

Reviews

Belaruskaja Savieckaja Encykłapiedyja. Ed. P. Broŭka et al. Vols 1-12 & vol. of indexes. 'Hałoŭnaja redakcyja Bielaruskaj Savieckaj Encykłapiedyi', Minsk, 1969-76. Illustrations.

Ever since Diderot and his friends produced, in the middle of the 18th century, their *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, it has become the ambition of every nation to possess a work of similar kind in its native language. Some, the Byelorussians among them, have had to wait for such an event longer than others. An attempt to produce a Byelorussian encyclopedia before the last war came to nothing, owing to the unfavourable conditions in the USSR during the Stalin period. It was only some 40 years later, in 1976, that the last volume of the *Byelorussian Soviet Encyclopedia* (hereinafter abbreviated as *ByelSE*) appeared. It consists of 12 volumes of about 600-700 pages each. The first 11 volumes contain over 34,000 entries in alphabetical order on a variety of subjects, while the last one is dedicated entirely to the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, with chapters on its geography, history, economy, literature etc. There is also an additional volume containing subject, name and place indexes. Its aim no doubt is to facilitate the finding of desired information in the encyclopedia, but its use might have been made more convenient by the provision of a table of contents. In any case many readers will have to do without its help, because only 5,000 copies of the index volume were printed, as against 25,000 copies of the encyclopedia.

As a universal reference work, the *ByelSE* contains entries on all kinds of subjects, from Shakespeare to Laplace equation, Physiotherapy and Cubism. Normally they reflect the current official Soviet point of view. It is therefore hardly surprising to find a photograph with a caption ex-

plaining that 'Against the workers of Northern Ireland who fight for their human rights, the English (*sic!*) government sent soldiers and armed police. Belfast 1970' (article *Vialikabrytanija*, vol. 3, p. 224). For the same reason William Gallacher and the 'Red Dean' Hewlett Johnson (remember them?) are honoured with separate entries. Ideologically the articles are written from uncompromising Marxist materialist positions. Thus God, according to the *ByelSE*, is a 'fantastic image of a supernatural being who allegedly created the world and governs it' (*Boh*, vol. 2, p. 363), while religion is nothing but 'a form of social consciousness, a distorted fantastic reflection in the consciousness of men of natural and social forces, in which those earthly forces are considered to be unearthly' (*Relihija*, vol. 9, p. 257). In bibliographical notes to articles on general and many Byelorussian subjects the works quoted are, as a rule, in Russian, while Byelorussian titles are the exception — a rather sad commentary on the linguistic situation prevailing in the 'sovereign' Byelorussian Soviet republic after nearly 60 years of its existence.

Despite this fact, however, the *ByelSE* can be justly called Byelorussian, not only because of the language in which it is written, but also because of the amount of Byelorussian material contained in it. In addition to vol. 12, about two-fifths of all articles in vols 1-11 are on Byelorussian subjects. There is in the first place a wealth of detailed information on Byelorussia's geographical features, geological structure, natural resources, fauna, flora etc. — all expertly written and profusely illustrated. How detailed the information

is can be judged from the fact that even small geographical objects such as the river Vyzienka only 20 km. long (vol. 3, p. 186) and the lake Brodna with a surface area of 0.55 sq. km. (vol. 2, p. 400) have their separate entries. With regard to inhabited places the situation is somewhat confusing. There are articles not only on all Byelorussian towns, but also on villages which are centres of rural district councils (*sielsaviety*) or collective farms (*kahasy*). In vols 1-5 the information includes the population of each inhabited place, even though it be as small as the village of Kavalki with its 24 inhabitants and 7 farmsteads (vol. 5, p. 204). Vol. 6 still provides information about the population of towns with over 10,000 inhabitants and of villages, but not of small towns. Thus, looking through entries for the letter K, which are partly in vol. 5 and partly in vol. 6 (both vols published in 1972), one learns, for example, that the town of Kamianiec has 5,100 inhabitants and is the centre of the country district (*rajon*) with a population of 52,200 (vol. 5, p. 361 *et seq.*). No such information is available for the ancient town of Kleck and its county (vol. 6, p. 18 *et seq.*), although one is still informed that the village of Kletnaje, whose entry immediately precedes that on Kleck, has a population of 466. From vol. 7 onwards the information on the population of villages also disappears. Such changes of policy in the middle of a publication are, to say the least, perplexing.

