

RUSYNS OF THE CARPATHIANS: COMPETING AGENDAS OF IDENTITY

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the cultural revival and nation-building movement of the Rusyns, an East Slavic ethnic group whose homeland along the Carpathians straddles the border between the former Soviet Union and the European Union. While in the 19th century and again after World War I, Rusyns launched national movements, they never gained statehood as did other neighboring nations. Instead, Rusyns remain divided among several European states. During communist rule, they were officially classified as Ukrainians, their closest ethnic neighbors. After the Revolutions of 1989 and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union, however, the Rusyns have emerged as a cohesive group recognized officially as a national minority in all the countries where they live except for Ukraine. The new Rusyn national movement brought about the revival of an identity once considered irretrievably outdated by reviving Rusyn language, engaging with the nations around them, and creating international organizations to unite all Rusyns.

This question is explored here through the lens of liberal nationalism theory, especially as formulated by Yael Tamir, who argues that nations are defined culturally and that a stateless people may achieve self-determination when they live in a state whose institutions provide recognition and space for them to develop unhindered. To examine the extent to which liberal nationalism applies to the Rusyn movement of today and how it competes with other concepts of nationalism among Rusyns and their neighbors, a variety of sources are utilized in this thesis: personal interviews with Rusyns in Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine, written histories, demographic data, and analysis of news and social media. The thesis covers four major areas of exploration. The first chapter discusses the history of past Rusyn national movements and the reasons for their failures. The second looks at the official ukrainianization policies of the communist era and their effect on identity and the motivation of those who later became Rusyn activists. The third chapter

considers the links between language and nationalism in the Rusyn movement and the important motivating force of the American diaspora. The fourth investigates the unique political and social contexts of individual states where Rusyns live and how this affects their opportunities, goals, and challenges. The case of Rusyns in Ukraine's Transcarpathia and their unique political history are given particular consideration.

In conclusion, Rusyns today have a unique opportunity to develop a thriving nation by applying the principles of liberal nationalism. The European Union has made a genuine contribution to the Rusyns in the arena of cultural preservation in its efforts to curb the marginalization of national minorities and promoting diversity as a value. At the same time, Rusyns in Transcarpathia face a difficult political situation which involves them not only in a struggle to define their own identity against Ukrainian national identity, but also involves them in Ukraine's efforts to define and consolidate its own national identity against Russia's resistance to its independence. The combination of historical factors that create a memory of autonomous rule in the region and a closer connection to the problems of Russian and Ukrainian identity have contributed to making dialog and negotiation more difficult as Rusyns work to be recognized in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the small but steady successes of some Rusyn activists in Transcarpathia who reject more fiery nationalist rhetoric and territorial claims that may be perceived to threaten Ukraine show that even there the principles of liberal nationalism may succeed. Ukrainians and Rusyns share the goal of moving closer to Europe. Embracing the values that guide the positive development of Europe's minority policies can thus unite Rusyns as a nation, repair their history of marginalization, and peacefully gain them a place among the peoples of Europe.

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Introduction

In the middle of the 19th century the nationalist mood sweeping across Europe reached a small East Slavic ethnic group that populated the northeastern corner of the Hungarian Kingdom, the Rusyns.¹ Their homeland, defined by the arc of the Carpathian mountains, covered what today is Ukraine's Transcarpathian oblast (Zakarpattia), a small portion of southeastern Poland, northeastern Slovakia, and a small slice of northeastern Romania. The group's leading intellectuals launched a classic national movement after the pattern adopted by other discontented national groups then living under Austro-Hungarian rule—a pattern much later made famous by Ernest Gellner and his “Ruritarians” seeking autonomy from the oppressive empire of “Megalomania” on whose fringes they lived.² Miroslav Hroch too would have recognized the early stages of a bona fide national movement in the writings of Rusyn elites of the time and in their development of literary and cultural societies.³ But today no Rusyn state is found on the map of Europe, though some casually refer to the lands Rusyns inhabit as “Ruthenia,”⁴ a Latin term used to describe the Rusyn territory. Instead, Rusyns remain divided among several European states. Their historical efforts to establish their culture and preserve it against assimilation by the dominant neighbors are largely overlooked because these efforts have lacked the sensational quality of violence and open conflict characterizing some other national movements, both in the past and today. Yet in the wake of the Prague Spring of 1968 and especially after the Revolutions of 1989 and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union, the Rusyns have emerged as a cohesive

¹ In the mid-19th century, the Kingdom of Hungary was under the control of the Austrian Empire and made an unsuccessful bid for independence in 1848. In 1867, the *Ausgleich*, or compromise between Austria and Hungary created a dual monarchy and gave Hungary control over its own administration, creating the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 58-62.

³ Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation,” in *Becoming National: a Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 63.

⁴ Timothy Garton Ash, “Hail Ruthenia!” *The New York Review of Books*, April 22, 1999, “Ruthenia: A Glimpse of Daylight,” *The Economist*, March 12, 2009, and “You Say Lwów, I Say Lviv: A Guide to Eastern Europe's Most Tedious Arguments,” *The Economist* online, http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=15810902, April 1, 2010.

group recognized officially as a national minority in all the countries where they live except for Ukraine.

Given a myriad of significant factors—the changing political conditions in Europe, the conflicts that have emerged from national movements in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the Russian online media's attention to the Rusyns—it is timely and necessary to evaluate where the Rusyns fit into the mosaic of smaller European ethnicities and national movements and how their unique location between Europe and the former Soviet Union affects the direction of their ethnic and cultural revival. Within the context of the new Europe, are the Rusyns a nation, a national minority (since they have no nation-state), or simply an ethnic group? For example, are they more like the famously nationalistic and separatist Basques, or the Catalans, or the dispersed Roma? The answer to this question depends on the respondent. Some classical theorists of nationalism, including Gellner and Hroch, would deny that the Rusyns are a national group because of their failure to satisfy these scholars' requirements for nationhood. At most, the Rusyns have achieved the status of an *ethnie*, according to Anthony D. Smith—a cohesive, self-aware ethnic group with the potential to become a nation, in possession of a common history and myths of descent, association with a homeland, and elements of a common culture.⁵ In everyday speech Rusyns often define themselves as an “ethnos” or “people” [*narodnost' / narodnist'*], terms which do not reflect a goal of political autonomy that many theorists of nationalism believe to be necessary for the formation of a nation. Nevertheless, a distinct Rusyn identity has endured over many centuries in spite of adversity and threats of assimilation.

Alternative interpretations of nationhood may be appropriate for the Rusyn case. Yael Tamir defines “nation” as a group with both a shared culture—including language, norms, myths,

⁵ Anthony D. Smith, “The Origins of Nations,” in *Becoming National*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 110.

and symbols—and an awareness of the distinctness of this culture.⁶ She reinterprets the notion of self-determination as the ultimate goal for nations, separating political self-rule from what she terms “cultural self-determination.” When a nation achieves cultural self-determination, individuals who belong to that nation enjoy the right to see their culture reflected in the political framework where they live, especially through “public institutions that reflect the history, the culture, the language, and at times the religion of the national group.” According to Tamir, a larger society in which a nation or national minority enjoys cultural self-determination also enables “members of the nation to develop their national life with as little external interference as possible.”⁷ This may result in political autonomy in varying degrees for that national group. The perceived need for full political autonomy, however, is not necessary for that nation to achieve the space it needs for its members to express and maintain their culture.

Tamir’s definition of nation closely reflects the concept of nationhood embraced by the majority of Rusyn activists who have worked since the end of the communist era to revive a culture and identity that was devalued, marginalized, and relabeled for so many years. Their efforts at cultural consolidation and the pursuit of official recognition, rights, and support reflect an aspiration for the kind of self-determination that Tamir describes. Their focus is on the preservation and development of their culture rather than on a demand for political control of a given territory and the creation of a nation-state as many other national movements demand. The political conditions of Europe today exemplified by the expansion of the European Union and evaporating borders under the Schengen Agreement may be especially conducive to this type of culturally-oriented national aspiration. In spite of the Rusyns’ failed past efforts to assert themselves officially as a nation, they have the potential to sustain a thriving national community, even in the absence of their own nation-state.

⁶ Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 67-8.

⁷ Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, 74.

The case of the Rusyns as a nation is nevertheless complex and controversial, because while European borders are less important today than in the past, Rusyns' historical experience has been and still is shaped by the national politics of each individual country where they live. A large Rusyn cultural movement embracing Rusyns in Europe and in the American diaspora, represented by the World Congress of Rusyns, established in 1991,⁸ aims to ensure that all Rusyns enjoy international recognition and support toward developing strategies for the maintenance of their identity and culture. The unique factors in each country where Rusyns live, however, shape the challenges that they face and their responses to those challenges. The history of animosity between Poland and Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary, Serbia and Croatia, and now Russia and Ukraine, as well as these countries' political agendas vis-à-vis each other all influence the success or failure of the Rusyn movement today. The number of Rusyns in the world is also controversial, with the lowest estimates based on state census records at between 50-60,000 and the highest estimates of Rusyn activists at up to 1.2 million.⁹

Will the Rusyns as a people distributed over several countries and with strong ties to a Rusyn-American diaspora succeed in overcoming the failures of the past efforts at a national movement and the dangers and distractions of the present in order to shape a future in which their identity and culture can be assured—even without their own nation-state? Will they become a thriving small European nation scattered across the borders of several European countries or will they fade into obscurity through assimilation? The Rusyns' efforts at strengthening their national identity, culture, and language, given all the obstacles they face, represents a prime test case of Yael Tamir's liberal understanding of nation. The Rusyns' potential success surely depends partly on their own determination and partly on the circumstances of a larger political and social nature.

This examination of the Rusyn case makes use of a wide variety of sources to try to understand the development of the Rusyn national movement and to try to capture the diversity

⁸ Anna Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk na Slovensku: náčrt vývoja a súčasné problémy* (Prešov: Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove, 2007) 59-60.

⁹ World Academy of Rusyn Culture, <http://www.rusyn.org/rusyns.html>.

and tensions that exist within it. Written histories of the Rusyns and of their region play an important role, as do analyses of current political and social issues that affect Rusyns in all the countries where they live. Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and other relevant news media is also a significant source utilized here. News sources reveal as much about their producers as they do about the subject of each piece. The events chosen for reporting, the definitions provided of Rusyns, and the attitudes toward their culture expressed in news reports can help to understand what impact the Rusyn movement has on those parties with a vested interest in it. Particularly in Russia's state-controlled media, news reports suggest what specific aspects of the Rusyn situation the authorities consider most relevant and what view of Rusyns they intend for their readers and viewers to adopt. Internet sources also make up a large component of the sources used here. Websites of political groups, Rusyns organizations and clubs, and social media such as Facebook are increasingly accessible to Rusyns, are important for connecting people across large distances, and reveal links between people and between organizations with shared agendas and perspectives. Finally, the Rusyns themselves are a key source for understanding the complexities of Rusyn identity and the direction of the Rusyn movement. Thus, stories and opinions obtained in personal interviews and through participation in the activities of Rusyn organizations make up an essential part of this examination of the Rusyn movement. The interviews, undertaken in Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine and the United States, include the voices of Rusyns from many fields and walks of life: academics, activists, actors, artists, musicians, students, engineers, teachers, and clergy.

Note on Terminology and Geographical Context

A clarification of terms and a geographical context is necessary before proceeding further. The bulk of the Rusyn population lives in rural villages spread over a continuous territory stretching east along the Carpathian foothills, mountains, and valleys from southeastern Poland, through northeastern Slovakia and Ukraine's Transcarpathian oblast, to slightly east of the Tisza

River and just inside the Romanian border.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, this “typical borderland or transitional territory, where for centuries various political, social, and cultural forces have met and clashed”¹¹ has been known throughout history by different names. Most common in reference to where Rusyns reside are the Prešov Region (Priashivshchina) in eastern Slovakia; the Lemko Region in southeastern Poland (Lemkivshchina); within the borders of today's Ukraine, Subcarpathian Rus' (Podkarpatska Rus') or Subcarpathian Ruthenia, Subcarpathia, and Transcarpathia; and a small portion of Romania's Maramureş Region. The term Carpathian Rus' refers to all of these regions as a whole.¹² Rusyn communities are also scattered in a few villages of Hungary, and in the Bačka and Srem regions of Serbia's Vojvodina and parts of Croatia, where Rusyns settled as agricultural workers in the 18th century.

The Rusyns themselves have also been known by many names. Although just outside of the territory of ancient Rus', the Rusyns were known as *rusyny* or *rusnatsy* (sing.: *rusnak*) with the adjective Rusyn (*rus'ky*), or Ruthenians from Latin and German. Rusyns living in Poland acquired the name Lemkos (*lemky*) by the early 20th century, a term the local intelligentsia promoted to distinguish them from the people of eastern Galicia, who also had been called Rusyns but adopted a Ukrainian national identity in the 19th century.¹³ Russian scholars in the 19th century designated Rusyn territory, then controlled by Hungary, as “*Ugorskaia Rus'*,” or in local

¹⁰ Paul Robert Magocsi, *Our People: Carpatho-Rusyns and Their Descendants in North America*, Third Revised Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) 6. Magocsi, the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto, is the most important scholar of Rusyn history and culture. Magocsi's 1978 history of the Rusyn people, *Shaping of a National Identity*, became the first major English-language study of Rusyn identity. Magocsi has published dozens of works on Ukrainian history and Rusyn history and culture. He has also been a key figure in the Rusyn movement, as a co-founder of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center in the United States in the 1970s and the major organizer for its many publications. He has also been a major leader within the World Congress of Rusyns, and currently holds a position as its Honorary Chair.

¹¹ Ivan Rudnytsky, “Carpatho-Ukraine: A People in Search of Their Identity,” in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, ed. Peter L. Rudnytsky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 353.

¹² Paul Robert Magocsi, “Carpathian Rus’,” in *Encyclopedia of Rusyns History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 57.

¹³ Paul Robert Magocsi, *The People From Nowhere: An Illustrated History of Carpatho-Rusyns* (Uzhhorod: V. Padiak Publishers, 2006), 113.

dialect *Uhors'ka Rus'*. The ethnonym *Uhro-rusyn* emerged from this designation.¹⁴ Russophile theorists, but Rusyns and Russians, also described Rusyns as *Karpatorossy*, and they classified the *Karpatorossy* as a sub-group of the *Malorossy* or Little Russians (today's Ukrainians). Along with the *Belorossy* (Belarusians) and *Velikorossy* (Russians), they considered the *Malorossy* and the *Karpatorossy* to be part of one "all-Russian" people.¹⁵ Today, much of the Western scholarship on Rusyns, especially the works published by the U.S.-based Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, uses the term Carpatho-Rusyn to help convey the distinctness of the people from Ukrainians and Belarusians who historically were also known as Rusyns before the rise of a specifically Ukrainian identity. Most Rusyns in Europe today, however, tend to describe themselves simply as Rusyns (*rusyny*, *rusnatsy*, with adjectives *rusin'sky* or *rus'ky*) both in speech, as well as in many of their publications. The term Rusyn is used in this work in reference to the Rusyns of the Carpathian region in general. The term Lemko is also used for the Rusyns who live in Poland. Where published works use the word "Ruthenian," that term will be employed as in the original source.

1 Making of Rusyns Through WWII

Ethnic Origins and Language

The early history of the Rusyn people is poorly known due to a lack of written records, and it is unclear what the relationship of the region was to either the Great Moravian Empire, encompassing much of what is now the Czech Republic and Slovakia, or to Kievan Rus', claimed progenitor of the major East Slavic nations of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Whatever the

¹⁴ Paul Robert Magocsi, "Uhors'ka Rus'/Hungarian Rus'," *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 507-508.

¹⁵ Paul Robert Magocsi, "Russophiles," *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 433.

region's previous political affiliation, the population was soon under the political control of non-Slavic rulers who would eventually attempt to shape the identity of the people to suit their own needs. The Magyars invaded East Central Europe in the late 9th century, firmly establishing Hungarian rule by the 11th century.¹⁶ According to legend Saints Cyril and Methodius, who created the first Slavic writing system in the 9th century, brought eastern-rite Christianity to the ancestors of today's Slovaks and Rusyns there. Today, some Rusyns claim a uniquely close relationship of their language to Church Slavonic and take pride in receiving Christianity slightly earlier than Kiev in 988.¹⁷ What people of the region felt their religious and ethnic identity to be was largely unrecorded until around the late 18th century. While Church Slavonic was used as a written language throughout Slavic lands during the Middle Ages, gradually taking on the characteristics of local vernaculars, only a few medieval Slavonic manuscripts have been found in Subcarpathian Rus', and scholars disagree on what they reveal about cultural contacts of the region or the nature of the vernacular language.¹⁸ Not until the Habsburg period, from the 16th and 17th centuries, were Church Slavonic and some vernacular texts found in greater abundance, inspired by a whirlwind of religious activity in the region. The Greek Catholic (or Uniate) Church was created by two separate agreements, the first in 1596 in Brest in Polish-controlled

¹⁶ "Hungarian" and "Slovakia." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. November 16, 2008, and Magocsi, *Our People*, 9.

¹⁷ M. Mal'covska, interview with the author, Prešov, June 24, 2009 and *Ia rusin byl, iesm i budu: neudobnaia pravda o Podkarpatskoi rusi* [*I Was, Am, and Will Be Rusyn: The Inconvenient Truth about Subcarpathian Rus*'], documentary, directed by Andris Dzintars (2008: "Zvaingze"), available online including at RuTube, <http://rutube.ru/tracks/2049361.html>, last accessed April 6, 2010. These claims may have more to do with activists' desire to raise the prestige of Rusyn language than with fact. According to linguist Stefan Pugh, author of the first Rusyn grammar in English, *The Rusyn Language: A Grammar of the Literary Standard of Slovakia, with Reference to Lemko and Subcarpathian Rusyn* (Munich: Lincom 2009), claims of a special relationship between Rusyn and Church Slavonic are "balderdash." While there are significant overlaps between many Slavic languages and between individual Slavic language and Church Slavonic, the similarities are not always very meaningful for mutual comprehensibility and many significant features divide the languages. Most speakers of Rusyn would not understand Church Slavonic well unless they were already very familiar with church liturgies. Rusyn is essentially an East Slavic language, most closely related to Ukrainian, but with significant West Slavic influences in vocabulary and grammar. It occupies a unique transitional place between the East and West Slavic languages and is, in Pugh's words, "a very special animal" (email communication, April 15, 2010).

¹⁸ Nadiya Kushko, "Literary Standards of the Rusyn Language: The Historical Context and Contemporary Situation," *Slavic and East European Journal* 51:1 (Spring 2000) 115.

Galicia just to the north of Subcarpathian Rus', the second in 1646 in Uzhhorod.¹⁹ While the unions permitted people to retain their Eastern Rite customs and simultaneously pledge allegiance to the Roman Pope, they also gave Roman Catholic Polish, Hungarian, and Habsburg rulers more direct control over the people. This had far-reaching implications for the political, linguistic, and cultural future of the Subcarpathian region.

Through its efforts to solidify the new Catholic identity of the population, and partly influenced by Protestant Transylvanian competitors, the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary with the blessings of the Catholic Habsburg rulers encouraged the creation of written works for the people of Subcarpathian Rus', such as catechisms and grammars.²⁰ Vernacular dialects were also employed for homilies, religious tracts, manuscripts, and chronicles. Several homily collections up to the mid-18th century indicate Hungarian influence in the language, evidence that these writings came from Hungary.²¹ In the later part of the 18th century, a drive led by Habsburg monarchs Maria Theresa and Joseph II to improve education throughout their empire resulted in the establishment of many elementary and secondary schools, as well as in books written for them. From this period came the first reference to the ethnonym of the people of Subcarpathian Rus'—*Rusnak*—in the grammar book written in 1778 by Arsenii Kotsak, a Basilian monk and native of the region. Still, rather than using a vernacular dialect, he constructed his grammar of Church Slavonic as influenced by the local vernacular. The choice to employ Church Slavonic, considered a higher-style language than the vernacular, was also taken by many writers after Kotsak, and in the sermons, commentaries, and administrative writings by another major church figure of the period, Bishop Andrii Bachyns'kyi. However, the influence of Latin was also

¹⁹ Paul Robert Magocsi, *Shaping of a National Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 22-23.

²⁰ Paul Robert Magocsi, "The Language Question Revisited," *A New Slavic Language is Born* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 23.

²¹ Anna Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk na Slovensku: náčrt vývoja a súčasné problémy* (Prešov: Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove, 2007) 11. The names of Plišková and other Rusyn activists and scholars who live and work in Slovakia are spelled here in their Slovak forms, because this is the form most commonly used. If their written works in Rusyn are cited, their names are spelled as transliterated from Cyrillic using the Library of Congress system, or as they appear in the published work, if different.

strong, and Latin and Hungarian both were employed in the higher education of candidates for the priesthood. Several major writers of the period who used Church Slavonic actually composed their largest works in Latin.²² This period reveals little about the identity of the population beyond the elite clerical class, which was to a certain extent assimilated by the dominant Hungarian and Austrian cultures.

While opinions on the use of vernacular language for education and publication purposes generally remained ambivalent, it was less so amongst a group of Rusyns who formed the first Rusyn diaspora and eventually establish one of the most vibrant Rusyn communities. At the time of Empress Maria Theresa, the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire stretched far, from the northeastern corner where Rusyns lived and south into the Balkans. In 1745 at the invitation of the monarchy, a first wave of Rusyn agricultural workers moved from the Borshod, Ung, and Zemplin counties of Austria-Hungary to what is now the Vojvodina province of Serbia. Another wave followed in 1763.²³ Rusyns also settled in some small towns of Eastern Slavonia, now a part of Croatia. These were not mass migrations. The first wave of settlement was only approximately 200 families and the second was even smaller—156 families.²⁴ The Austrian authorities established a local Greek Catholic eparchy to serve the community, and within a few years of settlement Rusyn schools, crafts guilds, and libraries were established and multiplied.²⁵ Literary activity was strong. School books in Rusyn vernacular were printed starting at the end of the 18th century, and while a codified version of the Vojvodinian Rusyn dialect did not exist in an officially-sanctioned grammar at that time, the vernacular language was used for education and literature. The willingness of Rusyns in the Balkans to use the vernacular sharply contrasts their community with all other Rusyn communities up to the 20th century. They later became the first

²² Plišková, *Rusinsky jazyk na Slovensku*, 11-12.

²³ Gabriel Koljesar, ed. Michele Parvensky, "The Cultural and Social Evolution of Rusyns in Vojvodina (Yugoslavia)," Rusyns in Pannonia website, <http://rdsa.tripod.com/rusinevolution.html>

²⁴ Mihajlo Hornjak, "Ruthenians in Vojvodina: Between Disputed Past and Uncertain Future," Belgrade, April 10, 2002, <http://rdsa.tripod.com/ruthenians.html>.

²⁵ Koljesar, "Rusyns in Vojvodina."

Rusyn group to codify their language. Meanwhile, perhaps because of their immigrant status, so different from the status of other Rusyns in the Carpathian homeland, education became a strong value among the Vojvodinian Rusyns. It is crucial to stress that the use of Rusyn vernacular in education and in literature helped to keep the language alive. While the Rusyn communities living in Serbian and Croatian lands maintained small and compact communities with educational opportunities within the group, Rusyns living in the homeland often looked to major centers in Hungary and Austria, particularly Budapest and Vienna, for educational opportunities.

Rise and Fall of the First Rusyn National Movement

By the middle of the 19th century many groups living under the rule of the Austrian Empire, including Slavs and Hungarians, began to work toward cultural consolidation and freedom from perceived and real oppression. The Rusyns were no exception. Whether Rusyns developed a sense of independent national identity at that time remains a contentious question among scholars, because cultural and ethnic identification with the greatest Slavic power of the time, the Russian Empire, was a striking if not the defining feature of Rusyn identity in the 19th century and has continued to be so in varying degrees up to the present. In the early part of the 19th century, discrimination in the Austrian Empire provided the motivation for several Rusyn scholars to move east, to Russia, where for linguistic and some cultural reasons, it was easier for them to integrate than in the major Austro-Hungarian cities such as Budapest and Vienna. A famous scholar who made such a decision was Ivan Orlai, who felt that he had been denied a promotion as a teacher in Austria due to his Slavic origins and moved to St. Petersburg in 1791 seeking greater opportunity. He eventually became the schoolmaster of famous author Nikolai Gogol's school in Ukraine, the Bezborodko Institute in Nizhyn. Orlai's writings, such as an

article entitled “A History of the Carpatho-Russians,” published in the St. Petersburg paper *Severnii vestnik*, also promoted an interest in Subcarpathian Rus’ among Russians.²⁶

Following Orlai’s example, in the early 1800s several Rusyn scholars moved to Russia and became professors at the St. Petersburg Pedagogical Institute. They joined the liberal Russian intelligentsia and involved themselves in reforms of the time. One Rusyn scholar, Iurii Venelin, who arrived in Russia in 1823 after being educated in Uzhhorod and then working in Kishinev, became heavily involved in the national movement of yet another Slavic country--Bulgaria. He worked for the Academy of Sciences and traveled in Moldavia, Bulgaria, and Romania. In his work for the Bulgarians he tried to highlight their Slavic origins over their Turkic origins. He also believed in the unity of the Rus’ tribes that he referred to as the “Little Russians, Carpatho-Russians, and Great Russians.”²⁷

A local movement for cultural recognition among Rusyns in the 19th century began with cultural activism of members of the Greek Catholic clergy, mainly in regions of what is now Slovakia. The most famous cultural activist of the time was Aleksander Dukhnovych (1803-1865),²⁸ a Greek Catholic priest from eastern Slovakia who became a prolific writer and promoter of the Russophile orientation in Rusyn thought. He is currently credited as the father of the Rusyn language and the Rusyn national awakener; monuments to him can be found in most places where Rusyns live, including the United States.²⁹ For Rusyn children from small villages, obtaining higher education usually meant moving away from home and learning new languages.

²⁶ Elaine Rusinko, *Straddling Borders: Literature and Identity in Subcarpathian Rus’*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 100. Orlai also tried to educate Russians about Rusyn culture through the Society for Russian History and Antiquities. For example, Orlai’s description of Rusyns in a letter to the Society in 1824 foreshadows common definitions of Rusyns found in today’s Russian press. As quoted in Rusinko, Orlai claims that “These Carpatho-Russians have maintained the name *Ruskii* or *Rusin*, the ancient appellation of the people of Rus’...they have preserved to this day their adherence to the Greek Catholic faith and the Rus’ language in a dialect that is, surprisingly, much purer than that of contemporary Kiev” (100, 477). Rusinko also points out that Orlai’s article on Rusyn history was influential enough to be quoted by Karamzin in his *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskago* (History of the Russian State).

²⁷ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 100.

²⁸ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 35.

²⁹ Ivan Pop, “Dukhnovych, Aleksandr,” *Encyclopedia of Subcarpathian Rus’*, (Uzhgorod: V. Padiak, 2001), 170.

Dukhnovych left his village, studied first in a gymnasium in Uzhhorod, where the languages of instruction were Latin and Hungarian, and later in the Greek Catholic Seminary where instruction was mostly in Latin with some courses taught in the local redaction of Church Slavonic.

Dukhnovych early on began writing poetry and prose, initially in Hungarian. After being assigned to parish work in small Rusyn villages in Slovakia in 1833, which he initially perceived as an insulting demotion, Dukhnovych was inspired to begin writing in the language of his own people. But he, like many of the era, aspired to bring the language closer to Church Slavonic.³⁰ In 1844 Hungarian was made the official language in the Hungarian Kingdom which directly ruled Rusyn territory, replacing Latin.³¹ To the many Slavic groups under Hungarian rule this policy was oppressive, and some found comfort in the ideology of pan-Slavism, that is, the idea of Slavic unity against the oppressor. Dukhnovych studied the writings of pan-Slavic and nationalist scholars, such as Vuk Karadžić of Serbia, Ján Kollár and Pavel Šafárik of Slovakia, Adam Mickiewicz of Poland, and many Russian authors and thinkers: Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Karamzin, and Pushkin. To Dukhnovych, the ideas of Rus', Rusyn, and Russian were one and the same thing, and the Rusyns should be proud to consider themselves a branch of a people strong enough to command a vast empire.³²

Dukhnovych was a prolific writer, and one of his most famous and influential works was the 1847 *Primer*, a book of verses written in Church Slavonic-influenced vernacular Rusyn for children (with some verses against alcohol consumption geared towards adults). It promoted hard work and learning, and described his ideal characteristics of a Rusyn person: “unsophisticated, pious, peace-loving, submissive, and obedient to authority, cheerfully hard-working and long-suffering.”³³ According to Rusinko, the primer was “a significant effort to provide a positive self-

³⁰ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 119.

³¹ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 121.

³² Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 115-116.

³³ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 125.

definition for a denigrated people largely lacking national identity.”³⁴ Dukhnovych also wrote the first play in the Rusyn language, *Virtue is More Important than Riches*. Like the *Primer* it promoted education and the avoidance of vices such as greed and dependence on alcohol.³⁵ Dukhnovych’s writings also became part of a larger effort to preserve Rusyn identity through language, led by the Greek Catholic eparchy in Mukachevo. Church leaders responded in 1849 to the expansion of the Hungarian language by requiring elementary schools to use Rusyn language in instruction and clergy to use Rusyn in services and in documents, as well as to encourage their parishioners not to give up their language.³⁶ Unfortunately for Dukhnovych, publication of this work marked him as a troublemaker in the eyes of the Hungarian authorities, and he was arrested and briefly imprisoned in 1849.³⁷ Another of his poems, written in 1851 a mix of Rusyn with Russian and Church Slavonic elements, has become the unofficial anthem of all Rusyns and a strong statement of identity. It is called *Vruchanie*, or *Dedication*.³⁸ Its famous first verse reads, “I was a Rusyn [*rusyn*], am and will be. I was born a Rusyn. My honorable heritage I will not forget. I will remain its son.” Not only does it claim identity, but it also links the Rusyn people with their land: “I first saw the light under the Beskids [part of the Carpathian range], the first breath I drew

³⁴ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 127.

