

# Carpatho-Rus

## Karpatska Rus



SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT YONKERS, NEW YORK AND OTHER MAILING ADDRESSES

NO.2 CARPATHO RUS, YONKERS,N.Y., JANUARY 21 1994, VOL.LXVII

### NOTICE -- MEETING

An important meeting of the First District of Lemko Association will be held on January 30, 1994 sponsored by the Elizabeth Branch, #35 - 7. The meeting will begin at 2:00 PM and will be held at:

**P.A.L. Youth Center  
400 Maple Avenue  
Linden, New Jersey**

We request that all Lodges in the First District send their delegates to this meeting.

*District Committee*

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*Excerpts from THE RECORD.*

#### **Slovak independence more bitter than sweet.**

Trnava, Slovakia -- It is almost a year since nationalist leaders proclaimed fulfillment of what they considered an age-old dream: independence and an end to domination by bigger neighbors.

Fireworks and the pop of champagne greeted independence on Jan. 1, but Slovakia is not a happy place. The economy is sick and the government is unstable. The new country that used to be the eastern third of Czechoslovakia is itself divided, primarily by the figure of populist Premier Vladimir Meciar.

Rather than boosting pride and self-confidence, independence has left many people confused about their own future and that of their fledgling republic of 5.2 million people.

In Czechoslovakia, said housewife Claudia Honsova, pushing a baby carriage in this industrial town north of Bratislava, "there was certainty. Now we have that strange border."

A poll taken last month by an independent research group indicated that was a common sentiment. As many as 60 percent would oppose the split of the Czechoslovak federation today, up from 50 percent in March. No margin of error was given.

Slovakia was dominated by its southern neighbor, Hungary, for centuries in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When Czechoslovakia was formed in 1918, the more numerous and prosperous Czechs dominated the federation.

Industrialization was begun in Slovakia only after Communists took over in 1948. When they were toppled 41 years later, the new federal government decided to convert most of the weapons industry centered in Slovakia to civilian use, and some 80,000 jobs were lost in the process.

Czech domination convinced some Slovaks they would be better off on their own. Some still feel that way. Anton Vyskoc, controller of Trnava's Slovenske Sladovne beer and soft drink factory, said he was convinced partition was inevitable.

"The banks, the export business, the financial system -- almost everything was occupied by the Czechs," he claimed...

...But the Czech-Slovak split is not the only theme cutting across the nation. The other divisive factor seems to be Meciar.

He pushed for more Slovak autonomy and was the clear winner of parliamentary elections in 1992 with 37 percent of the vote. Polls say his popularity has fallen drastically since.

Although Meciar claims an "economic miracle" in Slovakia, his opponents laugh him off. They point to nearly 14 percent unemployment and a huge budget deficit.

Controversy has swirled around him all year. \*Meciar drew criticism for a speech disparaging Gypsies and has chronic trouble with Slovakia's ethnic Hungarian minority.

\*He sacked his first foreign minister after three months and his ambassador to key neighboring countries Austria and Hungary. He got in a fight with President Michal Kovac over protege Ivan Lexa, whom he wanted to appoint privatization minister.

Kovac refused, and Lexa's harsh reaction prompted prosecutors to charge him with violating

a law against insulting the president.

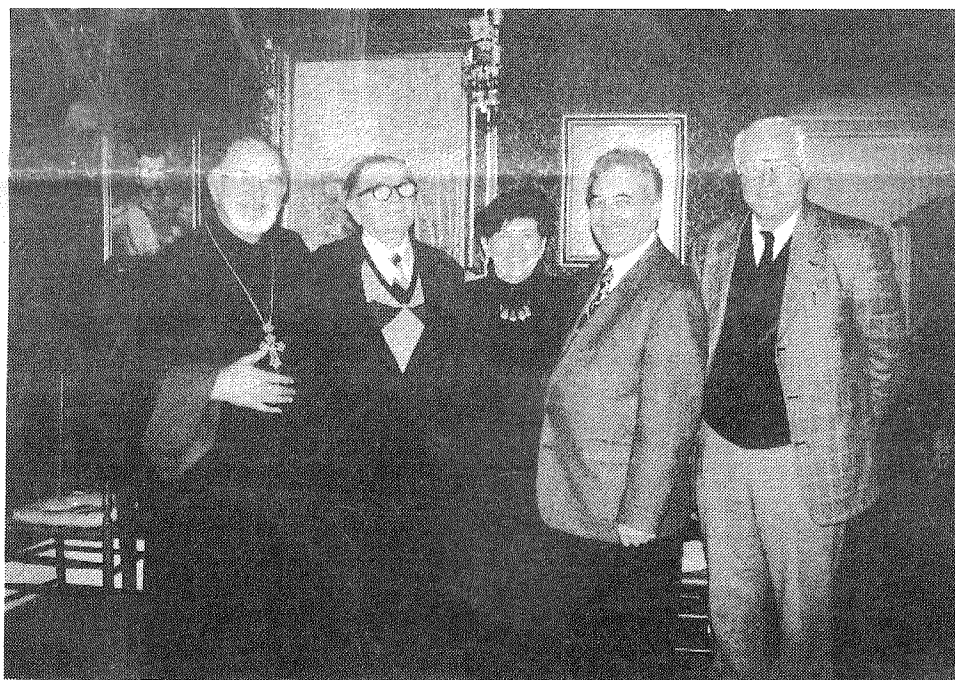
\*Some members of Parliament have deserted him, forcing him to scramble to keep a working majority.

