Themes in Belarusian National Thought: The Origins, Emergence and Development of the Belarusian 'National Idea'

by

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Abstract

Viewed in a comparative context, the post-Soviet 'nation-building' process in Belarus appears to have lagged seriously behind those of its immediate neighbours - Poland, the Baltic states and, to a lesser degree, Ukraine. This dissertation attempts to account for this lag by investigating the question of Belarusian national self-consciousness and identity within the rubric of what is defined as the Belarusian 'national idea'. A conceptual framework emphasizing the 'mythical', 'synthesized', 'contested', and 'structured' character of the 'national idea', as well as the basic stages in its development, is used to paint the picture of a *profound Belarusian identity crisis deeply-rooted in history.*

Using a variety of sources in the Belarusian, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and English languages, it is shown how the Belarusian 'national idea' emerged in the 19th century deriving from a complex and fluctuating 'synthesis' of 'Eastern' and 'Western' cultural, philosophical, religious and political influences. Although pre-dating the Soviet period, the legacy of 'Sovietization,' while in some respects having created the necessary pre-conditions for the existence of a modern Belarusian state, appears nonetheless as the major cause of this crisis typified by a pronounced and widespread *national nihilism* within Belarusian society today. This crisis is compounded by the current policies of the political regime of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka (elected in July 1994) who has consciously obstructed the effort begun in the early 1990s to return the 'national idea' to Belarusian society. Although grave, the dissertation concludes that there are modest grounds for long-term optimism concerning the future of the Belarusian identity. This is founded on several key defining elements of the Belarusian 'national idea' itself: deeply-rooted traditions of tolerance, respect and democratism within Belarusian national thought; the fact that Belarusians

themselves define their national identity primarily in *political* and not ethno-linguistic terms; a deeply-engrained 'confederal' dimension in accordance with which Belarusian nationalism has been of an *integrative* variety seeking the *federalization* and *democratization* of existing states as opposed to secession; finally, notwithstanding the historical strength of Russophilic tendencies in Belarusian national thought, the existence of a significant constituency of support for the idea of Belarusian 'belongingness' to Europe today among younger generation Belarusians.

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Preface

Within the conceptual rubric of what will be defined as *the Belarusian 'national idea'*, this dissertation addresses the question of *national consciousness* and *identity* in the former Soviet republic of Belarus. Contemporary Belarusian scholars themselves note that this subject is a topic to date essentially unresearched in any language - in short, *tabula rasa*.[1] Indeed, apart from a number of interesting and insightful articles by Roman Szporluk, Roman Solchanyk and Stephen Guthier,[2] there have been published but seven English-language monographs on the general topic of Belarus.[3] Although these works touch on the matter of Belarusian national consciousness and identity, none are devoted to an in-depth analysis of this question. The presently impoverished state of Belarusian studies reflects a general tendency within Western scholarship to regard Belarus (and Ukraine) as a linguistic and cultural appendage of Russia essentially devoid of any separate identity or national aspirations.[4]

This relative neglect, however, is unfortunate. Together with its immediate neighbours Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania, Belarus occupies an important strategic location in the newly-emerging sub-region of *East-Central Europe* which includes as well the Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Moldova, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.[5] The collapse of communism has given these countries a new, and perhaps historically unprecedented, opportunity to engage in the process of 'nation-building.' By this is meant constructing a new post-communist national identity drawing on native cultural and historical traditions, myths and symbols, the veracity of which was, in varying degrees, denied under the communist system with its ideological emphasis on the *class* values of 'proletarian internationalism' and 'socialist realism'.[6] It is likely no exaggeration to suggest that the future

political stability of the European continent depends largely on the success of these efforts.

Although badly skewed by the destruction of 'historical memory' under the communist regime, the shared history and roots of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus in the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia, and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with their multicultural and pluralistic traditions, provides these nations with the symbolic resources to create new post-communist national identities based simultaneously on principles of cultural *renaissance*, democracy, tolerance and justice. Nonetheless, the obstacles to be overcome in creating these new identities are immense. While, as symbolized by the rebirth of national cultures, the emergence of relatively stable democratic political orders, market economies, and their (forthcoming) accession into European and North-Atlantic institutions, Poland and other countries of the region (most notably Hungary and the Czech Republic) have made very substantial progress towards this end, Belarus stands out as an exception. This dissertation aims at addressing the question: *Why has Belarus, a republic which possessed certain advantages from a 'nation-building' perspective following the collapse of the USSR - including a well-developed (albeit degraded) industrial base, comparatively high living standards, and well-educated population - lagged behind its East-Central European nieghbours in this process?*

Through an examination of the origins, emergence and development of the Belarusian 'national idea,' this dissertation posits that the answer is to be found in *a deeply-rooted crisis of Belarusian identity which predates the Soviet era.* Nonetheless, the experience of 'Sovietization', which essentially reduced the entirety to Belarusian political history to an innate 'impulse' or 'striving' for union with Russia, was critical for it deprived Belarusians historical knowledge of themselves and the early Lithuanian and Polish influences which tie them to

Europe. Owing to a historically less-developed sense of national self-awareness as well as linguistic proximity, this 'alteration' or 'destruction' of 'historical memory' went much further in Belarus than other Soviet republics, to say nothing of Soviet-bloc countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary where strongly developed pre-communist national traditions and memories of political independence functioned as a buttress against the homogenizing pressures of official ideology. Tragically and ironically, after a promising brief period of attempted national 'revival' during the period 1992-1994, this Belarusian crisis of 'historical memory' has been deliberately perpetuated by the policies of the current President Alyaksandr Lukashenka (elected in July 1994) who, employing the rhetoric of 'pan-Slavism' and former Soviet identity myths, has obstructed the effort to return the 'national idea' to Belarusian society, pursuing instead a vigorous policy of reintegration with Russia, including the possibility of a new unified Belarusian-Russian state.

This is not to deny, however, the importance of Russian and other formative 'Eastern' influences on the development of the Belarusian 'national idea.' Indeed, together with a 'Western' orientation embodied in notions of renewed union with Lithuania and/or Poland, a major theme within Belarusian national thought historically has been that of federal or confederal union with a democratized and decentralized Russia. Like the other nations of East-Central Europe, the fundamental Belarusian identity problematic, viewed in the both the historical and contemporary context, emerges as the inherent, and perhaps ultimately irreconcilable, tension between competing 'Western' and 'Eastern' influences.

Nonetheless, the principal conclusion of the analysis is that there is reason for modest optimism concerning the future of the 'nation-building' process in Belarus. This rests primarily with younger generation Belarusians who, in contrast to the current political leadership under President Lukashenka, tend to identify more

strongly with the ideal of Belarusian 'belongingness' to European civilization and values.

A Word About Sources

The bulk of the research for this thesis was conducted at the following locations: the 'Janka Kupala' University, Hrodna (Belarus); the Modern History Archives, Minsk (Belarus); the National Library of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk; the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus; the Francishak Skaryna Centre, Minsk; the library and archives of the National Library, Warsaw (Poland); the *Archiwum Wschodnie Osrodek KARTA* ['The Eastern Archives of the KARTA Centre'], Warsaw; the library, archives, computer data base and 'Belarusian section' of the *Osrodek Studiow Wschodnich* ['Centre for Eastern Studies'], Warsaw. In terms of primary sources, the basic materials relied upon are rare Belarusian newspapers, periodicals, memoirs, monographs and other documents found in these locations. Research was conducted initially during the period September 1996-April 1997 when I was an Exchange Fellow at the University of Warsaw. This period included field work in Belarus itself during February and March 1997. The initial findings of this research were presented in a paper on the Belarusian identity problematic at an academic conference at Columbia University in New York in April 1997. Further research and writing was undertaken after my return to Warsaw in the fall of 1997 to work as an Analyst-Specialist in the Belarusian Section at the Centre for Eastern Studies and, later, as a Lecturer at the Collegium Civitas. Writing was completed after my return to Canada in July 1999. Substantial revisions of the first draft were made during the fall and winter of 1999.[7]

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In speaking of source materials and conducting the research for this dissertation, it should be acknowledged that several difficulties arose. First, *the incomplete character of primary source materials*. With respect to Belarusian periodicals and newspapers in particular, while some sets are complete, others have significant gaps owing mainly to the frequent confiscation and repression of these publications by the authorities of the day (in the main Polish and/or Russian). Second, the fact that those materials which are available *are dispersed in a number of countries including (apart from Belarus itself) Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, as well as the Czech Republic, United States and Canada.* Owing to time and financial constraints, a tactical choice was made within the context of this dissertation to focus on Belarus itself as well as Poland. Apart from textual materials, 'oral sources' - meaning by this interviews, meetings, and informal discussions with Belarusians themselves both within the country itself and living abroad - provided vital insights and information into the Belarusian problematic. It is hoped that the fusion of available primary source materials with existing secondary sources (including Polish, Russian and other writers whose work on the subject of Belarus is, as yet, not widely known or available in the West) creates an original interpretation of an important topic

In acknowledging the difficulties associated with gathering source materials for this work and its inherent shortcomings (for which the author is solely responsible), it is emphasized that this dissertation is intended as the beginning of a longer-term project and not its conclusion. It is very much hoped that its appearance will contribute to heightened interest in the topic and stimulate further research.

Format

As above all an exercise in the *interpretation of thought* built on a reading of the most important texts comprising the Belarusian national tradition (including historiography and creative literature), the format of this thesis is *thematic* and *comparative*. It is 'thematic' inasmuch as following an introduction defining the key concept 'national idea,' each of the subsequent five chapters is devoted to a specific trend or theme in Belarusian national thinking. Emphasizing the importance of philosophical Romanticism (especially in its Herderian form) for the emergence and development of the Belarusian 'national idea', chapter one offers a critical interpretation of the Belarusian national 'myth' set within a broader historical context. In doing so, it essentially sets the stage for the following chapters, all of which draw out themes identified and developed initially in this opening chapter. Continuing the emphasis on the importance of Romanticism but also noting the contribution of Enlightenment influences, chapter two discusses the complicated and evolving relationship between language and national identity in Belarus. Emphasizing moreso the importance of Enlightenment traditions, but also the Romantic tendency to regard the enormous and 'natural' cultural diversity of humankind in terms of an 'organic' and interconnected whole (or 'matrix'), the third chapter focuses on the themes of tolerance, respect, and democratism in Belarusian national thought.

Chapter four concerns the theme of 'struggle' (*zmahanne*) as a key component of the Belarusian 'national idea' in both the existential and political sense. The former refers to the fundamental tension noted above within the Belarusian 'national idea' between competing 'Western' and 'Eastern' cultural, religious, philosophical and political influences. The latter denotes the presence of radical

and even revolutionary motives within Belarusian national thought. Developing further the existential problematic outlined in chapter four, chapter five deals with the crucially-important 'confederal' dimension to the Belarusian 'national idea,' defined in terms of competing Western and Eastern 'vectors' or geo-political orientations which have typified the development of Belarusian national thought. Each of the chapters end with a brief 'analytical summary' framed in terms of the underlying theoretical framework outlined in the introduction. The overall findings are summarized in the concluding chapter which also reflects on future prospects for the post-Soviet 'nation-building' process in Belarus.

The thesis is 'comparative' in that frequent reference is made to the historical and political experience of other East-Central European nations. Apart from Poland and Russia as the two main external influences on the development of Belarusian national thought, the primary frames of comparative reference are *Lithuania* and, in particular, *Ukraine*. Indeed, Belarus can be regarded as sharing many of the same problems of post-Soviet 'nation-building' with Ukraine - comparatively low levels of pre-Soviet national consciousness, a high degree of linguistic Russification, and a debilitating Soviet 'totalitarian' legacy. However, owing primarily to identifiable historical reasons as well as the more supportive attitude of post-independence Ukrainian political elites towards the return of the 'national idea' to society, as well as a larger and more politically active diaspora, Ukraine appears to be further along the post-Soviet 'nation-building' path than Belarus.

Note on Transliteration

Consistent with orthographic changes officially adopted in September 1991, the name and adjective 'Belarus' and 'Belarusian' are employed throughout as

opposed to the previous 'Belorussia' and 'Belorussian.' Moreover, as opposed to the more commonly encountered 'Russianized' forms, 'proper' Belarusian spelling of geographical and individual names is used throughout the text - hence, *Hrodna* rather than *Grodna*; *Vaclau Lastouski* instead of *'Vaslav Lastovski'*, *Piotr Masherau*, not *'Piotr Masherov'* and so on. The only exception to this general rule occurs in footnotes and references where Russian forms are used in accordance with the original spelling of the author.[7]

Notes

[1] A. Latyshonak, "Belaruskaya naciyanalnaya ideya," *Svicyaz*, No. 2, 1994, pp. 30-37 and "Narodzyni belaruskai naciyanalnai idei," *Spadchyna*, No. 1, 1992, pp. 9-14.

[2] Roman Szporluk, "The Soviet West – or Far Eastern Europe?" *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 5, No. 3, Fall 1991, pp. 466-482 and "West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical Tradition, Social Communication and Linguistic Assimilation," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, January 1979, pp. 76-98; Roman Solchanyk, "Ukraine, Belorussia, and Moldavia: Imperial Integration, Russification and the Struggle for National Survival," in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger, eds., *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder, 1990), pp. 175-203; Stephen L. Guthier, "The Belorussians: National Identity and Assimilation, 1897-1970" Part I, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, January 1977, pp. 37-61 and Part II, *Soviet Studies*, Vol.. XXIX, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, April 1977, pp. 270-283. More recently, the December 1999 issue of the journal *Nationalities Papers* featured four major articles devoted to the national question in Belarus. As will be discussed at some length in subsequent chapters, 19th century Polish scholars were the first to 'rediscover' the distinctiveness of Belarusian culture, language and identity. A pioneering role in this was played by the philosopher Ludwik Krzywicki whose main works can be found in: *Dziela* 5 Volumes (Warsaw, 1957-1961) and *Wybor pism* (Warsaw, 1978). See also H. Kozakiewicz, "Ludwik Krzywicki: Sociologist and Activist" in P. Sztompka, ed., *Masters of Polish Sociology* (Wroclaw, 1984), pp. 53-65.

[3] Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1956); Ivan S. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule 1917-1957* (Lexington, 1972). The idea for this particular dissertation derives most directly from Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), especially chapter two: "The Emergence and Embodiment of the Belarusan National Idea." The most recent of these monographs are those of David Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe* (Edmonton, 1996) and *Belarus: A Denationalized Nation*

(1999). Marples is especially concerned with the impact of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster on developments in post-Soviet Belarus. Indeed, his "Post-Soviet Belarus and the Impact of Chernobyl," *Post-Soviet Geography*, 1992, 33, pp. 419-431 was the first article in the West to draw overdue attention to the fact that as horrible as its effect were within Ukraine itself, Belarus has borne the economic and humanitarian brunt of the Chernobyl catastrophe. Important new work is being done by a several younger 'Belarusianists' including Rainer Lindner of the University of Konstanz (Germany) and Alexandra Goujon of the *Institut des etudes politiques in Paris*.

[4] Motyl, p. 4, describes Ukraine as the "unknown country", a designation which is even more appropriate in the Belarusian case. For a discussion of 'nation-building' in post-Soviet Belarus is the chapter by Jan Zaprudnik and Michael Urban, "Belarus: from statehood to empire?, in Bremmer and Taras, eds., pp. 276-315.

[5] As defined by Alexander Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine After Totalitarianism* (New York, 1993), p. 3.

[6] For a discussion of 'nation-building' processes within Soviet successor states, see Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997).

[7] This is esentially the same transliteration employed by Zaprudnik as well as Marples in their recent work on the subject of Belarus.

Introduction: Defining the Concept 'National Idea'

Leading scholars of nationality studies have noted the inherent difficulty associated with attempting to elaborate working definitions of key concepts in the field. In one of the enduring classics of nationality studies, the late Hugh Seton-Watson, wrote that he was "driven to the conclusion that no 'scientific definition' of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists."[1] It would be no exaggeration to suggest that Seton-Watson's observation remains true today inasmuch as there is no generally agreed upon definition of the nation and associated terms. Nonetheless, as Anthony D. Smith points out, legitimate logical and methodological objections should not be viewed as sufficiently weighty to override the need for conceptual clarity.[2] Towards this end, the key concept requiring definition in this text is obviously that of 'national idea.'

Grounded in a deeper philosophical conviction as to the enduring importance of myth, mythic consciousness, and symbolism in the modern era[3], the 'national idea' here will be defined on the basis of two 'constitutive' myths: that of the 'ethnic origins' of the national group and a 'myth of statehood' outlining the group's political history. Following this, several other features of the 'national idea' will be identified: the various stages in its development, as well as its 'synthesized', 'contested' and 'structured' character. It is to be emphasized that this definition of the 'national idea' is meant to be *Central European 'context-specific.'* This is to say that, although as will be argued below, the classic distinction between 'Western' and 'Eastern' nationalisms ought not be taken too literally, there have been important differences in the path of development taken

by 'Western' and 'Eastern' nations. Perhaps most notable is the seeming requirement that 'Eastern' nations engage in ongoing debates over the proper understanding of the distant historical past in a way not typically seen in 'Western' nations. This will be defined below as the 'contested' character of the 'national idea.'

Definition of Related Concepts

Defining the concept 'national idea' requires , as a prelude, definition of related concepts including *'national consciousness'*, *the 'nation'*, *'nationalism'* and *'nation-building'*.

'National Consciousness,' 'the Nation', 'Nationalism' and 'Nation-Building'

National consciousness is defined here as *a mode of individual and collective identity based on a shared sense of culture, 'belonging', 'community' and 'history,' as well as the perception of 'difference' from others.*[4] The 'nation' itself can thus be understood as *a collectivity sharing a culturally-defined sense of 'belonging', 'community,' 'history,' and 'difference' from others.* While 'culture' may obviously include language, this is not considered necessarily to be a defining element of national identity. Indeed, as will be argued in chapter two, especially in the contemporary context, the Belarusian case suggests that language is not a reliable indicator of national identity - far more important is *shared historical consciousness and values.*[5] Neither is a 'common territory' included as a *necessary* element in the definition of 'the nation.'

Although for group participants it may feel 'natural' or 'given', the nation is, in fact, a *socio-symbolic construct*. To invoke the currently popular terminology of

Benedict Andersen, nations are 'imagined communities' existing, first and foremost, in the minds of their members.[6] As Andersen himself notes, there thus remains a large degree of truth in Seton-Watson's observation that "a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one."[7] As will be noted, against the efforts of some 'non-Belarusians' to deny their "inherent" right to nationhood, some Belarusian writers have advanced the argument that, in the end, the views of others are irrelevant; since Belarusians "feel themselves" to be a nation, they *are* a nation. However, as will be elaborated upon below in reference to what can be termed the 'structured' character of the 'national idea,' even if members of a group possess this subjective 'feeling' of nationhood, the lack of recognition that they are a 'nation' by external 'others' functions as a powerful brake on their national aspirations.

The nation is distinguished from an 'ethnic group' first and foremost by *the demand for group political rights*.[8] This is to say that while an ethnic group "may function without a state of its own, a nation implies bringing ethnicity and statehood together," a congruence which may be achieved through federal arrangements or independent statehood."[9] On this basis, 'nationalism' be defined as *a political movement positing as its goal the recognition of group political rights either within an existing state formation (federalism) or the establishment of independent statehood*.[10] Although there has been a tendency in much of the literature to conceive of nationalism as first and foremost a destructive force[11], here it is held to be neither an inherently 'disintegrative' nor 'integrative' force but can be one or the other (or a combination of both) depending on the circumstances. As Norman Davies has written: "Like Democracy or Autocracy, Nationalism in itself is neither virtuous nor vicious. It can only be judged in relation to the particular motives of its particular adherents. According to

circumstance, it has been espoused both by noble idealists and also by scoundrels for whom the means is an end in itself. There can be democratic nationalists and undemocratic nationalists, magnanimous nationalists and mean nationalists, nationalist moderates and nationalist fanatics. The only thing that they have in common is the conviction that their nations have an inalienable right to control their own destiny."[12] This is an important theoretical qualification especially in the contemporary East-Central European context where many Western scholars and observers (not entirely without reason - to wit, the former Yugoslavia) have emphasized the purely destructive character of post-communist nationalisms. Reflecting, in particular, historical Polish influences, it will be argued here that Belarusian nationalism has been primarily *democratic* and *integrative* in character.

Finally, 'nation-building' "has to do with eliciting the loyalty and commitment of the population, which is usually achieved by fostering the sense of belonging, often by manipulation of culture, history and symbolism."[13] This is to be distinguished from 'state-building' which "is concerned with defending, controlling and administering a given territory and the population living on it, and entails devising and operating a system for recruiting troops and raising taxes to pay for them, as well as matters like conflict regulation, the imposition and adjudication of law, the establishment of a reliable coinage and so on."[14] While the issue of 'state-building' is obviously of critical importance for many former communist states, it is also the case that the USSR bequeathed to most of its successor republics, including Belarus, more or less well-defined state structures with what have since become internationally-recognized boundaries ('forms'). The primary task now is to fill these forms with genuinely national 'content' or 'nation-building,' the basis for which is understood as the 'national idea.'

The 'National Idea' Broadly Defined: The Distinctive 'Historical Path' of a People

In the broadest possible sense, the 'national idea' can be understood in terms of a 'world view" defining a nation's distinctive heritage and particular 'historical mission.' In this vein, as the contemporary Belarusian literary critic L. Ya. Haranin argues, the 'national idea' is the striving by a national group "to find its unique path of social, political and spiritual development as well as its place in history."[15] As the "conscious understanding of the distinct historical path of a people," the 'national idea' emerges as a "reflection of the awakening of national consciousness within the group."[16] This notion of the 'awakening' of national consciousness is central to understanding the origins of the 'national idea' and occurs first of all within the *intelligentsia*.

As Orest Subtelny has written in his study of Ukrainian history, the appearance of the *intelligentsia* in East-Central Europe was "a development of great importance."[17] This was especially so for societies like Ukraine, and, it can be added, Belarus, "that had 'lost' their noble-elites through assimilation to imperial culture and service."[18] Perceiving life "in terms of ideas and ideologies and not, as was the case previously with other social groups, in terms of concrete social rights, privileges, and obligations," the East-Central European *intelligenstsias* appeared first in cities where institutions of higher learning were located.[19] Usually consisting of small groups or 'circles' and tending to perceive life "in terms of ideas and ideologies and not, as was the case previously and with other social groups, in terms of concrete rights, privileges, and obligations, members of the *intelligentsia* were "frequently fragmented by intellectual debates, increasingly alienated from the government, isolated from the masses, and immersed in activities that were of interest only to itself."[20] Nonetheless, encouraged during

the second half of the 19th century by the ideas of Romanticism, the intelligentsia began to demonstrate a greater interest in the customs, traditions, languages and histories of the peasantry, 're-discovering' in the process a sense of collective national identity from which they themselves had become estranged. As thus the originators of the 'national idea', the *intelligentsia* then attempted to inculcate it within the broader national group. To cite Tom Nairn once again, on the basis of the 'national idea,' the *intelligentsia* then "had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation had to be written in a language they understood."[21] Described by members of the intelligentsia itself as the effort to 'awaken' national consciousness, this role was typically fulfilled by *ethnographers, linguists, poets* and *historians*.

Illustrating once again what will be defined further below as the 'structured character' of the 'national idea,' the *embodiment* or *realization* of the 'national idea' depends on the response of the masses to the "invitation" of the indigenous *intelligentsia* to enter history. This question of *group mobilization* (inculcation of the 'national idea' in the masses and the emergence of a mass national movement) emerges as one of the fundamental and enduring problematics facing successive generations of Belarusian intellectuals. Although this problem can be seen as endemic to 19th century East-European national 'revival' movements inasmuch as these overwhelmingly agrarian societies made poor material for the reception of modern ideas relating to nation- and state-hood, it was especially acute in the Belarusian case owing to the comparatively late emergence of an indigenous *intelligentsia* and the unfavorable historical circumstances into which the 'national idea' was born at the turn of the 20th century, about which more will be discussed in chapter one.[22]

The Mythical Character of the 'National Idea'

The core of national consciousness, and, hence, the foundation of the 'national idea' can be conceived in terms of what Smith, building on the ground-breaking work of John Armstrong,[23] defines as "myth-symbol complexes" or *mythmoteur*. This is to say that if one wishes to grasp "the special qualities and durability" of nations, these are to be found "neither in their ecological locations, nor their class configurations, nor yet their military and political relationships, important as all these are for day-today experiences and medium-term chances of survival." Rather, one has "to look at the nature (forms and content) of their specific myths and symbols, their historical memory and central values, which we can summarize as the 'myth-symbol complex'." [24]Accordingly, this dissertation seeks to join with those - including Smith himself and the contemporary Belarusian philosopher Uladzimir Konan - who argue that the concept of myth needs to be "rehabilitated ."[25] This can only be done by freeing it from modern 'Comtian' and Enlightenment 'prejudices' which equate myth with 'untruth', 'falsehood' and 'fantasy.'[26]

Here, myth is understood in its classical sense as deriving from the Greek term *mythos* meaning simply *a story or narrative related either orally or in a more comprehensive and structured written form which typically sought to impart 'meaning' to the natural and social environment.* As Langdon Gilkey writes, myths "are not just ancient and untrue fables; rather, they signify a certain perennial mode of language whose elements are multivalent symbols, whose referent is in some strange way the transcendent or sacred, and whose meanings concern the ultimate existential issues of actual life and the questions of human and historical destiny."[27] In the words of Suzanne Langer, the ultimate end of

myth, then, "is not wishful distortion of the world, but serious envisagement of its fundamental truths; moral orientation not escape."[28] Secondly, myth is understood to possess a certain *inherent fluidity* in that it is subject to continual reinterpretation in the face of changing social and political conditions. To cite Langer once again, myth is a "dynamic phenomenon, great with possibilities, ready to take new meanings and express ideas that have had no vehicle before."[29] Third, although myth typically draws its inspiration from the distant historical past, it can be usefully conceived in the 'Malinowskian' sense as "a charter for contemporary action whose legitimacy derives from its very association with the cultural past." Hence, it is an analytical error to equate the 'revival' of the past as 'nostalgia,' 'escapism' or, in the Durkheimian sense of the word, *anomie*. On the contrary, these 'revivals' are better regarded as "a modern version of the Pythagorean art of memory: retrospection to gain a vision for the future."[30] The 'national memory' - fundamentally 'mythic-symbolic' in nature - is thus not simply past but *future-oriented*. Although he does not emphasize the importance of myth, Tom Nairn has described this quality appropriately as the "Janus-faced character of nationalism" meaning that the idealized vision of the past gives the national group strength to face the future.[31]

On the basis of this 'rehabilitated' definition, the 'national idea' is understood to be defined by two 'constitutive myths' - a myth of *ethnic origins or 'imputed descent'*; and, a mythical account of the *political history of the nation*. These inter-connected myths, or *mythmoteur*, constitute the 'historical memory' or 'spirit' of the nation. The primary analytical task thus becomes delineating the most important themes, symbols, dates and figures within the framework of the 'national idea.'

The 'Myth of Ethnic Origins'

It is important to note that in speaking of the 'myth of ethnic origins', "we are concerned here not with actual descent but with the sense of imputed ancestry and origins."[32] This 'myth of descent' attempts "to provide an answer to questions of similarity and belonging: why are we all alike? Why are we one community? Because we came from the same place, at a definite period of time and are descended from the self-same ancestor, we necessarily belong together."[33] As Smith continues, myths of descent "usually reveal several components and layers of legend. There are myths of spatial and temporal origins, of migration, of ancestry and filiation, of the golden age, of decline and exile and rebirth."[34] Moreover, it is usually only much later and often "the work of nationalist intellectuals in the modern era" that these "separate myth-motifs are brought together to form a fully elaborated mythology of origins and descent."[35] As will be elaborated in chapter one, in the Belarusian case, two separate 'myths of descent' have been developed - the 'pure Slavic stock' and 'Baltic substratum' theories respectively. At their core, both of these 'myths' represent attempts by Belarusian national writers, reacting against Tsarist and later Soviet historiography, to delineate their nation culturally and linguistically from the Great Russians. Reflecting the enormous *political significance* of myth, the debate over the 'Baltic substratum' in particular has continued to reverberate in post-Soviet Belarus.

The 'Myth of Statehood'

Together with an account of ethnic origins of the national group, the 'national idea' is undergirded by a 'myth of statehood' which gives an elaborate account of

the *political history of a people*. Typically, this myth traces the origins of national statehood to very ancient times, emphasizing the ongoing 'struggle' of the nation's early ancestors for independence from larger and more powerful neighbours. As Smith emphasizes, an important element of this myth is the recollection of "a 'golden age' of communal splendour, with its sages, saints and heroes, the era in which the community achieved its classical form, and which bequeathed a legacy of glorious memories and cultural achievements."[36] Typically, this 'golden age' is said to be followed by a period of national decline and (perhaps) subsequent regeneration. However, Smith makes the key point that "the historicity of the heroes and golden age alike is quite secondary. What matters is their ability to evoke a lost splendour and virtue, and to act as stimuli and models for national renewal today."[37] Furthermore, it is vital to reiterate that, generally speaking, "historicist intellectuals fail to conform to later canons of historiography and scientific method; indeed, objectivity is not their main concern. Their aim is to retell the 'past' in such a way as to 'explain' the lot of their community and prescribe remedies for its ills."[38] In this sense, the historical past is something to be drawn upon, providing the symbolic tools to define (or perhaps, more appropriately, redefine) the present and future. Furthermore, the past is "always changing because of our new experiences, the new situations we encounter, and the new perspectives we come to believe in reinterpret the past and cause us to see it altered."[39] Succinctly stated, nations engage in *a continual process of rewriting or reinterpreting their past*. As Smith thus describes it, creating nations "is a recurrent activity" which involves "ceaseless interpretations, rediscoveries, and reconstructions."[40] This means that the nation is not a "static target" to be achieved once and for all but exists in a constant state of *becoming*. Nonetheless, as will be emphasized below, this constant 'creativity' occurs within certain definable (viz. 'structural') parameters.

As shall be seen in chapter one, beginning with Vaclau Lastouski, Belarusian writers have elaborated a sophisticated political myth according to which their nation possesses a "centuries-long tradition" of independent statehood. The most important symbols in this tradition are the ancient Eastern Slavic principality of Polack, the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and, in modern times, the Belarusian National Republic ('BNR', 1918) and Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic ('BSSR,' 1919-1991). This myth is perhaps unique among 'myths of statehood' in that it incorporates not one but *two* golden ages of arts and letters - the first associated with the Grand Duchy and the second with the BSSR and the so-called 'Belarusization' ('*Belarusizatsiya*') phenomenon of the mid-1920s.[41] As part of this myth, Belarus has no shortage of its own national heroes including Eufrasinnya Polackaya, Francishak Skaryna, Leu Sapeha, Kastus Kalinouski, Francishak Bahushevich, Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Maksim Bahdanovich, Anton and Ivan Luckievich, Vaclau Ivanouski, Vaclau Lastouski, Usievalad Ihnatouski, Uladzimir Dubouka, Uladzimir Zhylka, Vasil Bykau, Uladzimir Karatkievich and others.

Although it is often described in Romantic terms as an 'eternal' phenomenon which 'lives' in the language, traditions and culture of a people, the 'mythic-symbolic' character of the national 'historical memory' means that it is, in fact, subject to *degradation* and even *destruction*. In other words, a people can lose or be deprived of its 'historical memory.' Indeed, without question, one of the most harmful and debilitating legacies of Soviet-style communist regimes has been the *de facto* erasure of national 'historical memory' and its substitution with a 'Sovietized' identity myth. In a curious historical twist, the task of poets, intellectuals, and writers in the post-Soviet era is that which it was during the time of initial national 'awakenings' during the 19th century - *the painstaking*

're-awakening' or 'reconstruction' of altered or diminished 'historical memory.'
In Belarus and other post-communist states, this is to be done on the basis of a
substantially revised and reinterpreted national *mythmoteur* seeking to 'correct'
alleged Soviet distortions and fill in 'blank pages' in the republic's history created
by the communist regime. However, the case of Belarus is highly illustrative of the
enormous difficulties, conflicts, and struggles involved in 'returning the national
idea' to society. post-communist society. Owing, in particular, to the
deeply-embedded character of the former Soviet identity myth in the Belarusian
popular consciousness, this 'return of the national idea' has been especially
problematic in Belarus.

Stages in the Development of the 'National Idea'

As noted by other scholars interested in the phenomenon of 'national awakenings'
among the Slavic peoples of East-Central Europe, this process, which began
during the early years of the 19th century[42], can be seen to have traversed three
distinct but, at the same time, overlapping, phases. The first, "marked by a
somewhat nostalgic mood, generally consisted of a small group of scholarly
intellectuals collecting historical documents, folklore, and artifacts in the belief
that the individuality of their people would soon disappear with the onslaught of
imperial culture."[43] The second, or *cultural*, phase, "usually witnessed the
unexpected 'rebirth' of vernacular languages and their increasing use in literary
and educational activities."[44] Indeed, as Andersen writes, 19th century Europe
was "a golden age of vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists
and litterateurs."[45] The third, or *political*, stage "was marked by the growth of
nationally-based organizations and the formulation of nation-oriented demands
that implied, to a greater or lesser extent, the desire for self-rule."[46] This stage can

also be conceived as 'Stage C' of Miroslav Hroch's theoretical framework wherein a *mass national movement* emerges.[47] Belarus can be regarded as generally conforming to this three-stage model with two very significant qualifications.

First of all, in contrast to Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Czechs and other Slavic peoples of East-Central Europe, the initial 'spark' for Belarusian national 'awakening' (the first 'nostalgic' and, in significant measure, the second 'cultural' phase) came *from without*. As will be seen in chapter one, Belarusian writers themselves have noted that following the incorporation of the Belarusian territories into the Russian empire as a consequence of the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century, the Belarusian people lacked a nationally-conscious elite. Hence, as Vakar writes, if a Belarusian national 'awakening' was going to happen at all, it had necessarily to be inspired by scholars of other nationalities.[48] As will be elaborated in chapter one, Belarusian national writers themselves acknowledge that a crucial role in this process was played by Polish students ('The Secret Society of Philomaths') and Greek Catholic ('Uniate') clergy at the University of Vilna. This has been conceptualized by some Belarusian scholars as the 'unconscious' phase of Belarusian national 'revival' inasmuch as the Vilna scholars had no notion of themselves as 'Belarusian' in the national sense. On the contrary, they defined their identities as Lithuanian (*litviny*) meaning by this "citizens of the former Grand Duchy."[49] Moreover, as their political ideal was the restoration of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and, within it, the autonomy of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, they clearly did not foresee the possibility of a separate path of Belarusian national development. Nonetheless, this 'unconscious' Belarusian 'awakening' was vital as it laid (albeit *unintentionally*) the foundations for the 'conscious' Belarusian national *renaissance* to follow which began following the Polish Insurrection of 1863.

The 'unconscious' nature of the first two stages of the Belarusian national 'revival' is indeed an important qualification for it helps to account for the comparatively late emergence of a self-consciously Belarusian national movement. For example, whereas the first works designed "to prove that the Hungarian language was suitable for the very highest literary genre," appeared in 1772,[50] the first such Belarusian texts did not appear until the 1890s. The first Ukrainian language grammar was published in 1819,[51] the first Belarusian grammar not until a full century later. The Ukrainian 'national poet' Taras Shevchenko published his first volume in 1830 whereas the first truly 'Belarusian' poet, Francishak Bahushevich, did not publish his until 1894. The first systematic history of Czech literature appeared in 1792;[52] the first history of Belarusian literature by Maksim Harecki in 1921. On the political level, the first independent Bulgarian state came into existence in 1878;[53] the first modern independent Belarusian state (the BNR) only following the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1918 and survived but for a few turbulent months.

The second important qualification pertains to the fact that the Belarusian movement has yet truly to acquire a 'mass' character. At the turn of the 20th century, the Belarusian peasant masses, aware that they were different on an ethnographic level from both neighbouring Poles and Russians - defined themselves not as 'Belarusian' but simply as *tuteishi* (the 'locals').[54] The primary goal of the emergent Belarusian national movement at this time was to transform this pre-existing sense of local or regional identity into a clearly articulated national consciousness. However, as will be discussed in chapter one, owing primarily to the unfavorable circumstances in which it has historically been embedded, finding this sort of 'resonance' for the 'national idea' within the Belarusian masses has been an enduring dilemma for successive generations of Belarusian intellectuals. Indeed, owing largely to the legacy of 'Sovietization', this

continues to be the case today. This is not to conclude, however, that the citizens of Belarus today are devoid of any sense of national self-awareness or are incapable of distinguishing themselves from 'others' - most importantly, Russia.

The 'Synthesized' Character' of the 'National Idea'

The 'synthesized character' of the 'national idea' refers to the presence within the national tradition of various, and often seemingly contradictory, *political, cultural, social, religious and philosophical influences*. In the East-Central European context, owing to the geographical location of nations at the very crossroads or meeting points of 'Eastern' and 'Western' civilizations, this 'synthesized character' can be broadly conceptualized in terms of a 'blending' of the ideals of *Romanticism* and *Enlightenment*. Although the relative weight of these respective Romantic and Enlightenment influences may *fluctuate* considerably over time, the vitality of the 'national idea' depends on the basic 'synthesis' between them being maintained.

This blending means that although the classical distinction in the literature between 'Eastern' (ethno-cultural) and 'Western' ('civic-territorial' or 'political') nationalisms established by Hans Kohn and others remains generally valid, it should not be insisted upon too strenuously.[55] Indeed, as recent studies (including in the post-communist East-Central European context) have suggested, in reality most national movements - be they 'Western' or 'Eastern' - incorporate elements of both 'civic-territorial' and 'ethnic' models.[56] The Belarusian case is illustrative of this 'synthesis' of traditionally dichotomous 'Eastern' and 'Western' definitions of nationhood inasmuch as the 'national idea' has reflected simultaneously Romantic notions of ethno-cultural 'revival' (*adradzhenne*) coupled with democratic and civic ideals deriving from Enlightenment influences. Indeed, to a

greater or lesser extent, this attempted 'synthesis' has historically been a defining characteristic of all East-Central European 'national ideas.' For example, as Ivan L. Rudnytsky argues with reference to Ukraine: "The ethos and aesthetic sensibility of the Ukrainian people are rooted in the spiritual tradition of Eastern Christianity. But as the country was also, in its political and social structure, a part of the European world, the Ukrainians searched after a synthesis of East and West."[57] Contemporary Lithuanian writers also stress the importance of this Central European geographical location for the development of the Lithuanian 'national idea.'[58] However, as the Belarusian experience also demonstrates, the historical 'fate' or 'destiny' of these nations may be the *ultimate irreconcilibility of these dual 'Western' and 'Eastern' influences*. Indeed, as will be discussed in chapter four, during the early 1920s, the young Belarusian philosopher Ihnat Abdziralovich advanced the argument that the most that can be hoped for is a 'partial synthesis' whereby Belarus selects the 'best' (and correspondingly rejects the 'worst') of both civilizations. Although subsequent generations of Belarusian scholars have been perhaps more optimistic about the possibility of synthesizing 'West' and 'East', as will be seen especially in chapter five, this sort of reconciliation remains at the heart of the contemporary (post-Soviet) Belarusian identity crisis.

The 'synthesized character' of the 'national idea' thus also derives from the seeming paradox that although a reflection of underlying group consciousness, the 'national idea' is very much dependent for its success or realization on *'non-rational' factors*. In particular, the Romantic 'recollection' of the past is thus intended not only to 'rebuild' historical memory as the basis for the development of national self-awareness but evoke an *emotional response* on the part of group members. This is still best-conceived in terms of building a 'primordial' emotional tie to the nation as a symbol.[59] Indeed, it is this Romantic, emotional attachment

to the nation much more than any 'rational' commitment to democratic values which renders many individuals ready to sacrifice their lives in the name of the 'national idea.' Toward this end, typical of national 'awakenings' generally, the articulators of the Belarusian 'national idea' have consciously employed an avowedly 'non-scientific' and even *emotional* style of writing, invoking not only heroic names and dates from the past, but symbols and images of the nation including pre-Soviet national symbols linked to memories of Polack, the Grand Duchy and the BNR.

The 'Contested Character' of the 'National Idea'

Like all symbols, the 'national idea' has no inherent or 'given' meaning: rather, its significance is continually 'negotiated' and 're-negotiated', activity in which the *intelligentsia* - as the originators of the 'national idea' itself - play a dominant role. Nonetheless, these controversies reverberate through the national group as a whole. It must be stressed, however, that this 'negotiation process' does not assume consensus: on the contrary, the assumption is that conflict over the meaning of the 'national idea' is an ongoing element of group life. In other words, as Katherine Verdery has written in her reflections on post-communist national movements in Eastern Europe, individuals oriented towards the idea of the nation differ, often profoundly "in their intentions for it."[60] Understanding the 'national idea' thus means "a close inspection of the social tensions and struggles within which it has become a significant idiom. Various issues enter into these debates: contrasting ideas about authenticity, about the nation's true mission, about cultural patrimony or heritage, about national character and so forth."[61] In other words, the debates centre around the *meaning* of the constitutive myth ('myth-symbol complex' or *mythmoteur*) held to be at the very core of national identity. As

Richard Ashley writes, the meaning which accrues to identity thus "is an historically emergent and always contested product of multiple practices, multiple alien interpretations which struggle, clash, deconstruct and displace one another."[62] This dimension is crucial for this recurring concern "with cultural matters, symbols, values and issues of self-definition" can be seen as the principal point of distinction between nations and other forms of collective identity such as economic classes and interest groups who are mobilized primarily in the pursuit of material interests.[63]

A major theme underlying this text is the idea that the Belarusian 'national idea' has been defined by Belarusian actors themselves in differing and, at times, sharply contrasting ways with the consequence that, as will be seen especially in chapter five, there have been evident a number of competing (geo-) political 'vectors' or 'orientations' within the Belarusian national movement. However, these debates have also been joined over time by 'non-Belarusian' actors. This points once again to the importance of the 'structural' dimension to the 'national idea.'

The 'Structured Character' of the 'National Idea'

The 'national idea' is a 'structured' phenomenon on both the *micro-* and *macro-levels* of analysis. However, in speaking of structure, it is important to emphasize that what is at issue here is the *duality of structure* - meaning by this that structure inherently plays not simply a 'constraining' or 'limiting,' but also 'enabling' role.[64] As emphasized in the 'neo-institutionalist' literature which has emerged in recent years, structure plays a vital 'constitutive' role in the emergence and articulation of interests and identity.[65]

At the micro-level, the 'national idea' can be regarded as being shaped by *informal cultural-traditional practices*, or what Pierre Bourdieu has described as 'structural experiences' meaning "those experiences and practices that act to inculcate ideas, abilities, and emotions in society's members."[66] These include cultural-symbolic practices "from apprenticeship through simple familiarization," to "extreme transmission by precept and prescription" that produce and reproduce identity and attachment: the stories that are told, the objects that are revered, the history that is remembered, the activities that are engaged in (walking in parades, carrying banners or weapons, etc.), and any indefinite number of specific practices."[67] These experiences give rise to and sustain if not, as Verdery suggests, a sense of 'nation-ness' among group members, then at least one of basic ethnographical 'difference' or 'separate-ness' from others.[68] On the one hand, this pre-existing sense of ethnographic distinctiveness is indispensable to the emergence and development of the 'national idea' since, as Ronald Grigor-Suny succinctly puts it in his study of modern Armenian nationalism, the 'national idea' cannot emerge in "an ethnographical vacuum."[69] Bluntly stated, the *intelligentsia* has to have some 'raw ethnic material' with which to work.

On the other hand, however, these traditional cultural practices *limit* the possible range of action for the *intelligentsia* in their definition of the 'national idea.' To paraphrase Smith, while, as suggested above, 'nation-building' may indeed be an ongoing activity involving "ceaseless interpretations and re-interpretations," the 'national idea' must "'belong to', or cohere with, a particular traditional past and its peculiar flavor."[70] Nation-building activity thus "operates within a definite tradition."[71] Indeed, although much of the recent literature emphasizes the 'invented character' of tradition, as Geoffrey Hosking suggests, in fact, "traditions cannot be simply invented: they must have existed in some form in which they can be authenticated." They then have to be rediscovered

and synthesized in a form suitable for the contemporary world."[72] Hence, to quote Grigor-Suny once again, "elites, particularly intellectuals and political activists, construct the idea of the nation and its attributes; teachers, journalists and politicians carry it to the broader strata of the population; but common folk also shape the national tradition through their own ethnic traditions, their responses to the 'word from above'."[73] In a sense, the creation of the nation as an 'imagined community' depends on joining the 'national idea' as framed by the *intelligentsia* with the pre-existing (but largely inarticulate) sense of ethnographic 'separate-ness.' This relates, as discussed above, directly to the problematic of inculcating the 'national idea' in the masses (viz. 'mobilization') - "inviting" them into history as Nairn would have it.

Secondly, it is important to *take into account* the importance of 'external categorization' or 'definition' for understanding the emergence of national identity. To cite Grigor-Suny once again, the making of a nation involves not only "acts of self-realization" but "outside impositions as well."[74] However, as will be pointed out at various times throughout this text, the Belarusian case is important for illustrating how 'structuring' in the form of 'external categorization' can both *facilitate* and *impede* the development of the 'national idea.' Throughout the 19th century and into the early years of 20th, while recognizing Belarusians as possessing a distinct 'regional' identity, neither the more powerful Polish nor Russian ruling circles and intellectuals in their majority accepted the validity of any Belarusian claim to nationhood (political rights including autonomy and independence). Most educated Poles and Russians continued to regard the Belarusians as, in essence, a '(sub-) species' of their own nation. As Jan Zaprudnik aptly describes it, caught between these dual "Polish and Russian elements fighting for the soul of Belarus," the emergence of the Belarusian 'national idea' was a "slow" and "painful" process.[75] Recognizing the importance of 'external

categorization' also means an understanding of national identity as being defined *in opposition to* some significant 'other.'[76] This means that in large measure, defining a particular group's identity is to draw a *contrast* with a neighbouring national group - paradoxically then, national identity is often not so much a statement about who a group is than who it is *not*.[77] As has been noted elsewhere, Russia historically has been East-Central Europe's "constituting other," meaning by this that the nations of the region have defined their own identity largely *in opposition* to Russia.[78] Indeed, the Belarusian 'national idea,' with its emphasis on democratic ideals and Belarusian 'belongingness' to Europe appears as the historical *anti-thesis* to the 'Russian idea' with its alleged Byzantine traditions of *autocracy, imperialism* and *absolutism*. Whether this juxtaposition is entirely justified is a point of debate. Moreover, this is not to discount the enduring strength of 'Russpohilic' tendencies within Belarusian national thought itself. In the post-communist context, as will be discussed in chapter five, the success of 'nation-building' strategies in successor states is intimately linked to *the resolution of Russia's own acute post-Soviet identity crisis*. This is especially so in the case of Belarus and Ukraine which Russians have for centuries been taught constitute part of their historical patrimony from ancient times with the result that they have difficulty conceiving of their fellow Slavic republics as distinct and independent entities.

Thirdly, at the 'macro-level' of analysis, it is important to remember that 'national ideas' emerge and evolve in concrete social settings. Hence, the 'national idea' is shaped by such large-scale 'structural' phenomena as *revolution and war, geographical partition, modernization, and the nature of the political system*. As has been generally true of the Slavic peoples of East-Central Europe, all of these factors have been instrumental in shaping the content ('meaning') of the Belarusian 'national idea.' Once again, these macro-structural processes can either

'enabling' or 'restraining' as far as the development of the 'national idea'. On the one hand, the Russian revolutionary crises of 1905 and 1917 gave considerable impetus (at least initially) to the Belarusian 'national idea' as did (to a lesser degree) German occupation policy during both World Wars. On the other hand, the 1921 Treaty of Riga, which ended the three-year long Soviet-Polish war fought in large part for control of Belarus (and Lithuania), partitioned Belarus between West (Polish') and East ('Soviet"). The nation was now divided politically and economically with the consequence that the 'national idea' itself became 'fragmented' among what have already been described as sharply competing 'vectors' or 'orientations' within the national movement.

As was the case in neighbouring Lithuania and Ukraine, the rapid modernization of the Russian empire during the final decades of the 19th century helped spur the development of the middle-class urban *intelligentsia* from which the leaders of the Belarusian national movement emerged.[79] Soviet-style modernization begun under Stalin during the 1930s and pursued by his successors transformed Belarus into an overwhelmingly literate and urban society. During the 1970s, some Soviet academics were coming to similar conclusions as their Western counterparts; namely, that contrary to initial expectations, modernization did not attenuate ethnic and national identities but *accentuated* them. Hence, the USSR was witnessing the *growth* of ethnic and national self-awareness among its constituent peoples.[80] As will be discussed in chapter one, during the Brezhnev tenure, this led to a substantial scaling-back of official expectations concerning the 'drawing together' (*sblizhenie*) and eventual 'fusion' (*sliyanie*) of Soviet nations. However, the modernization of Belarusian society clearly undermined the position of the Belarusian language which, especially in urban centres, was supplanted by Russian.[81] As will be seen in chapter two, this had profound implications for

defining the contemporary Belarusian 'national idea'; namely, the 'de-coupling' of language and national identity in contemporary Belarus.

With respect to the nature of the political system, as will be seen in chapter one, although they are highly critical (with reason) of the extent to which the Soviet regime destroyed Belarusian 'historical memory,' even some contemporary Belarusian writers acknowledge that the *institutionalization of nationality* through the Soviet federal system created in 1922 contributed to the crystallization of *a territorial sense* of Belarusian national identity, thereby preparing (in a dialectical sense) the grounds for future independence.[82] While the Soviet system thus can be regarded as having played a 'constitutive' or 'enabling' role which literally led to the emergence of new national identities where they had previously been weak or non-existent,[83] other aspects of the Soviet legacy weigh heavily on the future of the 'nation-building' process in the successor states).

Symptomatic of the thoroughgoing destruction of 'historical memory' already noted, it can be argued that, far from being a failed experiment in communist social engineering the attempt to create the 'new Soviet person' (*sovetskii chelovek - Homo sovieticus*), in fact, succeeded in many respects. The collapse of the USSR has produced a profound trauma for people who can no longer define their identity as 'Soviet.' Hence, a nostalgic longing for the former system "becomes an influential factor in shaping the process of rethinking post-Soviet identities."[84] As will also be discussed in chapter one, this is perhaps nowhere more the case than in Belarus. Equally problematic for the future of post-Soviet 'nation-building' is the *totalitarian* aspect of the Soviet legacy epitomized by the total destruction of civil society and any pre-existing democratic traditions of tolerance and compromise. The result is a discernible tendency among post-Soviet states towards the acute polarization of political life, including the exacerbation of inherent conflicts over historical experience and the future of the 'national idea.'

As will be seen at various points throughout this text (chapters one and five especially) this acute polarization has been clearly evident in Belarus.

Given these problems, the 'structuring' or 'constitutive' role of the *state* in the post-communist 'nation-building' process will be crucial. Herein lies perhaps the singlemost important reason for the comparative lag in this process in Belarus by reference not only to Poland and the Baltic states but even Ukraine. As Catherine Wanner notes, "new historical myths and a revised historiography encapsulated in historical representations are now the cornerstone of the new Ukrainian state's efforts to expand a sense of nation based on common historical experiences among an otherwise highly diverse and disenfranchised population."[85] On the contrary, except for the brief period 1992-1994 under the leadership of Stanislau Shushkievich, the Belarusian state, especially since the election of Alyaksandr Lukashenka as President in July 1994, has not only failed to play this vital 'integrative' role, but done everything in its power to deny the return of the 'national idea' to Belarusian society and perpetuate old Soviet identity myths symbols and stereotypes. Far from playing a leading role in 'constituting' a new post-Soviet national identity, the Belarusian state has, in fact, *obstructed* and *constrained* this process. This makes the future realization of the 'national idea' in Belarus dependent on regime *transformation* or *transition*.

Notes

[1] Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, 1977), p. 5.
[2] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 164-166. In large part, the debate has revolved around the question of whether nations are purely *modern* phenomena or, as Smith himself argues, are founded upon 'pre-modern' ethnic cores.
[3] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 2: Mythical Thought* (New Haven 1955) and *An Essay on Man* (New Haven, 1944).

[4] As Jerzy Borzecki. "The Union of Lublin as a Factor in the Emergence of Ukrainian National Consciousness," *The Polish Review*, No. 1, 1996, p. 38, points out, it is important to note that among the peoples of East-Central Europe, national consciousness is a relatively recent phenomenon. Prior to the 19th century, *religion* and *estate* (gentry, artisan, peasantry, etc.) were the most important modes of identity.

[5] Dan Smith, "Reconciling Identities in Conflict," in Richard Caplan & John Feffer, eds., *Europe's New Nationalisms* (Oxford, 1996), p. 200, notes that "linguistic unity is neither a sufficient nor even necessary condition of nationhood." As Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 37 has written, "memory of a *common* historical past has proven to be the most compelling factor in promoting the movements of national self-determination that have swept Europe in the course of the last hundred years." The evolving relationship between language and national identity in Belarus will be the topic of chapter two.

[6] Benedict Andersen, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991).

[7] Seton-Watson, p. 5. See also Andersen, p. 6.

[8] Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Washington, 1991), pp. 48-50; Borzecki, p. 38.

[9] Ashutosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety," *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No. 5, 1993, p. 230.

[10] As Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p. 1, wrote: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."

[11] For example, the writer Conor Cruise O'Brien, *God's Land: Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: 1988), p. 80 argues for the 'incommensurability' of various nationalist paradigms: "Any nationalism inherently finds it hard to understand any other nationalism or even to want to understand it." The American journalist William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Furies of Nationalism* (New York: 1993) also very much emphasizes the irrationality and destructiveness of nationalism by definition.

[12] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland Volume II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford, 1981), p. 5.

[13] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London, 1997), p. xxiv.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] L. Ya. Haranin, *Naciyanalnaya ideya u belaruskai litaratury pachatku XX stahoddzya* (Minsk, 1996), p. 58.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1988), p. 223.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

[21] Nairn, p. 340.

[22] Whereas an indigenous Ukrainian *intelligentsia* began to emerge at the University of Kharkiv in the early years of the 19th century, as Belarusian writers themselves acknowledge, a self-conscious Belarusian *intelligentsia* started to crystallize only at the turn of the 20th century. See, for example, 'A. Navini' (Anton Luckievich), "Rolya moladzi u pachatkach adradzhenskaho ruchu," *Rodnyi honi*, No. 5, July-August 1927, p. 21; A. Luckievich, *Za dvadcac pyac hadou* (Minsk, 1991), p. 8. For a good political biography of Anton Luckievich, see *Holas radzymi*, March 10-April 7, 1994. For an excellent Polish-language biography of Ivanouski, see Jerzy Turonek, *Waclaw Iwanowski i odrodzenie Bialorusi* (Warsaw, 1992).

[23] John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, 1982).

[24] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 15

[25] More will be written later in this text about Konan as a defender (even during the Soviet period) of the Belarusian 'national idea.' See also Joseph Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico's 'New Science'* (London, 1992).

[26] Milton Scarborough, *Myth and Modernity* (Albany, 1994), p. 4.

[27] Langdon Gilkey, *Religion and the Scientific Future: Reflections on Myth, Science and Technology* (New York, 1970), p. 66.

[28] Suzanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Rite and Reason* (New York, 1946), p. 143.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Michael M. J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 196.

[31] Tom Nairn, "The Modern Janus," *New Left Review*, No. 94, November-December 1975, pp. 3-29.

[32] Smith, pp. 23-24.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[39] Joel Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, an Interpretation, an Integration* (Englewood Cliffs, 1985), p. 126.

[40] Smith, p.

[41] This characterization of the 1920s and *Belarusizatsiya* as a 'Golden Age' of Belarusian language and culture was made previously by Ivan S. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule 1917-1957* (Lexington, 1972), p. 85.

[42] Peter Brock, *Folk Cultures and Little Peoples: Aspects of National Awakening in East Central Europe* (New York, 1992).

[43] Subtelny, p. 222.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

[45] Andersen, p. 71.

[46] Subtelny, p. 223.

[47] Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (Cambridge, 1985).

[48] Vakar, p. 75.

[49] Bazyli Bialokozowicz, "U zrodel ksztaltowania sie nowozytnej bialoruskiej swiadomosci narodowej," *Bialoruskie zeszyty historyczne*, 2(4), 1995, p. 45; A. Latyshonak, "Narodzyni belaruskai naciyanalnai idei," *Spadchyna*, No. 1, 1992, pp. 9-14.

[50] Paul Ignotus, *Hungary* (New York, 1972), p. 44.

[51] Andersen, p. 74.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] As I discovered myself when I accompanied an ethnographic expedition to the ethnically Belarusian Bialystok region of eastern Poland during the fall of 1996, this *tuteishi* identity still exists. Although speaking a dialect more or less identifiable as Belarusian (with some notable Ukrainian influences), the people living in several small villages we visited region defined themselves simply as 'the locals' who spoke 'our language' (in Polish, 'po swoemu'). Yet, they clearly felt themselves to be 'different' from Poles, Russians and Ukrainians.

[55] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944). In the first chapter of his *Nations and States*, Seton-Watson distinguishes between "old" nations such as England, France, Poland, Hungary and Russia and "new" nations which included many of the Slavs of East-Central Europe (Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Croats and Serbs). See also John Plamenatz, "Two Types of Nationalism," in E. Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (London, 1976).

[56] For example, Louis Vos, "Nationalism, Democracy and the Belgian State," in Caplan and Feffer, eds., p. 87, argues that the "analysis of the process of nation formation makes clear that this dual character - civic versus ethnic - is a part of every national experience irrespective of the route followed." As Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 58, had argued previously, the distinction between 'Eastern' and 'Western' nationalisms is something of "a Western mirage, reality as wish" since "modern civic nationalisms have not in practice really transcended ethnicity or ethnic sentiments ... closer examination reveals the ethnic core of civic nations, in practice, even in immigrant societies with their early pioneering and dominant (English or Spanish) culture in America, Australia or Argentina, a culture that provided the myths and language of the would-be nation."

[57] Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "Ukraine: Between East and West," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, (Edmonton, 1987) p. 8.

[58] Jokubas Minkevicius, "Co to jest Litewskosc," *Lithuania*, 3-4 (24-25), 1997, pp. 92-103. As with the Belarusian and Ukrainian, the modern Lithuanian 'national idea' can thus be seen as the attempt to effect some sort of specifically Lithuanian 'synthesis' of 'West' and 'East.'

[59] Having come under intense scrutiny from the likes of Jack David Eller and Reed Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism: The Demystification of Ethnic

Attachments," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 16, April 1993, No. 2, pp. 183-202, the concept of 'primordialism' has been decidedly out of vogue in recent years. This owes, in large part, to the fact that although the original formulators of the concept, Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties," *British Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1957), pp. 113-145 and Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity* (New York, 1963), did *not* define primordial identities as somehow 'natural' or 'given,' subsequent authors identifying themselves as 'primordialists,' including Andrew Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States* (New York, 1974) and Harold Isaacs, *The Idols of the Tribe* (New York, 1975), have very much stressed the 'given-ness', or in the case of Joshua Fishman, "Social Theory and Ethnography: Language and Ethnicity in Eastern Europe," in Peter Sugar, ed., *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (Santa Barbara, 1980) and especially Pierre van den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, No. 4, 1978, pp. 401-411, *physiological* character of 'primordial' identities. However, noting that, according to Shils and Geertz, "what is striking about 'primordial identities' - and the source of their ineffable character - is that they take on or acquire a 'feeling' of 'naturalness' andor 'given-ness' for group participants," Smith, "The Problem of National Identity: Ancient, Medieval and Modern," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, July 1994, p. 376, has striven to 'rehabilitate' the concept by advancing the notion of "participants' primordialism" which emphasizes the "socially-constructed" character of the 'primordial' tie. In this carefully proscribed sense, 'primordialism' still has something useful to contribute to discussions of ethnicity and nationalism.

[60] Katherine Verdery, "Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'" *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No. 3, Summer, 1993, p. 41. See also the same author's "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-Socialist Romania," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2, Summer, pp. 179-203.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Richard Ashley, "The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Towards a Critical Social Theory of International Politics," *Alternatives*, No. 4, 1987, pp. 403-404. In the post-communist context, apart from the work of Verdery cited above, this sort of *relational approach* which regards identity as the outcome of ongoing debate can be seen in: Charles King, "Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2, Summer 1994, pp. 345-368; Michael Urban, "The Politics of Identity in Russia's Post-Communist Transition: The Nation Divided Against Itself," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4, Fall 1994, pp. 734-765.

[63] As Shlomo Deshen, "Political Ethnicity and Cultural Ethnicity in Israel during the 1960s," in Abner Cohen, ed., *Urban Ethnicity* (London, 1974), p. 284 writes, in addition to ongoing struggles for wealth, resources, power, status and prestige, human beings also struggle "to solve Weberian 'problems of meaning,' questions of life and death, generation and stagnation."

[64] Anthony Giddens, *The Construction of Society: Outlines of a Theory of Structuration*

(Cambridge, 1984).

65 For example, Paul J. Di Maggio and Walter Powell, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago, 1991).

66 Eller and Coughlan, *op. cit.*, referring to Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977).

67 *Ibid.*

68 Verdery, "Whither Nationalism ...," p. 41.

69 Ronald Grigor-Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, 1993), p. 5.

70 Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 178.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

72 Hosking, p. xxiii.

73 Grigor-Suny, p. 5.

74 Grigor-Suny, p. ix.

75 Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), pp. 45-46. The same can be said about the 19th-century Ukrainian idea which found itself 'squeezed' between not only competing Polish and Russian but *Austro-Hungarian* and Russian pressures.

76 This is part and parcel once again of understanding identity in *relational* terms.

77 This can be seen even in the Canadian context. Reduced to its simplest terms, in many instances, it seems that to be Canadian is *'not to be American.'*

78 Iver Neumann, "Russia as Central Europe's Constituting Other," *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 7, No. 2, Spring, 1993, pp. 349-369.

79 Subtelny, pp.271-274; Vardys and Sedaitis, pp. 18-19. According to Olga Crisp, *Studies in the Russian Economy Before 1914* (London, 1976), p. 111, from the late 1880s to the outbreak of World War I, Russian economic growth averaged 5.72% annually. While it is generally true that the level of industrial development did not equal that of Poland, Ukraine or the Baltic region, the Tsarist state did devote substantial resources to the construction in Belarus of an extensive railway network. Moreover, while the overall ratio of Belarusian urban to rural populations remained the same, the actual number of city dwellers nearly doubled between 1863 and 1897. As was the case across the empire, industrialization processes in Belarus also gave rise to a new social category - the *proletariat* - of who there were some 3.6 million by the turn of the century. See Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), pp. 60-61.

80 See, for example, Yu. V. Bromlei, "Etnografiya na sovremennom etape," *Kommunist*, No. 16, November 1974, pp. 62-73 and "K voprosu ob osobennostyakh etnograficheskovo izucheniya sovremennosti," *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, No. 1, January-February 1977, pp. 3-18.

81 The 'dual-sided' character of the Soviet modernization process and its effects on the development of Belarusian national consciousness (especially the question of language) is a major theme developed most fruitfully by David Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe* (Edmonton, 1996).

82 Valery Tishkov, "Post-Soviet Nationalism," in Caplan and Feffer, eds., pp. 24-41; Brubaker, pp. 23-54.

[83] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "The Dialectics of Nationalism in the USSR," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXIII, 1974, pp. 1-22, defined this as the "new nationalism." In the Western literature, this process of creating new ethno-national identities where they had not existed before in large part through the recognition of group cultural and political rights (cited as a major factor in the 'ethnic revival' witnessed in developed industrial states over the past three decades) was described as 'ethnogenesis' or 'ethnicization.' See, for example, Jonathan D. Sarna, "From Immigrants to Ethnics: Toward a New Theory of Ethnicization," *Ethnicity*, Vol. 5, 1978, pp. 370-378 and Eugene E. Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis* (New Delhi, 1989).

[84] Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, 1998), p. 21.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. xxviv.

Chapter I
The Belarusian National *Mythmoteur* in Historical Context

As Orest Subtelny has written in reference to Ukraine, the study of national history played a crucial role in the growth of national consciousness in East-Central Europe during the 19th century. In order to achieve a new sense of community, "it was necessary for a people to believe that it had shared a common fate. Moreover, this shared historical experience should be perceived as a glorious one that instilled in individuals a sense of pride and encouraged them to identify with their nation."[1] Hence, East-Central European national 'awakeners,' including Belarusian, were greatly inspired by philosophical Romanticism which emphasized the value of looking upon the past with *admiration* and *sympathy*. As with so much of Belarusian national thought, this Romantic appreciation of history owes to the 'unconscious' origins of the 'national idea' among Polish students and Uniate professors at the University of Vilna during the early years of the 19th century and the time of 'cultural awakening' among the Slavic peoples of East-Central Europe.

Set within a broader historical context, this chapter provides an interpretation of the 'constitutive myths' (*mythmoteur*) at the core of the Belarusian 'national idea.' The first of these is the 'myth of ethnic origins' or, as defined in the introduction, 'imputed descent'. The second is a Belarusian political myth, the original formulator of which was Vaclau Lastouski, unquestionably one of the most important figures in the Belarusian national tradition.[2] His *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* ('A Short History of Belarus'), published in 1910, laid the foundations of modern Belarusian historiography.[3] Apart from this seminal text, Lastouski wrote short stories and poetry much of which drew as well on themes

related to Belarus' 'legendary' past.[4] Together with the work of Lastouski, the historian Usievalad Ihnatouski, writing during the early 1920s, can be regarded as an original 'co-architect' of the Belarusian national *mythmoteur*. In addition to the realm of historiography, this chapter also examines the national *mythmoteur* as it has appeared in Belarusian literature since its inception at the turn of the 20th century.

Like all national *mythmoteurs*, the Belarusian is undoubtedly not literally 'true.' Indeed, as will be pointed out, by reference to reliable 'non-Belarusian' historical sources, a number of arguments made by Belarusian scholars beginning with Lastouski and Ihnatouski are highly questionable. Moreover, once again like national *mythmoteurs* in general, the Belarusian has been subject to substantial re-interpretation over time by successive generations of Belarusian intellectuals some of whom have taken serious issue with certain of Lastouski's original postulates. Hence, a number of important *internal tensions* emerge within the Belarusian 'idea' itself. At the same time, attention will be drawn to the fact that key elements of the Belarusian *mythmoteur* have been 'contested' by non-Belarusian actors (including Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian). However, the principal antagonist of the Belarusian national *mythmoteur* was *Soviet historiography* which denied its very essence. Indeed, beginning in the 1930s, the historical works of Lastouski, Ihnatouski (among others) were banned. An alternative 'identity myth' was created by Soviet authorities linking together intimately the historical fate of all three Eastern Slavic peoples - Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians - and emphasizing the 'heroic sacrifices' of the unified 'Soviet people' during World War II.

Although, as will be seen, during the post-war period nationally-minded Belarusian writers and poets attempted to resist the erosion of Belarusian 'historical memory' as a consequence of Sovietization, the final section of the

chapter examines the acute crisis of 'historical memory' in Belarus today. This takes the form of a widespread 'national nihilism' nowhere more evident than in the person of current President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Defending essentially the themes and values of the former Soviet identity myth, Lukashenka has steadfastly opposed the effort begun in the late 1980s to return the 'national idea' to society as the basis for creating a new post-Soviet identity.

The Myth of Ethnic Origins: The 'Pure Slavic Stock' and 'Baltic-substratum' Theories

The matter of Belarusian ethnic origins has been the subject of ongoing debate among Belarusian, Polish, Russian and other foreign scholars for more than a century. Within Belarusian national thought, one can identify two basic theories of Belarusian ethnic origins - what have been defined elsewhere as the 'pure Slavic stock' and 'Baltic-substratum' theories respectively.[5] The controversy over Belarusian ethnic origins within Belarus itself continues today and is of enormous *political* significance.

The 'Pure Slavic Stock' Theory

Following the abortive Polish rebellion of 1863 (to be discussed further below and in chapter four), the Belarusian countryside was literally "flooded" by Polish and Russian ethnographers, linguists and other specialists researching the cultural and linguistic traditions of the native population. The main conclusion of these studies was that the Belarusians indeed possessed a distinct 'regional' or 'provincial' identity but that this was essentially a sub-species of Polish or Russian (depending on the nationality of the writer).[6] Although himself relying largely on these

materials, Lastouski argues in *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* that the Belarusians are neither Polish nor Russian but a culturally and linguistically distinct *ethnos* which formed on the basis of a 'merger' in ancient historical times between the Kryvichi, Drihavichi and Radzimichi tribes.[7] During the 1920s, the historian Usievalad Ihnatouski wrote in his *Karotkii narys historii Belarusi* ('A Short Outline of Belarusian History') that the Belarusians are the 'purest' of Eastern Slavic peoples who, thanks above all to the Western geographical location of their ancestral homelands, "did not mix with peoples of another race."[8] This was not true of the Russians and Ukrainians both of whose homelands were overrun by the Turkic-Mongols. On the other hand, according to Ihnatouski, notwithstanding centuries of close proximity, the influence of "Lithuanian and Polish blood" on the development of the Belarusian *ethnos* was minor at best. In the case of the latter, it was non-existent since Poles in Belarus historically were of a much higher social standing. Those Belarusians who during medieval times accepted Polish culture effectively themselves became Poles, thereby abandoning their own people. Hence, of the three Eastern-Slavic peoples, only the Belarusians were able to maintain the purity of their original ethnic type.

The 'pure Slavic stock' theory has been criticized by some Western scholars, including Nicholas Vakar, for having underlying racialist undertones in its emphasis on the 'purity' of the original Belarusian ethnic stock.[9] Indeed, as will be elaborated in chapter three, during the Nazi occupation of Belarus (1941-1944), a large amount of material was published by Belarusian Fascists on the 'pure' ethnic origins of the Belarusians which took on clearly xenophobic tones. However, as will also be noted in this same chapter, owing to deeply-engrained traditions of *tolerance* and *respect* for other peoples, Belarusian nationalism has historically *not* been of an integral 'ethnic' character.

The 'Baltic substratum' Thesis

The origins of this theory can be traced to the work of Russian linguists during the 1890s, most notably P. Golubovsky, who pointed to the curious fact that while descendants of the Kryvichi inhabiting the middle Volga region spoke Russian, those living along the west Dvina and middle Dnieper Rivers spoke Belarusian. In his view, the only possible explanation for this was that two sections of the Kryvichi "fell in pre-historic times under a different ethnic influence."[10] Building on Golubovsky's work, A. Kochubinski published findings in 1897 according to which the names of Belarusian towns and villages were Baltic in origin. This led him to conclude that the Belarusians were likely an ethnic mix of "two Arian neighbors" [viz. Balts and Slavs]."[11] The work of the linguists later received support from archeologists including A. Spitsyn who reported in 1899 that there was a clear connection between artifacts found in Kryvichian burial mounds and those located in Lithuanian burial sites dating from the eighth and ninth centuries.[12]

During the 1920s, a variant of the "Baltic-substratum" theory arose which drew its inspiration from the mythical "cult of Belbog," an ancient Slavic deity whom, according to the research of the nineteenth-century Russian scholar Makarov, was the likely source of the adjective *belyi* ('white') in the name *Belaya Rus*. As noted by Vakar, impressed by what struck them as the apparent similarity between 'Belbog' of Slavic and 'Baldag' of Teutonic mythology, these writers suggested that "the Belorussians might be really Balts and not Slavs at all; Belbog - White God; Baldag - White Day; Balts - the Whites; Mare Balticum - White Sea; Belorussians - White Russians - Baltic Russians."[13] Vakar correctly observes that the logic here is fairly simple since "if Belorussia and the Baltic are called 'white' for the same reason, albeit in different languages, they must belong together.

Mythology and linguistics do not always yield to political purposes."[14] Although this attempt to separate ethnically the Belarusians from the rest of Slavdom fell into disrepute for a period of years, it was revived after World War II by Belarusian émigrés living in the American Zone of the newly divided Germany. A 1948 editorial published in the Berlin periodical *Backaushchyna* ('The Motherland') concedes that the Belarusian psychological make-up - in both the positive and negative sense - borrows significantly from the Slavs but reminds its readers not to close their eyes to the fact that "the most valuable characteristics of our national psychology are of Baltic origins, such as general reliability, steadiness, tenacity, dynamism, strong resistance to pressure, mental reserves, and so on." [15] Hence, the underlying message to fellow Belarusians was that "[w]e must stress our Baltism not only our Slavism."[16] The editorial ends with a call to create a new 'Federation of Baltic Peoples' which would include Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark."[17] As Vakar notes, in political terms this amounted to a proposal for *severing* Belarus from the Slavic world altogether.[18]

During the 1960s, the Moscow-based academic V. V. Sedov advanced a new version of the 'Baltic-substratum' theory which parallels closely that of Golubovsky and Kochubinski in arguing that the ancestral Belarusian territories were originally inhabited by Balts well before any Slavs moved into the area.[19] According to Sedov, the process of Slavs beginning to settle in these territories was gradual and largely devoid of conflict. By the send of the first millenium AD, processes of assimilation were so advanced that only small groups of Balts continued to exist as "islets" within the now much larger Slavic population. Over the course of further time, facilitated especially by linguistic similarities, the aboriginal Balts were completely absorbed into the Slavic groups. Thus, Sedov concluded that "[t]he ancestors of the Belorussians are to an equal degree both the

newly-arrived bearers of the Slavic tongue, who settled in the Upper Dnieper and Upper Dvina Rivers during the second half of the first millenium AD and the indigenous population which had lived there for about two millennia and who spoke dialects of the Baltic linguistic group."[20] However, Sedov's theory was disputed by other Soviet specialists during the 1960s and 1970s.