³⁵ Aleksander Dukhnovych, *Virtue is More Important than Riches*, trans. Elaine Rusinko (New York: Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 1994). *Virtue is More Important than Riches* features the sufferings of peasants afflicted by alcohol addiction and greed, and highlights the achievements of their children, who choose to pursue education and apply their knowledge to useful professions that serve their community. *Virtue* is sometimes still performed (a Russia Today special on Rusyns from September 26, 2009 follows a young girl who plays a main character in a production of the play, at http://rt.com/About_Us/Programmes/XL_Reports/2009-09-26/491818.html), but usually is avoided because of its leading negative character—the thieving Jewish tavern-keeper, Shmuel. As Rusinko points out in the preface to her translation, tensions between Jews and Rusyns frequently arose out of economic pressures but relations were calmer and there was less anti-Semitism than in neighboring regions of Ukraine and Poland. This is perhaps because Jews in Subcarpathian Rus’ tended to be poorer and more rural, like the Slavic peasants themselves (see Rusinko, “Introduction: Aleksander Dukhnovych and the Origin of Modern Drama in Subcarpathian Rus’,” in *Virtue*, xxix). And as Dukhnovych asserts in his preface to the play, his intent is not to blame others for the problems of Rusyn society but “to show as in a mirror the transgressions of this heretofore neglected people and the means for correcting them”—education and hard work (1). The most complete work on the historical relationship of Jews and Rusyns is *The Carpathian Diaspora: The Jews of Subcarpathian Rus’ and Mukachevo 1848-1948*, by Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, translated from the Hebrew by Joel A. Linsider and published by the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 2007.

³⁶ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 121.

³⁷ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 371 n. 13.

³⁸ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 111.

was Rusyn [*ruskii*]. I was fed on Rusyn bread, and a Rusyn rocked my cradle.” Dukhnovych also includes a verse expressing love for the Rusyn language: “When I opened my mouth for the first time, I spoke a Rusyn word, and [it was] over the *azbuka* [Cyrillic alphabet] that sweat first flowed from my young brow.”

In 1849 an event occurred that had a profound effect on Dukhnovych and on other scholars who worked with him. As the Hungarians fought for their independence from Austria in the revolutions of 1848, most Rusyns, except for some leaders and clergy, who were magyarized, or assimilated into Hungarian culture and used Hungarian language, were terrified at the prospect of Hungary being able to have a freer hand over them. In June 1849 Tsar Nicholas I sent the Russian army to intervene in support of Austria. Their arrival in Subcarpathian Rus’ made a lasting impression on the population, out of proportion to the brief duration of their stay. It changed the course of the movement to develop a Rusyn literary language. Dukhnovych was overjoyed at being able to communicate with the soldiers with relative ease. He later called their arrival “the one great joy”³⁹ of his life. He was not the only one impressed. In January prior to the Russian intervention, Adol’f Dobriansky, also hailed as a national awakener, had led a delegation to Vienna demanding political unification of Hungarian-controlled Rusyn territory and Austrian-controlled Galicia to the north. Because of his anti-Hungarian position, he was then appointed by Austria as the liaison officer for the Russian army when they arrived, thereby playing “an important role in helping those forces that were to destroy the Hungarian revolution.”⁴⁰ Like Dukhnovych, Dobriansky maintained ties with pan-Slavist circles and also the Russian government, and focused on political activism beyond the cultural activism of Dukhnovych.⁴¹

The memory of the Russian intervention was kept alive in Rusyn thought. The local enthusiasm the arrival of Russian soldiers evoked was enough to inspire the establishment of a

³⁹ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 128.

⁴⁰ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 44-45.

⁴¹ Ivan Rudnytsky, “Carpatho-Ukraine: A People in Search of Their Identity,” *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) 362.

largely Russian-oriented literary society in Prešov, headed by Dukhnovych. This activist society produced works by a few dozen local authors as well as members of Slovak, Galician, and even Serbian ethnicity. The Rusyn writings were in a mix of local dialect, Russian, and Church Slavonic, and although Dukhnovych held out hope for Church Slavonic becoming the uniting language of the Slavs, he eventually began to advocate the use of Russian, probably because he viewed it both as more prestigious and as more modern than Church Slavonic. The Prešov Literary Society was banned by the Hungarian government in 1853, and by the 1860s the initial enthusiasm of the Rusyn national movement had given way to “less optimism, more realism, and contentious literary and linguistic debates.” In 1862 Dukhnovych and Dobriansky founded the Society of St. John the Baptist to educate Rusyn youth, but this group fell apart with Dukhnovych’s death in 1865.⁴²

Dobriansky and others, including Ioann Rakovsky and Aleksandr Pavlovych, attempted to carry on Dukhnovych’s work. In 1866, Dobriansky and Rakovsky founded the Society of St. Basil the Great, a Russian-oriented cultural society that continued into the 20th century, eventually competing with the Ukrainian-oriented society *Prosvita*. Pavlovych wrote poetry in Rusyn vernacular mixed with Russian and Church Slavonic.⁴³ He generally focused on the poverty of Rusyn daily life, with more explicit political content relating to developments in other parts of Europe. At the time, the situation for Rusyns in Hungary was deteriorating. Particularly after 1867, magyarization of Slavic territories became particularly intense. Almost no schooling was available in Slavic languages, and along with troubles in the Hungarian economy, more modernized agricultural techniques put many Rusyn peasants out of work. Their Slovak neighbors also found themselves severely affected by Hungarian policy. After 1874 higher education was available only in the Hungarian language. The result was that “in a backward and impoverished area like Subcarpathian Rus’, this process virtually wiped out the native

⁴² Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 183.

⁴³ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 187.

intelligentsia” and by 1910 only 21 out of 64,797 public employees and state teachers in Hungary were Rusyn-speakers.⁴⁴ Faced with poverty and the impossibility of advancement without assimilation, many people chose to emigrate and seek opportunity overseas. By the start of World War I about 150,000 Rusyns had emigrated to the United States.⁴⁵

Had an incipient Rusyn nationalism failed? As the years dragged on and the Rusyn movement headed by Dukhnovych failed to gain ground in the later 1850s and 1860s, he became increasingly frustrated and angry with what he saw as Rusyn passivity. Certainly, Dukhnovych faced great difficulty in acting as a “national awakener.” The Rusyn population was over 90% illiterate, and most of the intelligentsia had been heavily assimilated into Hungarian culture. It was nearly impossible to get anything printed in the modern Cyrillic alphabet since only two presses were available, one in Vienna and one at the University of Pest (now Budapest). Therefore Dukhnovych by necessity used outdated Church Slavonic characters.⁴⁶ His proposal for a new printing press was rejected by Bishop Popovych of Mukachevo, and in general the support of the Greek Catholic Church for the Rusyn national effort was at best erratic, depending on individual bishops. This was due to many factors, including the shaky political position of the Greek Catholic Church. It tried to protect itself against both Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, to balance the social and political position of the clerical elite with the demands of Hungarian and Austrian rulers, and to minister to the needs of the common people whom the Church was supposed to serve. At times it provided the strongest support available for Rusyn language and culture, but at other times it appeared to work together with the Hungarian authorities to hinder the Rusyn cultural development that could have become strong enough to demand independence from Hungary. For example, Bishop Gaganets of Prešov was initially a supporter and a subscriber to the publications of Dukhnovych’s Prešov Literary Society, as well as a supporter of

⁴⁴ Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation,” in *Becoming National: a Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15.

⁴⁵ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 66.

⁴⁶ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 69, 177.

Dobriansky's political program. He was officially reprimanded by the Hungarian cardinal for this, but his sudden return to favor in 1854 and elevation to knighthood has led to speculation that he was involved in the 1853 government ban on the Prešov Literary Society.⁴⁷

Aside from adverse circumstances imposed by the ruling empire and the Church, however, some scholars point to a failure of Rusyn leaders ever to truly decide what Rusyn identity should be. The use of Church Slavonic in literature long after it had been limited to an ecclesiastical venue by other Slavic nations, as well as the Rusyns' belief in a Russian identity, became more prominent throughout the second half of the 19th century after Dukhnovych's death. These are indicated as fatal mistakes because they prevented the development of a unique identity that would have made the Rusyns into a true nation. Another theorist of nationalism, Benedict Anderson, defines a nation as "an imagined political community,"⁴⁸ appearing with the emergence of print capitalism and serving to connect readers of related dialects to each other, creating a new sense of shared identity and leading to a new type of political organization—the nation. For Rusyns of the 19th century, however, not only did the lack of printing presses or adequate education for the majority of the population prevent the development of written works that could consolidate the entire Rusyn population in this way, but confusion among the national leaders about who they believed Rusyns were ethnically and what language they should use rendered the literature that was produced throughout the later 19th century—mostly in a mix of Church Slavonic and Russian influenced by vernacular dialects—unfit to be a uniting force at all. For the majority of people, it was essentially foreign. In a discussion of the importance of vernacular language in nationalism movements, Joshua Fishman points out that "the ethnic identity of the population itself is often sufficiently amorphous," such that "the drawing of a linguistic line is every bit as judgmental as is the act of drawing the ethnic line itself."⁴⁹ Later

⁴⁷ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 176.

⁴⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

⁴⁹ Joshua A. Fishman, "The Impact of Nationalism on Language & Language Planning," *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays* (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury, 1972), 57.

scholars, who supported either a definite Ukrainian or uniquely Rusyn identity for the Rusyns, criticized Dukhnovych and his followers for failing at “drawing the ethnic line” by adhering to Slavophile and Russophile notions of the nature of Rusyn language while placing too little value on the vernacular language of their people.

According to Ukrainian historian Ivan Rudnytsky, without the prevailing Russophilism of that era Rusyns would have eventually developed into nationally-aware Ukrainians. While Dukhnovych was well-meaning, his “undifferentiated Ruthenian patriotism” was unfortunate and ultimately unhelpful to his people because he “lacked a clear perception of the national differences between the Ruthenians/Ukrainians and the Russians.”⁵⁰ Likewise, Elaine Rusinko, supporting the notion of a unique identity for Rusyns separate from Ukrainians, feels that Dukhnovych “may have inadvertently undervalued the specificity of Rusyn national culture,” and that among 19th-century Rusyn activists, the “emphasis on Slavophilism as a framework...while comprehensible under the circumstances of the time, place and numbers, proved ultimately to be untenable and counterproductive.”⁵¹ Thus, critics believe that while neighboring Slovaks, Czechs, and Ukrainians were building literary languages based primarily upon what their people actually spoke, Dukhnovych and others with a similar ideological perspective on their ethnic identity created something that could not be realistically maintained. Ukrainians today, whose literary language has become successful where Dukhnovych’s was not, can point to how the latter’s language has been superseded in most of western Ukraine by standard Ukrainian.⁵²

To the north of Hungarian-ruled Rusyn territory the Lemko Rusyns felt some resonance of the Rusyn national movement. Residing in southeastern Poland in what was then the western part of Galicia, they were also influenced by the uneven cultural development and complex political conditions that provided them with a number of conflicting identity choices. Throughout

⁵⁰ Rudnytsky, “Carpatho-Ukraine,” 362.

⁵¹ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 177, 180.

⁵² Laada Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 112-114.

their history the Lemkos were culturally tied to the Rusyns of Subcarpathia and Slovakia. They shared to a certain degree the same admiration of Russian language and culture, but were ruled by Austria and Poland, and finally experienced the force of both the Ukrainian and Polish national movements. The eastern regions of Poland and the western borders of Ukraine have been contested territory for centuries, but after the partition of Poland in 1795 Galicia fell clearly under Austrian control. A Ukrainian national movement began rising in eastern Galicia, but was not supported by all. It faced competition from the Russophiles—with whom Dukhnovych and his followers shared many ideological similarities—who believed that Ukrainians were a branch of the Russian people and thus they advocated uniting for unity with Russia. Austria and the Vatican, fearing Russian expansion into this territory, began to actively support the new Ukrainian national movement against the Russophile movement.⁵³ With the help of the Austrian government the Ukrainians were allowed by the Austrians to create their own political structures, to codify their language and receive a department devoted to it at the University of Lviv, to use their language in administration, and elect their own deputies to the Austrian parliament.⁵⁴ Thus, this region, claimed as a national center by both Poles and Ukrainians, was primed for conflict.

World War I complicated the situation in Galicia even further. Russia captured Galicia as well as some other regions in what is now Ukraine, and Ukrainians from a few of the captured territories fled to Vienna where they formed the General Ukrainian Council and called for an independent Ukrainian state. When in mid-1915 the Austrians recaptured what they had lost, they severely punished people who had been sympathetic to the Russophile movement, and who had not by then adopted a Ukrainian national identity, but used the older name, Rusyn. As happened again after World War II, the Lemkos found themselves between warring powers, accused of supporting the “wrong” nation. The Austrians targeted primarily the Lemko region, where the Ukrainian nationalist movement had not reached deeply. Many thousands were arrested and

⁵³ Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues*, 50.

⁵⁴ Paul Robert Magocsi, *Ukraine: An Illustrated History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 182-3.

imprisoned, particularly at an infamous concentration camp in Thalerhof, Austria.⁵⁵ Toward the end of World War I, both the eastern and western regions of what is now Ukraine underwent massive upheavals. The east experienced revolution, the brief establishment of a Ukrainian state, and then the installation of a Soviet Ukrainian government before being swept into the larger Russian civil war that resulted in the establishment of Soviet rule by the early 1920s.⁵⁶ The western part of Ukraine developed differently. In 1918 the different regions of western Ukraine went in different political directions, but the parts of Ukraine bordering Poland declared the establishment of the Lviv-based West Ukrainian National Republic, and immediately began fighting with Polish troops. After the war, as disputed territory, the region was under allied control, then under Polish rule.⁵⁷ Lemkos in the western parts of this region, divided over identity, launched what were perhaps the first two attempts at political independence on the part of Rusyns, attempts that illustrate the conflicting pull of these different identities.

The Lemko Republic of Komancza, founded in November 1918 by delegates from 35 Lemko villages, based itself on Ukrainian identity and hoped to eventually join politically with the West Ukrainian National Republic. By the time it was attacked and dismantled by Polish troops in early 1919 after the Treaty of St. Germain gave the western part of Galicia to Poland, the Republic had grown enough to have a police force of between 800-1000 members.⁵⁸ The Lemko Republic of Florynka (originally known as the *Ruska narodna republika Lemkiv*), in contrast, took an opposing position. Founded a month after the Republic of Komancza, the Republic of Florynka was larger—based on the support of at least 130 villages—and managed to last more than two years, until January 1921. The founders of the Republic of Florynka were of

⁵⁵ Magocsi, *Ukraine: An Illustrated History*, 195, and Stanislas Srokowski and H. E. Kennedy, “The Ukrainian Problem in Poland: A Polish View,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 9:27 (March 1931), 591.

⁵⁶ Magocsi, *Illustrated History*, 203-9.

⁵⁷ Magocsi, *Illustrated History*, 213-4, 219.

⁵⁸ Bogdan Horbal, “Lemko Republic of Komancza/Komanchans’ka republika,” *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsci and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 291.

Russophile orientation and initially hoped to create a state called Carpathian Rus' that could be united with Russia. But they quickly realized the impracticality of this desire, given their geographical distance from Russia and the recent Bolshevik revolution. Instead, they decided to request union with Czechoslovakia, and sent delegates to Prešov, Slovakia to work with Rusyn leaders there. Meanwhile, Poland did not intend to tolerate any new states on its territory and arrested the republic's leaders in early 1919. However, the Republic of Florynka quickly re-formed as a lobbying group against the mobilization of Lemkos into the Polish army, and created a new government structure, with a Supreme Council and an Executive Committee, in early 1920. Poland sent in troops to the region to force Lemkos to join the Polish army, and within a year the leaders of Florynka were on trial for "anti-Polish agitation." They were later acquitted, since the court admitted they had been acting on the will of the region's people, but this early Rusyn experiment in state creation was over.⁵⁹ Suspicion of Lemko disloyalty to Poland remained and came to haunt the people of the Lemko region after World War II.

World War I and its aftermath brought many changes to other parts of Rusyn territory as well. Leading up to World War I, magyarization policies continued in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus', as well as a Hungarian effort to magyarize the Church. Over 1915 and 1916, the Cyrillic alphabet was abolished in the Prešov and Mukachevo dioceses of the Greek Catholic Church.⁶⁰ As the war progressed, it also became more dangerous to identify as Rusyn, and doing anything to promote Rusyn identity or culture was out of the question. At a council held in 1915, several priests proposed abolishing the term Rusyn and instead using the term "Hungarians or Catholics of the Eastern Rite," to avoid Hungarian suspicion of pro-Russian attitudes and disloyalty to Hungary.⁶¹ At the same time, however, Rusyn draftees in the Austro-Hungarian army were coming into contact with many other Slavic groups. It was reported that over 200

⁵⁹ Bogdan Horbal, "Lemko Republic of Florynka/Ruska narodna republika Lemkiv," *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 290.

⁶⁰ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 72.

⁶¹ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 73-4.

Rusyns defected to the Russian army when Russian troops reached the Carpathians in late 1914 and early 1915, part of a government-approved plan set up by various Russophile organizations and the Galician organization called the Carpatho-Russian Committee for Liberation to eventually incorporate all Rusyn lands into the Russian Empire.⁶² Finally, Ukrainian nationalist groups began battling for ideological control of the region, stationing an anti-Russian volunteer unit in Rusyn territory as early as 1914 and publishing a journal promoting Ukrainian statehood, *Ukraina*, in Hungary in 1916.⁶³ By the end of the war, neither side had met with definitive success, but the interwar period would bring an apparent triumph for those who advocated a Rusyn nation separate from the newly forming Ukrainian state.

The Interwar Period: A Fleeting Victory

The period between World Wars I and II is remembered by activists today as a kind of golden age, the one time when Rusyns achieved a level of political independence and international recognition.⁶⁴ After the war, with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Rusyns faced several possible political options, including union with Russia, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary. Several different organizations, or “national councils” formed to endorse union with other countries or to promote independence for the region in some form. Rusyns who had emigrated to America also expressed their desires for the future of their homeland. First, the Greek Catholic Union and another organization, the United Societies, came together to form the American National Council of Uhro-Rusyns. The Council met in Homestead, Pennsylvania wrote a resolution expressing their preference for the creation of an independent Carpathian Republic

⁶² Magocsi, *Shaping*, 73. Mark Wansa’s *The Linden and the Oak* (Toronto: World Academy of Rusyn Culture, 2009) is a fictional account of the Rusyn experience of World War I, including the questions of identity and political loyalty that arose from encountering Russian troops and Russian nationalism. It is the first English-language novel featuring Rusyn main characters, and exploring the ethnic and national identities of Rusyns during the early 20th century. *The Linden and the Oak* is based on years of historical research, including research on Wansa’s own family history, and Wansa uses this history to capture the emotional and personal significance of World War I in shaping Rusyn identity.

⁶³ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 74.

⁶⁴ Judy Batt, “Transcarpathia: Peripheral Region and the ‘Centre of Europe,’” *Regional and Federal Studies* 12:2 (2002) 161.

joining Galicia, Bukovina and Subcarpathian Rus'. They envisioned the new republic divided Swiss-style cantons determined by ethnic orientation (Russian, Ukrainian, and Subcarpathian, or Hungarian, Rusyn).⁶⁵

Rusyn-American lawyer Gregory Zhatkovich, whom the Council chose to write a memorandum to President Woodrow Wilson, favored either complete independence for Subcarpathia or autonomy within another state. Through consultations with President Wilson and with Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Zhatkovich convinced the Council to adopt a resolution calling for the union of Subcarpathian Rus' with the newly-formed Czechoslovakia. After the resolution was put to a plebiscite throughout the Greek Catholic Union in November 1918 and received a majority vote, Zhatkovich informed Czechoslovak authorities and U.S. State Department officials about the result. The decision to join with Czechoslovakia was thus interpreted as an "expression of popular will"⁶⁶ that was eventually endorsed by the Central Russian National Council (Tsentral'na Russka Narodna Rada) in Subcarpathia, under the leadership of Avhustyn Voloshyn, and the Czechoslovak government. Zhatkovich returned to Europe to act as governor of the region.⁶⁷

On September 10, 1919, the Treaty of St. Germain dissolved the Austro-Hungarian Empire and created new states. Rusyns were granted autonomy within Czechoslovakia, ensuring their right to use their language in education and religion. Rusyn became a state nationality, an official coat of arms was developed to use on official documentation, a national anthem was adopted, and although the precise identity of the Rusyn language had not been resolved, signs and paper money in Cyrillic lettering also appeared.⁶⁸ This apparent victory of Rusyn identity, however, did not last long. Full autonomy was not immediately granted because Prague felt the

⁶⁵ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 83.

⁶⁶ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 85.

⁶⁷ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 100.

⁶⁸ In 2007 new Rusyn flag with the same Subcarpathian crest (a red bear next to alternating blue and yellow stripes) on a blue, white and red background was chosen by the World Congress of Rusyns as the official Rusyn flag.

region was as yet too unstable. Thus it implemented a “transitional period” of direct Czech rule before full autonomy would be granted. Also, Rusyns living in eastern Slovakia, a region contiguous with Subcarpathian Rus’, were not part of this new potentially-autonomous territory. This was largely because the 90,000 Rusyns of Slovakia lived in a less compact territory, and their counties included many Slovaks, so they were left under Slovak administration.⁶⁹ Zhatkovich had imagined that Subcarpathia would achieve a level of autonomy similar to that of individual states within the United States, but Prague officials were reluctant to grant this. Frustrated by the failure to gain full autonomy and to include Slovak regions in Subcarpathian Rus’, Zhatkovich resigned in 1921 and returned to the United States.⁷⁰

While the failure to obtain full autonomy was a political disappointment, Rusyns continued to tackle the problems of language and identity. Beginning in 1920, the Rusyns were recognized as a national minority in Slovakia and were allowed to use their language in the media and in education. By 1938, 168 Rusyn schools were in operation as well as another 43 in which Rusyn was taught at least some of the time in a form adopted after a January 1920 conference on the possible codification of Rusyn held in Prešov.⁷¹ The Rusyn language was not codified into an official form, however, and Rusyns again did not opt to develop their own vernacular language but instead aspired toward the use of Russian. The language adopted for most textbooks used throughout the 1920s was largely Russian, with some Church Slavonic and local vernacular mixed in—a continuation of trends of the previous century.⁷² A lone Greek Catholic bishop, Bishop Peter Goidych, attempted to introduce a standardized form of the Rusyn vernacular for use in schools under the jurisdiction of the Church, and he wrote several times to Prague for assistance, but his efforts were rejected. Eventually he worked to reconcile Rusyns who were of different cultural and political orientations—Russian, Ukrainian, or Rusyn—by supporting the

⁶⁹ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 298.

⁷⁰ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 193.

⁷¹ Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 36.

⁷² Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 37.

newspaper *Russkoe slovo*, where articles were written in Rusyn vernacular, Russian, or Ukrainian, depending upon the author's orientation.⁷³ In Subcarpathian Rus', activists promoting Russian, the Rusyn vernacular, or Ukrainian—and the ethnic or national identities assumed to correspond to each—participated in a kind of war of grammar books. Grammars, such as that by Evmenii Sabov, tried to model written Rusyn on Russian grammar,⁷⁴ while Ukrainian-oriented scholars tried to implement standard Ukrainian language. The most influential of the writers in this second category was Dr. Ivan Pan'kevych, an émigré to Prague originally from L'viv who worked for Ukrainian nationalist causes. Czech authorities assigned him the task of preparing grammar books in the vernacular for the Subcarpathian population. He produced grammars in 1922, 1927, and 1936 which progressively eliminated unique local features from the language, bringing the language taught to schoolchildren of the region closer to standard literary Ukrainian. He also edited a children's journal, worked with teachers to promote Ukrainian identity, helped produce popular journals, and composed several scholarly works on Rusyn language.⁷⁵

Ultimately, neither in Slovakia nor in semi-autonomous Subcarpathian Rus' was the question of Rusyn language or nationality ever completely resolved in the interwar period. In sharp contrast, in 1919-1920 the Rusyns in Vojvodina were granted the status of national minority of Slavic origin by the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats, and Slovenes.⁷⁶ The first official Vojvodinian Rusyn grammar produced in 1923, establishing the official grammar of the language, was the *Gramatika bačko-sremskeje bešedi* (A Grammar of Bačko-Srem Language) by Dr. Havriil Kostel'nik.⁷⁷ It was used as the basis for school texts and literature in the Rusyn community there.

⁷³ Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 37.

⁷⁴ Valerij Padiak, "Ponizhenie statusa rusniskogo iazyka do urovnia dialekta ukrainskogo kak osnova iazykovoi politiki SSSR na anneksirovannykh territoriakh Podkarpatskoi Rusi (Zakarpattia) [Lowering of the Status of Rusyn Language to the Level of a Ukrainian Dialect as the Foundation of Language Policy of the USSR on the Annexed Territories of Subcarpathian Rus' (Zakarpattia)]," presented at the conference Is There a Fourth Rus'? Concerning Cultural Identity in the Carpathian Region, South-Eastern Research Institute, Przemyśl, Poland, May 24-26, 2006.

⁷⁵ Ivan Pop, "Pan'kevych, Ivan Artemovych," *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 370-371.

⁷⁶ Mihajlo Hornjak, "Ruthenians in Vojvodina."

⁷⁷ Koljesar, Parvensky, *Rusyns of Pannonia*.

Unfortunately, the short interwar period was not enough either to solve questions about Rusyn language and identity or to consolidate any real autonomous government for Rusyns within Czechoslovakia or Poland. Prague had never allowed Rusyns real autonomy and rejected a new plan for partial autonomy presented in 1936. In Subcarpathian Rus', but not Slovakia, a Ukrainian-oriented position on the Rusyn issue became more popular as the hope of autonomy within Czechoslovakia faded. In 1938 Slovakia, in cooperation with Hitler, declared its independence, leaving the status of Subcarpathian Rus' in question. The Hungarians began invading Subcarpathian Rus' in March of that year, and pro-Ukrainian Subcarpathian leaders declared the independence of "Carpatho-Ukraine." Prague finally was forced to grant autonomy, and an independent government existed for a day (March 15-16, 1938) before Hungary invaded and in a few months Hungary completed its takeover in 1939 and World War II began.⁷⁸ While Ukrainian orientation became more popular because it was strongly anti-Hungarian, few people adopted a Ukrainian identity. For example, over 20,000 people fled into Soviet territory after the Hungarian takeover. When they were placed in prison camps for crossing the Soviet border illegally where most died, the survivors generally rejected both Ukrainian and Russian claims on their identity.⁷⁹ In 1945, Subcarpathian Rus' was annexed to the Soviet Union. While it had been unclear whether the region would remain part of Czechoslovakia after the war or join the Soviet Union, Communist committees favoring entry into the Soviet Union had been organized in villages, enough to hold a council of the Subcarpathian Communist Party in the city of Mukachevo in November 1944 where 600 delegates voted to unite with Soviet Ukraine. The union was finally accomplished by an agreement between Stalin and Czechoslovak president-in-exile Edvard Beneš. Although Rusyns living in Slovakia were given the option to take Soviet citizenship if they wished, most did not.⁸⁰ The Subcarpathian Communist Party had since 1926 supported the use of standard Ukrainian as the literary language for Rusyns, and once the party

⁷⁸ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 299.

⁷⁹ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 252

⁸⁰ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 253, 255.

was in power it quickly implemented an official policy that all Rusyns were now to be considered Ukrainian. New textbooks for schools were sent out from Kiev, and Ukrainian suddenly was required in media, publications of all kinds, and signs.⁸¹ Communist rule brought its own interpretation of Rusyn identity and profoundly affected the people who founded the contemporary Rusyn movement—and their opponents.

2 Agendas of Rusyn Identity Under Communist Rule

The political, socio-economic and cultural development of the Ukrainian population of Eastern Slovakia has been enormous since the Victorious February of 1948. Individual districts of the East Slovakian region populated by the Ukrainian ethnicity have, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and with the selfless help of the Soviet Union, changed from backward agrarian districts into modern industrialized areas with high standards of life.

-Selection from a 1988 photographic book on eastern Slovakia, entitled *Blossoming Country*⁸²

I have nothing. I had one God, and they took Him from me; I had my ethnicity [narodnost'] and they took it from me, too; I had my little piece of land—and they took this from me. Everything that I once had—everything—they have taken from me.

-Rusyn Villager, 1968⁸³

Population Displacement: “Voluntary” Migration to Soviet Ukraine and Banishment to Western Poland

For some Rusyns, the close of the World War II was a particularly dangerous time precisely because of their ethnic identity. Their first experience of the communist governments taking over their countries was displacement from their homeland and an imposed definition of identity that many ultimately rejected. After their traumatic experiences, many were assimilated or chose to abandon the Rusyn identity that had brought them harm. Rusyn identity did not disappear, but the conditions created by communist rule made it difficult if not impossible to

⁸¹ Rusinko, *Straddling Borders*, 259.

⁸² Petro Beheni et al, eds., *Kvituchii krai*, trans. Illia Halaida et al, Slovats'ke pedahohichne vidavnistvo /Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1988, 161.

⁸³ From *Нове Життя/Нове З життя*, March 1968 edition, quoted in Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 51. Statements like this were possible to express publicly only for a short period of time in the late 1960s.

acknowledge Rusyn identity publicly. The 1947 Akcja Wisła (Vistula Operation), a mass deportation of approximately 140,000-150,000 Lemkos to the western regions of Poland newly emptied of their former ethnic German populations, remains an incident only slowly brought to light in the midst of a gradually opening society in Poland in the two decades since the fall of Poland's communist government. But the Vistula Operation was preceded by an even larger displacement which left the Lemko community in complete disarray by 1947. The Poles planned the displacement of the Lemkos even before the end of World War II, as a group suspected of supporting the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The UPA had participated in brutal massacres of Poles and was harassing Polish troops in Poland and in Poland's eastern *kresy*, the primarily Ukrainian areas it lost after the war. Many Lemkos claim that they were unfairly perceived as Ukrainian nationalists because of the presence of the UPA fighters on their territory, and insist that "most Lemkos did not support the UPA."⁸⁴ UPA reports, however, show that local people in the Lemko region were very much against the Soviets and spoke "positively about our movement."⁸⁵ Some scholars claim that support for the UPA was "widespread" among the population.⁸⁶ However, there are no numbers that demonstrate the extent of these feelings or how deeply they were derived from anti-Polish Ukrainian nationalism. In any case, it certainly appeared to the Polish government that the UPA fighters were deeply entrenched in Lemko territory, hilly and often forested terrain that made their location and capture difficult.

By September 9, 1944 a border agreement was signed by Nikita Khrushchev, People's Commissar for Ukraine, and Edward Osobka-Morawski, head of the Polish Committee of National Liberation. According to this agreement, every ethnic Ukrainian within Polish territory was to be given the option to emigrate to Soviet Ukraine, and the Soviet Union was to allow the

⁸⁴ Cathy Black, "Dance of the Exile: Jerzy Starzynski, Kyczera, and the Polish Lemkos," *Dance Research Journal*, 40(2) 2008, 41.