"He is a political gambler, not a statesman," said Emil Komarik, the No. 2 man in the opposition Christian Democratic Party.

Rudolf Filkus, who was dismissed as ambassador to Austria and subsequently quit Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, calls him an authoritarian who "wants to do it all by himself."

"What is lacking is a clear economic policy," said Milan Flatcnik, deputy chairman of the Party of the Democratic Left -- the former Communists. He called for a broad coalition government to carry it out.

*continued on page 2*



### **The Banquet for Peter Kohutov**

With only one week's advance notice, leaving scant time to notify people, advertise and make all necessary preparations for food and drink, a fine banquet was held in honor of our guest, Peter Kohutov. Approximately 55 people attended in spite of the very cold weather and icy roads. It was held at the Parish Hall of Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, Paramus, New Jersey.

Talks were given by V. Rev. John Nehrebecky, Alex Herenchak and our honored guest. At length, Peter Kohutov with Rev. Nehrebecky translating, informed us of conditions of our Lemko people in Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland, urging us here in America to maintain close contacts especially with our people in Poland. He informed us of the growing awareness and desire of the younger generation of Lemkos in Poland and Ukraine to search out and preserve our culture and traditions. He also promised to assist our newspaper, Carpatho-Rus, by submitting, periodically, stories about present day cultural activities of our people in Europe as well as historical background information.

The depth of warm feeling toward Peter,

from those who have known him in the past when he travelled to Lviv, was clearly evident by the numerous monetary gifts offered to him by banquet guests to assist him in his efforts on behalf of our people, when he returns home. The contributions were quietly and voluntarily made without any suggestion or solicitation by speakers at the banquet.

The buffet and decorations were superb with all dishes prepared by the women of Lemko Assoc. in their homes. We can honestly state the delicious food was superior to that provided by an average caterer. Our sincere thanks to the following ladies for their efforts at the banquet: Mary Barker, Victoria Windish, Mary Bakalets, Nancy Porada, Svetlana Ledenieva, Mary Rudawsky and Julia Adamiak. Our sincere thanks also to V. Rev. Nehrebecky and Matushka Eugenia for housing, transporting and taking care of Peter for about two weeks. Thanks also to Michael and Ann Logoyda, John and Nancy Porada, John and Stephanie Holovach Mr./Mrs. Fornazor and Mr./Mrs. Bakalets for the hospitality extended to Peter in their homes.

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Opposition leaders charge privatization has come to virtual standstill and is limited to people in cahoots with Meciar.

But rather than his public image, Meciar's chief concern is how to hold his coalition together..

...After eight defections, Meciar holds 66 of 150 seats in Parliament. The nationalists have 14.

But Vladimir Miskovsky, a moderate in the National Party, said only eight of the party's deputies will support Meciar without reservation.

"The government is only surviving from one session to the other," Miskovsky said.

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### IN APPRECIATION

We extend our thanks for help in producing this week's issue of Karpatska Rus to Svetlana Ledenieva.

Ed.

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### REQUEST OF OUR READERS

Through our archives we have searched for old Lemko Calendars from the 1930s and 1940s. Many of those old Calendars are missing. We would like to request, from our readers, any old Calendars that they may have and do not need. This would be of help to us in researching the history of our people. Thank you.

Ed.

