

ЛИНГВИСТИКА / ЛИТЕРАТУРОЗНАНИЕ / ИСТОРИЯ /
ЖУРНАЛИСТИКА / ТЕОЛОГИЯ

ПУБЛИКАЦИОННИ ДЕЙНОСТИ НА РУСИНИТЕ НА РОДНИЯ
ИМ ЕЗИК СЛЕД 1989 г.
(Периодични и непериодични издания)

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POST-1989 PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES OF RUSYNS IN THEIR
MOTHER TONGUE
(Periodicals and non-periodicals)

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Abstract *The paper presents the post-1989 publishing activities of the Rusyn minority, living as a compact community in north-eastern Slovakia. Apart from introducing the model according to which these activities are realised (by means of volunteer associations and civic societies), the focus is on the quality of the periodicals (their content as well as the form – adhering to the language norm), which is closely related to the efficiency of their financing, based on projects annually submitted by civic associations and organisations to the Slovak Government Office (Department for Ethnic Culture).*

Keywords *periodicals, non-periodicals in Rusyn, projects aimed at publishing*

The post-1989 publishing activities of Rusyns in their mother tongue are connected to the establishment of the Rusyn Revival (Rusínska obroda; 1990)¹, the first Rusyn organisation within the then Czechoslovak Federal Republic, albeit the publishing activities of Rusyns in their mother tongue have a much longer tradition. It dates back to the second part of the 19th century, i.e. the period of intense development of national movements throughout Europe and is related to the establishment of national-revival organisations, such as Литературное заведение пряшевское (The Prešov Literary Institute; 1850-1856), Общество Св. Василия Великаго (The Society of St. Basil the Great; 1866 – 1872), Общество св. Иоанна Крестителя (The Society of St. John the Baptist; 1862 – 1874), or Русское

¹ In the European and non-European context, the Rusyn Revival, however, became the fourth Rusyn organisation (alongside the Rusyn Association; 1983 in Minnesota, Stovaryšiňa Lemkiv; 1989 in Poland; and Obščestvo karpatskych Rusínov; February 1990 in Ukraine) in the modern history of Rusyns (as an autochthonous nation, living in its territory in the border regions of the present-day Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary), which historians named the third national revival.

културно-присветително общество имени Александра В. Духновича (The Russian² Cultural-Educational Society of Aleksander V. Dukhnovich; 1923 – 1948).

It is, thus, not unusual for the publishing activities of Rusyns after the Velvet Revolution to follow the traditions of former associations that were more or less favourable towards their national revival activities. A favourable national revival period also occurred after 1989, when Rusyns were given a new chance for their own existence. In the context of the past era and as a reaction to the new opportunities given to the minorities in modern Europe, other associations and organisations, alongside the Rusyn Revival, were gradually established, focusing their activities on publishing periodicals and non-periodicals in their mother tongue. The question arises whether the contemporary model for ethnic development is suitable in all its aspects and for all national minorities in those countries where they live, with regard to their specific historical developments. The paper focuses on the following:

1. Providing an overview of publication activities of the Rusyn minority living as a compact community predominantly in north-eastern Slovakia within individual associations which take the legal form of civic associations;
2. Pointing out priorities which Rusyns set in the process of revitalisation after 1989 and how they compare and contrast with the actual situation in their publishing activities;
3. Defining the positives as well as negatives of the current model of allocation of finances for the development of the Rusyn national minority in Slovakia by means of an analysis of projects focused on publishing activities submitted by individual civic associations (in the context of equal allocation of finances as well as the quality of individual project outcomes – periodicals and non-periodicals).

Media – print periodicals

Since 1991 (in accordance with the priority goals of the Rusyn Revival, defined at its first, founding, assembly in Medzilaborce in March 1990), an editorial office for periodicals and non-periodicals was established, which started to publish a weekly **Народны новинкы** (National News) exclusively in Rusyn. This editorial office (operating, as was mentioned above, within the Rusyn Revival, the first pro-Rusyn organisation in the then Czechoslovak Federal Republic and since 2004 until the present day, it has operated as an independent civic association **Русин і Народны новинкы** (Rusyn and People's Newspaper). Between 2000 and 2008, a quarterly for talented school children and youths entitled *Русалка* (Fairy) was part of the weekly *Народны новинкы*. The role of the appendix

² Russian – in this context meaning Rusyn. In the given period, the ethnonym “Russian” was used to denote (not only) Rusyn inhabitants of Greek-Catholic religion, as national identity was often substituted for confessional affiliation.

Поздравління Русинів (The Greetings of Rusyns³) was to present the most recent works of belles-lettres in Rusyn by adult authors. Due to a lack of finances, both appendices were only issued occasionally (when the publisher managed to find enough funds⁴). The editorial office, as is also included in the association title *Русин і Народны новинкы*, also issues a cultural-Christian magazine – the bimonthly *Русин* (Rusyn). In 2006, this magazine was published by the World Congress of Rusyns in spite of the fact that it was still prepared by the same editorial team⁵. Due to a lack of finances for the publishing of *Народны новинкы*, the literary appendix *Поздравління Русинів* has, since 2016, been included in the bimonthly *Русин*. Apart from these two periodicals, providing service for the Rusyn media world, another newspaper started to be issued in 2004 – the monthly *InfoРУСИИ* (*InfoRUSYN*), whose publisher is the Rusyn Revival in Slovakia. The addition of the new periodical to the media market did not, however, generate an appropriate increase in finances, nor in quality in comparison to the existing periodicals. On the contrary; the constantly decreasing amount of finances for the first two periodicals was only further subdivided, favouring *InfoРУСИИ*. This means that Rusyns not only did not acquire finances for the new periodical but its birth was also the outcome of conflicts between the Rusyn Revival and the editor-in-chief of the weekly **Народны новинкы**. This fact is also confirmed by the first issue of *InfoРУСИИ*, where the reader finds out that the newspaper started to be issued by the Rusyn Revival based on dissatisfaction with the content of the weekly **Народны новинкы**, as it did not pay sufficient attention to such materials which would provide information about the activities of the Rusyn Revival as its publisher⁶.

Characteristics and content of periodicals

Despite a significantly different financial situation compared to that at the start of publishing *Народны новинкы*, the editorial office has been issuing this periodical until the present day with no reduction in the level of quality; nevertheless, after many years of restricted funding, its frequency has decreased and, since 2011, the newspaper has been issued monthly (in contrast to *InfoРУСИИ*, whose frequency, paradoxically, with a decrease in quality, changed in 2008 from a

³ The title copies the first Rusyn almanac of the period, published by Литературным заведением Пряшевским: *Поздравление Русинов на 1850 рік*. Apart from other things, the almanac focused on publishing literary efforts (predominantly religious poetry) of the then Rusyn national intelligentsia and was issued by the Rusyn national revivalist and Greek-Catholic priest Aleksander Dukhnovich.

⁴ The greatest state support for these Rusyn periodicals (as the only ones of their kind) was recorded between 1991 and 1994, which is why, in this period, the newspaper could be regularly published as a weekly and the magazine as a monthly, i.e. in accordance with the terms of their registration.

⁵ This was a team of editors who, after their contracts with the pro-Ukrainian weekly *Nove žyttá* (*New Life*) were terminated, started publishing the weekly *Народны новинкы* and magazine *Русин*. These two periodicals are still issued today.

⁶ See the introductory material by the author Anna Kuzmiaková, the then Chair of the Rusyn Revival in Slovakia, who, at the same time, deputised as editor-in-chief of the monthly (earlier, an editor of the weekly *Народны новинкы*): *Зачінаме*. Ін: *InfoРУСИИ* č. 1/2004, p. 1.

monthly to biweekly). As the deputy editor-in-chief and copy editor Anna Plišková stated, since the very start of its existence, the editorial office has considered supporting and mobilising the cultural-national life of Rusyns in Slovakia and enhancing the formation of a nationally aware young generation of Rusyns by means of normative language as its priority⁷. That is why *Народны новинки* has been, since its birth, the one and only Rusyn-language periodical in which discussions have been held on nationality, religion, education and literature, as well as topics related to the everyday life of Rusyns. The newspaper also provides space for linguistic topics, on which readers and academic as well as the broader lay public can comment. The views on contemporary standard language (questions and comments) are, consequently, dealt with by the Linguistic committee, operating at the Institute of Rusyn Language and Literature, University of Prešov⁸. In contrast, *Русин* is a cultural-Christian magazine with an interregional focus, which means that it provides space for a broad spectrum of issues affecting Rusyns in all countries of the Carpathian area (Slovakia, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Croatia), also encompassing the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, USA and Canada. Apart from ethnic topics, the magazine also deals with issues of Rusyn literature and the religious life of Rusyns; in its layout, there is also a section on fine arts and museum studies (dedicated to Andy Warhol and the **Museum of Modern Art in Medzilaborce**). The published material reflects the academic, or scientific, character of the magazine, which bears witness to the editorship's ambition to, in this way, fill the absence of a specialised academic magazine focused on national as well as international Rusyn historical, literary and sociolinguistic issues.

As was mentioned above, in 2004, the Rusyn media world was entered by a new monthly (since 2008 a biweekly), issued by the Rusyn Revival in Prešov – *InfoРУСИИ*. Although each new periodical in Rusyn should be considered a success of the post-1989 revitalisation process, the monthly *InfoРУСИИ*, unexpectedly, in conflict with the fundamental mission of its publisher defined in the statute of the Rusyn Revival in Slovakia (to use the mother tongue in order to revive the Rusyn nationality), started to publish, in some of its issues, as much as 40 percent of material in Slovak⁹, which could be considered a competitive

⁷ Anna Plišková is also a professional linguist who was present at the birth of and is still actively involved in the process of the cultivation of Rusyn normative language in Slovakia. As a university lecturer, she forms the young generation for the needs of pedagogical practice in national education by means of the teacher-training study programme in Rusyn language and literature at the Institute of Rusyn Language and Literature, University of Prešov.

⁸ The readers' (as professional users of Rusyn normative language, linguists, as well as the general public) responses were a stimulus to revise and amend the language norm, adopted in 1995 (Cf.: Плішкова, Анна – Ябур Василь (2005). *Русинський язык в зеркалі нових правил про основні і середні школи з навчанням русинського языка*. Пряшів: Русин і народны новинки, 128 с.

⁹ Plišková, Anna. (2006). *Списовный язык карпатских Русинів: проблемы становления, кодифікації, акцуптації і сфер функціонування*. Dissertation thesis. Bratislava: Slovak Academy of Science – The Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavic Studies, p. 78.

way of attracting the attention of those readers who had subscribed to *Народны новинкы*. Over time it became obvious that the periodical has abandoned Slovak (certainly, also as a result of negative reactions from the readers, as well as criticism from the Institute of Rusyn Language and Culture at the University of Prešov) and, at present, publishes a great majority of texts in Rusyn. Concerning the content of the periodical in question, as is implied by its title, the publisher's goal is to provide information on current activities of the Rusyn national movement (predominantly those of the Rusyn Revival in Slovakia), publish annual reports from individual assemblies of the Rusyn Revival, and also informative materials regarding other civic associations, profiles of Rusyn personalities on their anniversaries (the column "Rusyn celebrities"), information from the region (the column "Our village"), the schedule of national-ethnic broadcasting on the RTVS channel, as well as the calendar of performances at the Aleksander Dukhnovich Theatre in Prešov. Moreover, the newspaper provides space dedicated for child readers – games, riddles, poetry for young learners, etc. *InfoРУСИИ* contains a great amount of information which reflects the cultural-social life of Rusyns in Slovakia; however, analytical material of more profound character is lacking from this periodical. It can be stated that, by its structure and content, *InfoРУСИИ* resembles the pre-November model of the former Cultural Association of Ukrainian Workers in Prešov which published the Ukrainian-language newspaper *Нове життя/Nove žytta* (which also provided information on the events and the cultural-social life of Rusyns; however, only in Ukrainian and without any self critique; this periodical is still issued today for the Ukrainian ethnic community in Slovakia as well as those Rusyns who have adopted Ukrainian national identity). From the above characteristics it results that *InfoРУСИИ* can be considered a periodical (alongside print information media) aimed at the older generation who prefer its classical – printed – form, or do not have access to the internet. Although in the most recent issues (after 2014 when the administration of the Rusyn Revival changed), an increase in the quality of materials published has been recorded, *InfoРУСИИ* still plays the role of a mere auxiliary medium in the Rusyn revitalisation process in Slovakia by its content as well as the quality of individual contributions. With regard to the unfavourable financial situation, Rusyn leaders are considering merging *InfoРУСИИ* and *Народны новинкы*, which would enable an increase in frequency as well as the quality of the content.

Non-periodicals

Non-periodicals are publications of scholarly, or popular-academic, literature about Rusyns, as well as publications issued in the process leading up to the codification of standard Rusyn language, which was one of the priorities defined by the Rusyn Revival at its first assembly on March 25th, 1990 in Medzilaborce¹⁰

¹⁰ Cf.: Koporová, K. (2008). Spolky a organizácie v rusínskom národnom hnutí: tradície a súčasnosť. In: *Rusínska kultúra a školstvo po roku 1989*. Anna Plišková (ed.). Prešovská univerzita v Prešove – Ústav rusínskeho jazyka a kultúry, Prešov, pp. 49-50.

(Ortografické pravidlá [Orthographic Rules]; 1994, Ortografický slovník [Orthographic dictionary]; 1994, Slovník lingvistických termínov [Dictionary of Orthographic Terminology]; 1994 and others). There were also the first attempts to publish belles-lettres in the mother tongue of Rusyns (first, within the literary appendices of *Русалка* and *Поздравліня Русинів*), later issued as self-contained collections of poetry and prose. The first recorded publication was a popular-academic book *Мирна наш русиньска путь* (Our peaceful Rusyn way; the Rusyn Revival within the editorship of Русин і Народны новинкы, Prešov: 1992). It was published in Rusyn, Slovak as well as English. The editorship of *Русин і Народны новинкы*, first, as part of the Rusyn Revival, and, since 2004, as an independent civic association has prepared more than 120 publications for press (apart from belles-lettres and popular-academic literature, also Rusyn language and literature textbooks). Besides the publisher mentioned above who, as proved by the number of publications, has had the longest tradition and the most publishing experience, further associations and organisations with publishing ambitions have appeared in the Rusyn world. Apart from the Rusyn Revival mentioned above, non-periodicals are also issued by the following associations and societies: **Spolok rusínskych spisovateľov Slovenska** [The Association of Rusyn Writers in Slovakia], **Združenie inteligencie Rusínov Slovenska** (ZIRS, The Association of Rusyn Intelligentsia in Slovakia), and **Spolok Rusínov Spiša** [The Spiš Society of Rusyns] with its occasional publishing activities. Among the most recent are the civic association *tota agentura* [That Agency], the civic association **Колысочка-Коліска** [The Cradle] and some other civic associations, as well as the Museum of Ruthenian Culture in Prešov (as part of the Slovak National Museum)¹¹ and other independent organisations¹². These rather numerous publishers pursue their activities on the basis of projects, under the auspices of the Slovak Ministry of Culture and, since 2011, by the Department for Ethnic Culture at the Slovak Government Office¹³.

The language used in the publications

Naturally, all those who publish in Rusyn should accept codified standard Rusyn language (in 1995) as the language norm. It is, however, surprising that some publishers do not respect it, which results in linguistic confusion especially

¹¹ In 2010, the museum issued a children's magazine *Bobrunka/Babarunka* (Ladybird), which however ceased to exist after this period.

¹² For several years, the following authors have been publishing their own works at their own expense: Jozef Kudzej, Helena Gicová-Micovčinová, Štefan Smolej, and, more recently, Kveta Morochovičová Cvik, František Dancák and others.

¹³ Apart from the above organisations, publishing activities in the Rusyn linguistic world (in Cyrillic, or the Latin graphic system) are also pursued by both Eastern-rite churches – Greek-Catholic (by means of the association *Obščestvo sv. Joana Krestiteľa* [St. John the Baptist Society] issuing the monthly magazine *Artos*, as well as *Grekokatolyckýj rusyňskýj kalendar'*; the Order of St. Basil the Great publishes the monthly *Blahovistnik* (Благовьстник); the Orthodox youth issues a magazine *Истина* (Istyna) which, however, apart from its title in Church Slavonic, uses Slovak and the Latin graphic system.

perceived by the readers¹⁴, not to mention teachers of Rusyn and students studying Rusyn language in teacher-training programmes at the University of Prešov. The Institute of Rusyn Language and Culture, University of Prešov (as the highest institution cultivating the language norm and guaranteeing its maintenance) has issued several academic works analysing the breaking of the standard language norm¹⁵, it keeps pointing the issue out by means of a series of linguistic tutorials issued in *Народны новинкы*, as well as in linguistic spots within ethnic broadcasts on radio Patria, as well as the Internet FM radio for Rusyns. In order to sum up the breaking of the language norm by individual publishers it could be stated that the civic associations in question which consult with, or have their to-be-published materials proofread by, professionals, do not make significant mistakes, or break the language norm (also with regard to its revisions and amendments adopted in 2005, ten years after the codification). What is, however, shocking is the fact that it is the Rusyn Revival in Slovakia (or its individual members who are, at the same time, copy editors of some non-periodicals) which respects neither the language norm adopted in 1995, of which it was a supervisor, nor the revisions and amendments adopted in 2005. Based on an analysis of the number of cases when the language norm was broken, especially in publications issued by the Rusyn Revival in Slovakia as well as some other publishers (edited by a member of the Rusyn Revival, such as The Spiš Society of Rusyns), it can be stated that the publisher (or copy editors of the periodical *InfoРусин*, as well as editors of non-periodicals issued by the Rusyn Revival) have not identified with the following:

1. The grapheme –ë- [jo], instead of which they use –ю- (soft sign + o) normally used in Ukrainian orthography.
2. The grapheme –i- [‘i] which softens the preceding consonant.

It seems that the use of the above graphemes in standard Rusyn language needs re-evaluating. The inconsistency in the orthographic norm was also a leading topic at the 4th International Congress of Rusyn Language on September 23rd – 25th, 2015 commemorating the 20th anniversary of the codification of Rusyn language in Slovakia¹⁶.

Projects: yes, or no?

The issue of publishing activities of Rusyns within projects has several aspects. To compare the contemporary situation with that prior to November

¹⁴ Cf. the following material: Тр Лиц, О. Франтішек Крайняк. Наш літературний язык у практиці. In: *Народны новинкы. Культурно-сполоченьскый місячник Русинів СР* z 5. novembra/2014, p. 3.

¹⁵ In 2007, a self-standing almanac *Jazyková kultúra a jazyková norma v rusínskom jazyku* [*Rusyn Language Culture and Norms*] was even issued. Anna Plišková (ed.), as well as the following: 1. Jabur Vasil. Ortografičny problemy i korekciji v rusyňskim jazyku na Slovakiji. 2. Zozulak, Alexander. Akceptacija normativnosti v rusyňskij publicistici na Sloveňsku. In: Anna Pliškova (ed.). *Rusyňskij jazyk medži dvoma kongresamy. Prjašiv*: 2008, pp. 57-62, pp. 103-112.

¹⁶ From the congress, the following almanac of papers was issued: *Русиньскый літературний язык на Словакії (20 років кодифікації)/The Rusyn literary language in Slovakia (20th anniversary of its codification)*. Executive editor PhDr. Kvetoslava Koporová, PhD. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita – Inštitút rusinskeho jazyka a kultúry, 2015.

1989, it must be claimed that the position of Rusyns as a minority living in the Slovak Republic has not improved, the opposite is true. Apart from the A. Dukhnovich Theatre in Prešov as a professional institution¹⁷, the socio-cultural needs of Rusyns are only fulfilled at the level of volunteer activity. In practice this means that, while in the past (during the socialist era) Rusyns (then Ukrainians) had a well functioning structure of professional employees (in the area of culture and education, editorship of periodical and non-periodical national press, as well as a full structure of services – photographers, drivers, means of transport, premises, technology, etc.), at present (with the exception of the period from the 1990s until 2004), all publishing activities are based on projects, which means there is no opportunity to employ a professional from the above areas. From this fact follow problems of finance allocation, assigned for the development of Rusyn culture (unfortunately, in favour of folklore festivals, organised by the Rusyn Revival, which are also held as part of projects; therefore, with regard to the most recent government regulations in the area of taxes paid from part-time contracts, a great amount of finances is ‘eaten up’, which is, consequently, paid back to the State Treasury).

Moreover, an increase in the number of civic associations in the Rusyn national context cannot be ignored; these are established purposefully with the aim of gaining finances, apart from other things also for publishing, or any project that could be approved regardless of its contribution to the development of the Rusyn ethnic community in Slovakia. These civic associations are primarily established in north-eastern Slovakia, which is the region known for the highest unemployment within the Slovak Republic.

Based on the above facts it seems that such a model for allocating finances to Rusyns is not satisfactory, since it does not make publishing activities possible at a professional level (in most cases this is realised by amateurs – volunteer nationalist enthusiasts who do it alongside their main jobs; at the same time, a great number of young people, or graduates of the study programme “Rusyn language and culture”, leave their region where they could find work as professionals in the area of Rusyn language and, instead, accept any job to avoid unemployment). Moreover, project-based activities cannot be regulated in any way (in the sense of quality improvement, adherence to the language norm, etc.), as there is no adequate monitoring mechanism in place overseeing the quality of project realisation. The Rusyn minority is, apart from other things, specific by not having its own country which would meet its socio-cultural needs as opposed to other nationalities living in the Slovak Republic, which is why its needs should be fulfilled in different ways from those applied to nationalities which have their own states.

¹⁷ In spite of the fact that, in 2008, following repeated urgent requests by Rusyns, the Museum of Ruthenian Culture was established in Prešov, it does not employ a single professional historian specialising in museology.

In the context of contemporary priorities, defined at the Rusyn Round Table discussion group, established in November 2012, it could be expected that, in the allocation of funds intended for the development of the Rusyn ethnic minority in Slovakia, significant changes will take place. At one of its sessions in Prešov, the Rusyn Round Table declared that media (including print media), publishing activities and education will be priorities for Rusyns¹⁸. In any case, Rusyn leaders should strive for employment opportunities for Rusyns in those areas which they defined as priority, while the contemporary model of financing (projects) would only function as a supportive mechanism, complementing, or assisting in, financing activities realised by professionals from the areas of education, media and non-periodical publishing. Only time will tell whether the leaders of the Rusyn movement have enough strength to actually pursue all this.

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¹⁸ By voting Ing. Milan Mňahončák the new Chair of the Rusyn Revival (at its 12th assembly on May 17th, 2014), this organisation, consequently, became a member of the discussion group Rusyn Round Table, implying an improvement in communication, and, mainly, in the pursuit of programme and priority goals, from which the organisation had digressed in recent years. The situation in the Rusyn Revival, however, turned out to be much more complicated, which is why, after a year in his position, Ing. Mňahončák resigned. At present, Ing. Martin Karaš, a young Rusyn activist, is the new Chair.