⁸⁵ Petro J. Potichnyj and Ivan Lyko, eds., *UPA Tactical Sector 26th "Lemko": Lemkivshchyna and Peremyshl Regions (Documents and Materials)*. Litopys UPA Vol. 33. (Toronto, Lviv: Litopys UPA, 2001), 96.

⁸⁶ Timothy Snyder, "To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All': The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1:2 (1999) 110.

1.3 million Poles stranded in Soviet territory to leave for Poland if they wished. Over three-quarters of a million Poles took advantage of this agreement.⁸⁷ Lemkos, however, were reluctant to leave their homeland. Therefore, in 1945 the Soviet government began first to persuade, and then to pressure them to come to Ukraine. Individuals who did not want to leave soon found themselves facing discrimination from the new communist state as the government began to close Ukrainian or Lemko schools and confiscate property. Soon the army and security forces, controlled by the feared Soviet NKVD, launched raids on Lemko villages.⁸⁸ After “horrifying accounts” of life in Soviet Ukraine began to reach the Lemko region, the populace became even more reluctant to leave Poland. They received no sympathy from the Polish government, however. In response to complaints, a delegate from the Council of Ministers declared: “After the understanding reached with the Soviet Union to establish an ethnographic frontier, we aim to become a national state, and not a state of nationalities...we do wish to remove the problem of national minorities.” In summer 1945, the Soviet official in charge of Ukrainian resettlement asked the Polish authorities to use force against anyone refusing to leave. The Poles agreed. In a cruel twist, most of the soldiers who made up the divisions directing the resettlement were refugees from Volhynia, where Ukrainian nationalists had massacred Poles during the war. They were eager to take revenge for the brutal anti-Polish violence that had affected their own lives.⁸⁹ The total number of Lemkos forced to leave Poland for Ukraine, with hundreds killed by Polish soldiers in the process, remains controversial, but it is estimated that 482,000 people, of whom approximately 300,000 were openly forced, left Poland between 1944 and 1946.⁹⁰

Poles made sure to enforce as much assimilation as possible or at least prevent the re-creation of a significant compactly settled “Ukrainian” territory by keeping Lemko populations at 10% or less in the cities and towns where they were resettled and by deliberately breaking up

⁸⁷ Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Question,” 101-103.

⁸⁸ Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Question,” 104.

⁸⁹ Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Question,” 106.

⁹⁰ Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Question,” 106-7.

their family clan structures.⁹¹ State takeover of Lemko property also helped prevent the possibility of a Lemko revival. Some of their land was sold to ethnic Poles, but much was left in ruins, and on the basis of being “abandoned” property, was taken over by the state.⁹² Some parts were taken over by state-run tree farms and turned into forest, while other lands were transformed into a state nature preserve, the Bieszczady National Park, in 1973. The existence of some villages and their exact locations can now be determined only by satellite technology that has the capability to analyze historical land use.⁹³ Poland maintained no statistical records on Lemkos or other minority communities in Poland after the war, and this effectively erased much of their history, making their present-day claims more difficult.⁹⁴

Rusyns in Slovakia, although they fared much better than the Lemkos, also found themselves entangled in a failed resettlement scheme which soured the dreams of thousands and did much to damage both Rusyn and Ukrainian identity in Slovakia. In 1946 the Czechoslovak government encouraged Rusyns to move to the Ukrainian region of Volhynia to replace Czechs and Poles who were being repatriated. Up to 12,015 people were relocated, some with high hopes of starting a new life as Ukrainians. Some, however, moved to Ukraine under clear threat of punishment. One American descendant of Rusyns from eastern Slovakia describes the migration to Ukraine as a case of “compulsory voluntarism.” In this version of the story, communist officials suddenly arrived at Rusyn homes and demanded of the inhabitants that they should choose at the very least one member of their family for migration to Ukraine—or suffer consequences of unspecified severity.⁹⁵ The local Ukrainian population greeted the new Rusyn arrivals with hostility as “Slovaks.” While initially not allowed to leave the Soviet Union, by the

⁹¹ Black, “The Dance of Exile,” 41.

⁹² Michal Wawrzonek, “The Consequences of the Deportation of Lemkos and the Process of Polish Ukrainian Reconciliation.” In *The Lemko Region, 1939-1947 War, Occupation and Deportation*, ed. Paul Best and Jaroslaw Moklak, <http://www.lemko.org/books/best/9.html>.

⁹³ Per Angelstam, et al. “Assessing Village Authenticity with Satellite Images: A Method to Identify Intact Cultural Landscapes in Europe,” Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, *Ambio* 32:8 (2003), 596-598.

⁹⁴ Susyn Y. Mihalasky, “Lemkos View Poland and Poles,” *Nationalities Papers* 25:4 (1997), 683.

⁹⁵ Interview with the author, Pittsburgh, March 6, 2010.

1960s these forcibly expatriated Rusyns had nearly all returned to Slovakia, believing that of the two official nationality choices then available, Slovak or Ukrainian, it was better to be Slovak.⁹⁶ These families may have contributed to a notable drop in the “Ukrainian” population of Slovakia as noted in the official census records of Czechoslovakia. While in 1950 the census showed a population of 48,231, by 1961 this number had declined to only 35,435 “Ukrainians.”⁹⁷

The new communist governments implemented the official classification of Rusyns as Ukrainian throughout Ukraine, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Schools where instruction had once been in Russian or some version of the vernacular became Ukrainian schools, and Rusyn organizations were renamed. Thus from the start, many people experienced an association of Ukrainian identity as part of the coercive agenda of communist rule—and within a political context that was often brutal. The exception to official implementation of Ukrainian identity was Yugoslavia. There Rusyns were treated as a distinct people defined on their own terms, because they had existed as an independent community since the late 18th century and had an established tradition of using a standard written form of their language, which was clearly different from the languages of the neighboring Serbian and Hungarian communities. Although like many minorities in Yugoslavia they faced some restrictions on their activities in the period after World War II, Rusyn-language radio was available throughout the late 1940s and 1950s in Vojvodina. By the 1960s and 1970s Rusyn educational publishers, literary societies, and Rusyn television had appeared.⁹⁸ In 1974 Rusyn language was granted official status as one of several languages of Vojvodina, along with Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian.⁹⁹ According Mychailo Varga, director of Rusyn schools in Ruski Kerestur, Serbia, in 1992, Rusyn identity was always strong in Yugoslavia. “Our [Serbian] Rusyns were never in error about their ethnicity [*narodnost*’]. They

⁹⁶ Mykola Mušynka, “The Postwar Development of the Regional Culture of the Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia,” in *The Persistence of Regional Cultures*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 59-60.

⁹⁷ Juraj Van’ko, *Language of Slovakia’s Rusyns* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 10.

⁹⁸ Koljesar, Parvensky, *Rusyns of Pannonia*.

⁹⁹ Brian Požun, “Caught in the Middle: Carpatho-Rusyns and the Vojvodina,” *Central Europe Review*, 2:25 (26 June 2000), <http://www.ce-review.org/00/25/pozun25.html>. Last accessed March 12, 2010.

always kept their Rusyn ethnicity and Greek Catholic faith,” and have never had many problems with their “Ukrainian brothers.”¹⁰⁰ Support for a Ukrainian orientation did exist and still exists in parts of Rusyn society in Yugoslavia, but authorities did not aggressively impose Ukrainian identity.

Under conditions involving Ukrainian identity was forcibly imposed from above, it is not difficult to understand that for many Ukrainian identity was unattractive. At least in Slovakia and Poland, assimilation into the state’s majority culture seemed like the better, if not the safer choice. These circumstances have profoundly shaped the experiences of Rusyns and affect the choices that people make about their identity today. In Transcarpathia, a ukrainianization policy was put into effect immediately, starting with the census of 1945. It classified all Rusyns as Ukrainian scholars and politicians were mobilized to transform the Rusyns of Transcarpathia, now the Zakarpats’ka oblast of Soviet Ukraine, into nationally-aware Ukrainians. Historians focused on promulgating a new interpretation of the region’s history: it was originally not connected with the west so much as with Kievan Rus’. Since the Magyar invasions its people had yearned to be united with their eastern brethren, and anything to be found in the regional culture or language that was different from the rest of Ukrainian culture (such as the Greek Catholic Church, which was abolished until the 1960s) must be a Western import that made the culture less pure Ukrainian.¹⁰¹ Rusyn language was relegated to the status of what some called a “museum language”—in other words, dead.¹⁰²

The Russian language and something of a Russian national orientation still remained among some parts of the population, however. In 1945 Transcarpathia became “the first West Ukrainian region to publish a Russian-language daily,” a newspaper entitled *Zakarpatskaia*

¹⁰⁰ Anna Plishkova (Anna Plišková), “Mozheme sia lem zbohachovaty, ” *Rusyn: kulturno-khristiians'kyi chasopis*. Vols. 5, 6 (Prešov, 1992), 41.

¹⁰¹ Magocsi, *Shaping*, 256-8.

¹⁰² Jerry Jumba, Interview with author, Pittsburgh, March 6, 2010. Jumba, studying folk music in Transcarpathia in 1983, angered his official government-provided guide when he used Rusyn to try to buy a pair of slippers in a store. “Do not speak that museum language!” the guide shrieked. “It is a dead language!” But the store clerk understood the dead language and gave Jumba his pair of slippers anyway.

Ukraina. This was the result of lingering Russophile sentiments in the region.¹⁰³ Some also see a cynical manipulation of Ukrainian national ideals by the Russian-led Soviet government. Valerij Padiak, a Rusyn activist from Ukraine, points out that the Russians carefully controlled the process of ukrainianization in Transcarpathia to prevent Ukrainian nationalism from ever growing too strong, forcing the population to adopt Ukrainian language but also encouraging the use of Russian. Television programs and other press were often in Russian, a Russian theater was established in the region, and Russian became a common language in Transcarpathia's cities. Rusyn language, neither ukrainianized nor russified beyond its pre-World War II form, was thus preserved only in small rural villages.¹⁰⁴ But for some, the dawn of the communist era brought a breakthrough and a sense of liberation, and facilitated the creation of a new identity: Rusyn-Ukrainian.

A New Identity? The Rusyn-Ukrainian Idea

Dr. Mikola Mušinka, an academic in his 70s who lives in a Prešov townhouse overflowing with stacks of books and manuscripts that speak to his lifelong dedication to studying Rusyn identity, history and culture, is one of the most outspoken proponents of the Ukrainian orientation among Rusyns in Slovakia today. He is the embodiment of what ukrainianization was intended to accomplish. While he works at the University of Prešov, and his office is located just down the hallway from the newly-launched Department of Rusyn Language and Literature, relations between him and the Rusyn local activists there are somewhat strained. He is seen by some as a representative of the old guard, the socialist-era elite intelligentsia holding on to an outdated view. Mušinka, however, has views shaped not only by the experience of ukrainianization, but also by earlier Russian-oriented approaches that used to hold sway in

¹⁰³ Roman Szporluk, *Russia, Ukraine, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 117.

¹⁰⁴ Valerij Padiak, "Ponizhenie statusa rusinskogo iazyka."

Slovakia. These perhaps tried to mold Rusyns to an identity that simply did not quite fit.

Originally from a small village in eastern Slovakia, Mušinka had begun attending the Russian gymnasium in Prešov in 1947. In the 1950s forced Ukrainianization began, but with little impact, he claims: people at that time thought of themselves as Russian, and according to Mušinka “there was no Rusyn anything.” The first hint for Mušinka that the Russian identity he had been taught was incompatible with his actual ethnicity and language came to him when he went home and read Russian poetry assigned at school to his mother, poetry she simply could barely understand. When the process of ukrainianization was under way, his class was compelled to read the works of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. This time when the young boy brought poetry home to read to his mother she understood it well and was so overcome with emotion that she cried. After a lifetime of believing that beautiful literature could be written only in inaccessible languages, here was an elegantly crafted work of literary art in what sounded very close to her humble peasant speech.

Later, Mušinka’s course of study was influenced by Professor Ivan Pan’kevych, the same Galician Ukrainian nationalist who had worked to incorporate Subcarpathian Rusyns into the Ukrainian nation in the war of grammar books before the war. Pan’kevych first inspired Mušinka to think seriously about his background. Mušinka had always been interested in Rusyn language, songs, and customs, through his family, but peasant culture never seemed to him a worthy subject of study. His attitude began to change when in 1950, as part of the new Ukrainian identity policy, a journal appeared in Prešov, called *Druzhno vpered*. In one issue of the magazine, Pan’kevych published an insert requesting that people record their language and songs in their own villages, and provided instructions on how to do this in a systematic ethnographic method. Mušinka was shocked that his local customs were important enough to record and decided to give it a try. Through this early ethnographic work he gradually realized that his culture was worthy of study and that the customs he knew and loved were not limited to their small villages but were connected with the much larger Ukrainian culture. Pan’kevych became Mušinka’s adored mentor.

After Pan'kevych was expelled from Soviet Ukraine for being a "bourgeois nationalist" and began teaching in Prague, Mušinka went there to study with him. In Prague he was "accepted like a son" of Pan'kevych and his ethnographic training followed Pan'kevych's principles and perspective. To this day Mušinka remains dedicated to Rusyn culture, and believes that the teaching of both Rusyn "dialect" and Ukrainian are necessary for avoiding the gradual assimilation of Rusyns into Slovak society.¹⁰⁵ For people like Mušinka, then, Ukrainian identity gives the small Rusyn ethnicity a status it never had before. Their continual domination by others and failure to achieve nationhood could be placed into the context of Ukraine's historical myths of defending itself against nations that desired to control it and divide its people. Rusyns could be part of the Ukrainian national story, and as part of the Ukrainian nation could now have the opportunity to assert their own traditions and culture in the face of the Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish cultures surrounding them.

The Ukrainian identity policy did not work as well in most cases as it did for Mušinka. Particularly in Slovakia, teachers who actually spoke Ukrainian were scarce. Some who were educated in "Ukrainian" as children discovered later when they went to Ukraine that they were speaking a hybrid form of the language, something in between the Rusyn they knew from home and the language spoken in Kiev—a reminder that they were perhaps not exactly as Ukrainian as they had been taught.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore Rusyn language did not disappear, but lived a "parallel life" on the streets and at home for the children who used Ukrainian in school.¹⁰⁷ Rusyn parents in Slovakia also became increasingly dissatisfied with their children having to study in a language that was neither useful for daily life in Slovakia nor helpful to find success in higher education. As a result of their protests, in a space of just four years, from 1960-1964, 161 Ukrainian schools switched to Slovak.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Mikola Mušinka, interview with the author, Prešov, June 10, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with the author, Prešov, June 13, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with the author, Prešov, June 24, 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Van'ko, *Language of Slovakia's Rusyns*, 10.

One individual whose experience illustrates the failure of ukrainianization among Slovak Rusyns is a middle-aged Rusyn man, “Michal,” who today despite the evidence of a completely Rusyn extended family, identifies as Slovak. He pointedly refuses to use the term Rusyn when talking about Rusyn language and culture unless prompted specifically to do so. He grew up in a tiny Rusyn village directly on the Slovak-Polish border with a population around 100 and presently lives with his Slovak wife and children in a city slightly beyond the western edges of Rusyn territory. As he recounts, being Rusyn resulted in specific disadvantages in life, and therefore he simply sees no future in trying to maintain any Rusyn identity either for himself or for his children. He believes that Ukrainian-language elementary education harmed his later academic progress. During his school years in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Ukrainian language policy was still in place throughout Slovakia so he, his brother, and the other children from the village were abruptly confronted with a new language to learn. From the first through fourth grades, all subjects were taught in Ukrainian, which gradually became nearly like another native language. Thereafter all subjects were presented in Slovak. After sixth grade it was necessary to attend a school in another larger town, where all subjects were in Slovak, although Ukrainian could be studied as an elective class. In addition, it was also mandatory to study Russian!

These transitions for Michal were decidedly tough, and to this day he suffers from what he describes as a “split” in his mind—some areas of knowledge for him are in Ukrainian, while others are in Slovak. He cannot discuss any subjects he has studied in Rusyn, his first native language. He asserts that because of all the language confusion in his education, he too often struggles to articulate his thoughts in Slovak, the language he currently needs to use in most areas of life. For many years he worked as a border guard, but since Slovakia has joined the Schengen Area and borders with the nearest neighboring country, Poland, have melted away, his service became irrelevant. He subsequently worked as a security guard in a large department store, and

recently has had to make lengthy trips away from his family to work as a laborer in Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁹

Michal does not entirely blame a lack of better career opportunities on his Rusyn identity and the difficulties it created for his education, but he firmly believes it played a role. He has also senses a certain level of prejudice against Rusyns by Slovaks—and described in particular that his wife’s brother had once mocked his Rusyn accent. He tries, therefore, to downplay his Rusyn origins. Until recently, in fact, his Slovak wife and his children did not know that he was actually Rusyn. Although the family has spent some time in his native village, he has told them that what they speak is a “local village dialect” of Slovak. Even there he avoids speaking the “dialect,” but chooses to communicate in Slovak with anyone else who can manage it. He seems especially intent that his children should never be burdened with Rusyn identity. His children have never learned any Rusyn, and currently attend a school specializing in the teaching of German and English. They are now fluent in German and quickly progressing in English, and hope to move to bigger cities of Slovakia or to Western countries in the future, where they can find good jobs.¹¹⁰

The official Ukrainian identity policy for Rusyns during the communist era thus met with varying levels of success. To some Rusyns, frustrated with the outdated Russian orientation still lingering from the Dukhnovych era, a cultural and linguistic orientation that in few ways matched their real experience and had never resulted in any real cooperation or aid from Russia to their people, understanding themselves as Ukrainian brought a sense of liberation. The new Soviet-backed interpretation of Ukrainian history claiming that Western powers were responsible for continually dividing and oppressing the Ukrainian population on their borders made sense to Rusyns who wondered why they had never achieved political independence on par with the nations around them and who felt victimized by the Hungarians and Poles. But too many more people discovered that they also could not connect with their “Ukrainian” identity. For Lemkos,

¹⁰⁹ Email correspondence with author, May 28, 2009.

¹¹⁰ Interview with author, Kežmarok, Slovakia, May 2008.

being “Ukrainian” had fragmented their people and nearly destroyed their culture. For the disillusioned Slovak-Rusyn returnees from Ukraine, it seemed that Ukrainians did not see them as part of the same nation. Facing discrimination from Slovaks, they were eager to leave their “Ukrainian” past behind them and give their children a more successful Slovak future. Finally, the temporary abolition of the Greek Catholic Church and other oppressive policies common in the socialist system (such as the confiscation of land described in the *Nove zhittia* quote) created a firm association of the officially-sponsored Ukrainian identity and the difficulties of daily life under communism. As communist governments began to crumble throughout eastern Europe, their official policies could finally be questioned, and many Rusyns began to question openly the policies that had turned them into Rusyn-Ukrainians.

3 The Contemporary Rusyn Movement

Language and Identity Creation Revisited

In the years just before the fall of Czechoslovakia’s communist government, people who eventually became the Rusyn activists of the next two decades were beginning to notice the mood of their people changing. In 1987, journalist Anna Plišková, a future Rusyn activist and co-founder of the organization *Rusinska obroda* (Rusyn Renaissance Society) and the Rusyn-language newspaper *Narodný novynký*, graduated from her university after an entire education in the Ukrainian language. Education in Ukrainian did not trouble Anna, although at times she had stopped to wonder why the parents of some of her other Rusyn friends chose to send them to Slovak schools rather than to the Ukrainian ones. But by the time Anna began her first job as an editor for *Nove Zhittia* (the Ukrainian-language newspaper in Slovakia), change was accelerating. Anna’s realization that use of the vernacular Rusyn language was a worthy pursuit came to her

over time. As a journalist for a paper serving the Rusyn community of eastern Slovakia, Anna often traveled to Rusyn villages to cover events and interview people. She was surprised that she repeatedly ran into the same question from Rusyn villagers: “Why are you writing for this paper in a language that we do not understand?” The two years between 1987 and 1989 Anna calls her “school of life” which formed her new national identity. The crumbling of the communist regime in 1989 made this process happen faster for her, she claims, and probably for other people as well. Momentous changes in the political and social order forced people to reconsider their understanding of their place in society, and allowed them to think more freely and believe in their own power to choose more than they had ever known previously.¹¹¹

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the communist system, the ukrainianization policy on Rusyns, already to a certain extent ineffective, was fairly quickly abandoned. Rusyns once again found themselves in conditions conducive for a viable national movement, this time armed with greater literacy of the population, modern legal systems protecting minority groups, and the possibility for wide international communication and organization. Within two years after 1989 new Rusyn organizations were established in every country where Rusyns live. Rusyn activists in the emerging contemporary Rusyn movement were determined not to make the same mistake of failing to insist upon a unified and unique identity for the Rusyn people. This time around, they would focus on strengthening the features that make them distinct from other related peoples. Therefore it is not surprising that the contemporary Rusyn movement’s strongest focus throughout its existence, and the field of some of its greatest successes, has been in language development—making judgments about the “linguistic line” that draw an “ethnic line” (following Fishman) between themselves and others, and creating an “imagined community” that they hoped would eventually encompass all speakers of Rusyn.

Why did language become the immediate focus of the Rusyn movement? Language is popularly conflated with the concept of ethnicity, and a distinct language is thus interpreted to

¹¹¹ Anna Plišková, Interview with the author, Prešov, Slovakia, June 24, 2009.

signify a distinct people. Reetta Toivanen, discussing movements for the rights of minority languages throughout Europe explains that “many of the groups treated as ‘language minorities’ are actually seeking official recognition of either their cultural distinctiveness or their difference, while language is only one element—often of varying importance—of their group identity.”¹¹² This was exactly the situation of the Rusyns at the outset of their newest movement. Rusyn activists assessing their position in 1989 could look to the Rusyns of Yugoslavia as an example. They, in contrast to all other Rusyns, had embraced their vernacular language from the beginning of their settlement in Serbia, eagerly published in it, taught their children in it, and were largely accepted by their surrounding society as exactly what they claimed to be—Rusyns. By the year 2000, the Rusyn community had “the lowest rate of illiteracy and the highest percentage of individuals with a secondary or higher education in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,” with over half of all ethnically Rusyn students receiving some instruction in the Rusyn language.¹¹³ Thus, Rusyn activists in other countries saw that development of their own language could be an effective way to “prove” their ethnic distinctiveness and create the basis for a strong “imagined community” of Rusyns who would recognize each other as part of the same nation. They also hoped to gain legitimacy in the eyes of their neighbors and the powerful political institutions of the world to whom for so long they had been only marginal people with a marginal language, difficult to define.

But if, as Toivanen insists, “language is an instrumental symbol, which can easily be put to serve some of the political purposes of the minority, relying on the generalized belief diffuse in our societies that language, as one’s mother tongue, is a natural sign of one’s ethnic identity,”¹¹⁴ then might a movement like that of the Rusyns be prone to manipulation and dishonesty? Might certain people use language in this way for their own political ends and not because a language

¹¹² Reetta Toivanen, “Linguistic Diversity and the Paradox of Rights Discourse,” in Dario Castiglione and Chris Longman, eds., *The Language Question in Europe and Diverse Societies* (Oxford and Portland: Hart Publishing, 2007), 101.

¹¹³ Požun, “Caught in the Middle.”

¹¹⁴ Toivanen, “Linguistic Diversity,” 105.

truly possesses enough features to make it clearly distinct from others, or not enough common features among its varying dialects to be honestly considered a common language? This is certainly what some critics of the Rusyn movement have been quick to point out. The historian and Marxist theorist Eric Hobsbawm roundly condemned Rusyn, Croatian, and several other languages as being “purely political languages—that is, languages which are created specifically as symbols of nationalist or regionalist aspiration, generally for separatist or secessionist purposes.” Calling the justification for such languages “nonexistent” Hobsbawm claimed that “neither communication nor culture,”¹¹⁵ but only politics are the reason for certain groups to assert the rights of their own small languages. Likewise, some Ukrainian and Ukrainian-oriented Rusyn critics have decried what they call “political Rusynism”¹¹⁶—a fabricated movement intended to put political power into the hands of a few activists, and prevent the Rusyn people from realizing their natural linguistic and cultural affiliation to the wider Ukrainian nation.

But for many Rusyns, specifically those who are actively involved in the Rusyn movement and those whom they hope to serve, working to increase the status of the Rusyn language is very much about restoring self-respect to a people which has for so long seen itself in an inferior position in society. Rusyns have been generally hesitant to assert themselves aggressively, but through work in language development they have a way to restore a sense of self-worth and value to their people. Rusyns in Slovakia, for example, explained that while they do not feel any noticeable discrimination towards themselves, several identified the terms, “crazy Rusnak” or “stupid Rusnak” as common “humorous” comments directed at them by non-Rusyns.¹¹⁷ A young man who speaks Slovak and Rusyn fluently said that when Slovak friends

¹¹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, “Language, Culture, and National Identity,” *Social Research* 63:4 (Winter 1996) 1077-1078.

¹¹⁶ Magdalena Dembinska, “Adapting to Changing Contexts of Choice: The Nation-Building Strategies of Unrecognized Silesians and Rusyns,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 41:4 (December 2008), 921 and Mikola Mušinka, Interview with the author, Prešov, Slovakia, June 10, 2009.

¹¹⁷ Interviews with the author, especially those of June 1, June 24, July 12, 2009.

discover he is Rusyn, “they are usually amused by the fact.”¹¹⁸ According to Camille C. O’Reilly, along with official recognition and favorable laws, languages also need to possess a certain perceived legitimacy to survive. Legitimacy comes not only from the laws set from above but also “has to do with ideas about appropriateness and expectations.”¹¹⁹ At the beginning of the Rusyn movement the Rusyn language had almost no legitimacy, and after more than two decades since the end of the communist regime, native speakers still struggle with this problem. Rusyns have, through their historical experience and their experience as minorities today, learned a sense of shame about their language.¹²⁰ Perhaps this is why Rusyns in Serbia and Slovakia reported that in mixed-language crowds, Rusyns switch languages to accommodate even one non-Rusyn participant in the conversation, but that those people who enjoy a proud national heritage would never do such a thing. Some have learned to resist the impulse to devalue Rusyn language. “I have learned to be proud of my language by watching the Hungarians,” one Rusyn woman explains. “If there are 100 people in a crowd, and two Hungarians in that crowd find each other, they will suddenly only speak Hungarian, even if nobody else can understand them. Rusyns are the opposite. If there are 100 Rusyns in a crowd and one Slovak, all the Rusyns will speak Slovak to accommodate him!”¹²¹

As Rusyn organizations mobilized throughout Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine and Serbia, language became a primary goal. By March 1991, the First World Congress of Rusyns—the umbrella organization of delegates from Rusyn groups in all the countries in which Rusyns live—met and agreed to organize a conference to resolve the issue of standardizing the Rusyn language

¹¹⁸ Written correspondence with the author, August 15, 2009.

¹¹⁹ Camille C. O’Reilly, “Introduction: Minority Languages, Ethnicity and the State in the European Union,” ed. Camille C. O’Reilly, *Language, Ethnicity and the State*, Vol. 1 (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 10.

¹²⁰ Patricia A. Krafcik, “The Power of a Newspaper: *Narodný Novynký*,” *Committing Community: Carpatho-Rusyn Studies as an Emerging Scholarly Discipline*, ed. Elaine Rusinko (New York: Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, 2009) 91. Also, interview with the author, July 13, 2009. Respondent cited being ashamed of one’s ethnicity as a fundamental characteristic distinguishing Rusyns from other peoples.

¹²¹ Vierka Janočková, Interview with the author, May 2008 and discussion at World Congress of Rusyns, Vrbas, Serbia, June 6, 2009.

with the help of international experts.¹²² The first conference on the creation of a literary standard was held in November 1992 in Bardejovské Kúpele in Slovakia. This “First Congress of the Rusyn Language,” as it came to be known, included scholars from the Congress’s organizers in the Rusyn Renaissance Society, as well as scholars from the United States and around Europe. The most famous figure at the conference was Joshua Fishman, who gave a lecture on the beginnings of similar language projects in various parts of the world. Professor Georges Darms from the University of Fribourg discussed how the Romansch of Switzerland developed several different literary variants and a single literary standard, and Professor Elaine Mollo from the University of Nice discussed the development of the Monegasque, the literary language of Monaco. This variety of speakers highlighted the hopes of Rusyns to participate in European life after their isolation during the Communist era. Rusyns were reassured that groups can be small but maintain a distinct identity and can even thrive.

The Rusyns were firmly placed in the context of other small peoples of Europe, as they shared the new, positive attitude toward multilingualism that was spreading through Europe. The same year, 1992, the Council of Europe’s Charter on Regional or Minority Languages was ratified, and remains the major statement of minority rights in Europe. The Charter is not legally binding but “provides an opportunity for states to subscribe to common principles” while giving them “almost total freedom to define and choose which measures to apply in their own territories” and leaving them to decide for themselves which minority languages deserve protections under the Charter.¹²³ Over the next decade all states where Rusyns live signed on to this agreement and recognized Rusyn as a protected language, except for Ukraine, which has excluded them from its list of protected languages.¹²⁴ In the next decade and a half after the fall of communist governments Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania joined the European Union, a

¹²² Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 59-60.

¹²³ O’Reilly, *Language, Ethnicity and the State*, 12.

¹²⁴ “The Database for the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages,” the Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research, Hungary, <http://languagecharter.eokik.hu/index.htm>, last accessed April 2, 2010.

move applauded by many Rusyn activist leaders. Because “the language policy pursued by the EU is built upon multiculturalism and multilingualism, thereby deviating in essential ways from the nation-state political form,”¹²⁵ more widespread recognition in Europe and greater cooperation with other small peoples of Europe and with European institutions could be helpful for those hoping to preserve Rusyn language, and through the language, develop a kind of Rusyn national identity.

The Prešov Region (Slovakia) variant of Rusyn was finally codified in 1995. The Declaration, signed by the executive council of the Rusyn Renaissance Society, reveals the meaning that this successful effort had for the Rusyns of Slovakia. It meant a correction of injustices. For the Rusyns of Slovakia, it became proof that their small language was as worthy of respect as any other. The Declaration states:

Now that the doors of democracy have opened wider and allowed for the development of our spiritual culture, it has become possible to correct the wrongs done to Rusyns in the past, to give them back their native language, and to allow them the same possibilities for spiritual development given to all other nationalities living in the Slovak Republic... A codified Rusyn language provides us with the possibility to show that it has like other contemporary languages all the possibilities for expressing the thoughts, inner feelings, and aspirations of today's modern society.¹²⁶

Congratulatory letters came to the Rusyns of Slovakia from around Europe, including from the United Nations Center for Human Rights (Switzerland), the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (Ireland), the Minority Rights Group (London, UK), the Fédération Européenne des Maisons de Pays (Brittany, France), and the Society for Threatened Peoples (Germany). They invited Rusyns to work cooperatively for their rights and the maintenance of their languages. One of the strongest expressions of support came from Dónall O Raigáin, the Secretary General of the

¹²⁵ Alexander Caviedes, “The Role of Language in Nation-Building in the European Union,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 27 (2003) 263.

