

Revolt in the Name  
of Freedom:  
Forgotten Belarusian  
Gene?



# Revolt in the Name of Freedom: Forgotten Belarusian Gene?

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# Contents

<b>Preface.</b> Piotr Rudkoŭski, Kaciaryna Kolb .....	7
<b>Introduction. Reflections on Self-government and Citizenship.</b> Andrzej S. Kamiński .....	9
<b>PART 1. HISTORIA MAGISTRA VITAE-IN-LIBERTATE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Religious Tolerance along the Polish-Belarusian Borderline.</b> Antoni Mironowicz .....	18
<b>The Revolt in the Name of Freedom: the Fight of Small Town Dwellers     for the Lost Freedom and Land in 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries.</b> Ina Sorkina .....	28
<b>Jews and Belarusians in the Fight for Freedom in Tsarist Russia     (1795–1904).</b> Zachar Šybieka.....	36
<b>Awakened by Sluck Uprising.</b> Uladzimir Liachoŭski .....	51
<b>Resistance Attitudes of the Belarusian Population in Interwar Poland     (Illustrated with the Example of Kruhovičy Village and Commune).</b> Anatol Trafimčyk .....	57
<b>The Academic Discussion of the Mid 1960s in Belarus: between     Freedom of Creativity and Political Denunciation.</b> Aleh Dziarnovič.....	64
<b>PART 2. CULTURE LAUGHTS AT POLITICS .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Two Carnivals of Contemporary Belarus.</b> Andrej Rasinski .....	78
<b>First Generation of Minsk Hippies (2<sup>nd</sup> half of 1960s–1<sup>st</sup> half of 1970s).</b> Uladzimir Valodzin .....	91
<b>Contemporary Belarusian Literature (<i>sučbiellit</i>) in the Post–tutejšyja     Era: People beyond Their Time.</b> Valiaryna Kustava .....	101
<b>Why Doesn't Religion Laugh at Politics?</b> Piotr Rudkoŭski.....	105
<b>PART 3. WHAT IS FORGOTTEN? ON MEMORY, NATIONHOOD AND EUROPEAN DIMENSION .....</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>The Rise and Fall of the Belarusian National Movement: Historical     Preconditions and Prospects for the Future.</b> Per Anders Rudling .....	112
<b>The “Belarusian Trap”: The EU’s Relations with Belarus.</b> András Rácz .....	120
<b>Between Church and the Government or Religious Life of an Ordinary     Person in After–war Belarus.</b> Iryna Kaštalian .....	128
<b>The Genealogy of National Statehood in the Historical Memory of     Belarusians.</b> Aliaksiej Lastoŭski.....	136



# Preface

This book is a collection of papers from the international conference “Revolt in the Name of Freedom. Forgotten Belarusian Gene?” which took place on March 8–10, 2013 in Warsaw. It was the fifth conference of that kind organized by the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy at Lazarski University. The conference initiator and patron is Andrzej S. Kamiński, professor of Georgetown University, United States, founder of the Institute and untiring promoter of the “Belarusian issue”. The conference was held under the supervision of the executive director Eulalia Łazarska and with the financial support from the National Endowment for Democracy and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

The created great opportunity to exchange thoughts, participate in wider discussions, and, of course, sew the seeds of new ideas in the Belarusian intellectual thought. “Revolt in the name of freedom” is deeply rooted in the Belarusian history; even though it was subdued in the period of Russian and Soviet occupation. It has reminded of itself to the world by numerous examples of struggle in Belarusian cities and towns, famous uprisings of the 19th century, different forms of protest in culture. Democracy and civil society in case of Belarus were not imposed externally; they result from the Belarusian experience from the past.

The first part of the book “History is a teacher of life in freedom” contains texts by a number of Belarusian historians, who critically analyzed major facts in the national history by evaluating victories and losses in the fight for freedom. On the one hand, Professor Antoni Mironowicz analyzes the phenomenon of peaceful coexistence of different cultural and religious traditions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. On the other hand, professor Zachar Šybieka draws attention to the difficult, even tense relations between Belarusians and Jews in the Tsarist Russia. Ina Sorkina describes at what level small town dwellers were determined to fight for their lost freedom, especially right after the Russian annexation at the turn of the 19th century. Anatol Trafimčyk shows peculiarities of the Belarusian resistance to *Rzeczpospolita*’s assimilation policy. The Soviet period became the central part for Uladzimir Liachoški’s and Aleh Dziarnovič’s research. Uladzimir Liachoški depicts the peculiarities of the Sluck uprising, and Aleh Dziarnovič writes about the Belarusian humanities researchers in the post-war BSSR and their proclivity for intellectual independence.

The second part of the book “Culture laughs at politics” is devoted to the analysis of different cultural phenomena. The text by Andrej Rasinski, a culture expert and a film critic, deserves special attention. The author singled out and described two types of carnival in Belarus: 1) the one that laughs at

authoritarianism (Bakhtin's carnival), and 2) "authoritarian" carnival, a cynic laughter of a violator who destroys human values. Uladzimir Valodzin touches upon a topic that rarely appears in the focus of historians, but it should appear in the context of the "revolt" of Belarusian hippies in the BSSR. A poet Valaryna Kustava dwells on the modern Belarusian ("*post-tutejšyja*") literature. Piotr Rudkoŭski's article is devoted to the forms of the Catholic Church participation in the life of the Belarusian society and also to the problematic issues associated with the Catholic Church.

Discussion of the "revolt in the name of freedom" could not omit the issue of the national idea and European integration. There is still no consensus in Belarus whether the "national choice" and the "European choice" are complementary or mutually exclusive options. The articles by Swedish scholar Per Anders Rudling, Belarusian Alaksiej Lastoŭski and Hungarian András Rácz tackle with different aspects of this issue. The Swedish scholar describes the peculiarities of the creation of the Belarusian nation. The Belarusian researcher presents the genealogy of the Belarusian statehood in the historical memory of Belarusians. The Hungarian scholar analyses practical aspects of "Europeanization of Belarus". The text by Iryna Kaštalian has a slightly different topic. It is devoted to the role of religion and religious ceremonies in the everyday life of Belarusians.

This publication would not be possible hard work of many people, their help and advice. The editors express their gratitude for the interest in the project and its financial support to Rodger Potocki, Senior Director for Europe, the National Endowment for Democracy, and Alexander Brakel, Head of Konrad Aadenauer Stiftung office in Belarus. We are also grateful to the Director of the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy at Lazarski University Jerzy Stępień, Judge of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Republic of Poland, for his patronage, advice and for crating an exceptional atmosphere. We express our special gratitude to "Budźma" campaign for organizing workshops, to out media partner "Novy Čas" for media support. We thank former Institute fellows for sharing their experience. We thank volunteers and Lazarski University employees for their hard and creative work, we thank the participants, the guests, all those people who created a unique atmosphere and by any means helped in organizing the conference and preparing its materials for the publication.

Piotr RUDKOŪSKI, Kaciaryna KOLB



Introduction.

# Reflections on Self-Government and Citizenship

**Andrzej S. KAMIŃSKI**, Georgetown University, USA

I would like to begin with a less than optimistic question: is it possible for Belarus to avoid the fate of Brittany? And what if — God help us — the battle over language is lost to the dominating imperial power, like the battle was lost in Ireland, and what if, in the battle for sovereignty and civic freedom, Belarus goes not in the direction of Brittany but of Ireland? Furthermore, can one assume that Belarus will not become a Russian Brittany? The present government, and in particular the president, feels much more attached to the language of its eastern neighbor than to its own, while its policy of isolating itself from Europe and cultivating close contacts with Russia suggests a less than optimistic response to the question posed at the beginning. Opponents of Lukašenka, including those on the left, right and in the democratic-liberal center, all in their own way are fighting to stop the process of “brittanization”. For some of them, the battle over language is an integral part of the struggle for sovereignty; for others language poses no problem whatsoever. However, a growing part of the opposition and Lukašenka’s current electorate are beginning to appreciate the long-term consequences of a closed door policy that cuts Minsk off from Europe.

Reflecting upon the fate of the Celts, i.e., the Irish and the Bretons, I cannot escape the impression that one has looking at a map of the changes that have taken place over the last thousand years. If one looks at Europe over the past two millennia on a map showing at 300–500 year intervals the changes occurring not only in country borders, but also in religions, languages and nationalities, one is bowled over by the lack of stability, the disappearance of age-old records and the appearance of completely new names. One is confounded by the languages of classic literature that have completely fallen out of use, such as Provençal or Old Belarussian, not to mention Latin, without which there would be no European civilization. One may well be startled by the disappearance for ages of ethnic names and then pleasantly surprised by their sudden „resurrection”. Indeed, nationalities that appeared to be sunk in a deep sleep for centuries suddenly sprang to their feet and took decisions into their own hands, vide Slovaks, Slovenians, Latvians or Estonians.

Similarly, in modern-day democratic countries there are national movements that continue to reach for ever great autonomy and self-government such as the Basques or Scots or, to a lesser degree, the Welsh or the German autochthons of the Opole region in Poland.

Russia and China — multi-national empires that prefer arbitrary rule, are the masters of “taking care” of such business because they know full well that these issues are veritable bombs that usually explode precisely when great crises are sapping the strength of the state. Both these empires are experts in processes that unite, that integrate, that assimilate. They look for guidance to, on the one hand, the melting pot model of the United States, and on the other hand, the example of Brittany. However, neither Russia nor China will tolerate any constriction of domination or national control, hence limiting their adherence to the American model.

The Kremlin for centuries has pursued its battle for the subjugation of the lands and nations that once made up Kievan Rus. Its policy of military aggression always went hand in hand with war over symbols and history. Without going into great detail, it is worth recalling the legend of the White Kalpak (the story of the migration of the symbol of real faith from Rome to Byzantium and hence to Novgorod) or the strikingly similar theory of the Third Rome, in this instance located in Moscow. In as much as the notion of the Third Rome established the dominance of the Muscovite church over orthodoxy, the later concept of three loving sisters (Great Russia, Little Russia and White Russia) justified the integration and subjugation of the younger sisters to the caring protection of the elder sister, Moscow. After occupying the greater part of the territories of Rus’ by the end of the eighteenth century, official St. Petersburg consolidated its position as defender and protector of all

Slavdom and all Orthodoxy. It comes as no surprise then, that the Lutheran-raised “Voltaire-inspired Semiramis of the North” so zealously persecuted Greek Catholics living on the lands occupied during the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For political reasons, it has always been more convenient for the rulers of Russia, both now and in the past, when the majority of Slav nations adhered to Orthodoxy and acknowledged the superiority of the Russian Orthodox church. This policy of religious community and spiritual dependence is evident throughout history until this day.

Directly subordinated to the Russian authorities from the rule of Peter the Great, the Orthodox church served Russia as a protective shield warding off “foreign influences” and as a ready justification for expanding its sphere of influence to the west and south. It was firmly maintained that aggression to the south freed the Orthodox from Ottoman servitude; aggression to the west restored the genuine Orthodox faith to the Belarusians and numerous Ukrainians. Russia’s distinctiveness from the West, and in particular the Catholic West, was emphasized in religious and ethical terms. On the good side was the real faith of pure hearts; on the other side was the decadent, autocratic church sunk in moral decay. This distinction (and choice) of Russia or Europe was all too clear for the nations freed from the Soviet Empire in 1989 and 1991.

Ethnic Poland, which accepted Latin rite Christianity, was regarded as a Trojan horse in a Slavic sea, a European country that brought the “Russian enemy,” i.e., Europeanism, to the Slavic lands of Belarusian and Ukrainian. Looking at a map of Europe at the end of the nineteenth century (with the exception of the North Caucasus), one can identify at least 20 nationalities that were sentenced by the rulers of several large countries to the same fate as Brittany. Yet by 1918 the majority of them had “broken through to independence.” The rest followed in 1989-1991. We must not, however, forget that, what with the astute policies of the Kremlin and the centralist policies of Brussels, the threat of “re-brittanization” is still real, most evidently at the present time in Belarus and Ukraine.

Ukrainians have taken over Maidan independence square in self-defense and in hopes of preventing Russia from severing them from Europe and thereby making them entirely dependent on the Kremlin. There is no way of telling if they will succeed, but most assuredly we must and should admire them. The Maidan occupiers are insisting that they live in a European country and will not kneel before Putin. Yanukovich is, however, kneeling, while Ukraine’s neighbors, especially Poland appear incapable (perhaps out of fear?) of making the gesture of support that the deceased Lech Kaczyński made towards Georgia. The careful observer notes that since the times of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, events

in Ukraine have had strong repercussions in Belarus. Does this still hold true? I would like to think it does as every mass act of civil disobedience hinders the process of brittanization. It mobilizes the younger generations, stripping them of yet another layer of corrosive sovietization.

My Belarussian friends tell me that, according to statistical studies, today's school children no longer believe — as did their peers in 1993 — that the Empress Catherine known as the Great, Peter I and Suvorov were among the top five greatest heroes of Belarussian history. This is certainly good news and the effect of a concentrated effort by teachers and historians to present to their students their own history and not that of a foreign country. The question is whether the official version of events from World War II being sold by the media and authorized schoolbooks is any cause for optimism. How many young Belarussians are seriously engaged in the struggle for their own citizenship and for the sovereignty of Belarus? It could prove instructive to look at this issue through the microcosm of Lazarski University in Warsaw.

The University has had a scholarly Belarussian Center for the past seven years and during that period the Center for Civic Space has organized annual international conferences that have brought together the leaders of the Belarussian opposition as well as Belarussian and foreign politicians, historians, sociologists and other experts. There are over 200 students from Belarus enrolled at the University. They are studying in Poland, but the language one hears in the corridors, elevators and student cafeteria is Russian, though there are in fact very few Russians at the University. These students, unfortunately, very rarely drop by the Belarussian Center or take part in the annual conferences, though there has been some improvement of late. Our observations during the conferences, though very limited, are sadly generally negative. Perhaps the most disturbing observation is the complete lack of interest in an alternative to the status quo. Even abroad, the young adults evince little need to seek out minds that think otherwise than their domestic autocrat. It is difficult to ascertain whether this stems from the small-mindedness and egoism of the youngsters or rather from their spiritual inability to identify with anything the opposition has to offer. One also wonders why less than 10% of the Belarussian students at Lazarski participates in the Belarussian Center's activities aimed at cultivating their native language and culture. They have no problem quickly mastering Polish and English, and after graduation many of them strike out to the West in pursuit of their careers. The choice of Poland for university indicates that if not the students themselves, then their parents decided to seek higher education in Europe, eschewing thereby their domestic brand of Lukašenka-laced education. If that is indeed the case, then how can one explain the students' utter passivity? Why do so few of them attend our

conferences? Perhaps because they spend so much time studying? Could it be that Lukašenka's conflict with the diverse opposition is perceived as simply a struggle for power, as a changing of the ruling elite, rather than as a struggle to transfer power to autonomous citizens?

Belarusian sociologists who for years have studied and analyzed changing trends in opinions within the Belarusian population have provided various answers to these questions. Some of them can be found in the official press, but most of them have appeared in alternative, independent media channels. I would like to cite some of them here in order to highlight the consequences for civic space and civic activity when political parties are centrally controlled. A look at the various experiences of the Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian opposition can also shed light on these issues. Just before communism fell, groups of rival oppositionists in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary worked together in national citizen committees. When communism crumbled, the citizen committees were replaced by competing political parties that offered their electorate different political, social and cultural programs. The citizens had the right to exercise their freedom of vote, which they did in democratic elections. Thereafter, however, voter turnout in elections began to drop precipitously and now seldom is more than 60% of those eligible to vote. All the parties were absolutely convinced that their programs were the best and that they would fulfill all their promises, but did any of them actually promise to share power with their electorate? Are any of the parties actually capable of foregoing their own centralized governing powers? Were any of them able to introduce for any amount of time an internal, grass-roots systems for electing even their own party leaders? And finally, which of the more influential parties thought to introduce legal and institutional procedures to safeguard civic liberties from the executorial power of the authorities? Almost all of them did indeed promise to establish effective self-government bodies and genuine one-mandate elections to parliament. Yet Poland still has no one-mandate elections and in multi-mandate districts voters have to choose from lists of candidates selected by party leadership. People become members of parliament because their names were put on a list drawn up by Donald Tusk or Jarosław Kaczyński. The same is true for Leszek Miller's post-communist party. The situation is reminiscent of events towards the end of the first Commonwealth, when delegates were nominated "on the recommendation of and at the behest of our Lord Brothers" by the lords Radziwił, Potocki and Sapieha and thereupon elected to parliament. The difference was that at that time there were, in towns, in districts and counties, local self-governments fiercely fighting for their representative rights. Today, the self-government structures, where civic activism is forged and thrives, are still very limited. Central authority is

still dominant, though for the average citizen the most important decisions influencing his/her life are made at the local level. The less society participates in the making of these decisions, the weaker its civic ethos and the greater the chances that the citizen becomes less a citizen and more of a subject or even a politically passive consumer.

The opposition parties in Belarus are, as we know, making an effort to connect with their compatriots and to be of help in resolving their daily problems. They do for a fact make a point of participating in self-government elections, though I am not certain to what degree they reach for models from their historical past. What I do know is that study of governance models from the past would make clear how very uneven the balance between local self-government and central authority is at present. It would be painfully evident how the morass of servitude has stifled the historic civic space. Belarus is heir to a rich and beautiful tradition of urban and county civic life that dates back the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its history is also full of the struggle for sovereignty or at the very least for the restoration of its national culture dating to the first thirty years of the twentieth century. It has a “forgotten” but dramatic history of the western Belarusian villages that strove to defend themselves and survive the onslaught first of Nazism marching to the east and then the onslaught of communism marching to the west. The Soviets destroyed the countryside of western Belarus. In 1991, the newly restored sovereign state did not pay much attention to the population of the collectivized countryside. Political elites generally assume that “for the good of the cause” they must take care of the “masses” and their problems without necessarily allowing them to participate in the decision-making process. It was precisely this logic that the population of the villages and post-Soviet collectives remained entirely unaware of the most important events of the democratic transformation of their country. In Poland, a similar approach (Balcerowicz) resulted in the rise of Lepper, while in Belarus the failure to install the Czech model eased the way for Lukašenka to take power.

For centuries first factions within the ruling elite and then later political parties were absolutely convinced that their program was the only valid one and they exhorted the voters to support them. Yet, we “normal folk” usually have great difficulty fitting our opinions and needs into the stiff framework of these party agendas. Ideally, however, one would like to divide one’s support, giving one party 65%, another say 25% and 10% somewhere else. Even in the United States, which for years has been “under the rule” of one of two parties, either “republican” or “democrat,” voters find it extremely difficult to lend 100% support exclusively to one party. What often happens is that people who generally vote Democrat will decide to choose a Republican for president.

We see these vacillations in both presidential and gubernatorial elections. In multi-party systems, the electorate are offered much more diverse and detailed party programs, but conversely this makes it that much more difficult to give 100% of one's support to the proposed solutions to all the problems facing the country. Oftentimes, instead of voting for one party which they only partially support, voters decide not to vote at all. They thus forfeit their right to make their decisions. I dare say, however, on the basis of my experience in the United States, that people are less willing to forego their right to vote in elections for the mayor or the sheriff or, perhaps most importantly, for the head of the county or the local school board. Even if Lukašenka's people win in the local elections (by one means or another), or people from the right or the left, these elections — if they take place — always lend some hope for the revival of local self-rule. Self-government structures in Czech, Slovakia and Hungary, for example, need to assert themselves against every successive government for the expansion of their rights. They still wield much less power and genuine civic influence than their counterparts in Switzerland, England or the U.S. Nonetheless, they are the most important source of civic spirit and civic *modus operandi*. One must never forget that while citizens form parties and lead them, they also are most effective in the defense of their basic human rights and their right to decide the fate of their children, their homes, streets, neighborhoods, villages or towns. By keeping these basic principles in mind, perhaps we can shorten the distance between the democratic opposition of Belarus and the former *kolkhozniks* and the students at Lazarski University.





PART 1.

# HISTORIA MAGISTRA VITAE-IN-LIBERTATE

# Religious Tolerance along the Polish- Belarusian Borderline

**Antoni MIRONOWICZ**, University of Białystok

Religious tolerance in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth belonged to a much broader range of issues than mere coexistence of different religions. Free public worship and advocacy of one's faith influenced other spheres of public and private life. Religious tolerance was a precondition for the openness of the Polish and Ruthenian society to foreign novelties. The innovation spread to the Eastern lands from the West, East and South. One should keep in mind the role of Byzantine and other Eastern traditions, widely accepted by the Sarmatian culture. Together with the religious openness people's practices and culture at a cultural frontier changed too. It can be seen in literature, art, political behavior and mentality of new generations.

## 1.

Orthodox and partly Uniate communities were part of the Byzantine civilization heritage, enriching the cultural and spiritual heritage of whole *Rzeczpospolita*. Great service in establishing religious tolerance in Poland was done by Orthodox noble families: the Bućackis, Chadkievičs, Čartaryjskis, Sanhuškis, Sapiehas, Siamaškas Sluckis, Salamiareckis, Tyškiewičs, Masałskis, Alielkavičs, Pacs, Puzynias, Višniavieckis, Zaslauškis, Zbaražskis and many others. It was on their initiative that Schweipolt Fiol set up a Cyrillic printing house for the needs of the Orthodox Church in 1491 in Krakow. His works

could be found in the residence of Belarusian magnates Sapiehas in Boćki and Kodna. Fioł's undertaking was continued by Belarusian humanist born in Polack, Francišak Skaryna, who in 1517–1519 published the first Bible in Old Belarusian language in Prague. Eminent Orthodox magnate Ryhor Chadkievič supported setting up a Ruthenian printing house in his family residence in Zabludaŭ. Two printers Petr Mstislavets and Ivan Fyodorov published in 1569 “The Instructive Evangelary”, a collection of religious lessons to facilitate the understanding of the biblical texts. The Zabludaŭ Evangelary is an analogue of the Catholic and Protestant *Postilla*, it was published 12 years after the Mikolaj Rey's *Postylla* (1505–1569) and four years prior to Jakub Wujek's *Postylla* (1541–1597)<sup>1</sup>. The fact that literacy was spread among the followers of “Greek faith” is the best indicator of the role of the Orthodox Church in the society of *Rzeczpospolita*. Literacy was spread wide among Ruthenian magnates, boyars and city dwellers<sup>2</sup>. The greatest achievements of legal thought were put in carefully designed and printed Lithuanian Statutes (1529, 1566, 1588). This codified collection of customary law contains many elements of ecclesiastical law. The statutes arose from the Renaissance ideas spread among the Ruthenians. These cultural achievements were only possible thanks to the Orthodox Church. It stimulated development of sacral architecture, icon painting, psalms and written language. The role of Ruthenian chronicles and annals was noted by Maciej Strykowski, who wrote in the “*Polish Chronicle*”:

“Therefore, brother Litvin, do not forget about Ruś, not less glorious; everyone should acknowledge, that one cannot make order in one's affairs without them, as Ruthenians got used to be in their countries for long, they have longer experience: Litva grew up from them in the end”<sup>3</sup>.

## 2.

The state of multi-religious and multi-cultural co-existence was broken by the Church Union in Brest (1596). It affected the main foundation of the Ruthenian culture, i.e. the spiritual community with the Byzantine Empire. The existing Catholic-Orthodox order was diluted by another indirect element, suspended between the two traditions. The initiators of the Union wrongly believed that it would be appealing for Ruthenians and would prompt their

1 Mironowicz, A. (1990). Powstanie zabludowskiej oficyny wydawniczej na tle sytuacji wyznaniowej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim. *Acta Baltico-Slavica*, t. XIX, Warszawa, 245–264; Jaroszewicz-Pieresiawcew, Z. (2003). Druki cyryliczne z oficyn Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI–XVIII wieku. Olsztyn, 17–46.

2 Kloczowski, J. (1997). Cywilizacja bizantyjsko-słowiańska. In J. Kloczowski (Ed.), *Chrześcijaństwo na Rusi Kijowskiej, Białorusi, Ukrainy i Rosji (X–XVII w.)*. Kraków, 95.

3 Strykowski, M. (1846). *Kronika polska, litewska, żmudzka i wszytskiej Rusi Kijowskiej, Moskiewskiej, Siewierskiej, Wołyńskiej i Podolskiej...* t. I, Warszawa: wyd. G. K. Glücksberg, 219.

withdrawal from the Orthodox religion. However, this trend has not led to the decay of the Orthodox culture; on the contrary, it stimulated development of its new forms, better adjusted to the realities of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Union of Brest was not directed against the Orthodox religion in general, but against the Orthodox Church in *Rzeczpospolita*. It brought few benefits to the Catholic Church, but did not solve any of the internal problems of the country. In Poland, the distance between the Catholic elite, the Ruthenian culture and the Orthodox Church increased. For Catholics, a Protestant, brought up within Western culture, was closer than Ruthenians, loyal to the Byzantine tradition, but increasingly accepting Polish culture<sup>4</sup>. This circumstance also had some positive effect for the Orthodox community. Orthodox elites went through the evolution of their cultural attitudes. Pressure from the side of the Uniates and the Roman Catholic Church gave impetus to the development of Orthodox communities. The works of Stanisław Hozjusz, Benedict Herbst, Piotr Skarga or Ipacij Paciej (Ipatii Potii) generated debate on the topics of dogma, rights and ceremonial rites. The controversy with the Uniates helped the Orthodox to develop a clear statement of their religious doctrine and crystallize their cultural identity. Uniate version of the Ruthenian culture influenced upon the formation of the protective mechanisms of the Orthodox culture in *Rzeczpospolita*. The Orthodox culture and education became, on the one hand, more engaged into religious dispute, while, on the other hand, increasingly referring to Latin models.

The development of Orthodox education and culture revived when Petro Mohyla became the Metropolitan. Interestingly, this revival appeared when the main place in the Kyiv Metropolia was taken not by a Ruthenian, but by a representative of a polonized Moldovan family. At the Metropolitan Mohyla's initiative the famous Kyiv Mohyla Academy, an advanced school on the model of Jesuit collegiums was established. Mohyla's actions outraged the Orthodox clergy who did not want to accept Latin models. Around him there emerged the so called "Mohyla Atheneum" (academy) that brought together outstanding humanists<sup>5</sup>. It should be emphasized that the Orthodox hierarchs were strongly associated with the Polish culture because of their educational background. The

4 Naumow, A. (1996). *Wiara i historia*, Kraków, 30.

5 Chynczewska-Hennel, T. (2002). *Akademia Kijowsko-Mohylańska*. In A. Mironowicz, U. Pawluczuk, P. Chomik (Eds.), *Szkolnictwo prawosławne w Rzeczypospolitej*. Białystok, 40–54; Jabłonowski, A. (1899-1990). *Akademia Kijowsko-Mohylańska. Zarys historyczny na tle rozwoju ogólnego cywilizacji zachodniej na Rusi*. Kraków; Łużny, R. (1966). *Pisarze kręgu Akademii Kijowsko-Mohylańskiej a literatura polska. Z dziejów kulturalnych polsko-wschodniosłowiańskich w XVII–XVIII wieku*. Kraków; Kłoczowski, J. (1998). *Młodsza Europa*. Warszawa, 337–338; Mironowicz, A. (2012). *Prawosławne szkolnictwo teologiczne na terenie Rzeczypospolitej*. In M. R. Drozdowski, W. Walczak, K. Włszowata-Walczak (Eds.), *Od Kijowa do Rzymu. Z dziejów stosunków Rzeczypospolitej ze Stolicą Apostolską i Ukrainą*. Białystok, 863–880.

Metropolitan Petro Mohyla's activities and the activities of his successors prove the existence of a separate Orthodox culture on the lands of the Commonwealth, which was formed in a situation threatening the existence of the Ruthenian Church. New conditions led to a break with the post-Byzantine and Muscovite isolationism and opened the Ruthenian community to the developments and achievements of the Western culture. As a result, the defense of Orthodoxy was going through the use of elements of Latin culture, but always maintaining its own religious tradition. The inclusion of the Latin language and customs into the Orthodox culture was a form of protection against pushing it to the periphery of cultural and political life. The reforms of Petro Mohyla added dynamics to the spiritual life and greatly enriched the Orthodox culture in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a stable country when there existed relative religious tolerance, and Ruthenians, Poles and Lithuanians had equal rights. Then, the Commonwealth was a strong European power. A departure from this tradition, formed in the noble democracy, and, in particular, departure from the principle of equality of noblemen without religious differences was equal to bringing the internal partitions and the fall of the state. In this regard, the fate of the Cossacks who had been faithful to the Commonwealth until they realized that Orthodox religion and Polish eastern policy could not be reconciled with each other was very typical one. As a result, they became subjects of Muscovy rulers. Cossacks were the guardians of the south-eastern border of the state. Most of the troops that defended Khotym castle in 1621, were Cossack troops led by Hetman Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachnyi. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth instead of increasing the number of registered Cossacks and returning privileges to the Orthodox Church began the abolition of Cossack rights. The policy of Žyhimont III Vasa eventually made Cossacks the defenders of Orthodoxy. The monarchy that increasingly succumbed to the influence of the papal nuncios had lost the belief that the guarantee of the rights of the Orthodox is the national and strategic interest of the state. Comprehension of this fact by Uladzislaŭ IV led to the restoration of formal structures of the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, this policy ended with the death of the king, and the revolt of Bohdan Khmelnytsky brought to the fore the issue of equality of the Orthodox Church. This problem had become not only an internal affair of the Commonwealth. Not only Muscovy raised voice in defense of the rights of other religions, but also Sweden, Transylvania, and even England. No wonder that defrauded by the unfulfilled promises of the Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth, Cossacks in 1654 accepted Moscow's protectorate. For Poland, this meant not only a war with its eastern neighbor, but also deepening of the political divisions among the Orthodox population.

Last chance to stop separatist aspirations among the Orthodox Church believers was Hadyach treaty. The treaty with Poland, concluded in 1658 by Cossack Hetman Ivan Vygovski and Ruthenian magnate Yurii Nemyrych, presupposed the creation of the third element of the state — Ruthenia, and also the exclusive appointment of the Orthodox bishops in the following provinces: Kyiv, Bratslav and Podolsk, as well as the entrance of these bishops to the Senate. Under pressure from papal nuncios and Uniates, The Hadyach treaty was not fully ratified by the Diet. The provision on the elimination of the Church Union, "*the sources of disagreement between Greeks and Latins*" was not approved. Thus, the chance of integrating the Orthodox population of the Commonwealth was lost<sup>6</sup>.

The social model of the eastern lands based on tolerance had been shaped for centuries. It was broken in the era of Counter-Reformation and wars that the Commonwealth fought with the Orthodox Muscovy, Mohammedan Turkey, Protestant Sweden, and multi-confessional Transylvania. It was then when the stereotype of a Pole-Catholic and the myth of Poland as "Christianity wall" arose<sup>7</sup>. Fortunately, these negative trends disappeared during the Enlightenment. The Commonwealth in this era was as previously was a multi-religious state. Multi-ethnic and multi-confessional structure existed mainly in the eastern provinces. In 1789, the Commonwealth already after the partition consisted of 53% of Roman Catholics, 30% of Greek Catholics, 10.5% of Jews, 3.5% of Orthodox and 1.5% of Evangelicals; in the eastern provinces the Uniates and the Orthodox still dominated. At the same territory, there were more than elsewhere mostly small religious communities represented by Karaims, Muslims and believers of the Armenian Church<sup>8</sup>.

At the time of the Four-Year Diet (the Great Diet), there was an attempt to regulate the legal situation of the Uniates, Orthodox, Protestants and Jews. For the first time, the Uniate Metropolitan got a seat in the Senate, and the Jews received legal protection. On May 21, 1792 the Diet adopted a constitution, which confirmed the decision of the Congregation of Pinsk

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6 Mironowicz, A. Prawosławie i unia za panowania Jana Kazimierza, 149-189; Mironowicz, A. (1998). Projekty unijne wobec Cerkwi prawosławnej w dobie ugody hadziackiej. In J. S. Gajek, St. Nabywaniec (Eds.), Unia brzeska z perspektywy czterech stuleci. Lublin, 95-122; Mironowicz, A. (2001). Piotr Mohyla a idea unii kościelnej. Studia Podlaskie, t. XI, Białystok, 25-33.

7 Tazbir, J. (1987). Polskie przedmurze chrześcijańskiej Europy. Mity a rzeczywistość historyczna. Warszawa.

8 Litak, S. (1994). Od Reformacji do Oświecenia. Kościół katolicki w Polsce nowożytnej. Lublin, 133-134.

of 1791. The Orthodox Church received the appropriate legal status and independent organizational structure. The Orthodox gained equal rights with other citizens of the Commonwealth. This was the result of understanding of the fact that too many privileges to the Catholic faith led to intolerant actions regarding Protestants and Orthodox believers, and believers of non-Christian denominations.

Attention should be paid to assessment of regulations of Pinsk congregation in 1791 that defined the status of the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Proponents of reform in the spirit of the constitution of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, found it *very efficient and in no way contradicting neither dominant religion nor the law of the country*. “National and Foreign Newspapers” wrote:

*“Had the Commonwealth acted in the same way earlier, if instead of persecution and harassment it would guarantee protection of that people’s property and traditions, then the generous grain fields of Ukraine and Podolia would not be so much covered with our blood, and no foreign intrigue would found easy access to the hearts attached to their homeland and happy in their lands”<sup>9</sup>.*

Evaluating the Pinsk agreement some publicists confirmed by historical examples that all the defeats the Commonwealth suffered from were caused by religious intolerance, they were punishment for persecution of *non-Uniates and dissidents*. Change of the policy of the Commonwealth in relation to adherents of different religions was the result of the current international situation and an attempt to fix the state system. It was then realized that the Commonwealth should have multi-religious and multi-ethnic character since favoring one dominant religion was detrimental. However, the conclusions were made too late to produce tangible results<sup>10</sup>.

#### 4.

Formed for several centuries, specific religious tolerance in the eastern provinces of the Commonwealth influenced the behavior of local inhabitants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The adopted model of coexistence between people of different faiths, often disturbed by external influences from Warsaw or St. Petersburg allowed the local communities to survive the most severe historical

9 “Gazeta Narodowa i Obca” z dnia 16 lipca 1791 r.

10 Sakowicz, E. (1935). Kościół prawosławny w Polsce w epoce Sejmu Wielkiego 1788-1792. Warszawa; Deruga, A. (1936). Walka z rusyfikacją Kościoła prawosławnego w Polsce w epoce Sejmu Wielkiego (1788-1792). Ateneum Wileńskie, t. XI, 2-32; Mironowicz, A. (1996). Cerkiew prawosławna na terenie Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w latach 1772-1795. In M. Biskup (Ed.), *Ziemie Północne Rzeczypospolitej Polsko-Litewskiej w dobie rozbiorowej 1772-1815*, Warszawa-Toruń, 81-94; Mironowicz, A. *Kościół prawosławny w dziejach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, 255-267.

moments. The symbiosis of cultures and faiths formed the character of the borderline society. On the one hand, it was inclined patriotically, but, at the same time, accumulated cultural elements of other nations.

German historian Professor Jan Rode drew attention to the influence of religious tolerance on the behavior of the population in former eastern provinces during the 1863–64 Uprising.

*“In Europe, there were no countries in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> that practiced tolerance for religious and ethno–national affairs as much as the Polish–Lithuanian union. It recognized six official languages, and four religions gave an example of an almost perfect coexistence with Judaism and Islam, as long as the Counter–Reformation did not take the fight with the Protestants and the Orthodox Church. The memory of that peaceful coexistence was still alive during the time of Russian domination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century”*<sup>11</sup>.

