



WORLD ACADEMY OF RUSYN CULTURE

APRIL 21, 2014

We, the undersigned representatives of Carpatho-Rusyn cultural organizations in North America, strongly endorse the views expressed in the appeal of the parliament of the Transcarpathian oblast (region) to the Verkhovna rada of Ukraine (Ukrainian parliament in Kyiv). This statement regarding concern for the interests of ethnic minorities of the Transcarpathian region, was adopted by the Transcarpathian parliament on March 7, 2014. It references specifically a law passed by the Ukrainian parliament in Kyiv last year protecting the rights of ethnic minorities to use their languages and celebrate their cultures—a law which is now again under discussion.

The Carpatho-Rusyns are the indigenous population of Transcarpathia, a region historically part of Czechoslovakia during the period between the World Wars, but annexed by Stalin to the Soviet Union after World War II. Carpatho-Rusyns also reside in the following countries and are recognized officially in these countries as a national minority: Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and Croatia. Some useful up-to-date information about the Rusyns of Ukraine is available at this website: <http://reconsideringrussia.org/2014/04/19/who-are-the-rusyns/>

We, the undersigned, ask our American governmental representatives to raise the issue of human and minority rights in discussions with Ukrainian government officials, and specifically to take note of Carpatho-Rusyns among Ukraine's minorities.

The text of the Appeal follows:

Appeal

Transcarpathia is a multiethnic region. Historically, over a hundred different ethnic groups and nationalities have inhabited this region in peace and harmony, preserving their own identities. Their historical and cultural heritage is nurtured by sixty-five regional ethno-cultural societies.

In the Transcarpathian region, a great deal of attention is paid to issues regarding the creation of appropriate conditions for national minorities to pursue education in their mother tongue, practice their religion, use their national symbols, and celebrate their national holidays. Attention is also given to the implementation of regional programs to ensure the development of the education, culture, and traditions of national minorities.

The hasty repeal [by the new Ukrainian government] of the law "On the Principles of State Language Policy" caused a fair amount of concern to many Transcarpathian communities, particularly among Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, and others, as demonstrated by numerous appeals to local authorities.

The repeal of this law is also of concern to the supporters of Rusyn culture in our region. For the first time, the Rusyn language was included in a list of regional languages in an official document, which corresponded to the standards of the European countries where Rusyns enjoy the rights of a distinct national minority.

The new democratic government must demonstrate a fundamentally new quality of Ukraine, without distinction based on language, nationality, or religion. On the Maidan Square, Russians, Poles, Belarusians, Armenians, Jews, Georgians, Tatars, Hungarians, Rusyns and others stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukrainians. All were united by their sincere love for Ukraine and hatred of tyranny. And for this they paid a terrible price – the price of their own blood.

The people of Transcarpathia welcome the establishment in the Ukrainian parliament of a committee to prepare a new law on the development and use of [minority] languages. We hope that the new law will ensure the development of all languages, and in order to achieve this, the interests of all nationalities living in the Ukraine must be taken into account.

In view of the above, we ask that along with Ukrainian as the state language, the new language law provide for the use and functioning of Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, and Rusyn as regional languages.

Adopted at the second plenary meeting of the Eighteenth Session of the Regional Council of the VI convocation, March 7, 2014.

Members of the [Transcarpathian] Regional Council at the VI Convocation.

This statement of the Transcarpathian Regional Council is endorsed and supported by the following North American Carpatho-Rusyn organizations:

Paul Best, Ph.D. (Southern Connecticut State University)
President, Lemko [Rusyn] Association
Higganum, Connecticut

Steven Chepa
President, World Academy of Rusyn Culture
Toronto, Ontario

Patricia Krafcik, Ph.D. (The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington)
Secretary, Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center
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Paul Robert Magocsi, Ph.D. (Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Toronto)
President, Carpatho-Rusyn Research Center
New York, New York

John Righetti
Board of Governors, World Academy of Rusyn Culture
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Elaine Rusinko, Ph.D. (University of Maryland, Baltimore County)
World Academy of Rusyn Culture
Toronto, Ontario

Karen Varian
President, Rusyn Association of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota



May 3, 2014

It is hereby noted that on the above-referenced date, the Board of the Carpatho-Rusyn Society unanimously approved and endorsed the letter issued by the World Academy of Rusyn Culture on April 21, 2014, supporting the appeal of the Transcarpathian Regional Council adopted on March 7, 2014.

Jim Kepchar-Kaminski
National President