

ARTICLE

The Fellow Who Made Himself President of a European Republic: Gregory Ignatius Zhatkovych

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Abstract

This is the first comprehensive biography based on unique archival sources about Gregory Ignatius Zhatkovych, a Pittsburgh-based lawyer, who in 1918–1919 was instrumental in the creation of Czechoslovakia and the inclusion of its far eastern region, Subcarpathian Rus'/Ruthenia, into the new country.

Keywords: Central Europe; Diaspora engagement; Eastern Europe; national identity

“Dad was born in Czechoslovakia, at the foot of the Carpathian Russian Mountains. At the time, his mother was travelling in an oxen-pulled jolting wagon, en route to a small village. The vehicle came to a stop ... in front of a picturesque square inn near the side of the dusty, winding road. It was such a peasant-crowded inn that an old, bent fortune-teller aided the new mother—and it was she who with squinting grey eyes took the tiny hand of the child and prophesied, in the gravest tones, that the black-haired boy would one day rule the green sloping country in which he had been born. Like Mona Lisa, the young girl, squatting there looking into the blazing fire-place, wondered how such a great thing could happen to her child” (Zatkovich, Connie, 1943, 1).

This kind of tale is quite typical, in one sense just another example of the numerous fanciful legends passed down by immigrants to their American-born children and grandchildren. The difference here is that this particular legendary tale with its prophecy turned out to be true. The black-haired infant child was Gregory Zhatkovych, and thirty years later he did indeed come to rule the land where he was born—Subcarpathian Rus’.

The real Gregory Zhatkovych¹ was born in the small village of Holubyn, on December 2, 1886. At the time of his birth, the village was in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg-ruled Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the course of Zhatkovych’s lifetime, Subcarpathian Rus’ was to change political hands several times: in 1919 it became part of Czechoslovakia; in 1939 it was returned to Hungary; from 1945 it was in the Soviet Union as part of the Transcarpathian oblast of Soviet Ukraine; and since 1992 it has been within independent Ukraine.

Gregory Ignatius Zhatkovych² was the second son of Pavel/Paul J. Zhatkovych (1852–1916) and Irma Zlots’kyi. Irma was the daughter of the Greek Catholic priest and Carpatho-Rusyn cultural activist Feodosii Zlots’kyi (1846–1926). Pavel Zhatkovych also came from a family of Greek Catholic priests, among whom was a younger brother, the renowned Carpatho-Rusyn ethnographer and historian, Iurii Koloman Zhatkovych (1855–1920). Unlike his younger sibling, Pavel did not enter the priesthood, but got some legal training and worked as a notary public for fifteen years in the Carpatho-Rusyn inhabited region of the northeastern Hungarian Kingdom (Magocsi 2005b; Mazurok 2010; *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, October 18, 1916). In 1890, he emigrated to the United States, and the following year sent for his wife and three children, including the then four-year-old

Gregory. The Zhatkovych family first lived in New York City, specifically in Lower East Side Manhattan, which at the time was home to the largest concentration of Slavic and other central, southern, and eastern Europeans anywhere in the United States. Very soon after his arrival, Pavel became a leading activist in the Rusyn-American immigrant community. He was one of the founders of the powerful Greek Catholic Union of Rusyn Brotherhoods, initially based in eastern Pennsylvania, and in 1892 he was named co-editor and soon after editor-in-chief of its influential newspaper, the *Amerykanskkii russkii vistnyk*.

Until now, information about Gregory Zhatkovych has come primarily from the extensive body of historical literature describing how Subcarpathian Rus' was incorporated into Czechoslovakia at the close of World War I. General histories about interwar Subcarpathian Rus' inevitably discuss the 1918–1919 incorporation process, as do several studies that focus specifically on that topic. The facts related in these works are more or less the same. Their assessment, however, differs rather substantially depending on the ideological orientation of the authors and/or the time when they were writing. Works by Czech (Raušer 1936), Ukrainian (Ortoskop 1924), and Carpatho-Rusyn (Hatalák 1935) authors, which appeared during the interwar decades, basically provided a positive view of the population's—or at least its self-appointed leader's—voluntary decision to join Czechoslovakia. Also during that period, characterized in Europe by the rise of fascism and border revisionism, Polish (Zawadowski 1931, 8–24), Italian (Scrimali 1938, 9–32), German (Ballreich 1938, 8–19), and Hungarian (Hungarian Readjustment League 1928; Kemény 1939, 100–142) authors were critical of the incorporation process and what they argued was the negative impact of Czechoslovak rule on Subcarpathian Rus'.

Following the annexation of Subcarpathian Rus' to the Soviet Union in 1945, the new Communist regime required its historians and publicists to put an appropriate Marxist spin on the events involving Zhatkovych and on the man himself. Soviet (Bazhenova 1962, 55–95; Klympotiuk; Mel'nikova 1951a; Mel'nikova 1951b; Netochaiev and Lelekach 1954) and Czechoslovak (Krempa 1978) authors publishing during the post-World War II decades of Communist rule considered the 1918–1919 incorporation an act of Czechoslovak imperialism carried out by the new country's bourgeois government in violation of the local inhabitant's socioeconomic and national interests. During those same Cold War decades, scholars in the West tried to provide a balanced view that recognized the voluntary nature of the union while at the same time being critical of Czechoslovakia's refusal to grant the region its promised autonomy (Hanak 1962, 1–22; Magocsi 1975; Magocsi 1976; Magocsi 1978, 76–102; Stercho 1971, 16–38; Warzeski 1971, 129–159). A resurgence of interest in Subcarpathian Rus' since the fall of Communist rule in 1989/1991 has seen a largely new generation of Slovak (Švorc 1997; Švorc 2003, 92–175; Vanat 1990, 40–115), Czech (Pejša 2016; Rychlík 2014), Ukrainian (Hranchak 1995, 38–113; Shandor 1997, 3–34), and other historians (Pushkash 2006, 25–74; Shevchenko 2011, 105–141) who are more balanced in their assessments of Czechoslovak-Subcarpathian relations during and after the incorporation process.

In all of the above mentioned literature, Gregory Zhatkovych figures prominently, although until recently he has been described in diametrical terms. For some authors (Raušer 1936; Hatalák 1935), he is hailed as a friend of the young democratic Czechoslovak state. For others, especially those of Marxist persuasion, he is denigrated as a representative of Rusyn-American “bourgeois nationalist organizations” (Krempa 1978, 715), a “lackey” and “loyal son of American capitalism” (Netochaiev and Lelekach 1954, 279), and “an agent of American imperialism” (Mel'nikova 1951b, 85). Finally, there are those (Hanak 1962; Magocsi 1975, 1976, 1978; Stercho 1971; Warzeski 1971) who consider Zhatkovych a Carpatho Rusyn patriot who did his best—but ultimately failed—to assure that the promises made by the Czechoslovak government for Subcarpathian self-rule would be fulfilled.