Probably for this reason, the Polish democratic uprising was supported by the local population in the Belarusian and Lithuanian lands.

According to many researchers of cultural borderlands, the greatness of Adam Mickiewicz, Mark Chagall, Stanisław Moniuszko, or Tadeusz Kościuszko grew from a specific religious and national tolerance in the former eastern provinces. For those great figures, the provinces remained their small motherland, their creative inspiration and the purpose of political struggle. It is worth recalling the words of an émigré scholar of Mickiewicz, Symon Braha, who in 1955 wrote:

*“Belarusian elements in the work of Mickiewicz are not just some superficial coloring. This is something that organically grown together with his works and is inseparable from it, it is in its very roots. It is a very natural fact for those who like Mickiewicz was born and grew up in Belarus under the direct influence that formed the life and culture of local peasantry and gentry”. And further: “(...) is not the bank of the Vistula and the Warta, but the Neman (Nioman) and the Vilna (Vilnia) that was an inexhaustible source of Mickiewicz’s natural poetic talent and inspiration”*<sup>12</sup>.

Most clearly his attachment to tolerance and eastern provinces Adam Mickiewicz expressed not only as a poet. One of the most interesting ideas in

11 Quoted from Okulicz, K. (1964). Białorusini, Litwini i Polacy w powstaniu styczniowym na Litwie Historycznej. *Zeszyty Historyczne*, t. VII, Paryż, 19.

12 Mickiewicz, A. (1955). *Dzieła*, t. IX, Warszawa; Брага, С. (1994). Міцкевіч і беларуская плынь польскае літаратуры. In *3 гісторыя на “вы”*. Артыкулы, дакументы, успаміны. Мінск, 293–294; Mironowicz, A. (2000). Andrzej Kempfi w kręgu Mickiewiczowskich alborutheników. In E. Feliksiak, E. Konończuk (Eds.), *Wilno i Ziemia Mickiewiczowskiej Pamięci. Materiały III Międzynarodowej Konferencji w Białymstoku*, t. I. Białystok, 377–385.



his teaching at the College de France was an indication of dramatic displacement of the Belarusian language by the Polish in the eastern lands.

*“The share of the Polish language before 16<sup>th</sup> century, Mickiewicz says, was very unclear, and was far behind the Ruthenian, which was the language of the court and the army, the language of the laws and statutes! The Ruthenian language had already made progress in its development, when the Polish dialect, although it was widely spread out up to Silesia, had no formal and legal existence: it was pushed away by the Catholic Church and not authorized for jurisprudence. There were several provincial statutes and privileges written in Polish, but in general canonical and state laws were written in Latin. Soon, the roles changed”.* Mickiewicz asked: *“what kind of power shook the Polish nation and pushed it to the Ruthenian lands, displacing Ruthenian nationality and language as far away as behind the Dnieper?”* And he answered: *“This power was not bred by the Polish soil, it came from far away, it was the result of a concurrence of circumstances and had no apparent connection with the history of Poland. It was the Catholic Church that took it upon itself to spread the Polish language, which until then it suppressed for a long time”*<sup>13</sup>.

Borderland tolerance had formed a lot of politicians. Józef Piłsudski, addressing the Belarusians in Minsk on September 19, 1919 said that he was *a son of this land, as well as those who have gathered here, so he could better understand and feel all the troubles and misfortunes that had been its fate*<sup>14</sup>. Deeply fond of the eastern provinces, more modern writer Tadeusz Konwicki wrote about Belarus with sentiments:

*“You should be called Dabrarus, should be called the Good land of Good People. (...) You did not take freedom away from anybody, did not rob other people’s land, did not kill because of the neighbor’s boundary. You had respect and a welcoming pie for other people, for the robbers you had the last cow and the last slice of bread with a sign of the cross; you had an open heart for the poor and unspoiled life as a gift. (...) When I recollect the Belarusian speech, when the wind blows from the north–east, when I see a linen shirt with sad embroidery, when I hear a cry of pain without complaint, my heart would always bit faster, sweet melancholy would always pop up from somewhere, it would always smell like a sudden cold and uncertain remorse, the feeling of guilt and shame”*<sup>15</sup>.

Specificity of tolerance on the Polish–Belarusian border area was not formed by an elitist Polish culture, but by the Belarusian folk tradition, that is much

13 Mickiewicz, A. (1955). *Dzieła*, t. IX. Warszawa.

14 Brandys, M. (1984). *Strażnik Królewskiego Grobu*. Warszawa, 5.

15 Konwicki, T. (1977). *Kalendarz i klepsydra*. Warszawa, 115.

more open than the culture of the Western Slavs. This culture, apart from its openness, has always been characterized by a tendency to absorb other influences: Byzantine, Oriental, Latin. Culture on the Polish–Belarusian border area, which grew out of a long-standing tradition of the Commonwealth, had a rich aesthetic life and was, in principle, more tolerant. The specificity of religious tolerance at those lands was based on acceptance of other faiths' adherents and respect for their cultural traditions. The elites of the Belarusian society, succumbing to polonization, gave impetus to other groups to treat with respect different faiths and cultures. Hatred to Jews or Poles, clearly visible during the revolts, had probably more political than religious overtones. The destabilization of the traditional tolerance always appeared under the influence of external factors.

The Belarusian political elites weakly expressed their desire for national independence. The society at the Polish–Belarusian border area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century kept archaic traditions rather than promoting the idea of creating an independent state. According to the residents of border areas national ideologies violated historical tradition and were treated as a foreign element that destroys the old social orders.

In such a diverse ethnic area it was hard to cultivate national postulates that are identical with one dominant church. Even within the same ethnic group the choice of faith and nation went often different way. The Szeptycki family, honored by both Polish and Ukrainian national idea movements, is the best example. The same can be said about the representatives of the Ivanouški family who played a significant role in the Belarusian, Lithuanian and Polish national movements.

The political choice of the elites in the eastern provinces was dramatic. For example, Branislaŭ Taraškevič was brought up in a multicultural environment. He authored the first Belarusian grammar, translated Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* into the Belarusian language, he was a member of the Belarusian and Polish national organizations, a member of the Polish Diet. Taraškevič was imprisoned in Poland for Belarusian nationalism, and killed in the Soviet Union for the same reason<sup>16</sup>. Such internal divisions in the inter-war period led to the fact that some intellectuals better chose the citizenship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania than any national idea<sup>17</sup>.

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16 Bergman, A. (1984). Sprawy białoruskie w II Rzeczypospolitej. Warszawa, 142–165.

17 Mironowicz, A. (2001). Specyfika tolerancji wyznaniowej na kresach wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej. In K. Krzysztofek, A. Sadowski (Eds.), *Pogranicza etniczne w Europie. Harmonia i konflikty*. Białystok, 163–173.

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The coexistence of many nationalities and religions led to the development of specific cultural traditions, formed under the influence of two major civilizations: the Eastern (Byzantine–Ruthenian) and the Western (Latin). The Polish–Belarusian border zone for many peoples was the place where their cultural identity was formed, tolerance being one of its main elements. The culture, formed under the influence of religious and ethnic differences, rooted in all forms of life of the local population and affected the cultural aspect of modern inhabitants of Białystok, Hrodna or Włńnia regions. This relationship to the religious rights, with characteristic openness and tolerance, influenced the behavior of modern Belarusians and Poles on both sides of the border. The lack of clear religious conflicts, which is the case in other regions of central and Eastern Europe, not only constitutes the specificity of the Polish–Belarusian border area. It also is a good example of a living long–standing tradition of the former Commonwealth, the homeland of many nations and faiths<sup>18</sup>.

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18 The image of multireligious *Rzeczpospolita* was recently presented by Andrzej S. Kamiński in: Kamiński, A. (2000). *Historia Rzeczypospolitej Wielu Narodów 1505–1795*. Lublin.

# The Revolt in the Name of Freedom:

## the Fight of Small Town Dwellers for the Lost Freedom and Land in 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries

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After the Belarusian lands were annexed by the Russian Empire and the Magdeburg rights were abolished, the dwellers of small towns (*miastečka*) lost their burghers' rights and were regarded as serfs (either belonging to feudal lords, if it was a private small town, or belonging to the state, if the small town became state-owned). This caused dwellers' lasting struggle for regaining their rights: the right to personal freedom (abolition of serfdom and regaining burghers' rights) and the right to land. At the Grand Duchy of Lithuania times, *miastečkas* received from the state a certain amount of land that small town dwellers considered their property. A common feature of this struggle was that in their appeals to official institutions dwellers quoted the liberties granted by *Rzeczpospolita*'s monarchs, being quite sure that those sources of law still had legal effect.

Some examples of such struggle were described by Mikola Ulaščyk<sup>1</sup>, Vital

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1 Улащик, Н.Н. (1965). Предпосылки крестьянской реформы 1861 г. в Литве и Западной Белоруссии. Минск.

Karnialiuk<sup>2</sup>, Siarhiej Tokć<sup>3</sup>. This article provides new materials relevant to the issue that were found in the archives of Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine.

## LOCALIZATION, FORMS AND RESULTS OF THE STRUGGLE

Former dwellers' struggle for freedom and land was quite common in 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The struggle started at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Haradziec<sup>4</sup> and Janiški<sup>5</sup> of Viłnia province; Markava, Miadziel, Hajna, Pierabrodździe, Parečča, Haradnaja, Lahišyn, Pahost, Paryčy of Minsk province)<sup>6</sup>. Thus, in 1793, residents of Hajna addressed Minsk province governor with an appeal to release them from serfdom labor and other obligations to work for the owner, as their small town was “king’s” and was inhabited by free people. The governor ordered to abolish serfdom labor and to leave only cash fee obligations<sup>7</sup>.

Lahišyn, Haradnaja, Pahost and Nobiel dwellers also appealed for observing their liberties and rights<sup>8</sup>. Those from Haradnaja managed to achieve some improvements. In 1803, Pinsk court held that they should be attributed to the category of state–owned peasants<sup>9</sup>. Lahišyn dwellers started struggle for their rights in 1794<sup>10</sup>. According to the Senate’s decision of 1808, they were released from serfdom and their burghers’ rights were safeguarded<sup>11</sup>. Neighboring landlords tried to get the land back by court appeals, but, in 1828, the Senate affirmed its earlier decision.

Lahišyn dwellers continued their struggle for land and burghers’ rights in the post–reform period. In 1870, the authorities changed the status of the small town residents into “state–owned” peasants and confiscated 2,133 arpents of land. The land was later bought by Minsk province governor Vladimir Tokarev, “on preferential terms” granted for his “committed service”, his Russification achievements in particular. The protest by the residents is known as Lahišyn burghers’ protest of 1874, one of the biggest in Belarus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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- 2 Карнялюк, В. (2004). З гісторыі барацьбы жыхароў мястэчка Крынкі за свае правы ў першай палове XIX ст. Герольд Litherland, № 1–2 (13–14). Горадня, 29–34.
  - 3 Токць, С. (2008). Скідзель у складзе Расійскай імперыі (1795–1915). In І. Барысаў, М. Дзелянкоўскай, А. Вашкевіч (Eds.), Скідзель. 500 год гісторыі. Гродна, 39–40.
  - 4 Lietuvos Valstybinis Istorijos Archyvas (LVIA), ф. 378, агульны аддзел, 1802 г., адз. зах. 2, арк. 4.
  - 5 Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Dział Rękopisów, адз. зах. 6322, арк. 84–87.
  - 6 Российский государственный архив древних актов (РГАДА), ф. 16, воп. 1, адз. зах. 758, арк. 507 адв., 513 адв., 516 адв., 522 адв., 531 адв.; Центральный державний історичний архів України (ЦДІАК України), ф. 533, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1600; адз. зах. 1652; адз. зах. 1676, арк.. 28, 31 адв.
  - 7 Сборник документов, касающихся административного устройства северо-западного края при императрице Екатерине II. 1792–1796. (1903). № 59, II. Вильна, 165–166.
  - 8 РГАДА, ф. 16, оп. 1, д. 758, л. 531 об.
  - 9 Памяць: Гіст.-дакументальн. хроніка Столінскага р-на. (2003). Мінск, 74.
  - 10 Biblioteka Polskiej Akademii Umjętności i Polskiej Akademii nauk w Krakowie, Dział Rękopisów, адз. зах. 5760, арк. 21–71.
  - 11 Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі (НГАБ) у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1355, арк. 204.

century. The cruel crackdown provoked wider protest in the country's democratic circles. A revolutionary and anarchist Piotr Kropotkin called Lahišyn case one of the most outrageous in Russian history. The residents continued to appeal for justice in supreme bodies. In 1876, the authorities decided that the dwellers should get their land back<sup>12</sup>.

The struggle for regaining the burghers' rights increased at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hrodna province governor in his rapport to the Senate explained it by "the Highest Decree of March 23, 1818, that allowed every person to appeal for personal freedoms and acquired liberties<sup>13</sup>. For instance, dwellers of the small town Dyvin when demanding burghers' status pointed out that during the agricultural reform of 1566 Dryvin received 53 *valokas* of land (around 1060 arpents), they provided documents proving that inhabitants of Dyvin were considered dwellers, and the land had been given to them for eternal use<sup>14</sup>. The authorities tried to keep the original documents proving the liberties. Dyvin dwellers complained that Kobryn police "*kept the originals of liberties granting documents and other papers of Dryvin dwellers at their office*"<sup>15</sup>. Kamianiec dwellers also used their King's liberties originals in the struggle for their rights<sup>16</sup>.

The province officials stated that "*the spirit of Dyvin dwellers was common for other peasants, in particular from the small towns of Haradziec, Malča, Lahišyn and other places in the neighborhood*"<sup>17</sup>. Dwellers' vigor and solidarity deserve respect. For example, when eight "instigators" were arrested in Malča, "*all Malča inhabitants both men and women got together, broke the door in the house where the detained were kept, won the fight against the police and released them*"<sup>18</sup>. Describing such cases civil servants frequently stressed that small town communities acted "unanimously and all together", which led to suspecting instigation from local priests.

Starting from 1834, the issue of regaining burghers' rights was many times raised by local communities in Kreva. In an appeal of 1844, they stated that before 1816 they were considered dwellers according to Polish kings' liberties, and later they were transferred to the peasantry estate. The Senate rejected the appeal<sup>19</sup>. But Kreva residents continued to consider and feel themselves dwell-

12 Крук, У. (1997). Лагішынскае выступленне мяшчан 1874 г. In *Энцыклапедыя гісторыі Беларусі: у 6 т., т. 4.* Мінск, 326.

13 НГАБ у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1355, арк. 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14.

14 Ibid., арк. 69 адв.

15 НГАБ у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1381, арк. 11–12.

16 Российский государственный исторический архив (РГИА), ф. 1286, оп. 2, д. 254, л. 5 об.

17 НГАБ у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1355, арк. 46.

18 НГАБ у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1360, арк. 324 адв.

19 *Городские поселения Российской империи. (1860).* Т. 1. Санкт-Петербург, 188.

ers. It is well represented in historic and ethnographic essay “Kreva” written, in 1871, by a local priest Dziamiencij Plaŭski<sup>20</sup>. He testified that the residents of the small town were proud of its glorious past and called it “*miesta*” (urban settlement, as opposed to rural areas). They considered themselves dwellers and tried to excel the peasants from the neighboring villages, to look better, for instance. Men shaved off their beards leaving only small moustache and whiskers. Many had frock-coats, waistcoats, dickies, caftans. Unlike peasants who had grey clothes, small town inhabitants dyed their clothes black. Women had bright percale or silk dresses, good quality black cloth jackets, decorated with light colored buttons, white sheepskin coats and parti-colored woolen kerchiefs. Former dwellers liked to show off in front of peasants as city dwellers. Peasants, in turn, treated them with due respect, but made fun of them behind their back.

Courts’ punishments were severe enough. For example, seven people were sentenced to exile, and the rest were condemned to public corporal punishment (15 to 100 birches)<sup>21</sup>. Landowner Paviel Jahmin was severe in his revenge upon Dyvin dwellers for their revolt in the name of freedom. He deprived Liuĭkovič, Dyvin dwellers’ proxy, of all liberties that gave foundations to their struggle. Liuĭkovič himself was recruited to the army. Six people were kept in custody put into irons for 10 days, and later kept in Hrodna prison. Five most active Dyvin dwellers were sent to Siberia. All heads of households who rejected serfdom obligation got 50 and more birches<sup>22</sup>. Corporal punishments were the only result of another struggle in small town Paryčy against their landlord Puščyn. It is recorded that Laurenci Sciapanaŭ and Fiodar Cybuĭski were punished<sup>23</sup>. According to the local court ruling from August 31, 1836, 21 people from small town Hałšany was sentenced to 50 birches each<sup>24</sup>.

Most frequently, the Russian authorities refused to recognize burghers’ rights of former small towns’ dwellers. In Dyvin, Malča, Milejčycy, Masty, and Kreva cases, the formal reason to reject the rights was the fact that city rights were abolished in 1776: “*The liberties, given by kings and abolished by the Constitution of 1776 have no legal effect at present*”<sup>25</sup>. Senate’s decision of March 1824 regarding Masty also had a general meaning<sup>26</sup>. The Senate referred to the Russian “The Charter of the Nobility” of 1785. It was this document that was

20 Плавский, Д. (1871). Местечко Крево. Историко-этнографический очерк. Вильно.

21 Ibid., арк. 425–426.

22 LVIA, ф. 378, агульны аддзел, 1835 г., адз. зах. 278, арк. 73, 74, 104.

23 ЦДІАК України, ф. 533, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1652, арк. 25.

24 LVIA, ф. 378, агульны аддзел, 1835 г., адз. зах. 417, арк. 46 адв., 49, 52 адв.

25 НГАБ у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1355, арк. 86; адз. зах. 1884, арк. 252.

26 НГАБ у Гродне, ф. 1, воп. 1, адз. зах. 1884, арк. 253.

regarded as a source of law for Russian authorities in such situations, not the liberties granted by *Rzeczpospolita* kings. This Senate's decree, regardless some minor stipulations (to right to receive freedom, for instance), demolished all burghers' liberties and in fact turned dwellers into serfdom peasants.

Desperate struggle helped several small town communities regain their burghers' rights. In 1831, according to the Senate's decree residents of Hlusk were recognized as dwellers: 312 males were cancelled from the list of Ivan Judzicki's peasants and included into the list of dwellers. They were allowed to elect a vojt (head of the town) upon the approval of Babrujsk magistrate. Moreover, the Senate decided that dwellers should pay a cash land tax to Hlusk's landowner in the amount that was accepted in 1793, this amount could not be increased<sup>27</sup>. In 1836, serfdom was abolished for dwellers from Davyd–Haradok. In 1848, Pietrykaŭ dwellers also regained their status<sup>28</sup>. However, in the majority of cases the authorities did not meet such claims.

## REBELLIOUS KAPYŹ

The available sources let us best reconstruct KapyŹ dwellers' struggle for their lost rights. The struggle began on March 4, 1809, when KapyŹ community proxies wrote an appeal to the emperor Alexander I: *“our ancestors were free people, with their freedom granted by Sluck and KapyŹ Liberties. We, their successors, had freedom and liberty before Russia annexed these territories. For some unknown reason, in 1795, we were included in the list of Duke Radzivil's peasants”*<sup>29</sup>. The claim was to exclude KapyŹ residents from the register of peasants and include them in the register of dwellers.

In 1810, former KapyŹ dwellers initiated a law suit against Prince Radzivil in Sluck local court. The legal resolution obliged the Radzivils to provide the documents, necessary for the judicial consideration. The next KapyŹ dwellers' appeal to the emperor was sent in 1814<sup>30</sup>. In 1818, KapyŹ residents filed a petition to the Committee for Resolving Radzivil–related Issues. This committee was a special judicial agency. From 1818 till 1833, it was shaping KapyŹ dwellers' destiny<sup>31</sup>.

In the struggle for their rights, KapyŹ dwellers showed good self–organization. As investigators found out in 1818, during 10 years they paid 1 to 10 zlotys

27 НГАБ, ф. 299, воп. 2, адз. зах. 872, арк. 3–6.

28 Городские поселения Российской империи (1863). Т.3. Санкт-Петербург, 135, 137.

29 LVIA, ф. 459, воп. 1, адз. зах. 4035 (Матэрыялы аб судовым працэсе паміж Радзівілаўскай масай і жыхарамі мястэчка Капыль), арк. 435.

30 Ibid., арк. 479.

31 Ibid., арк. 5 адв.



contribution (depending on the wealth) two–three times a year. The money was spent on paying taxes and on the expenses of proxies associated with the law suit against the Radzivils. The contributions were calculated and registered. In case there was a need for a common meeting, the dwellers met in the local inn<sup>32</sup>. The proxies were authorized with a special document. For example, in 1809, Dziajan Tataržycki and Fadziej Mankievič received a document with 56 signatures (crosses) of Kapył dwellers. In 1832, the authorization documents for Fiodar Źylunovič, Michajla Zaramboŭski, and Jan Čarnuševič were signed by 49 Kapył dwellers<sup>33</sup>. During the trial on the Kapył dwellers case, the Radzivil Committee changed three barristers.

The second stage of the struggle started in autumn 1833. Its main aim was to acquire property rights for land. Kapył dwellers filed a petition for appeal to the Senate. At the same time, they strived for justice at Minsk province attorney.

In 1852, local officials were already conducting investigation concerning the case of “*disturbance and tumult of Kapył dwellers against landlord prince Vithienštejn (Wittgenstein)*”, which started after Vithienštejn’s proxy complained that dwellers illegally cut down trees in the landlord’s forests, and also violently took away Vithienštejn peasants’ gardens, fields and hayfields. The troublemakers (Paviel Dziemidovič was the most active among them) were sent to Sluck city magistrate. The magistrate decision was to release them and put them under the surveillance of the police. This provided a possibility, as it is stated in the correspondence between the officials who dealt with the case, “*on their return, to provoke new unrest among Kapył dwellers who evade serfdom payments*”<sup>34</sup>.

The prince Vithienštejn’s case was again considered in the Senate, where it was finally closed in 1858 with the following decision: the land that dwellers used was Vithienštejn’s property; dwellers had to pay serfdom fees of 90 kopecks a month. Burghers refused to sign agreements with Vithienštejn and sent their appeals to other instances (The Petition Commission, The Senate, The Head of North–West Territory, Minsk province governor, Viłnia governor–general).

The province authorities addressed the Senate with a proposal of possible eviction of dwellers from Kapył. The Senate submitted this case to the minister of the Interior<sup>35</sup>. Thus, the case that seemed to be closed again appeared un-

32 Ibid., арк. 129–136 адв.

33 Ibid., арк. 281–282.

34 НГАБ, ф. 175, воп. 1, адз. зах. 163 (Перапіска па справе капільскіх мяшчан-хрысціян з князем Вітгенштэйнам аб землях), арк. 7, 16–19.

35 НГАБ, ф. 295, воп. 1, адз. зах. 2025 (Справа аб непаслушэнстве капільскіх мяшчан Слуцкага ўезда ўладам пры спаганні з іх чынша за землі князя Вітгенштэйна), арк. 7 адв.–8.

resolved. Dwellers continued either unwarranted use of crop lands, attached lands, and hayfields, offering the fee of 90 kopecks, or they refrained from using hayfields, cultivating only the homestead fields and paying nothing. The police actions did not have any result. Kapył residents would not agree to sign the land contract with the landlord. They still hoped that their appeals and claims would be satisfied.

The events in 1869 were rather tragic. The police department adopted a decision to distrain dwellers' property in order to compensate for Vithienštejn's losses, and to forbid usage of unwarranted fields and gardens. The distraintment was carried out by Šacinski, who later in officials' correspondence was described as "*slightly drunk and impolite, negligent and rather rude*"; his distraintment actions were "*careless, impolite, and evidently not in accordance with the law*"<sup>36</sup>. The distraintment provoked a fight between dwellers against hussars and Cossacks. Šacinski was recalled from his mission in Kapył. The distraintment was entrusted to the police district superintendent who, without Cossacks or hussars' help, distrained the property of 184 persons and on dwellers' approval gave this property for conservation to three noblemen.

Still another decision of the police department had to be implemented: prevent dwellers from harvesting crops from the fields and vegetables from the gardens. It was declared to the dwellers that the harvest from illegally occupied lands would be collected by the prince's administration with the protection from the police. The dwellers claimed they would not allow for it<sup>37</sup>. In July 1869, on a field near Niašviž road behind crosses there was a fight between the dwellers, from one side, and the superintendent, witnesses and Cossacks, from the other. Two hundred of Cossacks from the Don Cossack regiments were sent to Kapył on the order of Viłnia governor-general. An investigation commission on the case of "Kapył dwellers violence" had been working for two months. This commission sentenced six dwellers to imprisonment in Sluck prison castle. 29 dwellers received milder sentences. They were accused of neglect of the authorities' orders and were placed under the police supervision<sup>38</sup>.

Kraskoŭski, in his report to Minsk province governor, characterized Kapył dwellers in an extremely interesting way. According to him, only few of Kapył residents were honest and modest people, the majority of them are wild, annoying, cunning... Kraskoŭski divided this majority into three groups: *petitioners, ringleaders, and the crowd*. The petitioners were busy with the lasting argument

36 Ibid., арк. 92 адв.

37 Ibid., арк. 96 адв.

38 Ibid., арк. 53–54.

between the dwellers and the landlord. The ringleaders were intermediaries between the petitioners and other people. The petitioners and the ringleaders were fully funded by the community. The people who were ready to comply with the authorities' decisions did not have courage to speak openly, as they were afraid that the community would send them to the army<sup>39</sup>. These facts prove that Kapył dweller community was very well organized.

Still another evidence of Kapył residents' struggle for land can be found in officials' correspondence of 1878. There was a report to Minsk province governor about another affair in Kapył between dwellers and bailiffs and police superintendents. Similar description of Kapył residents' violent actions is found in the 1892rapport. However, the endless struggle of Kapył residents did not bring them to their aim. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was close. The new, much more dramatic century was coming...

## CONCLUSIONS

Dwellers from small towns that were not on the list of cities recognized by the Russian government lost their burghers' rights and became serfs. The struggle of such former burghers was mass and very stubborn. Residents of western and central regions of Belarus were particularly active. They used all the possible means: numerous claims, appeals to different degrees of jurisdiction, refusal to comply with serfdom obligations, violence against the representatives of landlords' administration, officials and the police. Communities formed by dwellers were self-organized institutions that helped to fight for the rights and defend interests persistently and stubbornly. The documents we studied do not provide us with sufficient information about the communities' functions and powers, but it is still possible to state that the role of such communities was significant in small towns at that time.

“Revolts” of the small-town-dwellers in the name of freedom show that those people were not quiet and obedient, they did not just dream about their lost freedom, but fought for it. They knew the history very well, especially when it referred to their rights. They preserved carefully the liberties, issued by Polish kings and Grand dukes, and used these documents in their struggle for personal freedom and land. It was one of the most significant manifestations of anti-serfdom movement in Belarus. This way, small town dwellers contributed to acceleration of the abolition of serfdom.

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39 Ibid., apk. 88–92.

# Jews and Belarusians in the Fight for Freedom in Tsarist Russia (1795–1904)

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Belarusians' struggle for freedoms in tsarist Russia took place in the immediate vicinity of Jews. But up to this time it remains unclear what contribution Jews have made to liberating Belarus from tsar's yoke and to what extent their interests and goals in the struggle against tsarism coincided with those of Belarusians.

It is yet unknown that anyone of modern experts in Belarusian Jewish Studies researched specifically the joint struggle of Jews and Belarusians for their rights and the democratization of Russia. Whereas joint Jewish and Belarusian actions are at times mentioned in studies on the history of revolutionary struggle, in the works on the peasant movement the former is presented as completely isolated from Jewish influence. Another aspect of the issue (the comparison of struggle methods) is not sufficiently studied in the Belarusian historical science and it does not take into account the Jewish revolutionary movement.

The struggle of the Jewish people for equal rights and national sovereignty is studied by Jewish historians mainly on the scale of the entire tsarist Russia<sup>1</sup>.

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1 See: Дейч, Л. Г. (1923). Роль евреев в русском революционном движении. Берлин; Гринбаум, И. (1942). Развитие сионистского движения (Иврит). Т. 1–4. Иерусалим; Маор, И. (1964). Еврейский вопрос в русском либеральном и революционном движении, 1890–1944 гг. Иерусалим; Гончарок, М. (1996). Век воли. Русский анархизм и евреи (XIX–XX вв.). Иерусалим.

As a result, many regional peculiarities and details of this struggle get lost. The issue of Belarusians' influence on the effectiveness of the civil and political activities of Jewish people is not even raised.

The present article only raises the issue and seeks for specific examples of Jewish revolutionary activities among Belarusians, including examples of joint actions by Jews and Belarusians in support of their rights. In relation to that, the struggle methods of those people are explored as well as an attempt is made to identify to what extent the rebellion spirit was typical of them. The study goes up to the year 1905, because the mass struggle in the course of the 1905–1907 revolution requires a separate research.

### **1. IN THE FIGHT FOR THE RESTORATION OF *RZECZPOSPOLITA* (1795–1863)**

Majority of Jews and almost all Belarusians ended up in Russia after the partitions of *Rzeczpospolita* in late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Russia at the time belonged to the state type of Asian despotism. Conditions generally worsened for the residents of Belarusian lands<sup>2</sup>.

At the cutting edge of struggle against the tsarist yoke were the military estate of nobility, which comprised about 12% of the whole population of Belarus, and the Catholic clergy. First unsuccessful attempt by the nobility to stir up people for a rebellion dates back to 1796–1797. After the unsuccessful negotiations of Belarusian magnates with Alexander I (reigned in 1801–1825) on the restoration of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (further — GDL), the nobility supported Napoleon in the Franco–Russian war of 1812. Finally, the nobility's honor, the increased national sentiment and the example of revolutionary Europe (especially France and Italy) raised twice the first estate for anti-tsar rebellions in 1830–31 and 1863.

In 1796–1797, the peasantry also responded to the economic oppression, which increased as the lands were incorporated into Russia, with anti-landlords uprisings. The policy of forced conversion of Uniates to the Orthodox faith caused mass protests of peasants led by clergy (especially in Białystok region)<sup>3</sup>. Peasant uprisings were a rule aimed against landlords, and the main purpose of the upheavals was to live freely without oppression. In the starveling year of 1822, about 1/3 of Viciebsk peasants escaped from their lords to the south of Ukraine and to the local virgin forests, where they lived as lonely wolfs, but

2 Шыбека, З. (2003). Нарыс гісторыі Беларусі (1795–2002). Мінск, 17–21. Further on, all unreferred facts of struggle against the tsarist regime in the text should be considered as drawn from this paper.

3 See: Dylağowa, H. (2000). Historia Polski. 1795–1990. Lublin.

never returned to serve their owners. Moved by rumors saying that peasants would be granted freedom for participating in the construction of Petersburg's railroad, thousands of people from the North of Belarus took off and flocked to the Russian capital. The government had to use army. In 1859–1860, Belarusian peasants refused to purchase landlords' vodka in taverns, which were usually rented by Jews. A sobriety movement spread in Western Belarus and was managed by Catholic priests. The discontent by the agricultural reform of 1861 again caused mass protests of Belarusian peasants in 1861–1862.

Belarusian city burghers met Napoleon as a liberator in 1812, and the small towns burghers who had been moved to the peasantry by tsar's government, sued the authorities for decades trying to get their burghers status back. In some places, it went as far as skirmishes with police. In the town of Masty, Harodnia province, a person named Jakimčyk and a Jew Morduch Hiecaliovič were the instigators<sup>4</sup>.

Jewish communities (qahals) did not express such an open and bellicose protest. The Jews were not subjected to serfdom and were free people. Trust in and loyalty to the authorities were a generally accepted tradition among them<sup>5</sup>. This was dictated by the necessity of survival. Tax rises were perceived as a common thing by qahals. Jewish communities kept hopes for co-existence with the government of the new country and helped the Russian army in the fight against France. Orthodox Jews considered Napoleon, who equated Jews in rights with other citizens of the empire, a destroyer of Jewish traditions. A circumstance added to that that the governing body of Warsaw Duchy, created by Napoleon, pursued a policy hostile to Jews<sup>6</sup>. Almost all Jews remained neutral in anti-tsar uprisings. When the nobility went into war against tsarism, no one knew, who would win, and it was unsafe to take sides.

This did not mean that there was no discontent among Jews. Rabbis (spiritual leaders of Jewish communities) considered it unacceptable for authorities to intervene into the internal affairs of Jews. Hasidic communities<sup>7</sup> and the courts of Hasidic saddiks (saints) became the seat of the opposition to the authorities<sup>8</sup>. The Jewish community responded to the oppression from the tsarist government with complaints to the institutions of the empire. It fought

4 Соркіна, І. (2010). Мястэчкі Беларусі ў канцы XVIII–першай палове XIX ст. Вільня, 80–87. “Сумнавядомыя “часовыя правілы” 1882 г., якія забаранялі габрэям жыць у сельскай мясцовасці, звалі намаганні беларускіх мяшчан на нішто. Узнікшая ў гарадах сітуацыя надзвычайнай перанаселенасці прымусіла іх дзесяці ў канцы 1880–пачатку 1890 гг. перасяліцца ў буйныя гарадскія цэнтры ўнутранай Расіі і нават у бліжэйшыя вёскі. Беларусы трацілі грамадска актыўную групу насельніцтва” (Шыбека, 3. (1997). Гарады Беларусі (60-я гады XIX–пачатак XX стагоддзяў). Мінск, 146–147).

5 Этингер Ш. (1993). Россия и евреи. Сборник статей. Иерусалим: Библиотека-Алия, 422.

6 Гинзбург С. М. (1912). Отечественная война 1812 года и русские евреи. Санкт-Петербург, 48-53.

7 Hasidism is widespread popular religious movement that arose in the Eastern European Judaism in the 2nd quarter of 18th century that still exists nowadays.

8 Этингер, Ш. (1993). Россия и евреи..., 242.

against Nicholas I's (reigned in 1825–1855) assimilation measures (russification, conscription, liquidation of qahals, the imposition of secular education in the Russian language) by the means of a silent boycott. Parents did not send children to Russian schools, young men evaded conscription. Qahals, which were liquidated in 1844, in fact existed almost in every town and city in the person of a spiritual rabbi and several honorable Jews, who formed ecclesiastic governing bodies in prayer houses and synagogues<sup>9</sup>.

Sometimes Jews showed enviable obstinacy in defending their rights. In late 1843, a collision took place in the marketplace in Mścislaŭje between Jews and soldiers as contraband goods were being confiscated. Mahilioŭ's governor saw a Jewish rebellion in this ordinary skirmish and took rough measures against the whole Mścislaŭje's Jewish community: forbade leaving the town, arrested the Qahal's leadership, started mass conscription. In response, the Jews went on fasting and spent three days praying in the cemetery. Only owing to the local entrepreneur and sponsor, Isaak Zalikin, who managed to send a complaint to a high official in Petersburg, the books were closed on case of the "Mścislaŭje rebellion"<sup>10</sup>.

As a result of tsar's repressions, lesser nobility with its knight traditions was partly destroyed and partly spread throughout the whole empire. It was losing influence also due to the economic bankruptcy. This put an end to the nobility being the avant-garde in the struggle against tsar's autocracy. Rebellions and uprisings did not develop into a statewide revolt. Each estate fought for keeping their rights and privileges. Land owning nobility aimed at remaining the first estate after the uprisings too.

