CARPATHO-RUSYN
AMERICAN
A Newsletter on Carpatho-Rusyn Ethnic Heritage

Vol IV. No. 2  Summer 1981
While it is always a time of great joy and profound peace, spring and the Paschal season inevitably carry with them a good deal of hectic activity as well. This year was no exception, with certain events having far-reaching implications for all of us. Let me share some of my observations on these events with you.

Our semester at the University of Pittsburgh concluded in time for me to spend Holy Week and Pascha with my family in Cleveland. Numerous church services carried us step by step through the Paschal Passion. Processions under starry spring night skies on Good Friday and Good Saturday drew us above and beyond chronological time in the style of our ancestors. Before dawn we broke the fast with blessed Paschal foods which brought us again in touch with the good earth in a most delicious way.

Coinciding with the Paschal season and, fortunately, with my visit to Cleveland, were two events sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Parma and hosted by Bishop Emil J. Mihalik, whose kind acquaintance I finally made. These were a Senior Citizens' Fellowship luncheon and an evening lecture, both on April 29th and featuring Dr. Paul R. Magocsi as speaker [see RECENT ACTIVITIES]. At the first, over 450 elderly folk filed into Parma's St. John the Baptist Cathedral hall, radiant from a late morning Divine Liturgy celebrated with Carpathian congregational plainchant. Grandmothers and grandfathers were there with their markedly Slavic faces—as if one enormous family; some spry, some showing signs of age, but gracefully; happy to share company, comparing notes, reminiscing. There sat a wonderful and very elderly woman, slightly bowed with age, probably a great grandmother, dressed in dignified European black, her head swathed in a black babushka, her wise eyes looking out from a distant era, from some other very different time and world. And an elderly man with deepset blue eyes, marvelous handlebar mustaches, large capable hands—he may have braved the River Tisa on a wooden log raft or guarded herds on a mountainside as a boy, maybe worked in the mines or mills as a young man, painfully familiar in those days with hot sweat and a hungry stomach.

Dr. Magocsi greeted this venerable audience, reminding them that they are the repository of precious information and treasured memories, possessing the conscience of our ethnicity which only they can pass on to younger generations. He encouraged them to support the endeavors of young people in exploring ethnic origins, and invited them to his evening lecture.

The site of the evening lecture was again St. John's Cathedral Center. A moderately-sized but highly responsive crowd was in attendance. After his talk on Carpatho-Rusyn ethnicity in Europe and in the United States, Dr. Magocsi fielded a barrage of questions regarding everything from the origin of Rus' to the state of Rusyn ethnic consciousness today. Of special interest were questions about the relationship between Carpatho-Rusyns and their Slavic neighbors—Slovaks, Poles, Ukrainians, as well as with Hungarians and even Austrians from the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Two hours after it had commenced, the session closed, with a handful of people remaining to chat with the speaker and with each other.

Just before the evening session, I made the acquaintance of Steve Mallick, a general science and chemistry instructor in the Cleveland area schools, with whom I had had previous correspondence. Like so many of us, he has wrestled for years with questions about Carpatho-Rusyn ethnicity, ethnic origins and culture, our ties with other Slavs, and so on. Through our efforts in the newsletter and from other publications of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, he has begun to formulate a clearer understanding of our people and its history. Steve has also now become the coordinator of the C-RRC membership campaign whose results will open new possibilities for all of us to explore and discover our ethnic heritage. We have discussed these possibilities in previous issues and will do so in the future.