¹²⁶ Paul Robert Magocsi, ed., “Declaration on the Occasion of the Celebratory Announcement of the Codification of the Rusyn Language in Slovakia,” *A New Slavic Language is Born* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xi.

European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. He wrote about the importance of achieving a written form of the language and reminded Rusyns that other minority peoples of Europe were their allies: “For too long our languages and those who spoke them have been oppressed and marginalized... Alone we are weak and ineffective. Together we are many millions and strong... Together we stand and together we shall succeed.”¹²⁷

A harshly negative response to the codification of Rusyn in Slovakia came from Ivan Drach, Chairman of the Ukrainian World Coordinating Council in Kiev. In an open letter of protest published in Kiev, he wrote that “there are no scholarly or linguistic grounds for codifying a creole language (*suržyk*),” and that far from being a genuine expression of the people’s everyday speech, Rusyn language has been “developed in the test-tubes of Ukrainophobic alchemists.”¹²⁸ Due to the political circumstances in Ukraine, an official codified version of the Rusyn dialect of that region has not yet been finalized. In 1999, Slovakia adopted a “Law on the use of the languages of national minorities,” which allows villages or towns with at least a 20% national minority population to post signs in the minority language and to use the language for administrative purposes. This qualifies at least 92 villages in the Prešov region to use Rusyn, but many still do not take advantage of this right, a great concern to Rusyn activists.¹²⁹

Literary efforts that have come out of the development of codified forms of Rusyn have been particularly successful. All the countries where Rusyns live produce either print publications or online news sites in Rusyn. In Serbia, Rusyn newspapers have been published since 1924 and the paper *Ruske slovo* continues to be printed.¹³⁰ In Slovakia the publications *Rusyn*, *InfoRusin* and *Narodný novynky* are intended to expand the horizons of the Rusyn language. They offer a

¹²⁷ “Greetings on the Codification of the Rusyn Language in Slovakia,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 18:1 (Spring 1995), 5-6.

¹²⁸ Ivan Drač, “Codification: Another Viewpoint,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 18:1 (Spring 1995), 7. *Surzhyk* (or *suržyk* in Slovak spelling as in the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*) is an often derogatory term referring to Ukrainian mixed with other languages, especially to the mix of Ukrainian and Russian spoken throughout much of eastern and southern Ukraine. Drač goes on to express fears that “anti-Ukrainian forces” and “enemies of Ukraine” have created the Rusyn language specifically to destabilize Ukraine.

¹²⁹ Juraj Van’ko, “The Rusyn Language in Slovakia: between a rock and a hard place,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 183 (2007), 84-85.

¹³⁰ Požun, “Caught in the Middle.”

chance for Rusyns to read about news in the Rusyn community, as well as to participate in creative writing in Rusyn. Literature, as in the 19th century, provides a powerful means for Rusyns to express and promote their identity. In the September 3, 2008 issue of *Narodnŷ novynkŷ*, for example, poet Maria Girova published a poem concerning the right to write in the Rusyn language. She includes a statement expressing her “great joy and pride that we today can write freely and at will”¹³¹ and thanking the newspaper for providing a venue for Rusyn writers to pursue their art. Her poem clearly expresses the newer Rusyn nationalist position: in the past, Rusyns were never sure of who they were, always clinging to something or someone perceived to be better and greatly undervaluing themselves. But in this new time, Rusyns finally have a chance to take pride in themselves:

“Rusyn Will Not Perish”
by Maria Girova

The years have stifled us,
Crushed us down against the earth,
Forbidden us to declare
Who we are.

We Rusyns have quietly
Served so many,
That which is native, maternal to us
We have shared with strangers.
As they say so beautifully
In a certain proverb:
“If you want to conquer—
humble yourself deeply.”
Humble yourself, Rusyn,
Push down even more deeply
That which you have in your heart;
And let no one take it from you.

For freedom has come
Also for you, Rusyn,
Your language, your word
Will not perish!

You have the right to write
And to praise your own,

¹³¹ Maria Girova, “Acknowledgements,” *Narodnŷ novynkŷ*, No. 33-36, September 3, 2008, 2. Translated by the author.

Just like your own mother
Taught you.¹³²

The Aleksander Dukhnovych Theater (Divadlo Alexandra Duchnoviča) in Prešov has become one of the important cultural beacons for the Rusyn community in Slovakia. Founded in 1945 as the Ukrainian National Theater, its early performances were largely in Russian and focused on Russian classics. In 1950 when the Ukrainization policies began to take effect the language used in the theater changed to Ukrainian. During the 1980s as the Rusyn movement began to take shape, the theater transitioned into the use of Rusyn language, “which is for our ethnicity the most understandable and comprehensible.” In 1990 the name of the theater was changed to its current one to commemorate the work of Aleksander Dukhnovych, and its website describes the theater’s main mission as “the creation of conditions for the formation and public spread of theater arts with a particular aim towards the development of the cultural life of Rusyns living in the Slovak Republic.”¹³³ The decision to use Rusyn language is stressed as stemming from the demand of the local population, which in the last two census counts declared itself as Rusyn, an impossibility in the previous 40 years.

Theater director Marian Marko explained that the theater serves an important purpose, reinforcing the perceived legitimacy of the Rusyn language, and hopefully, instilling pride in the people who come to see the plays: “From my position, I try to show people that theater can be done in Rusyn, even Shakespeare, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Schiller.”¹³⁴ The actors in the theater are proud of their Rusyn identity and proud to be performing using the Rusyn language.¹³⁵ One actor said he had moved from Ukraine and so, “some people in Ukraine see me as a traitor

¹³² Maria Girova, “Rusyn Will Not Perish,” *Narodný novynký*, No. 33-36, September 3, 2008, 2. Translated by the author.

¹³³ “Divadlo Alexandra Duchnoviča: Stručná charakteristika inštitúcie,” Divadlo Alexandra Duchnoviča / Teatr Aleksandra Dukhnovycha. <http://divadload.sk/o-nas.php>, last accessed March 30, 2010.

¹³⁴ Marian Marko, Interview with the author, Prešov, Slovakia, June 22, 2009.

¹³⁵ The Aleksander Dukhnovych Theater is a small regional theater, but one of its actors is particularly proud to have played a small role in the 2005 film *Everything is Illuminated*, directed by Liev Schreiber and based on the novel by Jonathan Safran Foer. Rusyn actor Igor Latta plays a villager who gives the main characters directions when they are lost in Ukraine.

because I've chosen to work in a Rusyn theater. But I love it and I use the Rusyn language. The people are Rusyn, not Ukrainian!" While the theater is sometimes criticized for failing to engage people living outside of major cities and in the small Rusyn villages further north and east, it is expanding this part of its work.

One example of this expansion, from June 2009, was its hosting of the Dukhnovych Competition, a Rusyn language competition for children, sponsored by *Rusinska obroda* and the Slovak Ministry of Culture's Program for the Culture of National Minorities. The participants in the competition were all children from various Rusyn-language programs in Slovak schools, who ranged in age from approximately four or five up to sixteen years old. The competitions included a number of categories, including recitation of Rusyn poems, recitation of fairytales, fables, or modern Rusyn stories, jokes and humorous stories, recitation of one's own literary competitions, and theatrical performances, including an impressive production of an unusual musical version of the Snow White story. Several schools whose children won prizes were given small sums to help improve their Rusyn language programs. The children who put on the performance of Snow White won in their category and received free tickets to attend a performance of a Rusyn-language version of Friedrich Durrenmatt's play *An Angel Comes to Babylon* in Stará Ľubovňa, where the Dukhnovych Theater came on tour.¹³⁶

The performance of *An Angel Comes to Babylon* in Stará Ľubovňa illustrated in several ways the importance of outreach to Rusyn regions beyond the immediate Prešov area. The medium-sized theater was nearly at capacity, confirming that an eager audience exists for performances offered in Rusyn. *Rusinska obroda* had organized the event, and along with play programs handed out copies of its own Rusyn-language newspaper, *InfoRusin*. At least half of the people took a copy. Many children attended the performance, including the Dukhnovych Competition winners. While this play contains rather serious subject matter, it was clear that the

¹³⁶ Dukhnovych Competition, Alexander Dukhnovych Theater, Prešov. Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture's Program for the Culture of National Minorities, and *Rusinska obroda*, June 12, 2009.

parents of many small children at the performance were making a point to give their children an opportunity to see Rusyn language used in a sophisticated way. But the performance also revealed concerns for the Rusyn movement. Embarrassingly for all present, the person who announced the performance and made introductory remarks about the theater and its mission called it the *Andrei Dukhnovych Theater*—revealing a surprising lack of knowledge about one of the most important figures of Rusyn history, and most closely associated with the first Rusyn attempt at a national movement.¹³⁷

Literature and theater are closely related areas of culture foregrounding some Rusyn language success, but the great challenge for Rusyn activists is to have the Rusyn language be useful and appropriate to its speakers in many other aspects of their lives. According to Florian Coulmas's theory of language birth and death, whether a language thrives or withers away depends on the number of its active communication domains. Languages "emerge and disappear, their ranges expand and shrink" in a competitive relationship "where a language comes into use for certain functions formerly reserved to another."¹³⁸ In his view, some languages die simply because they are no longer useful enough for the needs of their speakers. Rusyn activists try to prevent this from happening to their own language. Since codification of the language in Slovakia and Poland, Rusyn activists have hoped to inspire ordinary Rusyns not only to preserve Rusyn in those communication domains where it has traditionally been dominant in Rusyn society—the home and religious life—but to expand it into other areas. These include especially formal education, town administration, and media, where it has never had a chance to develop or be taken seriously. The Slovak state radio carries programs for the minority groups of Slovakia, including for Rusyns. In Serbia, Radio Novi Sad had (as of 2000) 4 hours of Rusyn programming

¹³⁷ Performance of *An Angel Comes to Babylon* by the *Divadlo Alexandra Duchnoviča* in Stará Ľubovňa, June 23, 2009.

¹³⁸ Florian Coulmas, *Language and Economy* (London: Blackwell, 1992), 153.

per week and there were 10-minute broadcasts of news in Rusyn 5 days a week as well as a 60-minute Rusyn show each Saturday.¹³⁹

The Rusyn language is in the difficult position of trying to launch itself as an independent language at the same time when Rusyns face possible assimilation with the majority populations in the countries where they live. Evidence of the Rusyn language fading evoked strong feelings at the World Forum of Rusyn Youth in June 2009, which met jointly with the 10th World Congress of Rusyns. There, Rusyn youth delegations from the United States and Romania were unable to carry on a discussion in Rusyn and the common language of the meeting quickly became English. The situation provoked some controversy and anxiety about what the future could look like if the Rusyn language is lost.¹⁴⁰ Rusyn language education is one of the goals of the Rusyn activists, but progress on that front has been slow. One problem may be lack of money. Activist-author Mal'covska, for example, laments that not enough money is circulating in the Rusyn population to support a private school system in which all instruction would be in Rusyn.¹⁴¹ A more serious problem, however, is a lack of interest among Rusyn parents, who instead hope that their children will learn not only the national language but also important international languages, in order to obtain lucrative work anywhere in their own country or abroad. In a Europe where “90% of all pupils in secondary education...are now learning English,”¹⁴² this sentiment is understandable—no parent wants their child to be at a disadvantage.

As work was being done on the codification of Rusyn, a survey was conducted in Slovakia to assess potential interest among parents in having their children study Rusyn in school. According to that 1994 survey, the parents of a total of only 582 elementary schoolchildren were interested in having their children study Rusyn.¹⁴³ The teaching of Rusyn language at the

¹³⁹ Požun, “Caught in the Middle.”

¹⁴⁰ Author’s field notes, Ruski Kerestur, Serbia, June 5, 2009.

¹⁴¹ Interview, June 24, 2009.

¹⁴² Commission of the European Communities, High Level Group on Multilingualism, *Final Report* (Luxembourg: European Communities, 2007), 7.

¹⁴³ Plišková, *Rusinsky jazyk*, 97.

elementary level was implemented beginning in 1997, but the program has not successfully expanded, and as of the 2006-07 school year, Rusyn was being taught as an elective or extracurricular subject at only eight schools, with a total of only 198 students choosing to study it.¹⁴⁴ Until 2008, no schools featured Rusyn as the language of instruction, but with funding from Rusyn-Canadian businessman Steven Chepa, the first elementary school with instruction in Rusyn language was opened in September.¹⁴⁵

As in many areas, the Rusyns in Serbia have been ahead by maintaining schools (if only a few) with instruction in Rusyn for years. Most notably, the Petro Kuzmjak Gymnasium in Ruski Kerestur provides Rusyn-language education, and schools provide mixed Serbian and Rusyn instruction. Crucially, the University of Novi Sad has had a Department of Rusyn Language and Literature and has conducted its program since 1982. In Poland, the study of the Lemko language in schools was revived in 1991, based on a standard grammar written in the 1930s. Since 1999 teaching of Lemko has been recognized by the government and is financially supported by the state. As of 2005, 20 elementary and 13 secondary schools were teaching the Lemko language in Poland.¹⁴⁶

Rusyns in Ukraine face an even greater uphill battle in trying to educate children and keep the Rusyn language alive. In 2003 activist Valerij Padiak established a charitable fund called “Rusyn School” with the help of American and Canadian donors, running a program of Sunday schools teaching language, culture, history, geography, and religion.¹⁴⁷ “Rusyn School” initially encountered some resistance from state school officials, who rejected establishing of Rusyn-language classes within the school program, citing, among other reasons, the teachers’ refusal to

¹⁴⁴ Plikšová, *Rusinsky jazyk*, 100.

¹⁴⁵ Aleksander Zozuliak, “We Have Waited for This 55 Years,” *Narodný Novynký*, No. 33-36, September 3, 2008, 1.

¹⁴⁶ Bogdan Horbal, “Contested by Whom? Lemko Rusyns in the Post-Communist World,” *Europa Ethnica* 1:65 (2008) 50.

¹⁴⁷ Valerij Padiak, *Vozrozhinia rusyns'koho oshkolovania na Podkarpatskii Rusi 2003-2008* (Uzhhorod: Vydavatel'stvo V. Padiaka 2008) 23.

teach this subject—a claim that proved to be untrue.¹⁴⁸ Through careful negotiations with individual schools, classes grew between 2004 and 2008 from 16 participating schools with 386 students to 40 participating schools with 858 students.¹⁴⁹ Some of the schools were recently co-opted by a Rusyn faction led by Fr. Dmitry Sydor, whose organization supports a pro-Russian ethnic orientation and political autonomy for Transcarpathia. These schools have done very poorly financially, despite reportedly receiving a grant worth nearly \$40,000 from the Russian organization *Russkii Mir*. Currently 23 schools are running Rusyn-language programs independent of Sydor.¹⁵⁰

Language scholar Fishman has noted that threatened languages are not best served by being taught only in school as a foreign language. They must also be reinforced at home, so that the threatened language does not become restricted solely to the school environment. He advocates education for adults in threatened minority languages,¹⁵¹ something as yet not much explored in the Rusyn case, but urgent: Elementary education is currently stalled in part because few adults are qualified to teach the language.¹⁵² Prešov University is trying to fill this serious gap with a program of Rusyn language and literature studies, and is trying to expand. Students have the option to concentrate on Rusyn literature as part of a major in Slovak and in a variety of other disciplines.¹⁵³ For the first time in the summer of 2010 a Rusyn-language summer school will be offered at the University of Prešov, geared in particular to train potential teachers of Rusyn language. Focus is on those who already speak Rusyn but lack a grounding in the study of grammar or teaching. Scholarships are available mostly to Rusyns from Ukraine, because they face visa fees that students from the EU do not. Whether potential Rusyn teachers from Slovakia

¹⁴⁸ Padiak, *Vozrozhinia rusyns'koho oshkolovania*, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Padiak, *Vozrozhinia rusyns'koho oshkolovania*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Valerij Padiak, “*Status rusynskoi narodnosti v konteksti suchasnoho obshchestvennoho dvihania na Podkarpattii*,” presentation at the Institute for Rusyn Language and Culture, Prešov (Uzhhorod: *Vyskumnyi tsenter karpatistiki*/Carpathian Research Center) December 17, 2009, 7.

¹⁵¹ Joshua Fishman, “Why is it so Hard to Save a Threatened Language?” In *Can Threatened Languages be Saved?* ed. Joshua A. Fishman, 1-22 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001), 15.

¹⁵² Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 100.

¹⁵³ Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 101.

and Poland will be able to afford the 900 Euro cost of the program remains to be seen, but if successful, this program could be an important way to increase the prestige of Rusyn language and to improve existing programs for the teaching of the language to elementary and middle school-age students.¹⁵⁴

The Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are also active in Rusyn language promotion. These two traditional faiths of the Rusyns have a mixed record at supporting efforts to develop Rusyn language and identity. A small group of about twenty priests of the Greek Catholic Church, called the Circle of Rusyn Greek Catholic Priests, has become a force for promoting Rusyn language in Slovakia. Father František Krainiak, who had already begun work on Rusyn language in the 1980s, has been the prime mover on the Rusyn issue in the Church, and already at that time produced a Rusyn *Book of Acts and the Gospel*, which was officially recognized by Bishop Ján Babjak in 1997.¹⁵⁵ Father Krainiak has produced a complete edition of the gospels in Rusyn, a book displayed with great pride at the recent 10th World Congress of Rusyns in Ruski Kerestur, Serbia. But permission to use this book in religious services has so far not been forthcoming.¹⁵⁶

Progress on official approval for Rusyn-language gospels, service books, and religious literature has been slow partly because traditionally only Church Slavonic has been used as a liturgical language and some authorities see the use of Rusyn as a form of secularization. Rusyn is only allowed in a few parishes, and education at the Greek Catholic Seminary in Prešov is in Slovak, something which several priests have protested.¹⁵⁷ Rusyn Greek Catholic priests appealed to the Pope for assistance in both 1997 and 2003, but were ignored. Again in 2007 representatives of the World Congress of Rusyns wrote once more to Rome on behalf of Rusyn priests, asking

¹⁵⁴ American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. Listing of 2010 Summer Programs in Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies. Studium Carpato-Ruthenorum program information, <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~aaass/additional/summerprograms-2010.html#easteurope>.

¹⁵⁵ Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 88.

¹⁵⁶ Author's field notes, World Congress of Rusyns, Ruski Kerestur, June 5, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 90.

for a specifically Rusyn Greek Catholic Church to be established in Slovakia to allow the 35,000 Rusyn-speaking Greek Catholics of Slovakia “their rights to use their mother tongue, Rusyn, in liturgical ceremonies, the right to post Rusyn priests in parishes with Rusyn congregations, and the right to educate Rusyn theologians to preach among Rusyn believers in the Rusyn language.”¹⁵⁸ So far, this effort has also been stalled. The remaining Rusyn speakers of Slovakia mostly belong to the Orthodox Church, which has largely continued to advocate the more traditional Church Slavonic and avoid political involvement. Because it was not shut down in the Communist era as was the Greek Catholic Church, it also tends to be associated with a Ukrainian orientation.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, some Rusyn Orthodox priests do try to help develop Rusyn language in their individual congregations. For example, on July 13, 2009 (St. Peter and Paul Day in the Orthodox Church), a few Orthodox congregations from around eastern Slovakia gathered for a service and picnic in a small village near the city of Medzilaborce. The sermon was given in Rusyn, an unusual occurrence receiving positive reviews from church members in conversations after the service. The priests present at the event refused interviews, but it was clear that they were supporters of Rusyn culture and language. The priest who gave the sermon in Rusyn had made an intense effort to be able to do so—his native language was Slovak.¹⁶⁰

Finally, Rusyns face one more challenge in their efforts to develop a distinct identity through building a strong and distinct language: to create a form of the language that will be equally accessible to all Rusyns, regardless of their native country and their native dialect. Success in this appears distant. As in any language standardization process, some of the variety in dialects that Rusyns cherish is lost in the current standardized forms of Rusyn. For example, Rusyn language in Slovakia is divided by linguists into an eastern and western dialect group, but the most prominent Rusyn activists and language planners in Slovakia have been from the eastern

¹⁵⁸ Aleksander Zozuliak and Paul Robert Magocsi, et al, “Request of the delegates and guests of the 9th World Congress of Rusyns for recognition of the Rusyn Greek-Catholic Church sui iuris in Slovakia and the appointment of its Rusyn bishop,” *Rusyn* 2 (2007), 23.

¹⁵⁹ Plišková, *Rusínsky jazyk*, 91.

¹⁶⁰ Author’s notes from this service and picnic, July 13, 2009.

region, and the current standardized form of the language there favors eastern forms, making certain aspects of the western dialects “substandard” and potentially alienating the speakers of the western dialect.¹⁶¹ Some Rusyns from the eastern dialect region openly scoff at the “impurity” of the western variant, seen as tainted with Slovak words, and at the Polish-tinged pronunciation of the Lemkos.¹⁶² Thus, while the Rusyn language in Slovakia has been codified, it is still undergoing active development and significant changes. This dynamic situation can sometimes mean that the language has a great deal of creative potential. An actress from the Dukhnovych Theater feels that the language’s lack of rigid norms expands the creative abilities of the actors. “Ukrainian and Slovak are languages that have borders,” she tries to explain.... “Rusyn is a language without borders.”¹⁶³ Actors sometimes find themselves having to speak a form of Rusyn that does not quite match the Rusyn they were raised speaking at home.

Interviews in the summer of 2009 turned up surprisingly unenthusiastic comments regarding the possibility of a common Rusyn language being standardized any time in the near future. While it is understandable that some respondents who believe Rusyn is a dialect of Ukrainian do not support official versions of Rusyn,¹⁶⁴ the coolness that some otherwise very proud Rusyns displayed toward this idea is significant. Some think it is undesirable to create a “language with borders” that would be different from the varied dialects they currently speak. One Rusyn, not part of the activist movement but proud of her heritage, was particularly skeptical: “Rusyn is too varied,” she explains, “for example, in our village, we end words [past tense feminine form of verbs] with –*ava*, ja čitava, ja znava—but a couple of villages down that way [she gestured down the road to the west] they don’t! They end words with –*ala*, ja čitala, ja znala.... We all know it is Rusyn and we don’t have any problem with people saying it a different

¹⁶¹ Juraj Van’ko, “Formovania koine z literaturnykh shtandartiv,” in ed. Anna Plišková, *Rusunskŷi iazyk medzhi dvoma kongresamy: zbornik referativ z III Medzhynarodnoho kongresu rusyn’skoho iazyka, Krakiv 13-16.9.2007* (Priashiv: Inshtytut rusyn’skoho iazyka i kultury 2008) 17.

¹⁶² Interview with author, June 27, 2009.

¹⁶³ Interview with author, June 13, 2009.

¹⁶⁴ Interviews with author, June 10, July 13, 2009.

way. A common language is unrealistic.”¹⁶⁵ Two Rusyn activists in Slovakia who make their living working with the standardized form of Rusyn for Slovakia were likewise pessimistic. One felt that it would be difficult to come up with an international Rusyn-language standard because of multiple influences on the language in each separate country and because it is in a state of constant rapid development.¹⁶⁶ Another stated it even more strongly, calling a common language “foolishness.” “I don’t believe in it,” this activist continued, “what is more important is to develop each variation to create a rich literature—artistic, journalistic, and scholarly. If there ever is a common language it won’t be for a long time. I am a pessimist in this.” Rapidly expanding internet communication, however, enabling dozens of Rusyn-related groups to appear on Facebook, as well as the creation of several Rusyn websites, may aid in developing a common “imagined community” among Rusyns from various regions. But what some suggest are radio or television programs that would serve all Rusyns, including live discussions between speakers of different varieties of Rusyn. No concrete plans guide this conceptual program, but if the Rusyn language is to survive, some solution along these lines might be necessary.

On the whole, the fall of Communism and the entry of Rusyn territories into the European political sphere have brought unprecedented freedoms to the Rusyns, as well as an international climate that encourages the assertion of minority language rights. At the same time, assimilation remains a real threat for those who seek to preserve Rusyn language and culture. Far from being a large-scale effort for political ends, the movement strives to promote the distinctiveness of the Rusyn language and to give it a protected place in European society that it has never been able to enjoy. It is a nation-building project, but its political nature does not deserve to be condemned. It is meant to give Rusyns of today a fair choice between the national identities that they can adopt, choice that has never been so free as it is now.

¹⁶⁵ V. J., Interview with author, June 1, 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Marian Marko, Interview with author, June 22, 2009.

Rusyn Revival in the Diaspora

It's as if there was one river that split into two branches. One kept flowing in one direction while the other went off in another direction. Now they've met again in the middle of the ocean but may not even know it. . . .—A fourth-generation Rusyn American on the difficulty of re-establishing family ties that were broken as a result of emigration¹⁶⁷

Like Carpatho-Rusyns in Europe, the Rusyn-American diaspora community, while largely assimilated, became interested in reclaiming their unique ethnic identity and also experienced a cultural revival. They were inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, protests against the Vietnam War, the “roots” movement,¹⁶⁸ as well as the many other tumultuous social changes of the 1960s. These social conditions nurtured a renewed interest in the individual and a new respect for diversity in American society. This revival gradually brought the Rusyn-American community into direct contact with descendants of their families who had remained in war-torn 20th-century Europe, including almost three decades behind the iron curtain. Rusyn Americans shared and continue to share some common elements with their European kin in terms of the present cultural revival, such as a desire to preserve folksong, folk dance, and native cuisine, as well as their grandparents' language. At the same time, they have been able to apply to their own “roots” movement their American education and way of thinking, including a freedom of social and political expression which the Rusyns of Europe lacked until recently under the often difficult and culturally repressive circumstances of their socialist/communist regimes. Today, a significant number of Rusyn Americans, organized into a vibrant and self-aware community, have become a major force for funding Rusyn organizations in Europe and for educating a worldwide public

¹⁶⁷ Interview with the author, March 7, 2010.

¹⁶⁸ With his novel, *The Saga of an American Family*, 1976, African-American writer Alex Haley became the poster child for the roots movement enabling people of many ethnic backgrounds to seek information about their ancestors as a way of discovering and preserving their identity.

about the situation of Rusyns in the European homeland, playing a significant role in connection with the European Rusyns' own cultural and ethnic identity revival.

The first generation of Rusyn immigrants in the early 20th century created fraternal organizations and church communities which served as repositories of Rusyn ethnic identity. While some of these organizations faded over time as the children of immigrants assimilated, others, such as the Greek Catholic Union of the U.S.A., transformed themselves into thriving businesses only peripherally concerned with maintaining some original ethnic orientation.¹⁶⁹ Church communities, both Greek (Byzantine) Catholic and Orthodox, providing immigrants and their children with protective pockets of ethnic experience and preservation, have maintained this role, although to a far lesser extent than a century ago. In spite of the passing of decades, even a full century after the major immigration, descendants of the immigrants, then, took up the banner and created new secular organizations celebrating their ethnic roots.

As a direct result of the "roots" movement, a group of young academics claiming Rusyn ethnic heritage in 1978 founded the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center (C-RRC) with the goal of "sharing information about Rusyn history and culture with Americans of Carpatho-Rusyn descent and scholars and students involved in Slavic Studies."¹⁷⁰ Since then the center has supported and produced scholarly research and writing on Rusyns and has gradually expanded its collaboration with Rusyn organizations and scholars in Europe. From the start, the C-RRC established a quarterly newsletter, entitled the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, to further its goals of teaching Rusyn Americans about their heritage. In its 20 years of publication (1978-1997), the newsletter served to inform people of Rusyn descent about their background. Its content evolved with its readership's growing awareness of the political and cultural situation of Rusyns in Europe, especially as communism fell and contacts with family, friends, and religious and cultural organizations in Europe were reestablished. The C-RRC also established a publication project,

¹⁶⁹ The Greek Catholic Union, for example, is an insurance company.

¹⁷⁰ Patricia Krafcik and Elaine Rusinko, *Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center: The First Quarter Century* (Ocala, Florida: Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, Inc., 2004), iii.

entitled *Classics of Carpatho-Rusyn Scholarship*, which to date has supported the publication of 14 volumes of significant works on Rusyn history, culture, and language.

The first issues of the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* in 1978 tackled basic questions of ethnic identity and sought to inspire Americans of Rusyn descent to explore their ethnic roots. As the first issue of the newsletter explained, the idea of the American “melting pot” for many people had “seemed to require that we forget the native language of our parents and grandparents if it was not English, discard their cultural traditions, slacken ties with their native land, and perhaps even reject their religious identity. The illusion of this ‘pure’ American toward which we were supposed to strive has, at last, lived out its time.”¹⁷¹ The first issue included an article on Aleksander Dukhnovych, a map defining the Rusyns’ homeland in the Carpathian region, a list of common Rusyn phrases, a recipe for traditional Rusyn Pascha (Easter) bread, and an article on Rusyn community activities available through churches in New York City and Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The major appeal to readers was emotional. Editor Patricia Krafcik, at the time a graduate student at Columbia University, began the first issue with the story of the emigration experience of her grandparents Anna and Michal, their departure from family and village in the Prešov Region of eastern Slovakia, their struggle to support their young family during the Depression, and the heroic service of their two sons in the American military during World War II. After all their sacrifice, as Krafcik writes:

And now, secure in our being Americans...we can explore Rusyn ethnicity in academic surroundings, by observing and recording those traditions to which our people still cling in this country and in the old country, and by studying the language of our parents and grandparents. The Rusyn cultural heritage is rich and varied. It is a precious possession which we can preserve by sharing it with each other. Let us, the young people, together with our parents and our grandparents, dedicate this newsletter to that endeavor.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ “Community Activities,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 1 (Spring 1978), 7.

¹⁷² Patricia A. Krafcik, “The Story of Anna,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 1 (Spring 1978), 2.

