

## Lucia Nimcová - Chočes po spivaku?

Whole my family is Rusyns. I was born to this project although it was not initially a choice. These seven villages I had never focused on, not intentionally. Yet, as I am trying to solve the problems of the whole world, I always end up at myself. I think that until the end of my days this project will remain unfinished. Lot of people told me it was useless. Well, in the end I am an obstinate Rusyn...

The most beautiful part of my childhood I spent in Starina. The place no longer exists and this absence has become the essence of my way of being in the world. I still search for the lost home. I try to reunite my family, who argue about property. The spirit of my ancestors is in my blood and I owe them something. My home is where my parents, friends, and loved ones live. Or it is the place, where I wake up in the morning -- wherever. But this strange feeling of loss remains. Maybe my mum mixed it with her tears into the Sunday soup while she listened to Rusyn songs from an untuned radio. Hard to say...

I am one of the last generations of this minority of upper Cirocha who can still remember fragments of everyday life and spirituality. But I do not feel I belong to them anymore. I know the language, but I no longer use it with my parents or friends. It does not fit, somehow. It does not come naturally to my mind, though I amuse friends when I use Rusyn words. I do things differently. I cannot accept what they perceive as culture. For sure, it is partly a clash of generations, of different life experience, but in the case of Rusyns it is even worse. The vibrancy is gone. It is as though we are dying while we are alive. It is a terrible feeling.

And so I decided to give space to six young people who are also from displaced families. My conditions were: parents from Dara, Ruské, Smolník, Ostrožnica, Zvala, Veľká Poľana or Starina, and a drive to work with photography. This is the field I could guide them in. I was also interested in their expatriate stories and personal experiences, which I could compare to mine.

The project has three parts:

1. Collection of archival family photos, films, and songs from the era when villages existed.
2. Collection of the work of amateur regional artists who photographed and filmed destruction of the villages and the construction of the Starina water dam.
3. Documentation of the present assimilation through the photographs taken by the young Rusyns here.

The exhibition and book, Rusyns – Lost Homes, are both a picture of a dying minority and our discussions about it. It is a small story of memories that we would like to keep for those coming up after us. Daniela Kapralova, who was our “angel guardian,” lead us to many rare materials. Roman Babjak was the only Slovak in this “battle” between Rusyns; he helped this project far more than he expected at the start. I would also like to thank to urbariat Ruske for their small financial contribution; it was a nice gesture. Other urbariats of the expatriated villages did not acknowledge our activities—but that is a subject for another project.

We would like to invite passers-by to this family visit, one accompanied by authentic Rusyn songs and photographs of a disappearing world. As my grandmother use to say: “Guest to the house – God to the house.” After all, I think the view from the outside can bring fresh and vital ideas.