No joint actions of Jews and Belarusians for their rights were observed. Strong mutual mistrust still existed between religious Jews and Orthodox Belarusians. Since Belarusian burghers and peasants usually consulted with Jews, who lived in multiple towns and villages, on everything, it would be logical to assume that Jewish counselors had certain influence on the rebellious spirit of Belarusians. In the Russian state with its police surveillance, censorship and lack of civil freedoms, meeting in taverns with a glass of beer and a bottle of vodka were sometimes the only opportunity for representatives of different confessions to share news and thoughts.

## 2. JOINING THE RUSSIAN *NARODNIKI* MOVEMENT (1863–1881)

After the 1863 uprising, the tsarism managed to strangle the anti-tsar movement in Belarus. The initiative of its revival and reorganization came to

9 Цыпин, В. (2006). Евреи в Мстиславле. Материалы к истории города. Иерусалим, 52.

10 Цыпин, В. (2006). Евреи в Мстиславле..., 75–81; Нацыянальны архіў габрэйскага народа. RU 678.

Russian intelligentsia, which consisted of representatives from various estates and different people of the country. In Belarus, a noble knight was replaced by a noble intellectual. Jews had their maskilim.

At the same time, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, political reorientation of local political forces from Poland towards Russia was taking place. A number of factors contributed to that: the futility of insurrection, instigated by local nobility; the relocation of economic interests to the East due to the construction of railroads; “voluntary–compulsory” integration into Russian culture. The fight against tsarism stopped being linked to the liberation from Russia, but was aimed at the democratization of Russia itself by the means of a peasants’ revolt. The idea of freedom was replaced by the idea of equality. The previous experience had shown that huge education work was needed to engage popular masses into political struggle. “Go to the people” started.

The participation of Belarusian intellectuals in the All–Russia *Narodniki* movement was insignificant. Of Jews as well<sup>11</sup>. One of the reasons for that were the small numbers of Jews and Belarusians, who spoke Russian and who accepted the ideals of the *Narodniki*. Although maskilim stood for the assimilation (by the example of Jews in Western countries), they were the supporters of the evolutionary way of societal development<sup>12</sup>. Starting from the 1860s, it was Jewish media in the Russian language that were on guard of the interests and rights of Jewish people.

The *Narodniki* movement filtered somehow into Belarus, to a large extent owing to Jews. In 1872, former students of Mahilioŭ gymnasium (brothers Nachman and Lazar Levental. Ryhor Hurvič) chaired by Pavel (Pinchus) Akselrod (1850–1928)<sup>13</sup> founded an *Narodniki* organization at Kyiv University and tried to agitate in the homeland.

After an arrest in the town of Klimavičy, they managed to escape in 1874 and go abroad<sup>14</sup>. In Minsk, Jewish youth, united into a *Narodniki* organization, helped one of the leaders of Russia’s *Narodniki*, Georgi Plekhanov, to found an underground print shop of the Black Repartition and organize its operations. After the police had got on the scent of Minsk revolutionists, they (Grinfest, Getzow, Levkov, Schulman) managed to escape abroad<sup>15</sup>.

11 Дейч, Л. (1923). Роль евреев..., 15.

12 Ibid., 32.

13 P. Akselrod later became a famous Russian *narodnik* and social democrat.

14 Дейч, Л. (1923). Роль евреев..., 205, 242–243, 247.

15 Ibid., 316–335 (Ліст Гецава да Л. Дэйча ад 10 студзеня 1923 г.); Шыбека, З. (2007). Мінск 100 гадоў таму. Мінск, 256.



In their activities in Belarus, the *Narodniki* did not go beyond agitation. Belarusian peasantry and Jewish communities did not apprehend their calls for a revolt. After the freedom had been granted by tsar in 1863 (decrease of land buyout payments, liquidation of the institute of temporary serfdom, partial increase of peasants' lands) the peasants lived relatively well and had all their hopes for the better linked to the incumbent monarchy. In the "age of reforms" (the 1860s and 1870s) the situation improved for Jews<sup>16</sup>. The Jews of the Lithuanian–Belarusian area lived isolated lives and did not intervene into politics<sup>17</sup>. Neither Belarusian peasants, nor Jewish city dwellers did accept agitators of a different faith, who spoke the Russian or Polish languages that they did not quite understand. The memory lived of the negative experience of previous anti-tsar insurrections, which caused a number of repressive measures.

The fear of repressions and illusions created by the tsar fettered the masses. Jewish servility to the Russian authorities was brightly pictured in the memoirs of Pavel (Pinchus) Akselrod. He wrote that impression of the duty to take the hat off before a "lord"

*"(...) was so strongly rooted in me, that having come to Mahilioŭ to enter the gymnasium, I took the hat off in the street not only before all the military men and officials, but even before my classmates"*<sup>18</sup>.

Obviously, the same sentiment was dominant among Belarusian peasants. It was well observed by a Belarusian poet Francišak Bahuševič, who described a peasant's feelings in a city as follows:

*Our fellow is scared at the entrance already  
Whether to go hatless or to bow somewhere*<sup>19</sup>.

For Jews and Belarusians alike, the Russian government was an alien, speaking a foreign language; the former as well as the latter got used to the fact that nothing could be ever demanded from this government, it could only be begged for with the hat taken off.

Lack of popular support pushed Russian *Narodniki* towards terrorism. Ihnat Hryniavicki (1856–1881), who was a part of the Belarusian group of *Narodniki*, but cooperated with Russian ones, set off the deadly bomb for Alexander II<sup>20</sup>. A

16 Этингер, Ш. (1993). Россия и евреи..., 232.

17 Stępniewska-Holzer, B. (2013). Żydzi na Białorusi. Studium z dziejów strefy osiedlenia w pierwszej połowie XIX w. Warszawa, 186–197.

18 Дейч, Л. (1923). Роль евреев..., 194.

19 Шыбека, З. (1997). Гароды Беларусі..., 43.

20 Луцкевіч, А. (2003). Да гісторыі беларускага руху: Выбраныя творы. Мінск: Беларускі кнігазбор, 141.

Narodnaya Volya's member, Jew Hiesia Hielfman, born in Mazyr, participated in the preparations for the attack on the tsar. Being pregnant saved the terrorist from death, but not from the life sentence<sup>21</sup>.

After the murder of the Russian emperor, tsarism started counter-reforms, and the war with Poles, which had been earlier proclaimed, was supplemented with the war on Jews. In general, repressions were strengthened against all the non-Russians. The development of civil society became impossible in Russia.

### **3. PARTICIPATION IN THE CREATION OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (1881-1898)**

The year of 1881 became a turning point in the life of Jews in Russia. The murder of Alexander II was a pretext for anti-Jewish pogroms. They, in turn, broke the hopes of the people of the Torah for peaceful co-existence with tsarist authorities. Even the leadership of Narodnaya Volya saw in the pogroms the means for increasing the revolutionary sentiment of the masses<sup>22</sup>. At the same time some landlords, officials and common peasants protected Jews from violence<sup>23</sup>.

Under the influence of pogroms, educated Jewish youth rejected the idea of cooperating with the authorities, promoted by the educators of the previous generation, and made his way on the road for revolutionary struggle. The social-democratic movement was founded by Jews in Viłnia, the capital of Litvak Jews. Approximately in late 1880s, first social-democratic groups emerged there consisting of Jewish intelligentsia and workers. Mutual benefit societies of Jewish craftsmen turned into social-democratic groups. Jewish socialism was guided by the democratization of Russia and civil rights of the oppressed, which was further promoted by the increased split of the Jewish community into the rich and the poor<sup>24</sup>.

In 1890 Mahilioŭ governor Aleksander Dembowiecki sent a special directive on Jews out to his subordinate officials. The tsarist official did not like the impudence and insolence of young Jews, who did not take off hats before the representatives of local authorities. In this regard, the head of the province demanded for the necessary enforcement actions to be taken. The nobility maréchal of Mscislaŭje district duke Miaščerski, having received the governor's

21 Иоффе, Э. Г. Страницы истории евреев Беларуси. 54.

22 Дейч, Л. (1923). Роль евреев..., 6.

23 Русский еврей (1881, July 2), № 27, 1096; Русский еврей (1881, July 22), № 30, 1176; Русский еврей (1881, November 18), № 47, 1853-1854.

24 Бен-Симуэль, Д. (1906). Письма к еврейской молодежи. Письмо одиннадцатое. Еврейская жизнь, №1, 69.

directive, invited honorable representatives of the Jewish community and threatened them with being publicly punished with birch-roads. An aide of the prosecutor, Suškoŭ, only assented to that. The Jews were indignant, but did not protest. A famous Jewish Mscislaŭje-born historian Shimon Dubnow made this incident in Mscislaŭje known to the press. It turned out that similar humiliation of Jews took place in other towns of Belarus. The authorities were compelled to administer a rebuke to Suškoŭ<sup>25</sup>. This fact indicated the manifestation of the feeling of dignity among Jews and their use of new techniques for protection against administration's abuses — the formation of a favorable public opinion about themselves.

The politicization of the Jewish community brought Chaim Ratner, originally from a merchant's family from the town of Škłoŭ of Mahilioŭ province, to the group of Belarusian *Narodniki* in Petersburg, called *Homan*. In 1884, he founded an illegal print shop of this Belarusian *Narodniki* group, being one of its ideologues and the editor of the *Homan* magazine published in Russian<sup>26</sup>. No other facts of similar Belarusian–Jewish cooperation were observed. It is worth pointing out that at that times the ideology of Westen–Russism was widely spreading among the Orthodox representatives of Belarusian intelligentsia, which was to a certain degree of the anti–Semitic nature<sup>27</sup>.

In 1880–s, multiple ethnographic and philological publications about Belarusians were made in the official press and in the public newspaper *Minskij Listok* (Minsk Leaflet), which was published since 1886. Among researchers of the Belarusian people was an ethnographer Paviel Šejn (1826–1900), a Mahilioŭ-born baptized (in a Lutheran church) Jew. He was considered an excellent expert on the culture of everyday life and dialects of Belarusians<sup>28</sup>. Being a Russian patriot–Slavophil, he called Belarusians Russians, although the songs that he collected (around 3000) and ethnographic materials indicated obvious differences between Belarusians and Russians. Ethnographic studies of Belarus contributed to Belarusians' awareness of their national dignity.

Compared to peasants, the agitation and propaganda among workers, whose numbers were steadily growing, was more successful. The working people stood out with their greater organization and education. That is why Marx doctrine on proletarian hegemony became very popular in Russia.

25 Цыпин, В. (2006). Евреи в Мстиславле..., 66–70.

26 Александрович, С. Х. (1976). Кнігі і людзі: Даслед., архіўныя знаходкі, успаміны, эсэ. Мінск, 78.

27 Western-Russism, historical and ideological direction of scientific, socio-political, ethno-religious and cultural life, which originated in the so-called North-West region of the Russian Empire, and which is based on the postulate that Belarusians are one of the ethnic groups of Great Russian people.

28 Берников, Л. (2010). Из иудеев — в славянофилы. Retrived from: <http://www.berkovich-zametki.com/2010/Zametki/Nomer11/Berdnikov1.php>

Estate interests were pushed into sidelines by the class interests (workers vs bourgeoisie). Political parties, including social–democratic ones, came to replace estate–based organizations. This created the ground for joint manifestations of workers of different nationalities under the slogan “Proletarians of all countries unite!” National interests of the peoples of Russia were ignored; the conditions were not favorable for that in the empire.

First party association based on class affiliation took place in Belarusian and Lithuanian lands in 1893. The Lithuanian Social–Democratic Organization (party starting form 1895), united the supporters of social democracy in Lithuania and Belarus (Lithuanians, Belarusians, Jews). It immediately established reliable contacts with Jewish social–democratic groups. The Marxists of Belarusian and Lithuanian lands acted jointly. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1890–s joint actions were arranged by Jewish and “Christian”<sup>29</sup> workers: May demonstrations, gatherings, and strikes<sup>30</sup>.

Jewish intelligentsia managed to accomplish party consolidation on the basis of both class and nationality. The leaders of the General Jewish Labor Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia (Jewish Labor Bund), which emerged in 1897, gave advantage to the solidarity with the Russian proletariat. On the national issue, they stood for the unity of the Russian state, did not recognize the necessity of non–Russian proletariat’s fight for the liberation from the Russian yoke or even for a national autonomy<sup>31</sup>. Organizationally established at the World Zionist Congress in Basel (1897), the international Jewish national movement (Zionism) oriented the Jewish proletariat of Belarus towards the creation of a common Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists limited themselves with the agitation exclusively among Jewish population and waited for international permission to return to the “promised land”<sup>32</sup>.

The social–democratic movement in Belarusian and Lithuanian lands developed from regional and Jewish into countrywide in Russia. It is well known that the main role in the convocation of the first congress of the Russia’s Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) in Minsk (1898) was played by the Bund. Faithful to the ideas of internationalism, the activists of the party convinced

29 This is how Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russian used to be called in Jewish revolutionary circles.

30 Архіў Цэнтра дзяспары Тэль-Авіўскага ўніверсітэта. Т. 32/142 (Рукапіс Альфонса Мараўскага “Гісторыя літоўскага рабочага руху (1893–1902)), 25–26, 62, 137, 195–196; Коўкель, І. І. (2009). Узнікненне першых палітычных партый на тэрыторыі Беларусі, іх асноўныя ідэйныя накірункі. In Грамадскія рухі і палітычныя партыі ў Беларусі (апошняя чвэрць XIX — пачатак XXI ст.). Матэрыялы Рэспубліканскай навуковай канферэнцыі (Гродна, 23–24 кастрычніка 2008 г.). Гродна. Retrieved from: <http://uctopuk.info/politika/1kovkel.htm>

31 Архіў Цэнтра дзяспары..., 175.

32 Маор, И. (1977). Сионистское движение в России. Иерусалим: Библиотека-Алия, 55.

the delegates of the congress to replace the word “Russian” in the party’s name with the word “Russia”<sup>33</sup>. This had been preceded by an revolt of Minsk Jews in 1897. As soldiers attempted to arrange a pogrom in the city during Easter, Jews managed to defend themselves. This was the first self–defense action of Jewish population in Russia. It is completely understandable that the defenders were accused of attacking soldiers, but thanks to professional protection in court, the arrested got away with a fine of 20 roubles<sup>34</sup>. So the choice of Minsk for RSDLP’s first congress was not arbitrary. The well–organized local proletariat was capable of protecting the delegates of the congress.

At the same time, the Jews of Belarus joined Polish social–democrats as well. Jewish sections were created within the Polish Socialist Party (further — PPS), which was active in Harodnia and Vĭlnia regions, for working with Jewish population<sup>35</sup>.

#### 4. FROM AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA TO TERRORISM (1898–1904)

The Bund was inevitably becoming the leading party in the social–democratic movement in Belarusian lands. It relied on Jewish workers, who comprised the overwhelming majority of the working class in Belarus. Belarusians accounted for only 9%<sup>36</sup>.

In 1901–1902, the Bund amended its program under the influence of the Zionist movement: recognized the Jews as a nation and put forward the slogan of struggle for the right of the Jewish people for a national and cultural autonomy within the borders of the empire<sup>37</sup>. But Bund’s theorists did not accept the idea of the resettlement of Jews to Palestine. They affirmed that the homeland of Jews was where they lived; hence there they had to fight for their civil and national rights<sup>38</sup>.

Zionists, under the influence of the Bund, gradually started recognizing the necessity to struggle for the improvement of the economic living conditions for Jews of Diaspora. They spoke about it at the Second Congress of Zionists in Minsk (1902)<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless, Bund’s activists and Zionists remained arch

33 Махновец–Акимов, Вл. (1908). Первый съезд Российской С.-Д.Р. Партии. Минувшие годы, № 2, 128–168.

34 Минский процесс: Дело о сопротивлении евр. скопищ воен. патрулям: [Крат. Очерк судеб. следствия]; Шамаков, А. С. (1899). Еврейские речи. Москва.

35 Piłsudski J. *Bibuła*, 10–17 (Underground publisher in communist Poland; without year and place of publication).

36 Біч, М. В. (1972). Нацыянальны склад прамысловага пралетарыята Беларусі ў канцы XIX — пачатку XX ст. *Вестні АН БССР*, № 4, 32–40.

37 Бен-Симуэль, Д. Письма к еврейской..., 66–77.

38 Лондан, Арье. Бунд. Retrieved from: <http://berkovich-zametki.com/Nomer23/London1.htm>

39 Членов, Е. В. (1906). Эволюция политического сионизма и задачи текущего момента. Речь на III Всероссийском сионистском съезде в Гельсингфорсе. *Еврейская жизнь*, № 11–12, 191–192.

enemies, although the former as much as the latter fought against the Russian autocracy.

Judging by the materials of Bund's VI congress (late 1905), this party had always been aware of the importance of activities among Christians (proletariat, peasants, soldiers). The experience of this activity showed that the largest success had only been secured by the means of creating separate Christian organizations for managing of the struggle of Christians. That is why Bund's V conference (1902) recommended to party's activists to assist the creation of such organizations and help them with literature, equipment and people. The non-Jewish social-democratic organizations, created by the Bund, including RSDLP's organizations, operated under its patronage until 1903–1904, when Russian parties grew stronger and started separating<sup>40</sup>.

Case in point was Bund's activities in Homieĺ. Starting from 1902, in city's railway shops a social-democratic group operated headed by Ivan Mochaŭ, who was a part of Homieĺ's Bund committee together with Lejba Drohunski, Frejda Kohan, Nieŭcham Rachimlevič and others. In 1904, RCDLP's Paliešsye Committee was created on the basis of this group<sup>41</sup>.

In 1903, an organization of the Russia's Socialist Revolutionary Party emerged in Homieĺ, subordinated to the center in Kyiv. Its composition was international, and a Jew, Israel Gotgielef, acted as its leader. SRP's activists in Homieĺ were agitating among Jews as well as among Belarusians in villages<sup>42</sup>.

As a Zionist activist from Homieĺ, Š. Šniejfal noted in his memoirs, Homieĺ had a great influence not only on Jewish, but also on Belarusian youth looking for new ways; in Homieĺ it [youth] "became Jewish"<sup>43</sup>.

Where the creation of Christian organizations was not achieved, Bund's organizations guided the economic struggle of Christian proletariat and carried out political agitation and propaganda among them<sup>44</sup>. In the report to the RSDLP's second congress (1903), Bund's delegates highlighted the work among "Christians": printing leaflets in the Russian language, joint manifestations and strikes<sup>45</sup>. Apart from Homieĺ, active work among non-Jews was done by Bund's organizations in Mahilioŭ, Viciebsk, Babrujsk, Pinsk, Harodnia and other cities of Belarus.

40 Бунд в Беларуси. 1897–1921: Документы и материалы (1997). Минск, 204, 216. See also: Бич, М. О. (1973). Развитие социал-демократического движения в Белоруссии в 1883–1903 гг. Минск.

41 Бунд в Беларуси..., 113–116. (Данясенне штаб-ротмістра асобнага корпуса жандараў начальніку Магілёўскага губернскага жандарскага ўпраўлення 1 кастрычніка 1903 г.)

42 Бунд в Беларуси..., 117.

43 Шнейфаль, Ш. К. (1917, January 29). Параллели. Осиротелый город. Еврейская неделя, № 5.

44 Бунд в Беларуси..., 204, 216. (3 даклада М.С. Гурэвіча на VI з'ездзе Бунда).

45 Бунд. Документы и материалы. 1894–1921 (2010). Москва, 345, 347, 350.

The strike movement grew stronger at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Harodnia, Bund's organization managed the strike of bakers (Jews and Christians) and the strike at brick producing plants, where the workers were exclusively Christian (200 persons)<sup>46</sup>. It was not easy for Jewish and Belarusian workers to agree on a joint strike. Thus, the owners of leather manufactures in the town of Kopyś of Mahilioŭ province in the spring of 1903 paid Belarusian workers a tad more, than Jewish, aiming to stir up enmity between them<sup>47</sup>. Bund activists still managed to consolidate workers of different nationalities. In 1902, 1200 Jewish and Belarusian leather producers went on strike in Smarhoń. In February 1903, Jewish bakers together with Belarusian colleagues announced a strike in Homieĺ demanding payments in money instead of food<sup>48</sup>.

As it comes out of the data as of 1903, provided by an aide of the head of Mahilioŭ province's gendarmerie, Bund's committee in Homieĺ took into account the fact that manifestations in cities should be accompanied with uprisings of peasants in villages, because this could ensure the success of the demands and weaken the forces of police and army<sup>49</sup>. Using the system of towns, scattered over Belarus, Jewish revolutionary influences penetrated into the very midst of the peasant masses. Thus, in 1904, the residents of the village of Bielaŭ near Źytkavičy started hewing the landowner's forest under the influence of the agitation<sup>50</sup>.

The pogroms in Chisinau (April 1903) and Homieĺ (September 1903) caused a great fear among the Jewish community along with the dislike of revolutionaries, whom they started to perceive as instigators of anti-Semitism. Jewish revolutionaries responded to the pogroms with the creation of underground heroic self-defense detachments. Certain Belarusians protected Jews during the pogrom in Homieĺ as well and others later on<sup>51</sup>. In the town of Tałočyn, Mahilioŭ province, Belarusians participated in a protest manifestation together with Jews and shouted: "Down with pogroms of Jews!"<sup>52</sup>.

Another response of Jewish revolutionaries to pogroms was terrorism. Although Bund's V congress (June 1903) rejected the terrorism<sup>53</sup>, it was done by private initiative or particular revolutionaries. A secret agent Lubin

46 Бунд в Беларусі..., 217. (3 даклада М. С. Гурэвіча на VI з'ездзе Бунда).

47 Последние известия (1903, April 7), № 116.

48 Последние известия (1903, February 19), № 108; (1903, April 2), № 115.

49 Бунд в Беларусі..., 72–74.

50 Смиловицкий, Л. (2008). Евреи в Турове: история местечка Мозырского Полесья. Иерусалим, 207, 211–212.

51 Карасев, А., Глушаков, Ю. (2001). Черная сотня и революционное движение в Гомеле накануне и в период первой российской революции: история противостояния. In Проблемы славяноведения. Сборник научных статей и материалов, вып. 3. Брянск, 179.

52 Бунд в Беларусі..., 217. (3 даклады М.С. Гурэвіча на VI з'ездзе Бунда).

53 Ibid., 95–99.

from Homieĺ was murdered in Babrujsk<sup>54</sup>. In September 1903, in the village of Śmiatanka near Kopyś the workers of a tile producing plant murdered an official Januškievič, who opposed the gathering, organized by Bund's members. By the order of Mahilioŭ's governor Klingenberg, Jewish and Belarusian workers were publicly flogged. This gave another push for the growth of the sentiment for terrorism. A Belarusian worker from peasants, Ivan Balaj, even threatened to assassinate Klingenberg following the example of Hirša Lekiert, who, in 1902, had successfully carried out a terroristic act against Viĺnia's governor Viktor von Val for a similar reprisal of workers in Viĺnia<sup>55</sup>. The first anarchist group in the Russian Empire was created by Jews from Białystok in the spring of 1903. In 1903–1904, it started broad terroristic activity in the city<sup>56</sup>. Jews also actively participated in the terroristic actions of the Russia's Socialist Revolutionary Party.

The Belarusian Socialist Hramada — first Belarusian political party, created in early 20<sup>th</sup> century — in its program declared equal rights for all nationalities that lived in the Belarusian lands. No direct influence has been found of the Jewish social–democratic movement over the creation of the party. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the revolution, Bund's influence on Belarusian workers and peasants was the strongest among all political parties. In the ranks of the party there were at the least 30 thousand persons<sup>57</sup>. If we take into account that Jews were among members of the RSDLP and Socialist Revolutionary parties, then the leading role of Jewish revolutionaries in Belarus will become even more obvious. Their revolutionary movement would have not been so mighty had it not been supported by the Belarusian population. The antagonism between rich Jews and poor Belarusians did not yet show much. The opportunities for the enrichment of Jews in the so–called North–Western province were worse than in the South of Russia.

After the pogroms in Chisinau and Homieĺ, mass protests in the pale of settlement developed into a revolution. Major role in the revolutionary movement in Russia in general belonged to Jews. In 1884–1890, they made up for about 13.6% of the total number of political prisoners in Russia, at the time when their share in the total population was only 4%. In 1897, already a quarter of the empire's political prisoners were Jews<sup>58</sup>. The growth of the

54 Ibid., 90.

55 Бунд в Беларусі..., 108–111. (Дакладная запіска паліцэйскага наглядачыка Санкт-Пецярбургскага ахоўнага аддзялення начальніку Магілёўскага ГЖУ. 20 верасня 1903).

56 Гончарок, М. (1996). Век воли. Русский анархизм и евреи (XIX–XX вв.). Иерусалим, 13–15.

57 Бунд в Беларусі..., 7.

58 Этингер, Ш. (1993). Россия и евреи..., 266.



revolutionary movement made the tsarist government start the war with Japan and strengthen the incitement of Christians against Jews in order to have the situation under control.

Simultaneously the authorities made concessions: from 1903, the pale of settlement was extended, although by little; Jews were allowed to live in certain new settlements; it was allowed to publish books and press in national languages (1904), public discussions of local problems were permitted. In the summer of 1904, Mahilioŭ's governor issued an obligatory ruling establishing for craftsmen to work no more than 10 hours in Mahilioŭ and Homieĺ where strong revolutionary movement could be observed<sup>59</sup>.

Bund's organizational and agitation activities in late 19<sup>th</sup> — early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries certainly led to the lowering of the economic oppression of Belarusian workers and caused the interest of Belarusian peasantry for politics. In 1901–1904, peasants' movement grew in Belarus. In this period, 52 political assemblies with the participation of peasants took place, which accounted for 15.5% of the total number of their strikes against landlords and authorities in the four years<sup>60</sup>.

The traditions of liberalism were destroyed in Belarus. Any protests were brutally suppressed. *Zemstvo*, a legal body for exposing public opinion, was absent, and municipal government did not represent all layers of the society. The petition campaign only started developing in December 1904<sup>61</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

Survivals of estate stratification, aggravated social antagonism and national disengagement ruled out the formation of civil society in Belarus, like in the whole tsarist Russia. The public was in the constant search for an alternative. In the 1880–s, the leading role in the struggle for freedoms in tsarist Russia went from the nobility of Polish culture to Jewish intelligentsia. The former as well as the latter preferred radical ways of struggling. The nobility in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century focused on uprisings, the Jewish intelligentsia in late 19<sup>th</sup>–early 20<sup>th</sup> century — on social revolution and sometimes even on terrorism.

Whereas the main slogan of the nobility's struggle was freedom, the Jewish intelligentsia's was equality. The protest went from one extreme to another. High degree of impoverishment of Jews and Belarusians made their social concerns more of a priority as compared to the national ones. In this situation,

59 Бунд в Беларусі..., 135–136. (Пракламацыя Гомельскага камітэта Бунда. Ліпень 1904).

60 Шабуня, К. І., Шыбека, З. В. (2002). Сялянскі рух у 1901–1904 гг. In Гісторыя сялянства Беларусі. Т. 2. Мінск, 286–297. Calculations were made by author.

61 Ibid., 285–288. (Даклад аб дзейнасці Бунда з верасня 1904 па чэрвень 1907 г. II Інтэрнацыяналу).

Bund with its slogans for social equality and good intellectual resources managed to take the leading place among social–democratic parties and develop quite significant activities not only among the Jewish, but also the Belarusian population. Soviet historiography attributed Bund’s achievements to the RS-DLP, whereas the revolutionary movement of Jewish proletariat was hidden behind the notions of “Belarus workers’ movement”, “revolutionary struggle of Belarus’ working class” etc.

The participation of Belarusians in the revolutionary struggle of late 19<sup>th</sup>–early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was quite modest. Belarusian peasants did not stand out with such prevalent revolutionary sentiment as did Jewish city dwellers. Tsarism put Belarusians above Jews. It was hard for them to apprehend that socialist Jews were their friends and fought for their interests. BSH’s own agitators were insignificantly small in numbers.

Private peasant households in Vilnia, Harodnia and Minsk provinces (as opposed to communal of Central Russia) made peasants accustomed to respect private property. It was difficult for Belarusian peasants to get the idea of the agricultural terrorism (the annihilation of landlords and their property), which revolutionaries urged them to.

Jewish revolutionaries worked for the Russian idea of democratization of the entire Russia by the means of a proletarian revolution and included the Belarusian population into the implementation of the idea. The possibility of a national union of Russia’s oppressed nations against tsarism was completely ignored. Deep trust existed into the strength of solidarity with the Russian proletariat. But the revolution was coming and it gave a chance to test the effectiveness of the tactic of proletarian internationalism.

# Awakened by Sluck Uprising

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Statements about the unity between the Bolshevik party and the people and lack of mass resistance to the Soviet government in Belarus are refuted by numerous archive documents and testimonies. However, in most cases these feelings were expressed in a passive form as the totalitarian regime showed rare open mass resistance in USSR. All attempts of political opposition were quickly exposed and violently suppressed; secret political control was pervasive. Nevertheless, at this time some of the young activists openly rejected Bolshevik political practices and talked about open resistance to the dictatorship. These views were most vividly articulated by the so called “*listapadaŭcy*” (‘Novemberists’). The crackdown of the Moscow Bolsheviks on the participants of the Sluck uprising in 1920 did not cease national liberation movement in Sluck area. A new clandestine organization was shortly established by young nationalists — former students of the teacher training courses.

The Sluck section of State Political Directorate (GPU) was caught off guard by anti-Bolshevik and anti-Russian leaflets in villages Sielišča, Darasino, Jeŭličy, Pahost in August 1925. One of the leaflets said: “*Peasants, Dear Brothers! We are again oppressed by landowners and Bolsheviks. They rip us off with taxes and everything... Stop moaning! Let’s establish our own government, the State of Belarus! People, rise!*” After a month and a half, the GPU tracked the anti-Bolshevik organization with the help of infiltrated agents. The members of organization were young teachers and students from the Sluck area: Ničypar Miacielski, Michaś Makarenia, brothers Ryhor and Mikola Kazaks, Michaś Dziemidovič, and others. During their studies at the general education courses

for teachers they were the core members of the Belarusian studies group led by Jurka Listapad ('November'), a teacher of the Belarusian language and literature and a former insurgent from Sluck<sup>1</sup>.

They all were arrested in October 1925; their homes were searched. During one of the searches, a handwritten magazine "Naša Slova" ('Our Word') was found. Later at the court, it became the main evidence for the prosecution. The investigator also noticed a picture of Jakub Kolas with the commemorative message that Listapad kept as a nice memory of the times they taught together with the poet when he was attending teacher training courses in Sluck in 1923. This was the fact that drew the attention of the GPU leadership in BSSR the most. Iosif Apanski, the head of the GPU in Belarus, set the goal to use the situation and in one stroke to also get over with nationalist–communists that tried to launch a policy of Belarusization in the Republic. He dreamed about a big trial of the leaders of Belarusian national cultural movement. On October 24, 1925, he signed the search order for Jakub Kolas' apartment<sup>2</sup>. During the interrogation at the GPU next day, the scared poet claimed that under the Soviet government he had not participated and was not participating in any political organizations, that he was interested in contemporary everyday life of Belarusian workers in order solely because he wanted to write new works of literature.

Apanski's plan was blocked by the higher leadership in Moscow. They considered this action untimely and inappropriate for the political situation. Anti–Soviet opposition abroad had not been completely disintegrated yet, the Belarusian emigration continued to trouble; and there was a non–conformist opposition within the Bolshevik party. They had to continue to imitate support of the policy of Belarusization and to present Minsk as a center of culture and state building of Belarus. A large–scale trial of Belarusian patriots could ruin the far–reaching plans of the Moscow leadership. The Kremlin was still trying to demonstrate friendliness towards national movements on the territory of the former Russian Empire. It was decided to have a short show trial of the Listapad group and to present the accused as a gang of kulaks' songs who were preparing an armed uprising aimed at overthrowing the Soviet government and establishing the government of kulaks and landlords.

Wealthy peasants indeed supported the 1920 Sluck uprising, they stood up against food appropriation system ("*prodrazverstka*") and mobilization to the Red Army. But who were they, these young activists who entered unequal fight

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1 From the investigation report kept in the Archives of the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus.

2 Ibid.

against the reigning regime? Parents of Michaś Dziemidovič had 5 tithes of land for 12 persons; only father and older sister were able to work. As Michaś said during the interrogation in the GPU:

*“The Soviet government does not pay attention to the poor. I was expelled from the courses because I did not pay for the studies... My heart is sinking and I can’t help it when I see the humiliation of the peasants. When, Belarus, will you finally feel the gratitude for your hard work?... Our eyes opened, the fog started to clear away. We saw the truth eventually... We will throw off this yoke...”*<sup>3</sup>

Brothers Ryhor and Mikola Kazaks came from a family from Viłnia. Their family was of modest means: four tithes of sand land for four persons and a huge tax. The admiration that boys had for the native language was not shared by their parents, what was quite sad. The boys expressed the bitterness in words: *“We left our home path and wandered on the strange unknown road”*. Instead, they found understanding with their classmates. Mikola Kazak noticed that at their courses there were only a few students from peasant families, the majority were children of “profiteers and shopkeepers”<sup>4</sup>. 19-year-old Michaś Makarenia had his own important reasons to protest against the Bolshevik government as he realized that the Soviet officials did not care about the interests of poor peasants. One of them beat up his mother. For not paying the taxes in 1924, the court ordered the family to pay twice as much. He wrote in his diary: *“Now it becomes clear that there is no equality at all. We won’t have equality unless we overthrow the Soviets”*<sup>5</sup>. Ničypar Miacielski (N. Smutny), the leader of the covert group, also came from a poor family from Apudzievičy village in Hreskaja volašć, Sluck paviet.

During the short life of the group, its activists developed their ideological program that was based on the following principles:

- 1) to achieve real political independence for Belarus, to have free elections, to deeply democratize civic life (*“Only national sovereignty, nothing else, can improve economic and cultural situation of the country and the people. For this, we need to convince our peasants that they can live a better life if they unite as a nation...”*). *“All our work should be carried out under the motto “For freedom!” Freedom of speech and press, freedom of religion... A handful of vermin took the most vital thing away from the people — freedom ... )*<sup>6</sup>.
- 2) to abrogate the 1921 Riga Peace Treaty and to include into the Belarusian

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 From “Naša Slova” (Our Word) the handwritten magazine of the “Listapad” group that is held in the Archives of the Committee of State Security of the Republic of Belarus.

Republic the entire Belarusian ethnographic territory (“*We were divided by force. One part of Belarus is strangled by Polish landlords, the other by Moscow Bolsheviks. Down with the fraudsters! Down with the communist landlords! We want to be our own lords! Longlive free Belarus!*”);<sup>7</sup>

- 3) to have a large-scale Belarusization of all the areas of state and social and cultural life in Belarus (“*The people can rise only through our own language*”)<sup>8</sup>.

The political program of the Listapad group can be described as still very rudimentary and romantic and therefore not very realistic. They did not apprehend all the difficulties and obstacles on their way, or the inertia and political passiveness of Belarusian peasants. There were several reasons for that. Probably, the most important one was the weak national consciousness of the society and its inclination to collaboration. The idea of the Belarusian statehood did not become the factor that would lead to political consolidation of Belarusian peasants. N. Miacielski admitted that: “*It is very dangerous to dream about the takeover of power by the peasants ... It’s only a dream. Peasant movement is too weak... We will have to work a lot ...*”<sup>9</sup>. Under such circumstances, the Listapad group also did not envision a possibility to create a unified political front between the peasants and the workers from the industries. An important reason for that were peculiarities of national and social composition of the city dwellers. The Jews who in the first years under the Soviet government were the main group of urban residents were fascinated by communism. Belarusian peasants were suffering from high taxes and abuses of power, social, political and material position of small traders and craftsmen improved during the years of the so called new economic policy. Bolshevism freed them from the national humiliation and raised their social status. The new government created plenty of career possibilities for dexterous young Jewish people who broke away with the conservative Jewish environment and were educated in public Russian-language schools. Another important factor that explains why the dominant form of unacceptance of Bolshevik government was passive was the social and psychological war-weariness of Belarus’ population by. People did not want war, they wanted stability. The broad mass of Belarusians stayed with their mouth opened and did not even voice their protests.

