In preparing this editorial for the last issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American, I distributed copies from our first few years beginning in the spring of 1978 around on my desk top. They were color coded then—spring green, beige, gray, sky blue—until we eventually chose a consistent bold white. The publication was only seven pages long, and to an experienced eye it is in retrospect clear that we were experimenting with the shape of the content and format.

How best could we accomplish our goal of conveying information on the life and cultural and historical heritage of Carpatho-Rusyns? How could we reach Americans of Carpatho-Rusyn background who were curious about their roots? How could we stimulate curiosity in others who had almost lost touch with those roots? Such questions were ever present in our editorial meetings.

Finally, the task of writing the first editorial was at hand. I sat alone before a typewriter in my small dormitory room at Columbia University in New York City. As I waited for inspirations, the room filled with the presence of my immigrant grandparents and the spirit of countless individuals like them. The time for this undertaking is now, they urged, and you must start with us. You must tell our story, and in telling it fully you will find yourself going beyond us more than you can ever imagine. You will travel back to explore our history, and at the same time you will excite the very energies which will propel our people forward into the future so that our name and identity will not be lost. You will touch the lives of our descendents here and you will support the yearnings of the children of our siblings who stayed behind in the European homeland.

I began writing as I was instructed. I hope that I have obeyed my grandparents properly all these past twenty years.

The C-RA has in fact touched many lives and has accomplished its goals as the quarterly publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center. The founding president of the C-RRC, Professor Paul Robert Magocsi, describes this in detail in his article, OUR TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY, in the present issue. Professor Magocsi and I, together with others who have devoted countless volunteer hours and effort toward the production of the C-RA, have now made an intentional decision to rechannel this time and energy into other work newly envisioned by the World Congress of Rusyns, including projects within the C-RRC itself.

The center, for instance, will continue to offer additional volumes in our series, Classics of Carpatho-Rusyn Scholarship. Four new books will appear under C-RRC auspices during this twentieth anniversary year (1998), including the unique and outstanding examination of Carpatho-Rusyn folklore by Petr G. Bogatyrev, Vampires in the Carpathians: Magical Acts, Rites, and Beliefs in Subcarpathian Rus' . Through our work and with the help of rising young scholars in Europe, new histories, prose, poetry, and folktales, now being written and published in Rusyn, will also eventually be available in English translation.

The spirit of our grandparents was right. We began by exploring history and the immigrant heritage, and in the process of doing so we were moved to shift our focus to events and activities under way in the Rusyn homeland, particularly in light of the radical political changes which took place after the Revolution of 1989. We joined forces with those Rusyn movements which are now shaping the Rusyn historical and cultural consciousness of tomorrow. We have reported on the progress of Rusyns in Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, and Hungary, and have tried to bring to the public attention the still difficult plight of Rusyns in Transcarpathia in Ukraine. We encourage the Carpatho-Rusyn Society’s publication, The New Rusyn Times, to continue providing some of this information for the sake of our people who are still striving to be recognized in their native land.

Carpatho-Rusyn organizations remain at work both in the European homeland and abroad. The Fifth World Congress of Rusyns is being planned, publications in the Rusyn language are available, the Carpatho-Rusyn site on the Internet is thriving, and Rusyn language and literature now have their own distinct subject categories in the Library of Congress. This last achievement is one of the most significant symbolic steps for Rusyns as we come to the end of the twentieth century. It quite simply confirms public recognition of the persistence of will among a people determined to survive and be recognized by others.

Another symbol is the new and impressive statue of the Rusyn national awakener, Aleksander Duchnovyc, which was recently unveiled in front of the Transcarpathian Theater in Uzhhorod (see SINCE THE REVOLUTION). Who could have imagined that in the otherwise difficult political and social conditions for Rusyns in Ukraine’s Transcarpathian Region such a symbol could be erected, greeted by an enormous public demonstration singing—alongside the Ukrainian national anthem—the Rusyn anthem penned by Duchnovyc himself? We Rusyns should perhaps be accustomed to such things: the spirit moves in strange ways.

It is time for me to sign off, and also perhaps an appropriate time to extend a heartfelt thanks to those who over the past twenty years have supported us as well as to those who have challenged us, at times even severely. To all of you we are grateful, for by your efforts you knowingly or unknowingly helped us to define ourselves, to see our way even more clearly, to survive, and to grow.

OUR FRONT COVER

The renowned artist of the Carpathian region, Ernest Kontratovyc, is a direct descendant of the Subcarpathian school of painting established after World War I by Adalbert Erdeli and Josyp Bokšaj. Kontratovyc was not only a contemporary of the leading Subcarpathian painters of the first half of the twentieth century, he was also one of the group's leading figures. Despite the establishment of Soviet rule in Subcarpathian Rus' in 1945, he never adopted the artistic principles of the totalitarian regime that were known as socialist realism. He neither compromised nor opposed the regime. Perhaps it is for this reason that he was never given any public awards or official recognition until very late in life.

Ernest Kontratovyc was born in 1912 in Kalná Roztoka, a Carpatho-Rusyn village in the former Hungarian Kingdom (Zemplén county) that today is in the far northeastern corner of Slovakia. As the child of elementary school teachers, the young Ernest was destined to follow in the footsteps of his parents and was sent to the Teacher's College in Užhorod. While at the college (1928-1932), he also attended the public school of art founded by Erdeli and Bokšaj. The experience with these two masters was to have a profound influence on the young artist. At first he taught in schools in the area around Užhorod for several years, but before long it was painting that became his true calling in life.

And what did he paint? First and foremost what he saw around him and what he felt inside: the beauties of nature, themes based on local folk legends, depictions of folk customs among Rusyn peasants and shepherds, and scenes of their work in the fields and orchards. There were also, of course, large tableaux of celebrations and festivities. The very titles of paintings—"The Ritual Spring Song" and "The Willow by the Lake" from the 1930s with their many mythological elements, or "Gathering the Sheafs" (1940) and "Picking Apples" (1969)—sum up his best known subjects. He also completed numerous landscapes, village scenes, and views of the highland pastures (polonyna) which he loved so much.

Most typical for Carpatho-Rusyn artists during the 1930s and early 1940s was to paint scenes that showed orphans, poverty, and hunger. Kontratovyc's works from this period were filled with these themes as well, such as "The Ukrainian Orphan," "Hunger," "The Burial of a Poor Man," and "A Beggar Under the Willow Tree." Nevertheless, Kontratovyc was in general a monumental artist, and this was particularly evident in his use of color as well as his choice of themes. In works such as "The Wedding" (1968), "Maslo" (1945), "Dances from the Highlands," "Musicians," and "The Wedding Procession," Kontratovyc revealed through his use of vibrant colors the energy of new life as symbolized by the wedding ritual.

Then there are his portraits, including several madonnas with the infant child that he rendered in a series known as the "Transcarpathian Madonnas." From the 1930s down to the present, he depicted the mother with her child either as an isolated portrait or with a mountainous background. Regardless of the subjects he has chosen, Kontratovyc's art has always been imbued with a wide range of rich color and a sense of grandeur. Such qualities are present even in those cases where he is stressing through an acute philosophical vision the less inspiring side of human life and nature.

The former totalitarian regime that ruled in Subcarpathian Rus' for nearly half a century after World War II either suppressed rebellious artists like Fedir Manajlo, or simply ignored others like Ernest Kontratovyc. That same regime feared the experimental use of color by Erdeli and accepted only the realist views of Bokšaj, while forgetting entirely the latter's numerous religious subjects.

In the few years since the end of Soviet rule, the Subcarpathian school of painting is still waiting to be fully rediscovered in all its variety like the colors of a rainbow over the Carpathian horizon. One of the colors in that rainbow is the work of Ernest Kontratovyc, to whom we wish the best of health and productivity for many more years to come.

Volodymyr Fedynysyne

Užhorod, Ukraine
OUR TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

In 1998, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center (C-RRC) will celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Throughout its twenty-year existence the C-RRC has never lost focus of its primary goal: to publish and/or distribute scholarly and popular reading materials on all aspects of the history and culture of Carpatho-Rusyns in Europe and America. As a corollary, the C-RRC has sponsored scholarly conferences, donated books and microfilm to libraries and individual scholars, especially in the European homeland, and provided fellowships to individuals from various countries studying Carpatho-Rusyns.

The C-RRC arose out of the particular circumstances in American life during the 1970s. That was the decade of the bicentennial of the United States and a time when the so-called “roots fever” was sweeping the country. Many Americans had by then come to believe that the genius of the United States lay in the cultural and ethnic diversity of its many peoples. One of those peoples included individuals who identified themselves by a variety of names: Ruthenians, Rusnaks, Carpatho-Russians, Lemkos, Byzantines, or simply Slavish. It seemed that this people of many names was worthy of being known not only to themselves but also to the larger American polity of which they were a part.

With this in mind, a few scholars and church activists began to meet in the early 1970s, in order to discuss ways to promote a greater awareness about Carpatho-Rusyns. The result of those discussions were conferences on Carpatho-Rusyns held in 1973 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and in 1974 at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Of particular importance in galvanizing community interest in the subject was a two-day Seminar on Carpatho-Ruthenia held in August 1975 at the Basilian Sisters Convent of Mount St. Macrina near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Over 200 people heard talks on Carpatho-Rusyn history, literature, language, religion, and art, which were later produced on cassettes that reached thousands of listeners across the country. At the same time that academics were meeting and lecturing on Carpatho-Rusyn topics, popular folk-art culture was being promoted through the creation of several song and dance ensembles in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan led by Jerry Jumba, Jack Poloka, and John Righetti among others.

