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Rusyn: A New–Old Language In-between Nations and States

Michael Moser

Constructing identities across historical borders

Wherever modern Rusyn activists have mapped their territory, Rusyn and Ukrainian national and linguistic identities are still competing with each other: some regard Rusyns as a separate fourth East Slavic people and Rusyn as a separate language, whilst others maintain that Rusyns are a branch of the Ukrainian people, Rusyn idioms are local variants of Ukrainian, and Modern Standard Ukrainian is a perfectly appropriate standard language for all Rusyns/Ukrainians.[1]

In fact, up to the late twentieth century virtually nobody asserted that precisely those groups that are today claimed to be Rusyn formed a separate people (that is the Rusyns of Ukraine's Transcarpathia Oblast, northeastern Slovakia, one village in northern Hungary, some villages in the Maramureş region of Romania, and some in the Bačka-Srijem region of Croatia and Serbia, all of them historically belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary; apart from them, also the 'Lemkos' of southeastern Poland). Historically, many more Slavs who were related to the legacy of Medieval (Kyivan) Rus' and its 'Rus' faith' (Orthodoxy or, later, Greek Catholicism) were called 'Rusyns' (usually rendered as 'Ruthenians' in English) (see Plokhy 2006). These included not only all Ruthenians/Rusyns of the Kingdom of Galicia and the Crownland of Bukovyna, at least up to the turn of the twentieth century, but also all those Ruthenians of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania who were renamed 'Little Russians' (*malorossy*) only after being integrated into the Russian Empire, where they had to be distinguished from the Muscovites or 'Great Russians' (*velikorossy*). As late as in the nineteenth century, even Belarusians living in the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania were more often than not still also regarded as part of the Rusyn/Ruthenian or Little Russian nation (Moser 2011a). Great Russians, by contrast, were considered to be distinct even by those Russophiles who

believed in one all-Russian nation, but distinguished its 'Little Russian and Great Russian branches' at a lower, non-national level.

The pre-shaping of a Rusyn national identity in the modern sense set in only after most Ruthenians/Rusyns in Galicia and in Bukovyna (but also some south to the Carpathian Mountains) joined the Ukrainian national movement.[2] The Rusyns, then, were those who were reluctant to do so.

The concept of a Modern Rusyn language is also a quite recent phenomenon, and (as in all other cases) it is certainly not primarily based on any kind of 'natural' or 'objective' linguistic Rusyn unity. The Lemko dialects of Poland do share some important features with the Lemko dialects in northeastern Slovakia, yet they are no less close to the neighbouring Ukrainian San/Sjan, Bojko, and Hutsul dialects than to most Rusyn idioms. Although Ukrainian dialects north of, and Rusyn/Ukrainian dialects south of, the Carpathian Mountains share many important features (Pan'kevych 1938), the variants of Modern Rusyn are quite diverse. Except for internal dialectal development at all linguistic levels, this diversity is a result of different historical language contacts. The Polish Lemko variant is remote from all other Rusyn varieties owing to the massive, century-old Polish influence to which only Galician Ukrainian dialects come close. The varieties of the Berehove, Uzhhorod, and Mukacheve regions were under the strong influence of Hungarian, whereas in the Prešov region, (East) Slovak has been the more important contact language. Finally, in the Bačka-Srijem region, Croatian and Serbian varieties have exerted an ever-growing influence on those Ruthenian/Rusyn dialects, which, even without that, differed significantly from most other variants in that they are much closer to (East) Slovak than to other varieties of Rusyn or Ukrainian, if they are not Slovak altogether. Meanwhile, in Romania, Romanian has been a more important contact language than anywhere else (see some of the Rusyn variants as reflected in Magocsi 2007).[3]

Earlier nation- and language-building processes also differed significantly across the regions. The Polish Lemkos belonged to the Greek-Catholic diocese of Przemyśl, which, in the first half of the nineteenth century, became an important centre of the first modern 'Ruthenian or Little Russian' national and linguistic movement in Galicia. Here, even prior to the revolution of 1848–1849, a vernacular-based language was introduced into a wide range of domains and codified in grammars. It was explicitly regarded as the language of the whole 'Ruthenian or Little Russian' nation (Moser 2009: 303–666). Individuals from the Lemko region were important actors in the nation- and language-building activities that encompassed all Galicia before and after 1848–1849: Ivan Birets'kyi attended the Slavs' Congress in Prague in 1848, where he represented all Ruthenians/Rusyns of Galicia. The Ruthenians/Rusyns of Hungary, by contrast, had asked the Slovaks to speak for them (Moser 2007a:

