

THE SCHOLAR, HISTORIAN, AND PUBLIC ADVOCATE. THE
CONTRIBUTIONS OF PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI TO OUR UNDERSTANDING
OF UKRAINE AND CENTRAL EUROPE

**A Multi-Vectored Scholar for a Multi-
Vectored Era:**

Paul Robert Magocsi

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Paul Robert Magocsi poses a three-fold paradox to Ukrainian Studies in the West that this symposium is the first to address. Magocsi has been Chair of Ukrainian Studies for nearly three decades at the University of Toronto.

Firstly, he is the most prolific Western historian of Ukraine. As John Paul-Himka pointed out on the occasion of the Chair's twentieth anniversary, 'Few other scholars in the field could match such a record' with an 'unusually productive career, and 'an unusual, yet unusually fruitful, scholarly style'. Himka pointed to highly praised books, such as Magocsi's historiographical guide to Galicia, historical atlas of Ukraine and edited collection on Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi. One could no doubt add his *History of Ukraine*, published in the West in 1996 and in Kyiv in 2007 and now entering its second English-language edition, and *Ukraine. An Illustrated History* (2007).

Secondly, he is a multi-vector scholar. In addition to being the leading Western historian of Ukraine he is also the leading Western scholar of Rusyns.

Thirdly, Ukrainian Studies in the West has marginalized him by focusing on his contribution to Rusyn studies. Meanwhile, it has largely ignored his overall contribution to Ukrainian Studies.

Ukrainian Studies in the West exists in its own ivory tower. Perhaps that is the nature of all ethnic studies. Conflicts surrounding ethnic chairs are usually the

norm, as seen in the Polish, Hungarian and, of course, the Ukrainian chair at the University of Toronto. At the same time, the Ukrainian diaspora has never been united in its support for encouraging Ukrainian Studies more broadly. The nationalist wing of the Ukrainian diaspora, which has always been the most organised, in particular never rallied behind the funding drives for academic positions and did not support or attend their subsequent academic activities.

The tragedy of the Ukrainian Chair at the University of Toronto is perhaps that a broader coalition of opponents were added to the doubters who always existed within the nationalist wing of the Ukrainian diaspora. Displeasure at the University of Toronto not hiring “their man” led to a de facto boycott of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Toronto. The boycott served nobody – least of all Ukrainian Studies - as it meant that the Chair was always under-funded. This prevented the emergence of a full academic agenda surrounding the Chair (i.e. research students and projects, periodicals such as a newsletter and journal, seminar series and conferences).

The Chair of Ukrainian Studies therefore became de facto a “one-man” show with Magocsi at its centre stage. This could have turned out to be a disaster if it had been led by other scholars associated with Ukrainian Studies. But, the disaster never took hold. Magocsi’s research and publications record outshone in quality, innovation and quantity Western academic centres devoted to Ukraine and that of Western scholars in Ukrainian Studies.

Magocsi is not the typical historian sitting in archives for years pondering over dusty manuscripts, checking the accuracy of dates and many years later

finally writing a historical work. His prolific nature extends beyond academic scholarship to that more commonly found within political science; namely, public advocacy (in Himka's words "'popular-scientific' or even 'publitsystyka'") through 25 interviews (until the twentieth anniversary of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies), letters to the press, and articles published in newspapers and pamphlets. As Himka notes, Magocsi, 'is, in short, not studying history, but taking part as actor in the historical process. In other words, he uses his knowledge of history to influence history'.

A Bibliography of Magocsi's work from 1964 to the twentieth anniversary of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies in 2000 gave an indication of the extensive nature of his contribution to Ukrainian Studies and scholarship more broadly. The bibliography contains 23 books, 17 edited and series works edited, 16 brochures, 3 catalogues of library collections, 48 book chapters, 65 articles in academic journals, 256 articles in other periodicals, 31 encyclopedic entries and 32 book reviews published by Magocsi over a 36 year period. We can safely assume that this list will grow even longer by the thirtieth anniversary of the Chair of Ukrainian Studies in 2010.

Quantity and volume do not dominate Magocsi's extensive publications record. While undoubtedly prolific his high standards demand that his work is also of a high quality, a fact that has produced a litany of positive reviews of his publications. His scholarly interests have been that of a historian of Ukraine, Rusyns and Central Europe more broadly as well as a scholar of nationalism and national identity. His approach to the former (history) has been unsurprisingly

influenced by his approach to the latter (nationalism and identity).

