

The Carpatho-Russians: A Nation Without a State

Dedicated to the Ever-Memorable Metropolitan Laurus (Skurla)

O Lord, bless the strings of our lyre

That the West might understand the truth of the Orthodox faith.

Fr Alexander Pavlovich, Vinets Stikhotvorenii, 57

Introduction: Rus' and Carpatho-Russian Identity



Many misunderstandings, sadly sometimes deliberately created by nationalists, arise with the ethnic names 'Russia', 'Rus'', 'Russian', 'Carpatho-Russian', 'Carpatho-Rusyn', 'Carpathian-Russian', 'Subcarpathian Russian', 'Rusin', 'Rusyn', 'Ruthene', 'Ruthenian', 'Great Russian', 'Little Russian', 'Ukrainian', 'White Russian', 'Lemko', 'Boyko' and 'Hutsul'. This is especially so among the descendants of far western Ukrainians, usually from Galicia, to the north of Carpatho-Russia, whose ancestors used to live under Austrian and then Polish rule and later emigrated, mainly to North America. In order to explain the historic realities clearly, we have written the below.

The fundamental confusion is the failure to distinguish between 'Russia' and 'Rus'' as a result of the local provincialism of Great Russian or Little Russian (Ukrainian) nationalists. This problem is deepened in English because both words, meaning quite different things, are usually translated as 'Russia'. In fact, this word defines only the Russian part of The Russian Federation, whose

capital is Moscow. However, the word Rus', which is much more ancient, covers the territory lived in by all four groups of 'Russians', that is to say, all East Slavdom, all the inhabitants of 'Rus'.

These four groups are: Great Russians ('Russians'), Little Russians (since the twentieth century called 'Ukrainians'), Belarussians (also called White Russians, but this has nothing to do with the 'White Russians', who resisted Communism after 1917) and, finally, Carpatho-Russians, commonly called Rusins. The latter are distinct from the other three East Slav peoples, because they were long ago 'orphaned', that is left without a State, through geographical (the Carpathian Mountains) and political circumstances. The Carpatho-Russians were thus cut off from the East Slav State, which took shape first in Kievan Rus' and then in Muscovite Rus', to such an extent that they were even forgotten by it.

Rus' therefore stretches from north-east Slovakia to the Pacific coast of Vladivostok, wherever East Slavs live as a majority. Of course, there can be oases of 'Rus', that is, of Russian Orthodoxy, beyond this area and in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, we speak of 'Australian Rus', 'American Rus', 'English Rus' etc. A thousand years ago the capital of Rus' was Kiev – hence 'Kievan Rus', but for most of the last millennium the capital of Rus' has been Moscow.

For this reason the Orthodox Patriarch of all these four East Slav or 'Russian' groups (and also of Orthodox of many other nationalities) bears the title, 'Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'. However, since the word 'Rus' is not understood in English and 'Russia' is a misleading translation, this title is usually translated as 'Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias'. Rus' is thus far greater than only Russia or the Ukraine, it means all the 'Russias'. Those Russian or Ukrainian nationalists who do not see this are merely showing their provincialism.

Ukrainianism

Historically, the word 'Ukraine' refers only to those who live in the western borderlands or marches of the East Slavs, next to Poland. As such, 'Ukraine' is therefore an ancient Slav word, but it never meant what it means today. It meant unstable, provincial, frontier territory. Moreover, what is now called the 'Ukraine' was called Kievan Rus', but never 'the Ukraine'. The use of the word to refer to what is now called 'the Ukraine', a huge territory where only a small minority speak Ukrainian or any of its many dialects, is very modern – a political invention of Austro-Hungarian imperialism.

The Austrians and the Hungarians first used this word in order to try to give extreme western 'Ukrainians', then subject to their tyranny, a separate identity from the other Russian or East Slav peoples and so divide and rule. Later, the Poles followed this policy in Galicia, then the Nazis copied them, using the naivety of Ukrainian nationalism for their own purposes. They in turn were followed by the Americans with the Galician-backed, Yushchenko puppet government of recent years.