Some of the best entries in the *ByelSE* are those on art (both pure and applied), architecture, folk art and literature, ethnography etc. Several articles such as 'Dress' (*Adziennie*, vol. 1, p. 103), 'Architecture' (*Architektura*, vol. 1, p. 473), 'Embroidery' (*Vysyuka*, vol. 3, p. 211), 'Graphic art' (*Hrafika*, vol. 4, p. 5), 'Folk art' (*Narodnaja tvorčašć*, vol. 7, p. 414), 'Sash' (*Pojas*, vol. 8, p. 522), 'Towel' (*Ručnik*, vol. 9, p. 200), 'Artistic weaving' (*Tkaniny mastackija*, vol. 10, p. 258) and many others are richly illustrated, in part or entirely, with Byelorussian examples. One cannot resist the temptation to mention the article on the famous Słuck sashes (*Słuckija pajasjy*, vol. 9, p. 596) with 10 splendid reproductions in colour. There is a great number of excellent articles on single monuments

of Byelorussian art and architecture, as well as on individual artists, all illustrated with reproductions (some in colour) and, wherever appropriate, plans. Equally informative and well written are the entries on Byelorussian music and theatre, although it is a pity that the political straitjacket proved too narrow to accommodate any mention of the composers M. Ravienski, M. Ščaħlou-Kulikovič and a few others.

There are nearly 500 articles in the *ByelSE* on Byelorussian literature, with individual entries on all major and most lesser known writers. As might be expected, Jakub Kołas (vol. 6, pp. 51-4) and Janka Kupala (*ibid.*, pp. 199-202) receive the most detailed treatment, but pride of place is reserved for Francisk Skaryna (vol. 9, pp. 548-52) with an article as long as that on the Russian poet Puškin. It may well be asked what makes Puškin so important for Byelorussians — and not him alone, but also other Russian writers like Tolstoj and Gor'kij, who receive more attention than Francišak Bahuševič, Maksim Bahdanovič, Zmitrok Biadula, Kuźma Čorny or Maksim Harecki. From the article on the poet Jazep Pušča (1902-64) one learns that he 'taught in Byelorussia (1921-6), worked in the Institute of Byelorussian Culture (1926), in the Byelorussian State Publishing House (1929-30), in Šedrinsk in the Urals and in Anap (1931-6) and in the Vladimir province (1937-58)' (vol. 8, p. 640). The article is silent about the reasons which compelled the poet suddenly to leave his native country, nor does it explain the 30 years' gap (1930-60) in the publication of his books. The fact is that, like many other Byelorussians, Pušča was arrested and deported under Stalin. He was one of the lucky few who survived and eventually, after 28 years, was permitted to return to Byelorussia and even to resume writing. Many others were less fortunate and died in undisclosed circumstances (a great number of them in the years 1937-8) to be 'rehabilitated' only posthumously after Stalin's death. One cannot help feeling that the authors of the relevant articles in the *ByelSE*, by being curiously reticent about these facts, are trying to create a distorted picture of the development of Byelorussian literature during the Soviet period.

A group of modern writers whose views did not exactly serve to endear them to the powers that be in the Soviet Union are passed over in silence in the *ByelSE*. Such are the playwright Francišak Alachnovič (1883-1943), poet Chviedar Iljaševič (1910-48), short story writer and essayist Jurka Vičbič (1905-75), poetess Natalla Arsieŋnieva (now living in the USA) and others. There is equally no mention of Byelorussian writers who now live in the Polish Republic, although the works of some of them (Aleš Barski, Sakrat Janovič, Viktor Švied) have recently been published in Minsk. The reason for the latter omission may be the tendency to identify the ethno-linguistic territory of Byelorussia with that of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. It is only indirectly, from articles such as 'Byelorussian language' that one learns that Byelorussian dialects are spoken outside the administrative borders of the Republic (the neighbouring districts of the Lithuanian and Latvian republics, Smolensk region and Biełastok province), (vol. 2, p. 224).