Magocsi's approach to the treatment of Ukrainian history has not been sufficiently recognised as having revolutionised the manner in which 'Ukrainian history' can be treated. His inclusive approach to the study of Ukrainian history is based on his view of Ukraine as the more civic 'Narod Ukrainy' (Peoples of Ukraine) rather than the more ethnic 'Ukrayinsky Narod' (Ukrainian People). Such an approach has undertaken a great service to Ukrainian Studies by modernising the approach to studying Ukrainian history through drawing on the civic conceptual framework that is dominant in Western historiography.

Magocsi's *History of Ukraine* is one of only three histories of Ukraine published since Ukraine became an independent state (all of which are by Canadian-based scholars). Orest Subtelny's (1988, 1994, 2000) and Serhiy Yekelchik's (2007) histories of Ukraine focus nevertheless on ethnic Ukrainians and continue in the traditional framework of Ukrainian historiography. The second expanded edition of Magocsi's *History of Ukraine*, originally published in 1996, will expand his innovative and thoroughly Western approach to the study of Ukrainian history by including greater detail on ethnic groups, such as the Tatars, who lived for centuries within the boundaries of Ukraine. Yekelchik's in many ways adopts an entirely opposite approach to that of Magocsi by largely ignoring Ukraine's regional diversity. Regional diversity and ethnic pluralism go to the heart of Magocsi's 'multicultural' approach to inclusive history.

The influence of histories of Ukraine published in the West will not be confined to the Western world. Subtelny's *Ukraine. A History* was the first to be

translated and published into Ukrainian and Russian in the early 1990s and has since had print runs that total nearly one million. Magocsi's *History of Ukraine* was first published in Ukraine in 2007 at a time when it faces competition from home-grown historians. Unlike Subtelny therefore, who had little competition from historians in Ukraine when the first Ukrainian edition of his *Ukraine. A History* was published in 1991 in Kyiv, Magocsi's *History of Ukraine* will be in a market where competition now exists. Ukrainian readers will though be able to compare and contrast Subtelny's and Magocsi's different approaches to Ukrainian history.

Subtelny's one-volume survey was the first in 50 years to bring Ukrainian history up to the present and is therefore similar to other one-volume histories of Ukraine by Dmytro Doroshenko and Ukraine's most pre-eminent historian, Mykhailo Hrushevskiy. All three histories are devoted to the Ukrainian people who have lived on the territory we know since 1992 as Ukraine. Consequently Russians, Poles, Tatars and Jews, who played an important role in the history of Ukrainian territory, are only treated in a minor way. In contrast to Subtelny's work, Magocsi focuses upon the history of all of the ethnic groups and events that took place on Ukrainian territory. Using this framework Magocsi follows in the standard Western civic historiographical framework of treating events that took place among the different ethnic groups on that territory that go to make up the 'Narod Ukrainy'.

Magocsi's new methodology is therefore different from Subtelny's traditional approach. In integrating Ukrainian history into a Western framework Magocsi is drawing on a civic nationalist approach that will be more unsettling to Russian historiography than the traditional ethnic approach favoured by historians from

Hrushevsky to Subtelny. Magosci's history will also inevitably contribute to the ongoing debate as to what, where and who constitutes 'Russia' and who therefore are 'Russians'. Should not Ukrainian nationalists, whether in the diaspora or in Ukraine, therefore re-appraise Magosci because of his preeminent contribution to defining 'Ukrainian history' as that associated with Ukraine's borders since becoming an independent state?

As a scholar of nationalism Magosci's scholarship invites greater controversy. This section of his scholarship includes his contribution as a scholar and also his public advocacy of Rusyns. The field of nationalism studies is an area that Magosci contributed to in his well known 'The Ukrainian national Revival: A New Analytical Framework' in the *Canadian Review of Studies of Nationalism* (1989). The framework stresses the importance of intellectuals, such as himself, in the construction of ethnic groups. Magosci's understanding of nationalism is impressive and it is therefore a loss to scholarship that he has not devoted greater energy to this field of scholarship. Magosci's first attendance at the pre-eminent scholarly body that focuses on nationalism and identity in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia, the Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN), was to have been in 2006 at this author's prompting but due to Canadian winter conditions he failed to depart from Toronto. Magosci's entry on to the ASN stage was more successful a year later. ASN's quarterly journal *Nationalities Papers* did publish two articles by Magosci in 1993 and 1996 on Hungarians in Trans-Carpathia and the 1918-1920 Lemko Rusyn Republic but nothing more recent.

