

Byelorussian Chronicle

EVENTS IN BYELORUSSIA

The following Byelorussian State prizes for literature and art were awarded in 1976:

Ivan Mielež was posthumously awardee the Special Prize in literature for his book of essays *Žyćciovyja kłopaty*. The Janka Kupała Poetry Prize went to Ryhor Baradulin for his book of verses *Rum*, and to Janka Sipakoŭ for the book *Vieča stavianskich baład*. Aleś Adamovič received the Jakub Kołas Prose Prize for his documentary novel *Chatynskaja apovieść*. The State Prize for the best work of childrens' literature was awarded to Alena Vasilevič for her collection of novels *Pačakaj, zatrymajsia*. The composer Ihar Łučanok received the Music Prize, and the sculptor Alaksiej Hlebaŭ was posthumously awarded the Art Prize for the Francis Skaryna memorial in Połack.

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The 7th Congress of Byelorussian Soviet writers took place on 11-12 May in Minsk. The poet Maksim Tank was re-elected president of the Union.

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A poetry festival was held on 11 July in the village Stary Dvor in the district of Ščučyn, the burial place of the Byelorussian poetess Ciotka (Alaiza Paškievič, 1876-1916), to commemorate the centenary of her birth.

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Thanks to the efforts of the teachers and students of the Babrujsk Art School, a Museum of Byelorussian Folk Art has been opened in that city. It is the first museum of its kind in Byelorussia.

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The play *Novaja ziamla*, based on the poem of the same name by Jakub Kołas, and produced by Byelorussian Radio, proved to be very popular with the audience and critics. The music for the play was composed by Ihar Łučanok.

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To commemorate the 85th anniversary of the birth of Maksim Bahdanovič (1891-1917), Byelorussian Television produced a new play *La siniaj*

buchty written by Barys Byrjan. The play portrays the last days in the life of the poet and his reminiscences of previous years and his love for Veranika.

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The Jakub Kołas Theatre in Viciebsk, one of the best known in Byelorussia, is 50 years old. To commemorate this occasion the theatre staged in November a number of plays by modern Byelorussian playwrights, among them the comedies *Ukrali kodeks* by A. Pietraškievič, *Tabletku pad jazyk* and *Zaciukany apostal* by A. Makajonak, as well as the historical drama *Zvany Viciebska* by U. Karatkievič. The highlight of the celebration was the play *Symon muzyka*, adapted for the stage by U. Hančaroŭ from Jakub Kołas, famous poem.

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Byelorussian literature suffered heavy losses in 1976. Among those who died were the poets Uładzimir Duboŭka and Michaś Mašara, and the novelist Ivan Mielež.

Duboŭka (b. 1900) was considered one of the most outstanding young Byelorussian poets in the 1920s. He was one of the founders of the literary association 'Uzvyšša'. Arrested and deported in 1930, he was not 'rehabilitated' until 1958, when he began to write again, although he continued to live outside Byelorussia.

Michaś Mašara (b. 1902) lived in Western Byelorussia which until 1939 was under Polish rule. In 1927 he was arrested by the Polish authorities and sentenced to four years imprisonment.

Ivan Mielež (b. 1921) is arguably the most prominent Byelorussian post-war novelist. His greatest work is the trilogy 'Paleskaja chronika' which depicts the life and transformation of Byelorussian village life in the late 1920s and early 30s. The first book, *Ludzi na balocie* appeared in 1962 and was at once widely acclaimed as a masterpiece. It was followed by *Podych navalnicy* in 1966. The third book of the trilogy, *Zaviei, śniežań...* has appeared only in journal form, in *Polymia* in 1976; it is planned to pub-

lish it in book form. The works of Mieleż have been translated into several languages.

EVENTS ABROAD

The Byelorussian Heritage Festival took place on 12 June in the Garden State Arts Center, New Jersey (USA). Organized through the concerted efforts of hundreds of American Byelorussians from New York, New Jersey, Cleveland and other parts of the USA, and held in the American Bicentenary year, it was by far the largest and richest display to date of Byelorussian culture, folk art, music and dance. Over 3000 visitors took part in the Festival, which received high praise in the American press.

A large group of Byelorussians, headed by Bishop Ceslaus Sipovich, Apostolic Visitor of Byelorussian Catholics, took part in the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia on 1-8 August. At the special Byelorussian exhibition stand visitors were able to obtain information about Byelorussia, its culture and its religious problems.

The 12th Convention of Byelorussians of North America took place on 4-6 September in New Jersey. Among the rich and varied programme there was a symposium 'Our Heritage', organised and conducted by the young generation of American Byelorussians.

An exhibition of works of Byelorussian artists living abroad took place on 28 November — 31 December in New York under the auspices of the Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences. Altogether 18 artists from America and Europe were represented.

The traditional multi-ethnic festival 'Caravan' took place on 18-26 June in Toronto. The Byelorussian pavilion 'Minsk' enjoyed considerable popularity because of its tastefully organized exhibition illustrating treasures of Byelorussian culture and folk art, and a rich programme of songs and dances.

The well known Byelorussian group 'Pieśniary' from Minsk made a tour of the southern states of the USA (South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee) and gave concerts in several cities.

Almost invariably the American press described the group as 'Russian'.

On 20 June New South Wales Radio in Sydney introduced a weekly programme in Byelorussian.

Dr. Arnold B. McMillin, member of the Anglo-Byelorussian Society, and former editor of *JBS* (from 1967 to 1972) was appointed Bowes Professor of Russian at the University of Liverpool.

At the conference 'Languages and literatures of the non-Russian Peoples of the USSR', which took place on 22-23 October at McMaster University in Hamilton (Canada), Prof. A. B. McMillin read a paper entitled 'Vasil Bykaŭ and the modern Byelorussian novel'.

The Medieval Study Group of the British Universities Association of Slavists held a one-day conference on 6 March at the Francis Skaryna Byelorussian Library in London. Among the papers read were 'Byelorussian cursive script of the 16th century' by A. Nadson, and 'The Monetary System of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania' by J. Dingley.

The following papers were read at the 11th Lecture Course on Byelorussian Culture, organised by the Anglo-Byelorussian Society at the Francis Skaryna Library in London during the academic year 1976-77: 'Heraldic Motifs in early printed books' (G. Picarda); 'Aspects of Byelorussian Paleography' (A. Nadson); 'Byelorussian influence on Russian 17th century architecture' (L. Hughes); 'Byelorussian orthography in the 20th century' (P. Mayo); 'Language policy in Soviet Byelorussia' (J. Dingley); 'Połack land in the 16th century' (R. A. French).

Dr. Janka Stankievič died in New Jersey on 16 July, aged 84. A philologist of considerable talent (his chief work in this field was *Mova rukapisu 'Al Kitab'*), he was equally interested in history. He was the editor of the journal *Vieda*. His somewhat unorthodox views, which he was not afraid to express publicly, were often the cause of lively controversy and discussion among Byelorussian scholars.