

Understanding Belarus: Belarusian Identity

GRIGORY IOFFE

IN THE FIRST OF THIS THREE-PART SERIES of articles the linguistic situation in Belarus was analysed. The research questions that inform this second article are:

- 1) What kind of ethnic identity evolved in Belarus that makes most Belarusians insensitive to ‘their own’ national symbols and attached to those embodying their kinship with neighbouring countries?
- 2) What is the status of the Belarusian national movement when viewed through the prism of the most reputable theories of ethnic nationalism?

My attempt to respond to these questions stems from my field observations and familiarity with scholarly studies and other material. Anthony David Smith’s classic volume on ethnic origins of nations and Miroslav Hroch’s perceptive book on national movements in Europe’s ‘small nations’ are of special importance. A quintessential piece on Belarusian identity is Yanka Kupala’s play ‘Tuteishiya’; written in 1922 and published in 1924, it was banned by the Soviet authorities primarily because Russian expansionism in regard to Belarus was painted by Kupala as a mirror image of Polish expansionism. The play is every bit as topical today as in the 1920s.

Language and identity

When asked whether the oblivion of the Belarusian language would lead to the erosion of Belarusian identity, 23.3% of the school teachers covered in my May 2002 pilot survey¹ said yes, 15% chose the rather yes than no option, 30% subscribed to rather no than yes, 20% said no and 11.7% had no opinion. Thus only one-fifth of the respondents firmly believed in the survival of Belarusian identity under current conditions. Overall, however, the situation required further insight.

Upon asking my Minsk correspondents orally and by e-mail whether maintaining Belarusian identity while speaking Russian was possible, I encountered two reactions:

- 1) Entertaining this possibility would only make sense if the native language were dead, which, however, it is not.
- 2) If Belarusians speak Russian, what would be the difference between them and Russians?

The first reaction has been *de facto* analysed in my first article: the language is not certifiably dead, but it is not a *living* language in the full sense of the word. The

second reaction is a rhetorical question: the difference is indeed small and so the attainment of separate identity hinges on whether the goal of becoming truly different from Russians can become truly mobilising.

According to Hroch, 'linguistic assimilation [does] not always strike a decisive blow against the further development of a nationality: one need only cite the examples of Ireland and Norway'.² In the case of Ireland, the religious difference from England historically played an important role.

Religion and identity

Indeed, according to Smith, 'organised religion supplies much of the personnel and communication channels for the diffusion of ethnic myths and symbols. The priests and scribes not only communicate and record and transmit these legends and beliefs, but they also serve as the chief guardians and conduits of the symbolism which can link feudal or imperial elites to the peasant masses ...'³

However, it is probably in the area of organised religion that one of the most acutely perceived vulnerabilities of the Belarusian identity lies. For Belarusian nationalism to assert itself vis-à-vis two older and aggressive nationalisms, Russian and Polish, it had to change the historical pattern of ethnic mobilisation that had long dominated the area. In this pattern Belarus was viewed as the Polish–Russian borderland, in which the Orthodox associated themselves with the Russians and Catholics with the Poles, and after the collapse of the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church there was no or at any rate little room for Belarusians *per se*.

Most residents of Belarus belonged to the Uniate Church from 1569 to 1839. Belarusian nationalist writings suggest that its collapse more than anything else undermined the Belarusians' sense of being different from the neighbouring ethnic groups. Indeed, the Uniates (Greco-Catholics who abided by Orthodox rites but recognised the supremacy of the Pope) essentially represented a transitional, half-way creed between Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy. One may say that it was just as transitional as local vernaculars were between Polish and Russian. Two transitional features (language and creed) superimposed might have led to something qualitatively new. However, blaming Belarusians' blurred identity on the Uniate's demise would invoke the chicken and egg conundrum—if only because the Uniates' supreme clerics shifted to Orthodoxy voluntarily⁴ and most Belarusians followed in their footsteps.

It is tempting to assume, though, that in today's Belarus the issue of religious underpinnings of identity is no longer important. First, there is confessional peace in Belarus wherein the Orthodox ostensibly have no problems with their Catholic neighbours. In Novogrudok, for example, a major *kosciol* with its many Polish-language posters and prayer books⁵ is just 100 metres away from a major Orthodox Church where they preach in Russian, and there does not seem to be any major tension between the two at all. Second, most Belarusians are atheists and do not care much about organised religion anyway. Third, protestant denominations, not traditional churches, are growing the fastest in today's Belarus.

All of this being said, however, the traditional religious divide appears to linger. People may not attend services but most are keenly aware of their backgrounds,

which in many cases is imprinted in their first names with, say, Stanislaw or Jadwiga identifying somehow as Catholics, while Ivan and Nadezhda identify as Orthodox. It is symptomatic that Alyaksandr Lukashenka speaks of himself as an ‘Orthodox atheist’ (an atheist with an Orthodox background), makes friends with Filaret,⁶ the Orthodox supreme leader of Belarus, and is suspicious of Catholics. Those of Catholic background, on the other hand, refer to Filaret as the biggest imposter and wheeler-dealer,⁷ and Stanislav Shushkevich, whose background is Catholic, said that in his childhood he associated Orthodox clerics with heavy drinking, while Catholic priests and monks appeared to him as decent, spiritual and clean.⁸

Location, ethnonym and identity

The setting of Yanka Kupala’s 1922 play *Tuteishiya* (Locals) is the city of Minsk in 1914–19. There are 15 characters, 14 of whom are local Slavs. Only three—Yanka, a rural teacher, Alenka, much influenced by Yanka’s preaching, and her father, Garoshka—refer to themselves and are referred to by the rest as Belarusians. Other characters do not subscribe to this ethnonym and are nationally indifferent. Mikita, whose proclivity to mimicry of Polish, Russian, German and, in the end, Belarusian ways depending on the political convenience of the moment, is scathingly parodied by Kupala. Nasta, a woman of indefinite profession, says that, as she ‘learned from reliable sources’, Belarusians are ‘very pliable’.⁹

Of particular interest are the two comical scientists who repeatedly bump into one another and whose identically-worded verdicts in regard to Belarus and Belarusians are expressed in Russian and Polish. The Russian-speaking Eastern Scientist wears a *kosovorotka*, a Russian-style shirt and high boots and has a tousled beard, whereas the Polish-speaking Western Scientist wears a *kontusz* (suit) and *konfederatka* (hat), which are recognisably Polish, and he shaves his beard but has a waved moustache. It is characteristic that in a Belarusian-language play Polish and Russian monologues are given without translation, as Belarusian speakers, for whom this play was intended, routinely understood both.

Both scientists ‘examine’ a self-proclaimed Belarusian man and write down his responses. For example, asked about the regional nature and political borders of Belarus, Yanka, a Belarusian, has this to say: ‘Well, our nature, Mr. Scientist, is nature-like, you know; we have fields, woods, mountains and valleys, we even used to have our own sea, but the occupiers mixed it with dirt and so only the Pinsk marshes remain. As for political borders, we have none, for we do not have politics of our own so we join in the politics of others.’¹⁰ Having heard this answer, Eastern Scientist reflects it in the following way in his field diary: ‘Nature in *Russia’s Northwestern province* is great and bountiful: there is dry land and there are watersheds; they even used to have their own sea, but due to adverse climatic influences *from the west*, the aforementioned sea has sunk into the Pinsk marshes. As for political frontiers, they are perceived as foggy. Yet there appears to be a desire to extend them *west*’.¹¹ The same response in Western Scientist’s rendition is: ‘Nature in *Poland’s eastern kresy* [a Polish toponym for much of Belarus, Lithuania and part of western Ukraine] is great and bountiful: there is dry land and there are watersheds; they even used to have their own sea, but due to adverse climatic influences *from the*

east, the aforementioned sea has sunk into the Pinsk marshes. As for political frontiers, they are perceived as foggy. Yet there appears to be a desire to extend them *east*.¹²

Obviously, the above reflects Kupala's satirical attack on his fellow countrymen's lasting anonymity and Russian and Polish claims on Belarus. Of prime importance would be the way in which those few in possession of Belarusian identity react to these claims—by which I mean the *de facto* mass response, not just that of Kupala's self-identified Belarusian characters who find nothing better than to repair to their rural villages away from the corrupt city.

Smith wrote that 'geo-political location [may be] more important for ethnic survival than autonomy, provided that we underline the symbolic and sociological aspects of location.'¹³ In what follows, I will pay attention to both aspects as they typify Belarusians. One thing, however, is clear from the outset: for a critical mass of people with Belarusian identity to squeeze in between Russians and Poles has been and continues to be entirely within the realm of possibility. This possibility cannot be discarded on the sole basis that Russian and Polish nationalisms are older and aggressive and the respective heartlands are not far apart. In Europe and around the world, younger nationalisms have succeeded despite overwhelming odds, and the distances between separate national cores in parts of Western Europe are often much smaller than those between Moscow, Minsk and Warsaw. In other words, there is plenty of 'room' for Belarusians, provided of course that Belarusian nationalism succeeds in its crucial survival test: effectively rallying locals around various markers of Belarusian identity. This, however, has not been at all a smooth process.

Perhaps the most phenomenal feature of Belarusians has been the long-lasting absence of a geographical name that would be perceived as the token of their collective identity. The words 'Belarus' and 'Belarusian' were embraced by most indigenous people of the area only in the wake of the formation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR). Among other things, this effectively means that the Soviet period was the longest time span of the Belarusians' nationally conscious existence. Under the BSSR, Belarusian became one of the official languages. Also, 'Belarus' and 'Belarusian' became part of the republic's national emblem and anthem, and the words circulated widely in regional print media and state documents, including, above all, internal passports initially issued for urban residents and residents of border regions. These personal IDs included not only the mention of Belarus as the holder's place of residence but also the person's *natsional'nost'* or ethnicity. Prior to that essentially top-down imposition of the toponym 'Belarus' and ethnonym 'Belarusian', most regional residents of Slavic background introduced themselves as simply '*tuteishiya*', which in the Polish language means 'locals',¹⁴ hence the title of Kupala's play.

The term 'Belorussia' or 'White Russia/White Rus' ' first appeared in chronicles by the end of the fourteenth century,¹⁵ and the origin of the term is not quite clear. There are two most believable interpretations. According to one, White Rus' meant a part of Rus' which had no obligation to pay tribute to the Tatars in the twelfth century, as opposed to Black Rus', which did pay tribute to the Tatars.¹⁶ According to the second interpretation—by Oleg Trubachev, a Russian linguist who, incidentally, did extensive research on Belarusian—there were the following divisions of Rus' at large: Malaya Rus'—the ancestral Russian land, from which the expansion started; Velikaya Rus'—land being colonised (land under expansion, for which Malaya Rus' was the

‘point of departure’); and White Rus’—part of the ancient colour orientation pattern, according to which ‘white’ means west.¹⁷ One can see that in neither interpretation was ‘Belarus’ an ethnic homeland, at least originally. Other known interpretations of the term¹⁸ do not change this conclusion.

Even the staunchest Belarusian nationalists do not believe that ‘Belarus’ became a marker of collective identity before the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ As mentioned above, for most residents of Belarus this occurred even later. In 1972 Solomon Brook, the late Soviet expert on ethnology, revealed in his Moscow University guest lecture that, even in the 1950s, on ethnographic expeditions in Polesie (southern Belarus) and other areas of rural Belarus many people still introduced themselves as *tuteishiya* or *miejscowi*. According to Sadowski, 10% of the Orthodox in Podlaskie *województwo* (northeastern Poland) identified themselves as *tuteishiya* as recently as the mid-1990s.²⁰ Other self-identifications included *miejscowi* (which also means ‘locals’), *Ruscy*, Orthodox Poles etc.