Soviet Historiography and the Concept of an "Ancient Rusian Narodnost'"

For example, M. M. Grinblat devotes an entire chapter in his book on the Belarusian ethnogenesis to the role played by Lithuanians and "other nationalities" in this process. He acknowledges that it is indeed true that "a part of the neighboring Lithuanian population was involved in the Belorussian ethnogenetic process: Lithuanian tribal elements who were undergoing Slavicization even before the formation of the ancient Rusian people and also during the period of its development, as well as Lithuanians who were Belorussianized."[21] Grinblat insists, however, that acknowledging this Lithuanian element does not in any way substantiate arguments in favor of the 'Baltic-substratum' and he cites Sedov for particular criticism, characterizing his views as being "without sufficient foundation."[22] Official displeasure with the 'Baltic-substratum' thesis was most dramatically exemplified by the last-minute cancellation of a planned 1972 conference in Minsk on the subject of Belarusian ethnic origins at which Sedov was to present his arguments.[23]

Beginning in the 1930s, accentuating the concept of an "ancient Rusian people" (*drevnerusskaya narodnost'*) first elaborated by Tsarist scholars during the 19th century, Soviet historiography thus reflected a curious merger of 'pan-Slavism' and Marxism-Leninism.[24] Undergirded by methodological assumptions concerning history as the struggle of economic classes which progresses through a

number of distinct phases, the origins of the 'ancient Rusian people' are accounted for in terms of "the disintegration of the primitive community structure" and the development of feudal relations during the fourth and fifth centuries between the various Eastern Slavic tribes. Evidence is cited from a number of ancient chronicles to the effect that these groups inhabited an area stretching from to the east from the Vistula River and led "a sedentary life." In the fourth century, a "great union" of Eastern Slavic tribes - Dregovichi, Radomichi, and Kryvichi - is said to have commenced, a process which continued into the sixth century.[25] According to Grinblat, the Dregovichi constituted the "predominant element" in what is described as this "ethnic basis" of the Belarusian people. With the breakdown between the fifth and ninth centuries of "patrimonial-tribal relations," the "ancient Rusian people" emerged. During this time, "on the basis of the development of productive forces, new feudal relations, the appearance of cities, and the expansion of trade relations, previous tribal particularities began to disappear."[26] Although there remained "survivals" of previous tribal cultural, linguistic, cultural and social patterns and practices, these did not obstruct the process of consolidation by the Eastern Slavs which led to the emergence of "an ethnic and linguistic community" the basis for which was the fusion of earlier tribal dialects into a single Eastern-Slavic language "which came to be called Rusian."[27] In the continuing course of time, formal tribal names gradually lost their significance as ethnic designations and acquired new exclusively territorial meanings. As the account continues, the high degree of linguistic and cultural unity achieved by the Eastern Slavs during this period is attested to by these geographical names and it is emphasized in particular that "many of the ancient geographical designations on the territory of Belorussia are identical to the ancient geographical names in other parts of Rus (Novgorod, Turov, Gorodok, Knyazitsi, Sula, Uzmen, Lukoml, and many others."[28] It is furthermore asserted that by the

9th century, the Eastern Slavs had achieved an unusually high degree of cultural, artistic, and economic development.[29]

The "ancient Rusian people" continued to exist as an entity unified on the basis of a single language, common territory and "elements of economic and cultural community" into the 13th century when from it began to emerge "three fraternal peoples [*narodnosti*] - the Great Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians."[30] This process of differentiation is attributed to, in the first instance, the "breakdown" of the feudal system in the course of which local political and economic centres began to develop in individual Rusian principalities. This, in turn, gave new impetus to those particular features of local languages, cultures and ways of life which had survived, in a dialectical sense, within the linguistic and cultural community of the ancient Rusian *narodnost'*. Initiated by these transformations in the underlying socio-economic structure, the process of differentiation was accelerated when, at the end of the thirteenth century, north-eastern and a significant part of south-western Rus fell to the invading Tatars while the western Rusian lands were captured by the Lithuanians. So it happened that "a part of the ancient Rusian people" - specifically that which populated the Belarusian territories - "was torn away [*otvorannoi*] from the rest of Rus." As Grinblat writes, "the territory upon which the Belorussian people formed was, in the main, determined by the borders of Grand Duchy of Lithuania" within which, on the basis of expanding economic, social and cultural ties, the Slavic peoples populating the former West Rusian territories underwent a process of "drawing together" [*sblizhenie*].[31] The implication of the argument was clear; had it not been for the "tearing away" of the Belarusian territories and their incorporation into the Lithuanian Grand Duchy, a separate Belarusian *ethnos* would likely never have evolved. Hence, although it is true that Soviet historiography did *not* deny the ethnic distinctiveness of the Belarusians (and Ukrainians), it did seek to

minimize their differences from the Great Russians, thereby justifying implicitly their future assimilation into the Russian nation.[32]

The Re-Emergence of the 'Baltic-substratum' Thesis

As it appears in the writings of contemporary Belarusian intellectuals, the essence of the Baltic 'sub-stratum' theory is the claim that prior to their colonization by Eastern Slavic tribes, the ancient Belarusian territories are said to have been populated by Balts. Although there is some disagreement as to whether relations between the indigenous population and the newly-arriving Slavs evolved peacefully, Belarusian national scholars concur that at some point a process of ethnic merger between the two groups began which lasted for at least several centuries. This process of consolidation is said to have been most pronounced in the area of the Polack and Smolensk principalities inhabited by the proto-Belarusian Krivichi tribe. The Drehavichi and Radzimichi tribes were later 'naturally' drawn into the original 'Baltic-Krivichi' union within the framework of what some scholars describe as a three-stage process. It is on the basis of this 'fusion' that the identifiable outlines of the Belarusian *ethnos* began to emerge in the opinion of some scholars as early as the VI-VII centuries.[33] Others, however, largely concur with Soviet historiography that a recognizable Belarusian *ethnos* did not emerge until perhaps as late as the 14th-15th centuries.[34]

While some Belarusian writers, citing archeological evidence as well as linguistic influences, very much emphasize the Baltic factor in the Belarusian ethnogenetic process, the general view seems to be that of the eminent historian Mikola Jermalovich who argues that, as proven by Sedov, while indisputably present and significant, the Baltic element should not be overrated. In the process of ethnic merger, which began as one of mutual 'Baltic-Slavic' assimilation, the

Slavic component ultimately prevailed. Hence, the Belarusians are a Slavic people, which, in the process of its formation, absorbed a 'Baltic substratum.'[35] It is the presence of this Baltic influence which radically distinguishes Belarusians from their fellow Eastern Slavs - Ukrainians and Great Russians - who absorbed respectively 'Iranian' and 'Urgo-Finnish' substrata.[36] The political implications of the "Baltic substratum" thesis have always been evident. The assertion of Belarusian ethnic distinctiveness from the Great Russians supports the demand for *independence* from the Russian state.

The Belarusian Political 'Myth of Statehood': From Polack to *Respublika Belarus*

The first attempt at creating a distinctly Belarusian national political myth occurred during the *Nasha Niva* period of Belarusian national renaissance (1906-1915) - named for the newspaper which functioned as the vehicle of the nascent Belarusian movement which, as will be discussed further below, emerged during the early years of the 20th century.[37] The originator of the Belarusian "myth of statehood" was Lastouski whose *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* can be regarded as a prototypical example of historiographical "myth" in the sense defined in the introduction to this dissertation. As Lastouski makes clear in the foreword to the book, his intent was not to produce a "scientific work" but rather, having collected materials from Polish, Russian and Ukrainian sources, recount the major events of Belarusian history in such a way as to make them "come alive."[38] Describing history as "the foundation upon which the life of a people is built," Lastouski dedicated his work to 'the young sons of Belarus in the hope that they "might become acquainted with the history of their native land in their own language."[39] As the contemporary Belarusian academic Anatol Hrickievich notes

in his commentary on the book, through this Romantic return to the past, Lastouski sought to show Belarusians that they were not simply the objects of history dependent on others but the *subjects* of history which they themselves created.[40]

Polack: The First Belarusian 'Protostate'

The Belarusian national "myth of statehood" traces the nation's political history back more than a millenium to the time of Kievan Rus - specifically, the ancient principality of Polack (Polotsk) situated in what is today north-eastern Belarus. The exact nature of the history of the ancient Eastern Slavic principalities remains a source of some controversy. In his history of Ukraine, P. R. Magosci describes Polack as having been a "satellite" of Kievan Rus.[41] For its part, together with classifying ethnically the Belarusians' Krivichian ancestors as part of the 'ancient Rusian *narodnost*,' Soviet historiography argued that Polack was an integral part of an 'ancient Rusian state' (*gosudarstvo*)."[42] However, the Belarusian national version of this early historical period is rather different.

A fundamental feature of the Belarusian "national myth" since Lastouski has been claim that the essence of early Polatian political history was *the ongoing struggle of Polack to win and maintain its political independence from Kievan Rus*. Although at least in some accounts it is allowed that Kiev succeeded in subjugating Polack briefly, during the 10th-12th centuries under the courageous leadership of Prince Uzyaslau, the Krivichi are said to have won back their liberty. Thanks to Uzyaslau's wise and benevolent leadership, the first half of the 11th century is described as a time of Polatian internal consolidation even in the context of continuing Kievan attempts to once again subjugate the principality.[43] The most important symbol of this early Belarusian independence was the St. Sofia Cathedral in Polack which was completed no later than the year 1066.[44]

Belarusian writers emphasize that this consolidation of Polatian statehood coincided with the collapse of the "ancient Kievan state" which, directly contradicting Soviet historians, is said to have never been more than a loose conglomeration of principalities in any event.[45] Seeking to substantiate the modern Belarusian claim for "belongingness to Europe," contemporary writers make a stronger case for the 'Westward orientation' of Polack and its development of extensive trade and cultural ties with its Hanseatic neighbours.[46]

In addition to the historical struggle of Polack for independence from Kievan Rus, Belarusian writers have unfailingly emphasized the *democratic principles* of Polatian social and political organization based on a popular assembly known as the *veche* which functioned as a check on the powers of the *elected* prince.[47] In his Marxist, class-based re-interpretation of Lastouski's original myth published originally in the BSSR during the 1920s, Usievalad Ihnatouski argues that at one point Polack became a republic.[48] Belarusian writers argue that the *veche* tradition in Polack lasted considerably longer than in neighbouring Russia where this form of popular democracy gave way much earlier to increasingly autocratic methods of rule.[49] Reflecting his Marxist orientation, an important departure appears in Ihnatouski's interpretation relative to that of Lastouski - namely, that the *veche* reflected the "class contradictions" of early Polatian society. Located on the main overland routes connecting East and West, the early Polatian economy was based mainly on trade with the result that society itself was divided into two basic socio-economic groups - wealthy traders, magnates, and industrialists ('capital') and the working masses ('labor'). However, these groups were not clearly defined economic classes in the contemporary understanding of the term and were connected by a number of smaller intermediate and transitional groups. Although he himself does not venture to such a conclusion, it seems as if the class contradictions of Polatian society were thus of a 'non-antagonistic' nature.[50]

Together with this democratic tradition, the Belarusian myth of statehood emphasizes the exceptionally high level of *cultural development* achieved in Polack associating this with the acceptance by the Krivichian princes of Eastern Orthodox Christianity during the 10th century. Described by the modern-day philosopher-writer Uladzimir Konan as the first Belarusian *adradzhenne* ('awakening'),[51] this era of early Belarusian 'cultural-enlightenment' is personified in the literary and educational activities of such luminaries as the writer Kliment Smolyachic and Eufrasinnya Polackaya the 'patroness' of Belarus.[52] Thanks to the rapid spread of Enlightenment and the printed word, Polack, in fact, became the "cultural avant-garde of Eastern Europe."[53] These traditions of Enlightenment and high culture are said to have existed in marked contrast to ancient Muscovy where violence and terror allegedly prevailed. Claiming that this drove some of the "best sons" of Moscow to seek refuge in Polack and other Belarusian towns, the argument is thus made that early Belarus was what Switzerland or France is today - *a place where people fleeing domestic oppression sought sanctuary*.[54] Indeed according to many Belarusian scholars, the Polatian territories acquired the name *Belarus* itself (*Belaya Rus* -'White Rus') during this period as a symbol of 'freedom,' 'independence,' 'pureness' and 'light.'[55]

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania: The Apex of Medieval Belarusian Statehood

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a multinational medieval state which at the height of its power during the 14th-16th centuries stretched from the Baltic to Black Seas incorporating territories which comprise the modern Belarus as well as western Ukraine. As such, it existed "on the crossroads of the Catholic and Orthodox worlds."[56] A crucial component of the 'national idea' of several

East-Central European nations (including, apart from modern-day Lithuania itself, Poland and Ukraine), the Grand Duchy represents the second important symbolic moment in the Belarusian 'myth of statehood.'

In *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi*, Lastouski accounts for the origins of the Grand Duchy on the basis of a Belarusian-Lithuanian *synthesis*. Indeed, he argues that from ancient times Polack shared common economic and political interests with Lithuania including trade and mutual distrust of neighboring Kiev (later Muscovy). As Lastouski writes, "princes with pagan Lithuanian names were not foreign princes but belonged to the Polatian dynasty." On the other hand, the Lithuanian territories were at least partially populated by ethnic Belarusians.[57] According to Lastouski's interpretation, in 1232, Lithuanian Prince Reinhold took advantage of internal strife and civil war among various Belarusian principalities to extend his rule over the Belarusian territories, establishing his new capital in the town of Novahrodak. Following Reinhold's death in 1242, his son Mindouh succeeded in further consolidating Lithuanian hegemony in the Belarusian territories. The discipline imposed on the Belarusian principalities by Mindouh maintained itself until his death in 1263 after which a new period of internal strife erupted. Gradually, however, Mindouh's successors, Hedmin and his son Olherdz, reimposed political and social order. Slowly but surely, Hedmin and Olherdz succeeded in subordinating remaining Belarusian principalities - including Polack - to the central authority of Novahrodak. However, Lastouski emphasizes the "wisdom" of these princes who understood that tolerance and magnanimity were more effective means of political consolidation than force - hence, local populations were not deprived of their faith nor freedom, and the previously existing social order was allowed to remain intact. This process of essentially *peaceful* consolidation finally led to the emergence in the 12th century of what Lastouski describes as a 'new Lithuanian-Rusian' state - the *Grand Duchy of*

Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia the capital of which was transferred by Hedmin from Novahrodak to Vilna.[58] Lastouski notes that the process of creating this new state was facilitated by the fact that Southern and Eastern Rus were at this time under Tatar onslaught with the effect that many Rusian princes sought refuge in the 'Lithuanian-Belarusian' territories.[59] Although Lastouski originally used the term "Lithuanian-Rusian" state, subsequent Belarusian historians strengthened the claim by arguing that "Mindouh built a state which was from the very beginning not simply Lithuanian but Lithuanian-Belarusian."[60] Indeed, owing to its rich Polatian heritage, the more culturally advanced Belarusian element in the new state was clearly predominant. As reflected in the official documents of the Grand Duchy - most importantly the Lithuanian Statute of 1588 - the Belarusian language enjoyed official status and many Lithuanians themselves are said to have 'converted' to Belarusian language and culture.[61] Beginning in the 1930s, this view was categorically denied by Soviet historiography which portrayed the incorporation of the Belarusian ('West Rusian') lands into the Grand Duchy as an act of "Lithuanian conquest."[62]

Seeking to substantiate further the claim as to the 'Belarusian character' of the Grand Duchy, Belarusian writers, beginning once again with Lastouski, have advanced the controversial argument that the name Lithuania is of *Slavic* and not Baltic origins. For his part, Lastouski adopted almost *verbatim* the theory of the Czech scholar Shafaryk according to which *litva* derives from the positive epithet *ljutyje* (meaning 'brave, 'bold' or 'daring') which was applied to ancient Slavonic tribes from which, in fact, arose the Belarusian people.[63] As Lastouski wrote in 1916, under the name 'Lithuania' (*'Litva'*) is to be understood "the Lithuanian-Belarusian territories which once constituted the GDL."[64] More recently, according to the novel interpretation of Vasil Saprun, *Litva* derives from

the Slavic (viz. Belarusian) verb *zlivatstsa/zlitstsa* meaning literally "to unite" or "merge."[65]

Citing topographical, archeological and etymological evidence, other Belarusian writers have maintained that 'Lithuania' first appeared in the chronicles in application to territories populated predominantly by Belarusians.[66] Jermalovich argues, for example, that *Litva* emerged in application to lands which today constitute central Belarus. Noting, however, that names "can move," only much later did *Litva* "migrate" to the north-west, eventually becoming fixed on the territory of the modern Lithuanian state.[67] Together with other historians such as Mikhas Tkachou, Jermalovich maintains as well that the symbols of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – the *Pahonya* state seal and white-red-white flag – are also of Belarusian origins having been those of the ancient principality of Novahrodak. Hence, the historical name *Litva* and the symbols associated with the Grand Duchy should in no way be confused with the contemporary Lithuanian state.[68] Not surprisingly, the Belarusian national interpretation has been vigorously contested by Lithuanian scholars. The question of who can rightfully lay claim to the name *Litva* has thus been the source of ongoing controversy in recent years between Belarusian and Lithuanian historians.[69]

Although they have disagreed as to whether it was a *unitary* or *federal* state, Belarusian writers since Lastouski have been unanimous that - continuing the political traditions of Polack - the Grand Duchy was organized on the basis of *democratic* and *pluralistic* principles and typified by mutual respect and accord between the two dominant religious faiths - Belarusian Christianity and Lithuanian paganism. These are once again juxtaposed against those of *autocracy* and *absolutism* which allegedly prevailed in neighboring Muscovy and later Russia.[70] Although engendered, in large part, by the ongoing effort of Russian/Soviet historians to reduce Belarusian political history to a 'primordial' striving for unity

with Russia, this epitomizes a tendency of Belarusian national writers to overlook the presence of a 'civic' nationalist tradition within Russian political history.

The Grand Duchy symbolizes the apex of medieval Belarusian statehood after which, according to Belarusian scholars, there begins a period of gradual but steady *decline* induced by first dynastic (1386) and later the Lublin Act of political union with Poland which gave rise to the new 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth' (*Rzeczpospolita - Res publica*) in 1569. However, it is important to note certain tensions, if not contradictions, in the assessment of union with Poland on the part of Belarusian national writers.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita obojga narodow*)

The new state stretched "from the Baltic to the Carpathian Mountains and across the northeastern European plain from the borders of Prussia to the Dnieper River, it occupied an area of some 730,000 square kilometers." With a population in 1795 of almost 14 million, the Rzeczpospolita was the fourth most populous state in Europe, after France the Holy Roman Empire and Russia.[71] The *Rzeczpospolita* consisted of two principal political units: the Crown (korona) comprising Polish and Ukrainian regions and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania made up of Lithuanian and Belarusian territories. This "Polish-Lithuanian" dualism" was embodied in the term "Republic of two nations" and reflected in separate administrations, armies, treasuries and legal codes.[72] However, perhaps the most outstanding feature of the "Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" was its *multicultural and multiconfessional character*. Within its borders, "there flourished a profusion of peoples, a riot of religions, a luxuriance of languages."[73] Although ethnic Poles constituted a slight overall majority of the population, Lithuanians, Ruthenians (Ukrainians) and Belarusians predominated in certain regions; moreover, there were significant

German and Jewish minorities together with Tatars, Armenians and Balts.[74] The Roman Catholic majority "was surrounded by a colorful array of sects and faiths - by Calvinists, Lutherans, Arians, Unitarians; Orthodox, Uniates, and Old Believers."[75] It is important to note, however, that various ethnic groups inhabiting the *Rzeczpospolita* as yet possessed no clearly defined sense of national identity. In essence, the *szlachta* or nobility (approximately 8-10% of the population) constituted the 'nation'; this identity, however, was defined not in ethnic but *territorial* terms. This is to say that the gentry classes, be they Lithuanian, Ukrainian or Belarusian, "became Polish in the sense of embracing a higher form of state nationality" embodied in the Latin expression *gente Rutheni natione Poland* ("of Rusian origin and Polish nation"). As will be argued in chapter three, the enduring legacy of the 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth' (and, before it, Grand Duchy of Lithuania) can be regarded as the original wellspring of traditions of *tolerance*, *democratism* and *respect* in Belarusian national thought.

However, the origins and exact significance of union with Poland has been a source of disagreement among Belarusians. Lastouski and other historians earlier this century tend to describe the first act of union (1386) between the 'Lithuanian-Belarusian' state and Poland as the result above all of unrelenting military pressure from Muscovy coupled with a new threat posed by the Teutonic knights. Whereas 'Lithuanian-Belarusian' representatives are said to have wanted only a "loose" union in which both states would retain their independence (for example, the Grand Duchy would continue to have its own parliament), the Polish side, driven by "imperial desires" took advantage of the vulnerable strategic position of the 'Lithuanian-Belarusian' state to impose its own framework for union which meant the absorption of Lithuania and Belarus into Poland "as a single state organism."[76] The final act of political union is depicted as one of *capitulation* by the 'Lithuanian-Rusian' state whose leaders were forced by these

dual external threats to accede to harsh Polish demands for its virtual absorption. The result was that after an almost two-century long struggle to maintain its independence and sovereignty within the context of union with Poland, "the Lithuanian-Rusian state, politically speaking, died."[77]

However, a paradox arises here inasmuch as the Belarusian writers maintain that, at least initially, the Lublin Union existed "on paper only" and that within the new Commonwealth the Grand Duchy was able to maintain its independence until the second half of the 16th century.[78] This is attributed above all to the courage and wisdom of Grand Prince Vytaut who steadfastly resisted persistent alleged Polish efforts to reduce the autonomy of the Grand Duchy within the framework of their unified state. As proof of this, it is argued that during the late sixteenth century Belarus experienced its cultural 'golden age' of language and culture. Special mention is made in this regard of *Francishak Skaryna* who translated the Bible into Belarusian as well as *Leu Sapeha*, editor of the "Lithuanian Statute," a progressive legal code which remained in force in the Lithuanian-Belarusian lands until its cancellation by Tsarist authorities in the wake of the failed Polish uprising of 1831.[79] Uladzimir Konan, in fact, has defined this period as the second period of Belarusian *adradzhenne* (national 'renaissance').[80] It is noted in some contemporary sources by way of further juxtaposition that while Belarus was experiencing this 'golden age' of arts and letters, Russia, under Tsar Ivan the Terrible, was enduring one of the most despotic and self-destructive periods in its troubled history.[81]

Illustrating further the contradictory assessment of union with Poland within Belarusian national thought, some contemporary writers argue that the legacy of shared history with Poland was *not* entirely negative. Apart from representing a 'golden age' of Belarusian arts and letters, political and religious union exposed the Belarusian territories to West European religious cultural and political

influences including the Enlightenment, Reformation and Renaissance that left Muscovite territories further to the east largely untouched.[82]

The Brest Act of Religious Union (1596)

Following on political union with Poland, the 1596 Brest act of religious union created the new Greek Catholic (Uniate) church. Under the terms of the Brest union, the Orthodox clergy agreed to accept the authority of the Catholic Pope in all affairs religious in return for being permitted to continue to practice their own liturgical rites.[83]

A recent Belarusian treatise on the subject of the 1596 union argues that although officially part of the Roman church, the new Uniate clergy "struggled to maintain their identity, individuality and independence from Catholicism especially in its Polish form."[84] The acceptance of Catholicism by Ruthenian elites thus did not mean necessarily their acceptance of cultural 'Polishness.' It is important to note in this respect that Belarusian was not only the official language of the Grand Duchy until being replaced by Polish in 1697, but was the language of the Uniate church as well. Hence, although they left behind Orthodoxy, the Uniates did not completely abandon their Rusian cultural identity. At the same time, the Uniates distinguished themselves from the 'Rusians' of neighbouring eastern territories who were known in the historical chronicles as 'Muscovites' (from the geographical and political designation 'Muscovy').[85] Non-Belarusian writers such as Jerzy Borzecki have argued that in giving rise to a new religious elite with its own distinct sense of identity (neither 'Polish' nor 'Muscovite'), the Brest union was an important factor in the eventual emergence of Ukrainian national consciousness.[86] However, it can also be seen to have been an impetus to the eventual development of Belarusian national awareness.

In *Karotkaya Historiya Belarusi*, Lastouski depicts the religious union as having been driven above all by political reasons - namely as part of the imperial Polish strategy for finally subjugating Belarus. Whereas the idea for union itself is said to have first germinated among Belarusians who conceived of the possibility of creating a "Belarusian national church," it was seen from the beginning in Poland primarily as a means of further expanding Polish influence to the East and undermining the already weakened position of the Orthodox Church.[87] After 1596, the "Lithuanian-Belarusian" *shlachta* (gentry) overwhelmingly converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism and adopted Polish language and culture as their own. Having made this conversion primarily for the economic and political benefits it afforded, the Belarusian nobility thus essentially "abandoned" their nation. Deprived of a national elite, the Belarusian masses "forgot" to which nation they belonged and came to call themselves simply *tuteishi* ('the locals').[88]

On the other hand, Belarusian intellectuals since Lastouski have argued that the Uniate church had the potential at least to become the Belarusian 'national religion' and have unsuccessfully called for its 'restoration'. As will discussed in chapter three, these calls were particularly apparent during the inter-war period especially on the part of the Belarusian Christian Democratic movement ('BCD').

The Partitions of Poland (1772, 1773, 1795)

According to Belarusian scholars from Lastouski forward, the end of medieval Belarusian independence came with the tripartite partitions of the *Rzeczpospolita* in 1772, 1773 and 1795 between Prussia, Austria and Russia. As independent historians notes, the net effect of the Partitions was that "after more than 800 years of existence, the Polish state was wiped off the map of Europe by violence, and divided between its three neighbours."[89] The leading political and civil institutions

of the Commonwealth, including the Polish Monarchy, Royal Court, Crown estates, Senate, the *Korona* and the Grand Duchy disappeared.[90] However, despite their considerable efforts, the imperial expropriators could not eradicate "the more intangible elements of old Polish life - their culture, languages, religions, social and political attitudes."[91] Polish cultural influence within the partitioned territories remained strong and would serve as the eventual catalyst for national 'revival' movements not only among Poles themselves but other national groups including the Ukrainians and Belarusians. During this period, inspired by the Romantic vision of 'restoring' the 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth' within its pre-1772 borders, there were four major insurrections (most notably in 1831 and 1863) all of which ended in "heroic defeat."[92]

If the consequences of the partitions were incalculable above all for Poles, they were also extremely important for the other national groups living within the borders of the former *Rzeczpospolita*. As Norman Davies writes, where as the former republic had been a multi-national state, after the partitions, "the old sense of common belonging was lost. Each of the various religious and linguistic groups tended to drift apart. With time, nationalist ideas caught hold in the German, Ruthenian (Byelorussian and Ukrainian), Lithuanian, and Jewish communities, as well as on the Poles. Each community began to think of itself as a separate nation, distinct from the Poles and gravitate towards its kinsmen in other parts of Eastern Europe."[93] Most importantly from the Belarusian perspective, the final act of partition (1795) led to the incorporation of the western territories of the Grand Duchy (Belarus and much of Ukraine) into the Russian empire.[94]

Depicting this as the 'liberation' of former 'Western Rusian' territories from 'Polish hegemony,' Empress Catherine the Great commemorated the occasion by minting a special medallion bearing the inscription "What was once lost, I have returned.' These lands were given the new name 'Belorussia' ('White Russia') as

means of signifying their 'purification' from alien Polish influences. Although 'Belorussia' was subsequently banned by Tsarist authorities after the failed 1831 Polish uprising and the Belarusian lands were given the new name 'West Russia,' "the identity of the natives, somewhat different from that of other Slavs in the empire, called for some special name, and Belorussian, banned from the administration, persisted as an ethnographical term."[95] This "proved to be a turning point in the history of the people ..... They now had a *name*, the symbol of a different identity, and around that symbol a movement of national self-determination soon began to crystallize."[96] Indeed, the name became so deeply-engrained in the popular consciousness that attempts by Belarusian intellectuals led by Lastouski during the 1920s to replace it in favor of the ancient tribal name 'Krivichi' came to nothing.[97]

However, at the same time as it was giving them the new name 'Belorussia,' the Tsarist state classified the Belarusians ethnically as 'Polish' or 'Russian,' depending on whether they were of the 'Catholic' or 'Orthodox' religious faith. Moreover, in 1839, the Uniate church was abolished. Consequently, as was also the case with Ukrainians and other Slavic peoples of East-Central Europe, the concepts of religious and national identity became essentially *fused* in the popular consciousness. The Belarusian nation was thus divided against itself on religious grounds and is still struggling to overcome this legacy. In its assessment, although critical of "reactionary" Tsarist policies which denied Belarusians the right to national self-determination, Soviet historiography later portrayed the "reunification [*vossoedinenie*]" of Belarus with Russia at the end of the eighteenth century as an event of "enormous progressive significance for the historical fate" of the Belarusian people. Indeed, some accounts describe it as the realization of the Belarusian people's "eternal dream" of three fraternal peoples - Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian - united in a single state.[98] Rejecting this interpretation,

contemporary Belarusian writers instead describe a "national catastrophe" which represented the "real destruction" of early Belarusian statehood.[99]

Illustrating the catalytic importance of the partitions, Belarusian scholars themselves trace the origins of their nation's movement for national 'reawakening' to the first two decades of the 19th century and the activities of the Polish Philomaty and Uniate scholars at the University of Vilna (established in 1803) who 'rediscovered' the value and richness of Belarusian language and culture within the framework of the former Grand Duchy.[100] The 'Secret Society of Philomaths' (named after the 18th-century French *Societé Philomatique de Paris*) was established at Vilna on October 1, 1817. This small, elitist group never consisted of more than 20 members. Its leaders included Tomasz Zan, Jozef Jezowski, Onufry Pietraszkiewicz, Brunon Suchecki, Erazm Poluszynski and the group's official poet Adam Mickiewicz (today revered as the 'national poet' of Poland). Suchecki and Poluszynski left the group shortly thereafter and were replaced by Francisek Malewski and Jan Czeczot. Most of the Philomaty, including Mickiewicz and Czeczot, were natives of ethnographically Belarusian territories. As Arnold McMillin writes, the Philomaty were fond of using "the peasant lingo amongst themselves, and clearly, the phonetical, morphological, syntactical and lexical provincialisms, or Byelorussianisms, to be found throughout the Polish poetry of the Philomaths was a conscious element in its Romanticism and therefore to be fiercely defended against the established critics of ethnic Poland and others who felt the Byelorussian language unworthy of serious attention."[101] Among their most important activities, the Philomaty collected Belarusian folklore and published original verse and short stories in the Belarusian language.[102] Moreover, Belarusian motives (especially folk ballads for which the poet himself acknowledged a special affinity) were clearly evident in Mickiewicz's early work, who together with Aleksandr Rypinski and others,

constituted the 'Belarusian school' in Polish poetry.[103] Illustrating a certain historical parallel in terms of incipient 'national awakening', there was at this same time also a 'Ukrainian school' within Polish poetry.[104]

For their part, Uniate scholars at Vilna were natives of the ethnically Bialystok region in what is today eastern Poland. Like the Philomaty, they were thus intimately acquainted with the language, customs and traditions of the local populations. The leader of this group was Mikhas Babrouski who is credited in contemporary Belarusian sources with having played an outstanding role in rediscovering the 16th-century works of Francishak Skaryna who made the first translation of the bible into 'old Belarusian,' symbolic of the 16th-century 'golden age' of Belarusian arts and letters.[105] Apart from Babrouski, the most important members of this group included Ihnat Danilovich, Platon Sasnouski, Anton Marcinouski, Ihnat Bazil Anacevich, Jazep Jarasevich and Ludvik Sableuski who researched Belarusian ethnography and folklore, as well as the political, economic and juridical history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Owing to the 'awakening' activities of the Polish Philomaty and Uniate fathers, Vilna University can be considered the 'original cradle' of the Belarusian 'national idea.'[106] Although the university itself was closed as part of Russian reprisals following the failed Polish revolt of 1831, the city of Vilna would remain the cultural and political centre of the Belarusian national movement until the mid-20th century. Nonetheless, it is important to reiterate that this represented what was described in the introduction as the initial 'unconscious' phase of Belarusian 'national awakening.' Neither the Philomaty nor the Uniate scholars identified themselves as 'Belarusian' in the national sense. Indeed, modern concepts of nationhood had not yet emerged. Rather, they were 'regional patriots' who called themselves *Litvini* ('Lithuanian') understood in the political-territorial sense as 'a citizen of the Grand Duchy. The Philomaty in particular represented "a

new type of Belarusian patriot which, being *gente russus albus, natione Polonus* (Belarusian by origin but Polish by nationality), love their homeland Belarus as a Polish province and dreamed about the union and resurrection of historical Poland."[107] Nonetheless, as contemporary Belarusian historians note, it is thanks to the Philomaty and Uniate scholars that the Belarusian 'national idea' was born.[108] The 'unconscious' phase of Belarusian 'national awakening' can be conceptualized as continuing through the Polish uprising of 1863.

The 1863 Polish Insurrection

As Jan Zaprudnik writes, the Russian defeat in the Crimean War against Turkey (1853-56) "revealed the rot of the tsarist regime and intensified demands for reforms - above all the abolition of serfdom."[109] The situation for the peasantry was perhaps no more desperate throughout the entire Russian empire than in Belarus where during the first half of the nineteenth century, "because of market demands for agricultural products, landlords took away from the peasants a sizeable quantity of cultivated fields. In Belarus, the land tilled by peasants diminished from 66 percent of the total land at the beginning of the nineteenth century to about 50 per cent in the 1850s."[110] Aware of the growing internal pressures for reform, Tsar Aleksandr II undertook a 'revolution from above' designed to implement a number of crucial political and economic reforms. Among these was the abolition of serfdom which was decreed in 1861. However, like most elements of this 'revolution,' the land reform was in reality a half-measure which, in the short term at least, actually contributed to a further worsening of the condition of the peasantry. The popular response to the proposed reform was a wave of peasant uprisings across the empire including in Poland.[111] These were accompanied by the rise of a new movement for Polish national

liberation inspired by emigres in Paris. The insurgents organized into two groups - the 'democratic Red committee' led by the historian Joachim Lelewel and the 'aristocratic White committee' led by Prince Adam Czartoryski (former Rector of the University of Vilna). Although bitterly divided at times over strategy and tactics, the common aim of these two groups was the restoration of the *Rzeczpospolita* within its pre-partition (viz. 1772) borders.

The rebellion itself lasted until the late summer of 1863 and had "social, religious and cultural dimensions."[112] Although it was somewhat slower in developing, the revolutionary mood in Poland and Lithuania began to touch the ethnographically Belarusian territories as well. During 1861 alone, 379 peasant revolts were recorded in Belarus of which 125 required suppression by police and military force.[113] Celebrations commemorating historic dates and events from the *Rzeczpospolita's* past were held in Viciebsk, Vilna, Hrodna and other towns. The "considerable activity" in Belarus contrasted sharply with the situation in Ukraine where emissaries dispatched to call the local population into action were killed by the peasants.[114] Active preparation for the uprising within Belarus itself began in July 1862 with the appearance of the first issue of the clandestine newspaper *Muzhyckaya prauda* ('Peasant's Truth') published by a group of young activists led by Kastus Kalinouski (1838-1864).[115]

The repression of the rebellion "left permanent scars" in Poland. Indeed, "a whole generation of Poles were deprived of their careers, and of their normal expectations of advancement."[116] Thousands, in the main "the most active, the most courageous, the most idealistic men and women in society," were deported to Siberia from where most never returned.[117] The Congress Kingdom of Poland was abolished in 1864 and Warsaw "became the capital of the *Privislinskiy kray* (Vistulaland)."[118] The official policy of the Tsarist state became one of aggressive extirpation of all remaining Polish cultural and political influences in the

'North-Western provinces.' In 1864, the Tsar decreed that all primary schools in Belarus would henceforth come under the direct control of the Orthodox Church. The Polish language was banned from use in school.[119] In 1867, the Polish education Commission was abolished. By 1871, "the only item which distinguished the conduct of affairs is Vistulaland from that pertaining in other parts of the Russian Empire was the continuing use of the Napoleonic Code in the civil courts."[120] The failure of the uprising also led to a fundamental reappraisal of Polish political attitudes. While they admired the aims and ideals of the insurrectionaries, conservative critics such as the 'Stanczyk Group' in Cracow and the 'Warsaw Positivists' popularized the slogan 'Organic Work.' According to this notion, the economic and cultural resources of the Polish nation were as yet insufficient to sustain the existence of an independent state. Hence, Polish efforts should be focussed on economic development as well as raising the literary and national consciousness of the population.[121]

Perhaps most importantly, however, the insurrection "hastened the parting of the ways between ethnically Polish territories and the former eastern lands of the commonwealth."[122] Indeed, the 1863 rebellion was the last "in which the leaders appealed to the nations of Poland, Lithuania, and Rus (Ukraine) to struggle for the rebirth of the old commonwealth. It was also the last in which not only Poles but Lithuanian and Belorussian peasants as well fought under the historic banner. Although the insurgent leaders understood the need for the application of federalist principles to the vast areas and agreed to Lithuanian and Ukrainian self-determination, they still thought mainly in terms of prepartition Poland."[123] However, the collapse of the rebellion 'followed by Russian policies of depolonization of the 'western guberniias', marked the disintegration of the old historic concept" and hastened the emergence of Lithuanian and Ukrainian national movements whose leaders "repudiated the historic heritage of the

commonwealth, which they associated with the rule of the nobility. In their struggle for recognition they opposed both the tsarist regime and the predominantly Polish landowning classes."[124] The failure of the January Insurrection can also be regarded as a catalytic event in the development of the Belarusian 'national idea.'

As will be elaborated in chapter four, the rebellion represents the origins of a *radical*, even *revolutionary*, trend within Belarusian national thought. As such it gave a powerful impetus to the 'conscious' phase of Belarusian national *renaissance* inaugurated during the 1880s by a small group of Belarusian populists publishing the journal *Homon* ('The Clamor'). However, as epitomized by *Homon*, the defeat of the uprising reoriented emerging Belarusian political thought away from visions of a resurrected 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth' in a more 'easterly' direction towards federal union within a democratized Russia.

As noted by Belarusian writers themselves, this transition was paradoxically aided by competing Polish and Russian claims to Belarus which continued throughout the 19th and well into the 20th century. Especially significant were the efforts of the *zapadno-russizm* ('West Russianism') school during the 1860s and 1870s led by Mikhail Kayalovich. Although their intent was to prove the 'Russian-ness' of the Belarusians, comprehensive ethnographic, linguistic and historical studies carried out during the second half of the 19th century by this group (and other Russian academics) unintentionally contributed to the cause of Belarusian 'national awakening' by discovering that the local Belarusian populations possessed a language and cultural traditions not only distinct from the Polish but which also distinguished them from Russians.[125] Nonetheless, there was no questioning that this regional identity was a 'species' of Russian with no possibility of independent cultural or political development.[126]

The 'Belarusian National Republic' ('BNR')

At the turn of the 20th century, the Belarusian national movement began to crystallize. Similar to national movements emerging at this time in Ukraine, Lithuania and other parts of the Russian empire, its origins are to be found in small circles of university students. The founders of the Belarusian movement were the brothers Anton and Ivan Luckievich as well as Vaclau Ivanouski who established a small student organization at St. Petersburg University under the name *Kruzhok Belaruskae Narodnae Asviety* ('The Circle for Belarusian National Enlightenment').[127] This movement can be seen as culminating in the declaration of independence by the 'Belarusian National Republic' (*Belaruskaya Narodova Respublika* - 'BNR') on March 25, 1918. However, the very particular historical circumstances into which the Belarusian movement emerged - in particular, continuing Polish and Russian pressures, as well as German occupation policy during World War I and the revolutionary events in Russia of March and November 1917 - are crucial for understanding events leading up to the declaration by the BNR.

A key catalytic role in the initial development of the Belarusian national movement was played by the Polish Socialist Party ('PPS') led by Jozef Pilsudski and Leon Wasilewski.[128] At its sixth congress in Lublin (June 1902), a separate wing of the PPS responsible for these territories was created. In 1903, the party assisted with the publication of three Belarusian-language pamphlets.[129] Delegates of the Polish Socialist Party attended the BSH congress in 1905 and assisted Belarusian activists that same year in the clandestine distribution of collections of Bahushevich's *Dudka belaruskaya* and *Smyk belaruski*.[130] As will be elaborated in chapter five, in the fall of 1903, the PPS assisted in the emergence of the first Belarusian national political organization - the 'Belarusian Revolutionary

Hramada' which later transformed itself into the 'Belarusian Socialist Hramada'. However, Polish interest in the emerging Belarusian national movement tended to be of an instrumental nature. As Jerzy Turonek writes, the interest of the PSP in supporting Belarusian activists at this point was in accordance with resolutions adopted at the party's founding congress held in Paris in October 1882 and developed further at its third congress in Vilna (June 1895) which foresaw the expansion of PPS activity on the territory of Lithuania, Belarus' and Ukraine. The development of separatist tendencies there (if possible) were to be encouraged and supported under the leadership of the PPS as a weapon in the struggle against Tsarism. Political agitation, including the arousing of 'separatist' sentiments among these peoples, was always viewed through the prism of the primary political goal of weakening and dismembering Russia.[131]

At the same time, the emerging Belarusian movement was openly opposed by reactionary Russian groups such as the 'Black Hundreds' espousing a modified version of the *zapadno-russizm* ('West Rusian') doctrine according to which Belarus was an integral part of Greater Russia. Founded during the 1840s, the primary aim of this school, led by M. Kaylovich, had been to combat Polish influence in the ethnographically Belarusian territories. Now, however, the task became countering directly the newly-emerging Belarusian 'national idea.' Towards this end, the early years of the 20th century witnessed the founding of the first 'West Rusian' political organizations including the *Russkii okrainnyi soyuz* (transformed in 1911 into the *Zapadno-russkoe obshchestvo* - 'West-Russian Society'). Representatives of these groups denounced as 'separatist' calls for cultural autonomy advanced by deputies elected from the 'Western provinces' during the First State Duma in 1906.[132]

Together with competing Polish and Russian pressures, it is important to take into account German occupation policy during World War I when the Belarusian

territories were effectively partitioned between occupying German and Russian forces. German attitudes to the emerging Belarusian national movement during the early years of the 20th century had been decidedly indifferent. Indeed, as Jerzy Turonek notes, prior to World War I, "not a single book or any other serious form of publication dedicated to the Belarusian question" had appeared in Germany.[133] This situation did not change initially with the outbreak of war. Although a large amount of material was published in German during 1915-1916 concerning the emerging emancipatory aspirations of Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Finns and Ukrainians (which were unfailingly assessed from the point of view of their possible strategic benefit for Germany itself) there continued to be virtually nothing on Belarusians who were judged to be a 'peasant' people culturally and linguistically very close to Russians with the result that little or no potential was seen for the development of separatist tendencies.[134]

The initial German strategy for prosecuting World War I was based on plans to create a buffer Polish state together with the outright annexation of Lithuania and Kurlandia. In the fall of 1915, the Germans established in the occupied eastern territories (which included Poland, Lithuania and Kurlandia) a new unit of direct military administration called the *Ober Ost*. Occupying approximately 109,000 sq. km., the *Ober Ost* was subdivided into three internal administrative structures - Lithuania, Kurlandia and the 'Bialystok-Grodno district,' the latter encompassing 17,000 sq. km. of the occupied Belarusian territories. The remaining 33,000 sq. km. of Belarusian land was part of the military sphere of operations stretching from the eastern boundary of the *Ober Ost* to the German-Russian front line. The Germans had no annexationist aspirations towards these lands which were to play the role of 'bargaining chip' in anticipated eventual peace negotiations with Imperial Russia. Specifically, in exchange for Moscow ceding control of the *Ober Ost* as part of a projected Polish buffer state, these Eastern Belarusian territories

would be returned to Russian control. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that Germany was interested in good post-war *economic* relations with Russia and therefore opposed to its radical decomposition.[135]

Nonetheless, German authorities were cognizant of the fact that the *Ober Ost* was a multi-national territory. Owing to the fact that from the point of view of German annexationist plans, the privileging of any one particular national group was clearly disadvantageous, the occupation authorities declared the principle of "equal status" of all languages in the *Ober Ost*. This amounted to *de facto* recognition of Belarusian as on a par with other languages of the region - Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Russian and Hebrew. In the further interests of equal treatment of nationalities, the Germans also permitted the publication of newspapers as well as cultural work in native languages.

Although, strictly speaking, unintended, the German decision concerning the equality of local languages was a substantial impetus to the Belarusian national cause. This was most notable in the area of *education*. As Turonek notes, the biggest problem in this regard was a lack of qualified teachers, the majority of whom had either been mobilized for the war effort or evacuated by with fleeing Russian authorities. The German occupation authorities thus took the decision to open a new instructional institute for teachers near Hrodna which began operation in October 1916. They also approved the creation of a new network of Belarusian-language primary schools the number of which increased from 8 in October 1916 to 89 by the spring of 1918. In addition to measures in the sphere of education, a Belarusian amateur theatre group was established in Vilna as well as a Belarusian library and bookshop. Publishing activity, especially in the form of school textbooks, increased substantially. Whereas in 1916, only 7 Belarusian-language books were published, by 1918 this number had grown to 28.[136]

As will be discussed further in chapter five, the German policy initially encouraged Belarusian activists, including Anton Luckievich and Vaclau Lastouski, to believe in the possibility of political independence in the form of *a resurrected Grand Duchy of Lithuania*. Although these plans failed to materialize, Belarusian leaders continued to count on German support following the declaration of independence by the BNR on March 25, 1918 which appealed in particular to the common economic interests Germany allegedly shared with the "Lithuanian-Belorussian state."[137] Although some Belarusian sources tend to portray this declaration as the 'logical' or even 'inevitable' outcome of the Belarusian national movement which emerged at the turn of the 20th century, others - including such leaders of this movement as Anton Luckievich - describe the act itself more as a *response* to two specific events: the forcible closure by the Bolsheviks of the landmark first 'All-Belarusian National Congress' which convened in December 1917 in Minsk, and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed by Germany and Soviet Russia in February 1918.

With reference to Bolshevik attitudes to the 'Belarusian question,' it is important to recall that the founding manifesto of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP) in 1898 had guaranteed the peoples of the Tsarist empire the right to "national self-determination." However, sharply differing views over what this 'self-determination' actually meant were one of the principal causes for the splitting of the RSDWP into its *Bolshevik* ('Majority') and *Menshevik* ('Minority') factions at the party's second congress in 1903. The Bolshevik understanding of 'national self-determination' was elaborated by Lenin in a number of his pre-revolutionary writings wherein an important distinction emerges between asserting as a matter of *principle* the right to 'self-determination' meaning quite simply "the political separation of nations from alien political bodies, and the formation of an independent national state,"[138] and the actual

secession of national territories in *practice*. Specifically, the demand for national self-determination was always regarded as subordinate to the interests of the proletariat in the ongoing *class struggle*. Hence, as Lenin wrote, "our unreserved recognition of the struggle for freedom of self-determination does not in any way commit us to supporting every demand for national self-determination."[139] In the pre-revolutionary Russian context, this conditional support for self-determination meant that since the nations of the empire were struggling to throw off the yoke of Tsarist oppression, the fight for independence was just and should be supported by Social Democrats. Indeed, to deny the right to self-determination at this 'bourgeois' stage of the revolution would be tantamount to siding with the 'oppressors.'

With the coming of the socialist revolution, however, the interests of the working classes across Russia would no longer coincide with strictly national aims. Rather, they would be served by the national proletariats themselves being drawn together into a single unified class which, as Bertram Wolfe describes it, would "eschew, outgrow, and despise all feelings of nationality as bourgeois or petty bourgeois."[140] To a large extent, this process was believed by Lenin to be a more or less 'naturally-occurring' phenomenon since, very much in keeping with Marx in this respect, it was believed that nationalist expressions and separatist sentiments were the products of the inequalities resulting from imperialist oppression and exploitation. In these circumstances, national self-determination could only take the form of secession. However, under socialism, which would establish 'real equality' between nations, the right to self-determination understood as secession, while still being upheld formally, was assumed to become practically-speaking meaningless. In other words, once the oppression of nation by nation ceased, the psychological basis for secessionism would also vanish. From the dialectical Leninist perspective then, guaranteeing the subject

peoples of the empire the right to secede was, in fact, the best way to keep them in renewed union with socialist Russia. As he wrote in the summer of 1915, championing the right of nations to self-determination, "far from encouraging the formation of petty states, leads, on the contrary, to the freer, fearless and therefore wider and more universal formation of large states and federations of states."[141] This emphasis on the 'drawing together' (*sblizhenie*) and eventual 'fusion' (*sliyanie*) of nations made clear that Lenin neither foresaw nor desired the break-up of the Russian empire but rather its *transformation* into a qualitatively new type of union based on socialist principles of political and economic organization.

Upon seizing power, the Soviet government established a Commissariat for nationality affairs under the Georgian Bolshevik Josef Stalin (Dzhugashvili) who had first appeared as the Party's spokesman on the 'national question' at an April 1917 conference of Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd. However, as early as 1913 in his essay *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin had set forth important views on the issue, beginning by defining the nation itself as "a historically-evolved, stable community of people, united by a community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological sense, manifested in a community of culture."[142] Moreover, nations were a phenomenon representative of particular phase of historical development: "The nation is not simply a historical category, but a historical category of a particular epoch - the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of the liquidation of feudalism and the development of capitalism is, at the same time, the process of evolving people into nations."[143] From this it followed that the *bourgeoisie* played the leading role in the creation of nations, and, as such, the struggle for national self-determination at this point was a 'bourgeois' struggle. In the main then, Stalin agreed with Lenin in viewing the struggle for self-determination by the minority nationalities in Russia under Tsarism

specifically within the context of the "bourgeois-democratic" phase of the revolution. Like Lenin as well, he stressed the necessity of internationalism and the unity and indivisibility of the proletariat in the class struggle while simultaneously voicing qualified support for the principle of national self-determination. As Stalin wrote, "Social-Democracy in all countries proclaims the right of nations to self-determination ... This, of course, does not mean that Social-Democracy will support each and every custom and institution of a nation ... It will uphold only the right of a nation itself to determine its own destiny, while at the same time agitating against harmful customs and institutions of that nation so as to enable the working strata to free themselves from them."[144] It is thus clear that Stalin agreed with Lenin that questions of national self-determination were always subordinate to the superior interests of the proletariat in the "class struggle: and that the Communist Party would reserve the right to decide which demands for self-determination were legitimate and worthy of support. Since the principal duty of Marxists everywhere was to work towards breaking down national barriers in the name of proletarian unity, it is not difficult to see that those instances wherein the Bolsheviks would actually support demands for secession would be few and far between, limited exclusively to supporting the struggle for independence by nations laboring under the burden of imperial domination.

After assuming power on November 7, 1917, one of the first acts of the new Soviet regime was to issue a 'Declaration of the Rights and Principles of Russia,' upholding 'the equality and sovereignty of all the peoples of Russia' and the right of these peoples to 'free self-determination, even to the point of separating and forming independent states."[145] However, the true spirit of the Bolshevik interpretation of self-determination was better reflected in a 'Declaration of the Rights of Toiling and Exploited People' adopted by the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets in January 1918 which stated that all the nations of Russia had

"the right of unfettered decision whether and on what basis to participate in the federal government and in other federal Soviet institutions."[146] The reference to "federation" here was employed "without regard to constitutional niceties" as the appropriate vehicle by which the national minorities could be gathered back into a new union with socialist Russia.[147] Indeed, it was clear that the Bolsheviks had no intention of allowing the break-up of the former empire. As Stalin himself wrote, the secession of border regions "would undermine the revolutionary might of central Russia which is stimulating the movement for emancipation in the West and East."[148]

Following a series of smaller meetings and congresses spurred by the revolutionary events of March and November 1917 (to be discussed in greater detail in chapter five), the first 'All-Belarusian Congress' was charged with the responsibility of defining the future political and social order in Belarus. The meeting was attended by 1,872 delegates, 1,167 of whom had the right to vote.[149] After rancorous debate, the meeting adopted unanimously a resolution proclaiming the "sovereignty" of Belarus and the establishment of a "democratic, republican order" on Belarusian territory. Although it obviously stopped short of being a formal declaration of independence from Russia, the resolution did represent the *de facto rejection of Bolshevik power in Belarus*.[150] This was too much for local Soviet authorities and elements of the Red Army were dispatched to close the congress in the course of which a number of delegates were arrested.

Before dispersing, however, the remaining delegates managed to meet one last time in secret session and delegated power to a special Executive Council which would continue to lead the Belarusian movement from underground. Following the Bolshevik withdrawal from Minsk on February 19, 1918, the Belarusian Central Council reemerged from underground to issue a proclamation constituting itself as a "Provisional Government" headed by Jazep Varonka which would remain in

place until a democratically-elected constituent assembly could decide the future of the country. Late that month, the council dispatched a team headed by Alyaksandr Cvikievich to the German-Bolshevik peace negotiations in Brest where they participated as members of the Ukrainian delegation. However, neither Leon Trotsky representing the Soviet side nor German representatives accepted Belarusian petitions. Consequently, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed on March 3, 1918 - in accordance with which Lenin's government was required to make large territorial concessions to the Central Powers - resulted in the partition of Belarus between Soviet Russia and Germany. The formal signing of the treaty spurred the issuance of a second proclamation by the Belarusian Executive Council on March 9 declaring the existence of the BNR.[151] As Luckievich and others note, and as will be expanded upon in chapter five, previous to these two catalytic events, the predominant tendency within the Belarusian movement was in favor of *renewed federal or confederal union with a democratized and decentralized Russia.*[152] Illustrating continuing parallels in their course of development, this was also the dominant trend within the Ukrainian national movement at this time.[153]

Upon its declaration of independence, the BNR adopted as its official symbols those of the former Grand Duchy - the *Pahonya* seal and white-red-white banner. Citizens of the republic were issued passports bearing these symbols. As will be elaborated in chapter three, respect for individual rights and liberties, as well as those of ethnic minorities, were embodied in the document.[154] At the head of government stood Jazep Varonka as Prime Minister. The BNR also included representatives of the Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian and Russian communities in Belarus. In the effort to achieve international recognition, emissaries were dispatched to Kiev, Warsaw, Berlin, Bern, Copenhagen and other major European centres. By the summer of 1918, Belarusian missions had been established in Ukraine, Lithuania and even Moscow. However, it is clear that the BNR leaders

continued to count most heavily on German support. In reply to a diplomatic note from the BNR, the new German Chancellor Georg Hertling wrote that as far as Berlin was concerned Belarus remained a part of Soviet Russia, adding that, in any event, under the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, his country could not recognize the new Belarusian state without the consent of Lenin.[155] Nevertheless, at the end of April 1918, the BNR dispatched a telegram of gratitude to Kaiser Wilhelm for having "liberated Belarus from foreign pressure and anarchy" and requesting anew German support for Belarusian state-building aspirations. Notwithstanding the good wishes, however, the telegram went unanswered.

Faced with silence on the part of Berlin, Belarusian leaders nonetheless reached an understanding on the question of organizing a local structure of state power with the leader of the occupying German 10th army, General Erich Falkenhaym. Already on March 27, the BNR had declared the intention to take over control of all national state structures. On April 20, it issued a directive outlining conditions for elections to municipal and regional councils which would eventually assume responsibility from the Germans for administration in certain fields. The Germans agreed to hand over to the BNR authority for trade, industry, education, social policy and other spheres which the Belarusian government would administer under German supervision. The field of education in particular was a special concern of the BNR. A publishing house for school textbooks named appropriately *Prasvieta* ('Enlightenment') and Belarusian Pedagogical Institute (headed by Vaclau Ivanouski) were established. Preparatory work for the opening of a national university was also begun. A Belarusian theatre and other cultural institutions became active and a number of new newspaper and journals appeared including *Belaruski shlach, Zaranka, Belarus, Belaruskae zhyycce* and others.[156] That the BNR was indeed dependent for its survival on German support became clearly evident as political and military events continued to unfold throughout the summer

and fall of 1918. In August 1918, under increasing battlefield pressure, Germany signed an secret addendum to the Brest treaty agreeing to withdraw its forces by the fall from most of Belarusian territory including the Minsk *guberniya*. The withdrawal of German forces and occupation of re-occupation of Minsk by the Bolshevik Red Army meant the end of the BNR's short and turbulent existence.

Nevertheless, the legacy of the BNR is enormously important for understanding the Belarusian national *mythmoteur*. Its anniversary has continually been recalled and celebrated over time by successive generations of nationally-conscious Belarusians. The 75th anniversary of the declaration of independence by the BNR in March 1993 was an especially significant occasion for official commemoration and intellectual reflection. However, this occasion also witnessed a renewed debate among Belarusian scholars in the periodical press and other fora as to just what extent the BNR had been "free and independent" or "unfree and dependent."[157] Indeed, the significance of the BNR in the history of Belarusian statehood is an issue yet to be resolved by Belarusian scholars themselves. However, it is generally acknowledged that owing to both internal and external factors, this declaration was never fully realized in practice. Among the internal factors that made the actualization of the independence declaration impossible, the most important is seen to be that fact that the national *adradzhenne* movement ('awakening') begun less than two decades earlier simply did not have enough time to develop the national consciousness of the Belarusian masses sufficiently to sustain statehood. A second major factor cited was the acute political divisions among leaders of the BNR itself. Externally, Soviet Russian and Polish hostility to the notion of Belarusian independence as well as a lack of support from the Western powers greatly undermined the chances of the BNR for survival. The unfortunate experience of the BNR - especially the need for raising national consciousness within the population and the consolidation of political

forces in defence of independence - is seen as providing an important lesson for the current situation.[158]

While the legacy of the BNR is thus valuable for demonstrating certain mistakes which ought to be avoided, it is perhaps even more important for the positive aspects of its existence and activities which are worthy of repetition in the contemporary context. At the top of this list is the conscious effort undertaken by BNR leaders to 'return' the Belarusian national-cultural heritage, language and state symbols.[159] Perhaps most importantly, Belarusian scholars maintain that had it not been for the BNR, the Bolsheviks would never have reconsidered their initial hostility to Belarusian national aspirations and created the new "Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic" ('BSSR') in January 1919.[160] Somewhat substantiating this is the statement by the Bolshevik leader Wilhelm Knoryn that the creation of the BSSR was necessitated by the fact that the period of German occupation had been "at the same time a period of absorption by the masses of the idea of Belorussian independence to which the Party should have given its attention."[161] Notwithstanding the statements of Knoryn and claims of Belarusian scholars, the subsequent machinations of the Soviets suggest strongly that Bolshevik interest in establishing the BSSR had been essentially to create a 'buffer state' against Poland in the context of the Soviet-Polish war (1918-1921). In short, as Antony Adamovich suggests, "Bolshevik hostility to the idea of Belarusian independence had not really changed."[162] Indeed, on March 12, 1919, the Soviet regime announced the merger of the BSSR with the also recently-established Lithuanian SSR to create the new *Lithuanian-Belorussian SSR* ('Litbel'). However, the "independence" of the BSSR was declared for a second time in July 1920 with one of signatories of this act being Ihnatouski who, as shall be seen below, would go on to assume a leading role in the new republic's administration.[163]

The 'Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic' (BSSR): *Belarusizatsiya* - A Second 'Golden Age' of Belarusian Language and Culture

During the inter-war period, the Belarusian territories were partitioned between the newly reconstituted Polish state and Soviet Russia. This was a direct consequence of the Treaty of Riga which ended the Soviet-Polish war of 1918-1921. Under the terms of this treaty, Poland gained about 40,000 square miles of Belarusian territory including Hrodna, Vilna, and the Western part of Minsk provinces, extending from the Dvina River in the north to the Bug in the west and Pripyats in the south with a population of 3.7 million. The BSSR, on the other hand, encompassed only about 20,000 square miles of the former Minsk *gubernaya* with a population of about 1.5 million.[164] Both sides agreed to recognize the independence of both Belarus and Ukraine and respect minority rights. This division geographical and spiritual division had important consequences for the development of the Belarusian 'national idea'.

As will be discussed further in chapter five, in the context of the Soviet-Polish war of 1918-1921, some leaders of the Belarusian movement, including Anton Luckievich, highly skeptical of Bolshevik designs, pursued the idea of creating a new "Polish-Belarusian federation." However, after some initial hopes for realization, these plans failed to materialize. In fact, during the early 1920s, the Belarusian 'national idea' found itself enmeshed in an acute conflict between two sharply contrasting views of the future of Polish statehood defined by Jozef Lewandowski as *'incorporationists'* or *'annexationists'* and *'federalists.'*[165] The leader of the 'incorporationist' perspective was the National Democratic Party led by Roman Dmowski and Jan-Ludwig Poplawski. This group consciously rejected the progressive Romantic nationalism personified by Lelewel and Mickiewicz. According to Dmowski, the nation was "a natural phenomenon, the result of the

God-given division of mankind into distinct entities each possessing its own 'blood' and its own genetic 'stock', and having a corporate existence and identity far superior to those of its individual members."[166] The National Democrats resented the presence of Belarusian, Ukrainian, and other minorities, believing that ethnic and cultural variety within the borders of a state could only be the source of weakness and instability.[167] These groups were, therefore, to be assimilated into the Polish majority.

The leader of the competing 'federalist' option was Pilsudski and the PPS. Nicholas Vakar points out that, for this group, the assimilation of Belarusians, Ukrainians and other ethnic and national minorities seemed a very long term and uncertain process. Their goal rather was "to restore the Polish Commonwealth 'as of Jagiellonian times,' that is, in the form of a free union with Lithuania, Belorussia, and the Ukraine, eventually with other state situated between the Baltic and the Black Seas."[168] Indeed, sympathetic historical accounts describe Pilsudski (himself a native of the Lithuanian-Belarusian territories) as a Romantic who genuinely believed in the "Jagiellonian idea."[169] Inspired by the ideal of the old *Rzeczpospolita*, in his view "the nation was a product of history, a community sharing the same values and loyalties, though not necessarily the same ethnicity or origins. Within such a nation, there was room for many nationalities so long as the constituent parts stayed loyal to the whole."[170] Others, however, including Lewandowski and Krystyna Gomolka argue that Pilsudski used the "Jagiellonian idea" in a purely instrumental fashion to further Polish political aims - most importantly, the weakening of Russia.[171]

Whatever the case, it appeared initially as if a 'federalist' policy of accommodation and tolerance would define Poland's approach to its national minorities, including large Belarusian and Ukrainian communities, which constituted more than 20% of the total population.[172] Beginning immediately after

the signing of the Treaty of Riga, the Polish government undertook a series of measures in support of Belarusian cultural development including the opening of new Belarusian-language schools and support for cultural organizations. The results in terms of the effect of this policy on Belarusian public consciousness were immediate. During Polish parliamentary elections of 1922, running together with Ukrainians, Jews and other groups as candidates of the larger "Bloc of National Minorities," 10 Belarusian candidates representing different political parties were elected to the *Sejm* (lower house) as well as 2 to the *Senat* (upper house). Deputies in the *Sejm* subsequently formed a 'Belarusian Parliamentary Club' (or 'fraction') which over the next several years energetically defended Belarusian national rights before the assembly.[173] However, when it thus became clear that Polish policy was contributing to growing national consciousness among Belarusians, tolerance gave way beginning in 1924 to an 'incorporationist' campaign of 'pacification' which took the form of martial law, mass arrests, and property confiscation aimed at eradicating what was viewed as "incipient Byelorussian separatism."[174] This campaign also witnessed the mass closing of Belarusian-language schools. Whereas in 1918-1919 there had been more than 400 Belarusian-language secondary schools operating in West Belarus, by 1938, none remained open.[175] Repeated calls in the West Belarusian periodical press during the late 1920s and early 1930s for new Belarusian-language schools in which to educate the future leaders of the nation thus fell on deaf official ears in Warsaw.[176] Several attempts at establishing West Belarusian 'thick' journals around which young intellectuals, poets and writers could gather to promote the development of the Belarusian literary language ultimately failed.[177]

During the height of the 'pacification' campaign, West Belarusian periodicals spoke of a crisis of the 'national idea' reflected in *continuing low levels of national consciousness* within the peasant masses. To an even greater extent than

"external" factors, this lack of national consciousness is frequently cited as the main reason why the declaration of independence by the BNR in March 1918 failed to be actualized. The general impression is left that while, thanks to the *adradzhenne* movement begun at the turn of the century, much has been accomplished in terms of raising Belarusian national consciousness, much also remains to be done.[178] According to some publications, for example, the Belarusian masses still possess only *social* consciousness which has developed over centuries whereas national consciousness began to develop only with *Nasha Niva* and hence simply had not had sufficient time to emerge fully.[179]

On the Eastern side of the Riga divide, the policy of the Soviet regime initially compared favorably. Indeed, the 1920s in the BSSR is portrayed in Belarusian national accounts as a second 'golden age' of Belarusian arts and culture. This is a consequence primarily of Lenin's attempted 'federalist' solution to the "national question" during the early 1920s which had once again become the source of source of acrimonious debate within the Bolshevik regime. In August 1922, a special commission headed by Stalin was established for the purposes of drafting a new Soviet constitution. In the fall of that year, this group completed its work and Lenin, who was recovering from a serious stroke suffered in May and only a month away from another that would force him out of public life altogether, was presented with a plan proposing that the new Soviet state be based upon the constitution of the 'Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic' ('R.S.F.S.R') adopted in 1918. As Helene Carrere d'Encausse writes, "the Federated Republic of Russia set up by the 1918 constitution did group eight autonomous republics and thirteen autonomous regions, but it was characterized by a high degree of centralization and an almost total lack of local jurisdictional authority ... Under these conditions, proposing the R.S.F.S.R. as a prototype for the federation amounted to advocating centralization extended to a different area."[180] In short,

Stalin's plan amounted to the *de facto* geographic extension of the R.S.F.S.R. and the absorption of non-Russian peoples.

Although, as has been seen, Lenin himself had a clear preference for centralization, and hence the very idea of federation was a substantial concession on his behalf, he was pragmatic enough to recognize that if the support of the minority peoples for Soviet power was to be won, anything smacking of 'Great Russian chauvinism' had to be avoided. Thus, he opposed Stalin's plan in the belief that, if implemented, the new Soviet state would quickly be equated by the non-Russians with its Tsarist predecessor. Russian imperial domination would be back only in a different structural form and under the doctrinal guise of 'proletarian internationalism.' In an article entitled "The Question of Nationalities or Autonomization" dictated in December 1922, Lenin emphasized once more the need to liberate the non-Russian psychologically from their accrued experience of Tsarist oppression, noting that through a policy not merely of "formal equality" but "by one's attitude or by concessions, it is necessary to compensate the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for the suspicion and insults to which the government of the dominant nation subjected them in the past."[181] Lenin was thus convinced that 'federation' was necessary as a *transitory step* of indefinite duration on the way to the socialist unitarism of the future.[182]

The USSR was created in January 1924 with the BSSR being one of the founding signatories. However, it is apparent that a fundamental contradiction was essentially built into the new state from the start. Although anticipating on the ideological level the eventual transcendence of ethnic and national distinctions, the federal system, as has already been suggested, *institutionalized* the concept of nationality within the USSR thereby offering "an organizational framework and political legitimacy for the protection and advancement of the interests of national groups."[183] This tension - embodied in the slogan 'national in form, socialist in

content' - had important 'nation-building' consequences. Indeed, although the Bolsheviks are condemned for having destroyed the BNR, another seeming paradox of the Belarusian 'national idea' is that the BSSR has since become an essential part of the Belarusian national myth.

This is a result primarily of the *Belarusizatsiya* ('Belarusization') phenomenon of the 1920s which was the Belarusian variant of a broader Soviet policy called *korenizatsiya* ("indigenization") instituted at the XII Communist Party Congress in April 1923.[184] Translatable literally as 'rootedness', *korenizatsiya* is, however, perhaps best rendered into English as "indigenization." In any event, within the broader framework of Lenin's 'New Economic Policy' ('NEP'),[185] the goal of the strategy was to encourage through a mixture of compromise and control the *voluntary integration* of the 'non-Russian' nationalities of the former empire into the new Soviet state.[186] Not only were non-Russians to be recruited into the Soviet state and party apparatus but ethnic Russian communists in the border areas were instructed to learn local languages, and the cultural development of the minority peoples was to be encouraged. 'Great Russian chauvinism' was identified as the main danger to proletarian unity within the USSR and while local nationalisms were not to be encouraged, recognition of national heritages was necessary for the new union to succeed. In short, the current period was to be one of the 'flowering' (*rastsvet*) of national cultures in the Soviet Union.

The theoretical foundations of *Belarusizatsiya* were laid by Ihnatouski. who became during this period the official Belarusian 'national historian.'[187] In March 1923, the All-Belarusian Communist Conference adopted a resolution stating in part that the "age-old oppression of nationalities and the Russifying policy of the tsarist government have not given Belorussian culture opportunity for normal development. The Communist Party, in complete agreement with its policy in relation to the question of nationalities, must take all measures for facilitating

work in the Belorussian language and creating normal conditions for the development of Belorussian culture." A month later, the All-Russian Congress formally approved the policy of 'indigenization.' In July 1924, the Second Session of the Central Executive Committee of the BSSR adopted a comprehensive plan for *Belarusizatsiya*.

The essence of *Belarusizatsiya* was the institutionalization of the Belarusian language, which was declared official, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the republic. and the filling of leading positions in society, including the communist party, state and military by ethnic Belarusians. Ihnatouski's *Karotki Narys Historii Belarusi* emphasizing Polack's historical struggle for independence from Kiev and the importance of the Grand Duchy as a 'Belarusian state' became the standard curriculum in East Belarusian schools. This was also a time of unprecedented literary 'flowering' symbolized by the appearance of several new Belarusian-language literary journals including *Polymia* ('The Spark'), *Maladnyak* ('The Saplings') and *Uzvyshsha* ('Excelsior'). As will be expanded upon in later chapters, this literary 'flowering' was defined by a lively debate between writers associated with these journals concerning the proper path for the future development of Belarusian national literature. At issue, in fact, were profound differences over the future of the 'national idea.' *Belarusizatsiya* also witnessed the enlargement of the territory of the BSSR. In 1924, Soviet authorities "returned" most of the Viciebsk and Mahileu districts from Russia. A second 'enlargement' of the BSSR was undertaken in 1926 as an overall result of which the area of the republic increased from 20,000 to 48,500 square miles and the population from 1.5 to 5 million.[188] As will be elaborated in chapter three, owing to the concessionary policy of the Soviet regime, many Belarusian political activists, scholars and intellectuals (including previous skeptics and outright

ideological opponents of the Bolsheviks) came to believe that the 'national idea' was being realized in the BSSR.

However, this promising period of Belarusian 'nation-building' ended in tragedy during the Stalinist terror of the 1930s which witnessed the mass purging of republican party and state structures across the USSR.[189] By the late 1920s, it had become apparent that the 'national in form, socialist in content' formula had created a paradoxical situation wherein, rather than giving rise to a new form of unified Soviet socialist culture, the peoples of the USSR had gradually begun to reassert their particular claims and interests. Within the BSSR, beginning in 1927 an official campaign was launched against alleged Belarusian 'national democrats' grouped together in the fictitious *Sayuz vyzvalenia Belarusi* ('SVB' - 'Union for the Liberation of Belarus').[190] Together with 'non-communists' such as Lastouski and Cvikievich, prominent Belarusian communists including Ihnatouski were falsely accused of belonging to the 'counter-revolutionary' SVB and stripped of their party memberships. The Central Committee of the Belarusian Communist Party resisted, proclaiming its support for the Leninist nationality policy which identified Great Russian chauvinism, not 'National-Democracy', as the primary ideological threat.[191] Successive waves of terror during the 1930s led to the almost complete annihilation of the Belarusian national *intelligentsia* which had begun to crystallize thanks to the *Belarusizatsiya* policy - including Lastouski, Ihnatouski, Cvikievich and many others.[192] In particular, the second purge of 1933-1934 "broke Belorussian national resistance," with the Central Committee of the Belarusian Communist Party now reversing its earlier stand and agreeing with the Moscow authorities that Belarusian nationalism, not Great Russian chauvinism, was the main ideological danger. The BCP structure itself was 'cleansed' with the result that the majority of the BCP delegation which attended the 17th Communist Party Congress in January 1934 were ethnic Russians.[193] As

Vakar writes, "testimonies abound that the wholesale purge which began in 1929 and continued far into 1933 was immeasurably more ruthless than anything the Belorussian nationalists had ever experienced in Poland."[194] Beginning in the 1930s, Belarusian history was re-written along new lines emphasizing that although the differentiation of the Eastern Slavs after the collapse of Kiev made difficult the development of economic and cultural ties "within the formerly united Rus," these were not destroyed altogether. More importantly, neither was the psychological sense of unity and community among Eastern Slavs completely ruptured. Indeed, the claim was that "throughout the course of their subsequent history, the fraternal Eastern Slavic peoples did not lose their unity flowing from a commonality of origins, language, as well as culture, and continually strove for reunification within the framework of a unified Russian state [edinovo russkovo gosudarstva]."[195] This desire appears to have been strongest within the Belarusians. It is claimed that "[b]eing linked to the Russian and Ukrainian peoples by a commonality of origins, and the tie of blood [krovnoi blizostyu], the Belorussian people during the course of its entire history has striven for union with them."[196] In spite of the fact that "for a period of several centuries the Belorussian people was torn away from the Russian people, it always saw in them its true friend and defender [zashchitik]."[197] Not surprisingly, the Belarusian national movement at the turn of the century as a whole was generally portrayed negatively in official Soviet literature. The authoritative Istoria Belorusskoi SSR ('History of the Belorussian SSR'), published in 1958 under the editorial direction of L. Abecedarski, described the political orientation of Nasha Niva, for example, as "bourgeois liberal" and "harmful" to the revolutionary cause in Russia.[198] This view is echoed by the Soviet Belarusian historian Ya. Karniechyk in his influential monograph published in 1968. Within this interpretation, the BNR is portrayed as having been nothing more than a German 'puppet' state. Belarus received its

'statehood' for the first real time thanks to Soviet power in the form of the BSSR.[199]

Despite its tragic conclusion, *Belarusizatsiya* left an enduring legacy as a time of unprecedented "flowering' of the Belarusian 'national idea'; in essence, a 20th century 'golden age' to be recaptured at some point in the future. Indeed, contemporary Belarusian writers express the view that the 'national idea' was, in fact, at least temporarily embodied during the relatively liberal early years of Soviet power. Statistical evidence is cited showing the progress made as far as institutionalizing the Belarusian language in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the republic and the filling of leading positions in society - including the communist party, military, and state, by ethnic Belarusians.[200] Emphasizing the basic belief of modern-day 'revivalist' scholars that a nation which does not know its past has no future, writers during the early 1990s defined the current task as that of continuing the work begun in the 1920s - in other words, instituting a new *Belarusizatsiya*.[201] However, as will be discussed below, this turned out to be much more difficult than even they originally anticipated.

World War II

As Jan Zaprudnik and Michael Urban have written, World War II was a pivotal point in the creation of the modern Belarusian nation.[202] In accordance with the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop 'non-aggression pact' between Nazi Germany and the USSR, Soviet forces entered West Belarus on September 17, 1939. The incorporation of West Belarus into the USSR was swift. Elections to a new National Assembly of West Belarus were held under Soviet supervision in Białystok on October 22, 1939. The new body, consisting of 929 delegates (621 Belarusians, 127 Poles, 72 Jews, 53 Ukrainians, 43 Russians and 10

representatives of other nationalities) convened on October 28-30, 1939 and quickly adopted a series of resolutions requesting the acceptance of West Belarus into the USSR. These were formally approved by the USSR Supreme Soviet on November 2, 1939.[203] This can be regarded as a significant date in the development of the Belarusian 'national idea' for it represented, albeit under conditions of violence and subterfuge, the amalgamation of almost all the ethnically Belarusian territories into a single entity. However, in accordance with a secret protocol unknown to Assembly delegates (the Molotov-Ribbentrop 'non-aggression' pact), it was announced on November 1 that the predominantly ethnically Belarusian Vilna region (comprising 2,750 square miles and a population of 457,000) had been transferred from Poland to Lithuania.

On June 25, 1941, the transparent character of the Nazi-Soviet accord became apparent when German forces invaded the USSR. Soviet defences collapsed rapidly, and Minsk was taken on June 28, 1941. Although initially greeted as liberators by many Belarusians, the ensuing three-year German occupation turned out to be an enormous tragedy for Belarus in economic and especially human terms. According to statistics, during this period the Nazis destroyed more than 200 towns and 9,000 villages. The capital city of Minsk itself was more than 80% destroyed with other major centres, including the second-largest city of Viciebsk, laying in similar ruins.[204] The industrial capacity of the republic was devastated with as much of 90% of factories and enterprises in Minsk, Viciebsk, Homel, Mahileu, Polack and other cities destroyed.[205] Whereas in 1941 the Belarusian population numbered 9.2 million by the end of the war it had fallen to 6.3 million. Experts disagree as to how many of these people actually perished. Piotr Eberhardt notes, for example, that during the early days of the invasion hundreds of thousands of Belarusians were evacuated to the east (Russia) and there remained after the war. Moreover, several hundred thousand others were deported to

Germany as forced labor and did not return. Although Soviet sources claim that 1.4 million Belarusians were murdered by the Nazis, independent statistics put the number much lower - in the area of 750,000 of which perhaps as many as 200,000 were Belarusian Jews targeted for mass execution.[206] None of this, of course, is to diminish the horror of the human tragedy.