Sadly, western Ukrainian provincials, usually Galicians, whether of Uniat, Nazi, Communist, Philaretist (a modern Ukrainian nationalist sect) or Capitalist orientation, have cultivated the myth that they are the only true East Slav or 'Russian' people. This denial of the separate existence, histories and languages of other East Slav peoples comes from provincialism, the concentration on the self to such an extent that we cannot see the big picture, the wood for the trees. The very word, 'Ukraine', meaning 'by the border', demonstrates this provincialism. It is reinforced by an inferiority complex, derived from the fact that such Ukrainians spent hundreds of years oppressed by Austrian and then Polish rule.

It must be said that Great Russian chauvinists have in their time fallen into exactly the same 'elder brother' syndrome and also denied the separate existence, histories and languages of Little Russians (Ukrainians), Belarussians and Carpatho-Russians, dismissing their languages as 'peasant dialects of Russian'. This is quite unrealistic and also comes from their confusion of 'Russia' with 'Rus'. Carpatho-Russians are not Russians. Like Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians, they are one of the four peoples of Rus' and none of them alone is greater than the whole. This is why 'Russophiles', 'Ukrainophiles', 'Belarussophiles' and 'Rusinophiles' are mistaken. We should be 'Rus'ophiles', that is, lovers of all Rus', and not just of one fraction of it.

Locally, Ukrainian nationalist delusion has meant denying the existence of Carpatho-Russians (Rusins) and trying to bully them into becoming Ukrainians. The English and Ukrainian Internet are full of such anti-Rusin, centralising propaganda. Since 1945 Ukrainians have occupied much of the Carpatho-Russian homeland, banned their language, much as the Hungarians used to do before the First World War, and persecuted them with a policy of 'Ukrainianisation'. The imposition of a Ukrainian identity has left Carpatho-Russians no room to choose their own identity.

Thus, extraordinarily, Ukrainian officials have ruled in denial of the existence of this neighbouring brother-people, despite the fact that they, almost a million in number, clearly have a totally different history and identity from the Ukraine, albeit speaking an East Slav language. Thus, Ukrainian nationalists have blinded themselves into denying the reality of what a million people feel and speak among themselves, forcing reality to fit an ideology and intimidating, slandering, fining and imprisoning any who disagree.

The historical reality is that the Carpatho-Russians were baptised into Orthodox Christianity over a century before the ancestors of Ukrainians (who called themselves 'Russians' and had never heard the word 'Ukrainian'). It was the Carpatho-Russians, baptised from 863 on, who sent priests to baptise the ancestors of modern Ukrainians in Kiev in 988. Carpatho-Russia is in fact the cradle of all 'Russian', that is all East Slav, Orthodox Christianity, Orthodox East Slavdom.

Obviously, therefore, Carpatho-Russians in the Ukrainian part of their homeland at heart refuse to call themselves 'Ukrainians' because they are not and never have been 'Ukrainian' and were never part of ancient Kievan Rus'. However, because the words 'Carpatho-Russian' and 'Rusin'

were for decades banned on pain of imprisonment, Rusins forced to be part of the Ukraine and persecuted into calling themselves 'Ukrainian' (that is not free and occupied by the Ukraine, whether Soviet or post-Soviet) often call themselves 'Transcarpathians' (Zakarpattsy).

Uniatism

Another extraordinary error is that of Uniatism - so-called 'Greek Catholicism', though it is neither Greek nor Catholic. Uniats are usually uprooted and denationalised Carpatho-Russian/Rusin ('Ruthenian' or 'Byzantine') and Galician ('Ukrainian') adepts of Roman Catholicism. Uniatism, Roman Catholicism with an imitation Orthodox rite, was a ploy used to starve Slav and other Orthodox into Catholicism, that is, secularisation. It was devised by scheming Jesuits at the end of the sixteenth century and gradually implemented by them right into the nineteenth century, since when it has deservedly been totally discredited.

Then many of the ordinary Uniat lower clergy began to revolt, but they were betrayed by their bishops and senior clergy. Uniatism was much used as a colonial tool first by Austrian and then by Hungarian imperialism for several decades before the First World War to control and manipulate the Rusins and crush their culture and language. Such is the brainwashing of Uniatism that Uniat ideologues, in self-justification, still claim that Orthodoxy, from which they broke away 250-350 years ago, is 'schismatic'!