Symbolically, the first discussions to create a cultural and scholarly organization took place in November 1975 at Concord, Massachusetts, near where “the shot heard round the world” had two hundred years before set off the American Revolution. Among the participants at the Concord and other early meetings were: Professors Andrew D. Perejda (Central Connecticut State College) and Richard Renoff (Nassau Community College); Paul Robert Magocsi and Edward Kasinec, then at Harvard University; and three priests from the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Eparchy of Pittsburgh—Msgr. Basil Sherhegy, Athanasius B. Pekar, OSBM, and Stephen Veselenak, OSB. One result of these meetings was the creation in early 1976 of the Carpatho-Ruthenian Studies Foundation, Inc., based in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, although it soon became clear that this organization was unable to galvanize community interest and financial support for scholarly activity. The American Bicentennial year did see, however, the appearance of the first Rusyn-English phrasebook, Let's Speak Rusyn, whose immediate popularity was a clear indication that Americans of Rusyn background wanted to know more about their ancestral heritage and to refresh their memory of a language spoken by their immigrant parents which, if possible, they hoped to pass on to their children.

Convinced that the various activities of the early 1970s reflected a need for greater knowledge about Carpatho-Rusyns, Paul Robert Magocsi and Patricia Krafick, at the time both associated with Columbia University, decided in 1978 to establish the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center and to publish a small quarterly magazine, the Carpatho-Rusyn American. They were assisted by several Rusyn Americans in the New York City metropolitan area, including Orestes Mihaly, then Assistant Attorney General of the State of New York, who still serves as the C-RRC’s legal advisor, and Nicholas Benyo, Jr., our accountant.

From distribution facilities in nearby Fairview, New Jersey, the C-RRC began advertising a list of about twenty books and pamphlets in the form of an attractive “Carpathian Passport.” Since that time, the C-RRC has offered over sixty titles, dealing with all aspects of Carpatho-Rusyn history and culture in the homeland and abroad. Some titles are published by our center, but most are by leading publishers such as Harvard University Press, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, University of Pittsburgh Press, University of Toronto Press, University of Washington Press, and Wilhelm Braumuller in Vienna, Austria. Of particular value are the Classics of Carpatho-Rusyn Scholarship, published under the auspices of the C-RRC in the East European Monographs Series of Columbia University Press. Edited by Patricia A. Krafick and Paul Robert Magocsi, the Classics include translations into English of books by some of the leading Rusyn specialists in the twentieth century, including Pëtr Bogatyrev, Alexander Bonkalo, Pavlo Markovjic, Maria Mayer, Athanasius B. Pekar, and Aleksei L. Petrov. Seven volumes have already appeared in Classics Series, and in conjunction with our twentieth anniversary three more will appear in the course of 1998.

Publishing high-quality books is one problem, getting such material to the public is yet another. In this regard, the C-RRC has been particularly successful in reaching thousands of Rusyn background as well as individual scholarly specialists and libraries that otherwise might never have had access to information about Carpatho-Rusyns. In 1978, the C-RRC began with a list of 800 supporters. During the past twenty years we have reached directly over 10,000 individuals. Our current list numbers just over 6,000 supporters to whom we do a mailing on average four times a year. The vast majority of our list includes individuals living in the United States, but there are as well about 500 supporters in over 20 countries ranging across the globe from Canada, Iceland, and several European countries to Israel, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand.

The results of our consistent advertising are impressive: from 1978 through 1997, we fulfilled 16,447 orders which represented the sale of 34,824 books, articles, and maps. Our best-selling books have been Our People: Carpatho-Rusyn American.
and Their Descendants in North America (5,269), Let's Speak Rusyn—Bisidujme po-raš'ky (3,580), and Rusyn Easter Eggs in Eastern Slovakia (1,934). The success of our sales program is due in large part to the dedication and efficiency of our distribution managers: Anna Magocsi from 1978 to 1990, when the C-RRC was based in Fairview, New Jersey; and Barbara Kopitan Corbiey, since 1990 in Orwell, Vermont, and most recently in Ocala, Florida.

A typical village winter scene from the Carpathian Mountains.

Such exposure to the public has resulted in an on-going dialogue with hundreds of individuals who since 1978 have written the C-RRC, most often with requests to have a birth certificate of an ancestor interpreted or to find a map which indicates the village(s) from where their parents or grandparents emigrated. After the Revolution of 1989 and the fall of Communism, the number of letters from individuals and organizations in the European homeland steadily increased, mostly with requests for copies of our publications. In response to such repeated inquiries for basic information, our center published a large-scale historic map (1996) of all villages where Rusyns ever lived, as well as a 24-page brochure called simply “Carpatho-Rusyns” (1995), which summarized all aspects of the group's past development and present activity. Over 4,500 copies of the English brochure have already been distributed, and in response to requests from the homeland special editions were published (1996) in the official language of each country where Carpatho-Rusyns live: in Hungarian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, and Ukrainian.

Aside from books, articles, and brochures, the C-RRC has also published 80 issues of the quarterly Carpatho-Rusyn American. Beginning as an 8-page illustrated newsletter, it expanded in 1987 to a 12-page magazine. During its first decade of existence, the Carpatho-Rusyn American was concerned primarily with providing Americans of Rusyn background with information about Carpatho-Rusyn history and traditional culture. The descriptive function of the quarterly publication, which in many ways fulfilled nostalgic longings of individuals cut off geographically and politically from an ancestral homeland, began to change in the late 1980s.

Responding to the fall of Communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991, the Carpatho-Rusyn American began a systematic coverage of recent events in Europe that included English translations of documents and polemical debates over national identity. In effect, the C-RA became the only source for information about the post-1989 Rusyn national revival in all European countries where it was taking place. Since that time, the quarterly has been cited in numerous scholarly and popular studies concerned with political change in east-central Europe. The unique role of the C-RA as both a source of knowledge and participant in helping to shape the course of political developments has been noted in a recent doctoral dissertation by Jacek Nowak at Jagiellonian University (Cracow, Poland), in which he devotes an entire chapter to how our quarterly has contributed to a crystallization of a distinct Rusyn identity in both the United States and the European homeland.

It is never easy to operate a periodical publication on a voluntary basis, and the task of preparing accurate and engaging editorials and articles as well as keeping up with subscription renewals is a daunting task. That is why the Carpatho-Rusyn American has been published from several different places, depending on where the editors and subscription managers have been located. The founding editor, Patricia A. Krafick, was initially based at Columbia University and the University of Pittsburgh (1978-1984), and when she later returned as editor she carried out the task from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and The Evergreen State College at Olympia, Washington. In the intervening years (1985-1988) the C-RA was edited by Patricia A. Onufra (McLean, Virginia), Andrew Kovaly (McKeesport, Pennsylvania), and John Haluska (Cambridge, Minnesota). The quarterly's imprint has moved across the country with its hard-working business and subscription managers, from the first, Olga Kavochka Mayo in Higham, Massachusetts, to Steve Mallick in North Madison, Ohio; John A. Haluska in Cambridge, Minnesota; and Maryann Sivak in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Finally, in 1995, Jack Figel of Eastern Christian Publications in Fairfax, Virginia took over the production and distribution of the C-RA at his own expense. The logistical problems together with the limited number of volunteers able to edit and write have forced the Carpatho-Rusyn American to cease publication after the last issue of 1997.

Not long after the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center was established, an Advisory Board was created to seek counsel from a diverse body of Americans of Rusyn background who were well suited to gauge the needs of the various elements within the community. The Advisory Board, with 8 to 10 members at any one time, has met on average once every two years. Among its past and present members have been: the late Peter Baycura (Lyndora, Pennsylvania), Mary Ann Gaschnig (Dracut, Massachusetts), Lawrence A. Goga (Minneapolis, Minnesota), John A. Haluska (Cambridge, Minnesota), Alexander Herenchak (Allentown, New Jersey), Mary Huzinec (New York, New York), Jerry Jumba (McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania), Edward Kasinec (Forest Hills, New York), Andrew Kovaly (McKeesport, Pennsylvania), Patricia A. Krafick (Olympia, Washington), Steve Mallick (Madison, Ohio), Susyn Mihalsky (Clifton, New Jersey), Orestes J. Mihaly (Armonk, New York), Patricia A. Onufra (McLean, Virginia), Fred Petro (Greek Catholic Union), Richard Renoff (Garden City, Long Island), John Righetti (Mars, Pennsylvania), Monsignor Edward V. Rosack (Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic
Archdiocese of Pittsburgh), Protopresbyter John Yurcisin (American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese), and Michael Zarechnak (Washington, D.C.).

Although the C-RRC has never been formally associated with any religious body or fraternal organization, the list of its advisors reveals that we have maintained good relations with a wide number of existing Rusyn-American churches and secular organizations. In the early years, two hierarchs—Metropolitan Stephen Kocisko and Bishop Michael Dudick of the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Church—were particularly helpful in making it possible for us to publish and distribute some of our books and the Carpatho-Rusyn American. Some of our advisors were also instrumental in creating new Rusyn-American organizations and publications that cater more to community-based needs, such as the Rusin Association of Minnesota (established 1983), headed by Lawrence Goga, and the Carpatho-Rusyn Society based in western Pennsylvania (established 1993), headed by John Righetti. The C-RRC continues to work closely with both these organizations in promoting our publications and in supporting cultural activity in the European homeland.

As a non-profit organization, whatever profits the C-RRC realizes have been used to publish new books and to encourage new scholarly activity. Aside from producing and selling publications, the C-RRC has made available several grants. The first of these were travel stipends in 1983 to allow the Rusyn-American choreographers, Jerry Jumba and John Righetti, to study folk dance and traditional music in what was then Soviet Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus'). Since that time, research grants have been awarded to the Lemko-Rusyn scholars from Poland, Olena Duc (1987) and Petro Trochanovskii (1989), and to the former director of the Institute of Carpathian Studies at Uzhhorod State University, Ivan Pop (1993). Writing grants were awarded to the ethnographer Mykola Muśynka (1983-86) from Prešov, Slovakia; and publication grants to the Rusyn writers from Subcarpathian Rus' in Ukraine, Volodymyr Fedynysynec' (1994, 1997) and Ivan Petrović (1996); to the newspapers, Narodny novyny in Prešov, Slovakia (1992) and Podkarpats'ka Rus' in Užhorod, Ukraine (1994); and to the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus' in Prague, Czech Republic (1996).