Despite his historic importance, to date there is no biography of Gregory Zhatkovych other than a few brief encyclopedic entries (Dutko 2009, 286; Kolář 1998, 297–298; Magocsi 2005a, 544–550; Mazurok 2005, 349–351; Pop, Dimitrii 2006, 95–96; Pop, Ivan 2006, 187; Pop, Ivan 2008, 281–283; Struk 1993, 843; Vidnians'kyi 2005, 140). Aside from their brevity, these entries generally focus on

the few years just after World War I, when he was politically active in Europe. But Zhatkovych had a life both before and after those years, as a lawyer and political activist in the United States, in particular western Pennsylvania. Based as it is on recently uncovered correspondence between Zhatkovych and his wife, Leona, and between the wife and her sister, as well as unpublished biographical data provided by his surviving family members (Ash 1992; Greg 1978; Zatkovich 1943), recently published correspondence with President Masaryk, and several rare newspaper reports, especially from western Pennsylvania, this is the first study to provide a comprehensive biography that spans Gregory Zhatkovych's pre- and especially post-World War I career in the United States until his death in 1967.

As a child, Gregory was raised in New York City's Lower East Side, where he attended elementary school and Dewitt Clinton High School. Sometime around 1904, his father Pavel moved the family to western Pennsylvania, specifically to the Pittsburgh suburb of Homestead. There the Zhatkovyches lived literally in the shadow of the steel mills owned by the industrial magnate, Andrew Carnegie. Homestead was also from 1907 the new home of the Greek Catholic Union mutual-benefit insurance society, whose editorial offices Pavel Zhatkovych continued to head until 1914.

Despite the harsh industrial environment that surrounded the family's now teenage son, Jerry—as he was known to all his friends and family—had a somewhat sheltered, even privileged upbringing (Greg 1978, 5–9). He learned to play the piano (something he continued to do for the rest of his life) and he had an excellent voice, probably honed through singing the liturgy and plainchant (*prostopinje*) each Sunday at the local Greek Catholic parish, which the family attended. He was removed from the working class environment of industrial Homestead in order to attend St. Vincent's College Preparatory School, a Roman Catholic institution located in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, about 75 kilometers east of Pittsburgh.

Rare was the case when Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant parents at the outset of the twentieth century could afford to send their children to university. The Zhatkovyches were clearly an exception. Jerry attended Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, from where he graduated in 1907 with a B.A. degree in political science. He then enrolled in the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, one of America's prestigious Ivy League schools. Aside from course work, Jerry developed skills as an orator, winning many prizes in debate competitions at Duquesne, and then perfecting his abilities as a public speaker from experience in the drama club at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1910, Zhatkovych graduated with a law degree (LLD), was accepted into the bar in the State of Pennsylvania, and that same year opened a private law practice in Pittsburgh.³

As a result of his own personal inclinations, the encouragement of his parents, and the educational world that he experienced, Zhatkovych considered himself—and therefore was—an American. He may have had a difficult-to-pronounce last name, he may have spoken languages other than English (Rusyn and perhaps Hungarian),⁴ and he may have belonged to an Eastern Christian (Greek Catholic) church with “strange” non-Western religious practices, but his political and social values were profoundly American—belief in democracy, the rule of law, and what he repeated in several of his writings, the principle of “Fair Play” (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 30).

Zhatkovych developed a relatively successful private law practice, and at some point during the World War I years acted as a legal consultant for the Pittsburgh offices of one of America's largest automobile manufacturing companies, General Motors. Like other young American professionals, he would spend a good portion of each summer with his law colleagues relaxing at resorts north of Pittsburgh. It was at one of those resorts, at Cambridge Springs in northwestern Pennsylvania, that Jerry met Leona Kotheimer (1888–1974), whom he eventually married on August 31, 1915.

Leona was from a Roman Catholic family of German descent. Her father (Dr. John B. Kotheimer) was an immigrant from Germany, who operated a large medical practice in Youngstown, Ohio; her mother (Amelia Deibel) came from a family that owned a successful land company. In other words, Leona belonged to the social elite of Youngstown. Jerry Zhatkovych was clearly marrying upwards in terms of social status. The couple's first child, Gregory “Ted” Jr., was

born one year later in July 1916. Because of his status as a father, Zhatkovych was exempt from being drafted and therefore never did any U.S. military service.

Zhatkovych's relatively stable life as a lawyer and father to a family living in Pittsburgh was to change abruptly in 1918. World War I was growing to a close, and American politicians led by the internationalist President Woodrow Wilson started making plans for the inevitable changes slated to take place in postwar Europe. America's various immigrant groups were also looking for ways to help and influence the political fate of their respective homelands. Although Carpatho-Rusyn Americans (who numbered about 225,000 at the time) had a wide variety of mutual-benefit and civic organizations that dated back at least to the early 1890s, they did not become involved in political matters until the waning months of World War I.

On July 23, 1918, members of the two largest mutual-benefit fraternal societies, the Greek Catholic Union (Sojedeninije) and the United Societies (Sobranije) met in Homestead, Pennsylvania to form the American National Council of Uhro-Rusins/Amerikanska Narodna Rada Uhro-Rusinov (Magocsi 1976). They adopted what became known as the Homestead Resolution, which indicated three possible alternatives for the future of their European homeland: remaining within Hungary but with full autonomy; unity with Rusyns in Austrian Galicia and Bukovina; or autonomy within some unspecified state (*Amerikanskii russkii vístnyk*, August 8, 1918).

During the next two months, the American Uhro-Rusin National Council remained inactive. Then, in late September, the council decided to engage Zhatkovych to act as its legal consultant and spokesperson. Although not at all active before then in Rusyn-American immigrant affairs, the ever ambitious Zhatkovych accepted the challenge. He attended the National Council's directorate meeting in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where on October 1, 1918, the text of a memorandum that reflected his political vision was prepared for President Wilson (*Protokol-Zapisnica* 1919, 96–97).

Already by the spring of 1918, there were numerous political exiles in the United States, such as Jan Paderewski among the Poles and Milan Štefánik among the Slovaks. All would have hoped to gain personal access to America's president. Only two leaders were successful in attaining that goal: the Czech exile, Professor Tomáš G. Masaryk, who was already well known to a number of influential American politicians and civic leaders, and the young 32-year old lawyer from Pittsburgh, Gregory Zhatkovych. Whereas he did not have the renommé of someone like Professor Masaryk or the world renowned pianist Paderewski, Zhatkovych was an American who knew how to work the system. With the help of a democratic congressman from western Pennsylvania (Guy E. Campbell), a three-man delegation from the American National Council of Uhro-Rusins was invited to the White House for an audience with President Wilson on October 21, 1918.