Indeed, when the average Roman Catholic finds out what his religious leaders did for centuries in Eastern Europe in the name of Catholicism, he is disgusted. The use of starvation, genocide, murder, bribery, persecution and lies to hoodwink and delude simple Orthodox Christian peasants into lapsing from the Church of Christ is diabolical. (Of course, it is true that a similar technique had already been put into practice centuries before in order to make the isolated peasantry of Western Europe lapse from the Church. So successful was its brainwashing there that there are many in Western Europe who, astoundingly, still believe the myth that it is not Orthodoxy, but Roman Catholicism, an invention of the second millennium, that is the most ancient form of Christianity and is the Church!).

When some Uniats in the Galician provincial capital of L'viv in the Ukraine recently tried to justify their separation from the Church by saying that they could not return to Orthodoxy because their parents and grandparents had also been deluded into becoming Uniats, the Orthodox Archbishop Augustine of L'viv answered: 'You need to dig deeper in the graves of your ancestors, go deeper beyond your parents and grandparents and you will find that your ancestors were for centuries Orthodox'.

The Carpatho-Russians: Definitions

Carpatho-Russians are popularly called Rusins (also transliterated Rusyns). The academic term Carpatho-Rusyn (whose only merit is that it avoids confusion with 'Great Russian') and the popular term Rusnak are also used. The terms Ruthene or Ruthenian are simply deformations of

‘Rusin’, used by those of Latin (Roman Catholic/Protestant) culture. Rusins live in the exact geographical centre of Europe on the slopes of the Carpathian Mountains and their homeland is called Carpatho-Russia (Carpatho-Rus’ or Carpathian Rus’), or, by foreigners, Ruthenia. This is located at the junction of the contemporary borders of the Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland. In the more distant past, the term ‘Carpatho-Russia’ was also used to include areas outside Carpatho-Russia proper and included areas in the western and southern Ukraine, north of the Carpathians. However, the term has not been used in this way for a long time.



Some small groups of Rusins are called by special names. These are the Romanian-influenced Hutsuls in the south-east (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvHRry9DSX4&feature=related>), the Ukrainian-influenced Boykos in the north of the centre and the Polish-influenced Lemkos. These are the only Rusins who live on the northern, and not southern, slopes of the Carpathians. They live in the Lemko Region of the south-eastern corner of Poland. However, these names, originally intended as insults or nicknames, are relatively recent and until the end of the nineteenth century these groups would simply have called themselves ‘Rusins’ like everyone else.

Today, most Carpatho-Russians or Rusins (we use both the formal term and the popular term interchangeably) live in 'Transcarpathia', a term invented by outsiders, Ukrainian nationalists, in the mid-twentieth century. Transcarpathia is the eastern part of Subcarpathian Russia (Subcarpathian Rus'). In the more distant past, this term of 'Subcarpathian Rus', which refers only to those Rusins who live on the southern slopes of the Carpathians and so excludes the Lemkos, was incorrectly used for all of Carpatho-Russia, but this has not been the case for a long time. The Transcarpathian Region is at present in the south-western corner of the Ukraine.

Carpatho-Russians also live in the north-east corner of Slovakia, an area known as Presov Russia (Priashchyna or Presov Rus') and in the south-eastern corner of Poland, an area known as the Lemko Region (Lemkivshchyna, officially known as Beskid Niski or the Lower Beskids). However, after the Second World War, most Lemko Rusins were cruelly deported by the nationalistic Polish government to Transcarpathia in the Ukraine or else to Silesia in northern and western Poland. (Some 12,000 Presov Rusins in Slovakia also moved to the Ukraine as a result of Communist propaganda). Since the fall of Communist oppression in Poland in 1989 a few thousand have been allowed to return to their homeland. There are also several Carpatho-Russian villages in the Maramures region of northern Romania and north-eastern Hungary.

Today, as a result of emigration, many Carpatho-Russians live in other countries. The oldest emigrant community is in the Vojvodina and Srem regions of northern Serbia and eastern Croatia. However, by far the largest emigrant community is in the United States, to where over a quarter of all Rusins at the time, some 200,000, were forced to emigrate between the 1880s and 1914 because of Hungarian oppression and chronic poverty. Coming mainly from Presov Rus' and the Lemko Region, they usually sailed from Hamburg to New York, though a few stopped in Southampton in England.