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

To set things moving, the Listapad group counted on the external factor: inevitable military conflict between the “western democracy” and the Bolshevik regime.

N. Miacielski wrote in his diary: *If the war starts it will catch us unprepared for implementation of our thoughts about forming the Belarusian state... It will be necessary to use all the people dissatisfied with the Soviet government and organize them*<sup>10</sup>.

Before this happens, the group planned to work on drawing up political ideology, preparing “organized force”, and developing the tactics. In Miacielski’s words, *“The primary responsibility is to pay attention to oneself, shape oneself according to these criteria, broaden one’s moral worldview... It is necessary to convince peasants that there is a need to organize. It is necessary to awaken the thinking about the great utility of mutual help, both material and spiritual”*<sup>11</sup>.

The trial of the Listapad group participants was held in the House of Education Workers of the BSSR from March 5 to 16, 1926. To enter, people had to have tickets that were sent out by the district court to organizations and state institutions. The public was pre-selected. According to the March 7 issue of the “Zvezda” newspaper (then published in Russian), the courtroom was packed. The accused had to stand up and testify in front of the judges one after another. The audience was surprised to see how young the accused were. A “Zvezda” reporter noticed that *“The accused named [Mikola] Kazak looked like a nanve fledgling boy who was smiling all the time”*<sup>12</sup>.

From the very beginning, the Court was on the prosecution side. Soviet courts were never concerned about the presumption of innocence. People from the audience were constantly shouting at the accused: *“Adventurers, sons of kulaks, belogvardeitsy (White Army members)...”*<sup>13</sup>. The state prosecutor was none other than Žmicier Žylunovič (Ciška Hartny), a Belarusian Bolshevik and poet:

*“Comrades Judges! I was tempered by the revolutionary fight. Therefore, I can clearly see the kulak and White Army character of the Listapad group. As we know, Listapad himself played an important role in helping the insurgents whose goal was not to let the Red Army and Soviet government come to Sluck by means of creating the so called “free independent Belarus” as a result of the*

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 В зале суда. (1926, March 7). Звезда.

13 Ibid.

*uprising. I find the leaflets of the accomplices and their magazine “Naša Slova” counterrevolutionary and inciting disorder...”*<sup>14</sup>.

Let us remind here that, in 1935, Žylunovič himself was accused of being the enemy of the government that he defended in 1926.

Although the court was not able to prove Listapad guilty, he was still sentenced to the longest term in prison — 5 years. Miacielski, Makarenia and Dziemidovič were sentenced to three years. Mikola Kazak received three years suspended sentence and was released from custody. The government was very prudent and punished the “counterrevolutionaries” mildly. The events were still happening in 1926, not 1930. To demonstrate their support to the accused, a big crowd of young people, including many students of the Minsk Belarusian Pedagogical College and Belarusian State University, gathered by the House of Education Workers. The Belarusian elite present during the trial wore national costumes on purpose... In 1927, the members of the Listapad group were granted amnesty on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution<sup>15</sup>.

What happened to the members of the Listapad group later on? Jurka Listapad was arrested again in 1934 and later executed. Mikola Kazak died soon after the war. His brother, Ryhor, found himself in Germany in 1944 and in the 1950<sup>th</sup> moved to the USA. Known as the poet Ryhor Krušyna by that time, he published several books of his poetry. He died in his home in 1979<sup>16</sup>.

Ryhor Kazak indirectly helped the Soviet secret services find N. Miacielski. On March 25, 1943 “The Belarusian Newspaper” published his article “From the past days. The Trial of Listapad”. The article told the story of the trial of the Listapad group in 1926 and cited the real names<sup>17</sup>. The article drew attention of the Soviet agents who were “shooting down” the most active representatives of the Belarusian national elites. Soon, the partisans found out that Miacielski lives in Citva village in Rudziensk District. On April 6, 1943 Miacielski was caught by the “red agents” and executed following the order issued by the head of the Special Department of Minsk Partisan Brigade. The fate of other members of the Listapad group is still unclear<sup>18</sup>.

14 Ibid.

15 From the investigation report held in the Archives of the Committee of State Security of the Republic of Belarus.

16 Крушына, Р. (2005). Выбраныя творы. Мінск.

17 Крушына, Р. (1943, March 25). З мінулых дзён. Судовы працэс над Лістападам. Беларуская газета.

18 Нацыянальны архіў Рэспублікі Беларусь (НАРБ), ф. 833, спр. 241, арк. 73. The information was provided by Halina Knačko.



# Resistance Attitudes of the Belarusian Population in Interwar Poland (Illustrated with the Example of Kruhovičy Village and Commune)

**Anatol TRAFIMČYK**, Belarusian Institute of Law

As a result of social upheaval of years 1914–1921, Vialikaje Kruhovičy village appeared on the west side of the Soviet–Polish border and became the centre of northern commune (*gmina*) of Luniniec district (*powiat*) in Palesskaje county. Kruhovičy commune included about 80 settlements altogether. At the same time, according to the Polish census of 1921, the village consisted of 116 households and 667 inhabitants: 645 Belarusians, 14 Poles and 4 Jews. The majority (623) belonged to Eastern Orthodox Church religion, 39 were Catholics, and 4 were Jews<sup>1</sup>.

The author does not seek to create a panorama of social and political processes in the rural areas of Western Belarus. The aim of this paper is to show how socio–political processes affected the life of a local dweller. The following

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1 Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (1924).T. VIII. Województwo poleskie. Warszawa: Nakładem Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego, 38–39.

chapter tries to depict a more plausible image of Western Belarus in the early XX century than the one created by the Security Service Agencies.

### **ORGANIZED STRUGGLE: GUERRILLA AND UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES**

Moscow had never accepted the loss of the Western Belarus and immediately after the conclusion of peace treaty the Kremlin initiated guerrilla struggle against Polish government, which reached its peak in 1924. In the neighborhood of Kruhovičy Soviet commandos were led by Kiryl Arloŭski (pseudonyms — Aršynaŭ, Mucha–Michalski or simply Mucha) and Stanisłaŭ Vaupšasaŭ. On May 19, 1922 there was an attack on a police-station in Dzianiskavičy. On February 6, 1924 about 50 subversives attacked the Aharevičy estate in Kruhovičy commune and eventually seized 10 horses, 5 carts and harnesses. Drawing on archival sources, the book “Memory” of Hancavičy district provides information about other actions, stressing that the villagers of Kruhovičy commune actively helped the Soviet subversives<sup>2</sup>.

If such actions were revealed by Polish Security Service, the arrested often were sentenced to death. During the attack on Chominka commune (located next to commune Zaastraviečča) on March 26, 1925, which resulted in five murders, the two arrested were sentenced to death and executed in Luniniec, one of whom was a resident of the Kruhovičy commune — David Myškaviec from Laktyšy. It should be noted that the document does not report the political objective of the attack. It is said instead that the bandits robbed the institution and, therefore, were driven by their greed for material gain. We also should note that there were more attackers — about 10 persons. But the others for some reason were not found<sup>3</sup>. This suggests that the others could be not local, because Polish agents managed to recognize locals rather well.

The main targets of guerrilla attacks were estates of landlords, police stations and often forest guard points, which all were pillars of the authorities' executive power. The attackers did not omit shop either. This approach shows the syncretism of partisan action purposes, which resulted in socio-political struggle combined with common robbery.

One should not exaggerate the scale of the involvement of local people in the guerrilla struggle. In the eyes of Belarusian people, Communist guerrillas did not look like fight for the improvement of their life standard, as we are often told by historians. The bandits (as they were referred to by the authorities and propaganda) did not reach their final goal: common people were tired of years

2 Памяць: Гіст.-дакум. хроніка Ганцавіцкага р-на (1999). Мінск: БЕЛТА, 108–114.

3 AAN, Zespół “Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/7, k. 110.

of war and were far from rushing into the woods. However, as the facts show, some of the “Westerners”, including residents of the Kruhovičy commune, took part in the armed struggle.

Kruhovičy residents stepped in as well. One of them had a common village surname, Leles. He was the leader of an organization whose activities were described in a report dating to October 18, 1928, by Malačyński, provincial governor of Paleskaje county. Its members gathered information about the Polish troops in Palieśsie, conducted the Bolshevik propaganda and damaged many military units, etc.<sup>4</sup> From the document, it is clear that the underground activities of the group were based on the Bolshevik views. However the was rewarded in cash. So the main incentives of the underground movement against the Polish state were based not only on ideological views but also on tangible financial profits.

The participants of such activities against the Republic of Poland are labeled as criminals in Polish documents. This fact comes to no surprise: every authority tends to evaluate their opponents negatively, especially those who offend the law. At the same time, the same sources show that “bandits” were ideologically and practically involved in the communist movement, and therefore they were not just criminals, but mainly political enemies. It is not possible to trace to what extent the anti-state activists were guided by either ideological considerations or financial reward. Obviously, in each particular case the proportions between the target components are different.

## THE PERCEPTION OF BOLSHEVIK IDEAS AND IDENTIFYING THEM

There is little data on the propaganda of the Communist Party of Western Belarus in Kruhovičy commune. Even during their first annexation of the “Eastern Borderlands” (May 1920), the Polish authorities stated that the Belarusian population (and in particular in Kruhovičy commune) was strongly influenced by Bolshevik agitators and Social Revolutionaries<sup>5</sup>. However, a different report on the same area, dating to the same month, states that the political situation is not that simple, being even self-critical in some aspects: the local population was afraid to get “under Moscow yoke”. But the affection for the Polish government reduced due to the good policies of the Poles themselves (especially in agricultural sector, administration, taxation, and requisition)<sup>6</sup>. Documents show that their authors — the representatives of

4 AAN, Zespól “Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/17, k.190-191.

5 O niepodległą i granice. Raporty Straży Kresowej 1919–1920 Ziem Północno-Wschodnich opisane (2011). Warszawa–Pułtusk, 973–976.

6 Ibid., 1056–1057.

the Polish government — were aware of the alienation of the local population from them and, in their reports, they mentioned occupation-like features of the regime they had established (the reports were prepared for internal use and therefore show a high degree of objectivity).

The situation did not change dramatically later. During the global crisis (1929–1933) which deteriorated the financial position of Paliešsie farmers, their mood was described as depressed. Only in some cases local farmers received aid through county committees of social assistance<sup>7</sup>. The economic difficulties, the policy of polonization were the factors of commitment to the pro-communist views of the villagers. In this aspect, Polish sources dated by 1935 single out the territory of Kruhovičy commune out of the entire county. The police report of 1937 notes Kruhovičy district as “*ognisko komuny*” (hotbed of the communists), mentioning also numerous contacts with the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup>. But on the whole, the situation was completely under control. Thus, the elections (documents imply elections to the Polish Diet in 1935) were held peacefully, the turnout was 73% (which was similar to other districts)<sup>9</sup>. The political and legal status of “Westerners” was not perfect, but it was better than in the totalitarian Soviet Union, as evidenced by the existence of elections, which meant the existence of a variety of alternatives, or at least the opportunity to vote or to abstain.

The reviewed police documents do not record significant acts of spreading the communist ideology in Kruhovičy commune. However, the authorities took into account even emotionally colored words with anti-state meaning. Let us take a domestic case — the quarrel between Maryja Hoffman and Maryja Arlova, residents of Kruhovičy, that occurred on September 27, 1936. Maryja Arlova addressed Maryja Hoffman this way: “*You Polish pig went around the entire country, and eventually came here to grease. Because of you, Polish pigs, we do not have bread; you all sit in governmental offices and spread around our land, and leave no place for us. Soon you will be caught by cholera, you will crawl with your snout in straw, when the Bolsheviks come here and break your foreheads*”<sup>10</sup>. Or during the inspection by an officer of Kruhovičy police station, Henryk Łukowski, in the house of Paviel Krycki from Laktyšy village, the wife of the suspect Todar Krycki said to the policeman: “*You should not be surprised that peasants steal when our Sirs steal as well, the peasants learned from their masters*”<sup>11</sup>.

7 AAN, Zespół “Urząd wojewódzki Polesie (Brześć)”, sygnatura 976/17, k. 25, 47.

8 AAN, Zespół “Komenda wojewódzka policji państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/2, k. 11–12.

9 AAN, Zespół “Komenda wojewódzka policji państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/2, k. 64.

10 AAN, Zespół “Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/14, k. 361.

11 AAN, Zespół “Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/15, k. 382.

Communist influence in Kruhovičy commune could not be compared at all with the situation in the neighboring Ivacevičy district of Paleskaje county. But the mood of the population of the commune, which often could be characterized as a spontaneous emotion, was treated by the Polish authorities as commitment to Bolshevik ideas. The police were detaining suspects for communist activities.

Communist structures supported their punished activists, as well as their families. Thus, as evidenced by “The Daily reports of crime,” in 1936 Stefania Sempołowska (1870–1944), a Polish educator, writer and activist in providing assistance to political prisoners, many times sent financial aid from Warsaw (15–25 zlotys) to the families of political prisoners and persons released from prison. Some of those people lived in Kruhovičy commune (Kupajčyk Maryja from Vialikaje Kruhovičy, Lejmas Chaim from Hancavičy, three wives of prisoners in Kryšlavičy, etc.)<sup>12</sup>.

Pro-communist sentiment grew in 1939. People started talking about the imminent war. The information that reached the villagers was contradictory, which in turn gave rise to conversations with diametrically opposite messages. Some of the local conversations were recorded by the police. Let us take the following cases for sake of example:

*“On April 15, during a public meeting in Ješkavičy village, which was held by the head of Kruhovičy commune under the direction of the head of general school in Dzianiskavičy, Philemon Karpeni from Ješkavičy repeatedly shouted: “Do not give loans, as the government only knows how to provide lice for the cows, but they do nothing to improve the life of people. The commandant of Dzianiskavičy police station conducts investigation...”*

(...)

*On April 24, Hancavičy police office arrested Aliaksandr Mielechaviec from Hancavičy village who for a few days spread among the population... that Poland has illegally occupied the region to the east of Bug River and that Russia will come on May 1 to take these areas back”<sup>13</sup>.*

It should be added that the police documents on the territory of Kruhovičy commune recorded not only pro-communist propaganda, but also other policy measures that went beyond the scope of governmental policy. First and foremost, it was the Jewish movement which was popular among almost half-a-thousand Jewish community in Hancavičy. According to the police

12 AAN, Zespól “Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/13, k. 97–98, 160–161, 260, 357, 473; sygnatura 2018/14, k. 163, 246, 478, 576.

13 AAN, Zespól “Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu”, sygnatura 2018/11, k. 200–201.

observations, Jewish activists were guided by the ideas of Zionism; they raised the issue of discrimination of Jews and even held practical professional and military exercises in the case of self-defense, as a part of fire brigade<sup>14</sup>. Even Polish nationalists propaganda was taken into account by the police<sup>15</sup>.

## LOCAL ACTIONS

Villagers' relations with the authorities were not always smooth. But the peasants rarely openly showed serious disobedience. Nevertheless, it happened. Sometimes it even got as far as to battering. In police records one can find the description of a case in 1936 when the head of Šaški village approached Pilip Radziuk, resident of the same village, asking to provide his cart to give a lift to members of Hancavičy "classification commission" (we did not manage to establish its function), but was refused and got a slap in the face<sup>16</sup>. The following case had even bigger political weight. On June 10, 1938, Aliaksandr Zialionka, resident of Smaller Kruhovičy, physically resisted the police officer Kaszkawiak during the estate inspection<sup>17</sup>.

Some of the "Westerners" tried to taste "socialist happiness". In Dzianiskavičy, for example, on March 18, 1925 the police arrested five men — Vasiľ Akula, Šciapan Novik, Ílla Novik, Maksim Savienia and Vasiľ Kiška — on the basis of suspicion of crossing the state border of Soviet Union by three families<sup>18</sup>. Although the protection of the Soviet-Polish border intensified, illegal crossings continued in the 1930s. These usually were young men who ran away to the Soviet side. The older generation remembered the Bolsheviks from the time of the Soviet-Polish war and did not like them.

## CONCLUSIONS

It should be noted that, despite the polonization policy, the residents of Western-Belarusian territory showed fairly stable national and religious consciousness: in contrast to many regions of Paliešsie where the population was lagging behind in the formation of ethnical identity, calling themselves "locals" (*tutejšyja*), the residents of Kruhovičy and the whole commune were firmly clinged to Eastern Orthodox Church and Belarusian identification. It is necessary to emphasize the fact that the territory of Kruhovičy commune

14 AAN, Zespól "Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu", sygnatura 2018/14, k. 308; sygnatura 2018/15, k. 653.

15 AAN, Zespól "Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu", sygnatura 2018/14, k. 43.

16 AAN, Zespól "Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu", sygnatura 2018/14, k. 331.

17 AAN, Zespól "Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu", sygnatura 2018/9, k. 423.

18 AAN, Zespól "Komenda Wojewódzka Policji Państwowej w Brześciu", sygnatura 2018/7, k. 48.

belongs to the Middle–Belarusian cultural zone, it borders the traditional Paliéssie but does not belong to it culturally.

If we take archival documents to compare the social activity of Kruhovičy dwellers with the situation in other areas of Western Belarus it is necessary to note the relative political loyalty of our fellow countrymen to the Polish authorities, or at least tolerant of it. No tendencies to mass opposition attitudes or resistance could be observed. However the police documentation recorded a lot of cases that were considered opposition activities by the local administration. Therefore, it is difficult to call the situation in Kruhovičy commune totally peaceful.

# The Academic Discussion of the Mid 1960s in Belarus: between Freedom of Creativity and Political Denunciation



Aliaksandr  
Koršunaŭ, the  
author of the book  
about Athanasius  
Filipovič

**Aleh DZIARNOVIČ**, Belarusian Academy of Science

Public life in the Soviet Belarus in mid 1960s was marked by an unprecedented public historiographic debate. The primary impetus for the debate was the publication of the work by a historian of old Belarusian literature and literature critic, Aliaksandr Koršunaŭ<sup>1</sup> (1924–1991), on Athanasius Filipovič (approximately 1595–1648), Orthodox writer, polemicist, and ecclesiastic of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. But the immediate beginning of controversy

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- 1 For more details about the life and work of the researcher see: Батвіннік, М. Б. (1992). Даследчык беларускай старажытнай літаратуры. *Весці АН Беларусі. Сер. грамад. навук*, № 3–4, 96–105; Кароткі, У. (1994). “З зычливості к моей отчизне...”. In *Шляхам гадоў: Гіст.-літ. зб.* Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура, 6–10; Ліўшыц, У. (2001). “Ён лёгка адчуваў сябе сярод стагоддзяў”. In *Раскопкі вакол горацкага Парнаса. Літаратуразнаўчыя нарысы.* Горкі, 179–183; Чамярыцкі, В. (2004). Пачынальнік. *Роднае слова*, № 3, 24–26.
- 2 Коршунов, А. (1965). Афанасий Филиппович. Жизнь и творчество. Минск: Наука і тэхніка.



is associated with the name of the author of the review on this book, the Belarusian literary critic Mikola Praškovič (1932–1983).

### BEGINNING: PRAŠKOVIČ'S REVIEW

Praškovič himself was quite a colourful figure<sup>3</sup>. As a specialist in Ancient Belarusian Literature, he worked at the Institute of Literature named after Janka Kupala, at the Academy of Sciences of the BSSR. In 1965, Praškovič defended his candidate's dissertation on the early period of work of Simeon of Polack. Thus, he could fulfill himself in the professional sphere. But, as noted by all who knew him, Praškovič had a temperament that was difficult to lock in an academic environment. In the same way, Praškovič's review on Koršunaŭ's academic work<sup>4</sup> appeared to be polemically sharp, in the review he used to question the official views and produced a wide resonating effect in Belarus.



Mikola Praškovič, whose review on Koršunaŭ's book provoked academic discussion in the mid 1960s

In general, Praškovič rated Koršunaŭ's work quite highly, but scathingly criticized some historical stereotypes inculcated by the semi-official propaganda. Thus, referring to Koršunaŭ's statement that "(...) *bearing in mind the interests of the lower classes, he [Athanasius Filipovič — A.Dz.] went to Moscow to seek protection from Catholic aggression and tyranny,*" the reviewer evaluated this thesis as "at least unconvincing". Further on, Praškovič wrote more bluntly: "*With his whole flow of thought, the researcher affirms that the Orthodox monk wanted to trade espionage information to the Orthodox tsar for material assistance to Kupiacičy Monastery [near Pinsk, where Filipovič lived for some time]*". And for "*an Orthodox monk, the Union was certainly a deadly evil: he wanted help from the Orthodox tsar to destroy the abhorrent Union. The social liberation was out of the question*"<sup>5</sup>.

In general, Praškovič noted that "*Koršunaŭ's view of the Union was obsolete and one-sided*". And "*he takes the purposes of introducing the Union for its ultimate result*"<sup>6</sup>.

3 For more details see: Чамярыцкі, В. (2004). Прашковіч Мікола. In А. Дзярновіч (Ed.), *Нонканфармізм у Беларусі: 1953–1985*. Даведнік. Т. 1. Мінск: Athenaeum, 149–152.

4 Прашковіч, М. (1965). Слова пра Афанасія Філіповіча. *Польмя*, № 12, 174–177.

5 *Ibid.*, 175.

6 *Ibid.*, 176.

Also, issues of terminology — quite relevant even today — drew Praškovič's attention. Here, it is important to understand that the discussion around the semantic field of the terms “Lithuania” (*Litva*) and “Lithuanian” (*litoŭski*) is by no means an invention of Mikola Jermalovič and practice of the 1980s–1990s. The example with Praškovič demonstrates that these issues were raised in the academic community as early as in the 1960s. Here is another typical terminological passage by Praškovič:

*“Identification of the term ‘Russian’ with the times of Kyivan Rus’ compared to its current meaning has also led Koršunaŭ to a misunderstanding. Thus, he affirms that the St. Sofia Cathedral in Kyiv is the ‘pride of the Russian people’. Of course, Koršunaŭ had in mind all the East Slavs of the Kyivan Ruthenia. Then, apparently, he should have said so clearly”.*

### SOVETSKAYA BYELORUSSIYA REACTS

Mikola Praškovič's review was published at the very end of 1965, and in February 1966 the main official newspaper of the BSSR, *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya*, printed a critical feedback on this review by unknown doctoral students Uladzimir Liukievič and Jakaŭ Traščanok<sup>7</sup>. That was the same Jakaŭ Traščanok (1931–2011), associate professor of Mahilioŭ University who later was going to gain significant influence on the didactics of the Belarusian history. In 2000s, he wrote and edited numerous school and university textbooks of history. Moreover, Traščanok will review other textbooks and manuals on the stage of their official approval. Traščanok's critics will rate him as one of the most significant representatives of the “directive historiography”<sup>8</sup>.

Back then in 1966, polemically disagreeing with some theses of Mikola Praškovič's review, primarily on the possible positive evaluation of the project of the Church Union, the reviewers took the liberty to obviously hyperbolize and hypertrophy Praškovič's views. In particular, they attributed Praškovič with affirmation that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a Belarusian and Ukrainian state, which did not correspond to the text of the Belarusian philologist. But, more importantly, these authors allowed themselves political assessments of the discussed text:

7 Люкевич, В., Трещенок, Я. (1966, February 22). Истине вопреки. Советская Белоруссия, 3.

8 See: Смалянчук, А. (2006). Навошта Лукашэнку Трашчанок? [Рэц.:] Трещенок, Я. И. (2004–2005). История Беларуси: в двух частях. Могилев: МГУ. *Arche*, № 3, 56–64; Смалянчук, А. (2007). Ад Абэцэдарскага да Трашчанка, або Эвалюцыя беларускай “дырэктыўнай гістарыяграфіі”. Репрессивная політика Советской власти в Беларуси. Сб. науч. работ, № 3; Мацкевіч, Я. (2003. January 30). Канцэпцыя а ля Мураўёў: Новае—гэта здабытае на сметніку гісторыі старое. *Новы Час*, № 2 (7).

*“The fudge that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania [in lower-case letters in the original — A.Dz.] was a Belarusian state, and that the Belarusian people lived in prosperity, that the Union was a specifically Belarusian religion is not original or new. Its complete scientific failure and questionable political significance has long been disclosed by Soviet historians. Therefore, the appearance of these false allegations on the pages of Polymia (“Flame”) can not but cause surprise.”*

And further on more bluntly:

*“We do not believe that the editorial board of Polymia share the ‘historical concepts’ of Praškovič, but we are convinced that they have to remember their duties to carefully read all the materials printed in the magazine. It is not appropriate for a basic literary, artistic and socio-political magazine to provide their pages for promotion of views that distort the history of the Belarusian people and have nothing to do with the science”.*



Jakaŭ Traščanok  
in his elderly age

## THE DISCUSSION AT THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The status of the publication raises many questions. This very critical text was placed only under the heading “Letter to the editor.” Could critical texts by unknown doctoral students get on the pages of the BSSR main newspaper so easily in those days? The subsequent events show that the publication was only a part of a planned action. As noted by literary historian Viačaslaŭ Čamiarycki, Praškovič’s publication provoked a sharply negative reaction from historian Laŭrenci Abecedarski and his associates. His article in 1966 served as the basis for a special scientific debate at the Academy of Sciences on the issues of the Belarusian statehood as well as an assessment of the role of the Church Union in the history of Belarusian people<sup>10</sup>.

Recalling the atmosphere of that discussion, Adam Maldzis notes that the first time Praškovič came under a “significant trial” in the large conference hall of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences after he published his review on Koršunaŭ’s book in *Polymia*. According to Maldzis, Praškovič in his review “criticized Orthodoxy and praised Uniatism, which at that time was considered a great sedition (...) A command was received from the top: to sort it out, to condemn”. The “trial” lasted for two days, as a real international scientific conference.

9 Люкевич, В., Трещенок, Я. (1966). Истине вопреки...

10 Чамярыцкі, В. (2004). Прашковіч Мікола..., 149.

The hall was full, because many attended such trials as theatrical spectacles. But young people supported Praškovič — some with a word, and some with applause. Therefore, each party considered itself both the winner and the loser.

It will be interesting to note that Koršunaŭ was the one brought on the most “awkward” feelings, because “although the review seemed to praise his book, he was required to dissociate himself from the reviewer...”<sup>11</sup>. All the leaders — from the science department of the Central Committee of the KPБ (the Communist Party of Belarus) to newspaper editors and directors of academic institutions — began to treat Praškovič with suspicion. He broke an unwritten rule of loyalty: triggered a public debate.

Belarusian philosopher Uladzimir Konan in his memoirs adds other features of that discussion. We can see that not all of the scientific community were ready to just passively accept the ideological guidance, and the unwinding intrigue was not one-sided:

*“It was then that the Bolshevik ideologist of Sovetskaya Byelorussiya Abecedarski got entrapped: he agreed to participate in an academic debate on the dispute. Even though I, back then inexperienced assistant, understood that Abecedarski and his academic followers would be isolated”.*

Everything turned out according to Konan — literary critics, historians, philosophers were delivering speeches one after another, and having paid the service tribute to the official atheism and Marxist–Leninist dialectics, having gently criticized Praškovič for “Unionphilism” and polemical exaggerations, “(...) quite thoroughly, though politely criticized Abecedarism (orig.: Abecedarščyna). Laŭrenci was entirely boiling inside, but was at first keeping cool as Kuliašoŭ’s ‘young man under interrogation’, repeating his well-known arguments and theses”<sup>12</sup>.

As Konan recollects, somewhere in the middle of the debate a portly young man with an open and calm face came out to the podium. He did not look like an ordinary stooped scientist with his 83–rouble pay.

*“I am an artist Lavon Barazna — an unknown speaker presented himself to the public. — I am not an academic scholar, but I know something about the issue of the dispute. And within formal correctness, but without those compromising ‘however’, ‘nevertheless’, ‘on the one hand and on the other hand’, showed that the Abecedarism was unscientific and convincingly proved the correctness of Praškovič’s statements”.*

11 Мальдзіс, А. (2003, June). Асэнсаванні. Новы Час, № 9 (14).

12 Конан, У. (2008). Пра Лявона-рыцара ды Лаўрэнція-аглабельніка. Народная Воля, № 183–184.

As we can see, public debate in the mid 1960s could still develop in an uncontrolled way, violating the planned scenario of condemnation. As a result, being quite confident in the university audience, Laūrenci Abecedarski “(...) exploded, seemed to be shouting something, and finally shook his finger menacingly at everyone (in translation into the official ‘Bolshevik–NKVD language’ that gesture apparently meant: “You just wait, bloody hell, I will show you who you are!”), and left the academic amphitheater”.

One can also assume that the academic discussion in 1966 influenced the formation of already well-known concept of “Chronicles’ Lithuania” (*Lietapisnaja Litva*) by Mikola Jermalovič. Exactly in 1968, Jermalovič finished his book “*Following the Traces of One Myth*”, which for a long time was a samizdat personally handed from one person to another. It was known under the secret name “*A Hundred of Pages*”<sup>13</sup> and was first legally published in 1989<sup>14</sup>.

### THE REPLY OF POLYMIA AND ALIEKSIUTOVIČ

The editors of *Polymia* magazine neither remained voiceless in this situation of pressure. Philosopher Mikola Alieksiutovič (1921–1967)<sup>15</sup>, re-phrasing the name of the text in *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya*, published his detailed article “*But where is the objective truth?*” in *Polymia*<sup>16</sup> Already at the beginning of his text, the author formulated the crucial issues that made debate so heated:

*“The negative reaction to Praškovič’s review has an explanation. The thing is that even nowadays there is a category of people who fail to understand that not everything related to the activities of Russian tsars and the Orthodox Church was progressive. Therefore, everything that came to*



Lavon Barazna, artist and historical and cultural heritage protection activist



Laūrenci Abecedarski — one of the initiators of the discussion on Praškovič’s text to the tribune of the Academy of Sciences

13 Дзярновіч, А. (2004). Ермаловіч Мікола. In Нонканфармізм у Беларусі..., 81.

14 Ермаловіч, М. І. (1989). Па слядах аднаго міфа. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка.

15 Mikola Alieksiutovič was known as a specialist in Renaissance and 17th century in the history of Belarus, his most important publications are: Алексіютовіч, М. (1958). Скарына, яго дзейнасць і светапогляд. Мінск.; (1968). Светапогляд Ф. Скарыны. In 450 год беларускага кнігадрукавання. Мінск.; (1968). Гуманістычныя ідэі в Беларусі: Скорина и его последователи. In История философии в СССР. Т. 1. Москва. In “Polymia”: (1966). 3 глыбінь стагоддзяў: Беларускі філосаф К. Лышчынскі. № 1; (1967). Імя яго гучыць у стагоддзях. № 7.

16 Алексіютовіч, М. (1966). А дзе ж ісціна аб’ектыўная? Polymia, № 5, 179–185.

us from the countries of Western Europe (and even from the Slavic Poland) is perceived by them as evil”.

Further, the author amplifies his thought:

*“This is the reason of curses to all Catholics and praises to the Orthodox ecclesiastics, condemnations of foreign monarchs and feudal lords and bows to the Russian tsar and landlords, curtsies to the Russian feudal state and suspicious attitude to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which by its ethnographic composition, territory and culture was predominantly Belarusian. (...) All above-mentioned leads us to the most important issue raised by U. Liukievič and J. Traščanok in their article. It is the question about the state”.*

Alieksiutovič quotes Liukievič and Traščanok: *“The Belarusian people obtained statehood only through the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution”.* But Alieksiutovič uses this thesis only to shift the discussion to another direction, breaking the hard-lined schemes of Liukievič and Traščanok:

*“If the authors had clarified — the socialist statehood — there would be no reason for dispute. But a little earlier they claim that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Lithuanian feudal lords integrated the western areas of Ruthenia, weakened by heavy fighting against Mongol-Tatars and German ‘dogs-knights’”.*

But precisely in these lands, as Alieksiutovič noted, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Belarusian nation began to form. And the “Lithuanian and later Polish magnates safeguarded rights and privileges of local feudal lords, thus providing themselves with social support”.

Hence, Alieksiutovič poses a rhetorical question:

*“So, what do we have: there were West Ruthenian lands that were fighting against strangers, but there was no state. Who inhabited these lands: savages organized in clans, kins or people who were already familiar with the state system? It is seen from the article of Liukievič and Traščanok that these lands were already ruled by feudal lords, but there was ...no state. And suddenly Lithuanian feudal lords just took these sparse lands and incorporated them into their state. Where is the logic in this?”*

One phrase from Mikola Alieksiutovič’s article can be considered a refrain to all that debate: *“...one can not simply cross out several centuries from the history of Belarusian people only because at the respective time there was no ethnographic term ‘Belarus’ yet”.*

## **A MANUSCRIPT FROM A DRAWER**

The discussion of 1965–1966 left another written trace which was found twenty years later. We are talking about a manuscript found in a drawer in the office of Kanstancin Šabunia (1912–1984), the head of the sector of the

Belarusian history in the capitalist epoch, Institute of History, Belarusian Academy of Sciences. The manuscript was found after Šabunia's death. It is worth noting it the piece of writing found was not Šabunia's. The text was in Russian. Its author is unknown<sup>17</sup>.

From the first lines of the text it becomes clear that Praškovič's publications in *Polymia* were treated as a comprehensive ideological campaign:

*"The article "A Page of Old Belarusian Poetry" — Polymia, 1964, №6 — opens a series of Praškovič's addresses on the magazine's pages (in the period from 1964 to 1965)".*

The author of the text proves that in this, at first sight purely literature studies article about Simeon of Polack's works, "there appears a biased implication and a particular point of view on the Belarusian past that Praškovič further develops in his next articles". The claims are below:

*"Praškovič emphasizes the difference between Belarus' and Russia' historical destinies, creates the image of Belarus as an integral part of Western Europe, and the Belarusian culture as a part of Western culture, contrasting it to the "stiff routine Orthodox culture" of Russia".*

Moreover, Praškovič presents Simeon of Polack was not as a Belarusian and Russian figure, his heritage equally belongs to both brotherly nations, but as some kind of *Kulturträger* who brought the light of Western culture to Muscovite barbarians<sup>18</sup>.

The author of the manuscript concluded that, according to Praškovič, "even the changes in Russia in early 18<sup>th</sup> century are not logical consequences of the development of the state, but ...a result of educational activities by Simeon of Polack." The following quote is represented as a proof:

*"The significance of Simeon of Polack for Russia goes beyond his poetry. His merit was to be teacher and instructor of Peter, future Russian emperor. Simeon of Polack was the leader of the 'Latin' Party in Moscow. The party stood for secularization of education and closer ties between Russia and better developed at that time Western Europe. It was not Simeon's of Polack fault that he failed to win in this battle every time, as the reactionary forces, led by patriarch Joachim were very strong. Another thing is important. The seeds that Simeon of Polack planted on the Russian soil did not disappear, they started giving fruits later when Peter I came to power".*

The section devoted to Praškovič finishes with a typical conclusion: "There is no need to further analyze well-known Praškovič's articles "A New Way to Speak

17 Чамярыцкі, В. (2001). Руканіс, знойдзены ў рабочым стане. In Шуфляда. Т. 2, 75.