Zhatkovych came well prepared for what was scheduled as a forty-five minute meeting. In the fifteen minutes he was given to speak, Zhatkovych laid out his political vision for what he called "our Uhro-Rusyn people." Again there were three options presented, although they differed in one important respect from the Homestead Resolution adopted the previous July. Now, the first and more radical option was "full independence" for Uhro-Rusinia. Only if that were not possible would one or another option be acceptable: unity with the Rusyns of Austrian Galicia and Bukovina, or, if the Peace Conference did not change the existing borders of Hungary, then the "fullest autonomy" within that state "in order to guarantee our national life in the future" (*Protokol-Zapisnica* 1919, 99–104). Although Zhatkovych did not sign the memorandum submitted during the White House meeting (because he was not a member of the National Council's directorate), he was clearly seen as the main Uhro-Rusyn spokesperson. President Wilson congratulated him for representing "the first people whose request reflected a full understanding of the American spirit" (*Protokol-Zapisnica* 1919, 103). At the same time, Wilson stated that full independence was not feasible and instead recommended union in federation with some yet unspecified fraternal Slavic state in which Carpatho-Rusyns should be assured full autonomy.

Zhatkovych acted quickly on the president's suggestion. Two days later, he was in Philadelphia representing Uhro-Rusyns at the Mid-European Democratic Union, which was a group of delegates representing 21 stateless peoples in Europe and the Middle East. Under the auspices of several

U.S. political and civic leaders, and deliberating in America's Independence Hall, the Mid-European Union, headed by the Czech exile Tomáš Masaryk, discussed concrete proposals for the postwar future of the various stateless peoples and their respective homelands. A large map of Europe displayed outside Independence Hall included, at Zhatkovych's insistence, the boundaries of a proposed new state—Uhro-Rusinia. The dynamic Zhatkovych also managed to get possession of the replica made for the occasion of the Independence Hall Liberty Bell, which he eventually arranged to have sent to Subcarpathian Rus'.

Zhatkovych may have been the youngest among the exiled politicians, but his youthful dynamism made a strong impression on the American guests who were observers at the Mid-European Union. In contrast to the long speeches by the seasoned European statesmen who were present, the adept Zhatkovych gave the shortest remarks: "Oh, you bell! Oh, you country! Oh, you President Wilson! That this day should see the Uhro-Rusyns free, free, free" (cited in May 1967, 250). A U.S. Supreme Court judge who was present quipped: "As small as is the people so short is the speech," to which the wealthy Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker retorted, "Short yes, but profound in meaning" (cited in *Protokol-Zapisnica* 1919, 106).

It was also at the Mid-European Democratic Union in Philadelphia that Zhatkovych met for the first time with Professor Masaryk. He informed the Czech leader of the memorandum that a few days earlier he had submitted to Woodrow Wilson and of the American president's advice that Uhro-Rusyns should seek union in federation with some kindred Slavic state. By this time, Zhatkovych had become convinced that the best solution for Uhro-Rusyns was to join with Czechs and Slovaks in their new state.

Reflecting the view of the American National Council of Uhro-Rusins, Zhatkovych came to the Czecho-Slovak solution after careful consideration of various options. The option to unite with fellow East Slavs seemed impractical for several reasons (*Protokol-Zapisnica* 1919, 107). The Galician and Bukovinian Rusyns were hopelessly divided by deep antagonism between pro-Russian (*karpatoros*) and pro-Ukrainian immigrants in America. At the very same time in Europe, Galician Ukrainians were at war with the Poles, while Russia and Ukraine were wracked by civil war. With that context in mind, the practical realist Zhatkovych called upon the directorate of the American National Council of Uhro-Rusins to meet again in Scranton, Pennsylvania on November 12. He was able to convince directorate members to adopt as its program the following resolution:

That Uhro-Rusyns with the broadest autonomous rights as a state, and on a federative basis, be united with the Czechoslovak Democratic Republic, under the conditions that to our country must belong all the original Uhro-Rusyn counties: Spish, Sharysh, Zemplyn, Abov, Borshod, Ung, Ugocha, Bereg, and Maramorosh. (*Amerykanskii russkii vîstnyk*, July 17, 1919)

The Scranton Resolution embodied the two basic components of Zhatkovych's vision, which were to be repeated throughout his entire political career: first, that of a self-governing autonomous state, and second, a state comprised of all territory south of the Carpathian mountain crests where Uhro-Rusyns live. During the following three days, he met first with Masaryk—who in the interim had been elected president of Czechoslovakia—and he sent telegrams to President Wilson and U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, informing them of the decisions reached at the November 12 Scranton meeting (full texts of the telegrams in Danko 1964–68, 191–200). Zhatkovych later reported that Masaryk "expressed great pleasure" with the Scranton Resolution and agreed with the idea of a plebiscite to be held among Carpatho-Rusyn American immigrants (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 5–6).

The plebiscite indeed took place on December 1, 1918, among branches of the Greek Catholic Union (Sojedineniye), the United Societies (Sobranije), and several Uhro-Rusyn Greek Catholic parishes. Zhatkovych was concerned about opposition among Carpatho-Rusyn Americans to his plan, because all the while Slovak-American activists were vehemently expressing their opposition to the idea that "Slovak" counties like Spish (only 9.4 percent Rusyn inhabitants), Sharysh

(22.5 percent), Borshod (0.1 percent), Zemplyn (11.5 percent), and Ung (38.2 percent) might be made part of an autonomous Uhro-Rusyn state (Magocsi 1976, 354–355; Švorc 1997, 39). Moreover, despite the political anarchy and war in Ukrainian lands, there was still some support among Rusyn-American immigrants for unity at the very least with Galicia and Bukovina. In the end Zhatkovych was very pleased with the results of the plebiscite: 67 percent of the votes were for the “union of Uhro-Rusyns with the Czechoslovak Republic,” and only 28 percent for union with Ukraine, while the remaining 5 percent were divided among several other options (independence, Russia, Hungary).⁵ Armed with these results, Zhatkovych was ready to present the Czechoslovak solution outlined in the Scranton Resolution to the international community.

The first stop was Paris, where negotiations at the postwar Peace Conference were, since January 1919, already well underway. Zhatkovych arrived in the French capital on February 14, together with Julius Gardoš, chairman of the American National Council of Uhro-Rusins. For the next month, the two Rusyn-American “diplomats” were housed in the prestigious Hôtel Lutetia on the Left Bank, which, as Zhatkovych quipped, was “one of the best in Paris” that must “cost a pretty penny” (Zatkovich’s Letters, February 14, 1919).⁶ Although he did not know the local language, Zhatkovych wrote in a rather cavalier manner to his wife: “Am picking up French rather rapidly and already can order the necessary things to eat in French. I do not find it hard” (Zatkovich’s Letters, February 16, 1919). Dining aside, Zhatkovych reported that his workload at meetings all day and well into the night were made worse in that he had no stenographer and had to copy out notes of meetings by himself. “Imagine sweetheart,” lamenting to his wife, “there are almost eighty persons attached to the Czechoslovak Peace Commission and the Uhro-Rusyns have only three—Dr. Beskyd from Europe, Gardoš and I from America” (Zatkovich’s Letters, February 26, 1919). Together the three formed the Rusyn Commission which claimed to represent the interests of all Carpatho-Rusyns.