Most of these emigrants settled in the north-eastern US, in New Jersey and Connecticut, but especially in Pennsylvania, where they typically worked in coal mines and steel-works. Over time, many of these and their descendants, some 600,000 altogether, but by no means all, have been assimilated, intermarried and lost their language, religion and national identity. Smaller numbers of Carpatho-Russians emigrated to Canada and Argentina in the 1920s, to the Czech Lands, mainly to northern Moravia and Prague, just after the Second World War, and to Australia in the 1970s and 1980s. A few others are to be found in Western Europe, especially in Germany, but also in France and even in England.

Carpatho-Russians have never had their own State. At best they are a legally recognised national minority in some European countries where they live. Until 1945 the vast majority of Carpatho-Russians in the homeland lived in just over 1,000 small villages with an average population of between 600 and 800. It is not possible to know the exact number of Carpatho-Russians today, but there are roughly one million in Europe and at least another 600,000 of Carpatho-Russian origin, though many of these are denationalized, in the USA.

Other minorities also lived side by side with the Carpatho-Russians, especially Gypsies, Hungarians, Germans and more recently many Jews, though this latter group, like many of the Gypsies, was annihilated by the Nazis. The Rusins were mainly poor peasants, shepherds or worked in the forests, as the mountainous landscape typical of Carpatho-Russia never permitted much agricultural production. As a result of the poverty and the political and cultural persecution which they were subjected to by Austro-Hungary, Carpatho-Russians were often forced to work in neighbouring countries or to emigrate.

After the Second World War, industries were established in or near Carpatho-Russia, and many Rusin villagers moved to nearby towns. These towns, Uzhgorod and Mukachevo in Transcarpathia, Presov, Humenne, Kosice and Michalovce in Slovakia, Sanok, Nowy Sacz and Gorlice in Poland and Novi Sad in Serbia, were either in or else just outside the Carpatho-Russian homeland. In the latter case, some Carpatho-Russians intermarried, attended schools using the local language and lost elements of their own language, especially to the similar languages of Ukrainian, Slovak and Polish.

Religion

Carpatho-Russians who have preserved their full national identity are Orthodox and wherever they live, Orthodoxy is the most important aspect of their lives. Indeed, in the popular mind Carpatho-Russian culture and identity have often been seen as synonymous with the Orthodox Church. This was brought to the Carpathians from the 860s on by the 'Apostles of the Slavs', Sts Cyril and Methodius or their disciples, who then began baptising those in the West Slav Greater Moravian and South Slav Bulgarian Empires. Borderland Carpatho-Russia was influenced by both these Empires. Sts Cyril and Methodius and their disciples had been sent as missionaries from New Rome, the capital of the Christian Roman Empire. This later came to be called Constantinople and since 1930 Istanbul.

Once the Western European elite had devised Roman Catholicism as the ideology to justify their power-grab and land-grab, it developed so fast that by 1054 it had become strong enough to break away from the Orthodox Church. Despite their westerly geographical position, the Carpatho-Russians remained faithful to the Church. This faithfulness to the Orthodox Church distinguished them from Slovaks, Hungarians and Poles, who were forced by the Western Powers into becoming Roman Catholics and later sometimes Protestants. Ruins of the castles and Gothic churches which were built by the catholicised and so feudalised Hungarians from the thirteenth century on to oppress the Orthodox can be seen in eastern Poland, eastern Slovakia and Transcarpathia to this day (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSsbs2jtS1Q&feature=related>).

As Slav Orthodox Christians, Carpatho-Russians in Transcarpathia use Church Slavonic in their services. They have not secularised and desacralised their Church like Roman Catholicism (or even more Protestantism). Thus, like the apostles, they continue to partake of both the body and the blood of Christ, they stand for services, they fast, they do not use organs, their priests are

married and they follow the Orthodox or apostolic calendar, so that fixed feasts like Christmas fall at the right time and not thirteen days early. (For this reason, Orthodox Christmas falls on 7 January according to the reckoning of the secular or Roman Catholic calendar). Orthodox also keep the apostolic rules for the dating of Easter, so that it never precedes or coincides with the Jewish Passover. Thus it often falls one or more weeks after the secular (Roman Catholic/Protestant) Easter. Their liturgical music is based on traditional melodies and is known as 'prostopinje' ('simple chant').