421–424). Administrative borders within Austria/Austria-Hungary often had great significance for language politics. When Austrian authorities suggested introducing the Latin script instead of Cyrillic as an antidote to the growing Russophile movement in Galicia in 1859 (during the so-called [Second] 'Alphabet War') (Moser 2009: 474–478), this would have affected the Polish Lemko region, but not the Hungarian realm. When in the mid-1890s the 'phonetic' orthography was introduced into the schools of Galicia and Bukovyna (Moser 2007: 33, 232), this was of no significance for the regions of Hungary.

In Hungary, barely any Ruthenian/Rusyn national movement set in until the end of World War I. First developments that are sometimes interpreted as a manifestation of Ruthenian/Rusyn national aspirations took place at the turn of the nineteenth century, when a primer and a catechism were printed in Church Slavonic and in the traditional Ruthenian/Rusyn language under Bishop Andrii Bachyns'kyi of Mukacheve (Udvari 2000). A few decades later, the first 'awakener', Aleksandr (Oleksander) Dukhnovych,[4] behaved like many other Russophiles of the time in that he did write some pieces in a locally based vernacular for the 'commoners', but regarded Russian only as a legitimate high variety (Moser 2009a). Conceptualizations of a vernacular-based standard language, as developed in other Slavic national movements of the era, played no important role. Exceptions were rare and cannot be attributed to a 'Rusyn' setting. The language of László Csopey's textbooks for elementary schools of the 1880s and 1890s was based on a local vernacular variety, but Csopey explicitly referred it to a 'Ruthenian and Little Russian' framework (which, in his case, also still included Belarusian) (Moser 2009a: 78–79). Hiiador Stryps'kyi used a locally based vernacular in some of his works on the eve of World War I, but he, too, felt Ukrainian at that point and wrote about 'that true Rusyn/Ruthenian language that is spoken by a people of 22 million divided among three states' (Udvari 2007: 145–146).

The Greek Catholic church was a stronghold against Polonization in Galicia, whereas in Hungary it often took an active part in Magyarization efforts. When during World War I Hungarian politicians hesitated to abolish the Julian calendar and the Cyrillic alphabet among the Ruthenians/Rusyns, Bishop Stefan Novák of Prešov himself introduced these measures in his diocese, and others followed him (Magocsi 1978: 72; see fragments of textbooks in a traditional Ruthenian/Rusyn language, but in Hungarian-based Latin orthography in Dulichenko 2008: 286–289).

The Rusyns of the Bačka-Srijem region developed a national and linguistic movement only after they established contact with Galician Ukrainian intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century. Their first 'awakener', the Greek Catholic priest Havrylo Kostel'nyk from Ruski Krstur, published a small volume with poems, entitled *Z mojoho valala* (*From My Village*), in the Galician town of Zhovkva in 1904, when he was already closely linked with the Ukrainian

movement.[5] This book, which is today celebrated as the work that initiated the modern Rusyn movement, was printed in 500 copies only, and it did not sell well at all. Kostel'nyk barely wished to create a new Slavic standard language, and it took almost two decades until he published his grammar of the Bačka-Rusyn [Ruthenian] language (*Hramatyka bachvan'sko-ruskei beshedy*) (*Grammar of the Bačka-Ruthenian (Bačka-Rusyn) Language*) in 1923 as a consequence of the developments after World War I (see next section). Even in this grammar Kostel'nyk wished 'that we should not distance ourselves from Ukrainian, where we do not have to' (cited after Belei 2008). Kostel'nyk wrote many of his works in Ukrainian. As late as in 1935 he published a text entitled 'Why Did I Become a Ukrainian?' (Belei 2004: 277; Belei 2008).

