

The Alphabet and Orthography of Byelorussian in the 20th Century

BY

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I

At the beginning of the 20th century the Byelorussian language had no officially established alphabetical or orthographical norms. Although many of the characteristic features of Byelorussian pronunciation (e.g. *akańnie* and *jakańnie*, *dziekańnie* and *ciekańnie*, the hardening of *r*, *ž*, *č* and *š*) were reflected sporadically in texts as early as the 14th and 15th centuries and more frequently — but still with a considerable degree of inconsistency — in the 16th and 17th centuries,¹ the further development and stabilisation of these features was effectively hindered by subsequent historical circumstances, in particular by the suppression of Byelorussia's national identity, one aspect of which was the treatment of the Byelorussian language until the end of the 19th century as a dialect of Great Russian (*maloruskoje narečije*).

The writers of works which appeared in the second half of the 19th century and the first few years of the 20th century had no specifically Byelorussian orthographical traditions on which to draw. Accordingly, their works, published in either Latin or Cyrillic script, were characterised by a variety of graphical symbols, largely based on the Polish or Russian alphabets, and by somewhat arbitrary orthographical systems. For example, the sound [w], in addition to being represented by the symbol *ŷ* as it is in modern Byelorussian, was also written as *у* (*постановіу*) or *в* (*правду*) and in Latin script as *u* (*zausiody*); *io* occurred not only in Latin script but also in Cyrillic where modern Byelorussian has *ё* (*завоіоваць, вясіола*); *i* was used in Cyrillic texts only in accordance with the pre-1917 Russian convention i.e. before a vowel — elsewhere *и* was used (*дзікіе, на съведці, толькі*); the softness of *с*, *з* before another soft consonant was generally reflected in the spelling (*часьці, зьвер*), but lengthened consonants were not normally spelt double (*жыцце*). *Akańnie* and *jakańnie* were reflected with varying degrees of consistency, the latter rather more regularly than the former (*сиратоі, радасьць, дабром, скаńцеńіе, hołas* cf. *одного, перэд, продаваць, czereda, hołas; бяда, вясіола, piarwiej, siale* cf. *перэселяцьца*)².

Clearly there was a need for standardisation of both alphabet and orthography, and this need became even more apparent in the first decade of the 20th century when at a time of growing national consciousness Byelorussian publishing houses were established in Minsk, Vilna, Kiev and St. Petersburg.³ The first of these, *Zahlanie sonca i ŷ naša vakonca*, began operating in St. Petersburg towards the end of 1906; almost simultaneously the first legal Byelorussian

newspaper, *Naša dola*, was published in Vilna. *Naša dola* was to have a short life: the tsarist authorities confiscated the first five issues and with the sixth closed it down. In November it was succeeded by *Naša niva*, among the regular contributors to which were the authors Śupała, Kołas, Ciotka, Hartny, Biadula and Bahdanovič. Since there were at this period no officially codified norms, these publications had a significant role to play in the establishment of the alphabetical, orthographical and grammatical norms of the Byelorussian literary language. Their normative influence was particularly marked where the alphabet was concerned.

From the very beginning *Naša dola*, *Naša niva* and the publications of *Zahlanie sonca i ŭ naša vakonca* were printed in both Latin and Cyrillic script. The *łacinka* was based on the Polish alphabet, with the addition of *ŭ* for Byelorussian [w]; the Cyrillic script or *hražďanka* on the Russian alphabet, with the addition of *ŷ* for [w], the substitution of *e* for *ѣ*, *шч* for *щ*, and the elision of *ъ* after a hard consonant in word final position (this last anticipating a change which was introduced into the Russian alphabet only after 1917).

In the *łacinka* the Czech symbols *č* and *š* began to appear sporadically in place of the Polish digraphs *cz* and *sz*. By 1909 they were to be encountered frequently in *Naša niva* and from 1910 onwards became the standard forms; they were also introduced into the publications of *Zahlanie sonca i ŭ naša vakonca*. On the other hand the newspaper *Bielarus* continued to use the traditional Polish *łacinka* without these modifications.

In the *hražďanka* jotated [o] and [o] after a soft consonant were usually represented, as in modern Byelorussian, by *ë* (and only occasionally by *io*), although the earliest publications of *Zahlanie sonca i ŭ naša vakonca* have *ňo*; in Ciotka's *Pieršaje čytańnie* (1906) the fricative [ʃ] and the plosive [g] were differentiated by the symbols *r* and *ř*. Later, however, these features were not retained: *ë* became the standard form, while *ř* was used to represent both fricative and plosive. Russian *и* was replaced by *i* from 1909 onwards and by 1914 the apostrophe had ousted *ъ* in its role of separating a jotated vowel from a preceding hard consonant (e.g. падъехаў became пад'ехаў). The Byelorussian Cyrillic alphabet was thus established in the form in which, despite a number of proposals for reform in the 1920s⁴ — most notably a desire to create special symbols for the combinations *дз* and *дж* — it is still used today.

One problem associated with the alphabet which remained unresolved, however, was the question of whether Byelorussian should continue to use both Latin and Cyrillic script. As was noted above, the earliest publications of many of the publishing houses set up at the beginning of the 20th century and especially *Naša niva* and its associated publications (calendars, various supplements) were produced simultaneously in both. This was inevitably an expensive and time-consuming operation, so much so that in its issue no. 50 for 1911 the editors of *Naša niva* posed the question as to which of the two scripts should be adopted to the exclusion of the other (*Jaki šryft vybrać dla bielaruskich drukau?*). This was the signal for a lively

debate: answers flooded in to the editorial board not only from all corners of Byelorussia itself, but also from the Ukraine, Russia and even from distant Siberia where, as *Naša niva* somewhat coyly expressed it 'there are many of our brothers' ('jość šmat našych bratoŭ'). Some of this correspondence was reproduced in issues 4, 5, 6 and 8 for 1912 in a column entitled *Conversations with our readers* (*Hutarky z čytačami*).

While a few correspondents favoured the retention of both scripts (one argument advanced in support of this was that the adoption of a single script would drive a wedge into national unity by divorcing Orthodox from Catholic and by creating a cultural division between East and West⁶), the majority agreed with *Naša niva* — there should be a single Byelorussian alphabet⁷. What remained in dispute was which alphabet should be chosen. Among the arguments put forward in favour of the *hraždanka* were that it was the alphabet in which the *Lithuanian Statute*, the first Byelorussian secular book, appeared⁸; that the majority of Catholics were familiar with it from school, whereas the reverse was not true⁹; and that the Orthodox population of Byelorussia was three times as large as the Catholic population¹⁰. The *łacinka* was preferred by others on the grounds that the Latin alphabet was widespread among 'cultured' nations and was being adopted by many nations which had formerly used their own script; and that in any case it conveyed the characteristics of Byelorussian 'better and more clearly' than Cyrillic¹¹. A small minority favoured the creation of an entirely new alphabet which would 'satisfy all the requirements of the Byelorussian language'¹² (though these were not defined).

After the publication of this correspondence there was a three-month hiatus before *Naša niva* returned to the subject, once again under the heading *Hutarky z čytacami*¹³. Although in the meantime the published correspondence had started a fresh avalanche of letters, none of these were published since they added nothing new to the discussion but simply reiterated previous arguments. It was now time to reach a decision. The creation of an entirely new alphabet was rejected on the grounds that in current circumstances it would be impossible to teach such an alphabet to Byelorussians and that its introduction would retard Byelorussia's renaissance (*adradžeńnie*) by some decades. The main arguments in favour of the *łacinka* and *hraždanka* were summarised and the editors made two further points: far more readers were in favour of the *hraždanka* than the *łacinka*, and twice as many copies of *Naša niva* were sold in Cyrillic script as in Latin.