Most of some 3,500 articles on the history of Byelorussia deal with the Soviet period. There are nearly 800 entries on the history of the Byelorussian Communist Party. Much space is given to the Second World War. Thus in vol. 8 alone material on partisan warfare in Byelorussia against the Germans takes up 166 pages (pp. 117-283), so that one sometimes wonders whether it is a work of reference or a treatise. The importance attached to the 'correct' presentation of this material can be judged from the fact that it was the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Communist Party and not the editors of the *ByelSE* who were responsible for its preparation. This may explain why vol. 8 appeared two years late in 1975, long after vols 9, 10 and 11 were published.

One of the strangest features of the *ByelSE* is a seemingly endless number of articles on various heroes, professional revolutionaries, generals and Communist party workers. There are separate entries (usually adorned with photographs) on 462 'heroes of the Soviet Union' of Byelorussian origin, and on more than twice as many 'heroes' of other nationalities who fought in Byelorussia during the

last war. One is for instance edified to learn about one Abylaj Alimbetaŭ, born in 1921 in Chuzman and now living in Kazyl-Orda in Kazakhstan, who distinguished himself in October 1943 during the crossing of the river Dniepr near Łojeŭ (vol. 1, p. 255). Without questioning this man's bravery which he is said to have displayed in 1943 in his unspecified exploit, it may perhaps be queried why this item of information — and hundreds more like it — is included there at all. One would hardly expect to find in the Encyclopedia Britannica articles on each and every holder of the Victoria Cross. And who in Byelorussia — or indeed elsewhere — would like to know about Jevgenij Afanasjev, who before 1941 was head of state security (a euphemism for the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB) in the Kamianec district and during the war occupied the post of commissar, or political officer, in Soviet partisan formations in Brest province (vol. 1, p. 614)? Equally as stirring and as relevant are articles on more than 300 'heroes of socialist labour' in Byelorussia. One reads of a Nadzieja Arsieŋnjeva (not in any way to be confused with the poetess Natalla Arsieŋnieva, about whom the *ByelSE* is discreetly silent), a milkmaid on the 'Viejna' state farm in Mahiloŭ province, who succeeded in increasing the yield of milk from her cows (vol. 1, p. 465). Then there is one Valancina Hardziejeva who has qualified for immortality as foreman (*bryhadzir*) in the section of receipt and delivery of telegrams in the Babrujsk post office (vol. 3, p. 359).

Not all subjects, however, are treated in such detail. There are only 15 lines on the Byelorussian National Republic (*Bielaruskaja narodnaja respublika*, vol. 2, p. 277) with a bibliography consisting of one title in Russian. The subject of 'Byelorussianization' (*bielarusizacyja*) which was official policy during the 1920s in Soviet Byelorussia is not mentioned at all. The article on the Academy of Sciences of the Byelorussian SSR (*Akademiya navuk Bielaruskaj SSR*, vol. 1, p. 179 *et seq.*) fails to mention that initially the name of that institution was 'The Byelorussian Academy of Sciences' (*Bielaruskaja akademiya navuk*), which emphasised its national character. Moreover, the list of fellows

of the Academy is far from complete; the names of historian Vaclau Łastoŭski (1883-1938) and philologists Jazep Losik (1884-1940) and Ściapan Niekraševič (1883-1937), who in 1930 were denounced as 'national democrats' and dealt with accordingly by the authorities, are omitted. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find in vol. 6 of the *ByelSE* (which appeared in 1972, three years after vol. 1) articles on Łastoŭski (p. 267) and Losik (p. 351) in which it is stated among other things that they were both fellows of the Academy, Łastoŭski even occupying the post of its first permanent secretary. Was this an oversight or a change of 'party line'? Incidentally, Niekraševič (who was the first vice-president of the Academy) was not so fortunate, if such be the right word to use.