This enduring anonymity is truly exceptional because a common name is the most basic indicator of belonging to a group. When Uladzimir Arlou and Gennadz Saganovich write that princedoms that existed in what is now Belarus and Smolensk province of Russia ‘formed an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous region’²¹ as early as the eleventh–twelfth centuries, they may be on target. But even seven–eight centuries later a common verbal denominator of this homogeneity, one that would transcend localism, was missing, and that is puzzling. Even the many large-scale military campaigns that affected the region apparently failed to foment a truly collective sense of insecurity that would be conducive to shared identity. Some, like Mikola Ermalovich, believe that the original name of what is now called ‘Belarus’ was ‘Litva’ (Lithuania), which was subsequently usurped by a neighbouring ethnic group, albeit by mistake.²² Sergei Markov, a Russian political scientist, wrote in this regard: ‘If one is having tea together with members of the Belarusian opposition, they would put bluntly what they still hesitate to formulate publicly. “Belarus”, they would say, “is a colonial fabrication of Moscow, we are a separate people, ancient and different from Russians, we are successors of the Great Duchy of Lithuania”’.²³ According to Vitaut Kipel, most people of the region used to identify themselves as *Litsviny* or residents of Lithuania.²⁴ This may not be quite accurate: according to Mikhas Bich, as recently as the mid-nineteenth century, ‘Belarusian’ as the ethnic name was widespread but limited to the easternmost part of modern Belarus; *Litsviny*, on the other hand, was a typical ethnonym for western and central Belarus, while in Polesie (southern Belarus) the term *Palyashchuk* was used.²⁵ All in all, the absence of a single ethnonym for the Slavic population of the region—prior to the commencement of the Soviet period—is undeniable.

Social structure and identity

The social composition of Belarusians may have inhibited the manifestations of their separate and unique ethno-national identity. Currently, 67% of Belarus’ population live in cities, but urbanisation was grossly delayed, and as recently as 1926 the proportion of urban dwellers among ethnic Belarusians (8%) was less than that of other ethnicities within the republic, notably Jews and Russians. A middle-class

intelligentsia that ‘would invite masses into history’²⁶ was late in coming. As a result, at the beginning of the twentieth century, residents of Belarus had the least discernible sense of separate ethnic identity, and Belarusian nationalists did not seem to have much following among predominantly peasant Belarusian masses. Most importantly, no sense of *shared* identity between the social classes had been forged in Belarus before the communist revolution in the Russian Empire. The upper and even middle (merchant and craftsman) strata pledged allegiance almost exclusively to the Russian, Polish and Jewish causes.

However, to present social structure as the root cause of the blurred identity of Belarusians would probably be short-sighted. Hroch studied in depth the nationalist movements of Europe’s so-called non-dominant ethnic groups, such as Czechs, Lithuanians, Norwegians etc. and defined a non-dominant ethnic group as one distinguished by the following ‘three deficiencies: it lacked “its own” nobility or ruling classes, it possessed no state, and its literary tradition in its own language was incomplete or interrupted’.²⁷ Belarusians fit this definition impeccably. Among Belarusians, as in other non-dominant ethnic groups, the majority of the national movement’s most active participants were of rural origin. In Lithuania, this share, according to Hroch’s estimate, was as high as 90%.²⁸ One of the principal tasks of the national movement was then to ensure that separate identity would not fall prey to vertical and horizontal mobility in which rural villagers become involved, so that, say, a Czech would not stop identifying with people of his stock when promoted in the ranks and/or moved to an urban area. This outcome, however, could never be taken for granted in Belarus, and so it is not by chance that as recently as the 1970s Zaprudnik averred that urbanisation in Belarus spelled loss of national character.²⁹

Birth of identity

In Belarus, awareness of ethnic distinctiveness began to develop among Catholic intellectuals of peasant origin in the mid-nineteenth century. In a narrowly defined linguistic sense it was an awakening, as contemporary Belarusian vernacular was now construed as deriving from the Ruski language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). Ethnic awareness was an entirely new thing because those writing in western Russian in the Grand Duchy had not defined themselves in opposition to Russia; in fact, it was affinity to Russia that was important, while weakened contacts and growing Polonisation had ultimately undermined the Russianness of the GDL. The idea of a separate Belarusian identity grew out of folklore research by some Vilna University professors and students, notably Jan Barszczewski (1790–1851) and Jan Czeczot (1796–1847), whose language of everyday communication was Polish. Later, Vincent Dunin-Marcinkiewicz (1809–84) and some others contributed to Belarusian self-awareness. On the basis of linking their folklore research with literary and official documents of the GDL (1253–1569), they came to the conclusion that they had inherited a cultural–historical legacy that had all the trappings of a tradition distinctive from that of the Poles. Uncovering the historical past of the Lithuanian and Belarusian peoples and, on the other hand, an awareness of the cultural rebirth of other ‘small nations’ such as the Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Bulgars and Slovenes, began to convince these Catholic intellectuals that the formula ‘*gente Rutheni, natione Poloni*’ (a Pole

of Russian descent) did not quite fit their ethnic domain.³⁰ This idea was subsequently refined by Frantsyszek Boguszewicz (1840–1900), a poet, who in 1891 appealed to his fellow countrymen to recognise that they were Belarusians and that their land's name was Belarus.³¹

The emergence of a Belarusian *national* idea (a step forward compared with the awareness of ethnic distinction) matured in the 'Nasha Niva' literary circle, which in 1909–15 published the eponymous newspaper in Vilna. It is essential to emphasise that this circle was also entirely composed of Catholics, a minority among Belarusian speakers. The city of Vilna played a significant role as their meeting place, and so, from the perspective of Belarusian nationalism, Vilna was the most significant centre. Its subsequent loss, first to Poland and then to Lithuania as a result of the 1921 Riga treaty and the 1939 border rearrangements respectively, was hurtful for the Belarusian national cause. Early Belarusian writers called Vilna 'Belarusian Zion'³² (Z. Byadulya) and 'Krivitskaya Mecca' (Uladzimir Zhylka).³³ According to Mikhas Bich, 'if Wilno University had endured for one or two decades longer, it would have become more Belarusian than Polish: dominant Belarusian elements in its environs would have won the tug of war with Polish influences, whose sources were on the ethnographic space of Poland per se'.³⁴ This prediction is impossible to verify. However, it does not seem likely that the Vilna metropolis in the early 1900s would ever have become the core area for the Belarusian national cause. Poles and Jews dominated the city, its cultural landscape and the iconography (architecture, billboards, public signs, attire etc.) of the place. Polishness was promoted by the Catholic Church and the character of the local university, one of the principal centres of Polish nationalism. While Jews could not possibly raise any national claims to the city, it was in Vilna that Ben Yehuda (born as Eliezer Perelman in a shtetle of Luzhki, currently in Vitebsk *oblast'* of Belarus) set out to revive Hebrew. Later, his son, Ben-Zion, who became known by his pen-name, Itamar Ben-Avi, became the first person in modern times speaking Hebrew as his native language because it was the only language spoken in Ben Yehuda's family. Vilna thus meant many things to many people.

Today's Vilnius is no longer a major centre of Belarusian nationalism, although its most active leaders have long enjoyed the sympathy and support of Lithuanian authorities. Thus in 1988 a congress of the Belarusian Popular Front convened in Vilnius. There are also some Belarusian-language publishers and one Belarusian-language monthly. About 60,000 people in Lithuania are believed to be ethnic Belarusians; at least they had a record of Belarusian ethnicity in their Soviet internal passports. Yet aside from Belarus itself and a few personalities in Europe and North America, the only area where nationally conscious Belarusians can be found is northeastern Poland.

Identity frustrations: pendulum effect

Situated between Poland and Russia both geographically and linguistically, the promoters of the Belarusian national idea identified themselves in opposition to one or the other of Belarus' expansionist neighbours. Today, for obvious reasons, the bogeyman to dissociate oneself from is Russia, but historically both Russia and Poland were used in that capacity intermittently, as springboards of sorts. In fact, Poland was

to play this role first because the Belarusian national idea developed amidst Polish-speaking intellectuals who began to define themselves in opposition to that country. That way, however, they stood a chance of falling into the embraces of Russia. Similarly, rebounding from Russia at a different point in time, Belarusian nationalist thinkers had to be on the look-out lest they became too Polish: a peculiar pendulum effect. It is important to point out in this regard that the Catholic intellectuals who developed a kind of a Manifest Destiny for Belarus earmarked this blueprint for Orthodox, if only because the majority of Belarusian speakers were Orthodox peasants.

However, almost from the outset, the aforementioned expression of Belarusian-ness was to confront the alternative blueprint. This was the so-called West-Rusism, a theory that emphasised Belarusian peculiarity but only within the confines of the Russian cultural universe. These two perspectives on what it meant to be a Belarusian fought each other from the time Belarusian ethnic awareness emerged. For example, Konstanty (Kastus) Kalinowski (1838–64) ranks high in the pantheon of prominent Belarusians: he was anti-Russian and pro-Polish, and he was executed as an active participant in a Polish uprising. In contrast to Kalinowski, his alter ego, Mikhail Koyalovich (1828–91), another member of the Belarusian nobility, embraced the ideology of West-Rusism. So did some other prominent Belarusians, for example, Mikhail Bobrovsky, one of the earliest researchers of the Belarusian vernacular, and Evfimi Karsky, the premier Belarusian linguist of all time.

To see the pendulum effect still at work, one has to heed not only what Belarusian nationalists say (or rather, used to say) about Lukashenka, calling him a Russian vassal and other names, but also what some rank-and-file Belarusians say about Zyanon Paznyak, who is a devout Catholic and vehemently anti-Russian. ‘If those Polacks come to power, whether Paznyak or somebody else, they will give us hell’, a rural pensioner from around Brest was quoted as saying in 2001 to a *Moskovskie Novosti* correspondent.³⁵ Interestingly, at that time Paznyak had been out of Belarus for the sixth straight year. Some 80% of today’s Belarusians are of Orthodox background, and most of them are prone to follow West-Rusism, even though they most probably have never heard the term ‘West-Rusism’.

The pendulum effect comes with some other complications. In particular, there is a denominational pattern of ethnic mobilisation. This means that in what used to be the Polish–Russian borderland, Catholics tended to identify with the Poles, whereas the Orthodox identified with the Russians, effectively leaving no room for Belarusians. Indeed, as mentioned above, in Catholic churches in Belarus Polish is routinely used. And likewise in the Orthodox churches the language is Russian. This explains why in the annals of the Belarusian national movement, from its very inception to today, one comes across the same refrain: ‘it is wrong to determine nationality by religion, and most self-proclaimed Poles in Belarus are actually Belarusians’. The following identical pronouncements come from publications dated between 1921 and 2001.

Fedor Turuk (1921): In Belorussia, Catholics from ancient times (*izdrevle*) identified with Poles, while Orthodox with Russian.³⁶ The surviving Belorussian nobilities usually assign themselves to the Poles because of their Polish and Catholic upbringing.³⁷

Tat'yana Mikulich (1996): The old principle of assigning nationality according to one's religion has survived to these days. In quite a few cases, in Belarus, people call themselves Poles, who do not have anything in common with the Polish nationality except religion.³⁸

Wojtek Kości (1999): Since the words 'Orthodox' and 'Belarusian'³⁹ are synonymous in the minds of Białystok authorities, both groups are discriminated against equally. However, those two words are not synonymous ...⁴⁰

L. V. Tereshkovich (1991): Denominational problems are extremely painful for the Belarusian national movement. In Belarus, Catholicism bears a distinctly colonial imprint, whereas the attitude of Orthodoxy to the national movement is chilly, although Orthodoxy has absorbed some regional features ... The overwhelming majority of Catholic priests are ethnic Poles who consider all Belarusian Catholics to be Poles. The Polonisation conducted by the priests is also reinforced by widespread Polonophile views among youths.⁴¹

Jan Zaprudnik (1993): The Uniate clergy ... spoke Polish and Latin better than the language of their flock. Concepts of religion and nationality were inseparably welded: Orthodoxy was Russian, Catholicism was Polish, and Uniatism was plebeian, associated with eastern rites but western ecclesiastical allegiance.⁴²

Jan Zaprudnik (1993): Strivings for Belarusian separateness were seriously hampered by the general identification of Catholicism with Polishness and Orthodoxy with Russianness—a psychological heritage of the age-old Russo-Polish competition in the Belarusian lands.⁴³

Jan Zaprudnik (1993): [In Belarus] identification of Orthodoxy with Russianness and Catholicism with Polishness is deeply seated in the popular mind. In fact, Belarusian renewal is an uphill struggle precisely because it has to deal with the heavy burden of past centuries—a burden not easily discarded.⁴⁴