To sum up, Rusyns can probably be best described as those remainders of Ruthenians/Rusyns who have not been willing to join the modern Ukrainian national and linguistic movement, which has transformed former 'Ruthenians/Rusyns or Little Russians' into 'Ukrainians' and promoted the Modern Standard Ukrainian language across the borders of the Russian and the Austrian/Austro-Hungarian Empires since the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially this reluctance was usually not based on any Rusyn identity in the modern sense, but resulted from Russophile views that Ruthenians/Rusyns/Little Russians belong to one indivisible Russian people and there was no place for a Ukrainian nation and a Ukrainian language (Moser forthcoming). Similar views were widespread among Galician and Bukovynian Russophiles, too, but they proved to be more persistent at the western periphery of Galicia and to the south of the Carpathian Mountains. The more successful the Ukrainian project was, however, the more obvious it became that the idea of an indivisible Russian people could not be maintained. As a result, the expressly non-Ukrainian Ruthenian/Rusyn identity had to be reshaped.

Linguistic battlefields

Even after World War I, no Rusyn identity in the modern meaning of this word emerged.[6] Explicitly non-Ukrainian and non-Russian identity models were occasionally addressed, but they were confined to just one of the regions, and the actual national framework remained questionable.

Only in the Bačka-Srijem region, where Rusyns found themselves in the newly-established Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a vernacular-based Rusyn language was developed after a council decided to cultivate a separate language in 1919. As a result, in 1923 Kostel'nyk's grammar was published (Fejsa 2007: 377; see preceding section), yet this language was designed exclusively for the Rusyns of the Bačka-Srijem region.

In Poland the administration fought the Ukrainian movement by fostering, in a typical manner of *divide et impera*, a separate Lemko identity (as well as

separate Hutsul and Bojko identities, and so on). In the 1930s, Polish authorities dismissed Ukrainian teachers from the Lemko region and co-operated with the Russophile activist Meletii Trokhanovs'kyi. In 1933 two textbooks that he had prepared in a Lemko vernacular were admitted for elementary schools (Misiak 2006: 61). In Trokhanovs'kyi's primer (printed in L'viv in 1935) the word *'rusyn'* is not used (Trokhanovs'kyi 1935). In 1935, Russophile teachers were replaced with Poles, and beginning from 1937, Lemko was not taught any more and replaced with Polish (Misiak 2006: 105).

Most Ruthenians/Rusyns of the former Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary became citizens of Czechoslovakia. The majority of them lived in a new administrative unit called Subcarpathian Rus' (*Podkarpatská Rus*), which largely coincides with today's Ukrainian Transcarpathia Oblast. It was destined to become an autonomous part of Czechoslovakia but received that status only in 1938. The Ruthenians/Rusyns of the Prešov region were separated from those of Subcarpathian Rus' by a highly disputed internal border (Švorc 2003). Those tiny groups that ended up in Hungary and Romania stood apart.

In the Prešov region most Ruthenian/Rusyn intellectual leaders were Russophiles (Plishkova 2009: 55–56). Some scholars argue that those texts from the region that were written in the traditional Church Slavonic-Russian mixture with dialectal elements 'indirectly conveyed the idea that Carpatho-Rusyns represented a distinct East Slavic people and were thus attempting to distance themselves from both Russians and Ukrainians' (*ibid.*: 52), but this is highly questionable since the same kind of language had been used for decades in accordance with varying ideological frameworks. If there was 'often a problem in distinguishing' (*ibid.*: 57) Russian and alleged 'Rusyn' orientations in interwar Czechoslovakia, this resulted primarily from the fact that most Russophiles did not know Russian well themselves and were at the same time aware that this language was not understood by their audience or readership. In any case, 'no constructive attempts were made to create a distinct Rusyn literary language on the basis of any one of the Subcarpathian dialects' during that period (*ibid.*: 61). The Ukrainian movement became visible in Slovakia only after a branch of the Prosvita Society was established in Prešov in 1930 and the local writer and cultural activist Iryna Nevyts'ka gathered some activists around the journal *Slovo naroda* (The People's Voice) between 1931 and 1932 (Shtets' 1996: 64–76).