On the strength of Hitler's decree of July 17, 1941, the new *Reichsministerium fur die bestezten Ostgebiete* ('Reich Ministry for the Occupied Territories'), known more commonly as the *Ostministerium* ('Eastern Ministry' usually abbreviated as Omi), was created. The new ministry was headed by Alfred Rosenberg. The decree called for the subdivision of the occupied Soviet territories into *Reichkommissariate* ('Reich commissariats') and regional administrative units called *Generalbezirke* or *Generalkommissariate* further subdivided into districts (*Kresigebiete*). Initial German plans called for the creation of a separate Belarusian *Generalbezirk* which, together with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, would be part of *Reichkommissariate Ostland*. In accordance with Hitler's racialist theories whereby Slavic peoples were regarded as 'sub-human' and due for at best enslavement to the German 'master-race,' official Nazi policy viewed the *Reichkommissariate Ostland* as a 'German protectorate,' and sought "by the Germanization of racially suitable elements, by colonization of Germanic races, and by expulsion of racially undesirable elements, to transform this region into a part of the Greater German Reich."[207] However, within this general context, the specific policy towards Belarus remained murky - sometimes it appeared to be destined for 'Germanization,' other times it seemed as if it would be excluded from this process. Indeed, Rosenberg believed that winning some measure of popular support among the occupied Eastern peoples was crucial to the realization of long-term German interests and could not be done without offering a positive and constructive socio-economic vision. Moreover, "in view of the necessity of

weakening the Russian heartland," he also favored the controlled stimulation of local nationalisms including Belarusian and even spoke of the possibility of a form of limited 'autonomy' for Belarus.[208]

Although at the time of its creation, the territory of the Belarusian *Generalbezirk* was greatly reduced relative to the area of the BSSR (the Bialystok and Hrodna regions were incorporated into East Prussia; Vilna and surrounding territory became part of the Lithuanian *Generalbezirk*; while the Brest, Pinsk and Gomel provinces were included in the Ukrainian *Generalbezirk*), Rosenberg had a grand vision for the expansion of Belarus far to the east at the expense of Russia. Smolensk and at least part of Briansk provinces were eventually to be incorporated into the Belarusian *Generalbezirk* which as a result would extend "to within 250 kilometres of Moscow."[209] Endeavoring to emphasize the differences between Belarusians and Great Russians, Rosenberg reintroduced the name *Weissruthenien* or 'White Ruthenia' by which Belarus was known in official German discourse for the duration of the war. Hence, Belarus became the *Weissruthenische Generalbezirk*. However, Rosenberg was under no illusions concerning the long-term character of his plan to stimulate Belarusian nationalism regarding the country as not only economically but culturally "a very much retarded part of the USSR" where the "awakening of a distinct [national] life and the erection of a viable state structure" would be "an extraordinarily slow and difficult undertaking." As he summarized it, "a question mark hangs over the future of the Belarusian or Krivichian nation."[210] German reports during the early days of the occupation stressed the striking difference in terms of national consciousness between Western provinces formerly under Polish rule, where there was reason to believe that it would be possible "slowly to try to foster a separate Belorussian popular consciousness," and the Eastern half where "[a]s a result of Russification, Communization and among the rural elements forcible resettlement of ethnically

alien groups on the collective farms, Belorussian national consciousness is scarcely, or but weakly, in evidence.'"[211]

The principal architect of the Nazi occupation policy in Belarus was *Reichkommissar* Wilhelm Kube, a personal appointee of Hitler. As had been the case two decades earlier with the German military and political leadership and its attitudes towards the BNR, Kube's policy towards the Belarusian 'national idea' was purely *instrumental*. In other words, like his superior Rosenberg, he assessed the 'Belarusian question' from the point of view of German national interests which meant essentially the economic exploitation of this territory in support of the German war-effort and the weakening of historically-dominant Polish and Russian cultural and political influences. However, within this broad mandate, Kube clearly felt that he had certain room for maneuver. Indeed, although nominally part of the *Reichkommissariat Ostland*, the 'White Ruthenian' *Generalkommissariat* "operated almost independently" under Kube's direction.[212]

Kube undertook the effort to appeal to Belarusian popular and national sentiment almost immediately after his arrival through the issuance on September 22, 1941 of his 'Communique to the Belarusian People.' This document took German victory in the war for granted, a development which "for the first time" in their history gave Belarusians the possibility for of "free development" and "a bright future, without Russian-Bolshevik oppression and foreign domination."[213] Furthermore, Belarus was assured prosperity, justice and its rightful place in the emerging new European order. Kube's first normative act, issued several days earlier, had mandated instruction in primary schools (ages 7-14) in the Belarusian language alone as part of a strict regimen which included mathematics, geography, science and physical training. Furthermore, the document warned that use of schools to spread 'Soviet' or 'Polish' ideology would be severely punished.[214]

On October 22, 1941, Kube's personal nominee, Dr. Ivan Jermachenka, who during the inter-war period had been a leading member of the Belarusian émigré community in Prague, was named by Rosenberg head of the new *Belaruski samopomach* ('Belarusian Self-help' hereafter 'BSH'). Enjoying Kube's increasing confidence, Jermachenka was named official adviser to the General Commissar on Belarusian affairs in June 1942. With Kube's support, Jermachenka played a key role in the expansion of Belarusian educational and publishing activities and there is reason to believe that Kube intended for the BSH eventually to be transformed into a instrument of Belarusian self-government under German supervision.[215]

Beginning in 1942, German occupation authorities sought to encourage more actively the controlled development of Belarusian national consciousness primarily in the aim of combatting an increasingly effective Soviet partisan resistance, the roots of which by 1943 numbered more than 200,000 fighters and controlled almost 60% of Belarusian territory.[216] Towards this end, on June 26, 1943, Kube attended a ceremony in Minsk inaugurating the *Sayuz Belaruskai moladzi* ('Union of Belarusian Youth' - 'SBM'). Regarded as probably the singlemost important achievement of Kube's tenure, the creation of the SBM inaugurated a new German propaganda campaign according to which Belarus' was being treated by Berlin as "a positive element" in the building of the "New Europe."[217] On June 26, 1943, Kube attended a ceremony in Minsk inaugurating the *Sayuz Belaruskai moladzi* ('Union of Belarusian Youth,' hereafter 'SBM'). As he defined it, the purpose of the new organization was to 'give leadership to Belarusian youth who, on the basis of the 'New Europe,' are struggling against Bolshevism.[218] In the fall of 1943, the SBM began activities in the Eastern half of Belarus as well. As Turonek emphasizes, it was at this time the only social organization officially-sanctioned by Berlin facilitating educational and other

activities "in the Belarusian national spirit."[219] Moreover, based as it was primarily in the cities, the Belarusian youth movement was not easily countered by the Soviet partisans who were active primarily in the countryside. Indeed, membership in the SBM grew rapidly to more than 100,000 by mid-1944.[220]

On June 27, 1943, with the consent of Rosenberg, the *Belaruskaya Rada daveru* ('Belarusian Council of Trust' or, more commonly known simply as the 'Men of Trust') was created. Designed not as an independent Belarusian organization but an integral part of the German occupation administration (in essence, an 'advisory board' to Kube), the 'Men of Trust' was chaired by Vaclau Ivanouski, the current mayor of Minsk. Altogether, the *Rada* comprised 16 members, among them representatives of local councils and administrative organs. Speaking on the occasion of the founding of the 'Men of Trust,' Kube, reiterating that the Nazis had arrived as the conquerors of Bolshevism and "liberators" of the Belarusian people, assigned the new group responsibility for providing advice in respect of three key questions: the development of the educational system and upbringing of youth; economic reconstruction; and Belarusian-German cooperation in the struggle against the Soviet partisans."[221] However, the 'Men of Trust' was established during a period of deepening crisis for the Nazi occupation regime. In early September 1943, German offices in Minsk were destroyed by Soviet agents. German retribution was swift and brutal - over 300 men, women and children residing in two neighbouring streets were summarily rounded up and executed. Later that same month, Kube himself was assassinated by a bomb planted in his bedroom.[222]

Kube's successor SS *Brigadeführer* Wilhlem Gottberg was initially extremely reluctant to play the card of Belarusian nationalism. Indeed, as Dallin writes, "some of his aides considered Belorussian nationalism a mere 'invention' and would gladly have forgotten about it."[223] However, faced with an increasingly dire

military situation, Gottberg was forced reluctantly to move towards the policy of his predecessor. On December 2, 1943 he called into session the 'Men of Trust' in order to seek their advice. On December 21, 1943, Gottberg approved the establishment of the *Belaruskaya Centralnaya Rada* ('BCR') appointing as its President Radaslau Astrouski. Superseding both the BSH and the 'Men of Trust,' Gottberg described the BCR as the official "representative of the Belarusian people" which had the main task of "mobilizing all available Belarusian forces in the struggle against Bolshevism."[224] Officially, the mandate of the BCR was to act as an advisory council possessing some real degree of autonomy in the areas of education, culture and social services. In fact, however, the Council's prerogatives were limited. The President served at the discretion of the General Commissar who could dismiss him at any moment and all projects developed by the BCR, including in those three fields where it supposedly had the right to act independently, had to be approved by German authorities.[225] The next significant German concession came on April 1, 1944 when Hitler signed a decree separating Belarus from the *Reichkommissariate Ostland* and establishing it as a new independent *Generalkommissariat* directly subordinate to Berlin. Finally, in June 1944 a second 'All-Belarusian National Congress' was held attended by 1100 delegates from across Belarus.

Recalling the original declaration of the BNR in March 1918, the congress adopted a series of resolutions the most important of which declared that "the sole legitimate representative of the Belarusian people today is the BCR headed by President Astrouski." The legitimacy of the BSSR as a form of Belarusian statehood was denied and all political ties with Russia were declared severed. A telegram was dispatched in the name of the Congress to Hitler assuring him of the unswerving support of the Belarusian people in the struggle against "our common enemy, Bolshevism."[226] Dallin, Vakar, Turonek and others are surely right to

observe that, in view of the rapidly deteriorating military situation, the congress and its resolutions bore no practical significance. It was, in fact, "the last hurrah of Belarusian nationalism under German occupation."[227] By now, the military situation for the Nazis in Belarus' was beyond hope. Minsk was retaken by the Red Army on July 3, 1944. Representatives of the BCR, including Astrouski, fled with the retreating German armies to Berlin. Nonetheless, it has become an important piece of Belarusian national mythology.

Following the war, the partisan movement became the essence of *a new Soviet Belarusian national myth* created by the Soviet regime based on the previously-discussed thesis of primordial Slavic unity coupled with the values of proletarian internationalism said to have inspired the 'heroic' wartime resistance. According to this interpretation, Belarus was 'rewarded' for its heroism after the war by membership in such prestigious international organizations as the United Nations and UNESCO. Another component of this myth was the discrediting of Belarusian wartime national leaders, who, as will be discussed further in chapter five, sought to take advantage of German policy for their own strategic ends as "Nazi collaborators" and Belarusian national symbols previously banned by the Soviet regime and 'revived' during the occupation years as 'Fascist.'[228] Having become deeply-embedded in the Belarusian popular consciousness during the post-war era, the power of this Sovietized identity myth based on the partisans cannot be underrated.

Reacting against this myth, contemporary Belarusian scholars have argued that the experience of World War II is another aspect of modern Belarusian history in need of thorough "revision" and purging of Soviet falsehoods. To begin with, some nationally-minded writers (including former partisans) argue that the wartime resistance proved, first and foremost, that Belarusians had not lost their historic sense of national identity ('spirit') and will to preserve their independence

and freedom. These writers drew attention to a phenomenon obscured by Soviet historians - namely, the existence of Belarusian national partisan brigades which continued to be active into the late 1940s. In some cases, the war-time determination to fight for Belarusian independence is held up as an example to be followed today.[229] However, notwithstanding the 'revisionist' claims of some contemporary Belarusian writers concerning the 'national' character of the resistance, it is apparent that - unlike in Ukraine and Lithuania - the communist influence within the partisan movement was far stronger than the 'national.' Indeed, even a cursory survey of a large 'partisan press', which by mid-1943 numbered more than 140 newspapers and periodicals including 65 in the Belarusian language, shows that, as opposed to the national motives, symbols and themes emphasized in materials published by Belarusian wartime political organizations (to be discussed further in chapter five), these newspapers typically emphasized such 'internationalist' notions as the heroic struggle of the 'Soviet people' to liberate "the Soviet Motherland."[230]

At times citing the ground-breaking work of the Polish Belarusian scholar Jerzy Turonek, other writers emphasize the significance of a war-time Belarusian national *adradzhenne*.[231] Indeed, although beset by deep internal contradictions and bitter personal disputes, it can be argued that German policy did create "the pre-conditions for the reanimation of Belarusian national sentiment quashed during the 1930s and the revival of the ideal of Belarusian statehood."[232] By 1943, the proportion of ethnic Belarusians in the civil administration and police had grown dramatically - exceeding 80% in the former and 60% in the latter. Moreover, Belarusians frequently occupied supervisory positions within the bureaucracy. In the second year of the occupation alone, more than 30 new Belarusian-language schools were opened which became "centres for the upbringing of children in the national spirit and activity of the SBM."[233] New

Belarusian-language newspapers and journals appeared. A national theater began operation in Minsk within the framework of which was created a new Belarusian national opera. This contributed to "the strengthening of the national consciousness of the average citizen" which functioned as an increasingly effective "counterbalance to Soviet ideology."[234] As Turonek writes, the fact that in such highly unfavorable circumstances, Belarusian nationalism became a significant social and political force "was undoubtedly the result of the easy acceptance of the national idea by society, especially young people" as best attested to by the rapid growth of the SBM.[235]

During the late 1980s, an attempt was made by Belarusian national intellectuals to rehabilitate the *Pahonya* and white-red-white banner by means of educating the Belarusian public in their deeper historical significance as symbols of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and Belarus' European heritage. Against the Soviet 'slandering' of the Pahonya, scholars such as Tkachou posed the obvious question: *are the symbols themselves to blame for how they are used?*[236] An important role in this process was played by a number of unofficial patriotic youth groups which emerged in Belarus beginning in 1986-1987, the most important of which were *Talaka* ('Shared Labour'); *Tuteishiya* ('The Locals'); *Spadchyna* ('Heritage') and *Svitanak* ('The Dawn'). At the time of independence from the USSR in 1991, these symbols were adopted as those of the new Belarusian state.

The Post-War Era: The Contradictory 'Masherau Legacy'

The post-war history of the BSSR is assessed by contemporary Belarusian writers in contradictory terms. On the one hand, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, it is depicted as the final stage in the "degradation" of the Belarusian 'national spirit.' The cause of this is attributed above all to the thoroughgoing

linguistic Russification of Belarusian society during the long tenure of First Secretary Piotr Miranovich Masherau (1965-1980), one of the most important figures in Belarusian political history.[237] On the other hand, concurring in this respect with Soviet assessments, the post-war period is recognized by many nationally-minded Belarusian scholars to have been a time of *real material, economic and technological progress which potentially augurs well for the future independence of Belarus.* Indeed, under the leadership of Masherau, the BSSR outpaced other Soviet republics - including Russia "in economic growth and industrial output, and annual increases to labor productivity in industry and agriculture were the highest in the USSR."[238] Moreover, the Belarusian population enjoyed comparatively high living standards among Soviet republics, in some key indices - such as infant and maternal mortality rates - approaching West-European levels.[239]

Although it is not generally cited by Belarusian writers themselves, the post-war experience of the BSSR must be understood within the context of a prolonged and acute debate within Soviet political and academic circles over the future of nations within the USSR dating from the landmark 20th Communist Party Congress in February 1956. At this Congress, Nikita Khrushchev delivered his famous denunciation of Stalin which sent shock waves throughout the communist world. Part of his critique was to condemn the dead dictator for "crude violations" of the Leninist nationality policy including the wholesale deportation of nations. As part of a broader 'return to Lenin' theme underlying the Congress, Khrushchev declared that the CPSU would henceforth fully restore Leninist principles in its approach to the 'national question.'[240] As an editorial published at this time in the official CPSU theoretical journal Kommunist defined it, "the flowering of the economies and cultures of all the nations and nationalities populating the USSR" was to be encouraged as a necessary precondition of their eventual 'drawing

together' and ultimate 'fusion' into a unified communist culture to be achieved in the distant future.[241]

However, beginning in 1958-1959, Khrushchev's line on the 'national question' began to harden. This was evident in a proposed education reform of November 1958 clearly designed to promote the study of Russian at the expense of national languages. In particular, the reform's provision that the parents of 'non-Russian' schoolchildren now be able to choose whether they wanted their offspring to be educated in either the native tongue or Russian, as opposed to compulsory instruction in both as was presently the case, made it likely that the latter would be chosen since command of Russian was essential in terms of later educational and career opportunities.[242] A firmer line on the 'national question' was also apparent in the theoretical literature where articles downplaying *rastsvet* and emphasizing more *sblizhenie* and *sliyanie* began to appear.[243]

The Third CPSU Program, adopted at the 22nd CPSU Congress in 1961, evidenced in full this shift in thinking. According to this document, the obliteration of class distinctions and development of "communist social relations" within the USSR was "intensifying the social homogeneity of nations and contributing to the development of common communist traits in their culture, ethics, and way of life." As a consequence, the boundaries between Soviet republics were said to be "increasingly losing their former significance."[244] In his report on the Party's new theoretical blueprint to the Congress, Khrushchev reiterated the fundamental Leninist thesis that "under socialism, two interconnected, progressive tendencies operate in the national question." On the one hand, nations are "undergoing a tempestuous all-round development [*rastsvet*]"; on the other, "they are drawing ever closer together and their influence and mutual enrichment are intensifying [*sblizhenie*]."[245] However, whereas his emphasis at the 20th Congress had been on *rastsvet*, Khrushchev now clearly

stressed the process of *sblizhenie*. In fact, he seemed to speak of the "flowering" half of the dialectic as essentially complete, declaring that "the Soviet system has roused to life and brought to their flowering all the formerly oppressed and rightless peoples who had been at various levels of historical development from patriarchal clan to capitalism."[246] This "flowering" had led to the emergence of "a new historical community of people who are of different nationalities but have characteristic features in common - the Soviet people."[247] Although it would undergo significant revision, this concept would henceforth be the cornerstone of Soviet nationality policy for the duration of the post-Stalin era.

According to Khrushchev, the defining characteristics of the "Soviet people" were: a common socialist homeland - the USSR; a common socialist economic base; a common social-class structure; a common world-view - Marxism-Leninism; a common goal - the building of communism; and, finally, "many common traits in their spiritual makeup and psychology."[248] While Khrushchev endorsed the ultimate goal of 'fusing' nations (*sliyanie*), he added the cautionary note that "even after communism has in the main been built, it will be premature to pronounce the fusion of nations. Lenin, as we know, said that state and national distinctions would exist long after the triumph of socialism in all countries." Nonetheless, as understood by Khrushchev, the notion of the "the Soviet people" supposed that the USSR was in transition "from a multiethnic society attached to its national characteristics to a society undergoing ethnic fusion."[249] However, under Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev, these expectations were significantly scaled back.

At the 23rd CPSU Congress in March 1966, while calling on the Party "and all communists, irrespective of their nationality to continue to work indefatigably to bring about the further comprehensive rapprochement [*sblizhenie*] of the peoples of the Soviet Union," Brezhnev made no reference to *sliyanie* nor any mention that

the effacement of national distinctions remained the Party's long-term goal.[250] Brezhnev's moderation of the language of Soviet nationality policy was undoubtedly in part a reflection of the fact that the Congress took place in the midst of major intellectual controversy concerning the national question unfolding primarily in the context of a "symposium" sponsored by *Voprosyi historii* ('Problems of History'), the theoretical journal of the History Department of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The symposium, which ran from January 1966 to November 1968, was entitled "Discussion of the Concept - The Nation," centred on the problem of methodology; that is "the conceptual framework that must be used in selecting, organizing, and interpreting information about nationality affairs within - and to some extent outside - the USSR."[251] In the *Voprosyi istorii* articles, two contrasting approaches to methodology emerged.

The first can be described as "assimilationist" and was based almost exclusively on reference to the classics of Marxism-Leninism. It held that nations retained no links with pre-national ethnic forms and were exclusively the product of the historical transition from feudalism to capitalism. As such, they were beset even from birth by deep class conflict with the consequence that the working classes of all countries were ideologically and emotionally more strongly bound together than they were to other classes within their own national entity (viz. the concept of "proletarian internationalism"). While acknowledging the duality of the *rastsvet-sblizhenie* dialectic, "assimilationists" stressed the latter and saw no objective obstacles to the accelerated "drawing together" and "fusion" of nations in the "not-too-distant future." Counterposing this framework was a "moderate" approach which projected the existence of nations much farther into the past and foresaw their continued existence much further into the future. This framework recognized a certain degree of inter-class social and psychological ties within capitalist countries (in other words, de-emphasized somewhat the sharpness of

"class conflict"). These theorists typically gave greater emphasis to the concept of *rastsvet* than *sblizhenie*, and either avoided discussion altogether of ethnic "fusion" or postponed it for an indefinite historical period.[252]

At the same time, a parallel debate was ongoing in various Soviet legal and academic journals concerning the future of Soviet federalism. A "pro-federalist" perspective, dwelling favorably on Lenin's federal compromise of the early 1920s as the best means of assuring the voluntary union of diverse ethnic and national groups, argued that the current political system based on national-territorial divisions was still desirable and would remain so for the foreseeable future. In contrast, a "de-federalist" position, based, it would seem, on firmer theoretical ground, held that Lenin had been willing to accept federalism only as a temporary, transitional vehicle designed not to perpetuate national distinctions but facilitate the "drawing together" and eventual "fusion" of nations. Some of these writers insinuated at least that federalism had essentially served its purpose in the USSR and the political reorganization of the Soviet state on a unitary basis was now in order.[253] The dual debates over methodology and the future of Soviet federalism obviously dovetailed. The "assimilationist" methodological approach obviously supported the "de-federalist" view; while the "moderate" approach supported the "pro-federalist" position. Not surprisingly, a number of writers who participated in the *Voprosyi istorii* symposium were simultaneously publishing articles on the question of federalism.[254]

Although the Soviet leadership made no direct intervention in these ongoing debates, it is apparent that the combined more "moderate - pro-federalist" perspective gradually came to prevail. This is evident in Brezhnev's main contribution to Marxist-Leninist ideology - the concept of "developed socialism" (*razvitoi sotsializm*). Although Brezhnev himself began to use the term as early as 1967, did not come into official vogue until the XXIV CPSU Congress in 1971. It

received its first theoretical elaboration in the Party organ *Kommunist* in December 1971[255], and from then on the monthly journal usually included a section of essays entitled "Socio-Economic and Political Problems of Developed Socialism."[256] As a theoretical innovation, "developed socialism" denoted a separate stage of Soviet historical development which followed its own inherent laws of growth and change. It was, in the words, of Donald Kelley, "an economic, social and political entity in its own right, thus conveying legitimacy to the political and social structures developing within it." Most importantly, the concept entailed a significant *scaling-down* of expectations for the time-frame involved in the transition of the USSR from a socialist to communist society. As regarded the national question, "developed socialism" conceded that national distinctions, while gradually losing their former significance, were indeed likely to last for the indeterminate duration of this new historical phase, and, in the form of secondary cultural differences, long into the period of full communism. As typified by Brezhnev's remarks on nationality policy at the XXIV Congress itself which again avoided reference to *sliyanie*, the "fusion" of nations was indefinitely postponed.[257] Brezhnev thus retained Khrushchev's ambiguous dialectic of *rastsvet* and *sblizhenie* but saw it as "leading to a pluralistic integration of nations within a firmly unified multinational community rather than their amalgamation into a single ethnically undifferentiated."[258] As Brezhnev himself noted in 1977, proposals to introduce into the new Soviet constitution adopted that year "the concept of a single Soviet nation, to liquidate union and autonomous republics or to curtail sharply the sovereignty of the union republics, depriving them of the right to leave the USSR, and the right to foreign dealings" had been rejected. The "socio-economic unity of the Soviet people in no way means the disappearance of national differences ... [therefore] ... we would be following a dangerous path if we began to force artificially the objective process of the drawing together of

nations."[259] Indeed, the constitution itself defined the "Soviet people" in terms of a common world outlook and shared ideological values but *not* ethnic or national homogeneity.[260]

As concerns the place of Belarus within the broader 'Soviet people,' it is interesting to examine Masherau's own views on the 'national question' as expressed within the context of this debate. On the one hand, as his critics in the Belarusian national *intelligentsia* point out, it is indeed true that manifestations of Belarusian 'national dissent' (the 'national idea') during the early 1960s and 1970s were resolutely repressed. Former associates who knew him well recall the First Secretary as a convinced internationalist who believed sincerely in the 'communist idea.'[261] Indeed, in his speeches and writings, Masherau warned frequently of the danger of "relapses into nationalism and nationalistic views," defining the 'national question' in doctrinaire terms as "one of the acute elements of the ideological-political struggle between socialism and capitalism."[262] On the other hand, it is also the case that in his public pronouncements on nationality policy (including at CPSU Congresses), Masherau tended to join the Ukrainian First Secretary Piotr Shelest in emphasizing more the 'flowering' than 'drawing together' of nations within the USSR. Furthermore, like Shelest once again, and unlike his contemporaries in several other republics, Masherau avoided facile praise of the "Russian elder brother," insisting that the USSR was a union of *equal* and *sovereign* republics.[263]

On the political level, although most Belarusian national scholars deny that the BSSR had any significant say over its own affairs, it can be argued that under Masherau the republic's 'sovereignty' within the USSR was not entirely *pro forma*. As pointed out in the discussion by Yaroslav Bilinsky, together with Shelest, Masherau opposed the December 1973 proposal of CPSU ideologist Mikhail Suslov to dismantle the Soviet federal system.[264] Moreover, as Michael

Urban's study of 'elite circulation' within the BSSR has shown, like other Soviet republics, Belarus under Masherau achieved a measurable degree of *administrative autonomy* within the USSR. Indeed, it became something of a "self-governing unit."[265] Masherau is thus best viewed in the same political light as Shelest and his Lithuanian contemporary Antanas Snieckus - something of a communist 'autonomist.'[266] In this sense, the Soviet period as a whole, but Masherau's tenure in particular, can be regarded as having given Belarus not only the formal attributes of state sovereignty but practical experience in *limited self-rule*. Accordingly, some Belarusian writers have argued that the BSSR actually laid the foundations upon which "real" Belarusian statehood can now be built.[267]

Owing primarily to the institutionalization of nationality through the Soviet federal system, the most appropriate characterization of the BSSR is that it contributed further to the development of a *territorial* sense of Belarusian national identity. As David Marples puts it, the Soviet legacy has "provided a basis for the existence of a Republic of Belarus into the twenty-first century; a state with clearly- defined borders; and a seat in the United Nations." Moreover, the BSSR "contributed toward national self-awareness in that it united most ethnic Belarusian territories (with some glaring omissions) in one entity."[268] Perhaps the best summation of Masherau's controversial legacy is the observation that "[t]he Soviet Belarusian was practically no different from the Russian in culture, spoke (and continues to speak) Russian, and didn't know Belarusian or knew it poorly. At the same time, he knew for certain that he was Belarusian, a citizen of the USSR - an equal Soviet republic and even a member of the United Nations - and that his native language was Belarusian."[269] In other words, thanks to the 'institutionalization of nationality' and the continuing contradictions of post-war

Soviet nationality policy, the Soviet state in the post-war era was not simply 'nation-destroying' but 'nation-building.'[270]

The Belarusian National *Mythmoteur* in Literature

Together with historiography, the Belarusian national *mythmoteur* has been evident in the realm of Belarusian national literature. Indeed, reflecting the profound influence of Romanticism, literature played a key role in the process of 'cultural awakening' among the Slavic peoples of East-Central Europe. This was evident in Russia as well where intellectuals such as the great literary critic Vissarion Belinsky placed enormous stock in the value of literature for generating a new sense of community transcending narrow class and estate interests wherein, moreover, the unique and irreplacable national 'Spirit' would come to self-expression.[271]

It is generally agreed that modern Belarusian literature begins with the anonymous *Eneida navyvarat* ('Travesty of the Aeneid'), based on a similar work by the Ukrainian poet Ivan Kotlyarevski and published orginally in 1798. The *Eneida* was likely written in the first quarter of the 19th century and appeared in 1845. This work was followed by another anonymous poem *Taras na parnassie* ('Taras on Parnasus') which is believed to have been written about 10 years after the *Eneida*. Although crude and containing a number of evident 'Russianisms', these poems demonstrated the literary potential of the Belarusian language and acquiried considerable popularity within the minor Polish gentry.[272] It was from within this class that emerged the first poet and playwright who consciously chose Belarusian as his vehicle of literary expression, Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievich who began his literary career in 1846 with the publication of a muscial play in two acts entitled *Selianka* ('The Peasant Woman'), the music itself being scored by the

Polish composer Moniuszko. Dunin-Marcinkievich's greatest contribution to the cause of Belarusian "literary awakening' was his translation during the 1850s of Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*. However, as will be discussed further in chapter two, notwithstanding his deep attachment to the Belarusian language and culture, the work of Dunin-Marcinkievich should be regarded as representing a new stage in the 'unconscious' phase of Belarusian national awakening as the author himself clearly did not define his identity as 'Belarusian.'

Reflecting the continuing influence of Romanticism, the anonymous writer 'Danila Borovik' (likely a young Belarusian populist) emphasized at the very beginnings of the 'conscious' Belarusian revival in the 1880s the need for the Belarusian people not simply to know but *respect* and *love* their historical past when "our land also lived a life full of historical events and even had influence ... over Lithuanian which used Byelorussian as its official language."[273] Together with, as will be discussed in the next chapter, an inclination to define the nation above all in linguistic terms, the Romantic strain in the first genuinely Belarusian 'national' poet Francishak Bahushevich (1840-1900) at the end of the 19th century manifested itself in the writer's concern with the historical fate (*los*) of his people through attention to the Belarusian historical past and especially the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Specifically, he recalls how more than 500 years ago Belarusians and Lithuanians together created a great state which stretched from the Baltic to Black Seas.[274]

Howeover, Belarusian literary *renaissance* really begins with *Nasha Niva* whose appearance inspired the rapid development of Belarusian national literature. Also in 1906, the Belarusian publishing house *Zahlanie Sonca i u Nasha Akonca* ("Into Our Little Window the Sun Will Also Shine") began operation in St. Petersburg. Established primarily on the impetus once again of Ivanouski, it was the most important Belarusian publishing house during the period 1906-1914.[275]

Notwithstanding difficult financial and other conditions, during the course of its existence, *Zahlanie Sonca i u Nasha Akonca* published 38 Belarusian-language books with a mass circulation of more than 100,000 copies.[276] The functioning of *Zahlanie Sonca i u Nasha Akonca* effectively came to an end in the spring of 1913 when Ivanouski withdrew from the organization and opened the new *Belarusian Publishing Society* in Vilna. Although its operation was cut short by the outbreak of World War I, the BPS succeeded in publishing 14 Belarusian-language books with a total circulation of 45,000 copies.[277] In sum, between 1910 and 1914, the total number of Belarusian-language books published by various organizations exceeded 70 with a combined circulation of 226,600.[278] In addition to new publishing houses, the number of Belarusian-language journals and newspapers began to multiply rapidly especially after 1910. For example, in 1911, Anton Luckievich began preparatory work for the publication of *Maladaya Belarus* ('Young Belarus') the first issue of which appeared in May 1912. Two more issues appeared - at the end of 1912 and in May 1913 respectively. Each comprised more than 150 pages with space devoted to current events as well as historical, cultural and literary subjects.[279] Cognizant of the overwhelmingly agrarian nature of Belarusian society at the turn of the 20th century, writers associated with *Nasha Niva* consciously drew on the myths, symbols and *motifs* of traditional peasant folklore in the effort to communicate the 'national idea' to the masses.

The Romantic 'return to the past' in the newly-emerging Belarusian national literature was perhaps most clearly evident in the person of the poet Janka Kupala whose post-1910 work contains "the clearest and most comprehensive pictures of the past, both of the legendary and historical period of the independent sovereign principalities with their democratic order up to the XII century and later the period of the Grand Duchy."[280] The lyrical poems 'Advechnaya pesnya', 'Kurhan', 'Z minulikh dzyon' and 'Yana i ya' are generally regarded as the best of Kupala's

Romantic works.[281] As was the case in general with regard to the strengthening of the Romantic trend in Belarusian literature at this time, Kupala's Romanticism was clearly conditioned by the Stolypin reaction of 1908-1909. In the context of increasing pessimism following the collapse of hopes associated with the revolutionary events of 1905, the poet consciously sought to juxtapose against a depressing reality an idealized and poeticized interpretation of the past. However, as he himself made clear in a 1910 poem dedicated to the author of *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* entitled 'Dudar' ('The Piper'), this 'romantic turn' was also inspired by the ground-breaking historiographical work of Lastouski. As was the case with Lastouski, the 'return to the past' for Kupala was thus meant to serve a specific aim - *the [re-]awakening of Belarusian historical memory* since, in his view, without knowledge of the nation's 'legendary' past there could be no future.[282]

As will be discussed in chapter four, reflective of the radicalizing influence on national literature of Marxist ideology, a new generation of Soviet Belarusian writers during the 1920s consciously strove to depart from the historical Romanticism of the *Nasha Niva* scholars through the Romanticization of the Bolshevik revolution. This did not prevent them, however, from perishing in the Stalinist terror. Henceforth, in accordance with the principles of 'socialist realism,' idealization or mythification of the pre-Soviet past in national literature was officially proscribed.

Nonetheless, during the post-war era, it is clear that some Soviet Belarusian writers fought a valiant 'rear-guard action' to revive the national 'spirit' through a conscious return to the historical past. Leading Belarusian literary scholars and critics of this period such as Sciapan Aleksandrovich, Aleh Lojka, and Adam Maldzis published biographies and other materials on the lives and work of such important luminaries of Belarusian literary history as Vincent

Dunin-Marcinkievich, Bahushevich, Kupala, Kolas, and Bahdanovich.[283] An especially significant event was the appearance during the early 1970s of previously unpublished primary texts from the *Nasha Niva* period, especially of lesser known poets and writers of the time such as 'Jadvihin Sh.' (the pseudonym for Anton Lavicki [1868-1922]), 'Hallas Leuchyk' (pen-name of Ilya Laukovich [1880-1944]) and 'Karus Kahanec' (Kazimir Kastravicki [1886-1918]). Arnold McMillin fittingly described this as "a revival revived" in which Aleksandrovich and I. P. Chyhryn played the leading roles.[284]

However, the best example of appreciating the didactic value of history during the Soviet period was the writer Uladzimir Karatkievich. Virtually alone among his contemporaries, Karatkievich worked in the *genre* of historical prose and can be regarded as the founder of the Belarusian historical novel, the first of which entitled *Nel'ha zabic* ('We Must Not Forget') was published in the literary journal *Polymia* in 1962. The main hero of the story, a young Belarusian intellectual named Andrei Hrinkievich studying in Moscow, emerges as a Belarusian patriot in the image of Kastus Kalinouski - Karatkievich's favorite hero from the Belarusian past, Andrei's great-grandfather was a participant in the 1863 rebellion and, indeed, the entire Hrinkievich family is animated by a deep feeling of Belarusian patriotism which Andrei maintains even though far away from home. His sense of national identity is further strengthened by his researches into Belarusian history and he even begins to write verse in the national language.[285]

Karatkievich's interpretation of Belarusian history is consciously poeticized and idealized. As the writer himself stressed, this idealization of Belarusian history (like Kupala, Kolas, Bahdanovich, Lastouski and others in the Belarusian literary movement before him) was meant to serve a clearly-defined purpose - *the awakening of national consciousness among Belarusians, especially younger generations*.[286] In the best tradition of Karatkievich, Belarusian writers in the

post-Soviet context have continued to exhibit a Romantic concern with the didactic value of history. For Vitaut Charopka, history is not simply the recording of dates, events and 'facts,' but a "spiritual treasure" which brings people together, animating their memory and "awakening national consciousness."[287] Furthermore, it teaches "moral lessons which prevent us from repeating mistakes of the past' and 'instructs us to love and respect our homeland bequeathed by our fathers and grandfathers."[288] However, notwithstanding the efforts of Belarusian writers, the post-Soviet context has also made clear the extent of the *degradation* of Belarusian 'historical memory'.

The Extent of the Crisis of Belarusian 'Historical Memory'

According to contemporary writers, as visible in broad strata of society today, the result of this has been the emergence of a new human prototype - the 'Soviet Belarusian.' This individual is described as exhibiting an attitude of 'national nihilism' exemplified by an inability or refusal to recognize the unique value of the Belarusian national-cultural heritage and the need for the existence of Belarus as an independent state.[289] Owing to this prevailing nihilism it is difficult, according to some of the gravest assessments, to argue that a Belarusian nation currently exists. The legacy of the totalitarian past is so deeply embedded in the consciousness of society that there exists only the spiritual-moral, artistic, philosophical and linguistic 'fragments' which might, with great effort, be fused together in the form of a national 'community' (*supolnasc*).[290]

During the crisis of the USSR in the late 1980s, Belarusian intellectuals, invoking consciously the tradition of Lastouski, Ihnatouski and other figures from Belarusian history discredited by the Soviet regime, attempted to address this crisis by returning the 'national idea' to society. The Belarusian National Front ('BNF')

was formed in Minsk on October 19, 1988 as an umbrella organization linking together various unofficial groups similar to those which emerged in other Soviet republics during at this time. It was created initially as the political wing of *Martyraloh* ('Martyrology'), an organization founded in June 1988 by Belarusian intellectuals following the publication of findings by the prominent archaeologist Zyanon Pazhnyak documenting the existence of more than 500 mass graves in the Kurapty woods near Minsk. Pazhnyak's disclosure provided irrefutable evidence of the genocidal character of Stalinist policies in Belarus during and immediately after World War II. Pazhnyak was elected chairman of the BNF whose executive committee also comprised the writers Vasil Bykau and Nil Hilievich. The BNF chose the historic name *Adradzhenne* ('Awakening') which had also been that of the Belarusian national movement at the turn of the 20th century centred around *Nasha Niva*. In this respect, a clear parallel to the Baltic case exists inasmuch as "the upheavals of the late 1980s were named *Atmoda* ('Awakening') in Latvia and *Atgimimas* ('Rebirth') in Lithuania, both names associated with the origins of nationhood." [291] Reminiscent of the original *Nasha Niva* movement, as reflected in its early *samizdat* publications,[292] the initial BNF agenda was based on the perceived need for the ethno-cultural and especially *linguistic* 'revival' of the Belarusian nation.

At the height of its influence, the BNF numbered more than 100,000 members including representatives of informal youth groups, independent unions and environmental groups.[293] While it is thus true that the BNF succeeded in becoming something of a 'mass movement,' it was not able to mobilize the Belarusian population at large around its interpretation of the 'national idea' in a way similar, for example, to the *Sajudis* or *Rukh* movements in neighbouring Lithuania and Ukraine. [294] On the one hand, this can be explained by the hostility of the Belarusian communist regime which denied the very legitimacy of the

popular movement from the beginning, pursuing a policy of official discrediting and harrassment of Front leaders. Nonetheless, as will be elaborated in subsequent chapters, the BNF made some important gains, especially in the field of language policy but also on the political level.

In June 1990, as part of a general trend across the USSR, Belarus issued a declaration of 'state sovereignty' which was the result of intense negotiations between the BCP leadership and parliamentary opposition led by the BNF. The document stipulated that "the right to act in the name of all the people of the republic shall be vested exclusively in the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR," and that within the territory of the republic, "the constitution of the BSSR and the laws of the BSSR shall be supreme." It also asserted that the government of the BSSR would "ensure the functioning of the Belarusian language in all spheres of social life, preservation of national traditions and historical symbols," and that the republic reserved the right to establish its own national bank, raise its own armed forces and declared the intention of becoming a 'nuclear-free zone' maintaining a position of official neutrality in international affairs. Finally, the declaration proposed to "immediately commence the elaboration of an agreement on a union of sovereign socialist states."[295] Although highly critical of the call for a re-negotiated 'socialist union,' BNF leader Pazhnyak noted nonetheless that the declaration reflected significant elements of the Front's own program.[296]

However, regime intransigence was *not* the most formidable obstacle to BNF mobilization efforts; rather, the most profound problem was the 'Sovietized' state of Belarusian public consciousness. In contrast to the Baltic states and even Ukraine, popular pressure for Belarusian independence was *minimal*. The results of an August 1990 poll showed that 80% of Belarusian respondents opposed 'separatist tendencies.'[297] During the March 1991 pan-Soviet referendum on the future of the USSR, 82.7% of Belarusian voters expressed a will to retain the

union.[298] In contrast to Ukraine, a referendum on Belarusian independence from the USSR was never held for the simple reason that it undoubtedly would have been defeated. The declaration of Belarusian independence in September 1991 following the abortive anti-Gorbachev *putsch* represented above all an act of self-defence and last-ditch effort at retaining political power on the part of Belarusian communist authorities discredited by their tacit support for the *coup* plotters.

As the experience of neighboring republics demonstrates, given the pervasive lack of historical consciousness within the population, the project of reawakening the national historical memory requires the active support of the *state*. An important comparative contrast can be drawn here with Ukraine. Under both Presidents Kravchuk and, to a lesser extent, Kuchma, the state has been generally supportive of the effort 'to return' Ukrainian national symbols and heritage to society.[299] On the other hand, although as will be discussed further in chapter five, during the period 1992-1994 Belarusian authorities under the leadership of Stanislau Shushkievich attempted to follow a similar supportive policy, the Belarusian state since has done its best to deny this effort. The election of Alyaksandr Lukashenka as President in July 1994 was a watershed in this process.

A self-styled 'political maverick,' Lukashenka defeated his primary opponent, former communist Prime Minister Vyachaslau Kiebich, in a landslide, winning more than 80% of the vote. The campaign platform of both men was essentially the same - political and economic reintegration with Russia as the most viable means of easing a profound economic crisis engendered by the precipitous collapse of the USSR. However, Lukashenka skillfully exploited his position as head of a special parliamentary commission investigating alleged 'corruption' in government to discredit Kiebich, portraying himself in quintessentially populist terms as a 'man of the people' who would bring integrity and order to post-Soviet

Belarusian politics. Lukashenka's victory was, therefore, broadly interpreted as a personal repudiation of Kiebich more than affirmation of himself and his policies. Nevertheless, since taking office, Lukashenka, symbolizing (or, better stated, employing in a purely instrumental fashion) a particular post-communist variant of what will be described in chapter five as the historically powerful 'Eastern vector' in the Belarusian national consciousness, has sought to revive Soviet identity myths and symbols as an integral part of his broader reintegration policy.

During one of his first speeches as President on July 27, 1994, Lukashenka presented his theory of the "centuries-long history" of Belarusian statehood. Echoing almost *verbatim* the argument of Soviet historiography, he described that history as beginning with the principality of Polack which, together with the "fraternal Russian and Ukrainian peoples," was a component part of Kievan Rus, thus denying the national claim that the essence of Polatian political history was the 'struggle' for independence from Kiev.[300] Lukashenka has also essentially restated the position of Soviet historiography *vis a vis* the BNR, describing it as a "marionette state" which sought to subjugate the Belarusian people to Kaiser Germany.[301] If adherents of the 'national idea' (reluctantly perhaps) acknowledge the importance of the BSSR as part of the contemporary Belarusian national myth, Lukashenka and supporters of the 'Slavic idea,' once again largely echoing Soviet historiography, depict its 70-year existence as the "high point" in the history of Belarusian statehood. Although Lukashenka has acknowledged that since the 1920s perhaps too much of the 'Soviet' element was emphasized at the expense of Belarusian national values, the history of the BSSR is held to have been on the whole a period not only of unprecedented material and technical progress but also the *cultural and spiritual* growth of the Belarusian people.

While agreeing that post-Soviet Belarusian society is experiencing a profound spiritual crisis, Lukashenka argues that this is not the result of a centuries-long

process of degradation, but rather the precipitous collapse of the USSR which ruptured not only the economic and other institutional links but the 'historical' and 'spiritual' bonds between Slavic peoples. The most dire assessments of the crisis from this point of view cite the influx of alien and harmful Western 'mass culture' which threatens to destroy the unique 'Slavic spirit.'[302] This argument is buttressed by restating the Soviet ethnogenetic myth according to which, having evolved from a single ethnic root, Belarusians and Russians are of the "same blood.' Epitomizing this type of thinking, Lukashenka himself has stated that owing to these shared origins, the Belarusian and Russian mentalities are "similar" with it being difficult to establish a boundary between them and thereby distinguish a Russian-speaking Belarusian from an ethnic Russian.[303]

Moreover, together with Eufrasinnya Polackaya, Francishak Skaryna and Kastus Kalinouski, Lukashenka in his speeches has included Masherau as one of the 'heroes' of Belarusian political history - an outrage to the BNF and other Belarusian national activists.[304] Indeed, even before Lukashenka's rise to power, the Minsk authorities had sought to defend Masherau's reputation against the criticism of nationalist writers. The occasion of what would have been Masherau's 75th birthday in February 1993 saw the publication in official media of a great deal of periodical literature praising his personal qualities and the progress achieved during his time in office. Most notable among these was a lengthy interview with then Prime Minister Vyacheslau Kiebich who recalled his close personal relationship with Masherau.[305] This defence of Masherau's legacy has continued unabated since in official media.[306] The 80th anniversary of his birth in February 1998 was again marked by the publication of numerous favorable articles.[307] Indeed, it is apparent that, seeking to capitalize politically on the 'cult of personality' which still surrounds Masherau in Belarus today almost two

decades after his death, Lukashenka has consciously endeavored to identify himself with the still enormously popular former First Secretary.[308]

Together with reviving the 'myth' surrounding Masherau, post-Soviet authorities in Belarus have sustained the Soviet discrediting of Belarusian national symbols linked to the Grand Duchy. The 50th anniversary of the Soviet victory in the war against Germany featured an officially-sponsored campaign in state-controlled press and television (then controlled by Kiebich through the Council of Ministers) associating the *Pahonya* and white-red-white banner revived under the Nazi occupation regime once again with fascism. Leaders of the Belarusian national movement during the war were re-branded as 'Nazi collaborators.' Newspapers published pictures of leaders of the 'Union of Belarusian Youth' ('SBM') wearing *swastikas* and giving Nazi salutes. Jerzy Turonek's book on the Nazi occupation came in for particularly harsh denunciation. Articles decried its author for attempting to "rehabilitate Fascism."[309] Illustrating the sacredness which has come to surround the partisan movement, Kiebich himself expressed disbelief that "such a book" could even be published.[310] The rehabilitation of the 'partisan myth' has continued under Lukashenka. Not only has the President seized upon holidays honoring the military and victory over Germany to thank veterans of the Red Army and partisan resistance for their sacrifices, the official media continues to publish materials discrediting Belarusian activists during World War II as 'fascist collaborators.'[311]

It has to be acknowledged that Lukashenka has appeared to be well-tuned to the state of public consciousness in post-Soviet Belarus. In April 1995, over the strenuous objections of the BNF-led opposition, he orchestrated a referendum wherein 75% of voters approved his proposed return to Soviet-era state symbols. In a subsequent interview where he defined his own identity in telling fashion as a 'Soviet Belarusian,' Lukashenka defended the decision to re-adopt these symbols

on the basis that a majority of Belarusian citizens simply do not understand or identify with the *Pahonya* and white-red-white banner.[312] As the results of the referendum demonstrated, Lukashenka was undoubtedly right in this assessment. During a second presidential referendum in November 1996 referendum, voters approved changing the national 'independence day' of Belarus from July 27 (the date of the "Declaration of State Sovereignty" by the BSSR in July 1990) to July 3 - the date of Minsk's liberation from German occupation by the Red Army in 1944. Lukashenka justified this action on the basis that had the Soviets not defeated the Nazis, there would be no independent Belarusian state to celebrate.[313]

On the one hand, it is possible to agree with Belarusian national scholars that the outcome of these two referendums does not represent a total disaster for the future of their cause. As Jan Maksimiuk argued following the April 1995 plebiscite, in voting against readopting Soviet-era state symbols and integration with Russia, more than one million Belarusians voted in favor of the 'national idea.'[314] Indeed, it is undoubtedly true that never before in its history has the 'national idea' enjoyed such a degree of measured popular support. Another writer noted that the results of the referendum showed that "in spite of various ideas about Slavic unity," nationally-conscious Belarusians do exist and "with every passing year their numbers are going to grow."[315] Writing in 1996, Uladzimir Konan took external observers to task for failing to recognize that, even though it presently constitutes only 20-30% of the overall population, there thus exists within Belarus a solid foundation upon which to renew the nation.[316] This view suggests that the *adradzhenne* movement of the late 1980s, predicated initially on the Romantic effort to restore Belarusian 'historical memory,' did bear some significant fruit *especially among younger generations*. Nonetheless, even the most optimistic Belarusian intellectuals were driven by the outcome of the April

1995 referendum to conclude that, in its majority, Belarusian society had rejected the BNF's 'ethno-cultural' agenda.

As will be discussed further in chapter three, the prevailing political situation led the Belarusian national opposition subsequently to shift its tactics and adopt a more 'rationalized', 'rights-based' definition of the 'national idea' in defence of democracy and the constitution. Consequently, the task of 'reconstructing' Belarusian 'historical memory' has been forestalled to the indefinite future in favor of the more immediate political task of defending Belarusian democracy against Lukashenka's growing political authoritarianism. This appears to have been a wise and proper tactical decision under the circumstances. However, bearing in mind the necessity (as discussed in the theoretical framework) of building a 'primordial' emotional attachment to the nation, Belarusian intellectuals will eventually have to return to the Romantic project of 're-awakening' Belarusian 'historical memory.' It seems clear, however, that this depends upon regime *transformation* or *transition* in Belarus, the prospects for which will be assessed futher in subsequent chapters.

Analytical Summary

This chapter focuses on the 'mythical character' of the Belarusian 'national idea' interpreted within a broader historical context. The essence of the 'national idea' is the claim that the Belarusian *ethnos* emerged on the basis of a unique 'Baltic-Slavic' ethnic 'synthesis' which distinguishes it radically from neighbouring Eastern Slavic peoples - in particular, the Great Russians. On the political level, Belarusians are said to be heirs to a 'centuries-long' tradition of independent statehood which begins with the Krivichian principality of Polack and includes the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) and Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*); and, in the modern era, Belarusian National Republic ('BNR') and Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic ('BSSR'). Such historical events as the Lublin Act of political union between the Grand Duchy and Poland (1569), the Brest Act of religious union (1596), and the partitions of Poland (1772, 1773, and 1795) emerge as especially important watersheds in this myth.

In the process of elucidating the 'national idea' within a broader historical context, its inherently 'contested character' also becomes evident, as represented by a number of internal tensions and paradoxes - for example, the legacy of union with Poland, as well as that of the BNR and BSSR - as well as a number of key points where the Belarusian scholars are clearly contradicted by 'non-Belarusian' writers. As discussed, the meaning of the 'national idea' has become the object of acute political struggle in post-Soviet Belarus. At issue is not only the meaning of the pre-Soviet past but the Nazi occupation of World War II, the legacy of the Soviet experience within the BSSR, and the legacy of former BCP First Secretary Piotr Masherau. All of these conflicts have profound meaning for the future of the 'nation-building' process in Belarus.

The chapter also demonstrates the importance of the 'structured character' of the Belarusian 'national idea'. To begin with, it is clear that the war and the accompanying revolutionary upheavals of the first two decades of this century played a key role on shaping the development of Belarusian national thought. Secondly, it becomes apparent that the emergence and development of the Belarusian 'national idea' was very much both abetted and hampered by competing external pressures - in particular the dominant *Polish* and *Russian* paradigms but also German occupation policy during both World Wars. More recently, reacting against Soviet historiography, the contemporary Belarusian national myth is very much founded 'in opposition to' Russia. Belarusian national

writers go to great length in distinguishing themselves both *ethnically* from the Russians (the 'Baltic substratum') theory and *politically* through the conscious juxtaposition of Belarusian traditions of democracy and pluralism against those of Russian Byzantinism and despotism. Whether this juxtaposition is entirely justified will be considered further in chapter three.

On the other hand, it is recognized in at least some Belarusian sources, but could be emphasized more explicitly, that notwithstanding the destruction of 'historical memory', Soviet nationality policy played a key facilitating role through the *institutionalization of nationality* as embodied in the federal system created in 1922, and the creation of an alternative Soviet Belarusian identity myth following World War II. During the long tenure of Masherau, the contradictory effects of this 'Sovietization' became apparent. On the one hand, the ethnocultural, linguistic and historical essence of the Belarusian 'national idea' was explicitly denied. On the other, the existence of the BSSR as, nominally at least, a 'sovereign' state within the USSR contributed to the development of a territorial identity. Finally, the 'structured' character of the 'national idea' is apparent in the policy of the *state* in post-Soviet Belarus. The Belarusian republic is unique among communist successor states inasmuch as the attempt to 'reawaken' the national 'historical memory' has been steadfastly opposed by the political authorities. It is, indeed, a cruel irony that the first elected President in Belarusian history, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, has done his utmost to obstruct the 'return' of the 'national idea' to Belarusian society. As will be elaborated in subsequent chapters, however, this does not mean that, especially in the last several years, Lukashenka refrains from using at least some of the language and symbols of the national idea for his own political purposes.

Notes

[1] Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1988), p. 225.

[2] For a brief biography of Lastouski, see appendix B.

[3] Vaclau Lastouski, *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* (Minsk, 1993). The first installment of *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* appeared in the newspaper *Nasha Niva* on December 1, 1910. This was followed in subsequent weeks and months by the remaining installments and later that year *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* was published as a short book of barely 100 pages (with illustrations). See V. Sienkievich, "Lastouski the Historian and his Historical Views," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, 1984, pp. 3-13.

[4] Vaclau Lastouski, *Pershaya chytannya* (Vilna, 1915).

[5] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), pp. 7-8.

[6] Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 75-77.

[7] Lastouski, *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi*, p. 7.

[8] U. Ihnatouski, *Karotkii narys historii Belarusi* (Minsk, 1991).

[9] Vakar, p. 38.

[10] Cited in Yu. Serech, "Problems in the Formation of Belorussian," *Word*, Volume 9, December 1953, pp. 3-101.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Vakar, "The Name White Russia," pp. 204-205.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Cited in *ibid.*, p. 205.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.* As will be discussed further throughout this text - in particular, chapter five - the notion of building a new federal union with neighbouring peoples has been one of the cornerstones of Belarusian national thought. This particular plan represents one of the most important historical variations of what will be defined as this 'confederal dimension' to the Belarusian 'national idea' - *reconstructing in a modified form the medieval Lithuanian Grand Duchy.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] V. V. Sedov, *Slavyane verkhnevo podneprovya i podvinya* (Moscow, 1970), p. 192.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] M. M. Grinblat, *Belorusi. Ocherki proiskhodzheniya i etnicheskoi istorii* (Moscow, 1968). See also K. V. Chistov, ed., *Etnografiya vostochnikh Slavyan: Ocherki traditsionnoi kultury* (Moscow, 1987).

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] See Sedov's recollections about these events in *Litaratura i mastactva*, No. 17, April 1993.

[24] For example, B. D Grekov, *Kievskaia Rus* (Moscow, 1939).

[25] Soviet historiography thus agrees with Belarusian national writers concerning the formation of the Belarusian *ethnos* on the basis of this tripartite tribal merger.

[26] Grinblat, pp. 40-41.

[27] V. N. Pertsev, ed., *Istoriya Belorusskoi SSR, Tom I* (Minsk, 1954), p. 23.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[31] Grinblat, p. 44.

[32] Stephen Velychenko, *Shaping Identity in Eastern Europe and Russia: Soviet-Russian and Polish Accounts of Ukrainian History, 1914-1991* (New York, 1993), p. 213. As Velychenko writes: "Since Eastern Slavs were the same in the past, according to official reasoning, it was inevitable that they would become one nation again."

[33] Mikhas Bich, "Dzyarzhaunasc Belarusi," *Belaruskaya minushchyna*, Nos. 5-6, 1993, p. 4.

[34] Ivan Pilipenka, "Dze nasha zyamlya budze, dze aichina u nas?" *Belaruskaya minushchyna*, No.1, 1993, pp. 7-8.

[35] Mykola Jermalovich, *Starazhytnaya Belarus: Polatski i Novaharodski periyadi* (Minsk, 1990), pp. 45-46.

[36] Indeed, for contemporary Belarusian scholars, which Slavic tribe absorbed which particular 'substratum,' as opposed to the geographical location of ancestral territories, is the key point of departure for establishing ethnic distinctions between them.

[37] The name *Nasha Niva* itself translates as 'Our Soil.' A virtually complete set of *Nasha Niva* is available at the National Library in Warsaw, Poland.

[38] Lastouski, *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi*, p. 5.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] Anatol Hrickievich, in *ibid.*, pp. 111-125.

[41] P. R. Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto, 1997), p. 66.

[42] For example, Ya A. Karneichyk, *Belaruskaya Naciya* (Minsk, 1969).

[43] Lastouski, pp. 8-9; Ihnatouski, p. 58; Jermalovich, pp. 57-58; *Vybar*, May 19-25, 1993; *Narodnaya hazeta*, October 30, 1993; *Holas radzymi*, December 27, 1994. In a skeptical vein, Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 42 argues that it is "doubtful that the wars of that time were 'wars of political independence,' since each faction fought for its own local princes in the Minsk region alone. The consciousness of being Belorussian, or even of being Polotian in a broader sense, could not, of course, have existed in that period."

[44] For example, Jermalovich, pp. 111-112.

[45] *Ibid.* Indeed, Jermalovich denies the very existence of any "ancient Rusian state."

[46] For example, Tarasau, pp. 56-57.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 8. The Belarusian writers thus divorce themselves from the dispute between Ukrainian and Russian historiography as to the legacy of Kievan Rus, locating the origins of their first state much further to the West.

[48] U. Ihnatouski, *Karotki narys historii Belarusi* (Minsk, 1991), pp. 25-26. In the first part of the book entitled "Introduction to Belarusian History," Ihnatouski writes that "[l]ike every land, Belarus has its past and ought to have its history. Up to now, few have taken an interest in this subject; however, the recent revolutionary transformations increasingly demand that we become acquainted with this history. The time is rapidly approaching when every citizen of Belarus will know his nation's history, for without this knowledge he will not be a conscious citizen and creator of the future. Only history can serve as the strong foundation for creative socio-political and cultural work." Despite his scientific pretensions, Ihnatouski's reflections on the didactic value of history thus sound remarkably like those of Lastouski in the introduction to *Karotkaya historia Belarusi* which, as noted above, was an avowedly 'non-scientific' tract. As will be argued later in this text, Ihnatouski's Marxist interpretation of Belarusian history symbolized a brief and conditional *rapprochement* between the Belarusian 'national idea' and Bolshevism during this time.

[49] Lastouski, p. 8; *Holas Radzymi*, August 1, 1991. Notwithstanding the crucial difference noted above, an interesting parallel with the Ukrainian national myth exists here inasmuch as according to Ukrainian writers, such as the eminent historian Ivan Rudnytsky, "Ukraine between East and West," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton, 1987), p. 8, ancient Kievan Rus was also organized on democratic principles embodied in the *veche*. Like the Belarusians, Rudnytsky also juxtaposes the pluralistic traditions of Kiev against the "political Byzantinism" of Moscow. See also Nicholas L. Fr-Chirovsky, *An Introduction to Ukrainian History* (New York, 1981) who argues that both the Belarusians and Ukrainians share a distinct and democratic historical path which radically distinguishes them from the Russians. On the other hand, Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 42 is dubious of the Belarusian argument: "As a matter of historical fact, written evidence of the *veche* is scant, and the city of Polock occupies no prominent place in it."

[50] Ihnatouski, pp. 25-26.

[51] *Zvyazda*, May 28, 1991.

[52] Lastouski, p. 7; Kastus Tarasau, *Pamyac pra lehendy: postaci belaruskai minuushchyny* (Minsk, 1994); Uladzimir Arlou, *Eufrasinnya Polackaya* (Minsk, 1992) and *Tymanici polackai historii* (Minsk, 1994).

[53] Mikola Jermalovich, *Starazhytnaya Belarus: Polacki i Novoharodski periyadi* (Minsk, 1990), p. 84.

[54] *Volnaya Belarus* ('Free Belarus), May 28, 1917.

[55] *Volnaya Belarus*, January 20-21, 1918;. *Rodnaya mova*, No. 1, 1929; Tarasau, pp. 45-46; A. Rohaleu, "Vsadnik bely v Krasnom pole," *Belaruskaya dumka*, No. 8, 1994, p. 56; Viktor Ostrowski, *The Ancient Names and Early Cartography of Belorussia* (London, 1971), p. ix. The exact origins and significance of the name *Belaya Rus* remain unclear. Foreign scholars who have explored this question include: Marceli Kosman, *Historia Bialorusi* (Warsaw, 1979), pp. 14-16; Jerzy Borzecki, "The Union of Lublin as a Factor in the Emergence of Ukrainian National Consciousness," *The Polish Review*, No. 1, 1996, p. 39; Nicholas P.

Vakar, "The Name White Russia," *The American Slavic and East-European Review*, 1949, p. 206 and *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, pp. 1-4. In general, they agree that in its application to the Belarusian territories, the adjective 'white' (*belaya*) signified the 'independence' of certain Rus lands from Tatar-Mongol and Lithuanian occupation. This is also true of Soviet historiographical accounts, for example, Chistov, p. 148. This interpretation goes on to contrast the name *Belaya Rus* with *Chernaya Rus* ('Black Rus') which emerged to designate those eastern Rusian territories conquered by the Tatars as well as western Rusian lands around Novahradok and Horde which later became part of the medieval Lithuanian state.

[56] Kathleen Mihalisko, "Belarus: retreat to authoritarianism," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Democratic changes and authoritarian reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 226.

[57] Lastouski, *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi*, p. 8.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 17. In his account of the origins of the Grand Duchy from a Ukrainian perspective, Mykola Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine* (Yale, 1970), p. 124 writes: "The Ukrainian princes disliked the loss of their sovereign rights, but were frequently allowed to retain their posts on condition of recognizing the Lithuanian prince who reigned in their capital. Thus almost imperceptibly and without bloodshed, the Ukrainian provinces fell one after another under Lithuanian control. The change took place so quietly that even the Ukrainian sources do not always mention this skilful Lithuanian penetration."

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] Ihnatouski, pp. 67-68; S. V. Tarasau, "Polackae knyastva u XI st." in *Staronki historii Belarusi* (Minsk, 1992), p. 46. According to the more radical interpretation of Jermalovich, p. 312, the Lithuanian Prince Mindouh did not take over Novahrodak; rather Novahrodak made Mindouh its prince in order to further its territorial ambitions to the West.

[61] *Holas Radzymi*, February 4, 1993; *Narodnaya hazeta*, May 27, 1993; *Vybar*, September 8, 1993; *Holas Radzymi*, June 15, 1993. Not surprisingly, this claim as to the "supremacy" of Belarusian culture within the Grand Duchy is not to be found in contemporary histories of Lithuania. See, for example, V. Stanley Vardys and Judith B. Sedaitis, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (Boulder 1997). On the other hand, Vardys and Sedaitis, citing Adolfas Sapoka, ed., *Lietuvos istorija* (Germany, 1950), p. 154, do note that: "As was typical for medieval states in that region, the language used in official documents and affairs of state was different from the one that prevailed as the local spoken language. The former, from the end of the fourteenth century on, was old Church Slavonic, also known as Byelorussian." Some Polish scholars have also described the official language of the Grand Duchy as Belarusian, for example, Juliusz Bardach, *Studia z ustroju i prawa Wielkiego Ksiestwa Litewskiego XIV-XVII w.* (Warsaw, 1970). The claim that Belarusian was the official language of the Grand Duchy has been restated in Western sources such as Stephen R. Burant and Voytek Zubek, "Eastern Europe's Old Memories and New Realities: Resurrecting the Polish-Lithuanian Union," *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Spring 1993, pp. 372-374. However, Borzecki , pp. 40-41 notes that the official language of the Grand Duchy

was 'Ruthenian' or 'Chancery Ruthenian' from which both Belarusian and Ukrainian later evolved. Accordingly, both Ukrainian and Belarusian scholars can claim the official language of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy as their own.

[62] L. Abecedarski, *Istoriya belorusskoi SSR* (Minsk, 1954).

[63] Vaclau Lastouski, *Knizhyca dla shkolnaha chytannya. Rodniya ziernaty* (Vilna, 1916), p. 186.

[64] *Homan*, December 4, 1917.

[65] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, December 27, 1991.

[66] Vitaut Charopka, "Litvyni-slavyanski," *Belaruskaya minushchyna*, Nos. 5-6 1993, p. 12; *Litaratura i Mastactva*, June 14, 1996.

[67] Jermalovich, p. 351. Indeed, the attempt to prove that *Litva* is a name of Belarusian origins is the dominant theme pervading this entire text. It is also the main thesis running through another of his publications from this time, *Pa slyadkakh adnaho mifa* (Minsk, 1989). This short book was actually completed in 1968 but had to await two decades until it could be published.

[68] Mikhas Tkachou, *Pakhodnya* (Minsk, 1994), p. 59.

[69] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, August 5, 1994. Some Lithuanian historians have accused the Belarusians in this respect of "national fundamentalism."

[70] In this regard, the Belarusians are generally supported by Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian scholars who also argue that the Grand Duchy was a state where political, religious and social tolerance prevailed.

[71] Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 1795-1918 (Seattle, 1974), p. 3.

[72] *Ibid.* p. 4.

[73] Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 316-317.

[74] Wandycz, p. 4; Neal Ascherson, *The Struggles for Poland* (London, 1987), p. 38.

[75] Davies, p. 17.

[76] Ihnatouski, pp. 134-135.

[77] Lastouski, p. 37.

[78] *Ibid.* Contemporary Ukrainian and Lithuanian writers also argue that the Grand Duchy was able to maintain a large degree of its former independence. See Subtelny, pp. 74-75 and Vardys and Sedaitis, p. 15. As noted above, independent historical accounts also suggest that this was the case. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 50, writes that: 'The political independence of the Grand Duchy was well known in the Slavic east. Moscow diplomacy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries kept the two states meticulously separate and pursued different policies toward them." Indeed, neither the Lublin Act nor the fundamental law of the Grand Duchy ('The Lithuanian Statute') were repealed. The latter was finally abrogated by Tsarist authorities during the 1830s.

[79] Lastouski, pp. 49-50 and Ihnatouski, p. 100 both argue that proof of the long-term character of this process is seen in the publication of the first Belarusian-language book *Triod Cvetnaya* in Cracow in 1483. Lastouski pointedly adds that the first Polish-language book did not appear in front until 1505 - 22

years later. While not wishing to suggest that the Poles, in fact, lagged behind the Belarusians culturally, he does argue that this indisputably attests to the high level of Belarusian cultural development on a par indeed with countries of Western Europe.

[80] *Zvyazda*, May 28, 1991.

[81] *Narodnaya hazeta*, May 28, 1993.

[82] *Respublika*, May 26, 1994. Lithuanian and Ukrainian scholars also note the influx into their medieval societies of these positive influences. See Vardys and Sedaitis, pp. 15-16 as well as Ivan Rudnytsky, "Polish-Ukrainian Relations," in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, p. 53 who writes that "all-European culture entered Ukraine mostly through Polish channels." Hrushevsky, p. 197 notes "signs of a revival of cultural progress" in 16th century Ukraine.

[83] Alexander J. Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine After Totalitarianism* (New York, 1993), p. 25.

[84] S. Marozava, *Uniyackaya carkva u kulturna-histarichnim razvicci Belarusi (1596-1839)* (Hrodna, 1996), p. 88.

[85] *Ibid*.

[86] Jerzy Borzecki, "The Union of Lublin as a Factor in the Emergence of Ukrainian National Consciousness," *The Polish Review*, No. 1, 1996, pp. 37-61.

[87] Lastouski, p. 90; Ihnatouski, pp. 134-135.

[88] Lastouski, p. 47; Ihnatouski, p. 140. Vardys and Sedaitis, p. 16, Hrushevsky, pp. 194-197 and Subtelny, pp. 100-101 note the development of a similar schism within Lithuanian and Ukrainian society respectively.

[89] Ascherson, p. 5 who notes furthermore that: "There is nothing comparable to this in European history. The only parallels, which are remote, are the English conquest of Ireland, the Spanish conquest of Catalonia, and the crushing of Bohemia by the Habsburg Empire."

[90] Davies, p. 316.

[91] *Ibid*.

[92] Ascherson, *p. 5*.

[93] Davies, p. 252.

[94] Lastouski, p. 90. Western Ukraine (Galicia) was incorporated into the Austrian Empire and later became the original cradle of the Ukrainian national movement.

[95] Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 3.

[96] *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.

[97] During the early 1920s, Lastouski published a journal in Kauna, Lithuania entitled *Krivich* in which he advanced the argument that the name 'Belarus' ('White Rus) had been imposed by Moscow during medieval times for purposes of "de-nationalization." See V. Lastouski, "Ab najmienniach 'Gudy', 'Kryvichi', Rus'," *Krivich*, No. 1, 1923 and "Shto takoe 'Rus' u smalenskai tarhovai hramaty 1229 hodu," *Krivich*, No. 6, 1923.

[98] Karneichyk, p. 276.

[99] *Narodnaya hazeta*, October 30, 1993.

[100] The catalytic role of the Uniates was vital in the 'awakening' of Ukrainian national consciousness in Galicia. See Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "The Ukrainians in

Galicia under Austrian Rule," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton, 1987), pp. 315-352 as well as the same author's "The Ukrainians in Galicia Under Austrian Rule," in Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E, Sysyn, eds., *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), pp. 23-67. Uniate clergy in Transylvania also played a key role in the 'awakening' of Rumanian national awareness. See R. R. Florescu, "The Uniate Church: Catalyst of Rumanian National Consciousness," *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 45, 1967, pp. 324-342.

[101] Arnold McMillin, "Jan Cacot in Byelorussian and Polish Literature," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1969, p. 60.

[102] The most significant contribution in this respect were six volumes of Belarusian folklore published by Czeczot during the period 1837-1844. See Jan Cacot, *Vybraniya tvory* (Minsk, 1996).

[103] Maria Janon, "Szkola bialoruska w poezji polskiej," *Przeglad wschodni*, Rok 1, Zeszyt 1, 1991, pp. 35-48.

[104] Peter Brock, "Vahylevych and the Ukrainian National Identity'" in Markovits and Sysyn, eds., pp. 115-116

[105] *Narodnaya volya*, August 17, 1997.

[106] Together with both the Polish and Belarusian, the University of Vilna can also be considered as the original cradle of the Lithuanian 'national awakening'. See, for example, V. Stanley Vardys and Judith B. Sedaitis, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (Boulder, 1997), p. 16

[107] F. Turyk, *Belorusskoe dvizhenie. Ocherkii istorii natsionalnovo i revolyutsionovo dvizheniya belorussov* (Moscow, 1921), p. 9.

[108] Latyshonak, "Narodzyni ...," p. 9.

[109] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), p. 55.

[110] *Ibid.*

[111] Norman P. Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, 1984), p. 168.

[112] Zaprudnik, p. 57.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[114] Davies, *God's Playground*, p. 354. See also Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 1795-1918 (Washington, 1974).

[115] While he has become a hero of mythical proportions within the Belarusian national tradition (in essence, the tragic young Belarusian national martyr), Kalinouski is also an important figure in some Lithuanian nationalist accounts of the 1863 uprising where he is known as 'Constantine Kalanauskas'. See, for example, Constantine R. Jurgela, *Lithuania: The Outpost of Freedom* (St. Petersburg, 1976), pp. 93-95.

[116] Davies, *God's Playground*, p. 365.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 364. Together with the Duchy of Warsaw (1807-1815), the Congress Kingdom of Poland qualifies as what Davies, *Heart of Europe*, p. 158 describes as one of "the ephemeral creations of Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic diplomacy" which was neither "endowed with true sovereignty" nor "succeeded in reuniting

the Polish people under one rule."

[119] Zaprudnik, p. 67.

[120] Davies, *God's Playground*, pp. 364-365.

[121] Davies, *Heart of Europe*, pp. 169-170.

[122] Wandycz, p. 178.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 239.

[124] *Ibid.*

[125] Alyaksandr Cvikievich, *Zapadno-russizm* (Minsk, 1991).

[126] V. V. Borisenko, Yu. S. Phsirkov, V. A. Chermeritskii, *Istoirya belorusskoi dookyatbrskoi literatury* (Minsk, 1977), p. 352.

[127] A. Navini (A. Luckievich), "Rolya moladzi u pachatkach adradzhenskaho ruchu," *Rodny honi*, No. 5, July-August 1927, p. 21; A. Luckievich, *Za dvadcac pyac hadou* (Minsk, 1991), p. 8.

[128] Leon Wasilewski's *Litwa i Bialorus* (Cracow, 1912) is perhaps the best analysis of the emergent Belarusian movement from a contemporaneous Polish perspective.

[129] Jerzy Turonek, "Z dziejow bialoruskiego ruchu wydawniczego w latach 1902-1905," *Studia polono-slavic-orientalia. Acta Litteraria IX* (Warsaw, 1988), p. 66.

[130] Jerzy Turonek, "PPS wobec ruchu bialoruskiego'" *Studia Polsko-Litewsko-Bialoruskie* (Warsaw, 1988), pp. 89-106.

[131] *Ibid.*

[132] See Jan Zaprudnik, "The Struggle for Byelorussia's Autonomy in the First State Duma (27April/10 May - 7/20 June 1906)," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. 2, 1971, pp. 289-307. This will be discussed further in chapter five.

[133] Jerzy Turonek, *Bialorus pod okupacja niemiecka* (Warsaw, 1995), p. 17.

[134] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 18

[136] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22.

[137] Cited Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 102.

[138] V. I. Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme," in V. I. Lenin, *On Proletarian Internationalism* (Moscow, 1967), p. 17.

[139] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[140] Bertram Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (New York, 1948), p. 589.

[141] V. I. Lenin, "On Socialism and War," in *ibid.*, p. 134.

[142] J. V. Stalin, *Natsionalnyi vopros i marksizm* (Moscow, 1913), p. 11.

[143] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[144] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[145] See "The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia," in Isaac Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (New York, 1966), p. 188.

[146] As quoted in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, 1917-1923 (New York, 1966), p. 269.

[147] *Ibid.*

[148] J. V. Stalin, "The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question," in *Collected Works Volume IV* (Moscow, 1953), p. 363.

[149] Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 93.

[150] Vadzim Krutalevich, "BNR-BSSR-RB abo palemichniya natatki z nahody yubileyu," *Holas Radzimi*, December 2, 1993.

[151] Varonka, p. 11.

[152] Anton Luckievich, *Za dvadcac pyac hadou*, pp. 41-53.

[153] Alexander J. Motyl and Bohdan Krawchenko, "Ukraine: From Empire to Statehood," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 240.

[154] Copies of the declaration were re-published in Belarusian media on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the BNR in March 1993. See, for example, *Naviny BNF*, March 25, 1993.

[155] See the memoirs of the first Prime Minister of the BNR, Jazep Varonka, *Belaruski ruch ad 1917 da 1920 h. Karotki ahlyad* (Kauna, 1920).

[156] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, March 19, 1993.

[157] *Respublika*, March 25, 1993; *Holas Radzymi*, April 8, 1993.

[158] See, for example, the exchanges of views in: *Holas Radzymi*, March 25, 1993; *Navini-BNF*, March 1-25, 1993; *Respublika*, March 23, 1993.

[159] *Holas Radzymi*, March 11, 1993.

[160] *Respublika*, March 25, 1993

[161] Cited in J. Mienski, "The Establishment of the Belorussian SSR," *Belorussian Review*, No. 1, 1955, p. 18.

[162] Antony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature* (Munich, 1958), p. 40.

[163] M. P. Kasciuk, "U. M. Ihnatouski - hramadski dzeyach, vuchony," in M. Tokarau, ed., *Akademik U. M. Ihnatouski: Materialy navukovyikh chytannya prysvechanyikh 110-hoddzyu z dnia naradzhennya* (Minsk, 1992).

[164] Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, pp. 82-83; Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-20* (London, 1972), pp. 255-258.

[165] Jozef Lewandowski, *Federalizm. Litwa i Bialorus w polityce obozu Belwederskiego (XI 1918 - IV 1920)* (Warsaw, 1962), p. 252.

[166] Davies, p. 138.

[167] *Ibid.*

[168] Vakar, p. 110.

[169] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland Volume II 1795 to the Present* (Oxford, 1981), p. 53.

[170] Davies, *Heart of Europe*, p. 138; Ascherson, p. 36.

[171] Krystyna Gomolka, *Miedzy Polska a Rosja* (Warsaw, 1994). This represented another fundamental difference between Dmowski and Pilsudski. For the former, Germany, not Russia, constituted the primary threat to Poland.

[172] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 97.

[173] Stanislaw Elski (Kaniewski), *Sprawa bialoruska: zarys historyczno-polityczny* (Warsaw, 1937), p. 59

[174] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland Volume II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford, 1981), p. 409. See also Stephan M. Horak, *et al, Eastern*

European National Minorities 1919-1980: A Handbook (Littleton, 1985), p 45.

[175] Michas Koszelew, "Polacy w oczach Bialorusinow: ewolucja pogladow," *Dzieje najnowsze*, Rocznik XXVII, 1995, No. 2, p. 88. As will also be discussed in chapter five, notwithstanding Polish repression, the historical Polish 'vector' within Belarusian national thought remained strong during these years.

[176] For example, *Belaruskaya dolya*, February 3, 1925; *Narod*, January 6, 1928; *Naperad!*, January 29, 1930; *Belaruskaya dumka*, January 20, 1931; *Belaruski zvon*, January 22, 1932; *Belarus pracy*, March 5, 1934; *Belaruskaya krynica*, April 15, 1937; *Belaruski Front*, June 1, 1939.

[177] The first such journal was *Zachodnyaya Belarus* which appeared in 1923 as a self-described "organ of literature, art, science and politics." In 1927, the first issue of *Belaruskaya kultura* appeared positing as its goal the gathering together of all the creative forces of the young West Belarusian intelligentsia dedicated to the ideal of Belarusian independence. Also in 1927, the journal *Rodny honi* made its debut devoting itself to topics of Belarusian history, culture, and literature. In January 1930, a new journal under the title *Rodnaya mova* ('The Native Language') appeared dedicated primarily to the defence of the Belarusian literary language. Copies of these journals, all of which ceased publication after only a few issues, are available in the archives of the *Biblioteka Narodowa* in Warsaw.

[178] *Belaruski dzen*, January 1, 1928; *Belaruski dzen*, March 25, 1928; *Chryshciyanskaya dumka*, March 6, 1928.