To *Naša niva* all the signs pointed in one direction: in future the newspaper should be printed only in Cyrillic or 'Russian letters' as *Naša niva* termed them. This decision was not, however, implemented immediately. *Naša niva* continued to appear in both Latin and Cyrillic script until issue no. 42 for 1912 when, in a leading article surveying the six years of the newspaper's existence, the editors announced that henceforth *Naša niva* would appear only in 'Russian

script'. This was presented as the lesser of two evils — the alternative was to cease publication altogether¹⁴.

Naša niva's choice of the Cyrillic alphabet was eventually mirrored in Byelorussian as a whole, but not until some time after the 1917 Revolution was it generally adopted, at least in Eastern Byelorussia. Significantly, at the 1926 conference on the reform of the alphabet and orthography even the most vociferous critics of the existing *hrazdanka* (e.g. Ja. Losik) rejected any suggestion of a return to the *lacinka*. In Western Byelorussia, however, the *lacinka* continued to be used alongside the *hrazdanka* right up to the Second World War.

II

If the standardisation of the Byelorussian alphabet was a relatively swift and painless affair, the same could not be said of the establishment of the orthographical norms of modern literary Byelorussian. Orthographical rules have been a contentious issue from the publication of Taraškievič's *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skot* in 1918, through the reforms of 1933 and 1957 and, for some at least, remain so to the present day¹⁵.

The normative influence of *Naša niva*, which played such an important part in the establishment of the modern Byelorussian alphabet and in the ultimate adoption of the *hrazdanka* in preference to the *lacinka*, was less evident where the orthographical system was concerned. The lack of an officially codified system of norms, the fact that it was not yet clear which dialect was to form the basis of the emergent literary language, the varied linguistic background of the contributors — all these factors combined to create a situation of some flexibility. Nevertheless it is possible to see certain general tendencies at work: the orthography of vowels was based largely on phonetic principles while that of consonants was based on morphological (or etymological) principles, as was the spelling of loan-words.

In the vowel system strong non-dissimilative *akajnie* was the norm, but there were some restrictions on this, especially in a final open syllable (e.g. маюць права — маюць право, згарэло, ад добраго стараго коня), and with rare exception *ə* was preserved in unstressed position (e.g. можэм, морэ, хочэцца). *Akajnie* was regularly reflected in the immediate pre-tonic syllable only if the vowel under stress was not *a* (e.g. бяз глебы, весялей, вядомы, бярэ, зямлі); if the stressed syllable contained the vowel *a*, unstressed *e* in the pre-tonic syllable remained (e.g. ваеваць, земля, непраўда), as it did in all other syllables, both pre- and post-tonic (e.g. без народу, вецер, поле, зямнае). Loan-words, proper names and toponyms were usually exempt from these 'norms' (e.g. зоологія, тэлефон, Достоеўскі, Оўса).

The main characteristics of consonant orthography at this period were: hard *p* (e.g. курыць, на рэку); the change of *л*, *в* after a vowel to *ў* (e.g. воўк, малакроўе, са ўсімі дапаўненнямі) though with some fluctuation, particularly in foreign names (e.g. Владыслаў — Уладзі-

mir); the doubling of consonants before [j] (e.g. аткрышце, гальлё); a sporadic tendency to replace the original double consonants of loan-words by single consonants (e.g. прэса, тэлеграма but cf. масса, прэсса, сума); *dziakaŋnie* and *ciekaŋnie* in native words but no softening of д, т in loan-words (e.g. дэержаць, меціць, cf. акадэмія, тэатр); the preservation of the hardness of many other consonants in loanwords (e.g. газэта, сыстэма, мэбля, маніфэст) and of the softness of л (e.g. філэзаф, парлямэнт). Assimilatory softening was not reflected in the spelling in the early years (1906-7) of *Naša niva* (e.g. жадаанне, жышчэ) but in later issues was indicated by the use of ь in the Cyrillic and of the acute accent in the Latin script e.g. жышчэ́, letaŋnie); assimilation of voiced and unvoiced consonants was not generally reflected, although there was some inconsistency where prefixes ending in д were concerned (cf. адказ — адказы); the orthographical representation of other consonant assimilation showed no discernible pattern. Thus changes in the groups цств > цтв, шств > ств, тск > цк and зск > ск were reflected in the spelling (e.g. выдавецтва, таварыство, брацкі, чалавецкі, рубяжэвіцкі, французкі) but those in the groups дзтв > цтв, жств > ств, дзк > цк were not (e.g. сьледзтва, мноштва, людзкі).

None of this, however, was systematised and the same word or group of sounds frequently showed inconsistencies of spelling, sometimes in one and the same article (cf. жыта — жыто, ёшчэ — ёсць, яго — ешчэ etc.)¹⁶ For this reason it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance for the development of the modern Byelorussian literary language of the publication in 1918 of Taraškievič's *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*. This is equally true of the morphology and of the orthography of Byelorussian, although it is the latter with which we are concerned here.

Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł was not the first published attempt at codifying the orthographical norms of Byelorussian; in 1917 the Losik brothers had published, in Latin script, their pamphlet *Jak pravilna pisać pa-bielaruskju*, which they followed in 1918 with *Bielaruski pravapis*, also in Latin script and clearly based on their previous work. 1918 also saw the publication of two other works which were at least partially concerned with orthographical questions: *Prosty sposob stacca ŭ karotkim časie hramatnym* which strongly, if not always consistently, advocated the phonetic principle of 'write as you speak'¹⁷, and B. Pačobka's idiosyncratic and unscientific *Hramatyka bielaruskaj mowy*.

Taraškievič's grammar stands out because when it appeared (also, initially, in Latin script but this was soon followed by a Cyrillic version) and without any official imprimatur, it was widely adopted for use in schools, thereby exerting a strong normative influence. Between 1918 and 1921 it went through four editions¹⁸. More importantly, at this embryonic stage of the modern Byelorussian literary language *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł* laid the foundations for its future development, foundations which remain substantially unaltered to the present day. In the words of the authors of *Historija*

Bełaruskaj litaraturnaj movy, II; 'The first school textbook compiled around fifty years ago, even today in many respects represents a synopsis of the normative grammar of the Byelorussian literary language'¹⁹.

In the introduction to the first edition of his grammar Taraškievič recognised the need for a period of flexibility in the form of the written language in order to ensure that the most suitable dialect base should be chosen for the literary language. He felt, however, that the time had now come to make a choice and *Bełaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł* was therefore based on what he regarded as the most characteristic dialect of Byelorussian, namely that with hard p and strong *akańnie* (although he imposed certain restrictions on the latter in view of the 'long practice of the written language')²⁰.

Continuing, but at the same time systematising, an earlier tradition, Taraškievič based his orthographical rules partly on phonetic and partly on morphological principles²¹. Thus pronunciation norms provided the justification for the use of only the non-jotated vowels *а, о, у, э, ы* after the hard consonants *ж, ч, ш, р*, for writing double consonants in intervocalic position in place of original *л, н, з, с, дз, ц, ж, ч* and *ш* followed by [j], for the spellings *ры, лы, лі* in unstressed position where Common Slavonic had had sonant + *jer* (e.g. *дры-жэць, блыха́, блішча́ць*), for prothetic *в, г*, for the change of *в* to *ў* after a vowel and before a consonant, and for the representation of the softness of *з, с, дз*, and *ц* before soft dental and labial consonants (e.g. *зьяняць, сьляза, дзьве, цьвіцець*).