18 Ibid., 77.

*About the Past*” (*Polymia*, 1964, №9), “*On the Passes of the Past*” (1965, №4), “*Doctor Francišak Skaryna*” (1965, №10), “*A Word about Athanasius Filipovič*” (1965, №12)”. This phrase shows that “*A Word about Athanasius Filipovič*” became a sort of a truism; the discussion about it had already taken place. This makes it possible to date the document by 1966 — end of 1967.

But here is the most important assessment of the entire document:

*“Praškovič makes a revision of the history of the BSSR according to a certain concept. His campaign, started in Polymia magazine, was supported by two other employees of the Institute of Literature (when they were doctoral students yet), A. Jaskievič and especially V. Čamiarycki”.*

Thus, there were built elements of a conspiracy plotted by Belarusian intellectuals. In fact, it is a draft of denunciation report<sup>19</sup>. Now it becomes clear in which way discrediting evidence was being collected to be used for pressure and dismissals campaign in BSSR Academy of Sciences in 1974–1975, known as “Academy Case”.

We still do not know everything about the mechanisms of repressions in post–Stalin times. The quoted fragments of the document prove that in 1960s–1970s a mere denunciation was not enough in the case of scholars, a report with argumentation was required. The author of the text was most likely a philologist who tracked all texts published in Belarus. Though sometimes the text looks proofless and the author hides behind simple accusation schemes: “the trends are from being funny”, “carefully looks for rotteness”, etc.

On the other hand, this draft denunciation proves that many non–soviet theses in the humanities were formulated long ago and were even introduced to the public use by the means Retrieved from that time. In the 2nd half of the 1980s these theses got spread in the society and became elements of civic consciousness.

As it was noted before, the author of the text is unknown. The document was given to Viačaslaŭ Čamiarycki, one of its ‘heroes’ by Michaś Bič (1937–1999), who in 1983 took Šabunia’s place at the Institute<sup>20</sup>. Kanstancin Šabunia is known as a researcher in the field of agricultural history of Belarus of the late 19<sup>th</sup> — early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His monograph<sup>21</sup> contains standard ideological clichés, but it is rich in statistics, stands out due to its reserved style and, in gen-

19 Дзярновіч, А. (2001). Праект даносу. In Шуфляда. Т. 2, 83.

20 Біч, М. (2002). Мой шлях у навуку. Гістарычны Альманах, т. 6, 22.

21 Шабуня, К. И. (1962). Аграрный вопрос и крестьянское движение в Белоруссии в революции 1905–1907 гг. Минск: Издательство Министерства высшего, средне специального и профессионального образования БССР.



eral, makes a good impression<sup>22</sup>. Why was the manuscript kept in his drawer? Before moving (returning) to the Academy, Kanstancin Šabunia worked as an advisor, head of sector, and deputy head of Science Department in KPB's Central Committee. It is likely that analyzing such text was Šabunia's duty. It is difficult to add anything more concrete at this stage of the study.



Kanstancin Šabunia, a manuscript by unknown author was found in his drawer

## PERSONAL DRAMA

Concerning the history of the pogrom of the “Academy Center”, it is rather well described. Those events have also left archival sources in open archives<sup>23</sup>. We should give a little more detail to the fate of Mikola Praškovič, since his text was in the heart of the debate and provoked such response. Viačaslaŭ Čamiarycki writes that Praškovič was a trustful, open and unnecessarily emotional man who was used by the special agencies, “under the watchful eye of which he was kept,” for discrediting some national patriots, fabrication of the case and “revealing” a “nest of Belarusian nationalists” at BSSR Academy of Sciences of the (“Academy Center”) in 1973–1974. As a result, along with Praškovič, a whole group of Belarusian scholars suffered, especially Aleś Kaŭrus, Ściapan Misko, Valiancin Rabkievič and Michaś Čarniaŭski, who were dismissed from their jobs and could not find any employment of professional qualification for a long time. In 1974, on a charge of Belarusian nationalism, Praškovič was also dismissed from his job at the Academy of Sciences. For some time, he was unemployed, later worked as a loader, a proof-reader in *Rodnaja Pryroda* (*Our Nature*) magazine and *Vecherniy Minsk* (*The Evening Minsk*) newspaper. In 1982, he left the job for health reasons. Praškovič tragically died in a fire in his home village<sup>24</sup>.

Adam Maldzis describes our hero's qualities in the following way:

*“[Praškovič] was earthly, peasant-like, trustful Belarusian maximalist. Even doctoral studies at the Leningrad Pushkin House did not deprive Praškovič of his peasant naivety. He could tell anyone about his correspondence with Ukrainian patriots, about him collecting money for those fired from their jobs. He could*

22 See also: Біч, М. (1973). Канстанцін Іванавіч Шабуна (Людзі савецкай навукі). Весті АН БССР, № 1; Токць, С. (2004). Савецкая гістарыяграфія беларускага сялянства перыяду Расійскай імперыі. Гістарычны Альманах, т. 10, 49–51; Белазаровіч, В. А. (2006). Гістарыяграфія гісторыі Беларусі: вучэбны дапаможнік. Гродна: ГрДУ, 285–286.

23 Нацыянальны архіў Рэспублікі Беларусь (НАРБ), ф. 447, воп. 4, спр. 2, арк. 81; спр. 6, арк. 52–54 (Выключэнне В. Рабкевіча з КПСС); ф. 4, воп. 20, спр. 518, арк. 248 (матэрыялы па супрацоўніках АН БССР).

24 Чамырыцкі, В. (2004). Прашковіч Мікола..., 150.

*invite anyone — for the sake of speaking Belarusian — to his doctoral student room, and later to a studio flat in Kuybyshev Street”.*

Praškovič was single, so to meet at his place — in the room or later in the flat — was easy, and sometimes there were no alternatives. Young scholars, mostly recent migrants from rural areas, had simply no other opportunity to meet outside of work. And then “someone often intentionally began political fantasies: like who would get which ministry when we come to power. Most of us took it as a game.” *But it was quite a risky game for that time: And Praškovič as the host was sitting and listening, sometimes naively echoed, not realizing that someone needed this to get promoted. And from above came the pressure...*”

Dismissed, Praškovič for long time had no work, and “*to have something to eat, he sometimes visited the Karatkievičs and us. Later he somehow got a job as a proof-reader. Praškovič died tragically: he lit a cigarette in his native house in Biarezina district, lay down on bed and burnt...*”<sup>25</sup>.

## CONSEQUENCES AND THE END OF THE PERIOD

Not only does the tragic story of Mikola Praškovič illustrate the hard choices of humanities’ scholar, but also shows us what was at that time the weight of a written word and, despite the circumstances, bravely expressed thought of a researcher. During the debate of the mid 1960s, the main theses of the Belarusian historiography had been clearly voiced; they would continue to be the target of propaganda campaigns — particularity of the history of Belarus, its difference from the Russian and Polish visions of history; cultural — including religious — distinctiveness of Belarus; the importance of the presence of the Western (Latin) civilization for the socio-cultural space. For more than a century, these virtually neutral points of view remain the irritant points for the followers of Western-Russism and its contemporary primitive versions (the founders of Western-Russism in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote about the cultural distinctiveness of the region).

External features of that campaign reveal some hidden mechanisms of public censure. A rather timely publication in *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya* of a letter by two doctoral students, Liukievič and Traščanok, (a month and a half after Praškovič’s review was published in *Polymia*) does not seem accidental. Traščanok was a student of Laŭrenci Abecedarski, who was the leading figure in the Academy of Sciences public discussions. The anonymous text from Šabunia’s drawer

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25 Мальдзіс, А. (2003). Асэнсаванні...

proves that the organizers of the campaign were not going to stop at the level of discussions. It was also corroborated by further events.

Two years after the discussion in the Academy of Sciences, on July 17–18, 1968 a plenary session of the KPB Central Committee took place. KPB CC Secretary Stanislaŭ Pilatovič (born in 1922, KPB CC Secretary from 1965 to 1971) made a speech “About the situation and measures to improve mass political work in the republic”<sup>26</sup>. The difficulty of reading such speeches is that there is plenty of rhetoric but few facts. Of course, those present in the party hall during such speeches can get a lot from the general context. But ordinary people of that time or researchers have to collect the pieces of real life and nomenclature conspiracy puzzle.

Among other things, Pilatovič noted that “in the hope to undermine the Soviet society from the inside, the imperialists stake on the psychological war aimed at artistic workers”, in this particular environment they are trying to “pursue their concept of peaceful coexistence of ideologies,... seek to revive nationalism and sow hostility between the peoples of the USSR”<sup>27</sup>. It would seem that it could be traditional for the communist party audience, the words uttered just to maintain the “ideological tone”. But during the discussion of the report of the KPB CC Secretary, the Director of the History Institute of the BSSR Academy of Sciences Nina Kamienskaja (1913–1986, Director in 1965–1969) proposed to create in the forthcoming year “new scientific and non-fiction works that will expose the bourgeois non-scientific authors with their speculation about the origin of the Belarusian people, the history of its culture, the formation of the Belarusian nation”. Kamienskaja felt it necessary to “reveal the reactionary nature of the so-called “works” by Belarusian nationalistic “scum”, who act in the service of imperialist reactionist forces and bourgeois historians on such important issues as the creation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic and its achievements in the building of communism”<sup>28</sup>.

In 1969, as a part of this party program implementation, Laŭrenci Abecedarski published a brochure “In the Light of Irrefutable Facts”, where, according to the author, he highlighted “some of the issues of pre-Soviet period in the history of Belarus, which are most often distorted by bourgeois falsifiers”<sup>29</sup>. These issues, according to Abecedarski, were the following: “Who are the Be-

26 According to Michael Urban, Stanislaŭ Pilatovič was a member of the “Partizan fraction” of political groups in the BSSR, see: Урбан, М. (2010). *Беларуская савецкая эліта (1966–1986): алгебра ўлады*. Вільня: ЕГУ, 176.

27 Доклад секретаря ЦК КП Белоруссии тов. С. А. Пилотовича “О состоянии и мерах улучшения массово-политической работы в республике” (1968, July 18). Советская Белоруссия, 2.

28 Прения по докладу секретаря ЦК КП Белоруссии тов. С. А. Пилотовича “О состоянии и мерах улучшения массово-политической работы в республике” (1968, July 19). Советская Белоруссия, 4.

29 Абэцэдарскі, Л. С. (1969). *У святле неабвержных фактаў*. Мінск: Голас Радзімы, 1969.

larusians by origin?"; "Was there a Belarusian state?"; "Belarusian "people's" religion". It was a program text of the party (Soviet) vision of the Belarusian history. Slightly abridged and translated into the Russian language it was issued again during Gorbachev's perestroika<sup>30</sup>, when the debate on historical issues was extremely acute. Back in 1969–1970, there appeared several laudatory reactions on Abecedarski's text<sup>31</sup>. It is revealing that Polymia magazine, which in the mid-1960s regularly gave the floor to Praškovič, was also involved in this campaign. In 1967, Maksim Tank quit his position of the editor-in-chief of this oldest Belarusian literary magazine.

Neither Abecedarski nor his clientele in the late 1960s had publicly linked their denouncing texts with Praškovič's publications and academic discussion of 1966. They directed their indictments charges against the historiography of the Belarusian emigration, "Radio Liberty" and international imperialism. In 1972, in response to Abecedarski's theses Paviel Urban (1924–2011) published a book "In the Light of Historical Facts"<sup>32</sup>, the title of which symbolically echoes the name of Abecedarski's booklet — "In the Light of Irrefutable Facts". In his text, Urban already linked the provocative tone of Liukievič's and Traščanok's article, Alieksiutovič's quite cautious participation in the discussion, Abecedarski's ideological brochure in a consecutive chain of events<sup>33</sup>. The issue of Belarusian ethnogenesis was also brought to attention through publications of Moscow archaeologist Valentsin Sedov<sup>34</sup>. But that debate should become subject to another historiographic study<sup>35</sup>.

The public debates on historiography matters, as occurred in mid 1960s, could not get to the pages of legal publications in 1970s, after the pogrom at the Academy of Sciences and other intellectual circles. Therefore, samizdat started to actively circulate, determining the specification of civic activity of the next period.

30 Abecedarskiy, L. S. (1987). В свете неопровержимых фактов. In И. Н. Осинковский (Ed.) Дары данайцев. Минск: Беларусь, 24–89.

31 Москаленко, В. (1967, July 12). Достойная ответеь. Советская Белоруссия; Хазянін, А. (1970). Супроць фальсіфікацый гісторыі. Полымя, № 2, 241–242.

32 Урбан, П. (1972). У святле гістарычных фактаў (У сувязі з брашурай Л. С. Абэцэдарскага). Мюнхен—Нью-Ёрк: БiНiМ.

33 Урбан, П. (1972). У святле гістарычных фактаў..., 10.

34 Седов, В. В. (1967). К происхождению белорусов. Советская этнография, № 2, 112–129; Седов, В. В. (1970). Славяне Верхнего Поднепровья и Подвинья. Москва: Наука.

35 See also: Грыцкевіч, В. (2000). Гісторыя і міфы. Мінск: БелФранс, 39; Лінднэр, Р. (2003). Гісторыкі і ўлада: нацыятворчы працэс і гістарычная палітыка ў Беларусі XIX—XX стст. Санкт-Петербург: Неўскі прасцяг, 446–448; Смалянчук, А. (2004). Феномен беларускай савецкай гістарыяграфіі. Гістарычны альманах, т. 10, 11–22.

Part 2.

CULTURE LAUGHTS  
AT POLITICS

# Two Carnivals of Contemporary Belarus

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The main characteristic of contemporary Belarus is not the fact that it is an authoritarian regime, “the last dictatorship in Europe”, nor the fact that it is uncertain of national and geopolitical definition of Belarusians. The key feature of the present-day Belarus is, in my opinion, a special “carnavalesqueness” which has a great influence on the mentioned traits.

In Belarus, there is a life-and-death struggle between two carnivals.

## 1. CARNIVAL OF THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE THE POWER

### 1.1. Carnival according to Bakhtin

The theory of carnival and culture of popular humor was developed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his dissertation on Rabelais, and later in the book “Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance”<sup>1</sup>. His ideas were very positively received by the world humanistic community<sup>2</sup>.

People’s laughter culture “...can be divided into three distinct forms: 1) *Ritual spectacles (carnival pageants, comic shows of the market place, etc.)*; 2) *Comic verbal compositions of all kinds (parodies both oral and written...)*; 3) *Various*

1 Detailed publication of these works with all the supplement was done in a recent collection of works by Bakhtin: Бахтин, М. М. (2008-2010). Собрание сочинений в семи томах. Т. 4(1), 4(2). Москва.

2 See, for example: Clark K., Holquist M. (1984). Mikhail Bakhtin. Cambridge; Holquist M. (2002). Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World. Routledge. From 1992 to 2009, an international journal “Дыялог. Карнавал. Хранатоп” (Dialog. Carnival. Chronotope) completely dedicated to Bakhtin’s works and ideas was published in Viciebsk.

genres of vulgarly abusive language (curses, oaths, clowns etc). These three forms of folk humor are closely linked and interwoven in many ways”<sup>3</sup>.

“(...) Carnival laughter is, first of all, the laughter of all the people. Secondly, it is universal in its scope; it is directed at everything and everyone, including the carnival’s participants (...). Finally, laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives”<sup>4</sup>.

Carnival is a grotesque, transgression and breaking of the boundaries: the wide open mouths, big noses, huge asses and tits; this is a familiarity and turning the top and the bottom<sup>5</sup>, where the face becomes the back and the back becomes the face.

Carnival laughs and liberates; the authoritarian government does not like laughter.

## 1.2. Mocking the regime

At first glance, one might think that everything is fine with this kind of carnival in Belarus. Immediately after the election of Lukašenka was mocking poem “Luka Mudziščaŭ is the President” signed by the Viadźmak Lysahorski (Wizard of Bald Mountain)<sup>6</sup>. The poem, which reduced the name of the elected person to an indecent nickname, referred to vulgar adventures of “Luka Mudischev”<sup>7</sup> and “Tale of Bald Mountain” by Francišak Viadźmak–Lysahorski (under this pseudonym was hiding Nil Hilievič who, in 2003, revealed his authorship)<sup>8</sup>. However, the “President” had neither the insolence of “Luka Mudischev”, nor the mastery of Hilievič’s “Tale”. Viadźmak sadly noted:

*Wind is whistling over Belarus  
Potatoes and oats have withered  
Our president Luka Mudziščaŭ  
Is getting into a black partymobile*<sup>9,10</sup>.

3 Бахтин, М. М. (2008-2010). Собрание сочинений..., т. 4 (2), 12.

4 Ibid., 20–21.

5 Vyacheslav Ivanov called it inversion of binary oppositions: Иванов, Вяч. Вс. (1978). К семиотической теории карнавала как инверсии двоичных противопоставлений. Учёные записки Тартуского Государственного университета, вып. 411, 45–64; Иванов, Вяч. Вс. (2009). Из заметок о строении и функциях карнавального образа. In Избранные труды по семиотике и истории культуры. Т. VI. Москва, 123–139.

6 Лука Мудзішчаў — прэзыдэнт (2006). In Народный президент. Минск, 5–6. Retrieved from: <http://www.optdesign.narod.ru/narodnyj.pdf>

7 Лука Мудищев / Барковиана. Три века поэзии русского эроса. 1991-2011 (2013). Retrieved from: <http://mail.exler.ru/barkoviana/luka.html>

8 Гілевiч, Н. (2003). Сказ пра Лысую гару. Мінск.

9 Translator’s note. Chlenovoz a mocking name for a limousine that ferried around Party members in the Soviet Union meaning literally a “member carrier”.

10 Лука Мудзішчаў — прэзыдэнт..., 8.

The hero put in the partymobile got his escort<sup>11</sup>, and he was allowed to speak, first in a terrible mixture of Russian and Belarusian (*trasiianka*) and, later, a la Pushkin<sup>12</sup>. In general, the ruler of Belarus has caused many literary allusions: it consisted of nasty puzzles<sup>13</sup> and sarcastic lullabies<sup>14</sup>, named “Biełaruśnik” he raced around like Gorky’s “Stormy Petrel”<sup>15</sup> and acted even this way:

*In the crown of white roses  
Lukašenka was carrying the truth*<sup>16</sup>.

Bard Viktor Šalkievič sang funny “Ballad of a comrade Sapieha”<sup>17</sup>, and the band “Lyapis Trubetskoy” took the song from the movie “The Adventures of Buratino (Pinocchio)” and by replacing the chorus’ “Bu–ra–ti–no!” to “Lu–ka–šen–ko/a!” turned the guarantor of the Constitution in a mischievous wooden trickster. The dedicated to Lukašenka mockery book “People’s President” even has a poem, “Sancho Panza”, where the “Don Quixote” character is reproached for the governor’s autocracy<sup>18</sup>.

Among the range of Lukašenka–related stories — literary and archaic<sup>19</sup> — Vasiľ Bykaŭ’s allegorical stories of “Wanderers” stand apart, full of wisdom and bitter grotesque<sup>20</sup>. Among various characters of the book there is Big Demagogue with a paralyzed tongue<sup>21</sup> and Comrade Horror<sup>22</sup> who wants to marry a princess from neighborhood to improve the situation in the country and falls into the arms of a toothy prince<sup>23</sup>.

But the main verbal resistance did not have such excellence and was often reduced to a variety of curses (lovingly collected in the book “The Idiot very

11 Лука Мудзішчаў — прэзыдэнт..., 6-8

12 О, Лукоморье, край зеленый / Тебя бог крепко наказал / Лука Мудищев неученый там безраздельно правит “бал” Oh Lukomorje, edge green / Mighty God punished Thee / uneducated Luke Mudishev reigns there his unchallenged “ball” (Луканиада (2006). In Народный президент..., 22).

13 Детская загадка-читалочка (2006). In Народный президент..., 4; Кулик, М. (2006). Загадки для взрослых... In Народный президент..., 32.

14 Ліслівічанка Клаўдзія. Наш вождь... (2006). In Народный президент..., 31–32.

15 “He happens to praise Hitler or recall Joseph, he yells and people hear Lenin speaking from a rostrum. In his cry a lot of follies and no reasonable thought, but so convincing that no need for any sense” (Вадзянік Няміскі (2006). Песня пра Беларусьніка. In Народный президент..., 39).

16 Гэта ўжо пад Блока (“Дванаццаць”) і Маякоўскага (Ел ананасы?) (2006). In Народный президент..., 30).

17 Шалкевіч, В. (2006). Балада пра таварыша Саперу... In Народный президент..., 28. Ballad referred to

Lukašenka’s speech, in which he called Chancellor of GDL and nobleman Leŭ Sapieha “comrade Sapieha”.

18 В. Псэўдонім (2006). Санча Панса. In Народный президент..., 18–19.

19 As Valer Bulhakaŭ points out, the compilers of the epic “sort of went back to the beginning of the 19th century when the literature written in non-codified Belarusian, full of regionalisms and Russianisms, was only able to burlesque and parody.” (Булгакаў В. (2004). Загадки і адгадки лукашэнкаўшчыны. ARCHE, №4, 30).

20 Быкаў, В. (1999). Пахаджане.

21 Ibid., 50–58 (Тры словы нямых).

22 Ibid., 100–125 (Байкі жыцця).

23 In horror films such alliances, united by hatred, death and belonging to sexuality minority, are rather common, they are called “queer couples”: Morris Gary. Horror Films [online]. In An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture (2002). Chicago. Retrired from: [www.glbtq.com/arts/horror\\_films.html](http://www.glbtq.com/arts/horror_films.html)



real<sup>24</sup>). Swear words have lost their carnival ambivalence and became monotonous political moaning.

Carnival's ambivalent image was created by Uladzimir Padhol though his grotesque is subordinated to the needs of propaganda. In the book "The bullet for the president"<sup>25</sup> a sexually preoccupied Death gave birth to Škloŭ's idol<sup>26</sup>, combed him with her scythe, kissed and sent to rule Belarus. Škloŭ's idol established a whole "Crafty" dynasty: LukaSNIFFs, LukaPISSes, LukaFARTs and LukaHISSes. The book was impounded by the KGB. There was a more tragic case of Slavimir Adamovič, who wrote the poem "Kill the President". Adamovič suggested in the most grotesque way to swat an unidentified

*...scum which  
So heinously bristles his mustache  
Over our open spaces,  
Upon the face of birthmark beauty.  
Do not hesitate to kill him with any available object  
Take a submachine gun or an ax  
And crack this "smart" head  
And throw it into the cesspool just like litter<sup>27</sup>.*

Agitated Lukašenka complained at the Council's of the Republic session: "Forgive me for such a truth: the state can not support anti-state tendencies and anti-state literary works. You can even kill me, I do not understand why I, as the President, the head of state should support the publication of the poem, like "Kill the President"? We have not put anyone to prison, no one was punished. While in other states people are punished for such things"<sup>28</sup>.

Slavimir Adamovič was later arrested and spent 10 months in prison<sup>29</sup>.

After "Multiclub", where the main mustached character was tapping skates dressed as Snow Maiden, its animator, Aleh Minič, was forced into exile as. In 1999, artist Aleś Puškin brought to the presidential administration a wheelbarrow of dung—low substance in performance for the higher-ups<sup>30</sup>.

24 Ідыёт самы настаяшчы. Творы і экспромты ў розных жанрах (2001). Менск, Варшава, Масква.

25 Падгол, У. (2006). Куля для прэзідэнта. In Народный президент..., 77–251.

26 Škloŭ's idol is a real idol found near Škloŭ — now in official sources is euphemistically called Škloŭ's deity.

27 Quoted from: Адамовіч, С. (2001). Убей прэзідэнта. Выбор, № 30 (123). Retrieved from: <http://www.bielarus.net/vybar/123/adam.htm>

28 Ibid.

29 Адамовіч Славамір (2007–2009). In Кто есть кто в Республике Беларусь. Retrieved from: [www.who.bdg.by/obj.php?&kod=664](http://www.who.bdg.by/obj.php?&kod=664)

30 Алесь Пушкін расказвае о перформансе "Навоз для прэзідэнта". Европейское радио для Беларуси. Retrieved from: <http://old.euroradio.by/ru/916/reports/35710/>



Director Jury Chaščavacki did a documentary with comedic hero — “Ordinary President”. An anarchist newspaper “Navinki”<sup>31</sup>, which blatantly mocked everyone and everything, produced video comics “A Story of a lad” and “Goodbye, Father!”.

In 1999, anonymous authors produced, within several days between two demonstrations, a video-leaflet “Unusual Concert”, which invited to join a political rally and a popular representation. The leaflet collected videos of Belarusian musicians with some deliberately satirical songs.

In the election year of 2001, in Minsk no-hoppers went skiing on the asphalt wearing ski masks, chased by girls dressed as nurses, while these “female doctors” were chased by policemen in their own uniform. Such performances of “Zubr” took place in other cities of Belarus as well<sup>32</sup>. Town people were given condoms with whiskered face and the caption “Pull it on!” During rallies, protesters chanted: “Belarus integrate with Europe, Lukašenka go to hell!” Identifying the ruler with the lower part of the body was a permanent feature: in the 2000s, the author of this text heard many times an anecdote about an ass that was earlier elected for the presidency<sup>33</sup>.

Gene Sharp’s book “From Dictatorship to Democracy”, used by young activists, relied on certain aspects of carnivalization<sup>34</sup>.



Young in moustached masks skiing on asphalt (“Naša svaboda”, April, 27 2001, p. 7)

### 1.3. Problems of carnival resistance. Laughter as a submission. “You understand everything, do you not?”

The carnival of resistance went silent and almost disappeared (it became particularly obvious in 2004 when the newspaper “Navinki” was banned).

31 Translator’s note. The title of the newspaper is a wordplay referring to “petty news” and a name of Minsk mental hospital.

32 Канчатковы дзягназ галоўнаму пацыенту (2001. April 27). Наша свабода, 1, 7.

33 A similar anecdote was told in Iran about Ahmadinejad.

34 Шарп, Дж. (2005). Ад дыктатуры да дэмакратыі. Канцэптуальныя асновы вызвалення. The Albert Einstein Institution. Retrieved from: [http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD\\_Belarusian.pdf](http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/FDTD_Belarusian.pdf)

Loud laughter dissipated. The problem was not only that mockers had left while others went under pressure of the authoritarian rule. The laughter stopped not because it was not enough carnivalesque: the carnival of resistance as such contains traps.

The first trap — the laughter appears to let off steam, to reduce social pressure and dampen the anti-authoritarian ardor.

The second one is clearly reflected in the popular phrase “You understand everything, do you not?,” which is often repeated by officials who ban concerts of unwanted musicians or drive together young people to demonstrations of the BRSM (Belarusian Republican Youth Union).

In the sentence above, there are three coded layers. The first one is an allusion to the intimidation and repressive apparatus that sees everything, hears everything with no chance to evade. The second layer is the one of “bureaucratic alibi” when an official may personally sympathize with you, but in the end he is responsible for executing given instructions and orders.

The third layer that existed in the Soviet times, flourished in nowadays Belarus and represents the remains of carnival laughter, embedded into authoritarian frames. The phrase “You understand everything, do you not?” here means “we understand that the country is ruled by fools, that orders are the most idiotic, so let’s secretly laugh at this”.

Person secretly laughs, taking a state official for an ally, and, through laughter, becomes voluntarily enslaved. The submission at the grassroots level is bought by hints of mockery from the authorities, by a conspiratorial agreement that a buffoon sits on the top: the subordinate rejoices over his own advantage (he “got it”), but the official executed an order. Subdued carnival of resistance becomes a means of subjection: it serves the dominant group which has its own carnival.

## 2. AUTHORITARIAN CARNIVAL

### 2.1. Authoritarian carnival according to Averintsev

While Bakhtin spoke about liberating factors of carnival laughter, Sergei Averintsev emphasized: “there is another laugher that laughs at the victims, indecently scoffs at those brought down and bitten, cynical laughter, insolently churlish laughter, in the act of which the one who laughs divests of shame, of pity, and of conscience”<sup>35</sup>. And the violence lurks behind such laughter.

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35 Averintsev, S. C. (1992). Бахтин, смех, христианская культура. In М. М. Бахтин как философ. Москва, 10. Retrieved from: [http://ec-dejavu.ru/n/Ne\\_smeh.html](http://ec-dejavu.ru/n/Ne_smeh.html)

“Aristophanes was in an unanimous agreement with his audience when he treated the motif of torturing a slave as highly amusing. The Roman comedies of Plautus continuously resound with ringing laughter about the beatings and floggings inflicted on slaves as punishment...The scene in the Gospel when Christ is mocked giving us a relief of the bitter seriousness about the agony of the innocent victim who will be taken, at the end of the mock ritual, to his execution”, — points out Averintsev<sup>36</sup>.

There is a direct connection between laughter and violence, carnival and authoritarianism: “During the French Revolution (...) nuns would be sought and captured in the street, their bottoms would be publicly exposed and whipped with birch rods. This chastisement was meant to be perceived (...) as chastisement of disobedient overgrown children. (...) To be sure, contemporaries do mention cases where the Parisian crowd (...) would go too far and would whip the victim to death.) The second case (...) is the use of castor oil in the treatment of dissidents in Mussolini’s Italy”<sup>37</sup>.

We call authoritarian as a carnival. It is linked with the crisis and abnormal cultural dynamics.

## 2.2 Abnormal cultural dynamics

Let’s agree to consider as normal cultural dynamics the following processes:

- 1) Samples of high culture are developed by the elite and go down, with irreversible simplification, vulgarization and parody;
- 2) High culture re-codes inventions of the low culture, if the former wants to use them. Any transfers of cultural phenomena and artifacts from one group to another require appropriate coding;
- 3) Low culture (and counterculture) gradually becomes high (and dominant) due to the change of generations, when the “counterculture” youth joins the power structures.

These are general rules of cultural dynamics that are well described by Abraham Moles<sup>38</sup> (and popularly explained by fashionable character of the film “The Devil Wears Prada”). It is obvious in mono-style cultures, while in poly-style cultures<sup>39</sup> the situation is complicated by variety of elite groups, but patterns still remain.

36 Ibid.,12.

37 Ibid., 13-14.

38 Моль, А. (2008). Социодинамика культуры. Москва.

39 Пра монастылістычныя і полістылістычныя культуры: Ионин, Л. Г. (1996). Социология культуры. Москва, 181–192.

We can not say that these rules do not work at all in today's Belarus. So, the public holiday on July 3, established during the authoritarian times, makes the full use of the elements and lack of restrictions of the City Day, scheduled for this date in the mid 1980s, but has re-coded it in military way. Posters "For Belarus" took over and changed slogans of national revival promoters. But it should be noted that the underlying cultural dynamics in the country is abnormal.

Abnormal cultural dynamics works as follows:

- 1) Trash culture is popularized, and high-value work is doomed to shame;
- 2) The system of re-coding is broken; phenomena and artifacts of some groups without translation and obstacles pass to other groups; intra-group translation are, on the contrary, cut;
- 3) Conventional evolutionary changes are complicated.

### 2.2.1 Upside-down: Translating trash from top downward

Maksim Žbankoŭ drew attention to the "outrageous lack of Style of the Power". It is "Life in No Style"<sup>40</sup>, when the trash is in the center. This is a "culture of trash, trash of culture"<sup>41</sup>. The Belarusian thrash is strangely intertwined with the world thrash<sup>42</sup>; and it is not just translated but rather reaches people through flooding of the communication space.

"Stalin Line" is a fictitious stamp from the totalitarian stamp rejected even by the Stalinist regime. Solemn reports from "Dažynki" where tractor with a mustache kisses a girl from the BRSM immediately get into the main newspaper, "Belarus Today"<sup>43</sup>, and into network community of thrash fans<sup>44</sup>.

Official movies and videos are issued either in the form of "political Satanism" where enemies are discredited<sup>45</sup>, either as sluggish-unfulfilled kitsch<sup>46</sup>. Here, films funded by national budget resemble sub-quality horror and exploitation movies — primarily, naziploitation (only instead of SS-men uniforms there are NKVD uniforms). Recipient is confused and unknown: in the movie "More about the War" together with the aesthetics of the asexual 1950s there is a lot of "over-

40 Жбанков, М. (2013). No Style. Вильнюс, 43.

41 Ibid., 11–36.

42 Расінскі, А. (2005). Трэш: залатыя часы. Наша ніва, № 17. Retrired from: <http://nn.by/?c=arprint&i=99903>; Жбанков, М., Расінскі, А. (2004, August 7). Резня мотопилой на первом национальном. Трэш-культура ў беларускім кантэксце. Наше мнение. Retrired from: <http://nmnb.eu/news/analytcs/356.html>; Расінскі, А. Сьмецьце і фільмы прыгону. Лекцыя. Беларускі калеріюм. Retrired from: <http://bk.baj.by/lekcyji/zhumalistyka/rasinski12.htm>

43 According to the old tradition — "Sovietskaya Byelorussiya".

44 Белпомочка. Журнал by\_trash (2007–2013). Retrired from: [http://by\\_trash.livejournal.com/](http://by_trash.livejournal.com/)

45 "Тыловыя тут праекты Юрыя Азаронка ("Канспіралогія"), "Шлях у нікуды" Рыгора Козырава дый іншыя тэлевізійныя стужкі" (Рудкоўскі, П. (2005). Сцэнары лукашэнкаўскай улады. АРСНЕ, № 4 (38). Retrired from: <http://arche.bymedia.net/2005-4/rudkouski405.htm>

46 Расінскі, А. Сьмецьце і фільмы прыгону...

coat eroticism”<sup>47</sup>; “Dniapro Line” gives an impression of a film “*for pensioners switched from marijuana to heroin*”<sup>48</sup>, and “Shield of the Fatherland” prescribed to schoolchildren has a passionate sex scene between spy and his assistant.

The situation with the “official” literature is not better. One can consider patriotic poetry of academician Rubinaŭ (Rubinov) about “huge loo” (*tualetiščie*)<sup>49</sup> exclusively his private affair. But these works were published by the publishing house which prints classics and, what is more, “*commissioned and funded by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus*”<sup>50</sup>. Lieutenant-General Mikalaj Čarhiniec (Nikolai Cherginets), chairman of the Union of Writers of Belarus, writes unmasking books with pornographic scenes<sup>51</sup> and heads the Council on Morality.

The main cultural event of country — Slavic Bazaar in Viciebsk — consists chiefly of the Russian pop, its main episode in 2007 was the president dancing with Verka Serduchka (transvestite character of the actor Andriy Danylko)<sup>52</sup>. Insolent Verka Serduchka is a thrash person with eternal hope for a Camp<sup>53</sup>. President kisses Serduchka without even realizing that it was not his emblematic space<sup>54</sup>; hugs and transvestite dance are a carnivalesque violation of hierarchy.

While Serduchka randomly burst onto the platform, nobody forced Lukašenka to roller skiing in the summer! But he runs, followed by officials and, as if to illustrate the mocking poem<sup>55</sup> about the endless Festival of the Fool (a carnival hero!).

Aliaksandr Fiaduta begins his book about Lukašenka with a description of the shock, experienced by sensitive to ceremonies Japanese when confronted with a politician who does not pay attention to the rules. Lukašenka arrived on Japanese Winter Olympics without prior agreement, craving for ice, seeking a meeting with the emperor, and, finally, putting on roller skis and

47 Расінскі, А. (2007, February 22). Беларускаяе порна і ірландзкі трансэкссуал . Наша ніва. Retrieved from: <http://nn.by/index.php?c=ar&i=6746>; Расінскі А. (2007). Нэасталінскае кіно. Наша ніва, № 28. Retrieved from: <http://nn.by/index.php?c=ar&i=10590>. For more details see: Жбанков, М., Расінскі, А. (2007, July). Салодкі сталінскі стыль. Наше мнение. Retrieved from: <http://nmbny.eu/news/discussions/1052.html>

48 Расінскі, А. (2009, July 3). Галюцынацыі і герайчная абарона Марілёва. Наша ніва. Retrieved from: <http://nn.by/index.php?c=ar&i=27412>

49 “Ох, народ ты наш, народ, / Ох, народище! / Из полтысячи пород — / Одна породица! // Наш один — за ихних двух — / Только дай борща... / И раз в двадцать крепче дух... / Из туалетища.” (Рубинов, А. Н. (2010). Вот она, наша жизнь. Минск, 74).