[179] *Belaruski Front*, February 5, 1938.

[180] Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire* (New York, 1981), p. 19.

[181] V. I. Lenin, "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomization'," in *Selected Works Volume III* (Moscow, 1963), p. 688.

[182] As a Soviet scholar summarizes it: "V. I. Lenin proved that Soviet federation is fundamentally different from bourgeois federation. Soviet federation does not divide people but rather draws them together. The principal difference between proletarian and capitalist states consists in this. If it is the case that in bourgeois states private capitalist ownership divides peoples, then it is the case that, in the Soviet state, social ownership and collective labour draws the peoples together." See S. Yakubovskaya, "Rol' V. I. Lenina v sozdanii Soyuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Kommunist*, No. 10, June 1956, pp. 27-41.

[183] Gail Lapidus, "Gorbachev's Nationalities Problem," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 4, Fall 1989, p. 96.

[184] As Subtelny, p. 387 notes, the primary focus of the Soviet leadership's concern for *korenizatsiya* was Ukraine where the policy was known as 'Ukrainization' ('*Ukrainizatsiya*').

[185] Lenin's 'New Economic Policy' represented a tactical concession to capitalism necessitated by the dire situation in which the fledgling Soviet state found itself after years of revolutionary upheavals and war. Aimed at rehabilitating the shattered Soviet economy, 'NEP' was based upon the introduction of limited market forces first in the agricultural sector but ultimately within the economy as a whole. The 'NEP' also extended to the field of culture which witnessed "a remarkable explosion of artistic ferment and creativity in almost every field ...

Above all it was a time of experimentation, when the modernism of the cultural avant-garde flourished spectacularly if briefly under the lenient reign of the political avant-garde." See Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography* (Oxford, 1979), p. 272.

[186] This aim was compromised by the fact that armed force proved necessary to install Bolshevik regimes in certain of the non-Russian territories, including Ukraine and Georgia.

[187] Ihnatouski's advocacy of *Belarusizatsiya* can be seen to have begun well before it actually became the official policy of the Communist party. In December 1921, Ihnatouski published his theses entitled 'The Belarusian National Question and the Communist Party' in which he argued that it was necessary to pursue communist educational activities "without fear of losing the purity of the Russian literary language. One must educate and involve in Communism the Belarusian rural semi-proletarian and proletarian in his familiar, native, routine, every-day Belarusian tongue." In a 1922 article, he called for the acceptance of the Belarusian language as that of the working majority in the republic, within party, state and educational structures as well as the press and theatre.

[188] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), p. 78.

[189] Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (New York, 1972). For a discussion of the murderous purges in Ukraine, see Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Edmonton, 1986), pp. 331-334.

[190] A similar pattern of events unfolded in Ukraine. In March 1930, the Stalinist regime announced the 'discovery' of a conspiracy in the form of the *Spilka Vyzvoleniya Ukrainy* (SVU - 'Union for the Liberation of Ukraine'). See Ivan S. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule, 1917-1957* (Lexington, 1958), p. 109.

[191] *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

[192] *Respublika*, July 2, 1993; *Vechernii Minsk*, August 13, 1993; *Chyrvonaya zmena*, June 27, 1995; *Respublika*, October 5, 1994.

[193] Lubachko, p. 116.

[194] Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, p. 146.

[195] *Istoriya Belorusskoi SSR*, p. 92.

[196] L. S. Abecedarski, V. N. Pertsev and K. I. Shabunya, eds., *Istoriya Belorusskoi SSR, Tom II* (Minsk, 1961), p. 5.

[197] *Ibid.*

[198] L. Abecedarski, ed., *Istoriya Belorusskoi SSR* (Moscow, 1954).

[199] Ya. Karniechyk, *Belaruskaya Naciya* (Minsk, 1968).

[200] *Respublika*, July 2, 1993.

[201] *Nioman*, No. 12, 1991, p. 169; *Navini adradzhennya BNF*, December 16, 1992.

[202] Zaprudnik and Urban, 'Belarus: From Statehood to Empire?," p. 284,

[203] M. P. Kasciuk, *Narysy historii Belarusi a 2-kh chastkakh (chastka 2)* (Minsk, 1995), pp. 256-257.

[204] Lubachko, p. 165.

[205] Turonek, *Bialorus pod okupacja niemiecka*, p. 156.

[206] Piotr Eberhardt, *Przemiany narodowosciowe na Bialorusi* (Warsaw, 1995), p.

107.

[207] Ivan S. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule, 1917-1957* (Lexington, 1972), p. 150.

[208] Turonek, p. 39.

[209] Vakar, p. 251.

[210] Cited in Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945* (London, 1957), pp. 201; 214.

[211] Cited in *ibid.*, p. 214.

[212] Timothy Patrick Mulligan, *The Politics of Illusion and Empire: German Occupation Policy in the Soviet Union, 1942-1943* (New York, 1988), p. 23.

[213] Cited in Turonek, p. 67

[214] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[215] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, July 1, 1942.

[216] Lubachko, p. 158.

[217] Turonek, p. 110.

[218] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, June 22, 1943.

[219] *Ibid.*

[220] *Ibid.*

[221] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, July 3, 1943.

[222] Turonek, pp. 117-118.

[223] Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945* (London, 1957), p. 221.

[224] Turonek, p. 139.

[225] *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141; Dallin, pp. 221-222.

[226] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[227] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), p. 99.

[228] As John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (Englewood, 1990), p. 220 notes, a similar opposition was visible in Ukraine: "Nominally, the constitutive myth of the Soviet system is the triumph of the proletariat through the Bolshevik Revolution. For legitimizing the postwar elite, however, that remote (and ambiguous episode) was submerged by the story of the 'Great Patriotic War,' which the elite claimed as its own 'heroic age.' Such emphasis facilitated an amalgam of the Soviet myth with centuries-old elements of the Russian myth, notably the ultimate 'in-gathering' of East Slavs, including Ukrainians, through victory in the Great Patriotic War. In this way, the revised Soviet myth clashed irreconcilably with the postwar Ukrainian national myth."

[229] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, January 14, 1994; *Chyrvonaya zmena*, June 30, 1994; *Holas Radzymi*, April 27, 1995; *Litaratura i Mastactva*, May 4, 1995.

[230] For a Soviet assessment of the "ideological struggle" in war-time Belarus, see I. A. Ivlev and A. F. Yudenkov, *Oruzhiem kontropropagandyi. Sovetskaya propaganda sredi naseleniya okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR. 1941-1944 gg.* (Moscow, 1988). This 'partisan press' included such newspapers as *Bolshevitskaya Tribuna, Partizan Belorussii, Molodoi partizan,* and *Za Sovetskuyu Belarus*.

[231] Jerzy Turonek, *Bialorus pod okupacja niemiecka* (Warsaw, 1993). See *Litaratura i Mastactva*, January 14, 1994; *Litaratura i Mastactva*, December 14,

1994.

[232] Turonek, p. 157.

[233] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[234] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[236] *Sovetskaya Belorussiya,* October 11-12, 1989.

[237] Like other elements of the Belarusian experience, Masherau has yet to receive adequate attention by Western scholarship. Within Belarus itself, at least two biographies
have been published: Vladimir Yakutov, *Petr Masherov* (Minsk, 1992) and Slavamir Antanovich, *Piotr Masherau* (Minsk, 1993).

[238] Mihalisko, p. 235.

[239] *Ibid.*

[240] See "Khrushchev's Secret Speech," in N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers,* Strobe Talbott, trans., (London, 1971), pp. 540-541.

[241] See "Pod znameniem Lenina - vperyod k kommunizmu," *Kommunist,* No. 3, February 1956, p. 9.

[242] See "Law on the Strengthening of the Relationship of the School With Life and on the Further Development of the System of Public Education in the USSR," in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (hereafter 'CDSP'), Vol. XI, No. 4, p. 13. Fur further discussion of this proposed reform, see Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-59 and Soviet Nationality Policy," Soviet *Studies,* Vol. XIV, No. 4, October 1962, pp. 138-157 and John Kolasky, *Education in Soviet Ukraine* (Toronto, 1968), esp. pp. 26-28.

[243] For example, B. G. Gafurov, "Uspekhi natsionalnoi politiki KPSS i nekotoriye voprosyi internatsionalnovo vospitaniya," *Kommunist,* No. 11, August 1958.

[244] See "The Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," *Pravda,* November 2, 1961, in *CDSP,* Vol. XIII, No. 46, p. 14.

[245] N. S. Khrushchev, "On the Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," *Pravda,* October 19, 1961, pp. 1-10, in *CDSP,* Vol. XIII, No. 45, p. 18.

[246] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[247] *Ibid.*

[248] *Ibid.*

[249] Carrere d'Encausse, p. 45.

[250] "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," *Pravda,* March 30, 1966, pp. 3-11, in *CDSP,* Vol. XVIII, No. 13, p. 9.

[251] Grey Hodnett, ""What's in a Nation?" *Problems of Communism,* Vol. 16, No. 5, September-October 1967, p. 5

[252] As summarized in *ibid.*, pp. 6-7: 10-11.

[253] A good summary of this debate can be found in Grey Hodnett, "The Debate over Soviet Federalism," *Soviet Studies,* Vol. 18, No. 4, October 1967, pp. 458-480.

[254] For example, the 'assimilationist' and 'de-federalist' views of P. G. Semenov, "Suverenitet sovetskikh natsii," *Voprosyi istorii,* No. 12, December 1965, pp.

22-33.

[255] B. Sukharevsky, "Ekonomika SSSR - ekonomika razvitovo sotsializma," *Kommunist*, No. 18, December 1971, pp. 58-72.

[256] Alfred B. Evans, "Developed Socialism in Soviet Ideology," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July 1977, p. 415.

[257] "The Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," *Pravda*, March, 30, 1971, pp. 2-10, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXIII, No. 14, p. 3.

[258] Hodnett, "What's in a Nation," p. 3.

[259] Cited in Brill-Olcott, "p. 105.

[260] See "Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," in Vadim Medesh, *The Soviet Union* (Englewood Cliffs, 1985), p. 318.

[261] Including his former aide Syarhei Zakonnikou and other writers at *Litaratura i mastactva* with whom I spoke personally.

[262] Cited in Zaprudnik, "Developments in Belorussia," p. 107. See P. M. Masherov, *Ideino-politicheskii rabote - vysokuyu deistvennost* (Moscow, 1975).

[263] For Masherau's remarks at the 23rd Congress, see "Speech by Comrade P. M. Masherov, First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party Central Committee," *Pravda*, March 31, 1966, pp. 5-6, in *CDSP*, Vol. XVIII, No. 14, p. 24. For his remarks to the 24th CPSU Congress, see "Speech by Comrade P. M. Masherov, First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party, *Pravda*, April 1, 1971, pp. 5-6, in *CDSP*, Vol. XXIII, No. 14, pp. 23-25. Masherau's strongest assertion of the equality of Soviet republics is likely his article "O nekotoryikh chertakh i osebennostyakh natsionalnyikh otnoshenii v usloviyakh razvitovo sotsializma," *Kommunist*, No. 15, October 1972, pp. 15-32. For an overview of the highly specific language of Soviet nationality policy during the Brezhnev period, see Michael Rywkin, "Codewords and Catchwords of Brezhnev's Nationality Policy," *Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Summer 1979, pp. 83-90.

[264] Yaroslav Bilinsky, "Shcherbytski, Ukraine and Kremlin Politics," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 32, July-August 1983, pp. 1-20. However, as will be elaborated in chapter two, there is an important and fundamental difference between Masherau and Shelest with respect to the cardinal question of *language*.

[265] Michael Urban, *An Algebra of Soviet Power: Elite Circulation in the Belorussian Republic, 1966-1986.* (Cambridge, 1989).

[266] Vardys and Sedaitis, pp. 62-64.

[267] *Respublika*, November 6, 1992. In some especially interesting accounts, the BSSR appears as the *historical successor* to the Grand Duchy. See *Holas Radzymi*, December 14, 1993. Although, as will be discussed in later chapters, the opposition 'Belarusian National Front' which emerged during the late 1980s had a pronounced 'Baltic' or 'European' orientation, its programmatic documents based the claim for Belarusian independence not only on the heritage of the Grand Duchy but the republic's membership in UNESCO, the United Nations and other international organizations achieved during the Soviet period. See *Radio Liberty Belorussian Service*, June 24, 1989.

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[268] David Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe* (Edmonton, 1996), p. 38.

[269] Cited in Mihalisko, p. 237.

[270] This terminology owes to Walker Connor, "Nation-building or nation-destroying?" *World Politics*, No. 24, 1972, pp. 319-355. A parallel here exists with the Baltic nations which, as Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 38 argues "far from being on the verge of extinction after a half-century of Soviet rule, as many Baltic nationalists asserted in the Gorbachev era, were much more firmly established and consolidated than they had been in 1940." For another example of this type of assessment, see also Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 260-262.

[271] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London,1997), pp. 291-292.

[272] Telesfor Pozniak, ed., *Antologia literatury bialoruskiej od XIX do poczatku XX wieku* (Wroclaw, 1993), pp. 8-16.

[273] Antony Adamovich, "The Kupala-Kolas Century, 1882-1981," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 6-7.

[274] Francishak Bahushevich, "Foreword" to "Dudka belaruskaya", in Pozniak, p. 85. Bahushevich is generally regarded as the founder of 'critical realism' within Belarusian literature. See, for example, V. Barisenka, *Francishak Bahushevich i prablema realizma u belaruskai litaratury XIX stahhodzya* (Minsk, 1957) and V. V. Borisenko, Yu. S. Pshirkov, and V. A. Chemeritskii, eds. *Istoriya belorusskoi dooktyabr'skoi literatury* (Minsk, 1977). However, as Yuras Paciupa, "Hrateski i arabski: dzvye plyni u belaruskai litaratury, pazhnachaniya M. Bahdanovicham," *Svicyaz*, No, 3 1994, p. 413, notes, the presence of this enduring Romantic element should not be overlooked.

[275] Maksim Harecki, *Historiya belaruskae litaratury* (Vilna, 1921), p. 132; S. Aleksandrovich, *Historiya i suchasnasc* (Minsk, 1968); R. Semashkievich, *Belaruski litaraturna-hramadski ruch u Peciaburzie* (Minsk, 1971).

[276] Aleksandrovich, p. 169.

[277] Turonek, "Dzialalnosc bialoruskiego ...," p. 63.

[278] *Nasha slova*, No. 16, 1994.

[279] *Maladaya Belarus*, No. 1, May 1912.

[280] Vera Rich, "Maksim Bahdanovic," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1965, p. 45.

[281] These poems can be found in Janka Kupala, *Zhyve Belarus: Vershy, artykuly* (Minsk, 1993). For a biography of Kupala, see 'Appendix B'.

[282] A V. Kavalenka, *Vytoki. Uplyvi. Paskoranasc* (Minsk, 1975), p. 242.

[283] S. Aleksandrovich, *Historiya i suchasnasc* (Minsk, 1968) and *Puciaviny rodnaha slova* (Minsk, 1971); S. Aleksandrovich, A. A. Lojka, and V. P. Rahojsa, *Belaruskaya litaratura XIX stahoddzya. Chrestamatiya.* (Minsk, 1971); A. A. Lojka, *Janka Kupala* (Minsk, 1968); Adam Maldzis, *Padarozhzha u XIX stahoddzya* (Minsk, 1969) and *Tradycja polskaha aswietnictwa belaruskai litaratury XIX stahoddzya* (Minsk, 1972).

[284] Arnold McMillin, "A Revival Revived: Some Recent Publications from the 'Nasha Niva' Period," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1981, pp. 47-50.

[285] U.Karatkievich, "Nel'ha zabic," *Polymia*, Nos. 5-6, 1962

[286] U. Karatkievich, *Zbor tvorau u vasmi tamakh* (Minsk, 1987) and *Kalasi pad syaprom tvaim* (Minsk, 1996). This concern of Karatkievich with the 'reawakening' of Belarusian historical memory was repeatedly emphasized during my conversations with his former colleagues, including his biographer and longtime professional colleague and friend Adam Maldzis, as well as younger generation Belarusian intellectuals inspired by Karatkievich's example.

[287] Vitaut Charopka, *Imye i letapise* (Minsk, 1994).

[288] *Ibid.*

[289] Alfred Maikhrovich, "Naciyanalnae adradzhenne i dukhouniya tradiciya," *Belaruskaya dumka*, No.2 February 1995, pp. 12-17.

[290] *Ibid.* For contemporaneous assessments of the deformed state of the Belarusian national mentality, see Eduard Dubyaneckii, "Unikal'nyi mentalitet Belarusau," *Belaruskaya dumka*, No. 12, December 1994, pp. 6-11; *Chyrvonaya zmena*, December 14, 1993; *Litaratura i Mastactva*, March 11, 1994. Other Belarusian writers have defined this crisis in terms of a 'spiritual Chernobyl.'

[291] Alex Grigorievs, "The Baltic Predicament," in Richard Caplan and John Feffer, eds., *Europe's New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford, 1996), p. 133 As will be elaborated in chapter five, 'Baltic echoes' - especially Lithuanian - were indeed strong in Belarus at this time.

[292] For a brief history of Belarusian *samizdat*, see Appendix 'D'.

[293] See Jim Butterfield and Marcia Weigle, "Unofficial Social Groups and Regime Response in the Soviet Union," in Judith B. Sedaitis and Jim Butterfield, eds. *Perestroika From Below: Social Movements in the Soviet Union.* Boulder, 1991, pp. 178-180.

[294] This is to say nothing of 'popular front' movements in non-European parts of the USSR.

[295] Cited in Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History*, p. 154.

[296] *Ibid.*

[297] *Kommunist Belorussii*, No. 12, 1990.

[298] Mihalisko, p. 242.

[299] Alexander J. Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine After Totalitarianism* (New York, 1993), pp. 81-83. See also Alexander Motyl and Bohdan Krawchenko, "Ukraine: From Empire to Statehood," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 235-275.

[300] *Narodnaya hazeta*, July 29, 1994.

[301] *Zvyazda*, July 8, 1998.

[302] *Tovarishch*, No. 2, February 1993.

[303] *Glos znad Niemna*, August 1995.

[304] *Narodnaya hazeta*, July 29, 1994.

[305] *Respublika*, February 12, 1993. In this interview, Kiebich noted that if Belarus

was now prepared to embark on the path of developing its own independent statehood (which, as will be seen in chapter five, Kiebich conceived as part of a renewed economic and political union with Russia), it was in large part thanks to Masherau. As suggested above, although Belarusian national writers would disagree, it may be that this observation is at least in part true.

306 See, for example, the five-part series on Masherau's often testy personal and political relationship with Brezhnev in *Respublika*, September 24 - October 1, 1993. For further 'rehabilitation' of Masherau, see *Novaya narodnaya hazeta*, August 19, 1994; *Minskaya prauda*, May 11, 1995; *Minskaya prauda*, September 5, 1995; *Chyrvonaya zmena*, August 24, 1995.

307 For independent commentary, see *Navini*, February 13, 1998. Some Belarusian oppositionists see in this an effort to transform Masherau into the 'Belarusian Lenin.' The 'cult of Masherau' would serve the same purpose as did the original 'cult of Lenin' - political legitimation of the current leader, in this case, not Josef Stalin but Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

308 *Chyrvonaya zmena*, August 24, 1995; *Narodnaya hazeta*, December 23-26, 1996; *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, February 16, 1998. In the opinion of personal associates of Masherau as well as many average Belarusians with whom I spoke while in Minsk, this attempt by Lukashenka to wrap himself in Masherau's mantle is wholly inappropriate and even offensive. This is especially so on the personal level where the current president's bombastic nature could not contrast more with the civility and charm of Masherau - qualities ascribed to him even by those within the creative *intelligentsia* most critical of his cultural policies (viz. the failure to resist linguistic Russification).

309 *Respublika*, June 25, 1994.

310 *Ibid.*

311 *Narodnaya hazeta*, July 2, 1998.

312 *Glos znad Niemna*, May 29-June 4, 1995.

313 *Zvyazda*, May 28, 1998.

314 *Niva*, November 10, 1996.

315 *Holas radzymi*, August 10, 1995.

316 *Litaratura i Mastactva*, January 26, 1996.

Chapter II
The Complex and Changing Relationship Between Language and National Identity in Belarusian National Thought

As the 'father' of Romantic philosophy, Herder wrote that in the language of a nation "resides its whole intellectual domain, its traditions, its history, religion and basis of life, all its heart and soul. To deprive a people of its speech is to deprive it of its one eternal good."[1] Hence, a nation may lose its political independence (statehood), "but will survive if it preserves its linguistic traditions: a precept which was not lost on his Polish, Czech, Serb and Ukrainian followers."[2] Nor can it be said that Herder's identification of language as a precious and unique attribute of nationhood was lost on Belarusian national 'awakeners.'[3] Indeed, as will be seen in this chapter, in typically Romantic fashion, Belarusian national writers have tended to define the nation itself as 'spirit,' or even as a 'living organism.' Within this avowedly metaphysical conception, language has been identified as the essence of the Belarusian national 'spirit' without which the nation itself will perish. Hence, there has been a discernible tendency observable among Belarusian intellectuals across space and time *to equate the survival of the nation with the survival of the national language.* At the same time, illustrating once again the 'synthesized' character of the 'national idea,' especially during the early years of the Belarusian national movement, the national language was regarded not just as the 'spirit' of the nation but the indispensable vehicle of Belarusian national *Enlightenment* - the lifting of the symbolic "veil of ignorance" said to enshroud the Belarusian masses.

As a result, for most of this century, one could speak of an *intimate link* between language and national identity in the Belarusian case. However, reflecting the reality of the thoroughgoing linguistic 'Russification' of Belarusian society during the Soviet period, this linkage today appears to be much less evident. While many older Belarusian intellectuals continue to insist upon the necessity of this connection and continue to hold out hope for the eventual 'revival' of the Belarusian language within society at large, other younger intellectuals now openly speak of the likelihood that Belarus will eventually become a state *without* its national language. This chapter thus concerns itself with what emerges as the *complex* and *changing* relationship between language and national identity in Belarus. Indeed, the chapter concludes by discussing the current *linguistic paradox* in Belarus - *the national idea speaking a 'foreign language (viz. Russian).*

Language as the 'Essence' of the National 'Spirit'

Evidence of the depth of Romantic influences on Belarusian national thought, Belarusian writers have tended very much to posit mind over matter, thereby emphasizing the metaphysical (or "subjective") elements of nationhood over the material or "objective." In the Belarusian case, this Romanticization was clearly evident in *Nasha Niva* where the nation is defined first and foremost in *spiritual terms*. Indeed, the current Belarusian national *adradzhenne* ('awakening') is often described as the "growth" of the "national soul" through the development of *national culture*.[4] At times, it is described in organic language as a "living thing."[5]

Further along these lines, a long article in *Nasha Niva* on May 13, 1913 identified "moral" and "spiritual values" ahead of "material" (including statehood and a national army) as the essence of nationhood. Moral values themselves comprised two categories: *institutional* and *ideal*. The first included *language*, a

national church and *customs.* The second comprised *history, traditions* and *ideals.* According to the article, experience had shown that nations lacking "material" values could nonetheless successfully withstand even the most severe de-nationalizing pressures over a very long period by relying on their "moral" values. As a nation without material values, Belarus was a prime example of this survivability. Belarusians were said to already possess at least three of the four requisite institutional values: their own national language and on this basis a "feeling" of national unity as well as unique national customs. Although Belarus did not currently have its own national church, this was deemed to be more important for statehood than nationhood - in short, a nation could exist without its own church. As for ideal values, Belarus possessed its own history and avowedly weak national traditions not because they had never existed but due to the fact that they had not been wholly preserved over time. Belarus also possessed "universal" democratic and national ideals without which it would be impossible to speak of the "rebirth" of the nation. The article concluded that on the basis above all of the "institutional values" it already possessed, Belarus had "a body but in order to survive needed a healthy spirit" which could be created and nurtured through the development of national art and literature.[6]

Interestingly, this tendency to define the nation above all in 'subjective' or 'spiritual' terms was the case even among Belarusian activists of a radical socialist or communist political persuasion who otherwise would identify themselves surely as materialists. One of the best examples of this was Alyaksandr Cvikievich in the context of his controversy with Lastouski during the mid-1920s over the latter's Romantic "Krivichian theory" which, as noted in chapter one, advocated a change of the group name from 'Belorussia' to 'Krivia' and 'Belorussian' to 'Krivichi.' Although he criticized Lastouski's preoccupation with the distant historical past, it can be argued that Cvikievich's own understanding of the nation was in itself

profoundly Romantic. Indeed, as he wrote in an article published during the early 1920s in the newspaper *Belaruski Sciah*, the most important features of the nation were not "objective" ethnographic and cultural markers but rather the "subjective feeling of a people itself."[7] Succinctly stated, if a group of people "feel" that they are a nation, then they *are* a nation irrespective of what 'others' might think.[8] According to Cvikievich, Belarusians possess this "internal feeling" and thus fully have the right to be called a 'nation.' Defining the 'nation' moreover as not simply "an abstract juridical person" living within certain prescribed geographical boundaries but "a living organism having its own dreams and sense of collective self," the essence of 'nation-building' was the effort to create a unified Belarusian "national spirit," a goal achievable only on the basis of political independence.[9]

Within this metaphysical understanding of nationhood, Belarusian writers have also historically reflected a profound Herderian appreciation of the centrality of language for national identity. The earliest origins of this inherent link can be traced once again to the "unconscious" Belarusian revival of the early 19th century and the person of Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievich (1807-1884). Although, like the Philomaty with whom he was acquainted personally, he wrote several original Belarusian-language works, as briefly noted in chapter one, Dunin-Marcinkievich's most significant contribution to the cause of 'reawakened' interest in the Belarusian language was his 1856 translation from Polish to Belarusian of Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*. Through the vehicle of this translation, Dunin-Marcinkievich was the first "to convince the reader that the Belorussian spoken idiom could be flexible, smooth, melodious, and as rich and expressive as any other language on earth."[10] As Jan Zaprudnik notes, demonstrating this capacity was of crucial importance if the "fledgling" Belarusian movement was to prove itself in the sphere of language, "the foundation of all national causes in Central and Eastern Europe."[11] However,

Dunin-Marcinkievich's translation was banned by Tsarist authorities in 1859. A comprehensive ban on publication in the Belarusian language was instituted after the Polish uprising of 1863 which would remain in place until the revolutionary crisis of 1905.[12] A result, the cause of Belarusian linguistic 'revival' was set back greatly.

It was not until the 1880s that the process of Belarusian linguistic revival reacquired real momentum in the person of Francishak Bahushevich regarded by Belarusian and non-Belarusian writers alike as the 'herald" of Belarusian national 'awakening.' As noted in chapter one, although emphasis is typically given by literary critics (including Belarusian) to the presence of a strong 'critical realist' dimension in Bahushevich, the presence of an enduring Romantic element should also be acknowledged. This is apparent above all in Bahushevich's conception of the nation in primarily linguistic terms. Indeed, the introduction to his first published collection entitled *Dudka belaruskaya* ('The Belarusian Pipe') poses the quintessential existential question: "What is Belarus?" The answer given by the poet is that Belarus exists "there, brothers, where our language is spoken and heard."[13] Describing the language in prototypically Herderian terms as the 'spirit' of the nation given to it by God, Bahushevich exhorts Belarusians not to be one of those people "who first lost their languages - as a dying man loses his power of speech - and then died completely." As he bluntly puts it, "[o]nce the language is lost, the nation is dead." Seeking to forestall this fate, Bahushevich insists that "the ancient language of our forefathers which we ourselves - and not only we but all ignorant people - call a 'peasant' language [is] no less civilized and noble than French, German or any other language." The future of Belarus, he writes, depends on 'cherishing' and 'cultivating' the national language.[14]

Echoing Bahushevich (and, at times, citing him directly), *Nasha Niva* argued during the early years of the 20th century that the Belarusian language - "the

treasure of the nation" - was no less capable of expressing scientific and creative thought than Polish or Russian.[15] Hence, time and again throughout its existence, *Nasha Niva* returned to the theme of establishing a new network of Belarusian-language schools so that future generations could be educated in the native tongue.[16] A crucial role in the defence of the national language by the *Nasha Niva* writers was played by Maksim Bahdanovich (1891-1917). Stricken from a young age by tuberculosis (which also claimed his mother and older brother) Bahdanovich lived a short and, in many ways, tragic life. Nonetheless, his place in the history of Belarusian literature and the development of the 'national idea' within it cannot be overestimated. Most importantly, he was a *literary innovator* who set for himself the goal of introducing into Belarusian poetry new and previously-unknown verse forms including sonnets, *rondeaux* and triolets, demonstrating in the process that "no poetical form of expression was alien to the Byelorussian language."[17] With this same goal of proving the inherent capability of Belarusian to accept the latest in literary innovations, Bahdanovich also translated into his native language the works of many foreign writers, most importantly, the French impressionist poet Paul Vadler whose style strongly influenced Bahdanovich's own original verse.[18] Through his translations, Bahdanovich sought to show that (as Bahushevich had argued with such passion in the 1890s) Belarusian was a language on a par with great European languages such as French and German.

Language as the Vehicle of Belarusian National Enlightenment

Together with Romantic emphasis on the nation as 'spirit' with language as its 'lifeblood,' emphasis on language as the vehicle of national Enlightenment has been central to the Belarusian tradition.[19] As with the Romantic component to

Belarusian national thought, the earliest origins of this Enlightenment component can be traced to the 'unconscious' Belarusian 'awakening' at the University of Vilna. Indeed, together with their regional (viz. Belarusian) Romanticism, the Polish Philomaty firmly believed in the power of reason, the spread of education, and the progressive development of mankind with freedom and liberty as its goals. Indeed, influenced by the ideas of Lelewel with his own curious blend of Romance and Enlightenment[20] they regarded it as their inherent duty to conduct educational work among the local population. Mickiewicz, in particular, "although born and raised in a strict Roman Catholic spirit loved to read Voltaire, and his first literary efforts were imitations or translations of that writer. Among the poets he read, an important place was taken by Polish poets of the Renaissance and Enlightenment: Kochanowski, akin to Ronsard; ... and brilliant Krasicki, a magician of Polish verse."[21] Together with his Romanticization of the Belarusian peasant, Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievich's social views were clearly influenced by the rationalistic ideals of Polish Enlightenment thinkers. In an 1861 letter to the Polish writer I. Kraszewski, Dunin-Marcinkievich himself recalled that he decided to write in Belarusian in order to encourage the local populations "towards education in the spirit of their own customs and traditions and according to their own customs."[22] These Enlightenment motives are also visible in the introduction to his translation of *Pan Tadeusz* where he expresses the hope of awakening in the Belarusian peasantry a new desire for knowledge and education.[23]

Enlightenment emphasis on the importance of literacy and education was evident in the writings of Kastus Kalinouski, leader in the Belarusian territories of the 1863 Polish rebellion, in particular, his "Letters From Beneath the Gallows" written while in prison awaiting execution for his role in the Polish revolt of 1863. As Jan Zaprudnik points out, the last of these letters has become "a political credo of Belarusian nationalism."[24] In it, Kalinouski writes that there is "no greater

happiness on this earth, brothers, than if a man has intellect and learning. Only then will he manage to live in counsel and in plenty and only when he has prayed properly to God will he deserve Heaven, for once he has enriched his intellect with learning, he will develop his affection and sincerely love all his kinfolk."[25] Clearly viewing literacy and education as the key to liberation from Russian servitude, Kalinouski adds that "just as day and night do not reign together, so also true learning does not go together with Muscovite slavery. As long as this lies over us, we shall have nothing. There will be no truth, no riches, no learning whatsoever. They will only drive us like cattle not to our well-being but to our perdition."[26] In short, Enlightenment is the means of achieving freedom and justice.

Together with his Romantic recollection of the distant Belarusian past, these Enlightenment motives were also apparent in 'Danila Borovik's' *Pis'ma o Belorussii*. The first of these documents, dated December 16, 1882, refers to the renewed interest "aroused recently by the Byelorussian question" and expresses the hope that "those who sympathize with the awakening of the Byelorussian intelligentsia will attempt to render all possible assistance to the newly emerged cause."[27] The note is followed by the 'First Letter' (*Pervoe pis'mo*) in which 'Danila Borovik' writes sorrowfully that "our native land sleeps the sleep of the dead, only now and then awakening in order to see whether anyone has appeared to arouse her from sleep, to come to her aid."[28] Concluding the 'First Letter,' he writes that "until now, historical circumstances have not allowed [Belarus] to awake and take control of her own destiny'; thus, the key question is ''[w]ho will lead our poor native land out onto the true path? Who, at last, will awaken Byelorussia's national and social forces from their long sleep.''[29] The answer is provided by 'Borovik' himself who calls upon "all the best people in Byelorussia to join together, to imbue themselves with the interests of their people, to get to

know them as well as possible in order thereafter to embark on a united effort for the welfare of their native land which for so long has suffered but which, perhaps, has a glorious future in prospect [...]."[30] As discovered in the same Soviet archives, 'Borovik's' Pis'ma were responded to in January 1884 by another writer using the pseudonym 'Shchyry Belarus' ('A True Belarusian').

In this Belarusian-language document, entitled *'Paslan'ne za ziemlakou-Belarusau u suvyazi z piershym 'Pis'mam pra Belarus"* ('A Message to Our Fellow Belarusians in Connection With the First 'Letter About Belarus'), the author notes how "certain signs of awakening of our native intelligentsia began to make themselves felt, i.e., a movement began among Byelorussians about which the foreign press, ever alert to unusual occurrences in the public life of its neighbours, began to write."[31] 'Shchyry Belarus' continues by stating that he had become aware of 'Borovik's' *Pis'mo pervoe* by reading a review of it in the journal *Studenchestvo*, and finally managed to obtain a copy of it "published, as can be seen from its preface, by group of Byelorussians." Clearly, the effect on this anonymous writer was inspiring: "After all this it was impossible not to be convinced that among us, too, the foundation has been laid for that grateful movement whose absence has for so long been felt in our land. In the light of this awakening I send you my warmest greetings, dear fellow countrymen! Good luck! The time has long been ripe to embark on this noble and sacred task."[32] Continuing this theme, in 1884 the Belarusian populist journal *Homon* wrote that the "great and sacred task of the Byelorussian intelligentsia is to shake the powerful forces of its people from their slumbers, to direct its progressive development, which has come to halt, and to enable it to display its national greatness, buried deep to hide it from the rapacious designs of the Poles and the Great Russian doubled-headed eagle."[33] As will be discussed later in this text, *Homon* was the first periodical of 'conscious' Belarusian national *renaissance*.[34]

Together with his Romantic predilections, Enlightenment emphasis on awakening social and national consciousness comes across perhaps even more clearly in the work of Bahushevich who emphasizes strongly the need for popular education if the Belarusian masses are to overcome fully the ignorance forced upon them by the current regime. Although, owing to official restrictions, Bahushevich, in fact, rarely uses the terms 'Belarus or 'Belarusian,' his work clearly has the aim of 'awakening' in the masses a new sense of social and national identity. Indeed, poems such as 'Khresbinakh maciuka' tell the story of the gradual emergence of this consciousness within their peasant heroes. In this particular instance, the peasant Maciej Burochak (not only the pseudonym of the author but that of the main character in the *Dudka belaruskaya* collection) discovers through his encounters with 'others' that he is in reality neither Polish nor Russian but *tuteishi* ('Belarusian'). Moreover, he proudly and freely chooses to remain so rather than accede to the ever-present pressures for Polonization and Russificiation. A similar *leitmotif* underlies the poem 'Maya khata', also part of the *Dudka belaruskaya* collection.[35]

Enlightenment motifs also typified the emergent Belarusian national movement during the early years of the 20th century. In October 1902, the Belarusian Revolutionary *Hramada* (the first Belarusian national political organization) published (in Polish) a programmatic document entitled "To the Intelligentsia" which, similar to 'Danila Borovik' two decades earlier, spoke of the need for popular education among the masses in the native language. In October 1906, the leaders of the *Hramada* began publishing in Minsk the first legal Belarusian-language newspaper under the title *Nasha Dolya* ('Our Destiny'). In this premiere issue, the editors acknowledged the enormous difficulty of the task before them. The poor, downtrodden and hungry Belarusian peasant is portrayed as having just 'awakened' from "a centuries-long slumber" and in desperate need

of "the printed word" (education) in order to find the path to a better future.[36] *Nasha Dolya* was brought into existence to serve this noble end. The main enemy of the Belarusian nation is identified as "darkness and the unequal situation of the peasantry."[37] Like its predecessor the goals of *Nasha Niva*, echoing strongly those of 'Danila Borovik' and the 'Homonites' two decades earlier, were identified as lifting, through the spread of science and the printed word, the veil of "darkness" said to currently enshroud the Belarusian masses who are depicted once again as having been in a "centuries-long slumber." Indeed, in its first issue, the editors expressed the desire to be "the servants of the entire long-suffering Belarusian nation, we wish to be the mirror of life so that from us, as from a mirror, light may be reflected into the darkness."[38] Their goal was "to make every Belarusian understand who they are - individuals and citizens, members of a single, great Belarusian people." The "main enemy" of the nation was identified as the "darkness" of ignorance and illiteracy to be overcome through the spread of science and the printed word in the native language.[39]

Together with his Romantic recollection of the past, Janka Kupala (like Bahushevich before him) demonstrates enormous faith in the power of Enlightenment to inspire in the Belarusian peasant a desire for freedom and justice ("Pesnya volnaha chalaveka' ['The Song of a Free Person']; 'Volya' ['Freedom']; 'Usta' ['Arise']). However, Kupala differs from his late 19th century predecessor in one important respect; namely, that the peasant portrayed in his work is no longer Bahushevich's 'nameless' *tuteishi* but, as Kupala himself writes "*Ya muzhyk-belarus* ["I am a *Belarusian* peasant"]."[40] Indeed, the Belarusian literary critic Haranin describes the poem 'Khto tam idzie?' ('Say, who goes there?') [1905-1907] as an "epoch event" in the development of the 'national idea' in Belarusian literature.[41] The image is no longer simply of the downtrodden peasant languishing under the yolk of Tsarist oppression but rather a proud 'people'

(*narod*) 'awakening' from its long historical slumber and arising with the demand for recognition and respect. As Antony Adamovich writes, "[h]ere, in the form of a rhetorical dialogue with 'such a mighty throng ... of many millions ... awakened from 'sleep', Kupala rose above the platform poetry he inherited from Bahushevich ... as a herald of the Byelorussian national movement with a true hymn of the people, which was indeed for no little time recognized as the Byelorussian national anthem."[42] It is this poem more than any other that earned Kupala the informal title of 'poet awakener' of Belarus.

A continually-repeated theme in Belarusian national literature and the periodical press beginning with *Nasha Niva* is the pressing need for Belarusian-language schools so that future generations could be educated in the native tongue.[43] As discussed in the previous chapter, a key component of the *Belarusizatisya* phenomenon in East Belarus (the BSSR) during the mid-1920s was the institutionalization of the Belarusian language within communist party, government and state structures. However, the end of the *Belarusizatsiya* policy meant the onset of intense Russifying pressures. In 1933, after the initial round of political purges (1929-1930), an orthographic reform was instituted by the Stalinist regime which aimed at narrowing the differences between the Belarusian and Russian literary languages. The decree proclaiming this reform accused Belarusian National Democrats of trying "to tear away the Belorussian literary language from the language of the Belorussian working masses and of thus creating an artificial barrier between the Belorussian and Russian languages."[44] Strangely, however, Russian was not made the compulsory language in Belarusian schools until 1938.[45]

During the "Khrushchevian thaw" of the late 1950s, the Central Committee of the Belarusian Communist Party headed by Kyril Mazerau adopted a resolution criticizing the fact that "in many primary schools all subjects, except Belarusian

language and literature, are conducted in Russian." In 1958, together with their counterparts from the Baltics, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Belarusian deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet - among them at that time Masherau - spoke out in opposition to Khrushchev's proposed education reform which clearly sought to further the cause of Russian at the expense of native languages.[46] However, during Masherau's subsequent lengthy tenure as First Secretary of the BSSR, the status of the Belarusian language relative to Russian declined precipitously. Indeed, every indication was thus that, like other 'Soviet people,' *Belaruski narod* would be primarily Russian-speaking.[47]

Notwithstanding the critique of contemporary national writers, however, it is not clear that, as some Western scholars also suggest[48], this was can be explained as the result of a deliberate and calculated Soviet policy aimed at destroying the Belarusian language as the basis for national culture and identity. Rather, as David Marples has argued, the linguistic 'Russification' of Belarusian society was a consequence primarily of *Soviet modernization policies and the rapid urbanization of the BSSR.* During the period 1959-1986, while the total population of the BSSR rose by 24%, the urban population increased by 250%. By 1990, 66% of the population was located in the cities, as compared to 31% in 1959. A crucial feature of the urbanization process in Belarus was the exceptionally rapid growth of Minsk to the extent that almost 25% of the republic's total population of 10 million reside in the capital.[49] Having previously supplanted Vilna (transferred to Lithuania, as noted previously, in 1939) as the major urban centre of Belarus, it was in Minsk that the Russian language realized most of its gains. Whereas in 1959, the number of Russian and Belarusian speakers was roughly equal, by 1970, Russian speakers comprised 54.5% of the population. Significantly, this was not due primarily to an influx of ethnic Russians but the adoption of Russian by Belarusians.[50]

Be they intended or not, the effects of Soviet policy on the whole were profound. Although according to the 1979 Soviet census, 83.5% of Belarusians declared Belarusian to be their "native language," rates of assimilation into Russian within the USSR were highest in Belarus.[51] Rates of assimilation were highest among younger generations, 14% of whom by 1970 were declaring Russian to be their native language. On the contrary, only 3.6% of those over 60 years of age made a similar declaration.[52] This was, in large measure, a reflection of the fact that Masherau's lengthy tenure witnessed the large-scale closure of Belarusian-language schools with children in the cities receiving their education almost exclusively in Russian. If at all, Belarusian was taught as essentially a "second (viz. foreign) language." Repeating its unhappy experience of previous historical times, the native language thus lost its status as a vehicle of Enlightenment, once again coming to be regarded by many educated Belarusians themselves as a crude and unrefined "peasant" tongue. Russian, on the other hand, was associated with "high culture," and, more importantly, deemed necessary for "progress," "status" and "upward mobility."[53]

In a comparative vein, notwithstanding their shared political 'autonomism' as discussed in chapter one, it is the language issue which clearly distinguishes Masherau from his Ukrainian contemporary Petro Shelest whose public defence of the Ukrainian language during the late 1960s is well documented. Indeed, there were discernible efforts under Shelest's leadership to 'Ukrainianize' the republican educational system in a way reminiscent of the 1920s.[54] Shelest himself published several books and other materials in which he lavishly praised the richness and beauty of the Ukrainian language, emphasizing the need to promote its development. There is little doubt that his tacit support for a new 'Ukrainization' was the major factor in Shelest's political downfall in 1972. On the contrary, although Masherau is known to have spoken Belarusian publicly on

occasion (albeit rather poorly),[55] as discussed above, there was no hint of anything like a new 'Belarusization' in the BSSR.

Defending the National Language Against 'Russification'

However, it is important to note that the post-Stalin era witnessed a conscious return to the national language on the part of Soviet Belarusian writers. As Stanislau Stankievich notes, Communist Party directives concerning the 'fusion' of nations naturally inspired a spirit of 'patriotic love' on the part of Belarusian poets and writers for their homeland, "its glorious past, national traditions and, above all, their native language."[56] This began to manifest itself as early as 1957 - immediately, in fact, following the 20th CPSU Congress - when the poet Maksim Luchanin wrote in the journal *Litaratura i mastactva* ('Literature and Art') that "[t]he further development of our culture is intimately linked with the dissemination of the Belorussian language. ... One wants to hear the Belorussian language not only in cultural organizations, but also in offices, secondary schools and colleges, to see it on a cigarette pack, a tractor and work bench."[57] An encouraging development was the energetic defence of the national language and values taken up by a new generation of young Soviet Belarusian poets and writers born after World War II who began publishing during the 1960s and 1970s. These included M. M. Barstok, Hennadz Dzmitryeu, Volha Ipatava, Valancina Koutun, Ivan Markievich, Ales Razanau, Nina Ryhor, Mariya Shauchonak, Ryhor Semashkievich, Jauheniya Yanishchyc and others.[58] Apart from their own collections, the work of this 'new generation' also regularly appeared in literary journals including *Maladosc* and *Polymia*. Reflecting the strong tendency towards linguistic Russification making itself felt in Belarus at this time, some of these individuals first wrote in Russian, publishing in Belarusian only later. As Shirin

Akiner noted, there is in these collections "a sense of wonder, of personal discovery, in their realisation that it is a literary language of power and beauty, capable of expressing the subtlest shades of meaning."[59] Against the argument of critics that "content alone conveys the national characteristics of a work and that language, as the medium, is of no importance," these poets (exemplified in this instance by the view of Barstok) maintained that the national element in poetry "vividly emerges through the language, its plasticity and range of metaphor, through idiomatic expressions, for the language reflects the psychological peculiarities of a people, their peculiarities of thought and perception."[60] By consciously choosing Belarusian, these young poets made "an unequivocal affirmation" that for them the native language was "the only legitimate means" of artistic expression.[61]

Another outstanding example of this was the social philosopher Uladzimir Konan who, in his discussion of what he called the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic' during the 1970s emphasized the importance of the Belarusian language in quintessentially Romantic terms as the 'soul' of the nation.[62] Indeed, although he did not explicitly criticize official linguistic policy, it is clear that Konan was deeply concerned about the future of the native language. In this regard, it is highly symbolic perhaps that the nineteenth-century Russian radical thinker Vissarion Bilinsky is quoted to the effect that it is impossible to imagine a nation without a common language understood by all social strata. Konan also cites Bahushevich's exhortation to the effect that a nation which loses its language faces death.[63]

Notwithstanding the efforts of Soviet Belarusian writers to defend the national language against the steady encroachment of Russian, publication statistics from the Masherau period illustrate the enormous obstacles they encountered. In 1967, of 1.8 million books published in the BSSR, only 337,000 (18%) were in

Belarusian.[64] Unlike the *Belarusizatsiya* phenomenon of the 1920s, or even the rapid growth of Belarusian literature witnessed during the *Nasha Niva* period (1906-1915), the practical effects of this courageous effort to save the Belarusian language through the vehicle of literature in the modern era have, therefore, to be regarded as limited.

Perestroika and the Future of the National Language

Concern for the future of the national language emerged into the open in the BSSR as a consequence of Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* reforms during the mid-1980s. In September 1986, *Litaratura i mastactva* published a letter from a school teacher criticizing the depressed state of the national language and calling for legislative measures to protect it. This was accompanied by a commentary from the historian Kastus Tarasau deploring the fact that Belarusian had virtually been eliminated from the national educational system. As Bohdan Nahalyo and Victor Swoboda note, the letter and commentary "triggered off a remarkable campaign in defence of the Byelorussian language in the republic's press. During the next few months, hundreds of letters poured in, some with as many as 50 signatures."[65] In December 1986, Belarusian writers convened a meeting at which Nil Hilievich encouraged his colleagues to take full advantage of the opportunity offered by *perestroika* to mount a new defence of the national language. A letter to Gorbachev was drafted and signed by 28 leading Belarusian intellectuals - including Hilievich, Vasil Bykau, and other writers - asking for the Soviet leader's assistance in rectifying the precarious situation of the Belarusian language. In a Romantic spirit reminiscent of *Nasha Niva* (and, even before that, Bahushevich), the authors described the native language as "the soul of a nation, the supreme manifestation of its cultural identity, the foundation of its true spiritual life. A

nation lives and flourishes in history while its language lives. With the decline of the language, culture withers and atrophies, the nation ceases to exist as a historical organism; it is no longer an invaluable component of civilization on Earth."[66] The following specific measures were proposed: the introduction of Belarusian as the working language in all Communist Party, state and local governments; second, the introduction of compulsory examinations in Belarusian language and literature for graduation from secondary schools; third, the introduction of compulsory entrance examinations in Belarusian language to all higher-learning institutions. A seven-page appendix contained further specific proposals for policy changes with respect to ideological education, science, book publishing, culture, art and the mass media.[67] In short, the document "could be considered the program for a rebirth of the Belarusan nation" reminiscent in many respects of the 'Belarusization' policies of the 1920s.[68] However, no direct response to the petition was received from Moscow.

Undeterred, Belarusian writers maintained their critical posture. In June 1987, they were among 138 Belarusian signatories from all walks of life (including workers) who signed a new petition to Moscow refuting assertions about the 'flowering' of Belarusian culture and calling again for legislative action to improve the position of the national language (as well as other languages in the republic). A plenary session of the BSSR Writers' Union held simultaneously adopted a resolution reiterating the demands made in the original 'Letter of the 28'.[69] In January 1990, the BSSR Supreme Soviet approved a new "Law on Languages in the Belarusian SSR" which declared Belarusian to be the sole official language and allowing for a transition period of 3-10 years to its use.[70] This reflected the realistic understanding on the part of Belarusian intellectuals that the process of linguistic 'Belarusization' could not be artificially forced. During the early 1990s, enormous importance was attached by the BNF to the

re-opening of Belarusian-language schools.[71] Slow but genuine progress was made in this direction. By 1994, from merely a handful by the end of the 1980s, there were 220 schools in Minsk where the principal language of instruction was Belarusian.[72] While recognizing the reality that the majority of the Belarusian population today are Russian-speakers, and the need to respect the rights of the ethnic Russian minority, citing the fact that the language of the majority has been discriminated against for decades, most *adradzhenne* writers rejected the notion of official Belarusian-Russian bilingualism.[73]

The April 1995 Referendum: Approving Official Bilingualism

However, with the arrival in power of Alyaksandr Lukashenka, the modest progress made in terms of Belarusian linguistic *renaissance* has been stalled and, to some degree, even rolled back. Indeed, the national nihilism of the Lukashenka regime has been nowhere better evidenced than in its linguistic policy. While declaring his respect for the Belarusian language and support for its renewal, Lukashenka has expressed the view that Belarusians consider the Russian language "their own" just as much as they do Belarusian and to cut them off from it "artificially" would inflict a deep spiritual wound. In other words, the Russian language is seen as a fundamental feature of the Belarusian identity, deeply-rooted in the Belarusian 'soul' itself.[74] Apart from being "our language," Lukashenka has on several occasions outraged nationally-minded intellectuals by remarking that Belarusian as a language is lacking in certain respects, most notably the alleged absence of a "scientific vocabulary." Being together with English and French, "one of the great languages of the world," Russian is thus the vehicle through which Belarusians can access the world of high technology. Finally, Lukashenka has

claimed that by calming the fears of Russian-speakers, official bilingualism will actually "save" the Belarusian language.[75]

Notwithstanding the disapproval of the opposition, Lukashenka once more has appeared to be in tune with the popular Belarusian mentality. During the April 1995 referendum, 83% of voters supported Lukashenka's proposal to give Russian equal status with Belarusian as an official language.[76] Responding since the referendum to repeated attacks, Lukashenka has argued that through his policy of accommodating the concerns of Russian speakers, he has done far more for the cause of Belarusian linguistic *renaissance* than his critics in the national *intelligentsia*.[77] However, this claim is highly dubious. Reminiscent of Soviet times, the number of Belarusian-language schools in Minsk since Lukashenka came to office has shrunk once again to less than 20.[78]

The 'National Idea' Speaking a Foreign Language: The Contemporary Belarusian Paradox

In contrast to 'older generation' activists such as the poet Nil Hilievich for whom the Belarusian language remains the 'soul' of the nation without which the nation itself will die,[79] some 'younger generation' Belarusians fully expect the future Belarusian state to be Russian-speaking, meaning, in other words, that Belarus will eventually "cease to exist as an ethnic state."[80] Although himself deeply committed to the survival of the national language, the historian and writer Uladzimir Arlou, citing the example of Switzerland, is of the view that "shared historical consciousness" and not language is the most important factor for national consolidation.[81] As discussed in the previous chapter, it is worth recalling in this respect that as far back as the 1970s, some Belarusians were clear in the view that their sense of 'Belarusian-ness' was not tied to the national language but

rather to the existence of a Belarusian 'state' (viz. the BSSR). In their view, their Belarusian national identity (of which they were not in doubt) was in no way diminished by the fact that (although knowing the native language) they spoke - and, moreover, preferred - to speak Russian.[82]

Indeed, one of the paradoxes of the current situation in Belarus is precisely the fact that Belarusian nationalism today overwhelmingly speaks *Russian*. Recent sociological evidence shows that support for the independence of Belarus is strongest among younger, highly-educated urban dwellers whose language employed most frequently at home and in the workplace is Russian (or a combination of Russian and Belarusian).[83] The exception within the Russified urban environment is the nationally-conscious political and cultural elite in Minsk and other cities who, although fluent in Russian, speak Belarusian as a sign of conscious opposition to the nihilistic policies of the current regime. On the other hand, support for the 'national idea,' democratization and the market is weakest among pensioners, war veterans, people with lower education, and especially rural dwellers whose language spoken at home, ironically, is still Belarusian. As commentary accompanying the study notes, "the 'national idea' speaking a foreign language is to say the least an untraditional model."[84] Nonetheless, it reflects accurately the complicated linguistic situation in post-Soviet Belarus.[85]

Some Belarusian scholars argue that prospects for reviving the national language remain. Indeed, notwithstanding the policy of Lukashenka, and, paradoxically, to some degree as a direct result of it, there is reason for modest optimism concerning the prospects for eventually 'reviving' anew the national language. Although, as has historically, it seems, been the case the present situation of the national language is, in the words of no less than Bykau, "catastrophic,"[86] forecasts concerning its disappearance altogether should be treated with caution. To begin with, although its volume has indeed been

significantly reduced under Lukashenka, Belarusian-language material of an *adradzhenne* character is being still published.[87] The most popular newspaper among younger generations is the oppositional Belarusian-language *Nasha Niva* (which obviously derives its name from the original newspaper at the turn of the century). In the tradition of its namesake, *Nasha Niva* frequently publishes the work of popular young Belarusian artists and intellectuals including the poet Slavamir Adamovich, the prose writer Adam Globus and others in which the Belarusian national 'spirit' is clearly evident. Initially 'revived' in 1990 as a *samizdat* publication[88], the Belarusian-language *Svaboda* ('Freedom') continued the effort to reanimate historical memory especially among young people including regular articles on Belarusian history and 'heroes' of the national movement (the didactic value of history to be discussed further below).[89] It is, hence, not surprising that, as part of a broader effort by the Lukashenka regime to expand its control of Belarusian mass media, these two publications have been under strong government pressure during the last several years. Indeed, *Svaboda* was actually closed down by Belarusian authorities in November 1997 on the pretext of alleged financial improprieties. Although it subsequently reappeared under the new name *Naviny*, the newspaper ceased publication altogether in 1999 after losing a libel suit brought by a member of Lukashenka's personal staff. In May 1998, Belarusian authorities warned *Nasha Niva* ('revived' by editor Syarhei Dubavec in 1991) to stop using 'traditional' (viz. pre-1933) Belarusian orthography, ordering it instead to adopt the Sovietized (Russianized) version or face closure. The newspaper refused and at this time continues to publish. Together with Western and Russian popular music, a number of Belarusian-language rock groups, some of whose music has an avowedly political and anti-presidential message, are extremely popular among young people.[90] Prior to its closure by Lukashenka in the summer of 1996, the oppositional FM *Radio*

101.2, broadcasting in Belarusian and geared towards a younger audience, had become far and away the most popular station in Minsk.

Apart from its use among the nationally-conscious elite, there are prospects for the Belarusian language's eventual 'revival' on a broader social basis. A sociological study in 1998 showed that a clear majority of Belarusian parents (57%) want their children to be educated in both Russian and Belarusian as opposed to Russian alone (26%).[91] It should be remembered as well that, as Maksimiuk notes, passive knowledge of the Belarusian language is widespread among the population. Key to the future of this language then is the lifting of the psychological barrier to its use which currently exists under Lukashenka.[92] Indeed, Adam Maldzis points out that in the current political climate it can actually be physically dangerous to speak Belarusian publicly.[93] He undoubtedly has in mind the fact that the conscious choice of Belarusian in public today amounts to an overt act of political opposition. Noting the complexity of the linguistic situation in Belarus today, Maldzis argues that not only the future of the Belarusian but Russian language is threatened. Indeed, much of the population, including Lukashenka, speak a dialectical mix of Belarusian and Russian called the *tryasanka*. A similar dialect, known as the *surzhyk*, is spoken in parts of Ukraine. Although some Belarusian writers have advanced the argument that the *trysanka* might serve as the basis for a new 'Belarusian' literary language, others resolutely reject the idea that what they view as this 'bastardized' language has any such potential. To them, its very existence is a sad testament to the destructive impact of Soviet linguistic policy.[94]

Although eventual prospects for a broad revival of the Belarusian language within society ought not be discounted entirely, the reality of the linguistic situation may be that linguistic Russification has become a *fait accompli* in Belarus which is not likely to be reversed in the near future if ever. However, it is

important to stress again that this does *not* imply 'Russification' on a deeper national level or the erosion of a Belarusian *territorial* identity. In other words, as Brian Connelly wrote in 1975, "Belorussians would acculturate, adopting the Soviet culture without giving up their own culture, but not assimilate ... Even the language attribute, most visible symbol of the Belorussian nationality, could be altered without seriously undercutting Belorussian self-awareness."[95] A similar phenomenon was observed in studies devoted to other national groups within the USSR as well. For example, citing empirical studies by Soviet specialists, Zvi Gitelman noted in 1983 that the adoption of the Russian language by 'non-Russians' did not necessarily mean that they identified themselves on an ethnic or national basis as 'Russian.' Indeed, "A non-Russian who uses the Russian language may be hostile to Russians, and may insist on maintaining a non-Russian identity."[96] Likely the most important case of comparative reference for Belarus is neighbouring Ukraine which, owing as well to linguistic proximity, was also highly vulnerable to Russificatory pressures. In her recent study of Ukrainian identity, Catherine Wanner writes that "commonplace are people of Ukrainian nationality who speak no Ukrainian (although they have a passive understanding) and have minimal knowledge of Ukrainian history and cultural traditions. Yet they consider themselves Ukrainian."[97] A similar 'paradoxical' situation undoubtedly exists among other former Soviet nationalities.

In short, as Jan Zaprudnik argued more than two decades ago, the Belarusian case (and, indeed, those of other post-Soviet nations) points to the need for *a more flexible understanding of national identity itself taking into account bilingualism and the possibility of multiple levels of identity.*[98] In essence, the notion of bilingualism and multilingualism as fundamental attributes of the Belarusian 'national idea' has been apparent from the very beginnings of the national movement. As *Nasha Niva* wrote in 1908, knowledge of foreign languages such as

Polish and Russian was highly desirable and did not risk inherently the loss of Belarusian identity. In short, the Belarusian who speaks Polish and Russian "remains and will remain a Belarusian."[99] However, given their Romantic predilection to understand the language as the "spirit" of the nation, the editors of *Nasha Niva* would undoubtedly be appalled and saddened at the current degraded state of the Belarusian language. Nonetheless, unlike the turn of the century, the situation as it has evolved today is that the future of the 'national idea' is no longer intimately linked to the survival of the national language.

Analytical Summary

This chapter concerns itself primarily with the 'synthesized', 'structured' and 'contested' characters of the Belarusian 'national idea.' Deriving ultimately from the early influences of Polish Romanticism and Enlightenment, the former refers to the dual function historically ascribed to the Belarusian language as, at once, the Romantic 'spirit' of the nation (*dukh*) and 'vehicle' of national Enlightenment. The second refers, in particular, to the effects of modernization, urbanization and Soviet linguistic policy during the post-war period especially on the relationship between language and national identity in Belarus. The main consequence of these inter-related processes was the de-emphasis by many Belarusians themselves of language as an essential indicator of national identity and the increasing linkage of this identity with the existence of the BSSR as a 'state.' This, in turn, had profound implications for the definition of the 'national idea' as represented by the paradox described - the Belarusian 'national idea' speaking predominantly Russian. Accordingly, the 'national idea' has, in the last several years, increasingly been defined primarily in political and territorial, as opposed to linguistic, terms. Moreover, bilingualism and even multilingualism should now be regarded as

fundamental attributes of the Belarusian 'national idea,' a concept implicit in the 'national idea' since the *Nasha Niva* period. Differing views, however, within the contemporary Belarusian *intelligentsia* over the future of the national language attest to the continuing 'contested character' of the 'national idea.'

Notes

[1] Cited in Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1961), p. 432.

[2] Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York, 1983), p. 181.

[3] Although it has been widely assumed that Herder identified language as the singlemost important marker of national identity, Smith, *ibid.*, points out that was, in fact, *not* the case. Rather, within German philosophy, the strict identification of nationhood with language is the particular legacy of Fichte and Schleiermacher. See also F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford, 1965) and *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1969) as well as Robert G. Erbang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York, 1931).

[4] *Nasha Niva*, July 1, 1914.

[5] *Nasha Niva*, November 11, 1910.

[6] *Nasha Niva*, May 13, 1913.

[7] *Nasha Niva*, May 31, 1912.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 80.

[11] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), pp. 54-55. Some Belarusian writers have argued that Dunin-Marcinkievich should be considered a nationally self-conscious Belarusian. See, for example, the article "Naciyanalnasc u Vincuka Dunin-Marcinkievich," *Zachodnaya Belarus*, No. 1, 1923, pp. 115-121. However, as the Polish sociologist Ryszard Radzik, "Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz -postac polsko-bialoruskiego pograniczna," *Bialoruskie zeszyty historyczne*, 1 (5), 1996, pp. 60-61, has written, although his contribution to the cause of Belarusian linguistic revival was pivotal, the Belarusian 'national idea' did not yet exist and Dunin-Marcinkievich "was far from being its formulator."

[12] A similar ban was enforced on the Lithuanian language. See V. Stanley Vardys and Judith Sedaitis, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (Boulder, 1997), pp. 16-17.

[13] Foreword to "Dudka Belaruskaya," in F. Turyk, *Belorusskoe dvizhenie. Ocherki istorii natsionalnovo i revolutsionovo dvizheniya belorussov* (Moscow, 1921), pp. 75-76 as well as Telesfor Pozniak, *Antologia literatury bialoruskiej od XIX do*

poczatku XX wieku (Wroclaw,1993), p. 85.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Nasha Niva*, September 24, 1909.

[16] *Nasha Niva*, February 21, 1915.

[17] Alexander Nadson, "Nasha Niva," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1965, p. 195.

[18] M. Bahdanovich, *Zbor tvorau u dvukh tamakh* (Minsk, 1968); Ivan Navumenka, *Maksim Bahdanovich* (Minsk, 1997).

[19] As seen in chapter one, Belarusian writers emphasize the Enlightenment traditions at the very dawn of their nation's political history in Polack.

[20] Joan Skurnowicz, *Romantic Nationalism and Liberalism: Joachim Lelewel and the Polish National Idea* (New York, 1981), p. 51.

[21] Manfred Kridl, ed. *Adam Mickiewicz: Poet of Poland* (New York, 1951), p. 6.

[22] V. Dunin-Marcinkievich, *Zbor tvorau* (Minsk, 1958), pp.. 46-47.

[23] Ryszard Radzik, ""Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz - postac polsko-bialoruskiego pograniczna," *Bialoruskie zeszyty historyczne*, 1 (5), 1996, pp. 60-61.

[24] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), p. 58.

[25] Jan Zaprudnik and Thomas Bird, *The 1863 Uprising in Byelorussia: 'Peasant's Truth' and 'Letters from Beneath the Gallows"* (New York, 1980), p. 68.

[26] *Ibid.* As will be seen in chapter five, Kalinouski's political ideal was the restoration of the former Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth.

[27] Cited in Antony Adamovich, "The Kupala-Kolas Century 1882-1982," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1982, pp. 6-7.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Homon*, No. 1, 1884, cited in *ibid.*, p. 8.

[34] Interestingly, as Vardys and Sedaitis, p. 18, point out, the first Lithuanian journals of national 'awakening' appeared at roughly this same time - *Ausra* ('The Dawn') in 1883 and *Varpas* ('The Bell') in 1887. As Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1988), p. 302, the new journal of Ukrainian studies, *Kievskaya starina*, was established in 1882.

[35] Arnold McMillin, "A Conspectus of Byelorussian Literature in the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. 2, 1971, p. 103.

[36] *Nasha Dolya*, No. 1, 1906

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Nasha Niva*, 1906.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] See "Ya muzhyk Belarus," in Janka Kupala, *Zhyve Belarus: vershy, artykuly* (Minsk, 1993), p. 30.

[41] L. Ya. Haranin, *Naciyanalnaya ideya u belaruskai literaturi pachatku XX stahoddzya.* (Minsk, 1996), p. 86.

[42] Adamovich, p. 19.

[43] *Nasha Niva*, December 6, 1911; *Nasha Niva*, February 21, 1915.

[44] Ivan S. Lubachko, *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule, 1917-1957* (Lexington, 1972), p. 115.

[45] Vakar, p. 153.

[46] Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-59 and Soviet Nationality Policy," Soviet *Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, October 1962, pp. 138-157.

[47] In response to my questions concerning the supplanting of Belarusian by Russian during Masherau's tenure, some younger generation Belarusians told me that, in view of its status as *lingua franca* within the USSR, the promotion of Russian, even at the expense of their own language, made a certain sense. Others, however, including several who served in the Soviet army, told me of the profound sense of shame they felt in their encounters with other young people, from, for example, the Baltics or Central Asia, who, chided them for not speaking or, in some cases, even knowing, their own national language.

[48] Roman Szporluk, "National Reawakening: Ukraine and Belorussia," in Uri Ra'anan, ed., *The Soviet Empire: The Challenge of National and Democratic Movements* (Lexington, 1990), p. 75

[49] David Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe* (Edmonton, 1996), p. 29.

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] See Roman Solchanyk, "Ukraine, Belorussia and Moldova: Imperial Integration, Russification and the Struggle for National Survival," in Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger, eds. *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*. Boulder, 1990, p. 183. However, as Roman Szporluk, "West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical tradition, social communication and Linguistic assimilation," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, January 1979, pp. 76-98 noted, Russification processes proceeded much differently in Belarus than in Ukraine. Most importantly, whereas West Ukraine has preserved much of its Ukrainian linguistic character, the same has not been true of West Belarus. As my own experience indicated, unlike Lviv for example, the Belarusian language is rarely, if ever, heard on the streets of Hrodna.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] William H. Mandel, *Soviet But Not Russian: The 'Other' Peoples of the Soviet Union* (Palo Alto, 1985).

[54] Jaroslaw Pelenski, "Shelest and His Period in Soviet Ukraine (1963-1972): A Revival of Controlled Ukrainian Autonomism," in Peter J. Potichnyj, ed., *Ukraine in the Seventies* (Oakville, 1975), pp. 286-287.

[55] Jan Zaprudnik and Michael Urban, "Belarus: From Statehood to Empire?" in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 284. This was also confirmed to me by Belarusian intellectuals during my conversations with them in Minsk. Although they were a minority, some, for example his former advisor Syarhei Zakonnikou, were of the view that Masherau tacitly favored the development of the Belarusian language but found himself constrained by the limits of Soviet policy.

[56] Stanislau Stankievich, *Belaruskaya padsaveckaya literatura pershai palaviny 60-ikh hadou* (New York, 1967), p. 13.

[57] Cited in Zaprudnik, p. 106.

[58] During my stay in Minsk, I had the opportunity to meet Ales Razanau in the offices of *Litaratura i Mastactva* where we discussed the literary community during the 1960s as a repository of the 'national idea'. As a student, Razanau himself was expelled from the Belarusian State University in Minsk for circulating a petition calling for the language of lectures to be switched from Russian to Belarusian.

[59] Shirin Akiner, "Contemporary Young Byelorussian Poets (1967-1975)," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1976, p. 344.

[60] Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 352-353.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] U. Konan, *Demokraticheskaya estetika Belorussii* (Minsk, 1972). The essence of Konan's 'democratic aesthetic' will be defined further in chapter five where it is argued that this was evidence of the enduring character (even under constraints of 'Sovietization') of the historical Polish 'vector' in Belarusian national thought.

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] Marples, p. 31.

[65] Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR*. New York, 1989.p. 249.

[66] Cited in Zaprudnik, pp. 125-126.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[70] Michael Urban and Jan Zaprudnik, "Belarus: A long road to nationhood," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 107-110.

[71] Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History*, p. 224.

[72] Jan Maksymiuk, "Belarus: Language Goes on Trial," *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty*, August 11, 1998.

[73] *Respublika*, November 24, 1992; *Holas Radzymi*, December 24, 1992.

[74] *Glos znad Niemna*, May 29-June 4, 1995.

[75] *Zvyazda*, July 8, 1998.

[76] Ustina Markus, "Lukashenka's Victory," *Transition*, August 11, 1995.

[77] *Belorusskaya niva*, September 19, 1995; *Zvyazda*, July 8, 1998.

[78] Maksimiuk, *op. cit.*

[79] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, April 12, 1996.

[80] Ales Kraucevich, "Bialorus - dzis i jutro," *Kultura*, January-February 1996, p. 89.

[81] *Holas Radzymi*, June 15, 1995.

[82] Nicholas Vakar, "The Belorussian People Between Nationhood and Extinction," in Erich Goldhagen, ed., *Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1968), pp. 223-226.

[83] It is true, however, that, as I learned during my time in Minsk, inspired by the

adradzhenne movement of the late 1980s, at least some of the 'new generation' of nationally-aware Belarusian youth have been making the conscious effort to 'return' to the native language in the past several years. For personal accounts of this 're-discovery' of the Belarusian language, see T. Sazewicz, "Moja Bialorus," *Czasopismo*, No. 4, 1996, pp. 20-21; *Wprost*, No. 37, September 15, 1996, pp. 78-80. However, it would be, in my view, incorrect to regard this as a linguistic *renaissance* among Belarusian young people. Many whom I spoke to personally - deeply-convinced of their Belarusian national identity - nonetheless saw no need to 'return' to the native language.

[84] *Beloruskaya delovaya gazeta*, January 19, 1997; *Belorusskii rynok*, September 22-28, 1997.

[85] The leading scholar on the linguistic situation in Belarus today, and the role of the Russian language in particular, is A. E. Mikhnevich of the Institute of Belarusian Culture in Minsk.

[86] *Transition*, March 22, 1996.

[87] For example, the previously-cited works by La. Ya. Haranin and I. Navumenka.

[88] For a conspectus of Belarusian national *samizdat*, see Appendix D.

[89] *Svaboda*, June 16, 1997; *Svaboda*, July 15, 1997; *Svaboda*, July 29, 1997. Although less frequently, such material can be seen at times in Russian-language independent newspapers of a predominantly economic and political orientation including *Beloruskaya gazeta* and *Belorusskii rynok*.

[90] I attended a concert of these groups while in Minsk in February 1997 at which pre-Soviet Belarusian national symbols were displayed and anti-Lukashenka sentiments openly expressed.

[91] *Natsionalnaya ekonomicheskaya gazeta*, No. 6, February 1998.

[92] *Niva*, November 10, 1996.

[93] Adam Maldzis, "Abarony patrabuyuc use movy Belarusi," *Kantakty i diyalohi*, No. 4, April 1996, p. 8.

[94] This was the view of writers I spoke with at *Litaratura i mastactva* in Minsk.

[95] Brian Connelly, "Fifty Years of Soviet Federalism in Belorussia," in Ralph S. Clem, ed., *The Soviet West: Interplay between Nationality and Social Organization* (New York, 1975), pp. 127-128.

[96] Zvi Gitelman, "Are Nations Merging in the USSR?", *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1983, p. 38,

[97] Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, 1998), p. 13.

[98] Jan Zaprudnik, "Developments in Belorussia," in George W. Simmonds, ed., *Nationalism in the USSR in the Era of Brezhnev and Kosygin* (Detroit, 1974), p. 107.

[99] *Nasha Niva*, April 25, 1908.

Chapter III

Tolerance, Respect and Democratism in Belarusian National Thought

As noted in chapter one, the Belarusian national *mythmoteur* holds that Belarusian political history has been characterized since ancient times by democratic and pluralistic values. Moreover, this heritage is consciously juxtaposed against the alleged almost total lack of democratic and 'civic' traditions in Russia. This argument, however, clearly ignores that fact that the roots at least of a Russian 'civic' nationalism are to be found "in earlier Russian history and the attempts of intellectual and political figures to construct the idea of a Russian (*Rossiskaya*) nation."[1] According to this conception, "the very notions of the people (narod) and nation were used with the adjective *rossiskii* and *russkii*, both synonyms at that time for the Russian state, not the Russian ethnic group."[2] Visible during the 1880s in Russia and best personified by Mikhail Katkov, this form of Russian nationalism represented "the attempt to inspire among all peoples of the empire a subjective sense of *belonging* to Russia, whether through the habit of using the Russian language, through reverence for Russia's past, its culture and traditions, or through conversion to the Orthodox faith. This kind of Russian-ness did not necessarily imply abandoning altogether a localized non-Russian identity."[3] Nonetheless, a key distinction between the Belarusian and Russian 'ideas' does exist in that the former lacks any sort of 'messianistic' inclination towards 'empire' and the political subjugation of neighbouring national groups. Moreover, it is the indeed the case that the Belarusian 'national idea' has been remarkably

devoid of chauvinistic, racialistic and xenophobic tendencies. Rather, it has been defined by attitudes of tolerance and respect for other nationalities together with political democratism.[4]

Once more, the origins of this tendency are to be found in the 'synthesized' chararacter of the 'national idea' itself, especially the dual influences of Polish Romanticism and Enlightenment at the University of Vilna. Notwithstanding their profound philosophical differences, Polish Romantics (Lelewel and Mickiewicz) and representatives of the Enlightenment (Hugo Kollataj and the Sniadecki brothers) alike tended to conceive of the nation in primarily 'civic-territorial' and not 'ethno-linguistic' terms. This heritage owes to the legacy of the medieval "Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" which, as discussed in chapter one, was *multicultural* and *multiconfessional* in character. As Norman Davies has written, this "prepared the ground for, if not universal tolerance, then at least for practical toleration. It promoted an environment of cultural 'cross-fertilization,' where open-minded people could learn from their neighbours, and it encouraged a strong tradition of education, where each of the communities had to emulate the others in the excellence of their schools and academies."[5] This spirit of toleration was embodied in many of the key documents of the *Rzeczpospolita*, such as the 1572 testament of Sigismund-August, which spoke of "love, harmony and unity" between the various ethnic and religious communities living within the Commonwealth.[6]

However, as acknowledged by Belarusian writers themselves, the importance of the *Roman Catholic religious component* in Belarusian national thought should be also noted in this respect - in particular *Belarusian Christian Democracy* ('BCD') which was one of most important political forces in West Belarus during the inter-war period. At the same time, these basic values were also visible in the BSSR (Soviet Belarus), particularly in the young writers and poets gathered during

the mid-to-late 1920s around the journal *Uzvyshsha* ('Excelsior'). The major exception to these traditions of Belarusian tolerance, respect and democratism occurred during the Nazi occupation of World War II when elements of an *integral ethnic nationalism* and *xenophobia* were evident in a periodical press published under German supervision by Belarusian Fascists. However, even during the post-Stalin period, the 'revival' of humanistic ideals of tolerance and democratism was visible in Belarusian national literature. Illustrating once again the 'synthesized character' of the 'national idea,' during the late 1980s and early 1990s, although it gave pride of place to the Romantic ideal of 're-awakening' Belarusian national memory and linguistic revival, the Belarusian national movement led by the BNF simultaneously embodied a more 'rational' emphasis on respect for other nationalities and democratic ideals. This 'synthesis' was embodied in the new post-Soviet constitution adopted in March 1994.

