

CARPATHO-RUSYN AMERICAN

A Newsletter on Carpatho-Rusyn Ethnic Heritage



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FROM OUR CENTER

After seven years, Patricia A. Krafčík is moving from her position as editor of the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*. While pursuing a doctorate in Russian literature and teaching at Columbia University in New York, she became involved with the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* at its inception in the spring of 1978. After completing her doctorate, she accepted a position as assistant professor with the Department of Slavic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Pittsburgh. Despite additional responsibilities, she continued to devote a great deal of time to the newsletter. Her interest in Slavic studies, specifically folklore, led her to study in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia during the summers of 1981, 1982, and 1983. She most recently completed a ten-month study tour in Czechoslovakia on an International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) grant for scholarly research in Eastern Europe.

Our profound thanks to you, Pat, for the generous contribution of your time, expertise, and dedication to the task of promoting our Carpatho-Rusyn identity in the United States. Your efforts have served to educate us about our past, both in this country and in the homeland, support us in our current efforts to maintain our rich heritage, and encourage us to continue this trend in the years ahead. We are pleased you will remain involved with the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* as consultant, and we look forward to your continued participation in the future. On behalf of our readers and our staff, we thank you again and wish you and your family (including your new addition Alexandra Christine), peace, health, and happiness for many years. *Na mnohaja i blahaja l'ita!*

We are pleased to announce that with this issue, Patricia A. Onufrak will assume the position of editor. She has been a member of our staff since May 1983. As assistant editor, she coordinated recent, current, and future events in her column, "Rusyn Forum," and also initiated a series of articles on genealogical research entitled "Search For Roots." As a third generation Rusyn American, Patricia Onufrak attributes the interest in her heritage to the relationship during early childhood with her maternal immigrant grandparents. Frequent visits to their home in northeastern Pennsylvania had a profound effect, instilling a love of Slavic people and more specifically her Carpatho-Rusyn heritage.

Born and raised in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the interest in her heritage led to travel to areas with more active immigrant/ethnic communities. After receiving a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and a Master's degree in Russian language and literature from the University of Toronto in Canada, she returned to her home in McLean, Virginia, where she currently resides.

Patricia Onufrak looks forward to doing her part in making available through this newsletter knowledge about Carpatho-Rusyns and their heritage in Europe and America. We wish her well in these efforts and offer our encouragement and support.

IN MEMORIAM

On September 30, 1984, the American Carpatho-Rusyn community lost a great friend and leader when Bishop John Martin died unexpectedly at the age of 53. Since 1966, he had served as a bishop of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Diocese, based in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and since 1977 he had been the ruling bishop of that diocese.

Bishop John contributed greatly to his diocese through his knowledge, compassion, and love of his people. He fostered pride among his flock in their Carpatho-Rusyn heritage, a pride that flourished during his episcopacy, particularly among the young. Because of that pride, numerous Carpatho-Rusyn performing ensembles and dance groups were born in recent times in a number of his parishes. Cultural displays and education about the history, religion, and lives of the Carpatho-Rusyns were fostered.

As both a spiritual and cultural leader, Bishop John Martin will be missed. Our condolences to his family and friends. May his memory be eternal. *Vičnaja jemu pamjat'.*

John Righetti

A THANK YOU TO CONTRIBUTORS

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TRANSCARPATHIA TODAY

John Righetti, director of the Carpathian Youth Choir and Dancers of Monessen, Pennsylvania, is offering a slide presentation on his recent trip to Transcarpathia.

Any organization in western Pennsylvania, nearby Ohio or West Virginia interested in this presentation may contact Mr. Righetti at (412) 761-0651.

OUR FRONT COVER

In the forests of far eastern Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus').

ANTONÍN HARTL (1885-1944)

Among those who in the period between the two world wars pioneered research into the literature of the Carpatho-Rusyns, certainly one of the most outstanding personalities was the Czech literary scholar Antonín Hartl. A man with a remarkable theoretical background, Hartl had a wide knowledge of a number of European literatures and originally had attained a reputation for his numerous monographs on the history of Czech literature. The incorporation of Subcarpathian Rus' into the newly-formed Czechoslovak republic after World War I stimulated his interest in the cultural and especially literary activities of the Rusyn people. It was to Rusyn literature that he paid the most scholarly attention during his mature years, and his contribution in this field certainly deserves to be remembered.