Krafcik's appeal to Rusyn Americans addressed the anxieties that many people in the Rusyn diaspora of the time may have felt. A perception that complete assimilation was the key to success in America remained strong among many immigrants and their children born in the United States, as it often has been for many other ethnic groups. In addition, Rusyns in the United States, despite a general lack of contact with the politics of the homeland, were not immune to the problems involved in establishing a clear and specific identity that Rusyns in Europe faced. Coming from what were the Slovak and Rusyn regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, some immigrants identified as Slovaks, Hungarians, Austrians, Slavs or "Slavish," or as Russians owing to the similarity between their term for "Rusyn" (*rus 'ky*) and "Russian" (*russky* or *russkii*). By the third issue of the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, Krafcik began publishing letters to the editor from Rusyn Americans, expressing their gratitude for the publication. One reader gushed, "I can't express my joy after reading it. As a first generation American, I was totally unaware of the social and historical significance of the region of my parents' birth."¹⁷³ Travel to these faraway places in east central Europe was and is still an expensive choice for Americans, and in the pre-internet age it was impossible simply to resort to Google or genealogy websites for quick information. In searching for knowledge about their ethnic identity, Rusyn Americans had to deal with the residue of russification, characteristic of many Orthodox parishes in the early 20th century when the Russian Church administered the churches available to Rusyns in the United States. In particular, they also contended with the prevailing agenda the communist authorities and Ukrainian nationalists in the homeland and the diaspora who insisted that Rusyns were actually Ukrainians.

Rusyn immigrants settled primarily in the major eastern and midwestern mining and industrial centers. Of all the centers, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area is home to one of the largest concentrations of Rusyn Americans in the country. The area has maintained Rusyn churches—both Orthodox and Greek (Byzantine) Catholic—and church-based cultural

¹⁷³ "From the Editor," letter by Thomas Dutch, *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 1:3 (Fall 1978), 2.

organizations for many years, including the popular amateur Rusyn folk dance group “Slavjane” and numerous choral groups and folk bands. Rusyn activists from Pittsburgh became affiliated with the fledgling Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center and began to reach out to the larger Rusyn community. As they attracted members from among those Rusyn Americans who may previously have been unsure of or less interested in their ethnic background, they ran into stiff opposition from several sides. Most notably, clashes were with Ukrainians who claimed that these Rusyn Americans were actually Ukrainian Americans. In 1972, “Slavjane” was to perform at the Allegheny County Fair in Pittsburgh, but the Ukrainian-American dance group that performed immediately before “Slavjane” staged a protest against the group’s embrace of Rusyn identity by sitting down and refusing to vacate the stage. Only when threatened with police intervention did the Ukrainian-American performers grudgingly leave and allow “Slavjane” to perform.¹⁷⁴ When “Slavjane” performed later in another local ethnic festival, the Ukrainian master of ceremonies refused to introduce the group as Rusyn.¹⁷⁵ Other tense encounters between “Slavjane” and Ukrainian-American ensembles occurred as well. One Rusyn-American activist, a musician, shared his experience of one of these encounters. He was hired to perform accordion music and sing at a Ukrainian church festival at an agreed-upon fee, but was then refused payment from the Ukrainian priest who had hired him. He believes this was because he refused to call himself Ukrainian during the performance.¹⁷⁶ Finally, in the 1980s, at the entry of “Slavjane” to the Pittsburgh Folk Festival, one of the largest and most prestigious ethnic folk festivals in the United States, the Ukrainian-Americans participating sent a frantic letter to the festival’s organizers denouncing those who “rape our heritage” and expressed a fear of impending anti-Ukrainian “persecution.”¹⁷⁷ The festival’s organizers nevertheless allowed “Slavjane” to perform, and

¹⁷⁴ From two accounts: Interview, Jerry Jumba, March 6, 2010, and Robert Metil, “Interethnic Conflict, Alliance and Identity in the History of the Slavjane Folk Ensemble,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 19:4 (Winter 1996), 10.

¹⁷⁵ Metil, “Interethnic Conflict,” 10.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with author, March 6, 2010.

¹⁷⁷ Metil, “History of the Slavjane Folk Ensemble,” 10.

during the course of subsequent years and festivals, the Pittsburgh-area Ukrainians have found that allowing Rusyns to express their own identity has not resulted in any harm to Ukrainian cultural celebration in Pittsburgh. Angry Slovak- and Ukrainian-Americans no longer besiege the Rusyn booth set up at the festival to argue that the Rusyns are “in fact” either Slovak or Ukrainian. Finally, some Rusyns with a Russian identity also resisted the idea of Rusyn identity. “We are Russians, but not the Russians like *Russians*,”¹⁷⁸ was one argument. After many years of Rusyn activist work, some people protested strongly in favor of using the term “Carpatho-Russian” rather than Carpatho-Rusyn.¹⁷⁹ Over time tensions have mellowed, and while some activists of differing ethnic persuasions do not agree with one another, they are more reticent about creating conflicts. A combination of time, gradual assimilation, and activist efforts to increase awareness of Rusyn culture seem to have all played some role in mitigating these strained relations between the ethnic communities. One elderly member of the Rusyn-American community in the Pittsburgh area looked back on the years of tension among the Rusyn-, Slovak-, and Ukrainian-American groups in the Pittsburgh area and tried to explain them in the most positive way he could: “Everyone wanted to claim the Rusyns as their own people because the Rusyns are diamonds...a five-star addition to their culture!”¹⁸⁰

The Rusyn-American community worked hard to make its culture visible on the American “ethnic” stage throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. Along with the founding of the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, and the participation of the dance ensemble “Slavjane” in the Pittsburgh Folk Festival as a Rusyn-American folk ensemble, the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church (Johnstown, Pennsylvania diocese) established Camp Nazareth in 1977 near Mercer, Pennsylvania, the only summer camp of its kind in the United States geared to encouraging both Orthodox and Rusyn identities. The camp was inspired by John

¹⁷⁸ Interview with the author, March 6, 2010.

¹⁷⁹ Michael Newman, “Display Spells Trouble at New History Center; Carpathian May Protest How to Call Ethnic Group,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 27, 1996.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with the author, March 9, 2010.

Martin, Bishop of the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church from 1966-84, who used to send children from Carpatho-Russian Church communities to a Benedictine Roman Catholic camp. He realized that a camp environment organized by the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church could serve as a powerful institution for preserving both cultural identity and the Faith. Thus he created a program at the camp that included instruction in religion, folk dance, Rusyn Plainchant (*prostopinie*), performances by folk groups, and activities such as flag raising ceremonies to reinforce also an American civic identity.¹⁸¹ In recent years, the Church built a Carpathian-style wooden church on the camp's premises to show its commitment to honoring its Rusyn heritage.

Neither the Greek Catholic nor those Orthodox Churches, which were once founded and attended almost solely by Rusyn immigrants and their children, have been able to remain strongholds of Rusyn ethnic identity, nor have they desired this. The Reverend Stephen M. Loposky, current priest at Camp Nazareth, recognizes the tension that exists between an ethnic group's yearning to maintain a particular cultural tradition within the Church and the Church's goal of universality and bringing all people to faith. Even though some parishioners in both the Greek Catholic and Rusyn Orthodox Churches encourage ethnic preservation within the Church into the 21st century, it is difficult, Father Loposky states, for Church leaders to defend any serious commitment to the maintenance of Rusyn ethnic heritage in that context. Nevertheless, he argues that preservation of some ethnic traditions may help illuminate religious principles and make them more accessible to the faithful.¹⁸² The traditional Rusyn Easter baskets blessed in churches at Pascha, for instance, allow the Faithful to enjoy both a meaningful spiritual and ethnic experience.

It is, then, largely through secular channels that the Rusyn-American community has organized itself and reestablished ties with Rusyns in Europe over the past twenty-five years. By 1989, as communist regimes that had repressed Rusyn identity in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and

¹⁸¹ Interview with the author, March 8, 2010.

¹⁸² Interview with the author, March 8, 2010.

Ukraine collapsed, Rusyns in America took note. The *Carpatho-Rusyn American* newsletter shows a sharp turn in focus beginning in that year. Whereas throughout the late 1970s and most of the 1980s the newsletter carried articles on 19th-century Rusyn national activists, profiles of prominent Rusyn-Americans, descriptions of traditions, accounts of the immigrant experience, and short lessons in basic Rusyn language, the political events of 1989 inspired changes both in the thinking of Rusyn Americans in general and in the newsletter. The fall issue of the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* in 1989 included substantial material about events in Europe, as well as a translation of a controversial article on Lemkos by a popular Polish poet, Jerzy Harasymowicz, originally in the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Krakowska* on July 19, 1989. Harasymowicz criticized both the Polish nationalist denial of Lemko-Rusyn identity and the Ukrainian nationalist denial of Lemko particularity and called for a “self-determined Lemko region” in Poland and for a Lemko political party or at least for Lemko organizations.¹⁸³ The newsletter's fall 1989 issue also included an article on the rediscovery of Andy Warhol's work in his parents' homeland, then Czechoslovakia, reminding readers that Warhol, the foremost American pop artist and son of Rusyn immigrants who claimed he was “from nowhere,” was most definitely a Rusyn-American.¹⁸⁴ In the winter 1989 issue of *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, editor Krafcik called for Rusyn Americans to reassess their activities and the purpose of their interest in their Rusyn backgrounds: “We ought to recognize the fact that much of our yearning to know our background has been motivated by a sense of nostalgia for the past.... The crumbling iron curtain, however, now reinforces another direction...our relationship to the homeland here and now.”¹⁸⁵ She listed concrete steps that Rusyn Americans could take to assist Rusyn organizations in Europe: purchase computers, support scholars and provide written scholarly material to aid in the process of developing codified forms of Rusyn language; offer financial support to Rusyn scholars

¹⁸³ Jerzy Harasymowicz, “To the Lemkos for Their Consideration,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 12:3 (Fall 1989) 10.

¹⁸⁴ Magocsi, *People from Nowhere*, 5, and Raymond M. Herbenick, *Andy Warhol's Religious and Ethnic Roots: the Carpatho-Rusyn Influence on His Art* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 1-2.

¹⁸⁵ Patricia A. Krafcik, “From the Editor,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 12:4 (Winter 1989), 2.

working in the fields of ethnic and nationality studies; participate in Rusyn cultural activities in the United States and in this way make Rusyn culture known to the wider American public; and finally and perhaps most significantly, make a concerted effort to continue or make new contact with Rusyn relatives in Europe and to visit the Rusyn homeland—whether Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, or Yugoslavia.

Rusyn Americans heeded this call and over the next several years contacts between Rusyns in Europe and Rusyns in America grew rapidly. In 1992, the “Slavjane” folk dance ensemble made a trip to Europe to perform in Slovakia and again in Uzhhorod in 2005 at the meeting of the World Congress of Rusyns. Rusyn Americans began traveling back to Europe in larger numbers in the 1990s. These first person-to-person contacts produced the inspiration for what is now the major Rusyn-American organization in the United States, the Carpatho-Rusyn Society (C-RS). The C-RS was founded in 1994 by Rusyn-Americans, some of whom were grandchildren of immigrants, but many who were already the great-grandchildren. Most of them were in their 20s and 30s at the time. The C-RS by 2010 enjoys the support of nearly 1,800 full members in ten chapters around the United States.¹⁸⁶ After traveling to Europe in the mid-1990s and observing the newly-formed Rusyn organizations, not church-based but secular, the founders of the C-RS decided from the outset to model their organizations along similar lines.¹⁸⁷ As a secular organization, then, the C-RS attempts to appeal to all Rusyn Americans, regardless of religious affiliations. Meetings of the C-RS chapters are intentionally held in secular community centers or schools rather than in church halls.

The C-RS has adopted a strong educational role. According to C-RS president, John Righetti, many people who are of Rusyn ethnicity in the U.S. grow up believing that their grandparents or great-grandparents were Hungarian, Slovak, Russian, or Ukrainian, and when family or genealogical research reveals that they are actually of Rusyn background, they need to

¹⁸⁶ Website of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, <http://www.carpathorusynsociety.org/>, accessed March 24, 2010.

¹⁸⁷ John Righetti, Interview, March 6, 2010.

reorient their thinking about themselves in significant ways. Righetti frequently finds himself as much as in the position of a counselor as an educator about Rusyn culture. The birth of children or aging of parents, Righetti finds, are key times when people information about their family's history before it is lost—and sometimes they only begin looking after a parent dies and it does seem lost.¹⁸⁸ According to Maryann Sivak, the C-RS treasurer, the interests and needs of members are quite varied: some are attracted for nostalgic reasons based on family memories; some desire to solve their ethnic identity questions; others take a scholarly approach to discovering their roots through the educational offerings of the society; and lastly, some members have become interested in Rusyn culture through a Rusyn-American spouse or friend.

The Carpatho-Rusyn Society has accomplished much in terms of strengthening Rusyn culture and identity both in the U.S. and in Europe. Early on, before Rusyns became a recognized national minority in most of that states where they live and eligible for state funds, financial support from Rusyn Americans, largely through the C-RS, was very important to the success of those organizations. Later, government funding was nonetheless difficult to acquire. Rusyns affiliated with the C-RS in Canada, where there are no official chapters, have also provided major financial assistance. Steven Chepa, a wealthy Rusyn-Canadian businessman, has been instrumental in funding Rusyn-language programs in Ukraine, and through the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center the Alexander Dukhnovych Prize for Rusyn-language writers.¹⁸⁹ Chepa also supports a fellowship for Rusyn scholars to spend time at the Center for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at the University of Toronto,¹⁹⁰ and a host of other grants for scholarly books, textbooks, music recordings and performances.¹⁹¹ The C-RS has a Humanitarian Committee that sends medical supplies to a hospital in Uzhhorod, and has recently established the Homeland

¹⁸⁸ John Righetti, interview.

¹⁸⁹ "Literature," World Academy of Rusyn Culture, <http://rusyn.org/awards-history-literature.html>, last accessed March 24, 2010.

¹⁹⁰ "Steven Chepa Fellowship," World Academy of Rusyn Culture, <http://rusyn.org/awards-fellows.html>, last accessed March 24, 2010.

¹⁹¹ "Grants," World Academy of Rusyn Culture, <http://rusyn.org/awards-history-grants.html>, last accessed March 24, 2010.

Committee to support Rusyn museums in Slovakia and Poland, Rusyn educational programs in Slovakia, Poland, and Ukraine, support financially Rusyn-language newspapers, and to provide educational materials, such as maps, and money for equipment.¹⁹²

Perhaps more important than material aid are the channels of communication that have developed between Rusyn Americans and Rusyns in Europe through the auspices of the C-RRC and C-RS. C-RS leaders have tried to increase awareness and support for Rusyns by visiting the Washington, DC embassies of Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, and of other countries where Rusyns live to present the work of the C-RS and the efforts of Rusyns abroad. President of the C-RS Righetti explains that the public commitment to their ethnic origins on the part of Rusyn Americans has made Rusyns in Europe bolder. This relationship with Rusyn Americans who, as Righetti says, are *not ashamed* of their ethnicity, has provided them with a new perspective on who they are after years of marginalization by their home countries in east central Europe and denigration of their Rusyn identity. Pittsburgh Rusyn-American activist Maryann Sivak, an immigrant herself, grew up in Silesia on the Czech-Polish border and assimilated into Czech culture, rediscovering her own Rusyn identity only in the U.S. when she became acquainted with other Rusyn Americans in the area.¹⁹³ In the mid-1990s, John Righetti, and Pittsburgh-area Rusyn cultural activist Jerry Jumba, realizing how much their own travel to the homeland influenced their educational and cultural work for Rusyn Americans and how Rusyns on both sides of the Atlantic were eager to learn about each other, decided to establish Rusyn heritage tours. For Rusyn culture in the diaspora, Pittsburgh Rusyn activist Dean Poloka has asserted, the tours demonstrate that the culture is a living tradition and not “just something their immigrant grandparents did.”¹⁹⁴ The tours also serve a significant educational purpose, acquainting Rusyn Americans with their ancestors’ land, and European Rusyns about the existence and interest of

¹⁹² John Righetti, Interview, March 6, 2010 and Rusyn Homeland Fund, <http://c-rs.org/homeland.htm>, last accessed March 24, 2010, and Email communication, from Walter Orange and Elaine Rusinko, February 10, 2010.

¹⁹³ Maryann Sivak, Interview with author, March 6, 2010.

¹⁹⁴ Dean Poloka, Interview with author, Johnstown, March 7, 2010.

descendants of immigrants. The tours have permitted visitors to reconnect with relatives with whom they can then maintain relationships into the future and have also created contacts that make it possible for Rusyn-American organizations to bring folk performers from the homeland to the U.S. For example, the Rusyn dance group “Šariš” from eastern Slovakia has been able to perform for Pennsylvania Rusyn communities of Pittsburgh, Erie, and Johnstown because of contacts made during heritage tours, and music recordings are constantly collected for the Rusyn radio program broadcast in the US.¹⁹⁵ Most recently, the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center and the Carpatho-Rusyn Society have joined together with other Rusyn organizations, including the Rusin Association of Minnesota, the Rusyn Association of North America (Kitchener, Ontario), the Rusyn-Saskatchewan Ruthenian Culture Association, and the World Academy of Rusyn Culture (Toronto, Ontario), to form the Carpatho-Rusyn Consortium of North America.¹⁹⁶ Founded in 2009, this coalition of Rusyn cultural organizations will permit Rusyns in North America to act on issues affecting their communities in the U.S. and Canada, as well as to advocate for Rusyns in their European countries. The Consortium sponsors a representative to the World Council of Rusyns, which holds meetings every six months and organizes the World Congress of Rusyns every other year.

The Rusyn diaspora in North America possesses a unique opportunity to affect the future of the descendants of Rusyn immigrants, as well as Rusyns in the homeland. Rusyn-Americans live in a country where, at least for the last few decades, national and ethnic identity are allowed to be different but simultaneously valued. Although Rusyn-Americans clearly face assimilation as much as if not more than Rusyns in Europe, they can provide an example that shows Rusyns in Europe that they can maintain a successful community without politically controlling a territory or having their own state. Americans of the generation that started the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center, the Carpatho-Rusyn Society, and other Rusyn organizations have come to value their

¹⁹⁵ Poloka, Interview.

¹⁹⁶ Carpatho-Rusyn Consortium of North America, <http://www.rusynmedia.org/consortium>, last accessed April 5, 2010.

ethnic background and to have an enthusiasm to help overcome feelings of shame and inferiority in Rusyns of Europe and also help to give them a voice on the world stage.

4 Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Rusyns and Their States

Poland, Ukraine, and the Lemkos

One of the most divided Rusyn populations is that of the Lemkos. In the United States, there are active Lemko communities, most connected with the Greek Catholic (in the US Byzantine Catholic) Church and some passionately identified with Ukraine, such as the World Federation of Lemkos,¹⁹⁷ or with certain radical Ukrainian nationalist ideals.¹⁹⁸ Other Lemkos firmly hold to a Rusyn-oriented ethnic identity and support Rusyn causes in Europe. The same divisions that can be found in the diaspora population exist in the Lemko population of Poland. These divisions within the Lemko community have resulted in a lack of necessary unity when confronting the troubled past of conflict between Ukrainians and Poles which after World War II nearly resulted in the complete destruction of the Lemko population in the only semi-voluntary emigration of 1945-6 and the Akcja Wisła.

In general, all issues pertaining to minorities were ignored in Poland after the war. Only with the fall of communism have archives been opened and acknowledgements of wrongdoing been made. Ukraine and Poland have restored friendly relations. Poland was the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence in 1991, as well as being a major supporter of the Orange Revolution in 2005.¹⁹⁹ Over the last two decades the Ukrainian and Polish presidents have gone to some length to demonstrate mutual efforts at reconciliation after the brutal events of the WWII

¹⁹⁷ "Since the Revolution of 1989," *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 16:4 (Winter 1993), 11.

¹⁹⁸ Especially the Organization for the Defense of Lemko Western Ukraine, <http://www.lemko-ool.com/index.html>, last accessed March 27, 2010.

¹⁹⁹ Michal Kubicki, "Poland-Ukraine – Improving Relations," *Polskie radio*. <http://www.polskieradio.pl/zagranica/news/artykul.aspx?id=36452>.

era. Both blame the former communist regimes for the events of 1947 but ignore the events of 1945-6. Instead they look towards the future, choosing to focus on common interests of the present rather than to account fully for the root causes of the hatreds, atrocities, and injustices of the past. Timothy Snyder writes that this forward-looking approach is a “genius” move by the Ukrainian and Polish governments. He concludes that these “wise policies...have given rise to the hope that, with a bit more time, these memories will be relegated to dusty books and footnoted articles.”²⁰⁰ But this policy leaves too many questions unanswered, and it prevents open discussion that would perhaps clarify questions of Lemko identity.

This identity question remains a major stumbling block for any discussion of the bitterness that surrounds the legacy and fate of the Lemkos in Poland. In Poland as in Slovakia and Ukraine, despite official recognition, it has proven difficult for the state to cope with people who seem to be part of the same or at least very closely related groups but who insist on claiming different ethnicities. The most recent Polish census of 2002 includes both Ukrainians and Lemko Rusyns, but it is unclear who has registered under which ethnonym and how that affects the totals for this minority population. According to this census, 5,900 Lemkos live in Poland along with 31,000 Ukrainians—many of whom may be Lemkos.²⁰¹ The vast majority of Polish citizens list their primary language as Polish—97.8%, while another 2.2% speak unspecified other languages.²⁰² It is also unclear how many people belong to the Greek Catholic Church, because the census indicated that 1.3% of the population is Orthodox, but did not specify a category for Greek Catholic. Some of them may be registered among the 8.3% of the population making up an

²⁰⁰ Timothy Snyder, ““To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All,”” 120.

²⁰¹ Karl Cordell and Andrzej Dybczynski, “Poland’s Indigenous Ethnic Minorities and the Census of 2002,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 6:1 (2005) 87. Cordell and Dybczynski also explain that because under Polish law ethnic identification is a private matter, it is difficult legally to investigate the ethnicity of people who returned incomplete or unclear census forms.

²⁰² Economic Expert, “Demographics of Poland,” <http://www.economicexpert.com/a/Demographics:of:Poland.htm>.

“Unspecified” religion category.²⁰³ The Polish Ministry of the Interior chooses not to take a clear stance on Lemko identity, and its website’s paragraph-long descriptions of Poland’s ethnic minorities carries almost the same information for Lemkos as Ukrainians: they live in largely the same regions although those who identify as Ukrainian live in more regions than the Lemkos; both are said to have “been resettled” during the Vistula Operation; and their members belong to the same churches, either Greek Catholic or Orthodox.²⁰⁴ The Polish press equally fails to clarify the situation: an article from *Polskie radio* describes Lemkos as speaking “a distinct dialect of Ukrainian” and then subsequently states that “it is not clear who the Lemkos are.”²⁰⁵ A number of Lemko organizations in Poland, most notably the Lemko Union, identify the Lemko people with Ukraine, regarding them as one of many regional variants of the larger Ukrainian people. But others, including the Lemko Association, Rutenika Foundation, and the Kyczera Ensemble (all based in Poland), regard Lemkos as a separate ethnicity,²⁰⁶ specifically as Rusyn.

Currently the question of whether the Lemkos truly can or cannot be considered Ukrainian is left open. Those who hope to absolve their WWII-era ancestors accused of sympathizing with violent ultra-nationalists do not have a strong or united voice. Genuine reconciliation is scarcely possible when few share common perceptions of this history and when the Lemkos, Ukrainians, and Poles rarely have opportunities to discuss and debate history openly? Where can Lemko Rusyns, who occupy a blurred border zone in terms of identity find the kind of leadership and community that will help them preserve their regional culture when they are uneasily wedged between the current political agendas of both Poland and Ukraine? Lemkos have been moderately successful at creating organizations to preserve and celebrate their own culture. While official membership in these groups is small, they nevertheless have a distinct

²⁰³ Central Intelligence Agency, “World Factbook: Poland,” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>.

²⁰⁴ “Characteristics of Ethnic and National Minorities in Poland,” http://www.mswia.gov.pl/palm/en/10/56/Characteristics_of_ethnic_and_national_minorities_in_Poland.html.

²⁰⁵ “Uprooted Lemkos,” <http://www.polskieradio.pl/zagranica/news/artykul.aspx?id=29780>.

²⁰⁶ Horbal, “Contested by Whom?” 45,48.

impact on Lemko life in Poland. The major Lemko groups include the Lemko Union (Poland's largest, Ukrainian-oriented Lemko organization), and the Rusyn-oriented Lemko Association, Rutenika foundation, and several cultural groups, including the Kyczera Ensemble, the Lemkovyna Ensemble, the Zyndranowa Museum and Ruska Bursa (a boarding school).²⁰⁷ In their work, these organizations have drawn not only on their own experiences but also on the traditions of the lively North American Lemko diaspora in order to rediscover traditions that existed prior to World War II.²⁰⁸ And the Ukrainian-oriented Lemkos have found inspiration in the national revival in Ukraine after its split from Russia in 1991. Rusyn-oriented Lemkos have worked with worldwide Rusyn organizations such as the World Congress of Rusyns and have developed a codified version of the Lemko language, resulting in several school textbooks approved by the Polish Ministry of Education that are now used in Lemko language education. Ukrainian-oriented Lemkos have achieved similar rights for the teaching of Ukrainian.

While cultural revival may be taken as encouraging for Rusyn activists, political developments surrounding the Lemko situation complicate the picture. When the communist government fell in 1989, the deportation of the Lemkos had yet to be even acknowledged. On August 3, 1990, the Polish Senate passed a resolution condemning the Vistula Operation, publicly recognizing that 150,000 people had been torn from their homes and lost their property in 1947, but not previously. The Senate stated that it "would like to correct this wrong as much as possible."²⁰⁹ In 1991, Poland recognized Ukraine's independence and in 1997, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vistula Operation, President Kwasniewski of Poland and President Kuchma of Ukraine issued a joint statement entitled "Mutual Declaration of the Presidents of the Republic of Poland and Ukraine Regarding Understanding and Reconciliation." They pledged to "overcome the complicated heritage of Polish-Ukrainian misfortunes," called for greater dialogue in the media, and further stated that both Poland and Ukraine should seek to "look after...and

²⁰⁷ Horbal, "Contested by Whom?", 48.

²⁰⁸ Black, "The Dance of Exile," 44.

²⁰⁹ Wawrzonek, "The Lemko Region," 2.

support the well-being of' the Ukrainian minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Ukraine.²¹⁰ Ten years later, in 2007, President of Poland Lech Kaczynski and Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko also issued a joint statement. Shorter than the previous one, this statement did not attempt to cover all past conflicts between Poland and Ukraine, but instead focused specifically on events during and after World War II and stressed what the two countries now share in common, including democratic values, a will to develop a bilateral strategic partnership as well as reconciliation, a commitment to "the Christian roots of Europe," a shared memory of "communist totalitarianism," and an aim to construct "a common European home."²¹¹ In 2007, President Yushchenko visited the Lemko Union's annual *Vatra* ['watch-fire']. This event is an annual summer festival originating in pastoral/sheep-herding culture and celebrated since 1983 when Poland's communist government was already weakening. It includes music, dance, and commemorative ceremonies marking the Vistula Operation. As reported on a Ukrainian-language television channel in Poland, Yushchenko not only participated in the festivities, but also spoke a few words of the Lemko language, warmly thanking the *Vatra* participants and promising to resolve their concerns in the coming year.²¹²

While presidential declarations and visits to commemorative festivals are an important step forward from the recent historical period when the issue of Polish-Lemko-Ukrainian relations remained a forbidden topic, the presidents' joint statements seem to avoid some of the difficult thorny issues that surround Lemko problems. They carefully avoid the fact that Poland has not yet fully condemned the Vistula Operation. The senate declaration of 1990 never was passed by the Sejm, or Polish parliament. Acute bitterness lingers on many levels, including some of the higher levels of power. According to Michal Wawrzonek of Jagellonian University, one

²¹⁰ Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Genocide and Rescue in Wolyn: Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Poles During World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland&Company, 2000), 255-256.

²¹¹ <http://www.prezydent.pl/x.node?id=1011848&eventId=11027937> English translation provided courtesy of Andrew Andrzejewski.

²¹² Telenowyny 04.08.2007 part 1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LajhO5wCEw>

can find among the Polish political elite “the certainty that the Vistula action, despite its brutality, was nevertheless necessary and just.”²¹³ None of the statements issued by either government address the organized “population exchanges” of 1945 and 1946, nor do they acknowledge that for the much greater numbers of displaced people, Lemkos who may have had no Ukrainian identity and no desire to leave their homeland for Ukraine, there was nothing voluntary about being escorted away from their homes by the Polish military. Little advancement has been made on initiatives for the return of property to Lemkos. In over 800 Lemko villages, people are still waiting for property to be restored.²¹⁴

Finally, Lemkos who claim a separate Rusyn identity struggle to obtain the same amount of representation to the Polish government that their Ukrainian-oriented counterparts enjoy. When in 2005, not long after its accession to the European Union, Poland passed the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and on Regional Languages, it created a Joint Committee of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities as well. The Lemko Rusyns were to have two representatives, as were the Ukrainians. Lemkos who identify as Ukrainian are simply treated as Ukrainian under this Act. However, the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs contended that the Lemko committee members should include both a Rusyn-oriented and a Ukrainian-oriented Lemko member, thereby replacing one of the Lemko-Rusyn delegates with a Lemko-Ukrainian activist leader.²¹⁵ The result is an over-representation of Ukrainian members (3) on this Joint Committee, and an under-representation of Lemko-Rusyn points of view (only 1), exacerbating the bitterness between the two opposed Lemko factions.

The activities of Ukrainian- and Rusyn-oriented Lemkos frequently remain separate. The Lemko Union, which advocates Ukrainian identity and close ties with Ukraine, convenes its *Vatra* and Vistula Operation commemoration in the village of Zdynia each year, while Rusyn-oriented Lemko organizations hold separate festivals elsewhere. Some overlaps and shared

²¹³ Wawrzonek, “The Lemko Region,” 4.

²¹⁴ Wawrzonek, “The Lemko Region,” 3.