Of course, I could not depart Cleveland without a Paschal pilgrimage to St. Theodosius Orthodox Cemetery where my maternal grandparents are buried. The afternoon was mellow, fragrant with sun on fresh sticky greenery and early spring blossoms. Enclosed crimson vigil lamps were lit here and there. And scattered over some of the graves were brightly colored eggs, the remains of Paschal visits by friends and family. After making the rounds to graves of relatives, I sat down on the warm grass and gazed at the gravestone photographs of Anna and Mychajlo. This time I had something very special to tell them—that for the first time, I would be travelling to the homeland. For a long time I have needed to study Slovak, as well as Rusyn dialects, in order to pursue my interest and work in the folklore of eastern Slovaks and Rusyns. A summer language and culture program sponsored by Comenius University in Bratislava was being offered and would provide the opportunity for me to continue language study and travel to Slovakia, whose eastern tip is a historical home for thousands of Carpatho-Rusyns. I had been to eastern Europe before for extensive periods in and throughout the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, but had never gotten near the eastern Slovak and western Ukrainian Carpathian area. This summer program was to conclude with a journey precisely to eastern Slovakia.

The map of east central Europe flashed across my mind. Now I would be able to see not only the Košice area from where my father's parents—Slovaks—had come, but also the Prešov Region—Praševščyna—homeland of Anna and Mychajlo. Something else flashed before my eyes—an old, worn winter photograph of my great grandmother and two of her daughters standing on the porch of their wooden house with rolling, snow-covered hills in the background—a moment of time frozen years ago. I could imagine that land in a spring like this.

What would I find this summer? What would I feel? Under that warm afternoon sun next to my grandparents I felt only a wonderful rush of anticipation. But for the time being, back to Pittsburgh . . . Chryostos voskres, Christ is risen, Anna and Mychajlo! That, after all, is the greatest event of Pascha.
AUGUSTINE STEFAN

In his 88th year, Professor Augustine Stefan is the patriarch among Carpatho-Rusyn cultural activists living in the West. He was born in 1893 in the Rusyn village of Poroskovo, then in the old Hungarian county of Ung (Už). His father, Emejan, was a Greek Catholic priest, as was his paternal grandfather Evgenij Fencik (1844–1903), the well-known Carpatho-Rusyn cultural leader. Augustine, too, studied for the priesthood in the Užhorod Theological Seminary, but after completing his higher education at the University of Budapest (1914–1918), he took up a career as an educator. For the next two decades, Stefan devoted himself to uplifting the cultural level of his Carpatho-Rusyn people. He did this not only through pedagogy, but in the footsteps of his father (the founder of the first reading room and cooperatives in Subcarpathian Rus’), through political and social activity as well.

Professor Stefan is most widely known by the thousands of students and scores of teachers who were privileged to study and work with him. He began his pedagogical career in 1918, as a professor of mathematics and physics at the Užhorod Teachers College. After Subcarpathian Rus’ became part of the new Czechoslovak republic, Professor Stefan taught at the Užhorod gymnasium (1920–1922) and then was appointed director of the State Commercial Academy located in Užhorod and later Mukačevo, a post he held from 1922 until 1938. He also wrote numerous textbooks, co-authored a grammar (1931), and served as associate editor (1929–1938) of the Subcarpathian teacher’s journal Ucytel’s’kyj holos. Already during the 1920’s Professor Stefan became committed to the view that Subcarpathian Rusyns were part of the Ukrainian nationality.

Besides pedagogy, Professor Stefan was engaged in the political and social life of Subcarpathian Rus’. He was active during the revolutionary years of 1918–1919 as a member of local national councils that were deciding the political fate of the homeland. Later he served as a member of the city councils of Užhorod (1922) and Mukačevo (1933–1937) and was a leading figure in the pro-Czechoslovak Agrarian Party (1929–1938). In the cultural sphere, he was an associate editor of the first Subcarpathian daily newspaper, Rusyn (1920–1922), and a founding member of the Pros vita cultural society (1920–1939).

Professor Stefan was especially active after his homeland received its long-awaited autonomy in October 1938 and was soon after renamed the Carpatho-Ukraine. He was responsible for the autonomous province’s educational and religious affairs, for which he was named minister in March 1939. He was also elected a member and then president of the first Subcarpathian autonomous diet. As president of the diet, it was Professor Stefan who presided over the declaration of Carpatho-Ukrainian independence on March 15, 1939, the very day the Hungarian army entered the area and made it once again part of Hungary.