On the basis of these deeply-engrained values, the French specialist Bruno Drewski suggested in 1995 that Belarus was a good candidate for the development of a tolerant 'civic' or 'territorial' type of nationalism.[7] Indeed, viewed in a comparative context, it is the case that, unlike other post-communist states, Belarus has not witnessed the emergence of what Rogers Brubaker refers to as an aggressive 'nationalizing nationalism' which discriminates against the rights of minorities or makes territorial claims against neighbouring states.[8] On the other hand, developments within Belarus since 1995 have been less than encouraging. Evidence once again of a debilitating "national nihilism" within the current ruling circles in Minsk, the most serious obstacle is the *subversion* of Belarusian democratic values by the political regime of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

Tolerance, Respect and Democratism in Early Belarusian National Thought

Humanistic ideals of tolerance, respect for other nations and democratism have been a defining feature of the Belarusian 'national idea' since its inception. Together with the seminal Polish influences already noted, progressive *Russian* and *Ukrainian* thought of the mid-to-late 19th century made an important contribution in this regard. Like their Russian counterparts, Belarusian populists, influenced by the social-democratic ideals of Herzen and Chernyshevsky, understood the development of nations not as a function of a particular law-governed phase of historical development (viz. capitalism) but rather within the broader context of 'general human progress.' According to this thinking, the most important question was what a particular nation could contribute to the general good of all humanity. Hence, the original journal of Belarusian 'national awakening' *Homon* spoke out against what was seen as the egocentrical 'bourgeois nationalism' typical of West European countries and perhaps best symbolized by the German philosopher Fichte.[9] The Belarusian writers were clearly influenced in this regard by the views of the Ukrainian social-democrat Mykola Drahomaniv who, while upholding the inherent right of nations to self-determination, cited specifically Germany in rejecting what he termed "as nationalism which opposes cosmopolitanism."[10] Reflecting further Drahomaniv's influences, as will be seen in chapter five, the political ideal of the 'Homonites' was not secession from Russia but its *federalization* and *democratization.*

Indeed, Belarusian intellectuals have historically understood nationalism itself as a fundamentally *democratizing, integrative force.* For example, a May 1912 article in *Nasha Niva* differentiated between "rational, healthy nationalism"

understood as defence of the nation's inherent rights, and "harmful nationalism" which aimed at domination and control of others. The authors stressed that Belarusian nationalism was a variant of the former. Indeed, "nationality" is defined as the "foundation of democracy" - only through the full development of the national cultural potential in particular can democratic ideals and 'accord' (*zhoda*) with other nations be achieved.[11]

Notwithstanding the prevailing hostility to the incipient Belarusian 'national idea' in leading Polish and Russian circles during the early years of the 20th century discussed in chapter one, *Nasha Niva* unswervingly manifested a friendly disposition towards the Polish and Russian *people*. The newspaper expressed sympathy for the Polish independence struggle and deep respect for Polish culture and language. Exemplary in this regard is an editorial published by 'a-n-a' - the pseudonym for Anton Luckievich - during a 1915 polemic with the National Democratic newspapers *Gazeta codzienna* and *Kurjer Litewski* in which he expressed his faith in the eventual victory of democratic forces in Poland which would make possible a future *rapprochement* between the two nations.[12] Although not shy about debating with the "West-Russian" press, *Nasha Niva* was always careful to separate reactionary groups such as the "Black Hundreds" or so-called "pure Russians" from the nation as a whole. In January 1911, *Nasha Niva* specifically denied the accusation of the right-wing *Belorusskaya zhizn* to the effect that it was "a separatist newspaper." This was impossible because the Belarusian movement was "national-cultural" and not political in nature.[13]

Noting that much good had come to Belarus from both Poland and Russia in the way of culture, art, and science, a 1907 article commemorating the first anniversary of *Nasha Niva* stressed the value for Belarusians of continuing to study both Polish and Russian languages.[14] The newspaper expanded on this theme in April 1908, noting (in obvious reference to the Vilna scholars and

Russian radical thinkers such as Herzen and Chernyshevsky to be discussed further in the next chapter) that during the 19th century the "best sons" of Poland and Russia had contributed much to help arouse Belarusians from their "centuries-long slumber" and inaugurate the cause of Belarusian national *renaissance*.[15]

In a distinctly Romantic vein, *Nasha Niva's* democratism revealed itself in the form of a profound appreciation for the *inherent value of small nations and their extraordinary contribution to the larger world culture*. Citing Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Switzerland among others, every nation was said to possess the *inherent right* to develop its national culture - defined as "the true work of the soul" - free of external hindrance. The nihilistic desire of some larger nations (by implication Russia and Poland) to destroy smaller ones, therefore, did great harm not only to them but all of humanity.[16] Specifically, the newspaper expressed Romantic faith in the unlimited creative "will" and potential of the Belarusian people heretofore denied but which had its own unique and irreplaceable contribution to make to world culture. Indeed, every nationality - big and small - had not only the right but *obligation* to contribute something original to "world culture" as a reflection of its particular national 'soul' or 'spirit.' However, it is continually stressed that the road to the "international" passes through the "national"; in other words, Belarus could make its contribution to "world culture" only by developing first of all to the fullest its own national language and culture - in short, through the vehicle of its own national *renaissance*.[17]

Another fundamental Romantic precept is the endless quest for the 'beautiful', 'truth' and 'harmony' in life primarily through an exploration of the depths of the national 'spirit.' As Isaiah Berlin wrote, this required 'non-traditional' method of analysis, in particular, "a capacity for imaginative insight."[18] Moreover, exploring the inner recesses of the national 'soul' allowed one to come to an understanding of how individual nations, although possessing inherently distinct linguistic,

physical and mental characteristics, were, at the same time, part of an organically interconnected 'natural' whole or 'matrix'.[19] Deriving originally from the *Nasha Niva* poets Jakub Kolas and especially Maksim Bahdanovich, these elements have also been clearly evident in Belarusian national thought.

Kolas is best known for two long Romantic poems: 'Symon-muzyka' ('Simon the Musician') and 'Novaya zyamlya' ('The New Land'), both of which were started in 1911 but not completed until the early 1920s. Described by the Belarusian literary critic Aleh Lojka as "an encyclopedia of pre-revolutionary Belarusian peasant life," the latter in particular is essentially a "novel in verse."[20] As literary critics point out, the truly innovative character of Kolas's work (relative, for example, to Kupala) is the positing of *deep philosophical questions concerning the meaning of life, nature and the universe and, specifically, the place of the Belarusian people in, and their relation to, this natural order.* This sort of philosophical questioning is at the heart of both 'Symon-muzyka' and 'Novaya zyamlya' wherein the poet, through a return to the historical past, probes deeply into the 'spirit' of his peasant heroes in the quest for answers to these 'eternal' questions. In the process, the 'inner' spiritual strength of the Belarusian nation - living in perfect harmony with the natural order and natural law, devoid of any striving to dominate and master nature - reveals itself.[21] This emphasis on harmony with nature is developed further in the Romantic collection 'Kazki zhyccya' and reflects a new understanding of the 'national idea' - *that of the indissoluble tie between the Belarusian 'ethnos' and its natural, geographic surroundings.*[22]

Reflecting in particular the influence of symbolism with its emphasis on the search for deeper significance in life and posing of such eternal questions as the meaning of existence itself, the poet for Bahdanovich was a 'medium' whose soul is closely bound to nature and whose art reveals the inner truths of the eternal and

unchanging character of the natural order. Indeed, perhaps owing to the tragic character of his own existence, the poet, for example, in the classic poems 'Ramans' and 'Zorka venera,' clearly sought to reveal the inner harmony and beauty of life and the world. Not coincidentally, Bahdanovich's favorite expression was '*la musique avant toute*' [above all, music].' In this sense, Ales Chabot is correct to argue that Bahdanovich was first of all a poet and only then a "Belarusian" poet. Yet, there is no doubt that the unifying thread connecting all of his work with its eclectic combination of different literary styles and influences is the "Belarusian idea."[23] Hence, it can be argued that Bahdanovich's fundamental literary aim was to reveal the 'eternal truths' about the Belarusian *ethnos* and 'national spirit' (*dukh*) understood as an integral part of a much larger 'cosmic' order within which the nation existed in a condition of *harmony* and *balance*. As will be discussed further below, directly inspired by the work of Bahdanovich, this sort of Romantic conception also typified the work of a new generation of young inter-war Belarusian poets gathered around the journal *Uzvyshsha* which was notions of motion and the "upward progress" of the Belarusian nation towards inclusion in the affairs of all humanity - in short, the fusion of the national and international.[24]

Herein lies an important distinction between the Belarusian 'national idea' and, in particular, the 'Russian idea'. Although Belarusian scholars tend to ignore the presence of a discernible 'civic tradition' within Russian social and political thought, they do seem justified in the claim that a fundamental difference between the Belarusian and Russian 'ideas' is the lack of a *messianistic tendency* in the former.[25] This Russian messianism has been given the name of 'pan-Slavism' and was rooted in the idea of Moscow as the 'Third Rome' (after the fall of Byzantium), possessing a unique 'historic mission' to 'regather' under its patrimony all the Orthodox faithful of the former Kievan Rusian realm. As

discussed in chapter one, this sort of thinking justified the incorporation of Belarus into the Russian Empire as a consequence of the partitions of Poland. At the same time, especially during the 1840s, messianism was a pronounced element of the Polish 'national idea' as it appeared in the works of the great Romantic poets Mickiewicz and Slowacki in which Poland was, at times, "compared to the Christ among nations, redeeming through suffering not only the Polish nation but mankind."[26] On the contrary, no such messianistic element, be it a tendency towards 'empire-building' or vision of Belarus as possessing some sort of unique 'salvation mission,' has been visible within Belarusian national thought. Rather, the Belarusian 'idea' has centred around the much more modest goal of achieving recognition, equality and respect for Belarus within the larger ('organic') family of nations.

The Commitment to Ideals of Tolerance and Democratism Embodied in Initial Belarusian Efforts at 'State-Building'

A commitment to fundamental ideals of tolerance, respect and democracy was apparent in the initial efforts at 'state-building' undertaken by the leaders of the Belarusian national movement centred around *Nasha Niva* during the early years of the 20th century. As suggested in chapter one, this movement culminated in the declaration of independence by the Belarusian National Republic on March 25, 1918. However, prior to this, and reflecting the strength of what will be elaborated upon in the chapter five as the Lithuanian 'vector' or 'orientation' in Belarusian national thought, Vaclau Lastouski and Anton Luckievich opened negotiations in 1915 with representatives of the Lithuanian, Polish and Jewish communities about the possibility of creating a new 'Confederation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania'

comprising several national groups to be based upon an elected assembly and wide-ranging guarantees and both individual and group rights.[27]

On December 15, 1915, a declaration was published in the four languages of the interested parties according to which "Lithuania and Belarus ... shall be independent, autonomous states ... in which all ethnic groups are guaranteed their rights ... All classes, organizations, and citizens of the country are called upon to forget slander, strife and mistrust in view of the great importance of this historical moment and, considering only the good of their common homeland, to join in the Confederation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania."[28] The affairs of the new state were to be conducted by a 'Provisional Council' comprised of representatives of all four groups which would appoint as head-of-state a 'Grand Duke.' However, reflecting controversy over the legacy of the Grand Duchy itself, plans for the new confederation soon encountered difficulty as quarreling broke out between the interested parties. The most important tensions were between the Belarusians and Lithuanians. The Lithuanian Supreme Council in Kauna (Kovno) favored the idea of a new Lithuanian-Latvian federation; however, in a statement of January 6, 1916, the Council grudgingly agreed that since the Belarusian territories had indeed been part of the Grand Duchy, Belarus could join as a 'third partner.'

Unwilling to accept this diminished status, leaders of the Belarusian movement ignored the Lithuanian Supreme Council's statement issuing instead a second declaration according to which the 'reconstituted' Lithuanian-Belarusian state as a 'sovereign nation' would include "all the territories now occupied by German troops, namely: the provinces of Kauna and Vilna, the Belarusian and Lithuanian parts of Courland, and portions of the province of Minsk now under the Vilna administration."[29] The capital of the new confederation was to be Vilna and a new legislative assembly to be given the name *Sojm* (after that of the parliament of the Grand Duchy) would be elected by 'universal, direct, equal and secret ballot' with

all ethnic groups enjoying 'equal rights' in the electoral process. Finally, it was stipulated that the constitution of the new Lithuanian-Belarusian state "shall not be granted from above, but worked out by a Constitutional *Sojm* in Vilna, elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot."[30] However, for the geo-strategic reasons noted in chapter one (the desire to avoid the territorial dismemberment of Russia), German occupation authorities continued to show no interest in the scheme which subsequently collapsed.

As discussed in chapter one, the 'All-Belarusian Congress' of December 1917 adopted a resolution declaring the intent to establish a "democratic republican order" on the territory of Belarus.[31] The fundamental documents of the BNR also reflected the commitment to ideals of tolerance and democracy. The highest body of governmental power is defined once again as a *Sejm* or parliament in the tradition of the legislative bodies of the former Grand Duchy to be elected, as before, on the basis of a universal, secret ballot in which all citizens of the Belarusian republic, irrespective of sex, nationality, would have the right to participate. Individual rights and liberties were also to be guaranteed, including: freedom of expression, speech, conscience, print, public assembly, strike and unionization, as well as the inviolability of the individual. Finally, all the nationalities residing on the territory of the BNR were assured their basic rights, including the equality of national languages.[32]

For reasons already discussed, these early Belarusian efforts at 'state-building' in the modern era, drawing on memories of the historical past, in particular, the Lithuanian Grand Duchy with its pluralistic institutions and traditions, failed. Nonetheless, the commitment to build a state based on democratic values is apparent and, as will be discussed further later in this chapter, would manifest itself in the first post-Soviet constitution adopted by the Belarusian republic in March 1994.

Belarusian Tolerance and Democratism During the Inter-War Period

During the inter-war period, Belarusian political organizations in both West and East Belarus displayed a commitment to humanistic and democratic ideals. Indeed, a theme which emerges in West Belarus is the idea that political regimes based on violence and coercion are unsustainable.[33] In the BSSR, with incipient Stalinism looming on the horizon during the second half of the 1920s, Belarusian writers associated with the journal *Uzvyshsha* mounted a humanistic critique of what they perceived as the nihilistic *ethos* of the Soviet communist system.

West Belarus: Belarusian Christian Democracy

In West Belarus, most exemplary in this regard was the West Belarusian Christian Democratic (BCD) movement. Indeed, illustrating the important role played by religion in the development of the Belarusian 'national idea,' Catholics stood at the forefront not only of the effort to save the nation's language and historical past but 'consciousness-raising' efforts. In this respect, it is worth noting that virtually all the leaders of the Belarusian national movement at the turn of the 20th century were Catholics, including the Luckievich brother, Ivanouski, Kupala, Kolas, Lastouski and others were all Catholics. Prior to them, such important 19th century figures in the history of the Belarusian *adradzhenne* movement as Kalinouski and Bahushevich were also of a Catholic background.[34] This was no 'historical accident', owing primarily to the fact that, especially in its Polish form, Catholicism was opposed to the Byzantine traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy and associated 'Russification' policies of the Tsarist state during the 19th century.

Indeed, the Roman Church in Poland was the essence of the country's deep historical bond with *the West*. As Norman Davies writes: "Poland's Catholicism determined that all her elected rulers came from the West; that all her cultural ties lay with the Latin world: that her closest political connections would be with the Empire, her immediate neighbour; and, in the age of faith, that most of her sympathies lay with the Catholic peoples of the West rather than with the pagans, schismatics, or infidels of the West."[35] Thanks to these 'Westernizing' influences, it can be argued that, as the direct 'anti-thesis' to Orthodoxy and prevailing Russian cultural, political and social influences, Catholicism has historically played a crucial 'nation-building' role in Belarus.

The origins of the Belarusian Christian Democratic movement can be traced to the revolutionary events of 1905 when Father Adam Stankievich - at that time a teacher at the local school in the village of Oshman - took part in a strike action against linguistic Russification and for the free development of the native (viz. Belarusian) language. In 1911, he led a small "Belarusian circle" of students and intellectuals in Vilna, and in 1916 took over direction of a similar group in St. Petersburg.[36] In 1913, the periodical *Belarus* made its debut published (in the Belarusian Latin script) by a group of Catholic clergy including Father Vincent Hadleuski. Although the appearance of *Belarus* was initially greeted with some reticence by the *Nasha Niva* editors who expressed concern for the integrity of the Belarusian movement, this newspaper - while seeking to distance itself from what were regarded as the more radical social-democratic elements of the Belarusian movement - clearly strove to awaken national consciousness among Belarusian Catholics primarily through calls for education in the native language.[37]

Following the March 1917 Russian revolution, Belarusian Catholics were represented in the Belarusian National Committee by Hadleuski. The first Belarusian Catholic political organization - the *Christian Democratic Union* -

emerged in April 1917. In August of that year, under the direction of Adam Stankievich, the first number of the newspaper *Krynica* appeared which - later adopting the name *Belaruskaya krynica* - was to become the "vehicle" of the Belarusian Christian Democratic movement. In 1918, Catholic priests took part in the creation of several organizations devoted to the cause of Belarusian national "revival" including the "Belarusian Scientific Society" and "The National-Cultural Union for the Revival of the Belarusian People".[38] During the inter-war period, following the liquidation by Polish authorities of the Hramada, the most important political force in the West Belarusian movement became Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD), the principal leaders of which were Adam and Jan Stankievich.

The first BCD program was adopted in Minsk in 1920. As the Polish scholar Jerzy Tomaszewski writes, in it one sees a conscious attempt to adapt the social teachings of the Catholic Church to the concrete realities of West Belarusian life where two issues were of cardinal importance - land reform and the 'national question'. In accordance with the 1891 papal encyclical *Revum novarum*, the BCD program was critical of the capitalist system, calling for the confiscation of land from Polish landlords and its redistribution to the Belarusian peasantry. At the same time, the document accepted in principle the institution of private property, seeking, however, to limit its "harmful effects" through steeply-graded taxation policy.[39] With respect to the 'national question,' BCD called for recognition of the right of nations to 'self-determination,' guarantees of minority rights including that of education in the native language, the unification of the Belarusian territories, and the *rapprochement* of Catholic and Orthodox Belarusians.[40]

Summarizing its policy on the 'national question,' BCD symbolized what Tomaszewski has described as a form of Belarusian "patriotism" which rejected extreme forms of nationalism, emphasizing instead (in the best tradition of *Nasha*

Niva) respect and *tolerance* towards other peoples including the Polish nation.[41]

In October 1926, following Pilsudski's *coup*, an organizational conference was held in Vilna at which the name 'Belarusian Christian Democracy' was officially adopted as was a new program containing major changes relative to the earlier Minsk document. The most important revision was in the area of land reform where it was stated that land was to be re-parceled to the peasantry albeit with financial compensation to landlords by the state. Interestingly, the landholdings of the Catholic Church itself were to be redistributed as part of this process. Concerning the 'national question,' BCD continued to call for the opening of Belarusian-language schools. In support of this goal, it actively participated in the founding and direction of the new Belarusian Institute of Economy and Culture established in 1926. Reflecting the general and inclusive character of the movement's name, it was also declared that Belarusian Christian Democracy was open to members of the Orthodox faith. The program furthermore called for the separation of church and state, as well as religious education in schools in accordance with pupils' individual faith. Use of religion as a political weapon to foment discord between Belarusian Orthodox and Catholics was also condemned.[42] However, the adoption of a BCD new program in 1936 led to the fracturing of the movement itself. In protest against the socio-economic content of the document as moving BCD too far to the "left," (the radicalization of BCD to be discussed further in chapter four), Father Vincent Hadleuski and several other clerics established their own group publishing the newspaper *Belaruski Front.*

In terms of its socio-economic program, 'Belaruski Front' advanced the concept of *cooperativism* which it defined as *a new form of social order based initially on a radical critique of both capitalism and communism.* Capitalism is rejected as having led humanity into a very difficult socio-economic situation typified by the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a small group of capitalists, and,

as a corollary, the increasing pauperization of the laboring classes. However, if capitalism begins the process of impoverishing the masses, Marxian communism is condemned for seeking to complete it. Cooperativism, on the other hand, does not strive towards the 'proletarianization' of the masses but rather stands on the basic principle of *the just distribution of capital (wealth)*. It therefore does not seek the abolition of private property (for without it individuals are deprived of their maximum possible independence) but rather its redistribution in a way so as to encourage cooperation (and not competition).[43]

Underlain by the basic ontological assumption that human beings are by nature *good*, the defining feature of cooperativism is *voluntarism*. Only labor, especially socially-oriented volunteer work, gives the individual full social and political rights. Hence, people in a cooperativist society will be 'enlightened' as to not only their rights but *obligations*. Cooperativism thus emerges as a form of social democracy or, in the modern vernacular, 'communitarianism' positing the ultimate supremacy of "the collective good" over that of individual rights. Like BCD, Hadleuski's organization furthermore rejected both fascism and Marxian concepts of the 'class struggle' and 'dictatorship of the proletariat.' With work and social wealth distributed in accordance with the principal of strict equality, classes would disappear. Hence, there would simply be no basis for class conflict in society and a 'dictatorship' to repress exploiters in the name of the exploited. Indeed, according to the cooperativist program, society could not be built and sustained on the basis of violence. Hence, fascism and Marxian communism - as societies ultimately based on the principle of force rather than persuasion - must inevitably face collapse.[44]

Indeed, the BCD press identified *the growing influence of materialist values within the population - especially young people -* as the root cause of what was widely reported on in the periodical literature during the 1930s as a profound

spiritual crisis within West Belarusian society which was at the root of numerous social ills including most importantly a growing problem of *alcoholism*.[45] BCD publications thus specifically target 'communism' as the main "ideological enemy" of the Belarusian movement.[46] Belarusian national revival was possible only on the basis of Christian values with the Catholic church, defined as the "creative force of the nation," to play the leading role in this process.[47]

As part of the ongoing 'pacification' campaign, Polish authorities moved against the Belarusian Catholic clergy beginning in the late 1930s. In December 1936, accused of fostering "radical" sentiments within the Belarusian population, *Belaruskaya krynica* was suspended by order of the regional court in Vilna. In January 1937, the Warsaw government closed the Belarusian Institute of Economy and Culture. Hadleuski's *Belaruski Front* was continually harassed by Polish authorities and had several of its numbers confiscated before closing in 1939.

Democratic and Humanistic Values in the BSSR: The *Uzvyshsha* Writers

Reacting against the idealization of the *proletariat* which, as will be discussed in the next chapter, characterized the work of the *Polymia* poets, the journal *Uzvyshsha* created in 1926 by the poets Uladzimir Dubouka and Jazep Pushcha, explicitly stood for the development of Belarusian literature on the basis of humanistic national traditions. More specifically, coining a phrase later paradoxically appropriated by the Soviet regime, Belarusian literature was to be "national in form, and socialist in content."[48] Through the vehicle of literature, Belarus would show the entire world the new artistic heights it was capable of achieving - "art should be excelsior."[49] In essence, *Uzvyshsha* had as its fundamental goal the continuation and further development of the ideals of what

Adamovich calls the 'New Renaissance' (meaning by this *Nasha Niva*) begun by Kupala, Kolas and Bahdanovich.[50]

In the collection 'Nalya' published in the summer of 1927, Dubouka, sounding somewhat similar to West Belarusian Christian Democrats, attacked the materialist *ethos* of communism with its emphasis on industrial and technological progress which he saw as leaving no room "for art, culture and genuinely human values."[51] In this collection, Dubouka emphasizes a theme crucial to the *Uzvyshsha* project - *the inclusion of Belarus in the affairs of all humanity*. As Antony Adamovich puts it, Dubouka "declares himself to be a cosmopolitan (perhaps universalist would be more accurate) ... This love for all humanity is presented as a fundamental trait of the Belorussian character."[52] For its part, although not as open a criticism of official ideology, Pushcha's new collection 'Days of Spring' also implied the spiritual poverty of communism. As Adamovich characterizes it, together these collections "transmit the quintessence of the early *Uzvyshsha* spirit, including its spirit of opposition."[53] Illustrating the depth of emerging divisions within the Soviet Belarusian literary community, Pushcha was harshly criticized in another 'proletarian' journal *Maladnyak* for not recognizing the "progress" made in terms of Belarusian national development under Soviet rule.[54] During the fall of 1927, Dubouka's new poem 'Circles' once again betrayed growing pessimism about the present circumstances but remained firm in the hope for a better future. Indeed, the final 'circle' develops the basic idea of the poem and a constant theme of Dubouka as well as, in a broader sense, the *Uzvyshsha* movement as a whole (reminiscent of Bahdanovich) cited above - the notion of "upward motion" or "progress" leading to the inclusion of the Belarusian people in the affairs of all humanity.[55]

However, of particular interest in this regard is Dubouka's new cycle of verse published in the first number of *Uzvyshsha* for the year 1929 which contained a

dialogue between two symbolic characters - 'Mathematics' and 'Lyric'. The main point of the debate between the two is the fundamental question: *what constitutes the proper basis for the development of national culture?* Reminiscent of the answer given earlier by Maksim Bahdanovich, the response of 'Lyric' is that traditional folklore ought to be the point of departure for developing national culture and he recites the verses of several Belarusian folk-songs in support of his argument. This is rejected by 'Mathematics' who, symbolizing what Dubouka evidently regarded as the materialistic and utilitarian communist approach to life, ridicules 'Lyric' as essentially being detached from reality. Dismissing Belarusian national folklore in nihilistic fashion as "petty bourgeois," 'Mathematics' maintains that national culture must be "proletarian" in content and, therefore, built entirely on entirely new foundations with no real connection to the past. Although Dubouka himself had left it up to the reader to decide who won the argument between 'Mathematics' and 'Lyric,' the arguments of 'Mathematics' were so absurd as to leave little doubt that 'Lyric' emerged the victor.[56]

It is thus no coincidence that when the first wave of Stalinist repressions began, *Uzvyshsha* was among the first targets. A resolution adopted at the 10th Congress of the Belarusian Communist Party in 1926 indicated that the authorities now planned to take the offensive against national trends in Soviet Belarusian literature. The resolution warned that "national democratic" elements of the Belarusian *intelligentsia* were beginning to adopt positions of aggressive Belarusian nationalism." The first object of attack was Belarusian theatre. During the winter season 1927-1928, a number of plays were banned including Janka Kupala's *Tuteishi* ('The Locals'). In 1929, communist authorities demanded that Uzvyshsha publicly acknowledge its "errors" (*pamylki*). A coerced declaration to this effect appeared in the press on February 3, 1930 and marked the *de facto* end of *Uzvyshsha* as an independent entity. The arrest of journal writers began in June

1930 with Uladzimir Zhylka who refused, however, to sign an act of self-incrimination. Dubouka and Pushcha were arrested in July 1930. Although he would avoid physical liquidation and eventually be 'rehabilitated' during the 1950s, Dubouka would spend almost three decades in detention and internal exile. For his part, Pushcha was banished to the city of Shadrynsk in the Urals. The journal itself ceased publication at the end of 1931.[57] On April 23, 1932, the Central Committee of the Belarusian Communist party adopted a resolution liquidating all independent literary organizations including Uzvyshsha and creating in their place the new *Sayuz Saveckikh Pismennikau* (SSP - 'Union of Soviet Writers') comprising 39 members of whom only 14 wrote in Belarusian.[58] In sum, of more than 230 Belarusian writers arrested in the USSR during the successive purges of the 1930s, only 20 survived.[59]

World War II: The Appearance of Integral 'Ethnic' Nationalism

The significant exception to this tradition of tolerance and respect for other peoples within the history of Belarusian national thought occurred during World War II and the Nazi occupation. A large periodical press published under German supervision by a small group of Belarusian Fascists contains explicitly racialistic, xenophobic and anti-democratic sentiments which can be defined as comprising a specifically Belarusian form of *integral nationalism*.

As John Armstrong has defined it, integral nationalism comprises the following features: "(1) a belief in the nation as the supreme value to which all others must be subordinated, essentially a totalitarian concept; (2) an appeal to mystically conceived ideas of the solidarity of all individuals making up the nation, usually on the assumption that biological characteristics or the irreversible effects of common historical development had welded them into one organic whole; (3) a

subordination of rational, analytic thought to the 'intuitively correct' emotions; (4) expression of the 'national will' through a charismatic leader and an elite of national enthusiasts organized in a single party; (5) glorification of action, war and violence as an expression of the superior biological vitality of the nation. The appearance of this sort of nationalism in inter-war Europe, including Poland, Ukraine and other countries of the region, was not an uncommon phenomenon.[60] As noted in chapter one, an integral Polish nationalism manifested itself during the early years of the 20th century in the form of Dmowski's National Democratic Party. Elements of an integral Ukrainian nationalism appeared in the early 1920s leading to the creation in 1929 of the right-wing 'Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists' (OUN).[61]

In the Belarusian case, during the early 1930s, Fabian Akinchyc, a former leader of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, created the 'Belarusian National-Socialist Party' in Poland but failed to attract any significant popular following within the predominantly agrarian West Belarusian population. During the early years of the war itself, he lived in Berlin where he worked in the propaganda section of the German OMi visiting Belarus only on occasion for consultations with Kazlouski and other Belarusian National-Socialists active on the ground. However, it took the Nazi occupation of Belarus to create the circumstances in which this form of Belarusian integral nationalism could manifest itself. Beginning in 1941, under German supervision, he operated a school for ethnic Belarusian prisoners-of-war who were then dispatched to Belarus where they occupied leading positions in the periodical press and other propaganda activities aimed at strengthening support for the National-Socialist option within Belarus. Akinchyc also lobbied German authorities for permission to resume his political activities; however, in view of the official policy forbidding the creation of any political parties in occupied Belarus these efforts met with

failure. Retaining nonetheless the hope that his party might be 'legalized' in the future, Akinchyc undertook the effort to organize a National-Socialist youth organization which began to function (as a precursor to the SBM) with tacit German consent in 1941.[62]

In newspapers and journals published by Akinchyc's organizations, a large amount of material was published on the ethnic origins of the Belarusians which took on clear racialist tones. Developing an extreme version of the 'pure Slavic stock' ethnic theory, Belarusian Fascists advanced the claim that the early Slavic tribes initially lived together as "a single family" devoid of ethnic divisions. At a certain indeterminate historical point, however, the Slavs became dispersed into separate tribes which eventually evolved into distinct nations including Belarusians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Czechs, Poles, Russians, Serbs, Slovaks and Ukrainians. However, blatant chauvinism was evident in accompanying emphasis on the importance of Belarusian "racial purity," declaring, for example, that a "true Belarusian" would avoid at all costs marrying a "non-Belarusian" and fathering children of mixed blood. Those who would do otherwise and thereby undermine the core of the nation, which is the family, have, in fact, no right to call themselves "Belarusian."[63]

In the event of a Bolshevik victory in the war, those who gave their lives in the course of Europe's valiant although vain struggle for freedom will be remembered by future generations as heroes who preferred death to life as prisoners of "the Asians" and "Jews."[64] Apart from being described in highly derogatory terms as "pillagers" and "plunderers", the Soviet partisans are also frequently denounced as "Jewish bandits" and anti-partisan propaganda posters often had very strong anti-Semitic images and verbal content.[65] In September 1943, the newspaper *Za Svobodu* (published in Russian) called upon Soviet partisans not to betray their 'people' and 'homeland' (*Backaushchyna*) and join the German struggle for

"freedom" and a "bright future" against the "Jewish Bolsheviks."[66] Indeed, Stalin personally, and the Soviet regime generally are often portrayed as the instruments of an alleged international Jewish ('Zionist') conspiracy. Hence, according to some of these accounts the war itself is a "struggle for the existence of a pure Aryan race in defence of natural law."[67] Explicit anti-Russian sentiments are manifest in statements quoting Nazi officials on the need to extirpate all vestiges of Russification "from this part of Europe." Thus, on the territory of Belarus, Russian should be regarded as a "foreign language" and everyone speaking it is an "enemy" of the Belarusian people.[68] Other articles spoke of the need "to cleanse" the Belarusian language of Russian influences.[69] The American and European allies of the Soviet regime are also portrayed as enemies of the Belarusian people. Propagandistic materials concerning alleged massive Allied losses, during the Normandy invasion for example, appeared during 1944.[70] Anti-democratic sentiments are clearly expressed in *Belaruskaya hazeta* which spoke of two possible options for the political consolidation of the Belarusian nation: "the path of democracy" or "consolidation on the basis of a new 'world view' comprehensible to all." Rejecting the former, the newspaper defines the "new world view" upon which not only Belarus but "all reawakening nations" should consolidate as being German "national socialism" and Italian "fascism."[71]

The Post-War 'Recovery' of Values of Tolerance, Respect and Democratism

The post-war era has witnessed a return to humanistic values of tolerance and respect on the part of Soviet Belarusian intellectuals. As noted earlier, the Romantic dimension was purged from Soviet Belarusian literature during the Stalinist era with its emphasis on the principle of "socialist realism." However, as

a consequence of the Khrushchevian thaw of the late 1950s, Soviet Belarusian writers such as Janka Skryhan, Pilip Pestrak, and Mikola Tkachou once again strove in Romantic fashion (reminiscent of Bahdanovich) to reveal the unique characteristics and internal 'beauty' of the Belarusian national 'soul' or 'spirit' denied for so many years.[72]

Another effect of the Khrushchevian thaw during the early 1960s was to allow a certain reassessment of the wartime experience in the work of Soviet Belarusian writers. The most outstanding example of this is Vasil Bykau who is a leading figure in the contemporary Belarusian national movement. As best exemplified by his story *Mertvim nie balic* published in the journal *Maladosc* in 1965, Bykau's writings express the profound conviction (engendered by his own combat experience as a soldier in the Soviet army) that, far from being in any sense heroic, war is the greatest of all possible human tragedies.[73] This work earned Bykau the wrath of communist authorities both in Minsk and Moscow, including the condemnation of the Soviet general staff which demanded that the author recant his views. Bykau, however steadfastly refused to cede to official pressure thereby acquiring at least within certain Western circles a reputation as something of a Belarusian "dissident." Indeed, one account describes him the "Belarusian Solzhenitsyn." [74] In Bykau's work, revulsion at war emerges as a defining feature of the Belarusian 'national idea.'

However, the most important name to be mentioned in speaking of the 'return' of Romantic motives to Belarusian literature during the post-Stalinist period is undoubtedly once again that of Uladzimir Karatkievich. As a "literary innovator" deeply-concerned with the Belarusian past, Karatkievich (like Zhylka, Dubouka and others before him) appears as, in essence, the continuer of Maksim Bahdanovich's 'neo-Romanticist' legacy. Karatkievich's Romanticism is also evident in the writer's effort, again similar to that of Bahdanovich, to probe the

'inner depths' of the human soul and spirit. Indeed, Karatkievich was the first writer in Belarusian literary history to explore the deeper humanistic and national sentiments (and not just social causes) of the 1863 Polish rebellion led by in Belarus and Lithuania by Karatkievich's personal hero Kastus Kalinouski.[75] Through his lyrical heroes as well as real-life figures from Belarusian history - including Kalinouski, Skaryna and Dunin-Marcinkevich - the best qualities of the Belarusian national 'soul' are held to reveal themselves precisely at the most trying historical moments. Even the names of Karatkievich's heroes, for example the late 19th century folklorist and ethnographer 'Belareski' which is obviously only one letter removed from the adjective 'Belaruski' - are meant symbolically to affirm the immortality and strength of the Belarusian national aesthetic and spiritual traditions. Karatkievich's work is also typified by the search for answers to such 'eternal questions' as the meaning of good and evil. Engaged as they are in this quest, Karatkievich's heroes are unfailingly individuals of the highest moral standards motivated above all by the ceaseless struggle for truth and justice. Through his lyrical heroes, Karatkievich also seeks to reveal the internal harmony, synchronicity, and beauty of nature. In particular, by probing the spiritual world of his heroes, Karatkievich strives to reveal the truth and 'inner beauty' of the Belarusian national 'soul' or 'spirit' regarded as an integral part of a larger cosmic order.[76]

Karatkievich's work was also permeated by the idea (popular within the USSR at that time) of the "friendship of the peoples" (*druzhba narodov*). Indeed, Hrinkievich's girlfriend in the historical novel *Nel'ha zabic* published in 1962 is the beautiful and talented Russian Irina Gorova (who dies a tragic death) and the best student within his circle is not a Belarusian but the Latvian Janis Vaivads. The sense of Belarusian patriotism fostered within Hrinkievich's family was the work above all of his mother who was a student in Prague at the time of the Czech

'national awakening' which made a deep impression upon her.[77] Although often encountering chauvinistic attitudes on the parts of others, Karatkievich's heroes never abandon their humanistic ideals and ability to separate, as do Hrinkievich and Zahorski for example, Russian autocracy from the Russian people who are unfailingly portrayed as good and decent. Although deeply committed through the vehicle of his art to the defence of Belarusian language, Karatkievich himself took a profound interest in the culture and history of neighboring countries and, apart from Russian which he spoke fluently, studied several other foreign languages including Ukrainian (Karatkievich completed part of his university studies in Kiev), Polish, Slovakian and French.[78]

Uladzimir Konan and the Belarusian 'Democratic Aesthetic'

Together with Belarusian national literature, special mention must be made of Uladzimir Konan's studies of the development of Belarusian social thought at the turn of the 20th century. Described in a synopsis of his life and creative activity published on the occasion of his 60th birthday in 1994 as a thinker "with the mind of a philosopher and the heart of a Romantic,"[79] Konan's work is mainly devoted to the analysis of what he calls the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic.'

Konan graduated from the history faculty of the Belarusian State University in Minsk and continued his studies at the BSSR Academy of Sciences where he specialized in aesthetics which was at that time virtually *tabula rasa* in Belarus.[80] Konan decided specifically to research the history of aesthetics in Belarus during the 1920-1930s, defending a doctoral dissertation entitled *The Development of Aesthetical Thought in Belarus, 1917-1934* in 1964. In 1968, Konan's first monograph based on the dissertation and bearing the same title was published. In this work, Konan devotes particular attention to the philosophy of intellectuals

associated with the journals *Maladnyak*, *Uzvyshsha*, and *Polymia*, as well as the newspapers *Soveckaya Belarus* and *Zvyazda* during the *Belarusizatsiya* phenomenon of the 1920s.[81] Beginning in the 1970s, Konan increasingly focused his work on the deeper historical origins of the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic'. The initial fruit of these efforts was a book co-authored with E. Darashievich focusing on the 'Enlightenment' activities of the patron saint of Polack, Eufrasinnya Polackaya, as well as the sixteenth-century literary and philosophical work of Francishak Skaryna.[82] Especially worthy of attention here, however, are Konan's studies of the 'democratic aesthetic' associated with the Belarusian national movement at the beginning of this century.

In 1972, Konan published his *Demokraticheskaya estetika Belorussii* ('The Belorussian Democratic Aesthetic'). A book which is remarkable in part for the fact that Hegel's views on the topic of art are quoted more often than is Lenin, this study is dedicated to the Belarusian national movement between the two Russian revolutions (1905 and 1917). Konan argues that the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic' developed throughout the nineteenth century in the context of prevailing Polish and Russian cultural influences and reached its apex during this 'inter-revolutionary' period. According to Konan, the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic' is most visible in the art of this period, especially the literature of the *Nasha Niva* writers Kupala, Kolas and Byadulya. Thus, contrary to official portrayals of *Nasha Niva* as 'reactionary' and 'bourgeois-nationalist,' Konan emphasized the progressive, democratic character of *Nasha Niva* and the early Belarusian movement as a whole.

In its origins, the Romantic dimension in the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic' is closely linked by Konan to *Polish Romanticism*. As against the reactionary Tsarist policy, he expressly credits the 'Polish school' including Mickiewicz, Czaczot, and Rypinski for having recognized the "inner beauty" of Belarusian

national life, language and art.[83] Credit is also given, however, to Russian "revolutionary-democrats" such as Herzen and Chernyshevsky whose significance in the development of the Belarusian 'national idea' will be a major theme in the next chapter.[84] Notwithstanding the contribution of these dual Polish-Russian influences (with the former being given somewhat greater weight), Konan (like Maksim Bahdanovich before him - the influence of whom is clearly felt in this book) locates the real foundations of the Belarusian 'democratic aesthetic' in Belarusian national culture, traditions, mythology and folklore.[85] Not surprisingly, Konan became a leading figure in the contemporary movement for Belarusian national 'revival' which emerged in the late 1980s.

The Contemporary Belarusian National Movement

In the tradition of *Nasha Niva*, *'Belarusizatsiya'* and Karatkievich, the most recent Belarusian *adradzhenne* movement has continued to exhibit attitudes of tolerance, respect and democratism. For example, although he held the principal cause of the destruction of Belarusian historical memory was held to be seven decades of Russificatory policies by the Soviet regime, the historian Mikhas Tkachou was careful not to ascribe blame for this to the Russian people. On the contrary, in his view the Russian nation itself was also a victim of the nihilistic Soviet nationality policy. Blame thus rested exclusively with the CPSU and Communist Party of Belarus.[86] Tkachou was thus proud of the fact that the membership of the *Pakhodnya* club established at the University of Hrodna during the mid-1980s to encourage public interest in Belarusian culture and history was multinational in character including both Belarusians and Russians as well as Poles, Ukrainians and Tatars.[87] Membership was open to anyone interested in the subject of Belarusian history and included the brother historians Anatol and Valeri

Hrickievich, Anatol and Valencin Pyatrovich, Hennadz Kisyalou, Hennadz Kahanouski, and Mikola Jermalovich, as well as literary critics, artists and students. Meetings were held once every two weeks and often took the form of an outing to places of historical and cultural interest (connected, for example, with the lives Francishak Bahushevich, Janka Kupala, and Maksim Bahdanovich) usually in the Hrodna region itself but sometimes further afield to places such as Vilna. When given the structural opportunity during the late 1980s afforded by Gorbachev's *perestroika*, members of the club played a leading role in the process of beginning to call into doubt the official historiography.

Although indeed putting primary emphasis on the Romantic 're-awakening' of Belarusian historical memory and revival of the national language as the 'spirit' of the nation, the *adradzhenne* movement led by the BNF defined itself above all as "a mass socio-political movement" which aimed at "renewing the identity of the Belarusian nation based on the principles of democracy and humanism."[88] Although the Belarusian language was to be granted official status, progammatic statements of the BNF included provisions for the free development of the languages of all nationalities living in the republic - including Russian, Polish and Lithuanian.[89] As Vasil Bykau himself described it, the movement led by the BNF was "national in form and democratic in content" with room for all the nationalities within the Belarusian state.[90] Nonetheless, during the late 1980s and immediate post-independence period, some nationally-minded writers emphasized the need for 'moderation' in the pursuit of *adradzhenne* and were at times critical of what they regarded as the 'national fundamentalism' and 'Russophobia' of Pazhnyak. This public perception indeed severely undermined Pazhnyak's candidacy for the Belarusian presidency in 1994 with the result that he failed to qualify for the second (run-off) ballot, contested, as discussed in chapter one, by Kiebich and Lukashenka. Citing the *multi-national* and *multi-confessional*

character of contemporary Belarusian society, views were expressed that the Belarusian "cultural space" had been irrevocably transformed with the consequence that the 'ethno-linguistic' concept of the nation they saw the BNF as pushing was no longer viable. The current 'revivalist' movement thus needed to be 'rationalized,' meaning less emphasis on 'feeling' and 'spirit' and more on the deeply-engrained humanistic values of Belarusian statehood and democracy.[91]

Reflecting these historical values, the new post-Soviet constitution, adopted in 1994 after a prolonged political debate over whether Belarus should be a parliamentary or presidential republic, represented a certain synthesis of competing views. The document described Belarus as a state governed by the 'rule of law,'[92] provided for the formal division of executive, legislative and judicial powers, introduced a 260-seat parliament and majoritarian electoral system as well as guaranteeing a broad range of individual democratic rights. The office of president was created as head-of-state but its powers were limited in several important respects. The president was not, for example, given the power unilaterally to dissolve parliament or declare a state of emergency.[93] The document expressly forbade discrimination on the basis of ethnic or national grounds. Indeed, the understanding of the 'Belarusian people' or 'nation' in the document was very much territorial in principle, declaring all citizens residing in the republic to be part of the Belarusian people and Russian was granted special status as the language of 'international communication' within the state.[94]

In the contemporary context, the traditions of tolerance distinguish modern Belarusian nationalism from the cases, for example, of both Serbia and Croatia where policies of aggressive ethnic nationalism have been pursued with extraordinarily tragic consequences. Indeed, unlike these instances, Belarusian nationalism is not colored by sentiments of 'economic deprivation', 'resentment', or 'national humiliation'.[95] In distinction from post-Soviet nationalisms in the

Transcaucasus (most notably Georgia), the contemporary Belarusian 'national idea' also lacks irredentist claims.[96] As opposed to Latvia and Estonia (republics with supposedly stronger and more recent democratic traditions), post-Soviet Belarus (as well as, it is interesting to note, Ukraine) has not witnessed attempts to disenfranchise politically the Russian minority.[97] Indeed, sociological research has shown that Russians residing in Belarus feel entirely at home there, defining their national identity in terms of "the territory of constant and permanent habitation."[98] Indeed, Russians residing in Belarus tend to think of themselves of 'Russian-Belarusians' and not 'Belarusian-Russians'.[99] During the late 1980s, expressions of support in mass media for the Belarusian national movement from ethnic Russians were not uncommon.[100] Especially interesting in this respect were young ethnic Russians who defined themselves as 'Belarusian patriots' and supporters of the 'national idea'.[101]

Disturbingly, the major exception to this situation of tolerance and respect in post-Soviet Belarus has been none other than President Lukashenka. Although emphasizing himself traditional Belarusian values of tolerance and respect for all national groups, noting that the Polish government has been highly critical of his policies and provided sanctuary to the Belarusian opposition (including Pazhnyak), he has at times hinted that ethnic Poles in Belarus represent a potential "fifth column." On the one hand, this is a clearly orchestrated effort on Lukashenka's part to limit what he evidently regards as the growth of 'unhealthy' Polish influences, especially the 'revival' of the Catholic church witnessed in Belarus over the last decade. As part of this, he has resisted renewed calls from within the BNF and other national organizations for the restoration of the Uniate Church as the Belarusian 'national religion', describing it as an instrument of "Polonization."[102] Aware nevertheless of the ideological vacuum existing since the collapse of the USSR, Lukashenka has openly acknowledged that the need for

the spiritual renewal of the Belarusian nation is every bit as acute as resolving the country's economic crisis. Speaking in October 1996 to the 'All-Belarusian Peoples' Congress,' an assembly comprised overwhelmingly of the president's 'electorate' which he described as a 'revival' of the ancient Slavic *veche* tradition, he identified this as a task not only for Belarusians but for the "entire Slavic world which today is going through a difficult period." Although he insisted that there was no official state religion, with all religions in Belarus being equal before the law, Lukashenka reaffirmed the view that "Christian values, which for almost two thousand years now have defined the spiritual and moral outlook of a significant part of humanity, can unite the Belarusian people and become the basis for its spiritual renewal, or, if you like, state idea [*gosudarstvennaya ideya*]."[103] Indeed, academics sympathetic to the President have written at length on the subject of the 'Belarusian idea' as being defined on the basis of Christian (i.e.., 'Orthodox') collectivist values and a rejection of 'alien' Western influences.[104]

However, Lukashenka's identification of the Belarusian Polish community (which has indeed been generally supportive of the concept of Belarusian national 'revival') as a possible source of 'subversion', should be seen as part of a more general policy of encouraging an unhealthy 'siege mentality' among Belarusians. This is done through the continual citing of alleged "foreign plots" hatched, among other places, in Warsaw, Prague, and Washington, to destabilize the political and economic situation in Belarus.[105] As implied by his nihilistic attitude towards Belarusian history and language discussed in previous chapters, this suggests strongly that, at his core, Lukashenka is an individual devoid of any deep ideological or moral convictions whose primary concern is the question of maintaining and expanding his personal power.

The Subversion of Democracy in Post-Soviet Belarus

Indeed, the major obstacle to the development of a genuine 'civic nationalism' in Belarus is the fact that the constitutional pillars of Belarusian democracy have been willfully subverted by the president himself. Although he solemnly pledged upon taking office to defend the 1994 constitution and continually reiterates his commitment to principles of democracy, Lukashenka made clear even before his election that the socio-economic crisis engendered by the collapse of the USSR could be overcome only through the effective exercise of strong, centralized state power. Upon assuming office, he set about resolutely creating a new 'vertical' structure of executive power bypassing local councils (soviets) whose dissolution he simply decreed, an action later ruled illegal by the Belarusian Constitutional Court. Accused by the BNF-led opposition of striving to establish an authoritarian regime, this represented the beginning of an increasingly bitter conflict between legislative, judicial and executive branches of the Belarusian state. Following the April 1995 referendum debacle which, as discussed, saw Belarusian society in its majority reject the BNF agenda of ethno-cultural 'revival', it is now clearly a 'rationalized' democratic nationalism emphasizing a territorial conception of nationhood in defence of the 1994 constitution which has been pushed by the Belarusian opposition as the alternative to Lukashenka's steadily creeping authoritarianism.

The origins of this strategic shift can be traced to July 1995 when a new political movement calling itself *Belaruskaya Perspektiva* ('Belarusian Perspective') was formed. In contrast to the BNF's primary emphasis on ethno-linguistic and cultural revival, this group posited as its goals market economic reform, defence of the constitution, rule of law and state sovereignty.

This revised oppositional line was reflected in a number of new independent newspapers which began publication (in Russian) during 1995 including *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta, Belorusskaya gazeta, Belorusski rynok* and *Imya*. During the final round of elections to a new Belarusian parliament in November and December 1995, leading representatives of the national-democratic opposition such as Shushkievich, Bahdankievich and Hennadz Karpienka, leader of the centrist 'Party of National Accord' which also supports market reform, defence of the constitution and Belarusian sovereignty, won seats. Indeed, observers noted that the Belarusian opposition had emerged somewhat strengthened from the elections which represented a defeat for Lukashenka who had done everything in his power to discredit the electoral process in the evident aspiration of introducing direct presidential rule.[106]

In January 1996, Semyaon Sharecki, leader of the Belarusian Agrarian Party which, together with the communists, had previously tended to support Lukashenka's general program (if not Lukashenka personally), surprised observers by stating that his party stood for market reform, the supremacy of the constitution, the independence of Belarus, and calling on society to rally around the 'national idea.'[107] In April and May 1996, large anti-Lukashenka demonstrations (30-40,000 participants) took place in Minsk and several other Belarusian cities.[108] In June 1996, BNF leader Pazhnyak and his deputy Syarhei Navumchyk, citing the increasingly repressive political climate in Belarus and fears for their personal safety, applied for and subsequently received political asylum in the United States. Although they generally credit him with having done much for the *adradzhenne* cause, many in the opposition considered the charismatic Pazhnyak's departure to have been, in fact, beneficial for the future of the 'national idea.'[109]

In July 1996, the leaders of the most influential Belarusian political parties (Agrarians, United Civic Party, Social-Democratic Union, Communist Party, BNF, the women's party Nadezhda, Green Party and others), as well as representatives of trade and collective farm unions, convened a second united opposition 'round table' which issued a public declaration warning of the looming threat of 'totalitarianism.'[110] During the fall of 1996, the opposition mounted demonstrations of several thousand people outside parliament denouncing Lukashenka's intention to hold a new referendum on the issue of constitutional reform.

Although he characterized his proposed amendments as nothing more than necessary 'improvements' and 'adjustments' to a document which was basically sound, a draft published in September of that year outlined plans for a massive transfer of power from parliament to the president. Parliament itself would be transformed into a new bicameral legislature with the president having the right to appoint deputies directly to the upper house (Senate). The Constitutional Court would also be reformed with the head-of-state having the right to appoint the chairman as well as 5 of the remaining 11 judges. The fundamental democratic principle of division of powers was thus clearly compromised. The presidency would also be granted a range of entirely new powers including the right arbitrarily to dissolve parliament, declare states of emergency and suspend civil liberties. Lukashenka's term would also arbitrarily be extended to the year 2001.

Inside parliament, opposition deputies managed to collect enough signatures to bring a motion for impeachment alleging repeated violations of the constitution before the Constitutional Court. Had the Court judged the petition to be valid, Lukashenka would theoretically have been removed from office and, pending final approval of his impeachment by a two-thirds majority in the Supreme Soviet, executive power would have temporarily passed to Sharecki who, as speaker of

parliament was "number two" in the Belarusian political hierarchy.[111] Such an eventuality was avoided, however, by direct Russian intervention under the guise of mediation by then Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin who had very real concerns that the political situation in Belarus was becoming dangerously unstable. Indeed, some accounts warned of the possibility of civil war in Belarus being created primarily by the utterly uncompromising policies of Lukashenka.[112]

On the basis of a 'compromise' brokered by Chernomyrdin and agreed to by Lukashenka and Sharecki, the president agreed to abide by a previous ruling of the Constitutional Court according to which the referendum would be of a 'consultative character' only. In return, parliament pledged to drop its efforts at impeachment. That the agreement, however favored Lukashenka was apparent in a provision calling for the creation of a special 'Constitutional Assembly' of which the president himself would be chairman with right to appoint directly 50 of the projected 100 members drawn from parliamentary deputies. In view of the certainty that at least some of remaining 50 would be Lukashenka supporters, there was no doubt that the commission, to be charged with drafting a new constitution in accordance with the results of the referendum, would produce a document to Lukashenka's liking. When parliament failed to ratify the accord, Lukashenka seized his opportunity, issuing a new decree affirming that the referendum would be legally binding. In a climate of official media censorship and alleged intimidation and bribery[113], the result was easily predictable - over 70% of Belarusians approved Lukashenka's constitutional project. The current (and oppositional) Supreme Soviet and Constitutional Courts were dissolved and replaced by the new subservient institutions. As a result, the opposition was excluded from all formal levers of state power.

In the wake of this debacle, prospects for the Belarusian opposition have diminished considerably. The decision of Pazhnyak to go into political exile led to

an internal crisis within the BNF between his supporters and opponents who wanted not only a leader who was residing in Belarus itself but also one more amenable to compromise with other opposition organizations. These tensions came to a head at a BNF Congress in October 1999 when Pazhnyak's leading critic, Vincuk Vyachorka, was elected chairman. Pazhnyak loyalists responded by electing him leader of the new Christian Conservative Party (CCP) of the BNF formed a month earlier. Vyachorka, however, has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the CCP as the legal successor to the BNF. The opposition has also been severely undermined by the loss of several of its other most important leaders. In 1998, Hennadz Karpienka, a leading candidate to oppose Lukashenka in an eventual presidential election, died suddenly and unexpectedly of natural causes. In the spring of 1999, during attempts by the opposition to hold a 'shadow' presidential election at the time Lukashenka's mandate under the 1994 constitution was due to expire, Sharecki suddenly fled into political exile in Lithuania. His decision may have been accelerated by the previous disappearance of two other leading Lukashenka critics - Viktar Hanchar and Yuri Zakharenka. Both men had been members of Lukashenka's original administration in 1994 but resigned in disillusionment shortly thereafter citing corruption within the president's circle as well as his increasing authoritarianism. Although it cannot be confirmed, the general assumption is that Hanchar and Zakharenka were abducted and likely murdered by Lukashenka's security forces. Together with its increasingly stringent control of the media and manipulation of public consciousness through the use of former Soviet identity myths (most notably, the partisans and memory of Masherau), this action suggests that the Lukashenka regime itself has entered a new and sinister phase in its development - from authoritarian to *proto-totalitarian*. This transition is undoubtedly aided by the

majority state of public consciousness within the country itself existing as a debilitating legacy of the Soviet period.

The Lingering Soviet 'Totalitarian Legacy'

Indeed, the current situation is stark evidence of a classic *totalitarian legacy*. This is apparent, first of all, in the bitter political conflict between Lukashenka and the national-democratic opposition during the period 1994-1996. The words of George Schopflin in this regard are highly instructive: "Communism was a singularly poor apprenticeship for democratic compromise and tolerance because it emphasized homogeneity, black and white thinking, and the kind of epistemological certainty that insisted that in each moment of choice there could be only one answer."[114] This inherent inability to compromise can also be seen at work in the bitter divisions which have become apparent within the Belarusian opposition especially since November 1996, in particular, the internal fragmentation of the BNF discussed above. This sort of lingering totalitarian consciousness in Belarus is also apparent in the fact that notwithstanding his evident disregard for the rule of law, public opinion polls continually show high levels of support for Lukashenka (over 40%) whereas remaining opposition leaders barely even register.[115]

Third, and most importantly, the legacy of Soviet totalitarianism manifests itself in the atomized character of Belarusian society, noted already during the early 1990s by Belarusian intellectuals.[116] It was already pointed out in chapter one that the Belarusian national movement led by the BNF never succeeded in mobilizing public support the way similar movements in the Baltics or even Ukraine did. Renewed opposition attempts to mobilize society have met with, at best, mixed success. In November 1997, a group of leading Belarusian intellectuals, including former Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Sannikou (who

resigned in November 1996 in protest against Lukashenka's referendum plans), launched the non-partisan *Karta '97* initiative. Modeled on the Czech *Charter '77* action of two decades earlier, the charter's goal is to collect the signatures of 250,000 Belarusian citizens on a declaration pledging support for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Belarus. To date, however, the campaign has fallen far short of this goal.[117] In contrast to the momentous events of April-May 1996, the BNF and other opposition parties and groups now have trouble drawing more than several hundred people to their gatherings. This owes in part to a series of draconian decrees issued by Lukashenka during 1997-1998 stipulating extremely severe penalties (including lengthy imprisonment) for participation in unauthorized public gatherings. A recent *cause celebre* became the tragic case of two young Belarusian males (15-16 years) given lengthy prison terms for having spray-painted anti-Lukashenka and pro-independence slogans on several public buildings in Minsk.

This is not to say that owing above all to a steadily deteriorating economic situation there is not considerable public dissatisfaction with Lukashenka. Indeed, although genuine, the 'Lukashenka phenomenon' should be interpreted carefully. Recent analyses show that Lukashenka's hard core of public support is around 25% of voters. The remaining 15% represents people who, although searching, have yet to find a suitable alternative to the president.[118] Aware that his support may be well be a case of 'a mile wide but an inch deep,' Lukashenka sees to it that no credible political alternative to himself has a chance to emerge primarily through strict media censorship and control. Indeed, notwithstanding constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and expression, opposition politicians have, in reality, no access to media through which to propagate their cause. This totalitarian atmosphere is crucial to bear in mind when assessing the results of both the April 1995 and November 1996 referenda, neither of which were

legitimate expressions of the public will. Hence, rather than indicating massive levels of public confidence in his person, the 'Lukashenka phenomenon, is best understood as a as a legacy or remnant of the Soviet past deliberately reinforced by the authoritarian policies of the president, as a result of which Belarusian society as a whole is inert, intimidated and politically apathetic.[119] People are consumed with the immediate task of simply surviving severe economic hardship and, in any event, generally convinced of their inability to change the political system for the better. On the contrary, as in other foremr republics of the USSR (including Russia and Ukraine) a visible nostalgia for the relative material comforts of the Soviet past is apparent. As Lukahshenka himself undoubtedly well appreciates, this situation is to his immense political advantage. He thus has every incentive to perpetuate this lingering totalitarian consciousness.

If there is reason for long-term optimism, it rests with younger generation Belarusians especially in the capital Minsk and other major cities. As was noted in chapter one and will be discussed further in chapter five, sociological research has suggested that support for democratic ideals, the market, and Belarusian independence within these groups who, in contrast to the pensioners, rural dwellers and veterans which comprise the core of Lukashenka's electorate, represent the best-educated and upwardly mobile elements within Belarusian society, is comparatively high. Although prospects for rapid regime transformation at this time appear limited, the historical link between the 'national idea' and democratic values is thus still visible within contemporary Belarusian society.

Analytical Summary

As manifested in deeply-rooted traditions of tolerance, respect and democratism, this chapter very much emphasizes the 'synthesized character' of the Belarusian

'national idea,' deriving once again from the early dual influences of Polish Romance and Enlightenment. This is evident specifically in a discernible tendency within Belarusian national thought to 'blend' or 'merge' the 'ethno-cultural' ('Eastern') and 'civic-territorial' ('Western') conceptions of nationhood. These pluralistic traditions distinguish Belarusian nationalism rather favorably from national movements in other parts of East-Central Europe and the former USSR. At the same time, the concern of certain *adradzhenne* advocates during the late 1980s and early 1990s pointed to an important schism within the BNF, one which become pronounced in 1999 leading to the fracturing of the organization itself (the 'contested character' of the 'national idea').

On the 'structural' plane, the chapter argues that the emergence of a Belarusian 'integral' nationalism based on principals of xenophobia, racism and anti-democratism was very much a function of the particular circumstances created by the Nazi occupation regime during World War II. As evidenced by the post-war 'recovery' of democratic values (visible especially within Soviet Belarusian national literature), this departure, although significant, represented nonetheless an aberration in the history of Belarusian national thought. In terms of the future of the Belarusian the 'national idea' - specifically, the further development within the republic of a form of 'civic nationalism' - the fundamental problem is identified as the subversion of historic Belarusian democratic values by current President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, reflecting on a deeper level the debilitating effects of the Soviet totalitarian legacy on the post-Soviet 'nation-building' process.

Notes

[1] Valery Tishkov, "Post-Soviet Nationalism," in Richard Caplan and John Feffer,

eds., *Europe's New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford, 1996),p. 38.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* (London, 1997), p. 367. To the extent that at least certain of its spokesmen, including Kayalovich, recognized the cultural distinctiveness of the Belarusians and other non-Russian peoples, the *zapadno-russizm* school can be regarded as partially symbolizing this sort of Russian 'imperial nationalism'.

[4] The Belarusian case, and before it, the Polish example, are important for illustrating the basic point made by Michael Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Toleration," in Richard Caplan and John Feffer, eds., pp. 221-222 that 'toleration' and 'tolerance' are not concepts alien to East-Central Europe. If they are currently in short supply there, this is, in large degree, the legacy of communism.

[5] Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, 1984), p. 317.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Bruno Drewski, "Bialorus - strefa pluralizmu kulturowego," *Lithuania*, 3 (16) '95, pp. 56-67.

[8] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 47.

[9] S. S. Sambuk, *Revolyutsionnyie narodniki Belorussii (70-e nachalo 80-x godov)*. (Minsk, 1972), p. 175. See also S. S. Sambuk, *Politika tsarizma v Belorussii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka*. Minsk, 1980.

[10] M. Drahomaniv, *Chudatski dumki*, p 13, cited in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "Drahomanov as Political Theorist," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton, 1987), p. 218.

[11] *Nasha Niva*, May 31, 1912.

[12] *Nasha Niva*, April 2, 1915.

[13] *Nasha Niva*, January 27, 1911.

[14] *Nasha Niva*, November 10, 1907.

[15] *Nasha Niva*, April 25, 1908.

[16] *Nasha Niva*, November 19, 1909; *Nasha Niva*, June 7, 1912; *Nasha Niva*, June 28, 1912.

[17] *Nasha Niva*, May 31, 1912.

[18] Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (New York, 1979), p. 138.

[19] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York, 1956), p. 90.

[20] Aleh Lojka, *Historiya belaruskai litaraturyi. Dakastrichnicki periyad u 2 chastkakh* (Minsk, 1989), p. 54.

[21] Jakub Kolas, *Kazki zhycca* (Minsk, 1960).

[22] I. V. Navumenka, *Jakub Kolas, Voblik dukhouniya heroya* (Minsk, 1981), pp. 212-213; L. Ya. Haranin, *Naciyanalnaya ideya u belaruskai litaraturi pachatku XX stahoddzya* (Minsk, 1996), p. 134.

[23] Ales Chabot, *Maksim Bahdanovich* (Hrodna, 1996), p. 70.

[24] U. Dubouka, 'Zdauni,' in Anton Luckievich, "Novae u belaruskai paezii," *Zachodnyaya Belarus*, No. 1, 1923.

[25] Haranin, p. 34.

[26] Piotr Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 180-181; p. 7. For an in-depth discussion of Polish 'Messianism', see Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford, 1982), esp. Part Two: "In Search of a National Philosophy."

[27] Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 94.

[28] Cited in Vakar, p. 94.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Alyaksandr Cvikievich, *Kratkii ocherk vozniknoveniya Belorusskoi Narodnoi Respubliki* (Kiev, 1918), p. 10; B. Tarashkevich, "Bialoruskie postulaty polityczne," *Litaratura na swiecie*, Nos.. 8-9, 1991, pp. 257-258.

[32] "2-ya Ustaunaya hramata da narodau Belarusi," in F. Turyk, *Belorusskoe dvizhenie. Ocherki istorii natsionalnovo i revolutsionovo dvizheniya belorussov* (Moscow, 1921), pp. 112-113. This historical outline of the early Belarusian movement is one of the best sources for documents relating to it.

[33] A caveat needs to be added here. As will be discussed in chapter four, owing to several important 'structuring' factors, the inter-war period also witnessed the *progressive radicalization* of the Belarusian 'national idea' in Poland. Beginning in the mid-1920s, certain Belarusian national organizations advocated revolutionary means in the struggle for independence and the secession of West Belarus from Poland.

[34] Adam Stankievich, *Belaruski chryshciyanski ruch* (Vilna, 1939), p. 22. Catholic clerics were also important players in the Lithuanian national movement. See V. Stanley Vardys, *The Catholic Church: Dissent and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania* (Boulder, 1987) and Alfred E. Senn, *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania* (New York, 1959).

[35] Davies, p. 343.

[36] Jerzy Tomaszewski "Bialoruska chrzescijanska demokracja. Uwagi o kryteriach ocen," *Studia polsko-litewsko-bialoruskie* (Warsaw, 1988), p. 160.

[37] *Bielarus*, No. 18, May 1, 1914.

[38] Tomaszewski, p. 161.

[39] Citing in particular its defence of private property, the 1970 edition of the *Belarusian Soviet Encyclopedia* describes the West Belarusian Christian Democracy movement during the inter-war period as having been fundamentally "bourgeois" in character although it attempted to "mask" this behind "democratic postulates."

[40] Tomaszewski, p. 162.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, this reflected the desire of BCD to overcome the long-standing religious schism within Belarusian society.

[43] *Belaruski Front*, July 5, 1937.

[44] *Belaruski Front*, June 12, 1936.

[45] *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka,* January 6, 1928; *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka,* February 20, 1928.

[46] *Belaruskaya krynica,* March 14, 1937.

[47] *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka,* October 25, 1928; *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka,* November 10, 1928.

[48] "Tezy 'Uzvyshshy," *Uzvyshsha,* No. 1, May 1926.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] Antony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature* (Munich, 1958), p. 75.

[51] *Ibid.,* p. 92.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] Adamovich, p. 91.

[54] *Maladnyak,* No. 1, 1928.

[55] *Uzvyshsha,* No. 5, 1927.

[56] *Uzvyshsha,* No. 1, 1929. The tendency towards the idealization of rural life was stronger in West Belarusian literature where the peasantry - reminiscent of 'Danila Borovik' and *Homon* decades earlier - while in its overwhelming majority not being yet nationally-conscious, is credited with the virtue of having mutely preserved and defended the national language and traditions (viz. 'spirit') against the dual historical pressures of Polonization and Russification. Indeed, some Belarusian periodicals defined the peasantry - not the proletariat nor *intelligentsia* - as the 'fundamental core' of the nation.

[57] Adamovich, pp. 162-164.

[58] Jan Zaprudnik, *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History* (Boulder, 1993), p. 87.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (Englewood, 1990), p. 13. See also John A. Armstrong, "Collaborationism in World War II: The Integral Nationalist Variant in Eastern Europe," *Journal of Modern History,* Vol. XL, September 1968, pp. 396-410.

[61] Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism,* pp. 13-15. As Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1988), p. 441 writes, Ukrainian integral nationalism was born from the "tragic plight of Ukrainians under Polish and Soviet rule" as well as disillusionment with the lack of support forthcoming from Western democracies for Ukrainian national aspirations. See also Alexander Motyl, *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of Ukrainian Nationalism* (Boulder, 1980).

[62] Jerzy Turonek, *Bialorus pod okupacja niemiecka* (Warsaw, 1985), p. 74.

[63] *Belaruskaya hazeta,* June 25, 1943.

[64] *Belaruskaya hazeta,* November 22, 1942; *Belaruski holas,* December 21, 1943.

[65] *Belaruskaya hazeta,* December 29, 1944.

[66] *Za Svobodu,* September 20, 1943.

[67] *Belaruskaya hazeta,* February 4, 1943. Although, as Subtelny p. 442 writes, it contained "elements of fascism and totalitarianism" as well as "traces of anti-Semitism," racism was not a major component of Ukrainian integral nationalism.

[68] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, June 6, 1942; *Belaruskaya hazeta*, September 6, 1942.

[69] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, June 18, 1942.

[70] *Belaruski holas*, June 23, 1944.

[71] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, June 10, 1943.

[72] Janka Skryhan, *Svaya apovesc, Apavyadanni, apovesci, rozdum* (Minsk, 1964); P. Pestrak, "Seradzibor," *Polymia*, No. 1, 1961; M. Tkachou, "Pshuki skarbau," *Polymia*, No. 12, 1962; .

[73] V. Bykau, "Mertvim nie balic," *Maladosc*, No. 7, 1965.

[74] Michael Glenny, "Writing in Belorussia," *Partisan Review*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 1972. This is to make the point that, although less significant than in neighbouring Baltic republics and Ukraine, there was such a thing as Belarusian national dissent during the Brezhnev period. For more on this, see the Ukrainian-language article by Jan Zaprudnik, "Inakodumstvo v Bilorusi," *Suchasnist*, July-August 1979, pp. 158-169.

[75] U. Karatkievich, *Kalasi pad syaprom tvaim* (Minsk, 1996).

[76] Adam Maldzis, *Zhycce i uznyasene Uladzimira Karatkievicha* (Minsk, 1990).

[77] U. Karatkievich, "Nelha zabic," *Polymia*, Nos. 5-6, 1962.

[78] Maldzis, p. 98.

[79] *Litaratura i mastactva*, April 27, 1994.

[80] *Litaratura i mastactva*, May 8, 1992.

[81] U. Konan, *Razvicce estetichnai dumki u Belarusi u 1917-1934* (Minsk, 1968).

[82] *Litaratura i mastactva*, April 27, 1994.

[83] Uladzimir Konan, *Demokraticheskaya estetika Belorussii* (Minsk, 1972), p. 100

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[86] Mikhas Tkachou, "Nie zrabic zla svaimu narodu," in A. Ulicenak, *Inshadumci myshlyashchie inache* (Minsk, 1991), p. 273.

[87] Mikhas Tkachou, *Pakhodnya* (Minsk, 1994), p. 59.

[88] *Radio Liberty Belorussian Service*, June 29, 1989.

[89] *Kantakt*, No. 1, 1989 (Belarusian *samizdat*).

[90] *Litaratura i mastactva*, July 7, 1989.

[91] *Litaratura i mastactva*, August 5, 1994; *Narodnaya hazeta*, September 18, 1994; *Litaratura i mastactva*, April 3, 1995.

[92] For a synopsis of this debate, see Alexander Lukushuk, "Belarusian Draft Constitution: A Controversial Step Forward, *RFE/RL Research Report*, October 30, 1992, p. 43 and the same author's "Survey of Presidential Powers: Formal and Informal," *East European Constitutional Review*, Fall 1993/Winter 1994.

[93] Indeed, as defined in the new constitution, the powers of the Belarusian president would be significantly *less* than in other post-communist states including Russia.

[94] *Narodnaya hazeta*, March 30, 1994.

[95] These have all been important elements fueling contemporary Balkan nationalisms. With respect to 'deprivation' as Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi, 1991), pp. 42-45 writes in reference to the former Yugoslavia, the point is not whether a national group, in

fact, has been denied economic advancement ('objective inequality'): "In fact, what appears to be at issue in Yugoslavia - as in many developing societies - is competition for economic resources, particularly for the investment funds needed to promote economic development and technological change and to provide employment, and for political power that crystallized in the issue of constitutional changes in the direction of centralization and decentralization ... The explanation for the reassertion of Croatian nationalism in this form is not that Croatians are actually deprived but that there is advantage to be gained economically and politically be emphasizing Croatian distinctiveness." Although this 'instrumentalist' approach has considerable explanatory power for understanding the emergence of national movements in the USSR during the late 1980s, it is less salient in the Belarusian case where, as discussed in the previous chapter, cultural issues were the primary catalyst. Unlike the Serbian case in particular, nor is 'national humiliation' a significant element in the Belarusian national psyche.

[96] An imprudent statement by then Foreign Minister Krauchanka in 1992 to the effect that Belarus had a historical claim to Vilna was immediately renounced by Stanislau Shushkevich and has not resurfaced. Indeed, treaties have been signed between Belarus and Lithuania codifying existing borders. See V. Stanley Vardys and Judith Sedaitis, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (Boulder, 1997), p. 221.

[97] Brubaker, p. 47; Alex Grigorievs, "The Baltic Predicament," in Richard Caplan & John Feffer, eds., pp. 120-137. As Brubaker, pp. 108-109 points out, this sort of 'nationalizing nationalism' has also characterized post-Ceaucescu Rumania and Slovakia. For further discussion of the Slovakian case, see George Schopflin, "Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities in Post-Communist Europe," in Caplan and Feffer, eds., pp. 153-155. Owing in part to the fact that the Russian population is proportionally much smaller, Lithuania represents the exception among Baltic states in this respect.

[98] David R. Marples, *Belarus: From Soviet Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe* (Edmonton, 1996), p. 36.

[99] The situation is again similar to that in Ukraine where, as Marples, *ibid.*, p. 118, writes: "Russians in Ukraine are Russian Ukrainians rather than Ukrainian Russians, that is they are part of a Ukrainian state and for the most part divorced from their ancestral motherland, Russia." It is worth noting that Russians in Ukraine (including Crimea) strongly supported the Ukrainian referendum on independence held on December 1, 1991. See Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (University Park, 1998), p. xxiii-xxiv. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russians in the Baltic states also generally supported the independence drives in these republics. Moreover, they expressed a clear desire to remain in their respective republics as opposed to relocating to Russia. See John B. Dunlop, Russia: In Search of an Identity?", in Ray Taras and Ian Bremmer, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 46-47.

[100] See, for example, *Respublika*, October 27, 1992.

[101] *Czasopismo*, No. 5, 1996, p. 4.

[102] *See, Moscow News*, August 4-10, 1995.

[103] *Respublika*, October 20, 1996.

[104] *Belorusskaya dumka*, No. 5, 1996; *Belorusskaya dumka*, No. 1, 1997.

[105] *Moscow News*, May 2-22, 1996.

[106] Ustina Markus, "A New Parliament, Despite the President," *Transition*, January 12, 1996, p. 63.

[107] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 10, 1996.

[108] *Le Monde*, April 6, 1996; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, April 30, 1996; *Moscow News*, May 2-22, 1996. For an eye-witness Polish account of these events, see *Polityka*, No. 15, April 13, 1996.

[109] In the course of his presentation at the 'Centre for Eastern Studies' in Warsaw during the fall of 1996, Stanislau Shushkievich himself expressed this view, going so far as to describe Pazhnyak with whom he often had strained relations while in office, as a "national Bolshevik."

[110] *Svabodniya prafsayuzy*, September 6, 1996.

[111] *Sevodnya*, November 21, 1996.

[112] Ustina Markus, "Russian Concerns over Instability in Belarus," *OMRI Digest*, September 27, 1996.

[113] *Tygodnik Solidarnosci*, November 29, 1996; Ustina Markus, "Plots and Bribes Surround Belarusian Referendum," *OMRI Digest*, September 9, 1996.

[114] George Schopflin, "Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities in Post-Communist Europe," in Caplan and Feffer, eds., p. 157.

[115] An interesting analysis of this so-called 'Lukashenka phenomenon' can be found in Anatolij Majsiejnia, "Bialorus Aleksandra Lukaszenki," *Wiez*, September 1997, pp. 5-16.

[116] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, June 14, 1991.

[117] During his appearance at a academic conference devoted to the subject of Belarus held at Harvard University in April 1999, Sannikou stated that the drive had at that time collected about 85,000 signatures.

[118] See Leonid Zlotnikov, "Possibilities of Private Economic Networks," Paper presented to the international conference "The Belarus Factor: Implications for Russia, East-Central Europe and the West," Harvard University (Boston), April 22-23, 1999.

[119] Indeed, as experienced personally by myself during my attendance at several BNF-led opposition rallies in 1997, this climate of fear deliberately fostered by Lukashenka is palpable in Minsk and other Belarusian cities. As previously noted by David Marples, "Post-Soviet Belarus and the Impact of Chernobyl'", *Post-Soviet Geography*, 1992, 33, pp. 419-431, this state public apathy and pessimism about the future is very much a function of the lingering impact of the Chernobyl' disaster which continues to weigh extremely heavily on the republic's popular consciousness.

Chapter IV

The Theme of 'Struggle' (*Zmahanne*) in Belarusian National Thought

A fundamental defining characteristic of the Belarusian 'national idea' has been emphasis on the notion of 'struggle' (*zmahanne*). Once again this theme can be regarded as deriving from the dual influences of Romance and Enlightenment which define the 'synthetic character' of the Belarusian national idea." On the one hand, Romanticism very much emphasizes the struggle of the national spirit (*dukh*) for liberation and self-realization.[1] On the other hand, deriving originally from Immanuel Kant's classical understanding of human autonomy, a key Enlightenment concept is that of *the inalienable right to individual and national self-determination*. Indeed, "political nationalism understands the nation in much the same way that liberalism understands the individual ... the fight for national independence is only legitimate because it is a particular case of the general principle - as a person's fight for individual freedom and dignity is only legitimate because it affirms the universal principle of human rights."[2] together with these deeply-rooted philosophical influences, the concept of "struggle" reflects the extraordinarily difficult historical circumstances in which the Belarusian 'national idea' has found itself embedded. Succinctly stated, in a very real sense, to be a self-conscious 'Belarusian' has meant being engaged in the ceaseless 'struggle' against the ever-present perceived danger of 'de-nationalization.'