50 Ibid., 2.

51 Чергинец, Н. И. (2001). Тайны овального кабинета. Минск.

52 Верка Сердючка танцует с Лукашенко на Славянском базаре (2007). Youtube. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zHan5BH1LE>

53 Sontag S. (1996). Notes on “Camp”. In *Against interpretation*. New York. Retrieved from: <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/sontag-notesoncamp-1964.html>; Расінскі, А. (2013). Кіч і малімоньне. Лекцыя. Беларускі калеріум. Retrieved from: <http://bk.baj.by/lekcyji/zhurnalistyka/rasinski11.htm>

54 In general, the Belarusian Carnival is also a state of transition, described by Victor Turner: Turner V. (1966). *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, New York. But the Belarusian transition is “frozen”.

55 “I am standing on the pavement in ski booted, / Either the skis are not skiing, or I am cranky...” The last word from the quote has obscene variations. Poem by Uladzimir Niaklajeu.

running — with bodyguards — across the rice field before the eyes of stunned owner of the field<sup>56</sup>.

“Belarusfilm” archives had yet more expressive material: president on the circus arena. Lukašenka in a serious suit makes an introductory speech to the kids. The camera drifts away showing elected sovereign on the arena. There were also trained seals and dogs performing, and, finally, there was a Christmas tree around that sang and danced in a ring with the president, a circus clown and the president’s bodyguard. The text created in 1999 in the archives is so self-unmasking, that it was never edited.

But the absurd is not noticed on the top. From top downward freely transmitted “Skaryna in St. Petersburg”, “Bykaŭ’s poetry” and other pearls of wisdom by the ruler. The bureaucratic apparatus tries to fix new madness, but the presidential phrases are willingly and persistently quoted<sup>57</sup>.

### 2.2.2 Trash for the President

If the thrash is smoothly transmitted from top downward what easily fills the “perforated” groups with broken codes, there is also a reverse process of the anomaly. The tops pull from landfills rags without any consideration that those rags are already cast-off by irony and sarcasm.

The most revealing case is the story of a band “Rocker-Joker”. Two guys played songs in “alco-boogie” style<sup>58</sup>. In 2010, they recorded a comic ditty about Sania (nickname of Aliaksandr), whom everybody begged to stay with them and he finally agreed<sup>59</sup>. During the presidential campaign, the song was noticed and obsessively broadcasted on the radio<sup>60</sup>. Astonished singers — in dark suits with backup girls in traditional costumes — played their hit on the television<sup>61</sup>. Finally, the song was performed at a gala concert for President (by other actors)<sup>62</sup>. Although the design and performers changed, ironic text remained — what did not prevent from raising the song as an election flag.

56 Федута, А. (2005). Лукашенко. Политическая биография. Москва, 8–12.

57 For more details see: Падгол. Наш дом — Беларусь [online] (2013). Retrieved from: <http://padgol.blogspot.com>. After each press conference, biased Belarusian internet users quote Lukašenka no less than the official newspapers.

58 The style stands for “modern urban folklore. This is music of pubs, taverns. And, like any folklore, it is prone to fun, satire and lyrical feelings.” (Прудникова, О. (2011). RockerJoker: мы закрываем проект. Naviny.by. Retrieved from: [http://naviny.by/rubrics/culture/2011/01/16/ic\\_articles\\_117\\_172060/](http://naviny.by/rubrics/culture/2011/01/16/ic_articles_117_172060/)

59 Саня (2010). Youtube. Retrieved from: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=n4MCFp553K4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=n4MCFp553K4)

60 “Колькі казалі, столькі і павінны ставіць — сам разоў на суткі.” (Quoted from: Коровенкова, Т. (2010). Группу RockerJoker “прывлеклі” к агітацыі за Лукашенку. Retrieved from: [http://naviny.by/rubrics/culture/2010/12/08/ic\\_articles\\_117\\_171590/](http://naviny.by/rubrics/culture/2010/12/08/ic_articles_117_171590/)

61 Саня останется с нами. Концерт ОНТ (2010). Youtube. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1TJNPVqpEw>

62 Ibid.



And soon, when the economic crisis struck, “Rocker-Joker” released a new song with cognitive “presidential” motif and refined chorus: “Opa opa, we all will end up in hell!”<sup>63</sup>. In its heyday the melody has gained huge popularity but it did not last long — it was erased off the top lists quickly.

### 3. EXITING THE CARNIVAL. “TERNARY” BELARUS AND “BINARY” RUSSIA

It is not possible to win the authoritarian carnival by another carnival. Culture of popular laughter is lost when the king personally strives to be a buffoon: it is an absolute power, not restrained by madness (what was well understood by the Moscow rulers, who determined the civilizational choice of our neighbors — Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great)<sup>64</sup>.

The current authoritarian regime inherited the Russian tradition of “binary culture.” As Yuri Lotman noted, “*the idea of binary systems is the complete destruction of all things in existence*”<sup>65</sup>. For binary systems, there is only black and white. Opposite to it is the “ternary system” which sees shades and is able to find intermediaries between the poles. The ideal of binary systems is victory achieved at any price while the priority of ternary systems is compromise<sup>66</sup>. In binary systems, development occurs through explosions, that pierce, unlike ternary systems, not just individual angles, but all the space and overturn it upside down. These are carnival inversions<sup>67</sup> through explosions.

If Russia is mainly “binary”, Belarus is mostly “ternary” (in relation to the law and even in phenomenon of “*tutejšaść*” when citizens strongly avoid rigid



Performance of “Rocker-Joker” on state television (picture of the scene shot from the video). Youtube. 07.12.2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1TJNPVqpEw> Accessed: 21.06.2013

63 RockerJoker — 2012, Раздаецца “Планета” (2011, May 10). Пяршак, 34mag.net. Retrieved from: <http://34mag.net/piarshak/post/razdaeccja-planeta/>

64 As philosopher Nikolai Fedorov wrote, Russian political system is an autocracy, limited by the Institute of fools (Quoted from: Померанц, Г. (1990). Открытость бездне. Встречи с Достоевским. Москва, 19).

65 Лотман, Ю. М. (2010). Семиосфера. Санкт-Петербург, 142.

66 Ibid., 144. According to Lefebvre, to Binary and ternary systems correspond two ethical systems: Лефевр, В.А. (2003). Алгебра совести. Москва. Analysis of the current authoritarian regime through the prism of Lefebvre’s second ethical system is given in the article: Расінскі А. (2008). Гераічнае паганства аўтарытарнай этыкі. АРСНЕ, № 12. Retrieved from: <http://www.arche.by/by/9/reviews/344/>

67 Иванов, Вяч. Вс. (1978). К семиотической теории карнавала как инверсии двоичных противопоставлений...

opposition<sup>68</sup>). But the “binary” habits are observed not only in the behavior of the ruler of Belarus, but also of his most ardent opponents<sup>69</sup>. In these circumstances, the carnival intertwines in a special way with destruction, creating backwaters of anachronism where every passage of time is lost.

Carnival is inherently universal. Carnival of resistance is intertwined with authoritarian carnival. But there is a way out of it.

Each carnival ends by Great Fast.

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68 See, for example: Першай, А. (2012). Тутэйшасць как тактика культурнага супрацівлення: о локальнасти, социальной мобильности и белорусской национальной идентичности. Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры — Русское издание, № 2. Retrieved from: <http://www1.ku-eichstaett.de/ZIMOS/forum/docs/forumruss18/12Pershaj.pdf>

69 Thus, the cultural factors in any case can not be reduced solely to the personal traits of a person diagnosed in absentia by a psychiatrist (Щигельский, Д. (2001, January 12). Врачебное заключение. Наша свобода, 5–12).

# First Generation of Minsk Hippies (2<sup>nd</sup> half of 1960s–1<sup>st</sup> half of 1970s)

**Uladzimir VALODZIN**, environmental activist

There are no scientific papers on youth subculture in Minsk during the denoted period, either in history, social and cultural anthropology, sociology or linguistics. One of the main icons of the period was journalist Viktor Siamaška, the author of radio series about the Belarusian musical underground in the 1960s and 1980s. There are other works in print and electronic media, as well as literary works.

As published journalistic and scientific texts could not give enough information on the history of Minsk hippies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1960s — early 1970s, the recollections of former hippies Minsk collected by the author of this work in summer 2007 served as the main source for the research.

We did not select random respondents. We approached them, using personal contacts. These are people born between 1947 and 1953, all of them living in Minsk from their childhood.

From the very beginning it should be noted that it is difficult to speak about hippies as such at a particular time (the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 1960s — the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 1970s) in a particular area (Minsk). Most of the central figures of this work did not call themselves hippies. However, in this text we will use the term “hippie” in quotation marks, because we failed to invent a better matching one.

## 1.

Hippies in the U.S. and Western Europe appeared in the mid-1960s. With a slight delay (no more than a couple of years) a similar subculture emerged in the European part of the USSR.

My interlocutors expressed quite different understanding of what the hippie movement was as a social phenomenon in the West. Here is the description of hippie ideology (both Western and Minsk) by Andrej Pliasanaŭ: *“What is a hippie? Hippies are pacifists, who I think were against the war, they did not work; they collected flowers and sang songs. We did the same though we did not call ourselves hippies. We just had long hair and wore flowers”*.

Uladzimir Juzefovič believes that the word “hippie” cannot be applied to young people, who lived in the Soviet Union. He believes the interest in Eastern philosophy and experiments with psychotropic drugs were the core of the hippie subculture in the West. If the word “hippie” was not frequently used (only Filipaŭ of all my interlocutors determined himself as a hippy), then how did the long-haired young people listening to rock music and not wanting to be exemplary members of the Komsomol identify themselves? The “civils” called them “hairy” and its derivatives — sometimes this word became



V. Šviacoŭ. Without words. Caricature of the journal “Vožyk”, 1971, №19, p. 10

self-identifying<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes self-identifications were tied to specific locations: “*skviernyja ludzi*” (“park people”) in Minsk (gathered in a mini-park in the Lenin Street, according to Kačanoŭskaja), “kids of rock Momma” (gathered near the monument to Eliza Ažeška) in Hrodna<sup>2</sup>. Often there simply was no specific word for self-determination.

But the term “hippie” was often used by other people to define this

particular subculture what was confirmed by Juzefovič.

In the early 1970s, there appeared a term “System” which meant:

“1. *Community of hippies in the Soviet Union as an informal youth association.*

2. *Any territorial or temporal community of hippies*”<sup>3</sup>.

The system was indeed a USSR-wide phenomenon. Here is a description of its action by Filipaŭ:

1 Мудрой, В. (2007). Альбом сямейны, 132–133.

2 Чернявка, И. (2003, August 11). “Это не Маша, это Миша”: 32 года назад в Гродно взбунтовались хиппи. Белорусская газета, №30 (397).

3 Рожанский, Ф. И. (1992). Сленг хиппи: Материалы к словарю. Санкт-Петербург–Париж, 44.

*“We often met the same people as we were in Minsk. If I saw a man in flared jeans with very long hair, I understood that he is one of our boys. I approached him and asked how I could help. Because the face was unfamiliar it was clear that the guy was a stranger, as we knew the locals by sight. He naturally had no money; he hitchhiked and most likely needed help. It was out of the question. It was sort of sacred at first but I asked him: “Do you need any help?” And only then I asked: “Where are you from?” I helped as I could to find him a place to spend the night. I brought him to my friend’s place. I also knew that no matter where we go, we could count on each other”.*

It is not difficult to identify the social layer which gave rise to the Soviet “hippies”. In Minsk, they were children of intelligentsia, sometimes even of party, teaching or artistic elite (for example, the son of Pimien Pančanka was a rock musician, according to Pliasanaŭ). The vast majority of Minsk hippies of the late 1960s — early 1970s was born in Minsk or at least grew up there.

## 2.

Cosmopolitanism was an important part of the subculture. Even if it was not stressed it was still present. At the same time, the cosmopolitanism of that generation did not mean contempt for the local Belarusian or Russian culture. On the contrary, Minsk hippies of the late 1960s — early 1970s, who grew up in Russian-speaking environment, later, as adults, learned the literary Belarusian language and used or use it actively. But these people feel comfortable in any country (at least, any European country), they are interested in other cultures and ways of life.

It should be noted that they remain active participants of the capital’s cultural life (and sometimes political life as well). Some hippies did not belong to the Komsomol. Some, being officially listed in the Komsomol, never got a card (certificate) and did not pay membership fees.

Key code for the youth subculture was music. Since access to Western European and American records in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1960s was extremely difficult, the youth from Minsk focused on the Polish rock music [Pliasanaŭ, Filipaŭ], which could be heard on the radio in good quality (Polish radio broadcast was not jammed). Sometimes Polish bands (“Czerwone gitary”, “Skaldowie”, “Bizony”) visited Minsk with concerts in the Palace of Sports.

“The Beatles” was the most important Western group. Fans of the Beatles are regarded as a separate subculture, although in reality there was no division between Beatles fans and hippies. It should be noted that fans of rock were open to other kinds of music. For example, some respondents remembered the visit of jazz maestro Duke Ellington to Minsk [Kačanoŭskaja, Juzefovič].

The USSR performers were not appreciated, as the pop groups that came to Minsk officially could be heard on radio and television and were out of the

hippies' tastes. Amateur teams did not go on tours. There were, however, local performers, who were more or less popular with the long-haired public. "Panie Bracie", "Pilihrymy", "Nasledniki" (with musicians Eühraf and Hardziej) were famous.

In addition to playing on the dance floors, the musicians performed at the universities and at schools. Two beat-festivals held in Radio Engineering Institute in 1968 and 1969 had great impact on Minsk cultural life.

### 3.

Clothes (and, more broadly, appearance) was perhaps the second most important code. It was mandatory to have long hair and jeans (women could also wear dresses or skirts, but jeans were most popular). Apart from these small conventions, there were wide open opportunities for fantasy. Guys often wore "colorful printed cotton shirts" [Pliasanaŭ]. Some hippies dragged out of the closets their grandparents' suits from 1930s–1950s [Kačanoŭskaja, Filipaŭ]. Sometimes they sewed themselves or ordered from an acquainted tailor [Pliasanaŭ, Čarniaŭka].

Jeans could be purchased from local speculators or in Vilnius.

*"I bought my first jeans in Vilnius on so-called "talčok". Everyone went there back then: you get a scholarship (twenty-eight roubles) and get on "Čajka". It was the name of the train from Minsk to Tallinn. It took only three hours to get to Vilnius. And then you go to this flea market. There were always many Poles around the place. I bought "Super Rifle" jeans for 25 rubbles from a Pole. I had them for a very long time. They survived even though I wore them during construction work. Even when I already got married and gave birth to my first daughter, I still wore them. They were really good jeans"* [Kačanoŭskaja].

Andrej Pliasanaŭ stood out for his shoes:

*"They are now getting in fashion again, those square-tipped shoes with very thick soles and huge heels. I wore a pair of those shoes back in the late sixties. I bought them at a show in the Palace of Sports. I do not even remember whom did I bought them from, some foreigners I guess".*

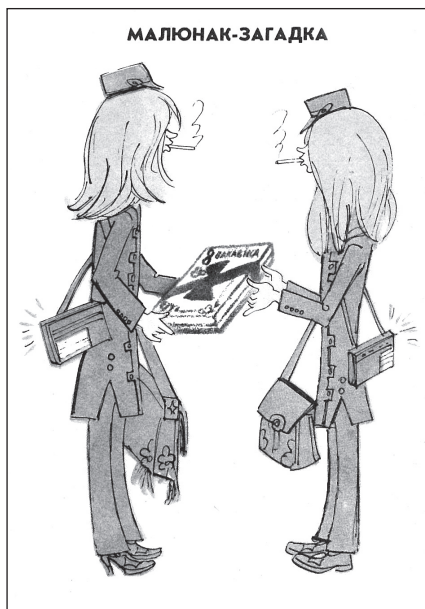
Tennis shoes ("prorezinki") also gained huge popularity. They were white and got dirty quickly, so we had to clean them with tooth powder [Kačanoŭskaja]. In summer, it was common to walk barefoot.

One of the most important symbols of hippies was a flower. Flowers appeared on colored shirts, and on "prorezinki". Hippies themselves often drew flowers on their clothing or shoes.

Before turning to the leisure options, it should be noted that Minsk "hippies" of the outlined period represented very different life styles. In the most orthodox version, the Minsk hippie lifestyle at the given period was as follows:

*“Back then we were not trying to make careers. We would take any job in autumn. Passed the winter and quit in spring. We spent the summer travelling. And found another job in autumn: a laboratory technician, a loading workman, a stoker. We did it “hippy” way, to cut the story short...<sup>4</sup>.”*

Someone used their time at University for parties and hanging out more than for studying. However, a large part of the informal community had decent jobs with good salaries and rapidly integrated into the “adult” society. Some (such as professional musicians or speculators) have earned a few hundred or even a thousand roubles a month and could not complain about the lack of money (especially taking into account the total deficit and the inability to make an expensive purchase without waiting in line.)



M.Hurlo. Who congratulates whom?  
Caricature of the journal “Vožyk”, 1971, №4,  
p. 8

*“I performed a lot. Then, when I left the university and went to the Philharmonic, I was earning pretty much money, because we played thirty to forty concerts a month. And the concerts were informal i.e. we put it in our pockets all the money we got. Then I went to the Polytechnic Institute and worked there for five years, and there I also made a lot of devices for all sorts of machines, cars, to “Zhiguli” for example, and I sold them. We also played at weddings; we were making money on the side playing at some events in factories, universities. And we were paid very well for that. I earned about two thousand a month. At the same time, my mother and father got ninety roubles, not more than a hundred” [Pliasaŋa].*

4 Филиппов, С. (2005). Подробности: Хроникально-документальное кино. Минск, 21.

How did Minsk hippies spend their free time? They mostly gathered in small parks or at each other's places. The main gathering point for hippies in Minsk was "Hrycaviec" — now it is Janka Kupala Park (on the place of Kupala monument there was a monument to the pilot Hrycaviec which was later moved to Lenin Street). Other place to hangout was the park on Lenin Street (it was called "green front door" because one of the front doors in the neighborhood was painted in green), the small park in Kamsamol'skaja Street (near the monument to Dzierżyński), the Victory (Round) Square and Lenin (now Independence) avenue.

Some part of the hairy youth attended dances. But, as it was very likely to be beaten for unusual appearance, only the guys confident in their fists did it. Dancing took place in *Karčy* (a dancing floor in the park of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October revolution near the Tractor Factory), in *Morgue* (a floor on Moscow Street; now there is the Youth Variety Art Theatre; the place got such a name because of the brass band playing there on weekends). There were *Dožki*, and Brick factories as well.

Occasionally (because they had little money), they went to cafes or restaurants, of course, not in order to eat, but to talk. They ordered one dish that could be eaten with hands (cold cuts, for example). They liked visiting two places on Park Avenue: Ramaška Cafe [Filipaŭ], the bar and restaurant in Jubiliejnaja Hotel [Kačanoŭskaja]. For some time one of the groups gathered in the "dustbin" (basement under the current McDonald's in front of the GUM, in 1990s bar "Svitanak") [Filipaŭ].

Flats were used when someone's parents had left on holiday or on business. Typically, these parents were high-ranking officials or diplomats. In "flats" they talked, listened to music (in records and live guitar), cooked, drank alcohol and used drugs.

Some part of long-haired young intellectuals visited Kim Ivanavič Chadziejeŭ. This man was a highly self-educated connoisseur of literature, a prisoner of Stalin's camps; he was able to fascinate guests with his stories. Several generations and groups of "hippies" visited his house. Natallia Kačanoŭskaja could recollect Aleś Ancipienka from the younger generation.

Musicians, of course, spent time at rehearsals and performances. From time to time hippies arranged outdoor games in public places (performances, as we might say today). *"For example, we once walked in bast shoes along the central avenue"* [Kačanoŭskaja]. Colorful description of such performances can be found in Siarhiej Filipaŭ's books<sup>5</sup>.

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5 For example, see: Филиппов, С. (2005). Подробности..., 36.



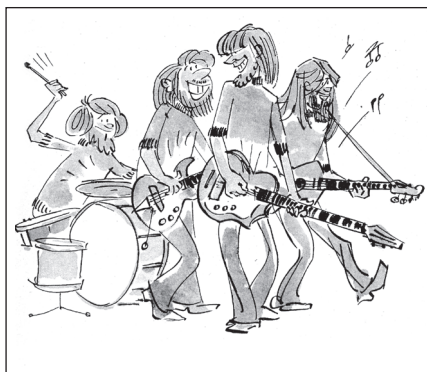
Quite often nicknames were used. Viktor Panič, nicknamed the “Triangle”, was a famous character. Other examples: Fatty, Sam, John [Pliasanaŭ]. Not everyone had a nickname. Sometimes names were often completely replaced by nicknames. So, each of the interviewed persons knew a guy named “Dolphin”. At the same time, only Pliasanaŭ remembered his name, and no one could recollect his surname. This person was one of the interviewed — Uladzimir Juzefovič. Everyone remembered him for his long hair: *“His hair was the longest in Minsk. It reached his waist. He showed it at concerts or dances, and then hid it below his shirt, he buttoned the collar and the hair looked slicked back, and it was not evident that he had such long hair”* [Pliasanaŭ].

Many members of the hippie subculture hitchhiked. Both Siarhiej Filipaŭ and Uladzimir Juzefovič managed to get as far as to Tallinn, Leningrad or to Ukraine. On the other hand, those who managed to get a prestigious university or vocational education and get a permanent and more or less promising job, had enough money to travel by bus, train or plane. A train ticket to Vilnius cost two roubles eighty, and a plane ticket to Odessa — fourteen roubles [Pliasanaŭ].

The information about western music and foreign hippies is residual. Something could be found in Soviet papers, pamphlets, brochures or even propaganda novels (eg, “What do you want?” by Kochetov) [Pliasanaŭ]. Western magazines were very rare. It was easier to buy in newsstands some Polish youth editions with special headings about Western music [Juzefovič].

In mid 1970s, *samizdat* became popular, but it did not publish any specific “hippie-style” materials. The authors recollected by all the interviewed were Solzhenitsyn and Bulgakov.

In many groups it was common to use drugs. Most confined themselves to smoking weed (“plan”), or to the use of tablets sold in pharmacies (for example, they mixed sedepsen or Chinese magnolia-vine with wine [Pliasanaŭ]). Once there was liquid LSD. It is not known whether the substance was LSD, but the drug effect was a really strong [Kačanoŭskaja]. Injecting drugs was also common. Sometimes they were brought by the hippies that worked in the



V. Šviacoŭ. Youngsters Band “Youth”.  
Caricature of the journal “Vožyk”, 1972, №17,  
p. 5

health care system (Filipaŭ mentioned such drugs as pramedol and amnapon in our conversation)<sup>6</sup>.

Experiments with the “expansion of consciousness” as well as the intensive use of alcohol and tobacco caused many members of the ‘hairy’ generation to die young or in their fifties. For example a playwright, actor, theatre and art critic, and director of “The Comedy” Uladzimir Rudaŭ died of cancer in 1999 at the age of 52.

Almost all of the male Minsk hippies of the late 1960s — early 1970s faced health problems. Siarhieŭ Filipaŭ had to spend some time in a madhouse.

Hippies had strained relationship not only with the Ministry of Defense, but also with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

*“The police caught us right at the central avenue. If we walked, say, in a group of ten–fifteen hairy people, there appeared an empty bus, it stopped, and then about 50 policemen jumped away from it. If they caught someone, they would... cut his/her hair. When the bus approached us, the policemen were lying on the floor, they got up only when it stopped. They would tear up our trousers, cut them into pieces”* [Pliasanaŭ].

There were raids in Hrycaviec. Those who were caught were taken to the department of “voluntary national guard” in Komsomolskaya Street (now there is a lingerie shop). It happened that during raids they cut our hair at the police departments. They sent notifications to our schools or work.

There were raids in the flats in the city centre, where hippies got together.

The most notorious event associated with hippies in Minsk’s social life was the performance after the funeral of Viačaslaŭ Maksakaŭ, which is now sometimes called demonstration. On April 7, 1970 a group of young people were standing outside the cinema “Naviny Dnia”, they suddenly heard passers–by shout “Heil Hitler!”. One of the young men — Viačaslaŭ Maksakaŭ — made a remark about it, after which he was stabbed in the stomach. The young man died at the scene. A lot of people gathered at his funeral at the Moscow cemetery of Minsk two days later, they could barely fit in five buses<sup>7</sup>.

According to Andrej Pliasanaŭ:

*“The Belarusian theatre used to be a children’s theatre, and then “Naviny Dnia”. And we could see the letters written on the pavement: “Slava Maksakaŭ was killed here”, with a red circle underlining the word “here”. There were six or seven buses full of young people. I was in the first one. We made the driver stop*

6 See also Филиппов, С. (2003). Автобиография. Поворот: Рассказы. Дорога: Роман. Минск, 7.

7 Будкін, С. (2007, April 9). Першая маніфэстацыя беларускіх хіпі. Тузін гітоў. Retrived from <http://tuzin.fm/article/621/>

*and got off the bus. There was a man who started cleaning it all with petrol. We said: “Do not do that!” — “I was ordered”, he replied. Then I took this petrol, poured to his feet and took a lighter. The guy immediately disappeared. We stayed there. At that time, the police brought their cars there, and it turned out that the people began to gather. The entire park was filled with people already looking at us, the hairy ones, more than a hundred. We joined our hands and did not let the police to get to the place and clean it. It all lasted forty minutes, maybe an hour. Then there appeared about ten people in black raincoats and hats, the short ones. KGB majors or colonels. Shouting out “Get him, he is the chief!” or “He is the provoker!” They caught me, wrung my hands, pulled me towards a police car, but the youth attacked them and won me over. I run away. Half of the guys were arrested. Many of the people who were standing in the park and on the other side of the street were also arrested. Even the thirty–sixth bus from Radiator plant, had a stop there. People got off the bus, and then they were caught by the police and put in their cars”.*

Fortunately, none of those who took part in the spontaneous performance was prosecuted criminally. The event was filmed by the KGB, so there is a hope to see those tapes one day.

It is interesting how the information was distorted in the USSR. Moscow human rights *samizdat* magazine “Current Events Chronicles” in its 14<sup>th</sup> edition published the following note about the “demonstration” in Minsk:

*“On April 7, a high school student MAKSAKAŪ was killed in Minsk. Officially, he was killed by a drunk bully. The dead possessed leaflets demanding democratic freedoms. A few days later, on the day of Maksakaŭ’s funeral, a group of Minsk high school students organized a demonstration in the city centre, in Engels Street, next to the Central Committee of the Communist Party”.*

(...)

*“The demonstrators gathered outside the “Naviny Dnia” cinema, they burned a circle on the pavement by a gas welder; they stood inside the circle and shouted out slogans demanding freedom of speech and press. When there appeared the riot squad, they began to shout: “This is not Czechoslovakia, you won’t stop us!” Allegedly some of the demonstrators were expelled from schools. Komsomol “consciousness–raising” meetings were held in Minsk schools”<sup>8</sup>.*

To sum up, we should agree that the subculture of “Soviet” (and, in particular, Minsk hippies) was not a “clone” of the American one. In other social conditions both the form and the content were different. However, the

8 Хроника текущих событий (2013). Выпуск 14. Retrived from: [http://hr2.memo.ru/wiki/ХТС\\_14/Краткие\\_сообщения/Беспорядки\\_в\\_Минске\\_в\\_связи\\_с\\_убийством\\_старшеклассника](http://hr2.memo.ru/wiki/ХТС_14/Краткие_сообщения/Беспорядки_в_Минске_в_связи_с_убийством_старшеклассника)

subculture symbolism was borrowed: rock music, jeans, flowers, long hair. It is hard to say how the West affected the value system of the youth in the Soviet Union, but many of the principles of western and eastern hippie matched: cosmopolitanism, pacifism, certain distrust to the adult world and a desire to build a better one. The integration of ex-hippies in the prevailing social relations both in the West and in the former Soviet Union was fairly successful.

It has long been observed that sub-cultures are sources of innovation for the dominant culture. There is nothing surprising in the fact that many former hippies have made successful careers. It should be noted that these careers were made most frequently in art or other areas of intellectual work that require increased creativity. Very often their careers developed in the 1990s and turned out to be very successful.

### **THE LIST OF INTERVIEWS**

An interview with Natallia Hieorhijeŭna Kačanoŭskaja, born in 1947, conducted on May 15, 2007.

An interview with Andrej Michajlavič Pliasanaŭ, born in 1948, conducted on July 9, 2007.

An interview with Siarhiej Anatoljevič Filipaŭ, born in 1953, conducted on July 16, 2007.

An interview with Uladzimir Viktoravič Juzefovič, born in 1951, conducted on July 17, 2007.

# Contemporary Belarusian Literature (*sučbiellit*) in the *Post–tutejšyja* Era: People beyond Their Time

**Valiaryna KUSTAVA**, litterateur

If the reader pays close attention to the title of the article, he will see that there are three main theses formulated in the heading. The contemporary Belarusian literature is utterly a reflection of the contemporary Belarusian society. It can be seen both with regard to relations between authors and to literature trends. The Belarusian literature circles are divided into small groups of involuntary associates that are generally open for the world but closed to similar networks inside the country.

Thinking about contemporary literature, I realized there was a need to introduce new notions in order to describe it. I even managed to introduce some neologisms, such as *sučbiellit* and *post–tutejšyja* in the language practice. It is time to define them. The term *sučbiellit* has two connotations<sup>1</sup>. The first one is direct. *Sučbiellit* means all Belarusian literature as such: authors, works, topics and trends. The second clearly refers to emotions. *Sučbiellit* is the Bohemia, with its typical intrigues, lies, small group divisions and distinction between friends and

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1 Translator's note. *Sučbiellit* is a compound word with three abbreviated parts: **suč**asnaja **Bi**elaruskaja **litaratura**. *Sučasnaja* means contemporary. But when abbreviated, *suč* sounds similar to a word, meaning "bitch".

foes. What I mean here is that the division is not purely ideological. It separates the Belarusian writers who write in Belarusian and share pro–Belarusian and pro–European views from the Belarusian Russian–language authors (this phrase sounds weird, but it is how it functions in the cultural circles).

I introduced the other term, *post–tutejšyja*<sup>2</sup>, more than five years ago. It also has two meanings, a broad and a narrow one. The narrow meaning is ‘those writers, who are considered followers of such literature circles as *Tutejšyja*, *Regional Society of Free Writers* headed by Aleś Arkuš and a scandalous *Bum–bam–lit* which stands apart. However, this definition is notional, as contemporary young writers do not recognize such continuity. The representatives of young Belarusian literature do not even try to “throw off the ship of contemporary literature” their elder colleagues, they simply ignore them. Ignoring is the most common way to fight enemies or alleged enemies in the *sučbiellit* community. Take, for instance, a brilliant prose writer Andrej Fiedarenka, who is not accepted by the Bohemia.

It is not enough to be talented in *sučbiellit*. You have to speak out about yourself and do loads of other things that would promote your texts: performances, presentations, as well as related genre projects like translations, festivals, TV and radio broadcasts, music and art projects, blogging in mass media popular web–sites, etc. One has to be their own literary agent, as there are almost no professionals in the sphere.

Moreover, every Belarusian writer, sometimes unwillingly, is attributed with a mission — to locally instill the Belarusian identity feeling. The youth that position themselves as ‘clean’ creators of the world level, do not care about the ‘revival’, they do not want to be burdened by the ‘civic’ bonus, remaining “artists for art’s sake”.

But let us get back to *post–tutejšyja*. Sometimes the term is used in relation to all representatives of the contemporary Belarusian population. I will share an interesting observation. I teach at our artistic University. My students are mostly future script–writers, directors, film actors and producers. One of the tasks I give is to write the continuation of Kupala’s legendary nation–building play *Tutejšyja*. The task’s code name is “*Post–tutejšyja*”. Students should depict the peculiarities of today’s young people and their worries, to try to describe the characters of the successors of Nasta Pabiahunskaja and Mikita Znosak<sup>3</sup> or

2 Translator’s note. *Tutejšyja* (local people) is believed to be self-definition of Belarusian peasants in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

3 Translator’s note. Mikita Znosak is a character of famous play *Tutejšyja* by Janka Kupala. He is characterised, a time–server who changes his views and positions according to changes in political situation in Belarus in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Janka Zdolnik<sup>4</sup> and Alenka. What would those characters be like, what issues in today's Belarus would they worry about? The continuations that my students write in fact do not differ much from the original in this respect. The new heroes have similar problems. There are two ideologically opposite capitals in Belarus: Znosak's ancestors live in Miensk, Zdolnik's live in Minsk. There are two major unions of writers: one (which used to be the only) is independent *Union of Belarusian Writers*, whose members were Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Uladzimir Karatkievič, and still are Ryhor Baradulin, Nil Hilievič, Hienadž Buraŭkin, Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ. The other union is state-founded *Union of the Writers of Belarus*. There are two unions of Journalists: an independent *Belarusian Association of Journalists*, more and more suppressed by the government, and state-sponsored *Belarusian Union of Journalists*. Authors try to coexist in such constant division. Two visa regimes, two black lists: some people are not let out of the country, some are not wanted back. Double truth, double reality, double standards.

The conclusion that my students make, and that I earlier made for myself is that being on the edge and balance, being in the golden mean is extremely difficult. It is like having mental customs control from both sides. It is difficult to learn how to talk with both poles. Because it is highly possible that neither pole will get what you say. This is the issue of mediation, translation into a different perception language. Attempts to unite artists on opposite sides of the barricades. Apart from talking to those poles, the author should talk to people — his audience, listeners, and consumers of culture product.

For some reason in my students' continuations it always appeared that Znosak's and Pabiahunskaja's successors were well off and happy, but a bit shallow. Janka's and Alenka's successors were unhappy and wanted to leave Belarus, to emigrate. But they were apparently deeper persons and suffered more because they understood what was happening. Just like their ancestors had moved to village, they also strive to go far away, overseas, into a free community of Belarus. This situation is very sad and ambiguous. Only those who happened to be the Messiahs College graduates will stay to turn out the light at the airports after everyone had left.

The Belarusian literature, as, in fact, the Belarusian society at large, lacks great persons, great talents and great leaders. There should be people as great as the 'pillars' of the Belarusian literature — Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Uladzimir Karatkievič — who by their works cultivated the gene of the Belarusian identity.

4 Translator's note. Janka Zdolnik is a character of famous play *Tutejšyja* by Janka Kupala. Zdolnik has firm position in life, he is sincere, hard-working but a bit too romantic.

It was enough to read a Karatkievič's novel in due age in order to turn into a Belarusian. This transformation was something wider than national identity. Because one could have any nationality: Russian, Polish, Ukrainian. But he or she mentally turned into a Belarusian. The mission mentioned above is still topical. The so-called revolt in the name of freedom is in fact everyone's quiet load. Wherever you appear, your small goal is to change people. Without violence. Turn them towards the Belarusian. Most frequently, to the Belarusians themselves.