²¹⁵ Horbal, “Contested by Whom?” 46.

cultural activities occur, but the two groups adamantly maintain irreconcilably opposing views on their national orientations. The Ukrainian-oriented Lemko Union tends to receive more publicity because of its greater representation and the Ukrainian government's interest in supporting it (as demonstrated, for example, by Yushchenko's visit to the Zdynia *Vatra*). All these disparities create tension within the Lemko groups. This is true although in 2002, the only year in which government funding to Lemko organizations was thoroughly monitored, the various Rusyn-oriented Lemko organizations together all received more money than did the Ukrainian-oriented Lemko Union.²¹⁶

The specific conditions in Poland, then, create a specific and complex situation that the Rusyn-oriented Lemkos of Poland must grapple with in their attempts to consolidate their cultural and national movement. Those who identify as Ukrainians have recently achieved a stronger standing because the leaders of Poland and Ukraine made the pursuit of peaceful cooperation between Poland and Ukraine a priority. In the course of improving relations between these countries, Lemko interests have often been abandoned in the background. Whether that will continue with new leaders remains uncertain, but it is reasonably clear that Lemkos are deeply affected by the course of the Polish-Ukrainian relationship.

Rusyns in the former Yugoslavia

The experience of Rusyns of the former Yugoslavia, presently split into groups living in villages on either side of the Croatia-Serbia border, has historically been very different from that of Rusyns who remained in the Carpathian homeland. The question endures as to whether Rusyns should identify with the Ukrainian nation or think of themselves as distinct enough to constitute a nation of their own. Nevertheless, a cohesive group identity, strong commitment to education and Rusyn language, and a tolerant government policy have all contributed to the success of the

²¹⁶ Horbal, "Contested by Whom?" 48.

Vojvodinian Rusyn culture. As the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* proudly observes, Rusyns in Yugoslavia were able both to maintain their own identity and attain prominent positions in the wider society. By the late 1980s they could boast a sizeable intellectual class, aware and proud of its ethnicity, with professors, lawyers, journalists, officials in the Yugoslav government, actors, film stars and directors, composers and writers working in many major cities of Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the world.²¹⁷

But in Yugoslavia, the fall of communism was not necessarily as hopeful a time as it was for the more consistently repressed Rusyns in the Carpathian homeland. In Yugoslavia, Rusyns were treated like other minorities including Hungarians and Slovaks, and acknowledged as a national group. The fall of communism and the rise of nationalism among Serbians and Croats, nationalism that would lead to horrific war across the Balkans, eventually split the Rusyn community artificially across a new state border and left them vulnerable, unable to prove to either warring party that they did not intend to take sides in the conflict. While Rusyns were never the main object of hatred for the warring Croats and Serbs, their questioned loyalties made them targets for abuse, deportation, and in the worst cases, murder. The resulting devastation diminished the size of the Rusyn population in this region, and set back their community's economic and social position. According to Yugoslav Rusyn cultural activist Vladimir Dudaš, in an interview with Slovak-Rusyn journalist Anna Plišková during the war, the new nationalism in Yugoslavia represented "the greatest danger that there is in the world: it kills ideas, science, enthusiasm." Worst of all to Dudaš was that the Rusyns, already such a small group, were split and many contacts severed.²¹⁸

Vojvodina's autonomous status was suspended in 1989 under Slobodan Milosevic. But trouble really began for the Rusyns in 1991. From the start it put those Rusyns who found themselves on the Croatian side rather than in Vojvodina, into the most directly traumatic

²¹⁷ "The Destiny of Rusyns Along the Danube," *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 16:1 (Spring, 1993): 4.

²¹⁸ Anna Plišková, "Mozheme sia lem zbohachovaty," 41.

situations. During elections pitting the Croatian Democratic Union against the Serbian Democratic party, the several thousand Rusyns who lived in the city of Vukovar and nearby villages of Mikloševci and Petrovci in Eastern Slavonia (a part of Croatia along the eastern border with Serbia that was claimed by Serbian nationalists) attempted to lie low and remain as neutral as possible. When the election resulted in victory for the Croatian party, however, Rusyns promptly found themselves drafted into the newly formed Croatian National Guard.²¹⁹ Similarly, by the summer of 1991 when open war broke out, Rusyns living on the Serbian side in Vojvodina were frequently drafted into the Yugoslav Army under Serbian control. A small number of Rusyns did voluntarily join each of these armies, but forcible drafting was more common. Most Rusyns had hoped to maintain a neutral position during a war between competing nationalities in which they had no interest.

When fighting came directly to the Vukovar region, thousands of Rusyns chose to flee. By 1993 in one district to the north of Vukovar, Osijek, the Rusyn population of over three thousand approached zero. Most fled to other regions of Serbia or Croatia, but some also fled to Europe, America, and Australia.²²⁰ The worst of the struggle transpired in the spring of 1992 when Rusyns were deported from Vukovar and from Mikloševci and Petrovci. According to Julijan Tamas, a Vojvodinian Rusyn leader, the deportation occurred in the midst of fighting, resulting in dozens of people being killed. The area was placed under a curfew, and according to Tamas, Serbian forces began harassing Rusyns who were known to have or were suspected of having any relatives in the Croatian National Guard. Wealthier families were particularly targeted, and some who refused to leave were murdered.²²¹ Serbs also prevented Rusyns who had fled the fighting from returning to their homes, especially if they any connection with Croatia supporters. Their homes were often pillaged, destroyed, or occupied by Serbs. Greek Catholic

²¹⁹ “The Destiny of Rusyns Along the Danube,” 4.

²²⁰ “The Destiny of Rusyns Along the Danube,” 4.

²²¹ Dmitrije Boarov, “Cruelty and Bigotry,” *Vreme News Digest Agency*, No. 35, May 25, 1992, <http://www.sec.rutgers.edu/serbian-digest/35/t35-2.htm>, last accessed April 3, 2010.

Rusyns received threats of punishment for celebrating church holidays by the Catholic rather than the Orthodox calendar, churches were damaged, and in a few cases priests were beaten.²²² What was particularly hurtful to some was that although the Rusyns had been a peaceful and accommodating minority, they were now perceived to be in the way of Serbia's pursuit of an ethnically pure state. Why did they deserve to be targeted, Tamas asked, "especially when amongst them a pro-regime attitude (which has often made their whole people bend to the very ground) has always been strong?!"²²³ Rusyns were not the only targets; the larger Hungarian minority in the region and other non-Serbs were equally targeted. As happened to the Rusyns, when they were forced out of or fled their homes, the Serbian government encouraged approximately 200,000 Serbian refugees from Bosnia to settle there, changing the demographic balance of the region.²²⁴ According to a regional war crimes trial that started ten years later and lasting intermittently from 2005-2007, Rusyns and others who were part of the Serbian paramilitary forces participated in the expulsion and murder of Rusyns in Mikloševci.²²⁵ The trial has not been completed because so many of the accused have either died or gone missing. However, according to one witness, the Serbs intentionally used Rusyns against each other, so that "when violence was committed, two people were always responsible—one Serb and one Rusyn forced to do the dirty work."²²⁶

The war also brought devastating economic ruin to the regions where Rusyns live, and diminished their place in society. Most Rusyn cultural and scholarly organizations either closed

²²² "The Destiny of Rusyns Along the Danube," 5.

²²³ Dmitrije Boarov, "Cruelty and Bigotry."

²²⁴ Ted Galen Carpenter and Pavel Kislytsin, "NATO Expansion Flashpoint No. 2: The Border Between Hungary and Serbia," Cato Foreign Policy Briefing No. 45, The Cato Institute, November 24, 1997, <http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefts/fpb-045.html>.

²²⁵ "Croatia," Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Croatia. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78806.htm>, March 6, 2007 and Croatia," Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Croatia. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100553.htm>, March 11, 2008.

²²⁶ Brian Požun, "The Mikloševci Group," unpublished article sent by email communication to author, March 12, 2010.

down temporarily or found their ability to work scaled down. The agricultural sector that employed most Rusyns was also in crisis. A long-term tradition of exporting corn, paprika, seeds, fruit and livestock was put in jeopardy by trade barriers between Serbia and the new states that had been part of Yugoslavia. The Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center set up a fund with donations gathered from Rusyn-Americans and Rusyn-Canadians. By the war's end, "no Rusyns [were] left at any level of government in either Serbia or in Croatia,"²²⁷ nor were there Rusyns left in upper-level management in any major fields.

Both the economic and social status of Rusyns have increased somewhat in the last nearly twenty years, and the experience of the war is no longer a major focus for Rusyns of Serbia and Croatia. In 1996 memorials were created to the victims of the deportations and killings in Mikloševci and Petrovci, and the Rusyn communities have not so far used their wartime experience against the Serbian or Croatian governments. Rusyn organizations are strong. Nevertheless, the community is threatened. With little economic opportunity to be found within Vojvodina itself, many people choose to leave the region. According to the 2000 census about 18,000 Rusyns lived in Vojvodina and around 3,000 Rusyns in Croatia.²²⁸ But by 2001 only 2,337 Rusyns were registered in Croatia²²⁹ and by 2002 the Rusyns made up .77% of the Vojvodinian population of 2,031,992—that is, less than 16,000.²³⁰ The shrinking of the Rusyn community, if it continues at the same pace (latest census results from 2009 and 2010 are pending), will make it ever more difficult to sustain Rusyn schools, publishing houses, and cultural organizations. According to one Hungarian activist, whose community is also shrinking, "anyone with enough

²²⁷ "The Destiny of Rusyns Along the Danube," 5.

²²⁸ Brian Požun, "Rusyn Review: Rusyns in Central and Eastern Europe," *Central Europe Review*, Vol. 3, No. 16, 7 May 2001, <http://www.ce-review.org/01/16/pozun16.html>.

²²⁹ "Population by Ethnicity, by Towns/Municipalities, Census 2001," Republic of Croatia, Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www.dzs.hr/default_e.htm, 2006, last accessed April 3, 2010.

²³⁰ "Get Acquainted With Vojvodina," Website of the Vojvodinian Government/Autonomna Pokrajina Vojvodina, http://www.vojvodina.gov.rs/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=174&Itemid=83, last accessed April 2, 2010.

brains runs away.”²³¹ But the Hungarian community is relatively large, making up about 14% of Vojvodina’s population and Rusyns fear being overshadowed by its interests. Because of this, Rusyns in 2000 opposed efforts to return Vojvodina’s autonomy²³² and it remains unclear what impact Vojvodina’s recent recovery of autonomy in 2009 will have on their community. As far as relations with the rest of the Rusyn world go, the Rusyns of Vojvodina and Croatia have difficulty working with their colleagues in other countries. As non-EU citizens their travel is more restricted than for Rusyns in Slovakia, Poland, Hungary or Romania. But while the Rusyn communities of the former Yugoslavia have lost the illusion that being a peaceful and small group can shield them from violence between their contentious host societies, and they have much to worry about for the future, Rusyns enjoy a level of cultural development, cohesiveness of their community and recognition that other Rusyns still can only dream about. Their language is one of six official languages in Vojvodina and thus enjoys public respect. They have Rusyn schools, Rusyn television and radio. Their shrinking population does not necessarily mean rejecting their claim of a cherished Rusyn heritage, but is rather the deliberate facing of an often bleak choice to depart from their homeland and community for a better life.

Slovakia’s Rusyns

The Rusyns of Slovakia, in contrast to the Lemkos of Poland and the Rusyns of the former Yugoslavia, might consider themselves lucky. Rusyns in Slovakia are free of the stigma of suspected Ukrainian nationalism that plagues Rusyns in Poland and complicates their efforts to build up Rusyn culture there. They also have not, at least for over half a century, been caught in the middle of two warring nations like Serbia and Croatia. Rusyns in Slovakia were the first after 1989 to achieve a codified form of their language. Slovakia was the first of the countries that had

²³¹ “Exit Strategy,” *The Economist*, Vol. 394, January 2, 2010.

²³² Brian Požun, “Caught in the Middle.”

once officially deemed Rusyns to be Ukrainians to recognize them as a distinct national minority. Moreover, Rusyns of Slovakia can claim several of the most famous Rusyns of history. Alexander Dukhnovych was born and worked there there and so in a sense Slovakia may be seen by today's Rusyns as the birthplace of Rusyn identity and of its present revival. But some would argue that Slovakia's Rusyns are on shaky ground in terms of their survival as a group, and that their rights may be threatened by Slovakia's conflicts with other minority groups. Moreover, early recognition may have made them complacent, and the Rusyn activists of Slovakia are failing to make Rusyn cultural resources available or attractive to all segments of Rusyn society, but only to a small and highly educated elite.

In 1994, the Slovak nationalist government of Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar, who generally took a hard line against minorities, came to power. As talk of possible EU membership grew louder, Slovakia had to try to come to terms with its minority groups, notably the Hungarians and the Roma. This resulted in only mixed success throughout the period of Mečiar's government.²³³ Some Rusyn activists complain of erratic funding from the government for their educational and publishing activities starting in the mid-1990s. The Slovak Constitution of 1992 includes provisions for minorities to receive education in their own language, to promote their cultural heritage and use their language in publications, to participate in political decision-making that would affect them. Additionally, while Slovakia ratified the Council of Europe's framework convention on minorities in 1995, it subsequently failed to resolve these issues clearly with the Hungarian and Romani minorities in Slovakia and ongoing conflicts remain over the levels of state support provided for minorities, especially for education in minority languages.²³⁴

One Rusyn activist claimed that immediately after the fall of communism, the Rusyn Renaissance Society was able to employ some to work full time on furthering Rusyn interests—

²³³ Kyriaki Topidi, "The Limits of EU Conditionality: Minority Rights in Slovakia," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 1(2003), 5.

²³⁴ Stefan Wolff, "'Bilateral' Ethnopolitics after the Cold War: The Hungarian Minority in Slovakia, 1989-1999," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 2:2 (2001), 10.

by coordinating with the government, planning events, and publishing. But when Mečiar came into power in 1994, this changed, and minority groups were expected to be funded only partly by the Slovak state, partly by their home state mother country, and partly by private funding. This system hurts the small stateless Rusyn population and the poverty-stricken Roma population particularly hard.²³⁵ Others explain that state discrimination is not the only problem. Some Rusyn-American activists blame the financial woes of the Rusyn movement in Slovakia more on mismanagement of funds and lack of transparency within the Rusyn organizations than anything else.²³⁶ Another explanation of change in funding for Rusyns in the mid-1990s is that state financing was simply erratic all along anyway. For several years in the 1990s, minority groups in Slovakia were funded unevenly, apparently according to government whim. The government was particularly stingy toward the Hungarian minority, and in the first half of 1996 non-Hungarian minority groups (making up about 4% of Slovakia's population) received five times more subsidies than Hungarians (making up about 10% of Slovakia's population).²³⁷ Rusyns are, by official census statistics, only about half of a percent of the population of Slovakia. Rusyns experienced an unexplained, appreciable decrease in government funding during the 1990s. In 1993, the Slovak government had granted the Rusyn Renaissance Society 2 million Slovak crowns and 1.9 crowns the following year. But once Mečiar established control, the 1995 subsidy was only 970,000 and the 1996 subsidy a mere 380,000 crowns, necessitating financial rescue by donations from the Rusyn diaspora to keep Rusyn publications alive in Slovakia.²³⁸

Although state support has improved for Rusyns and their cultural revival with Slovakia's accession to the EU and the departure of Mečiar, Rusyns' positions are fragile in the context of Slovakia's struggle with its other minorities. Concerned with Hungarian demands and fearful that by the population of Roma will overtake the size of the ethnic Slovak population in the next fifty

²³⁵ Interview with author, Prešov, Slovakia, June 24, 2009.

²³⁶ Interviews (2) with author, Pittsburgh, March 6, 2010.

²³⁷ Wolff, "'Bilateral' Ethnopolitics," 10.

²³⁸ Paul Robert Magocsi, "Promises, Promises! Chaos or Deception in Slovakia?" *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 19:3 (Fall 1996), 2.

years,²³⁹ Slovak lawmakers have again taken steps to try to protect all things “Slovak.” In September 2009 a law was passed that, in mirror image of the 1999 language law that allows official use of minority languages when the minority population is 20% or higher in a particular locality, expressly bans the use of minority languages for any official purposes where the minority group is less than 20% of the population. It is unclear how this will affect Rusyns, who took little advantage of the 1999 law anyway. Because Rusyns have traditionally shunned political involvement, no Rusyn representative has taken any official stance regarding this new law. Additionally, the real dividing line in Slovak politics seems to run from east to west, dividing the Hungarian-dominated population of the south from the Slovaks and Rusyns in the north, who tend to support somewhat Slovak nationalistic candidates. Few studies specifically address Rusyn political behavior, but in one survey conducted in Rusyn areas of Slovakia in 2002, researchers discovered that 30% of respondents did not sympathize with any political party, 32% sympathized with parties that as a rule have an openly nationalistic platform or with those that promise more restrictive policies toward minorities, such as the Slovak National Party (SNS) and Direction, for example. Another 25% supported parties whose stance on the national minority issue is ambivalent, and a mere 14% supported liberal parties that “subscribe to democratic standards of ethnic politics and promote tolerant approaches to its implementation.”²⁴⁰ In the presidential election of 2009, the northeastern part of Slovakia was particularly supportive of incumbent president Ivan Gašparovič, who is allied with the parties Direction-Social Democracy

²³⁹ “Coerced Sterilization of Romani Women in Slovakia,” A Report Prepared by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C., 2003. www.osce.org, p. 3. On May 12, 2001 in an article entitled “Europe’s Spectral Nation,” *The Economist* published a prediction that the Romani population “might even become a majority by 2060.” It also reported that welfare payments to the Roma would likely bankrupt the Slovak state as early as 2020. According to the report of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the *Economist* article received much attention and spread through the press, sparking panic in Slovakia. Slovak politicians have tried to take a strong stance against the rapid growth of the Roma population, but no workable resolution to the situation has been found.

²⁴⁰ Stanislav Konečný, “Názory Rusínov na niektoré politické otázky súčasnosti,” *Sebareflexia postavenia a vývoja Rusínov na Slovensku*, ed. Ján Lipinský (Róbert Vico-vydavateľ’stvo, 2002), 70.

coalition and the Slovak National Party.²⁴¹ Fewer than half the respondents in the 2002 survey supported —by answering “yes” or “decisively yes”—the development of greater cross-border cooperation with Hungary (49%) compared to those who supported cooperation with Poland (67%) or Ukraine (70%).²⁴²

Why might the Rusyns exhibit stronger Slovak nationalist tendencies than would be expected of a national minority? First, Rusyns share with Slovaks a degree of animosity towards Hungarians, who ruled their land for nearly a thousand years and imposed their own ethnic and cultural identity on the populations they ruled. The same historical myths and symbols that inflame Slovak feelings may affect Rusyn opinions of the Hungarians, and they may tend to support politicians who “put the Hungarians in their place,” even if that is not in their own best interests. Most Rusyns did not discuss their feelings about other minorities but one Rusyn this past summer of 2009, in contrast to most others who said that the Slovak state treats Rusyns well claimed that it favors the powerful Hungarian minority over all others.²⁴³ So anti-Hungarian feelings might play a role in Rusyns voting against minority interests. Rusyns may also support nationalistic laws that they, like Slovaks, believe will prevent the Roma from overtaking them, especially because the Roma population is at its highest concentrations in eastern Slovakia, where the Rusyns also live. They interact daily with their poverty-stricken Roma neighbors and these interactions can be unpleasant.²⁴⁴ Second, and troubling for the Rusyn movement, this snapshot of Rusyn opinion might indicate a lack of success of the Rusyn movement in its attempt to strengthen solidarity among Rusyns and a lack of perception among Rusyns that they are a single distinct group with a specific set of interests to protect.

²⁴¹ Slovakia 2009: Runoff. *World Elections: Elections, referendums and political demographics around the world*. <http://welections.wordpress.com/2009/04/05/slovakia-2009-runoff/>, accessed March 27, 2010.

²⁴² Miroslav Frankovský, “Postoj Rusínov k integračným procesom,” *Sebareflexia postavenia a vývoja Rusínov na Slovensku*, ed. Ján Lipinský (Róbert Vico-vydavateľstvo, 2002), 92.

²⁴³ Interview with the author, July 13, 2009.

²⁴⁴ Numerous respondents discussed their discomfort with the Roma. Some express blatantly racist opinions, but many are concerned about the effects of a growing population of poverty-stricken people on their doorstep, and fear theft, vandalism, or violence.

The results of the 2001 census suggest that much work needs to be done to encourage Rusyn identity. While a new census is currently being conducted—and Rusyn organizations have been encouraging Rusyns to register their ethnicity [*národnosť*] on the census²⁴⁵--at present the most complete information comes from the results of the 2001 census. According to the 2001 census, 54,907 people declared Rusyn as their native language, while only 24,201 claimed Rusyn ethnicity. At the same time, 10,814 declared their ethnicity as to be Ukrainian.²⁴⁶ Results from villages that Rusyn activists identify as primarily if not completely Rusyn also suggest a lack of strong ethnic identity among Rusyns. In most towns, less than 30% of the people believed by activists to be Rusyn declare Rusyn ethnicity on the census. The following is a small selection of data collected by the independent Forum Institute for Minority Research in Slovakia reflecting the numbers of individuals in Rusyn villages in eastern Slovakia who declare themselves as Rusyn and/or claim Rusyn as their native language.²⁴⁷

Rusyn Village	Population	# Declared Rusyns	% Rusyns	# Rusyns Native Lang	% Rusyn Native Lang
Kamienka	1408	237	16.8	834	59.2
Ladomirová	838	65	7.8	234	27.9
Radvan	602	139	23.1	286	47.5
Ruská Vol'a nad Popradom	115	32	27.8	70	60.9
Ruský Potok	161	9	5.6	41	25.5

The majority of those who say that they speak Rusyn natively but do not identify as Rusyn ethnically subscribe instead to the Slovak ethnicity. For example, in the Stará Ľubovňa region that

²⁴⁵ Including through social media such as the Facebook group, “Pri najbližšom sčítaní sa ako hrdý Rusin prihlásim k rusínskej národnosti! In the upcoming census, as a proud Rusyn I will declare Rusyn ethnicity!” <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=logo#!/group.php?gid=226048882331>, last accessed April 4, 2010.

²⁴⁶ Róbert Dohányes, et al, eds., *Národnostné menšiny na Slovensku 2003*, Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín (Šamorín-Dunajská Streda: Lilium Aurum vydavateľstvo 2004) 16.

²⁴⁷ Róbert Dohányes, et al, eds., *Národnostné menšiny na Slovensku 2004*, Fórum inštitút pre výskum menšín (Šamorín-Dunajská Streda: Lilium Aurum vydavateľstvo 2005) 90-91. The regions shown were chosen for their geographical distribution, and because their results are typical of the villages listed in Dohányes's book.

includes both Kamienka and Ruská Voľa nad Popradom, 90.2% of the overall population is “Slovak,” while 3.3% is Rusyn and 1.2% is listed as Ukrainian.²⁴⁸ The above villages are only a small selection of the over 100 Rusyn villages covered in the census, but their results are typical. These numbers do not bode well for the Rusyn movement’s ability to rally Rusyns to claim their “authentic” ethnic identity. Kamienka is an activist center of Rusyn life in Slovakia. Not only does the director of the state-supported Rusyn Museum in Prešov hail from this village, but so does Martin Karaš, president of the World Forum of Rusyn Youth (the youth wing of the World Congress of Rusyns) and many others. In Kamienka, one would expect Rusyn ethnic orientation to be widespread so the discrepancy between the number of people living in the village, speaking Rusyn, and claiming Rusyn ethnicity is surprising. The reasons for the discrepancy are not clear. It could be because they are afraid of claiming Rusyn ethnicity—that is, not that long ago in Socialist Czechoslovakia Rusyn ethnicity was not helpful; in other words, old habits die hard. Another possibility is that people may feel that because they are citizens of Slovakia they must in some way be Slovak. Or perhaps they are like the man who rejected Rusyn identity and language, calling it a “village dialect” and putting behind him the social stigma of being a “stupid rusnak,” as discussed earlier in terms of language.

Some accuse the Rusyn movement in Slovakia of failing to be active enough in promoting Rusyn identity after its initial victories with language codification and governmental recognition. Rusyn activists may blame a lack of funding, but others argue that this is a class issue—that Rusyn scholar-activists who write numerous books and newspapers are failing to engage the rural Rusyn population on a level that makes sense to them, and failing to show them how they as a people can fit into the wider national and international context without being ashamed of their Rusyn ethnic identity. An engineer from the village of Ruská Voľa nad Popradom described the Rusyn movement today as “invisible”²⁴⁹ and others voice similar

²⁴⁸ Róbert Dohányes, *Národnostné menšiny na Slovensku 2004*, 25.

²⁴⁹ Interview with the author, Michalovce, Slovakia, June 20, 2009.

opinions. Most people are too busy to read scholarly books on Rusyns, one woman explains with exasperation. As the wife of an Orthodox priest, the owner of three furniture stores, and the mother of three teenage children, she knows she will never have the spare time to sit down and read books about being Rusyn or to attend scholarly conferences on the subject. “If there were more television shows or radio programs,” she suggests, “then people could listen and watch whenever they had the time.”²⁵⁰ Another respondent who claims his native language as Rusyn but ethnicity as Ukrainian says that he has never in his life read any Rusyn publications nor does he know of any Rusyn organizations he might like to join.²⁵¹ A 25-year-old teacher, who describes herself as Rusyn but admits to identifying as “Slovak” on official documents because her citizenship is in Slovakia, says that while she has seen a few Rusyn newspapers, she has never been aware of any of the other Rusyn-language literature that has been produced, even those works by such celebrated authors as Maria Maľcovska. She feels that the Rusyn activists hold events and conferences that are too “remote” from the places where most Rusyns live and that they are not publicized in a way that makes it possible for people outside activist circles to participate.²⁵²

Some external observers, especially Rusyn-American activists, have noticed a serious class split in the Rusyn movement of Slovakia. A Rusyn-American activist with the Carpatho-Rusyn society says that even with years of experience working in cultural organizations, she encounters scorn from Rusyn activists in Slovakia who are overly preoccupied with what *title* other people possess, a tendency she believes to be a carry-over from the communist era. “If people see you as inferior to themselves because of your lack of a title,” she claims, “they will not take you seriously or believe you to be worth working with.”²⁵³ If this activist is right—and complaints about the remoteness or even invisibility of the Rusyn movement provide a hint that

²⁵⁰ Interview, June 20, 2009.

²⁵¹ Interview with the author, Medzilaborce region, July 13, 2009.

²⁵² Interview with the author, Michalovce, Slovakia, July 13, 2009.

²⁵³ Interview with the author, Pittsburgh, March 6, 2010.

she may be on the right track—this cuts off the vast majority of the Rusyn population from the cultural activists who are supposed to be serving them, teaching them to respect their culture’s richness, helping them to understand the rights that they now have, and inspiring them to demand that those rights be fulfilled by their government.

Complacency is also a possible problem. The second annual hike to Kremenec, a mountain top location where the borders of Slovakia, Poland, and Ukraine all meet, was held on June 28, 2009. It was organized as a special graduation ceremony for Rusyn children from Transcarpathia graduating from the Rusyn-language program run by Uzhhorod scholar and activist Valerij Padiak. This yearly event is intended to bring Rusyn youth from Poland, Slovakia, and Transcarpathia together for a celebration of their common ethnicity. It took enormous effort for the Rusyns in Ukraine to arrange the trip to Kremenec because the path from their side runs through a Ukrainian military zone and thus they had to be escorted by military guards. An intrepid reporter from the Uzhhorod Rusyn television program *Rusins’ka rodina*, that the Transcarpathian Rusyns have managed to set up and fund with regional governmental support, despite a lack of state support, also made the hike, carrying her videocamera and tripod along the entire way. The graduation ceremony Padiak organized for his students included the presentation of certificates, featuring each child repeating an oath to love and respect the Rusyn language and never be ashamed to speak it. But before the ceremony, as exhausted hikers lunched on sandwiches and shots of slivovitz, an argument broke out between some representatives of the Rusyn organization in Slovakia, the Rusyn Renaissance Society and the Rusyns from Transcarpathia. The Rusyns from Slovakia expressed sympathy for the plight of Rusyns in Ukraine, who have no governmental recognition, do not have their ethnicity listed on the census, and do not enjoy the many rights and protections offered by the European Union. “What is wrong,” one asked, “with asking for a little help from a stronger government? What is wrong with turning to Russia for support against Ukrainian repression of Rusyn identity?” The reaction was not the agreement that they may have expected. Instead, the Rusyns from Ukraine turned their

questions around on them responded with a reprimand: “Why, when you [in Slovakia] have government recognition and government funding do you not have a system of schools like we do? Why do you not have a Rusyn television program that can reach 46 different countries? Recognition means nothing without your own effort!”²⁵⁴

The children, the next generation, vowed to preserve their language. Padiak gave a speech expressing hope that Ukraine would one day join Europe. Everyone was photographed standing with the Rusyn and the European Union flags unfurled proudly. But the Transcarpathian Rusyns’ words convey a significant message to the Rusyns of Slovakia. The minority rights that they may think they have because of EU standards and government funding are not necessarily the magic keys to preserving a sense of Rusyn identity in the Slovak state. Rather, Rusyns in Slovakia may benefit from an activist program that is more inclusive of diverse segments of the Rusyn community, enabling them to be more aware of their interests as a people.