In the wake of the Hungarian invasion, Professor Stefan was forced to flee his homeland, never to return. Almost immediately, however, he resumed his pedagogical work, as director (1939–1940) of the Ukrainian Academy of Commerce in Bratislava, then as director (1940–1949) of the Ukrainian gymnasium near Prague, which after World War II was transferred to Augsburg in the U.S. zone of Germany. In 1949, he emigrated to the United States, where he taught at the Ukrainian Catholic high school for girls in Stamford, Connecticut until his retirement in 1969.

During more than half a century of teaching on two continents, over 5,000 students have experienced the gentle guidance of Professor Stefan. Many more people have been enlightened by his writings, most of which have dealt with the history of his Subcarpathian homeland. And from his retirement residence in Philadelphia, Professor Stefan has remained a steadfast supporter of the Carpatho-Rusyn American and its cultural work. We thank him for his encouragement and wish him many more years of health and prosperity.
CARPATHO-RUSYN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

In the third installment of this article, the author dealt with a handful of nineteenth-century Carpatho-Rusyn writers who wrote their works in Russian. He also discussed briefly the generation of writers at the turn of the twentieth century who employed Subcarpathian vernacular in their publications. Finally, two groups of writers emerged after World War I and chose to write either in Ukrainian or in Russian; the former were introduced with excerpts from Grendza-Dons'kyj.—Editor

(Part 4)

Grendza-Dons'kyj felt himself and his Subcarpathian people to be part of the Ukrainian nationality. This is repeated several times in his works, but is perhaps most graphically illustrated by the Greek Catholic monk, Sebastijan Sabol (b. 1909), who under the pen name Zoreslav published two volumes of poetry during the 1930s. From the collection of poetry *Sonce j blakyť* (The Sun and the Blue Sky, 1936), we read:

**Hotovi** (They are ready)
They are ready, they are ready,
Flowering ranks, . . .
In the East it's becoming light,
In the East it's burning bright,
Appear, O Prophet,
Messiah, Messiah, Come!
The day will come
And the fiery redness of the sun will begin,
And a gush of fire will flow like lava
To torment the horse-mounted hundreds.
Unbridled columns will go forth
Like a storm, like thunder and anger and dread.
The age-long boundaries will fall,
And you will tremble, Holy Russia!
You will be upon their lips
And you will go within their hearts,
In the first of the fiery ranks,
O Messiah!
And with a song Kiev will respond again,
Hosanna, Hosanna!
It is done!
It is ready!
And in the halo of the suns,
In a storm of song,
It will arise from the ruins,
It will arise,
This last garlanded liberty—
This majestic, holy aureole
Of the Ukraine.

If Subcarpathian Ukrainophile authors looked to the Ukraine for salvation, their counterparts, the local Russophiles, looked to Rus' and to Holy Russia:

Don't forget these prophetic words,
My friends, my brothers:
Only great Moscow
Will hold us in her embrace.
All these fields and mountains,
From Uzhhorod to the Kremlin—
This is the Russian expanse,
This is the Russian land!

That was from the poem "Ne zabud'te" (Don't Forget), published in 1933 by Michail Popovič (1908–1955), a young Rusyn student from Bereg county who was then studying law at Prague's Charles University. But the best representative of Russian-language literature in Subcarpathia is from the pen of Andrej Karabeleš (1906–1964), who published two large collections of poetry in the late 1920s: *Izbrannya stichotvorenja* (Collection of Poetry, 1928) and *V lucach razsveta* (In the Rays of the Dawn, 1929). Karabeleš was only 22 years old at the time, and though on one level he looked for the salvation of his people in Russian civilization, on another more deeper level he was troubled by a profound pessimism about life and existence in general. From his poem "Gde sčast'e?" (Where is Happiness):

We were born to be happy,
But all of us die without happiness.
No matter how we strive for happiness,
We won't find it in this world.
Poor mankind doesn't know
Where to go, what to strive for,
And so he wanders a whole lifetime,
And without happiness lies down to sleep.

