

The Byelorussian Library

MARIAN HOUSE, HOLDEN AVENUE, LONDON, N.12.

The Byelorussian Library in London grew up out of the fusion of the private collections of Dr Ć. Sipovich, Rev. Leū Horoško and other Byelorussians established in the United Kingdom, and it has developed into the most significant library of its kind in Western Europe. By the standards of other nations a collection of 6000 books is commonplace. In the field of Byelorussian studies, however, it must rate as an exceptional establishment.

The library contains a very complete section on literature as well as comprehensive sections on ethnography, art, music, history, law, theology, politics, geography and linguistics. There are several very rare books from the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. The periodicals section comprises over 600 publications, and contains an unique collection of material published in emigration.

Where it has not been found possible to obtain the originals of certain rare works, microfilms have been made, and in this way the Library has been able to gather together in one place copies of items which are disseminated in about a dozen different English and Continental Libraries.

A reading room is at the disposal of all readers. A microfilm-reader is also available. It is regretted that books cannot be lent.

Applications for admission to the Library as a regular reader should be addressed to The Librarian, together with a recommendation from a qualified teacher, lawyer or clergyman. The Library is accessible to readers by special appointment.

The Chairman's Annual Report for the Year 1965-1966

During the past year the activities of the Society, apart from various acts relating to the Society's reconstitution, have been primarily concerned with the publication of the Journal of Byelorussian Studies. It had been agreed at the Special General Meeting which took place on 5th February 1965, that this should constitute the first step towards extending the Society's activities, and that we have now done.

As to the formalities of reconstitution, the Memorandum and copies of the original statutes and the present By-Laws were exhibited to a Notary Public for the purposes of identification, and the documents, duly sealed and marked, have been bound into the Membership Book. Headed writing paper has been engraved and the Council, pursuant to Article VII of the By-Laws, chose as a device or emblem for the Society the sun and moon symbol used by the Byelorussian Humanist and engraver of the Renaissance, Francis Skaryna. The emblem appears, and we hope will continue to appear, on all the Society's publications.

We all, I surmise, had the great pleasure of attending Mrs Maurice Macmillan's splendid reception last March, and I feel that such functions play a very important part in promoting contacts between the English people and our Byelorussian friends. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking Mrs Macmillan for the great kindness and generosity she has shown to the Members of this Society.

Of course it is in the field of publication that our principal efforts have been deployed this past year. In May we were able to print our By-Laws together with a brief introductory note on Byelorussia. There is a great need of serious booklets on this subject to give some rudimentary details about that country, and it was felt that the Society's booklet was required in the circumstance. Perhaps we should in the future envisage the publication of something more substantial as a source of general information on Byelorussia.

The Journal of Byelorussian Studies for 1965 is, I think, a tolerable effort for a first number. It is the first Journal of this kind to appear in English language, at least in this country, and I have every hope that it will prove a success. Of course it still leaves much to be desired, but next year, finances permitting, we hope to improve and expand it to include rare or as yet unpublished material, both in English and Byelorussian.

The Journal has already been dispatched to the University Libraries and Academies in Byelorussia, Poland and the United States of America. As it appeared substantially behind schedule and has only recently been sent out, we have not yet been able to gauge reactions to this publication. I trust it will be favourable: at least we have the benefit of quite a flattering introduction to this issue by Professor Robert Auty.

I trust you will agree that, despite its socially tranquil existence, the Society has achieved something worthwhile.

AUBERON HERBERT
Chairman

28th February 1966