Jan Zaprudnik (1993): The Polish minority in Lithuania consists fundamentally of indigenous inhabitants who consider themselves Poles exclusively because of their Catholic religion (the everyday language of these 'Poles' is a dialect of Belarusian).⁴⁵

Jan Zaprudnik (1993): Old clichés inherited from history are being reanimated now in the atmosphere of free expression: whereas eastern Orthodoxy is identified by many, either subconsciously or overtly, as the Russian faith, Catholicism is presented as the Polish faith. Officially, Moscow and Warsaw are both content with this twist of mind and have been using it for their own expansionist purposes.⁴⁶

Zaprudnik's exceptional tenacity in fighting the denominational pattern of ethnic mobilisation may be self-defeating. First, if one fights an alleged myth so persistently one actually lends it additional legitimacy. Second and most important, objecting to the denominational pattern on the grounds that it is rooted in the popular mind is illogical. Ethnic allegiances and/or shared identity can exist *only* in popular mentality, which is their sole possible agent or substratum. There could hardly be a DNA or other objective scientific test that tells Belarusians from Russians or Poles. Criticising popular mentality may make sense when it propagates 'truths' rejected by science, such as that the Earth is flat or that motor vehicle tyres can save one from lightning. But if people identify themselves in a certain way over and over again for a period of 200 years, then telling them that they are wrong after all constitutes a strange message at best. While physical anthropology (e.g. facial types) and language may in

exceptional cases cast doubt on self-proclaimed ethnic identity, this is highly unlikely in a racially homogeneous region with gentle language gradients, over-lapping cultural influences and unstable national borders. After all, the people in question do not claim to be Mongols, Arabs or American Indians. They do not even claim to be French or German. The people in question are Slavs who live in what has been for centuries the Russian–Polish borderland and who just cling to one of its flanks. Having lived all their lives in between Russian and Polish national cores, all they want is to be identified with one of the two. Apparently the third alternative, i.e. espousing Belarusian-ness, has not swayed some of them.

Zaprudnik’s case about the spurious Polishness of quite a few Lithuanian residents seems particularly bizarre because the identification of the ‘true’ national niche of these people is attributed to Lithuanian and Belarusian authorities, namely to Vitautas Landsbergis (then the president of Lithuania) and Stanislau Shushkevich (then the leader of Belarus), who happened to meet in the early 1990s in Lithuania and discussed the issue.⁴⁷

The pattern of ethnic mobilisation described has other expressions as well. For example, modern Belarusian historians who live in the republic of Belarus praise the suppressed Uniate Church because they see it as an attempt on the part of local Slavs to dissociate themselves from Russia. At the same time, Belarusian historians in Poland are dismissive of that Church because to them it looks like a vehicle of Polonisation.⁴⁸

‘Passport national awareness’

There are apparently a sizable number of Belarusian speakers with whom the positive message of the Belarusian national movement (that is, the message defining who ‘we’ are rather than who ‘we’ are not) has not struck a cord. Yet quite a few Russian speakers appear to declare themselves Belarusians apparently just because they happen to live in Belarus.

When Sadowski, a researcher from Bialystok (Poland), studied the communities on both sides of the Belarus–Poland border, his survey included one question that was considered entirely normal on the Polish side but raised many eyebrows on the Belarusian side: What nationality do you belong to in your deepest conviction? People east of the border were surprised (whereas those west of it remained unruffled) because Soviet-style internal passports contained a clear-cut record of nationality. Unavailable in Poland but available and required in Belarus, these IDs helped instil and fix the notion of belonging to a certain ethnic group—in fact, so much so that there appeared to be no need to doubt it, which is why the words ‘in your deepest conviction’ seemed grossly redundant to many on the Belarusian side of the border. Sadowski aptly dubbed this phenomenon ‘passport ethnic awareness’.⁴⁹

How many Belarusians?

Internal passports may indeed have done more to enhance ethnic awareness of Kupala’s *Tuteishiya* than the entire Belarusian national movement. One side effect of

this is that more people in Belarus than in Poland believe that belonging to a certain ethnic group is preordained by one's ancestry.⁵⁰

Because the most eminent promoters of the Belarusian national idea 'became finally convinced that they were Belarusians' only in the late 1890s⁵¹ and were unable to sway more than a couple of hundred of their fellow countrymen prior to the commencement of the Soviet era, the above hypothesis does not seem implausible. But if this is true, it is next to impossible to say how many self-identified Belarusians there are.

According to the 1999 census there were 8,159,073 Belarusians living in Belarus.⁵² According to the 1989 Soviet census, 2,127,000 Belarusians lived in other Soviet republics,⁵³ for the most part in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania. But how many of these people are Belarusians 'in their deepest conviction' (as per Sadowski) is impossible to verify. In contrast to that, the data available for the northeastern part of Poland (former Białystok *województwo*, currently part of Podlaskie *województwo*) allow one to attribute ethnicity to self-identification, the realm where ethnicity rightfully belongs, particularly in blurred cases where people face more than one option.

The number of Belarusians in Poland has been debated since the reinstatement of Poland's statehood in 1919 up to this day. The last Polish census that recorded nationality (*narodowość*) took place in 1921. In 1931 only a question on native language was included. Vakar showed that in the census of 1921 all the natives of Roman Catholic faith were registered as Polish and the total number of Belorussians was thus reduced from 3,700,000 to 1,041,760 on the assumption that 'being Roman Catholic in faith, they would be completely assimilated within ten years or so'.⁵⁴ The veracity of this assumption could not be tested at the time, and in 1939 Poland was partitioned for the fourth time in its history, with Białystok and its environs accruing to Soviet Belarus. After the war Białystok and its environs were returned to Poland, and a certain number of Belarusians remained west of the border, in Poland. A count conducted soon after the war showed 125,000 Belarusians. It is believed, though, that the count was not carried out by competent statisticians and was influenced by the post-war chaos. Once again, only the Orthodox were recorded as Belarusians. In reality, a sizable number of the Belarusian-speaking Orthodox at that time did not have a clear-cut ethnic identity and most identified themselves as *tuteishiya*, some as just Orthodox (in which case 'Orthodox' was not only a token of faith but of ethnicity as well), and there were also some self-proclaimed Russians and Poles among them.⁵⁵

In later years the Polonisation process accelerated, but the post-war Polish censuses did not include entries on either nationality (ethnicity) or native language. According to Sadowski's survey of the mid-1990s, no Catholics in northeastern Poland identified themselves as Belarusians.⁵⁶ On the other hand, there were 286,000 people of Orthodox faith in what used to be Białystok *województwo*, and these people accounted for 40% of its entire population. Of these, 53% identified as Poles and 28.2% as Belarusians.⁵⁷ Based on these data, there are about 80,000 self-identified Belarusians in Poland. Other sources give lower or higher estimates for the overall number of people with the Orthodox creed, which may express itself in a lower or higher number of ethnic Belarusians.⁵⁸

A case of trans-border asymmetry

Mariusz Kowalski has added some human geography insights⁵⁹ to the analysis by Sadowski. The major findings with reference to both authors boil down to the following.

According to Kowalski, the entire study region, including Grodno *oblast'*, Belarus, and Podlaskie *województwo*, Poland, is a transitional region both linguistically and culturally, which is particularly characteristic of the areas abutting the current Polish–Belarusian border. These include about a dozen westernmost *raiony* of Grodno *oblast'* (notably Grodno, Lida, Volkovysk, Voronovo and Shchuchin) and a similar number of *gminy* in the easternmost part of former Białystock *województwo* (notably the environs of Hainówka, Bielsk, Siemiatycze and Sokółka).⁶⁰

A trans-border symmetry is reflected in that there are people identifying themselves as Poles to the east of the state border and as Belarusians to the west of the border. Also, most Poles in Belarus and the overwhelming majority of Belarusians in Poland alike are rural villagers.⁶¹

Yet symmetry is limited in scope, and there are important ‘asymmetrical’ features that also engage attention. First, the 1999 Belarus census recorded 396,000 Poles,⁶² whereas there are no more than 80,000 self-identified Belarusians in trans-border regions of Poland. Available observations show that the latter figure is significantly short of the actual number of Belarusian speakers in Polish Podlasie. In Belarus, on the contrary, the actual number of those using Polish in the everyday setting is significantly less than the number of self-proclaimed Poles.⁶³

According to Sadowski, in the border regions of Poland all the Catholics identify themselves as Poles, but so do a significant number (53%) of the Orthodox. On the other hand, those who identify themselves as Belarusians are exclusively Orthodox. In the border areas of Belarus, 62% of the Orthodox identify themselves as Belarusians. Surprisingly, 23% of those whose parents were both Orthodox identify themselves as Poles, which Sadowski interprets as testimony to the high status of Polish culture in Belarus.⁶⁴ As for the Catholics on the Belarusian side of the border, they are divided: 36.5% of them identify themselves as Poles, but 40% as Belarusians.⁶⁵ Kowalski points to a geographical dimension of that divide: in the westernmost part of Grodno *oblast'* most Catholics identify themselves as Poles, but in the eastern part of the same *oblast'* most identify themselves as Belarusians. It is from these Catholic Belarusians that most active Belarusian nationalists recruit.⁶⁶

On the Belarusian side of the border most secondary schools are Russian-language schools. Polish schools were terminated in 1948. Local Poles have long appealed to the authorities to restore Polish-language schools, and some were re-opened in the late 1980s. Currently, many schools with Polish as one of the languages of instruction exist in the westernmost part of Grodno *oblast'*. Also, in the 1990s two exclusively Polish schools were opened: one in Grodno and one in Volkovysk. Interestingly, not all the students who attend these schools are Poles according to their internal passports. On the Polish side, no exclusively Belarusian schools exist, as no local demand for such schools has been recorded in annual surveys of parents. So all the schools here are Polish-language schools but, in some, Belarusian is taught as a separate subject. Sadowski surveyed two secondary schools located in Hainówka and

Bielsk, linguistically the most Belarusian places in the area, and determined that 39% of the students in one and 50% in the other identified themselves as Poles, while only 23% in each identified themselves as Belarusians.⁶⁷

These findings illustrate how spatial continuity is giving way to abrupt trans-border changes under the homogenising influence of state-wide tendencies. Indeed, according to Sadowski, 43.6% of self-identified Belarusians in Poland now use Polish in contacts with colleagues and friends, and 24.8% use Polish in contacts with family. On the other hand, in border regions of Grodno *oblast'* 54.2% of Poles and 57.2% of Belarusians now use Russian in contact with friends and colleagues; in contact with family, Russian is used by 40.6% of Poles and 44.4% of Belarusians.⁶⁸

Like my Minsk interviewees quoted in the first article, Kowalski stresses that 'no significant Polish colonisation waves' to Belarus versus Ukraine have been recorded. That in Belarus, nevertheless, many people identify themselves as Poles is, according to Kowalski, due to the fact that their ancestors 'chose the Polish national option'. This is attributed to the high prestige of the Polish language and culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; most members of the upper classes adopted them, and this had implications for their descendants and for lower strata alike. Polish identity, however, was even 'chosen' by those who continued to speak Belarusian.⁶⁹

Emphasis on choice is what distinguishes Kowalski's and Sadowski's pronouncements and reasoning from those embraced by my Minsk interviewees and Belarusian nationalist historians alike, whose attitude is avowedly defensive, as they seem to be willing to honour choice only if and when it favours the Belarusian national option. This is not to say that top-down, state-sponsored pressures on people's choice are non-existent. To his credit, Uladzimir Arlou recognises that the reduction in the percentage of both Poles and Russians in Belarus⁷⁰ is due to such pressures. They exist on both sides of the border. Thus, Soviet and today's Belarusian authorities have always been suspicious of the Polish minority in Belarus. Apparently, the homogenising pressures have been significant on the Polish side too.