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### NOTICE

Due to lack of hard currency, our subscription mailing list to Poland, Slovakia, Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine is limited. Some Americans and Canadians pay for their relatives and friends in East Europe. As an inducement, to increase our readership in East Europe, we offer to send issues there at a special rate of \$8.00 per year, which only represents the cost of postage. If readers in the United States and Canada want to avail themselves of this opportunity, kindly send us the name and address of your relative or friend, with a check for \$8.00, and the newspaper will be sent.

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**KARPATSKA RUS**

Carpatho-Russian Newspaper, published bi-weekly by the Lemko Assoc. of the United States and Canada.

Subscription Rate: One Year...\$20.

Edited By: Editor, pro-tem., A. Herenchak  
USPS No. 291 460

Postmaster: Send address changes to:

**KARPATSKA RUS**  
556 Yonkers Avenue  
Yonkers, New York, 10704

# SLAV MYTHOLOGY

Translated from Russian by

Stephen P. Kopestonsky

Continued from Issue #1, 1/7/94

### PART 7

Instigated by the daughter of Hreh, Udyna the fornicator, who slipped into the World of Light unnoticed, Byelobog took into his head the idea of setting himself up as the chief of the "heavenly firmament." He stirred up the *dyidki* against their superiors, the *Dyidy*, but the uprising ended with Byelobog's complete defeat. After his fall, the evil *byeluny-dyidki* were scorched by the lightning flashes of Perun, turning them into black creatures, after which the earth split and opened up and the evil-mongers were swallowed up by the Black Cloud (*Chornaya Pot'ma*) who, after inflicting on them the torture of hell, spewed them out again into the World of Light, but now as evildoers who offended and harmed people. Before they were swallowed up by the Black Cloud, they were the helpers of the people, but now the *Pot'ma* spewed them out not as "giants," but even lesser than monstrous dwarfs, some hairy, others with hoofs and tails, and still others with horns, or simply as little devilish monsters. They settled in the same places on the earth and under the earth where they lived before their fall, harming and bedeviling people at every turn. And the people, just as they honored them previously, now damned and cursed them. Eventually, humankind began to use these invectives against their own fellow men. Whatever malevolence occurred to people would be blamed on the *dyidki*. In Halichina, on any acrimonious occasion, a person would without fail shout: *Akh, ty chornyi dyidko proklyaty!* (Oh, you accursed black *dyidko!*)

Depending on the place they lived and what they worked at, people called them spirits or sprits: of the forest, of the home, of the fields, of the waters, and various other names. For example, in Halichina they were called *many* (decoys) who led travelers astray from their paths, making them wander in circles. The word *manit'* means to lure, to entice. They were also thought to substitute their evil monsters for people's offspring.

*Byelobog*, as with the sprites, was tarnished black, thus being transformed into a *Chernobog*,<sup>1</sup> and remaining in the Dark World where *Chernaya Pot'ma* chained him to the walls of hell. Being tortured by *Chernaya Pot'ma*, he in turn tormented other souls who found themselves captive in hell. But at the same time, he awaited salvation, together with other occupants of hell, by the performance of good deeds by the people on earth.

After the Fall, the White Carpathians darkened, shrank and split; rivers broke their banks, changed their courses and became shallow. *Byelogora* (White Peak) became *Chernogora* (Black Peak)<sup>2</sup> and dropped from heavenly heights to even lower levels than other Carpathian peaks.

Not all *dyidki* (sprites), according to common beliefs, mutinied. A small number remained loyal to Svarog and continued to live on the earth, helping, as before, people in their life's misfortunes. A well-known Czechoslovakian legend tells how Czech, the "forefather" of the Czech people, brought his personal *dyidko* on his own shoulders to colonize a new (Czech) country. Such "good" *dyidki* were considered as personal guardians of people, just as in Christianity Guardian Angels look after individual Christians. These good *dyidki* carried on an unmerciful struggle with the evil, black *dyidki* and *cherty* (devils) and taught

people how to perform good deeds. Even though there were not many of them, they were supposed to exterminate eventually all evil from the earth and return it once again to its former pristine state -- a virtual paradise which would continue throughout the ages.

The "devils" mentioned in chronicles are the same *dyidki* that were maddened by the tortures of hell, inflicted upon them by the *Chernaya Pot'ma* (Black Cloud) after the Fall. In those chronicles and other ancient memorials, the earlier Slav gods and the evil spirits that tried to do harm to the monks in their ascetic exploits were called *byesi* (or devils). According to the people's beliefs, a flaming fire burned continuously in the bosoms of these *dyidki* -- the embers of which were brought with them from hell. This burning fire tormented them and made them evil things.

