate his thoughts into Ukrainian word for word. His master’s thesis at the University of

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**Eighteenth-century Carpatho-Rusyn wooden church in the village of Rus’-Poljany in Romania. (photo by Tom Trier)**

Bucharest examined methods of bilingual teaching, and he is basically dissatisfied with the present state of language instruction.

Romanjuk says he hopes to publish a newspaper in his vernacular. He is connected to a comprehensive network of teachers in most Rusyn villages, who agree on the need to write po-nasemu. Several of the teachers I met were positively disposed to giving what is now considered a dialect the status of more than just a spoken vernacular, and this includes a Hucul writer and local historian, who otherwise contributes regularly to Ukrainian-American periodicals.

The inhabitants of the East Slavic villages in the Maramureș region of Romania are part of a larger Carpatho-Rusyn nationality, and as such are culturally and ethnically related to Rusyns in Ukraine’s Transcarpathia as well as in Poland and Slovakia). This, however, is not something about which villagers in the Maramureș region are aware. In short, nobody seems to identify with a larger Carpatho-Rusyn people. When asked about their national affiliation, most people I met promptly replied: Ukrainian. Apparently, there is no debate taking place at this moment on the question of Rusyn versus Ukrainian national affiliation. Intellectuals, too, identify with Ukraine and see themselves as full-fledged Ukrainians. When asked about their native language, however, many answered: Rusyn.

**Ukrainian and/or Rusyn?**

Today all the villages in the Maramureș region of Romania marked on Professor Magocsi’s map still exist, and apparently each has a majority population of indigenous East Slavs. According to figures provided by local intellectuals, there are currently some 30,000-35,000 primarily indigenous East Slavs living in these villages and another 20,000-25,000 elsewhere in the country, including seven rural villages in the Banat region of southwestern Romania.
Not surprisingly, it is first urban dwellers that have been—and still are—exposed to processes of assimilation into mainstream Romanian culture, whereas the villagers more likely identify with Ukrainians. Only a few seem to consider themselves Rusyn in terms of ethnic affiliation, despite many more who claim that the Rusyn language is their mother tongue.

Most probably we will not witness the emergence of a forceful Rusyn movement in the region. A significant part of the region’s East Slavic intelligentsia is more likely to maintain what during the past 80 years or more has developed into an explicitly Ukrainian identity. The Ukrainians are well established as a national minority in Romania with their own cultural and political organizations, a publishing house, a range of periodicals in Ukrainian, and even a journal in Romanian. Many pro-Ukrainian intellectuals also maintain ties with Ukrainians in Ukraine and with the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, the United States, and Canada. In fact, Ukrainian political, cultural, and social organizations in Romania are to some extent financially supported by the Ukrainian diaspora.

On the other hand, it is quite likely that the incipient contacts with Rusyns in other countries will spark a Rusyn-Ukrainian debate in Romania in the coming years. If ethnic identity is perceived as subject to change according to altering realities, then the East Slavic population of Romania’s Carpathian region might also—at least in part—change its ethnic orientation. This could happen particularly if a Rusyn ethno-cultural movement would have something special to offer the people under the current circumstances.

One benefit could be the creation of a literary Rusyn language and the official recognition of such a language in Romania. The fact that such aspirations are prevalent elsewhere in the Carpathians may serve as a source of inspiration to the East Slavs of Maramureș and possibly fulfil a long felt need. This does not, of course, mean that a Rusyn movement in Romania would necessarily evolve like Rusyn movements in other countries. Rusyns in Romania might adopt other ethnic or regionalistic strategies. One thing does seem certain, however. Whatever form a possible Rusyn movement assumes will not be greeted with enthusiasm by the existing Ukrainian organizations in Romania. Since the present Romanian nationality policy recognizes minorities of even the smallest size, such as the Poles (4200 in 1992) and the Armenians (2000), Rusyn ethnic or cultural organizations might also have a chance to achieve the status of a minority in their own right. It still remains to be seen whether a viable need for this actually exists.

My visit to Romania was very brief, and my sources of information in the field were random and somewhat limited. My observations of the present ethno-national situation primarily derive from conversations with a small number of intellectuals in the region. These observations are not the result of extensive fieldwork in Romania, but are a reflection of my initial and firsthand impression of the region, which I have found worth sharing with others. To be sure, further studies in the fields of history and sociology remain to be conducted on the situation of the Rusyns and Ukrainians of Romania.