Hartl was born on December 11, 1885 on a small farm in Kunovice in western Bohemia, where in the near-by town of Klatovy he finished his *gymnasium* (high school) education. During university studies in Prague, where he came in 1906, the young Hartl became an enthusiastic follower of the philosophical ideas of the then professor at Charles University and later first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. In 1912, Hartl obtained his Ph.D. degree and became a researcher in the Czech Academy of Arts and Sciences in Prague. After World War I, he became editor of the leading daily *Čas*, and in 1923 was appointed director of the press section of the Czechoslovak foreign ministry. Later, he was named editor of the government-sponsored weekly *Prager Rundschau*, which was aimed at promoting Czechoslovak interests in German-speaking Central Europe. Finally, in 1931, he became head of the library of the foreign ministry. With the occupation of Prague by the Nazis in 1939, Hartl remained a librarian, having been transferred to the University Library in Prague, but because he was known to be a convinced democrat and a former high Czechoslovak official, he spent his last years of life under the watchful eyes of the Gestapo. This situation must have further aggravated his poor health, and he died of tuberculosis on February 19, 1944.

In spite of his involvement in journalism and in responsible posts in the foreign ministry, Hartl's preoccupation with Rusyn culture remained strong throughout the twenty years of the first Czechoslovak republic. In 1923, he published three important books on the Rusyn issue: *Osnovy ruskoji narodnoji i kulturnoji polytyky* (The Foundations of Rusyn National and Cultural Politics), *K jazykové otázce podkarpatoruské* (On the Language Question of Subcarpathian Rus'), and *Jazyk a písemnictví na Podkarpatské Rusi* (The Language and Literature in Subcarpathian Rus'), works which at the time provided the most complete outline of the basic aspects of the Rusyn position in Czechoslovakia. That same year also saw the appearance of Hartl's valuable study about the nineteenth-century Rusyn national awakener Aleksander Duchnovýč, *Národní básník podkarpatských Rusinů* (The National Poet of Subcarpathian Rusyns), comparing his role in the development of Rusyn culture with that of the leading contemporary Czech and Slovak national awakeners.



In 1924, there followed another important book, *Kulturní život osvobozené Podkarpatské Rusi* (The Cultural Life of the Liberated Subcarpathian Rus'), in which he dealt in detail with the postwar development of the Rusyn educational system and journalism. Turning to an earlier period, Hartl surveyed in an article the Hungarian oppression in the former Habsburg empire in "Podkarpatské Rusiny za valky a za převratu" (The Subcarpathian Rusyns in the War and in the National Revolution, 1925).

Hartl's extensive research into modern Rusyn Literary history came to fruition in his 1931 study, *Literární obrození podkarpatských Rusinů v letech 1920-1930* (The literary Revival of Subcarpathian Rusyns, 1920-1930). This was and still is the most detailed study of Rusyn literary activities during that period. Combining a scholarly approach with popular appeal (the study includes rare photographs of the Rusyn writers in question and a number of items of human interest), the book also discusses Ukrainian and Russian émigré writers living at the time in Subcarpathian Rus'. Well aware of the complexity of the language problem in Subcarpathian writing — most works of the time were written either in Ukrainian or in Russian — Hartl did not side with any of the feuding camps in the language dispute and evaluated the works strictly on the basis of their aesthetic value.

An even wider scope is covered in Hartl's next study, "Písemnictví podkarpatských Rusinů" (The Literature of the Subcarpathian Rusyns), which appeared in the 1933 volume of the authoritative thematic Czechoslovak encyclopedia, *Československá vlastivěda*. This was the first compre-

hensive history of Rusyn literature from its very beginnings. Hartl divided Rusyn literary history into three periods: the old period — from the fourteenth to sixteenth century; the middle period — from the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century; and the new period — from the late eighteenth century to the present. The study also included an outline of the literature of Rusyns living abroad, mainly in Russia and Hungary, as well as a discussion of works by Ukrainian and Russian émigrés living in Subcarpathian Rus'. This survey was no mere listing of authors and works, but the first aesthetic analysis of Rusyn literary production. Applying aesthetic criteria, Hartl valued most enthusiastically the works of Aleksander Duchnovyč and, among contemporary writers, Vasyľ Grendža-Dons'kyj.