Zhatkovych’s main goal was to present in person the Scranton Resolution and the results of the Rusyn-American immigrant plebiscite to Colonel Edward M. House, President Wilson’s personal representative and head of the American Peace Commission, to the leading representatives of the Czechoslovak delegation, Prime Minister Karel Kramář and Minister of Foreign Affairs Edvard Beneš, and to the influential member of the French delegation and chairman of the Peace Conference’s Delegation of Ten, André Tardieu.

As in Philadelphia at the Mid-European Democratic Union back in October, Zhatkovych was determined to get Uhro-Rusyns and their homeland Uhro-Rusinia on the physical and mental maps available to the Peace Conference diplomats and their advisors. Already on February 17, within three days of his arrival in Paris, he “went to the conference with some experts to discuss the details for preparing an official map of the new country” (Zatkovich’s Letters, February 17, 1919). In the next few months, during one of his short return visits to the United States, Zhatkovych created a map that he arranged to have published by the leading American cartographic company, Rand McNally, which was aptly titled: “Uhro-Rusinia, Proposed Third State of the Czechoslovak Republic” (color original reproduced in Magocsi 2018, 67).

Having completed successfully the mission he hoped to accomplish at the Paris Peace Conference, Zhatkovych set out for the homeland. His first stop along the way was Czechoslovakia’s new capital of Prague, where he met briefly with President Masaryk, but more extensively with his son Jan Masaryk, the future World War II prime minister. More or less the same age, Jan and Jerry became close friends and at times “drinking buddies” (Greg 1978, 12).⁷

Zhatkovych’s ultimate destination was Uhro-Rusinia, where he had not been since leaving with his parents at the age of four. He and Gardoš arrived in Uzhhorod on March 12. His main task was to bring news of the Scranton Resolution to local leaders and to organize among them a national council that would adopt on its own accord the Czechoslovak solution. Ever since early November 1918, several national councils had been formed throughout Carpathian Rus’, each of which proposed a different political solution for the future of Carpatho-Rusyns (Magocsi 1975, 365–373). At first, Zhatkovych could only meet with the leaders of the Uzhhorod National Council, because most of the

rest of Subcarpathian region was still controlled by Hungary, initially the liberal democratic republic headed by Mihaly Károlyi, and after March, the Hungarian Soviet Republic under Béla Kun. To correct this situation, at the end of April Zhatkovych returned to Prague and Paris, requesting authorization for the Czechoslovak armed forces to move from Uzhhorod to at least as far east as Mukachevo. That goal was finally achieved at the outset of May.

With at least the western half of Uhro-Rusinia in control of the Czechoslovak military under the command of a French general (Edmond Hennocque) who was the authorized representative of the Peace Conference, representatives of the three leading national councils (Prešov, Uzhhorod, Khust) numbering 200 delegates gathered in Uzhhorod on May 8, 1919 to create the Central Rusyn National Council. Zhatkovych was chosen the honorary chairperson, and during the next week the delegates reviewed all the possible political options for their homeland. On May 16, the last day of deliberations, the council approved the 14-point program submitted by Zhatkovych, and it designated him the “first minister” with full authority to negotiate on the council’s behalf with President Masaryk and the Czechoslovak authorities (*Amerykanskii russkii vistnyk*, July 17, 1919).

Zhatkovych now considered himself the head of a state (now called simply Rusinia) that was negotiating with another state (Czechoslovakia). The very first of his 14-point program made that position clear: “The Rusyns will comprise an independent state within the Czechoslovak Rusyn Republic” (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 12). The northern border of the “Rusyn State” was to follow the crests of the Carpathian Mountains, while the southern border (with Romania and Hungary) was to be determined by the Peace Conference. As for the controversial western border with Slovakia, it was to be drawn so that it included all Rusyn-inhabited lands (Spish, Sharysh, and Zemplyn counties) in present-day Slovakia. Any disagreements between the Czechoslovak and Rusyn states regarding these and any other matters would be “adjudicated and decided by the League of Nations” (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 13-14).

Zhatkovych was very clear in his expectations for the Rusyn State (Rusinia), which was consistent with the principles he had first formulated in the resolutions adopted at Philadelphia and Scranton in late 1918. He also had great faith in President Masaryk and the Czechoslovak government, whom he expected would live up to the provisions of the Paris Peace Conference Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye (September 10, 1919) and the Czechoslovak constitution (February 29, 1920), both of which stated in unequivocal terms that “the Ruthene territory south of the Carpathians” was to be given “the fullest degree of self-government compatible with the unity of the Czecho-Slovak state” (*Traité* 1919, 26-27; *Ústavní listina* 1920, 256).

Aside from faith in the Czechoslovak authorities who he expected to engage in “fair play,” the youthful Zhatkovych exhibited another typical American characteristic—impatience. As he wrote to his wife, he expected to provide a reasonable political program for his land of birth, engage in negotiations, and wrap things up in “about a year,” so that he could go back home to his family and law practice in Pittsburgh (Zhatkovych’s Letters, May 28, 2019). Little did he realize that such attitudes were likely to fail in traditional European societies whose style and slower pace of life he never truly understood.

In short, Zhatkovych believed Rusinia should be a self-governing autonomous state within a federal state. But contrary to his expectations, Czechoslovakia became a centralized state in which Rusinia, or the future Subcarpathian Rus’ (and for that matter Slovakia) may have been autonomous, but in name only. It was inevitable that Zhatkovych’s understanding of autonomy would clash with the Czechoslovak government’s de facto centralization.

In late July 1919, Zhatkovych was asked by President Masaryk and Prime Minister Antonín Švehla to head a provisional government of five persons to be called the Directorate. Zhatkovych accepted the invitation, and in a proclamation to the Central Rusyn National Council, dated August 12, 1919, he began to style himself as the Directorate’s president (“Proklamatsiia,” 1919, 2). He insisted that he must have with him his wife and two young children as well as his brother Theophile (then chancellor of the Greek Catholic Ruthenian Exarchate in the United States) to serve as his

personal advisor. Zhatkovych went for a month's visit to the United States and returned with his wife, children, and brother at the end of September 1919 to take up residence in Uzhhorod.

Rusinia at the time was administered by the local military commander and Peace Conference representative, General Hennocque. It was he who on November 18, 1919 issued the so-called General Statute with guidelines to administer what was now officially called Subcarpathian Rus' (Czech: Podkarpatská Rus). This document confirmed the existence of the Directorate headed by Zhatkovych, although it considered that body only an "advisory board" (documents in Hořec 1997, 49–51). Instead, the province was to be administered by a Czechoslovak official sent from Prague (Jan Brejcha). Even worse from Zhatkovych's point of view was "the demarcation line" along the Uzh River, which temporarily—and then permanently—left the Carpatho-Rusyns of Zemplyn, Sharysh, Spish, and Abov counties in Slovakia, not in Subcarpathian Rus' (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 27–31).