That Belarusian national agitation is kept alive exclusively by the Orthodox in Poland and mostly by Catholics in Belarus finds many confirmations. In Poland, as shown above, Catholics never identify as Belarusians. In Belarus, most radical nationalists are hostile to the Orthodox Church. For example, in the April 2002 declaration of the BNF and Christian Conservative Party, the Orthodox Church is taken on directly: 'Active Russification of the Belarusian population is conducted by the Orthodox Church, which has traditionally acted in Belarus as an anti-national force'.⁷¹

The explanation of this particular asymmetry is twofold. First, the religious affiliation or background of the Orthodox in Poland and Catholics in Belarus is what makes them different from the overwhelming majorities in their respective domains, that is, Poland on the one hand, and Belarus plus Russia on the other. Second, mainstream Poles' and mainstream Russians' attitudes to Belarusian speakers do not seem to match. Based on Sadowski's perceptive account, prejudice toward these people in eastern Poland was at times pervasive.⁷² When in 1976 I first visited Bialystok and stayed with an Orthodox family, the two teenage girls in that family emphasised that they spoke correct Polish, unlike their older relatives in Hajnówka. Statements like these from youths bear evidence of strong homogenising pressures. There has been no Belarusian autonomy in Poland. Whereas rank-and-file Poles and indeed Polish

authorities desired assimilation of minorities, most Russians in the quasi-federal Soviet Union hardly saw any meaningful difference between Belarusians and themselves. This may help explain rejection of bonds with Poland by some of the Catholics residing east of the Belarus–Poland border: their parents and grandparents lived in Poland and were looked down on.⁷³ At the same time, rejection of bonds with Russia among the Orthodox is not widespread. In fact, the overwhelming majority of them enthusiastically embrace those bonds.

Kupala's scientists and their real-life epitomes

Kowalski's position on the issue is meaningful: 'Just like other groups, Belarusian-speaking Catholics faced the imperative of choosing the national option. And it is just in this community that the idea of separate Belarusian people was born ... [a community] whose initial orientation was pro-Western. However, gradually in the Belarusian movement the initiative was wrested by the Orthodox, which followed from their demographic preponderance. This outcome precipitated a shift to closer association with Russian society, and that antagonised Belarusian Catholics. This situation could not help but influence identity. Linguistic (the difference between Polish and Belarusian is small), religious, and civilisation reasons led not only the upper classes but also Polonised Lithuanian peasants to become intent on associating themselves with the Poles'.⁷⁴ Note that the last two sentences of the above statement are entirely in line with what Kupala's Western Scientist said. His Eastern *alter ego* would evidently replace 'Polish', 'Polonised' and 'Poles' with 'Russian', 'Russified' and 'Russians' respectively but otherwise would leave the statement intact.

Following Kupala's pattern, a Russian ought to be given the floor alongside a Pole. Sergei Markov, a Russian political scientist, says: 'Apparently the members of the Belarusian opposition consider themselves heirs of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. But the majority of Belarusian people do not. They believe they are Belarusian and Russian, which explains their aspiration to be together with Russia. At the same time, an insignificant minority takes cues from Lithuania and Poland. Herein, not in attitudes toward democracy and freedom, lies the principal schism in Belarus' politics.'⁷⁵ The last sentence of Markov's statement has far-reaching implications. For example, if his diagnosis is correct, then the pivotal conflict in Belarus is haplessly misread in the West.

Not only both of Kupala's 'scientists' but their real-life counterparts as well are correct (and their messages deserve to be taken at face value) to the extent that, and as long as, nobody challenges them *persuasively*—in the eyes of 'ordinary' people. When it comes to ethnic bonds, popular mentality is the only consideration that matters. As Smith notes, 'where ... meanings, myths and symbols cease to strike a responsive chord—because of other competing ones—there [lie] the cultural boundaries of the nation.'⁷⁶

A tug of war

'Passport ethnic awareness' notwithstanding, the existence of a fair number of nationally conscious Belarusians is undeniable. Yet forces striving to flesh out Belarusian identity have been at war with each other. Who are ethnic Belarusians? Are

they Russians' little brothers (whose peculiarity is quite real but falls within the Russian cultural universe)? Or are they proud descendants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whose formative experiences derive from numerous wars against Russia?

It is tempting to portray the evolving views on Belarusian identity as a perpetual fight for its meaning. This assertion can be called into question because much of Belarusians' nationally conscious history falls into the Soviet period. However, just as in Russia proper, where the rivalry between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles did not vanish in the communist revolution but was reduced to an undercurrent, so in Belarus calling things by their proper names has been and still is an exception. And yet the ongoing struggle for the meaning of Belarusian-ness appears to unfold according to the old script, first written in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Throughout the twentieth century Belarusian Westernisers seldom rose to a position of power. In fact, this happened only three times, and each period was brief and marked by external supervision and controversy. The first time the Westernisers made a splash was in 1918–19, when the Belarusian People's Republic (BPR) was proclaimed under German military occupation. The BPR introduced the white–red–white flag and a coat of arms depicting 'pursuit' (a knight mounted on a racing horse). 'As the emblem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus' and Samogitia, the latter represented a link to a proud period' in Belarusian history.⁷⁷ Also, under the BPR the so-called First Belarusian Congress was convened but thwarted by the Bolsheviks.

In the annals of Belarusian nationalism the BPR is cast as a pivotal episode in the national history. However, few people took notice of the BPR in its time. Von Beckeret, the German adviser on Belarusian affairs, reported to the military command of the eastern front that 'the Belarusian secessionism, supported by a few Vilna archaeologists and journalists, ought to be considered a local matter of no political consequence'.⁷⁸ Interestingly, the BPR founders became mutually antagonised when Polonophilia was reportedly embraced by several of them.⁷⁹

Foiled by the Bolshevik takeover, the Westernising ideas, however, staged a comeback in what soon became Soviet Belarus. There, however, they were perpetually at war with the Russophile stance. Whereas the Westernisers gained reinforcement from the immigration of a dozen prominent Belarusian activists from Poland, the pro-Russia orientation grew stronger as more and more Belarusian peasants were promoted to the helm of power. Just as in Russia proper, in Belarus the cultural affinities of the upper strata were at odds with those of the common folk. While the former looked up to the West, the latter were spontaneously more eastern in outlook, and this revealed itself in the redistributive ethos of peasant communities. Ultimately, the ideological Westernisers were crushed in the Stalinist purges.

The Westernising platform then briefly resurfaced under the supervision of German occupiers yet again, this time the Nazis. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 they treated Belarus as 'nothing more than a vague geographical term'.⁸⁰ Only after the assassination of Generalkommissar of occupied Belarus⁸¹ Wilhelm Kube in September 1943, and following the overall success of the Soviet-led guerilla activity, did the Germans decide to play the card of Belarusian patriotism. The white–red–white flag and the coat of arms of Pahonia were in use again by the local authorities, who were appointed by and worked under the close supervision of the occupiers. On 27 June 1944 the so-called Second Belarusian National Convention gathered in Minsk

opera house with Yaukhim Kipel presiding. 'In his opening speech, he pointed out that the various Belarusian assemblies that had been called at different times under the Soviets were always 40% Jewish and consequently did not represent Belarusian people'.⁸²

Soon thereafter, most Nazi collaborators left Belarus with the retreating German army. Some of the Nazi collaborators' activities in Belarus are described by Vakar.⁸³ A detailed account can be found in a book by Loftus⁸⁴ and an informative website compiled on the basis of that book.⁸⁵ Loftus also described the successful post-war careers of some of these people in US government agencies during the Cold War. An alternative version of the war-time events is given, very briefly, by Vitaut Kipel, who writes that 'as Germans looked upon the Belarusians as potential allies', it 'was only natural that some Belarusians would look upon the Germans as their political allies. This point of view was reinforced with the outbreak of the Soviet–German war when the Germans ... encountered many Belarusians ... who had suffered under the Soviets'.⁸⁶

In Belarus Nazi collaborators were not nearly as numerous as in Ukraine. Very little information on Belarusian collaborationists percolated into Soviet historical writings, in marked contrast with what was divulged to the general public concerning the Baltic States, Ukraine and indeed the occupied sector of Russia itself.⁸⁷ In Belarus the collaborationist movement apparently had a meagre following and was dwarfed by the Soviet-led guerilla movement, which became one of the major epic stories of the Great Patriotic War. Significantly, when ethnic Germans were evicted from their homeland in East Prussia in 1947, the only non-Russian ethnic group that was selected to participate en masse in what became the Kaliningrad *oblast'* resettlement programme was Belarusians.⁸⁸ Apparently, the Moscow authorities did not doubt their loyalty—even though the late 1940s and early 1950s marked one of the darkest periods of Soviet history, when almost anybody's loyalty could be questioned.

In 1988 Paznyak discovered a mass grave in Kuropaty, near Minsk, a grave that was traced to the Stalinist terror,⁸⁹ not to German occupiers as the authorities of Soviet Belarus strove but failed to prove. In the atmosphere of Gorbachev's *perestroika* this discovery ushered in the third and most recent period of the Westernisers' drive for power. The 1992–95 period was marked by a brief comeback of the same national symbols (white–red–white flag and the coat of arms). Yet once again the triumph was short-lived, and the backlash was culturally conditioned: most rank-and-file Belarusians simply did not accept these alleged tokens of identity as their own and were swayed overwhelmingly by Lukashenka's 1995 attempt to discredit them. In particular, much was made of the fact that Nazi collaborators had used the same state emblem and flag.

That all three episodes of the Westernisers' triumph were so brief may, of course, be attributed to the ploys of Russian colonialists. Such reasoning, however, appears shallow: it shifts attention away from the inherent weaknesses of the Belarusian national movement itself, as well as from the fact that not one but different and opposing forces have been scrambling to flesh out Belarusian identity from the outset.

According to Andrei Ekadumov, a Minsk-based researcher, 'cultural Russification' of Belarus unfolded only in the Russian Empire, not under the Soviet regime.⁹⁰ In

their controversial article on Belarus Eke & Kuzio make the point that ‘the creation of the Soviet Belarusian republic in 1922 *prevented* [emphasis added] the complete fusion of Belarusians into Russians’.⁹¹ Ekadumov observes that the Westernising nationalist upsurge that commenced in 1988 ‘never really grew into a mass cultural movement’⁹² and that the Belarusian Popular Front, while enjoying mass support in its struggle with Soviet bureaucrats, never had much following in issues of linguistic Belarusification and national symbols.⁹³ ‘Most Russians and Belarusians view themselves as one nation, not as representatives of different peoples’,⁹⁴ write Yuri Drakokhrust & Dmitri Furman. Why so?

The factors that have been instrumental in the preponderance of a Russophile stance, which may be construed as a modern version of West-Rusism, fall into four categories.

First, as stated, most Belarusians are of Orthodox background.

Second, Russia has long been in the position of prime cultural donor vis-à-vis Belarus. Russian classical literature, music and other art forms (including Russian rock culture) became ‘organically’ accepted in Belarus and are perceived as part of the native cultural tradition, not inventions of cultural colonialism. Many of these art works do not view history in terms that would suit Belarusian Westernisers. For example, anyone who reads Alexander Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* and/or watches the eponymous opera by Modest Mussorgsky—all but a must for any educated Russian speaker—learns of some Russians, Lithuanians and Poles in action, but nothing about Belarusians. The ‘Great Russian’ national mythology propped up by generations of academic historians has long come to sway the popular mindset, while genuine Belarusian mythology has not measured up to it.

Ekadumov applies the notion of ‘cultural second hand’ to the observation that all the Western ‘texts’ (a semiotic term effectively meaning substantive ideas) reached Belarus and continue to reach Belarus via Russia.⁹⁵ In the context of a highly asymmetric Russia–Belarus cultural exchange, this notion, however, is questionable simply because, for most Belarusians, Russian is the only language in which they are fluent. So as recipients of Western or any other ideas of foreign origin, ‘passport Belarusians’ and ‘passport Russians’ are no different. These ideas just have to be expressed in Russian in order to be absorbed and do not become ‘second hand’ just because some native Russian speakers happen to live in Belarus.

Third, forces instrumental in achieving statehood for Belarus (or altering parameters as crucial as national borders) have been perpetually external, not internal, as Marples has observed.⁹⁶ This was the case in 1917 and 1919 and in 1991 as well. Also, the 1921 division of Belarus, the enlargement of Eastern Belarus (BSSR) in the 1920s, the 1939 unification following the fourth partition of Poland, and the loss of Vilna to Lithuania were all initiated from without and had barely anything to do with the Belarusian national movement.