As a result of the Protestant Reformation (which affected the neighbouring Hungarians and Slovaks) and the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, in the late sixteenth century Roman Catholic States and their local aristocratic ruling classes tried to intimidate and starve the Orthodox Carpatho-Russians into becoming Roman Catholics. Although this intimidation was resisted by such Orthodox heroes as Bp Ioanikiy (Zeykan) (+ 1687) and Fr Mikhail Orosvigovsky (Andrella) (1637-1710), eventually, between 1646 and the end of the eighteenth century, the oppression resulted in the creation of a Uniat Church. This is a Church which is outwardly Orthodox but inwardly degouted and subjugated to the Pope of Rome, to Roman Catholic ideology ('theology') and latinisation with all its secular customs – the secular calendar and Easter, sitting in church, beardless and dog-collared, celibate clergy etc.

In 1772, in a propaganda measure against their unpopularity, the Uniat authorities renamed themselves 'Greek Catholics' (though they were not Greek) and later started calling themselves 'Byzantine Catholics' (They were certainly not 'Byzantines' – a word referring to pagan Greeks). As soon as and even before freedom came at the beginning of the twentieth century, all



A picture of Orthodox missionaries taken in the 1930s. In the centre is the future St Alexis (Kabaliuk)

who had kept their Carpatho-Russian national identity and sense of history came back to the Orthodox Church, both in the immigration in the USA or else in the homeland. In the homeland their spiritual leaders included St Alexis (Kabaliuk - + 1947 - <http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/servalex.htm>). Apart from in the USA and Slovakia, where many Rusins were denationalised, only a minority of Carpatho-Russians have remained Uniats ('Byzantine or Ruthenian Catholics'), though there are still some 700,000 polonised Galician Ukrainian Uniats to the north of Carpatho-Russia in the extreme west of the Ukraine.

Today the 520 parishes and 35 monasteries and convents of the Rusin Orthodox Dioceses of Mukachevo and Khust in Transcarpathia are part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the multi-ethnic Patriarchate of Moscow ('The Russian Orthodox Church'). In Slovakia the Rusin Diocese of Presov is part of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and in Poland the partly Rusin Diocese of Sanok-Przemsyl is part of the Polish Orthodox Church. In the United States, Rusin Orthodox at the moment belong either to a small group called the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) or else to dioceses of the Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches. Notably, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia had a Rusin Metropolitan, the ever-memorable Metropolitan Laurus (Skurla).

Language and Culture

As their name suggests, Carpatho-Russians or Rusins are the fourth and smallest East Slav or 'Russian' people, after the Great Russians, the Little Russians (Ukrainians) and the Belarussians. Their language is therefore the fourth East Slav language. Although it is close to Ukrainian, it also shows both West Slav (Polish and Slovak) and South Slav (Bulgarian and Church Slavonic) influences, as well as ancient words and grammatical forms. These influences in a language which is closer to Church Slavonic than any other, are to be found only in Carpatho-Russian, spoken on the edge of the original Slav homeland.

Rusin is therefore the closest to the ancient, proto-Slavic language, from which all Slavic language groups, East Slav, West Slav and South Slav, have evolved. For this reason, Carpatho-Russians are rightly proud to consider themselves as the first East Slav people, from whom the other three are issued, and indeed as being the closest to preserving the original Slavic language. Like all East Slavs, Carpatho-Russians use the Cyrillic alphabet, which is based on the Hebrew, Greek and Latin alphabets. Some of its vocabulary has been influenced by other languages, especially Hungarian, but also Slovak, Polish, Romanian and German.

The word Rusin (clearly from the same root as the word 'Russian') is the name which the nineteenth-century national awakener, the poet-priest Fr Alexander Dukhnovich, used. This was in his lines, written in a form of Russian, of what became the national credo – 'I Rusin was and

am and ever shall be' (<http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/pdf/yarusinbyl.pdf>) - and it is the theme he used in the first lines of the Carpatho-Russian national anthem:

Rusins beneath Carpathia's mounts,
Now forsake your slumber deep,
On you the nation's voice calls and counts,
Forget not your own in sleep.