Magocsi's involvement in the Rusyn movement has been subjected to criticism not only by the Ukrainian diaspora but also by his scholarly colleagues. It is indeed difficult to see where to draw the line of objectivity between impartial scholarship and direct and high level involvement in politics and nation-building. In political science individuals such as myself have been pigeon-holed as 'nationalists' simply because of my ethnic group. Is then Magocsi as a public advocate also a 'nationalist', whether Ukrainian, Rusyn or both? Hrushevsky, the doyen of Ukrainian historical scholarship, did combine history writing and politics, but this was over a century ago in a different era, when Ukraine was not an independent state. Magocsi has been accused of instigating the Rusyn revival, a charge he categorically denied answering the allegation by saying that he has followed, but not initiated, developments among Rusyns.

Magocsi helped to found the Carpatho-Rusyn Research Centre in 1978 and was its president for many years and he has also regularly participated in World Congresses of Rusyns. Magocsi's writings and involvement have given Rusyns a strong sense of self-confidence by providing them with a history book that was initially used by the Slovak Ministry of Education. Magocsi has been proactive in promoting a language congress to promote what Rusyns speak as a language, rather than defined as a Ukrainian dialect.

The eastern Slavic inhabitants of the Carpathians could have adopted Rusyn (as a fourth eastern Slavic group), Ukrainian or Russian identities. Magocsi's preference is for a Rusyn identity and he has condemned the marginal pro-Russian orientation and its aggressively anti-Ukrainianism and separatism. Rusyn

separatism was never popular in Trans-Carpathia and Magocsi is not a proponent of separatism. Western scholars have though often confused regionalism with separatism and included Trans-Carpathia within the threats to Ukraine's territorial integrity as the Crimea.

Magocsi's supports a resolution of the Rusyn question through Ukraine's integration into the European Union (EU). Magocsi is the editor of a volume on multiculturalism and Canada's ethnic groups that was published after he was appointed director of the Multicultural Society of Ontario in 1990, taking a five-year leave of absence from academia. He has had a long-term interest in minorities throughout Europe and supports a future Europe that emphasises regions over nations and countries. The Rusyn revival is not a unique phenomenon in Europe, Magocsi believes, because it follows a general trend in the 1990s that coincided with the collapse of communism in central and eastern Europe and the decentralisation of traditional nation-states. National minorities, such as Bretons and Corsicans in France, and regional groups, such as the Rusyns of Slovakia, have used this newly available political space to revive identities that were previously hidden from view by homogenising nation-states. The revival of a Rusyn orientation is therefore, in Magocsi's view, a normal part of the revival of minorities throughout Europe and Ukraine. If Ukraine wants to be treated as a 'European' state that upholds human and minority rights then Kyiv should therefore recognise Rusyns. During a September 2008 visit to the US Republican Party presidential candidates raised the issue of the recognition of Rusyns to President Viktor Yushchenko.

The EU's supra-national framework has traditionally been supported by minority and regional groups, such as the Scots and Catalans (and Rusyns), because it has been seen by central governments as undermining traditional nation-states. Ukrainian national democrats who are traditionally Ukraine's staunchest supporters of integration into the EU have yet to come to terms with the EU as an institution that undermines the sovereignty of nation-states, a consequence of EU integration that Magocsi applauds but Ukrainian national democrats might not.

A further difficulty raised by Chris Hann is the common assumption by Magocsi that all eastern Slavs living in Trans-Carpathia are in fact Rusyns who are being forcibly designated as 'Ukrainians'. The few Western scholars who have surveyed Trans-Carpathia follow in these footsteps by either designating all of its inhabitants as 'Rusyn' or defining the region as 'multi-ethnic'. Lemkos, Boikos, and Hutsuls in Galicia and Trans-Carpahia were collectively defined as 'Rusyns' until the twentieth century and Lemkos and Boikos also called themselves 'Rusnaks'. In the Soviet era, Boykos, Lemkos, Hutsuls, Rusyns, Ruski, Cossacks, Pinchuks, Polishchuks, and Lytvyns were classified as Ukrainian sub-groups and the idiom spoken by these groups was therefore classed as 'Ukrainian' dialects.

In the 1989 Soviet census 78.4 percent of the inhabitants of Trans-Carpathia claimed Ukrainian ethnicity, close to the average throughout Ukraine, a figure that grew to 80.5 percent by the 2001 Ukrainian census (the Russian population in Ukraine declined by 3 million during the same period). Official census statistics therefore would support the argument that during the 1990s there was a Ukrainian, not a Rusyn revival, in Trans-Carpathia, the opposite of that claimed by Magocsi.