In an attempt to overcome the political misunderstandings with the Czechoslovak government, Zhatkovych went to Prague in January 1920. For nearly the next six months, separated from his wife and children who remained in Uzhhorod, he met with government officials and at least twice with President Masaryk (Pejša 2016, 96–108). In the end, Prague replaced the Directorate with a Gubernatorial Council (April 26) and two weeks later named Zhatkovych "temporary governor" (documents in Hořec 1997, 23–41). He accepted the appointment and returned from Prague to Uzhhorod. When he arrived on June 19, he was greeted triumphantly, although not by all Subcarpathian political factions. The local Communists, mostly ethnic Magyar and Jewish urban dwellers, staged protests in Uzhhorod and Mukachevo with banners that read "Het' Zhatkovycha" ("Zhatkovych Get Out") (*Shliakhom Zhovtnia* 1957, 252–253).

Even more problematic was the increasing criticism from fellow Carpatho-Rusyn activists with whom he had cooperated closely less than a year before. Already before the end of 1919, the Central Rusyn National Council, which in May of that year had proclaimed the "voluntary union" with Czechoslovakia, split into two antagonistic factions. The faction led by Avgustyn Voloshyn continued to support Zhatkovych. The faction led by Anton Beskyd opposed the new governor, accusing him of discriminating against the local Russophile national orientation and the Orthodox movement and of favoring the Greek Catholic Church and populist Ukrainophile national orientation led by Voloshyn (Pejša 2016, 70–79).

Zhatkovych tried to remain neutral in the growing Russophile-Ukrainophile and Orthodox-Greek Catholic confrontations. He reminded President Masaryk that ever since their first personal meeting in Philadelphia (in October 1918) "we fought for recognition as a separate and distinct nationality." He was particularly incensed that Czechoslovak officials seemed to be favoring Subcarpathian activists with "Muscofil tendencies and leanings" who "go before the world and inform it that we are not a separate nationality but a part of the Big Russian people" (letter to Masaryk, October 17, 1919 as cited in Pejša 2016, 73, note 155). The governor's efforts at neutrality proved to be of no avail, as accusations continued against him for allegedly taking sides in the growing national-religious controversies that were to plague Subcarpathian Rus' during the next two decades of Czechoslovak rule.

Despite his problems with the central government in Prague and with fellow political and civic activists in Subcarpathian Rus', Zhatkovych was determined to take his responsibilities as governor quite seriously. Already in early 1920 he founded a newspaper, *Rusyn*, for which his brother Theophile became editor-in-chief. It was considered the semi-official organ of the governor, and it certainly did reflect Zhatkovych's goal to create a sense of loyalty among Carpatho-Rusyns toward the Czechoslovak republic while not losing sight of the need to implement full autonomy and to correct the provisional boundary with Slovakia. The newspaper, which appeared bi-weekly and then weekly until mid-1921 when Zhatkovych resigned, was written in Rusyn in a tone that reflected the governor's sense of tolerance toward various orientations regarding language (Russian, Ukrainian, or Rusyn), religion (Greek Catholic or Orthodox), and politics (pro-government or anti-government parties). On one topic, however, Zhatkovych and the newspaper *Rusyn* were

particularly firm: opposition to revisionism; that is, the idea that Subcarpathian Rus' (and Slovakia) should be "returned" to Hungary (Gabor, 196–199).

With access to one of the few automobiles in the entire region, Governor Zhatkovych made an effort to visit as many villages as possible in order to get a better understanding of the needs of the Carpatho-Rusyn populace. Sometimes his wife Leona and their two children accompanied him. She was in particular disheartened by the conditions in the high mountain villages, "where there is so much poverty," so that "the poorest place our cattle have at home [in America] is 100% better" (Mother: Leona Zhatkovych's Letters, June 28, 1920, 26).

Together the couple tried to make the governor's residence worthy of a head of state, first in the Greek Catholic Seminary in the Uzhhorod castle and then the old Ung county administrative building where they had a private apartment complex. Among the numerous guests were political leaders from the region and from Prague, and foreign attachés who might be visiting the city.⁸ The receptions were often done in a grand style accompanied by concerts. Even afternoon teas could have upwards of 200 guests. Particularly memorable was Zhatkovych's thirty-fifth birthday (November 27, 1920), with public celebrations that included the unveiling of the Liberty Bell replica created back in October 1918 at the Mid-European Democratic Union in Philadelphia (Mother: Leona Zhatkovych's Letters, December 8, 1920, 41–42). Despite all the possible peoples in Europe and the Middle East who could have obtained the bell, it was Zhatkovych's insistence that brought it to Uzhhorod, capital of the Carpatho-Rusyn State.⁹

Despite his appointment as governor, Zhatkovych's relations with the Czechoslovak government did not change. They were even made worse following the results of a provisional census in Slovakia (August 1919), which recorded 16,000 less Carpatho-Rusyns than appeared in the 1910 Hungarian census (Magocsi 2015, 221–222; Tišliar, 7–42). Zhatkovych characterized the provisional census results as "an absolute and evident example of denationalization" of the Rusyns in Zemplyn county, who because of "government terror" were unjustly listed as Slovaks (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 36). Aside from his displeasure with the Slovaks, Zhatkovych reserved his greatest anger and disillusionment for the Czechs:

The peculiar form of psychology, diplomacy, or whatever you may call it, with which they [the Czechs] dealt with the Rusins and me, was that in answer to all requests and demands they gave promises, promises, and promises, which promises however never saw fulfillment. To almost every request or demand the reply was, 'Why, of course,' and the result in almost every instance was—promise not kept. (Zatkovich 1923, 7)

In turn, Czechoslovak officials were becoming increasingly disillusioned with Zhatkovych for not being able to resolve or at least reduce tensions over the religious and national identity controversies in Subcarpathian Rus'.

Since nothing seemed to change, on March 16, 1921, after only ten months as governor, and "having lost faith and trust in the intentions of the [Czechoslovak] government," Zhatkovych submitted his resignation to President Masaryk (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921, 36). The government delayed its response until Zhatkovych repeated his request to resign on April 10, which one week later was finally accepted. It was to take another three months, however, before Zhatkovych and his family would be able to return to America. That is because in the interim they were struck by an unexpected tragedy.

Sometime in late May, Zhatkovych's wife Leona and their two-and-a-half-year old daughter Joan were struck by scarlet fever. The mother survived but the daughter did not. She died on June 21 and was buried on Calvary Hill in Uzhhorod. Although Zhatkovych had already resigned as governor, he stated—and his supporters believed—that he would continue to work from America on behalf of Subcarpathian Rus'. The distraught Mrs. Zhatkovych wrote to her sister: "The people here, that is the Rusin people, feel that our little girl is a link between them and Jerry's [Zhatkovych] future work for them. As they say, it is their guarantee that he will not forget them. They call her their little

patron in Heaven” (Mother: Leona Zhatkovych’s Letters, July 24, 1921, 50). The only consolation was that Leona was pregnant and expecting another child, so that “poor little Greg [Ted] ... may have another playmate about Christmas” (Mother: Leona Zhatkovych’s Letters, July 24, 1921, 50).