This chapter focuses on the concept of struggle on two levels: the *spiritual* (or 'internal') and *political*. The first represents the essence of the historical Belarusian 'crisis of identity' at the heart of which lies the fundamental existential question of *belonging*. As posed by Belarusians themselves, this question is the

following: *which civilization are we a part of - Eastern or Western?*.[3] In the minds of all Belarusian writers, but in particular Christian Democrats during the inter-war period, key to resolving this question has been overcoming the long-standing division of the Belarusian people on the basis of religion ("Catholic = Polish" - "Orthodox = Russian") through the restoration of the Uniate church cancelled by Tsarist decree in 1839.

On the political level, the concept of *zmahanne* incorporates two dimensions both of which reflect the growing influence of *critical realism* on Belarusian national thought during the second half of the 19th century. The first of these is recurring emphasis on the need for Belarusian *self-reliance* in the 'struggle' for recognition of the nation's cultural and political rights. Secondly, as an extension of this 'self-reliance' theme, a discernible *radical-revolutionary* component owing primarily to the influence of Russian social-democratic thinkers including Aleksandr Herzen, Nikolai Chernyshevsky (chief ideologues of the 19th century 'populist' movement in Russia): revolutionary Marxism (symbolized by the *Narodnaya volya* ('Peoples' Will') organization: and, finally, Bolshevism (Marxism-Leninism).

The Internal Struggle within the Belarusian National Spirit: Resolving The Existential Question of 'Belonging'

Belarusian national thought has been defined by a fundamental existential problematic that to a large extent remains unresolved. The best account of this problematic remains Ihnat Abdziralovich's *Advechnym shlyacham: dasledzyni belaruskaha svetahladu* published in Vilna in 1921.[4] This short work can be regarded as the first real conscious attempt by a Belarusian intellectual to delineate the essence of a distinct Belarusian *Weltanschauung* or 'world-view'.[5] As such, it is one of the seminal texts of the Belarusian national tradition.

Advechnym shlyacham is underlain by an ontological view of existence as nothing more than *motion*. The philosophical teachings of Henri Bergson are cited at one point as part of the argument that there are no stable, permanent or universal 'forms.' Rather, life is essentially 'flow' (*durée* to use the proper Bergsonian terminology).[6] According to Abdziralovich, however, this inherent absence of 'form' is not to be lamented; on the contrary, it is to be welcomed for it means that there are no inherent or barriers to the natural striving of human beings towards *freedom*. While people cannot live without form, it is imposed on life through their creative work. Indeed, if we can say anything at all about something like 'human nature,' it is that human beings possess an innate impulse to create which knows no bounds and can never be completely satisfied. All that exists in terms of life itself is individual and group "creativity" (*tvorchasc*), the former being the foundation of the latter.[7] A second fundamental element in Abdziralovich's ontology is a view of the world as extremely complex and contradictory with it being virtually impossible to distinguish between 'black' and 'white.' For Abdziralovich, although competing trends seek mutual understanding and accord and tend towards mutual reinforcement as opposed to exclusion, a formal synthesis of competing extremes is impossible.[8]

On the basis of these dual ontological postulates, Abdziralovich defines the essence of the Belarusian 'world-view' as the internal 'struggle' (*zmahanne*) within the Belarusian national 'spirit' (*dukh*) between competing 'Eastern' and 'Western' philosophical, religious and cultural currents. Like Ukrainians and the Balkan Slavs, Belarusians "cannot genuinely belong to either of these traditions. We aren't eastern people, but at the same time we don't accept the culture of Western Europe."[9] Although ultimately belonging to neither East nor West, Abdziralovich notes that Belarus is greatly attracted by elements of both. On the one hand, Belarusians admire the "simplicity" and "sincerity" of Eastern peoples

who, if they take a liking to someone will willingly "lay down their soul" for them. At the same time, Belarusians reject a perceived tendency on the part of Eastern-Slavic peoples towards *emotionalism* and *extremism*.[10] On the other hand, while repudiating its excessive individualism, Belarus is attracted by the *humanism, liberalism* and *democratism* of the West. Sounding remarkably like Belarusian Christian Democracy, Abdziralovich expressly rejects force and coercion as the basis for social and political organization. Emphasizing, as did BCD, the concept of "cooperation" (*kaaperaciya*), the purpose of society ought to be the satisfaction of individual and group needs; most importantly, the aforementioned impulse to creativity.[11] At the political level, this quest requires nothing short of *full independence*. If, as Abdziralovich himself acknowledges, Belarus has yet to succeed in creating a national culture comparable in its richness to other peoples, this is not because Belarusians lack the necessary traditions and resources to do so but have historically been denied their "inalienable" right to independence. He notes that albeit without tangible results as yet, Belarusian political thought has recently started to work in this direction.[12]

In short, as it appears in Abdziralovich, the Belarusian 'national idea' can be regarded as the effort, perhaps not even always conscious, to reconcile somehow - on the basis of specifically Belarusian national forms of social and political organization - the struggle within the Belarusian national 'soul' between competing Eastern and Western currents without completely eradicating this tension Although this internal struggle is ultimately irreconcilable, the image which emerges, paradoxically perhaps, is the rather optimistic one of the Belarusian national 'soul' as in the final analysis enjoying a fundamental and irrepressible *freedom* - belonging neither to West nor East but searching for its own unique and 'eternal' historical path. Abdziralovich cites the example of Francishak Skaryna who once purportedly stated that when he was in Russia he

felt himself to be a 'Byzantine' but when in Cracow he perceived himself as a 'Latin.' From this, it would seem to follow that to be Belarusian is to be inherently something of an 'internationalist', or, in the positive sense of the word, a 'cosmopolitan,' *free to accept and identify with the best (and, correspondingly reject the worst) elements of both Eastern and Western civilizations*. This, in turn, implies a rather *fluid* notion of identity - at the core what it means to be Belarusian is a 'freedom of spirit' essentially to choose one's identity depending on the socio-cultural (and political) context. As Anne Applebaum writes: "To be Belarusian is to be able to choose one's identity, even to allow that identity to change over time."[13] Nevertheless, it is important to note that Abdziralovich clearly considers Belarusians historically to be *a part of Europe*. Indeed, as Syarhei Dubavec has recently suggested, in accordance with Abdziralovich's original conception, it can be argued that Belarus is the quintessential *Central-European* country in that it occupies not only the geographical but cultural and spiritual space between East and West.[14]

Undoubtedly reflecting at least in part the influence of Abdziralovich, the 'national idea' as expressed in West Belarusian periodicals during the inter-war period exhibits *an acute consciousness of Belarus's location at the very crossroads of Eastern and Western civilizations and the existential problematic of 'belonging' this creates*. This problematic appeared most frequently in the Belarusian Christian Democratic press. As early as March 1920, the newspaper *Krynica* noted how the Christian world was divided into two halves - 'East' (Greek) and 'West' (Latin). Of all the Slavic peoples, only the Czechs and later Poles came under the influence of the Western church; all others fell under the influence of Eastern Christianity. However, Belarus alone occupies a unique position in that located in the very middle of Europe it straddles the borders of these two religious influences. Recalling the legacy of the Uniate Church, *Krynica*

defines "our ideal" as the "unification of Latin and Greek Belarusians" on the basis of "a single religious world-view." Indeed, the newspaper argues that religious union is "in the very nature of Belarus."[15] At another point, *Krynica*, commenting on the short story 'Two Souls' by the Belarusian writer Maksim Harecki, noted that Belarus seeks to join East and West - "two confessions (Greek and Latin) into one religious world-view and two social systems into one living organism."[16] Continuing this theme, in November 1925, *Belaruskaya krynica* posed the similar question to that of Abdziralovich himself: "Do we Belong to the East or the West?" Like Abdziralovich, the apparent answer was while accepting and admiring elements of both Eastern and Western civilizations, Belarus can ultimately belong to neither.[17] Other non-religious publications, noting that Belarusian territory is the meeting point between the two great religious confessions, called for the restoration of the Uniate church and overcoming of the historic religious schism within Belarusian society which is regarded as a major impediment to the development of Belarusian national identity.[18] Indeed, unifying all Belarusians on the basis of religion had been a predominant theme in Belarusian literature since the inception of the Belarusian national movement at the turn of the century.[19]

Along similar lines, *Belaruski Front* published an article in May 1938 on the topic of 'Eastern Europe and Belarus' conceiving of the former as not only a geopolitical but *cultural* space. According to the editors, Eastern Europe has historically witnessed the emergence or rise of three different 'centres': Kiev; Vilna and Warsaw all of whom have attempted to expand their influence over Belarus - located between these 'centres' - as much as possible. Although following the partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, the Moscow centre predominated in this struggle, since Poland regained its independence in 1918, Warsaw has resumed its rivalry with Moscow which

threatens at any moment to break into armed conflict. However, the weakening or disintegration of Russia could give rise to yet one more competing 'centre' in this region - namely Kiev which once again would aspire to the dominant role it enjoyed in Eastern Europe a millenium ago. This would inevitably include pretensions towards Belarusian territory - notably the Podlassie region. Reflecting its strongly independents line, the newspaper concludes that in order to maintain stability and balance in Eastern Europe, the region needs the emergence of one more 'centre' - Belarus staking this claim on its long history of statehood stretching back to Polack.[20]

In June 1938, *Belaruski Front* returned to this theme with an article entitled 'Between Moscow and Warsaw' in which Belarus appears as caught in a bitter political and ideological struggle between these two centres. In Moscow, ideas of 'pan-Slavism,' 'neo-Slavism' and 'Eurasianism' and, more recently, 'communism' all of which aspire in their own way to the assimilation of 'non-Russian' peoples have historically prevailed. On the other hand, in Warsaw the, 'Jagiellonian idea' - meaning by this the ideal of restoring the *Rzeczpospolita* in its pre-1772 borders and assimilating the minorities which inhabited the former Lithuanian Grand Duchy - was in the ascendancy until the beginning of the 20th century when it began to be eclipsed by 'Slavism' according to which all Slavic peoples should be united under the leadership of Poland. In the interpretation of *Belaruski Front*, according to this 'Jagiellonian idea,' Belarus is denied any claim to independent statehood. Lying at the 'pole' or 'crossroads' of this 'struggle,' the newspaper argues anew that this necessitates the creation of a strong new Belarusian 'centre' to act as stabilizing counter-balance to these competing Russian and Polish hegemonies and, perhaps most importantly, guarantee the protection of Belarusian cultural and political interests.[21]

The Necessity of Self-Reliance

This theme - in short, the realist conviction that, given the enormously difficult historical circumstances and prevailing hostility to the very existence of the 'national idea' on the part of larger and more powerful neighbours, the 'rebirth' of the nation (*adradzhenne*) ultimately depends on the courage and will of Belarusians themselves - begins with *Nasha Niva*. Noting the extremely difficult historical conditions in which the emergent Belarusian national movement found itself, the newspaper repeatedly emphasized that only through their own efforts would Belarusians succeed in lifting the "veil of darkness" from themselves, win recognition from others of their right to exist as a free and equal people among the nations of the world, and thereby realize the better future that education and Enlightenment could offer. The first issue, for example, carries an article invoking the symbolism of the "survival instinct" among all creatures great and small, noting that those who do not struggle for their survival "are parasites." The realist analogy was clear - if Belarusians could find within themselves their own "survival instinct" and will to fight for their rights, they themselves would be no better.[22] Along similar lines, the fourth issue on December 15, 1906, featured the short story of "three fraternal brothers" - elder, middle and younger. Obviously meant to symbolize Russia, Ukraine and Belarus respectively, the story tells of how, although endowed by God with the same power of reason, thought and other worldly qualities as his siblings, the "younger brother" is the most downtrodden of the three, none of whose lives, however, are easy. He is deprived of the right even to use his own language which is laughed at and scorned by the "elder" (Russian) brother. For a very long time, the "younger brother" wept silently and privately over his sad lot. The story ends, however, with him finally standing up and demanding to be heard in his own language. The symbolism once again was clear -

the time had come for Belarus to arise and demand to be heard in its own national language.[23]

Towards this end, *Nasha Niva* also frequently cited positively the struggle of other nations for their self-determination as examples Belarusians should follow. In the fall of 1909, for example, articles appeared highlighting the courageous *adradzhenne* movements among the tiny Chuvash and Yakuts peoples.[24] On January 7, 1910, the newspaper published an article concerning India, noting how it was once a country dependent upon and dominated by others - most notably, of course, Great Britain. However, a national movement there demanding full autonomy and self-rule had forced the imperial authorities to make important concessions especially in the area of agrarian reform.[25] Among Slavic peoples, the Czechs were singled out for praise as a small nation which had achieved a very high level of cultural, social, economic and scientific development. Moreover, *Nasha Niva* emphasized with evident admiration how Czechs had realized these achievements through their own efforts.[26] In January 1915, *Nasha Niva* wrote that the "day of judgment of nations" was coming at which all peoples would be given the chance to prove their "right to exist." Belarus would be recognized this right only when and if it could show that it had something "new and different from other nations" to contribute to "world culture." Hence, even at this most difficult time, Belarusians had no right "to shed tears" but rather the *obligation* to continue cultural work.[27] Expressions of support and admiration for other small nations struggling for their self-determination - in particular, once again Ireland - also typified the successor to *Nasha Niva*, Vaclau Lastouski's *Homan* ('The Clamor') published in Vilna during the period 1916-1918.[28] During the early 1920s, the emergence of a number of new Slavic states from the ruins of Tsarist Russia, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire are regarded as examples to be followed by Belarus. Indeed, some West Belarusian periodicals spoke of a

dawning age of democracy, freedom and social justice.[29] Continuing the tradition of *Nasha Niva*, the positive example of other nations struggling for national self-determination - including Estonians, Basques and Arab peoples - were cited.[30] Interest continued to be shown as well in the "quiet revolution" occurring in India.[31]

During the late 1930s, West Belarusian periodicals in general devoted a great deal of attention to what is perceived as a rapidly-changing *international climate with profound and, in the main negative, implications for Belarus and the national movement*. In fact, as early as 1929, some radical socialist publications were already speaking of a looming 'imperialist war' with potentially cataclysmic consequences for Belarus.[32] The most profound of these analyses are to be found once again in *Belaruski Front*. In February 1937, it published an article describing the world as divided in half by the deepening ideological struggle between 'Fascism' and 'Communism.' Owing to their geostrategic location in the very heart of Europe, the Belarusian people are caught in the very middle of this struggle. Rejecting both these ideological options, the newspaper emphasizes that neither will bring Belarusians independence and sovereignty - on the contrary, both seek the "spiritual destruction" of Belarus. Hence, Belarusians would have to realize their political goal of independence through their own efforts.[33] *Belaruski Front* returned to this theme in greater depth in January 1938 describing the world as divided into two competing blocs: 'Communist-Democratic' comprising the United States and Great Britain in tactical alliance with the USSR; and 'Fascist' - including Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan. The 'Fascist' bloc is seen currently to be in the ascendancy in this increasingly bitter struggle in the context of which Belarus has become "a subject of international politics" as each 'bloc' attempts to pursuade Belarusians to align themselves with it. However, the conclusion again is that Belarus should expect nothing good from either side and must find its own

independent way.[34] The message was that in the increasingly complex and dangerous international situation, the very *survival* of the Belarusian nation was at stake and Belarusians could, in the final analysis, *count only on themselves*.

Political Struggle: The Radical-Revolutionary Component

Within the broader rubric of the *zmahanne* theme, the Belarusian 'national idea' has at particular points in time incorporated *a clear radical-revolutionary element*. As with many of its other defining elements, this revolutionism can ultimately be traced to the mid-nineteenth century 'unconscious origins' of the 'national idea' - specifically the 1863 Polish rebellion. As noted in chapter one, this event can be regarded as catalytic in the emergence and development of the Belarusian 'national idea.'

Kastus Kalinouski: *Muzhyckaya Prauda* and the Call to 'Armed Resistance'

The son of a petty landlord in Hrodna province, Kalinouski had been a student at St. Petersburg University where the radical ideas of the great Russian revolutionary Alexander Herzen (to be discussed further below) were very much in vogue. After graduating at the age in 1862 of 24, Kalinouski made his way to Vilna in search of employment. However, before finding work, he joined a local revolutionary cell and eventually aligned himself with the 'Red Committee.' As the only native of Hrodna on the committee, Kalinouski was appointed military commissar in the town when the uprising began, thereby becoming its *de facto* leader in Belarus and Lithuania. Although managing for some months to avoid capture following the rebellion's collapse, Kalinouski was arrested in Vilna in

January 1864. He was subsequently sentenced to death for his role in the revolt and hung on March 7, 1864.

Through the vehicle of *Muzhyckaya prauda*, whose pages he filled with his own writings under a variety of pseudonyms, Kalinouski aimed his message at several different social categories, most importantly the *peasantry*. As Aleh Lojka writes, positing above all the questions of social justice, land and freedom, *Muyzhckaya prauda* reflected the growing influence of *critical realism* within Belarusian national literature.[35] In the very first issue of *Muzhyckaya prauda*, Kalinouski, referring to Aleksander I's Emancipation Decree, writes that "[s]ix years have passed since the peasant's freedom began to be talked about. They have talked, discussed and written a great deal, but they have done nothing. And this manifesto which the Tsar together with the Senate and the landlords has written for us is so stupid that only the devil knows what it looks like - there is no truth in it, there is no benefit in it whatsoever for us."[36] Stressing that nothing favorable for the Belarusian peasantry can be hoped for from the Tsarist government, Kalinouski calls in *Muzhyckaya prauda* for an armed uprising against Moscow as the only way the peasant's liberation can be achieved. As he wrote in the first issue, "[a]s long as the peasant has scythe and axe in hand, he will be able to defend what is his."[37] These themes were repeated in the seventh and final number of *Muzhyckaya prauda*.[38]

It is important to note the religious dimension to Kalinouski's thought. By maintaining the peasant masses in a condition of bondage, the current order appears to be contravening the will of God. In the fourth number of Muzhyckaya prauda, he expresses the view that government is necessary above all to ensure justice and truth as well as looking after the social needs of the people. More specifically, the purpose of government is to ensure the "happiness" of the people defined as their living in accordance with truth and justice understood as a

"natural" or "divine" law.[39] Flagrantly violating this canon, the Muscovite regime, metamorphized as a "living person" robs and plunders the people and the Tsar himself, as the "head" of government, is identified as the ultimate source of all injustice.[40] Kalinouski expresses the conviction that God himself is on the side of the Belarusian peasantry in their struggle against Moscow and the third number of Muzhyckaya prauda includes a prayer for divine assistance "to help us drive the Muscovites out of our land."[41] This emphasis on liberation from Russian servitude was also to be found in the pamphlets and prose written by a number of Kalinouski's contemporaries including Adam Pluh (the literary pseudonym for Anton Petkievich [1823-1903]), Arciom Viaryha-Dareski and V. Korotynski. The latter published in 1861 the short story *Hutarka Staraha Dzieda* ('The Story of an Old Man') in which the question is asked as to whether or not it is the will of God that Belarusians remain forever under the heel of Moscow, with the answer being that the time will soon come when the Poles will defeat the Russians and restore freedom to Belarus.[42]

Unrepentant to the end in his condemnation of the existing socio-political order, Kalinouski warns in his final 'Letters From Beneath the Gallows,' that "just as day and night do not reign together, so also true learning does not go together with Muscovite slavery. As long as this lies over us, we shall have nothing. There will be no truth, no riches, no learning whatsoever. They will only drive us like cattle not to our well-being but to our perdition." Kalinouski exhorts Belarusians into action, telling them that "as soon as you learn that your brothers from near Warsaw are fighting for truth and freedom, don't you stay behind either, but, grabbing whatever you can - a scythe or an ax - go as an entire community to fight for your human and national rights, for your faith, for your native country. For I say to you from beneath the gallows, my People, that only then will you live happily, when no Muscovite remains over you."[43] Reflecting the lingering

influence of Polish Romanticism in his thinking, Kalinouski was of the view that life for the Belarusian peasant had been immeasurably better under Polish-Lithuanian rule.[44]

However, as noted in chapter one, the repression of the January Insurrection had a number of important consequences including for the incipient Belarusian 'national idea.' Specifically, nascent Belarusian radicalism took a new direction similar to that of the emerging Ukrainian and Lithuanian movements - *federal union within a decentralized and democratized Russia.*

Belarusian Populism

Notwithstanding the repressions which followed the 1863 rebellion, the Belarusian radical tradition continued in the 1880s and continued to be very much influenced in its development by Russian radicalism, in particular, the phenomenon widely known in the literature as *populism*. As Sir Isaiah Berlin writes, 'populism' (*narodnichestvo*) has come to be known as "the name not of a single political party, nor of a coherent body of doctrine, but of a widespread radical movement in Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century."[45] According to Richard Pipes, the term itself originated in the 1870s in designation (often pejoratively) of a particular current within Russian radicalism typified by the belief that the intelligentsia had no right to impose its ideals on the *narod* ('people'); on the contrary, it should learn from the people and play only a limited role in the future transformation of Russia. Only in subsequent years did the name become more inclusive.[46] Furthermore, it is important to note that the leaders of Russian populism "were men of very dissimilar origins, outlooks and capacities; it was not at any stage more than loose congeneries of small independent groups of conspirators or their sympathizers, who sometimes united for common action, and

at other times operated in isolation."[47] Although these groups also tended to differ over the question of means and ends, they nonetheless held in common certain fundamental beliefs "and possessed sufficient moral and political solidarity to entitle them to be called a single movement."[48] Strongly influenced by the views of Aleksandr Herzen, the defining feature of 'populism' became the *denial of the progressive character of capitalism and conscious idealization of the spirit and institutions of Russian peasant life.*[49]

Like their predecessors - the 'Decembrists' of the 1820s and the small groups of radicals which coalesced around Herzen and Vissarion Bilinsky during the 1830s and 1840s - Russian populists regarded the government and social structure of their day as "a moral and political monstrosity - obsolete, barbarous, stupid and odious - and dedicated their lives to its total destruction."[50] Indeed, influenced by the French 'Utopian' socialist ideals of Proudhon and Fourier, they exhibited a clear contempt for the state as being nothing more than a weapon in the hands of the ruling classes wielded in defence of their own privileges. Hence, despite their differences, populists were united most fundamentally by "an unshakeable faith in the revolution" deriving from several sources. First, the progressive disillusionment of Russian radicals "with parliamentary democracy, liberal convictions and the good faith of bourgeois intellectuals" which followed the failure of the European revolutions of 1848-1849. Indeed, coupled with the death of Tsar Nicholas I and Russia's humiliation in the Crimean War, this belief that the ideals of European liberalism were bankrupt was a key factor in the development of 'populism'. Second, the populists were strongly influenced by Mikhail Bakunin's critique of all forms of central authority "and by his vision of men as being by nature peaceful and productive, and were forced to be either gaolers or convicts."[51] Third, populist revolutionism also derived from the seemingly contrary teachings of Piotr Tkachev who put his faith in "a Jacobin elite

of professional revolutionaries," an idea later taken over virtually intact by Lenin.[52]

Guided by their revolutionary faith, the main populist political goals can be described as *social justice* and *equality*. Like Herzen, populists believed that the embryonic essence of a just society in Russia already existed in the form of "the *obshchina* organized in the form of a collective unit called the *mir*" which was a free association of peasants whose decisions were binding on all members and which periodically redistributed the land to be worked.[53] Originating as it did in the "deepest moral instincts and traditional values of Russian, and, indeed, all human society," populists believed that the peasant commune offered the prototype for a society which "would ensure justice, equality and the widest opportunity for the full development of human faculties."[54] Following Herzen once again, they also believed that the large-scale industry of the sort developed in the West was "unnatural" and led inexorably to the degradation and dehumanization of people. Although, in contrast to Russian Slavophiles with which they shared the Romantic notion of the *mir* as a model for a future just society in Russia, populists did not believe in the "unique character" or "historical destiny" of the Russian people, they were of the view that the positive effects of the scientific and technological revolution in the West could be applied to Russia without the country having necessarily to traverse the capitalist stage of socio-economic development. Although they were therefore not historical determinists of the Marxian variety, populists did not deny in principle the notion of *progress*. Rather, in the view of the leading populist ideologue of the 1860s and 1870s Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Russia could profit from the technological progress achieved by the West without having to traverse the industrial revolution. In the process, far from being destroyed by the advent of technological progress (as argued by Marxists), Russia's peasant communes could be transformed into new

associations of agricultural and industrial producers who would represent the core of the new socialist society. In a word, populists sought the road to socialism not through capitalism but *in spite of it*.[55]

Exemplifying the sort of missionary zeal which bound together its members, the populist movement in Russia reached its zenith during the 1870s with the so-called 'going to the people' phenomenon (*dvizhenie k narodu*). Believing that the most important thing was not only to show the Russian peasantry the path to social justice and equality but to learn from them, idealistic young populists flocked to the countryside in their thousands in the hope of making direct contact with those 'simple people' whose communal existence they so Romanticized. However, to their dismay and disbelief, the peasants themselves most often turned to be, at best, indifferent to the populists, or, at worst, outright hostile to them. In many cases, the populists were simply turned over to local authorities. The failure of the 'going to the people' movement led to the further *radicalization of populism*. In 1878, the new revolutionary organization *Narodnaya volya* ('Peoples' Will') was formed by Vera Zasulich and Georgi Plekhanov. Reflecting the growing influence of revolutionary Marxism within Russian radical circles, *Narodnaya volya* dedicated itself to the violent overthrow of the Tsarist state. Towards this end, the group began a campaign of political terror which culminated in the 1881 assassination of Tsar Aleksander III. Far from causing the Tsarist regime to topple, however, this act discredited *Narodnaya volya* in the eyes of the Russian public and inspired a new period of strident political reaction in Russia.

Populist groups began to appear in Belarus during the early years of the 1870s. Often comprising only a handful of people (mostly students), they were active in all major cities including Minsk, Hrodna and Vilna and maintained close contacts with Russian populists. During the second half of the decade, a Belarusian wing of *Narodnaya volya* was established in Minsk. Like Russian populists, Belarusian

radicals idealized the peasant *obshchina* and rejected the historical necessity of capitalism. Their most important programmatic goals were also social justice and equality for the downtrodden peasantry. This 'critical realist' dimension was clearly evident in documents produced by these groups including 'Danila Borovik's "Letters About Belorussia" as well as 'Shchyry Belarus' who argues that the main aim of the new Belarusian movement must "consist in a struggle against the contemporary political and social order."[56] Expounding unmistakably revolutionary views concerning the necessity of overthrowing Tsarism by force, the author described this struggle as being "totally identified with the main task of the Russian revolutionary party *Narodnaya volya*."[57] Indeed, a young Belarusian populist was among the conspirators who murdered Tsar Aleksandr I in 1881. As S. S. Sambuk writes in what remains to this day the seminal study of Belarusian populism, this action represented "a return to the best revolutionary-democratic traditions of the 1860s and in the first instance K. Kalinovski's *Muzhyckaya Pravda*."[58] As will be discussed further in chapter six, influenced profoundly by the Ukrainian social-democrat Mykola Drahomanov, Belarusian populists were the first to advance the demand for Belarusian political independence albeit in a *federated* form.

Radical *Motifs* in the Emerging Belarusian National Movement

It is important to note that the turn of the 20th century was a time of intellectual ferment within the Russian Empire. In particular, the revolutionary ideas of *Marxism* began to take increasing hold among elements of the Russian radical elite. It is, of course, true that the philosophy of Marx "came to Russia not as a surprise or sudden importation but after the Western thinkers whom he acknowledged as his predecessors had already become known in Russia in their

own right."[59] Indeed, Marxism had been preceded by the ideas of British political economy (Ricardo and Smith), French 'utopian' socialism (Fourier and Saint Simon) and, most importantly, German Romanticism (Schelling, Fichte and Hegel). The first great Russian Marxist theoretician was Georgi Plekhanov, a former leader of the defunct *Narodnaya volya* discussed in the last chapter, who, together with two other former *narodniki*, established a new revolutionary group called *Liberation of Labour* in 1883.[60] Under Plekhanov's direction, this organization laid the foundations for a Russian Marxist movement and in March 1898 the founding congress of the *Russian Social-Democratic Party (RSDWP)* was held in Minsk.

It was in this context of intellectual ferment and radicalization that the first Belarusian political organization of a radical, social-democratic orientation emerged in the fall of 1903 - the Belarusian Revolutionary Hramada (BRH) led by Ivan and Anton Luckievich and Vaclau Ivanouski. At its founding congress in 1903, the name was changed to the Belarusian Socialist Hramada ('BSH').[61] A program adopted at the Congress declared the BSH to be a "socio-political organization of the working people" which aimed at "the destruction of the current capitalist order and the transfer of all land to the people." The biggest obstacle to these aims was identified as the existing lack of political freedom in Russia. Accordingly, the BSH declared itself to be an ally of the proletarian movement across the Empire in the mutual struggle against autocracy.[62]

A radical socialist *ethos* was clearly apparent in the organ of the BSH, *Nasha Dolya*, the first Belarusian-language periodical which appeared in 1906). Noting that "all the peoples of the Russian empire have declared war against the old order," the editors promise to fight against "all the dark forces" who for their own benefit have maintained the Belarusian people in a state of unhappiness and poverty.[63] Arguing at the same time, however, that the Belarusian peasantry is

somewhat themselves to blame for their miserable lot, this first issue calls for the "unionization" of the countryside as the best means of improving material conditions of life. Although urban workers are not inherently better as people than peasants, they are "more reasonable" and understood long ago the need to band together in order to achieve common aims.[64] According to *Nasha Dolya* - the self-described organ of the "working people in the village and town" - this is a lesson which needs to be learned by the peasantry - only through collective class action would it be possible to overcome the forces of "darkness" and achieve justice and a better life.[65] The initial press run of 10,000 copies caused an immediate sensation in Vilna where 3,000 copies were sold on the first day alone.[66] Nevertheless, the newspaper had a short life. Its next five issues were confiscated by Tsarist authorities who considered it too 'radical' after which it ceased publication on December 2, 1906.

Radical themes were less evident in the successor to *Nasha Dolya*. Profiting from the unhappy experience of its predecessor, *Nasha Niva* adopted primarily a *national-cultural* line which permitted it to survive until its closure by German occupation authorities in 1915. During the Soviet period, the vehicle of Belarusian "national awakening" was portrayed disparagingly in official sources as being a "liberal" publication which adopted a "petty bourgeois" and reactionary "anti-Marxist" position.[67] Nonetheless, together with their evident Romanticism discussed in chapter two, critical realist themes were clearly evident in the work of the leading poet of *Nasha Niva* - Janka Kupala. Beginning with his first collection *Zhaleika*, and specifically poems such as 'Muzhyk' ('The Peasant'), the 'national idea' in his work thus takes the form of a demand that the Belarusian peasant be treated as a person worthy of dignity, honor and respect.[68] In this sense, Kupala clearly continued the tradition of Bahushevich inasmuch as the 'national idea' appeared as *a realist protest against the unjust order of things*. The presence of

these 'critical realist' themes was cited during the Soviet period by writers such as Uladzimir Konan who, taking at least implicit issue with the prevailing official historiographical position, defended the "progressive" character of *Nasha Niva*.[69]

The Radicalization of Belarusian National Thought During the Inter-War Period

During the inter-war period, Belarusian society and political thought underwent a substantial radicalization. In West (Polish) Belarus, this was a consequence of two factors. First, the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology 'seeping' in from East (Soviet) Belarus which, especially during the NEP and *Belarusizatsiya* period, represented a potentially attractive alternative to Polish repression. Secondly, the increasingly severe Polish 'pacification' campaign undertaken by Polish authorities beginning in the mid-1920s.

The early 1920s witnessed the emergence of a large number of leftist political parties in West Belarus including the Belarusian Socialist Revolutionary Party, the Belarusian Peasant Union, the Belarusian Social-Democratic Party, the Belarusian National-Radical Party and, of particular interest here, the *Belarusian Revolutionary Organization* (BRO) and *Belarusian Socialist-Workers' Hramada.*' The Belarusian Revolutionary Organization was created in the fall of 1922. Its leaders included A. U. Kancheuski, I. K. Lahinovich, and the poet L. H. Radzievich. During the early 1920s, the BRO published several newspapers including *Nash sciah, Volny sciah, Novae Zhycce* and *Zmahanne*.[70] The social base of the BRO was the West Belarusian countryside where, as a direct consequence of the "colonization" policies of Warsaw, anti-Polish sentiment was growing rapidly. In response, the BRO advocated the confiscation (without compensation) of land from Polish landowners and its redistribution to Belarusian

peasants. Concerning the 'national question,' the main programmatic goal of the BRO was defined as *the "revolutionary struggle" for the creation of a Soviet-style political and socio-economic order in West Belarus and the joining of these territories to the BSSR.* In short, proclaiming in its publicist material the conviction that Soviet power now stood on the principle of "recognizing the national idea" in East Belarus, the BRO advocated the unification of the Belarusian territories under Soviet rule (viz. the separation of West Belarus from Poland), declaring that the BSSR was the sole legitimate representative of the Belarusian people whose national capital was Minsk.[71]

The BRO ceased to exist formally as an independent organization on December 30, 1923 when it joined the *Communist Party of West Belarus* (hereafter 'CPWB'), an autonomous wing of the *Polish Communist Party* (hereafter 'PCP') founded originally in December 1918. As Aleksandra Bergman notes, the unification conference, in fact, formalized cooperation between the BRO and CPWB which had been ongoing for several years. Indeed, although in terms of its own social base very much a 'peasant' organization, the BRO had from the outset professed its solidarity with the Polish proletariat in the revolutionary struggle for socio-economic and national emancipation.[72] During the period 1923-25, supported by the CPWB, this solidarity took the form of an armed resistance against Polish authorities waged by several groups of West Belarusian partisans.

The BRO can be regarded as the precursor to the most important and influential of West Belarusian political organizations during this period - the 'Belarusian Peasants - Workers' Hramada' (hereafter simply 'Hramada'). The initial roots of this organization are to be found in the 'Belarusian Parliamentary Club' within which a break-away 'faction' using this name appeared in June 1925. This group was headed by Bronislau Tarashkievich, at this time (together with Anton Luckievich) a leader of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party and who is revered

within Belarusian national thought for being the creator of the first modern Belarusian orthography in 1918. In accounting for the origins of this schism, it is necessary to take account of a noticeable radicalization of Tarashkievich's political views during his time as a deputy and directly a consequence of shifting Polish policy. Whereas in 1923, he was voicing demands for Belarusian national-cultural and political autonomy within Poland, by 1924 (the beginning of the Polish "pacification" campaign), he was expressing serious doubts about this possibility. At this time, he also began to speak favorably of developments in the BSSR. In the programmatic statement announcing its formation, the Hramada faction - which, apart from Tarashkievich, included Simon Rak-Mikhailouski, Piotr Myatla and Pavel Voloshyn - invoked the tradition of the original 'Belarusian Revolutionary [later 'Socialist] Hramada' founded in 1902 and issued a call for the 'unity and independence' of the Belarusian territories.[73] In August 1925, Tarashkievich represented the Hramada at a meeting between Belarusian activists (among them Anton Luckievich) and representatives of the CPWB in Gdansk. Together with exploring possibilities for joint political action, the conference was important for recognizing the BSSR as the only legitimate representative of the Belarusian people. Although, as made clear at a January 1926 party congress, the CPWB regarded the Hramada as an independent "mass peasant organization" within which communists might form their own wing, this meeting also marked the beginning of increasingly close coordination of the activities between the communists and Hramada.[74]

This left-wing influence was clearly evident in the principal postulates of the Hramada's program which were developed during the second half of 1925 and adopted at an organizational meeting in May 1926. The 'national question' occupied pride of place in this document. Indeed, the first paragraph declared that the entire system of relations between states and peoples should be restructured on

the basis of "unconditional recognition of the inalienable right of nations to self-determination." In accordance with this principle, "all the Belarusian lands should be united in a single independent republic on the basis of peasants' and workers' power." At the same time, the Hramada declared its support for the aspiration of the working masses to create a close socialist union of European peoples." Hence, the it pledged to carry out its activities in "a spirit of the international solidarity of working peoples."[75] Although the document spoke of creating a state based on "the peasants' and workers' power," this was not understood as a "dictatorship of the proletariat." Indeed, the Hramada undertook a clear commitment to carry out its "revolutionary struggle" within the framework of the law and existing Polish constitution. The supreme executive body of the Hramada was its Central Committee chaired by Tarashkievich and including (as his deputy) Rak-Mikhailouski, Myatla, Voloshyn, as well as Radislau Astrouski (director of the Belarusian Gymnasium in Vilna as well as the fledgling Belarusian National Bank) and the prominent lawyer Fabian Akynchyc. In time, Anton Luckievich also became a member. Indeed, the Hramada was to become the organizational centre of the West Belarusian national movement.

In May 1926, a military *coup d'état* occurred in Poland which witnessed the return to power of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski after the 'Constitutional Period' of unstable coalition governments (1921-1926). As Norman Davies has written, the regime installed by the May coup defies easy description. It took its name "from the slogan *Sanacja*, meaning a return to (political) 'health', and was guided by a vague, if forceful, ideology, akin to Moral Rearmament, which imagined that the evil in men's souls could be scrubbed clean by military spit and polish."[76] Formally speaking, the new regime, which survived until Pilsudski's death in 1935, was not a dictatorship as parliament, political parties and opposition all continued to function. Pilsudski "was content to direct affairs from behind the

scenes: to mask his personal rule with a parliamentary facade: and to cow the opposition by strong-arm police methods and harassment."[77] On the one hand, the *Sanacja* regime had a number of redeeming features. During this period, Polish cultural life experienced a certain flowering and the economy was relatively stable. Moreover, notwithstanding the initial shock of the May coup, Pilsudski himself continued to enjoy immense public confidence. On the other hand, however, the system, like Pilsudski, "was seriously ill." Unemployment during the early 1930s reached 40%, socio-economic distress in the Polish countryside was increasingly acute, inter-ethnic tensions were exacerbated, anti-Semitism was on the rise, and a new constitution adopted in April 1935 "moved in the direction of intensified authoritarianism."[78] As Davies points out, exemplified by the sorts of specific measures discussed in previous chapters (including against the Belarusian Christian clergy), "the Byelorussian countryside took its share of punishment from the *Sanacja*'s pacification campaigns."[79] Notwithstanding the claims by some Polish politicians during the late 1930s that the Belarusian movement was 'dead,' the "pacification' policy, in fact, only exacerbated relations between Warsaw and the Belarusian minority.

In response to Pilsudski's coup, during the summer of 1926, after it had already in fact been declared illegal by Polish authorities, the Hramada organized a mass political action. Reflecting the rapid radicalization of West Belarusian society, the organization's membership grew quickly. By January 1927, more than 2,000 local branches comprising 120,000 members (approximately 80% of whom were peasants) had been created across West Belarus.[80] At the height of its influence, the Hramada published a large periodical press including the newspapers *Belaruskaya praca*, *Nasha praca*, and *Nasha prauda*.[81] Not surprisingly, the rapid growth of the Hramada inspired increasing alarm within official Polish circles. In 1927, as part of its 'pacification' campaign, Polish authorities officially banned the

Hramada and fifty-six of its members - including Tarashkievich and Rak-Mikailouski - were arrested. After a secret trial, the '56' (as they have since come to be known) were sentenced to lengthy prison terms.[82] The repression of the Hramada was unquestionably a serious blow to the West Belarusian national movement which was thus left without a real organizational centre.

The disarray into which the movement was thrown is best exemplified by the radically different directions taken by the leaders of the Hramada following its demise. Following elections in 1928, the left-wing tradition of the Hramada was continued by a new Belarusian parliamentary faction which chose the symbolic name *Zmahanne* ('The Struggle'). Until being declared illegal by Polish authorities this group, led by the historian and journalist Ihnat Dvarchanin, pressed traditional "left" demands for land reform (confiscation from Polish owners without compensation and its redistribution to the Belarusian peasantry), as well as, in terms of the 'national question,' the unity and independence of the Belarusian territories.[83] Anton Luckievich and Astrouski attempted to remedy this situation through the creation of the new *Centrasoyuz* ('Centreunion') group. In its programmatic statement published in September 1930, the organization declared its goals to be the continuation of cultural-educational work and improvement of the economic condition of the Belarusian peasantry. Luckievich was acclaimed as Chairman with Stanislau Stankievich (Belarusian Christian Democracy) as Secretary.[84]However, reflecting the depth of increasingly bitter political (and personal) differences emerging within the West Belarusian movement, *Centrasoyuz* collapsed in 1932. As discussed in chapter three, Akinchyc attempted to carve out his own political niche through the creation of a Belarusian National Socialist Party,' an effort which met with no success until the Nazi occupation of Belarus during World War II.

As also pointed out in the previous chapter, after the disbanding of the Hramada, the most significant political force in West Belarus became the catholic Belarusian Christian Democratic movement. However, the political radicalization of West Belarusian society was clearly evident in January 1936 when BCD revised yet again its program and announced its transformation into the new Belarusian National Union ('BNU'). In terms of socio-economic policy, the BNU continued to call for the re-parcelization of land with compensation as well as government regulation of private ownership in the superior interest of the "public good." With respect to the 'national question,' reflecting undoubtedly a growing response to the increasingly repressive policies of Polish authorities, the BNU now called expressly for the creation of *an independent Belarusian state uniting all the ethnographically Belarusian territories.*[85]

Radical - even revolutionary - themes were also evident in Belarusian literature of the time, in particular the work of Janka Kupala.[86] In August 1919, following the arrival of Polish forces in Minsk, Kupala wrote one of his most militant poems to date entitled *Paustan!* ('Arise!').[87] As Antony Adamovich writes, this poem consisted of four basic principles formulated in his Kupala's pre-revolutionary poetry. First, "[t]he national idea, or more precisely, the national ideology which is expressed by projecting the glorious national past on the screen of the future, showing and lighting the way to that future, which comes after the spiritual liberation of the nation." Second, "[n]ational poetry, or sometimes more broadly, national culture, which develops national consciousness and leads to the national awakening of the people." Third, "[m]ilitary force, which organizes the awakened people, arming and leading them to decisive battle for the restoration of national prestige and the establishment of national sovereignty - the liberation of the 'motherland' from enslavement by alien and hostile forces." Fourth, "[t]he power of a national authority, which formulates and heads national sovereignty, and

ensures its continued existence."[88] In 'Arise!', these elements are represented respectively by a 'seer' or 'prophet' (*prarok*), 'bard' (*pyasnyar*), 'knight' (*vayak*) and 'lord' (*uladar*) in what amounts by a call from Kupala upon Belarusians to rid their lands once and for all of every kind of foreign rule.

In October 1919, Pilsudski decreed the formation of a new Belarusian national army. Under the pseudonym 'K-a', Kupala welcomed what he viewed as this long overdue decision on the part of Polish authorities. He noted that neighboring states such as Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia already possessed their own armies which were "engaged in the struggle for independence and a better future." Owing to "historical and geographical circumstances," however, Belarus had never been in the position to raise its own army. Instead, its sons had been forced to fight in the Tsarist military, spilling their blood in far-flung places such as Turkey and the Urals without knowing why they were dying. As this was the time of the foreign intervention against the Bolsheviks, Kupala goes on to warn those who "currently hold power over a large part of Belarus (viz. the Poles)" of the danger posed by "growing reactionary forces" in Russia. Hence, Poland ought to give Belarusians the possibility of defending themselves. Kupala ends by expressing "from the very depths" of his "soul" the hope "that in the very near future the sons of Belarus, standing under their Belarusian flag, will defend a free and independent Belarus."[89] Another interesting and illustrative poem of this period is Kupala's adaptation of the traditional Belarusian folk-song *A u bary, u bary* ('And in the Woods, in the Woods') in which the Belarusian soldier (symbolizing the nation as a whole) finds himself before three paths. One leads to "the East (Russia), from whence he will not return"; a second leads to the "West" (Poland) but here "he will become enslaved"; the third is the correct choice leading the soldier to "his native fields" (Belarus).[90]

On November 28, 1919, Kupala published an article in the newspaper *Belarus* entitled *Nezalezhnasc* ('Independence') in which he raises the question of why it is so difficult for Poland and Russia alike to entertain the notion of Belarusian independence. Like their neighbors in Lithuania, Latvia, and Ukraine, Belarusians are a distinct people with their own history of statehood - "the Lithuanian-Belarusian Grand Duchy." However, in accordance with their respective imperial aims, both Poland and Russia want to destroy Belarusian independence. In view of these unfavourable conditions, Kupala writes, Belarusians ought to demand "state independence" through peaceful means and, if necessary, by taking up arms.[91] During celebrations of the fifteenth anniversary of his creative activities on June 24, 1920, he delivered a speech in which the main theme was again the idea of Belarusian independence by revolutionary means if necessary. Kupala noted that "[f]ifteen years ago, even to think of independence was dangerous; today our most powerful neighbours discuss it with us themselves, as with a people ." Noting that the path traversed to date by Belarusians had been extraordinarily difficult, Kupala declared that "[w]e have struggled and will continue to struggle." Expressing faith that "the eternal sun of truth and justice" would one day shine on Belarus, Kupala concluded his remarks by calling upon Belarusians "to fight and become free." [92] The independence *motif* was also apparent in Kupala's poetry from this period, for example, the verse 'Five Senators' written in April 1920 which expresses the belief that a "new prophet" will come to replace the "false prophets" now visible in Belarus and lead the Belarusian people towards this ultimate goal.[93]

Radical-revolutionary motives were also apparent in the work of the promising new West Belarusian poet Uladzimir Zhylka. Zhylka's first published verse entitled 'Poklich' appeared in the newspaper *Belarus* on January 25, 1920 and made clear at once his unswerving commitment to the Belarusian 'national idea.'

Dedicated to the March 25, 1918 declaration of independence by the BNR, the poem invokes the symbols adopted by the fledgling state - the white-red-white banner and what Zhylka calls the "Lithuanian *pahonya*"- as part of what amounts to a "call-to-arms" directed especially at young Belarusians to march together under these symbols towards a better future for their homeland (*Backaushchyna*) - one, most importantly, of *freedom* and *progress*.[94] However, without doubt Zhylka's most important poem of his brief career was the 1922 epic *Uyaulenne* ('The Conception') in which the central theme is that of *Belarusian national revolution*.[95] As Adamovich notes, the poem "represents a lyrical interpretation of all the chief stages in the growth of the national revolutionary movement in Belorussia, from the time when the national spirit of the people just awakening, through the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and ending with the culmination of the National Revolution of 1918 'as a result of which the Belorussian emerged on the map of Europe."[96] This work emphasizes themes of 'revival', 'motion', and 'life' which the poet saw as being "provided for by the Belorussian national spirit and could be found in the development of the Belorussian national ideal."[97] *Uyaulenne* concludes with Zhylka citing the 'motion' symbolized in the *Pahonya* with its image of a gallant knight aboard onrushing steed as foreshadowing the future success of his nation envisaged once again in humanistic terms as "the inclusion of Belorussia in the brotherhood of nations, the inclusion of the national in the international."[98] In his contemporaneous assessment of *Uyaulenne*, Anton Luckevich pointed out that 'The Conception' is indeed permeated by a new revolutionary spirit. The process of Belarusian national *adradzhenne* is no longer portrayed as one of evolutionary awakening of national consciousness, but the almost explosive outburst of creative forces from the very depths of the national 'soul' and directed towards the independence of Belarus.[99]

In the East, radical and revolutionary motifs were evident in Soviet Belarusian historiography and literature as well, illustrating the fundamental point that the mid-1920s and the Belarusizatsiya phenomenon represented *a partial and, in the end, unsuccessful rapprochement between the Belarusian 'national idea' and Bolshevism.*[100] In the realm of history, this was apparent in Usievalad Ihnatouski's *Karotki narys historii Belarusi* which, as discussed in chapter one, represented a Marxist reinterpretation of Belarusian political history. In this text, Ihnatouski gives enormous credit to Soviet power for having, in essence resolved the 'national question.' As he writes, following the "liberation" of Minsk by the Red Army in December 1918, the Communist Party decided to take into its own hands "the resolution of the national question" and declared the independent BSSR. Referring to the subsequent fusion of the BSSR with Soviet Lithuania, Ihnatouski justifies this as having been necessary in order "to best protect the working and peasant masses" against the continuing threat of "Polish imperialism" which regarded both Lithuania and Belarus "as its provinces."[101] The BSSR exists today as "the Western vanguard" of the USSR and Soviet power is praised for having consolidated Belarusian statehood.[102]

Within the literary community, a new trend started to emerge in 1924 which, as Adamovich writes, combined the principles of the 'New Renaissance' (*adradzhenne*) with "revolutionary and Communistic phraseology."[103] The initiators of this movement including Mikhas Charot (an acquaintance of Uladzimir Zhylka), Aleksandrovich and Ales Dudar differentiated themselves from the 'New Renaissance' writers (Kupala, Kolas, Bahdanovich) primarily in the new degree of rebelliousness they saw themselves as exhibiting typified by the use of communistic and revolutionary terminology. It was this rebelliousness which led to the movement finally being given the nickname *burapiena* meaning literally "stormfroth." The *burapiena* movement quickly moved from

phraseological to *ideological* acceptance of the Bolshevik revolution with Charot, Dudar and other *burapieny* criticizing the older 'New Renaissance' intellectuals for their continuing refusal to do so.[104] Indeed, in his poems 'On the Path of Renaissance' (1921) and 'Dance in the Cemetery' (1922), Charot openly chastised the *Nasha Niva* poets for being "mired in the past" and called on them to join the new trend.[105] However, the new 'revolutionary' attitude was most evident in Charot's epic poem 'The Barefoot on the Site of the Fire' (1922) which is generally regarded as having opened a new era in Belarusian literature. In essence a call for acceptance of the Bolshevik revolution, Charot's 'barefoot men' represent a new hero in Belarusian poetry; namely, "- the element of the urban and rural population which had been proletarianized, or more exactly, which had been turned into the 'Lumpenproletariat' - the ragged and the barefoot - during the war and revolution and which formed the chief support of the October Revolution in Belorussia."[106] Symbolized by fire, the revolution itself is conceived by Charot as a moment of destruction. Indeed, for Charot and the other *burapieny* writers, destroying the 'old' was a necessary first step towards the creation of something radically new.[107]

In December 1922, a new literary journal was founded called *Polymia* ('The Flame'). Under the editorship of Cishka Hartny, *Polymia* devoted the bulk of its space to the *burapieny* and comparably less to the 'New Renaissance' trend. In its first issue, the editors described themselves as "revolutionary Marxists" and described *adradzhenne* as "not an end in itself" but the means "of rousing the working masses towards revolutionary creativity towards the active construction of Soviet Belarus."[108] This first number features a poem by another of Charot's contemporaries Mikhail Hramyka preceded by a short introductory article by the same writer entitled "Poetry About the Revolution and the Revolution in Poetry" in which he calls for not only for new poetry on the subject of the November 1917

revolution but the rejection of previous poetic forms.[109] Indeed, firmly believing in the notion (deeply embedded in Marxism) of historical progress, Charot and other *burapieny* emphasized not previous history but the *qualitatively new future* now open to the Belarusian people thanks to the liberating power of the revolution. The Belarusian 'national idea' would thus be realized not on the basis of a 'return to the past' but through the construction of Belarusian statehood on *new socialist foundations* in union with other Soviet republics.

In 1923, a second journal entitled *Maladnyak* ('The Saplings') began publishing also in Minsk. Modelled on the Russian journal *Molodaya gvardiya* and initially edited by Charot, *Maladnyak* became the 'organ' of the *burapiena* movement. As Hartny wrote in 1928, the journal had the aim of defending "the proletarian ideology and furthering the cause of socialist construction."[110] Similar to the political views being expounded at this time in West Belarus by the BRO and the poet Zhylka, a major theme of the *Maladnyak* writers became that of a "national revolution" uniting East and West Belarus under Soviet power. This was typified in 1924 poems by Charot and Aleksandrovich entitled respectively 'The Warlord' and 'The Insurgents,' as well as Uladzimir Dubouka's verse 'To Those in the West.'[111]

Within the literary community, the growing *rapprochement* between the Belarusian 'national idea' and Bolshevism was also symbolized by the fact that, as Adamovich writes, thanks to the *Belarusizatsiya* policies of the Soviet regime discussed in chapter one, the leaders of the 'New Renaissance' (viz. the *Nasha Niva* poets) were increasingly inclined to "to work for national independence even at the cost of doing so within the Soviet system."[112] Having initially greeted the Bolshevik revolution with silence or outright hostility, during the early 1920s they gradually began to signify their acceptance of Soviet power. Especially in the case of Kupala, however, this acceptance was notably cautious and gradual. It began in

1923 with the publication in *Maladnyak* of two new poems of greeting to new generation Belarusian writers under the title 'To the Eaglets,' followed the same year by two more poems addressed to the Fourth All-Belarusian Congress of Soviets. Entitled 'From the Children of Belarus', these poems asked communist authorities to govern Belarus so that the country "does not live under duress" and contains the children's request for food, clothing, teachers and books.[113] In 1923, Kupala also wrote a poem to Cishka Hartny on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of his literary efforts "on behalf of the working people of Belarus."[114] As Adamovich notes, "[t]he development of the ideas of the Nationality NEP of so-called Belorussianization, and of the enlargement of Belorussian territory found a direct and positive response in Kupala's poems 'The Nameless'."[115] Similar in "both ideology and form" to Zhylka's 'Conception,' this work was devoted to something which for Kupala "was still 'nameless,' something like a Belorussian National-Communist Revolution which was how he saw the Nationality NEP" as the basis for further Belarusian national development.[116] Also in 1924, Kupala dedicated a poem to the 'architect' of *Belarusizatsiya* Ihnatouski entitled *Nash letapisec* ('Our Chronicler').[117] Kupala's transition to acceptance of the Soviet regime was completed with his 1925 poem 'In the Wake of the Years' which extols the November 1917 revolution.[118] That same year, Kupala was given the official title of 'People's Poet of Belarus,' recognition he described not as a personal triumph but that of "the Belarusian national idea," adding that he was proud to have received such an honor from Soviet Belarusian authorities.[119] Although he had quarreled violently with the *Maladnyak* writers, Jakub Kolas began to signal his acceptance of the new Soviet order by revising his epic poem 'Simon the Musician' in 1924-25, dedicating it to the young people of Belarus. His "reorientation," however, is more apparent in three collections of new prose written and published in 1925-26 - *In Quiet Water, On the Border Line,* and *Step*

by Step. As Adamovich notes, the short novel *Towards Life's Expanses* (1926) "is considered by critics as evidence of Kolas' ideological switch 'onto the rails of the present day'."[120] Hence, "by the end of 1925, all the leaders of the 'New Renaissance' movement had given up their opposition to the Bolsheviks and were ready to collaborate with them in the construction of a Belorussian national culture."[121]

However, the literary *rapprochement* between the Belarusian national idea' and Bolshevism showed in signs of strain as early as 1926. In the spring of that year, the Soviet Belarusian literary community split into competing currents when a group of writers led by Dubouka and Jazep Pushcha left *Maladnyak* to form a new organization called *Uzvyshsha* ('Excelsior') which, as discussed in chapter three, posited as its fundamental aim a Romantic 'return' to Belarusian national values in literature based on a sharp critique of the allegedly nihilistic materialist *ethos* of the communist regime. However, indicative of the fact that the *rapprochement* between the Belarusian 'national idea' and Soviet-style Marxism was definitively over, together with the *Uzvyshsha* writers, the poets of *Polymia* and *Maladnyak*, including Charot and Hartny, became victims of Stalinist repressions during the early 1930s.[122]

Political Radicalism in Post-Soviet Belarus

Post-Soviet Belarus is typically regarded as being perhaps the most tranquil, stable and docile of successor states. Indeed, this is an image deliberately cultivated by President Lukashenka to justify his domestic policies. Given the historic strength of the tradition of tolerance in Belarus, this image is not entirely divorced from reality. Indeed, Belarus has avoided the major social upheavals and convulsions that have accompanied the post-communist transition in many Soviet successor

states.[123] Nonetheless, given the acute political conflict which has typified Lukashenka's tenure, rooted fundamentally in sharply differing conceptions of the future of the 'national idea,' the carefully cultivated official image of Belarusian stability has been severely undermined.

It is important in this context to note the emergence during the mid-1990s of a small number of political parties and other organizations which have exhibited what is in the Belarusian context at least an uncommon degree of radicalism. These groups, including 'White Legion,' 'Grey Wolves,' 'Right Revenge' and the 'Party of Freedom' made themselves apparent for the first time during the demonstrations of April and May 1996. These groups were highly critical of what they regard as the passivity of the national intelligentsia centred in the BNF and opposition political parties and developed close contacts with the far right-wing Ukrainian nationalist organization UNA-UNSO. The leader of 'Right Revenge,' which seeks retribution for the damage done to Belarusian language and culture through Russification, Slavamir Adamovich authored a poem in 1995 entitled 'Kill the President.' Although the verse did not mention Lukashenka by name, Belarusian authorities arrested Adamovich nonetheless for allegedly threatening the life of the Belarusian head-of-state. As a result of pressure from intellectual circles - including in Russia - who came to his defence on the basis of upholding 'intellectual freedom,' Adamovich was finally released in 1997. For its part, advocating an 'ethnically pure' Belarus free from Russian influence, the 'Party of Freedom', citing the heroic example of the Chechen people, circulated leaflets in Minsk during the summer of 1996 calling upon Belarusians to defend their independence by armed force if necessary. In September 1996, POF leader Syarhei Vysocki wrote that conditions for a 'national revolution' in Belarus now existed.[124]

This new degree of post-Soviet Belarusian radicalism was clearly a response to the Lukashenka regime's assault on democracy and the 'national idea' which was encouraging the 'revenge of the minority.'[125] Although these far right-wing groups clearly exist on the fringe of Belarusian society, their emergence gives pause for reflection. Indeed, some foreign observers now suggest that were integration to lead to the absorption of Belarus as a constituent part of the Russian Federation, the emergence of an underground armed Belarusian resistance should be now regarded as not simply possible but probable. Russia would thus unwittingly create its own 'Ulster' scenario.[126]

Indeed, while it is true that, reflecting the fluctuating synthesis of Romantic and Enlightenment influences and underlying traditions of tolerance, respect and democratism discussed in chapter three, the emphasis of the Belarusian 'national idea' has historically been on *evolution* rather than revolution, the possibility of increasing radicalism in Belarus should not be discounted.[127] What was described in the previous chapter as the increasingly totalitarian character of President Lukashenka's rule has all but denied legal means of opposition. In such an oppressive climate, the possibility of acts of political violence directed against the Lukashenka regime, even some attempt to remove the regime itself by force, ought be entirely excluded as a possible future scenario.

Analytical Summary

This chapter once again focuses principally on the 'synthesized character' of the Belarusian 'national idea' as symbolized by the concept of *zmahanne* ('struggle') on both the internal ('spiritual') and political dimensions. It also emphasizes the importance as well of the 'structured character' of the 'national idea,' especially for understanding the emergence and development of radical and revolutionary

motives in Belarusian national thought which were very much shaped initially by external Polish, and later, Russian-Soviet influences. Indeed, in the BSSR during the 1920s it is possible to speak of a temporary and conditional *rapprochement* between the Belarusian and Soviet 'ideas,' evident especially in Soviet Belarusian national historiography and literature of this period. This represented a fundamental departure since, as noted previously, the Belarusian 'national idea' had been decidedly non, even *anti*-Bolshevik. The appearance of post-Soviet Belarusian radicalism as largely a direct ('structured') response to the increasing oppression of the Lukshenka regime represents a significant phenomenon worth careful monitoring in the future.

Notes

[1] Indeed, Belarusian writers and periodicals of all political orientations from communist to fascist have emphasized this theme.

[2] As Ghia Nodia, "Nationalism and the Crisis of Liberalism," in Richard Caplan and John Feffer, eds., *Europe's New Nationalisms: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford, 1996), p. 107. Moreover, the nation fulfills itself by being active in history."

[3] As noted in the introduction, another clear parallel with the Ukrainian 'national idea' exists here. The same existential problematic, as perhaps best conceptualized in terms of the 19th century confrontation between 'Westernizers' and 'Slavophiles,' can be seen at the heart of the historical Russian identity crisis.

[4] Ihnat Abdziralovich, *Advechnym shlyacham: dasledzyni belaruskaha svetahladu* (Minsk, 1993), p.

[5] Uladzimir Konan, "Arkhetypi belaruskaha mentalitetu: sproba rekanstrukcyi pavodle naciyanalnaya mifalohii i kazakhnaha epasu," *Belarusika-Alboruthenica* (Book Two) (Minsk, 1992), p. 21.

[6] Abdziralovich, p. 19.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

[13] Anne Applebaum, *Between East and West: Across the Borderlands of Europe*

(New York, 1994), p. 159. This implies what is described in the literature as a 'circumstantialist' or 'situational' understanding of identity. See, for example, Herbert Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, No. 2, 1979, pp. 1-20 and Jeffrey Okamura, "Situational Ethnicity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, No. 4, 1981, pp. 452-465. In a paradoxical sense, Soviet nationality policy can be regarded as having reinforced this basic 'freedom' to choose one's national identity. Indeed, in addition to being a supranational 'Soviet, 'citizens of the USSR chose for themselves a separate national identity - be it 'Russian', 'Belarusian', 'Ukrainian', 'Georgian', 'Uzbek', etc.

[14] Syarhei Dubavec, "Evropa: chamu my nya tut," *Fragmenty*, No. 1, 1996, p. 32.

[15] *Krynica*, March 7, 1920.

[16] *Krynica*, June 20, 1920.

[17] *Belaruskaya krynica*, November 8, 1925.

[18] For example, *Belaruskaya kultura*, No. 1, 1927.

[19] *Nasha Niva*, May 20, 1911; *Nasha Niva*, December 22, 1911; *Nasha Niva*, October 11, 1912; *Nasha Niva*, July 10, 1914.

[20] *Belaruski Front*, May 5, 1938. Nonetheless, the newspaper favored the division of Russia into separate states because this would allow for the genuine independence of the oppressed minority peoples. See *Belaruski Front*, April 5, 1938

[21] *Belaruski Front*, June 5, 1938.

[22] *Nasha Niva*, November 10, 1906.

[23] *Nasha Niva*, December 15, 1906.

[24] *Nasha Niva*, September 24, 1909; *Nasha Niva*, October 22, 1909.

[25] *Nasha Niva*, January 21, 1910.

[26] *Nasha Niva*, July 4, 1908; *Nasha Niva*, October 8, 1909.

[27] *Nasha Niva*, January 9, 1915.

[28] See, for example, *Homan*, May 12, 1916 .

[29] *Krynica*, May 30, 1920.

[30] *Krynica*, May 30, 1920; *Krynica*, June 6, 1920; *Krynica*, June 20, 1920; *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka*, July 15, 1936; *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka*, August 10, 1936.

[31] *Naperad*, April 9, 1930.

[32] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, October 24, 1929.

[33] *Belaruski Front*, February 5, 1937.

[34] *Belaruski Front*, January 5, 1938. Representing somewhat of a shift from its earlier position, *Belaruskaya krynica*, January 4, 1936, was by this time identifying 'fascism' and not 'communism' as the main threat. Nonetheless, during the late 1930s, leaders of the Belarusian Christian Democratic movement rejected an invitation from the Communist Party of West Belarus to form an 'anti-fascist' political alliance.

[35] Aleh Lojka, *Historiya belaruskai litaraturyi. Dakastrichnicki periyad u 2 chastkakh.* (Minsk, 1989), p. 2.

[36] *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 1, 1863. Copies of this newspaper are available in the 'Rare Books and Periodicals' section of the Belarusian National Library in Minsk.

[37] *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 3, 1863.

[38] *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 7, 1863

[39] *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 4, 1863.

[40] *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 3, 1863.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Vakar, pp. 80-81.

[43] Cited in Zaprudnik, p. 58.

[44] *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 2, 1863; *Muzhyckaya prauda*, No. 6, 1863.

[45] Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers* (New York, 1979), p. 210.

[46] Richard Pipes, "Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Enquiry," *Slavic Review*, September 1964, pp. 441-458.

[47] Berlin, p. 210.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] Abbott Gleason, *Young Russia: The Genesis of Russian Radicalism in the 1860s* (Chicago, 1980), p. 33.

[50] Berlin, p. 210.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Ibid.* As Gleason, p. 391, thus suggests, "From within the Populist movement itself emerged the politically conscious Jacobinism that accepted the state, sought to seize it and make the revolution that way. In Bolshevik form, a Russian Jacobinism came to power in 1917."

[53] Berlin, p. 211

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.

[55] Thus, Russian Westernizers were far from idealizing the West *per se*. On the contrary, they shared as much fundamental distaste for what they perceived as the decadent and corrupt character of West European society as their Slavophilic rivals.

[56] Antony Adamovich, "The Kupala-Kolas Century, 1882-1982," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1982, pp. 6-7.

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] S. S. Sambuk, *Revolyutsionnie narodniki Belorussii (70e - nachalo 80-kh godov XIX v.)* (Minsk, 1972), p. 159.

[59] Donald Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia* (Boston, 1961), p. 29.

[60] Plekhanov's most important philosophical works, including "Our Differences" and "The Development of the Monist View of History," can be found in Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works in Five Volumes* (Moscow, 1974)

[61] Anton Luckievich, *Za dvadcac pyac hadou* (Minsk, 1991), pp. 8-9; Alexander Nadson, "Nasha Niva," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1965, p. 188.

[62] Jan Ochota, "Z historii panstwowotworczych poczynan bialoruskikh," *Sprawy narodowosciowe*, No. 1, 1928, pp. 1-2; Aleksandra Bergmanowa, "Antoni Luckiewicz (1884-1946) Szkic biograficzny," *Przeglad historyczny*, Vol. LXV, 1974, pp. 667-668.

[63] *Nasha Dolya*, No. 1, 1906.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] See Jerzy Traczuk, "Prasa bialoruska w II Rzeczypospolitej (1918-1939)," *Studia polono-slavica-orientalia. Acta litteraria.* (Warsaw, 1992), pp. 257-313.

[67] For example, Ya. Karniechyk, *Belaruskaya naciya* (Minsk, 1968).

[68] Janka Kupala, *Spadchyna. Vybar paezzi Janki Kupali* (New York, 1955).

[69] U. Konan, *Problemyi iskusstva i estetiki v obshchestvennoi mysli Belorussii nachala XXv.* (Minsk, 1985).

[70] In some cases, complete sets of these newspapers are available in Polish archives.

[71] *Nash sciah*, July 20, 1923.

[72] Aleksandra Bergman, "Przyczynek do historii Bialoruskiej Organizacji Rewolucyjnej," *Przeglad historyczny*, Volume LXVIII, 1977, pp. 157-170.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, 1984), p. 125.

[77] *Ibid.*

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[79] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland. Volume II: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford, 1981), p. 409.

[80] M. P. Kasciuk, ed., *Narysy historii Belarusi u 2-x chastkakh [chastka 2].* (Minsk 1995), p. 231.

[81] Apart from the national archives and library in Minsk, these newspapers are available in Polish archives as well as the *Biblioteka Narodowa* in Warsaw.

[82] Vakar, p. 125; Zaprudnik, pp. 84-85.

[83] For biographical information about Dvarchanin and the activities of the *Zmahanne* club, see Aleksandr Barszczewski, Aleksandra Bergman, and Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Ignacy Dworczanin: bialoruski polityk i uczony* (Warsaw, 1990).

[84] *Naperad!*, October 3, 1930.

[85] *Belaruskaya krynica*, January 24, 1936. More specifically, representing what will be described in chapter five as the Lithuanian 'vector' within Belarusian national thought, BCD of its periodical press, BCD favored the idea of a "revived" Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the model for future Belarusian statehood.

[86] Indeed, even 'socialist realist' accounts of Belarusian literary history 'credit' Kupala with espousing revolutionary ideals. See, for example, Harri Junger, ed., *The Literatures of the Soviet Peoples* (New York, 1970), p. 53.

[87] Janka Kupala, "Paustan!", in *Zhyve Belarus: vershy, artikuly* (Minsk, 1993), pp. 302-303.

[88] Antony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature* (Munich, 1958), p. 42.

[89] Janka Kupala, "Belaruskae voiska," in *Zhyve Belarus*, pp. 304-307.

[90] Kupala, "A u bary, u bary," in *ibid.*, pp. 319-321.

[91] Kupala, "Niezalezhnasc," in *ibid.*, pp. 304-307.

[92] Kupala, "Pramova na 15-hoddzi litaraturnai pracy," in *ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

93 Kupala, "Pyac senatarau," in *ibid.*, pp. 328-329.

94 Uladzimir Zhylka, "Poklich," in *Vybranniya tvoryi* (Minsk, 1998), p. 25.

95 "Uyaulenne," in *ibid.*, pp. 133-141.

96 Adamovich, p. 69.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*

99 'Anton Navini' (Anton Luckievich), "Novae u belaruskai paezzi," *Zachodnaya Belarus*, No. 1, 1923.

100 This argument would likely be refuted by many Belarusian national writers who insist that the Belarusian 'national idea' was *unfailingly hostile* to Bolshevism

101 U. V. Ihnatouski, *Karotki narys historii Belarusi* (Minsk, 1991), p.

102 *Ibid.*

103 Adamovich, p. 68.

104 *Ibid.*,

105 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

106 *Ibid.*

107 *Polymia*, No. 1, 1928.

108 *Polymia*, No. 1, 1922.

109 *Ibid.*

110 E. Zhylunovich (C. Hartny), "Revolyucionim shlyacham," *Polymia*, Nos. 2-3, 1928, p. 156.

111 Adamovich, p. 72.

112 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

113 Cited in *ibid.*

114 Janka Kupala, "Cishku Hartnamu," in *Zhyve Belarus*, p. 380.

115 Adamovich, p. 73

116 *Ibid.*

117 Janka Kupala, "Nash letapisec," in *Zhyve Belarus*, pp. 381-382.

118 *Ibid.*, pp. 396-399.

119 *Ibid.*, pp. 401-402.

120 Adamovich, p. 75.

121 *Ibid.*

122 *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

123 In large part, this can be attributed to the fact that, unlike Poland, Russia and other post-communist states, Belarus has not undertaken major socio-economic reforms including privatization and price liberalization.

124 *Belaruskaya maladzyozhnaya*, September 6, 1996.

125 *Moscow News*, May 2-22, 1996.

126 Gunnar Lassinantti and Olexander Potekhin, *International Integration: The Experience of Belarus* (Stockholm, 1998). This is a comprehensive study of Belarusian-Russian integration processes done by the Swedish Olaf Palme Centre. As will be noted in chapter six, if for no other reason than to protect his own status and prestige as head of an internationally recognized state, Lukashenka himself explicitly rejects the integration scenario according to which Belarus would be reduced to the status of a Russian *guberniya*. However, apart from Lukashenka's

capricious will, there are other more 'objective' structural and institutional reasons to believe that this will not happen.

[127] Like Scottish nationalism, for example, Belarusian nationalism has historically been of the 'quiet character.' See Joyce McMillan, "Scotland's Quiet Nationalism," in Richard Caplan and John Feffer, eds., *Europe's New Nationalisms: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 75-84. Perhaps the most important parallel consists in the fact that, although, as the author suggests, this may gradually be changing, Scots have traditionally understood their own identity within the larger 'British' designation somewhat analogous to the Belarusian inclination to understand national identity within a broader 'Soviet' context. Moreover, like the Belarusian 'national idea,' Scots have historically defined the 'nation' in egalitarian and inclusive terms by according Scottish nationality to everyone residing on Scottish territory.

Chapter V

Competing 'Vectors' in Belarusian National Thought: The 'Confederalist' Dimension

The Belarusian 'national idea' incorporates a strong 'federalist' or 'con-federalist' component. Indeed, as Stanislau Shushkievich noted in 1993, the "greater part of our history is a history of *unions*."[1] Reflecting the 'synthetic character' of the 'national idea,' discussed in chapter two, the earliest origins of the confederal element in Belarusian national thought can ultimately be traced to the 'unconscious' Belarusian *renaissance* begun by the Polish Philomaty, Uniate Fathers and Dunin-Marcinkievich during the early years of the 19th century whose political ideal was the restoration of the medieval Lithuanian Grand Duchy and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*). Although having its roots in the Romantic vision of resurrecting the former Grand Duchy, the 'confederal' dimension has also been based on the 'realist' recognition by successive generations of Belarusian activists that in the prevailing historical circumstances, outright independence was not a viable political option - that Belarusian statehood would have to be built within the framework of some sort of (con-)federal union with one (or more) states.

The question for the leaders of the Belarusian national movement, however, became - *union with whom?* - an issue around which sharp differences of opinion emerged and continue. In this respect, the confederalist tendency can be seen as representative of the sorts of acute internal tensions which have beset the Belarusian national movement. Identified here as competing 'vectors' seeking union in different directions and forms, the 'confederalist' dimension reflects

sharply differing interpretations of the national idea itself among Belarusians themselves. This chapter seeks to outline and assess, in ascending order of significance, the relative weight of these competing 'vectors' within Belarusian national thought. Evidence once again of the 'synthetic' character of the 'national idea', these 'vectors' can be grouped together under the broad headings *'Western'* and *'Eastern'*. The first includes four specific 'vectors': *'German'*, *'Polish'*, *'Lithuanian,'* and a new post-communist 'vector' which has been visible in most other East-Central European nations as well (including Belarus' immediate neighbours Poland, the Czech Republic and Lithuania) - the notion of *'return to Europe.'* The 'Eastern vector' comprises the historically preponderant *'Russian-Soviet'* orientation.

Western 'Vectors' in Belarusian National Thought

Rooted primarily in distant memories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Western 'vectors' have constituted historically an important dimension of the Belarusian 'national idea.' This continues to be the case in post-Soviet Belarus.

The German Orientation

Although of minor significance in comparison to other historical 'vectors in Belarusian national thought, the German orientation is nonetheless important to note. This 'vector' made itself apparent initially during World War I when, as discussed in chapter one, German occupation policy encouraged leaders of the Belarusian national movement to believe that an opportunity had been created to advance their political cause. During the inter-war period, *Belaruski Front* noted

the continuing presence of the German orientation. Unlike the more deeply-rooted 'Polish,' 'Lithuanian' and 'Russian' orientations, the 'German' dated only to the occupation of Vilna in 1915. This orientation was rejected by this BCD publication, however, owing to the growing realization that under Hitler's leadership, German aspirations were based on conquering the 'Eastern spaces' and subjugating the local Slavic populations. Emphasizing, as discussed in chapter four, the necessity of Belarusian 'self-reliance' in the context of an increasingly tense international environment, *Belaruski Front* concluded that there was nothing to be gained through cooperation with Nazi Germany.[2]

Nonetheless, it was precisely during World War II that the German 'vector' in Belarusian national thought reached its apex. As discussed in chapter three, the Nazi occupation of Belarus from 1941-44 created an unprecedented structural opportunity for a small group of Belarusian fascists led by Fabian Akinchyc to propagate their cause. Bearing in mind that it was published under the direct supervision of the occupation regime, great credit is routinely given in Belarusian periodicals of this period to the benevolent character of German leadership which, having freed Belarus from Polish and Russian oppression, has given Belarusians a new and historically unprecedented opportunity for national cultural, social and economic development. Indeed, it is claimed that never before in its history has Belarus witnessed such dynamic development of the "Belarusian idea."[3] Articles in the periodical press marking the second anniversary of the German civil administration in Belarus lauded the achievements of German policy which have led already to the growth of Belarusian national consciousness.[4] Through its monthly organ *Zhyve Belarus!* ('Long Live Belarus!'), the SBM should "express the healthy spirit of the youth of the 'New Europe' and cultivate faith in the German people and its leader Adolf Hitler" as well as "love for the Belarusian homeland and people."[5] Much of the credit in this material for the 'wisdom' and

'foresight' of German policy is given to Kube personally. Hence, his assassination was thus greeted by Belarusian publications with profound expressions of regret. An obituary issued by the 'Men of Trust' issued and signed by Ivanouski noted that the Belarusian people had lost "their best friend and a true fighter for Belarusian interests."[6]

Among several competing Belarusian political organizations seeking to take advantage of the new possibilities offered by the German authorities to pursue Belarusian national aims, a pro-German orientation was strongest in the activities of Akinchyc's group which advocated close and unconditional cooperation with the Third Reich and approved its basic policies (including the mass extermination of Jews). In terms of its understanding of the 'national idea,' Belarusian fascists believed that owing to the dual historical effects of Polonization and Russification the necessary conditions for establishing independent Belarusian statehood did not currently exist. The immediate task was to work on the building of Belarusian national self-conscious within the population, a process envisaged to last perhaps several decades. Only then would it be possible to conceive of creating an independent Belarusian state moreover under German protection. As discussed in chapter three, Belarusian Fascists published a large periodical press in which, reflecting very much the ideological influence of the Nazi occupiers, clearly racist, xenophobic and anti-democratic sentiments were apparent. However, the Belarusian Fascist movement lost whatever minor significance it had after Akinchyc himself was murdered during a visit to Minsk in March 1943.