Tom Trier
Copenhagen, Denmark

Postscript

Among the speakers at an international colloquium on Rusyn minorities in east-central Europe held on November 8, 1990 in conjunction with the Week of Rusyn Culture in Copenhagen were the Ambassador of Romania, Dr. Grete Tartier Tabarăși and Pavlo Romanjuk. The ambassador stated that according to current Romanian law, every citizen of Romania has the right to identify with any nationality and that the government would consider providing recognition and assistance to Rusyns, regardless of size. Romanjuk reported on the plans he and several of his Rusyn colleagues have of establishing a Rusyn-language newspaper in Romania called Pradî. For further information or to assist in these efforts, write to: Profesor Paul Romaniuic, com. Rona de Sus nr. 626, jud. Maramureș, ROMANIA. Fax: 40-62-31-76-36.

PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH ABOUT CARPATHO-RUSYNs, 1994

Items available from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center are indicated as such. Others can be obtained on request through Interlibrary Loan or as listed in various libraries. Agents in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe.


To be standing here as a delegate from America is something which ten years ago I could never have even imagined. Ten years ago, at age seventeen, I had only begun to discover my Rusyn heritage. My mother’s parents left their tiny Rusyn villages “under the Dukla Pass” at the beginning of this century to start a new life in America. They met and married in New Jersey, and moved to Pennsylvania a few years later. My grandfather, a coal miner, died at fifty-five years of age, leaving my grandmother and fourteen children, the youngest of whom was my mother. Although my Rusyn grandmother went to her eternal rest when I was only eight years old, my memories of her and the small seed of Rusyn identity she gave me through my mother have blossomed into a flower which today greatly enriches my life. I am now learning my Rusyn mother tongue and I help others like myself to discover or to understand better their Rusyn heritage by serving as a trustee of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society [based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania] and as editor of its magazine, The New Rusyn Times.

But an important piece of my heritage was missing until summer of last year, when, along with thirty-three other members of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, I was finally able to visit the land of my grandparents’ birth, our beautiful Carpathian Rus’. As I walked on the same ground my ancestors walked, crossed the stream which flows through my grandmother’s village, and sang a hymn in the very church—a traditional Rusyn wooden church—where my ancestors prayed and attained their eternal salvation for centuries past, I finally realized the full meaning of the word “heritage.”

Heritage is what our organization, the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, is all about. Our organization faces many of the same challenges which confront Rusyns wherever they may live. The division of the Rusyn mainstream into Greek Catholic and Orthodox religious orientations began in America and was tragically transported to the Rusyn homeland. Our organization has begun to heal these divisions in terms of Rusyns coming together to share our common culture. We have as members not only both Greek Catholics and Orthodox, but also Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and even those of no religion, Rusyns and non-Rusyns alike, who in some way value the Rusyn heritage. The theme of unity which our organization presents is further demonstrated by the fact that Rusyn Americans of all regional backgrounds—whether their roots are in Subcarpathian Rus’, eastern Slovakia, the Lemko and Bojko regions, or the Vojvodina—belong to our organization. We have also bridged the gaps of age and gender with our youngest members under ten years old, and our oldest near ninety. Women as well as men serve as officers and trustees, and we have as members recent Rusyn immigrants alongside those of the second, third, fourth, or even fifth generation born in America.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Society also looks to the future, and proof of this is the fact that its members have established a significant Rusyn presence on the internet called the Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base [see the Carpatho-Rusyn American, Vol. XIX, No. 1, 1996, p. 8]. The internet continues to provide outstanding opportunities for the free exchange of information and news among Rusyns worldwide. Since it was started over two years ago, the Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base has continued to grow at a steady rate. Internet contact with Rusyns in Poland and Slovakia has been established this year, and it is our sincere hope that
these contacts will continue to provide beneficial results for everyone involved. The internet is growing at an astounding rate, with more and more people using it every day. We Rusyns should be proud that we were one of the first ethnic groups to establish a strong presence on the World Wide Web. Through the internet we receive daily e-mail from people who are grateful to have a source of materials that pertain to their heritage, material they can easily access from their homes 24 hours a day.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base is dedicated to providing a free forum where Rusyns all over the world can place information—current news, historical information, scholarly papers, etc.—for anyone to read. It is very important that people can easily discover and learn about our culture and history. And our site's success is made possible by the involvement of many Rusyns worldwide who offer new material for the site. Such cooperation is much appreciated! We look forward to having other Rusyn organizations involved in the future. We are proud to be involved in this service to our Rusyn brothers and sisters and we have associated! We look forward to having other Rusyn organizations involved in their heritage, material they can easily access from their homes 24 hours a day.