The article on Kastuś Kalinoŭski contains the following passage: 'As an atheist [Kalinoŭski] criticised the teaching that God created men and endowed them with equal (*sic!*) souls. He placed peasants' truth above God. He was calling to change the world not with prayers or faith in God, but by revolt: "... there is no point in expecting anything from anybody because only those who sow will reap. So, keep sowing, Fellows, when the time comes, with a full hand, don't spare the effort — so that the peasant may be a free man..."' *Peasants' Truth*, No. 3' (vol. 5, p. 266). Kalinoŭski (1838-64) was one of the leaders of the anti-Russian uprising of 1863-4 and the editor of the first Byelorussian clandestine paper *Mužyckaja praŭda* (*Peasants' Truth*). In No. 3 of that paper, from which the quotation is taken, he is not concerned with religious matters, but attempts to explain to Byelorussian peasants the true value of the franchise granted to them by the tsar, and to warn them against being deceived by the Russian government. As for his alleged atheism, perhaps a longer passage from the same issue of *Mužyckaja praŭda*, with the quotation in question placed in its proper context, may serve to clarify the matter: 'Only, Fellows, be brave because God and truth are with us and when we are with God it is difficult to fight against us, because God's might is great and the people are many. So it is clear from this letter: *there is no point in expect-*

ting anything from anybody because only those who sow will reap. So, keep sowing, Fellows, when the time comes, with a full hand, don't spare the effort — so that the peasant may be a free man, as he is throughout the world. God will help us!!!' ('Tolko, dziaciuki, śmieło, bo Boh i praŭda z nami, a kali my z Bohom to z nami wajewaci trudno bo boska moc wielka i narodu mnoho. Tak s taho piśma i widno: szto niema czeho ždaci ad nikoho, bo toj tolki źnie chto pasieje. Tak siejcież, Dziaciuki, jak prydzie para pounoju rukoju nie szkadujcie pracy — kab i mužyk byu czełowiekom wolnym, jak je u caluśkom świecie. Boh nam dapamože!!!', *Mužyckaja praŭda*, No. 3. Text from: Agurskij, S. *Očerki po istorii revoljucionnogo dviženija v Belorussii, 1863-1917*. Bel. gos. izd., Minsk, 1928, p. 214). Clearly here is a case of deliberately attempting to deceive the reader who is in no position to check the facts. The question arises, therefore, is this an isolated case, or are there others? And how many?

The Byelorussian material scattered throughout the first 11 volumes of the *ByelSE* is gathered together in vol. 12 which is thus a handy reference book on Byelorussia — or rather on the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. There are chapters on the geography of Byelorussia, its history, political system, administrative structure, economy, art, literature, development of science etc. Religion and the thousand years' history of the Church in Byelorussia are dealt with on two pages (the bibliography is all Russian) and the whole subject is dismissed with the perfunctory statement that 'as the results of sociological studies show, the majority of the population in Byelorussia does not profess any religion' (p. 664). By contrast there are 35 pages on the history of the Byelorussian Communist Party — all 60 years of it.

The *ByelSE* is comparatively free from small factual mistakes (as distinct from deliberately misleading information) which are unavoidable in a publication of this kind. Those few mistakes which could be discovered are of minor importance. Thus in vol. 12, p. 605 the woodcut of St. Matthew the Evangelist is described as coming from the 16th-century Vilna primer. In fact there are no known illustrated

16th-century Byelorussian school primers, and the woodcut in question was used for the first time to illustrate the primer published by the Vilna Orthodox confraternity in 1640. Similarly the caption to the reproduction of the 17th-century icon of the 'Three hierarchs' (vol. 12, facing p. 612) should have 'Gregory the Theologian' (*Ryhor Bahastoŭ*) instead of

'John the Theologian' (*Iaan Bahastoŭ*).

It must be said that on the whole the *ByelSE* is technically well produced and beautifully illustrated; it is a pleasure to look at. No doubt it has its uses as a reference work, especially if what is required is information on Byelorussian fauna and flora.