(http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/pdf/rus_na.pdf). Almost single-handedly, in poverty and persecution and with little support, Fr Alexander gave the Carpatho-Russian people their national consciousness. He was followed by another poet-priest, the 'Nightingale of the Rusins', Fr Alexander Pavlovich (1819-1900), who spoke of 'the truth of sacred principles', of which 'the spirit of the poet must prophesy' ('Sing to the People').

When Carpatho-Russians had begun to publish books in the seventeenth century, they were written either in Rusin or else in Church Slavonic. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Carpatho-Russian writers continued to use Rusin, when the Hungarian authorities allowed them to, but they also used Russian or Ukrainian. At the end of the nineteenth century the Hungarians censored and banned journals and books in Rusin and those who wrote in it were exiled. Since the fall of Communism between 1989 and 1991, there has been a Carpatho-Russian national revival, and efforts have been made, especially in Slovakia and Poland, to create a standard Carpatho-Russian literary language.

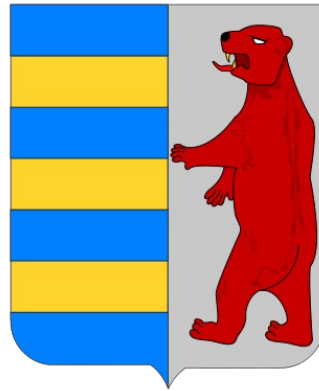
Thus, Carpatho-Russians have a distinct literary tradition that dates back to the seventeenth century, but one great national awakener and literary founding literary father in Fr Alexander Duchnovich (1803-1865). No matter which language writers have used – Carpatho-Russian, Church Slavonic, Russian or Ukrainian - their works have embodied the Rusin way of life and world view. Dominant themes have been a love for the unspoiled beauty of the Carpathians and a sometimes melancholic view of Rusins as a humble, hard-working, self-reliant, God-fearing people. They stoically suffered the hardships and injustices of both natural forces and unnatural (foreign) governments, spiritual exiles in their native land, occupied by foreign powers. Their literature displays the sense of the inevitability of human injustice in the short term, matched by the stoic resignation to God's Will and the inevitability, in the long-term, of Divine justice.

Apart from folk-culture, such as embroidery, painted Easter eggs and folk music and dance, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i91ggjy-y80&feature=related>) Carpatho-Russians are most noted for an outstanding form of architecture in the form of wooden Orthodox churches. The majority of their surviving churches were built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M8XeL_jYtQ&feature=related). The great craftsmanship and beauty of these churches is a unique part of the world's spiritual and cultural heritage.

During the twentieth century, Carpatho-Russians also created a unique School of Art, of whom the leading figures are Igor Grabar (1871-1960), Josif Bokshaj (1891-1975), Adelbert Erdeli

(1891-1955), Emilian Grabovsky (1892-1955), Zoltan Sholtes (1909-1990), Adalbert Boretsky (1910-1990), Fedir Manajlo (1910-1978), Andrei Kotska (1911-1987) and Ernest Kontratovich (1912-2009). Influenced by both the impressionists and the expressionists, this 'Transcarpathian' School, still very much living, is as good as any in Europe (<http://karpatart.com>). It shows a sacralised way of life and celebrates the glory of the Carpathians and Rusin life. The beauty of Rusin life in the Lemko Region was also captured by the famous artist Nykyfor Drovnjak.

Politics



The National Emblem of Carpatho-Russia. Devised in 1920, on the right it shows the Carpathian bear, red on silver, on the left the three gold lines represent the main rivers, the Tisa, the Latoritsa and the Uzh, and the four blue lines represent the four regions of Carpatho-Russia.

Carpatho-Russians have never had their own independent State. From the eleventh century until 1918, Rusin lands south of the Carpathians - Subcarpathian Rus' and Presov Rus' - were part of Hungary. From the second half of the nineteenth century on they were cruelly oppressed by the Hungarians. Until the mid-fourteenth century the Rusins of the Lemko Region north of the Carpathians were divided between Poland and the East Slav principality in Galicia. From the 1340s to 1772, these were entirely in Poland and from 1772 to 1918 they were part of what became known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, under which, as elsewhere, Carpatho-Russians came to be more and more persecuted, their language and publications in it banned under the policy of 'Hungarianisation' and its patriots put on trial and imprisoned.