Wherever we look, wherever we go,
We haven't the strength to find happiness:
It is shrouded in eternal sleep,
It is buried in the lifeless grave.

It is interesting to note that both the Russophile Karabeleš and the Ukrainophile Grendza-Dons'kyj lamented the poverty-stricken state of the Subcarpathian highlands, but whereas Karabeleš seemed to be crushed by cruel reality into a state of deep depression and pessimism, Grendza-Dons'kyj reacted to these same conditions with a sense of hope in the future. From the conclusions to Grendza-Dons'kyj's poem "Verchovyna" (The Highlands):

My people are suffering
Still more than they have suffered.
Oh, how I have cried,
Oh, how I have wept!
But I truly believe
There will come that time
When for us the sun
Will also shine.
We will raise on high
Our banner,
And the song of the Highlands
Will be heard once more.

Unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, the younger Subcarpathian Russophiles had an opportunity to learn literary Russian, primarily at the Mukacevo gymnasium, which during the Czechoslovak regime was staffed largely by Russian émigrés. By the late 1930s a host of Subcarpathian writers like Vasilij Dobos (b. 1917), Emeljan Baleckij (b. 1919), and Andrej Patrus-Karpatskij (b. 1917) had mastered literary Russian. Nonetheless, there was a constant threat that education itself would alienate these men from their still largely illiterate people. Also, Great Russian, the language of Puskin, Tolstoj, and Turgenev, which these writers held as ideals, was very far from the speech of the Rusyn peasants. This state of alienation, this feeling of being an immigrant in one’s own homeland, was best expressed in a 1940 semi-autobiographical poem by Emeljan Baleckij, who since his student days has remained in the capital of Hungary, where he is today a professor at the University of Budapest:

Ęj, zemljak! (Hey, Fellow Countryman)
Hey, fellow countryman, don’t you hear?
Don’t you hear the shout?
There up in the Highlands
Your mother Marika is crying . . .

She is crying and cursing her son.
The far-away city
Has stolen her son away,
Has taken him off into the big world.
The son has forgotten his simple tongue,
He doesn’t know his mother . . .
His mother cries in the Highlands,
Cursing her son.
The motherland cries and sighs . . .
The grandsons wrinkle their brows.
Hey, fellow countryman, don’t you hear?
There’s going to be thunder and fury.

I cannot leave this discussion of the Czechoslovak period without saying a few words about Subcarpathia’s only satirist, Ivan Rozničuk, who wrote under the pseudonym Marko Barabolja. About this enigmatic figure we know very little, other than that he was born near Rachiv in the eastern Maramaroș county in 1910, that he served as a school teacher during the 1930s, and that he died sometime after 1944. His sharp pen focused on two problems which dominated Subcarpathian life during the 1920s and 1930s: (1) the so-called “jazykovyj vopros” or language question; that is, which language would be accepted for use—literary Russian, literary Ukrainian, or a standardized Rusyn based on local dialects; and (2) the autonomy question; that is, when would Subcarpathian Rus finally receive self-government. In a satirical play entitled “Oj stelysja ty, barvinku, na joho mohyli” (O, periwinkle, spread yourself upon his grave), subtitled “a tragedy that takes place in the year 1999,” the dialogue begins with a teacher asking his student: “Tell me, Peter, what do you know about the development of literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century?” Hesitantly, the student answers:

At that time, as if a punishment from heaven, poets sprouted up and set themselves to composing sonnets and odes. Transcarpathia, which had experienced difficult times, had in the end also begun to fabricate a literature. Books and newspapers began to appear; reading rooms, schools, and cultural circles were established. But all this provided an incentive for the so-called ‘language question’, which lasted a long time and considerably advanced the cause of culture, because later it got a hold on everyone’s tongue . . . The time when the ‘language question’ dominated the situation was the most romantic in the history of Transcarpathia. Just imagine, everywhere in the towns and villages—in reading rooms, in theaters, in government offices, in coffee houses—everywhere, wherever people got together, they rehashed the ‘language question’. Oh, what times they were! When, for instance, the weather hadn’t changed for a long time, and people, getting together, had nothing to talk about, they still had one subject—the ‘language question.’