A. Nadson

Hłybinny, Uładzimir. *Paeta z Božaj łaski. Uspaminy i rozдум pra Jazepa Pušča (1902-1964)*. Privately published, New York, 1979. 132 pages.

Jazep Pušča is one of the considerable number of important Byelorussian writers who have for reasons unconnected with literature been seriously neglected in Soviet criticism. Though not excommunicated like his predecessor Harun, Pušča has been republished only partially, and it is characteristic of the disfavour in which he is held that he receives only two sentences in the official Byelorussian history of Soviet Byelorussian literature, and is treated scurrily as 'depressive' and 'inclined to bourgeois ideology' in the more recent Russian-language *Istorija belorusskoj sovetskoi literatury* (pp. 41, 61 etc.). The writer of the present notice has been taken to task in the Soviet press for 'bourgeois objectivism' in presenting Pušča and Duboŭka as poets of opposition in the 1920s, but whereas Duboŭka is now officially defended as having been loyal to the régime, with Pušča no such defence is made; instead his status as a major poet is impugned (*Poŭymia*, 1980, no. 5, pp. 240-41). The fullest description of Pušča as an oppositionist is still to be found on the pages of Anthony Adamovich's *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature (1917-1957)* (Munich, 1958), and it is around the significance of such works as the *Listy da sabaki* (1927), *Asieŭnija pieśni* (1927) and *Pierad skupym abliččam času* (1929) cycles, and long poems like *Cieŭ konsuła* (1928) and *Sady viatroŭ* (1929) that controversy revolves. Of these pre-war works only the last has been fully republished in any of the three selections of Pušča's verse which have appeared since his rehabilitation (1960, 1963, and 1968), and only recently have major satirical pieces like *Listy da sabaki* been men-

tioned at all (albeit abusively) by Soviet critics. The existing sparse critical writing on Pušča includes a short introduction by S. Hrachouški to the 'Biblijateka biełaruskaj paezi' edition of 1968, a mainly 'biographica' article by fellow-poet Mikoła Chviedarovič (*Poŭymia*, 1972, no. 5, pp. 215-21), and a series of articles by Uładzimir Hłybinny under the title 'Paeta z Božaj łaski' which have appeared in the American journal *Biełaruskaja dumka*, nos 16-22 (1974-78).

The present critical biography-cum-memoir is in fact an offprint of these articles, and is greatly to be welcomed as the first attempt to present an overall, albeit highly personal, view of the poet's life and work. The author, who also writes under his real name of Uładzimir Siadura (Vladimir Seduro) is well-known for his work on Byelorussian theatre and drama, and for his collections of prose stories and memoirs, as well as for critical studies of Russian literature, particularly Dostojevskij. His reminiscences of Pušča may be regarded as one of his most useful works, despite their small format and the sadly small edition (about fifty) in which they appear, for Pušča's posthumous reputation richly deserves to be re-established, his spiritual boldness and poetic power to be recognized at their true worth. The Pušča that emerges from Hłybinny's book is akin to that presented by Adamovich, but far more rounded, both as a man and as a poet. It is, nonetheless, as the title implies, a very personal account: the word 'I' appears in the title of six of the first seven chapters. Hłybinny's literary judgements are sound and well considered, whilst the extensive use of illustrative quotations is partic-

ularly valuable when so many of Pušča's more interesting poems are otherwise unavailable.

Paeta z Božaj łaski is a popular book, but, as the first substantial study of Pušča, an important one. It

is to be hoped that the author will have more copies printed, and that it will serve to introduce an unjustly neglected poet to a wider audience.

Arnold McMillin

Kalešnik, U. *Vietrazi Adysieja. Uładzimir Žyłka i ramantyčnaja tradycyja ŭ biełaruskaj paezii*. 'Mastackaja litaratura', Minsk, 1977. 328 pages. Illustrations.