Some of my Minsk interviewees supplied me with arguments to the contrary,⁹⁷ but in light of many well-known facts these did not sound persuasive. As an opposition columnist candidly stated in regard to the events of 1991, ‘We obtained freedom without ever getting a chance to fight for it’.⁹⁸ That the cart, so to speak, has been invariably ahead of the horse has been detrimental to the national consciousness of the Belarusians.

When the eastern border of Belarus was changed in the 1920s the internal passport record of ethnicity (*natsional'nost'*) was determined according to the side of the border one found oneself on. Because in the Soviet Union internal passports for a long time were an urban perquisite, some urban residents originally assigned as Russians remained such even after the Russian Federation border shifted east.⁹⁹ When in the 1970s the 'passportisation' of rural people began, ethnicity was recorded in strict compliance with the border. So, for example, the family of my Moscow State University classmate Boris Timofeevich Lagutenko, who resided in Mglin *raion* of Bryansk *oblast'* seven kilometres away from the Russia–Belarus border, were all recorded as ethnic Russian, but the ancestors of president Alyaksandr Grigor'evich Lukashenka of Belarus, in Shklov *raion* of Mogilev *oblast'*, were recorded as Belarusian. No difference in vernacular or any other relevant cross-border gradient existed at the time the border was demarcated, nor does it exist today. This makes the eastern border of Belarus ill-suited to the kind of survey that Sadowski undertook along its western border. In the east, there does not seem to be any meaningful difference at all between people on the Russian and Belarusian sides; only 'passport ethnic awareness' is different.

The *fourth* factor instrumental in the Russophile orientation of most Belarusians stems from Belarus' economic dependency on Russia and the perception of where economic success (if any) came from. These topics will be discussed in my third article.

National mythology

In his historical account of Belarus Marples wrote about the challenges the Belarusian national movement faced from the outset. One of them was that 'the national past could only be reconstructed through ... "historical leaps" over centuries of uncertain existence'.¹⁰⁰ This terse formula aptly conveys the enormity of the task. The necessity of accomplishing it stems from the fact that people are unlikely to engage in nation building without prior assurance that their history is glorious and unique. According to Vakar, 'the memory of a common historical past has proven to be the most compelling factor in promoting the movements of national self-determination which have swept Europe in the course of the last hundred years. Where the historical past was inadequate, appropriate myths have been created to give the movement the meaning and dynamics of a national revival'.¹⁰¹

Smith underscores the vital role of myths and symbols as 'embodying the corpus of beliefs and sentiments which the guardians of ethnicity preserve, diffuse and transmit to future generations'.¹⁰² According to Smith, national myths are 'creative recombinations of the past'.¹⁰³ Although such 'novel recombinations are pre-eminently the work of intellectuals in search of their "roots"', there are 'very clear and very specific limits to their activities'. These 'are provided by existing criteria of historiography of the time and by the texture and inner coherence of the myths and motifs themselves'.¹⁰⁴

'Inner coherence' may be more important than anything that has to do with 'historiography'. Although academic historians do play an important role in myth making, the principal criterion of success is acceptance of their activity by the popular

audience, not so much its scientifically tested veracity. Even in recent (let alone older) history one can come across recorded facts that lend themselves to different interpretations. Even so, younger nationalisms have to be careful not to over-exploit already known historical facts and cultural icons that other ethnicities have persistently claimed as their own, and not to put such twists on those facts that their own constituency might not find them believable and therefore appealing. At issue, according to Hroch, is 'the relation between verbal demands and real interest: the basic condition for any acceptance of national demands [is] that it roughly correspond to reality as perceived by those to whom the national agitation was directed'.¹⁰⁵

The clash of mythologies

Today Belarusians are faced with two sets of national symbols. They are partially overlapping and yet profoundly different and backed by different mythologies. The first set of symbols is of Soviet vintage. Belarusian officialdom, some prominent historians (e.g. Adam Zalessky) and linguists (A. I. Zhuravsky) and apparently a large part of rank-and-file Belarusians cling to it.

According to a bitterly ironic pronouncement of an opposition journalist, this set includes Zubrovka, Pesnyary, Viskuli and the 1941–44 partisan war¹⁰⁶ or rather landmarks, films and memories of those years. Zubrovka is a Belarusian brand of vodka featuring a bison (*zubr* in Belarusian and Russian, *zubr* in Polish) from the Belavezha forest in western Belarus. Pesnyary is a Minsk-based rock group, extremely popular in the 1970s and 1980s, which drew upon Belarusian musical folklore, performed quite a few songs in Belarusian and, if anything, contributed just as much, if not more, to Belarus' external recognition than tractors and heavy trucks produced in the republic. Finally, Viskuli is a government retreat in the Belavezha forest, where in December 1991 El'tsin, Kravchuk and Shushkevich terminated the Union Treaty of 1922, and so the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

The anti-Nazi guerilla war is at the heart of this Russophile variety of Belarusian symbols. It was indeed a major epic story. At least until the late 1970s all of Soviet Belarus' high-rank officials had been recruited from the Soviet-led network of the 1941–44 anti-Nazi underground,¹⁰⁷ a glorified group. Though their war-time activities unfolded within Belarus, 'no name bearing reference to Belorussian history or culture was ever used or suggested' for guerilla brigades: prior to 1943, they had been named 'Suvorov, Kutuzov, Revengers, Victory, and thereafter ordered to change their names to Stalin, Voroshilov, etc'.¹⁰⁸

If even war-time, that is, relatively recent, history was not couched in nationalist terms, it was all the more so in regard to earlier history. Only the peasant unrest in early 1860s Belarus under the guidance of Kastus Kalinowski was discussed in secondary school history textbooks as something inherently Belarusian. This unrest, of course, was not to be studied in the context of anti-Russian, Polish-led uprisings. Only 20% of respondents in my 2002 pilot survey mentioned Kalinowski as a prominent Belarusian, fewer than, for example, Petr Masherau, one of Belarus' Communist Party leaders, who was mentioned by 23%.

The Belarusian flag and national emblem of Belarus (introduced in 1995) are part and parcel of the same set of national symbols. Belarus is the only post-Soviet nation

that returned to its Soviet insignia. Along with the ruble as the unit of national currency and Russian as one of the official languages of Belarus, these symbols unmistakably reflect Belarus' closeness to Russia, the bulwark of the former Soviet Union—even as Russia itself disposed of its Soviet-era flag and national emblem. A country whose all but most distinguishing feature is closeness to another country is a questionable entity.¹⁰⁹

It is little wonder then that the leaders of the Belarus Popular Front (BPF) that emerged in the final years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and some intellectuals even before that, found these symbols ill-suited for stirring up national feelings, particularly those that would draw upon Belarus' alleged affinity to the West. First, based on those symbols, Belarusians appeared as nothing more than Russians' little brothers. Second, Belarusians' knowledge of their own early history was foggy. To me, the entire corpus of the Belarusian history exhibits in the State Historical Museum in Minsk (or rather the way they looked in the 1970s) gave the impression of a kitchen garden on hydroponics—when roots do not rise up from the soil but somehow dangle in a transparent, man-made solution.

It was only natural for nationally conscious Belarusian Westernisers to be willing to rewrite and retroactively extend the available accounts of Belarusian history. All they had to fall back on was the annals of the national movement that culminated in the 1920s and was then brutally terminated by Stalin's thugs. In accordance with these annals, they began once again to glorify the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a truly Belarusian state and adopted the state symbols that had been used under two successive German military administrations. In 1992 these became the official insignia of independent Belarus, and the Belarusian language was proclaimed the only official language of Belarus.

Language and mythology

The issue of the Belarusian language was of particular importance for the nationalist camp because it was still regarded by all too many as a rustic, peasant vernacular which naturally yielded to Russian as a person assumed a higher social position and was refined by an urban way of life and education.

However, the Belarusians' lasting anonymity played its treacherous role also in the context of language. In much of the existing literature the language of the Grand Duchy was referred to as *Rusky*. Thus, according to Zhurausky, 'it is appropriate to assign the language of documents and treaties from the Belarusian territory prior to the first half of the fifteenth century ... to ancient Russian literary language'.¹¹⁰ Vakar, also a scholar with Belarusian roots, scrutinised a huge body of published research on the language of the Grand Duchy.

'In Moscow', writes Vakar, 'they described the language as Lithuanian, in order to distinguish it from their own form of Russian. In the Ukraine, its written form was known as Russian, and the vernacular as Lithuanian. The Poles referred to both by either name. The term Lithuanian, of course, referred to the geographical location of the idiom, which in fact was Russian. Local scholars Lavrenti Zizani (Vilna 1596) and Meleti Smotricki (Evje 1619) gave it a grammatical organisation which was used in all Russia until the Lomonosov reform (1755)'.¹¹¹

This language was used in the Grand Duchy until it gave way to Polish and was officially banned from courts and offices in 1697. According to Yevfimy Karsky, that language had differed from both old Russian and modern Belarusian: ‘That was a bookish language that only upper strata used as colloquial and it sustained some influence of Polish culture ... Because of this it could not become the language of mass communication even though it had evolved on the basis of popular vernacular’.¹¹² This vernacular, however, was looked down on. According to Vakar, ‘the Western Russian literary standard had long been dead before its burial. The educated Russians in the Grand duchy saw in their mother tongue only the language of the lower social strata. An attempt by the Academy of Peter Mohila in Kiev to restore its purity and glory failed. The ecclesiastical writers continued in the Church Slavic tradition, while the educated split into two hostile camps, one following the lead of Warsaw and the other that of Moscow’.¹¹³ There is little room for anything inherently Belarusian in the above treatment of the issue, which indeed required what Smith called ‘creative recombination’, that is, extensive reinterpretation of historical findings.

Skaryna—a potentially unifying cultural icon

A nationalist search for a major figure of prominence, a man who used the precursor of modern Belarusian in the past, led to Frantsisk Skaryna. Born around 1490 in the glorious city of Polotsk and educated in Vilna, Krakow, Prague and Padua, Skaryna had been long known as a dedicated translator of religious texts into ‘the simple Russian language’.¹¹⁴ According to Vakar, ‘Francis Skoryna published his Russian version of the Bible, using the famous Venetian edition for the vernacular translation. Since Skoryna was the first to introduce West Russian provincialisms into religious texts, he is considered the father of West Russian literature’.¹¹⁵

Brockhaus & Efron, the most influential encyclopedia of pre-revolutionary Russia, defined Skorina (Russianised spelling) as a ‘Russian scientist of the early sixteenth century, a medical specialist (doctor of pharmaceutical sciences), a printer, and a translator of the Bible into Russian’.¹¹⁶ Translation into Russian, not any other language, is attributed to Skorina’s own evidence. ‘All the texts published by Skorina were intended for the Orthodox Russian people ... By translating bible-related books from Church Slavonic, Czech and Latin into Russian, Skorina laid the foundation of literary language of southwestern Russia. Skorina’s language form is eclectic and crude, but it reflects the elements of the Belorussian vernacular ...’.¹¹⁷ So much for Skaryna’s Belarusian-ness, according to the author of the Brockhaus article.

A more consistent Belarusification of Skaryna was first attempted in the 1920s, then thwarted in the 1930s with Skaryna being labeled ‘a member of Polotsk bourgeoisie’.¹¹⁸ The efforts, however, eventually succeeded, not least due to the popular Soviet Belarusian film ‘Ya—Frantsisk Skaryna’, produced in 1969. The success of Skaryna’s ascendancy has to be credited to the enthusiasm of Belarusian historians in the first place. But some auspicious circumstances played their role as well. First, Soviet Russian ‘court’ historiographers did not lay claim to Skaryna because the pantheon of cultural icons of Russia never lacked members. Second, whereas the Moscow-initiated intention to transfer Polotsk and its environs from

Russia to Belarus in 1924 did succeed, the 1944 idea to shift it back to Russia's jurisdiction did not come to pass—allegedly due to Panteleimon Ponomarenko, then the First Secretary of the Belarus' Communist Party.¹¹⁹ Had that happened, the promotion of Polotsk-born Skaryna to the position of great Belarusian enlightener would have been unlikely.