In late July the Zhatkovyches, now a family of only three, left Uzhhorod. They set sail from France on August 6, 1921, and a week later landed back home in America. They never returned to Europe, although the former governor did keep his word and continued, at least for a while, to work on behalf of the native homeland that he would never see again.

Zhatkovych had alluded several times that he wanted to get back to his law practice in Pittsburgh. Now his wish was fulfilled. After a few months residing in Pittsburgh, in 1922 Gregory moved the family across the river and settled in the suburb of Munhall. It was there that both the Greek Catholic Union and episcopal seat of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Exarchate were located, literally on the border of Munhall and Homestead. The reason for residing in Munhall was related to Zhatkovych’s desire to attract two types of clientele: immigrant workers in Homestead-Munhall who had minor legal problems, and the more wealthy individual and corporate clientele which could be serviced in Pittsburgh where his law offices remained (Greg 1978, 13–17).

It was while the family was living in Munhall that Leona gave birth to five more children alongside Greg (Ted) who had returned with them from Europe. Leona was never happy in the midst of steel mills and eventually convinced her husband to return to Pittsburgh, where from 1935 they lived in the more up-scale district of Oakland, near the University of Pittsburgh.

Initially, Zhatkovych’s thoughts were with the homeland he left behind. That prompted him to publish in Rusyn a memoiristic account of his two years in Subcarpathian Rus’ (*Okrytie-Exposé* 1921) and a short survey in English (*The Rusin Question in a Nut Shell*, 1923). He also gave a few public lectures on his political experience in Europe, the most publicized and well attended of which was held in November 1921 to great fanfare at Pittsburgh’s prestigious Carnegie Music Hall. It was in connection with these events that reporters reveled in emphasizing Zhatkovych’s uniqueness as “the first American in the history of the world to be elected president of a European republic” (“Sister”; *Pittsburgh Press*, October 23, 1921; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 18, 1921).

For the rest of the 1920s and 1930s Zhatkovych seemed not to take much interest in his ancestral homeland. All of the anti-Czechoslovak petitions sent during those decades by Carpatho-Rusyn Americans to the League of Nations and to the Czechoslovak government were written by other civic leaders connected with the Greek Catholic Union, not by Zhatkovych (Warzeski 1971, 165–171; Švorc 2000, 267–284). He did maintain his private law practice and for a few years he served in a pro-forma capacity as legal advisor to the Greek Catholic Union (1926–1932) and to the bishop of the Ruthenian Greek Catholic Exarchate based in Munhall. Nevertheless, in the words of his oldest son, father “was a lawyer that hated the practice of law ... and would duck every possible way he could to delay cases and postpone them and anything” (Greg 1978, 16).

Zhatkovych was much more passionate about American politics. His son’s characterization was less generous, however, seeing in his father an “opportunist” who would do whatever necessary to realize his “political ambitions” (Greg 1978, 14). Whether Zhatkovych was genuinely passionate or opportunistic or both, his ambitions were never entirely fulfilled. This is largely because he was a Republican, which did not serve him well after Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democrats came to power in 1932. In an effort to enhance his political career, in 1934 Zhatkovych switched to the Democratic Party. This resulted in his appointment as Worker’s Compensation Judge for the State of Pennsylvania (1934–1936) and his close involvement in city politics. For a few months in 1936, he was personal secretary to the mayor and the solicitor (chief law officer) for the city of Pittsburgh.

Even before he was ousted from those posts, Zhatkovych returned to the Republican party where he perfected the skill for which he was best suited: attracting immigrant workers of central, eastern, and southern European background to vote Republican (*Pittsburgh Press*, June 16, 1936; *Pittsburgh Press*, October 7, 1936). He carried out these tasks as a leader in the Naturalized Citizens Division of the Republican State Committee and as General Chairman of the Slavic Division of the Allegheny County Republican Committee. So successful was he that the *Pittsburgh Press* (Sheridan 1938)

called him a “genius” in the art of political patronage, voter registration, and ability to mobilize the immigrant vote in municipal and county elections. One Pittsburgh weekly news magazine summed up the opinion of many in a feature article with a picture of him on the front cover over a caption which read: “GOP Nationality Man Zatkovich ... *knows many and where*” (*Bulletin Index* 1939).

If Zhatkovych had no qualms about moving back and forth between America’s two political parties whenever the circumstances seemed to warrant such a change, he was also flexible, or deliberately vague, about the national identity of his ancestral people. When he first entered politics during the last months of World War I as the acclaimed representative of Rusyn-American immigrants, he used the ethnonyms *Uhro-Rusin*, *Rusin*, and sometimes *Ruthenian*. The implication in choosing such terms was the belief that “his” people comprised a distinct nationality living in a historic territory which he referred to as Uhro-Rusinia, Rusinia, and eventually Subcarpathian Ruthenia. After his short stint as governor in 1920–1921 came to an end and he returned to America, Zhatkovych continued to use the terms *Rusin* and *Ruthenian*, but he also began to refer to his people as Little Russians, in the sense that they were allegedly “a branch of the Russian Race” (Zatkovich 1923, 4; *Pittsburgh Press*, October 29, 1933).

In his World War II phase of political activity, Zhatkovych preferred the terms *Carpatho-Russian* for the people and *Carpatho-Russia* for their homeland. These terms reflected usage among the mainline Rusyn-American mutual-benefit societies and civic institutions, most of whose leaders by the interwar years had become Russophile in national orientation; that is, they believed Carpatho-Rusyns were a branch of the Russian (certainly not Ukrainian!) people. Two decades earlier, when Zhatkovych was governor of Subcarpathian Rus’, local Russophiles had accused him of favoring the Ukrainian national orientation, since in fact he did work closely with Ukrainophile activists in the region. I would suggest that his subsequent use of the terms *Carpathian Russia* and *Carpathian Russians* did not necessarily mean that he had a change of heart and became a Russophile. Rather, one might speculate that Zhatkovych the politician would never take a fixed position on the nationality question, preferring instead to use terminology that he believed went with the times, or how he felt the proverbial wind was blowing.

During World War II, Zhatkovych decided to turn his attention once again to Europe and his homeland. Somewhat remarkably, he seems not to have commented on the transformation and eventual disintegration of Czechoslovakia beginning in late 1938 and the annexation of Subcarpathian Rus’ to Hungary in March 1939. But in 1941, a few months before the United States entered the war, Zhatkovych had a change of heart. In September, he addressed letters to then Czechoslovak president-in-exile Edvard Beneš and to U. S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt calling for the future recreated state of Czechoslovakia to include “Carpathian Russia as an autonomous state ... under the [provisions] of the Saint Germain-en-Laye Treaty.”¹⁰ Zhatkovych’s communications were acknowledged by both presidents Beneš and Roosevelt.