In Subcarpathian Rus' the contest of identities was much more serious because only in that realm was Ruthenian/Rusyn to function as an official language.[7] As it was still unclear what kind of language Ruthenian/Rusyn really was, the local school administration asked a commission of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague for advice. In accordance with the traditional views in Slavic studies, the commission identified the Ruthenian/Rusyn language of Subcarpathian Rus' as 'Little Russian', adding that it was particularly

close to its Galician variant (see the text in Tichý 1938: 112–113). Although the commission recommended hiring teachers and purchasing textbooks published in Galicia, the support for the Ukrainians was far from unanimous. The scholars also advised the local authorities not to introduce the so-called 'phonetic' orthography, although they must have been aware of its symbolic value for the Ukrainian movement. More than that, they pointed out that 'the inhabitants of Subcarpathian Rus'' should not forget that they, 'like Ukrainians, also belong to the great Russian people' (*ibid.*) and therefore recommended the compulsory teaching of Russian in secondary schools. Regarding the possible creation of 'a separate standard language for Subcarpathian Rus'', however, the Czech scholars maintained that this was 'certainly not more necessary than for certain branches of the Czechoslovak people, for example, the Hanaks [a group living in northern Moravia]' (*ibid.*).

During the first years after 1919, the Russophile and the Ukrainian camps struggled for hegemony in the schools and in the press. The Ukrainian side was primarily supported by immigrants from Galicia; the Russophiles were backed by immigrants from the Russian Empire and Russophile newcomers from Galicia and Bukovyna. Even the most important grammars of both camps were written by immigrants (Moser 2011: 103–107; Moser forthcoming).

During the first few years after 1919 the Ukrainians were supported by the Czechoslovak government, yet this changed quickly after a Russophile, Antin Beskyd, became the vice-governor of Subcarpathian Rus' in 1923. External political developments made active support for the Ukrainians seem even less recommendable. In the Soviet Union, Stalin initiated the policy of so-called *nationalizatia* 'nationalization' (later *korenizatsiia* 'indigenization') in 1923 and declared Soviet Ukraine the new 'Piedmont' for all Ukrainians. At the same time the Soviets decided that all East Slavs of the Carpathian region were to be regarded as Ukrainians (Padiak 2009: 82).

The etymologically oriented orthography of the official publications separated Subcarpathian Ukrainian from both Galicia and the Soviet Union, yet local intellectuals soon began using the so-called 'phonetic' orthography (which was no Soviet 'invention' after all) and increasingly oriented toward Modern Standard Ukrainian (Moser 2011). Subcarpathian Russophiles, in contrast, did not adopt the Russian orthographic reforms that the Bolsheviks had introduced in 1918. Their traditionalism was enhanced by their inclination to pronounce the letter *jat'* as [i] (see interwar Russophile materials written in traditional orthography in Dulichenko 2008).

Rusyn positions in the modern sense did not emerge in Subcarpathia either. Only in 1935 did former Russophile circles from Mukacheve begin actively promoting a language that they declared to be opposed to both Russian and Ukrainian. This was, however, primarily a reaction to Edvard Beneš, who had proclaimed 'an end to support for Russian and Ukrainian émigrés in the

province' and called for the fostering of a local Rusyn identity one year earlier (Kapral and Pop 2005). Altogether, the language that was actually used by the Mukacheve Russophiles still remained traditional (Plishkova 2009: 50).

During the entire interwar period it was primarily the Ukrainian and Russian sides that competed in Subcarpathian Rus'. In early October 1938 Subcarpathian Rus' received autonomy status, and its first leader, the Russophile Andrii Brodii, was arrested as a spy for Horthy's Hungary a few days after his inauguration. Soon after the Ukrainophile Avgustyn Voloshyn succeeded Brodii, Hungarian troops annexed the most important regions of Subcarpathian Rus', including the towns of Uzhhorod, Mukacheve, and Berehove. Voloshyn introduced the new name 'Carpathian Ukraine' for the remaining polity, where the Ukrainian language was promoted (Magocsi 1978: 176). When it was clear that interwar Czechoslovakia would ultimately collapse, Voloshyn declared Carpathian Ukraine an independent state on 15 March 1939, but within a few hours Hungarian troops overran the 'republic for a day'. As a result, Subcarpathian Rus' became Hungarian 'Kárpátalja' ('Subcarpathia'), the Ukrainian language was banned (while the use of Russian was tolerated), and a 'Hungarian Ruthenian/Rusyn/Russian' language (*Magyar orosz nyelv*) was promoted. This language, as represented in Ivan Harajda's grammar of the Ruthenian/Rusyn language (*Hrammatyka rus'koho iazŷka*), is celebrated by some modern Rusyn activists as an outstanding achievement in the modern Rusyn sense. In fact, the language was not only designed exclusively for Horthy's Hungary; it was also very traditional at all linguistic levels and much closer to Ruthenian/Rusyn varieties of the nineteenth century (including those of Galicia) than to any variant of Modern Rusyn (Moser 2011: 109–111).