With unstressed vowels the picture was somewhat more complicated. It is in this area more than any other that Byelorussian dialects show a wide variety of pronunciation; any practical system of orthography could not hope to reflect all the changes, of both quality and quantity, which take place at various degrees of removal from the stressed syllable even within a single dialect. Taraškievič therefore compromised between his two basic principles: unstressed *о, э* were to be written everywhere as *а* except in certain loan-words (see below) and a number of numeral-words (e.g. *восемна́ццаць, шэ́сць-цят*): unstressed *е* was to be written as *я* in the immediate pre-tonic syllable regardless of the vowel under stress, (also with exceptions for loan-words and certain numerals e.g. *семна́ццаць, дзевя́ты*), while in the second pre-tonic syllable *жакаńnie* was to be dissimilative (e.g. *лясуна́, бядуна́, ня была́, бяз дзіця́ці but* *цецяру́к, не хачу́, без мяне́*). In other pre-tonic and in all post-tonic syllables *е* was to remain (e.g. *вєрацяно́, вòсень, по́ле, ду́маем*); exceptions to this rule were made for certain grammaticised endings.²²

By contrast with vowels the orthography of the consonant system was based almost entirely on morphological principles. With very few exceptions consonant assimilation — voicing and devoicing, the disappearance of consonants in certain consonant groups — was not reflected in the spelling; the devoicing of consonants was reflected only in the case of prefixes ending in *з* (e.g. *згінуць, разбіць but* *схадзіць, рассыпаць*), while the disappearance of consonants in

pronunciation was reflected only in the groups жс, зс, стн and здн (e.g. боскі, французкі, пачэсны, позны).

Taraškevič separated loan-words into two groups: those which had long since been assimilated into Byelorussian, and those which were current in the literary language but had not yet penetrated the vernacular or had only recently done so²³. The former were to be written according to the normal orthographical rules of Byelorussian (e.g. літара, аканом, калідор, леварвер); the latter according to their spelling in the language from which they were taken (e.g. тэлеграф, геаграфія, універсытэт, элемент). This was, of course, a subjective division and not surprisingly became one of the focal points of dissatisfaction with Taraškevič's orthography in the 1920s.

Two general rules which Taraškevič applied to loan-words of both types were that double consonants in the original language should be replaced by single consonants in Byelorussian (e.g. тэлеграма, каса, маса) and that foreign *l* was to be represented in Byelorussian by soft л (e.g. лямпа, Лёндон, монолёр). Both these features were characteristic of Byelorussian pronunciation.

If we compare Taraškevič's orthography with that which had gone before, especially in the *Naša niva* period, we can see that in addition to regularising certain tendencies already strongly in evidence at that time (the change of л, в after a vowel to љ, the assimilatory softening of consonants, the preservation of soft л in loan-words etc.) Taraškevič introduced rules which extended or in some instances ran counter to current practice. *Akaŋnie* was no longer restricted in a final open syllable and also became the norm for unstressed э, where previously this had been exceptional; dissimilatory *jakaŋnie* became a feature of the second rather than the immediate pre-tonic syllable; the previously sporadic replacement of double consonants in loan-words by single ones was given the status of a norm.

Notwithstanding the general excellence of Taraškevič's work and its widespread adoption it was perhaps inevitable that some problems should have been resolved less than satisfactorily. Taraškevič himself acknowledged as much in the introduction to the first edition of *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, but added that he hoped that any changes which were felt to be necessary would not be too great and that 'all the most important things had been done well'²⁴. While the subsequent development of the Byelorussian literary language has shown that all the most important things had indeed been done well, Taraškevič's orthography had two main defects: in the treatment of unstressed e, and in the artificial separation of loan-words into those which had penetrated the vernacular and those which were confined to scientific and literary usage, with a consequent difference in the application to those two groups of the rules governing *akaŋnie* (and *jakaŋnie*). It was these two areas which were to attract most of the attention of those who were seeking to reform the orthography of Byelorussian in the 1920s.

The first overt sign of dissatisfaction with Taraškevič's orthography was the extension of *akaŋnie* to many loan-words which, in Taraškevič's words, 'had not yet reached the people'²⁵, from 1922

wards in the newspaper *Savietskaja Bielaruś*, although only in the case of unstressed o e.g. канрэс, шавінізм but рэкашэтам, тэрміна-
~~жэя~~). This was also illustrated in the dictionaries compiled by Niekraševič, Bajkoŭ and Harecki²⁶. From 1924 a number of articles devoted to this and other orthographical problems began to appear and continued to do so throughout the 1920s²⁷.

The most far-reaching and in many ways the most controversial of these was the Losik brothers' *Da reformy bielaruskaha pravapisu*. They proposed the following major reforms: the simplification of the rules governing *jakańnie* by writing я for unstressed e in all syllables; the extension of *akańnie* (in the case of unstressed o) and *jakańnie* to loan-words, with exceptions only for some compound words; the abolition of the soft sign after the consonants з, с, дз, ц before other soft consonants and also between so-called 'double' consonants; the retention of y, i after a vowel in word initial position or when standing as separate words.

Jazep Losik, in particular, campaigned so effectively for consideration of these reforms that the Scientific Council of the Institute of Byelorussian Culture created a special Orthographical Commission under the chairmanship of A. Čvikičevič to examine the Losik brothers' project. The Commission, however, was unable to reach agreement; the Scientific Council therefore decided to call an Academic Conference on the reform of the Byelorussian orthography and alphabet. This conference, which was attended by leading scholars not only from Byelorussia itself, Russia and the Ukraine, but also from Poland (Golombek), Germany (Vasmer) and some other European countries, was held from 14-21 November 1926 and the speeches and reports of the various commissions were published in 1927²⁸. Sadly Taraškievič, together with other Western Byelorussian scholars, was prevented from attending because the Polish government would not issue them with passports.

Although the conference was concerned with the Byelorussian alphabet and the language of Byelorussian literature as well as orthographical problems, it was the last of these to which it devoted the greatest attention and which generated the most intense discussion. The main speeches on this subject were given by Jazep Losik and S. Niekraševič, with shorter contributions by, among others, Anton Losik, V. Voŭk-Levanovič, P. Rastorgujev and the Ukrainian P. A. Biliak. Some speakers argued for fundamental reforms in Taraškievič's orthography and favoured considerable extension of the phonetic principle, on the Serbian model; others proposed less drastic measures, consisting in the main of a tying up of the loose ends left by Taraškievič. The only point of general agreement was the extension of *akańnie* (in the case of o only) to loan-words.

The main proponent of substantial reform was Jazep Losik. This was not surprising in view of the fact that it was largely as a result of his campaigning that the conference had been called. In his speech he repeated the proposals outlined by himself and his brother Anton in their pamphlet *Da reformy bielaruskaha pravapisu* (see above). Losik was disturbed by what he felt to be a fear of change and the

uncritical acceptance of Taraškievič's orthography, which was rapidly becoming a sacred cow. He was critical of the etymological principle in orthography on the grounds that it was incomprehensible to the masses and he cited English and French as particularly bad examples. Only the phonetic principle could satisfactorily answer the need for a readily accessible orthography; it should therefore be extended not only to the spelling of unstressed vowels in loan-words, but also to the consonant system of Byelorussian in general. Some degree of phonetic spelling of consonants was already in operation (e.g. брацкі, французскі, пачэсны). Why should not such forms as мёт, хлеб, ношка, калотка (for мёд, хлеб, ножка, калодка) be equally acceptable? Paradoxically, Losik criticised Taraškievič's rules for *jakańnie* precisely on the grounds that vowel changes in unstressed syllables were a matter for phonetic transcription and not for the orthography!²⁹

With the exception of the extension of *akańnie* to loan-words Losik's proposals received little support from the other contributors. Rastorgujev gave his qualified approval to the extension of *jakańnie*, but warned against going too far — nowhere in Byelorussia did one hear, for instance, *пяравярнуць*³⁰; Buzuk was in favour of the phonetic representation of consonants — the Serbs had shown that there was nothing to fear in this³¹; but the retention of *i, y* after vowels and the abolition of *ь* after *з, с, дз, ц* before other soft consonants and between double consonants found almost no support.