The C-RRC has traditionally provided upon request its publications gratis to individuals and institutions in all countries of Europe where Rusyns live. Of particular importance is a microfilm collection of over 50 rare nineteenth- and twentieth-century Rusyn newspapers and journals that we donated in 1995 to the Institute of Rusyn Language and Culture in Prešov, Slovakia and to the Department of Ukrainian and Rusyn Philology of the Bessenei Pedagogical Institute in Nyíregyháza, Hungary.

The C-RRC has also provided speakers for lectures at the University of Pittsburgh and University of Minnesota, and it has co-sponsored and funded several scholarly conferences: "Carpatho-Rusyn Studies: New Research and New Resources," at the University of Pennsylvania (1986); "The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese," at John Carroll University in Cleveland (1988); "Rusyns and the Revolution of 1989," at the University of Pittsburgh (1990); and the "Persistence of Regional Cultures" session at the IV World Congress of Soviet and East European Studies at Harrogate, England (1990), as well as a conference on the same topic (1991) in four cities—Užhorod (Ukraine), Cracow (Poland), Prešov (Slovakia), and Novi Sad (Yugoslavia). We have also participated on average once every two years at the large annual conventions of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, either with a booth to display our publications or in support of a panel on Carpatho-Rusyn topics.

In conjunction with the post-1989 Rusyn national revival in Europe, our center has worked especially closely with the Rusyn Renaissance Society/Rusyn'ska Obroda in Prešov, Slovakia, with whom we organized the First Congress of the Rusyn Language (1992), a conference on "Rusyns and the Slavic National Revivals" (1994), and a conference in connection with the codification of the Rusyn language in Slovakia (1995). The C-RRC is also a founding member of the World Congress of Rusyns and has played an active role in each of the bi-annual meetings held in Medzilaborce, Slovakia (1991); Krynica, Poland (1993); Ruski Kerestur, Yugoslavia (1995); and Budapest, Hungary (1997).

A few C-RRC initiated projects have been generously supported from financial sources other than our own. These include funds from the following: the Greek Catholic Union—to prepare the second volume of the index to the Amerikansky russky viestniki; the Hungarian Research Institute of Canada to publish Alexander Bonkalo's book, The Rusyns; Dr. Amalija Fairbanks and others—to create a Yugoslav Rusyn Youth Fund in the wake of the war in that country; Orestes Mihaly—to publish several issues of the Carpatho-Rusyn American and to create an endowment for scholarship and research; Steven Chepa—to publish the Polish, Slovak, and Ukrainian editions of the brochure, "Carpatho-Rusyns"; and the Rusin Association and Carpatho-Rusyn Society—to publish the English-language edition of the "Carpatho-Rusyns" brochure. Of particular importance is the annual Aleksander Dучnouć Prize for the best original work in Rusyn literature judged by an international panel headed by Professor Elaine Rusinko of the University of Maryland. The prize of $1,000, to be awarded annually over a five-year period beginning in 1997, was funded by Steven Chepa of Toronto, Ontario.

As we begin our third decade of existence, it is clear that the work of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center is not over. Despite our best efforts, which have been enhanced in the last few years through our appearance on the Internet, we have still not reached thousands of Americans who remain unaware of the publications that are available about Carpatho-Rusyns. There is also still much work to be done in helping to establish on a firm footing new Rusyn academic and cultural organizations in the European homeland. In the short term, our primary goals are to complete, together with a team of international scholars, a Concise Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture (about 1,000 entries), and a Rusyn-English dictionary based on the new literary standard used in Slovakia.

Over the years we have been most grateful that our work has been appreciated by Rusyns in North America and in the European homeland as well as the larger scholarly community interested in east-central Europe. We appreciate the support and encouragement of all who have helped us and benefitted from our work and we pledge to do even better in the years to come.

Paul Robert Magocsi
Toronto, Ontario
RECENT EVENTS

Prešov, Slovakia. On August 25-27, 1997, the first seminar for teachers of the Rusyn language was held in Prešov under the auspices of Slovakia’s Ministry of Education. Ten teachers were present to hear lectures on Rusyn language, literature, and folklore by several professors from the University of Prešov, as well as to deal with practical issues concerning language pedagogy by Dr. Vasyl’ Jabur, the organizer of the seminar, and by Jan Hryb, a retired teacher and author of two modern Rusyn-language schoolbooks published in 1994, a Bukvar (Primer) and Čítanka pro rusyn’ský dity (Reader for Rusyn Children).

Despite the late date of the preparatory seminar, the first classes to teach Rusyn were started during the 1997-1998 school year in Medzilaborce and in a few other village schools in northeastern Slovakia. Hence, one of the major goals set in 1991 by the Rusyn Renaissance Society (Rusyn’ska Obroda) has been achieved. The next closely-related goal that remains is the establishment of a Department (katedra) of Rusyn Language and Culture at the University of Prešov to train teachers and other students interested in Rusyn subjects.

Užhorod, Ukraine. On September 20, 1997, a group of professors, writers, and other cultural activists established in Užhorod, the administrative center of the Transcarpathian oblast, the Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society (Rusyns’ke naukovo-osviti oho tovarystvo). The new society has among its primary goals: (1) to provide objective information about all aspects of Transcarpathia’s past and present; (2) to undertake scholarly studies dealing with the history, language, folklore, art, and religious life of Carpatho-Rusyns; and (3) to create a literary standard for the Rusyn language in the region. The society also intends to publish a newspaper and an annual scholarly journal.

This is the first time that respected specialists in the history of Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus’) have supported publicly an organization which is intended to promote the Rusyn orientation. Among those active in the new organization are several professors from Užhorod State University, including Eduard Balahuri, Mychajlo Boldyzar, Ivan Hrančák, Ivan Lakatoš, Petro Lyzanec’, and Ivan Myhovyč, as well as the bellettrists and literary historians Volodymyr Fedynskyjec’ and Vasylji Sočka-Boržavyn. Mykola Makara, director of the Institute of Carpathian Studies at the University of Užhorod, was elected chairman of the Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society. On the occasion of its establishment, a declaration of the society’s principles was published under the title, Naša rusyns’ka pravda (see the article, OUR RUSYN TRUTH, in this issue).

Copenhagen, Denmark. On November 3-10, 1997, the Danish Cultural Institute, which is funded by Denmark’s Ministry of Culture, sponsored a week-long series of programs that promoted awareness about Carpatho-Rusyns and also organized a study tour for Rusyns from six countries to learn about how democratic institutions in Denmark function. There were several events during what was billed as the “Week of Rusyn Culture in Denmark.”

On November 3, an exhibit of modern Rusyn art was opened at the Gallery Shambala in the heart of Copenhagen’s art district, featuring the works of Petro Foldessy, Pavel Michalič, Ivan Šafranko, Fedir Vico, and Aleksander Zozuljak. On November 7, at the Filmhuset, the premiere of a documentary film took place, “The Warhol Nation,” by the Danish director Jakob Høgel and script writer Tom Trier. Over 200 people were at the premiere, including Josef Kesciha, head of the Andy Warhol Pop Art Club in Slovakia, who figures prominently in the documentary. On November 6, Professor Paul Robert Magocsi of the University of Toronto presented a seminar on the recent Rusyn national movement at the Institute for Slavonic Studies at the University Aarhus. On November 7, he lectured on the present and future status of Rusyns at the Center of Minority Studies of the University of Copenhagen.

The study tour included 16 Rusyn cultural activists, scholars, priests, writers, and journalists from Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia. They were provided with informational sessions at Denmark’s National Parliament and at town and regional governments, as well as at the office of Greenland affairs, the Danish Writer’s Association, and the offices of the ecumenical movement, among other institutions. The group also visited southern Jutland (northern Schleswig) to see how the German minority functions in Denmark, and then went across the border to observe the Danish minority in Germany. In nearby Flensburg, Germany, they were guests of the European Centre for Minority Issues, which proposed holding a conference in Užhorod about national minority questions in Ukraine’s Transcarpathian region.

A Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

The Carpatho-Rusyn American (ISSN 0749-9213) is a quarterly publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center Inc., a non-profit cultural organization whose purpose is to promote knowledge about all aspects of Carpatho-Rusyn culture through the publication and distribution of scholarly and educational material about the Carpatho-Rusyn heritage in Europe and America.

General inquiries concerning the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, and all communications concerning this publication, should be directed to:

Carpatho-Rusyn American
P.O. Box 192
Fairfax, VA 22030-0192
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Patricia Onufrait
Richard Renoff
John Righetti
Rt. Rev. Protosbytery John Yurcisin
The following text was issued as a “Declaration” on September 20, 1997 in conjunction with the establishment of the Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society located in Uzhhorod, the administrative center of the Transcarpathian region (Subcarpathian Rus’ of Ukraine.—Editor

Every God-given people, whether large or small, has the right to exist. Every people’s wealth is to be found in its unique culture, language, songs, tales, customs, religion, and traditions. Every national culture has the right to be preserved and to develop.

For centuries Carpatho-Rusyns have adapted to the geographic and climatic environment of their homeland. In harmony with nature they have created the economic basis for their existence as well as formed their own spiritual culture. Consequently, these hard-working inhabitants of the Carpathians have developed into a people with its own distinct material and spiritual culture and a national psyche characterized by peacefulness.

The historical roots of the Carpatho-Rusyns go back to the ancient past. As the indigenous inhabitants of the Subcarpathian region, Rusyns live in a geographic area that stretches from the peaks of the High Tatras in the west to Mount Hoverla in the southeast. Over the centuries their numbers have been supplemented by newcomers from East Slavic lands as well as by Germanic, Vlach (Romanian), and Turkish influences.

The ancestors of the Carpatho-Rusyns received Christianity from Saints Cyril and Methodius already in the second half of the ninth century before those missionaries went to the Great Moravian state; in other words, long before the Christianization of Kievan Rus’. Cyril and Methodius, the apostles and evangelizers of the Slavic peoples (including Rusyns), taught a group of our Rusyns who then spread their missionary work in other lands. From Subcarpathian Christianity spread to Moldavia and Walachia. According to the [Russian] church historian E. Golubinskiti, it was from our homeland that the grand prince of Kievan Rus’, Vladimir/ Volodymyr the Great, may have requested missionary priests [ca. 988].