Behind the Iron Curtain

After the Red Army invaded the territories of East Central Europe, former Subcarpathian Rus'/Subcarpathia turned into Transcarpathia Oblast of Soviet Ukraine. Contrary to widespread modern Rusyn myths, the fact that the Soviets had identified the Rusyns as Ukrainians did not entail a 'forced Ukrainianization' of the territory in the real sense of the word. After all, use of the Russian language was primarily promoted there, as in all other territories of the Soviet Union. No variant of a Ruthenian/Rusyn identity or a Ruthenian/Rusyn language was allowed, and no publications in such varieties appeared during the Soviet period (Magocsi 2007a: 102).

The Ruthenians/Rusyns of Czechoslovakia initially found themselves in a particularly paradoxical situation. On the one hand, they had to be officially regarded as Ukrainians. On the other hand, the only language they actually used as their official high variant was Russian, which now, of course, had to be Modern Standard Russian with its modern orthography. Only after 1952 was

Ukrainian introduced there (Shtets' 1996: 76–86; Gajdoš and Konečný 2006: 173), but because Ukrainian was a threatened and stigmatized language in Soviet Ukraine itself, its standing in Czechoslovakia and other countries of the Soviet bloc was far from ideal. In the mid-1960s Ivan Matsyns'kyi, then head of the Department of Ukrainian Literature of the Slovak Pedagogical Publishing House in Prešov, realized the growing difficulties of the Ukrainian language in Slovakia; he demanded that 'school textbooks, popular brochures, and the weekly *Nove zhyttia* should begin coming out in the language spoken by the Rusyns of northeastern Slovakia' (Plishkova 2009: 73). From 1967 a two-page insert in the local vernacular was included in this Ukrainian-language newspaper (*ibid.*: 74–75), and Matsyns'kyi, who was in fact a supporter of the Ukrainian side, prepared a 28-page typescript with a description of some features of this idiom (Shtets' 1996: 95–100). In 1970, the dialect-based inserts were removed from *Nove zhyttia*. More than a decade later, on the eve of the fall of the Iron Curtain, a group of Greek-Catholic activists, headed by František Krajňak, prepared some Biblical texts in a Medzilaborce[8]-based variety of Rusyn (Magocsi 2007a: 106), yet these texts have appeared in print only since the 1990s.

In Poland the Lemkos were expelled from their historical homelands between 1945 and 1947. About two-thirds of them were deported to Soviet Ukraine. The rest (between 40,000 and 50,000), now officially regarded as Ukrainians, were resettled under duress during 'Operation Vistula' in other areas of postwar Poland, primarily in the newly annexed former German territories (*ibid.*: 102). After 1956 the publications of newly established Lemko organizations included some texts in Lemko dialects (*ibid.*: 103, 106), yet there is no evidence that these idioms were regarded as a separate language or were associated with any other Rusyn varieties in the modern meaning. The Lemkivs'ka Vatra (Lemko Bonfire) folklore and cultural festivals in the historical Lemko region organized after 1983 (Magocsi 2007b: 36) had no further-reaching Rusyn significance either.

Only the Bačka-Srijem variant of Rusyn was further elaborated and codified prior to the 1990s, particularly in Mykola Kochysh's works of the 1960s and 1970s. When Vojvodina's autonomous status within Yugoslavia was expanded in 1974, Rusyn was acknowledged as one out of four official languages of the province (Magocsi 2007a: 104–105). As a result, the Bačka-Srijem variant was used in all communicative spheres, including radio and TV. No Rusyn identity models in the modern sense were addressed by the activists yet, whereas many referred to a Ukrainian framework.[9]

After 1989

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the breakup of the Soviet bloc, virtually all territories that have been mapped as Rusyn were located within new state

borders. Since 1991 Transcarpathia Oblast has been an administrative unit of independent Ukraine. The Rusyns of Slovakia witnessed the peaceful breakup of Czechoslovakia in 1993, whereas the Rusyns of Yugoslavia, who were strongly affected by the secession wars of the early 1990s, ended up divided between independent Croatia and new Yugoslavia.