(To be continued)  

Paul R. Magocsi

Like other volumes of Dukljia, this one contains a large number of new literary works by Ukrainian-language writers in the Presov Region of Czechoslovakia, especially by Mychajlo Drobnjak and the very talented Stepan Hostynjak. There are also several biographies of contemporary cultural leaders: Fedir Kovac on the writers Milan Bobak, Ilija Halajda, Viktor Hajnyj, Josyf Zbihlej, Marusja Njachaj, and Miroslav Nemet; and Mychajlo Hryjak on the musicologist Jurij Kostyjk. Important scholarly studies are by Olena Rudlovich on the little-known nineteenth-century cultural leader Petro Kuz'mjacj; Jurij Kundrat on the literary works of Vasyl' Grendza-Dons'kij in the journal Nasa zemlja (1927–29); Mychajlo Mol'nar on the relations of Carpatho-Rusyns with the nineteenth-century Slovak leader Bohus Nosak-Nezabudov; Mychajlo Rycajka on the educational role of the post-World War II children's journal, Kolokol'cik-Dzvinocok; and Vasyl' Kapi'sovs'kij on the life and work of Osp Markov, the legal historian and ethnographer who wrote many studies on Subcarpathian Rus'.


This is a collection of 67 articles, most of which had previously appeared in the Russian-language journal Svobodnogo Slovo Karpatskoj Rusi (Newark, N.J.) and which stress the Russophile interpretation concerning the history of Subcarpathian Rus', Galicia, and Bukovnia, collectively referred to as Carpatho-Russia. It includes some useful articles by the scholar, Georgij Gerovskij, and by the political and religious activist, Aleksander Gerovskij.


This is the first book in any language to provide a historical survey of the Rusyns (at least down to 1941) living in the Backa (Vojvodina) of Yugoslavia. It includes five chapters, written in Croatian, and all based on documents from local archives: (1) mid-18th to mid-19th century by S. Gavrilovicj; (2) 1848–1890 by B. Vranesavicj; (3) 1890–1918 by A. Lebl; (4) the interwar years by N. Gacesa; and (5) Rusyns in the socialist movement before 1941.


This is the second volume in a new series which surveys books and articles published primarily in and about the Transcarpathian oblast'. This volume contains 1201 entries arranged according to 33 subjects. Author and place indices are also included.


This short article provides an introductory discussion about the 25,000 Rusyns in Yugoslavia who have formulated their own distinct literary language and who have been able to maintain an active cultural life. (Available from the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center for $1.00).


The Harvard University Library has perhaps the richest collection of materials in the western world on Carpatho-Rusyn culture. As this catalog of printed cards reveals, by September 1977, Harvard held 1,030 titles that deal specifically with Carpatho-Rusyns.

This catalog includes: a brief history and statistical breakdown of the collection (three-fifths of which have been obtained since 1968); photo-reproductions of the 1,030 cards arranged according to 19 subject chapters (such as Reference Aids, Serials, History and Society, Ethnography, Language, Literature, Art and Architecture); and a comprehensive index of authors, editors, and compilers. Besides having a first edition of Bishop de Camillis' Catechism (1698). Harvard also has works by Decsy (1797), Bazylovyc (1799–1805), Ol'savs'kij (1746), Luckaj (1830), and other classics of Carpatho-Rusyn writing. Especially impressive are the 79 rare newspapers and journals. The value of this catalog becomes evident when it is realized that many works in Harvard's collection are accessible to the community through Inter-Library Loan.