The Battle for Rus’: Rusyns Between Russia and Ukraine

One of the most difficult challenges for the Rusyn movement is how the complex relationship between Ukraine and Russia has affected Rusyn efforts for recognition in the Transcarpathian oblast. While Rusyns are recognized as a national minority in all the European countries where they live, they are not recognized by Kiev. Instead, Ukraine has argued loudly against what Rusyns claim to be their cultural, linguistic, and historical distinctness from Ukrainians. At the same time, in recent years Russian media coverage of the Rusyn movement in Transcarpathia has expanded widely. A small contingent of Transcarpathian Rusyns, disappointed by the lack of recognition from the Ukrainian government, favors autonomy, even independence

²⁵⁴ The Rusyns from Ukraine were supported in their argument by Dr. Paul Robert Magocsi, visiting from Canada. Magocsi, as the world’s foremost scholar of Rusyn culture and history, was the first to object loudly to the comments from the Rusyns from Slovakia. His sharp objections easily silenced them and gave the Transcarpathians an opening to respond to the questions of the Rusyn group from Slovakia.

from Ukraine, and seeks to back up its claims with the muscle of the Russian government. These claims and association with Russia are considered radical by most of the Rusyn movement in other countries. Russian attention has drawn the Rusyns into a contentious debate between Russia and Ukraine over their political relationship, the validity of Ukrainian national identity, and the question of which country should be considered the rightful heir of Kievan Rus' and therefore claim political control over East Slavic lands. Russian media coverage and the aggressive use of the internet by relatively more radical Rusyns and the nationalist Russians focused on the issue of Rusyn discontent in Transcarpathia, threatens to overshadow the progress that Rusyns have made toward their cultural revival and self-determination by bringing them further into the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The Rusyns and their demands for recognition are only part of the reason that Transcarpathia's identity as a region is in question. Transcarpathia's history and ethnic composition, both unique among other regions of Ukraine, has resulted in a specific kind of Transcarpathian regional identity shared by the region's inhabitants. It plays a role in the present conflict. According to Judy Batt of the Centre for Studies in Security and Diplomacy at the University of Birmingham, Transcarpathia has managed over the decades to maintain an impressive sense of independence. She points out that locals continue to use subtle ways to assert their sense of connection with central Europe rather than with the rest of Ukraine to their east—notably employing what they call “local time” or “our time,” which is one hour behind official Kiev time.²⁵⁵ Transcarpathia is also home to an array of other ethnic minorities including Hungarians, Roma, Romanians, Russians, Slovaks, and Germans. Intermarriage is fairly common. The “vicissitudes of history” that have created a specific Transcarpathian identity according to Batt, have allowed the region to remain relatively free of interethnic conflict during the many crises of the past century. But the people face serious challenges. Transcarpathia is one of the poorest regions of Ukraine, and since the fall of the Soviet Union employment has

²⁵⁵ Judy Batt, “Transcarpathia,” 155.

plummeted with industrial decline. The region's former strategic status as the western border of the Soviet Union is gone and "permanent emigration is the ambition of many."²⁵⁶

Rusyn activists claim that between 600,000-800,000 Rusyns live in Transcarpathia but according to the latest official census, in which "Rusyn" was not an ethnic category presented as a choice but had to be specifically entered, there are only just over 10,000.²⁵⁷ The current Rusyn movement in Ukraine began as the communist government collapsed and was inspired by and supported by the many Rusyn movements that had sprung up since the late 1980s in other European countries. The demise of the Soviet Union was a time of celebration and anticipation of freedom. In the words of historian and publisher Valerij Padiak, one of the leading Rusyn activists in Ukraine today, this "liberated the energy of national rebirth"²⁵⁸ not only for Rusyns but for other peoples of the region. Ukrainians too were eager to be free of russification. The first organization in Transcarpathia to use the term "Rusyn" in its name was the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns, a "cultural-civic organization, whose basic goal is the rebirth of [Rusyn] history, culture, language, traditions, and the distinct name Rusyn," founded in February 1990. It immediately adopted as its symbols the coat of arms in the regional flag and Aleksander Dukhnovych's poem, *Dedication*, as its anthem. In an official statement to the Ukrainian press the new organization announced a wide-ranging program of activity that was to include not only a Rusyn Research Center at Uzhhorod State University and to create an "ethnographic fund for Rusyn studies," but also to clean up the threatened ecology of Transcarpathia, promote traditional crafts and industries, and "to oppose all manifestations of chauvinistic nationalism in whatever form."²⁵⁹ These were fairly modest goals. But one demand the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns made alarmed the central Ukrainian government in Kiev. In September 1990 the organization issued a declaration outlining Transcarpathia's history, its autonomy and very brief independence as

²⁵⁶ Judy Batt, "Transcarpathia," 157.

²⁵⁷ Iurii Snegirev, "Rusyny prosnutsia i bez krovi otdeliatsia ot Ukrainy?" *Izvestiia*, November 12, 2008.

²⁵⁸ Padiak, "Ponizhenie statusa."

²⁵⁹ "Revolution of 1989 Update: Uzhhorod, Soviet Union," *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 13:2 (Summer 1990) 5.

Carpatho-Ukraine, and the non-democratic conditions of annexation to the Soviet Union in 1945. It proposed that Transcarpathian Ukraine should become an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union. Ukrainian organizations soon issued a counter-declaration asserting that the views of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns must be ideas lifted from “Muscovite chauvinists, Budapest Uhro-Rusyns, Prague Carpatho-Russians, and politicized American Rusyns.”²⁶⁰ Thus, the contemporary Rusyn movement in Ukraine from its beginnings carried a political weight that none of the Rusyn movements in other countries did. Transcarpathia was the only region Rusyns had a chance to govern as their own, and it remains the one place today where the Rusyn movement has taken on the features of a national movement demanding political control of a territory. Its most radical segment insists on the end goal of a nation-state rather than the peaceful kind of goals of cultural self-determination that have arisen in other Rusyn territories.

The drive for Rusyn autonomy or independence and political control is by far not the main feature of the Rusyn movement in Transcarpathia. Dozens of other Rusyn organizations have also sprung up there since the fall of the Soviet Union, many of which, like the Padiak’s Aleksander Dukhnovych Society, focus on cultural aims like such as education and cooperative work together with other Rusyn organizations in the World Congress of Rusyns. But the region’s Rusyn activists have not forgotten Transcarpathia’s brief experience with political independence in its history. The right to at least recognition of a separate and distinct ethnic identity and what Padiak calls “cultural autonomy,”²⁶¹ remains a main goal in the Rusyn movement of Ukraine.

As the Soviet Union broke up in 1991 and the Society of Carpatho-Rusyn’s request to become an autonomous republic lost relevance, Ukraine’s impending independence created anxiety among Rusyns, largely because they were afraid of domination by nationalist rule that would deny their self-identity, and this strengthened the desire among some activists for regional

²⁶⁰ “Declaration of the Carpatho-Rusyns Concerning Restoration of the Transcarpathian Oblast to the Status of an Autonomous Republic,” *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 14:1 (Spring 1991) 4-5.

²⁶¹ Channel 5 (Ukraine), *5 kopiok* [5 Kopecks], “*Problema separatizma v Zakarpatti*/Problem of Separatism in Zakarpattia,” Kiev, May 23, 2009.

autonomy.²⁶² Nevertheless, most people believed that the fall of the Soviet Union and independence would bring greater freedoms. Thus Rusyns joined with other inhabitants of the Transcarpathian oblast in the 1991 vote for Ukraine's independence, with 90% of the Transcarpathian population voting in favor. But the 1991 vote also came to be remembered by the Rusyn community as a moment of disillusionment. Included in the considered measures was a referendum that would have granted a degree of autonomy for Transcarpathia. With a memory of promised autonomy in democratic Czechoslovakia and a tiny period of independence, voters in Transcarpathia were almost as supportive of autonomy as they were of Ukraine's independence: 78% were in favor of autonomy for their region within the newly-independent Ukrainian state. But these results were quietly ignored and political debate between the new Ukrainian government in Kiev and Transcarpathia became more heated.²⁶³ In the following years, local Transcarpathian elites struggled for power against Kiev's efforts at centralization, and the regional administration leadership changed hands often. Elections were falsified, unemployment soared, people became more suspicious of the government and shied away from political involvement, and the economy was crippled.²⁶⁴

Rusyn groups in the early 1990s in Transcarpathia continued to make demands for recognition and some continued more strident demands for autonomy, particular the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns headed by Ivan Turianytsia, a biochemist and Transcarpathian representative in the World Council of Rusyns (the executive body of the World Congress of Rusyns).²⁶⁵ To much of the rest of the world, Turianytsia's attempts at creating a small potential government—called a “provisional government”—either went by unnoticed or were “good for a laugh,” as Timothy

²⁶² Judy Batt, “Transcarpathia,” 159.

²⁶³ Valerij Padiak, “*Status rusinskoï narodnosti*.”

²⁶⁴ Valerij Padiak and M. Rutsak, *Sistema khoziaistvovania v zakarpatskoi oblasti v 1991-2004 godakh: ekonomicheskii upadok, razval agrarnogo sektora, gubitel'noe ispol'zovanie prirodnnykh resursov, krakh sotsial'noi zashchity naselenia, politika assimiliatsii rusin, narushenie prav korennogo naselenia* (Uzhgorod: Izdatel'stvo V. Padiaka, 2004) 7-9.

²⁶⁵ Paul Robert Magocsi, “Turianytsia, Ivan M.” *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsci and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) 470-1.

Garton Ash put it after interviewing Turianytsia in 1999.²⁶⁶ The reaction of the Ukrainian government was largely to ignore all of these demands and instead to study how to resolve the situation by eliminating Rusyn identity. In 1996, five years after the referendum for autonomy, the Rusyn communities suffered a blow from the Ukrainian government, cited today by separatist activists as justification for their demand that Rusyns must be granted autonomy to be able to maintain their culture. This blow came in the form of a Ukrainian government document entitled “Proposed Measures for Resolving the Problem of Ukrainian-Rusyns.” The result of a Ukrainian government appeal to several different ministries and scholarly academies for ideas on how to eliminate Rusyn identity, this document contains specific recommendations on how to stifle the Rusyn movement by encouraging and strengthening the Ukrainian identity of Transcarpathia. It has now become the basis not only for disillusionment and distrust of the Ukrainian government, but also for accusations of “ethnocide” leveled against Ukraine by more radical Rusyn groups.²⁶⁷ The fact that such a document was commissioned at all, and that so many ministries were involved in its composition, points to the significance that the Rusyn issue has held for the Ukrainian government. The recommendations also reveal that Rusyn identity was indeed considered alive and strong, and that the Ukrainian government felt threatened by the recognition of Rusyns that had by then occurred in neighboring countries. For example, in Point 2 of the document, the Ministry of Culture and the Arts and of Education, Ministry of Education, as well as the Transcarpathian Oblast State Administration recommend the implementation of “a series of measures designed to strengthen the Ukrainian-ness of Transcarpathia in terms of language, culture, choice of personnel, etc.” and in Point 3 the Transcarpathian Oblast State Administration recommends the prevention of “any local referendums whose goals are to determine the ‘self-identity’ of the Ukrainians of Transcarpathia”

²⁶⁶ Ash, “Hail Ruthenia!” 3.

²⁶⁷ For one example (among many) of the use of this term, a conference in Rostov-na-Donu, Russia, was held in December 2008, on the theme of “Genocide and Cultural Ethnocide of the Rusyns of Carpathian Rus’,” discussed in Mikhail Dronov, “Rus’ pod Karpatami,” *Izvestiia*, March 19, 2009, 6.

because “the existence of an old and still vibrant tradition among the people of calling themselves ‘Rusyns’ could influence the outcome of such questionnaires and color subsequent political interpretations of the results.” Point 3 specifically mentions the recognition of Rusyns in Slovakia as a situation for Ukraine to avoid. In Point 9, the Ministry of Information and the State Commission for Television and Radio Broadcasting recommend that Ukrainian mass media emphasize the identity of Transcarpathia as an “age-old Ukrainian land” with a population that makes up “an indelible part of the Ukrainian nation.”²⁶⁸

Over the years Rusyn organizations formed in Transcarpathia and many worked with the World Congress of Rusyns, interacting with members of Rusyn organizations from all the countries where Rusyns live. They watched as their fellow Rusyns gained recognition and rights and as their status appeared to be on the rise with the entry of Poland and Slovakia into the European Union. Many vowed to move Transcarpathia down a similar path. For example, the Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society, established in Uzhhorod in 1997, stated in its founding declaration that “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.”²⁶⁹ The Regional Society for Subcarpathian Rusyns and the charitable fund “Rusyn School” organized schools, events for young people, and meetings of Rusyns from around the world. They have also supported Rusyn writers, supported Rusyn television, produced books, scholarly literature, news, organization of congresses dealing with Rusyn language, and worked with international institutions, organizing lectures and conferences in other countries including Poland and Germany.²⁷⁰

These more moderate approaches to defining and preserving a distinct Rusyn identity are what activist Valerij Padiak calls the “evolutionary approach” as opposed to the strident,

²⁶⁸ See Appendix B for the entire document. Reprinted in English translation in the *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 20:1 (Spring 1997), 6.

²⁶⁹ “Our Rusyn Truth,” Declaration in conjunction with the establishment of the Rusyn Scholarly and Enlightenment Society, *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 10:4 (Winter 1992) 9.

²⁷⁰ Valerij Padiak, “*Status rusinskoi narodnosti*, 12.

autonomy-demanding “revolutionary approach”²⁷¹ taken by more radical leaders such as Turianytsia. They seemed to have little effect. The Rusyns have not received responses to their demands for recognition despite having delivered statements and requests to all the presidents of Ukraine since the fall of the Soviet Union, to the Verkhovna Rada, to the prime ministers, and to other officials. According to Padiak, the Rusyn “problem” is simply passed around the government, and eventually politicians have turned to the National Academy of Sciences. It has repeatedly provided the same conclusion: the Rusyns are just a “sub-ethnos” of the Ukrainian people using an ethnonym which historically referred to all the Ukrainians. “This means,” Padiak continues, “that Ukrainians ignore the right of a people to self-definition (*samoopridilenia*).”²⁷² According to Rusyn activists, the Ukrainian government is ignoring a historical experience that has engendered an independent culture and identity among the Rusyns of the Carpathian region distinct from that of the rest of Ukraine.

When the 2004 elections appeared to promise a turn towards greater democracy and towards Europe, many Rusyns in Ukraine once again began to hope that a new era was dawning. As other states where Rusyns lived, such as Slovakia and Poland, adjusted their policies toward ethnic minorities to meet European standards and were admitted to the EU, hope grew that Ukraine would begin to do the same. Rusyn organizations in Transcarpathia held a “round table” to decide what their position should be in the elections. They were angry about the inaction of the Ukrainian government concerning their demands since 1990, and they worried that Viktor Yanukovich was a representative of that same system that had ignored them. They were supportive of Viktor Yushchenko, but feared the consequences if he were to lose and they were seen publicly supporting him. To avoid this bind, some Rusyns advocated voting for third parties such as the socialists or communists. Eventually they decided that the Rusyns should vote for those who might bring them positive change. Certain Rusyn factions, however, stayed away from

²⁷¹ Valerij Padiak, Interview with the author, Mukachevo, July 5, 2009.

²⁷² Valerij Padiak, “*Status rusinskoi narodnosti*, 1.

these agreements.²⁷³ Father Dmitry Sydor, an Orthodox priest of the Moscow Patriarchate and a Rusyn activist who soon became leader of a pro-Russian Rusyn organization called the *Soim of Subcarpathian Rusyns*, openly supported Yanukovych. After the Orange Revolution Sydor became an ever more prominent activist in a new, virulent anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian strain of the Rusyn movement.

Russian attention to the Rusyn issue in Transcarpathia has focused on Sydor's efforts, no doubt because of his pro-Russian stance. One of his first and most damaging actions after the Orange Revolution was to support certain radical Russian groups striving for autonomy in Ukraine's disputed southeastern region. According to Padiak, Sydor supported the so-called "Southeastern Ukrainian Autonomous Republic" declared in Siverodonetsk in November 2004, and called for a federal system in Ukraine, providing the regions with more autonomy.²⁷⁴ As early as 2005, a small group of Russophile Rusyns from Moldova, under the leadership of Sergei Suliak, had begun writing to right-wing Russian politician Andrei Savelev. Savelev published the Rusyn letters and his replies to them on his personal website, asking for assistance for these "westernmost Russians" from the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov.²⁷⁵ Suliak and Sydor became allied in their Russophile stance on Rusyn identity.²⁷⁶ By 2006 Sydor was openly distancing the Rusyn organizations under his control from international Rusyn

²⁷³ Valerij Padiak, "Status rusinkoi narodnosti, 4-5.

²⁷⁴ Valerij Padiak, "Status rusinkoi narodnosti, 5.

²⁷⁵ <http://savelev.ru/journal/case/?id=17> continues on <http://savelev.ru/journal/case/more/?id=17>. Accessed August 5, 2008.

²⁷⁶ IA Regnum, "Glavnoe nashe dostizhenie—etnonim "rusin" vozvrashchen v massovoe soznanie: intervju glavy obshchestvennoi organizatsii "Rus" Sergeia Suliaka," November 17, 2006, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/741327.html>. According to Dr. Magocsi, the group surrounding Sergei Suliak is of unknown size and its attempts to join the World Congress of Rusyns have consistently been rejected. Suliak's position is not that there is a unique Rusyn ethnicity, language, and culture in Subcarpathian Rus'. Instead, he believes in a "return to" a Rus' identity for all East Slavs and the destruction of Ukrainian national identity (email communication, Patricia A. Krafcik, April 17, 2010). Suliak and whatever followers he may have publish an online journal at *Obshchestvennaia organizatsia Rus'*, <http://www.rusyn.md>. They also link to the main website serving the Rusyns of Vojvodina, at <http://www.e-rusnak.info>, where they are portrayed as a legitimate Rusyn organization and Suliak as a major Rusyn leader. The inclusion of this anti-Ukrainian organization into mainstream Rusyn activity serves only to justify the Ukrainian government's impulse to crack down on Rusyn organizations and identity in Ukraine.

organizations, especially those based in the United States and Canada with a membership of immigrants and descendants of immigrants.

While Sydor appeared to be steering the Rusyns down a path of confrontation with Ukraine, some slow but positive developments in Transcarpathia also occurred. Despite the federal Ukrainian government's stand, in 2007 after persistent lobbying by more moderate Rusyn groups, they were recognized by the Transcarpathian oblast Administration as a minority ethnicity.²⁷⁷ The number of children in Rusyn language classes continued to increase as Padiak and other moderate Rusyn leaders worked to build trust among locals for their movement.²⁷⁸ But Sydor's *Soim* of Subcarpathian Rusyns and a few other radical Rusyn organizations in Transcarpathia were not satisfied with this pace of achievement. They published a "Declaration" on December 15, 2007, written in Russian and accusing Ukraine of "genocide" against the Rusyn people through measures taken to ukrainianize the region. They demanded official recognition from the Ukrainian government. They also asked both the European Union and Russia to take note of their plight and to help them fulfill their right to national self-determination as guaranteed by the 1919 Treaty of St. Germain, joining Subcarpathian Rus' to Czechoslovakia after World War I.²⁷⁹ An attachment to the Declaration made more far-reaching and extreme statements, calling for a sovereign Rusyn state, a Rusyn army, a wall to separate Subcarpathian Rus' from the rest of Ukraine, the adoption of Rusyn and Russian as official languages, and finally a citizenship requirement of four generations living in Transcarpathia.²⁸⁰

The "Declaration," however, was not welcomed by most Rusyns in Transcarpathia and outside of Ukraine. The World Congress of Rusyns, under the chairmanship of historian and

²⁷⁷ Richard D. Custer, "Rusyns Recognized as Indigenous Nationality of the Transcarpathian Oblast of Ukraine," *The New Rusyn Times: A Cultural-Organizational Publication of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society* 14:2 (2007) 1.

²⁷⁸ Valerij Padiak, *Vozrozhinia rusyns'koho oshkolovania*, 11.

²⁷⁹ Dmitry Sydor, et al, "Declaration of the association of Rusyn organizations of the region 'Soim of Subcarpathian Rusyns,'" *Subcarpathian Rus'* 1/149 (January 1-15, 2007), 1, 4. Original: Димитрий Сидор, «Декларація асоціації русинських організацій краю Сойм Подкарпатських Русинів», *Подкарпатська Русь* 1/149 (1–15 января, 2007) 1, 4.

²⁸⁰ Paul Robert Magocsi, untitled letter, World Congress of Rusyns. January 21, 2008, 2.

Rusyn activist Dr. Paul Robert Magocsi, condemned the “Declaration” as “a dangerous provocation directed against the present political order of Europe and against the interests of the Carpatho-Rusyn people” and declared the complete dissociation of the World Congress of Rusyns from the *Soim* of Subcarpathian Rusyns.²⁸¹ Undaunted, the *Soim* and other like-minded Rusyns continued periodically issuing statements regarding “ethnocide” and “genocide,” and continued making contacts with Russians and pro-Russian organizations. Sydor also made provocative statements suggesting that the Transcarpathian oblast might split from Ukraine if the demand for autonomy was not met. In an interview in March 2008, he claimed that the regional government might soon recognize the region’s independence, saying that “The transfer of Zakarpattia to self-governance is the question of the hour. If Kiev does not want to communicate positively, then the regional council will declare independence.”²⁸² On October 25, 2008, a meeting of the European Congress of Subcarpathian Rusyns was held in the Transcarpathian city of Mukachevo at the Russian Dramatic Theater, bringing together the leaders of the Subcarpathian *Soim* and their open supporters, totaling 109 people in all. They signed a declaration demanding autonomy for Transcarpathia within Ukraine by December 1, 2008. According to Sydor, “If they ignore us, we will find another way, and will renew our state system. We are not separatists, we want our republic within Ukraine, but recognized.”²⁸³ On the streets of Mukachevo that same day, another approximately 100 members of the pro-Russian youth group Rodina demonstrated in support of Rusyns. Most of these supporters had come from Odessa, a center of tension in the ongoing struggle between Russia and Ukraine over Crimea, specifically for the purpose of supporting Sydor and his group. The Ukrainian press warned that “the phantom of separatism wanders over Ukraine.”²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Magocsi letter, 1.

²⁸² Valerij Padiak, “*Status rusinskoi narodnosti*, 6.

²⁸³ “Na votchine Balohi trebuiut avtonomii rusiny i druzia Kremliia,” October 27, 2008, <http://rus.4post.com.ua/politics/113255.html>

²⁸⁴ “Rusiny trebuiut do 1 dekabria priznat’ respubliku Podkarpatskaia Rus’,” October 27, 2008, <http://www.newsukraine.com.ua/news/128029/>

In general, while views differ as to the nature and meaning of the Rusyn issue in Transcarpathia, many critics understood the problem of the Rusyns as a new phenomenon, engineered specifically by the Russians to destroy Ukraine's unity and integrity. Oleksandr Solontai of the Transcarpathia Regional Council said that the Rusyn movement led by Sydor is "entirely supported from Russia... thought up and established in Moscow."²⁸⁵ Volodymyr Pipash, head of the cultural and educational organization *Prosvita* and member of the Our Ukraine party, claimed that "the idea of Rusynism is dead; it is being played only as a political card," and nationalist politician Eduard Shufrich asserted that "the Rusyns are Magyars who think the *katsapy* [a derogatory term referring to Russians] love them."²⁸⁶ According to Ukrainian historian Oleksandr Paliy writing for the online newspaper *Obozrevatel'*, the Rusyn movement is really a construct of Russia and its sympathizers, a case of "the empire strikes back" by Russians who are unable to cope with their loss of control over Ukraine.²⁸⁷ While some of these characterizations are exaggerated, devalue the Rusyns' sense of identity, and disregard the impact that Transcarpathia's distinct history has had on its relationship with Ukraine today, Sydor's activity has encouraged the sense that the Rusyn movement ultimately seeks to break up Ukraine's territory. His contradictory statements—"we are not separatists" versus "the transfer of Zakarpattia to self-governance is the question of the hour" and his comparisons of the Rusyn situation to that of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria²⁸⁸—serve only to sow confusion and discourage meaningful dialogue between Rusyn activists and Ukrainian officials.

Not surprisingly, the *Soim's* December 1, 2008 deadline for recognition passed without acknowledgment from the Ukrainian government. A small provisional government for the

²⁸⁵ Vitaly Chervonenko, Sviatoslav Khomenko, "Rusinskii perevorot," October 28, 2008, <http://glavred.info/print.php?article=/archive/2008/10/28/175728-0.html>.

²⁸⁶ Katerina Cherepanova, "Separatizm v Ukrainu mozhetsia podkrast'sia iz Zakarpattia," *FOKUS*, <http://focus.in.ua/article/32055.html>, March 25, 2008. The term *katsap* is of uncertain origin, but according to the *Entsiklopekia kul'tur* at <http://ec-dejavu.ru/k/Katsap.html>, it may derive from a Turkish word for "butcher."

²⁸⁷ Oleksandr Paliy, "Ukraintsy pobedili kuchmizm—pobediat i separatizm," *Obozrevatel'*, <http://obozrevatel.com/news/2005/10/12/51505.htm>.

²⁸⁸ "Dimitrii Sidor: Rusiny Zakarpattia solidarny s narodami Abkhazii, Iuzhnoi Osetii I Pridnestrovia," *Regnum informatsionnoe agenstvo*, February 22, 2008, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/961638.html>

“Republic of Subcarpathian Rus” was created along the lines of Turianytsa’s separate government from the 1990s, under “Prime Minister” Petro Getsko. All the members of the government of the “Republic of Subcarpathian Rus” are now wanted men,²⁸⁹ and Sydor is on trial for violation of Article 2 of Ukraine’s constitution, which deals with the territorial integrity of the country.²⁹⁰ Sydor’s supporters are Russians and Rusyns who share his pro-Russian views. For example, the nationalist Eurasian Youth Movement²⁹¹ held a protest in front of the Ukrainian Embassy in Moscow on March 15, 2010.²⁹² Photographs from this picket show a small group of protesters with signs in support of Sydor, and with banners promoting the cause of ethnic Russians in Ukraine and accusing Ukraine itself of being “separatist”—presumably from Russia.²⁹³ While members of the government of the “Republic of Subcarpathian Rus” are wanted by the law and operate underground, they have maintained an active presence on the internet. “Prime Minister” Getsko, or someone claiming to be him, maintains a blog discussing the political goals of the Rusyn movement in Ukraine²⁹⁴ and regularly posts to Rusyn Facebook groups which link Rusyns from around the world, not just those in Ukraine. His blog postings, such as an article entitled “At Minimum Three Regions of Contemporary Ukraine Now See Their Separateness and Uniqueness,” only help to confirm Ukrainian fears that the Rusyn movement is not truly a movement of a culture seeking respect and recognition within the Ukrainian state, but is a cynical political ploy to weaken the Ukrainian state by fomenting separatism of various kinds.

The Russian press in turn has publicized the Rusyn question to its audience in a biased way. No prominent Russians have made any public statements on the Rusyn issue. The news

²⁸⁹ Petro Okhotin, “Pazl ‘Ukraina’: shmatochki v riadochku,” *Tyzhden*, February 2, 2010, <http://ut.net.ua/tribune/199/0/6/>

²⁹⁰ Subcarpathian Rus/Podkarpatska Rus: Bulletin of Rusyn Society, <http://www.pudkarpatskarus.eu/index.htm> last accessed April 7, 2010.

²⁹¹ Evraziiskii soiuz molodezhi, <http://www.rossia3.ru/>.

²⁹² Alexander Bovdunov, “Hands Off Father Dimitry Sidor!” in the group Carpatho-Rusyns Everywhere! Facebook, <http://ta-in.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=2203971582&topic=16009>, last accessed April 7, 2010.

²⁹³ “The fresh fotos from Moscow,” Subcarpathian Rus/Podkarpatska Rus: Bulletin of Rusyn Society, <http://www.pudkarpatskarus.eu/rsnews/article063.htm#2>, last accessed April 7, 2010.

²⁹⁴ Petro Getsko, “Zhurnal Petra Getsko premier ministra Respubliki Podkarpatskaia Rus’: Rusyny nepobedimy. S nimi pravda i Bog!” <http://getsko-p.livejournal.com/>, last accessed April 7, 2010.

reporting, however, appears to be produced with the goal of revealing Ukraine to be a weak state, to encourage Russian irredentism by highlighting Russian goals and undermining Ukraine's claims to be European and democratic. Definitions of the Rusyn ethnicity that appear in Russian press often seem to match not what most Rusyns believe about themselves—that they are descendants of a mix of the ancient Slavic tribe of the White Croats, shepherd settlers from Romania, and settlers from ancient Rus'²⁹⁵—but instead focus on the connection of Rusyns to Kievan Rus' alone. For example, in mainstream Russian news articles available in newspapers and online Rusyns are frequently connected with the culture of ancient Rus' as an “ancient East-Slavic people who have preserved in practically inviolate form the language and culture of Kievan Rus'.”²⁹⁶ They become “Eastern Slavs, who together with Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are the direct descendants of the culture and language of Ancient Rus'.”²⁹⁷ Their preservation of the term Rus' as part of their ethnonym points to, say Russian sources, the Rusyns' sense of “*ruskost*” —of identity with Rus' and the connection of all peoples descended from it, in contrast to the Ukrainians who have created a newer and by implication, false sense of identity.²⁹⁸ Russian sources also tend to overstate the level of oppression that Rusyns face in Ukraine, claiming, for example, that Ukraine “drives them from judicial, executive and military structures, persecutes Rusyn politicians...does not allow the opening of Rusyn schools, radio or television stations.”²⁹⁹ The Russian press does not discuss the Rusyn movement's achievements, which include the establishment Rusyn-language programs, book publications, a Rusyn-language television program partly funded by the Transcarpathian authorities, the official adoption of a Rusyn anthem as the regional anthem, let alone the official recognition of Rusyns by the

²⁹⁵ Magocsi, *Our People*, 9.

²⁹⁶ Konstantin Smirnov, “Gazovoe kormlennie,” *Gazeta*, January 16, 2009.

²⁹⁷ Mikhail Dronov, “Rus' pod Karpatami,” *Izvestiia*, March 19, 2009, 6.

²⁹⁸ *Ia rusin byl, iesm i budu*, documentary, Dzintars, 2008.

²⁹⁹ Igor' Makarov, “Russkii da zhivet narod,” *Pravda* February 4, 2010, 3.

Transcarpathian oblast authorities.³⁰⁰ Thus, the accomplishments of the Rusyn movement, achieved not through threats of separatism but by dialogue and cooperation with local Ukrainian authorities, are completely overlooked. Those who follow only the Russian press are led to believe that Rusyns cannot accomplish anything as part of the Ukrainian state. Russian television news has reported on the Rusyns several times, including on major channels such as *Vesti* and Channel 1. A Channel 1 report on Rusyns quoted Sydor defining Rusyns as “an ancient people who with love still remember the undivided Holy Rus’.”³⁰¹

This kind of coverage by the Russian media is perhaps also why the Rusyn cause has been picked up by several Russian nationalist organizations in Ukraine and Russia. They are linked to Rusyn websites or carry articles on the Rusyn situation from a pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian perspective, including *Edinoe otechestvo* [United Fatherland],³⁰² the *Russkii blok* [Russian bloc] political party in the Crimea,³⁰³ *Kol'tso patrioticheskikh resursov* [Circle of Patriotic Resources],³⁰⁴ the *Fond strategicheskoi kul'tury* [Strategic Culture Foundation]³⁰⁵ and *Edinaia Rus'* [United Rus'].³⁰⁶ The image of Rusyns as naturally opposed to Ukrainians has trickled down into Russian popular culture. For example, the Rusyns appear in a recent short story by author Vatslav Mikhalskii (b. 1938 in Taganrog) in a series about Russian émigrés. In this story, a former Russian countess meets a Rusyn worker on a ship:

As usual she began speaking with Anatoly Makitra in Ukrainian.
“You can also speak Russian,” the youth said to her unexpectedly. “I like Russian better.”
“And why is your native Ukrainian bad?”
“It isn’t. But it’s not native to me.”