Nevertheless, a claim of a Ukrainian national revival is undermined by the unwillingness of Ukrainian census takers to include an entry category for 'Rusyn', perhaps out of a fear that some inhabitants of Trans-Carpathia would re-define their identity.

One problem for official and parallel census-takers is that many people do not see the need propounded by intellectuals such as Magocsi, policy makers, NGO's and nation builders to take hard decisions as to whether they are Rusyns, Ukrainians, or Ukrainian-Rusyns. Most people in Trans-Carpathia, after all, were free in the 2001 census to declare themselves as being *both* Ukrainian citizens and Rusyns. Another way to define their identity could be for the inhabitants of Trans-Carpathia to declare themselves to be Ukrainian by ethnicity *and* by citizenship while at the same time they could still adhere to a Rusyn regional identity. National identity in general is always in flux and even more so on the ground in border areas such as Trans-Carpathia. Different options are available to local citizens who could identify themselves in a civic sense according to their citizenship (Ukrainian) or ethnicity (Ukrainian, Rusyn, or Ukrainian-Rusyn). An added confusion rests on the conflation of 'citizenship' and 'nationality' that is commonly found in the West.

The situation is changing on the ground in Trans-Carpathia although it is too early to tell if the trend will be in the direction of a greater Rusyn separate identity or reinforcing a regional Ukrainian-Rusyn identity (or both). The Transcarpathian Oblast Council voted on 7 March 2007 to officially recognise the Rusyn people as an indigenous nationality in the region, meaning presumably that the next census (in 2011?) may include an entry category for 'Rusyn'. The 90 council members

voted 71 for, 2 against with 2 abstaining. The oblast council vote was promoted, or instructed, by presidential secretariat head Viktor Baloga, himself a native of the Mukachevo region of Trans-Carpathia. It is therefore a second irony that has been lost on Ukrainian nationalists in Ukraine and in the diaspora that Rusyns have been recognized in Ukraine not by the 'russophile' former President Leonid Kuchma but by 'their' national-democratic President Viktor Yushchenko.

This is now a golden opportunity for Magocsi to apply his scholarship to Ukrainian and Rusyn national identity and national revivals through integrating Trans-Carpathia into nationalism studies and political science, which has largely not been undertaken. But, here is where Magocsi could, just as many nation builders have elsewhere, come unstuck.

Let us return to the question of who are 'Rusyns'? As Hann pointed out, 'the term Lemko must be seen as part of the problem. It does not emerge 'naturally' from within the group so defined, but is an attempt to impose order and borders on a continuum of cultural variation'. Hann argues that Magocsi does not believe that Lemkos are a nation in their own right, 'but part of a nation of Carpatho-Rusyns, with a larger component in Ukraine', and smaller fragments in Slovakia, Romania, and Serbia. But, who are we to say whether Lemkos are not a separate, fifth eastern Slavic group, part of the Rusyn nation (Magocsi's preference) or part of the Ukrainian nation (Ukrainian traditional viewpoint)? The 1947 'Akcja Wisla' ethnic cleansing of eastern Slavs from south eastern Poland could have Ukrainianised Lemkos while the post-1945 Soviet occupation of Trans-Carpathia may have Ukrainianised the majority of its inhabitants (as Magocsi initially

included in his.

Two questions spring to mind. Did communist Poland's inadvertent mistreatment of Lemkos lead to their Ukrainianisation? Was the USSR a nation-builder in western Ukraine as much as it was a nation-destroyer in eastern Ukraine?

After 1945, Soviet nation-building policies in Trans-Carpathia redefined eastern Slavs from 'Rusyns' into 'Ukrainians'. Following the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 some of these Trans-Carpathian 'Ukrainians' have redefined themselves as 'Rusyns.' But, the limited available data point to only a small proportion of eastern Slavs in Trans-Carpathia redefining themselves as Rusyns, at least until now. The 2007 decision of the Trans-Carpathian oblast council to recognize Rusyns could undermine post-1945 Soviet Ukrainian nation-building in Trans-Carpathia, or it could have limited impact. It is maybe too early to reach a conclusion. In a major scholarly study of censuses in Ukraine written before the 2007 decision Dominique Arel believed it unlikely that there would be an increase in the number of Rusyns after decades of nation-building in Trans-Carpathia. Who will be proven correct in the years to come: Arel or Magocsi?