A pro-German orientation is also evident in the person of Ivan Jermachenka appointed by the Germans head of the Belarusian Self-Help Organization ('BSH') created, as noted in chapter one, at the initiative of *Reichkommisar* Wilhelm Kube. Although bitter political rivals, Jermachenka shared essentially the same goal as Akinchyc; namely "the activation of Belarusian nationalism, the mobilization of

the material and spiritual forces of the nation in the struggle against Bolshevism, and - eventually - the creation under German tutelage of an independent Belarusian state."[7] However, in contrast to Akinchyc's ideological dogmatism, Jermachenka was driven above all by the pragmatic hope of reconciling German political interests with Belarusian national aspirations. From the outset determined to transform the BSH into an instrument of Belarusian national self-government, he succeeded in considerably expanding the administrative competencies of the organization beyond those originally envisioned by the Germans. Moreover, it is to be noted that the BSH under Jermachenka protested strongly against German atrocities in Belarus including the mass extermination of Jews.[8] This alone points to a sharp distinction between his group and the unconditional support of the Nazi regime (including the policy of genocide) by Belarusian National-Socialists. These factors ultimately led to his dismissal as head of the BSH - at the insistence of the SS - in 1943.

The Polish 'Vector'

As will be apparent by now, the Polish orientation is deeply-embedded in Belarusian national thought. Indeed, as has been emphasized several times throughout this text, the Belarusian 'national idea' is intimately linked in its origins with the 'Polish idea' as symbolized by the historian Lelewel and Philomaty at the University of Vilna, as well as Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievich during the 1840s. It was apparent during the 1863 Polish rebellion in the person of Kastus Kalinouski who, as discussed in the previous chapter, called for an armed peasant uprising against Moscow and strove for the restoration of the 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.' Notwithstanding the reorientation of the incipient Belarusian 'national idea' in a more 'Easterly' (viz. Russian) direction as

a consequence of the failure of the 1863 uprising, links between the Belarusian and Polish Ideas' continued to be visible.

As noted in chapter one, the Polish Socialist Party ('PPS') led by Pilsudski and Wasilewski assisted actively in the emergence of the nascent Belarusian national movement at the turn of the 20th century which henceforth continued to evolve in the context of competing Polish and Russian pressures. In the context of the Polish-Soviet war of 1918-1921[9], the possibility of creating a new Polish-Belarusian federation seemed real and enjoyed considerable support among leaders of the Belarusian movement highly skeptical of Bolshevik designs. During a major offensive in the spring and summer of 1919, Polish armies led by Pilsudski swung eastward taking Vilna on April 22. Upon his arrival, Pilsudski promptly issued a declaration entitled 'To the Peoples of the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.' Recalling the history and traditions of the medieval state, he promised that the Polish army had brought to these territories and their inhabitants "liberty and freedom," adding that henceforth they would have the possibility of "resolving internal questions of nationality and faith" in accordance with their own wishes and free from "any sort of pressure from the Polish side."[10] Pilsudski's declaration was favorably received by leaders of the Belarusian national movement including Arkadz Smolich and Simon Rak-Mikhailouski. The document was also widely published in the local Belarusian press where, however, some reservations were expressed. Noting critically the passage of a resolution by the Polish Sejm on April 24 welcoming the "liberation of the Eastern provinces," and calling for their unification with Poland as part of a revived *Rzeczpospolita*, the newspaper *Belaruskaya dumka* warned against lingering Polish imperial sentiments and expressed the firm conviction that the Belarusian people would never abandon their dream of independent statehood.[11]

Preoccupied with the pressing problems of solidifying the foundations of re-acquired statehood, the first two Polish governments of Prime Ministers Ignacy Daszynski and Jedrzej Moraczewski did not develop a coherent policy on the 'Belarusian question.' This changed early in 1919 with the installation as Prime Minister of Ignacy Paderewski, an adherent of the 'federalist' cause and founder (clearly influenced in this respect by US President Wilson) of the concept of a 'United States of Poland'. In May of that year, Paderewski received a Belarusian delegation headed by Arkadz Smolich who presented a plan for future Belarusian-Polish relations according to which after the complete liberation of the Belarusian territories from Soviet occupation Poland would assist in the formation of a new joint Belarusian-Lithuanian state. If the Lithuanians refused such a formula, a Belarusian state linked by federal ties to Poland alone would be created. Paderewski indicated some initial interest in the scheme and negotiations continued.[12] For its part, the government-in-exile of the BNR led by Anton Luckievich took a decision to return to Minsk and at the end of May 1919 he informed the Paris Peace Conference that 'White Ruthenia' [or Belarus] would henceforth be "closely bound to the Polish republic in order to guarantee its economic and cultural development, while at the same time preserving a White Ruthenian [Belarusian] national constitution."[13] The following month, Belarusian leaders requested Pilsudski's assistance in stopping a plebiscite drive (begun by the National Democrats) within the local Polish population requesting the joining of the Vilna-Hrodna region to Poland as well as the cessation of alleged violence towards local Belarusians and other excesses by Polish troops.[14]

That the plan for a new Polish-Belarusian federation indeed existed is suggested by the fact that a document of understanding dated July 1, 1919 exists in Polish archives. According to this blueprint, a Belarusian state joined federally to the Polish state on the basis of 'equality' was to be created. Within the framework

of the federal union, both states were to conduct joint foreign and defence policies, the Ministers and Deputy Ministers responsible in these areas to be named by a 'Polish-Belarusian Union Council.' The two states would also be linked by conventions concerning customs, trade, telegraph communications and national minority rights. Both parties were to renounce the borders established by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918) with those of the new Belarusian state to be defined by means of a separate convention ratified by the two states' respective parliaments. If agreement on the border question could not achieved through negotiation, the issue would be decided by means of a plebiscite supervised by an international commission.[15] However protracted negotiations between Polish authorities during the summer and fall of 1919, including Pilsudski himself and leaders of the Belarusian movement headed by Anton Luckievich, failed to resolve outstanding issues surrounding the question of federation.

According to his Luckievich's personal memoirs, Pilsudski reiterated his previously-stated desire to see the Belarusian lands completely liberated (viz. from Russian-Soviet hegemony). However, the Polish leader noted the opposition of the Entente to Belarusian independence. Moreover, Pilsudski was of the view that only after more important issues surrounding the future status of Ukraine and the Baltics were resolved could an appropriate solution to the 'Belarusian problem' be found.[16] Although disappointed with the results of his discussions with Pilsudski, Luckievich continued to advocate cooperation with Poland as the best option for the Belarusian movement.[17] This led, however, to a split within the movement's leadership. Upon its submission to the BNR Council on December 13, 1919, Luckievich's proposal to cooperate with Poland was rejected by an overwhelming majority of 87-37. Luckievich himself was replaced as Chairman by Vaclau Lastouski who subsequently called for armed resistance against the Poles. Polish authorities promptly dissolved the Council and arrested Lastouski on December

17. After a brief period of detention, Lastouski relocated to Kauna where he assembled a new pro-Lithuanian Belarusian Socialist Revolutionary government with himself as Prime Minister and Cvikievich as Foreign Minister. However, refusing to recognize the legitimacy of Lastouski's new government, Luckievich and 36 other members of the former Council formed the new 'Supreme Belarusian Council' which pledged itself to continue work with the Polish government.[18]

As 1920 began, prospects for the 'national idea' being realized under Polish rule in the continuing context of war and revolutionary upheaval, appeared dim. This pessimism found expression in a New Year's article by Janka Kupala surveying the progress made by the Belarusian movement in 1919 in which he noted that the declarations of the Polish government were one thing, its actions in practice altogether another. True enough, Kupala did not blame Pilsudski directly, ascribing primary responsibility to Dmowski's National Democrats; moreover, he was equally, if not more, critical of the Bolsheviks.[19] New prospects for a Belarusian-Polish accommodation soon arose, however, as the consequence of an overture at this time on the part of the Bolsheviks to the BNR government-in-exile about the possible restoration of the BSSR. Although from the Soviet perspective this was clearly another tactical maneuver designed to create a buffer against Poland, the impending Soviet-Belarusian discussions "forced the Poles again to attend the question of Belarusian independence."[20] From March 20-24, 1920, new negotiations thus took place in Minsk between the Polish government and Belarusian Supreme Council. The Belarusian delegation headed by Vaclau Ivanouski and including Jazep Lesik, Adam Stankievich, Smolich and Rak-Mikhailouski presented a long list of demands at the top of which was the independence and territorial integrity of Belarus coupled with a call for the creation of a new joint Belarusian-Lithuanian government. However, this and all other major Belarusian demands - including direct representation at the Paris

peace talks as well as recognition of the Belarusian language on an equal basis with Polish - were rejected as excessive by the Polish side.[21]

It will be recalled from chapter one that during the inter-war period, the Belarusian 'national idea' found itself embedded in the bitter political and ideological struggle between Pilsudski's 'federalists' and Dmowski's 'incorporationists' with the latter essentially coming to prevail after 1924. However, paradoxically perhaps, it was precisely the 'pacification' campaign which made evident the deeply enduring character of the Polish orientation within Belarusian national thought. During these years, this orientation manifested itself most clearly in continual expressions in the Belarusian periodical press of respect and support for the state-building aspirations of the Polish people and their leader Marshal Pilsudski. In January 1928, the organ of the newly-created Belarusian National-Radical Party *Belaruski dzen* expressed the view that the strengthening of Polish statehood was the best means of reviving the idea of Belarusian independence. The newspaper argued that there was, in reality, no other credible option and that "among the statesmen of Eastern Europe," Marshal Pilsudski was likely "the best representative of the idea of the independence of the peoples."[22] Other Belarusian publications - most notably *Belaruskaya dumka* (published in Hrodna) - also continued to express faith in the person of Pilsudski who is described at one point as a symbol of independence and "brotherly understanding" among all the peoples of Poland.[23] It is reiterated that Pilsudski himself is favorably disposed to Belarusian concerns with the real source of the problem on the Polish side continuing to the National-Democrats. Thus, it is necessary to prove to the Polish public that Belarusians are not their enemies. Towards this end, during the 1928 elections to a new Polish parliament, *Belaruski dzen* actually encouraged Belarusians not to vote (as they had in 1922) for the Bloc of National Minorities or other Belarusian political parties but Pilsudski's "Ticket No 1."

Doing so was the best way of demonstrating that the Belarusian national movement was not directed against Poland which, in turn, would inspire confidence on the part of Poles.[24] The fact that Belarusians overwhelmingly voted for Pilsudski's 'ticket' is greeted after the elections as a 'victory' for the Belarusian national cause as is the defeat of Dmowski's party. According to *Belaruski dzen* the objective causes for the "abnormal" state of Polish-Belarusian relations had now been removed thus opening the way potentially to a new *rapprochement.*[25]

In April 1932, *Belaruskaya dumka* advanced the novel interpretation that the March 25, 1918 declaration of independence by the BNR as an expression of "Belarusian regional patriotism" and "striving (*imknenne*)" for the "restoration" of the former *Rzeczpospolita* as a state shared by the two (Polish and Belarusian) peoples as equal partners. On the institutional level, the Polish constitution is seen as providing real opportunities for the advancement of Belarusian interests. In view of the fact that Belarusian leaders have thus far failed to take advantage of these legal opportunities, Belarusians themselves are at least partially to blame for their unhappy lot. The leaders of the Hramada (Luckievich and Astrouski) as well as the *Zmahanne* parliamentary club (Dvarchanin) are criticized for their unwillingness to adopt a more constructive approach in their dealings with Polish authorities.[26] Noting the left-wing orientation of these individuals, the destructive and diversionary effect of communist ideology is cited. One of the biggest mistakes of the Belarusian movement was to trust Bolshevik promises which have led to a "dead end', the only way out from which is renewed cooperation with Pilsudski.[27] During the late 1920s, other newspapers, focusing less on the political element, noted that the Polish government had created new opportunities to improve the *economic* lot of the Polish peasantry and expressed gratitude to Pilsudski in this respect.[28] This was indeed a key issue. According to publications

of a socialist orientation in particular, the acute problem of *poverty* among young people in West Belarus must be addressed. Unless economic conditions were radically improved, young Belarusians - the potential future leaders of the nation - would continue to leave.[29] Less sympathetic accounts, however, accuse the *intelligentsia* of "treason" for being too easily tempted to abandon their people and search elsewhere for a better material existence, thanks to which the Belarusian masses are described as leaderless and "disoriented."[30] Hence, the 'crisis' of the 'national idea' was not simply a consequence of Polish policy but reflected a certain lack of courage and intellectual bankruptcy within the Belarusian movement itself.

Other newspapers, however, were far more reticent about the possibility of a new Polish-Belarusian *entente*, reiterating the view that the goal of Polish policy was the 'de-nationalization' of Belarusians.[31] Once again, the most radical critique of the 'Polish vector' is to be found in the pages of Hadleuski's *Belaruski Front*. While noting the long history of the 'Polish' orientation within Belarusian national thought as well as occasional Polish voices raised in the Seim in defence of Belarusian rights,[32] *Belaruski Front* rejected any possibility of creating some sort of new federal state with Poland on two bases: first, the continuing tendency of Polish society (even, according to the newspaper, among younger generations) to treat Belarusians *unequally* as a 'peasant' people; second, and more important, Belarusians and Poles represent *radically different psychological types*. Hence, the newspaper rejected in principle the possibility of a Polish-Belarusian *rapprochement*.[33]

Nonetheless, the overall strength of the Polish 'vector' continued to manifest itself during World War II. Whereas, as noted above, Akinchyc and Jermachenka tied their political fortunes to the victory of the Third Reich, the *Partiya nacyanalistou Belarusi* ('Party of Belarusian Nationalists') created as an

underground organization in June 1940 by Jan Stankievich counted rather on *the defeat of Germany and the eventual support of the victorious Western allies (the United States and Great Britain in particular) for the creation of an independent Belarusian state in federal union with Poland*. Stankievich's ideological ally among other Belarusian activists at this time was Ivanouski who, as noted above, became chairman of Kube's 'Men of Trust' advisory council. Although initial discussions between Stankievich and representatives of the Polish underground during the summer of 1940 came to nought, contacts were renewed upon Ivanouski's initiative in July 1942. The aim of these discussions, which began in Minsk and continued during 1943 in Vilna and Warsaw, was to explore the possibility of creating a new joint Belarusian-Polish state after the war. In view of the impossibility of the PBN being active on the international scene, Ivanouski and Stankievich agreed that responsibility for attempting to curry Western (especially British) interest in such an idea would be delegated to the Polish government-in-exile headquartered in London. In accordance with this plan, Poland was thus to be the 'main architect' of Belarusian statehood.[34]

The PBN calculated that Poland would be interested in this scheme as a means of creating "a Belarusian buffer separating it from Russia, which, after the joining of Ukraine, would create the perspective of an entirely new political system in Eastern Europe."[35] As Turonek emphasizes, these plans for a new Polish-Belarusian state represented, in essence, a return to the 'federalist idea' of Pilsudski and attested to how deeply rooted in the consciousness of Belarusian activists this conception of statehood was.[36] However, they failed to take into account the legalities of the Treaty of Riga upon which Polish representatives based their position. who were prepared only to permit Belarusian autonomy as part of a reconstituted Polish state within its pre-war borders. Belarusian representatives were unwilling to accept such diminished status. In any event,

these efforts at Belarusian-Polish dialogue ended abruptly on December 6, 1943 when Ivanouski was felled by an assassin's bullet in Minsk.

The Polish vector was officially proscribed during the Soviet period when, as discussed previously, history taught that the Belarusian experience as part of the *Rzeczpospolita* was one of repression. In the Soviet historiographical account of the emerging Belarusian movement during the nineteenth century, the influence of Russian radical thought in the persons of Herzen, Bilinsky, Chernyshevsky, although as noted in chapters three and four, undeniably an important element, is emphasized to the exclusion of other important components - especially the dual influences of Polish Enlightenment and Romanticism. Heroes of the nineteenth-century Belarusian "national-liberation movement," including Kalinouski, are depicted not as having desired the restoration of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and, in this context, some form of Belarusian cultural and political autonomy - but rather as having striven for "union" with Russia. Representing their 'liberation' from alleged Polish tyranny, the absorption of the Belarusian territories into the Russian empire at the beginning of the 19th century was termed a 'progressive' development. Notwithstanding this official interpretation, as discussed in previous chapters, intellectuals such as the late writer Uladzimir Karatkievich and philosopher Uladzimir Konan at least implicitly defended the 'progressive' character of historical Polish influences on the development of Belarusian literature and social thought.

In the post-Soviet period, the Polish orientation has once again emerged as an important component of the Belarusian 'national idea'. As they were able to do before only quietly, Konan and other contemporary Belarusian 'revivalists' today emphasize that the 'spiritual' heritage of Belarus stretching back to Polack and through its history with Poland ties it to West European civilization and values.[37] Diplomatic relations with Poland were (re-)established in March 1992.[38] In

October of that year, a treaty on bilateral relations emphasizing the cultural and historical proximity of the Polish and Belarusian peoples was signed.[39] Without a doubt, contemporary Belarusian intellectuals place considerable hope on Polish support in achieving what will be described below as a Belarusian 'return to Europe.'

It is encouraging in this respect that Polish officials - including President Alexander Kwasniewski - are on public record as favoring a democratic and sovereign Belarus. Polish concern for the future of Belarus became especially evident following the November 1996 Belarusian referendum which, as discussed in chapter three, saw President Lukahenka greatly expand his personal powers at the direct expense of parliament.[40] Warsaw itself has since become one of the centres of the Belarusian opposition. Former BNF leader Pazhnyak took up residence there and several conferences of Belarusian opposition groups - including emerging 'Non-Government Organizations' (NGO's) have taken place in the Polish capital. Having embarked decisively along the path of European economic and political integration, Poland could well once again play its historic role as a conduit or link between Belarus and Europe and, hence, as an important counterweight to the preponderant influence of Russia.

The Lithuanian 'Vector'

Together with the Polish, the Lithuanian 'vector' is deeply rooted within the tradition of Belarusian national thought. Identifying themselves on the political-territorial level as *Litvini* ("Lithuanians"), the Romantic aim of the Uniate scholars at the University of Vilna was the restoration of the Grand Duchy with Belarusian as the official language. This orientation was also evident during the second half of the 19th century in the person of 'Danila Borovik' who recalled

how "there was once a time when our native land also lived a life full of historical events and even had influence [...] over Lithuanian which used Byelorussian as its official language."[41] As noted in chapter one, the Lithuanian 'vector' was given impetus during the German occupation of Belarus in World War I.

Belarusian intellectual life under German occupation was initially concentrated in Vilna where many of the *Nasha Niva* scholars remained following the outbreak of war. Taking advantage of the relative cultural tolerance on the part of German authorities, the Luckievich brothers began publishing in February 1916 a new semi-weekly Belarusian-language newspaper called *Homan* ('The Clamor') which was edited until 1918 by Lastouski. During this period, it was the only regular Belarusian-language newspaper published within the territory of the *Ober Ost*. Reflecting largely Lastouski's historiographical and political perspective, the Belarusian 'national idea' is clearly evident in the pages of the new *Homan* in the form of what can be described as 'federated' Belarusian independence within a resurrected Lithuanian Grand Duchy comprising neighbouring national groups as well. Decrying, in particular, alleged Polish characterizations of the Belarusians as a 'non-historical people', the newspaper defines Belarusians as a "state people" who once had their own state (the GDL) on the territories where they now live. Accordingly, the 'national idea' in the pages of *Homan* appears as *the deeply-held desire of the Belarusian people to build a new joint 'Belarusian-Lithuanian' state where all peoples inhabiting the lands of the former Grand Duchy will once again live together in harmony.*[42] However, as discussed previously, the efforts by Lastouski and Luckievich to realize this aspiration failed owing primarily to a lack of German interest in the scheme. When, following Germany's capitulation, the Red Army re-occupied Minsk in December 1918, most of the BNR leaders, including Luckievich and Lastouski, fled to Lithuania. There, they signed a pact on "mutual assistance" with the Lithuanian government providing for the creation of

a Ministry of Belarusian Affairs as well as autonomy for the predominantly ethnically-Belarusian Hrodna and Vilna regions. Others, including Varonka, - who became the Belarusian representative in the Lithuanian cabinet - moved to Hrodna itself where they continued to function until the final German withdrawal from the city in April 1919.

Notwithstanding this failure, the strength of the Lithuanian 'vector' continued to manifest itself during the inter-war period. It was especially evident in the pages of the Belarusian Christian Democratic organ *Belaruskaya krynica* which, basing its arguments on medieval history consistently described Lithuania as the "natural ally" of Belarus.[43] In 1925, *Belaruskaya krynica* noted the presence of two distinct directions within the Belarusian council in Kauna. Not surprisingly, the newspaper supports Lastouski's position in favor of *rapprochement* with Lithuania, describing the 'socialist federalism' of Cvikievich (to be discussed further below) as "mistaken" and, in essence, a plan for merging Belarus with Russia.[44] However, *Belaruskaya krynica* was accused by other West Belarusian newspapers of "idealizing" Lithuania thereby ignoring the real thrust of current policy there which was anti-Belarusian.[45] In its critical assessment of the Lithuanian 'vector', *Belaruski Front* noted that, recalling the heritage of the Grand Duchy, this orientation has been an integral element of the Belarusian national movement from its very beginnings. However, somewhat similar to the 'Polish' orientation, it has always been the case that enthusiasts for the [re-]construction of a new Belarusian-Lithuanian state have always been more numerous among Belarusians than Lithuanians who have never considered the 'Belarusian question' to be a high priority and have never supported strongly the idea of an independent Belarusian state. Nonetheless, the editors resolve that at present there exist no "objective" reasons for Belarusian-Lithuanian tensions although it is difficult to predict possible future sources of disagreement.[46]

Although officially discredited by Soviet authorities, the Lithuanian vector reemerged in the late 1980s as part of the latest Belarusian *adradzhenne* movement in which a number of informal Belarusian youth groups played a key role on the effort to revive public interest in Belarusian history. The most important of these included *Talaka* ('Shared Labor') and *Tuteishiya* ('The Locals') which appeared in 1986-1987. It is important to note that the precursor to *Talaka* was an unofficial organization called *Belaruskaya Maistrounya* ('The Belarusian Workshop') formed by university students in Minsk during the winter of 1980-1981 "that engaged in such seemingly innocuous pastimes as folklore expeditions, theater and language study - first and foremost the Belorussian language, but also Polish, Lithuanian and Esperanto."[47] From the beginning of its existence, Talaka " was dependent on its contacts in Lithuania for running its day-to-day affairs; the Lithuanians even provided the expanding organization with an office in Vilnius that has telephones and printing presses."[48] On December 26, 1987, representatives of 30 independent youth groups held a congress near Minsk. The vent was called a *Valny Soim* ('General Diet') after the name of the parliament of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and was also attended by invited delegates from Ukraine, Lithuania and Russia. Although the state-controlled Belarusian media ignored the event, a *samizdat* document appeared in July 1988 which gave considerable insight into the spirit of the meeting. Noting that the Belarusian youth movement had been inspired not only by internal events but by developments in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the document defined the goal of Belarusian youth groups as educating a new generation of nationally-conscious Belarusians.[49] During group meetings, the long-banned symbols of pre-Soviet Belarusian statehood - *Pahonya* and white-red-white banner - were openly displayed as part of the effort to educate Belarusians (who, as previously discussed had been taught for decades that these symbols were Fascist) about their deeper

historical significance. Western observers wrote of this as increasing signs of Belarusian "national self-assertiveness."[50] Indeed, as a commentary noted, "numerous young intellectuals nowadays appear to have little use for ideals of Slavic unity, regarding pan-Slavism and historical notions of unification as the same old pretexts to justify Russian domination and russification."[51] Once again with the help of the Lithuanian *Sajudis*, the second Congress of Belarusian youth groups convened in Vilna on June 24-25, 1989.[52]

Reviving the Grand Duchy: Proposals for a New 'Baltic-Black Sea Commonwealth'

In June 1989, the BNF held its founding congress in Vilna. Programmatic documents published by *samizdat* spoke of the Belarusian people having won the right to sovereign nationhood "by struggle and suffering throughout their history."[53] Apart from the ancient principality of Polack, this tradition included "the sovereignty of Belarus and Lithuania embodied in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia."[54] Reference to the legacy of the Grand Duchy was not simply pro-forma; indeed, even prior to this, BNF leaders had been discussing the possibility of reviving the Grand Duchy in the form of a new 'Baltic-Black Sea Commonwealth' comprising the Baltic states, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova with the leaders of popular front movements from these republics.[55] In November 1990, recalling Belarusian participation in the Grand Duchy, BNF leader Pazhnyak told an interviewer that a 'Baltic-Black Sea Commonwealth' accorded with history.[56] However, by August 1991, with discussions among the concerned groups having failed to resolve much, the BNF, while continuing to reject Soviet leader Gorbachev's draft 'Union Treaty' (which was being fully supported by Belarusian communist authorities), altered its approach by suggesting that

Belarusian independence could be realized initially within a "transitional" commonwealth of former Soviet republics based on principles of "confederation."[57]

However, reactions within the Belarusian national movement to the creation of the new Commonwealth of Independent States ('CIS') as the successor to the USSR with Minsk as its "coordinating centre' were sharply divided. On the one hand, under the leadership of Mikhas Tkachou, the policy of the 'Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada' with respect to the 'national question' reflected another key and enduring element of the Belarusian 'national idea' - the concept of Belarusian independence within the framework of a confederal state - in this instance, as Tkachou understood it, a radically decentralized and democratized community of former Soviet republics to be known as the 'Commonwealth of Sovereign States.' The inspiration for this idea was the European Economic Community ('EEC') which meant that the former Soviet republics would be linked not by 'supranational' but 'international' institutions for coordinating basic policies. In the words of Willy Brandt, it was to be "not a union state but union of states." Although he thus welcomed the collapse of the USSR and creation of the new 'Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) as a progressive development, Tkachou later criticized Gorbachev's proposed 'Union Treaty' as representing a new form of "federation" and, hence, "return" to the former union. The new 'Union of Sovereign States' he repeated, must be a "confederation - a voluntary union of genuinely sovereign states."[58] On the other hand, however, although in many respects it appeared to resemble their own proposal, other groups under the BNF umbrella responded to the creation of the 'CIS' with deep reservations.

A statement issued by the 'Backaushchyna' ('Homeland') organization on December 8, 1991, noted that Belarus was faced with "the question of whether to become the borderland of a Eurasian political formation - the so-called CIS - or to

choose the path of independence."[59] At a BNF rally on December 15, 1991, a number of resolutions were adopted concerning the need to strengthen Belarusian independence, declaring that as part of the CIS "Belarus remains an economic and political appendage of Russia ... Belarus should not be Russia's window on Europe but an independent and equal European state."[60] In January 1992, A. V. Astapenka, leader of the National-Democratic Party of Belarus, stated that "Belarus ought not be part of any sort of union, with the exception perhaps of a Black-Sea-Baltic Union, but again I emphasize without the participation of Russia."[61] Talk of such a union continued to be heard among Belarusian nationalists and in August 1992, leaders of the BNF and the Lithuanian *Sajudis* met in the Belarusian town of Gerveti to discuss further the possibility of a new Belarusian-Lithuanian federation in the image of the former Grand Duchy.[62]

In December 1992, Pazhnyak reiterated that due to the preponderant weight of Russia with what he described as its continuing "imperial mentality," the CIS was "a temporary, unstable and dangerous" formation from which Belarus should extricate itself as soon as possible.[63] The next month, the BNF leader published a long article in which, obviously recalling the Grand Duchy, he restated his plan for "a Baltic-Black Sea Commonwealth of states" to include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, arguing that such an arrangement was "the path toward stability, equal cooperation, and a guarantee of sovereignty."[64] As reports suggested, the proposed commonwealth was undergirded by plans for a new 'North-South' oil axis stretching from Norway across the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine to the Middle East.[65] However, skeptics noted that the geo-strategic obstacles to reviving the Grand Duchy, including thorny questions of territorial boundaries and ethnic minorities, were formidable.[66] Moreover, as will be expanded upon below, the idea was rejected even by those who favored Belarusian integration into Europe, not to mention as will be discussed in the next chapter,

proponents of renewed 'union' with Russia. As a result, although the new Belarusian constitution adopted in March 1994 recalled the 'centuries-long' tradition of Belarusian statehood, mentioning the Grand Duchy specifically,[67] the Romantic vision of its resurrection has once again failed to germinate.

Belarusian 'Return to Europe'

As noted by the contemporary historian Zakhar Shybeka, the concept of 'return to Europe' represents a new departure in Belarusian national thought (viz. the 'national idea').[68] In a broader comparative context, the contemporary Belarusian movement shares much in common with national movements in Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Ukraine (as noted above), Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and other East-Central European states which have also posited 'returning to Europe' as the cornerstone of their post-communist 'nation-building' strategy. Indeed, owing once again to the 'synthetic' effect of historic Polish-Lithuanian influences[69], the claim that Belarus is an integral part of European civilization can be seen as deeply-embedded in Belarusian national thinking.

Although certainly implied in the writings of Francishak Bahushevich at the end of the 19th century, the idea of Belarusian 'belongingness' to Europe was first consciously elaborated by the poet Maksim Bahdanovich during the *Nasha Niva* period of Belarusian national renaissance. In the Russian-language article "Belorusskoe vozrozhdenie" ('Belorussian Awakening"), Bahdanovich argues that Belarusian culture "is not simply a variant of Russian culture." Indeed, it is in his publicist writings that one finds for the first time in the history of Belarusian national thought the explicit argument (arguably implied 'unconsciously' in the work of the Uniate fathers and Philomaty) that, as much as it may be linked culturally and spiritually to Slavdom, Belarus is nonetheless an *integral part of*

European culture and history. Very much epitomizing his own literary heritage, the poet, in fact, writes of a *rapprochement* or 'drawing together' of Belarus and Western Europe visible in the current development of Belarusian culture.[70]As discussed in chapter three, although he wrote of the ultimately irreconcilable struggle within the national 'soul' between the competing attractions of 'Western' and 'Eastern' civilizations, Ihnat Abdziralovich nonetheless also resolved (perhaps somewhat contradictorily) that Belarus was an integral part of Europe. Emphasizing the "international solidarity of working peoples," the initial program of the West Belarusian 'Workers and Peasants Hramada' adopted in 1925 advocated the creation of new socialist union (or federation) of European peoples.[71]

The idea of Belarusian 'belongingness' to Europe reappeared during the wartime German occupation in the form of references to the historical, cultural and political legacy which made the Belarusian people an integral part of European (as opposed to Asiatic viz. - 'Russian') civilization. It must be acknowledged, however, that this conception of 'European-ness' was much less in the humanistic tradition of Bahdanovich than in the context of the Nazi conception of a "new world order" which envisaged Europe under German tutelage. Indeed, a common thread visible in the periodical literature published by Belarusian fascists during the occupation is the notion of the dawning of a new historical era in Europe emerging under German leadership. A 1943 editorial in *Belaruski holas*, for example, describes the current situation as a bloody struggle for the future between Germany and Bolshevism at the heart of which is the question: "who will be the master of Europe?" Optimism is expressed that Germany will inevitably triumph in this conflict thus leading to the establishment of a "new order" in which Belarus will finally assume its rightful place as a free and independent European state.[72] Indeed, consistent with Rosenberg's stated goal of encouraging

"[e]very autonomous Belorussian anti-Russian consciousness," a new element in this literature argues for the complete severing of Belarus from Eastern Slavdom. According to this interpretation, Belarus has never been a part of Russia and, in fact shares nothing in common with Russia. 'Pan-Slavic ideas' are thus rejected as "alien to the Belarusian soul" and having no basis as a possible Belarusian "national ideology." Blunt declarations are made to the effect that "[w]e want nothing to do with the East."[73] Hence, "the future of Europe is the future of Belarus." Accordingly, the organ of the SBM, *Zhyve Belarus*! posited as its goal the building of a "new Belarus, rejuvenated in the spirit of the 'New Europe' and in close collaboration with other European peoples."[74] However, it is clear that in this context, 'European-ness' was an 'idea' rooted in racial intolerance and prejudice.

However, in concert with what was described in chapter three as the return of values of tolerance and democratism, post-Soviet Belarus has witnessed a 'return' to the democratic and humanistic 'Europeanism' of Bahdanovich and Abdziralovich. Although some Western observers have argued that, in contrast to Ukraine, post-Soviet Belarusian elites showed no inclination towards pursuing integration into European economic and political structures,[75] this is not the case. Immediately after Belarusian independence from the USSR, Stanislau Shushkievich and then Foreign Minister Piotr Krauchanka charted a foreign policy course centred on the idea of Belarusian 'return to Europe.' In January 1992, Belarus became a full member of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) with Krauchanka telling a conference of European Foreign Ministers that the policy of his government was "economic and political integration into the European community."[76] In March 1992, Shushkievich emphasized that Belarus was interested "first and foremost in addressing the issues which may enable use to rapidly integrate ourselves into Europe," and Krauchanka

was quoted as saying that Belarus was "coming back to the family of European peoples."[77] In July 1992, Belarus ratified the Conventional Forces in Europe ('CFE') Treaty and by the end of the year had been granted observer status at GATT ('The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade').

However, this interest in integrating into European structures did not mean that good relations with Russia were not also an important priority. On the contrary, although he obviously shared the BNF goal of building an independent Belarusian state oriented towards Europe, Shushkievich rejected the 'Baltic-Black Sea' idea on the basis that it was necessary "to convince Russia that the sovereignty of Belarus does not contradict Russia's interests."[78] For his part, citing "harsh economic necessity" and the "political legacy of the vanished empire," Krauchanka was of the view that the former Soviet republics would "have to live together for the next ten to fifteen years whether we like it or not ... That being the case, until the year 2005, we foresee the existence of two basic geopolitical and economic groups: a European community of possibly as many as sixteen members ... and an East European Economic Community, or Commonwealth, linking eleven or some other number of independent states."[79] Eventually, however, Krauchanka envisioned the boundaries between these communities fading away thereby making the idea of a "common European home" a reality.

Hence, at this juncture, Belarus regarded the CIS "not as an end in itself but as a singularly useful mechanism whereby Belarus's standing among the leading nations of Europe can be enhanced."[80] Moreover, as evidenced by Shushkievich's refusal (together with Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan), to support a Russian proposal in April 1992 to establish a CIS collective security system as violating the constitutionally-enshrined principle of Belarusian neutrality, "if the commonwealth begins to assume an increasingly Eurasian character ... Belarusian interest in perpetuating the CIS would diminish."[81] In short, Belarus had a

"thoroughly European-oriented" view of the CIS and its own future as a nation.[82] Symbolic once again of the 'synthetic character' of the Belarusian 'national idea,' the thinking of Belarusian leaders was posited on the notion of acting as a link between, or somehow merging 'East' and 'West.'

However, on the political level the idea of Belarusian 'return to Europe' has been in decline since Shushkievich's forced departure in early 1994 in large part over his refusal to endorse the CIS security pact. As will be discussed further presently, since the election of Alyaksandr Lukashenka as President in July 1994, the Belarusian leadership has very much emphasized the Eastern or Russian 'vector.' Consequently, after an initially promising beginning, Belarus has fallen far behind its most of its East-Central European neighbours in achieving the goal of 'return to Europe.' Whereas Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have already become full-fledged members of NATO and opened 'accession discussions' for membership in the European Union, Belarus under Lukashenka has essentially isolated itself from European integration processes. Moreover, since the November 1996 referendum, political and economic relations between Europe and Belarus have been badly strained. The republic's guest status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was suspended following the November 1996 referendum and several attempts by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to foster a dialogue between President Lukashenka and the Belarusian oppostion have foundered. Nonetheless, it is important to note that some links between Belarus and Europe continue to be active, perhaps most notably through the Central European Initiative (CEI) which promotes regional economic development and cooperation among Central European states. Belarus is a full member of this organization which provides for the maintenance of at least informal contacts between Minsk and Europe.[83]

Nonetheless, in assessing future prospects, it is crucial to note that, notwithstanding the attitudes of the current Belarusian ruling elites, the idea of 'return to Europe' has a *significant social base* especially among younger generation Belarusians (18-35). Indeed, polling has revealed that "a significant part of the population, especially students and younger people, strive more for full sovereignty and independence of the Belarus republic ... Many also believe that in all its characteristics Belarus is closer to Europe and the West and, therefore, should try to develop relations with its Western neighbors and be oriented towards them and the Baltic countries in contrast to the orientation towards Russia."[84] It should be emphasized that this new generation of nationally-aware Belarusians (most of whom, as discussed in chapter two, are Russian-speakers), identified by older activists such as Bykau as "the hope of the nation," are not necessarily followers of the BNF or any other political group; rather, they are "simply people who want to live in a normal independent European state."[85] Their 'world-view' clearly influenced by the *adradzhenne* movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s, these young people represent "a new constituency for Belarus's separate identity from Russia."[86] Somewhat reminiscent of the late 1980s, these generations are represented in such unofficial organizations as the Union of Belarusian Students, "Next Stop - New Life", The Young Society and Civic Forum.[87] In March 1995, the Belarusian National Council of Youth Organizations, an 'umbrella group' comprising representatives from a number of different associations, was accepted into the European Council of Youth Organizations.[88] As epitomized by one of the leaders of Civic Forum, the desire to see Belarus "a free and independent state" within the European Union is motivated by an awareness that people in Western Europe, including in such post-communist states as Poland where fundamental economic and political reforms have been implemented, live much better than do Belarusians.[89] Perhaps most significant are

results showing that while 39.9% of members of the pro-presidential Belarusian Patriotic Youth League (created in 1996 by Belarusian authorities as a counter-movement to anti-Lukashenka youth groups) favored the creation of a new 'union' state with Russia, an equal number (39.2%) opposed this idea. Moreover, 38% of BPYL members identified Germany and 31% the United States as the countries they would most like Belarus to be like. Only 1.3% identified Russia.[90]

The Eastern 'Vector' in Belarusian National Thought

As significant a component of the Belarusian national tradition as the Western 'vectors' discussed above have been, owing to clearly definable historical reasons (once again, the 'structured character' of the 'national idea') - most importantly, the incorporation of Belarus into the Russian Empire at the end of the 18th century, and its seven-decade long history within the USSR - the Eastern or Russian-Soviet 'vector' has been more pronounced. Reflecting the complex 'synthesized character' of the Belarusian 'national idea,' this 'Eastern' orientation derives not only from direct Russian influences but late 19th century Ukrainian political thought. Indeed, the idea of a new 'union' with Ukraine emerges as one of the most interesting dimensions of Belarusian national thought during the early years of the 20th century. As a consequence of the Stalinist re-writing of Belarusian history beginning in the 1930s already discussed, the Ukrainian 'vector' was re-cast in distinctly more 'Slavophilic' language emphasizing the concept of Eastern Slavic unity at the core of the broader 'Soviet people.'

The Russian-Soviet 'Vector'

Owing to identifiable historical reasons (once again, the 'structured character' of the 'national idea'), including the experience of Belarusian subjugation within the Russian Empire and the 'Sovietization' of Belarusian history with its emphasis on "Slavic unity", the strongest 'vector' within Belarusian national thought has undoubtedly been the 'Russian.' As noted in chapter four, Russian radical thinkers including Herzen and Chernyshevsky profoundly influenced the development of the incipient Belarusian 'national idea' during the second half of the 19th century. This was evident especially in Belarusian populists who can be regarded as the true originators of the 'confederal' element in Belarusian national thought. On this basis, S. S. Sambuk argues that these groups were the first "to define the essential traits of the nation and on their basis proved the existence of an independent Belarusian nation."[91]

Although, reflecting the importance of lingering Polish influences, some Belarusian populists during the 1870s had still adhered to the idea of reunion with Poland, the Belarusian populist newspaper *Homon* proposed the novel idea of *'federated independence' for Belarus within a democratized and decentralized Russia*. This concept of 'federated independence' attested to the important influence of Ukrainian political thought of the late 19th century on the development of the Belarusian 'national idea,' most directly the Ukrainian social-democrat M. A. Drahomaniv. As pointed out in Ukrainian sources, Drahomaniv elaborated the first Ukrainian political program representing "a complex synthesis of anarchist, socialist, democratic, liberal, federalist, and Ukrainian patriotic elements united on the basis of a positivist philosophy."[92] Of

all of these eclectic influences, of the most interest here is Drahomaniv's federalism.

Multilingual and widely-read in West European political philosophy, Drahomaniv, who lived for a time in Geneva, was especially influenced by the autonomist and communalist ideas of thinkers such as Proudhon. As Drahomaniv himself wrote, "the independence of a land and people can be achieved either by secession and the creation of an independent state (separatism) or by winning self-government without separation (federalism)."[93] It is indeed, important to emphasize strongly that "federalism is contrasted with separatism, but *not* with independence. Drahomaniv was probably thinking of Switzerland, where the French- and Italian-speaking cantons, though in the minority, are no less independent than are the German-speaking ones."[94] In the Ukrainian case, Drahomaniv believed that his nation's best interests would be served by - together with neighbouring 'oppressed' peoples - striving for the transformation of Russia into a constitutional and democratic federal system.[95]

Similar ideas found resonance in the programmatic documents of Belarusian populists. As was noted in the second (and last) number of *Homon*, "we are Byelorussians because we must fight in the name of the native interests of the Byelorussian people and of the federal autonomy of our country."[96] However, *Homon* also maintained that the common revolutionary struggle would further the 'rapprochement' (*sblizhenie*) or 'drawing together' of Belarus with its neighbours so that any sort of separatist striving was unthinkable.[97] Nonetheless, like Drahomaniv, it is to be stressed that while federalism here is contrasted with 'separatism', it is not to be contrasted with independence.

During the early years of the twentieth century, Anton Luckievich to explore the possibility of some sort of political partnership with the emerging Ukrainian national movement. As with the Polish and Lithuanian 'vectors', the roots of this

Ukrainian orientation can ultimately be traced to shared historical bonds between Belarus and Ukraine in the Grand Duchy.[98] In 1904, Anton Luckievich travelled to Lviv where he met with Uniate Metropolitan Sheptyski (a long-time personal friend). Discussions centred around the possibility of restoring the Uniate church as a Belarusian 'national church.' A plan, to be financed principally by Sheptyski, was developed which foresaw the parceling out of large tracts of Belarusian land to Ukrainian Uniates who would become the propagators of this idea within the surrounding Belarusian population. However, as Luckievich later recalled, this scheme met without the pronounced disapproval of Russian Prime Minister Piotr Stolypin who rejected it in typical fashion as a 'Polish intrigue.'[99] Unlike the majority of their Polish and Russian counterparts, Ukrainian journals at this time tended to report positively on the emerging Belarusian movement.[100]

After the appearance of *Nasha Niva* in 1906, friendly relations were established with the Ukrainian newspaper *Rada* and each year *Nasha Niva* marked the anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's death by publishing materials dedicated to the memory of the Ukrainian 'national' poet. In August 1909, *Nasha Niva* spoke, in fact, of the "unity" (*ednasc*) of the Belarusian and Ukrainian peoples, welcoming in this way cooperation with the Ukrainian monthly *Ukrainska khata* which, beginning with its fifth number, had created a separate "Belarusian section" devoted to events in Belarus. The space was also available for publication by Belarusian writers who were called upon by *Nasha Niva* to take full advantage of this new opportunity.[101] Other articles in 1909 and 1910 noted with gratitude how Ukrainian journals were not only devoting growing attention to the Belarusian question but were also beginning to carry translations of Belarusian writers which was doing much to acquaint Ukrainian readers with Belarusian national aspirations.[102]

Reflecting the ongoing search by Belarusian activists for possible allies among neighboring national groups, articles during the period 1916-1918 in Vaclau Lastouski's *Homan*, citing once again the proximity of language and culture as well as shared history within the former Grand Duchy, emphasized anew the possibility of close cooperation with the Ukrainian national movement. Indeed, at times there are even hints at *the possibility of creating a joint Belarusian-Ukrainian state*.[103] As part of the effort to gain international recognition following its declaration of independence in March 1918, the BNR sent emissaries, including Cvikievich and the historian Mitrofan Dounar-Zapolski, to Ukraine which was itself struggling to assert independence from Russia. Agreements on economic cooperation were signed and a Belarusian "House of Trade" was opened in Kiev. Cvikievich and Dounar-Zapolski also published several pamphlets including the latter's *Asnovyi belaruskai dzyarzhaunasci* ('The Foundations of Belarusian Statehood') which has, together with Lastouski's *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi*, since become one of the fundaments of modern Belarusian historiography.[104]

During the inter-war period in Poland, the Ukrainian 'vector' was most apparent in the BCD press which, citing the legacy of the Grand Duchy, classified Ukraine as a "natural ally" of Belarus.[105] *Belaruski Front* assessed the Ukrainian 'vector' at this time as the most promising of all the competing Belarusian orientations at this time. Indeed, Belarusians are said to look upon the Ukrainian people "with great feelings of warmth, seeing in it a true friend." Although it is true that there have been periods of tension, these need not retard the development of good relations between the two peoples. This prospect is seen as greatly enhanced by the proximity of the Belarusian and Ukrainian languages - the two peoples can speak each in their own native tongue and understand one another.[106] As an example of these good relations, in April 1937, *Belaruski Front* reported

favorably the speech of a Ukrainian deputy in the Polish *Sejm* defending Belarusian rights.[107] Examples of direct Belarusian-Ukrainian cooperation including joint meetings were also cited.[108] At the same time, the newspaper did not shy away from polemicizing with occasional Ukrainian skeptics concerning the Belarusian national movement. For example, on May 5, 1938, the editors published their rebuttal to an article which had recently appeared in the Ukrainian periodical *Vistnik* expressing doubt about the historical validity of the Belarusian claim to nationhood. Nonetheless, this is judged to be an aberration in no way curtailing the possibility of Belarusian-Ukrainian *rapprochement* and perhaps even joint statehood. [109]

Notwithstanding this nascent Ukrainian orientation, as well as the deeply-embedded Polish and Lithuanian 'vectors', the theme of Belarusian cultural and political autonomy within a restructured and democratized Russia predominated within the Belarusian national movement during the early decades of the 20th century. In its treatment of the 'national question,' the Belarusian Socialist Hramada ('BSH') advocated that Belarus should become an 'autonomous republic' with its own *Sejm* (parliamentary assembly) located in Vilna which would remain linked with a 'democratic' Russia on a federal basis.[110] Belarusian thinking in this regard was clearly encouraged by the revolutionary crisis of 1905 which extracted from a reluctant Tsar Nicholas II the 'October Manifesto' granting the peoples of the empire a representative assembly (the *Duma*) as well as such basic constitutional rights as freedom of speech, conscience and the inviolability of the individual. Restrictions on the use of native languages (including Belarusian) among the 'non-Russian' peoples were also lifted. At its second congress in January 1906, the BSH adopted a new, farther-reaching program which called not simply for Belarusian cultural autonomy but included

the *political* demand that the Russian empire be transformed into "a federation of all free peoples."[111]

The revolutionary transformations of March and November 1917 gave new momentum to the Russian 'orientation' with the result that the Belarusian movement itself was now split into competing Lithuanian and Russian tendencies. Immediately after the collapse of the Tsarist state, leaders of the Belarusian movement began "energetic political action."[112] On March 25, 1917, a congress of Belarusian groups was held in Minsk which included "at once the representatives of all the important groups in the region, from Russian socialists to Polish landlords, from the Roman Catholic clergy to the Jewish Bund, and from the scholars and artists to railroad workers and farmers." An eighteen-member Belarusian National Committee ('BNC') was elected by the conference. The BNC adopted a program calling for the creation of a democratic republican regime in Belarus which would join Russia as an *autonomous state*. The program added that "those people who masquerading as Belarusians advocate the joining of Belarus to Poland or any other state" would be considered as "provocateurs."[113] Although, as noted above, the provisional government had officially declared itself in favor of 'self-determination' for the subject peoples of the former empire, it refused categorically to entertain petitions from the BNC calling for Belarusian cultural and political autonomy well as the withdrawal of Russian army units from Belarusian territory.

In May 1917, the BNC began publishing the newspaper *Volnaya Belarus* ('Free Belarus'). According to the newspaper, the revolution in Russia had given new impetus to the cause of cultural *renaissance* and political liberation among all the peoples of the former empire. In terms of its specific program, *Volnaya Belarus* advocated *Belarusian national-cultural and "even territorial" autonomy within a democratized and federalized Russia*. It was emphasized that there was no

question at this time of complete separation from Russia. This was a result, first of all, of the long-standing economic ties with Russia which, if anything, were to be strengthened. Nevertheless, relations between the republics within Russia were to be on the strict basis of 'equality' with the constituent units enjoying a high degree of self-government.[114]

In July 1917, the BSH reformed to convene a second congress of Belarusian organizations which, after a stormy debate, declared the dissolution of the BNC and its replacement by a new Central Council of Belarusian Organizations and Parties which claimed for itself the right to speak for the Belarusian people. Thus began what Cvikievich describes as a period of "Belarusian congresses."[115] Thanks mainly to the propaganda work of Rak-Mikhailouski, a congress of Belarusian soldiers of the Third Russian Army was convened on October 18, 1917. The meeting elected a new 'Belarusian Military Committee' of the Western Front from which subsequently emerged the 'Central Belarusian Military Council'. Following this, congresses of Belarusian soldiers stationed on the northern, Romanian and south-western fronts took place. Meetings of Belarusian groups also occurred in Smolensk, Viciebsk, Polack and other cities as a result of which the new 'Great Belarusian Council' (hereafter 'GBC') was created. New demands were made on Petrograd for the transformation of the former empire into a democratic, federated state in which Belarus would have autonomous status as well as support for the development of Belarusian language and culture.[116] However, as before, the Provisional Government turned a deaf ear to Belarusian concerns. Indeed, it is generally agreed that the failure of the Provisional Government to deal effectively with the 'national question' was one of the principal reasons for its downfall in November 1917.

A Belarusian wing of the Bolshevik party had been formed in Minsk on June 17, 1917. However, like other parts of the empire, Bolshevism had a pronounced

Russian flavor and local leaders were highly reticent about programmatic assurances concerning the 'right of nations to self-determination.' The GBC reacted against this by issuing an appeal to the Belarusian people which read in part that "energetic steps" were necessary in order to defend "the rights and freedoms" obtained as a result of the March revolution. Belarus, the communique concluded, "must be a democratic republic, united with Great Russia and with other neighbor republics of the empire on a *federal basis*."[117] On November 23, 1917, *Volnaya Belarus* further clarified its position by defining federation itself as "a voluntary union (*supolka*) of free democratic republics" in which the central government would possess only those limited powers (presumably in the economic and military spheres) transferred to it by the republics - "[i]n all other affairs, each republic would be *fully independent*." As the newspaper itself acknowledged, it was proposing in essence not a federation but an even looser form of union known historically as "confederation," examples of which were to be found in Europe and the United States.[118] Indeed, some Belarusian periodicals have since referred to this as the *'confederationist' stage* in the development of the Belarusian 'national idea.'[119]

As discussed in chapter one, after declaring its independence in March 1918, the BNR initially pinned its hopes for survival on German support. However, in October 1918, faced with the rapidly deteriorating German political and military situation, the newly-appointed Prime Minister of the BNR, Anton Luckievich, attempted to reach a new *modus vivendi* with Lenin's Bolsheviks. As the contemporary Belarusian historian Vadzim Krutalevich notes, the March 25 declaration did not specifically rule out the possibility of continuing ties with Russia albeit on a new legal and political basis. Indeed according to Luckievich's personal notebooks preserved in Belarusian archives, he was prepared at this time to accept a new [con-]federation with Russia on the basis of a Soviet-type

constitution for Belarus provided that in return Moscow unequivocally recognized Belarusian sovereignty.[120] Although the Bolsheviks showed no interest in this idea, some Belarusian representatives remained hopeful that the goal of Belarusian statehood might yet be realized with Soviet support within the framework of the BSSR.

Indeed, together with the competing Polish orientation, the Russian-Soviet 'vector' was clearly apparent in Belarusian national thought during the inter-war period. In its third issue, *Belaruski Front* noted the strength of the 'Eastern' or 'Russian' orientation within West Belarusian society especially among older generations nostalgic for what is recalled as the 'good life' of Tsarist times when, among other things, people could travel freely to far-away Russian cities in search of work and a better material existence. Although comparatively weaker, this orientation also existed among younger people hopeful of finding work in the 'eastern spaces.' However, an even more fundamental reason for its strength among youth was the belief that a new political and social order was being built in Soviet Russia on the principles of equality and social justice. As the editors comment, this is always an attractive prospect for idealistic young people who always search for greater justice on this earth."[121]

Perhaps the best example of the Russian 'vector' during the inter-war period was Alyaksandr Cvikievich's 'socialist federalism' which foresaw some form of loose political and especially *economic* 'union' of independent Belarus with Soviet Russia. Owing to a significant shift in the nationality policy of the Soviet regime linked to the liberalizing nature of the Lenin's 'New Economic Policy' and the *Belarusizatsiya* of the mid-1920s discussed in chapter one, Cvikievich was among a growing number of Belarusian *émigrés* during this period who were increasingly convinced that the opportunity to realize the Belarusian 'national idea' genuinely existed within the USSR. This epitomized his basic socialist conviction that

resolving the 'national question' was, first of all, a question of the *social and economic emancipation of the masses*. Accordingly, the most appropriate vehicle for realizing the 'national idea' was socialism understood not as a political regime based on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' but collectivist and democratic principles of social organization which would offer all national groups equal opportunities for cultural and economic development. A combination of the failure of the Western powers to support the BNR in its struggle for international recognition as well as events in the USSR convinced Cvikievich that the "objective" conditions for the success of the 'national idea' existed there on the basis of *federal union with Russia and other socialist republics*. Far from proscribing Belarusian independence, this "free union" of equals would be its ultimate guarantor. Towards this end, Cvikievich foresaw especially close cooperation between the BSSR and Moscow in the key spheres of *economy* and *defence*. Beyond that, however, Belarus would retain full political sovereignty and the right to develop its culture, language and traditions - the concept of national *renaissance* which Cvikievich regarded as far from complete.[122] In 1925, at the Berlin conference chaired by Cvikievich, the BNR-in-exile liquidated itself and declared that henceforth Minsk would be the 'centre' of the Belarusian national movement.[123]

Within the BSSR itself, as previously discussed, intellectuals such as the 'national historian' Ihnatouski and the *burapieny* writers (Charot, Aleksandrovich *et al*) were clearly committed to the principle of 'socialist federalism.' As *Polymia* noted in 1923, "[t]he interests of the Belarusian working masses are only part of the interests of all the workers of Russia." Accordingly, the journal advocated the closer 'drawing together' of Belarus and its fellow Soviet republics.[124] Like Cvikievich, the *Polymia* writers obviously saw no contradiction between the ideal of Belarusian independence, on the one hand, and federal union (on qualitatively

new Soviet socialist foundations) with Russia. At this time, there was also nebulous talk within the BSSR of a so-called 'Mongolian Project' predicated on the idea of a Belarusian national uprising which would begin in West ('Polish') Belarus. At the same time, Soviet Belarus would exercise its constitutional right freely to secede from the USSR. The two halves of Belarus would then unite in the form of a quasi-independent state under Soviet protection similar to the Mongolian People's Republic. Although It is not known for certain if the Bolsheviks took this plan seriously, there is some circumstantial evidence of its credibility. An editorial in *Saveckaya Belarus* published on January 5, 1924 described the Belarusian national *adradzhenne* as having entered the "second and last stage" of its development - a revolution which would join West Belarus and the Soviet East.[125] Moreover, as noted in chapter four, within West Belarus, the Belarusian Revolutionary Organization ('BRO') also advocated a national revolution uniting the Belarusian territories under Soviet rule.

Indeed, during the mid-1920s and the *Belarusizatsiya* phenomenon, West Belarusian newspapers of a radical left persuasion were fulsome in their praise of the positive effect of Soviet policy for Belarusian national aspirations. A 1925 article by Anton Luckievich, for example, argued that whereas in West Belarus under increasing Polish repression the Belarusian 'national idea' was currently experiencing a profound crisis, it was currently being realized in East Belarus (albeit on entirely new Soviet foundations) in the form of the BSSR joined thorough 'federative ties' with its neighbors in the USSR.[126] Interestingly, while rejecting the "materialism" of communist ideology as well as the Soviet regime's policy towards religion, periodicals associated with the Christian Democratic movement also tended to assess events in the BSSR at this time positively.[127] However, with the onset of Stalinism in the USSR during the late 1920s, West Belarusian newspapers of all political orientations began to report critically news

of the increasing repression of leaders of the national movement in the BSSR including Ihnatouski and Lastouski as well as Soviet Belarusian writers[128].

In January 1937, *Belaruski Front* noted that Soviet Belarus now had "neither sovereignty nor independence."[129] Later that year, the same newspaper published a long article evaluating "from the Belarusian perspective" the ideological conflict within the USSR between 'Stalinism' and 'Trotskyism' which arrived at the conclusion that the Belarusian movement had nothing to gain from either and thus should be negatively inclined towards both.[130] Some West Belarusian periodicals, in fact, saw the situation in the USSR during the late 1920s (the increasing use of terror "unseen in Russia since the time of Ivan the Terrible") as evidence of a *deepening crisis* of the communist regime there and perhaps even its forthcoming demise.[131] As the situation worsened during the mid-1930s, West Belarusian periodicals agreed that the essence of the 'Sovietophile' trend had now become the 'denationalization' and spiritual destruction of the Belarusian people through Russification.[132] At this time, some West Belarusian publications spoke of a "heroic struggle" under way in Soviet Belarus against reemergent Russian "imperialism," or, alternatively, a new "Soviet empire."[133]

Coupled with acute awareness of Belarusian economic dependency on Russia (especially for energy supplies), this historical legacy of Sovietization has meant that the Russian 'vector' within post-Soviet Belarus has remained strong. Indeed, although independence initially gave a substantial boost to the Belarusian *adradzhenne* movement, within Belarusian society, several socio-political organizations, most importantly *Slavyanskii sobor Belaya Rus* ('Slavic Assembly White Rus'), which emerged in June 1992, and Peoples' Movement Belarus' (PMB) formed as an umbrella organization in March 1993 grouping together communists, representatives of the Belarusian military-industrial complex as well as a number of smaller 'pan-Slavic' groups to counteract the BNF, began to

agitate for a renewed 'union' of Slavic peoples. Then Prime Vyacheslau Kiebich was clearly of the view that Belarusian statehood was inconceivable outside the context a renewed 'union' of former Soviet republics. Hence, as early as July 1992 he was musing aloud about the possibility of a new Belarusian-Russian 'confederation' within the broader CIS framework.[134] In September 1993, he and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin announced agreement on creating a Belarusian-Russian monetary union. This was justified primarily in terms of Belarusian energy dependency on Russia and the need to rebuild economic links ruptured by the collapse of the USSR. Although he emphasized primarily these economic imperatives, Kiebich made clear during 1993-1994 his view that closer ties with Russia "was not just a matter of economic circumstances. We are linked by the closest spiritual bonds. We have a common history and similar cultures."[135] He thus rejected the BNF's 'Baltic-Black Sea Commonwealth' proposal discussed in the previous chapter as based on "a clearly expressed desire to sever ties with Russia," adding that as long as his heart continued to beat, he would campaign for 'union' with Russia.[136]

The Russian 'vector' gained momentum with the election of Lukashenka who, like Kiebich before him, has justified his pursuit of integration with Russia not only on the basis of economic and political imperatives but cultural proximity and shared historical fate. At times he has even spoken of an innate impulse in the Belarusian 'soul' for union with Russia.[137] Towards the goal of reintegration within the CIS framework, a four-way customs union was established between Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzya in January 1995.[138] That same month, a series of agreements were concluded between Minsk and Moscow guaranteeing Russia rent-free use of two strategic military bases on Belarusian territory for a period of 25 years.[139] Although signing onto NATO's 'Partnership for Peace' program in 1995, Lukashenka, echoing the line emanating from Moscow, emerged

as a firm opponent of the alliance's Eastward expansion, describing it at times as a direct threat to Belarusian national security.[140]

On March 26, 1996, after closed-door meetings with Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, Lukashenka emerged to declare that agreement had been reached on the creation of a new Belarusian-Russian "union state."[141] On April 2, Lukashenka signed an agreement with Russian President Boris Yeltsin creating within the CIS framework the new 'Commonwealth of Sovereign States.' The agreement established several supranational bodies: a supreme council, executive committee and inter-parliamentary congress, and called for the synchronization of economic reforms and creation of the conditions necessary for the introduction of a common currency by the end of 1997. At the same time, it was stipulated that both sides retained their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and state symbols. Exactly one year to the day later, he and Yeltsin signed an agreement on the creation of a new 'Union of Belarus and Russia' which committed both sides to even closer coordination of economic, foreign and military policy but stopped short of creating a single state. In his April 2, 1998 communique marking the first anniversary of the new 'Union', Lukashenka invoked 'pan-Slavic' rhetoric in his description of it as 'natural conclusion' to the historical striving of the Russian and Belarusian peoples towards 'union in the framework of a single economic, political, scientific and cultural space ...' Although acknowledging that the new union is not without serious problems, Lukashenka noted that at the very least the "artificial borders between our peoples - borders passing through the hearts and souls of tens of millions of people - have been erased in order to unite once again in a single family as determined by the thousand-year long history of the Slavic peoples."[142] In May 1998, Lukashenka described the Union of Belarus and Russia as being the 'salvation' of all Slavdom.[143]

On December 25, 1998, a new protocol entitled 'Declaration on Further Unification of Belarus and Russia' was signed by Presidents Yeltsin and Lukashenka which called for the creation of a 'union state' in 1999. Essentially restating principles already contained in previous agreements, the 'union' was to be given wide authority in the areas of socio-economic, foreign, defence and security policy. The two countries' monetary policies and tax systems were to be harmonized. with the creation of a single state budget and currency (which would obviously be the Russian ruble). A unified energy and transportation grid as well as single scientific, technological and informational space would also be established. Once again, the declaration justified Belarusian-Russian integration not only by reference to common economic, geo-political and strategic interests but the 'spiritual and cultural' closeness of the two republics as well as shared history. At the same time, however, once again as before, it was also reiterated that both Belarus and Russia were to maintain their national 'sovereignty' and remain independent subjects of international law[144].

Future Prospects for the Belarusian 'National Idea'

Notwithstanding its enduring strength within the popular Belarusian consciousness, the contemporary Russian 'vector' is problematic. In the first instance, Lukashenka's concept of renewed 'Slavic union' makes no sense without Ukraine. It is, therefore, extremely signifcant that Ukraine to date has been noticeably cool towards Lukashenka's numerous overtures to join the new 'Union of Belarus and Russia.' As has already been alluded to, like many of their Belarusian counterparts, striving to differentiate their nation from Russia, Ukrainian intellectuals have argued historically that Ukraine in all respects 'belongs' to European civilization. In the post-Soviet period, among Ukrainian

political elites, of more than 30 parties and political alliances which contested the 1998 parliamentary elections, only three support a trilateral union of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus while two others - the Communist Party of Ukraine and Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine - support the restoration of the USSR. Moreover, popular attitudes (41-44%) generally support Kuchma's policy of cooperation with the West - only 15-17% oppose.[145] Hence, notwithstanding "the acuteness of the current economic crisis, the average Ukrainian citizen demonstrates [a] quite high level of understanding of the fact that only a stable and [strong] Ukrainian state, possessing friendly relations with Russia without being, as traditionally, under its rule, can overcome the difficulties."[146] In January 1997, Kuchma joined with Polish President Kwasniewski in expressing concern over the course of political developments in Belarus, noting that while it was the right of Belarus and Russia to integrate if they so chose, Ukraine had defined its choice for integration as *Europe*.[147] In addition to Ukrainian reticence, there are other 'structural' factors mitigating against future Belarusian-Russian integration prospects.

Indeed, it is to be noted that to date agreements on Belarusian-Russian 'integration' have failed to be implemented in full primarily because Russia is neither able nor willing to bear the prohibitive cost of bailing out the unreformed Belarusian economy. Indeed, since the signing of initial agreements integration in 1996, Russian officials have been at pains to insist that neither Belarus nor Russia are renouncing any of their sovereignty. At the end of 1997, citing Russian reluctance, Lukashenka described Belarusian-Russian and CIS integrative processes as a whole as enduring a period of severe crisis. Notwithstanding the creation in 1998 of the Belarusian-Russian 'union' and subsequent 'Declaration on Further Unification,' tangible steps towards the further integration of the two countries are thus not yet visible and remain unlikely. Apart from the continuing

structural inequities between the Belarusian and Russian economies, the proposed unification raises a number of highly problematic question for the Russian side. Most significantly, a number of leaders of autonomous republics within the Russian Federation (including Tatarstan) might well demand a constitutional redefinition of their political status within any new union.

At the same time, polling over the last several years has shown that although the general idea of integration with Russia continues to be popular within Belarus, there is little support for pursuing it at the expense of Belarusian sovereignty. In this respect, it is worth noting that attitudes within the Belarusian population concerning integration over the last several years have been far from clear and certainly not representative of some innate impulse deeply-embedded in the Belarusian 'spirit' for 'reunion' with Russia. Polling conducted in the republic during the spring of 1994 for example, showed that although 74% of respondents favored monetary union with Russia proposed at that time by Prime Minister Kiebich, when questioned further "it turned out that the population did not have clearly defined concepts of the principles of mutual relations with Russia," and even those who strongly favored economic union expressed "very serious doubts and fears about a hasty reunification." Of the various possible models for relations with Russia, the most popular was economic union with political sovereignty. Moreover, if given the choice of two 'extremes' - entry into the Russian Federation as a constituent republic and full independence without preferences in regard to Russia, "the majority shifted closer to the second pole."[148] Subsequent polling throughout 1997 has shown consistently that about 60% of the population favor economic union with Russia but only on the condition of maintaining Belarusian political sovereignty. Only 15-16% of Belarusians as a whole favor the actual 'fusion' of Belarus and Russia into a single, unified state. Indeed, the Belarusian population clearly understands integration with Russia primarily in

terms of a *common economic* market. When asked to complete the statement "Integration with Russia is ...", 65.5% replied "no borders with Russia," and 41% said "a common currency." Only 12.6% replied "a common President," and 29.3% "common laws." 85.4% responded that Belarus must be a sovereign state.[149] Even among those who strongly support integration, a majority oppose a rapid merger, favoring instead a gradual approach which takes into account economic, social and political differences of development between the two republics. In view of these trends, the characterization by external analysts of the Belarusian people as "a nation *in statu ascendi*" seems appropriate.[150] The *avant-garde* of what Mikola Statkievich, leader of the opposition Belarusian Social-Democratic Hramada describes as this 'new nation' are young people and students among whom, as noted above, polling suggests support for Belarusian independence is highest.[151] As discussed above, these younger generation Belarusians display a discernible *European* orientation.

Perhaps in recognition of this evolution, the last two years have witnessed a certain shift in Lukashenka's rhetoric in the direction of the 'national idea'. This can be traced to January 1997 when Yeltsin dispatched a letter to Minsk outlining a series of pre-conditions (including the large-scale privatization of Belarusian industry and unification of tax and custom codes) the fulfillment of which could lead to a joint Belarusian-Russian referendum on formally merging the two states. In practice, however, the Yeltsin initiative amounted to a plan for the absorption of Belarus into the Russian Federation. The response of the Belarusian side, however, was notably cool. The leadership of the new pro-Lukashenka parliament declared categorically that it was far too early to speak of a referendum on unification.[152] For his part, irritated at what he construed as the 'directive' character of the Yeltsin initiative which imposed unreasonably harsh conditions for integration and, in reality, amounted to a plan for the absorption of his republic by its larger

neighbor, Lukashenka repeated his previously-stated position that Belarus would never be transformed into a "Russian *guberniya*," insisting that Belarusian-Russian integration was possible only as a partnership between two equal and sovereign states.[153]

Lukashenka held to this position firmly in the course of remarks and interviews throughout the rest of the year. On the occasion of the July 1997 'Independence Day' celebrations, to the great surprise of his critics, he once again spoke publicly in Belarusian, repeating that while intent on pursuing integration with Russia he would preserve Belarusian sovereignty because this was "the most important value" for him as head of state with which he could never and would never dispense.[154] Although, as noted above, couched in rhetoric concerning the union of 'fraternal Slavic peoples,' articles in the official (Russian-language) Belarusian press marking the first anniversary of the creation of the Union of Belarus and Russia described it as an example of how the 'unification' (*ob'edinenie*) of two states was possible on the basis of both "maintaining their independence." The principle achievement of the 'union' to date was said to be progress towards the creation of a "common economic space."[155]

While Lukashenka's congratulatory remarks to the nation published in the press on the occasion of the "independence day" holiday on July 3, 1998 began with reference to the "eternal idea of Slavic unity," his speech at the celebrations in Minsk (replete with Soviet-style military parade) was nonetheless devoid of 'Slavophilic' rhetoric. He again cited the "long tradition" of Belarusian statehood including Polack and the Grand Duchy as part of this heritage. By virtue of a long and troubled history which has seen their lands become a battlefield many times - including twice this century - the Belarusian people have earned the right to independent statehood. Although he described the collapse of the USSR as having led to the loss of sovereignty for all former republics, Lukashenka again declared

that Belarusian independence and sovereignty were the "highest values" not only for him as President but for the nation as a whole. He added to this that the Republic of Belarus is today "an independent European state", noting how its geographical location in the very centre of the continent gave it the possibility of acting as an intermediary or conduit between East and West. Hence, he drew attention once again to the "independent" character of Belarusian foreign policy based on the principal of *shmatvektarnasc* ('multi-vectoredness') according to which while relations with Russia are the priority, Belarus also seeks cooperation and contacts with Western countries.[156] Although by virtue of the fact that its member states are democracies with well-developed market economies, the comparison is not appropriate, Lukashenka and other Belarusian spokesmen continue to insist that their own model for integration is not the former USSR but European Union.[157]

In short, from having described Belarusian sovereignty shortly after his ascension to power as "junk,"[158] Lukashenka in the last two years has clearly adopted at least some of the terminology of the 'national idea.' Indeed, observers note that as part of his ongoing political game with Moscow, he currently is doing a sort of "balancing act" between integration and independence, between, it might otherwise be stated, the 'Slavic idea' and the 'national idea'. In a paradoxical sense, if for no other reason than he is unwilling to see his own personal status reduced from head of an internationally-recognized state to that of governor of a Russian province, Lukashenka is thus currently acting as a guarantor of Belarusian sovereignty. Moreover, as can be seen from the foregoing discussion, although his critics in the national-cultural intelligentsia do not acknowledge it, Lukashenka's notion of a new Belarusian-Russian confederation *per se* is one with deep roots within the Belarusian 'national idea.'

However, there is a fundamental and irreconcilable difference between Lukashenka and previous Belarusian 'federalist' thinkers such as Cvikievich - namely, as was discussed in chapter three, Lukashenka's profound disdain for *democracy*. Whereas Cvikievich, and even before him the 'Homonites', sought to federalize and democratize Russia, Lukashenka's primary political motive in pursuing integration appears to be securing his own political base both within Belarus itself (where, as pointed out, the general idea of 're-integration' with Russia remains popular) and 'abroad' - perhaps as the future President of any new Belarusian-Russian confederation. Moreover, Cvikievich's 'federalism' had nothing in common with ideas of 'pan-Slavism'; quite the contrary. Unlike the situation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Lukashenka's primary political allies within Russia are not democrats but 'neo-imperialists' (including Vladimir Zhirinovsky), 'neo-Slavicists' and communists striving for the 'restoration of empire'. Although, on the one hand, Lukashenka is using these forces to pursue his political ambitions[159], these Russian elements they are also clearly using him as an instrument in their ongoing power struggle with the Kremlin. In this regard, Lukashenka's pursuit of 'union' with Russia has nothing to do with the 'national idea'; on the contrary, it is clearly a profound threat to Belarusian sovereignty and prospects for democratization.

The Russian 'Identity Crisis'

Like Belarus, Russia itself can be said to have historically experienced a profound crisis of identity perhaps best symbolized by the 'Slavophile - Westerner' debate of the 19th century. This crisis was exacerbated by the Soviet regime which not only adopted a nihilistic attitude towards 'non-Russian' languages and cultures but also denied cultural and political 'Russianness'. As John Dunlop writes "the

Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (or RSFSR for short) had deliberately not been given many of the institutions enjoyed by the other republics; there was, for example, no Russian KGB, no Russian MVD, no Russian Academy of Sciences, and no television channels or radio stations geared specifically at the interests of ethnic Russians. Strikingly, there was not even a Russian Communist Party, while all the other republics possessed their own party organizations."[160] Consequently, ethnic Russians came to regard the USSR as a whole as essentially a 'Russian state.' The essence of the post-Soviet Russian identity crisis is, therefore, quite different from that of Belarus, Ukraine and other successor states and revolves around the question of whether or not Russia can transcend what some contemporary Russian scholars themselves characterize as its historical 'imperial complex.'[161] This is especially relevant to the cases of Ukraine and Belarus since even many 'liberal' Russians have difficulty perceiving these fellow Slavic republics as independent entities.

However, the collapse of the USSR gave Russians themselves a historically unprecedented opportunity to begin anew the process of genuine 'nation-building.' Notwithstanding the tendency of Belarusian writers to emphasize almost exclusively the strength of Russian 'imperial' traditions, statistical evidence from 1989-1991 showed that ethnic Russians were "growing accustomed to the fragmentation of the empire and that they, by a significant margin, refused to countenance the use of force to hold it together. A marked 'de-imperialization' of the Russian psyche appeared to be occurring."[162] This was especially evident among younger generation Russians, 70% of whom according to a 1991 poll favored permitting the secession of republics from the USSR.[163] During the period 1992-1994, attitudes among ethnic Russians began to change somewhat in the direction of regret over the 'loss' of the USSR. However, unlike attitudes within Russian political and military elites, this did not translated into support for

'resurrecting' the union. On the contrary, adherents of strengthening Russian (*rossisskaya*) statehood within the CIS framework increased almost two-fold from 20% in February 1992 to 41% by April 1994.[164] However, the Russian invasion of Chechnya in December 1994 marked a turning point in post-Soviet Russian politics and "witnessed a growth of imperial nationalism among some ethnic Russians." This was accompanied by signs of a less tolerant attitude towards 'non-Russians' (especially Transcaucasians) and increased levels of electoral support for demagogues such as Zhirinovsky who remains, nonetheless, a peripheral figure in Russian politics.[165]

While consistently high levels of public support for the most recent Russian military operation in Chechnya (1999) suggest that "unscrupulous 'empire-savers' might yet have their day,"[166] there remains reason for cautious optimism that the 'civic nationalist' tradition in Russia will ultimately prevail. As Valery Tishkov has written, in Russia today "despite vocal hegemonic and periphery ethnonationalists, civic nationalism remains a viable policy choice, and this is not only because of the liberal orientation of the Russian government. Put bluntly, ethnonationalism would be an extremely harmful and unrealistic political line for the country's leaders to take. Although comprising one of the most homogeneous successor states with 80% of the population, Russians live side by side with 27 million 'non-Russians,' many of whom enjoy territorial autonomy and are politically well organized. Any strong linkage of the state and its doctrines with ethnic exclusivism would immediately strengthen centrifugal tendencies among these non-Russians."[167] Moreover, "the unleashing of Russian imperial nationalism would undoubtedly serve to severely exacerbate relations with CIS states, and seriously destabilize the Eurasian sub-continent as a whole.[168]

Although Russians may thus be closer today than ever to nationhood "the question still remains open whether they can decide who should belong to the

nation and what its boundaries should be."[169] The answer to this question will have profound implications for the future of the Belarusian 'national idea.' Specifically, if the 'civic model' eventually prevails in Russia, then Russians will accept the 'loss' not only of Ukraine but Belarus. In this regard its is perhaps encouraging that public opinion polling in Russia has revealed considerable hesitancy about the idea of reintegrating with Belarus. In July 1994, for example, "only 9 percent of those polled wanted such a union if it were accompanied by economic losses for Russia; 56 percent flatly rejected such a loss-making reintegration."[170] This was, as Dunlop suggests, "scarcely a ringing endorsement of immediate union with Ukraine and Belarus."[171] As opposed to the creation of a new Belarusian-Russian federal or confederal state, some Russian liberals have proposed the idea of a loose 'condominium' arrangement with Belarus based on the idea of a common economic market but retention of separate national currencies. Most importantly, no supranational political institutions would be created.[172]

Contemporary Belarusian scholars suggest that this sort of 'strategic partnership' is by far the best integration alternative for Belarus which, within the framework of existing federal or confederal proposals (Lukashenka's scenario), inevitably runs the risk of eventually disappearing as a subject of international law.[173] The decisive rejection of the imperial model within Russia, and with it, any hope of resurrecting the USSR or, alternatively, new 'Slavic union' would, in essence, force Belarus, with or without Lukashenka, down the path of post-communist 'nation-building' on what could conceivably, at least, be a more 'European-oriented' trajectory. It remains at this time to be seen whether the new Russian President, Vladimir Putin (elected in March 2000), will, in fact, direct Russia down this path of 'civic nation-building' or pursue more vigorously the idea of 'Slavic integration' beginning with Belarus.

Analytical Summary

This chapter concerns itself primarily with the 'contested character' of the Belarusian national idea' as visible in a number of sharply contrasting 'Eastern' and 'Western' geopolitical orientations or 'vectors.' Evidence once more of the importance of the 'structured character' of the 'national idea,' it is argued that, although visible earlier in at least an incipient form, these competing 'vectors' sharpened during the inter-war period in large part as a function of the partitioning of the Belarusian territories between the newly-reconstituted Polish state and the USSR. Although the Eastern, specifically, 'Russian,' orientation has historically predominated within the Belarusian consciousness, the 'return to Europe' option discussed should be regarded as representing an attractive alternative for the future. The contemporary post-Soviet Belarusian identity crisis can thus be conceptualized as a continuing internal 'struggle' between these competing 'vectors.' Finally, the future of the Belarusian 'national idea' is intimately linked with, in other words, 'structured' by, the eventual resolution of the acute post-Soviet crisis of national identity in Russia.

Notes

[1] *Zvyazda*, July 29, 1993. Emphasis in original.
[2] *Belaruski Front*, January 5, 1938.
[3] *Belaruski holas*, June 23, 1944.
[4] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, September 1, 1943.
[5] *Zhyve Belarus!*, No. 1, July 1943.
[6] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, September 25, 1943. Although he chaired Kube's 'Men of Trust' council, as will be discussed below Ivanouski had tied his political fate to hopes for the *defeat* of the Nazi regime and renewed cooperation with Poland (the Polish 'vector')

[7] Turonek, p. 126.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] For an authoritative account of this conflict, see Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920* (London, 1972).

[10] Cited in Krystyna Gomolka, *Miedzy Polska a Rosja* (Warsaw, 1994), p. 58.

[11] *Belaruskaya dumka,* May 5, 1919.

[12] Krystyna Gomolka, "Polityka rzadow polskich wobec mniejszosci bialoruskiej w latach 1918-1939," *Bialoruskie zeszyty historyczne,* 2(4), 1995, p. 108.

[13] Cited in Vakar, p. 111.

[14] Anton Luckievich, *Okupacja polska na Bialorusi* (Vilna, 1920), pp. 6-7; 10-11.

[15] Gomolka, *Miedzy Polska a Rosja,* p. 76.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 3.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Luckievich, *Za dvadcac pyac hadou* (Minsk 1991), p. 40.

[19] Kupala, "Sprava niezalezhnasci Belarusi za minulyi hod," in *Zhyve Belarus,* pp. 342-343. Indeed, Kupala was a significant exception to the 'pro-Polish' orientation. As discussed in chapter four, he wrote some of his most militantly nationalist poetry, prose and publicist articles during the Polish occupation.

[20] Antony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature* (Munich, 1958), p. 45.

[21] Gomolka, *Miedzy Polska a Rosja,* pp. 111-116.

[22] *Belaruski dzen,* January 25, 1928.

[23] *Belaruskaya dumka,* March 19, 1932.

[24] *Belaruski dzen,* February 2, 18, and 25, 1928

[25] *Belaruski dzen,* March 16, 1928.

[26] *Belaruskaya dumka,* October 11, 1930; *Belaruskaya dumka,* April 22, 1931; *Belarus pracy,* February 3, 1934.

[27] *Belaruskaya dumka,* October 18 and 26, 1930.

[28] *Belaruski radny,* December 13, 1927.

[29] *Belaruski zvon,* June 24, 1931.

[30] *Belaruskaya dumka,* October 2, 1930; *Belaruski zvon,* January 7, 1932; *Belaruski Front,* January 5, 1938.

[31] *Belarus pracy,* March 18, 1934.

[32] For example, *Belaruski Front,* April 5, 1937 reported that on February 18, 1937, Polish Deputy Wanda Pelczinska had made a long speech critical of Polish policy towards the Belarusians and other national minorities. For this speech itself, see *Kurjer Wilenski,* February 21, 1937, pp. 1;3 in which Pelczinska indeed describes the 'pacification' policy as in the long run self-defeating.

[33] *Belaruski Front,* June 5, 1938

[34] Turonek, pp. 127-128

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Uladzimir Konan, "Bialorus jest w rekach Pana Boga," *Kultura,* June, 1996, p. 92.

[38] Stephen R. Burant, "Polish-Belarusian Relations," *RFE/RL Research Report,*

September 18, 1992.

[39] Stephen R. Burant, "Foreign Policy and National Identity: A Comparison of Ukraine and Belarus," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 7, 1995, p. 1143.

[40] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 24, 1997; *Rzeczpospolita*, January 24, 1997.

[41] Cited in Antony Adamovich, "The Kupala-Kolas Century 1882-1982," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1982, pp. 6-7

[42] *Homan*, December 8, 1917; *Homan*, January 1, 1917.

[43] *Belaruskaya krynica*, November 1, 1925.

[44] *Belaruskaya krynica*, October 25, 1925.

[45] *Naperad!*, December 31, 1929; *Belarus pracy*, March 18, 1934.

[46] *Belaruski Front*, November 5, 1936

[47] Kathleen Mihalisko, "The Popular Movement in Belorussia and Baltic Influences," in Jan Arveds Trapans, ed., *Toward Independence: The Baltic Popular Movements* (Boulder, 1991), p. 125. As noted in this same volume, 'Baltic echoes' were also strong in Ukraine at this time. For interviews with the founders of *Belaruskaya Maistrounya* and *Talaka*, Alyaksandr Ulicenak, ed., *Insha-dumci myshlachie inache* (Minsk, 1991).

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Navini Belaruskaha Frontu za perebudovu 'Adradzhenne'* (Belarusian *samizdat*), No. 1, 1988.

[50] Bohdan Nahaylo, "More Signs of National Self-Assertiveness by Belorussians," *RL (Radio Liberty) 22-88*, January 18, 1988; Kathleen Mihalisko, "'Talaka' Takes Up the Latest Cause: Restoration of Belorussian National Flag," *RL 409-88*, September 7, 1988.

[51] Mihalisko, "The Popular Movement in Belorussia and Baltic Influences," p. 129.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Navini BNF*, No. 3, 1989.

[54] *Ibid.* The document also cited as part of this tradition, the 1863 uprising of Kalinouski, the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the declaration of independence by the BNR (March 1918), and "the creation of the sovereign Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus on January 1, 1919."

[55] *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, October 15, 1991.

[56] *Belarus*, No. 375, 1990.

[57] *Zvyazda*, August 14, 1991.

[58] Mikhas Tkachou, *Pakhodnya* (Minsk, 1994).

[59] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, December 8, 1991.

[60] *Chyrvonaya zmena*, December 16-22 1991.

[61] *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, January 25, 1992.

[62] *Moscow News*, August 2, 1992.

[63] *Moscow News*, November 29-December 6, 1992. It was these sorts of remarks about the alleged Russian imperial mentality which left Pazhnyak susceptible to the criticism of 'Russophobia' not only on the part of Belarusian state authorities but other Belarusian national activists who, as noted previously in this text, argued for the 'rationalization' of the 'national idea.'

[64] *Narodnaya hazeta*, January 14, 1993.

[65] *Moscow News*, March 5, 1993.

[66] *Moscow News*, August 2, 1992.

[67] *Narodnaya hazeta*, March 30, 1994.

[68] *Holas Radzymi*, February 23, 1995.

[69] As Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short of Poland* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 342-343 writes: "Whatever one's definition of Europe - whether it is the old idea of Christendom, or the modern concept of a geographical continent stretching from Gibraltar to the Caucasus; and whatever one's definition of Poland - whether it was the ancient realm of the Piasts of the Jagiellons, or the united Republic of Poland-Lithuania, there can be no dispute that historic Poland always lay on Europe's eastern confines. On one or two occasions, Polish scholars have made out a case for placing Poland not in 'Eastern Europe' but in the centre. In this case, most of their compatriots felt as uneasy belonging to a Mittleuropa dominated by Germans and Austrians as to the Eastern Europe of Mongols, Muscovites, and Muslims. Yet by no stretch of the imagination could the Poles claim that their country lay in the western half of Europe. At the time of Mieszko's baptism, Piast Poland formed the eastern extremity of Christendom on the edge of the pagan world. Under the Jagiellons, the frontier beyond the Dnieper bordered the steppes of the Golden Horde and the nomad peoples of Asia. In Sobieski's day, Poland shared a long frontier with the Ottoman Turks. Geographically, Poland belongs and has always belonged to the East. In every other sense, its strongest links have been with the West." As noted in chapter three, this bond with the West owes in large measure to Poland's strong links with the Roman Church.

[70] Cited in L. Ya. Haranin, *Naciyanalnaya ideya u belaruskai literaturi pachatku XX stahoddzya* (Minsk, 1996), p. 125.

[71] Alexandra Bergman, "Przyczynek do historii Bialoruskiej Organizacji Rewolucyjnej," *Przeglad historyczny*, Volume LXVIII, 1977, pp. 157-170.

[72] *Belaruski holas*, No. 44, 1943.

[73] *Belaruskaya hazeta*, December 7, 1943; *Belaruskaya holas*, June 23, 1944.

[74] *Zhyve Belarus!*, No. 1, July 1943, p. 2

[75] For example, Steven R. Burant, "Foreign Policy and National Identity: A Comparison of Ukraine and Belarus," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 7, 1995, pp. 1125-1144.

[76] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, March 20, 1992.

[77] *TASS International Service*, March 13, 1992, in *FBIS-SOV*, March 16, 1992.

[78] *Le Monde*, February 22, 1992; *Zvyazda*, February 25, 1992.

[79] *Litaratura i Mastactva*, March 20, 1992.

[80] Kathleen Mihalisko, "The Outlook for Independent Belarus," *RFE/RL Research Report*, June 12, 1992, p. 7.

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] *Ibid.*

[83] Leading figures of the Belarusian opposition, including Andrei Sannikou, emphasize the importance of their country's membership in the CEI.

[84] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, July 21, 1994.

[85] *Nasha Slova*, No. 22, 1994; *Nasha Niva*, July, 13, 1996.

[86] See the remarks by Alyaksandr Mikhalchuk, editor of the independent newspaper *Belorusskii rynok*, in The Washington Post, May 21, 1996.

[87] *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, May 5, 1999.

[88] *Chyrvonaya zmena*, April 1, 1995; *Narodnaya volya*, July 31, 1997.

[89] *Belaruskaya maladzyozhnaya*, September 6, 1996.

[90] *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, May 8, 1999.

[91] S. S. Sambuk, *Revolyutsionnyie narodniki Belorussii (70-e nachalo 80-x godov)*. Minsk, 1972. p. 176.

[92] Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "The First Ukrainian Political Program: Mykhailo Drahomanov's 'Introduction to Hromada," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton, 1987), p. 279.

[93] Cited in Rudnytsky, "Drahomanov as Political Theorist," in *ibid.*, p. 243.

[94] *Ibid.*

[95] Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1988), p. 285.

[96] *Homon*, No. 1, cited in Antony Adamovich," "The Kupala-Kolas Century 1882-1982," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, 1982, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 8

[97] *Ibid.*

[98] Jerzy Borzecki, "The Union of Lublin as a Factor in the Emergence of Ukrainian National Consciousness," *The Polish Review*, No. 1, 1996, pp. 41-43.

[99] A. Luckievich, "Mitrapalit Sheptyski i belaruski ruch," *Bohoslovia*, Vol. 4, 1926, pp. 45-48.

[100] For example, in January 1903, the Ukrainian journal *Przedswit* reported favorably on the appearance of the Belarusian-language leaflets (published with the assistance of the Polish PSP) discussed earlier in this text

[101] *Nasha Niva*, August 13, 1909.

[102] *Nasha Niva*, October 15, 1909; *Nasha Niva*, April 11, 1910.

[103] *Homan*, May 16, 1916; *Homan*, May 19, 1916.

[104] M. Dounar-Zapolski, *Asnovyi belaruskai dzyarzhaunasci* (Kiev, 1918).

[105] *Krynica*, October 15, 1922; *Belaruskaya krynica*, November 1, 1925; *Chryshchiyanskaya dumka*, November 1, 8, 15, 1936. The notion of Ukraine as a 'natural ally' of Belarus also found expression in other newspapers such as *Belaruski klich*, November 1, 1930. Indeed, this newspaper had the promotion of 'Belarusian-Ukrainian unity' as its main goal.

[106] *Belaruski Front*, December 5, 1936.

[107] *Belaruski Front*, April 5, 1937.

[108] *Belaruski Front*, January 5, 1939.

[109] *Belaruski Front*, May 5, 1938.

[110] Jan Ochota, "Z historii panstwowotworczych poczynan bialoruskikh," *Sprawy narodowosciowe*, No. 1, 1928, pp. 1-2.

[111] Nicholas P. Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 85.

[112] Bronislaw Taraszkiewicz (Bronislau Tarashkievich), "Bialoruskie postulaty polityczne" *Literatura na swiecie*, Nos. 8-9, 1991, p. 256.

[113] A. Cvikievich, *Kratkii ocherk vozniknovenniya Belorusskoi Narodnoi*

Respubliki (Kiev, 1917), p. 7; Ochota, "Z historii ...," p. 5.

[114] *Volnaya Belarus*, August 3, 1917; *Volnaya Belarus*, August 17, 1917.

[115] Cvikievich, *Kratkii ocherk ...*," p. 8.

[116] *Ibid.*

[117] Vakar, p. 98. Emphasis added.

[118] *Volnaya Belarus*, November 23, 1917.

[119] *Belaruski Front*, April 5, 1938.

[120] *Holas Radzimi*, December 2, 1993.

[121] *Belaruski Front*, September 5, 1936

[122] *Evropeiskoe vremya*, No. 5, June 1993: *Evropeiskoe vremya*, No. 8, September 1993.

[123] *Zvyazda*, November 15, 1925: *Saveckaya Belarus*, November 15, 1925.

[124] *Polymia*, No. 1, 1923.

[125] *Saveckaya Belarus*, January 5, 1924.

[126] 'A. Navini' (A. Luckievich), Kryzis idei, chy kryzis hramadyanstva," *Zachodnaya Belarus*, No. 1, 1923, p. 4.

[127] *Belaruskaya krynica*, November 8, 1925.

[128] *Belaruski dzen*, January 7, 1928; *Naperad!*, December 12, 1929; *Naperad!*, January 1930; *Belaruskaya dumka*, October 26, 1930; *Belaruskaya dumka*, February 26, 1931; *Naperad!*, March 10, 1931; *Belaruski Front*, January 5, 1938. These newspapers reported news of the arrests or deaths of leading intellectuals such as Cvikievich, Lastouski, Ihnatouski, Kupala and others.

[129] *Belaruski Front*, January 5, 1937.

[130] *Belaruski Front*, April 5, 1937.

[131] *Belaruski dzen*, February 2, 1928.

[132] *Belaruski Front*, June 12, 1936; *Belarus pracy*, March 18, 1934.

[133] *Belarus pracy*, March 18, 1934; *Naperad!*, December 24, 1929.

[134] See "Weekly Review of Events," *RFE/RL Research Report*, July 31, 1992, p. 74.

[135] *Selskaya zhizn*, February 5, 1994, in *FBIS-SOV*, February 8, 1994.

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] *Gazeta wyborcza*, September 14, 1994.

[138] *Kommersant-daily*, January 31, 1995.

[139] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 14, 1995; *Sevodnya*, February 15, 1995.

[140] *BTK Television Network*, March 5, 1995, in *FBIS-SOV*, March 7, 1995.

[141] *Sevodnya*, March 26, 1996.

[142] *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, April 2, 1998.

[143] *Zvyazda*, May 28, 1998.

[144] Vladimir Snapkovsky, *Belarusian-Russian Integration Scenarios*, paper presented to the international conference, "The Belarus Factor: Implications for Russia, East-Central Europe, and the West," Harvard University, April 22-23, 1999, p. 6

[145] Gunnar Lassinantti and Olexander Potekhin, *International Integration: The Experience of Belarus* (Stockholm, 1998).

[146] *Ibid.*

[147] *Rzeczpospolita*, January 24, 1997.

[148] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, July 21, 1994.

[149] *Belorusskii rynok*, September 22-28, 1997. Indeed, as pointed out in additional data by the author of this research during his appearance at Harvard University in April 1999, See Leonid Zlotnikov, *Possibilities of Private Economic Network*, paper presented to the international conference "The Belarus Factor: Implications for Russia, East-Central Europe and the West." Harvard University (Boston, Ma.), April 22-23, 1999. As Zlotnikov's research also shows, support for Belarusian independence (as well as democratic values and market economic reform) is higher in the West Belarusian *guberniyas* (Brest and Hrodna) than in the East (Mahileu). Interestingly, although not as pronounced, this situation somewhat parallels the traditional 'West-East' split in Ukraine.

[150] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 27, 1996.

[151] *Nasha Niva*, July 13, 1996.

[152] *Belorusskaya delovaya gazeta*, January 20, 1997.

[153] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 23, 1997.

[154] *Belorusskii rynok*, July 7-13, 1997.

[155] *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, April 2, 1998.

[156] *Zvyazda*, July 8, 1998. In view of the competing 'vectors' discussed in this and the previous chapter, Lukashenka's use of the term *shmatvektarnasc* is quintessentially Belarusian. Indeed, 'multi-vectoredness' emerges as a defining feature of the Belarusian 'national idea.'

[157] *Zvyazda*, May 28, 1998.

[158] Kathleen Mihalisko, "Belarus: retreat to authoritarianism," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Democratic changes and authoritarian reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 275.

[159] This is to say that, despite his claims, Lukashenka is not an emotionally committed 'pan-Slavist.' Rather, he has employed the 'Slavic idea' in a purely instrumental fashion to further his own political aims.

[160] John B. Dunlop, "Russia: In Search of an Identity?" in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 29.

[161] See "Roman Szporluk and Valerii Tishkov Talk about the National Question," in Roman Solchanyk, ed., *Ukraine: From Chernobyl to Sovereignty* (Edmonton, 1992), pp. 105-116. As Hosking, pp. 484-485 argues, the process of 'nation-building' in Russia has historically been subsumed by that of 'empire-building' leading to a "fractured and underdeveloped nationhood" within Russia. Indeed: "One cannot say that, as it stands, the post-1991 Russian Federation is really a nation-state" It is more a bleeding hulk of empire: what happened when to be left over when the other republics broke away."

[162] Dunlop, p. 42.

[163] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[164] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[165] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[166] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[167] Valery Tishkov, "Post Soviet Nationalism," in Caplan and Feffer, eds., p. 40.

[168] Internally, Hosking, pp. 485-486, points out that the although far from perfect, the 1993 Russian constitution "does at least provide a framework within which a civic culture might be created, and restrains - up to the time of writing (1997) - the various political factions from settling their differences in a naked power struggle." Indeed, it is encouraging that the various political forces arrayed across the complicated spectrum in post-Soviet Russia, including Communists, have to date observed the rule of constitutional law.

[169] *Ibid.*, p. 486; Dunlop, p. 68.

[170] Dunlop, "Russia: in search of an identity?", p. 57.

[171] *Ibid.*

[172] This idea was proposed in April 1997 by Grigory Yavlinsky's 'Yabloko' faction in the form of a draft 'Treaty on Economic Union.' See Snapkovsky, p. 6.

[173] *Ibid.*

Chapter VI
Summary and Conclusions

Adopting a 'mythic-symbolic' approach along the lines previously developed by leading scholars in the field of comparative nationality studies such as John Armstrong and Anthony Smith, this dissertation proposes an analytical framework for defining the concept 'national idea' and applying it within a comparative context to the historical experience of the former Soviet republic of Belarus. The key question addressed is why Belarus has thus far lagged behind its East-Central European neighbours, in particular Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, with whom it shares deep historical and cultural ties, in the process of constructing a new post-communist national identity. Contrary to the view of many foreign observers, the difficulty is not that Belarus lacks inherently the resources necessary for the creation of a new post-Soviet identity myth. As a successor state to the USSR possessing clearly defined and internationally recognized borders and membership in key international organizations including the United Nations, nor does the Belarusian republic lack a 'rational' or juridical basis for its existence.

On a conceptual level, the framework defines the 'mythical', 'synthesized', 'contested' and 'structured' character of the 'national idea'. With reference to the first of these analytical categories, it was emphasized that 'myth' as a concept is not to be understood as meaning 'distortion' or 'falsehood', even though certain claims by Belarusian national writers appear to be highly contestable by reference to other historical sources. Rather, the key question is the *interpretation of meaning*. Understanding the basic symbolic elements included in the Belarusian national myth, according to which Belarusians represent a unique 'Baltic-Slavic' ethnic synthesis and

are heirs to a 'centuries-long' history of independent statehood and cultural achievements which ties them to Europe, permits a fuller investigation of the Belarusian identity problematic.

The 'synthesized' chararacter of the Belarusian 'national idea' is reflected in the combination of social, cultural, religious and political influences deriving from the country's geographical location at the very crossroads of 'Western' and 'Eastern' civilizations. These have included Romanticism and Enlightenment (especially in their Polish forms); Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic religious influences (including Uniatism); Russian radical thought of the late 19th century personified by Herzen, Chernyshevsky and others; Ukrainian political thought (the federalist ideas of Mykola Drahomaniv); Marxism-Leninism (Bolshevism); critical realism, impressionism and symbolism. Owing to this 'synthesized character,' the Belarusian 'national idea' has historically represented *a certain blending together of the ethno-cultural ('Eastern') and politico-territorial ('Western') conceptions of 'the nation.'* This 'synthetic' blending of influences also appears as the major cause for the development of other important features of the Belarusian national idea: traditions of tolerance, respect and democratism and a corresponding rejection of violence and coercion as the basis for social and political organization; faith in the inherent 'goodness' of human nature; bilingualism and even multilingualism: and revulsion at war as the greatest of all possible human catastrophes.

The 'contested character' of the 'national idea' reveals that although the Belarusian *mythmoteur* demonstrates a certain internal logic and coherence, it also exhibits a number of important tensions and points of controversy among Belarusian writers across time, frequently joined in these debates by foreign actors. The most important of these include the significance of dynastic and later political union with Poland, the

legacy of the Belarusian National Republic (BNR), the significance of the Soviet experience (BSSR), and the future of the Belarusian language as a marker of national identity. Most importantly, as discussed especially in chapter five, the Belarusian 'national idea' has been typified by sharply competing 'vectors' or geo-political 'orientations' which emerged clearly during the inter-war period when the Belarusian territories were partitioned between Poland and the USSR. This continues to be the case in the contemporary context as exemplified by the ongoing struggle, also discussed in this chapter, between the 'return to Europe' and 'Russian' or 'Eastern' options. Viewed in a comparative vein, whereas Ukraine under Presidents Kravchuk and Kuchma has tended towards the European 'vector', Belarus under Lukashenka has been vigorously pursuing the Russian 'orientation.' However, in neither case has the matter been resolved finally. Nor will it ultimately boil down to a clear choice between the two options. Hence, the fundamental Belarusian (and Ukrainian) existential problematic remains that defined by Ihnat Abdziralovich during the early 1920s and discussed in chapter three - *find some means of 'blending' together the best of competing 'Western' and 'Eastern' influences.* Indeed, the observation of Ivan L. Rudnytsky regarding Ukraine could just as easily be applied to the Belarusian experience: "We arrive at the following conclusion. Ukraine, located between the worlds of Greek Byzantine and Western culture, and a legitimate member of both, attempted, in the course of its history, to unite the two traditions in a living synthesis. This was a great work, although it must be admitted that Ukraine has not fully succeeded in it ... In this sense, it may be said that the great task, which appears to be the historical vocation of the Ukrainian people, remains unfulfilled, and still lies in the future."[1] However, owing to the earlier emergence of a 'conscious' Ukrainian national movement, the attempted 'Ukrainization' and more vigorous defence of national

values during the 1960s under First Secretary Shelest (in stark contrast to the situation in Belarus under Masherau), and the pro-European policies of both Presidents Kravchuk and Kuchma (in contrast to the pro-Russian orientation of Lukashenka) since independence from the USSR in 1991, Ukraine today is relatively closer to realizing this historical aim than is Belarus.

The 'structural' dimension of the framework is crucial to understanding not only the essence but *depth* of the Belarusian identity problematic. On the one hand, competing Eastern and Western pressures (primarily, but not exclusively, Russian/Soviet and Polish) throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century were catalytic factors *facilitating* the emergence of the Belarusian 'national idea.' On the other, however, the 'structural' component goes a long way towards explaining the *tragedy* of the Belarusian experience which is that the national *mythmoteur* has not been deeply imbibed by the Belarusian masses themselves. As discussed at various points throughout this text, the causes for this are deeply-rooted in Belarusian history. The consciousness-raising efforts of Belarusian intellectuals associated with the national movement during the early decades of this century (including most notably the historians Lastouski and Ihnatouski as well as the poets Kupala, Kolas, Bahdanovich) were greatly complicated by the upheavals of war and revolution and the prevailing hostility to the movement itself on the part of larger and more powerful neighbours. The promising phase of 'nation-building' within the BSSR during the 1920s known as *Belarusizatsiya* ended in disaster thanks to the Stalinist liquidation of the Belarusian national *intelligentsia* during the 1930s. Notwithstanding the efforts of Belarusian activists during the World War II German occupation of Belarus to revive 'historical memory,' fertile grounds were thus created for the inculcation during the post-war period of an alternative Sovietized identity myth combining Slavophilic

emphasis on the unity of the Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian peoples with the principles of 'proletarian internationalism'. Moreover, the combined effects of Soviet urbanization, modernization and linguistic policies destroyed the previously intimate historical link between the 'national idea' and language.

While it can be regarded as having borne some important fruit among younger generation Belarusians, the new movement for national 'awakening' inaugurated by the opposition Belarusian National Front (BNF) during the late 1980s thus ran up against the bulwark not only of a deeply-conservative and recalcitrant communist regime but a largely *uncomprehending* population incapable of conceiving Belarusian statehood outside the context of the USSR. This was characterized in chapter one as a evidence of a pronounced *national nihilism*. In this sense, Belarus has yet to fully traverse the third stage of development elaborated in the introduction - that of the emergence of a mass national movement around the 'national idea'.

Assessing the Future of the Belarusian 'National Idea'

Although grave, the current situation in Belarus is not yet beyond salvation. First, as discussed in chapter three, owing to deeply-rooted traditions of tolerance, respect and democratism, Belarus (like Ukraine) compares rather favorably with other communist successor states (including the Baltic republics of Latvia and Estonia) which have witnessed the emergence of 'nationalizing nationalisms.' Indeed, an integral ethnic nationalism appeared in Belarus only during the abnormal conditions of the Nazi occupation of World War II and there are no serious signs of it re-emerging in the post-Soviet context. Second, as discussed in chapter one, although Belarusian scholars rightly condemn the Soviet system for destroying 'historical memory,' they tend to

downplay somewhat the 'nation-building' features of Soviet power. Indeed, it is undoubtedly the case that without the USSR there would be no Belarusian nation, let alone state, today. Third, although the current status of the Belarusian language can only be described as catastrophic, the fact that Belarusians themselves do not define their political and national identity in linguistic terms is extremely important to bear in mind. This is best exemplified in the paradox described in chapter two whereby Belarusian nationalism today overwhelmingly speaks *Russian*. Although there are deeply divergent views in this regard among nationally-conscious Belarusian intellectuals themselves, it is entirely possible that the survival of the Belarusian state is *not* dependent on the survival of the national language.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, as suggested in chapter three, the other side of the inherent Belarusian existential problematic is the *freedom* to choose one's identity ('Western') or ('Eastern') depending on the context. As exemplified by the 'confederal' dimension to Belarusian national thought discussed in chapter five, this means that Belarusians possess *a historically conditioned ability to identify with different state formations*. Like the Ukrainian 'national idea' once again, Belarusian nationalism has been of an *integrative* variety seeking not so much secession from existing states as their *federalization* and *democratization*. Sharing sovereignty and federalist ideas are nothing new to Belarusians who have historically defined their national identity within larger political formations. As Bruno Drewski argues, in this sense, Belarusian national consciousness is well-suited to the demands of modern European civilization, in particular *processes of economic and political integration*.[2] As emphasized in chapter five, symbolic of the more 'rationalized' nationalism promoted by the Belarusian opposition over the last several years, there is a

constituency of support for the idea of 'Europe' within Belarusian society among younger, urban generations.

However, bearing in mind what was described on a theoretical level as the importance of the socially-constructed 'primordial' bond with the nation as a symbol, the historical synthesis between Enlightenment ('realism' and 'rationalism') and Romance which has typified the development of the Belarusian 'national idea' will eventually need to be restruck. The key, however, is not linguistic revival but, as argued in chapter one, the enduring problem of 're-awakening' (or *inventing*) Belarusian historical consciousness. Eventually then, Belarusian elites will have to return to the Romantic task of reconstructing 'historical consciousness' (or the 'national spirit') on the basis of a 'constitutive myth' giving all citizens of the Belarusian state a shared sense of belonging and identity. The pluralistic traditions of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) provide a good starting point for (re-)creating such an 'inclusive' myth.

It is clear, however, that any optimistic prospects for the future depend on *regime transition* in Belarus. As discussed in chapter three, the pervasive Soviet totalitarian legacy deeply-rooted within the Belarusian public consciousness (in particular older generations), and deliberately perpetuated by Lukashenka for his own political purposes, is a formidable obstacle to overcome on the road to democratic transformations on the basis of the 'national idea.' Notwithstanding his increased emphasis in the last several years on the need to preserve Belarusian sovereignty in the context of economic and political integration with Russia, prospects for realizing the 'national idea' as long as the nihilistic self-described 'Soviet Belarusian' Lukashenka remains in power are negligible at best. It is apparent, however, that political change can come only from within - ultimately, drawing on the principal of self-reliance and

'struggle' (*zmahanne*) discussed in chapter three, younger generation Belarusians will have to show the will and determination of their forebears in the national movement to fight for the 'national idea' and, indeed, the very survival of their nation. Externally, the future of the Belarusian 'national idea' is also intimately linked to the acute post-Soviet Russian identity crisis. The shedding by Russia of the 'imperial' model in favor of a 'civic' approach to nationhood would greatly facilitate the chances for Belarusians to create a new national identity based on the notion of their historical 'belonging-ness' to Europe while maintaining, out of economic necessity if nothing else, close ties with their Eastern neighbour.

Notes

[1] Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "Ukraine Between East and West," in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History* (Edmonton, 1987), p. 9.
[2] Bruno Drewski, "Bialorus - strefa pluralizmu kulturowego," *Lithuania*, 3 (16) '95, pp. 56-67.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Abbreviations

The following is a list (in alphabetical order) of abbreviated terms which appear in the text.

BCD - Belarusian Christian Democracy.

BCP - *Belorusskaya Kommunisticheskaya Partiya* (Belorussian Communist Party).

BCR - *Belaruskaya Centralnaya Rada* ('Belarusian Central Council').

BNC - Belarusian National Committee.

BNF - *Belaruski Front Narodovy* ('Belarusian National Front').

BNR - *Belaruskaya Narodowa Respublika* (Belarusian National or 'Peoples' Republic).

BNU - Belarusian National Union.

BPYL - Belarusian Patriotic Youth League

BRH - Belarusian Revolutionary Hramada.

BRO - Belarusian Revolutionary Organization.

BSH - Belarusian Socialist Hramada (chapters one, three, four and five); Belarusian Self-Help (chapter five).

BSPR - Belarusian Socialist Revolutionary Party.

BSSR - *Belorusskaya Sovetskaya Sotsialisticheskaya Respublika* - ('Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic').

CCP - Christian Conservative Party

CDSP - Current Digest of the Soviet Press.

CEI - Central European Initiative

CFE - Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States.

CPWB - The Communist Party of West Belarus.

CSCE - Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

EEC - European Economic Community

GATT - The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

GNC - Great Belarusian Council.

GDL - The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia.

KPSS (CPSU) - *Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Sovetskovo Soyuza* ('The Communist Party of the Soviet Union').

NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

NEP - The 'New Economic Policy'.

OSCE - The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

PCP - Polish Communist Party

PFP - Partnership for Peace.

PMB - Peoples' Movement Belarus.

PNB - *Partiya naciyanalistou Belarusi* ('The Party of Belarusian Nationalists').

PPS - Polish Socialist Party

RSDWP - The Russian Social Democratic Workers Party.

RSFSR - Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic.

SBM - *Sayuz Belaruskai moladzi* ('The Union of Belarusian Youth').

SSP - *Sayuz Saveckikh Pismennikau* ('The Union of Soviet Writers').

SVB - *Sayuz vyzvalenia Belarusi* ('Union for the Liberation of Belarus').

SVU - *Spilka vyzvalenia Ukrainy* ('Union for the Liberation of Ukraine')

Appendix B

Select Biographies of Important Figures Associated With the Belarusian National Movement

The following are select biographies of key figures associated with the origins, emergence and development of the Belarusian 'national idea' and national movement. In some cases, owing to the paucity of original biographical materials, these personal histories are rather brief and incomplete. Piecing together the lives and times of many of these individuals remains one of the cardinal tasks in the area of Belarusian studies.

Maksim Bahdanovich (Writer/Poet)

Born in Minsk on December 9, 1891, the son of Adam and Mariya. In the summer of 1892, the family moved to Hrodna in what is today Western Belarus. Not without significance for understanding the development of the future poet is the fact that both parents had a strong interest in literature. Although a teacher by profession, Adam Bahdanovich was also an amateur ethnographer and collector of Belarusian folklore who published in 1895 (in Russian) the booklet *Perezhitki drevnyaho mirosozertsaniya u belorusov* ('Remnants of the Ancient World-view Among the Belarusians').[1] A turning point in Bahdanovich's early life was the premature death of his mother in 1896 at age 27 from tuberculosis following which Adam moved with Maksim and his older brother Vadzim to Central Russia, settling first in Nizhny Novgorod and later in Yaroslavl. Although living in the heart of Russia far removed from his Belarusian homeland, it was here that Maksim began to develop a deep love and devotion to *Belaruskasc*. In part, this was clearly owed to his father's interest in the subject. As Adam later recalled: "It

all started with the reading of Byelorussian fairy-tales, which initially I used to read to the children aloud, and which Maksim later began to read on his own. He saw in them a means of learning the Byelorussian language, which he was prevented from doing by what he heard either within his own family [the language at home being Russian] or from other people. This was his own, completely independent decision ... I did not encourage him in this pursuit, although, of course, did not prevent him from doing so."[2] There also existed in Nizhny Novgorod something of a 'Belarusian colony' comprised of the families of Adam's two sisters "in which the Belarusian spirit" prevailed and Belarusian customs were observed and respected. As a small boy, Maksim spent much of his free time with his aunts where he became acquainted with traditional Belarusian folk-songs and tales. The 'Belarusian colony' in Nizhny Novogorod also included an instructor at the local gymnasium - a certain Kabanou. Upon entering the gymnasium in 1902, Maksim spent long hours with Kabanou, enthralled by his stories about Belarusian history.[3] Young Bahdanovich's interest in his far-away native land was further sharpened in 1906 when his godmother Semova, who lived in Pinsk, began sending him copies of *Nasha Dolya* and *Nasha Niva* to which she subscribed on his behalf. Without doubt, reading in the pages of these publications the poetry and prose of Kolas, Kupala and other Belarusian writers further accelerated Maksim's already budding interest in a literary career.

After completing his studies in Nizhny Novogorod in 1908, Bahdanovich continued his studies at the Yaroslavl gymnasium. Here, his intellectual horizons were broadened through acquaintance with a lecturer at the school named (somewhat ironically) Belarusov, an expert in Greek, Latin and European languages. He imparted this interest to Maksim who subsequently himself became something of a linguist, developing proficiency not only in Russian, Ukrainian and Polish, but Romance languages including French and Latin. Although it was not

part of his official curriculum, Bahdanovich, already something of an autodidact, devoted himself almost exclusively to the study of Belarusian history and literature. As a result, he graduated in 1911 with only average marks. In the summer of that year, determined to make acquaintance with the leaders of the Belarusian national movement, Bahdanovich travelled to Vilna. Here he met Vaclau Lastouski (with whom Bahdanovich stayed during his visit) as well as Anton Luckievich. At this time, Bahdanovich was invited to join the editorial board of *Nasha Niva* which had already published several of his verses. Thus began a four-year long period of close collaboration with the newspaper ended only by the closure of *Nasha Niva* itself in 1915 following the outbreak of World War I. In the summer of that year, aware already for some time of the fact that he was suffering from the same illness which had already claimed the lives of his mother and brother, Bahdanovich travelled to Crimea for treatment in a sanatorium near Yalta. In 1916, he returned to Minsk (which remained free of German occupation - the front being 80 kilometres to the west) where he took a clerical job. However, in the spring of 1917, Bahdanovich's health deteriorated sharply, forcing his return for treatment to Yalta where he died on May 25 of that year.[4]

Francishak Bahushevich (Writer/Poet)

Considered the father of modern Belarusian literature, Bahushevich was born into a minor gentry family in the Vilna *guberniya* in 1840. He entered St. Petersburg University in 1861 where he studied mathematics and physics. However, as a consequence primarily of what he perceived as the stultifying political atmosphere at the university, Bahushevich gave up his studies and returned to his home province where he took up a teaching position at the village school in Dociski

(Lida region). When the Polish insurrection of 1863 broke out, Bahushevich took an active part, being wounded in the leg during a confrontation with Tsarist police near the town of Suvalki. After being nursed back to health by a local peasant family, Bahushevich returned briefly to Vilna but was soon forced to flee the wave of reprisals sweeping the countryside, making his way to Ukraine. Over the next three years, he studied at the Nizhny Law School and after graduation held a number of civil service appointments at various towns in both Ukraine and Russia. In 1884, Bahushevich returned to Vilna where he took up work as an attorney, acquiring a solid reputation among the local peasantry for his understanding and generosity towards them. However, in 1897, Bahushevich fell ill following a boat trip down the Nioman and Vilija Rivers, eventually contracting tuberculosis from which he died in March 1890.

There is some reason to believe that Bahushevich actually began his literary career while studying in Ukraine. Indeed, the influence of Taras Shevchenko and other Ukrainian poets is apparent in his work. However, Bahushevich was more closely connected to Polish cultural life as exemplified by his friendship with the writer Eliza Orzeszkowa, ethnographer Michal Federwoski and philologist Jan Karlowicz. Indeed, the latter played an instrumental role in the clandestine publication in Cracow of Bahushevich's first collection of original Belarusian-language verse in 1891 ('The Belarusian Pipe'). A second book of poetry was published also in Cracow in 1894. Bahushevich is also known to have authored a number of other works which have been lost.[5]

Usievalad Ihnatouski (Historian)

Born in the Hrodna *guberniya* (today part of Western Belarus), Ihnatouski was the son of a school teacher who later became an Orthodox priest. He began his studies at the Vilna gymnasium but was expelled for his involvement in radical student groups. He continued his studies at the Mahileu gymnasium from which he graduated in 1902. Seeking higher education, Ihnatouski that same year enrolled in the historical-philological faculty of St. Petersburg University. Here he became a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and owing to his participation in anti-government demonstrations was arrested and expelled from the Russian capital during the revolutionary events of 1905. Although permitted to return the following year, in 1907 he was once again expelled from St. Petersburg this time sent to the Archangel *guberniya*. However, in 1909 he succeeded in being accepted into the Yurevski university from which he graduated in 1911.[6]

Ihnatouski then went to Vilna where he worked as a history teacher in a private gymnasium until 1914 when he accepted a position as lecturer and subsequently professor of history and economic geography at the Minsk Teaching (after 1919 'Pedagogical') Institute where he remained until 1920. In 1915 (after the institute itself had been evacuated to Yaroslavl in the context of World War I), Ihnatouski participated in the creation of an autonomous wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party called 'Nash Krai' which propagated the idea of Belarusian 'national revival' (*adradzhenne*) and began active cooperation with the 'liberal wing' of the Belarusian national movement. It was during his time at the Institute that Ihnatouski's views on Belarusian history (to be discussed in further depth below) began to crystallize with his lecture notes destined to be the basis for a number of subsequent scientific publications on this topic.[7]

Following the February 1917 Russian Revolution, Ihnatouski began to cooperate with the Soviet of Worker's Deputies in Yaroslavl (members of which included representatives of the Bolshevik party). In May of that year, 'Nash Krai' transformed itself into the new organization 'Maladaya Belarus' whose program was close to that of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada discussed in the previous chapter. In the summer of 1918, although most of Belarus was still occupied by the German army, Ihnatouski and his teaching colleagues returned to Minsk. Here, following the collapse of the BSH, Ihnatouski became a member of the Central Committee of the newly-formed Belarusian Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Representing the radical 'left-wing' of the BSRP, Ihnatouski advocated a policy of tactical cooperation with the underground communist movement. During the Polish occupation of 1919-1920, Ihnatouski was a member of the anti-Polish Belarusian underground resistance. In December 1919, at his initiative, 'Maladaya Belarus' broke away from the BSRP and one year later transformed itself into the new Belarusian Communist Organization. In its programmatic documents signed by Ihnatouski, the BCO called for the revival of the BSSR linked through federative ties with Soviet Russia. In February 1920, Ihnatouski was elected head of the Central Committee of the BCO which subsequently established organizations in Minks, Sluck, Hrodna, Lida and several other Belarusian cities. Numbering about 2,000 members, this group began increasingly active cooperation with the Bolshevik underground as Ihnatouski's own political views shifted steadily towards a communist orientation. Indeed, in July 1920, he was accepted as a member of the Russian Communist Party [Bolshevik]. That same month, representing the BCO, Ihnatouski signed the second 'declaration of independence' by the BSSR referred to earlier. In August the BCO itself was accepted into the Communist Party [Bolshevik] of Lithuania and Belarus (later the

Communist Party [Bolshevik] of Belarus) which itself was already part of the RCP[b].[8]

Within the BSSR, Ihnatouski occupied a number of senior state, party and academic positions. From 1920-1921, as a member of the Military-Revolutionary Committee of the BSSR, he was Commissar of Agriculture. In 1921, he became the first Soviet Belarusian Commissar of National Education, a position he occupied until 1926. From 1923-1924, he was a candidate member, and from 1924-1930, a full member of the Central Committee of the BCP[b]. From 1927-1929, he was Chairman of the Society of Belarusian Marxists. Ihnatouski was one of the founders of the new Belarusian State University in Minsk where, after 1922, he held the position of professor. From 1926-1928, he headed the newly-created Institute of Belarusian Culture. Following the transformation of *Inbelkult* into the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in 1929, Ihnatouski became its first President.[9]

However, in beginning as early as 1927, the BCP leadership began calling into question Ihnatouski's historiographical views. Official criticism began in earnest in 1929 and in October 1930 Ihnatouski was stripped of his membership in the BCP Central Committee. In December of that year, he was dismissed as President of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences. In January 1931, now openly accused of being a 'national democrat,' Ihnatouski was deprived of his Communist Party membership. Rather than face the humiliation of further trumped-up charges, Ihnatouski chose death by suicide on February 4, 1931.

Mykola Jermalovich (Historian)

A seminal event in the reconsideration of Belarusian history during the *perestroika* period in the USSR was the publication in 1990 of Jermalovich's *Starazhytnaya*

Belarus: Polacki i Novaharodski periyadi, a book which represented the culmination of twenty years of quiet and pain-staking research in the Belarusian National Library and archives in Minsk. Jermalovich is a prime example of the fact that a number of nationally-minded Belarusian historians had for years simply been unable to have their work published.[10] Nonetheless, they remained undeterred in their efforts to research the 'truth' a they understood it about their nation's past. Perhaps best regarded as *l'éminence grise* of the contemporary Belarusian historical community, Jermalovich was born in 1921 in the village of Maliya Navasyolki to a peasant family. His father perished during the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s an event which was important for shaping Mykola's outlook. He studied Belarusian literature and worked for almost ten years as a lecturer before being forced to give this up in 1958 by his poor eyesight. Already animated by a profound interest in ancient historical chronicles, he subsequently decided to devote himself to returning to Belarusians their "historical memory." During the 1960s, several attempts at publishing his work were rejected by the Soviet censor. However, at times he succeeded in imparting his historical views in other fora. For example, at an academic conference in 1969, he presented his controversial and nationally-oriented interpretation of the origins of the name *Litva* ('Lithuania').[11]

Jakub Kolas (Writer/Poet)

Kolas was born the son of forest-warden in Minsk province. After graduating from teacher's college in 1902, he became a village school-master. However, in 1906, Kolas was arrested and dismissed from his teaching position for having taken part in a clandestine political meeting. As Kolas himself later wrote in his autobiography, the appearance that same year of first *Nasha Dolya* and then *Nasha*

Niva was a turning point in his life which he henceforth dedicated "to the Belarusian cause and Belarusian literature."[12] While awaiting the disposition of his court case, Kolas' first poem 'Nash rodny krai' ('Our Native Land') appeared in the inaugural issue of *Nasha Dolya* (October 1906).[13] Kolas joined the editorial board of *Nasha Niva* in 1907. However, in 1908 he was sentenced to three years imprisonment for his participation in the illegal meeting. Kolas' first collection of poems *Pesni alby* ('Songs of Mourning') appeared in 1910. Following his return to Vilna in 1911, he became a regular contributor to *Nasha Niva* publishing in its pages a total of 126 poems and 313 short stories. Together with his contemporary Janka Kupala (whose biography appears below), Kolas was virtually the lone Belarusian writer to survive the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. He died a natural death in 1956.

Janka Kupala (Writer/Poet)

Regarded within Belarusian circles as the 'national poet' of Belarus, Janka Kupala (the pseudonym for Ivan Luckievich) was born in the son of a tenant farmer near Minsk in 1882. Owing to the premature death of his father which obliged him to assume responsibility for the family farm, his widowed mother and younger sister, Kupala was initially unable to continue his education beyond primary school. He later worked as a brewery laborer and junior office clerk. In 1904, Kupala had a chance meeting with the Belarusian writer Anton Lavecki (1868-1922) who acquainted him with the works of nineteenth-century Belarusian poets - most importantly Bahushevich. Kupala's first published poem *Muzhyk* ('The Peasant,' inspired by Bahushevich's *Durny muzhyk, jak varona*) appeared in the Russian-language newspaper *Severo-zapadny krai* ('The North-West Region') in 1905.[14] Kupala debuted in *Nasha Niva* in May 1907 with the poem *Kascu* ('To

the Haymaker').[15] In 1908, Kupala accepted an offer to join the editorial staff of *Nasha Niva* and moved to Vilna. That same year, his first collection of poems under the title *Zhaleika* ('The Flute') was published by the Belarusian *Zahlanie sonca i u nasha akonca* in St. Petersburg. A sympathetic reviewer in the Russian-language press wrote of Kupala's work that "[w]e are witnessing a historic event of extraordinary importance for our land. The Belorussian poem is passing from the realm of ethnography to the realm of literature; the Belorussian people, from being an object of folkloric study is becoming the object of national consciousness." In 1909, Kupala went to St. Petersburg to pursue his education, returning to Vilna in 1913. In February of the following year he became editor-in-chief of *Nasha Niva* occupying the position until the newspaper's closure by German occupation authorities in August 1915. As discussed in the text, Kupala was one of the most militantly nationalist Belarusian writers, expressing at times, distinctly radical and even revolutionary views, much of this material appearing during the Polish occupation of 1918-1919.

Rather than liquidating Kupala (and Kolas), the Stalinist regime after 1930 tried to redirect the writer's creativity into the proper, 'propagandistic' channels. In this context, it was obviously impossible for him to continue his role as the 'prophet' of Belarusian renaissance, a turn of events he could not easily countenance. In November 1930, after writing a letter to the Chairman of the BCP Central Committee denying affiliation with any 'counter-revolutionary organizations whatsoever' and declaring that physical death was preferable to "an unwarranted political death," Kupala unsuccessfully attempted suicide. Although he recovered and resumed his literary career, he died in Moscow in 1942 under suspicious circumstances, this time possibly a successful suicide.

Vaclau Lastouski (Writer/Historian)

As discussed in chapter one, Lastouski can be regarded as the original formulator of the Belarusian national *mythmoteur*. However, epitomizing the depth of the destruction of Belarusian 'historical memory' during the Soviet era, reliable biographical data on Lastouski remains difficult to come by. To the extent that his name was even mentioned in Soviet sources, it was typically to denounce him as one of the chief ideologues of Belarusian "bourgeois nationalism." Beginning in the 1930s, his historiographical works, including *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* ('A Short History of Belarus'), were banned from publication. They would not be republished within Belarus itself only the late 1980s and the emergence of a new Belarusian movement for national *renaissance* (*Adradzhenne*) made possible by Gorbachev's *perestroika* reforms.

Lastouski was born on October 27, 1883 to a minor gentry family in the Vilna *guberniya*. He received his initial education at home and alter attended St. Petersburg University (1904-1905). However, as noted in the text, Lastouski was primarily an auto-didact who became essentially the first Belarusian 'national historian' through his own independent efforts. In 1902, Lastouski joined the Polish Socialist Party (PSP) which, as discussed in chapter one, played a crucial catalytic role in the emergence of the nascent Belarusian movement at this time. In 1906, he became a member of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, the first Belarusian national political organization which advocated Belarusian cultural and political autonomy within a democratized Russia. From 1909 to 1914, Lastouski worked on the editorial board of *Nasha Niva*. It was during this period that his most important historical works appeared. During 1916-1917, Lastouski edited the journal *Homan* which propagated the idea of a new Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In

1919, following the collapse of the Belarusian National Republic (BNR), Lastouski joined the newly-created Belarusian Socialist-Revolutionary Party. In December of that year, following the split within the leadership of the Belarusian movement over the question of federal cooperation with Poland, Lastouski, after a brief period of detention by Polish authorities, became Prime Minister of a new Belarusian Socialist-Revolutionary government located in Kaunas, Lithuania. He withdrew from active political life in 1923 and devoted himself once again to cultural and literary activities.

From 1923-1927, Lastouski published and edited the journal *Kryvich* in Kaunas wherein he expounded his so-called 'Krivichian theory.' As discussed in the text, this theory argued for dispensing with the names 'Belorussia' and even 'Belarus' as vehicles of 'de-nationalization' and 'Russification' imposed by the Muscovite authorities during the middle ages in favor of the more historically-correct tribal name 'Kryvichi'. During the early 1920s, the 'Krivichian theory' was the source of intense internal controversy within the Belarusian movement. Although rejected by other leaders of the Belarusian movement, Lastouski's theory clearly had its adherents. During the mid-1920s, for example, Belarusian *émigrés* in Prague, comprised primarily of university students, established the 'Krivichian (Belarusian) Cultural Society' dedicated in large part to popularizing the name 'Krivichi' among Belarusians. The journal *Belaruski student* expressed the hope that with time this would be the name by which Belarusians called themselves and were called by 'others.'[16]

Together with other Belarusian activists who had initially been highly skeptical of Bolshevism, Lastouski was convinced by the *Belarusizatsiya* policy of the mid-1920s to return to the BSSR. In 1928, he became first curator of the newly-established Belarusian National Museum in Minsk. However, in January 1930, during the first wave of Stalinist repressions against the Belarusian national

intelligentsia, Lastouski was arrested and exiled to Saratov where he worked as a university librarian in charge of the rare book collection. The final few years of Lastouski's life remain one of the glaring 'blank spots' in his personal biography. However, it is known on the basis of materials in Soviet archives that he was arrested again in August 1937, condemned as an "enemy of the people," and shot on January 23, 1938.[17]

Mikhas Tkachou (Historian)

The historian Tkachou was born in the town of Mstislau located to the east of Mahileu near the border with Russia. During the second half of the 1960s, he was involved with an informal group of intellectuals called 'Na paddashku' which met to discuss the possible ways and means of Belarusian national *adradzhenne*.[18] After completing his studies in the history faculty at the Belarusian State University in Minsk, he accepted a teaching position at the University of Hrodna in 1978. In 1981, the 'Na paddashku' group organized an unofficial art exhibition devoted to the memory of Ivan Luckievich. Similar functions in honour of Vaclau Lastouski and Maksim Bahdanovich were later held. Tkachou joined the *Pakhodnya* club in 1986 and almost immediately became its spiritual leader. The following year, he defended his doctoral dissertation on the subject of Belarusian military history. He gained the title of professor at Hrodna University in 1989. During his academic career, Tkachou participated in the publication of more than 400 articles and books on the topic of Belarusian art, history and culture including the new *Encyklapediya historii Belarusi*, the first volume of which appeared in 1991.[19] Tkachou's premature death by illness in 1992 clearly deprived the 'reawakening' Belarusian nation one of its most eloquent intellectual, spiritual, and political leaders.

Uladzimir Zhylka (Writer/Poet)

Born in the village of Makasha near Minsk, Zhylka's parents instilled in their son from an early age a love of reading as a result of which the boy became acquainted with the works of such great Russian writers as Lermontov, Gogol and Pushkin. However, even more important, after 1914, young Zhylka began to read Belarusian-language books which were also in the family library. By the time of the March 1917 Russian revolution, Zhylka was a member of the Belarusian Socialist-Revolutionary Party and the revolutionary events themselves found him in Minsk. He was in attendance at the First 'All-Belarusian' Congress in December of that year and witnessed its forcible closure by the Bolsheviks. Early in 1918, wishing to help his destitute father, Zhylka began work as an agronomist at a state-farm near Minsk where he came into contact with such leading figures of the Belarusian movement as the budding young writer Mikhas Charot, the 'second generation' *Nasha Niva* poet Byadulya, and Ihnat Dvarchanin. Most significantly, Zhylka struck up a friendship with Janka Kupala who exerted undoubtedly a profound influence on the 'new generation' poet's outlook. Following the partition of Belarus in 1921, Zhylka moved to Vilna where he established a close friendship with Anton Luckievich and also met the philosopher Abdziralovich, both of whom also exerted significant formative influences on his world-view.[20]

In terms of his creative inheritance, Zhylka is best regarded as the continuer of Maksim Bahdanovich's legacy. Indeed, parallels on both the personal and artistic levels between the two are striking. To begin with, both were plagued throughout their lives by chronically bad health, succumbing at a young age to the same disease - tuberculosis. In terms of their literary achievements, both were innovators who set before themselves the conscious task of introducing into

Belarusian verse and poetry new literary styles, thereby demonstrating the inherent capacity of the Belarusian language to assimilate the latest innovations in Russian and European literature. Whereas Bahdanovich introduced into Belarusian poetry and prose an eclectic mix of impressionism and symbolism, Zhylka introduced the new Russian literary 'fad' of the 1920s - *imagism*. Together with Belarusian students in Prague, Zhylka was a supporter of Lastouski's 'Krivichian theory," employing the term not only in his original poetry but publicist writings. Most interesting in this respect is a short article entitled 'Kryiuya' ('Kryvich') in which he largely echoes the thinking of Lastouski. As long as we are 'Belarusians,' the poet writes, we will not be a real 'we.' Being a "real organism" and engaging in genuine "creativity" required "individualism" and "self-identification." This could only be as "Kryvichi." Zhylka interpreted the name itself as meaning "creativity and form, the essence of which is the nation, the content - every achievement - be it a new verse, a new scientific work - is Kryvichian."[21]

Notes

[1] A. E. Bogdanovich, *Perezhitki drevnyaho mirosozertsaniya u belorussov* (Hrodna, 1895).

[2] A. E. Bogdanovich, "Materialy k biografii Maksima Adamovicha Bogdanovicha," *Belaruskaya litaratura, dasledvanni matariyaly*, Minsk, No. 3, 1960, p. 205.

[3] Ivan Navumenka, *Maksim Bahdanovich* (Mlnsk, 1997)' pp. 35-45-46.

[4] Ales Chabot, *Paet i chas* (Hrodna, 1996), p. 65.

[5] Maksim Harecki, *Historiya belaruskae litaratury* (Vilna, 1921), p. 106.

[6] M. P. Kasciuk, "U. M. Ihnatouski - hramadski dzeyach, vuchony," in M. K. Tokarau, ed., Akademik *U. M. Ihnatouski: Materiyaly navukovikh prysvechanikh 110-hoddzyu z dnya naradzennya* (Minsk, 1993), pp. 6-7.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[9] A. P. Hrickievich, "Pradmova da 5-ha ydavvya," in U. Ihnatouski, *Karotki narys historii Belarusi* (Minsk, 1991), p. 6.

[10] Mikhas Tkachou, "Napisanae zastaecca," in Mikola Jermalovich, *Starazhytnaya*

Belarus: Polacki i Navahrodski periyadi (Minsk, 1990), p. 6.

[11] *Respublika*, July 14, 1993; *Nasha slova*, No. 32, 1994.

[12] Jakub Kolas, *Autobiyahrafiya* (Minsk, 1927), p. 10.

[13] *Nasha Dolya*, No. 1, 1906.

[14] *Severno-zapadnyi krai*, No. 746, 1905. For the Belarusian-language version of this poem, see *Spadchyna: vybar paezzi Janki Kupali* (New York, 1955), p. 5.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

[16] *Belaruski student*, Nos. 2-3, February-March 1923, pp. 5-11.

[17] V. Sienkievich, "Lastouski the Historian and his Historical Views," *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, 1984, pp. 3-13.

[18] *Nasha Niva*, November 11-17, 1996

[19] Mikhas Tkachou, *Pakhodnya* (Minsk, 1994), p. 244.

[20] Mikhas Skobla, 'Shukalnik kharastva," foreword to Uladzimir Zhylka, *Vybraniya tvory* (Minsk, 1998), pp. 6-7.

[21] U. Zhylka, "Kryuiya," in *ibid.*, p. 163.

Appendix 'C'
Historical Chronology

The following is brief historical chronology of important dates in Belarusian history recounted in the text.

10th-12th Centuries

According to Belarusian scholars, the period of initial independence for the principality of Polack - the first Belarusian proto-state. Other historians maintain that Polack was an integral part of the Kievan Rusian dynasty.

13th Century

The Belarusian territories centred in Polack become part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ('GDL'). Citing the official status of the 'old Belarusian' (Ruthenian) language, Belarusian writers describe the GDL as a joint 'Lithuanian-Belarusian' or even simply 'Belarusian' state.

1386

Owing primarily to a growing military threat posed by Muscovy (as well as the German Teutonic knights), the Grand Duchy enters into dynastic union with Poland. However, the GDL retains a large degree of its previous political autonomy.

1569

The Grand Duchy enters into political union with Poland to create the new *Rzeczpospolita* or 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.' A multi-national and multi-confessional state,

1596

The Brest Act of religious union gives rise to the new Greek Catholic ('Uniate') Church. Belarusian scholars later argue that the Uniate Church had the potential to become the Belarusian 'national religion.'

1772, 1793, 1795

The partitions of Poland by Austria, Prussia, and Russia as a consequence of which the Belarusian territories are incorporated into the Russian Empire.

1810-1830

The initial phase of 'unconscious' Belarusian national awakening begins at the University of Vilna. A leading role in this process is played by Uniate professors and the Polish Philomaty, in particular Adam Mickiewicz and Jan Czaczot. The university is closed after the abortive Polish uprising of 1831.

1839

Cancellation of the Uniate Church by Tsarist decree.

1840-1860

The 'literary awakenings' of Belarusian nationalism in which an outstanding role is played by Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievich, the first writer to choose the Belarusian language as his literary vehicle.

1863

The crushing of the Polish Insurrection by Russian authorities create the ground for the eventual emergence of new national movements among Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belarusians. One of the leaders of the rebellion within Belarus and Lithuania, Kastus Kalinouski, is later immortalized in Belarusian national mythology.

1884

The 'conscious' phase of Belarusian national 'revival' begins with the appearance of the Belarusian populist journal *Homon* ('The Clamor'). Influenced profoundly by the federalist ideas of the Ukrainian social-democrat Mykola Drahomanov, the newspaper advocates the concept of federated Belarusian independence within a democratized and decentralized Russia.

1894

The appearance of the first Belarusian-language collection by the poet Francishak entitled 'Dudka Belaruskaya' ('The Belarusian Pipe'). Publishing under the pseudonym 'Maciej Burochak,' Bahushevich exorts his compatriots above all not to relinquish their national language which he describes as being on a par with the other great languages of Europe including French and German.

1902

The brothers Ivan and Anton Luckievich, together with fellow student Vaclau Ivanouski, create 'The Circle for Belarusian National Enlightenment' at St. Petersburg University. This can be regarded as the origins of the modern Belarusian national movement. The name of the group is then changed to the Belarusian Revolutionary Hramada ('BRH'), the first Belarusian political organization.

1903

The BRH changes its name to the Belarusian Socialist Hramada ('BSH') and adopts a program calling for Belarusian cultural and political autonomy within a democratized and federalized Russia.

1906-1915

The *Nasha Niva* period of Belarusian national 'renaissance' (*adradzhenne*) so named for the newspaper which served as the vehicle of the Belarusian movement.

Personified by the poets Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Maksim Bahdanovich and others, this period witnesses, in particular, the rapid growth of Belarusian national literature.

1910

The publication of Vaclau Lastouski's *Karotkaya historiya Belarusi* ('A Short History of Belarus') which represents the first real effort to elaborate a Belarusian national identity myth.

1915-1916

The German occupation of Belarus gives leaders of the Belarusian movement hope for the resurrection of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This idea is propagated in the pages of Vaclau Lastouski's newspaper *Homan* ('The Clamor'). However, owing primarily to German disinterest, these plans are not realized.

March 1917

The collapse of the Tsarist state gives impetus to national movements across the former empire including Belarus. A series of Belarusian congresses and meetings are held through the spring and summer. As elaborated, among other sources, in the newspaper *Volnaya Belarus*, the dominant theme among Belarusian activists is that of federal or confederal union with Russia.

December 1917

The first 'All-Belarusian Congress' is held in Minsk. The dominant political trend continues to be that of federated Belarusian independence within a democratized and decentralized Russia. However, the Congress is forcibly closed by the Bolsheviks. This proves to be a catalytic event in the development of the Belarusian national idea' which now starts working towards the idea of *independence* from Russia.

March 1918

The Belarusian National Republic ('BNR') declares its independence from Russia. However, having emerged in the chaotic circumstances of war and revolutionary upheaval, the fledgling state survives only until December 1918 when Minsk is re-occupied by Bolsheviks.

January 1, 1919

Acknowledging the fact that they were insufficiently attentive to Belarusian national aspirations, the Bolsheviks create the new Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic ('BSSR').

March 1919

The Soviet government merges the BSSR with the recently-established Lithuanian SSR to create the new Lithuanian-Belorussian SSR ('Litbel').

March 1921

As a result of the Treaty of Riga, the Belarusian territories are partitioned between Poland and Soviet Russia. This division remains in effect until September 1939 when, under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of non-aggression between Stalin and Hitler, Soviet forces annexed West ('Polish') Belarus into the USSR. During this pivotal period, incipient schisms within the Belarusian national movement were profoundly exacerbated.

1924-1930

The *Belarusizatisya* ('Belarusization') period of national cultural flowering within the BSSR ('East Belarus') most easily visible once again in Belarusian national literature - the journals *Polymia*, *Maladnyak* and *Uzvyshsha*. The Belarusian language was institutionalized within party and state structures and, as exemplified by the work of the 'national historian' Usievalad Ihnatouski (the architect of *Belarusizatsiya* itself), the history of the republic was Belarusianized. On the contrary, Polish policy during the mid-1920s in 'West Belarus' became one of 'pacifying' Belarusian national aspirations. The end of *Belarusizatsiya* and destruction of the Belarusian national *intelligentsia* during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s appear today as a major tragedy which forestalled the modern Belarusian 'nation-building' process. The history of Belarus is re-written emphasizing the striving of Belarus for 'union' with Russia. As part of this, seminal works by Belarusian national historians, including Lastouski and Ihnatouski, are banned.

1941-1944

The Nazi occupation of Belarus devastates the republic economically and exacts an appalling human toll through mass deportations and executions. However, a rapidly growing and effective Soviet partisan resistance encourages the occupation authorities to make certain concessions to competing Belarusian nationalist organizations. It is during this period that integral Belarusian nationalism clearly manifested itself.

1956

Nikita Khrushchev criticizes Stalin for abuses of the Leninist nationality policy and inaugurates a new period of the officially-sanctioned 'flowering' (*rastsvet*) of national cultures within the USSR. Belarusian writers begin the process of 'returning' national values and traditions to society through literature.

1961

Khrushchev introduces the concept of the supranational Soviet people (*Sovetskii narod*) into the lexicon of Soviet nationality policy. The official policy increasingly becomes one of encouraging the 'drawing together' (*sblizhenie*) and eventual 'fusion' (*sliyanie*) of nations within the USSR.

1965-1980

The long and contradictory tenure of Piotr Miranovich Masherau as First Secretary of the Belarusian Communist Party. On the one hand, the thoroughgoing

destruction of Belarusian 'historical memory' continues, accompanied by the linguistic Russification of the republic. On the other, the internal contradictions of Soviet policy contribute to the further development of at least a territorial sense of Belarusian national awareness. A paradox emerges whereby Belarusians take genuine pride that they are citizens of a 'sovereign' Soviet republic with representation in international bodies including the United Nations but do not know their own history or language.

1986

Mikhail Gorbachev inaugurates his package of liberalizing economic and political reforms which come to be known as *perestroika* ('restructuring'). National cultural elites across the USSR, including Belarus, begin protesting the nihilistic effects of the Soviet nationality policy, in particular, the altering or destruction of historical memory and linguistic Russification. In December, Belarusian writers dispatch a letter to Gorbachev asking for his personal support in defending the Belarusian language.

October 1988

The Belarusian National Front organization ('BNF') dedicated to national 'renaissance' is created in Minsk. Its leadership includes prominent Belarusian intellectuals.

February 1989

The BNF holds its first mass rally in Minsk attended by more than 50,000 people.

June 1989

The BNF holds its founding congress. Owing to the recalcitrant attitude of Belarusian authorities, the meeting has to be held in Vilna, Lithuania.

January 1990

The BNF wins an important political victory when the still communist-dominated Belarusian Supreme Soviet approves a new language law declaring Belarusian the sole official language.

June 1990

As part of a general trend across the USSR, Belarus issues a declaration of 'state sovereignty' which was the result of intense negotiations between the BNF and communist authorities.

September 1991

Following the abortive anti-Gorbachev *putsch* of the previous month, Belarus declares its independence from the USSR. The symbols of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania - *Pahonya* state seal and white-red-white banner, are adopted as official emblems of the new republic.

December 1991

The 'Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) is established on the impetus of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and Chairman of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet Stanislau Shushkievich as the successor mechanism to the defunct USSR. Minsk is named as the 'coordinating centre' of the new entity.

July 1994

Alyaksandr Lukashenka, a former state-farm director and political maverick, is elected the first President of Belarus in an overwhelming victory against Prime Minister Vyachaslau Kiebich.

April 1995

During a nation-wide referendum held at Lukashenka's initiative, Belarusians vote overwhelmingly to reject national symbols adopted at the time of independence from the USSR and linked to memories of the Grand Duchy and re-adopt Soviet-era state symbols. They also strongly endorse Lukashenka's proposals for closer economic and political ties with Russia and granting Russian equal status with Belarusian as an official language.

April 1996

Russian President Yeltsin and Belarusian President Lukashenka sign a protocol on the creation of a new 'Belarusian-Russian Commonwealth.' This is followed by large-scale anti-Lukashenka, pro-independence demonstrations in Minsk and other Belarusian cities involving as many as 40,000 people.

November 1996

During a second presidential referendum, Belarusians vote to grant President Lukashenka sweeping new executive powers. They also agree with his proposal to change the date for Belarusian 'Independence Day' celebrations from July 27 (the date the BSSR declaration of sovereignty was officially approved in 1990) to July 3, the date Minsk was liberated by the Soviet Army in 1944.

January 1997

Russian President Yeltsin outlines the preconditions which must be met in order for a two-country referendum on unifying Belarus and Russia to be held later that year. Belarusian authorities, however, react with notable caution. President Lukashenka declares that Belarus will never become a province (*guberniya*) of Russia.

April 1997

Russian President Yeltsin and Belarusian President Lukashenka sign an agreement establishing the new 'Union of Belarus and Russia.'

November 1997

Belarusian President Lukashenka declares his dissatisfaction with the pace of integration processes between his country and Russia. A group of Belarusian opposition intellectuals and journalist launch the new *Karta '97* initiative in the aim of encouraging Belarusian to declare their support for democracy, human rights and the independence of their state.

December 1998

Belarusian President Lukashenka and Russian President Yeltsin sign a new 'Declaration on the Further Unification of Belarus and Russia.' However, throughout the following year, tangible steps towards the formal unification of the two states are not apparent.

Appendix D
A Brief Conspectus of Belarusian National *Samizdat*

Belarusian national *samizdat* is a phenomenon virtually unknown in the West. Arguably, however, the tradition of Belarusian *samizdat* can be traced all the way back to the 1863 Polish Insurrection and Kastus Kalinouski's clandestine *Muzhyckaya prauda*. Contemporary Belarusian *samizdat* materials have been collected at the new 'Modern History Archives' established under the auspices of the *Nasha Niva* foundation in Minsk.

As defined by Juras Lauryk,[1] three stages in the development of Belarusian *samizdat* can be discerned covering the period from 1965-1991. During the first of these from 1965-1971, Belarusian *samizdat* consisted primarily of Russian-language materials either typewritten or reproduced by photocopy, for example, the literary works of Bulgakov and Pasternak as well as the philosophical writings of Berdaev and other Russian thinkers. The second period the second from 1971-1988, however, is characterized by the publication of Belarusian *samizdat* of an undeniably national-cultural character. To begin with, there appeared photocopied reproductions of previously published works on the subjects of Belarusian language, culture and history including Vaclau Lastouski's *Rasiejska-Belaruskaha Slounika*. Admittedly, however, owing to the vigilance of the KGB and the generally oppressive political climate, the circulation of this material was extremely limited (perhaps no more than 20 copies - in the case of Lastouski's book about 100). Also circulated in *samizdat* form during this period were several of Mikola Jermalovich's historical works which were deemed unacceptable for publication by authorities. An important piece of Belarusian samizdat from this time is the poignant "Letter to a Russian Friend" written in

1977 by the Belarusian literary scholar Ales Kauka. Circulated at first anonymously within the territory of the USSR, this document was published in the West in 1979.[2]

More significant during the 1970s were the clandestine publishing efforts of students at several Belarusian universities, most importantly Novapolack. The principal actors included Zyanon Pazhnyak - who, as noted in the text, was to become leader of the Belarusian National Front, Uladzimir Arlou, a writer and historian who is one of the leading figures in the Belarusian national movement, the poet-musician Syarzhuk Sokolau-Voyush, as well as V. Mudrou, V. Shlikau and A. Rybykau. In 1971-74, this group published (in Belarusian language) 15 numbers of the illegal newspaper *Blakitny likhtar* devoted primarily to literary themes all of which were confiscated by the KGB. In 1975-76, Arlou published 38 issues of the clandestine journal *Hutarka: Ab usim shto balic* devoted to national-cultural and historical themes.[3] At the beginning of the 1980s, Arlou and his associates established a student circle at Novapolack university under the name *Maladazik* devoted to literary and historical themes, including the work of Francishak Skaryna, Vasil Bykau and Uladzimir Karatkievich - the latter two being the contemporary 'heroes' or 'role models' of nationally-minded Belarusian youth during this time.[4] Also during 1979-80, the *samizdat* periodicals 'Lustra dzyon' and 'Burachok' (the pseudonym for Francishak Bahushevich) appeared briefly.

The third period (1988-1991) coincides with the beginnings of Gorbachev's liberalizing *perestroika* in the Soviet Union and is thus the most fruitful in terms of Belarusian *samizdat* activity. During this period, more than 50 informal and unofficial publications appeared. The first of these was *Navini Belaruskaha Narodnaha Frontu za perebudovu - Adradzhenne* which debuted in the fall of 1988. As the title suggests, this was the unofficial organ of the BNF. In its premier

issue, much space was devoted to the origins of the BNF itself as well as the concerted ideological campaign being waged against the re-emerging Belarusian movement by communist authorities.[5] The third issue of *Navini* in early 1989 devoted itself largely to the ideals embodied in the March 25, 1918 declaration of independence by the BNR. In his commentary, one of the leaders of the BNF, Viktar Ivashkievich drew the conclusion that the BNR ultimately failed because, rather than relying on the support of Belarusians, its leaders tried to consolidate statehood on the basis of agreements with foreign powers. The lesson to be learned was that only Belarusians and Belarusians alone were "capable of building a free, democratic, prosperous and European Belarus."[6] In April 1990, the electoral committee of the BNF began publishing the unofficial newspaper *Svaboda*. The editors explained the choice of the name by recalling the first attempt at publishing a Belarusian-language newspaper in 1903 undertaken by Vaclau Ivanouski bore the same name. Secondly, *Svaboda* was chosen because it symbolized the entire Belarusian movement from its very inception with its striving for freedom and independence.[7]

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Belarusian youth groups published a number of *samizdat* materials (sometimes handwritten) in which the 'national idea' is clearly evident. In the fall of 1988, the organization *Svitanak* published the first issue of *Studenckaya dumka*, which took its name from the organ of the Union of Belarusian Student Organizations which had appeared in the late 1920s in Vilna. Citing an extract from the original newspaper, the editors dedicated themselves to the goal of building national consciousness among Belarusian young people.[8] Subsequent issues of *Studenckaya dumka* reported on the expanding activities of Belarusian youth groups as well as calling on Belarusians of all faiths (Orthodox and Catholic) to rally around the *adradzhenne* movement.[9] In 1989, the first issue of *Kantakt* published by the *Talaka* organization appeared with the aim

of "contributing to the strengthening of Belarusian sovereignty and growth of the movement for national revival" so as to "save Belarus' from national death." It included a "manifesto" commemorating the March 25, 1918 declaration of independence by the BNR. The 'sovereignty' allegedly enjoyed by the BSSR (including its membership in the United Nations and other international organizations) was rejected as purely pro forma. Although First Secretary Masherau himself is not named, Soviet Belarusian state and party leaders are condemned for having not simply failed to resist Russification processes but of having aided and abetted them.[10] For its part, during 1988-1989, the youth-group *Tuteishiya* produced four issues of the *samizdat* bulletin *Kantrol* the first two of which appeared as independent publications, the remaining as part of *Studenckaya dumka*.[11] The executive council of the confederation of Belarusian youth-groups itself was at this time publishing the samizdat journal *Supolnasc*. The fifth number of this newspaper is especially interesting for it reprinted part of Ihnat Abdziralovich's *Advechnym shlyacham*, the foundational text of contemporary Belarusian philosophy, first published, as discussed in chapter four, in 1922.[12]

Notes

[1] Juras N. Lauryk, "Samizdat na Bialorusi," *Dyskusja*, No. 2, January-February 1994, pp. 18-19.

[2] *Letter to a Russian Friend: A 'Samizdat' Publication From Soviet Byelorussia* (London, 1979).

[3] These and other Belarusian *samizdat* materials are available at the 'Modern History Archives' in Minsk.

[4] U. Arlou, " Ya naradziusya u hod smerci Stalina," in A. Ulicenak, ed., *Inshadumci: Myshlachie inache* (Minsk, 1991), p. 159.

[5] *Navini Belaruskaha Frontu za perabudovu 'Adradzhenne '*", No. 1, 1988.

[6] *Ibid.*, No. 3, 1989.

[7] *Svaboda*, No. 1, April 1990.

[8] *Studenckaya dumka*, No. 1, November-December 1988.

[9] *Ibid.*, No. 6, 1989. In all, 17 issues of this newspaper appeared between

1988-1990.
[10] *Kantakt*, No. 1, 1989.
[11] *Nasha Niva*, November 18-24, 1996.
[12] *Supolnasc*, No. 5, October-November 1989.