Most countries that today acknowledge Rusyn minorities were involved in the processes of European integration. Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary joined the European Union in 2004 (Romania, together with Bulgaria, followed in 2007) and entered the Schengen Area in 2007. Borders between these states have virtually ceased to exist, whereas those with other countries have become less porous again.

In the 1990s local activists established Rusyn organizations and Rusyn journals and newspapers in all countries with Rusyn minorities except Romania, and for the first time in history a Rusyn identity in the modern sense was promoted. In March 1991 the first World Congress of Rusyns was held in Slovakia (Magocsi 2007b: 36–37). In the following years, Rusyns were acknowledged as national minorities not only in Slovakia, Poland, Serbia, and Croatia, but also in Romania, where only 200 people identified themselves as Rusyn, in Hungary, where only one Rusyn-speaking village is left, and in the Czech Republic, where only recent Rusyn migrants from Slovakia live (Magocsi 2007b: 37, 2011: 271). All of these countries now have designated two national minorities out of one ethnic group: those with a Rusyn and those with a Ukrainian identity. This is one of the reasons why Rusyn claims that approximately one million Rusyns live in Europe at present (Magocsi 2007b: 16) are in sharp contrast with official data. However, only roughly 10,200 out of an estimated 740,000 persons identified as Rusyns in the latest Ukrainian census of 2001, and other polls reveal even smaller figures (with the exception of some unofficial censuses that were conducted by Rusyn organizations themselves, but even they did not find more than 22,000–28,000 Rusyns in the region) (Kuzio 2011: 102).

The vast majority of Ruthenians/Rusyns in Transcarpathia Oblast clearly identifies as Ukrainian and regard Rusyns as a branch of the Ukrainian people. So do central Ukrainian political authorities, although on 7 March 2007, the Transcarpathia Oblast Council acknowledged a separate Rusyn ethnicity at the regional level (Magocsi 2011: 272). In Slovakia, the latest census revealed 55,000 Rusyns (that is, many more than in Transcarpathia Oblast!). The corresponding figures in other countries are Serbia 16,000, Poland 5,900, Croatia 2,300, the Czech Republic 1,100, Hungary 1,100, and Romania 200 (Magocsi 2011: 271). Thus, roughly 91,000 people in Europe identify themselves as Rusyns.

Efforts to promote and to codify the Rusyn language were addressed for the first time in history in the 1990s. In November 1992 a seminar on the Rusyn language was held in Bardejovské Kúpele, Slovakia. At that meeting,

which was later labelled the 'First Congress of the Rusyn Language', activists from Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, and Hungary decided to accept the 'Romansch model' for the codification of the Rusyn language, that is, to develop four different standards of Rusyn for Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia first, and to create an all-Rusyn language later (Magocsi 1996: 37).

In January 1995 the Slovak variant of Rusyn was officially declared a new Slavic language in Bratislava (Magocsi 1996: 38), even though the level of codification was still extremely low at that time. Five years later Henryk Fontański and Mirosława Chomiak published a 'grammar of the Lemko language', and a Polish standard of Rusyn was declared to be in force. Both in Slovakia and in Poland, Rusyn is now taught in schools and universities. The Institute for Rusyn Language and Culture at the University of Prešov is probably the most active European centre of the modern Rusyn movement. Rusyn studies at the Pedagogical University in Cracow (*ibid.*: 109–111) are apparently at a considerably lower level than Rusyn sources suggest; only a course on the 'grammar of the Rusyn-Lemko language' is held at the Russian department of that institution (Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny 2011). In Ukraine's Transcarpathia Oblast, various grammars have been published since the 1990s; none of them has, however, been accepted by any larger groups to date (*ibid.*).