In 1936, Hartl prepared two studies as part of a semi-official deluxe Czech-language volume entitled *Podkarpatská Rus*. His "Přehled literárního hnutí na Podkarpatské Rusi" (A Survey of the Literary Movement in Subcarpathian Rus') presented an even more detailed analysis of contemporary Rusyn writers, especially Grendža-Dons'kyj, J. Boršoš-Kumjats'kyj, M. Božuk, A. Karabeleš, L. Demjan, A. Markuš, and I. Nevyc'kyj. Hartl also mentioned the Rusyn-American writer Emilij Kubek, expressing regret that the American Rusyns with their wide network of periodicals and a number of talented writers showed at the time little willingness to help the development of literature in their old country. The second study in the 1936 volume, "Podkarpatská Rus v české literatuře" (Subcarpathian Rus' in Czech Literature), traced Subcarpathian themes in the works of such leading Czech writers as Ivan Olbracht, Karel Čapek, Stanislav K. Neumann, Vladislav Vančura, Z. M. Kuděj, and Josef Spilka. Hartl argued that the main reason for the frequency of these themes in Czech literature was the fact that "Subcarpathian Rus' had become for Czech literature a similar source of inspiration as overseas territories are for the literatures of larger European nations, that is, an exotic country in which everything is different from the life-styles and culture of their own respective countries." In 1937, Hartl updated his previous studies of contemporary Rusyn literature in an article "Písemnictví Podkarpatských Rusínů XX. století" (The Twentieth Century Literature of Subcarpathian Rusyns). Two years later, this was followed by another sequel, "Soudobé básnictví na Karpatské Ukrajině" (Contemporary Poetry in the Carpatho-Ukraine).

Antonín Hartl was not only a scholar, he also did much to popularize Rusyn writing among the Czechs. There was hardly a single leading Czech intellectual periodical in which he had not published numerous translations from the works of contemporary Subcarpathian Rusyn writers or in which he reviewed scholarly works about Rusyns. As part of his popularizing efforts, he edited the first anthology of Subcarpathian literature in Czech, *Pozdravení Rusínů* (A Greeting from the Rusyns). The anthology included extracts from the works of 15 poets and 12 prose writers from the years 1920-1935, as well as a poem by the gifted Rusyn-American belletrist E. Kubek. As translator, Hartl can be said to have rendered the spirit of the original works with extreme success. Later on, Hartl compiled and translated an even more ambitious anthology, *V Karpatech svítá* (The Sun Rises in the Carpathians), embracing Rusyn poetry from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the Nazi occupa-

tion of Bohemia-Moravia made publication impossible, and the work remains in manuscript to this day.

To appreciate fully Hartl's contribution to the popularization of Subcarpathian literature among his fellow Czechs, it is necessary to mention also his numerous translations and contributions about Subcarpathian Rus' for radio, and his translations of Rusyn plays for the Czech stage. Hartl's articles and studies on Rusyn culture also appeared in several other languages: in the French journal *Le monde slave*, in the Paris based Russian-language periodical *Central'naja Evropa* and in the Prague German-language weekly *Prager Rundschau*. In addition, the German-speaking public of Europe learned about Rusyn literature from Hartl's book, *Die literarische Renaissance der Karpatho-ruthenen* (The Literary Renaissance of the Carpatho-Rusyns, 1932).

For someone so deeply involved in the history and contemporary developments of Rusyn literature, Hartl could not avoid taking a stand on the thorny question of which language should become the standard language for Rusyn literature. His original position on this matter was more or less neutral. But in 1938, in his "K jazykovým sporům na Podkarpatské Rusi" (On the Language Controversy in Subcarpathian Rus'), he expressed a preference for the Rusyn vernacular, which he argued was most easily understood by the Rusyn public. Nonetheless, he thought this to be merely a temporary solution, for he regarded the Rusyns to be a part of the Ukrainian nation, even though they had for long been separated from its nucleus. In his view, use of the vernacular represented a transitional stage in the natural process of gradual amalgamation of the Rusyn dialects with standard Ukrainian.