With the arrival of the Magyar tribes at the end of the ninth century and their creation of a state in the Danubian Basin, the Subcarpathian Rusyns together with their neighbors—Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Romanians—became the object of expansionist tendencies of the Hungarian Kingdom. Until the end of World War I, Rusyns lived in the counties of Abaúj, Borsod, Szépes, Sáros, Zemplén, Ung, Bereg, Ugoča, and Máramaros in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Because of their national oppression, social exploitation, and a variety of other reasons, Rusyns were unable to secure control over their own economic life; hence, the efforts of the group’s small elite to attain the status of an autonomous state proved to be in vain.

According to the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the territory inhabited by Rusyns was divided among the newly-created central European states of Romania, Hungary, and Poland. In each of these states Rusyns became a minority, while in Czechoslovakia, where two-thirds of all Rusyns found themselves, they were in theory granted autonomy. But even that theoretical autonomy came to an end in 1939 and was not restored either under the Hungarian occupation [during World War II] or after the unification of Rusyns with Ukraine in the context of the Soviet Union in 1945.

Despite the fact that Rusyns were limited politically and subjected to powerful assimilationist forces led by dominant nationalities of foreign regimes, they did not lose their distinct identity and preserved their age-old culture, customs, traditions, and religious beliefs. At the same time they were exposed to influences from Russians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, and other Slavic peoples.

Living in various states and under differing regimes—including regimes directed by their two Slavic “brothers” [Russians and Ukrainians]—the Subcarpathian Rusyns have experienced ethnic bleeding, socioeconomic exploitation, and marginalization. Just as a Carpatho-Rusyn identity was being formed, the Russophile and Ukrainophile orientations became particularly influential during the 1920s and 1930s and attracted a significant portion of our local youth and intelligentsia.

Alas, the destruction of our right to self-identity, combined with the loss of moral values, responsibility toward one’s own land, and a sense of local distinctiveness—tendencies that began half a century ago [with the onset of the Soviet regime]—continue to this day. The hope that the present democratic regime [of Ukraine] would return confiscated property to its owners or their descendants has not been fulfilled. The so-called privatization program carried out according to “legal norms” has allowed swindlers to become fantastically rich while the indigenous inhabitants have been reduced to the status of an unemployed rootless laboring class that is forced to work “under the table” outside the local region and in foreign lands. Trained specialists are no longer employed in their fields of specialization, while university scholars, teachers, cultural activists, artists, medical personnel, and pensioners all live in poverty-like conditions.

Rusyn culture was formed over the centuries under particular geopolitical conditions. Starting from an Old Rus’ linguistic and cultural base, Rusyns borrowed elements from neighboring peoples—Ukrainians, Russians, Slovaks, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Germans—and they shared with them their own cultural achievements. The renowned Rusyn professors and scholars, Ivan Orlaj, Mychajlo Baludjans’kyj, Vasyl’ Kul’nyk, Petro Lodij, Andrij Déško, and others, made outstanding contributions [at the outset of the nineteenth century] to scholarship in Russia and to the implementation among all East Slavs of a European system of higher education. At the same time, the talented Slavic scholar Jurij Venelin-Huca made a name for himself in the history of Bulgaria as one of the greatest cultural awencers of the Bulgarian people. Several highly educated Subcarpathian Rusyns also made successful careers in Ukraine as teachers with European-level qualifications in Kharkiv and L’viv universities.

Rusyn culture may be related to Russian and Ukrainian cultures, but it is not the same. Moreover, Rusyn culture cannot be considered a kind of second-rate component of either Russian or Ukrainian culture. Civilized Rusyns
deeply respect the cultures of other peoples and expect the same in return, in particular toward the Rusyn language.

There are not many languages that can claim to have nearly two dozen grammars, dictionaries, and other instructional manuals. These range from a seventeenth-century catechism (1698) and primer (1699) to the grammars and dictionaries of Arsenij Kocak, Mychal Luckaj, Ivan Fogaraši, Aleksander Duchnovyc, Kyrił Sabov, Ivan Rakov’s kjy, Jevmenj Sabov, Aleksander Mirak, Laslo Čopej, Mychajlo Vrabel’, Avhustyn Vološyn, Ivan Pan’kevyč, and Ivan Harajda.

As paradoxical as it may seem, it is also true that we do not have a single codified literary Rusyn language, even though there are scholarly, publicistic, literary, and theological works written in Rusyn. At the present time alone there are more than ten writers [in Transcarpathia] who publish in Rusyn. And as for those local writers who have forgotten their native tongue, they have never acquired a widespread readership. One might ask how a people such as ours can be proud of a native language with so many foreign borrowings. But isn’t that why it is so easy for Rusyns to learn Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian, Slovak, or Romanian? On the other hand, it is true that not every Magyar, Slovak, Russian, or Ukrainian will learn Rusyn. In the end, Rusyn history, culture, and language have all evolved by integrating or developing in parallel with other peoples.

The Subcarpathian Rusyns, who are the age-old indigenous inhabitants of our region, have peacefully accepted the best spiritual and cultural achievements of neighboring peoples. To this very day Rusyn culture continues to function and develop along the borderland of two civilizations—Eastern and Western. We do not have the right to reproach those among us who for various reasons may have become Magyarized, Slovakized, or Ukrainianized. We have only one request of them—that they reflect upon who their ancestors were and where their own roots lie.

Civilized societies generally preserve the linguistic, cultural, and ethnographic relics of their past. In our case, we continue to follow the lead of the previous [Soviet] regime that strove to bring everything in line with a common norm. In that context, any interest in the ethnic distinctiveness of Rusyns is assumed [in Ukraine] to be political separation. Our historical past is both wonderful and tragic. Rusyns have never taken up arms on their own behalf, although they have served in the Austrian, Hungarian, Romanian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Russian, American, Canadian, Belgian, and other armies and legions. At the same time Rusyns have more than once been the object of conflict and "liberation."

Without ever leaving home, some Rusyns have managed to be citizens of three empires and five smaller states. In such conditions, if Rusyns had not learned how to relate in a tolerant manner toward various states and political regimes, they long ago would have disappeared from the face of the earth. In a sense, fate has graciously looked down upon us. Various regimes and foreigners may have come and gone, but the Rusyns have remained. As Volodymyr Fedynysynec’ has written, “Rusyns have always looked contemptuously at newly-arrived and short-term settlers as well as at local mercenaries.”

The Subcarpathian Rusyns represent a distinct people. Historically they have been formed under difficult conditions of foreign rule, although they have also experienced periods in which a relatively advanced level of democracy and state-building have been achieved. Today Rusyns live on their own land within the borders of contemporary Ukraine as an ethnic minority, in the same way as Rusyns in Slovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Hungary. This does not mean, however, that Rusyns are in any way opposed to the Transcarpathian Ukrainians, Russians, Slovaks or other peoples who live in their midst. Together they all form a regional part of the population of the entire Ukraine, although it is true that Rusyn culture is a withering flower in the bouquet of peoples who inhabit the country.

In the end, Rusyns want only one thing: that they be recognized as an equal among equals in the multinational polity of Ukraine. Unity through diversity is in the interest of strengthening the Ukrainian state. As a result of the frequent changes in political regimes and national orientations, the Transcarpathians of today have to a certain degree lost their sense of ethnic awareness. National and ethnic apathy is a fact of life for most Transcarpathians. The people are not really interested in their ethnic origins, and ethno-national self-identity no longer has any priority for them. Such ethno-national nihilism, which is only accelerated by the country’s present unstable social and political conditions, may soon transform this historic Slavic people into a faceless mass doomed to biological extinction. This is possibly the greatest tragedy that faces us today.

It is conditions such as these that require our urgent attention. The Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society must try: (1) to redirect the scholarly interests of historians, ethnographers, linguists, literary scholars, sociologists, political scientists, theologians, and representatives of other disciplines toward the study of the history of the Rusyn people from earliest times to the present; (2) to promote awareness of our cultural heritage and the traditional moral values of our people—honesty, dignity, spirituality, responsibility, seriousness, and respect for the law; and (3) to defend the social, economic, and spiritual interests of the Rusyn community as well as the entire population of our region.

Before us stands a difficult but noble task. We must with patience and consistency support and strengthen in our people a sense of their historical memory, help them to feel national pride as a people of central Europe whose sons and daughters in the past and still today have become the pride of scholarly, educational, and political institutions in many capitals of the world, both East and West. History will not forgive us if on the eve of the next millennium the Rusyn people disappear from the ethnic map of central Europe and if their homeland—covered with the blood and tears of generations past—is transformed into a territory inhabited by an ethnically indeterminate mass. The disappearance of any people is an unjust loss for all humanity. Therefore, the basic goal of our organization is to undertake scholarly research in history, ethnography, and the formation of a literary language and to disseminate among our people the truth concerning its dramatic past. Perhaps there will be a better future and that there will develop among the inhabitants living for centuries in their own homeland a distinct people recognized by the whole civilized world.
THE RUSYN LITERARY LANGUAGE IN TRANSCARPATIA

The following text was presented at the scholarly conference held in connection with the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns in Budapest, May 30, 1997, by Petro Lyzanec', Head of both the Department of Hungarian Studies at Uzhgorod State University and the Institute of Hungarian Studies. —Editor

As participants in the World Congress of Rusyns, we are obliged at this linguistic study session to examine a series of important issues connected with the future of the Rusyn literary language not only in Transcarpathia, but in the entire Carpathian region. I wish to touch on several questions without whose resolution it is impossible to discuss the future of the Rusyn literary language, particularly in Transcarpathia (Ukraine).

My observations may be outlined in five points:

(1) Who are the Rusyns (Rusnaks)? Many books and articles have been written about Rusyns, but there is still a need for accuracy here and now. Such accuracy is hindered by contradictions among scholarly opinions in these various works, not to speak of the political aspect of the Rusyn issue.

I believe the original homeland of the Slavic tribes before the common era [C.E.] was located on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains, including the adjacent lowlands. Sometime in the 4th-6th centuries C.E., changes began to take place. A portion of the Slavic population moved to the east where the East Slavic group was created. Another portion migrated west to form the West Slavs, and yet another relocated to the south and became the South Slavs.