Although some activists continue their work on a common Rusyn standard language, the actual achievements rather point in the opposite direction of an ongoing 'nationalization' of Rusyn standards in accordance with the state borders. At present as many as four Rusyn standard variants are actually in the making. New work on a North-American standard of Rusyn has apparently begun (see Magocsi 2007a and 2007b), and a Hungarian standard of Rusyn is being developed (Benedek 2007), despite the fact that the vast majority of Hungarian Rusyns are migrants and the only Rusyn-speaking village is near the border with Transcarpathia Oblast. Will those 200 Romanian citizens who claim a Rusyn identity really stay without their own variant in the long run? And is it likely that the Croatian and Serbian Rusyns will preserve the idea of one common standard?

Paul Robert Magocsi recently addressed some of the current problems of Rusyn language planning in his inaugural speech at the third congress on the Rusyn language, held in Cracow in 2007. In his presentation, the Rusyn leader called for the further elaboration of national standards where they have not yet been established, particularly in Transcarpathia Oblast, where at least two more or less serious versions have been proposed by Ihor Kercha and Stepan Popovych in 1999 and by Dmytro Sydor in 2005, and in Hungary, where extremely diverse versions have been in use since the early 1990s (see Magocsi 2008: 10–11). With an eye on a future Rusyn common standard, Magocsi encouraged activists to replace loanwords from their state languages with words that are likely to be understood by all Rusyns; he also recommended

the creation of a single linguistic and geographic terminology on a Latin basis be discussed, and criticized the curious fact that in some variants, for example in the Bačka-Srijem region, the adjective *rus'kŷi* means 'Rusyn', whereas in Slovakia it means 'Russian'.[10]

First and foremost, Magocsi emphasized the importance of a common Rusyn standard, not only because 'Rusyns in Romania or Ukraine would be able to completely understand Rusyns in Slovakia or Poland', but also because non-Rusyn organizations and individuals have become increasingly interested in publishing Rusyn dictionaries or Rusyn grammars. However, he also pointed out that nobody really knows 'which Rusyn language, or which of its variants, should we use?' (*ibid*.: 13).

It is precisely the issue of a common Rusyn standard that might gain even more significance soon. Without such a common language, it could become increasingly difficult to convince outsiders that Rusyn is in fact only one language. If that were really the case, one might ask why the still so modest Slovak standardization of 1995 was celebrated with the slogan 'A New Slavic Language Is Born', despite the fact that the Bačka-Srijem variant had already been codified for several decades. Why, then, did other Rusyns not just adopt or at least adapt that variant? Can one believe in the notion of one Rusyn language while observing that different variants of Rusyn are barely mutually comprehensible and to a greater degree than the separate variants of Rusyn and other Slavic languages (including Ukrainian)?

Only time will tell if a Rusyn common standard will ever be established or, furthermore, dispersed in the speech communities. One of the main problems is quite obvious: if Rusyn variants were in part successfully presented as so much closer to the local dialects than allegedly alien Ukrainian, the switch to any kind of language with a broader reach might appear to be highly risky, because, after all, such a language would inevitably be much more remote from the local dialects (and probably not much less remote than Modern Standard Ukrainian).

The first serious attempt at creating a modern Rusyn common standard was promoted quite recently by the Uzhhorod-based journalist, publisher, and activist Valerii Padiak, who introduced this idiom in a translation of Paul-Robert Magocsi's *A People from Nowhere*. For more or less obvious reasons, the variety is clearly based on the dialects of Transcarpathia Oblast: Padiak writes *mavut* or *maiperva* (Magocsi 2007d: 11, 24) and uses local forms such as *aibo* (*ibid*.: 12); he also introduces not only Russian loanwords such as *yzslido-vateli* 'researchers' or *pobidonosno* 'victoriously' (*ibid*.: 24, 91), but also several Hungarian ones such as *vad'* (from *vagy* 'or') (*ibid*.: 12), *ippen* (from *éppen* 'just') (*ibid*.: 22), or *falatavut sia* (from *falat* 'bit, bite') (*ibid*.: 21). Although Padjak, curiously enough, reintroduces the letter [ô] to cover the varying Rusyn reflexes of /o/ in newly closed syllables (in accordance with much further-reaching Ruthenian/Rusyn/Ukrainian etymologically based orthographies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), his project will probably not be

accepted anywhere beyond Transcarpathia Oblast, if at all. Slovak Rusyns are likely to have serious problems in recognizing this language as their own, and this will certainly apply even more so to the Lemkos in Poland, not to mention the Rusyns in the Bačka-Srijem region.