What we have in the end is that the modern Belarusian literature (*sučbiellit*) is marginal, it is only for the people beyond their time. This literature is also beyond happiness, wealth, grateful audiences, beyond school textbooks, universities and book shops. It is stuck in small fights between communities with different ideologies. It is represented with successors of no ancestors (*post-tutejšyja*). We should not expect European foundations to show us the way. We should find the way to talk to our people... I just tried to outline what we are for you and for me, not from the best point of view, but we should see what we need to improve.

**P.S.** Professor Andrzej S. Kamiński told us here that the author should criticize, should address the authorities. But I am rather inclined to share Piotr Rudkoŭski's point of view about the great potential of metaphors... As it can happen that we all sit here and criticize, but those whom we address would stand behind the door and they would not hear us. As for me, the most uncomfortable but necessary position is when you stand in the door, in the middle, in a draft, and when you get infected with this sore and cold Belarus. And when you make them hear you. But "they" will not read this text. Unfortunately.



# Why Doesn't Religion Laugh at Politics?

Piotr RUDKOŪSKI, Lazarski University

The question in the title represents a peculiar kind of reaction to the statement that the Catholic/Orthodox Church is quite passive in the civil realm in Belarus. Why the Catholic/Orthodox Church does not react to important events in civil and political sphere, and even if it happens why does it react so weakly?

In this short text, first and foremost I would like to reflect on the methodological issues mentioned in the title. I suggest to find out *what criteria* should be used for measuring the activities of ecclesiastical regiment, and what kind of engagement in the social realm could we expect from ecclesiastic institutions. I believe that the clarification of this issue is of great importance for the quality of the discussion about “social and political realm of Catholic/Orthodox Church in Belarus”.

In the article, I will focus on the Catholic Church. I believe that the outcomes of the case study could be to a certain extent applied to all Christian confessions.

## 1.

Since the times of *Rerum novarum* (1891)<sup>1</sup>, the Catholic Church authorities have regularly formulated their position on key social and ethical issues.

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1 Encyclical (universal destination) of the Pope Leo XIII was devoted to the so called “Labor question”: the problems of the working class and the liberal and Marxist proposals to address these problems.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a fairly settled consensus has formed the key assumptions of the catholic social doctrine (CSD) that were systematized and published as the *Catholic Church's Social Doctrine Compendium*<sup>2</sup>.

It is more difficult to reach a consensus on the CSD's "executive" aspect. How should the Catholic Church behave in situations when the public life contradicts the basic foundations catholic doctrine? When it comes to secular organizations the tendency is that there are many voices in public life opposing the government's policy: protest actions take place, media attention is drawn to existing problems, electorate has an incentive to support their candidates etc. At the same time, in case of the Catholic Church it is not that easy. On the one hand, it must abstain from getting engaged into political struggle; on the other, it would be good for the Catholic social doctrine to turn into a set of general declarations, irrelevant of the real public life and not supported with specific actions.

Multiple disagreements over the issue of assessing the Catholic Church in public life inspired me to make an attempt of creating a "ladder of ethical priorities", which would simplify the task of assessing the public role of the Catholic Church's public role and intensify the discussion over the topic. In other words, I will try summarize 600 pages of the Social Doctrine Compendium of the Catholic Church in an unusual way.

The "ladder of ethical priorities" that I will present further is of my own construction and has been based on the following elements: 1) basic assumptions of the Catholic Church's doctrine; 2) practices of Catholic Church across the globe; 3) "signs of the times" — observations of moral trends in the modern world. I believe that five priorities would be enough to cover the issue of the main social and ethical priorities in adequate manner:

1. *Protection of the cult of the One God and the autonomy of the Catholic Church*
2. *Protection of the innocent and unprotected*
3. *Protection of the institution of family*
4. *Protection of cultural values*
5. *Protection of political freedom*

The priorities above have been listed in order of their hierarchical importance to the Catholic Church. It is worth pointing out that all of the above principles

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2 Published by the Pontifical Council Iustitia et Pax in 2004. Two years ago published in Belarusian: Кампендыі сацыяльнага вучэння Касцёла (2011). Мінск.

are important. The suggested scheme just clarifies what from the *point of view of the Catholic Church's specific mission* is primary and what is secondary. This is how the scheme should be understood.

Now a short explanation will follow by points.

### *1. Protection of the cult of the One God and the autonomy of the Catholic Church*

The priority nature of this principle directly follows from the first Commandment — “*Thou shalt have no other gods*”. Let us note that even the first Christians — who were generally very politically indifferent — were reckoned among political opposition in the Roman Empire (as well as in a number of other states) exactly due to the adherence to the principle of Protection of the cult of the One God.

### *2. Protection of the innocent and unprotected.*

In different periods of history the notion of “innocent and unprotected” was different. In the preaching of the Old Testament's prophets this group included “orphans and widows” (first and foremost) and also the poor and immigrants (secondarily). In those times, precisely these were the groups of people treated with injustice. At the turn of the new era, the notion of “the unprotected” was supplemented in the Jewish world with the “people of the land” (*am ha'arez*). “People of the land” were uneducated farmers who were not engaged in cultural and religious activities. Jesus' first blessing “Blessed be the miserable in spirit...” was most likely addressed to the people of this group.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, the protection of orphans, widows, immigrants and the unemployed remains urgent, which the Pope Benedict XVI mentioned in the *Caritas in veritate* encyclical (2011). However, in the period after the “sexual revolution”, the issue of the status and fate of human beings in the early stages of their development, especially in the first three to four months, became most urgent. Thus, unborn children were included in the category of the least protected by the Catholic Church.

### *3. Protection of the institution of family.*

From the Catholic Church's viewpoint, as well as from the point of view of many social and philosophical systems, a family is a natural environment for a human being to be born and to develop in, and it forms a social unit. At the same time, a family is a very vulnerable entity, susceptible to the influence of internal as well as external factors. Thus, caring for family and marriage is one of Catholic Church's first priorities.

#### 4. *Protection of cultural values.*

The Pope John Paul II wrote about the meaning of culture for the spiritual development of a person in the *Centesimus annus* encyclical (1991). It can be said that cultural organizations are the Catholic Church's natural allies. The Catholic Church should, if possible, support and promote the development of culture, especially national renaissance.

#### 5. *Protection of political freedom.*

A person has the right, and in a certain sense it is even an obligation, to participate in the society's political life. They have the right to freely elect their representatives in the parliament, have the right to be elected in accordance with the Constitution and legislation. They have the right to criticize the actions of representatives of the state authorities and not be persecuted for such a critique. They also have the right to be engaged in economic activities and — on the condition of paid taxes — feel safe and be free from unjustified intrusion on the part of the state authorities.

The protection of this type of rights may become the subject of Catholic Church's pastoral concern and, as we know, Catholic Church's representatives — including Popes — took certain steps towards protecting the political rights of citizens from a number of countries. It should be, though, remembered that in the hierarchy of the principles this is not of primary nature. It would be a mistake to take the Catholic Church for a human rights organization.

## 2.

Now, I suggest taking a look at the presence of the Belarusian Catholic Church in the public domain through the lens of the “hierarchy of priorities”. I will describe the situation as follows. Under each of the priorities I will first name the forms of hierarchs' activities, aimed at protecting each given value in the public domain. Then, I will formulate the neglected challenges, which means the public phenomena that represent a certain problems falling — according to the CSD — on the Catholic Church's pastoral concern, but on which Belarusian hierarchs did not speak publicly.

### *A. Protection of the cult of the One God and the autonomy of the Catholic Church*

*Types of hierarchs' activities.* Perhaps, only one case may be given as an example of Catholic Church authorities' public speech in support of the Catholic Church's autonomy. In December 2006, the chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, bishop Aliaksandr Kaškiavič, strongly criticized the Belarusian authorities for not prolonging the visas for 7 priests and 5 nuns from Poland. The bishop's pastoral

addressed to Harodnia diocese believers (read on Sunday in all the diocese's churches) carried the message: "... *external intrusion in the competent activities of a diocese bishop is a violation and the violation of freedom of the Catholic Church*"<sup>3</sup>.

*Neglected challenges.* The symbols of the Soviet past are present everywhere in Belarus. Apart from political and cultural meaning they also bear religious semantics. The statues of such people as Lenin or Dzierżyński, streets and squares named after them symbolize the age of the violent fight against God and the believers. The presence of such symbols in the public space is a challenge for the Catholic Church's most important value — the cult of One God.

#### *B. Protection of the innocent and unprotected + C. Protection of the institution of family*

*Types of hierarchs' activities.* At least once a year (on the occasion of Annunciation Day, 25 March), Catholic bishops make a collective statement that keenly criticize the practice of abortions. In May 2011, the statement by archbishop Tadevuš Kandrusievič came out on the occasion of the adoption by the House of Representatives of a draft law's on reproductive technologies; the hierarch criticized the content so much as the way the *draft law* was promoted<sup>4</sup>. On different occasions, pastors also reminded in public statements of the value of family, however they did not put forward any suggestions of legislative or political nature.

*Neglected challenges.* The Catholic Church actively supports civic initiatives aimed at protecting the life of the fetus and strengthening the family ethos. However, it remains indecisive about supporting the political forces standing for the protection of a fetus' life and promotion of a pro-family policy. Among may challenges the head of state's lifestyle should be mentioned (separation from wife, concubinage practice), which could be of great influence on the moral convictions of country's citizens.

#### *D. Protection of cultural values*

*Types of hierarchs' activities.* There have been no public statements by Belarusian hierarchs aimed at protecting national and cultural values.

*Neglected challenges.* The Russification in terms of language, the Sovietization of the historical narrative, the prohibition of national symbols, lack of care for the historical and cultural heritage, the conservation of the inferiority complex

3 Зварот Біскупа Гродзенскага ў сувязі з выдаленнем ксяндзоў. Retrived from: <http://grodzenski.by/dom/kommunikaty30/55-wydaleenne-ksiezy.html>

4 Заява архыбіскупа Тадэвуша Кандрусевіча Мітрапаліта Мінска-Магілёўскага ў сувязі з прыняццем Палатай прадстаўнікоў Нацыянальнага сходу законапраекта аб рэпрадуктыўных тэхналогіях. Retrived from: <http://catholic.by/2/libr/speeches/108809-kandrusiewiczz.html>

of Belarusians — these are the challenges of cultural nature that have yet not been addressed in the educational activities of Belarusian pastors.

*E. Protection of political freedom*

*Types of hierarchs' activities.* Belarusian Catholic Church authorities never publicly raised the problem of citizens' political rights, as were not there for public speeches in defense of political prisoners. Indirectly the problems of political ethics were touched upon on the "Address by archbishop Tadevuš Kandrusievič on the social and political situation in Belarus" as of May 2011<sup>5</sup>; however, the message was very general and limited itself only with the call for "respect and love". More eloquent in the context of reminding of political rights was the gesture of apostolic nuncio Claudio Gugerotti, who met a political prisoner, Paviel Sieviaryniec, in September 2012.

*Neglected challenges.* Virtual annihilation of the separation of powers, gigantic growth of the national security agencies, elections rigging, disappearance of politicians, political prisoners, tough control over state-owned media and the restriction of activities of non-state media, propaganda, brutal fights of protesters, lack of transparent rules in the economic sphere — the catalogue of the problems in the sphere of political ethics is quite large. As we can see, the solution to these problems requires fairly deep reforms and transformations; and the appropriate question is of whether the Catholic/Orthodox Church should participate in this process, or such participation would lead to neglecting other, more fundamental priorities.

\* \* \*

Why does the Catholic Church not "laugh at politics"? Why does it not take systematic measures aimed at protecting human rights or get engaged in the process of liberating political prisoners or criticize the electoral legislation?

I do not think that there can possibly be a single answer to these questions. The excuse "it does not get engaged, because it is not its competence" seems to be purely apologetic, since it is not completely true that the problems mentioned are not the Catholic Church's concern. The ethical aspects of politics are of the Catholic Church's concern. On the other hand, I consider the claim that it is conformist and not sympathetic to societal problems unjustified. A critical assessment should take into account the "ladder of priorities" described above. The promotion of political ethics belong to the priorities of the Catholic Church, but not as its main purpose.

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5 Retrieved from: <http://catholic.by/2/home/news/belarus/hierarchs/109046-kandrusiewicz.html>

PART 3.

WHAT IS FORGOTTEN?

ON MEMORY, NATIONHOOD  
AND EUROPEAN DIMENSION

# The Rise and Fall of the Belarusian National Movement: Historical Preconditions and Prospects for the Future

**Per Anders RUDLING**, Lund University, Sweden

Belarus was one of the last regions in Europe to be reached by nationalist impulses. The early Belarusian nationalism of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shared many characteristics of the Bundist movement, the intellectual capital of which was located in Viĭnia. Part of its ideology overlapped with the *krajovaść* ideology in which some of its leaders, notably the brothers Anton (1882–1942) and Ivan (1881–1919) Luckievič and Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski (1883–1938) had their background<sup>1</sup>. Much like the *krajovaść* ideology, Belarusian nationalism could be defined by its search for allies and associates. Still in 1917 the Belarusian nationalists did not primarily seek independence, but autonomy.

From the onset, the Belarusian nationalists faced significant obstacles. Under the rule of tsar, nationalist mobilization was difficult. Censorship, political

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1 Смелянчук, А. (2013). Краёвасць стасоўна беларускага і літоўскага нацыянальных рухаў на пачатку XX ст. In А. Лагвінец, Т. Чуліцкая (Eds.), Беларусь і беларусы сярод суседзяў: гістарычныя стэрэатыпы і палітычныя канструкты. Матэрыялы міжнароднай канферэнцыі. Варшава, 66–78.



oppression from the authorities, lack of education were only a few obstacles that Belarusian nationalists had to face. When more favorable conditions for nationalist agitation appeared, they acted under extraordinary circumstances, very often relying on outside support.

After the 1915 Second Battle of Masurian Lakes the Russian army was on retreat. The tsarist authorities spread rumors of horrendous atrocities committed by the advancing Germans, deliberately triggering an exodus of primarily Orthodox Belarusians. During the so-called *Bieżanstva*<sup>2</sup> of 1915 2.3 million people, of which 2,060,000 were Belarusians and Russians left the Belarusian land<sup>3</sup>. The western boundary of the Belarusian area of settlement was pushed back over 100 kilometers to the east. The exodus meant a depletion of the base of potential activists and more people receptive to the nationalist message. With the departure of many Orthodox Belarusians, the Belarusian Catholics in the westernmost areas of the Russian empire were reduced to a small minority susceptible to Polish culture, Polonization, and assimilationist pushes from the Roman Catholic Church.

The advancing German troops wouldn't bayonet children or cutoff the breasts women, as Russian propaganda has claimed. On the contrary, Ludendorff's administration was instructed to support Belarusian cultural activities and to use Belarusian activism as a counterweight to Polish nationalism in the region which was commonly known as *Land Ober Ost*. As the nationalists had almost no popular following, they were dependent on sponsors and allies. Under German occupation, Belarusian nationalists found themselves in a situation more favorable than any time in modern history. This opened up for unprecedented opportunities for the nationalist activists. Lastoŭski and Luckievič brothers, all Belarusian nationalist pioneers, were hired by the German authorities to raise Belarusian national consciousness by publishing papers in the Belarusian language from 1916<sup>4</sup>.

The mass political mobilization that took place east of the front in 1917 was rather socialist than nationalist. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly on November 12–19, 1917, 0.3 per cent of the votes cast in Belarus went to the list of national parties and organizations. Many of the votes were cast by

2 Fleeing, running away.

3 Мірановіч, Я. (2000). В. Луба (Ed.), Бежанства 1915 года. Беласток, 8; Łatuszonek, O. (1995). Białoruskie formacje wojskowe 1917-1923. Białystok: Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, 35. See also Gatrell, P. (2005). *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russian During World War I*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

4 Umowa dotycząca zezwolenia na gazetę białoruską w Wilnie, Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybinis Archyvas (henceforth LCVA), f. 365, ap. 1, B. 31, ll. 9–10 ap.

war-weary soldiers, rather than the local Belarusian population. The Bolsheviks received an absolute majority of the votes cast in Belarus<sup>5</sup>.

The declaration of the so-called Belarusian People's Republic (*Bielaruskaja Narodnaja Respublika*, BNR) in March 1918 was, in many ways a “plan B” after the Lithuanian declaration of statehood in December 11, 1917<sup>6</sup>. Following the October Revolution and the Lithuanian declaration of statehood, the Belarusian nationalists’ preferred to form some kind of federation with Lithuania or democratic Russia but couldn’t have happened<sup>7</sup>. Ironically, the nationalists’ “collaboration” with the German authorities alienated them from the masses<sup>8</sup>.

German support for (or rather passive tolerance) of Belarusian nationalism continued after all of Belarus ended up under German control following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in early 1918. The hasty declaration of the BNR was of marginal political impact on the German command, which tolerated the nationalist activism, but never seriously considered its recognition. The declaration of the BNR was not exactly reflecting what the nationalist have imagined. It was a modern Belarusian foundation myth, or rather a counter-myth, developed in opposition to that of the Soviet narrative<sup>9</sup>.

After the collapse of Imperial Germany the Bolsheviks returned. They had realized the explosive power of nationalism and believed, like the Germans, in the existence of a separate Belarusian people. On January 1, 1919, they established a Belarusian soviet republic. On the tenth Party Congress in 1921, Stalin stated that “*the Belarusian nation exists with its own language, which is different from Russian*”, adding that “*the culture of the Belarusian people can be raised only in its native language*”<sup>10</sup>. Between 1918 and 1921, Belarusian statehood was declared and re-declared no less than six times<sup>11</sup>. While most of these aborted state projects are now largely forgotten, two have come to serve as national foundation myths. The current regime regards itself as the successor of the BSSR, whereas the BNR has come to occupy a

5 Pipes, R. (1997). *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923: With a new preface*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 75; Ігнаценка, І. М. і інш. (Eds.), *Гісторыя Беларускай ССР у пяці тамах. Том 3: Перамога Вялікай Кастрычніцкай рэвалюцыі і пабудова сацыялізму ў БССР (1917–1937)*. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка, 84.

6 Senn, A. E. (1959). *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania*. New York: Columbia University Press, 31–33.

7 Смалянчук, А. (2000). *Беларускі нацыянальны рух і краёвая ідэя*. *Białoruskie zeszyty historyczne*, № 14, 114.

8 Wilson, A. (2011). *Belarus: The Last European Dictatorship*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 92.

9 The most detailed study on the BNR is Michaluk D. (2010). *Białoruska republika ludowa 1918–1920 u podstaw białoruskiej państwowości*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

10 Касцюк, М. П., Ігнаценка, І. М., Вышыньскі, У. І. і інш. (1995). *Нарысы гісторыі Беларусі ў 2-х частках. Ч. 2*. Мінск: Беларусь (citing Десятый съезд РКП(б). Март 1921 года. Стенографический отчет (1963), 213).

11 Rudling, P. A., *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906–1931* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, forthcoming), chapter three.

central role in the historical memory of the Belarusian diaspora and much of the opposition<sup>12</sup>.

The mild German occupation policy of relative tolerance and support for minority language education were appropriated by other political forces with political aspirations for the Belarusian lands. The returning Soviets declared a Soviet Belarusian republic on January 1, joined it with a hastily declared Soviet Lithuanian republic, and, in 1920, restored the Soviet Belarusian republic. Even Piłsudski reluctantly paid lip service to the notion of Belarusian cultural autonomy in an attempt to win over the local elites during the Polish–Soviet War.

The war ended in a peace treaty, which was unsatisfactory to the major adversaries. In Poland, the Riga peace treaty corresponded neither to the visions of the Piłsudski camp, where the idea of restoration of the pre-partition borders had been strong, nor the national democrats, with their ideas of a smaller but ethnically homogenous Polish nation–state. But even if the Soviets grudgingly accepted the border, the Lithuanians certainly would not. To Belarusian and Ukrainian nationalists Riga Treaty was a disaster. The dissatisfaction became a fertile ground for anti-Polish attitudes. The Lithuanian *Taryba*<sup>13</sup> in Kaunas established a Ministry of Belarusian Affairs and generously funded Belarusian nationalist activists in an attempt to feed Belarusian irredentism in the Second Polish Republic<sup>14</sup>. The government in Kaunas supported armed rebels in Western Belarus in 1921–23, at which point the Soviets took over the funding of local insurgents. By 1925 it became clear to many Belarusian nationalists that they would not be able to alter the borders by force. At the same time, generous Soviet nationalities policies, in Belarus known as *Belarusizacyja* and *korenizatsyia*<sup>15</sup> impressed the exiled Rada of the Belarusian People's Republic, which dissolved itself in 1925, following which many of its leaders relocated to Minsk<sup>16</sup>.

Among the Belarusian minority in Poland there was also a growing support for the Soviet cause. The year 1926 was not only the peak of Belarusization in the BSSR, but also a year of significant changes in Poland and Lithuania, both

12 Kotljarchuk A. (2004). The Tradition of Belarusian Statehood: Conflicts about the Past of Belarus. In E. Rindzeviciute (Ed.), *Contemporary Change in Belarus*, (=Baltic and East European Studies 2). Huddinge: Baltic & East European Graduate School, 2004, 53–58.

13 "Council".

14 Міхнюк, У. М., Рашкевіч, У. К., Фалей, Я. С., Шарапа, А. В. (Eds.), *Знешняя палітыка Беларусі: Збор дакументаў* (1999). Том 1 (1917–1922 гг.). Мінск: Міністэрства замежных спраў РБ, Беларускі дзяржаўны ўніверсітэт, Беларускі навукова-даследчы інстытут дакументазнаўства і архіўнай справы, 217; Вашкевіч, А. (2007). *Грошы для партыі: фінансаванне партыйнай дзейнасці Беларускай хрысціянскай дэмакратыі (1921–1939 гг.)*. Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne, №28, 73.

15 On the Belarusization, see Платонаў, Р. П., Коршук, У. К. (Eds.), *Беларусізацыя ў 1920-я гады: Дакументы і матэрыялы*. Мінск: БДУ, гістарычны факультэт.

16 Пастанова да пракалолу паседжання Рады Народных Міністраў Беларускай Народнай Рэспублікі 15 кастрычніка 1925 г. LCVA, f. 582, b. 2, ap. 61, l. 4.

of which witnessed coups d'Etat in May, and December, respectively, which spelled the end to parliamentary democracy in the two states<sup>17</sup>. Initially, the return of Piłsudski signaled a more generous attitude towards the national minorities in the Second Polish republic. The previous, *endecja*-dominated governments had succeeded in alienating its Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities. The new leadership therefore sought new and different approaches. In Volhynia the authorities pursued a policy which, in some respects mirrored the nationalities policies in Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belarus. Ukrainian language schools were opened, more cultural autonomy announced<sup>18</sup>. During a period between June and December 1926 there was an explosive growth in Belarusian political activism in Poland, led by a group of radical left-wing nationalists with a base in the Sejm. The group, known as the Belarusian Workers and Peasants' Hramada in short time became a mass movement, with up to 160,000 members, a remarkable feat. Its leaders were openly pro-Soviet, and made vague declarations about the desire for "re-unification" of Belarus, including irredentist calls for joining the BSSR<sup>19</sup>.

At the same time, in the BSSR, the Belarusization switched to a higher gear. Belarusian institutions were opened, including a Belarusian Academy of Sciences and a Belarusian State University. The administration was to be conducted in the Belarusian language. University professors were given ultimatums to quickly learn Belarusian or lose their jobs, and some prominent academics actually did master Belarusian<sup>20</sup>. The Belarusization was carried out in a break-neck speed and with little regards to popular sentiments. While it enthused nationalist activists, it annoyed many people on the grass root level, where support for the Belarusian national idea was limited. To the most of the peasantry, questions of Belarusian identity and nation-building appeared as rather abstract issues, far removed from their concerns of everyday life. Many resisted having their children put in Belarusian-language schools, regarding them as hampering their children's social advancement. In January 1925, the Communist Party of Belarus national communist republican leadership even started a process of Belarusization of the divisions of the Red Army, stationed

17 On the 1926 coups in Poland and Lithuania, see Wołos, M. (2013). O Piłsudskim, Dmowskim i zamachu majowym: Dyplomacja wobec Polski w okresie kryzysu politycznego 1925–1926. Kraków Wydawnictwo Literackie; Lopata, R. (2001). Die Entstehung des autoritären Regimes in Litauen 1926: Voraussetzungen, Legitimierung, Konzeption. In E.Oberländer (Ed.), *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919–1944*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 95–142.

18 Snyder, T. (2005). *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 60–82.

19 Праграма і арганізацыйны статут Беларускае Сялянска-Работніцкае Грамады (1926). Вільня: Друкарня Н.Левін і сын, 3; LCVA, f. 365, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 1. Гл. таксама: Праект канстытуцыі Заходняй Беларусі Сымона, LCVA, f. 365, ap. 2, b. 18, l. 8.

20 НАРБ, ф. 701, оп. 1, г. 1931, д. 104, ll. 59–60.

in the BSSR, having Belarusian replacing Russian as the language of command. The following year, two divisions of the Red Army consisting only of Belarusians, were designated to mark the territorial Belarusian divisions<sup>21</sup>.

Most of the 1920s in the BSSR showed strong cohesion of Soviet nationalities policy and some of the key aims of the nationalists. The idea was that if the Soviet state was tolerant of the national movement, and instead tried to keep Great Russian nationalism at bay, they would be able to produce loyal, pro-Soviet Belarusian nationalists. Just like a gardener grows tomatoes in a greenhouse, the Soviet “garden state” would engineer a sort of Soviet Belarusian identity, national in form, but socialist in content.

The authoritarian turbulences in Poland and Lithuania in 1926 and the rise of Stalin the following year changed the dynamic of Eastern Europe countries. All three states significantly expanded their executive authorities and repressive abilities. Piłsudski, a formidable opponent, was now back in power. While Piłsudski declared that he sought non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union in July, 1926<sup>22</sup>, he also gave orders to the Second Department to work with various nationalist émigré movements in order to “*shatter Russia into a series of nation-states*”<sup>23</sup>. The distrust was mutual—Stalin feared that the nationalities policies introduced to strengthen Soviet power in Ukraine and Belarus had created increasingly autonomous republican elites. On their part Piłsudski, and the Sanacja government had reasons to suspect the Belarusian movement of irredentism, fanned by the Soviets.

The changed political situation in Poland outlined the need for stable control of the strategically important border regions. The so-called War Scare of 1927 underlined that popular support for the Bolsheviks was limited in Soviet Ukraine and Belarus<sup>24</sup>.

In Western Belarus, Piłsudski faced a radical, quickly growing Belarusian nationalist movement, which was pro-Soviet, parts of which irredentist. In early 1927 Polish authorities cracked down upon Hramada, sentencing its leaders to long prison terms, and effectively interrupting the Belarusian national mobilization. In the BSSR, Stalin’s “revolution from above” needed different forms of societal organization.

21 Krushinsky, S. (1953). *Byelorussian Communism and Nationalism: Personal Recollections*. New York: Research Program on the USSR, 14.

22 Касцюк, М. П., Навуменка, І. Я. (Eds.), *Назаўсёды разам: Да 60-годдзя ўз’яднання Заходняй Беларусі з БССР*. Мінск: Беларуская энцыклапедыя, 32.

23 Snyder, T. (2005). *Sketches from a Secret War...*, 44.

24 On the War Scare of 1927, see Meyer, A. G. (1978). *The Great War Scare of 1927, Soviet Union/Union soviétique* 5:1 (1978), 1–27.

Nationalism, and national identity, had little to do with people's everyday-life. The rigorous Belarusization was often met with suspicion from the local peasants, who saw little direct utility in these programs. Mahilioŭ and Homieł districts had been added to the BSSR in 1924 and 1926 on the basis of the opinion of "ethnographic" experts rather than the will of the dwellers<sup>25</sup>. Many dodged this form of control, and were reluctant to embrace the new national identities as they were perceiving them as means of social control rather than a response to people's needs. The national activists resembled players around a roulette table, who played on one bet. Stakes were high, a great deal of power and influence, but so were also the losses. During less than a decade, the Belarusian lands changed proprietors several times from Imperial Russia, the Bolsheviks, Germany, Poland, and the Bolsheviks again. Despite several attempts, the Belarusian nationalists failed to achieve independence. They represented a marginal section of society. They were weak, poorly organized and unable to seize the opportunities that opened in 1918–1920, and were quickly reduced to pawns in a larger geopolitical game between hostile neighbors. While the region was turning authoritarian, Belarusian irredentism was regarded as a threat to the new unstable, authoritarian states. Having lost in the regional political power struggle, Belarusian nationalists became its political victims.

The official quadrilingualism turned out to be unpractical, the Belarusization did not visibly strengthen the position of the Bolsheviks in Belarus. The introduction of a centrally planned economy demanded a massive bureaucracy, hard enough to manage in one language. From 1929–1934 the Belarusization was curbed and rolled back. Three waves of terror swept the republic in 1930–31, 1933, and 1937–38, during which the political and intellectual leaders of the 1920s were particularly targeted. The vast majority of Belarusian language authors were repressed<sup>26</sup>. The Belarusian national mobilization was interrupted, or, rather, reorganized. The modernization continued for the rest of the Soviet era, but under Soviet auspices, and under different conditions, and, increasingly, in the Russian language. It created a different modernity, and a nation built quite different from that of PRL or Antanas Sniečkus's Lithuanian SSR or Petro Shelest's Ukrainian SSR, with their more significant dissident movements<sup>27</sup>.

25 Hirsch, F. (2005). *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 149–155.

26 On the Stalinist terror in the BSSR, see Iwanou, M. (2001). *Terror, Deportation, Genozid: Demographische Veränderungen in Weißrußland im 20. Jahrhundert*. In D. Beyrau, R. Lindner (Eds.), *Handbuch der Geschichte Weißrußlands*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 429–433; Процько, Т. (2002). *Становление тоталитарной системы в Беларуси (1917–1941 гг.)*. Минск: Тесей.

27 Kavaliauskaitė, J., Ramonaitė, A. (Eds.), *Sąjūdžio ištakų beiėskant: nepaklusniųjų tinklaveikos galia* (2011). Vilnius: Baltos Lankos; Risch, W. J. (2011). *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Tromly, B. (2009, October). *An Unlikely National Revival: Soviet Higher Learning and the Ukrainian 'Sixtiers', 1953–65*. *The Russian Review*, No. 68, 607–622.

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Is nationalism an enemy or an ally of civic society? The history of Belarusian nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows examples of both. In the post-Soviet space there is a tendency to combine nationalism with democracy. The current rise of the *VO Svoboda* and hard rights in Ukraine may be the reason to question this assumption. The Orange revolution in Ukraine was more keen to rejuvenating nationalism rather than democracy, and similar pictures emerge from other “color revolutions” of the past decade. Furthermore, some of the most radical nationalist movements in post-socialist Europe grew out of revisionist history departments; we recognize this picture not only in Ukraine, but also in countries like Hungary and Croatia.

In Belarus, there are signs that the current regime’s continuation of Soviet-style instrumentalization of World War II is giving rise to a counternarrative in the form of a glorification of far-right World War II-era Belarusian nationalists, such as Usievalad Rodžka, Michal Vituška, and Barys Rahulia, all with deeply problematic backgrounds in the service of Nazi Germany<sup>28</sup>. There is a possibility that these figures, in a post-Lukašenka future could become objects of cults of personality, not unlike those of Bandera, Shukhevych, and the OUN in post-Orange Revolution Ukraine<sup>29</sup>. Historians could do a modest contribution to the development of civic society in Belarus by providing a critical historiography that deconstructs the instrumentalization of the regime as well as heroic representations of its nationalist opponents. Having experienced a traumatic, multi-totalitarian past requires an open and critical inquiry rather than the replacement of Soviet ideological narratives with selective nationalist narratives of heroism and victimization. National heroes are poor substitutes for critical inquiry; civic societies are built around values, principles, and upon institutional foundation rather than patriotic legends. Critically and openly engaging the past means addressing questions of critical importance for the democratic development. Deconstructing rather than constructing myths means empowering the citizenry by providing alternatives and critical choice.

28 See, for instance, Цялежнікаў, А. (2013). Беларускі пасляваенны антысавецкі супраціў 1944–1957, дак. фільм Антося Цялежнікава (Мінск: Студыя ПартызанФільм, 2013). Retrived from: <http://video.arche.by/by/channel/movie/14841>

29 On the situation in post-Orange Ukraine, see Rudling, P. A. The OUN, UPA, and the Holocaust: A Study in the Manufacturing of Historical Myths. Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 2107. Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh and Himka, J.-P. (2011, May). Debates in Ukraine over nationalist involvement in the Holocaust, 2004-2008. *Nationalities Papers* 39:3, 353–370.

# The “Belarusian Trap”: The EU’s Relations with Belarus<sup>1</sup>

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This paper aims at providing an overview of the EU–Belarus relations, trying to answer the question, why the foreign policy of the EU towards Belarus has been mostly ineffective in the last two decades. The objective, of course, is not to provide any excuses, but explanations. The main argument of the paper is that until the late 2000s the EU lacked both the institutions and the policy mechanisms necessary for effectively addressing Belarus.

Concerning methodology, the paper uses a basically institutionalism approach to address the reasons of inefficiency in the EU’s Belarus–related foreign policy. Therefore, neither the often voiced lack of serious political will, nor the primacy of relations with Russia is going to be discussed here. Instead, the paper focuses on the institutional and policy background that the EU could rely on in its relations with Belarus.

The paper addresses the EU–Belarus relations in a time frame that starts from the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and ends in 2009, with the creation of the Eastern Partnership initiative.

## **1. THE NEED FOR AN INTERESTED PARTNER — WHICH BELARUS IS NOT**

First and foremost, the EU’s foreign policy towards the neighbors is fundamentally based on the free will of the neighboring states to cooperate with

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the EU, to the extent they prefer to do so. The problem in the case of Belarus was that for a long time Minsk did not intend to cooperate with the EU at all.

The newly independent Belarus that came to existence in 1991 conducted a foreign policy balancing between Russia and the West. However, unlike the Baltic states and the countries of Central Europe, Belarus did not apply for European Communities / European Union membership. Instead, Minsk aimed at a neutral, non-aligned foreign policy. However, this changed drastically with Alexander Lukašenka coming to power, which resulted in quick re-orientation of the country's foreign policy towards Russia.

Consequently, relations between the EU and Belarus have been frozen since 1997, when the EU suspended the ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in response to the anti-democratic developments in the country, more concretely when President Alexander Lukašenka replaced the freely elected Belarusian parliament with a National Assembly that directly depends on him. As Belarus has kept violating the norms and principles of both the OSCE and the Council of Europe, from November 2002 visa sanctions against members of the Belarusian government have been introduced. However, neither these measures, nor the curtailing of EU assistance could persuade Minsk to comply with the basic democratic norms and standards.

The reason was that starting from 1995 Belarusian foreign policy was decisively focusing on the cooperation with Russia. The gradual establishment of the so-called Union State, and the constantly deepening defense cooperation all served this purpose.

This strongly pro-Russian attitude of the Minsk leadership changed only with Vladimir Putin coming to power in Russia in 1999. Putin put much stronger pressure on Belarus than his predecessor President Boris Yeltsin had ever done. One may recall the famous declaration by Putin made in 2002, when he stated that if Lukašenka was so keen on the integration of the two states, Belarus could simply become part of Russia as an ultimate solution to the integration problems<sup>3</sup>. Lukašenka, of course, flatly rejected the offer.

From then on, Belarus has been constantly trying to introduce an element of counter-balancing the dominance of Russia into its foreign policy. However, relations with the EU have always remained subordinated to the Russian dimension<sup>4</sup>. This means that even if Belarus temporarily gets engaged in a

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3 Nygren, B. (2008). *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia: Putin's Foreign Policy Towards the CIS Countries*. London: Routledge, 71. For a detailed analysis, see: Eberhardt, A. (2008). *Gra Pozorów. Stosunki Rosyjsko-Białoruskie 1991–2008*. Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych.