Where Losik talked of an 'orthographical crisis'³², the other main speaker at the conference, Niekraševič, counselled caution: there was no crisis, Taraškievič's orthography generally held good, certainly nothing better had as yet emerged. He claimed the support of the absent Western Byelorussian linguists in this and accused the Losik brothers of putting orthographical principles before pronunciation and of adopting an unscientific approach in their pamphlet ('*uvieś pravapis, možna skazać, budujećca z hałavy*')³³ which hardly merited the calling of a special conference. Niekraševič was not convinced of the need for reform, except with regard to the extension of *akańnie* to loan-words. Apart from this he suggested only a couple of minor amendments to Taraškievič's orthography: the elimination of *jakańnie* from the second pre-tonic syllable and from *не* and *без* when written as separate words.

After the speeches and discussions the various proposals were passed to an orthographical commission for further consideration. The commission rejected almost without exception those put forward by Jazep Losik (the extension of the phonetic principle to the spelling of consonants, *jakańnie* in all unstressed syllables etc.) but recommended the adoption of Niekraševič's suggestion concerning the elimination of *jakańnie* in the second pre-tonic syllable and from *не* and *без* when written separately; it also approved the extension of *akańnie* to loan-words as outlined by Niekraševič, i.e. in the case of *o* only (cf. *камісія, but дэлегат*). The commission's other recommendations were: that *i* should not be replaced by *й* when it occurred after a vowel as a separate word or in word initial position, but that *y*

ould continue to be replaced by ŷ in such positions; that the remaining points of reform which had been raised at the conference (e.g. the abolition of ъ after с, дз, ц and between double consonants) should be referred to the Orthographical Commission of the Institute of Byelorussian Culture.

Taraškievič's orthography thus emerged from the conference relatively unscathed. The elimination of *jakannie* from the second pre-tonic syllable regardless of the vowel in the immediate pre-tonic syllable represented a welcome simplification of Taraškievič's rules as did the standardisation of the spellings *не* and *без* when these letters were written separately. The extension of *akannie* (for unstressed o) to all loan-words was also welcome since it eradicated the need to apply subjective criteria in determining the spelling of such words — perhaps the weakest point in Taraškievič's orthography. The limitation of this change to unstressed o, however, was unfortunate, since it meant that the treatment of unstressed э in loan-words remained subject to these same subjective criteria and created a distinction between, on the one hand, the treatment of unstressed э in native words and loan-words assimilated into Byelorussian (e.g. *золата, вада, рака, чарапы, камісія, аграном, адукацыя, акацыя*) and, on the other, their treatment in more recent loan-words which were regarded as not having penetrated to the vernacular (e.g. *графія, батаніка but літэратура, рэдакцыя*) — a distinction which has largely persisted to the present day.³⁵

One change in Taraškievič's orthography which ran counter to the aims of simplification and consistency was the proposal to retain *i* in non-syllabic position where it occurred as a conjunction or in word initial position (e.g. *баба і дзед, баба ідзе*) — a change which was the more surprising in view of the opposition which had been expressed by the majority of contributors to the conference when Jazep Losik had proposed it. In the first place it represented a departure from the general phonetic principle underlying the orthography of vowels in Byelorussian; secondly, it introduced an unnecessary complication into the rule governing the treatment of this vowel, since it was to continue to become *й* internally in a word or in word final position (e.g. *свойскі, бадай, людзей*); and thirdly, it was inconsistent with the treatment of the vowel *y* in similar circumstances, since the conference rejected a parallel proposal to abolish the change of *y* to *й*. Nevertheless this inconsistency is still in evidence in the orthography of Byelorussian today.

III

The conference over, work on the orthography (and, to a lesser extent, the alphabet) continued in the Institute of Byelorussian Culture. On the 1 October 1927 a Commission on the Literary Language was created and was charged with the task of examining all the material from the 1926 conference with a view to producing a definitive orthography. This commission in turn appointed a special Orthographical Commission whose members were: S. Niekraševič

(chairman), A. Bahdanovič (secretary), Jazep Losik, V. Łastoŭski, P. Buzuk, Ja. Bialkievič, Ja. Łucevič (Kupała) and U. Čaržynski. Between 7 December 1927 and 17 April 1929 it held 33 sessions. Working on the principles that 1) orthographical reform should be separated from the reform of the alphabet and that the orthography should be reformed first on the basis of the existing alphabet; 2) the findings of the 1926 conference were to be regarded as authoritative, but not binding; and 3) taking into account the value of Taraškievič's orthography, only those changes and additions which would simplify and improve it should be made, the Orthographical Commission produced a plan for the orthography of Byelorussian which was published by the Academy of Sciences in 1930³⁶.

Meanwhile a fifth, revised, edition of Taraškievič's *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skol* was published in Vilna in 1929. In his introduction to this edition Taraškievič explained that, while he recognised the need for some reform, he had not introduced any of those changes which had been approved by the 1926 conference because he felt that any reform of the orthography should be carried out as a whole and in conjunction with a reappraisal of the grammar. Piecemeal changes could only lead to 'harmful chaos' (*škodny chaos*). This view was echoed by R. Astroŭski in the introduction to the second edition of his *Bielaruski pravapis*³⁷, which was based on Taraškievič's orthography, but in a considerably expanded form.

The 1930 *prajekt* went a long way towards answering Taraškievič's criticisms. Its proposals for orthographical reform were made in the context of the orthography as a whole (in many respects it endorsed Taraškievič's orthography) and 13 of the 62 recommendations were concerned as much with grammar as with orthography e.g. there were recommendations on the use of the endings -a and -y in the genitive singular of masculine nouns of the second declension and on the endings to be used in the second person plural of the present/future tense and imperative mood of verbs³⁸. As for the orthography itself the *prajekt* covered all the controversial issues of the 1920s. It considered the spelling of loan-words in much greater detail than had Taraškievič, devoting approximately one third of its recommendations to this subject³⁹, and also had a special section on the orthography of proper nouns and toponyms, something which Taraškievič had not dealt with at all⁴⁰. An appendix to the consensus recommendations contained the comments of various members of the Orthographical Commission on individual points in the *prajekt*⁴¹.

In the main the *prajekt* incorporated the recommendations of the 1926 conference. It did not, however, accept the standardisation of the spelling of *he* and *bez* when written separately, and it advocated the retention of syllabic *y* (as well as *i*) when it occurred after a vowel as a separate word or in word initial position⁴². Otherwise its only major departures from Taraškievič's orthography were in recommending the abolition of *ь* after *з, с, дз, ц* before another soft consonant and in double consonants, and of the use of the apostrophe (instead of *ь*) after soft consonants as well as hard before jotted vowels⁴³.

One may question the need for some of these changes and how far they accorded with the Orthographical Commission's brief to make only those changes which would 'simplify and improve' the existing orthography — particularly the retention of syllabic *y* and *i* and the abolition of *ь* in the circumstances referred to above; what cannot be doubted is that the *prajekt* was the fruit of much thoughtful scholarly consideration of the issues involved. Sadly it was destined to remain merely a *prajekt*; when an official decree detailing reforms was published in *Žviazda* on 26 August 1933⁴⁴ political considerations had superseded linguistic and practical ones.