The prestigious Harvard Library Bulletin has devoted an article to the Katechysys, "diia nauky Ohhorouskym" (Catechism for the Instruction of the Hungarian-Rusyn People), published by Bishop Joseph de Camillis in 1698. Havard's Library recently obtained one of the seven extant copies of the first (and only) edition. Dr. Magocsi provides a historical introduction, Dr. Strumins'kij a linguistic analysis. Five plates show facsimiles of the title page and other representative pages.

Rev. Marina is a Greek Catholic priest now living in the United States, who between 1939 and 1944 served as head of the Subcarpathian section of the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture in Užhorod. The present book contains the memoirs of this Rusyn leader who, during the interwar years of Czechoslovak rule, supported local pro-Hungarian political parties and then was appointed to an influential cultural post after the Hungarians took back Subcarpathian Rus’ in 1939. These memoirs, written in Hungarian, provide a rare insight into the attitudes and interpretations of twentieth-century Rusyn history by a sympathizer of the Hungarian regime.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

New York, N.Y.: One of the oldest and rarest books published for Carpatho-Rusyns has been found in the United States. It is the Bukvar (Primer) attributed to Bishop Ivan Bradač (1732–1772, consecrated 1771) of the Greek Catholic diocese of Mukacevo and published in 1770 in Vienna. Because this school text was suspected of containing “schismatic” teachings, most copies were destroyed, except for ones still held in Vienna, Košice, and now New York. The last copy comes from the collection of Paul M. Fekula, a noted Slavic book collector, and has been described in a recent publication: Kievan, Galician, Volhynian and Transcarpathian Old Cyrillic Printed Books from the Collections of Paul M. Fekula (New York, 1981), compiled by Edward Kasince and Bohdan Struminskyj.

Chicago, Ill.: On March 29, 1981, Rusyn cultural instructor Jerry Jumba directed a Rusyn Cultural Roots program at St. Mary School, sponsored through the office of Byzantine Catholic Bishop Emil J. Mihalik. The children performed Carpatho-Rusyn songs and dances, and the seventh and eighth graders enacted scenes from a Rusyn wedding play arranged by Jumba.

Joliet, Ill.: On April 25, 1981, children of St. Mary School presented an Easter Pageant which included a performance of Rusyn songs and dances taught by Jerry Jumba. Jumba’s instruction was supported by the Rusyn cultural roots program through the office of Bishop Emil J. Mihalik.

Cleveland, Oh.: On April 29, 1981, the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Parma Stewardship Appeal Program sponsored Dr. Paul R. Magocsi as featured speaker at a Senior Citizens’ Fellowship Luncheon and an evening lecture, both at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cathedral Center. The events were hosted by Bishop Emil J. Mihalik. Dr. Magocsi spoke on Carpatho-Rusyn ethnicity, its evolution in Europe and the United States, and its possible directions in the future.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Pittsburgh, Pa.: In the fall semester, 1981, the University of Pittsburgh College of General Studies is offering a course entitled American Ethnic Traditions: The Slavic Experience. The course meets for fifteen Tuesdays from 5:20-7:50 p.m. Lectures, readings, and films will examine the prehistoric development, early history, expressive culture, social structure, immigration to America, and interaction with twentieth-century American society of the Carpatho-Rusyns. Professor Arthur Tuden of the Department of Anthropology is the main instructor. Guest speakers from several academic disciplines and the local Carpatho-Rusyn community will be featured. Students will learn how to collect oral histories. Those interested in registering for the course should make immediate inquiries at the Registrar’s Office of the College of General Studies (412-624-6610). For additional information about the course itself, contact Professor Tuden at 412-624-3389.

WITH APPRECIATION

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OUR NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the Carpatho-Rusyn American (No. 3, Fall, 1981) will be a special one. It includes a controversial reaction to the work of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center which was published in the leading Ukrainian intellectual journal in the West. Our response to the above article will be printed as well.
THE CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

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