Apart of the common Slavic population remained at the epicenter of the original homeland on the territory of the Carpathian lowlands. This group was autochthonous, native to the region, and preserved in its speech many archaic Slavic linguistic features. The carriers of this language formed a conglomerate which came to refer to itself as Rusyn. Their language retained many archaic words, for instance: besida (conversation), bolvan (blockhead), horodenya (wattle-fence), hrjada (cross-beam in a ceiling), husti (violin), husljary (to play the violin), dynja (pumpkin), obolok (window), ozych (spoon), poludynok (dinner), chyza (house), celjad (family), and others.

Archaic lexical borrowings from languages and dialects of populations living in direct contact with the Rusyns also entered into the lexicon of the Rusyn literary language in Transcarpathia, for instance, several Hungarian words: aršu (spade, shovel), bajusy (moustaches), banovaty (to be sad), bekeč (sleeveless fur vest), bečelovaty (to value, respect someone or something), bosorkanja (witch, sorcerer), bunda (fur coat), varoš (city, town), vaskar (market), hotar (territory of the village), gazda (master), gombijca (button), kabat (jacket), and many more. Slovak words likewise entered the Rusyn language: barvinok (periwinkle), varkuc (woman’s braid), hodynta (clock), djaka (desire), durkaty (to knock, as on a door), kocur (cat), pec (stove), and others. And from Romanian came such words as berbeneyoutu (wooden container for transporting sheep’s milk from the pasture to the village), porta (gate), rumehaty (to chew—for cows and sheep), spuza (ashes), jaryc (hedgehog), and others.

(2) The second issue is whether Rusyns in the entire Carpathian region need a single Rusyn literary language. It seems to me that at this stage such a common language is not necessary. The first major task is to create a literary language for each region where Rusyns live. Each of these literary variants should produce a lexicon drawn from archaic Slavic words and word combinations that are characteristic for Rusyn, rather than from the language of the surrounding environment. This process will gradually help the Rusyn variants from different regions draw closer to each other and in the future will lead to the creation of a single literary language for all Rusyns.

(3) What should the literary Rusyn language be in Transcarpathia? Much has been written about the fact that Rusyns in Transcarpathia had their own literary language already from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. That was not true then and is not true now, for the language in the works of Andrella, Duchnovyc, Mitrak, Sabov, and others was a “high,” “elite” language with a great many Old Slavic, Church Slavonic, and Russian words, as well as many borrowings from various other languages. The ordinary people did not understand this language.

A Rusyn literary language for this region should use the central Transcarpathian dialects (Maramoros and in part Borzava) as a foundation, and from there develop a conception of the literary language with phonetic, morphological, word-forming, and syntactical norms. It is essential, first of all, to take into consideration the great amount of factographic material about this central dialectical group which we already have, to carry out extensive audio taping of the language, to begin to compile a definitive dictionary and

Typical wooden church architecture found in the Carpathian Mountains.
grammar, as well as to devise an orthography. Should we employ in this literary language elements from Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, and other neighboring languages? Yes, we must, but not to excess. The most important thing in the creation of a Rusyn language is the production of good literary works, as well as newspapers and journals. It is essential that this archaic and beautiful language gradually win the hearts of the people so that they, especially the youth, will love it. Only in this way can the language come to occupy its proper place.

Should the question of introducing the Rusyn literary language into schools in Transcarpathia be raised now? I do not think so. The language first must be created on a serious common base, and only after this can we go further. I see no problem with the native Rusyn language of Transcarpathia being studied alongside Ukrainian, the official state language. I am quite certain that any self-respecting democratic nation-state ought to be proud that within its borders live representatives of other nationalities and ethnic groups that have their own languages. Such nation-states ought to create all the necessary conditions for the development of these groups. Only then will political intrigues and national and ethnic dissension dissolve. The presence of a variety of cultures and languages within the boundaries of one nation-state constitutes its real wealth. Moreover, such a country becomes attractive to other nation-states and their peoples, since a variety of national or ethnic groups does not in any way hinder states from having an official national language.

(4) None of these issues about which I have spoken should at this stage be confused with politics or be decided on a political level. At this point all these questions should be resolved in a scholarly and culturally enlightened manner. This means less talk and more work.

(5) For the successful undertaking of these above-mentioned measures, we must be tolerant toward all national and ethnic groups, and not curse or taunt our critics, but rather ground our thoughts and actions in solid scholarship. What are the things we must do first?

a. Create a competent commission to devise norms for a Rusyn literary language for Transcarpathia.

b. Support talented writers and poets who have mastery over the Transcarpathian (central-Carpathian) dialect in the publication of their works in Rusyn. For this purpose it would be useful to create an international “Fund for the Rusyn Literary Language.”

c. Create a Rusyn-language journal which would contain interesting material about the native land, its culture, architecture, and history, and to publish in it also proverbs, sayings, and jokes in Rusyn.

d. To assure that the commission for defining linguistic norms of the Rusyn literary language maintain on-going contacts with scholars elsewhere who are competent in these issues, and to publish articles about the principle questions involved in the creation of a Rusyn literary language and the description of its orthographic norms. People should engage more in the reading of works in Rusyn, for only in this way can we count on their support.

Petro Lyzanec’
Uzhhorod, Ukraine

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS RECOGNIZES CARPATHO-RUSYNS

Responding to the political, socioeconomic, and cultural changes that since 1989 have taken place in east-central Europe and the former Soviet Union, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. has introduced several new subject categories that reflect more correctly the content of the books and other published materials it currently receives. In December 1996, the library introduced two distinct subject categories: Carpatho-Rusyn Language, and Carpatho-Rusyn Literature.

Previously, Rusyn dictionaries, grammars, or studies about the Rusyn language were classified under Ukrainian dialects. Similarly, works of literature written in Rusyn and studies about Rusyn literature were classified among Ukrainian-language authors and histories of Ukrainian literature, or grouped together as a category of Ukrainian regional literature. Now, books about Rusyn language and literature as well as literary works by individual Rusyn authors have their own subject classification and call number range: PG 3990-PG 3990.95.

According to internal Library of Congress documentation, the decision to implement the new subject classifications was based on recently published information from The Times Guide to the Peoples of Europe (London, 1994); from Paul Robert Magocsi’s “A New Slavic Language for a Distinct Slavic People” (1995), in which the newly-codified Rusyn language of Slovakia is described; and from his report to the library (1995) about the “Carpatho-Rusyn national revival in all countries where they live,” about the “efforts . . . to create a standard Carpatho-Rusyn literary language,” and the existence today of “Rusyn-language newspapers, journals, and books.”

The new classification scheme will have a wide-ranging impact, since virtually every library in the United States and Canada follows the Library of Congress system and receives from that institution standard data for its own cataloguing procedures. Put another way, the Carpatho-Rusyn language and its literature are now recognized as part of an international cataloguing system, so that in the future all libraries in North America—from the largest research institutions to the smallest local library—will be able to have a Carpatho-Rusyn section. This is but another example of how the larger world has come to recognize Carpatho-Rusyns as a distinct people and culture.

A Carpathian Mountain farmhouse and storage building.
SINCE THE REVOLUTION OF 1989

Uesca, Spain. On July 24-27, 1997, the International Association for the Defense of Threatened Languages and Cultures, a non-governmental organization made up primarily of Romance-speaking peoples in Europe, held its 18th Congress at Uesca, in the Aragon region of Spain. As part of its deliberations, the association issued a special resolution in defense of the Carpatho-Rusyns living in Transcarpathia (Ruthênes d’Ukraine), calling on the government of Ukraine to live up to the principles of the European Charter on Human Rights and to allow Rusyns to identify themselves as belonging to a distinct nationality.

L’viv, Ukraine. On August 8-10, 1997, the World Federation of Lemkos held its second congress. The federation is comprised of organizations from Canada, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, and the United States which support the idea that Carpatho-Rusyns (Lemkos) are a branch of the Ukrainian nationality. In consideration of its orientation and active rejection of the view that Carpatho-Rusyns are a distinct people, this body changed its name to: the World Federation of Ukrainian Lemko Organizations (Svitova Federacija Ukrajins’kyh Lemkiv’s’kyh Ob’edinen’). The long-time “patriarch” of Lemko studies during the post-World War II period, the Ukrainian-oriented Ivan Krasov’s’kyj, criticized the name change, because it implies that the federation will no longer speak on behalf of all Lemkos, but only those of Ukrainian orientation. He also argued that “treating Rusyn political activists as hated enemies is clearly a mistaken position.” (Vîsty z Ukrajiny, Kiev, September 25, 1997, p. 4)

Kiev, Ukraine. On August 21-24, 1997, the Second World Forum of Ukrainians met in the capital of Ukraine. Its goal was to review the work of the Ukrainian World Coordinating Council comprised of Ukrainian political and cultural organizations from 43 countries. The president of Ukraine, Leonid Kuëma, opened the event at which there were 650 delegates and over 1,000 guests.