By this time many members of the Orthographical Commission which had produced the 1930 *prajekt* were in prison (e.g. Buzuk) or in exile (e.g. Niekraševič), accused of 'bourgeois nationalism'. The introduction to the 1933 decree leaves us in no doubt as to their 'crime':

'Byelorussian national democracy, proceeding from its bourgeois, counter-revolutionary aims, has carried out its subversive saboteurs' work on both the economic and the cultural front, including the sphere of language, terminology and orthography. National democracy has striven by all means possible to divorce the Byelorussian literary language from the language of the broad working masses, erected an artificial barrier between the Byelorussian and Russian languages and contaminated the Byelorussian language with various medieval archaisms and bourgeois vulgarisms.

The existing Byelorussian orthography has been considerably contaminated by these stated tendencies and is therefore in need of reforms'⁴⁵.

This indictment of the work carried out at the Institute of Byelorussian Culture during the 1920s was expressed in even more propagandistic and vitriolic terms at a general assembly of the writers of Minsk called by the Institute of Linguistics of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences and the Organisational Committee of the Union of Soviet Writers of the BSSR in December 1933. After a lengthy address by A. Aleksandrovič entitled 'The class struggle on the linguistic front and the reform of the orthography of the Byelorussian language' there followed a number of shorter contributions, by, among others, Kolas, Biadula, Krapiva, Łyńkoŭ and Broŭka. These were published in 1934, together with a written submission from Kupała, who was convalescing in Kislovodsk, in a volume entitled 'The Writers of the BSSR about the Reform of the Orthography of the White-Russian Language'⁴⁶ — although a less misleading title might have been 'The Writers of the BSSR about National Democracy', since the contributions had rather more to say on that subject than about the reform itself.

The style of the contributions varies little: the 'national democrats' are variously aligned with interventionists, the White Guard, Polish fascists, Hitler and German fascists; Niekraševič, Jazep Losik, Dabouka and others associated with *Polymia* and *Uzvyšša* are singled

out for particular venom. The supremacy of the political aspects of the reforms is perhaps best illustrated by Jakub Kołas, who sees three principles at work: the political, the scientific and the practical — in that order⁴⁷.

Predictably, the 1933 decree evoked a hostile response from linguists in non-Soviet Byelorussia and this was exemplified in the publication of a protest against the reform of the orthography by the Byelorussian Scientific Society in Vilna⁴⁸. This document was the outcome of an extraordinary general meeting of the society held on the 31 October 1933 at which a resolution was passed condemning the decree as 'a political act which, trampling on the demands of science, outraging Byelorussian grammar and violating the living Byelorussian language, has as its aim the fusion of the Byelorussian literary language with Russian and the gradual, systematic Muscovisation of the Byelorussian people'⁴⁹, and calling on all participants in the 1926 conference to add their voice to the protest. Although it was also not without political overtones, the protest of the Byelorussian Scientific Society did at least attempt a *linguistic* analysis of the changes in the orthography brought about by the 1933 decree. In doing so it found that in approximately half the changes there was an element of Russification.

One of the most vociferous opponents of the 1933 decree in Western Byelorussia was Janka Stankievič who in 1936 published, at his own expense, a pamphlet denouncing the reforms and the motives behind them⁵⁰. He was to remain a critic, both theoretical and practical, over the next quarter of a century. In 1947 he published a grammar of Byelorussian⁵¹ which completely ignored the orthographical reforms of 1933 (although it must be said that his own conception of the Byelorussian language was in many respects idiosyncratic), and in 1955 he returned to the subject of his 1935 pamphlet in rather more detail in an article in the émigré publication *Bielaruski zbornik*⁵².

In the face of all this it is easy to overlook the fact that in a number of its 23 paragraphs the 1933 decree implemented reforms which had been suggested by the 1926 conference and/or the 1930 *prajekt*. While there can be no question that the decree was largely politically motivated (why else should a special category of 'international revolutionary words' be created which were specifically exempted from the rules of *akañnie*?), a critical evaluation of the individual points of reform suggests that it was not as completely against the spirit of the Byelorussian language as has been claimed by some of its opponents.

IV

The 1933 decree proposed three changes in the orthography of the Byelorussian vowel system: the limitation of *jakañnie* to the immediate pretonic syllable, the standardisation of the spellings *he* and *bez* when these were written as separate words, and the use of prothetic *в* before initial stressed *o*, *y* and also before initial unstressed *y* where this latter was not a prefix or derived from *в*. Leaving aside for the moment the last of these changes (which might in

any case have been more appropriately included under the section on the orthography of consonants), we find that the other two proposals coincide entirely with those put forward by Niekraševič at the 1926 conference and recommended for adoption by the Orthographical Commission of that conference. (Subsequently in the 1930 *projekt* the proposal to standardise the spelling of *не* and *без* was rescinded; *не* and *без* were to be regarded as a syllable of the following word and be spelt accordingly (i.e. *не крычы, без людзей* but *ня бяры, бяз нác*). Both these changes represented a departure from Taraškievič's orthography. How far were they justified?

By contrast with unstressed *o* there is a much greater variety in the treatment of unstressed *e* in Byelorussian. Not only are there considerable differences from dialect to dialect, between dissimilative and non-dissimilative *jakańnie, jakańnie* and *ikańnie*, but also in many cases from syllable to syllable. Clearly it was impossible to devise an orthographical rule to take account of all these variations. Nor would it have been appropriate: such a task falls more properly within the domain of phonetic transcription. Any orthographical rule was therefore bound to involve some simplification of the pronunciation norms. With Taraškievič this had taken the form of non-dissimilative *jakańnie* in the immediate pre-tonic syllable and dissimilative *jakańnie* in the second⁵³; the 1933 reform simply went a stage further by abolishing *jakańnie* altogether in the second pre-tonic syllable. To argue, as Stankievič does⁵⁴, that this goes against the nature of the Byelorussian vowel system is to misunderstand the role of the orthography.

Less satisfactory was the standardisation of the spelling of *не* and *без* when written as separate words. While from a pedagogical point of view there was a clear advantage in this change, it ignored the fact that even when they are *written* separately the particle *не* and the preposition *без* are purely syntactic words which in pronunciation are no more independent of the words they qualify than are the prefixes *не-* and *без-*, which were to continue to alternate with *ня-* and *бяз-* (subject to the new rule of *jakańnie*).

The other rule which the 1933 decree included under the heading of the orthography of vowels (the use of prothetic *в*) was an accurate, if incomplete, reflection of Byelorussian usage (it did not deal with the occurrence of prothetic *в* before unstressed *a*, e.g. *у вагні*) and was a rather more precise formulation than Taraškievič's vaguely worded statement that 'if a word begins with the vowels *a*, *o*, *y* or *э* then it may be preceded by the aspiration *в* or *р*'⁵⁵. It also marked a contrast with Russian, which has no prothetic consonants. Stankievič nevertheless managed to see an element of Russification in the fact that this rule had been included among those on vowels rather than consonants⁵⁶.

With one exception the five points in the 1933 decree concerned with the orthography of consonants implemented reforms proposed in the 1930 *projekt*. The exception was the retention of a final stem consonant *д* before the *с* of a following suffix (e.g. *градскі, градскі*);

here the 1930 *projekt* had suggested the spelling дз (гарадзкі, грамадзкі).