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Customarily, ethnic groups in the United States have relied on new immigrants to keep their communities vibrant. Rusyns in America have not been fortunate in this respect. Rusyn immigration to America virtually ended in 1938. Since the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, however, there has been a small but steady stream of Rusyn immigrants especially from eastern Slovakia. It is well known that there are many Rusyns from the villages of Litmanová, Kamionka, and Jarabina—all near Stará Lúbovňa—who have come to America and now live in New York (especially Brooklyn) and New Jersey. Unfortunately, instead of becoming a part of existing Rusyn communities there, these immigrants have in large part become active members of the Slovak-American community and of various Slovak-American organizations. We might say that they have become Slovaks only after leaving Slovakia.

My main contact with these new immigrants has been at an annual Greek Catholic pilgrimage in Pennsylvania. In September of last year I also went to one of their largest secular gatherings, the Festival Slovenského Dedicstva, an annual event in the state of New Jersey. The festival opened with a Byzantine Catholic Divine Liturgy served by local Greek Catholic clergy, assisted by some Slovak Roman Catholic priests. The liturgy was celebrated mostly in Church Slavonic, but the main celebrant, the pastor of St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic church in Manville, New Jersey, sang all his parts in Slovak. This is absolutely unheard of anywhere in the United States. There is not one Greek Catholic or Orthodox church in the entire United States where the Slovak language is used. Even the so-called "Slovak Byzantine Catholic Eparchy" in Canada uses only English and Church Slavonic.

Since this priest’s parish has many Rusyn parishioners who are immigrants from Litmanová, I asked him if he ever uses Slovak in his church there. He said he hadn’t yet, but did have plans to start doing so. “Why?” I asked. “Surely not for the Rusyns from Litmanová?” “What Rusyns?” he said, adding that “they are Slovaks.” I repeated that many of his parishioners were in fact Rusyns, to which he replied that “perhaps they are Rusyns, but they speak only Slovak and they don’t understand Church Slavonic.” Is it not time, I wondered, for the entire Divine Liturgy to be translated into the Rusyn literary language for use in Orthodox and Greek Catholic parishes in Slovakia? Then there will be no more excuse for introducing Slovak into the service based on some premise that “the people do not understand Church Slavonic.”

These new immigrants have also become involved in the artistic expression of their culture. The Limbora Slovak Folk Ensemble was established in 1966 and is dedicated to the authentic presentation of Slovak folk culture throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. In the list of members, however, one immediately recognizes the following Rusyn names: Benyo, Kočerha, Matoljak, Šikorjak-Turkynjak, Čobor, Koneval. Many of the dances are typical eastern Slovak dances. The only specifically Rusyn material is an occasional Rusyn folksong, although these are never identified as Rusyn or Rusnak, only as “eastern Slovak.”

A smaller ensemble, Východna Dolina, also in New York City, is made up entirely of these same Rusyn immigrants and their American-born children, and even though they perform Rusyn songs almost exclusively, they describe and promote themselves as a Slovak folk ensemble. Some of these recent immigrants have told me that they would like to know our history and learn more about our culture, which shows they realize that they are not just a subgroup of Slovaks, and that we can call our own all the things which make each nationality distinct. Perhaps this could be the most tangible proof I have that, when engaged in conversation long enough, even these Rusyns who have thickly clothed themselves with a Slovak identity know deep down in their heart of hearts that they are Rusyns.

There is some good news, however. A number of other recent Rusyn immigrants, including Rusyns from Slovakia and in particular Lemko Rusyns from Poland, have become enthusiastic and valuable members of our organization. At this time we have met only a very few recent immigrants from Subcarpathian Rus’, of whom most seem to be convinced Ukrainians. The phenomenon of new immigrants presents our Carpatho-Rusyn Society and the Rusyn communities in the United States and Canada with a special challenge: How can we provide a place in our Rusyn family for new arrivals? The success or failure of our response to this challenge will be an important determining factor in the future shape of the Rusyn community in America.