The *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (2006) jointly edited by Magocsi uses 'Rusyn' to cover a broad variety of eastern Slavic peoples living in the Carpathians, a problem that re-occurs in Magocsi's scholarship on Rusyns. Those who have been defined in the past as Rusyns, Ruthenians, Carpatho-Ukrainians, Carpatho-Russians, and Lemkos are often included as sub-groups of 'Rusyns' in a manner that could be readily compared to the Ukrainian approach to

defining Rusyns as one of many sub-Ukrainian ethnic group. The *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* implicitly assumes that the eastern Slavic population of the Carpathian region is entirely Rusyn. The large number of maps in the *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* defines the eastern Slavic population of the Carpathian region; that is, Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, south-eastern Poland, and north-eastern Slovakia, in such a manner. A map on page 186 of the *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, for example, entitled 'Carpathian Rus', 2000' includes Carpatho-Rusyn settlements for 1920. This precedes Soviet Ukrainianisation after 1945 in Trans-Carpathia and the ethnic cleansing of Lemkos in 1947 in Poland that may have also inadvertently contributed to their Ukrainianisation. A map from 1920 tells us therefore little about the national identity of Trans-Carpathians nearly a century later.

Such wide-embracing claims are impossible to prove without survey data, opinion polls, or census results. Without these, an accurate national (Ukrainian, Rusyn, or Ukrainian-Rusyn) affiliation within the eastern Slavic population of Trans-Carpathia cannot be ascribed. The data available from official and unofficial census surveys conducted in 2001 show that only a small minority of the Trans-Carpathian eastern Slavic population defined itself as 'Rusyns.' The 2001 official census result found 10,200 Rusyns, 672 Lemkos, and 131 Boykos in Trans-Carpathia. The 10,200 Rusyns are somewhat close to the 6,004 and 22-28,000 Rusyns found in two parallel unofficial censuses conducted by Rusyn organisations. The Sejm (Diet) of Trans-Carpathian Rusyns found 6,004 eastern Slavs in Trans-Carpathia who declared themselves to be Rusyns. Thus between

0.67 and 3.11 percent of eastern Slavs in Trans-Carpathia defined themselves as Rusyns in the 2001 census.

The integration of Rusyn studies within political science has not taken place to date. Although Magocsi holds a holding a joint history-political science appointment at the University of Toronto he would never claim to be a political scientist (especially the latter part of this definition!). Nevertheless, Magocsi undoubtedly understands the importance of discussing the Rusyn question within political science. The gap in Magocsi's study of Trans-Carpathia is the lack of political science survey and polling results. Not a single Western academic study published since Ukraine became an independent state has been undertaken of Trans-Carpathia drawing on survey results or opinion polls. Within political science in North America the use of such quantitative data is central to the study of attitudes, feelings, orientations, and views. Surveys and polls on Ukrainian issues have been used extensively in Western scholarship of Ukrainian national identity and regionalism in the works of Stephen Shulman, Lowell Barrington, Dominique Arel and many other scholars. Surveys and public opinion polls by well-known and respected Ukrainian sociological institutions, such as the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), the Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies, Sotsis and Democratic Initiatives, have not been tasked to collect survey data on national identity in Trans-Carpathia or on Rusyns.

This lack of survey data has been coupled by neglect within political science of Rusyns as there have been few political science studies of Trans-Carpathia and Rusyns in Ukraine. Western studies of Ukrainian regionalism have been extensive

but these have over-focused on the polar opposites of Lviv and Donetsk with Kyiv as the midpoint. Crimea has also been studied extensively because of its separatist challenge to the Ukrainian state and its vantage point as the only region with an ethnic Russian majority. Western studies of Ukrainian regionalism have until now ignored Trans-Carpathia, something that could become a future priority in Magocsi's scholarship.

Magocsi is a multi-vector scholar, by far at one and the same time the leading Western historian of Ukraine *and* the leading Western scholar of Rusyns. The Ukrainian aspect of his scholarship could, as Alexander Motyl points out in his paper delivered to this symposium, act as the 'Other' for his Rusyn scholarship. Or, the answer could be more straightforward; that he is a member of a small group of uncommon academics with the gift of project management in publishing, teaching and public advocacy that spans two fields of scholarly interest (Ukrainian and Rusyn Studies).

In our personal and academic lives we all eventually conclude that it would be pointless to attempt to agree with everything that a partner, friend or colleague publishes and advocates, especially if that person is a prolific scholar. Why then are some of us attempting to accomplish this impossible feat in the case of Magocsi?

