

The Chairman's Annual Report for the Year 1974 - 1975

On 16 March 1975 the Anglo-Byelorussian Society came of age, having completed twenty-one years of activity since its establishment in 1954. Our Anniversary celebration last year was saddened by the recent death of our past Chairman Mr. Auberon Herbert, and the Council has felt it more appropriate to defer a more formal reception to mark its coming of age, and the beginning of the Tenth Annual Lecture Course in November. I need not go into the history of the Society's achievements, since this was done *in extenso* by the Honorary Secretary at last year's Annual General Meeting. It is however interesting to observe the evolution in the life of the Society from an informal body, concerned largely with refugee relief and welfare work among the Byelorussians in Great Britain, to a fully fledged academic Society. This organisation has, over the last ten years, managed to organise regular Lecture Courses, publish a Journal which I think I may say enjoys an international reputation, and has also sponsored two substantial works in the field of Byelorussian linguistics, Dr. McMillin's *Vocabulary of Literary Byelorussian in the 19th Century*, and Mr. Peter Mayo's *Byelorussian Grammar*, which has just gone to press. That we have been able to achieve this is largely thanks to the tireless efforts of the Society's Editorial Board — Mr. Dingley, Dr. McMillin, Father Nadson, and Mr. Michaluk. Neither can we forget the generous material and moral support afforded to us by The Byelorussian Charitable Trust, the Association of Byelorussians in Great Britain, and our numerous English friends in Universities and Libraries throughout the Country.

During the current session four new members joined the Society: Professor Robert Auty, Professor of Comparative Slavonic Philology in the University of Oxford, Lord Egremont and Leconfield, Mr. Jan Siaŭkovič and Mr. Alexander Michaluk, which brings the number of members to 38.

We have to report the publication of a further number of the *Journal of Byelorussian Studies* (Vol. III No. 2. for 1974). We are also involved in the publication of Mr. Peter Mayo's *Grammar*, jointly with the University of Sheffield, which has now gone to press. There is a field for further activity here, and the Society hopes to continue this series of occasional publications as our financial resources permit. The Journal continues to enjoy an ever-growing circulation and the number now distributed each year has reached eight hundred.

Increasing printing costs have given rise to some concern over the form to be taken by the *Journal* in the future. Although income from the sale of publications (inclusive of Dr. McMillin's very successful *Vocabulary*) is satisfactory at £548 for the past year, two journals have been published at a total cost of £2,298. The cost of the last number of the *Journal* (1974) has increased by an unacceptable percentage. Your Council is endeavouring to find appropriate means

to reduce publication costs. Even with a generous grant from the Byelorussian Charitable Trust of £1,651, the current year's deficiency of expenditure over income is £207. The Society duly records its thanks to the Trust and to the Association of Byelorussians in Great Britain for their support.

For the Society's Ninth Annual Lecture Course, we exchanged our former venue at the Society of Antiquaries for the agreeable surroundings of the Francis Skaryna Byelorussian Library in Finchley, where there are catering facilities, and where we are allowed to use the Hall free of charge. We should like to express our appreciation to the Librarian Fr. Nadson, for allowing us the use of these facilities, and for having laid on, together with Mr. & Mrs. Michaluk, such excellent hospitality throughout the lecture course. As usual six papers were read. On 14 November last our Vice-President Bishop Sipovič addressed the Society on 'A 17th Century Slavonic and Latin Manuscript of the Pontifical Liturgy of St. John Chrysestom' from the Collection of the Francis Skaryna Library. The Honorary Secretary on the 12th December read a paper on 'Anton Navina Luckievič (1883-1946) and the origins of the Byelorussian New Testament and Psalms of 1931' prepared from recently discovered and unpublished material in the Archives of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Father Nadson on 13 January gave a talk illustrated with slides on 'Byelorussian Early Printed Books in Western Libraries', and Mr. Peter Mayo of Sheffield University spoke on 'Recent Changes in norms of literary Byelorussian' on 19 March. The Editor of the Journal, Mr. James Dingley of Reading University, entertained the Society on 15 May with a lecture on 'Where on earth do they come from? — The ethnogenesis of the Byelorussian people', and finally on 19 June Mrs. Shirin Akiner of University College London addressed the Society on 'Aspects of the Tartar Settlement in Byelorussia'. Attendances varied between 26 and 16, with an average number of 22.

The Council of the Society met twice, on 12 February and 24 July, to deal with the ordinary business of the Society and its activities.

Members of the Society have been playing an active part in a number of other Slavist Associations in the United Kingdom, and a few were able to entertain Professor Shevelov of Columbia University when he read a paper at the Francis Skaryna Library on 10 July.

An International Congress of Slavists will be meeting in Zagreb in 1978, and it may well be time for the Society to be considering what contribution Members could make to the Congress Programme. It is a matter which I put forward to you for discussion.

With a record of twenty-one years' continuous and increasing activity, the Society may feel satisfied with its past achievements and look forward to a prosperous future.

DATED this 30th day of July, 1975

JOHN JOLLIFFE
Chairman