During the First World War came the Habsburg war crimes. These included the genocide of Carpatho-Russians in the Austrian concentration camps at Talerhof and Terezin and the mass shootings and hangings of Rusin priests and villagers by Hungarian terrorism in Carpatho-Russia itself. After the War Carpatho-Russian territory was divided among several countries. Presov Rus' in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus' ('Ruthenia') became part of Czechoslovakia, with the exception of about twenty villages south of the Tisa River which were incorporated into

Romania. The Lemko Region was joined to Poland. The few Rusin settlements in the Backa/Vojvodina region in the former far south of Hungary became part of Yugoslavia.

Borders changed again during the Second World War, with first a Ukrainian takeover and then a Hungarian invasion of Subcarpathian Rus'. However, after the conflict borders were mainly restored to what they had been before the War. The exception was Subcarpathian Rus', which was annexed from Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union in 1945 and became the 'Transcarpathian Region' of the Soviet Ukraine. After the fall of Communism from 1989 on, Carpatho-Russians became citizens of several new states. Subcarpathian Rus', still officially called Transcarpathia, is part of an independent Ukraine, Presov Rus' is part of an independent Slovakia, the Lemko Region has remained within Poland, but the small community in former Yugoslavia has been separated between Serbia and Croatia.

Ruled by several different States throughout their history, Carpatho-Russians have struggled to achieve any self-rule. Already during the revolution of 1848, Rusin leaders like Adolf Dobriansky urged the Habsburg Empire to create an autonomous East Slav province which would unite all East Slavs in Austria-Hungary. Although Rusins were unsuccessful in these demands, ever since the end of the First World War the idea that Carpatho-Russians deserve some sort of political autonomy has been accepted by many.

At the end of 1918 the first Hungarian government after the fall of the Habsburg Empire created a Rusin region called 'Rus'ka Krajina', while the Lemko Rusins north of the Carpathians created a self-governing republic that lasted for sixteen months until early 1920. These were short-lived. More significant was the voluntary unification, proclaimed on 8 May 1919, of 'Rusins living south of the Carpathians' with the new State of Czechoslovakia. This came about largely through the political influence of Rusins who had emigrated to the USA.

By its Treaty of St Germain in 1919, the Paris Peace Conference recognised the Rusin union with Czechoslovakia on the understanding that Rusins would be given autonomy. However, although the Czechoslovak government created a province called 'Subcarpathian Rus'', which existed from 1919 to 1938 with its own Rusin governor, it failed to give it autonomy. Moreover, although both the Presov Rusins in Slovakia and the Lemko Rusins in Poland wanted to be part of Subcarpathian Rus', they were stopped from joining it by both the Czechoslovak and Polish nationalist governments.

Despite this, this period, at last free of Hungarian colonial oppression, was a time of cultural and linguistic renaissance. As fellow-Slavs, the Czechoslovaks understood the Rusins much better than the Hungarians, and greatly improved the infrastructure of the country, providing health, education and employment opportunities, undreamed of under the old Hungarian tyranny. However, unfortunately, they consistently allowed foreign ideologues, Ukrainians and Russians, to meddle in Rusin affairs. Moreover, the refusal of the Czechoslovak government to grant promised autonomy was a grave political betrayal, which compromised Czechoslovakia during

and after the Second World War. Thus, the centralism of Prague alienated the Rusins (and the Slovaks) and brought it punishment.

When Czechoslovakia was in turn betrayed by Great Britain and France at Munich and then transformed into a federal state in October 1938, Subcarpathian Rus' received self-governing status. Its government was first headed by a Russophile Rusin, Andrej Brodij, and then by a pro-Ukrainian Uniat priest, Avhustin Voloshin, under whom Ukrainian nationalists renamed the province 'Carpatho-Ukraine'. This lasted nearly six months until 15 March 1939, when Hitler's Germany, having used the Ukrainian nationalists as his dupes, destroyed what remained of Czechoslovakia and allowed anti-Ukrainian Hungary to occupy Subcarpathian Rus'. That very same day, an independent 'Carpatho-Ukraine' was proclaimed by Ukrainian nationalists, but because of the Hungarian invasion it was literally 'a republic for a day'. In a national tragedy, thousands of Rusins fled to the Soviet Union, mistakenly thinking that it was still Orthodox Rus'. They were at once sent to Stalin's concentration camps.

