

The Chairman's Annual Report for the Year 1975-1976

During the past year, the Society held its 10th Annual Course of lectures on Byelorussian Culture. It is a matter of some satisfaction to all of us to observe how, over the years, the number of lecturers and the variety of the subjects discussed have grown since the early days at the French Institute in South Kensington when we had only three lecturers. From there, by way of the Royal Scottish Corporation, the British Academy and the Society of Antiquaries of London, the venue of the Lecture Course has for the last two sessions been fixed at the Francis Skaryna library in North Finchley. In thanking the library for the accommodation and refreshments it has so generously and unstintingly offered to the Society, I feel sure you would wish me also to extend to that institution our congratulations on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of its establishment at 37 Holden Road. We would also like to address our best wishes to the librarian Fr Nadson on attaining his 50th birthday last August. Fr Nadson has, over the last 10 years, been our most willing, and certainly one of our most erudite lecturers since the sessions began. I need remind no one of the past contributions he has made and continues to make in the *Journal* in the form of articles, reviews, chronicles of events and bibliographies.

Last session opened with a reception given at her home on 25th November by our President, Mrs Katharine MacMillan, together with our Chairman. Over 50 members and guests attended to celebrate the Society's 21st anniversary and the commencement of its Tenth Lecture course. The speakers on that occasion were Mr Jolliffe, Dr Arnold McMillin and Bishop Sipovič. Notices of the event appeared the following day in *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, as well as in a number of Byelorussian journals overseas. The Council has asked me to express to the hosts at the reception, the Society's grateful appreciation for their hospitality and support.

In the course of the last year the Society has, in conjunction with the University of Sheffield, published Mr Peter Mayo's *A Grammar of Byelorussian*, which is the second in our analecta series. The technical standard of the printing is high; some 500 copies were printed, and a number of reviews and critiques have appeared. The distributor reports that sales are progressing well.

The Society is happy to note the appointment of our good friend Professor Arnold McMillin to the Chair of Slavonic Studies in the University of Liverpool. He has assured the Society and the Editorial Board of his continuing cooperation and support. He looks forward to lecturing to the Society again in the not too distant future. We extend to him and to his wife Caroline, a member of this Society, our

warmest congratulations. We look forward also, with eager anticipation, to the publication of his latest work, a history of Byelorussian literature, which is understood to be imminent.

On the subject of publications, members will I know, be pleased to hear that a collection of papers presenting a composite portrait of our late Chairman Auberon Herbert, has been edited by your present Chairman, and is currently available at a very reasonable price. It is hoped a review will appear in the *Journal* in due course; the collection casts interesting light from a number of sources on the life and interests of a good friend of Byelorussia.

During the last General Meeting, two new members were elected, Mme Shirin Akiner, whom the Society knows as a lecturer and an authority on the Byelorussian Tatars and their language; and Mr Mark Saūka-Michalski.

A further number of the *Journal* also appeared this year, (Vol. III, no. 3) and has been distributed. Despite rising costs it will continue to appear, and once again the Society expresses its appreciation to the Byelorussian Charitable Trust and other organisations for their financial assistance and support. Our income and expenditure account as on the 31st March of this year shows income at £1,645 and expenditure at £1,614, leaving a surplus of £31, though with other expenses incurred since that date, the position may well have altered.

The Tenth lecture course concluded successfully in June of this year. As usual there were six lectures, each of which was followed by the now traditional buffet-supper. The dates and subjects of the lectures were as follows: 11 December, 'The Devil, the peasant and the Jew — Aspects of Byelorussian literature in the 18th century' by Dr Arnold McMillin; 22 January, 'Francis Skaryna and his times' by Fr Alexander Nadson; 19 February, 'Nikolai Dilecki's treatise on music and the Smolensk version (1670)' by Dr H. Leeming; 18 March, 'The young Byelorussian poets of today' by Shirin Akiner; 13 May, '17th century schools of Byelorussian wood-engraving' (illustrated with slides) by Guy Picarda; and 10 June, 'The early history of the first Byelorussian State' by James Dingley. Attendances varied between 23 and 26. A number of lectures on subjects connected with Byelorussia were also given at seminars of slavists by members of the Society.

The Council of the Society met on 19 May to deal with the ordinary business of the Society and to organise its activities.

In concluding I should like to express my personal thanks to the members of the Council, to the Editorial Board of the *Journal* and to our lecturers and hosts for ensuring the continuing success of our activities.

17 November 1976

John Jolliffe
Chairman