Today, Skaryna Avenue is the main street in Minsk (formerly Lenin Avenue, formerly Stalin Avenue, formerly Zakhar'evskaya Street). In my pilot survey Skaryna was by far the most frequently mentioned prominent Belarusian.¹²⁰ He was mentioned by 61.6% of respondents, with Yanka Kupala a distant second with 41.7%, followed by Yakub Kolas (38.3%) and Vasil Bykau (31.6%).

When I mentioned (above) that the two sets of Belarusian symbols were partially overlapping, I meant these prominent Belarusians in the first place, as they have gained acceptance on both sides of the divide¹²¹ but the *esprit de corps* hardly extends to anything or anybody else. The promotion of Skaryna to the position of the prime national figure has been among the few success stories of the Belarusian national movement to date.

The movement succeeded much less in the 'appropriation' of other historical figures with roots in Belarus such as, for example, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who was once proclaimed 'the world's most honourable Belarusian',¹²² let alone Adam Mickiewicz, Michal Kazimierz Ogiński and Stanislaw Moniuszko, whose Belarusian-ness is also repeatedly stated in nationalist texts. In my pilot survey only 0.6% mentioned Kosciuszko, and nobody mentioned Mickiewicz, Ogiński or Moniuszko. However, Vitaut (The Grand Duke of Vilna who ruled the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from 1392 and emerged victorious in the Grunwald battle of 1410) was referred to as an outstanding Belarusian by 6.6% of respondents—a success, however modest, of the Westernising platform.

Who is to blame?

In the words of Lindner, 'the neo-Soviet and the opposition memorial cults are in bitter conflict'.¹²³ The fight between the two had been unfolding in the open since the late 1980s, and it culminated in the 1995 referendum on language and state symbols, in which 83.3% of voters rejected the white–red–white banner and the Grand Duchy-based national seal and opted for the return of the Soviet national symbols of Belarus. Although nationalists claim that the referendum was anti-constitutional and subject to manipulation or that 'every referendum in an authoritarian country is to the satisfaction of its organisers',¹²⁴ it seems that very few people in Belarus had accepted those Grand Duchy-related symbols as their own.

BPF leader Zyanon Paznyak's idea that all the deep-seated underpinnings of the Russophile leanings can be undone forcefully and swiftly through a state-sponsored assault on popular ways of thinking did not materialise. In 1996 Paznyak emigrated to the US; he currently resides in Warsaw and tries to position himself as the spiritual leader of the nationalist opposition from across the border. Having left the country, however, Paznyak has lost his high moral ground even among intellectuals, the only group to which he once had some appeal.

Whereas the leaders of the Belarusian national movement routinely blame all the

major setbacks on 'carefully crafted' Russification and the perfidious role of Moscow, independent researchers find some flaws in the national movement per se. Thus Andrei Okara believes that 'Belarusian intellectuals developed an understanding of Belarus as non-Poland and non-Russia but failed to rise to the next level, that is, to spell out what Belarus' unique nature and commonly understood historical mission are'.¹²⁵ Okara points to Ukraine, where alongside the westernising and the pro-Moscow ideological blueprints, 'the third alternative' is entertained as well, which draws upon 'Kiev's unique role as the sacral centre of the post-Byzantium cultural realm and a possible geopolitical centre of Eastern Europe'.¹²⁶ No providential role of that or any other kind was ever proposed for Belarus. 'Every Orthodox country', writes Okara, 'can't help but construe itself as the mystical centre of the world, be that the New Rome or the New Jerusalem. As for Belarus, it always saw itself as an advance guard: within the Grand Duchy ... and Rzeczpospolita it was the eastern forefront of the West; within the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the CIS or the Russia-Belarus Union, it is a "defence shield" of a large space. Belarus thus is a "corridor", "transit space", "bridge between civilisations", it is an "outskirts", a country located at a "strategic crossroads"'.¹²⁷ These images, according to Okara, are not particularly uplifting. As for Okara's conferring on Belarus the status of an Orthodox country, this, as we know, is not accurate, although most Belarusians indeed have an Orthodox background. This misstatement, however, points to the problem: there is no single Belarusian identity.

Włodzimierz Pawluczuk echoes Okara as he invokes a contrast between the national ideas of Belarus and Ukraine but highlights a different aspect of the issue. According to Pawluczuk, the 'Ukrainian national mythology flows from the religious sources of eastern Christianity and from the Cossack and peasant ethos ... As for the Belarusian mythology, it draws from other religious sources and a different ethos. The religion is Catholicism. The ethos is affection of landed gentry for peasants and a moral obligation to reveal peasant cultural values, thus fostering [shared identity] amidst many unrelated people and dissociating them from the Russians. Belarus does not know martyrs of the national cause or heroes like Sagaidachny, Khmelnytsky or Bandera. The national mystique of Belarus has to do with personalities that are total outsiders with respect to the living and cultural universe of ordinary people. Such a personality from the past is Kastus Kalinowski, a current personality of the same kind is Zyanon Paznyak'.¹²⁸ Pawluczuk berates Paznyak's 1991 plan of Belarusification of Belarus, described in the 1991 book *Inshadumtsy*,¹²⁹ as adventurous, coercive, top-down and elitist. In contrast to Okara, Pawluczuk reaffirms the Catholic roots of Belarusian nationalism and this points to the same problem: Belarusian identity is Janus-faced.

Time for new pursuits: 'Ten centuries of Belarusian history'

After the new and painful setback of 1995 the Belarusian Westernisers have been regrouping. Apparently a lot of soul-searching has taken place. Now many prefer to distance themselves from Paznyak and his radicalism. Aleh Trusau, for example, pointed out that, in contrast to Paznyak, he was not willing to assault the wall of indifference and hostility head-on: 'I have only one head and would like to save it for

future endeavours'.¹³⁰ Trusau drew a line between his gradualist approach to the Belarusisation of Belarus and the approach revealed in the above quoted 2002 Declaration of the BNF, edited by Paznyak.

The gradualist approach adopted stems from renewed awareness of the sheer enormity of the task; and it involves much writing that recasts history in a way that is amenable to the westernising stance. I am not sure whether Belarusian authors have scrutinised Western scholarship on nationalism and national movements, but some authors proceed as though aided by a proper road map. For example, in Smith's typology of national myths, one may find a myth of the Golden Age, a myth of decline and a myth of rebirth. A younger nationalism, writes Smith, would portray its respective community as a 'Sleeping Beauty, pricked by external forces of evil and put to sleep until the nationalist dawn arrives to restore the community to its true self in a new golden age'.¹³¹

Unable to find 'Belarus' and 'Belarusians' in the annals of medieval history, nationalist authors continue to cast the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the precursor of modern Belarus and its Golden Age. Some outwardly dub it the Great Belarusian Power;¹³² others are more cautious, averring that 'although Lithuanians appropriated the Grand Duchy, life in that country unfolded in Belarusian national forms'.¹³³ Correspondingly, the language once spoken in the Grand Duchy (before it was Polishised) is referred to as Old Belarusian. External forces of evil are Poles and Russians, with Russians being the greater evil of the two, which is a retroactive projection of the present dangers as they are seen by the westernising camp.

Some authors attempted to separate the image of Belarus from that of Russia in the eyes and ears of a foreign audience by linguistic means. Vakar had long stated that 'as a rallying point of the new nationalism, the term "Belorussian" presented certain inconveniences. Semantically, it was too close to Russia'.¹³⁴ When in English the name of the country used to be transliterated as 'Belorussia' the aforementioned inconveniences were all too obvious. While 'Belarus' sounds 'better' in this regard, it is the adjective 'Belarusian' that remains treacherous because in English it sounds nearly identical to 'Belorussian'. In his 1993 book Zaprudnik attempted to purge the word of the 'i'; the resulting term 'Belarusan' can be traced to Rus', not by any means to Russia. However, Zaprudnik's lead does not seem to have generated much following.¹³⁵

A more important task focuses on the interpretation of early Belarusian history. According to Lindner's terse formula, 'the issue of the ethnic origins of Belarusians has once again become, as during the 1920s, a historiographic question of faith'.¹³⁶

The major bookshops in Minsk now feature monographs by westernising nationalist historians, notably Mikola Ermalovich and Gennadz Saganovich, who set out to rewrite Russian renditions of regional history.¹³⁷ These books, however, inspire but few sophisticated readers and do not affect the man in the street. Apparently recognising this, Arlou & Saganovich issued a well illustrated 200-page book, *Ten centuries of Belarusian history: 862–1918*, intended for a mass audience and published in Belarusian and, separately, in Russian by a Vilnius-based publisher. This book is as direct an attempt at lending popular legitimacy to a certain version of Belarus' national mythology as there possibly can be, and may become a milestone in the Belarusian national movement.

The book's recurring theme is dissociating Belarus from Russia by focusing on their allegedly inborn dissimilarities and on wounds inflicted by Russia on the nations of which today's Belarus was part.

Arlou & Saganovich set out to challenge a situation where (in the words of Drakokhrust & Furman) 'Belarusians and Russians do not share any negative historical memories about each other and do not have any negative or hostile stereotypes similar to those that exist, for example, between the peoples of the Baltic States and Russia'.¹³⁸ The authors try to resolve the monumental problem of Belarusians' lasting anonymity by intermittently applying the token phrase 'our country' to a) a set of tenth–twelfth century neighbouring princedoms, b) the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and c) the Rzeczpospolita. In the authors' view, 'nothing proves the existence of a single Great Russian ethnē',¹³⁹ and yet 'Polotsk, Turov, Brest, Grodno and Novogrudok and Smolensk princedoms formed a region of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity [as early as] the eleventh–twelfth centuries'.¹⁴⁰ 'The name Rus' was applied to the Vladimir-Suzdal' princedom [the Russian heartland] only in the second half of the thirteenth century, by which time inhabitants of Belarus had already formed a separate ethnic community'.¹⁴¹ In Vladimir-Suzdal and most other Russian princedoms, elements of Asiatic despotism were incorporated almost from the outset, while Polotsk princedom was a paragon of democracy. This refrain surfaces many times, especially in conjunction with setting the 'autonomism' (i.e. grassroots self-governance) of the Grand Duchy (a.k.a. our country) against the despotism of Muscovy.¹⁴² The Great Russian pantheon of cultural icons is addressed directly by relating vivid episodes of the 1368 defeat of voivode Dmitry Minin by 'our detachments', that is, by Olgerd, the Great Prince of Vilna.

Minin is a revered character of Russian historical chronicles. According to them, Minin along with Pozharsky headed a popular militia defending Russia from the Polish–Lithuanian invaders. Every Russian and for that matter Belarusian schoolchild knows something about Minin and Pozharsky from secondary school history classes. Arlou & Saganovich place the ancestors of today's Belarusians squarely in the anti-Russian camp. The Grand Duchy's military campaigns against Russia commenced in 1492 and culminated in the 8 September 1514 defeat of the Russian army near Orsha. 'In 1992', write Arlou & Saganovich, 'on the day of this battle's anniversary the Belarusian military pledged allegiance to their people on Independence square in Minsk'.¹⁴³ In 1517 'Frantsishek Skaryna published the first Belarusian book in Prague thereby introducing Belarus into the fold of pan-European civilisation'.¹⁴⁴ 'Just in the second half of the sixteenth century, so many books were published in Belarus that their total circulation exceeded that of Muscovy throughout the entire sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century by a factor of ten'.¹⁴⁵

The authors paint a vivid picture of the cruelties that accompanied the 1563 conquest of the enlightened city of Polotsk by the barbarian army of Ivan the Terrible. During his reign 'The bloody dictatorship inundated the country with informants and thugs. Monarchism and megalomania were implanted in the Russian national psyche at that time. It was that Moscow ruler that conferred upon Russia the legacy of a fully accomplished Asiatic autocracy, based on terror against fellow countrymen'.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, only one element of the Polotsk population, the Polish knights, emerged as free people from Polotsk's demise at the hands of the Russians. This is how yet

another refrain of the book emerges: tacit collusion between Russians and Poles in their lingering anti-Belarusian game. In the book, Poles, however, are spared the dismal treatment to which the more perfidious and deceitful Russians are subject.