The two most controversial reforms, however, involved the deletion of ь after з, с, дз, ц before another soft consonant and in double consonants. Opponents of the 1933 decree saw them as prime examples of the Russification of Byelorussian. But how far does this charge stand up in the face of the evidence? There is no doubt that with the deletion of ь after the consonants з, с and, to a lesser extent, ц many words acquired an appearance identical with that of the corresponding Russian word (e.g. свет, след, снег, разведка, цвет), but in the case of дз and double consonants this could not happen because neither the former nor the latter are characteristic of Russian (cf. Byelorussian дзве, заданне, соллю and Russian две, задание, солью). Moreover, these changes had been proposed long before political considerations had begun to impinge on orthographical matters: Jazep Losik had spoken in favour of them at the 1926 conference⁵⁷ and, although some speakers had feared that they would lead to incorrect pronunciation⁵⁸ and the decision as to their implementation had been left to the Orthographical Commission set up after the conference, the 1930 *projekt* (which was the result of that commission's work) had recommended their adoption (with Niekraševič and Kupala dissenting)⁵⁹. They were therefore associated as much with the 'academy' as with the Communists.

Surprisingly, at no stage was it proposed to delete ь in double consonants while preserving it after з, с, дз, ц. There would have been a certain logic in such a proposal, since the so-called double consonants are merely an orthographical device to represent lengthened consonants — the deletion of ь should therefore in no way affect their pronunciation.

The third section of the 1933 decree dealt with the orthography of loan-words. This was an area of the orthography which had received insufficient treatment in Taraškievič's grammar and had been the source of much of the dissatisfaction expressed in the 1920s (see above). The 1930 *projekt* had gone some way towards rectifying the situation, devoting approximately a third of its recommendations to this subject, and a number of these were incorporated in the 1933 decree: the extension of *akainie* to loan-words in the case of unstressed o but not э, е (e.g. маналог, прафесар but тэлефон), the use of ф for foreign f (e.g. форма) and th (e.g. афарграфія), the latter with some exceptions which had become established by tradition with т (e.g. тэатр, метад, тэзіс). In other respects, however, the 1933 reforms not only went against the characteristics of Byelorussian but were clearly politically motivated and aimed at harmonising the form of much Byelorussian 'international' lexis with that of Russian.

The most blatant example of this was the creation of a special category of 'international revolutionary words' which were exempt from the normal rules of *akainie* (рэволюцыя, совет, большэвік, комуна, соцыялізм, камунізм, Комінтэрн, пролетарый). Alongside spellings such as маналог, геаграфія, камітэт there could be no linguistic justification for these forms.

Russification was also evident in the treatment of foreign *l*. Although the 1933 decree recommended the continuation of the Byelorussian practice of representing European 'middle *l*' sometimes by a hard *л* (e.g. метал, пратакол, формула) and sometimes by a soft *л* (e.g. пляж, лямпя, пляц), it claimed, totally falsely, that the traditionally widespread pronunciation in Byelorussia was predominantly with a hard *л*⁶⁰, and included among its examples of this a number of forms which had previously been pronounced (and written) with a soft *л* (e.g. клас, маналог, калонія). It is no coincidence that the Russian equivalents of all the examples quoted in this section of the decree have a hard *л*.

Other rules which represented a departure from Byelorussian usage were those concerning the treatment of foreign *s*, *z* as predominantly soft when adapting loan-words into Byelorussian (e.g. сістэма, фізіка), the rejection of forms such as пролетар, пролетары in favour of пролетарый (to be declined like май) and of the adjectival declension of nouns in -істы (e.g. комуністы) in favour of nouns in -іст (to be declined like брат), all of which represent subordination of Byelorussian linguistic norms to those of Russian.

The one section of the 1933 decree which entirely accorded with the 1930 *prajekt* and evoked virtually no opposition from those Byelorussians living outside Soviet Byelorussia was that which was concerned with the orthography of Christian names, surnames and toponyms. Like the 1930 *prajekt* the 1933 decree stated that these should retain the characteristics of the language from which they were taken insofar as these did not conflict with such characteristic Byelorussian features as *akańnie*, *dziakańnie*, *ciekańnie*, the spelling of vowels after chuintantes and the change of *в* to *ў* in syllable final position⁶¹.

In complete contrast the final section of the 1933 decree, which dealt with certain points of morphology, almost entirely contradicted the recommendations of the 1930 *prajekt*. Furthermore, with one exception⁶² the rules given all had the effect of making Byelorussian grammatical forms less distinguishable from the corresponding Russian ones. Nowhere is this more evident than in the statement that masculine nouns in the genitive singular should be written mainly with the endings -а, -я: завода, цэха, трактара, інстытута, соцыялізма, універсітэта, правапіса *but* жалю, болю, гаю, лесу, краю, цэменту⁶³. In accordance with Tараškіevič's grammar the ending -а (-я) was to be used in Byelorussian only for 1) animate nouns; 2) nouns which can be seen or counted (i.e. concrete objects); 3) the names of months. All other nouns (the majority) normally took the ending -у (-ю)⁶⁴. On that basis only one of the nouns listed in the 1933 decree with the ending -а (трактара) conformed to the Byelorussian norm. In Russian, on the other hand, the ending -у (-ю) is extremely restricted in its usage: apart from a number of set expressions in which it has become fossilised, it is confined to a very small number of nouns denoting substances and even then is used only when those nouns occur in a quantitative construction.

The other morphological changes contained in the 1933 decree

which violated the norms of Byelorussian were: the abolition of the stressed endings -óm, -óх in the dative and locative plural of masculine and neuter nouns and their replacement by the endings -ám, áх (e.g. братам, братах); the unification of the oblique cases of the numerals два and дзве (абодва and абедзве) by the abolition of the formerly distinct feminine forms (дзэвёх or дзэвюх, дзэвём or дзэвюм, дзэвьяма or дзэвюма), and of the alternative masculine and neuter forms with the stem vowel о (двох, двом, двама), leaving only those forms which coincided with the Russian forms (двух, двум, двумя); the standardisation of the ending of the 2nd person plural of the present tense of first conjugation verbs, regardless of whether they were stressed on the stem or the ending, i.e. not only працўеце, чытаеце but also вядзеце, нясеце (in place of ведзяце, несяце); the replacement of the stressed ending of the 2nd person plural of the imperative mood -еце (-ёце) by the ending -іце (-ьце) e.g. нясіце, бярыце and, finally, the exhortation 'to introduce into the orthography (sic) of Byelorussian active participles, especially when they have a social meaning'⁶⁵. The key word here is 'introduce' — present active participles at least were only rarely used in Byelorussian at this period, a relative clause construction being preferred⁶⁶. The political motives of the 1933 decree were thus at their most naked in the changes introduced into the morphology of Byelorussian.

V

The decree came into effect on 16 September 1933; from that date all schools and publishing houses were to go over to the new orthography. Reading between the lines of an article in the issue of *Zviazda* for that day, we get a clear indication that the new orthography was as unpopular with many people within Soviet Byelorussia as it was in Western Byelorussia. The article refers to the 'as yet not unmasked residue of the 'nacademy'' and regrets is that 'some comrades do not understand' that 'the new orthography is one of the concrete manifestations of the struggle the party is waging for the construction of a culture which is national in form and socialist in content'. The Institute of Linguistics of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences is singled out for particular criticism in this respect. Three years previously the party had rid the Academy of Sciences of its Losiks, Łastoŭskis, Niekraševičes and Čvikievičes. 'Who gave those people sitting in the Institute of Linguistics the right to guard their legacy so tenaciously? How could it happen that neither the praesidium of the Academy of Sciences nor the party cell noticed this and took steps to cleanse the Institute of Linguistics of these class enemies and their inheritance?' Even Communist writers are indicted for being insufficiently vigilant in 'the struggle with the continuation of the national democratic tendency in linguistics'⁶⁷.