Another period began during the closing months of the Second World War, when Subcarpathian Rus' was renamed 'Transcarpathian Ukraine' by the Ukrainian administration. This was on the other side of the Carpathians, in distant Kiev, from which Subcarpathian Rus' was indeed 'across the Carpathians'. 'Transcarpathian Ukraine' was governed by its own National Council from October 1944 until the end of 1945. Occupied by the Red Army, which had driven out the Hungarian Fascists in just a few days in October 1944, the Transcarpathian National Council was forced by Stalin to accept absorption into the Soviet Ukraine.

Stalin wanted the strategically important territory in order to control Central Europe. After annexation had taken place in June 1945, the newly renamed 'Transcarpathia' lost its self-governing status and in early 1946 became just another region of the Soviet Ukraine. In 1945 in the neighbouring Presov Region, Carpatho-Russians had set up a 'Ukrainian National Council' which they hoped would become an autonomous governing body, but they too were repressed by the Czechoslovak Communist government which abolished the Council in 1949.

The immediate result of Soviet rule in Transcarpathia and in neighbouring Communist-dominated Poland and Czechoslovakia was the implementation of an oppressive centralising policy of 'Ukrainianisation'. This meant that the Rusin nationality was outlawed and only a Ukrainian identity was recognised. Soviet occupation did bring sometimes welcome economic development, but also oppression and militarisation with virtual slave labour on feudal collective farms and in factories. Over forty years of cultural nihilism arrived, with the denial of the Rusin people, the persecution of the Orthodox Church and the official abolition of Uniatism.

Conclusion: Towards the Future

Such a situation was to last until the fall of Communist Imperial tyranny in 1989-1991. The idea of autonomy had not died, however. When the Soviet Union disintegrated and the Ukraine became an independent country, Carpatho-Russians in Transcarpathia called for a return to their

historical status as an autonomous region. In the referendum on Ukrainian independence on 1 December 1991, over 78 percent of Transcarpathia's inhabitants (basically all the Rusins who live there) voted for a 'self-governing status' in the newly-independent Ukraine.

When the new ultra-nationalist Ukrainian government flatly refused to fulfil the democratic wishes of the December 1991 referendum, in May 1993 Carpatho-Russian leaders formed a Provisional Government for the Republic of Subcarpathian Rus'. Since then Carpatho-Russians and their spiritual leader, Archpriest Dimitri Sidor (<http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/intsidor.htm>), were much persecuted by the anti-Orthodox Galician junta in power in Kiev under the CIA-backed Yushchenko (<http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/trial.htm>). However, since his fall, with Viktor Yanukovich now the pro-Orthodox leader in the Ukraine, Carpatho-Russians hope to obtain more autonomy for their 'Sojm' or Parliament.

Carpatho-Russians in neighbouring countries have also been active, especially since the Revolution of 1989 and the fall of Communism in Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. However, the ambitions of the minority Carpatho-Russians in those countries are only cultural. In 1990-1991, new cultural organisations were established in each of the countries where Rusins live. These were The Rusin Renaissance Society in Slovakia, the Lemko Association in Poland, the Organisation of Rusins in Hungary, the Rusin Matka in Serbia, and Friends of Subcarpathian Rus' in the Czech Lands. The basic aim of these organisations is to see Rusins recognised as a distinct nationality and to codify the Rusin literary language for use in schools, the press, radio, theatre and other cultural events.

Together with the Society of Carpatho-Russians in the Ukraine, these organisations form the World Rusin Congress, which since 1991 has met several times to formulate common goals to protect Carpatho-Russian national identity. The result of these increased contacts has been co-operation in cultural, academic and economic areas among all Carpatho-Russians, no matter where they live. As a result, Rusin is today becoming a codified literary language and all Rusins look forward to increased autonomy and cross-border co-operation and, above all, to political autonomy in 'Transcarpathia', that is, the eastern part of Subcarpathian Rus'. Carpatho-Russians have had to struggle hard to find themselves, after two centuries of Austrian, Hungarian, Nazi, Communist and then Ukrainian oppression, but now at least they are a Nation.