4 Gromadzki, G. (2009). *Belarusian Foreign Policy — change or continuity?!* In S. Fischer (Ed.), *Back from the Cold? The EU and Belarus in 2009*. Chaillot Papers, No. 119. Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 93–104.

*rapprochement* process with the EU, as it happened in 2008, it is always only a tool for Minsk to be used in the relations with Russia as an instrument of counter-balancing. The fact that Belarus has never seriously addressed the questions raised by the EU back in the times of suspending the PCA ratification demonstrates how shallow these *rapprochement* intentions are.

## 2. LIMITED EU INTEREST UNTIL THE EARLY 2000s

The second reason of the inefficiency of the EU–Belarus relations is that in the 1990s the EU itself showed very limited interest towards the former post–Soviet countries of Eastern Europe. Most EU attention was paid to the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic states that openly aspired to become members of the Union. On the contrary, the ‘grey zone’ ranging from Belarus to Azerbaijan received very little attention, particularly following the end of the armed phase of the regional conflicts. The Yugoslav civil war between 1991 and 1995, in addition to the Kosovo conflict in 1998–1999 diverted Western European attention even more.

Changes started only with the Copenhagen EU summit in 2002, when it became clear that the Eastern enlargement, e.g. the accession of the Central European countries and the Baltic states was to become a reality in 2004. Since then, with the Eastern enlargement approaching, many problems and tensions of post–Soviet Eastern Europe have ‘come closer’ to the European Union.

This resulted in the Wider Europe<sup>5</sup> initiative in 2003 and in the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Strategy Paper<sup>6</sup> in 2004. However, neither documents prescribed any concrete, active initiatives about how to improve the relations with Belarus. Instead, the EU set the improvement of the human and democratic rights in Belarus as the pre–condition of de–freezing the relations. In other words, the ball was left on the side of Belarus. Thus, as Minsk was still uninterested, the EU–Belarus relations remained as shallow as they had been earlier.

## 3. THE NEED FOR A STATE AS A PARTNER

Besides, for a long time since the Treaty of Maastricht came into force, the EU has had no substantial mechanisms to deal with non–state political partners. In others words, the Union could conduct foreign policy only vis–à–vis state actors. Even after high–level bilateral relations got frozen, the EU cooperated with the Belarusian government on technical and

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5 Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours. Communication from the Commission (Brussels, 11 March 2003). Retrieved from: [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03\\_104\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf)

6 European Neighbourhood Policy. Strategy Paper. Communication from the Commission (Brussels, 12 May 2004). Retrieved from: [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf)

humanitarian issues, for instance, related to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. But there was simply no institutionalized mechanism for dealing with NGOs and the non-state political partners of the EU.

Therefore there was a spectacular contradiction present: though the EU had frozen political relations with Lukašenka–regime, it was unable to establish any substantial contacts with the opponents of this regime. This, of course, had a strongly negative effect on the political opposition and the civil society in Belarus, who could not receive any substantial financial support from the EU as a whole. Nevertheless, individual EU member states have done a lot, such as Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and many others. They could also use EU funds for such purposes. However, the European Union itself had no institutionalized political tool to work together with Belarusian civil society and opposition for almost two decades.

The situation started in 2007 to change only with the establishment of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Its main task is the promotion of democracy and human rights in the framework of the EU’s external policies. EIDHR is able to operate also in those countries, in which the EU has no direct cooperation with the government<sup>7</sup>. However, a key weakness of the EIDHR in Belarus was that it needed registered organizations as partners, thus many civil society organization that are non-registered or are deprived of registration cannot not apply<sup>8</sup>. Another problem is the highly complicated bureaucracy necessary for EIDHR projects, and the relatively low overall funding available.

The newly established European Endowment for Democracy (EED)<sup>9</sup> has a much better tailored structure to support civil society in Belarus and Belarusian civil society abroad. However, the EED is a very new organization that had its key document approved only in June 2013. Thus, it remains to be seen, whether it can bring more efficiency into the EU’s relations with non-state partners in Belarus.

#### 4. LACK OF ADVOCATES IN THE EU

Another interesting element worth noting was connected with the limited EU interest towards Belarus mentioned above. Namely, before the 2004

7 European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR). Retrived from: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr_en.htm)

8 Even the very recent, June 2013 EIDHR call is open only for registered legal entities. See Guidelines, 7. Retrived from: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?AD55Chck=1373351089387&do=publi.getDoc&documentId=132442&pubID=134605>

9 European Endowment for Democracy. Retrived from: <http://democracyendowment.eu/>

enlargement there were no countries inside the EU that would have advocated the case of Belarus, or the need for the EU to do more about the situation of human and democratic rights there.

With the EU-accession of primarily Poland and Lithuania, this changed, naturally. Both Warsaw and Vilnius are active promoters of more engagement with Belarus. They both represent the general position that maintaining the isolation harms mostly the everyday people of Belarus, and has little effect on the regime itself. Instead, the EU should get more engaged with Minsk, and this way it should strive for the improvement of democracy and human rights in Belarus. Together with Poland and Lithuania, the other new EU member states are also active supporters of the visa liberalization with Belarus. Both the Visegrad countries and the Baltic states do a lot to strengthen the civil society in Belarus and help the victims of repression. Needless to say, there are strong economic motivations in this engagement, however, the value and identity-related elements are also very strong in both the Polish and Lithuanian cases<sup>10</sup>.

However, all these are relatively new phenomena. The states actively advocating Belarus joined the EU only in 2004, and it took some years for them to 'find their voice' within the EU, to gain experience with policy-making and lobbying in the European Union, etc. The Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative, originating from a Czech proposal, is an important fruit of these efforts. However, it was launched relatively late, only in 2009, and progress with Belarus is very slow, if existent at all.

## 5. THE PROBLEM OF NON-GRANTED BENEFITS

Another reason why the EU could not conduct an effective foreign policy vis-à-vis Belarus was the complete lack of any mechanism by which meaningful pressure could have been exercised on Belarus. In other words, the EU had no sticks in its hands — and the carrots it had were of no interest for Belarus, as it was demonstrated above.

Almost for one and a half decade the only way the EU could sanction Belarus was by not granting any new benefits for Minsk. Not completing the PCA, not giving access to various funding schemes, not improving the political contacts, etc. However, this meant that even though Belarus was not granted any new political and/or economic benefits, it factually did not lose anything either.

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10 For a more detailed analysis, see: Identity and Solidarity in Foreign Policy: Investigating East Central European Relations with the Eastern neighbourhood (2011). Perspectives, Special Issue, vol. 19, no. 2. Retrieved from: [http://www.perspectives.cz/upload/Perspectives/2011/Perspectives02\\_11.pdf](http://www.perspectives.cz/upload/Perspectives/2011/Perspectives02_11.pdf)

This weakness of the EU started to change only in 2007, when the EU withdrew the preferences of Belarus in the framework of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) status, as a response to the continuous violation of the freedom of association, and of core labor rights<sup>11</sup>. Even though it turned out that suspension of the GSP was not as effective as it was intended to be<sup>12</sup>, this was the first case when Belarus really lost something as a consequence of its non-compliance with European standards.

The line has been continued by the extended visa bans, assets freezes and trade embargoes introduced both by the EU and the United States in the second half of the 2000s. However, the West needed more than a decade to recognize the need for efficient sanctioning measures against the Lukašenka-regime.

## 6. THE LACK OF INSTITUTIONALIZED CHANGES

The EU continuously demands from Belarus to comply with the basic European standards; for example to conduct free and fair, democratic elections, or to refrain from imprisoning people on political bases, and to guarantee basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. This way the EU hopes to ensure the lasting respect for the basic European values in Belarus.

However, even if the Lukašenka regime reacts positively, it makes only non-institutionalized, ad hoc concessions. The benefits granted are only temporary, and can be withdrawn at any time, basically at will of the regime. For example, the release of the political prisoners gives no guarantee that the same people would not be imprisoned again immediately the next day. The reason is that the legal environment that makes such measures possible remains unchanged<sup>13</sup>.

The result is that the regime is able to use the situation of the opposition organizations or of the political prisoners as bargaining chips in its relations with the EU. One day, as a positive answer to the EU's demands, some of the prisoners may get released, as it happened, for example, during the 2007–2008 *rapprochement* period. Thus the EU becomes ready to lift some of the sanctions, or to grant certain benefits. However, in the next days the same civil society activists may be arrested and imprisoned again, following similarly unfair trials, because the very legal environment is still the same. Interestingly enough, even

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11 EU will withdraw GSP trade preferences from Belarus over workers' rights violations. EUROPA - PRESS RELEASES Reference IP/07/844 (2007, June 18). Retrieved from: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-07-844\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-07-844_en.htm)

12 Hajduk, K., Silitski, V. (2007). After the GSP Withdrawal: The Case for the Revision of the EU Policy Towards Belarus, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies. Retrieved from: <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00003465/01/gspaug7en.pdf>

13 For a more detailed analysis, see: Racz, A. (2011). Unfair Trade — Political Prisoners as Bargaining Chips in the EU-Belarus Relationship?, Analysis. Eastern Partnership Community. Retrieved from: <http://www.easternpartnership.org/publication/politics/2011-09-20/unfair-trade-political-prisoners-bargaining-chips-eu-belarus-relatio>

nowadays the EU focuses only on the factual release of the political prisoners instead of demanding changes in the legal environment itself<sup>14</sup>.

The same applies to elections: even though opposition candidates were allowed to conduct a relatively open and fair campaign before the December 2010 presidential elections, there wasn't any independent control over the counting process of the votes, and opposition protests were brutally cracked down.

All in all, the fundamental structure of the regime has remained the same ever since the mid-1990s, regardless of the EU's efforts to bring it more in line with the European standards of democracy. The main reason is, of course, the support from Russia that makes it possible for the Lukašenka-regime to sustain itself both politically and economically, despite Western isolation.

## CONCLUSION

The main argument of the paper is that since Aliaksandr Lukašenka came to power in Belarus the EU has been lacking the policy mechanisms and instruments necessary to conduct an efficient foreign policy vis-à-vis official Minsk. Part of the reasons was connected to the mutual lack of interest in each other. This was particularly true before the 2004 EU enlargement, before which the Belarusian problem had simply been 'too far away' from the EU, and there were no committed advocates of the Belarusian case within the Union. Besides, the EU lacked effective sanctioning mechanisms, thus it could exercise no pressure on Minsk. The only thing the EU could do was to isolate Minsk and not grant any additional benefits. However, real losses could not be inflicted, thus the Belarusian non-compliance with the fundamental values of the EU remained unpunished.

In the second half of the 2000s however, most of the structural obstacles enumerated here have become properly addressed. The European Union is already very much interested in strengthening its relations with Belarus, and even the Lukašenka-regime is showing certain interest in warming up relations with the EU. The case of Belarus has firm supporters among the member states, and the current targeted sanctions seem to be more effective than simply relying on political declarations and passive isolation, as it happened until the late 2000s. However, the EU still did not manage to achieve any lasting, institutionalized change in Belarus concerning the respect for human rights and democratic freedoms.

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14 Jacek Protaszewicz: European Union hopes for the release of political prisoners (2013, June27). Retrieved from: <http://freeeales.fidh.net/2013/06/protaszewicz-eu-hopes-release-political-prisoners/>

To sum up, though not much had been achieved in EU–Belarus relations in the 15 years between the rise of Lukašenka and the launch of the Eastern Partnership, the situation is gradually changing now. At least, the necessary institutions and policy mechanisms are increasingly present and functioning. However, there is still a lot to do to make up for the time lost.

# Between Church and the Government or Religious Life of an Ordinary Person in After-war Belarus

**Iryna KAŠTALIAN**, Belarusian Oral History Archive

**I**n Belarusian Soviet Socialistic Republic (BSSR) religion was an important aspect of everyday life. It was significantly influenced by the war, during which official attitude underwent certain liberalization at the Soviet Union macro-level. The population became more religious during the war. This was reflected in the increased number of christening, marriage and funeral ceremonies<sup>1</sup>. However, after the victory, the tendency to restrict religious activity returned.

In this article, we will try to depict the attitude of ordinary people to these restrictions. The analysis is based on the witnesses' reminiscences. The respondents were Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish and atheists. Unlike religious people, the latter recollected very little about this issue because of internal disinterest (with several exceptions). Children who were brought up in atheistic com-

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1 Кашталян, И. С. (2005). Политика советских властей по отношению к Русской православной церкви и повседневная жизнь в БССР в 1944–1953 гг. In Макарьевские чтения: мат-лы четвертой междунар. конф., Горно-Алтайск, 21–22 ноября 2005 г. Горно-Алтайск: РИО ГАГУ, 157.



munist families took the absence of religion in the public sphere for granted. But they were not completely isolated from religious issues as they sometimes communicated with active believers and could see that there were sanctities, which reminded about the belief in God.

## A THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT

Religion has always been an obstacle to cultivating an ideal Soviet citizen. The government treated religious adherence as a protest against its atheistic policies and could persecute for that. Nevertheless, during the long Soviet period, active believers for whom it was important to remain loyal to traditional values and to maintain religious canons were always present on the Belarusian territories. Believers could rebel when they had internal or external conflicts with the imposed ideological doctrine. They feared God's judgment more than repressions that could befall on them for protesting against destroying churches or following the rituals of christening, marriage, and funeral. Naturally, the degree of revolt depended on the profoundness of faith and on how deeply the convictions of the person were affected.

The government tried to penetrate in work environment and private life through adopting and enforcing legally prescribed decisions that significantly influenced everyday life and restricted people's freedom. However, people could still make some choices. Religiousness affected people considerably causing them to choose the strategy of behavior that was not favored by the government. The forms of religious manifestation differed depending on personal traits and various factors of influence in the environment. The threat of repression made everyone choose the degree of risk by a person could undertake. Some people confined to covert celebrations of the most respected holidays, others fought for their persecuted priests and shrines. One example of passive protest is the conviction that those who were actively participating in anti-religious policies would be punished by God<sup>2</sup>. For some of those who disagreed with the Soviet authorities perceiving another person as a believer, especially someone from the West, could be a positive factor that indicated a possibility of higher degree of trust to this person and his non-Sovietness<sup>3</sup>.

If we take into consideration the peculiarities of the confessions traditional to the Belarusian territories it becomes clear that although the government looked for harmful anti-Soviet activities, even the most radical actions of

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2 Аудыёінтэрв'ю Генадзя Ю., 1929 г. н., 19.07.2008, в. Бязводнае Вілейскага раёна Мінскай вобласці, Беларускі архіў вуснай гісторыі (БАВГ), 2(2)-71-218; Аудыёінтэрв'ю Фамы К., 1913 г. н., 20.03.2009, г. Жодзіна Мінскай вобласці, БАВГ, 2(2)-73-230.

3 Аудыёінтэрв'ю Наталлі П., 1917 г. н., 15.03.2009, г. Мінск, БАВГ, 2(2)-84-296.

believers were, as a rule, peaceful. Religious people distributed “the holy letters”, spread rumors about the approaching Doomsday and the dissolution of collective farms, petitioned and filed complaints asking to restore churches, etc. Such activities intensified particularly during religious holidays that drew attention to religious institutions issue.

In most cases, the measures taken by the government to restitute shrines were fictitious. The government could intentionally bring out discord among complainants by giving back the building but not registering the priest. Therefore, only the most stubborn agreed to undertake the responsibility for the maintenance of those churches. Big distances to closest churches made some believers form groups that prayed illegally in private homes<sup>4</sup>.

Some forms of activities could be considered by the government as a manifestation of revolt. For example, the government reacted in such a way to the cases of self-renovation of icons in 1949, which was treated as a political action. Archbishop of Minsk and Belarus Piciryum even organized a special expert commission to prove that such miracles of self-renovation had purely religious meaning. As evidence, they used the fact that this miracle happened both in homes of collective farm workers and in homes of self-employed farmers and the meetings caused by it were spontaneous and not organized.

Initially, such self-renovations were observed in Mir District of Hrodna Region. A year before some people witnessed another miracle — icons in water. By October 3, 1949 nine incidents of self-renovations of icons were registered in Stoŭbcy District of Baranavičy Region. Mass prayers around them lasted for 10–14 days. The church authorities decided to bring such self-renovated icons to the churches to stop “illegal” gatherings in the open<sup>5</sup>.

It should be noted that during the first years after the war the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was more privileged than other religions in the BSSR. The actions of the government towards it were focused less on strict control and more on gradual pushing it to the background of the social and political life. The policies towards other confessions were harsher. It was caused, among other factors, by their more principled position towards the government and participation in activities that could be easily considered “political”. The Catholic Church actively supported the Armia Krajowa (Interior Army) resistance movement and facilitated the exodus of people to Poland. In official documents, the government explained the persecutions of the Catholic priests by their alleged opposition to the policies of the government and direct intervention

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4 Нацыянальны архіў Рэспублікі Беларусь (НАРБ), ф. 4, воп. 62, спр. 348, Аа. 59, 63, 64.

5 Ibid., спр. 68. Аа. 486–488.

into the work of the Soviet civil servants. The Protestants were also suspicious as many of them were members of non-registered religious organizations and they typically refused to cooperate not only with the Germans during the occupation but also with the Communist authorities. Besides, they sabotaged and hampered Soviet events. Some groups indeed challenged the system — they refused to join collective farms, did not let their children attend schools on Mondays and Saturdays, and so on<sup>6</sup>.

Since 1948, general attitude of the government to all, even registered religious communities, changed fundamentally — a number of prohibitions to perform religious rites were introduced. It was impossible to register a new parish. It was decided to ban the service of clerics in other parishes and religious services in the open. The priests were forbidden to “*hinder the work of the collective farm members*” in the agricultural activities. Thus, the number of formal reasons to prohibit the activities of a religious community or a priest was officially increased. The ban on the engagement of the under-aged in religion made the government suspicious of all religious events where young people participated. The government was also suspicious of non-attendance of schools during religious holidays, non-participation in the Pioneer Organization, and so on.

The clerics and active believers often violated the bans imposed by the government. This was one of the reasons for persecutions of the believers. The most popular pretext for repressions was the accusation of “anti-Soviet activities” and work for the benefit of the enemy. The forms of security services’ influence were not limited to punitive measures (arrest). Alongside the Party and the Soviet authorities, low-level civil servants — financial agents, authorized representatives of District Executive Committees — also interfered into the affairs of religious communities. Religious activities of the parents were often an obstacle to children’s possibility to get to and a reason for expulsion from educational institutions. The Soviet authorities kept track of the place of work not only of religious activists but also of their relatives. Cooperation with priests was considered even worse an offence.

Still, anti-religious propaganda on the local level, which happened without considerable pressure from the government, did not influence religious activities significantly, especially in rural areas. “Readers houses” often did not have their own space and shared location with Rural Councils, did not subscribe to the newspapers, etc.<sup>7</sup> People were not receiving payment for “work-days” in the collective farms, which worsened the situation. As a result, young people

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6 Ibid., сnp. 348, Aa. 91, 96.

7 Ibid., A. 125.

fled the villages to work at the industries in the cities. Those who stayed could find consolation in Church.

### THE WESTERNERS AND THE EASTERNERS

The fear of re-emergence of pre-war terror, including for religious activity, was typical of the residents of the Eastern areas. The life of religious communities in the Western regions was different. The clergy there had more influence on the believers as large scale fight against religion had not been launched yet. There were more religious communities in that area. For example, in 1949, the majority of Orthodox communities were located in that region — 808, whereas there were only 219 in the Eastern part. The Catholic Church functioned officially only on the territory of the Western regions of the BSSR as the authorities believed that the number of Catholic believers in the Eastern regions was insignificant. On the other hand, the situation in Belarus was affected considerably by the population exchange with Poland in 1944–1946. During these years, a lot of Catholics left Belarusian territories, including 304 priests, and a number of Catholic parishes ceased to exist.

The government thought that complete collectivization, which started in 1949, would make it even more difficult for religious communities in the Western region to influence the peasants. Indeed, this had a strong impact on the religious life in the area — peasants went to church less frequently as they were overburdened with work in collective farms. People, however, did not always give in to these circumstances. During religious holidays, the work in the collective farms was suspended; horses from collective farms were sometimes used for religious events. Priests tried not to demonstrate their attitude to the collectivization and reacted passively<sup>8</sup>. Despite that, the church activities annoyed the government and were considered as potentially feeding the propaganda against collective farms.

The difference between the levels of religiousness in the Western and Eastern part of Belarus was huge. The residents of less Sovietized Western Belarus followed religious rites more thoroughly. This is confirmed by the reminiscences of both “Westerners” and “Easterners” who were in contact with them. Easterners noted the dissatisfaction of Westerners with the fight against religion that was initiated by the government. It was influenced by the fact that during the Polish times residents of Western Belarus received, as a rule, religious education and were more closely connected to religious values.

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8 НАРБ, ф. 4, воп. 62., спр. 68, А. 33.

This was especially true about the group of Westerners who expected that the territory of Western Belarus would be returned to Poland or that they would be able to move to Poland under the population exchange scheme and hence, that official religious policies for them would change.

At the same time, recollections demonstrate that in spite of weak religious consciousness Easterners, including young generation, also celebrated religious holidays and adhered to religious traditions, like Westerners, even when they were not dedicated believers. Easter, Christmas, Pentecost, and Radaŭnica were the main holidays. Christening and funerals were the most significant rites. The marriage rite was less observed but was also considered important. Christening of the children of atheists was still a tendency. Usually, it was done by a relative or a friend of the family who made this decision based on his or her religious beliefs.

Religiousness depended on a large number of factors. Place of birth was not always the determinant. According to the recollections, there was no big difference in religiousness of respondents who were born outside Belarus from Belarusian Easterners, which was caused by the general period of Sovietization. The newly arrived could be believers and could know about the persecutions for religious convictions in their region. When the eyewitness was from a cleric family the level of religiousness could be higher than that of a representative of regions annexed to the BSSR in 1939<sup>9</sup>. Those Belarusian Westerners whose parents were associated with the Communist party of Western Belarus could be atheist already during the Polish rule. But it does not mean that they were aggressive atheists, possibly because they could not imagine themselves detached from the local community and had certain respect towards believers.

Westerners and Easterners had different attitudes to celebration of holidays. Still, they all celebrated them in some way. However, many Westerners did not recognize Soviet holidays because they did not accept Sovietization. For the young generation, religious holidays with their diversity, including diversity of rituals and their practical aspects, contributed to positive perception of religion and maintained religiousness.

## **THE FEAR OF REPRESSIONS AND STRATEGIES OF PRESERVING RELIGIOUSNESS**

A source of information about religious activities that was barely mentioned by the official Soviet propaganda was everyday communication between people. Informal exchange of messages between believers and their relatives in the

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9 Аўдыёінтэрв'ю Валянціна Л., 1929 г. н., 11.03.2009, г. Мінск, БАВГ, 2(2)-79-260-267.

family, at work or in the community helped preserve religious practices and learn about possibilities to participate in the activities of religious institutions. On the outside, this topic was a taboo. Secrecy strongly characterized religious activity as there was a threat of repression for implementing religious rites with people who had a certain social status (for example, teachers, doctors) and for children attending religious institutions. Tipping off to the authorities was a usual trigger for repression.

Religiousness of individuals manifested itself in two ways: in preservation of religious rites in everyday life and going to shrines. The latter was less popular both because the number of functioning shrines was reducing and because in this case the risk of repression was higher as this was harder to conceal. Therefore, people mostly celebrated religious holidays secretly in private homes.

Confidence in the local priest could be one of the reasons for participation or non-participation in public religious services in the shrines. Some believers were afraid to participate in the rituals as they feared that the priest could be an informer of the government.

Given the general situation of restriction on activities of religious institutions and fight against religion, believers paid less attention to the religion of the spouse, to whether the Christian church was Orthodox or Catholic when they felt a need to pray or find a priest to help with religious rites. If spouses were of different confessions, they could live in harmony and celebrate the holidays of each other. Changes of confession by one of the spouses happened less frequently. A bigger obstacle to mutual understanding in the family was atheism of one of the family members.

Because of the fear of repressions for deviation from the official course people who held high positions, including those responsible for ideology, changed their behavior. And they were believers. As a rule, they conformed to the external restrictions of religiousness in the family. The way they followed them depended on the strength of their faith and internal need to preserve the traditions. Some people secretly kept icons, prayed, celebrated holidays, others were afraid of doing even this little. These people could sometimes combine the fight against religion with personal religiousness; they could forbid going to churches but celebrate religious holidays at home<sup>10</sup>. In most cases, these people emphasized later that their fight against religion was merely formal.

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10 Аўдыёінтэрв'ю Матроны Г., 1929 г. н., 01.03.2009, в. Юрковічы Лагойскага раёна Мінскай вобласці, БАВГ, 2(2)-64-185-186.

However, they could be lying in order to create a better image of themselves for the next generations.

### **COMMUNICATION OF RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS**

Under the Soviets, the process of communication of religious convictions to the younger generation changed. Whether religious parents engaged the children in celebration of religious rites at home or took them to church depended on the degree of fear of repressions for that and on the probability of this creating a problem for children's carrier in the future. When parents supported official policies introduced at educational institutions and excluded religion from upbringing of children, the level of religiousness of young people was lower. After the older generation perished, the communication of religious traditions often ceased.

Different methods of fight against religion launched by the government hindered the preservation of traditions in the family. People frequently recalled that Soviet events were organized on church holidays or that entertainment was organized during the Lent.

Another factor that decreased religiousness was a post-war mobility of the population. Young believers often left their communities and moved to a different city for work or studies. The preservation of rites hence declined as religious traditions were better maintained through family connections as well as the character of life in rural areas. Adapting in the new environment, the person was more likely to obey official rules of everyday life. It is also important to keep in mind that the atmosphere in cities was more atheistic.

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The desire to preserve religious traditions as part of freedoms led to an open or covert conflict of an ordinary person with the policies of the Soviet government. Pursuing this, people had possibilities to preserve traditional values in full or partially depending on the resistance strategy they chose. Partial preservation safeguarded against repressions but made it more difficult to communicate religious convictions to the next generations in the future, which led to graduate decrease of religiousness. With very few exceptions, children who were brought up in the Soviet system were not able to fully adhere to religious practices. This fact may have resulted in an increased manipulation of the Soviet government and a decreased inclination to protest.

# The Genealogy of National Statehood in the Historical Memory of Belarusians

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There are two major meta-narratives in Belarusian cultural and historical sphere that from the late 19th century provide the basis for interpreting historical events and their meanings. The issue of statehood origins is central for both.

The first (national) narrative sees the roots of Belarusian statehood back in Polack Principality, an independent state formation. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania is considered the golden age: the Belarusian people had dominant position, but as a result of more powerful neighbors’ intrigues the powerful statehood was lost. The Belarusian Democratic Republic is seen as a legitimate restoration of this statehood line in the Modern Era.

The second (russocentrism) narrative regards the history of Belarus in the context of all-Russian statehood. The Kievan Rus (Ruthenia) was the cradle of Old Russian people which later served as the basis for formation of close and brotherly Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples. This narrative identifies the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a state of Lithuanian feudal lords, with Ruthenian Orthodox culture and identity suppressed. The embodiment of modern statehood is attributed to the BSSR. Both ways of seeing the genealogy of the Belarusian statehood are closely and directly tied to the political projects and visions not only of the past but also of the present and the future of Belarus.



The historians who worked in national historiography paradigm became “nation-builders”. Their works had immense impact on modern national identity formation. At the same time, many of them were involved in direct political struggle, especially in the Belarusian case. Almost all national historians of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were active in politics. Accordingly, the “long genealogy” of Belarusian statehood had direct ties with the ethnic and national project, seeking autonomy and later independence for Belarus. The revival of this historiography tradition at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union was also linked with civic and political activism. It aimed first at expanding the independence of the BSSR in the Soviet Union, and then at the independence of Belarus. For some time, the ethno-national version of the history of Belarus was closely associated with the Belarusian Popular Front. Consequently, the political defeat of the movement led to history textbooks revision. However, the decline of the movement and strengthening the country’s independence naturally leads to the erosion of this link. Thus, there appear conditions when elements of national historiography can be adopted by the official historical policy.

It is worth noting that both of these narratives are supported by intellectual circles that develop and promote them. At the same time, the official historical policy conducted in Belarus since Aliaksandr Lukašenka came to power can not be directly identified with any of these narratives. We should rather talk about a hybrid cultural canon based on a combination of national and Soviet elements.

One should agree with Andrej Findor that *“historiographic representations of national history origins reflect the epoch’s basic political configuration”*. On the other hand, one should pay attention to the translation of these representations and their adoption by the collective consciousness of the target audience, the Belarusians in our case. Was it successful and if the answer is yes, to what extent was it successful? At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Belarusian national movement was extremely short of resources and possibilities to spread its views on the Belarusian nation and its history. Ironically, it is in the Soviet Belarus of the 1920s when for the first time the national version of history began to expand among the general population with the help of mass education. These ideas might also have helped to fix “Belarusians” as a self-determination, which was recorded by the Soviet censuses. But the further course of the Soviet government’s historical policy aimed at integrating the Belarusian history in the myth of the Kievan Rus and the triunity of the Russian people. This myth appeared to be longer lasting than the Soviet regime. It is still transmitted by part of the political and intellectual elite, educated by communist ideals, as well as by a new wave of “Westernrussism” supporters. It all proves there is no common set of knowledge about the origins of Belarusian statehood which would be translated through cultural policy institutions. Thus, the notion of national statehood origins can be used both for the analysis of political positions in today’s

Belarus and for studying historic memory of the country's population. It is not surprising that latest sociological studies have started to apply this notion.

Of course, there is a natural distance between the views of historians and political speeches, on the one hand, and their audience, i.e. the country's population, on the other. The first issue to arise is the issue of transmission, of using a variety of means to spread certain ideas among the people. In today's modernized society the most effective means are education system and the media. However, their efficiency remains debatable. It is, obviously, not possible to state that the transmitted message is interpreted directly and in the right way.

The issue of national statehood origins is even more complicated: not only the dominant narrative changes in accordance with the political situation, but there is also practical co-existence of opposite and confronting ideological positions in the official cultural field.

It should be noted that it is not possible to change one's views immediately, including the ideas about the past. Thus, we may suppose that elder Belarusians will be less attached to "long genealogy" of national statehood, more complying with the canon transmitted in the Soviet times. It also provides ground for the hypothesis that the number of those attached to "long genealogy" should increase, but not rapidly because of the uncertainty of the official position, reflected in a variety of textbooks.

At the moment, we have four different sociological studies available. They can be compared to each other, although with some limitations: IISEPS<sup>1</sup> (2004), the Institute of Sociology of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences, Novak laboratory (the study for Budźma campaign, 2009 and 2012).

Let us take a look at IISEPS's study first. The wording of the question was the following: "What state, in your opinion, was the first Belarusian state?" Unfortunately, the poll was not properly prepared, as Polack Principality was not included in the answers provided.

Bearing this in mind, the distribution of replies is the following:

State	Number of replies, %
GDL (Grand Duchy of Lithuania)	34,6
BNR (Belaruskaja Narodnaja Respublika)	15,1
BSSR (Soviet Belarus)	17,0
The Republic of Belarus	18,2
Difficult to answer / No answer	15,1

1 Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS).

The Institute of Sociology (IS) and Novak laboratory introduced another choice — Polack Principality (IS) or Polack and Turaŭ Principality (Novak).

	Polack Principality	GDL (Grand Duchy of Lithuania)	BNR (Belaruskaja Narodnaja Respublika)	BSSR (Soviet Belarus)	The Republic of Belarus	Difficult to answer
The Institute of Sociology (June 2008)	29	22	9	10	6	24
Novak (summer 2009)	18	38	5	12	9	18

The most recent data is represented by Novak laboratory study for Budźma campaign in 2012. In this survey, the respondents were able to choose several answers. The results are the following:

Polack and Turaŭ Principality — 25,1%

Grand Duchy of Lithuania — 44,8%

BNR (Belarusian Democratic Republic) — 9,9%

BSSR (Soviet Belarus) — 18,2%

The Republic of Belarus — 15,6%

Do not know / Difficult to answer — 14,6%

It appears that we have several surveys with similar but not identical wordings which causes difficulties in their direct comparison but still makes it possible to formulate several general conclusions. First, all surveys clearly show that “long genealogy” is more popular in Belarusians’ collective consciousness than “short genealogy”. Taking ISEPS’s study of 2004 as the starting point and Novak’s study of 2012 as the final one, we can make another important conclusion: the number of “long genealogy” adherents is increasing. In 2004, the proportion is 10 to 7, while in 2012 it is already 10 to 4.

The data from the Institute of Sociology (2009) and Novak (2012) were analyzed in detail. Both surveys’ findings fully confirmed the initial hypothesis. Indeed, people older than 60 years are more likely to prefer the BSSR as the first Belarusian state (15.2%) than younger respondents (5.4%). But still, older age groups largely associated the genealogy of the Belarusian statehood to the periods of the Polack Principality, or the GDL. In this respect, there are no significant controversies in the historical memory of Belarusians according to the age groups. Higher education may also be mentioned among the factors determining the choice of statehood genealogy: Belarusians with higher education are clearly more attached to “long genealogy”.

Then another question rises: to what extent the origins of the Belarusian statehood back in the times of Polack Principality or the Grand Duchy of

Lithuania reflects the adherence of Belarusians to the national historical narrative (with all political connotations)? And, symmetrically, does choosing “short genealogy” mean politically motivated support to Russocentrism? The problem, obviously, requires using additional indicators that should be used in the study. Analyzing Novak laboratory survey results of 2012, we used the following indicators: the choice of national symbols (white–red–white flag and *Pahonia* arms or the current state symbols), attitudes towards the wider use of the Belarusian language or supporting Soviet identity.

Sociological data provide ground for distinguishing four types of views on the national past: 1) Ideological choice of “long genealogy” based on conscious adoption of the national narrative, linked with firm positions regarding the white–red–white flag and *Pahonia* as Belarusian symbols, commitment to widening the scope of use of the Belarusian language); 2) Empathic choice of “long genealogy”, which is characterized by a moderately positive attitude toward the Belarusian history and language, positive perception of everything related to Belarus and a lack of personal active position; 3) Ideological choice of “short genealogy” characterized by rejection of the idea of wider use of the Belarusian language and adherence to Soviet identity; 4) “short genealogy” choice based on shallow knowledge of history limited to daily routine (such choice is normally accompanied by unclear position regarding topical issues and vague identity). The sociological data prove that regardless the fact that firm ideological standings are not rooted into Belarusians’ mass consciousness, soft support to “long genealogy” of national statehood generally is more common and steadily wins even bigger support. Keeping in mind that “short genealogy” supporters are mostly elderly people with low education level, the generation change will contribute to the shift in favor of “long genealogy”.

Adherence to ancient version of the Belarusian statehood does not totally correspond to the narrow interpretation of ethnocentrism with the same historiographic basis. The Belarusian population chooses “long genealogy” while accepting the current national symbols and remaining passive about promoting wider use of the Belarusian language. Such version of “long genealogy” looks suitable for the Belarusian authorities, as it does not contradict the attitudes promoted by the Belarusian state ideology project. Thus, even with the change of the Soviet generation and the absence of stable Russocentrism support base, the radical version of ethnical and linguistic nationalism is not likely to develop. Moderate and rather passive version of the Belarusian identity seems more probable to spread.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that results of the sociological surveys directly confirm the tie between the language, historical memory and identity proclaimed by national prophets and now subject to research. The choice of a version of the Belarusian history firmly correlates with the choice of national symbols, attitudes to Soviet identity and language preferences.