Unfortunately, time has been less than just to Hartl's efforts. His death in 1944 passed almost unnoticed, with only two specialized Czech periodicals — *Naše věda* and *Časopis českých knihovníků* — carrying an obituary. Many of his extremely valuable manuscripts still remain unpublished, and there exists no comprehensive description of Hartl's scholarly career. For instance, the entry on him in the dictionary of Slavic studies published in 1972 in Prague (*Československé práce o jazyce, dějinách a kultuře slovanských národů od roku 1760*) contains only scant information, so that the broadest scholarly coverage of Hartl's work to date can only be found in the bibliographical appendix to Paul R. Magocsi's outstanding 1978 monograph, *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus' 1848-1948*.

The scarcity of literature on Hartl and especially the general unavailability of many of his works is regrettable for many reasons. One is that Hartl's work still has lasting scholarly value. Another, as the late academician Orest Zilynskyj remarked, is because Hartl was "the only consistent source of information on Carpatho-Rusyn literature for the Czech public." Finally, Hartl's scholarly and popular writings themselves contributed directly to the shaping of Subcarpathian literature during the interwar years. His steady flow of critical analyses did much to compensate for the then still undeveloped state of Rusyn literary criticism.

Mykola Mušynka

RECENT PUBLICATIONS 1980 (concluded)

Nova dumka (New Idea), Vol. IX, Nos. 24, 25, 26 (Vukovar, Yugoslavia, 1980), 112, 156, 112 pp.

As in previous years, these three issues of *Nova dumka* contain much information on the contemporary life of Rusyns living in the Vojvodina (Bačka) and Srem regions of Yugoslavia. Because a large part of these issues are devoted to two events — the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lenin and the recent death of Tito — there are very few articles on the Rusyn past and cultural heritage. The most useful of these are a translation into Vojvodinian Rusyn of Jan Čaplovič's description from 1825-1831 of Rusyn customs and life in the Carpathians (No. 25) and translations into Croatian of excerpts of works by two Hungarian scholars (Albert Bereghy, Sandor Bonkaló) on the Rusyn political and cultural problem during the interwar period (No. 26).

Penjak, Stepan I. *Rann'oslov" jans'ke i davn'orus'ke naselennja Zakarpattja VI-XIII st.* (Early Slavic and Old Rus' Settlements in Transcarpathia, Sixth to Thirteenth Centuries). Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1980, 180 pp.

Who were the first people to live in Subcarpathia? Were the Rusyns the original population, or did they come after the Magyars who crossed the region at the end of the ninth century? These are questions which have plagued historians since the middle of the nineteenth century. Several different theories have evolved, each with its battery of archeological, linguistic, and historical evidence. The controversy to date is discussed in this well documented Ukrainian-language study.

Despite its title, this study is not limited to Transcarpathia (Subcarpathian Rus'), but rather analyzes the whole upper Tisa region, which includes eastern Slovakia, northeastern Hungary, the Transcarpathian Oblast' of the Ukrainian S.S.R., and northwestern Romania. The bulk of Penjak's analysis is devoted to describing the archeological remains that have been found throughout this territory, especially since World War II.

On the basis of this evidence, the author concludes that the first Slavic settlers in the region were the East Slavic tribe of White Croats, whose center was north and east of the Carpathians in Galicia and Poltava and who arrived already in the sixth century as a result of the invasion of their territory by the Avars. Later the White Croatian settlements were supplemented by other East Slavic Rus' peoples who came across the Carpathians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Popova, Lidija I. and Cel'ner, Vladimir P. *Očerki o chudožnikach Sovetskoy Ukrainy* (A Survey of Artists in the Soviet Ukraine). Moscow: Sovetskij chudožnik, 1980, 390 pp.

This handsomely illustrated Russian-language volume contains comprehensive biographies of twenty artists active in recent years in the Soviet Ukraine. Among those included are the important Carpatho-Rusyn painters Andrej A. Kocka (b. 1911), most well known for his portraits of females in traditional dress, and Fedir F. Manajlo (1910-1978), the versatile artist who has left us canvases in the realist, expressionist, fauvist, and abstract styles. Each of the biographies

(pp. 126-143 and 200-219) includes a photograph of the artist and good-quality reproductions in color and black-and-white of several of their paintings.

Ruski jazik na Panoniji i Hor'nici (The Rusyn Language in Pannonia and the Highlands), Vol. I, No. 1 (Montreal, 1980), 104 pp.

This is the second journal begun in 1980 by Julijan Kolesar. As with his other publications, the entire text is written by Kolesar in the Vojvodinian Rusyn language. The sixteen articles in this first issue deal with the Rusyn language, especially that used by the population in Yugoslavia. The author argues for the distinct character of the Rusyn language and is particularly critical of those who classify it as a dialect of Ukrainian.