The Second World Forum issued a special “Appeal to Rusyns Worldwide.” It praised all who preserve the Rusyn name, but warned against those “anti-Ukrainian forces throughout the world which at present try to convince you that you are part of a separate Slavic people not linked to the Ukrainian people.” The document concluded with a call to all “Brother Rusyns! Your ancestors always turned toward the eastern Rus’-Ukraine, which they considered to be their homeland and their future. We [the Second World Forum of Ukrainians] hope that you will follow in the footsteps of your ancestors.” (Vîsty z Ukrajiny, Kiev, September 25, 1997, p. 4)

The delegation of Rusyn-Ukrainians from Slovakia, which was responsible for preparing the “Appeal to Rusyns,” also took the opportunity while in Kiev to interview Ukraine’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hennadij Udovenko, and to ask his opinion about the “problem of political Rusynism.” Udovenko’s response struck a note of tolerance. “In the course of my work abroad, I have met frequently with Rusyns. They have numerous organizations which hold divergent political views. We must remain clear that there is a Ukrainian nation (nacijà) and that Rusyns are a part of that nation. If this principle continues to guide us, then we will be able to find a common path. But this will be a gradual process. For this reason I have often said that we must act with tolerance. We cannot simply declare, ‘Professor Magocsi is an enemy of Ukrainians,’ or use other such phrases. We must engage in a dialogue with Professor Magocsi. I realize that we are not going to change his views, but we must nevertheless adopt a tolerant approach in order to resolve these problems.” (Nove žytta, Prešov, August 5, 1997, p. 3)

Užhorod, Ukraine. In September 1997, the initial issue of a Rusyn newspaper appeared in Subcarpathian Rus’ (Transcarpathia). Called Rusyn’s’ka bysida (The Rusyn Language), it is the first paper in the region to appear entirely in the Rusyn language according to the central dialect of Transcarpathia in the form used by its editor, the popular Rusyn poet, Ivan Petrovîj, as well as in the new grammar of the Rusyn language for Subcarpathian Rus’ by Ihor Kercà and Stepan Popovîj. According to the subtitle on the masthead, Rusyn’s’ka bysida is a “people’s newspaper” dedicated “to the brotherhood of true Rusyns.” The first issue includes an editorial statement; the famous poem by the nineteenth-century national awakener, Aleksander Duchnovîj, Ja Rusyn byl, jes’m i budu; short news items on recent political and cultural events in all countries where Rusyns live; and an extensive interview with the Yugoslav Rusyn poet and publisher, Natalija Dudaš. The second issue which appeared in October features interviews with the grammarian and poet, Ihor Kercà (pseudonym Slavko Slobodan), and with Agata Pilatovà, the Rusyn-born Czech journalist and activist in the Society of Friends of Subcarpathian Rus’ in Prague.

Munich, Germany. The Society of Rusyns in Germany (Deutsche-Ruthenische Freundschaft), founded in 1995, issued in the fall of 1997 the inaugural issue of a periodical bulletin, Picha Rasnacoj/Trost Ruthenen. Roughly translated as Pride of the Rusyns, the new publication is intended to reflect its title, that is, to encourage Rusyns living in Germany to remain aware and proud of their distinct national heritage and language.

Picha Rasnacoj is written primarily in Vojvodinian Rusyn, since the organization it represents is made up almost exclusively of recent Rusyn immigrants to Germany from the Vojvodina (historic Bačka) in Yugoslavia/Serbia. Announcements of current events are in German. The attractive first issue, with illustrations in color, was prepared for the Society of Rusyns in Germany by Ljubomir Medjîš, former director of Ruske Slovo Publishers in Yugoslavia.

Užhorod, Ukraine. On October 12, 1997, a monumental statue of the nineteenth-century “national awakener of the Carpatho-Rusyn people,” Aleksander Duchnovîj, was unveiled in front of the Transcarpathian Theater along the banks of the Už River in Užhorod, the administrative center of Ukraine’s Transcarpathian oblast (historic Subcarpathian Rus’). Over a thousand people from all parts of the region were present at what turned out to be a public expression of Rusyn patriotism. Plans to erect such a statue go back to
1990, and its final erection was in large part due to the financial support of the current major of Uzhhorod, Serhiy Ratusnyk.

Participating in the opening ceremonies were the sculptor who created the statue, Michajlo Belen', the city major Ratusnyk, representatives of the regional (oblast) administration, and the head of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns, Professor Ivan Turjanytsja. The statue was blessed by priests from the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, and all present, led by the cathedral choir and a high school children's chorus, sang the Ukrainian state anthem and the Rusyn national anthem based on Duchnovych's poem, "Subcarpathian Rusyns, Arise from Your Deep Slumber."

Copenhagen, Denmark. On November 8, 1997, the Danish Cultural Institute held at its headquarters in the capital of Denmark an international colloquium, "Rusyn Minorities in East Central Europe." The colloquium was designed to bring diplomatic representatives from each country where Rusyns live as an indigenous population together with cultural activists in order to inform the Danish and western European public about the fate of Rusyns today.

The program began with an introductory talk, "A New Slavic Nationality: The Rusyns of East Central Europe," by Professor Paul Robert Magocsi of the University of Toronto. Then followed hour-long sessions devoted to each country in which Rusyns live. These began with an official statement from the country's diplomatic mission in Denmark followed by a statement by the head of the Rusyn organization representing that country in the World Congress of Rusyns. Among the speakers were: for Poland—First Secretary and Cultural Attaché Bogusława Sochariska, and Andrzej Kopczak of the Lemko Association; for Slovakia—Chargé d'Affaires Ivan Surkoš, and Vasyl' Turok of the Rusyn Renaissance Society; for Hungary—Consul Otto Rona, and Gabriel Hattinger of the Organization of Rusyns in Hungary; for Ukraine—Chargé d'Affaires Vasyl' Yakovenko, and Ivan Turjanytsja of the Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns; for Romania—Ambassador Grete Tartier Tabaraș, and Andrei Kopca of the Rusyn Society of Romania; and for Yugoslavija—Chargé d'Affaires Marija Djordjević, and Michal Varga of the Ruska Matka.

The official languages at the international colloquium were English and Rusyn, and a bi-lingual publication of the proceedings is being prepared by Tom Trier, the scholar from the University of Copenhagen who was responsible for organizing the colloquium.

Uzhhorod, Ukraine. On April 27, 1998, the World Council of Rusyns (Svitova Rada Rusyniv) met under the direction of its chairman, Vasyl' Turok, to discuss concrete plans for the Fifth World Congress of Rusyns. The congress is to be held in May 1999 in Uzhhorod, the administrative center of Ukraine's Transcarpathian oblast and the cultural capital of historic Subcarpathian Rus'. The members of the World Council also met with Ivan V. Ivančo, chairman of the Transcarpathian Regional Parliament (Oblastna Rada), to whom they submitted a formal request to hold the next world congress in Uzhhorod.

Chairman Ivančo responded favorably to the request, although he indicated that the final decision about the Fifth World Congress being held in Uzhhorod rests with the Ukrainian government in Kiev. At the Uzhhorod meeting, each member of the World Council described the status of Rusyns within their respective countries. This was the first time any official from Ukraine received a delegation from the World Congress of Rusyns.
AN INVALUABLE SERVICE

It was a humble and quiet beginning when a friendly newsletter magazine called the Carpatho-Rusyn American was published in September of 1978. I remember the first bright green issue that came in my mailbox. Oh, what information! Finally, our local Carpatho-Rusyn ensemble, Slavjane, could find more Rusyn allies. In those days, we had some difficulty with Slovak and Ukrainian nationalism in our local Pittsburgh area community. To say that we were Carpatho-Rusyn in our performances and displays was met with considerable negativity and protest. It was a frightening experience that we had to deal with repeatedly. The C-RA had articulate information of merit, and provided a connection for us to a larger Rusyn community with a healthy sense of self-identity and esteem, as well as to a world view that did not deny itself its resolve to have a bright future to enjoy its Rusyn heritage.

What a joy it was to receive the C-RA and participate in its current event reportage. The C-RA, with a congenial intellectual resonance attributable to collaborators Magocsi and Krafcik, was stimulating and connected Rusyns who believed in pursuing the blessings of continual education and development of Rusyn culture! In isolated Rusyn-American communities, the future looked like it would only offer the continued isolation of American Rusyns—with a kind of subdued minimalism in local development.

With the birth of the C-RA came the birth of a post-factionalist Rusyn intellectual civility and kindness of high moral example, a sense of strength in unity of Rusyns everywhere, and a level of high academic achievement through the communication of knowledge for beneficial culture building in people. Those who came on board the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center’s activities, with its official publication, the C-RA, worked selflessly and with great empathy for the betterment of Rusyns, and shared a driving internal force to grow and to heal a special ethno-civilization that had taken a beating but was not defeated.

The C-RA had an academic way of embracing and delivering the goodness of the whole package of Rusyn cultural literacy. It prompted Rusyns to see the need to arrive at a level of functional cultural maturity. Furthermore, the C-RA had a way of attitudinally embracing and sharing the hope and faith that propelled us beyond what could be immediately perceived as possible to achieve. The C-RA had taken on straightway the challenge to awaken the majority of American Rusyns who had unceremoniously drifted into a dense fog about the essential cultural literacy of their Rusyn heritage. The history, the geography, the religion, the beautiful traditions, the art, the crafts, the chant, the folk art music, the dance, the embroideries and more, had become—during four, five, or six decades of American life—experiential pockets and pieces of culture that were unconnected, like most people were unconnected to a direct and larger life experience of their Carpatho-Rusyn heritage.

In those days, and throughout its twenty years, the C-RA successfully made connective progress among factionalized Rusyn-American leaders. With potent educational information, the C-RA faced leaders who were losing their sense of strength and cooperation in the larger Rusyn community, and who were quietly moving into a sense of diminishment. Rusyn-American leaders were existing not only in a large degree of isolation from each other, but also with an unresolved chaotic sense of how to speak their Carpatho-Rusyn name to the American society around us. For several decades, it was a very disturbing experience to hear speakers or to read articles that repeatedly opened with a nervous ambivalent statement something like this: “Among our Uhro-Rusin, Carpatho-Rusin, Carpatho-Ruthenian, or Carpatho-Russian people, there is the favorite custom and tradition of…” It is a daunting personal experience to explain repeatedly to our fellow Americans that an American Carpatho-Rusyn has a variety of competing names and a fragmented community. It was an embarrassing situation that many people avoided by not saying anything. The C-RA was graciously dispassionate, but positively involved in setting the Carpatho-Rusyn nomenclature in place by virtue of its all-embracing historical continuity from the past to the present. Its academic work was exceedingly practical. It put the Rusyn identity problem in a clearer perspective and helped to create a sweeping new level of Rusyn cooperation that was sorely needed for American Rusyns, and for Rusyns in Europe.

The academic publications of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center added awareness and momentum to the European Rusyn recovery from the communist era into the new post-communist times. With the collaborative guidance of long-time C-RA Editor Patricia Krafcik, and the prolific historical and current event writings of Paul R. Magocsi, as well as the courageous academic-minded staff of the C-RRC founders and board-members, a heritage of a numerically small people without a country, without the political and jurisdictional tools of cultural and economic self-determination, undergoing “ethnic cleansing” of their Rusyn identity, and a far-reaching assimilation process by the surrounding national cultures had begun to breathe, live, and give birth to more self-esteem and self-determination. The C-RA—with its freedom of speech—said with clarity that Carpatho-Rusyns existed and that it was worthy to speak about their presence, the integrity of their culture, and their human and cultural value in a larger world.