In fact, current Rusyn problems are still much more down-to-earth. During the past few years leading codifiers have not even remained united in the various countries themselves: Rusyn activists in Slovakia have not only sharply criticized recent orthographic innovations, but have also complained that the Slovak Standard of Rusyn pays virtually no attention to the westernmost dialects (Van'ko 2008). Rusyn interest groups in Prešov have split, and since 2003–2004 two Slovak Rusyn standard models have been in use (Koporova 2010: 5–6). In Poland, Henryk Fontański has complained that even Mirosława Chomiak, his coauthor of the Lemko grammar of 2000 (2nd ed. 2004), is not willing to introduce the norms of this grammar into her own textbooks (Fontański 2008: 51). In Transcarpathia Oblast Rusyns are still searching for their norms (Padiak 2008: 72), and they are not likely to agree soon. In Hungary, Rusyns are 'still far' from 'ideal standards' (Kapral' 2008: 77). Even in the Bačka-Srijem region, the divergence of Rusyn standard and language usage seems to go far beyond the 'normal' level (Ramach 2008: 86–89).

Conclusion

To accept the status of the still loosely standardized national variants of Rusyn as one language (with one history) basically means to agree with an axiom put forward by Rusyn activists. Despite some indisputable achievements, it is still impossible to predict whether the Rusyn project will succeed in the long run.

Notes

1. In this chapter, I pay no attention to those roughly 13,000 people who identified as Rusyns in the U S census of 1990 (Magocsi 2007c: 386), although their efforts have undoubtedly played a tremendous role for the organization of the Rusyn movement since 1989.
2. Historical terms that seemingly reflect a separate quasi-Rusyn identity, such as 'Hungarian Rus', emerged only in the nineteenth century. They had a territorial, not an ethnic or national, meaning, and the Polish Lemko Rusyns always stood apart (even Paul-Robert Magocsi's map of 'Subcarpathian Ethno-Geographical Features' of 1978 did not yet include the Polish Lemkos) (Magocsi 1978: 11).
3. Even if one considers the role of German, its impact varied greatly across the Rusyn regions. Since at least the sixteenth century, the German language of migrants into rural regions has played a more significant role in the Hungarian realm than among Polish Lemkos.
4. All names are given in transliteration from Ukrainian. Regarding names, too, Rusyn variants differ significantly from each other.

5. Kostel'nyk studied theology in L'viv, married the daughter of a Ukrainian activist, and became a member of the Archdiocese of L'viv. Throughout his lifetime, he maintained strong ties with Galicia, particularly with Greek Catholic Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi (Belej 2008).
6. In order to argue for the existence of supra-regional Rusyn identity models, some scholars highlight that activists of one of the so-called Lemko republics of 1918–1920 (which actually consisted only of Florynka and some neighbouring villages) formulated the wish to join Czechoslovakia (Dubiel-Dmytryszyn 2010: 81). They forget to add that joining the Soviet Union was considered at the same level (Misiak 2006: 59–60).
7. In 1919, in Béla Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic, Rusyns were recognized as a distinct people. 'A Department (*katedra*) of Rusyn studies was created at the University of Budapest; and a few issues of a Rusyn newspaper, *Rus'ka Pravda*, later *Rus'ko-Kraïns'ka pravda*, appeared' (Pop 2005: 425). Soviet Rus'ka Kraiina, i.e. the Rusyn autonomous administrative unit under Béla Kún's rule, lasted only 40 days.
8. Medzilaborce is a town in northeast Slovakia.
9. As the Union of Rusyns and Ukrainians in Croatia/*Soiuz Rusynokh y Ukraiintsokh Republyky Horvatskei* (http://www.rusuk.org/ruski/snovanje/ accessed 18 April 2015) or the regularly held Festival of Culture of Rusyns and Ukrainians/*Festyval kultury Rusnatsokh y Ukraiintsokh* in Serbian Ruski Krstur demonstrate, this has not changed to date.
10. Magocsi also addressed alphabet problems, criticized the fact that some publications of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia still appear in Latin script, and pointed out that the transcription of Rusyn in the electronic media is 'chaotic' (*ibid*.: 11–13).
11. For the sake of simplicity, the variants of Rusyn will not be distinguished here.

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