The hopes of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society for the international Rusyn community are primarily the preservation and cultivation of our language, an understanding of our common history (which goes far beyond the borders of any single country), and hopefully a shared culture and identity. Rusyns in America are proud of their Rusyn heritage! The Rusyn community in America is growing! The Carpatho-Rusyn Society looks forward to many more years of building up the Rusyn community in America and cooperating with our fellow Rusyn organizations elsewhere for the benefit of the Rusyn people worldwide. I leave you with the heartfelt prayer from one of our renowned poets: “Bože Výšnij, Otců narodov, spasy Tebi všichy Rusynov” (O God on high, Father of all peoples, deign to save the faithful Rusyns).

Richard D. Custer
Hershey, Pennsylvania

Carpatho-Rusyn American

10

Vol. XX, No. 3, Fall 1997
RESOLUTIONS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF RUSYNS

1. The World Congress acknowledges that the republics of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia have all recognized Rusyns as a distinct people. Ukraine, unfortunately, has not taken this step, and thus has violated both the General Agreement of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the protection of national minorities, as well as its own constitution. Therefore, the World Congress appeals to the government of Ukraine and its representatives to recognize Rusyns as a distinct national minority and to respect the results of the national referendum of 1991 in Transcarpathia [see the Carpatho-Rusyn American, Vol. XV, No. 1, 1992, pp. 10-11].

2. The World Congress calls on representatives of the United Nations and the European Council to use their authority in helping to achieve human rights for Rusyns according to European standards at the end of the twentieth century.

3. The World Congress calls on the national parliaments of the countries in which Rusyns reside to adjust their legislatures to allow for a minimum of one Rusyn member with the legal right to represent the Rusyn community in parliament, a practice [regarding minorities] common in the parliaments of other countries.

4. The World Congress calls on the clergy of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches to follow the example of the nineteenth-century national awakener who became bearers of the Rusyn spiritual revival, and to strive by their own example to eliminate those negative tendencies which are not to the advantage of Rusyns of either denomination. Spiritual Fathers, help us to preserve our Church Slavonic liturgy and Cyrillic alphabet as the basic characteristics of our people’s identity.

5. The World Congress recalls with sorrow the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy of the Rusyns (Lemkos) of Poland—the Vistula Operation—so that this sad event might serve as a reminder for present and future generations [see the Carpatho-Rusyn American, Vol. X, No. 1, 1987, pp. 5-12]. We request that the government of the Republic of Poland and its representatives not only acknowledge the Vistula Operation as unjust, but also take concrete steps to compensate for the moral and material losses incurred by the Rusyns (Lemkos) as a result of the operation.

6. The World Congress remembers Rusyns and other peoples of Subcarpathian Rus’ who were victims of the brutal violence suffered in concentration camps at Rachiv (1938) and Svaljava (1945). Along with this, the congress condemns the Fierlinger-Molotov Pact between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in 1945 as a violation of international law.

7. The World Congress has agreed that the Fifth World Congress of Rusyns should take place in 1999 in Ukraine, in the former Subcarpathian Rus’.

Budapest, Hungary
June 1, 1997

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF RUSYNS

The Fourth World Congress of Rusyns recommends:

1. That the Interregional Executive of the World Council of Rusyns visit the highest officials of the governments of Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the Czech Republic in order to discuss with them the most pressing problems of the Rusyns in their respective countries.

2. That the leading representatives of Rusyn national organizations which are members of the World Council of Rusyns work toward achieving the recognition of Rusyns as a distinct national minority in every country in which they live so that they might have the right to call themselves Rusyns and that in the official population censuses there be a separate category for Rusyn identity.

3. That the Interregional Executive of the World Council of Rusyns insure the publication of an anthology of Rusyn prose and a Concise Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture before the Fifth World Congress of Rusyns, and assist scholars in the preparation of a general history of Rusyns.

4. That the Interregional Executive of the World Council of Rusyns create a financial fund for the World Congress.

Budapest, Hungary
June 1, 1997

OUR FRONT COVER

Peasant poetess Anastasija Dalida from Mižhirja in Transcarpathia, Ukraine, declaiming her poetry at the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns. (photo by Richard Custer)

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

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