In 1975 there was an important Carpatho-Rusyn seminar at Mt. St. Macrina in Uniontown. It was chaired by Professor Magocsi, included several speakers, and was cosponsored by the Sisters of St. Basil the Great. This seminar was a great discovery. Its proceedings encouraged the establishment of the C-RRC and its newsletter magazine, the C-RA. This had far-reaching positive consequences in the lives of many Rusyns. In 1994, one of those far-reaching successes included the emergence of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society with its New Rusyn Times newsletter magazine, whose growing ranks of active membership can be attributed in large measure to the great formative work so ably completed by the C-RA. Many thanks to the editors, associate editors, researchers, and reporters of the C-RA who labored out of love. Many people were touched and transformed by this goodness. The twenty years of C-RA issues continue to serve as valuable information for understanding the nature of the Rusyn heritage. Rusyns and Slavic studies programs everywhere will continue to benefit from what you have done.

Jerry Jumba
McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania

Carpatho-Rusyn American
FINDING MY CARPATHO-RUSYN ROOTS

We invited Jack Figel, our business manager and publisher in the past few years, to share his roots saga with our readers in this last issue. Like many others, Jack has served C-RA generously and professionally, and deserves great thanks. What he describes here is truly symbolic of the experience of so many of us in the past twenty years.—Editor

In 1984, I embarked on a somewhat unusual vacation trip to Europe. I intended to spend a full week in Eastern Slovakia searching for relatives of my grandparents who came from the region known at one time as Zemplin County, near the city of Prešov.

I flew first to Vienna—the furthest east I could get by commercial flight at the time—rented a car, and set out driving toward Bratislava. In those days, the communists were in strict control of travel in and out of Czechoslovakia, and although I had all my papers and visa in order from the embassy in Washington, the border crossing took more than an hour. After negotiating the streets of Bratislava with the primitive map I had, I found my way to the main highway across Slovakia and headed for Prešov.

Arriving in Prešov on a Saturday evening, I checked into the main hotel in the center of the city, the Dukla, which I discovered later that night was directly across the street from the Greek Catholic Cathedral. Finding the times for services the next morning, I attended the Divine Liturgy that was sung by the cathedral choir in Church Slavonic. I felt right at home, just like in my parish back in Duquesne, Pennsylvania. There were very few young people or children present. The church was filled with elderly “bubbas” in the multicolored but dark head scarves all sitting on the left side, while the “dzedos” were all in dark suits sitting very quietly on the right side. I sat down and took a few pictures—as many as I dared—during the liturgy.

After church, I got into my rental car and headed out of town on the only road which went north and east, toward the town of Stropkov. I remember finding the village of Šandal, from which my mother’s father said he came, on a detailed map in the library of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City. It was outside the town of Stropkov, and I decided to begin my search there. I had no complete roadmap of Slovakia at the time, and just followed the road northeast. After about 10 miles, I found a turnoff that was marked for Stropkov, and 15 miles later I entered Stropkov. In the middle of town, there was a sign pointing to the left into the hills for the village of Šandal. I couldn’t believe my eyes. I had found it!

Getting more and more excited, I headed up the hill and five minutes later found the village—about 20 houses, a church, cemetery, small community building, and surrounded by co-op farmland. After driving all the way through, I found a short road that went to the side of town and up a hill to the cemetery. I walked around, feeling a great reverence, and after a few minutes discovered the family name of my mother, Kačur, on one of the memorials. The grave was for Michal Kačur who was born the same year as my grandfather, who had said he came from this same village. I knew this was more than just coincidence.

Not able to speak much of the language—only a few folk songs that my grandfather had taught me, and the hymns and prayers I knew as a cantor in church—I went back into Stropkov to see what else I could find. I drove down the main street and quickly found the church with the three-bar cross on it. Going up to it, I discovered a prayer service being celebrated (it was about 3:30 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon) and I waited patiently until it was over. I approached the priest and asked if he spoke English. He replied “a little” and we slowly tried to find out if he knew a Kačur family in Šandal. He said he did, and he offered to take me there right then. We climbed into his two-seat East German auto and went “put-put” up the hill back to the village. He also was the priest for the parish there, and went once a week to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. He was Greek Catholic, but shared the church in Stropkov with the Orthodox, who were recognized by the government at the time.

He knew the Kačurs lived in the village, but wasn’t sure of their house number. We stopped an old woman on the street, he asked her which was the Kačur house, and we drove up to it. No one answered our knocks on the front door, but we heard voices around the back. We walked around and there were about a dozen people sitting on the grass and talking in the warm sunshine. The priest interrupted them and tried to explain that I might be a relative from America.
At first they were very shy and did not believe him. I could tell they seemed reluctant to cooperate and so I started singing the folksongs in the local Rusyn language that my grandfather had taught me. They immediately recognized the words and melody, and then readily accepted me as a distant cousin.

The “patriarch” of the family, Michal Kačur, was not there at the time, and so we made arrangements for me to meet him and his brother Petro and the priest at the church in Stropkov the next day. I departed Sandal and drove back to Presov with a feeling of accomplishment that I had at least found some contact with my mother’s family.

The next day, at the agreed time, I met Michal Kačur, his brother, the priest, and a Jewish friend of theirs, Mr. Greenfield. Mr. Greenfield had learned English from American soldiers during World War II and spoke it better than the priest. He acted as interpreter for the rest of my visit. We went to the local hotel and restaurant in Stropkov and I learned that Michal Kačur was indeed the manager of the local co-op farm and also ran the hotel. He was the party leader of the area and a somewhat important individual. We ate lunch in a private room in the back, with large portions of haluski and halupki and generous glasses of vodka.

After lunch we drove up to the village and met with the rest of the family and spent the day and well into the evening talking and learning about each other’s families. Michal Kačur was the eldest son of the Michal Kačur whose gravesite I had found in the cemetery, and his father was also Michal Kačur (1869-1919). That Michal Kačur had a brother, Juraj, who went to America in the late nineteenth century. Although we couldn’t get a complete confirmation, I believe that this Juraj Kačur was the same Juraj (George) Katchur who was my grandfather’s father, emigrated to America, and settled in Western Pennsylvania to work in the coal mines. His son John later moved to Duquesne, Pennsylvania, worked in the steel mills there, and was my grandfather.

The family invited me to stay with them for the rest of my trip and so I spent the next few nights sleeping on their couch which converted into a fairly comfortable bed. The older couple, Michal and his wife Anna, slept in one bedroom while their youngest daughter Emilia and her husband Andrej slept in the other with their two young daughters, Emilia and Lenka.

The next day we all met Mr. Greenfield again in Stropkov, and headed southeast toward Vranov to find the village of Yestreb where my father’s father said he had been born. In searching the maps, I discovered there were three Yestrebs (also Yastrabie) in eastern Slovakia, but decided to head for the closest one since it was the easiest and quickest to find.

This one was outside Vranov near the Toplov River. On the main street we stopped and asked a woman coming out of the village market if she knew the Figel family. She said yes, but said they lived in the next village called Čakov. We drove there and asked around for the Figel house. We were directed to the end house of the main street and there found a lanky, white-haired man cutting the tall grass in the front yard with a long scythe. We pulled in the drive and Mr. Greenfield explained who I was and that I was looking for any Figels in the area.

The man was Stefan Figel, father of four sons and a daughter. His youngest son, Ján, was away in the Army but Ján’s wife and daughters lived in the house next to his. We spent a few hours talking, thanks to Mr. Greenfield’s interpreting, and found that Stefan Figel was the son of another Ján Figel who died in 1956, and whose father was Michal Figel. Michal had a brother named Ján who went to America in the late nineteenth century. I have an Uncle Mike, too.

On my father’s side of the family, my grandfather’s father was Ján (John) Figel who emigrated with his young son John to the U.S. in the 1890s. Again, the coincidence seemed to good too be true, so I believe I found the same cousin relationship with this side of my family. We didn’t stay with the Figels long, but long enough to find my family roots and get mailing addresses for future correspondence.

Not only did I find the family name in the villages where my grandfathers said they came from, but the two men I met had the exact same facial features and body shape as my two grandfathers—they must have been from the same families!

We returned to Sandal, and then the next day I headed back to Vienna and home to America.
I returned again in 1986 and spent more time with both families, especially the Figels. Like me, Stefan Figel's youngest son, Jan, was an engineer relatively fluent in English. His job at the time was to translate technical documents about telephones from English into Slovak for the local phone company. In 1986 he and I spent a full week exploring more villages and finding more relatives with my grandmothers' maiden names—Lazor and Malasko—and also looking for more Figels and Kačurs.

Over the years, I have kept in touch with these first contacts that I made in Slovakia. I visited again in 1996 to find them living in much improved conditions. In fact, my cousin Jan Figel is now a member of the Slovak Parliament in Bratislava, representing the Vranov district. He has been to the United States on business a few times, and even studied at Georgetown University for several months in foreign affairs and economics on a U.S. funded scholarship program.

I am most thankful that I have found my roots in the Carpatho-Rusyn region of eastern Slovakia. With this final issue of the C-RA, I am proud to relate my story and encourage anyone else who wants to find their ancestors. The exploration and adventure are well worth the investment of time and energy. And even though driving under machine-gun turrets across "no-man's-land" in 1984 was a somewhat anxious moment during my first trip, it has been worth it!

Jack Figel
Fairfax, Virginia

A FOND FAREWELL

The following letters have been received from readers regarding this last issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American.—Editor

Dear Editor,

No one likes to see the end of something that is meaningful. And yet, I think one of the key indicators of the maturation of the Carpatho-Rusyn American community is that now we are concentrating our growing resources in different areas so that our community can achieve what it needs to achieve culturally both in this nation and internationally.