It was against this background that the decree was enforced. Between 1933 and the beginning of the Second World War a number of grammars and school textbooks incorporating the principles of the new orthography were published⁶⁸. Dissatisfaction with some aspects

of the decree surfaced publicly in a number of articles in newspapers and magazines in the late 1930s⁶⁹, and again after the war⁷⁰. In 1951 a *Prajekt źmien i udakładnieńniaŭ biełaruskaha pravapisu* was drawn up by the Orthographical Commission of the Institute of Language, Literature and Art of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences and its contents discussed at a conference held in the Institute on 25-26 January 1952⁷¹.

Not until 1957, however, did the Soviet of Ministers of the BSSR issue a new decree⁷². This decree restored some characteristic features of Byelorussian morphology which had been abolished in 1933: the stressed ending of the 2nd person plural of first conjugation verbs (e.g. берацэ, несяцэ) and the distinctive oblique case forms for the feminine gender of the numeral дзве (дзвюх, дзвюм, дзвюма). As far as the orthography was concerned, however, apart from a clarification of the rules governing the use of the apostrophe and ь, and the formulation of rules concerning *akańnie* and *jakańnie* in compound words, the 1957 decree contained only minor amendments to its 1933 predecessor — notably the inclusion under the normal rules of *akańnie* of the 'international revolutionary words' formerly exempted, and the extension of *akańnie* (in the case of unstressed э) and *jakańnie* (in the immediate pre-tonic syllable) to proper names and toponyms of Slavonic origin or which had long since been assimilated into Byelorussian (e.g. Чарнышэўскі, Чарапавец, Нява, Сяргей).

These amendments were incorporated in the first officially codified handbook of modern Byelorussian orthography — *Pravily biełaruskaj arfahrafii i punktuacyi*, published by the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences in 1959 — which remains the most recent official statement of the orthographical and punctuation norms of Byelorussian. The changes introduced by the 1933 decree thus remain substantially in force to the present day.

Notes

1. M. R. Sudnik, 'Da pytańnia ab historyi farmiravańnia biełaruskaj arfahrafic'naj sistemy', *Vieści AN BSSR*, 3, 1950, pp. 48-50.
2. The examples quoted in this paragraph are taken from the following works: W. Dunin-Marcinkiewicz, *Sielanka*, 1846; A. Rypiński, *Niaczysćik. Ballada Białoruska*, Tottenham, 1853; *Rasskazy na belorusskom narečii*, Vilna, 1863; Szymon Reūka, *Smyk białoruski*, Poznań, 1894; A. I., *Synok*, St Petersburg, 1895; A. I., *Skarej u Tomsk*, Minsk, 1896; *Chto praŭdziwy pryjaciel biednogo narodu?*, London, 1903.
3. In 1846 an attempt by the ethnographer Špileŭski to produce the first grammar and codified orthography of Byelorussian had come to nothing. The Academy of Sciences refused to publish his work on the grounds that it was not scientifically based.
4. See especially the contributions by Ja. Losik, P. A. Rastorgujev, S. M. Niekraševič and V. Łastoŭski in *Pracy Akademičnaje konferencyi pa reformie pravapisu i azbuki (14-21 listapada 1926 h.)*, Inbiekult, Minsk, 1927, pp. 115-65; also U. Duboŭka, 'Projekt litar dla zhukaŭ "dz" i "dž"', *Uzvyšša*, 1928, No. 4., pp. 161-77; 'Biełaruski zhuk "dz" i litera "dzelo"', *ibid.*, No. 5., pp. 183-91.
5. *Naša niva*, 1912, No. 4.
6. *ibid.*, No. 8.

7. One correspondent pointed out that in 1908 only 28 issues of *Naša niva* had appeared as compared with 38 issues in 1907. Attributing this fact to the difficulties associated with producing the newspaper in both scripts simultaneously, he suggested that it would be better if *Naša niva* were to appear weekly in one script rather than fortnightly in both (*ibid.*, No. 6).
8. This argument was used by Janka Kupała (*ibid.*, No. 4).
9. *ibid.*, No. 5.
10. *ibid.*, No. 6.
11. *ibid.*, No. 4.
12. *ibid.*, No. 4.
13. *ibid.*, No. 20.
14. 'Da našych čytačou', *ibid.*, No. 42.
15. A recent example of this is to be found in *Fundamental Byelorussian, Book 1*, by V. Pashkievich, published in Toronto in 1974. This textbook grammar, which was produced with the aid of a substantial grant from the Canadian Federal Government, totally ignores the orthographical reform of 1933 on the basis of a rather doubtful claim that this reform has never been accepted by Byelorussians living outside the Soviet bloc. The consequence of this is that a book whose aim it should be to describe the language in its standard modern form, uses a system of spelling which is more than forty years out of date! (for an excellent critical review of *Fundamental Byelorussian* by James Dingley see: *JBS*, III, 3., London, 1975, pp. 296-9).
16. For a more detailed analysis of the orthographical patterns and inconsistencies of this period see: I. I. Kramko et al, *Historyja bielaruskaj litaryturnaj movy*, II, Minsk, 1968, pp. 119-26.
17. Exceptions were made for consonants in word final position. This work also advocated the abandonment of the 'Polish' and 'Russian' alphabets and a return to the so-called *antykva* which would be adapted to express Byelorussian sounds by the introduction of diacritic signs and special letters.
18. 1st ed., Vilna, 1918; 2nd ed., Vilna, 1919; 3rd ed., Vilna, 1920; 4th ed., Vilna-Minsk-Berlin, 1921.
19. Kramko et al., *op. cit.*, p. 163.
20. *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, 1st ed., Vilna, 1918, pp. 3-4.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 85-103.
22. *ibid.*, p. 88. For a discussion of the application of this criterion in modern Byelorussian see: P. J. Mayo, 'Anomalous spelling in Byelorussian: the replacement of e by я in post-stress syllables', *JBS*, III, 2, London, 1974, pp. 171-5.
23. Taraškievič, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
24. *ibid.*, p. 4.
25. *ibid.*, p. 102.
26. M. Bajkoŭ, M. Harecki, *Praktyčny rasijska — bielaruski sloŭnik*, Minsk, 1924; S. Niekraŭševič, M. Bajkoŭ, *Rasijska — bielaruski sloŭnik* and *Bielarуска — rasijski sloŭnik*, Minsk, 1927.
27. Ja. Losik, 'Neŭstanoŭlenyja vypadki našaha pravapisu', *Potymia*, 1924, 2; A. Bahdanovič, 'Da pytańnia ab neŭstanoŭlenych vypadkach našaha pravapisu', *Potymia*, 1925, 7; S. Niekraŭševič, 'Ab paŭreŭni akańnia na čužaziemnyja słovy', *Potymia*, 1926, 5; A. Losik, Ja. Losik, 'Da reformy bielaruskaha pravapisu', *Potymia*, 1926, 6; Ū. Duboŭka, 'Pra našu litaryturnuju movu', *Uzvyšša*, 1927, 2; 'Niekatoryja pryvatnyja vypadki miŭahučnašci našaje movy', *Uzvyšša*, 1927, 4; 'Padoužanyja (abo padvojnyja) zyčnyja i sposab ich aznačeńnia na piśmie', *Uzvyšša*, 1929, 2; V. Volski, 'Da pytańnia pra sproščanaje aznačeńnie padvojnych zyčnych na piśmie', *Uzvyšša*, 1929, 4.
28. *Pracy Akademičnaje konferencyi pa reformie bielaruskaha pravapisu i azbuki (14-21 listapada 1926 h.)*, Inbietskult, Minsk, 1927.
29. *ibid.*, p. 191.
30. *ibid.*, p. 226.
31. *ibid.*, p. 232.
32. *ibid.*, p. 188.
33. *ibid.*, p. 211.
34. 'Ab paŭreŭni akańnia na čužaziemnyja słovy', *Potymia*, 1926, 5.