RUSALKI, MAVKI: beautiful water nymphs. It was generally accepted to consider *rusalki* to be souls of those people who had lost their lives by drowning, and unbaptized children, etc. The time of their appearance on earth was said to be from Thursday before Easter (Great Thursday) to Pentecost (Green Sunday) which feast days in Carpathian Rus and in Lemkovshchina are called *Rusalia*; or even to the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, which in some localities is also called *Rusalia*. In Halichina it is also called *Turitsy* (from the word *tur*, that is, Perun).

The general superstition represents the *rusalki* as beautiful females with long flaxen hair and with dead, glassy eyes. Christianity considers them evil "beings." Supposedly, on moonlit nights these nymphs (*rusalki*) incite young, amorous men to their deaths by tempting them into watery graves.

The Sanskrit word *rosa* (water), Celtic *rus* (sea), Latin *ros* (dew) and the Slavic *rosa* and *ruslo* attest to the fact that the root of the word *rusalka* means water, and that this root has nothing in common with "souls," nor with the dead. This is confirmed by Byelorussian songs about *rusalki*:

<i>Privedu Rusalok</i>	<i>Yak yavorochek</i>
<i>V zelenoye zhitto,</i>	<i>A moyi zhitinki</i>
<i>Tam Rusalki v zhitse</i>	<i>Yak proskurochki,</i>
<i>Zelenom sidzeli,</i>	<i>V pechke pirozhki,</i>
<i>A moy kolosochek</i>	<i>Na stole kolachiki.</i>

From the *rusalki* the grain blooms and itself answers:

<i>Ne mogu stoyatsi,</i>	<i>Kolos kolos klonits</i>
<i>Kolosa derzhatsi,</i>	<i>I solome lomits.</i>

Procopius of Caesarea (a historian of the 6th century A.D.) wrote that the Slavs worshipped the nymphs (and other spirits -- *daimonia*). Further, taking into consideration the reverence in which all sources of water are held by the Russians and generally by all Slavic peoples, it is difficult to believe that they were of the opinion that *rusalki* were the souls of the deceased. Slavic people in general considered water, which irrigated their fields and crops, as sacred and vivifying.

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After the introduction of Christianity people were indoctrinated with the idea that their former gods were devils who had evil properties. It is easier to believe that *rusalki* (among the Hutsuls and in Carpathian Rus they were called *Mavki*) are water goddesses, who induced sources of water from the bosom of the earth for the irrigation of fields and crops, guaranteeing a bountiful harvest. It was, and still is, a sin among the Slavs to fill or cover up a spring or well or to muddy their water. This is attested to by the saying in Hutsulshchina: *Bez Mavki ne bude travki* (Without Mavka, there will be no grass.)

In Halichina, on the day of *Rusalia*, the people in procession, with the Cross at the forefront, proceeded into the fields where the priest, after reading the Gospel and special prayers, blessed the fields with holy water, petitioning the Lord for a good harvest. Undoubtedly, this procession with the Cross into the fields on the feast day of Pentecost (*Rusalia*) was the Christianization of the ancient Slavic pagan rite, in this case as in many other cases, a compromise of the Christian Church. Not being able to excise the deeply rooted pagan rite, the Church sanctified it into a Christian ritual in order to effectively erase the memory of paganism from the people's minds.

VILY, "twenty-nine sisters," nebulous virgins -- the same as *Rusalki*, but with their domain in the clouds, serving the *Chernaya Khmara-Tucha* (the Black Cloud). They carry out the Black Cloud under the firmament and then put her away again into her lair. During thunderstorms, the *Vily* ride the thunderbolts from the Black Cloud to the earth and then back again.

According to people's beliefs during the union of Perun and the Black Cloud, the *Vily* scatter the Perun seeds [rain] flowing out of the Cloud to the earth and water the earth, thus enhancing the growth of crops. After the people accepted Christianity, Perun was transformed into a devil and the Black Cloud into a witch. During a heavy storm with lightning and thunder, people would say: *The devil is "embracing" the witch.* The Black Cloud (or *Mokosh*) is also called a witch. On a summer day, when a shower would suddenly descend from the Cloud, people would say: "The witch is churning butter." In gray antiquity the cloud was not a witch but rather a "gracious goddess," and Perun was not a devil, but a mythological god who cleansed the earth with the fire of Svarog. The Cloud or *Mokosh* was not a witch since witches damaged and harmed people and did not treat them with buttermilk, only the gracious goddess (*Baby*) could saturate the earth with buttermilk.