Zhatkovych then addressed an open letter to his fellow “American Carpathian Russians.” He explained somewhat disingenuously that in 1921 he had resigned as governor of Subcarpathian Rus’, not in protest against Czechoslovak government policies (which was the real reason), but because he felt “the people of the land of my birth could act without outside aid” and, therefore, he could withdraw “from participation in their internal affairs” (Zatkovich 1941, 1). Now, two decades later, because of Hungarian rule and Nazi German aggression, “our brethren” in Europe again need help. The former governor felt it was his “solemn duty” to unite Carpatho-Rusyn Americans “into a virile organization to carry on the great work of defending America and liberating the Slavic and other peoples of Europe by aiding the Allies” (Zatkovich 1941, 2).

Already, in September 1941, Zhatkovych created a monthly publication, *The Carpathian*, to inform the American public about the fate of Carpatho-Rusyns in Europe. One week after the United States entered the war, he spearheaded in Pittsburgh the creation on December 14 of the American Carpatho-Russian Council of which he became president. The council, with its official organ *The Carpathian*, was comprised primarily of Greek Catholic Carpatho-Rusyn civic leaders associated with the Greek Catholic Union. Ever sensitive to diversity and the strength that could

derive from overcoming differences, Zhatkovych reached an agreement with Orthodox Carpatho-Rusyn Americans who were part of an organization called the Carpathian-Russian Unity based in Gary, Indiana and headed by the Reverend Ivan Ladizinsky. Actually in May 1941, four months before Zhatkovych decided to become engaged again in European matters, the Reverend Ladizinsky had contacted President Roosevelt and Beneš, pledging that his organization would work for Carpatho-Russia's return to a future Czechoslovak state (Ladizinsky 1941, 9–13).

On March 22, 1942, the two organizations formed the American Carpathian-Russian Central Conference at a gathering in Pittsburgh in the presence of several American congressional leaders, judges, and Czechoslovak government-in-exile officials, including vice prime-minister Jan Masaryk and minister plenipotentiary Ján Papánek. It was at the March 22 meeting, expertly organized by Zhatkovych, that a Joint Declaration was adopted which made clear one of the Central Conference's main goals: "The liberation of Carpathian Russia from the brutal enforced occupation of the Hungarians (Magyars), and its re-union as an autonomous self-governing state under the terms of the St. Germain-en-Laye Treaty with Czechoslovakia" ("A Joint Declaration," 1943, 10).

Although serving only as co-chair of the Central Conference, Zhatkovych was nonetheless its guiding force. He took the lead in the personal meetings with Edvard Beneš, when the Czechoslovak president-in-exile arrived on an official visit to the United States in May 1943. Zhatkovych called for the restoration of Czechoslovakia according to its prewar boundaries, but he insisted that full autonomy must be accorded Carpathian Rus'. In his verbal reply, Beneš referred to a restored but decentralized Czechoslovakia comprised of three units, one of which would be Carpathian Rus' with its own parliament to be "created promptly" after the war was over ("A Joint Declaration," 1943, 12). Beneš's written acknowledgement of the meeting with the Central Conference was even less concrete, referring to "an early restoration ... of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic and of a new stage of thriving and prosperity of her people" ("A Joint Declaration," 1943, 12). Once again, as at the close of World War I, Zhatkovych's specific demands were being met with vague platitudes from the Czechoslovak authorities.

On-going suspicion of "the Czechs" was what prompted the conclusion made in a secret 1943 report of the United States government's Office of Strategic Services: "the pro-Czechoslovak movement among Carpatho-Russians in the United States appears not to have made much headway. Zatkovich has professed to have the support of a majority of American Carpatho-Russians of the Greek Catholic faith, but this is far from accurate... only a small section of politically-minded Carpatho-Russian-Americans can be counted in the Czechoslovak camp" (Office of Strategic Services 1943, 12).

In the end, Zhatkovych's faith in the alleged goodwill of the Czechoslovak authorities in exile or the views of America's various Carpatho-Rusyn communities soon became irrelevant. This is because America's Soviet ally Stalin had other goals in mind. Soon after the Red Army arrived in Subcarpathian Rus' in October 1944, plans were set in motion to annex the region to the Soviet Union. The formal secession of Subcarpathian Rus' (renamed Transcarpathian Ukraine) took place on June 29, 1945.

Already in late 1943, the American Carpathian-Russian Central Conference had ceased functioning, and Zhatkovych once again withdrew his interest in European affairs. Whether as an individual or as part of the Central Conference he did not join the United States government-sanctioned American Slav Congress, nor did he participate in any of the Rusyn-American protests against the Soviet annexation that were sent in 1945 and 1946 to the United States government by the Greek Catholic Union and the newly-founded Carpatho-Russian Congress.¹¹ On the other hand, with the onset of the Cold War, he joined the Republicans in their search to uncover alleged Communist sympathizers within the allegedly Democratic-dominated U.S. State Department (*Pittsburgh Press*, July 22, 1951).

By design or by default, Zhatkovych had lost touch with the Carpatho-Rusyn Americans that he claimed to represent. He spent the last two decades of his life in a kind of semi-retirement. While he continued to practice law, it was for an ever decreasing clientele. He seemed not to participate in any Carpatho-Rusyn events and had no active relations with the Greek Catholic Union that he and his

father had once served. He did appear on a Pittsburgh television program talk show in 1961, where he was introduced as “His Excellency Gregory Zatkovich, First Governor of Carpathian Ruthenia.” But he said nothing about the very topic which had made him famous four decades earlier at the close of World War I. That same year he participated in a ceremony in Washington, D. C., during which the original copy of the “Declaration of Common Aims of the Independent Mid-European Nations, October 25, 1918,” which he had signed, was turned over to the Library of Congress (“Historical Document,” 1962, 52–54). He also came up with a strange publicity stunt to grant “knighthood” to hundreds of Americans who in the past had befriended our country, “Carpathian Ruthenia,” claiming that “it’s his right as ex-leader of the tiny European country” (*Pittsburgh Press*, December 4, 1960).

When at the age of eighty Zhatkovych died on March 27, 1967, his passing was only cursorily noted in Rusyn-American circles. On the other hand, obituaries were published in many Pittsburgh newspapers (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 28, 1967; *Pittsburgh Press*, March 27, 1967), although ironically the longest one appeared in America’s leading newspaper, *The New York Times* (March 29, 1967).

Zhatkovych was certainly a known entity, especially at the time of his governorship, when he was featured, albeit as a curiosity, in one of America’s most widely-read publications, *The Saturday Evening Post* (Roberts 1920, 9, 112). And his reputation lived on, sometimes in unexpected places. The third part of a trilogy, *The Carpathian Rhapsody* (1941), by the popular Hungarian Communist novelist Béla Illés, was satirically called “Gergely Zsatkovics’s Kingdom” (Illés 1963, Vol. 2, 85–284), while in the United States he made an anecdotal appearance in a popular 1936 book about the art of conversation:

Ever hear of George Zatkovich?

...

No. Who was he?

He was the fellow who took the Constitution and made himself president of a European republic with it.

And what republic was that?

Rusinia.

Rusinia? There never was any such republic.

...

O, yes, there was.

...