Therefore, it is with mixed emotion that I write to you in this, the last issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American. I reflect on the incredible work of this publication. At a time when there were no English-language periodicals devoted to educating people about Carpatho-Rusyns, our cultural development, and our history, the Carpatho-Rusyn American was that one glimmering star—a star that led truly thousands to a richer and fuller understanding of their Rusyn heritage.

Even more so, the C-RA raised the issue of Rusyns on an international scale and made us a viable entity worth study and discussion—in essence, laying the groundwork for what we have now achieved as a people throughout most of the world in which we live. We ARE a people, one with a rich culture every bit as valid as any other culture on the face of the earth.

I remember our early days at C-RA. At that time I was writing for the publication with some regularity and served for a brief period as its associate editor. I remember the struggles of pulling together a publication that served such a vital purpose with very limited resources. When I think back on this, I especially commend you, Bob, and you, Pat, for your unfailing commitment and effort for 20 years in assuring that this beacon was there for us.

Like a beacon, the C-RA has led the Rusyn community to "find land." We now have an increased awareness of Rusyns worldwide. We have dramatically growing numbers of Rusyn Americans who have rediscovered their Rusyn heritage and are becoming increasingly involved in celebrating and manifesting it. You and your efforts were a precursor, and in many ways the motivator for the creation of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, our first national "grass roots" organization for people of all backgrounds and religions interested in assuring a future for Rusyn culture in America. Our membership is fast approaching 1,000!

So now, there are many of us involved in Rusyn cultural efforts, when once there were few. It is time for us to use our community resources to their utmost—and that is what is happening now. The continuing need for a periodical focused on educating the public and "our own" about Rusyn culture, history and events can clearly be met by the Carpatho-Rusyn Society's membership newsletter, The New Rusyn Times. This allows the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center to concentrate its efforts where they will be most productive for our community—the publication of research materials and books which will assure an existence for our people for all eternity.
Dear Editor,

With disappointment, yet with a sense of profound gratitude, I wish to convey my appreciation to the editorial staff, past and present, upon the conclusion of the publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn American. For twenty years this publication has set the standard for periodicals which enable Rusyn Americans to rediscover the value of their heritage. But it is so much more than just a periodical; it is an essential resource for Rusyn scholars, writers, and anyone seeking information about the accomplishments of our people. I recall in years past how eagerly I awaited every issue, which inevitably provided hours of pure learning about the wondrous kaleidoscope of Rusyn life in America and in our ancestral homeland.

The crumbling of communism provided the C-RA with a new mission—to be the chronicle for the revival and flourishing of the Rusyn people. The editorial staff rose to this challenge admirably: the C-RA quickly became the single best source for the latest in Rusyn-related developments in East Central Europe. And through this reporting, Rusyn Americans and Rusyn Canadians have been inspired to reinvigorate our cultural and organizational life.

I am honored to have been among the contributors to this fine publication over the past few years. While the need for a full-fledged academic journal about Rusyns now becomes even more urgent with the conclusion of the C-RA, as the editor of another Rusyn publication I will strive to carry on in your tradition of accurate reporting, absorbing writing, and celebrating the dignity and talents of our people wherever they may live.

Richard D. Custer
Editor. The New Rusyn Times
Washington, D.C.

Dear Editor,

As the curtain comes down on the publication, Carpatho-Rusyn American, we all unfortunately will be affected. This newsletter was truly a remarkable event in our history. It was more than a publication. It was in effect the origin of our rebirth of the homeland. Then along came the C-RA with its wonderful vignettes, short biographies, historical essays, cultural comments and pictures, many of which I came across in no other source.

But alas, as life itself, all things must end. As we move on however, I, as will my people here in the twin cities area and elsewhere will always remember the education that we received, the history of who we are. The true value of the C-RA will be judged by what we do with this information and knowledge in the future. Can we sustain this revival? To do so we must all play a part.

I want to thank all of those who contributed to the past 20 years of publication. They and Bob Magocsi are to be congratulated on a job well done. “Ja Rusin byl, jesim i budu!”

Lawrence Goga
President, Rusyn Association
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dear Editor,

The first seven paragraphs of your editorial in the Fall 1997 issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American were so positive about the cultural program at the Fourth World Congress of Rusyns that I was at first surprised and then saddened to read the last two sections. To think that after 20 years, 80 quarterly issues, with nearly 1,000 pages of priceless information, the C-RA will cease publication!

When you started to put out your “Forum on Carpatho-Rusyn Cultural Heritage” there really was very little available in English beyond Professor Paul Robert Magocsi’s book, The Shaping of a National Identity, and occasional material in the little known English language journal Diakonia (which deals with Eastern Christianity). One really needed to know Polish, Russian, Slovak, Rusyn, Ukrainian, and Hungarian to find anything about the Eastern Slavs of the Carpathian mountains of central Europe. The educated North American Rusyn descendant had nowhere to turn for information about the homeland. Then along came the C-RA with its wonderful vignettes, short biographies, historical essays, cultural comments and pictures, many of which I came across in no other source.

It was always a pleasure to find the latest copy of the quarterlies in my mail tray when I sorted through it, and I always put the C-RA on the top of my required reading pile. Certainly I will greatly miss the C-RA both personally and professionally. I’m sorry to see it disappear.

Paul J. Best
Southern Connecticut University
New Haven, Connecticut

Dear Editor,

Until I read Bob Magocsi’s The Shaping of a National Identity (1978), I wasn’t sure how to answer questions about the origin of my name. I would say “Russian,” but Russians wondered if it might be Georgian. I am now happy to identify myself as a Carpatho-Rusyn.

My mother’s church school diploma (from the Russian Orthodox parish in Passaic, New Jersey), spelled her name—Wilhousky (Vil’hovska)—as Ol’’ovskaja, reflecting a Russo-centric bias, but I learned, via a C-RA contact, that the church was founded less than twenty years earlier by my own grandfather, among others, as a Greek Catholic parish. It later switched its allegiance to Russian Orthodoxy—for reasons I learned about from Magocsi’s book!

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By the time I got interested in my parents’ and grandparents’ origins, it was too late to ask them. But I have been able to fill in the gaps in my people’s history with the help of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center publications, including the C-RA newsletter. I’ll miss it. Many thanks to the volunteers who produced the C-RA for 20 many years!

Lawrence P. Chvany
Watertown, Massachusetts

Dear Editor,

For twenty years the Carpatho-Rusyn American, published by the C-RRC, has been the voice of the spirit of “our People.” It is a voice that has been well received and recognized by academia in the Americas and in Europe. Approximately 150 years have elapsed since that spirit was first expressed in the capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Those who have since attempted to still the voices of the Rusyn spirit for political and religious reasons have not been successful. That spirit will continue in the future by other means and other ways in a technologically changing world.

Throughout our history we have witnessed the power and influence of the written word and how it has played an important role in the awakening of our national identity. So too has the C-RA played an extraordinary role in the awakening of Rusyns in America to the existence of their precious ethnic spirit. We commend your efforts and the efforts of Professor Magocsi and others in the publication of the C-RA. We have learned the history of our people from its pages, and are now at a point where all the pieces of our ethnic puzzle finally fit together. We now understand who we are and turn to yet another generation to continue to nurture and preserve this spirit into the next millennium. Na mnohaja lita!

Orestes J. Mihaly
Armonk, New York

Dear Editor,

I’ll miss the C-RA’s capsule coverage of Rusyns in all “flavors,” but I agree it’s time to move on. The field of Carpatho-Rusyn studies has matured to the point that it now outstrips what even the most dedicated volunteers can keep up with. I hope the excellent publication program of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center will make up for the loss of the newsletter by making available an annual “Digest” of interesting materials, continuing the even-handed and inclusive tradition of the pioneering C-RA.

Catherine V. Chvany
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Editor,

“How many of us began our own journey toward encountering our Rusyn backgrounds and the larger Rusyn world around us with information every bit as compelling and fragmentary as his?”

Most of us, I dare say. And what filled in the missing details and led us to the eventual understanding that many of us share today with our brothers, sisters, and friends across the ocean—that Rusyn identity is a viable reality that deserves as much respect and attention as that of any other ethno-linguistic community, despite the often oblique nature of its own articulation and the many factors that often obscure it? Certainly, the C-RA and the work and dedication of its editors, contributors, and readers have occupied a central role in disseminating information on Rusyn identity, in opening up dialogue on its problematic, and in giving us a forum in which to explore ourselves and our global community.

I have entertained the idea of compiling a collection of narratives from Rusyn Americans on the themes, “How I found out that I was of Rusyn descent,” and “How I became active in Rusyn cultural life.” I wager that the C-RA would figure prominently in virtually everyone’s story, as it does in my own.

The C-RA has consistently responded both to the authoritative needs of the scholarly community and to the Rusyn-American public’s desire for needed educational materials and news on Rusyns, Rusyn culture, and Rusyn studies in North America and Europe. I share in my colleagues’ satisfaction for having contributed to this process. If we accept that there is much enrichment to be gained through an exploration of Rusyn studies and heritage issues and the experience of a living Rusyn culture, then the C-RA has been for many of us a map to a treasure trove, and its editors, contributors, and supporters have been its cartographers.

In both personal and social histories, especially those involving the kind of conflicts and pluropotentialities endemic to the Rusyn experience, intolerant and oppressive writings and ideas can be like guns that keep on firing long after the hails of bullets and tiresome polemics have ceased. Conversely, tolerant and objective writings and fresh ideas stressing free inquiry and openness—like those found on the pages of the C-RA—can continue to educate, illuminate, and endure long after publication. The free discussion of the idea of Rusyn identity and the kinds of writings featured in the C-RA have attracted the lasting attention of so many Rusyn Americans precisely because they explain so much and answer so many unanswered questions in a way unmatched by other forms and avenues of discourse.

In this respect, the C-RA has shared much in common with the goals of the Rusyn press in Europe, insofar as both have endeavored to give marginalized Rusyns and Rusyn culture a voice on their own terms appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the people about whom they are written. To the C-RA’s continued influence, and to those who have helped make it a success, I offer the sincere wish, mnohaja i blahaja Vam lita!

Robert Carl Metyl
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania