

## Auberon Herbert

(1922-1974)

Auberon Mark Henry Yvo Molyneux Herbert, founder and Chairman of the Anglo-Byelorussian Society, died peacefully at his home in Pixton Park, Dulverton, Somerset on 21 July 1974, aged 52 years.

He was the only son of Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. Aubrey Herbert, second son of the fourth Earl of Caernarvon, and former Member of Parliament for Yeovil; his mother the Hon. Mrs. Aubrey Herbert was the daughter of an Irish peer, Lord de Vesci. Politician, wit, patron of the arts and protector of immigrant organisations, Auberon by his death has left a big gap in the lives of many people. Of him a former



Minister and member of the Society wrote: 'Auberon Herbert was a true friend to more people than most men's acquaintance . . . He was, in his way a truly great man.'<sup>1</sup>

He was educated at Ampleforth College and Oxford, where the Second World War interrupted his studies. Rejected by the British Army on health grounds, he enlisted voluntarily in the Polish forces as a private, later being commissioned as a second lieutenant, and was awarded several decorations for gallantry in the field.

From his father, a leading British expert on the Near East, and from his experience in the forces, he acquired a lasting interest in the affairs of the less privileged nations of Eastern Europe, — particularly the Albanians, the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians. After the war, he became concerned with the relief of refugees in Great Britain, and in 1954, together with a few friends, he founded the Anglo-Byelorussian Society. For twenty years, first as vice-chairman, and later as chairman, he was the *spiritus movens* of the Society, using his influence and enlisting his friends to promote its growth and welfare. He regularly contributed a Chairman's report to the *Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, took the chair at the Society's

annual lecture course, and organised a number of receptions for its members and their guests. He was always ready with a few words appropriate to every occasion, and made a point of using the Byelorussian language whenever the opportunity arose.

He became a patron of the Byelorussian School for boys in Finchley, who were, with all the staff, not infrequent guests at Pixton Park during summer vacations. An honorary member of the Association of Byelorussians in Great Britain, he visited, often on his own initiative, their centres in London, Bradford and Manchester, and greatly enjoyed presiding at their meetings. Many individual Byelorussians have cause to remember with gratitude the kindly assistance and hospitality he was able to afford them.

It was no secret to his friends that Auberon Herbert had particularly warm feelings towards the Byelorussian community, whom he liked to describe as 'the most English of all the East Europeans'. Towards the end of his life, disappointed with the changes in the Latin Mass, he requested Bishop Česlaŭ Sipovič to accept him as his parishioner, and he was frequently to be seen in Finchley, attending the Eastern-rite Liturgy in the beautiful, icon-studded chapel of the Byelorussians. At the request of his family, his funeral and requiem were conducted by the Apostolic Visitor of Byelorussians, assisted by Fr. Alexander Nadson; the Honorary Secretary of the Society acted as precentor at the graveside.

A Byelorussian friend of many years' standing wrote: 'Auberon Herbert helped the Byelorussians to enter into the British *milieu*, and introduced them to a number of personalities in cultural and political circles. At the same time, he aroused the interest of his British friends in the Byelorussian community, and introduced them to their land and culture.'<sup>2</sup>

As a distinguished pioneer in the field of Anglo-Byelorussian relations and as a friend, his name will be remembered with affection and respect by the members of this Society and by all who knew him.

We join one of his oldest friends in reflecting:

We shall not see his like again.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A friend (Rt. Hon. Maurice Macmillan, P.C., M.P.) 'Obituary', *Times*, 26 July 1974, London, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 'Śmierć i pachoviny Aubersona Herberta', *Bożym Ślacham*, 141, pp. 15-17, London 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen, 'His memory will dwell with us', *West Somerset Free Press*, 2 August 1974, p. 2.