Rusinia! The lawyer laughs. Sounds like the name of a country in a musical comedy. (Wright 1936, 191)

More respectful of Zhatkovych’s memory have been state institutions and Carpatho-Rusyn communities in Europe. In 1992, on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic, the new post-Communist Czech and Slovak Federal government awarded the Tomáš G. Masaryk Medal to Gregory Zhatkovych. The posthumous award was accepted by his oldest surviving daughter Connie Ash (Constance Louise Zhatkovych, b. 1925) at a ceremony on October 28, held in Vladislav Hall of the Prague Castle (Hradčany).¹² His daughter was also able to see the only statue of Zhatkovych in the world, a bronze bust on display at the Monument of Liberation of the Czechoslovak Army’s Historical Institute, which was created in 1936 by Olena Mandych, one of Czechoslovakia’s best-known sculptors who happened to be of Carpatho-Rusyn origin (Ash 1992).

Zhatkovych also came to attention of Carpatho-Rusyns in post-Soviet Ukraine. In the mid-1990s, the recently established Society of Subcarpathian Rusyns (Obshchestvo podkarpatskykh rusynov) mounted on the façade of the town hall in the county seat of Svaliava a series of plaques with portraits of famous “local sons.” Pride of place in the center over the main entrance was given to Gregory Zhatkovych. Ten kilometers away, in the village of Holubyne, a memorial plaque was unveiled (October 6, 1996) on the building now standing on the site where he was born and which contains a small museum about his life (Molnar 1996).

Although not given the acknowledgement he deserves from his “own” Carpatho-Rusyn people in America, Gregory Zhatkovych has always fared well in accounts by historians of central Europe who have understood properly his unique role. Aside from the authors mentioned at the outset of this study, particularly noteworthy was a series of visiting lectures given in the early 1960s at La Salle College in Philadelphia by a distinguished group of American and European historians who spoke about the various immigrant groups and their influence on President Woodrow Wilson’s peace policies following the end of World War I. Despite the strenuous efforts of German-, Irish-, British-, Italian-, Hungarian-, and several Slavic-American immigrant groups in 1917–1919, their actual influence on events in Europe was very limited and at best only indirect.

There was one exception, however. In the words of the accomplished American diplomatic historian of Slovak heritage, Victor S. Mamatey, “The Carpatho-Ruthenian immigrants in America did determine the fate of their compatriots at home—a unique case, it appears, of the influence of an immigrant group in America on the political history of Europe” (Mamatey 1967, 249). It is clear from the historical record that the influence in question was due largely if not exclusively to the work of one individual—Gregory I. Zhatkovych.

Disclosure. Author has nothing to disclose.

Notes

- 1 All the materials about the Zatkovich family were kindly supplied to the author by his oldest child Ted Zatkovich Greg (1916–2003), by his fifth child Constance/Connie Louise Ash (b. 1925), and by the latter’s eldest daughter Jennifer Ash. I am particularly grateful to Richard Custer and Dr. Bogdan Horbal for providing me with several reports that appeared in American newspapers about Zhatkovych.
- 2 The spelling of Gregory’s surname in published and unpublished sources varies, depending on the language of publication and his own preference. The Hungarian form, which appeared on his father’s European documents, was Zsatkovics. Initially, Gregory signed his surname in English as Zsatkovich, but while in Europe he dropped the “s” (which seemed too Hungarian) and from May 1920 became Zatkovich. In Rusyn- and Czech-language publications, whether published in the United States or Europe, the form Žatkovič appears. This study uses the original Rusyn form Жаткович, which in Library of Congress transliteration is rendered as Zhatkovych.
- 3 According to his son’s account (Greg 1978, 5) and comments in a few newspaper articles, Zhatkovych also received a master’s degree in law from Georgetown University in Washington, D. C. He never earned a doctorate, although when in Europe, as he recalls, “everyone calls me Doctor Zhatkovych, that being the proper title for an attorney-at-law” (Zatkovich’s Letters, February 17, 1919). He did not use the title “Dr.” after returning to the United States but was often referred to in print as “His Excellency Gregory Zatkovich, First Governor of Carpathian Ruthenia (or Carpathian Russia).”
- 4 It seems that the language of the Zhatkovych household may have been Hungarian. His parents called their son Gerő, the Hungarian diminutive of Gergely (Gregory). His American playmates, hearing that name, changed it to Jerry so that, as his son Ted later wrote: “Jerry stuck and it was always Jerry Zatkovich, never Gregory” (Greg 1978, 6).
- 5 At Zhatkovych’s suggestion, the balloting was indirect, with each lodge or parish being allotted only one vote for every fifty members. The results are provided in Danko 1964–68, 191–200.
- 6 It is not clear who was paying the bill for the Rusyn-American diplomatic mission to Europe. One might assume it was the American National Council of Uhro-Rusins, or more likely its two sponsoring fraternal societies, the Greek Catholic Union and the United Societies. In any case, representatives of stateless peoples usually needed personal funds to carry out their civic work.
- 7 Zhatkovych’s son also comments (Greg 1978, 15–16) on his father’s serious drinking problem and lifestyle as a sociable “playboy,” which only ended after he had a mild heart stroke sometime in the early 1930s.

- 8 The governor's wife Leona, who spoke no language other than English (and communicated with her servants in sign language), was desperate to speak with anyone, especially some of the foreign dignitaries who could understand her. If such guests could not come to Uzhhorod she went to them, including Alice Vanderbilt, heiress to the American shipping magnate, who was married to the Hungarian Count Szécsenyi. The Vanderbuilt summer home was at Morské Oko (today in Slovakia), which from Uzhhorod to the west was "about one hour ride in the machine" (Leona Zhatkovych's Letters, August 19, 1920, 35).
- 9 Despite recent efforts by historians of Uzhhorod, no records of what happened to the bell have been found. Photographs of its arrival in Uzhhorod, flanked by Governor Zhatkovych, his brother Msgr. Theophile Zhatkovych, and the Reverend Emylian Nevyts'kyi, appeared in various publications, including "Historical Pictures."
- 10 The correspondence, dating from September 1 to October 23, 1941, is reproduced in *The Carpathian* 3 (7-8-9): 1943, 4.
- 11 Reflecting the assessment of the 1943 OSS secret memorandum ("Carpatho-Russia"), and its skeptical view of Zhatkovych's influence upon Rusyn-American civic activists, the documents issued by the Carpatho-Russian Congress (*Memorandum* 1945; *Protest* 1946) did not call for a return of Subcarpathian Rus' to Czechoslovakia, but rather for a plebiscite to determine the region's future. The congress participants were certain about only one thing: that their homeland should not be in Soviet Ukraine, since "our people never were Ukrainians, nor called Ukrainians, nor was their territory ever a part of what is now Soviet Ukraine" (*Memorandum* 1945, 9).
- 12 At the request of the Office of the President of the Czech and Slovak Republic (through its embassy in Canada) I was able to find a surviving relative (Connie Ash) to be invited to the ceremony in Prague.

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