³⁰⁰ Interfax-Ukraine News Agency, “Ukrainian MPs concerned over western region’s Rusyn anthem,” BBC Monitoring Kiev Unit, BBC Worldwide Monitoring, December 23, 2009.

³⁰¹ Channel 1, “V Serbii proshel siezd malogo naroda—rusinov,” February 28, 2009, <http://www.1tv.ru/news/world/139031>, last accessed April 19, 2010. *Vesti* coverage of a Prague meeting of Rusyns sympathetic to Sydor and in opposition to the World Congress of Rusyns can be found at Vesti, “Vsemirny kongress rusinov: itogi vstrecha,” April 25, 2009, <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=279314>, last accessed April 19, 2010.

³⁰² *Edinoe otechestvo*, <http://www.otchestvo.org.ua/>, last accessed April 7, 2010.

³⁰³ Portal russkogo naroda kryma, <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/>, last accessed April 7, 2010.

³⁰⁴ *Kol'tso patrioticheskikh resursov*, <http://www.rossija.info/>.

³⁰⁵ *Fond strategicheskoi kul'tury*, <http://fondsk.ru/>.

³⁰⁶ *Edinaia rossii*, <http://www.edrus.org/>.

“But aren’t you a Ukrainian?”

“No.”

“So who are you?”

“I am a Rusyn. Have you heard of such a nation [*pro takuiu natsiu*]?”

“Rusyn? I have. Our cook in Nikolaevo was a Rusyn, a very good cook. Do you live in Prikarpattia [another term for Transcarpathia]?”

“Exactly!” Anatoly broke into a grin. “I am so glad that you know our nation because [usually] whomever you tell, nobody knows. This is because before the war they forcibly registered all of us as Ukrainians, but we are Rusyns.”

“Are you a Catholic?”

“What do you mean!” Anatoly crossed himself three times. “We Rusyns have been Orthodox from time immemorial.”³⁰⁷

Their conversation reveals the version of Rusyn identity that is currently promoted in the Russian press: that the Rusyns feel closer to Russians than to Ukrainians, they are pious Orthodox Christians, they are a nation repressed by Ukraine, and are grateful to be acknowledged by a Russian friend. Some Russian articles expressly suggest that Russia needs to stand up for Rusyns against Ukraine and appeal to the Russian sense of responsibility for the Slavic world:

Our country is the historical homeland of the largest East-Slavic people. And there is after all a good Russian tradition: the older brother always stands like a mountain for the younger. Older, meaning big and strong: of course this is not about the age of these two brotherly ethnicities. On this foundation alone the Russian Federation’s insistence on the rights of Carpathian Rusyns would be completely justified. By the way, it is no accident that the common root “Rus” is preserved in the names of both our peoples. It is in a similar way that, for example, Hungary, Finland and Estonia protect the Finno-Ugric peoples living on the territory of Russia. Moreover, Rusyns themselves, as follows from the documents of the two European congresses [in which Sydor’s declarations were issued], look with hope to Russia, seeing it as a potential partner and an influential relative.³⁰⁸

The Russian media has also been using English-language broadcasting, especially through its worldwide channel *Russia Today*, which has produced at least four television reports on Rusyns, including a half-hour-long special.³⁰⁹ They are effectively reaching the English-speaking Rusyn diaspora, and Rusyn-American leaders and scholars are doing little to counter the biased impression of the Rusyn movement in Ukraine that these Russian media sources create.

³⁰⁷ Vatslav Mikhal’skii, “Proshchenoe voskresen’e,” *Oktiabr’* 12 (December 2009), 94. Translated by the author.

³⁰⁸ Mikhail Dronov, “Rus’ pod Karpatami,” 6.

³⁰⁹ The longest and most comprehensive Russia Today coverage of the Rusyn issue is RT, “The Rusyns,” *XL Reports*, September 26, 2009, http://rt.com/About_Us/Programmes/XL_Reports/2009-09-26/491818.html.

Rusyn leaders of a more moderate stance, such as Valerij Padiak, however, are relying on scholars and activists to provide more accurate information to Rusyn-Americans and others. Recent discussions in the Rusyn-American community revealed their strong interest in Sydor, but also a lack of awareness of any other group within the Rusyn movement in Transcarpathia besides his. Some Americans, as yet uninformed of about the larger political context of channels like *Russia Today*, do not suspect the bias in their reports. And the internet is a strong source of information for many.

At a recent church dinner in a Rusyn community, a woman excitedly described the *Russia Today* special on Rusyns, which can be found either on Russia Today's website or on a prominent Rusyn-American site, the *Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base*.³¹⁰ She thought it was "very nice" and promised to send the link to it to everyone sitting near her—another five people who would perhaps soon watch this biased report that extols Sydor and his followers. On another occasion, a group of Rusyn-American seminary students explained that they had read about Sydor and to an extent support him, although they are concerned with Russia's involvement. When asked if they knew that there were other Rusyn organizations in Transcarpathia that do not support Sydor's calls for independence or his attempts to engage Russia in the Rusyn problem, none of them had.³¹¹ Another Rusyn-American explained that the Rusyn movement as a whole takes too soft a stance. He views the lack of recognition of Rusyn ethnicity in Ukraine to be a terrible injustice, is convinced that moderate approaches are too slow, and has come to believe that only toughness will win Rusyns the rights they deserve. Sydor's involvement with Russia might be slightly problematic, but "if I were there I'd be one of his bodyguards!" he continues. "It would be great to have a country." His wife added, "It would be on the map!"³¹² The spread of approval for Sydor's views should worry those Rusyn activists who have worked hard to make their movement fit into a peaceful and Europe-centered approach, one that does not seek to create

³¹⁰ Greg Gressa, Carpatho-Rusyn Knowledge Base, <http://www.carpatho-rusyn.org/>.

³¹¹ Interview with the author, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, March 7, 2010.

³¹² Interview with the author, March 7, 2010.

new borders but to give the Rusyns a chance to develop as a culture and live as a small but respected nation within other states. The Russian version of the Rusyn movement, broadcast widely in two major world languages, will be the Rusyn movement that the whole world knows unless others can be strong enough to make their own voices heard.

Making moderate voices heard is a problem not only because of aggressive Russian propaganda regarding the Rusyn movement, but also because of another serious division that has developed within Ukraine's Rusyn movement. Besides the split between moderate Rusyns and radical Rusyns, another group has organized under the *Narodna Rada Rusinov Zakarpattia* or the NRRZ. The NRRZ got its start after the 2004 elections when a local oligarch from a family of prominent politicians and businessmen, Viktor Baloha, associated with Yushchenko's party, received leadership of the regional administration. Baloha has cynically used the Rusyn movement for his own ends, creating an organization he could control and turn into loyal supporters, while trying to alienate those he could not control—both Sydor's radical faction and the Rusyn organizations connected with the World Congress of Rusyns and able to work independently partly because of funding from the Rusyn diaspora abroad.³¹³ But Baloha has made more of a career in Kiev than he has working with those in Transcarpathia, and has switched his own political allegiances a few times. The NRRZ that he created has at times allied with Father Sydor, and it even boycotted the 2009 conference of the World Congress of Rusyns in Serbia. Like Sydor's group, they issued demands for autonomy to the Ukrainian government.³¹⁴ Divisions within the Rusyn movement meant that during the 2010 presidential elections, Rusyn organizations did not come together to determine a unified position, although Transcarpathia as a whole leaned slightly towards Yulia Tymoshenko. The effect of President Yanukovych's policies on Rusyns remain to be seen.³¹⁵ It is clear, however, that divisions within the Rusyn community

³¹³ Padiak, "Status rusinskoi narodnosti," 11.

³¹⁴ Padiak, "Status rusinskoi narodnosti," 12.

³¹⁵ Valerij Padiak, Email communication with author, March 13, 2010.

create poor conditions for the work of moderate groups and the lack of a unified front may make winning recognition from the Kiev government more difficult.

In sum, the Rusyns of Ukraine are in a unique position among all other Rusyn groups in other countries. The experience of Rusyns in Transcarpathia has been far more politicized than in any other country. Indeed, in Transcarpathia the Rusyns came closest to having political control over their territory, when they had a semi-autonomous region inside of Czechoslovakia and a fleeting moment of independence. Today, they struggle with this history. Rusyn organizations, even the most moderate, hold autonomy on some level to be an important goal, although only the most radical have tried to create Rusyn governments. Ukraine, which has since its independence struggled to free itself of Russian influence and to consolidate a sense of national solidarity among its varied regions, has been reluctant to allow Rusyns the same kinds of rights that they have been given in other countries. Ukrainian concern is to an extent justified by the eagerness of some Rusyn activists to ally with Russia and support Russian separatist causes that could be damaging to the Ukrainian state. The conflict has also turned into a media assault on Ukraine by Russia, using the Rusyn issue to expose Ukrainian weaknesses in its democracy, the strength of its state, and in its national identity. Whether Rusyns who truly want to achieve recognition for their own language and culture in Ukraine through peaceful means will succeed at times appears doubtful. Rusyn achievements so far, however, though modest, are encouraging. Those who embrace a Rusyn identity may yet find a way to realize their national dreams in a way that balances between Ukraine's security and the Rusyn desire for recognition.

Conclusion

In the context of today's new Europe and in light of the emergence and development of the European Union, national minorities play a particularly significant role. With the demise of communism and the liberation of the countries of east central Europe, the diminished importance

of international borders, the spread of a common currency, and an explicit goal of greater mutual cooperation among all European peoples, the European landscape has evolved considerably in the past several decades. For those who monitor both the revival of the east central European countries emerging from grasp of the former Soviet Union, as well as the tense relationship between Russia and Ukraine, the case of the Rusyn minority is unique and important. The Rusyn homeland straddles the border of Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the success of the Rusyn cultural revival on both sides of the border could permit their homeland to become an important link bringing these regions closer together. They currently have achieved recognition in many countries where they live, but not in all. At present, Ukraine claims that Rusyns are Ukrainians, while the Russian media portrays the Rusyns as the westernmost branch of the larger historical Rus' nation and has supported a Russian orientation among a segment of the Rusyn population. Indeed, some among the Rusyns themselves espouse a Ukrainian identity, others are prepared to identify as members of a larger Russian nation, and yet others have assimilated or may assimilate into the dominant societies in which they live. But in the midst of this dynamic, the majority of European Rusyns have joined with descendants of their immigrants to North America in forging an international organization to define and defend what they consider their unique identity.

The Rusyn movement is also important in how it reveals the interconnectedness of cultural and political goals. Rusyns have traditionally been in a weak position culturally as well as politically, and these weaknesses play off of and perpetuate each other. Political domination by other nations—Hungary, the Soviet Union, Poland, Ukraine—has not only hindered Rusyns economically and socially, but has also burdened them throughout their history with a sense of shame and inferiority about their culture. This sense of Rusyn inferiority was to an extent responsible for the persistence of a Russian orientation among 19th and early 20th century Rusyn leaders. The desire to identify with a culture perceived as higher than their own prevented the full development of the Rusyn vernacular language and made it difficult for the majority of Rusyns to

emulate the national movements of other Slavic nations at the time. Shame is a striking feature Rusyn activists continue to grapple with even as they move forward in their renaissance.

Perceiving themselves more clearly as a significant piece of the rich and varied mosaic of national minorities in Europe may be a productive way for Rusyns to overcome the negative legacy of their past and reevaluate their unique heritage and culture. The Rusyns share much in common with small and stateless peoples of Europe, including the Catalans, the Romansch, the Bretons, and yet others who have struggled to maintain their identity and language in the presence of dominant neighboring nations and are now enjoying greater success than in the past. Today, expanding local education in the Rusyn language and increasing efforts to connect with other national minorities throughout Europe may be useful for the Rusyns' own cultural revival. By relating to other national minorities whose cultures have also been traditionally devalued, and taking as a model the work that these groups have done to win recognition and support from the states where they live, Rusyns may be able to work together creatively on strategies that will allow them to see themselves not as some aberrant ethnic phenomenon but as a natural and legitimate component of a Europe that is far more diverse than national borders show.

Precisely in recognition of the uniqueness of each member nation's culture, on May 4, 2000, the European Union adopted the motto "United in Diversity."³¹⁶ If taken as a genuine expression of Europe's philosophy, and not just as a slogan, the idea of unity found in diversity could be particularly conducive to small national groups. This focus on diversity acknowledges the value of groups who do not possess a nation-state. As Rusyns today seek to build a sense of pride in their culture, this new attitude in Europe provides them with an opportunity that they have not had before. Rusyns can now be a nation defined by culture, even without control of any borders. They can be the kind of nation that Yael Tamir describes in her model of liberal nationalism. Tamir defines a nation as a group with a shared culture and a shared notion of the

³¹⁶ Europa, Official Website of the European Union, "Symbols of the EU."
http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/motto/index_en.htm

distinctness of that culture.³¹⁷ She argues that a nation's right to self-determination can be fulfilled when members of that nation have the freedom to celebrate and develop the culture that binds them through public institutions that reflect that culture.³¹⁸ A Europe truly built on a philosophy of unity found in diversity could provide respect and support for stateless nations, including the Rusyns, in building a space within larger states for the expression of their culture. In an expansive and multinational political system guided by respect for diversity, smaller nations may have a greater chance for survival and for mutually productive cooperation than they would in a political system that insists on the nation-state as an ideal.

If culture is taken as key in defining a nation, then it is necessary particularly for small national groups to build and preserve their unique cultures. These cultures serve as a crucial component in the people's drive for recognition and support within the larger political framework in which they live. For Rusyns, preserving their language is a special challenge in connection with overall cultural preservation. In light of increased and lucrative job opportunities in the new borderless Europe requiring the use of languages such as German and English, Rusyns might ask themselves why they should work to preserve their small language. Why not simply use only the language of the country in which they live, for instance, Polish, Slovak, or Ukrainian? As Florian Coulmas predicts in his theory of language birth and death, the primary determiner of language survival is its usefulness, and individuals choose the language they use on the basis of practicality, rather than for the sake of their national identification.³¹⁹ Coulmas's theory predicts that small languages of stateless peoples could easily wither away as they are used in fewer and fewer areas of life. For Rusyns historically and today, however, language development has been of paramount importance in defining their identity and in the quest for recognition. Surrounded largely by other closely-related Slavic languages, they have continued to understand language as one of the major indicators of their particular ethnicity and cultural identity and they are working

³¹⁷ Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, 68.

³¹⁸ Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, 74.

³¹⁹ Florian Coulmas, *Language and Economy*, 153.

actively in all the countries where they live to ensure its survival. In the new Europe, there is hope that despite the challenges they face, it may be possible for the Rusyns to preserve and develop their language into the future.

The European Union's real contribution to the Rusyns in the arena of cultural preservation, however, is in its dismantling of a previous marginalization of national minorities by demanding that states cease discrimination against minorities. According to Michael Blake, no culture has an absolute and unquestioned right to continue to exist in its current form. He argues further that to attempt to maintain cultural diversity for diversity's sake is misguided, nor should the decision of individuals to change their culture or leave it behind to be condemned. Instead, what is of central importance to Blake is the right of cultural groups "to be free from circumstances under which their continued existence is made impossible because of injustices."³²⁰ While Blake's stance on the importance of cultural diversity is certainly controversial, his main point about removing injustices is valid and includes a moral imperative to create conditions under which cultures can survive. The Rusyns have not found it impossible to maintain their culture throughout history, but they certainly have found it difficult, and they have experienced marginalization under the governments that ruled them for most of their history. The European Union's minority rights policy today gives them a better chance than they have ever had in the past to make choices about maintaining their language and cultural traditions. Thus in Europe, the Rusyn movement focuses on cultural and language development in particular to strengthen the culture that defines them as a nation and wins them recognition and respect.

The situation for Rusyns in Ukraine's Transcarpathia is distinctly different from the Rusyns' situation in other European countries, all of which are EU members. The pressures that Transcarpathia's Rusyn population have experienced provide clues as to why the Rusyn movement has taken a more extreme turn there. By the fortuitous combination of political circumstances after World War I and a larger and more compact pattern of Rusyn settlement than

³²⁰ Michael Blake, "Rights for People, Not for Cultures," *Civilization* (August/September 2000), 53.

in Slovakia or Poland, the Rusyns of Transcarpathia, called Subcarpathian Rus' between the two world wars, received the chance to make a choice about the political status of their region. They chose autonomy, brought to an end by Hungarian invasion and then annexation to Soviet Ukraine at the close of World War II. During the Soviet period, those aspects of culture and language that contribute to the unique Rusyn identity of Transcarpathia were repressed, including the Rusyn language and the very term "Rusyn" itself. As the Soviet Union crumbled, calls for the restoration of previous autonomy and recognition of this unique identity once again surfaced.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, both the Ukrainians and the Rusyns had the opportunity and the need to shape a new national identity. Both turned to their past in search of answers. Rusyns in Transcarpathia looked back to their region's brief moment of independence and the annexation and aggressive ukrainianization program that ended it. Ukrainians looked back at the years of russification that had repressed their own culture and hoped to rid their country of any forces hostile to Ukrainian identity. According to Victor Shnirelman, "for people who believe they have been deprived of their cultural legacy, invention of the past becomes a powerful instrument," in particular for "the raising of self-esteem and the reevaluation of their position among other peoples."³²¹ He explains that when it comes to using history to invent the nation's past and consolidate identity in the present, groups with common or closely related origins are likely to clash "because in putting forth their own versions, they must draw on the same historical resources."³²² This process has fueled the conflict between the Ukrainian state and the Rusyns. Ukrainians see the inclusion of Transcarpathia into their state as the righting of a great historical wrong—the domination of what they consider ethnic Ukrainians by foreign powers. The historical narrative of Rusyn activists instead focuses on the region's thousand-year history outside of the political sphere of Ukraine and the region's aspirations for autonomy.

³²¹ Victor A. Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past? Competition for Ancestors among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1996), 2.

³²² Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past?* 60.

Ukraine itself has faced great difficulty in consolidating its national identity after the fall of the Soviet Union. As Catherine Wanner puts it:

With little cultural capital at their disposal, political and cultural leaders turned to history, first to generate support for Ukrainian independence, and then to legitimate it. With russification, sovietization, and sharp regionalization as legacies to overcome and little in the way of broad cultural unifiers, such as common language or religion, how can a fragile state mired in economic chaos forge a collective identity to unify such a highly indifferent, diverse, and disenfranchised population?³²³

It is therefore not surprising that Transcarpathian demands for autonomy have been met with a categorical refusal on the part of the Ukrainian state. Nor is the Ukrainian government's response unexpected. These include accusations that the enemies of Ukraine have created the Rusyn movement and Rusyn language specifically for the purpose of destabilizing the country, as well as the creation of the blatantly repressive "Proposed Measures," encouraging the assimilation of Rusyns into the larger Ukrainian population. Ukraine's insecurity and insistence that Rusyns are Ukrainians, and thus that Rusyn demands are unfounded are key factors in provoking an even more radical fringe of the Rusyn movement to seek not just autonomy but complete independence.

In turn Russia, sore from its loss of Ukraine, has recently taken up the Rusyn cause through the media. Russia's own sense of its origins and identity are deeply tied to Kievan Rus', and thus it has something important to lose from Ukraine's rejection. Some Russian nationalists consider that if Rusyns, who share so much culturally and linguistically with Ukrainians, can choose not to be Ukrainian but can create an independent identity based on the name of ancient Rus' and look to Russia with admiration and respect, then what is *Ukrainian* identity but an artificially-constructed identity broken off from an earlier Rus' identity? How can either Rusyns or Ukrainians reject the ties binding all East Slavs culturally and politically? Thus, Russian

³²³ Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 75.

insecurities, historical memories of former glory, and contemporary political and territorial losses all contribute to the unique complexity of the Rusyn movement in Transcarpathia. They make the identity question far more intractable there than anywhere else in the Rusyn world.

The historical experience of Ukraine as part of the Soviet Union may affect the Rusyn-Ukrainian conflict in yet another way. Shnirelman points out that Soviet scholarship had a strong tendency towards primordial explanations of ethnicity. It sought to define ethnic and national groups solely on the basis of what were supposedly “scientific” and “objective” criteria such as language and culture.³²⁴ In the “Western democratic environment,” however, the self-identity of groups has had more prominence in defining the nation and determining its rights than the “objective” criteria. Scholars trying to understand ethnonationalism have tended to give “psychological factors...primary importance,” and ethnic identity has more often been understood “to be flexible, responding to changes in the political, social, or economic environment.”³²⁵ In a 1998 meeting between Rusyn representatives, Ukrainian representatives, and western European experts from the European Centre for Minority Issues, the Ukrainian representatives repeatedly asked for “scientific evidence” of Rusyn nationhood. They repeatedly promised that the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences—although it had recently endorsed Rusyn assimilation through the so-called “Proposed Measures”—would objectively and scientifically resolve the question of Rusyn identity.³²⁶ *Self*-identity on the part of Rusyns themselves, that is, the linguistic, cultural, and political identification of the population in question, was to have no place in this process.

Rusyns in Transcarpathia hoped to do away with Soviet-influenced definitions of their people when they voted for Ukrainian sovereignty in 1991 and supported the Orange Revolution in 2004. Rusyn leaders who lobby for Rusyn language education, recognition, and degrees of

³²⁴ Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past?* 8.

³²⁵ Shnirelman, *Who Gets the Past?* 9.

³²⁶ Tom Trier, “Inter-Ethnic Relationships in Transcarpathian Ukraine,” Uzhhorod, Ukraine, 4-7 September 1998 (Flensburg: European Center for Minority Issues, 1999), 18-23.

autonomy all continue to stress the self-identity of the people as a major factor justifying their goals. They acknowledge that six decades of state-imposed ukrainianization have to some extent lessened the cultural and linguistic “objective” criteria that may have helped to distinguish the Rusyns of Transcarpathia, yet insist on principles of self-determination. At the same time, some Rusyn leaders can themselves sound “primordial” when they choose to fight for Rusyn rights by creating a myth that Rusyns preserve the purity of an ancient Rus’ faith, language, and culture linking them to the Great Russian nation. Their view of Rusyn culture does not take into account or value varying accounts of Rusyn descent, religious divisions among the Rusyns, or Rusyn cultural and historical ties to the West. Both the Ukrainians and that segment of Rusyns who refuse to acknowledge the varieties of Rusyn identity and experience, and instead judge identity based on a rigid set of criteria that are not objective or appropriate for all Rusyns, have continued to clash with the majority of Rusyns who work to build their culture on a model of liberal nationalism.

Despite the Rusyn-Ukrainian struggle in Transcarpathia, it is clear that the Rusyn movement is most strongly oriented towards Europe, and today Ukraine too seeks a closer bond with Europe. In a climate that is generally closed to the concept of Rusyn identity, the recent political agitation of Rusyn activists in Transcarpathia has at least resulted not in a new set of measures to eliminate Rusyn identity, but in genuine productive discussion. Valerij Padiak of Transcarpathia’s Aleksander Dukhnovych Society recently participated in a debate about Rusyn identity on national television in Ukraine, and representatives of a more politically moderate Rusyn organization, the National Council of Subcarpathian Rus’, have met with the newly appointed governor of Transcarpathia.³²⁷ This move, as well as the 2007 recognition of the Rusyns’ distinct identity on the part of the local Transcarpathian government, constitutes an important step for a people whose identity was once proclaimed out of date and out of existence

³²⁷ UA-Reporter, “Sostoialsia dialog rusinov s gubernatorom Zakarpatia,” March 28, 2010, <http://www.ua-reporter.com/content/84872>.

in Ukraine. If successful, dialogue and cooperation can overcome approaches that advocate separatism and are hostile to Ukraine.

Rusyn leaders everywhere who advocate a Europe-centered, conciliatory, “evolutionary” approach, however, may have something to learn from the radicals. They must try to capture something of the passion that their eastward-looking counterparts have. If the Rusyns are to succeed in their cultural revival, their crucial task is to accelerate the “evolution” with potent organized efforts at political representation, education, and publicity. Their legal recognition by most countries where they live is important, but their nation-building efforts cannot end with this achievement if they want continued success. They must deal with the advantages and weaknesses they face within each country where they live. They must also work toward forming closer ties with other Rusyns beyond those borders or that they share common cause with other stateless peoples. They should reach out more to others, particularly to stateless groups who are successful at negotiation with their state’s government, such as the Catalans. They could work more closely with groups they already use as a model for cultural development, such as the Romansch of Switzerland who have successfully overcome challenges to unity posed by varying language dialects. The resources of Europe and the EU are available, and in today’s globalized world, examples of other minority groups worldwide can serve as inspiration and instruction for what works and what does not work toward preserving minority cultures.

All Rusyns know the anthem of Rusyn national awakener Aleksander Dukhnovych, *Vruchanie* (The Dedication) and sing it at nearly every Rusyn gathering in all their respective countries: “I was, am and will be Rusyn.” Rusyn movements share the goal of keeping Rusyn identity alive into the future. If the Rusyns want to be a nation that will be recognized, respected, and gifted with a chance of surviving into the future, they must actively adopt principles of liberal nationalism and strive for a cohesive and vibrant culture, acknowledged legally and maintained through the principles of cultural self-determination. To do this, they must rid themselves of a

legacy of marginalization, so that they can proudly claim their place among the peoples of Europe.

Appendix A: Map of the Rusyn Homeland



Map showing the historical settlement pattern of the Carpatho-Rusyns, 1920. Reprinted with permission from Paul Robert Magocsi, *The People From Nowhere: An Illustrated History of Carpatho-Rusyns* (Uzhhorod: V. Padiak Publishers, 2007), p. 8.



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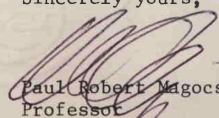
Dear Ms. Wiktorek:

This letter is to grant permission to reproduce Map 1, on page 8, of the book, The People From Nowhere, for which I hold the copyright. This permission is granted at no cost provided you provide the following statement and, if possible, send me a copy of the finished thesis.

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With best wishes for success in your thesis, I remain,

Sincerely yours,


Paul Robert Magocsi
Professor

Appendix B: Proposed Measures for Resolving the Problem of Ukrainian-Rusyns, 1996.

Below is the full text of the plan adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine for reducing or eliminating Rusyn identity in Transcarpathia. It is reproduced here as translated in the *Carpatho-Rusyn American*, 10:1 (1997): 6.

1.

Clearly define and declare, on the basis of the Constitution of Ukraine, in particular paragraph 2, the position of the Ukrainian state concerning all ideas of separation or autonomy for Transcarpathia, whether on cultural, ethnic, or administrative-territorial grounds, since none of the above has any hope of being realized. Charge the embassies of Ukraine in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland with the task of organizing a series of publications in the languages of each of those countries that explains the position of Ukraine regarding the Rusyn question. Guarantee the embassies of Ukraine in each of the above-named countries all necessary means to produce and distribute such material. (For implementation in 1996).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Justice

National Academy of Sciences

2.

Implement a series of measures designed to strengthen the Ukrainianness of Transcarpathia (in terms of language, culture, choice of personnel, etc.) and to integrate the region's inhabitants in the socio-political and religious-cultural framework of Ukraine. Create a government interdepartmental working group to coordinate the activity of various ministries and governmental departments with regard to carrying out the above measures. (For implementation in 1996-1997).

Ministry of Culture and the Arts

Ministry of Education

Transcarpathian Oblast State Administration

3.

Prevent holding any local referendums whose goals are to determine the "self-identity" of the Ukrainians of Transcarpathia; that is, whether they are Rusyns or Ukrainians. In the first place, on scholarly grounds such a question is in principle an incorrect one. Secondly, the existence of an old and still vibrant tradition among the people of calling themselves "Rusyns" could influence the outcome of such questionnaires and color subsequent political interpretations of the results. For instance, a similar questionnaire in eastern Slovakia provided a so-called "legal basis" for recognizing the Rusyns of Slovakia as a distinct nationality. (For implementation on an on-going basis).

Transcarpathian Oblast State Administration

4.

Create a permanent government interdepartmental working group to coordinate the study of the Rusyn problem. (For implementation in 1996).

National Academy of Sciences
Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and the Arts
State Committee for National Minorities and Migration

5.

Establish a scholarly commission and introduce the necessary precise definitions for the planned enumeration of nationalities and languages [in Ukraine]. The object is to work out a final variant of an official List of Nationalities and Languages in Ukraine. (For implementation in 1996).

National Academy of Sciences, Ministry of Statistics

6.

Prepare for the public at large scholarly works that explain the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and political aspects of the history of the Ukrainian-Rusyns of Transcarpathia as an integral part of the history of the Ukrainian people. (For implementation in 1996-1997).

National Academy of Sciences
Ministry of Education

7.

Make use of the authority vested in the local self-governing administration according to paragraph 11 of the Constitution of Ukraine as well as by the state law “On the Principles of Local Self-Government in Ukraine” (after its passage by Ukraine’s National Parliament), in order to resolve the linguistic and cultural problem in the region within the framework of the self-governing bodies in the Transcarpathian oblast. (For implementation on an on-going basis).

Local Self-governing Administrative Bodies in the Transcarpathian Oblast
Transcarpathian Oblast State Administration

8.

Implement a series of measures for the ideological, material, personnel, and cultural support of Ukrainian communities in eastern Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Poland by each of the undersigned governmental bodies. (For implementation in 1996-1997).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
State Committee for National Minorities and Migration
Ministry of Culture and the Arts
Ministry of Education

Ministry of Information
Society for Relations with Ukrainians Abroad

9.

Distribute widely through the mass media materials about Transcarpathia, emphasizing the fact that this region is an age-old Ukrainian land, and that the local Ukrainians are an indelible part of the Ukrainian nation. (For implementation in 1996-1997).

Ministry of Information
State Commission for Television and Radio Broadcasting

10.

Undertake clearly defined and preventative work with leaders and activists of the “political Rusynism” movement, with the goal to avert the spread of their influence and their ability to create political structures with clearly defined separatist goals. Apply to members of the unregistered regional branch of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns, and the “provisional government” which it has created, the appropriate norms of the existing administrative and criminal law code (paragraphs 187-188 of the criminal code of Ukraine). Apply administrative measures against activists in the registered branches of the Society of Carpatho-Rusyns (in the towns of Užhorod, Mukačevo, Svaljava) in those cases where they can be found to violate the provisions of the Law Code of Ukraine dealing with rights of assembly and association (For implementation on an on-going basis).

Office of the General Prosecutor
Ministry of Internal Affairs
Transcarpathian Oblast State Administration

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