Having ultimately seized the entire country, the Russians play the Orthodox card, and many Orthodox priests are lured into collaboration with the occupiers. The war of 1654–67 between Russia and the Rzeczpospolita is characterised as ‘the most devastating war in our history’¹⁴⁷—a direct shot at the neo-Soviet mythology that confers this status upon the 1941–45 Great Patriotic War. According to Arlou & Saganovich, it was actually that seventeenth century war that ‘deprived Belarusians of their elite, lower middle class and entrepreneurs, as these strata suffered most of all. The remaining peasantry could not rise to national consolidation.’¹⁴⁸ Broken down by the war with the Russians, the region could no longer stage resistance to ... Polonisation’.¹⁴⁹

Other important episodes featured by the book concern the abortive history of the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church, which was not by any means a sellout to Catholics; Peter the Great’s unspeakable personal cruelty during his 1710 visit to the Polotsk Uniate Cathedral; an unusually cautious (compared with some other nationalist authors) Belarusisation of Kosciuszko, a leader of the 1794 Polish uprising (‘the uprising which our compatriot headed’), and the horrendous mission of Alexander Suvorov, a Russian commander and yet another icon of Russian history. ‘For Russia, he was really a great military leader, but for Belarus, he was the commander of the occupiers in the first place’.¹⁵⁰ To appreciate the sensitivity of the issue, one has to bear in mind that in the town of Kobrin, Brest *oblast’*, a Suvorov museum still glorifies the heroic deeds of that commander.

The final section of the book concerns the birth of the Belarusian national movement. This part is the only one in which no attempt is made to walk through the minefield of contested identities. The book’s actual success remains to be seen in the number of young converts to the westernising stance.

In the meantime, however, favourable signs come from the least expected quarters. After June 2002, when President Putin of Russia offered to include the six Belarus *oblasti* in the Russian Federation, thus depriving Belarus of statehood, Lukashenka uttered: ‘We will not be either the northwestern or the northeastern region of any state’.¹⁵¹ No Russian commentator appreciated the symbolism of these words, and only one newspaper quoted them, apparently by accident.

Conclusion

The subtitle of Kupala’s *Tuteishiya* is ‘tragic-comical scenes in four acts’. Its fifth act is being played now. Today, 80 years after Kupala’s play was written, there is still no single Belarusian identity, and the cultural elite of Belarus are split between the Westernisers (the heirs of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) and the people with pro-Moscow orientation (the *de facto* followers of West-Rusism). While these may be construed as political movements, they transcend politics, and so does the difference between them reflecting the heart of hearts of what it means to be a Belarusian. Correspondingly, there are two competing sets of national symbols and two different mythologies to back them. Whereas the Westernisers nurture national myths that cast

Belarus as a country apart from Russia almost from antiquity, others in the elite and many in officialdom rely upon myths and symbols that evolved throughout two centuries or so when Belarus and Russia lived side by side in a common home, first in the Russian Empire and then in its successor state, the Soviet Union.

The two visions of Belarus have not emerged during the post-independence period. Rather, they were articulated anew, but they in fact have lengthy historical roots. The preponderant Russophile orientation in Belarus stems from the Orthodox cultural tradition, Russia being the prime cultural donor of Belarus, and Russia's pre-eminent role in shaping Belarus' statehood. Still, the Westernisers from among the Belarusian Catholics have been successful in producing their brand of national mythology and it may yet gain new converts.

In today's Belarus, however, 'Orthodox' and 'Catholic' are more indicative of the historical roots of ideas than of the immediate spiritual allegiances of those actively participating in the political gambit. First, there are scores of non-believers on both sides of the aisle. Second, people with Orthodox and Catholic backgrounds may easily be found on the 'wrong' side of the barricades. For example, Adam Zalessky, the patriarch of pro-Moscow historians, is most probably from a Catholic family. At the same time, Uladzimir Arlou, an ardent Westerniser, is from an Orthodox family and is even half-Russian. Nevertheless, we are witnessing the contest of the same visions of Belarus' destiny, the fight that has been going on since the time Belarusian identity began to rise above localism, that is, when the very first '*tuteishiya*' became 'Belarusians'.

Because of this lingering conflict, Belarusians suffer from a collective split identity disorder. Their identity is Janus-faced, and so is Belarusian nationalism. Each 'face' tries hard to pose as the only one, that is, the sole promoter of the Belarusian national cause. It is, however, their ambivalent and uneasy coexistence, their perpetual conflict, that constitutes Belarusian nationalism's hidden agenda. The side effects of this perpetual fight are apathy and cultural confusion of rank-and-file Belarusians, who remain silent observers of the ongoing contest for their hearts and whose ethnic awareness derives from the nationality record in their internal passports more than from being swayed by the nationalist agitators. Ordinary Belarusians are tired, disoriented, and yearn for something more than just economic stability. They seem to long for clarity.

Ironically, it may be that fostering the Russia–Belarus Union will eventually help promote the pro-Western ideological blueprint for Belarus. The likelihood of this outcome would increase if Belarus were somehow mistreated in that Union, which seems plausible. The only way to promote the vision of Belarus as a nation apart from Russia is through opposition to Russia's real and/or perceived actions. This issue will be examined in my third article.

Radford University

The author wishes to acknowledge the support of the International Research and Exchanges Board through a short-term travel grant (summer 2002) as well as invaluable advice and help from Drs Andrei Ekadumau and Isaak Khazdan (Minsk), Marek Jerczynski and Mariusz Kowalski (Warsaw), Zhanna Zaenchkovskaya (Moscow), Ilya Prizel (Pittsburgh, PA), Robert J. Kaiser (Madison, WI) and Donald Samson (Radford, VA).

¹ The pilot survey of 60 secondary school teachers was conducted in May–June 2002 in Minsk (two schools), Grodno (one school) and Vitebsk (one school).

² Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, 2nd edition (New York, Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 9.

³ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 12th edition (London, Blackwell, 1999), p. 36.

⁴ Vladimir Orlov & Gennadz Saganovich, *Desyat' vekov Belorusskoi istorii* (Vilnius, Nasha Buduchynia, 2001), p. 165. Some rank-and-file Uniates resisted conversion to Orthodoxy and were persecuted. Interestingly, Felix Dzierzynski, born in 1877 in Dzierzynovo (Oshmiany *uezd*, Vilna *guberniya*; now Stolbtsovskii *raion*, Minsk *oblast'*, Belarus) wrote in a letter to his wife that the stories about persecuted and slain Belarusian Uniates, conveyed to him by his mother, nudged him to become a revolutionary fighter against injustice and evil (an episode related in *Izvestiya*, 11 September 2002, in an article pointedly titled 'Krasnyi Bin Laden'; <http://www.izvestia.ru/community/article23734>). A problem similar to that of Belarusians was faced by Ukrainians. However, in the Ukrainian case, maintaining a separate identity has been somewhat of a problem only in the east (in the Ukraine–Russia borderland) but not nearly so much so in the west. First, the Ukrainian Uniates endured, and this proved to be of the greatest importance for the Ukrainian national cause. Second, even the Orthodox in Western Ukraine have long stopped identifying with the Russians. Distance from the Russian heartland and inclusion in the Austro–Hungarian Empire (much more at peace with diversity compared with the Russian Empire) were crucial in this regard.

⁵ This is despite the fact that officially Poles account for just 4.64% of the Novogrudok *raion* population, according to *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniya Respubliki Belarus i rasprostranennost' yazykov* (Minsk, Ministerstvo Statistiki i Analiza, 2000), Vol. 1, p. 176.

⁶ Filaret routinely speaks of 'our homeland stretching from Brest to Vladivostok'.

⁷ Filaret's office once gained the right to export Belarusian vodka.

⁸ Personal interview, 27 May 2002.

⁹ Yanka Kupala, *Tuteishiya* (Munich, Batskaushchyna, 1953), p. 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60; translation and italics by this author.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, translation and italics by this author.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 61; translation and italics by this author.

¹³ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 93.

¹⁴ R. Sklyut, the émigré author of the preface to the 1953 Munich edition of *Tuteishiya*, made a special point of the Polishness of this semi-anonymous cliché used as a 'national pseudonym'. The bottom line is that even this self-effacing label is of alien origin; in Belarusian it would rather be rendered as *tutashnii* or *gettashnii* (p. 9).

¹⁵ Nickolas Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 2–3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Oleg Trubachev, *V poiskakh edinstva: vzglyad filologa na problemu istokov Rusi* (Moscow, Nauka, 1997), pp. 127–129; for Trubachev, other confirmations of this pattern's validity are Akdengis—the Turkish name for the Aegean Sea—meaning White Sea and located west of Turkey, and Russia's White Sea, which for the most part lies west of the mouth of the North Dvina River, the northern outpost of Russian colonisation of the European north.

¹⁸ See Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, pp. 1–4.

¹⁹ Vitaut Kipel, *Belarusians in the United States* (Lanham, University Press of America, 1999), p. 9.

²⁰ Andrzej Sadowski, *Pogranicze Polsko–Białoruskie: Tożsamość mieszkańców* (Białystok, Trans-humana, 1995), p. 77.

²¹ Orlov & Saganovich, *Desyat' vekov Belorusskoi istorii*, p. 11.

²² M.I. Ermalovich, *Pa Slyadakh Adnago Mifa* (Minsk, Belaruskaya Navuka, 2002), p. 29.

²³ Sergei Markov, 'Zachem Rossii nuzhna Belarus'?, <http://www.strana.ru/print/975679610.html>, 24 August 2001.

²⁴ Kipel, *Belarusians in the United States*.

²⁵ Cited in Bazyl Bialokozovicz, *Miedzy Wschodem a Zachodem* (Białystok, Białowieza, 1998), p. 57.

²⁶ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 93.

²⁷ Hroch, *Social Preconditions* ..., p. xiii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁹ Jan Zaprudnik, 'Belorussia and the Belorussians', in Zev Katz, Rosemarie Rogers & Frederic Harned (eds), *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York, The Free Press, 1975), p. 64.

- ³⁰ Cited in Bialokozovicz, *Miedzy Wschodem a Zachodem*, p. 59.
- ³¹ Orlov & Saganovich, *Desyat' vekov Belorusskoi istorii*, pp. 204–205.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- ³³ *Ibid.*; Krivichi is the name of a large East Slavic tribe, the precursor of Belarusians.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- ³⁵ Galina Kovalskaya, 'Karma Belorussii', *Moskovskie novosti*, 2001, 27, p. 3.
- ³⁶ Fedor Turuk, *Belorusskoe Dvizhenie* (Moscow, Gosizdat, 1921), pp. 12–13.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- ³⁸ T.M. Mikulich, *Mova i Etnichnaya Samasvyadomast* (Minsk, Navuka i Tekhnika, 1996), p. 48.
- ³⁹ The spelling discrepancy, 'Belarusan' instead of 'Belarusian', is explained below.
- ⁴⁰ Wojtek Kosc, 'To be Belarusian in Bialystok', *Central Europe Review*, 17 September 1999; www.ce-review.org/99/13/kosc13.html accessed 1 July 2001.
- ⁴¹ L.V. Tereshkovich, 'Obshchestvennye dvizheniya v sovremennoi Belorussii: kratkii kommentarii k dokumentam', *Grazhdanskie dvizheniya v Belorussii: dokumenty i materialy 1989–1991* (Moscow, TSIMO, 1991), pp. 28, 31. Note that the menace of Polonisation is brandished 219 years after the incorporation of Belarus into the Russian Empire and 53 years after the unification of Belarus. Apparently, the genuinely Belarusian national movement did not develop much in the meantime.
- ⁴² Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus at a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1993), p. 45.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 217–218.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.
- ⁴⁷ The issue does not seem to have lost topicality in 2002. Aleh Trusau, for example, sees a peculiar conspiracy undercurrent: Lithuanians, he says, prefer that those people be called Poles, not Belarusians, because Poles can always be referred to as 'occupiers', whereas Belarusians are autochthonous to the area (personal interview, 23 May 2002). Note that Polish-language secondary schools existed in Soviet Lithuania. A Polish-language newspaper, *Czerwony Sztandar*, was an official organ of the Communist Party of Lithuania, while in Salcinikai district (suburban Vilnius) even a county-level newspaper (*Przykazania Lenina*) was published in Polish. At the same time, there have been no indications of demand for Belarusian-language publications in Lithuania. Today there actually is one, a monthly, *Roon'*; it has a circulation of 1,000 copies and is printed with a grant from the Lithuanian government.
- ⁴⁸ Personal interview, 22 May 2002.
- ⁴⁹ Sadowski, *Pogranicze Polsko–Białoruskie: Tożsamość Mieszkanców*, p. 118.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- ⁵¹ Orlov & Saganovich, *Desyat' vekov Belorusskoi istorii*, p. 194.
- ⁵² *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniya Respubliki Belarus i rasprostranennost' yazykov*, p. 16.
- ⁵³ Calculated on the basis of Robert Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 161, and *Natsional'nyi sostav Respubliki Belarus i rasprostranennost' Yazykov*, p. 16.
- ⁵⁴ Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 121.
- ⁵⁵ Personal correspondence with Dr Mariusz Kowalski of the Warsaw-based Institute of Geography, Polish Academy of Sciences.
- ⁵⁶ Sadowski, *Pogranicze Polsko–Białoruskie: Tożsamość Mieszkanców*, pp. 73–74.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- ⁵⁸ Clearly, some references to the number of Belarusians in Poland derive from their identification with the Orthodox. For example, Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska estimates the number of Belarusians as being 'around 250,000'; see Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem & Lisbeth L. Tarlow (eds), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 350.
- ⁵⁹ Mariusz Kowalski, 'Polacy na Białorusi, Białorusini w Polsce—Obraz pogranicza Dwóch Narodów', paper presented at the conference 'Trasgraniczna współpraca samorządowa na terenach zamieszkiwanych przez białoruską mniejszość narodową w Polsce i na Litwie', organised by Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej Polska–Białorusi z Białegostoku within the framework of the EU-funded programme PHARE ACCES, Białystok, 5–6 July 2002.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*; most college-educated and urban Poles who remained east of the Polish border after the war left for Poland when allowed to do so under Khrushchev.
- ⁶² Although these are just 'passport' Poles, Polish identity is claimed by a larger group than that of 'passport Poles'.
- ⁶³ Kowalski, 'Polacy na Białorusi ...'.
- ⁶⁴ Sadowski, *Pogranicze Polsko–Białoruskie*, pp. 74–75.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74