Russian *Rusalki* are called *Vily* in Serbia and *Samovily* in Bulgaria. Scholars say the word *vily* is derived from *v'ina, v'iny* -- daughter of water.

TSAPOK, Tsap -- goat. In this case -- Capricorn-Fawn. According to people's beliefs, young goats are joyful, entertaining creatures, similar to people, but with beards, horns and legs. They were supposed to have been created to entertain and amuse all other creatures in paradise, romping in fields and forests and playing upon reed pipes.

After the Fall, they like the *dyidki*, became evil creatures, waylating single women in the fields and forests, luring them into caverns and deep forests where they kept them as their wives who gave birth to monster-offspring that were substituted among the people as newly born human children.

The author heard the following: "It is fearful to go to Berezhina (name of a forest near the village of Podhaichiki of the Rudki *uezd*). There *tsapki* waltz day and night and the wild goats romp and dance continuously."

HROMOVIKI. By the name of *Hromovik* it is accepted to count Perun himself and other gods of the *Dyidy*. In the representation of the people thunder is the fearsome, ferocious and deafening roaring of animals -- *Hromoviki*. They supposedly impure the White or Bright World from the black, impure power. Perun keeps them in his court on tethers -- on fiery chains anchored to the clouds -- and lets them loose (lowers them) in case of

necessity during storms against the devils that broke through into the White World ("thunder from a clear sky"). The evil virgins -- the *Vily*, ride on the *Hromoviki* with fiery Perun arrows or bolts in their hands.

#### THE BOGATYRI OF THE BYLINY

SVIATOGOR In Halichina; among other Slavs: Valigor, Vernigora. Sviatogor carries a heavy burden because of his great strength. The earth cannot hold him. He searched and found a mountain which would hold him where he could stay in peace. But he perished because he attempted to lift the earth's gravity from the ground. In doing so, he sunk to his knees in the ground and was stuck there to die and petrify.

According to another legend Sviatogor, when dying, laid down in a coffin; when Mikula Selianinovich closed the coffin, Sviatogor asked Mikula to bend down over the coffin. Sviatogor, through a slit in the coffin, breathed into Mikula, transferring his great power and strength into Mikula.

Sviatogor represented the power of the Slavs in cattle breeding while they lived a nomadic life. His transmittal of power to Mikula symbolized the transition of the Slavs from cattle breeding to an agricultural and more settled life.

As was said previously, the Russian people, after the acceptance of Christianity, had difficulty in forgetting their beloved pagan Slavic gods and even still more the rites, rituals and customs of their forefathers. As a result they fastened their pagan divinities to Christian holy days and saints which, by their nature or by their names, reminded them of their former deities: Sviatogor -- St. George; Veles-Volos -- St. Vlas, St. Vasili and the Entrance (they led their cattle into their *izby*); Perun -- St. Elias, St. Nicholas; Kupalo -- St. John the Baptist, etc. In search of a homonym, Russian people covered not only Yarilo, but also Sviatogor with St. George. According to Christian as well as pagan beliefs, both were shepherds, the first of earthly, the second of heavenly, flocks.

MIKULA SELIANINIVICH. With the Slovaks he was called VALIDUB. Mikula was a gallant knight and represented the peasant-farmer. The *bylina* (epic) has him mocking the strength of the knights Alyosha Popovich and Dobrynia Nikitich,

who together -- and even with the help of their *druzinniki* -- could not lift Mikula's plow and hide it in the bushes. Mikula himself lifts it up with one hand as if it were a toy and tosses it into the laburnum bushes. By this act Mikula symbolizes the end of the unsettled, agricultural era and the beginning of the settled, agricultural epoch of the peasant-farmer, the new power and strength of the Rus people. (A town in the Hutsul Carpathians was named after Mikula -- Mikulichin, and village in Opolye -- Mikulintsy.)

After the establishment of Christianity in the Rus, Mikula was replaced by St. Nicholas of Myra Lycia. To no other saint did the Russian people give more devotion and veneration, having complete confidence and faith in his power; and to no other Christian saint did they light up more candles than to St. Nicholas. (In Halichina, the people call him Mikola, instead of Nikolai.)

In Galician-Russian tales (variants of the Vladimir cycle), we meet, besides Valigor-Sviatgor, with yet three other knights: Tryasous, Valigor and Silach, the latter, stronger and more powerful than all other knights. Tryasous, when he shook his whiskers, the trees trembled and all their leaves fell to the ground. Valigor, meaning one who breaks down or topples mountains, was Tryasous's companion. In the Kaluzhsky *uzed* people are wont to tell the tale of these two knight -- and their new-found companion, Silach.