35. See P. J. Mayo, *A Grammar of Byelorussian*, Sheffield, 1976, pp. 8-9.
36. *Bielaruski pravapis (prajekt)*, AN BSSR, Minsk, 1930.
37. R. Astroŭski, *Bielaruski pravapis*, 2nd ed., Vilna, 1930.
38. *Bielaruski pravapis (prajekt)*, pp. 26-30.
39. *ibid.*, pp. 31-6.
40. *ibid.*, pp. 37-8.
41. *ibid.*, pp. 49-57.
42. *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
43. *ibid.*, p. 15.
44. *Ab žmienach i spraščeŭni bielaruskaha pravapisa*, Pastanova Savieta Narodnych Kamisaraŭ BSSR, reproduced in T. P. Łamcioŭ, *Bielaruskaja hramatyka. Fanietyka i pravapis*, Minsk, 1935, pp. 67-71.
45. *ibid.*, p. 67.
46. *Pišmienniki BSSR ab reformie pravapisa bielaruskaj movy*, Minsk, 1934.
47. *ibid.*, p. 29.
48. *Pratest Bielaruskaha Navukovaha Tavarystva proci dekretu Savietu Narodnych Kamisaraŭ BSSR ab reformie bielaruskaha pravapisu*, Vilna, 1933.
49. *ibid.*
50. Ja. Stankevič, *Žmiena hramatyki bielaruskaha jazyka u BSSR*, Vilna, 1936.
51. Ja. Stankievič, *Padručnik kryvickaje (bielaruskaje) movy*, Regensburg, 1947.
52. Ja. Stankievič, 'Moŭnaja palityka bałšavikoŭ u Bielaruskaj SSR', *Bielaruski zbornik*, 2, Munich, 1955, pp. 49-110, especially pp. 81-100.
53. Taraškievič, *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, 1st ed., p. 86.
54. Stankievič, 'Moŭnaja palityka bałšavikoŭ u Bielaruskaj SSR', p. 85.
55. Taraškievič, *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, 5th ed., p. 117.
56. Stankievič, 'Moŭnaja palityka bałšavikoŭ u Bielaruskaj SSR', pp. 85-6.
57. *Pracy Akademičnaj konferencyi . . .*, p. 208.
58. For example, Rastorgujev. (*ibid.*, p. 227).
59. *Bielaruski pravapis (prajekt)*, pp. 15, 50, 51.
60. Łamcioŭ, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
61. Taraškievič had not felt it necessary to treat these forms separately, subsuming them under the general category of loan-words (*Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, 5th ed., pp. 126-7).
62. The sole exception was in the recommendation of the use of the ending -ma after consonants in the 1st person plural of the imperative mood (e.g. *станьма, кіньма*).
63. Łamcioŭ, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
64. Taraškievič, *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, 5th ed., p. 73.
65. Łamcioŭ, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
66. Taraškievič, *Bielaruskaja hramatyka dla skoł*, 5th ed., p. 102.
67. 'Novy bielaruski pravapis', *Žviazda*, 16 September 1933.
68. T. P. Łamcioŭ, *Bielaruskaja hramatyka. Fanietyka i pravapis*, Minsk, 1935; N. I. Šeŭčyk, A. S. Sałomienik, *Hramatyka bielaruskaj movy*, Minsk, 1935; *Bielaruskaja hramatyka. Marfaloŭhija* (ed. T. P. Łamcioŭ), Minsk, 1936; Ju. A. Šakal, M. I. Žyrkievič, *Hramatyka*, č. 1, Minsk, 1938; K. D. Biaznosik, Ju. A. Šakal, *Hramatyka bielaruskaj movy*, Minsk, 1941; K. I. Hurski, T. P. Łamcioŭ, T. Z. Šklar, S. L. Rochkind, *Kurs sučasnaj bielaruskaj movy. Fanietyka. Marfaloŭhija. Leksika*, Minsk, 1941.
69. K. Hurski, 'Ab bielaruskim pravapisie', *Žviazda*, 9 April 1938; P. F. Chada-renka, 'Patrebna nieadkladnaje spraščeŭnie bielaruskaha pravapisu', *Žviazda*, 6 July 1938; P. Dzik, 'Da pytaŭnia ab sučasnaj bielaruskaj arfa-hrafiij', *Žviazda*, 16 October 1938; Hryščuk, 'Zauŭvahi ab bielaruskim pravapisie', *Litaratura i mastactva*, 3 July 1939; V. Borisenko, 'O projekte reformy belorusskogo pravopisanija', *Sovetskaja Belorussija*, 16 February 1939; Raščenja, 'Reforma belorusskogo pravopisanija neobkhodima', *Sovetskaja Belorussija*, 5 March 1939; A. K. Bondarenko, 'Nabolevšije voprosy belorusskogo pravopisanija', *Sovetskaja Belorussija*, 9 April 1939; 'O reforme belorusskogo pravopisanija (obzor pisem)', *Sovetskaja Belorussija*, 3 June 1939.
70. M. R. Sudnik, 'Da pytaŭniaŭ ab bielaruskim pravapisie', *Nastaŭnickaja hazieta*, 16 May 1946; P. Dubovik, S. Šeŭčuk, 'Žmieny nieabchodny', *Nastaŭ-nickaja hazieta*, 13 June 1946; A. Barysaviec, 'Bołš dałkadnašci', *Nastaŭnic-*

- kaja hazieta*, 18 July 1946; 'Ab biełaruskim pravapisie', *Litaratura i mastactva*, 31 July 1948; M. R. Sudnik, 'Składanyja słowy u biełaruskaj arfahrafičnaj sistemie', *Litaratura i mastactva*, 2 October 1948; S. Turčynovič, B. Piatrovič, 'Inšamoŭnaja i internacyjanalna — revalucyjnyja słowy', *Litaratura i mastactva*, 25 September 1948.
71. For a summary of the proceedings of this conference see: I. A. Ossovetskij, 'Voprosy sovremennoj belorusskoj orfografii', *Voprosy jazykoznanija*, Moscow, 1952, 2, pp. 151-5. A more detailed exposition of the proposals in the 1951 *prajekt* may be found in K. K. Krapiva, 'Pytaŭni biełaruskaha pravapisu u šviate vučeńnia I. V. Stalina ab movie', *Vieści Akademii Navuk BSSR*, Minsk, 1952, 2, pp. 24-37 (reprinted, without the references to Stalin, as 'Pytaŭni biełaruskaha pravapisu' in: Kandrat Krapiva, *Zbor tvoraŭ u piaci tamach*, vol. 5, Minsk, 1976, pp. 170-88).
72. Pastanova *Ab udakładnieńni i častkovych źmienach isnujučaha biełaruskaha pravapisu*, začvierdžanaja Savietam Ministraŭ BSSR 11 maja 1957 h. (published in *Zviazda*, 23 May 1957).

The Chairman's Annual Report for the Year 1976-1977

In the course of its 11th session, the Society continued its traditional activities of organising lectures and distributing publications. Membership has remained static during the past year, but the Society's contacts with graduates, students and other persons interested in Byelorussia have continued to develop.

The financial affairs of the Society continue to be conducted on a satisfactory basis, thanks to an increase in the sale of publications, and in particular to a welcome grant from the Byelorussian Charitable Trust amounting to a total of £1,436.00. Generous donations from the Byelorussian Social Clubs in Manchester and Bradford have been of great assistance in enabling us to publish the works of our growing circle of friends in academic life. With income at £2,290 and expenditure at £2,220, there remains a surplus for the year of £70.

Among projects discussed during the session was the question of the Auberon Herbert memorial plaque, a design for which has now