⁶⁶ Kowalski, 'Polacy na Białorusi ...'.

⁶⁷ Sadowski, *Pogranicze Polsko-Białoruskie*, p. 120.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 165–166.

⁶⁹ Kowalski, 'Polacy na Białorusi ...'.

⁷⁰ Between 1989 and 1999 the share of Russians in Belarus declined from 13.2% to 11.3%, the share of Poles declined from 4.1% to 3.9%, whereas the share of Belarusians increased from 77.8% to 81.2% (calculated on the basis of *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniya Respubliki Belarus i rasprostranennost' yazykov*, p. 16).

⁷¹ 'Pra zhishchene rezhimam Lukashenki Belaruskai movy i pra neabkhodnast yae abarony', Deklaratsiya Soimu BNF Adradzhene i Kanservatyvno-Khrystsiyanskai Partii—BNF', 4 April 2002.

⁷² Sadowski, *Pogranicze Polsko-Białoruskie*, pp. 13–19.

⁷³ Magdziak-Miszewska traces Belarusian–Polish tensions to 1939–45: 17 September 1939, when Soviet forces invaded Poland, 'is remembered as a day of national tragedy for the Poles, while in Belarus it is a public holiday celebrating the day when the nation was united'. She contends that 'this dramatic period in both nations' histories, supported by aggressive Soviet-inspired anti-Polish propaganda, left an indelible imprint on the collective consciousness of the majority of Belarusian society and created the stereotype of Gentry Poland that threatened Belarusian national aspirations ... This imprint proved to be more powerful than the superficial propaganda of Socialist Internationalism during the period 1945–89'; see Balmaceda *et al.* (eds), *Independent Belarus, Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West* p. 346.

⁷⁴ Kowalski, 'Polacy na Białorusi ...'.

⁷⁵ Markov, 'Zachem Rossii nuzhna Belarus?', <http://www.strana.ru/print/975679610.html>, 24 August 2001.

⁷⁶ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 136.

⁷⁷ Zaprudnik, *Belarus at a Crossroads ...*, p. 164.

⁷⁸ Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 246.

⁷⁹ Nikolai Zenkovich, *Tainy Ukhodyashchego Veka* (Moscow, Olma Press, 2000), p. 258.

⁸⁰ Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 263.

⁸¹ According to Vakar, the Weissrithenische Generalbezirk included Smolensk *oblast'* of Russia and Belarus without Gomel, Pinsk and Brest *oblasti*, which were subordinated to the Reichskommissar of Ukraine, while Bialystok, which in 1939–41 had been part of Soviet Belarus, was included in East Prussia (*ibid.*, p. 176).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 199–206.

⁸⁴ John Loftus, *The Belarus Secret* (New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1982).

⁸⁵ 'Belarusian Anti-Communism: Nazi and CIA Connection,' <http://www.geocities.com/dudar2000/Bcc.htm>.

⁸⁶ Kipel, *Belarusians in the United States*, p. 18.

⁸⁷ The most prominent Nazi collaborator, General Andrei Vlasov, was ethnic Russian.

⁸⁸ Pavel Polyan, *Ne po svoei vole: istoriya i geografiya prinuditel'nykh migratsii v SSSR* (Moscow, OGI, 2000), pp. 135–136.

⁸⁹ A detailed account can be found in David Marples, *Belarus: A Denationalized Nation* (Amsterdam, Harwood, 1999), pp. 54–60.

⁹⁰ Andrei Ekadumau, 'Kul'turnyya Realiya Belarуска–Rasiiskai Integratsii', in *Belarуска–Rasiiskaya Integratsiya* (Minsk, Entsylapedyks, 2002), p. 195.

⁹¹ Steven M. Eke & Taras Kuzio, 'Sultanism in Eastern Europe: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarian Populism in Belarus', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, 3, 2000, p. 525.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁹⁴ Balmaceda *et al.* (eds), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, p. 232.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 194–197.

⁹⁶ Marples, *Belarus: A Denationalized Nation*, p. 126.

⁹⁷ For example, Shuskevich stated his role in the organisation of the December 1991 clandestine meeting with El'tsin and Kravchuk, the meeting that terminated the USSR, and Trusau claimed that all changes in Belarus' status except those that took place in 1939 had some internal underpinnings.

⁹⁸ Irina Khalip, 'Tri schastlivykh dnya', BDG, 23 August 2002, <http://bdg.press.net.by/2002/08/2002>.

⁹⁹ Mogiliov and Vitebsk *oblasti* were shifted from Russia to Belarus in 1924 and in 1926; subsequently some *raiony* were shifted to the jurisdiction of Belarus (these were incorporated in Gomel *oblast'*).

- ¹⁰⁰ Marples, *Belarus: A Denationalized Nation*, p. 4.
- ¹⁰¹ Vakar, *Belarus: The Making of a Nation*, p. 37.
- ¹⁰² Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 15.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hroch, *Social Preconditions ...*, p. xv.
- ¹⁰⁶ Irina Khalip, 'Chtoby bylo muchitel'no bol'no', *BDG*, 20 November 2001. <http://bdg.press.net.by/2001/11/2001>.
- ¹⁰⁷ Michael Urban, *An Algebra of Soviet Power: Elite Circulation in Belorussian Republic 1966–86* (Cambridge, MA, Cambridge University Press 1989).
- ¹⁰⁸ Vakar, *Belarus: The Making of a Nation*, p. 198.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'As a representative of the US Embassy in Moscow, I was visiting the capital of Minsk the week Belarus formally declared its independence in 1991', writes John C. Reppert. 'In street surveys with a number of people, the major question I posed was "What is the primary difference between Russians and Belarusians?" An academic provided the most poignant answer after pondering for several moments. He said, "the prefix". The addition of "bela-" to the name Russia did not seem to me an adequate basis for national identity'; see Balmaceda *et al.* (eds), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, p. 263.
- ¹¹⁰ A.I. Zhuravsky, *Gistoriya Belaruskai Literaturai Movy*, Vol. 1 (Minsk, Vysheishaya Shkola, 1966), p. 31.
- ¹¹¹ Vakar, *Belarus: The Making of a Nation*, p. 52.
- ¹¹² Cited in M.G. Bulakhov, *Evfimii Fedorovich Karskii 1861–1931: Zhizn' i nauchnaya deyatel'nost'* (Minsk, BGU Im. Lenina, 1981), p. 181.
- ¹¹³ Vakar, *Belarus: The Making of a Nation*, p. 62.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁶ P. Vladimov, 'Skorina (Frantsisk [Georgii])', Brockhaus & Efron, read at www.booksite.ru/fulltext/bro/kgabrokerfr/4/4369.htm.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁸ Rainer Lindner, 'Besieged Past: National and Court Historians in Lukashenka's Belarus', *Nationalities Papers*, 27, 4, 1999, p. 632.
- ¹¹⁹ Zen'kovich, *Tainy ukhodyashchego veka*, pp. 353–355.
- ¹²⁰ The question asked respondents to name the five most prominent Belarusians.
- ¹²¹ In May 2002 Savvik Shuster, a Moscow-based NTV anchorman, asked Lukashenka live on his prime time show why the Belarusian regime made such a prominent writer as Vasil' Bykau leave the country. Lukashenka's reaction was 'What are you talking about? I love Bykau, when I was a kid, his poems nurtured me'. Vasil Bykau, to be sure, is a prose writer and has never published a poem. The point to make, however, is the degree of acceptance of Bykau's name.
- ¹²² Anatol Rostau, 'Rusin plemeni belarusau', *Belaruskaya Minuushchyna*, 2, 1, 1994, p. 18, quoted in Lindner, 'Besieged Past: National and Court Historians in Lukashenka's Belarus', p. 635.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 643.
- ¹²⁴ Aleh Trusau's exact wording (personal interview, 23 May 2002).
- ¹²⁵ Andrei Okara, 'Belarus v otsustvii tret'ei al'ternativy', *Russkii zhurnal*, 14 November 2001, <http://www.russ.ru/politics/20011114-oka-pr.html>.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁷ Andrei Okara, 'Belarus: severo-zapadnye gubernii Rossii ili wschodnie kresy Polski?', *Evrasiiskoe obozrenie*, No. 3, <http://eurasia.com.ru/eo/3-12.html>.
- ¹²⁸ Włodzimierz Pawluczuk, 'Ruskie Drogi', *Polityka*, 30 November 1996.
- ¹²⁹ Aleksandr Ulitsenak, *Inshadumtsy = Myslyashchie Inache* (Minsk, Belarus, 1991).
- ¹³⁰ Personal interview, 23 May 2002.
- ¹³¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 191.
- ¹³² Mikalai Ermalovich, *Belaruskaya Dzyarzhava Velikae Knyastva Litouskai* (Minsk, Bellifond, 2000.)
- ¹³³ Uladzimir Arlou's exact words (personal interview, 22 May 2002).
- ¹³⁴ Vakar, *Belarus: The Making of a Nation*, p. 4.
- ¹³⁵ Actually, Vitaut Kipel also uses this spelling; this author once came across it in *Niva*, a Belarusian-language weekly published in Bialystok (see endnote 40).
- ¹³⁶ Lindner, 'Besieged Past ...', p. 633.
- ¹³⁷ Lindner presented a superb analysis of their work as well as that of their neo-Soviet nemeses (*Ibid.*).
- ¹³⁸ Balmaceda *et al.* (eds), *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamics, and Implications for the West*, p. 232.

¹³⁹ Orlov & Saganovich, *Desyat' Vekov Beloruskoi Istorii*, p. 10; compared with this statement, even Zaprudnik can be labeled a Rusophile: he at least distinguishes what he calls 'a common written language of Eastern Slavs—Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians [that] began differentiating in the thirteenth century and gradually developed into three national languages by the end of the fifteenth century' (Zaprudnik, *Belarus at a Crossroads ...*, p. 19).

¹⁴⁰ Orlov & Saganovich, *Desyat' Vekov Beloruskoi Istorii*, p. 11.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁵¹ 'Tri dnya, kotorye potryasli Belorussiyu i Rossiyu', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 20 June 2002, p. 5.