(Available gratis from Julijan Kolesar, 4875 Bourret Avenue, No. 203, Montreal, Quebec H3W 1L2)

Savva, Bishop and Archimandrite Vasiliy, "The 30th Anniversary of the Reunion of the Zakarpatskaya Region Greek Catholics (Uniates) with the Russian Orthodox Church," *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 1 (Moscow, 1980), pp. 21-26.

Bishop Savva of the Orthodox Diocese of Mukačevo and Užhorod and his assistant Archimandrite Vasiliy provide here in a brief and somewhat polemical form the official Russian Orthodox version of religious history in Subcarpathian Rus'. They also give some details on the celebrations held in 1979 at the cathedral in Mukačevo and at the St. Nicholas Convent on Černeča Hora to mark the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in 1949 and the return of the region to the fold of Orthodoxy.

Sersun, I.H., "Rozkvit Zakarpattja za roky radjans'koji vlady" (The Blossoming of Transcarpathia During the Years of Soviet Rule), *Ukrajins'kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, XXIV, 6 (Kiev, 1980), pp. 47-54.

This brief article reveals the social and economic transformations that have taken place in Subcarpathian Rus' since 1945. The underlying theme is that prosperity in the region was only made possible because of the establishment of a Communist system of government.

Sirka, Josef. *Rozvytok nacional'noji svidomosti lemktiv Prjašivščyny u svitli ukrajins'koji chudožn'oji literatury Českoslovaččyny* (The Development of National Consciousness Among the Lemkos in the Prešov Region as Reflected in the Ukrainian Literature of Czechoslovakia). Ukrajins'kyj Vil'nyj Universytet: Monografiji, Vol. XXXI. Munich, 1980, 191 p.

This monograph is a revised version of an earlier English-language book, *The Development of Ukrainian Literature in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1975*, published in 1978 (see the C-RA, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 7). In both volumes, most of the discussion surveys the work of individual poets and prose writers grouped according to three generations: the older (pre- and post-World War II), middle, and younger.

The extensive chapters on literary production are preceded by a general description of the nationality question among the Rusyns of the Prešov Region (southern Lemkos in the terminology of the author) since the establishment of

the Czechoslovak republic in 1918. As in the earlier English-language volume, this book also includes extensive footnotes; an index; résumés in German, French, English, and Spanish; and a rich bibliography that is particularly valuable for its comprehensive listing of works by belletrists.

Stebila, Petro. *Nezabudni roky* (The Unforgettable Years). Bratislava and Prešov: Slovac'ke pedahohične vyd., viddil ukrajins'koji literatury, 1980. 262 pp.

These are the Ukrainian-language memoirs of a peasant from near Snina in the Prešov Region, who lived in Subcarpathian Rus' during the interwar period and then fled to the Soviet Union during World War II. There he joined the Czechoslovak Corps, which returned with the Red Army in 1944-1945 to drive the Germans out of Czechoslovakia. The author was a member of the Communist party, and he provides information about that organization as well as about Carpatho-Rusyns who fought in the Czechoslovak Corps.

Švetlosc, Vol. XVIII. Nos. 1-6 (Novi Sad, 1980), 512 pp.

As with other volumes of *Švetlosc*, this one contains primarily new literary works (prose, poetry, drama) by Vojvodinian Rusyn writers in Yugoslavia. There are also several articles on contemporary Yugoslav society and a whole issue (No. 3) devoted to the deceased Yugoslav Communist leader, Marshal Josef Broz Tito. Of particular interest for Carpatho-Rusyn studies is an article on literary works written in Rusyn by the local national leader Havrijil Kostel'nyk (1886-1948) by Julijan Tamaš (No. 2); a collection of heretofore unpublished documents compiled by Mykola Cap on the establishment of the first Vojvodinian Rusyn cultural society (Ruske Narodne Prosvitne Družtvo) in 1919 (No. 4); and Mykola Skuban's survey of the activity of the Rusyn amateur theater Djadja between 1970 and 1980 (No. 6).

Tkáč, Štefan. *Ikony zo 16.-19. storočia na severovýchodnom Slovensku* (Icons from the 16th to 19th Centuries in Northeastern Slovakia). Bratislava: Tatran, 1980. 280 pp.