Valigor and Tryasous were hired by a king to save his daughter who had been kidnapped by the evil pagan Boroda -- "who was only a cubit in height, but whose beard was three cubits long." The two "courageous" knights caught up with the fleeing Boroda, but alas they were soundly defeated by the latter, turned tail and fled in terror "into the world beyond sight." As they fled they met up with the knight Silach, to whom they told their tale of the terrible strength of the pagan

Boroda and why they had followed him. Silach bids them to take him to this fearful pagan. So all three take off to capture this paganite and the kidnapped princess. Eventually, they catch up with Boroda. They engage in a long, bitter struggle. Silach is finally able to jam Boroda's long beard into a large tree stump. But to the knights' amazement, Boroda invisibly disappears, leaving behind his beard, his skin and flesh on the tree stump.

The trio take off again in hot pursuit of the denuded Boroda, following a bloody trail he left behind. As they travelled, they came face to face with a foreboding forest, dark and impenetrable, into which, because of its complete, hellish darkness, they could not even take a step. Silach turns to Tryasous and says: "This is your job!" So Tryasous shakes his whiskers and the trees of the forest tremble violently and all their leaves tumble to the ground. Bereft of the leaves, the forest now becomes passable. The trio continue their trek through the denuded forest, but soon come to another obstacle: before them rises a high mountain, *Vysoch Gora*. Silach turns to Valigor and says: "This is your job!" Valigor, as suits his name, breaks down the mountain and they continue to follow the bloody trail of the pagan Boroda.

They finally came to a "bottomless" pit in which Boroda with the kidnapped princess had taken refuge. Valigor and Tryasous braid a thick rope from the hemp-like branches of a tree and with this rope lower Silach into the "bottomless" pit. A bitter struggle with Boroda ensues. Silach grapples desperately with Boroda, but Silach grasps him: he tears off his arm, but the arm creeps back and attaches itself anew to its previous position; he severs Boroda's leg, but the leg jumps nimbly to its rightful place; Silach tears off Boroda's head, but it twists and turns and re-attaches itself. Silach is losing his strength and is near exhaustion. The kidnapped princess, seeing the imminent danger to Silach, weighs down the disattached members of the pagan's body with large blocks of stone so that they could not return to their original positions, thus saving Silach from impending disaster.

Gathering Boroda "into his pocket," Silach tugs the improvised rope and Valigor and Tryasous lift him and the princess out of the pit "into the light of day." The three knights, with the princess and the "pocketed" Boroda, depart for the king's palace. The king rewards the trio generously for saving the princess and orders that the headless, legless, armless Boroda be tied to the tail of a wild horse to be disposed of permanently.

KOSTRUB -- hoar frost; the same as Dyed Moroz or Kashchei or Kostroma. Kostrub as mentioned on *Velikden* (the former festival of Dazhbat) in the *hailki-horovody*, is mocked and laughed at. He is summoned to appear before the *horovod*. One of the maidens promises to "stand under the crown" (in marriage) with him on the "white stone" (that is, on the snow). But the sun beats down relentlessly upon him with its hot rays and he

"perishes." The maidens "bury him" with joy and on his grave they "trample with their maiden feet and caress the soil with their hands until it is perfectly level."

During winter Kostrub often sneaks upon the sleeping or relaxing lazy wind (Stribog) and clings to his wings. The wind, attempting to shake Kostrub off its wings, thrashes to and fro in exasperation, thus generating wind storms of hurricane proportions and violent snow blizzards that bring death to people, animals and plant life.

1 Luxemburg Slavs until recent times called the devil -- Chernobog. Helmold (*Chronica Slavorum*) wrote about the Baltic Slavs: *Malum deum sua lingua diabol sive Zernoboch, id est nigrum deum appellat bonumque -- Belbock.* (In their own tongue they call the evil god "a devil" or Zernoboch, that means "black god," the good god (they call) Belboch, or "white god.")

2 Mas'udi (an Arabic geographer of the 10th century) mentions a Chernohora in the Carpathians. According to him, the mountain was surrounded by enlivening waters known for their healing qualities. Upon this Chernohora peak stood, supposedly, a wonderful edifice -- a temple to Dazhbogh, from which every day the rising of the sun was greeted early in the morning with prayers and hymody.