This collection of 70 color and 202 black-and-white photographs by Miroslav Jurik with an introductory study on icon painting by Štefan Tkáč and design by Milan Veselý is the most comprehensive book with the highest-quality reproductions and design of any published to date on Carpatho-Rusyn religious painting. The icons are taken from iconostases found in wooden churches as well as from a few museums, especially the rich collection of the Šariš Museum in Bardejov. Each icon is reproduced in color with several pages of details in black-and-white. Descriptions of each icon are provided in an appendix printed in four languages: Slovak, Russian, English, and German. The Slovak introduction also has brief résumés in Russian, English, and German.

The extensive introduction by S. Tkáč (pp. 9-78) provides a discussion of the technical aspects of icon production in eastern Slovakia (the Prešov Region) followed by an analysis of the religious content and stylistic changes, especially after the seventeenth century. The author stresses that these are "eastern Slovak" icons only in the present-day territorial sense, although he perhaps overemphasizes the supposed complex ethnic composition of the area (Slovaks, Rusyns, Germans, Magyars, even Serbs and Bulgars) at the expense of the Rusyn element and environment in which the

vast majority of icons are found. The author has also provided a lexicon of technical terms (with Slovak translations) and a bibliography of works on the subject.

Trojan, M. V. and Čičur, A. A., "Vozz'jednannja Zakarpattja z Radjans'koju Ukrajinoju u skladi SRSR—toržestvo istoryčnoji spravedyvosti" (The Reunification of Transcarpathia into the Body of the Soviet Union — A Great Celebration for Historical Justice), *Ukrajins'kyj istoryčnyj žurnal*, XXIV, 6 (Kiev, 1980), pp. 40-46.

This is one of two articles published in an issue of the official historical journal of the Soviet Ukrainian Academy of Sciences to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the incorporation of Subcarpathian Rus' into the Soviet Ukraine. The brief article presents the official Soviet version of how the incorporation process took place, under the leadership of local Communists and the protection of the Red Army, during the months of late 1944 and early 1945.

Tvorčosc: hlasnjik družtva za ruski jazik i literaturu (Works: Organ of the Society for Rusyn Language and Literature), Vol. VI (Novi Sad, 1980), 125 pp.

With this volume of *Tvorčosc*, the Society for Rusyn Language and Literature in Yugoslavia's Vojvodina (Bačka) celebrates its tenth anniversary. Besides introductory statements on the Society's anniversary (by Djura Varga) and its future tasks (by Djura Latjak), there are also eight studies on Vojvodinian Rusyn language and literature, two documentary works, and a chronicle of the Society's recent activity. The most extensive studies are on the vowel system in Vojvodinian Rusyn (by Mitar Pešikan) and important documents (compiled by Janko Ramač) on the personnel and budget of Ruski Kerestur's schools during the nineteenth century.

FOLK CUSTOMS OF CARPATHO-RUSYNS SUMMER FESTIVALS: ST. JOHN'S DAY

The summer months represented for the Carpatho-Rusyns the period of the most intensive work in the fields, and accordingly the customs of these months were not as rich as the customs practiced in winter or spring. The central festival of the summer period was connected with St. John's Day which falls on June 24. The saint was variably called Jan, Ioan, or Kupala, and the festival itself in some places had the name of Ivanden' — John's Day. It was a summer solstice festival, occurring when the sun reached its highest point and resulting in the year's longest day and shortest night. It was also the highest point for the crops, signaling the arrival of the most important event in the peasant's year-round schedule — the harvest.

It is perhaps no wonder that plants, and not only agricultural plants, were believed to be endowed with magical powers exactly at this time of the year. Women and girls would collect various herbs before sunrise, and having had them consecrated in church, they would keep them in their households until the next year. Most frequently the plants were hung near the icons, and since they were believed to have magical powers, the herbs would be used both for medical

treatment and for magic rites. Sometimes the "St. John herbs" (*zilja*) would be tied with a whip in the hope that the symbolic gesture would help keep the cattle in the pasture together.

Of the many herbs used in Rusyn folk medicine the most popular were *ivanok* (*Hypericum perforatum*), *devjatsyl* (*Inula Helenium*), *odylja* (*Valeriana officinalis*), *mjata* (*Menta piporita*), *rumjanok* (*Matraria chamomila*), and *zvirobij* (*Hypericum perforatum*). Even some poisonous herbs were used for curative purposes, such as *rostopast'* (*Chelidonium majus*) and *nadragulja* (*Atropa belladonna*).

The eve of St. John's Day was a special day for the boys and girls of the village. They would meet at a particular place, usually at a hill above the village where they would make a bonfire, sing songs connected with St. John's Day, dance, and generally make merry. This custom known as *sobitka* was most widespread in the western part of the Prešov Region. In the village of Jakubany near the district town of Stará Ľubovňa, the custom is alive even today. The local boys dip torches in pitch, light them, and then walk with them up to the nearest hills where they start several imposing bonfires. Soon thereafter they are joined by village girls bringing each a bundle of straw with which to feed the fire. The ring of bonfires surrounding the village offers a truly unforgettable sight. In some villages in the past the bonfires were used also for burning discarded objects such as birch rods, baskets, straw binders, etc., in what was a symbolic purification of old bad habits. Also burned in the bonfires were the last year's "St. John's herbs." The *sobitka* celebrations in the village of Kružľov near Bardejov also included the interesting custom of rolling a burning wheel wrapped in straw down to the village in a symbolic imitation of the movement of the sun.

An indispensable part of the festivities were the special *sobitka* songs. One of their most frequent themes were the requests addressed to St. John for a good harvest. As one of the songs recorded in the village of Makovica near Svidník would have it:

A tŕ, Jane, ťvatŕj Jane,
Oťvet ťe nam ťyre pole,
Ťyre pole i paťnycju,
Ťyto, oves i pťenicju.

And you, John, St. John,
Bless our broad fields,
Broad fields and the pastures,
Rye, oats and wheat.

Another group of *sobitka* songs dealt with the joys and sorrows linked with love. Often these songs would make public even the more profane love secrets, such as the pregnancy of an unmarried girl, like the following song recorded in the village of Becherov near Bardejov:

A na Jana, na Jakuba,
Kapral'ova Marĉa hruba.
A od koho? Ta od toho
Od Joťka Leťĉyťsynoho.

On St. John's Day, on St. James' Day
Mary Kapral' came with child.

By whom? By him
— Joe Leťĉyťsyn.

Another related theme of the *sobitka* songs was the mutual teasing between boys and girls. As research into the village customs of the past attests, the St. John's festivities were one of those exceptional occasions when a certain amount of sexual freedom was tolerated. The fact that the freedom sometimes went too far found its expression also in the lyrics of some of these songs recorded in the village of Kružľov near Bardejov:

Na Ivana, na Kupala,
Hanĉa kabat zaľuťtala,
Neznala ho vyrajbaty,
Musyla ho chlapcom daty.
Chlopcy kabat postelili,
A Hanĉu vinka zbavyly.

On St. John's Day
Annie soiled her skirt
She did not know how to wash it,
And so gave it to the boys.
They spread the skirt,
And stripped Annie of her virtue.

Some of the other customs connected with St. John's Day were, nevertheless, more serious in intent. After finishing the *sobitka* festivities, for instance, girls would throw wreaths into the stream in order to learn more about their future: the girl whose wreath was taken away the farthest by the stream was expected to marry the soonest. In another custom, young people would leap over fire with a double purpose: to purify their souls symbolically, and to "draw" from the fire the strength needed for the forthcoming harvest.

Among other things, the night of St. John's Day (like the nights of some other important days) was also believed to be the night of witches (*bosorkanja*). In many villages, legends were told about the "annual meetings" of the witches at imaginary places like "Black Mountain," "Bald Mountain," and "Devil's Hill." These meetings were believed to serve the purpose of accepting new arrivals into the witches' ranks and dividing the domains of their activity among themselves. Yarns were spun about the orgies which were supposed to accompany the meetings. According to legends many other strange things happened on that night: treasures hidden in the earth came to light (almost literally, because their appearance was first announced by fires bursting out on the surface); ferns began to blossom; trees would start to speak among themselves and move from place to place, etc.

After World War II, most customs connected with St. John's Day, especially the lighting of bonfires, ceased to be practiced. Recently, however, some of them have been revived on the initiative of folklore groups and with the endorsement of various cultural organizations. This revived tradition has, of course, a merely entertaining value, with the belief in the magic implications of the customs no longer extant. (*To be continued*)

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