The case of Uładzimir Žyłka (1900-1933) is a strange and sad one even in the frequently bizarre context of Byelorussian literature of the twenties and thirties. A fervent Communist and staunch patriot all his life, he began as a poet in Western Byelorussia, lived for a while in Prague (1923-26) and, having voluntarily moved to Soviet Byelorussia, fell as one of the first victims to Stalin's Purges. As a poet, Žyłka may, like Čarot, be associated with Harun in the spirit and free form of many of his lyrics, but whereas Čarot vehemently proclaimed futuristic destruction in his hymn to the revolutionary new age *Bosyja na vohniščach* (1921), Žyłka replied to the frenzied *burapienist* with relatively measured tones (though he too felt 'drunk on motion') in *Ujaŭleńnie* (1922), an eloquent poetic description of the various stages in a specifically Byelorussian national revolution, with the future seen as the product of 'immense distances and enormous treasures' rather than universal nihilism. Always a romantic, Žyłka wrote elevated nature poems and unusual formally adventurous lyrics on love and mortality, somewhat in the folkloristic tradition of late Bahdanovič. In the Soviet Union he was soon dubbed with the epithet 'bourgeois aesthete', and expelled from the initially radical organization 'Maładniak' in 1928. He joined 'Uzvyšša' in the following year, and, having figured extensively in Andrej Aleksandrovič's notorious denunciatory poem *Cieni na soncy* (1928-30) was in 1930 the first of many 'Uzvyšša' members to be arrested by the OGPU. Žyłka's 'odyssey' ended with death in Siberia in 1933, after which appeared his verse *Testament* (printed 1942), a strongly nationalistic declaration of Byelorussian patriotism and of the, in the circumstances remarkable, politic-

al loyalty which had remained with him throughout earlier 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'.

In the introduction to his attractively produced new monograph Uładzimir Kalešnik, author of several books on West Byelorussian literature including a now superseded study of Maksim Tank (*Paezija zmahańnia: Maksim Tank i zachodniebielaruskaja litaratura*, Minsk, 1959) criticizes those Western commentators who have portrayed Žyłka as a victim of the Party he so faithfully supported. It is, however, difficult to see this loyal Communist as other than a martyr in the light of hard facts which this rather ill-documented book (no bibliography, inadequate annotation) does little or nothing to dispel. Rehabilitated relatively late, in 1961, Žyłka had until 1970 only twenty-nine poems published in Soviet Byelorussia. Even *Vieršy*, published by Kalešnik in 1970 and still the only Soviet collection of his works, omits several major poems including the greater part of *Ujaŭleńnie* and all of *Testament*, whereas the émigré edition *Tvory* (New York, 1955) embraces all Žyłka's surviving original poems, and includes a substantial commentary by Anthony Adamovich. It would seem that Kalešnik 'doth protest too much' in his comments on the work of 'ideological enemies' (p. 6).

Nonetheless *Vietrazi Adysieja* augments Adamovich in several details, and may be given a very cautious welcome for drawing some attention to a seriously neglected modern Byelorussian poet, though one regrets the strong ideological special pleading and some curious ideas about 'progressive' and 'reactionary' romanticism (already familiar from Kalešnik's earlier work). The most serious sins, however, are those of omission: Western students of Žyłka's work can use this new book

in conjunction with Adamovich's study, but Soviet readers will gain a decidedly one-sided picture of the poet and his times, particularly since *Vietrazi Adysieja* (328 pages; 2000 copies) is far more likely to be read than *Vieršy* (136 pages; 2000 copies),

long since unavailable. In the circumstances it may be felt that a scholarly edition of Žyłka's work would have been a more worthwhile project.

Arnold McMillin

Majsiejenka, A. F. *Tvorčaść Michasia Zareckaha: Stanaŭleńnie talentu. 'Vyšejšaja škoła'*, Minsk, 1978. 152 pages. Bibliography.

Anatol Majsiejenka begins his long overdue study of Michaś Zarecki (pseudonym of Michaił Kasiankoŭ, 1901-41) by correctly noting that although he was one of the most talented of early Soviet Byelorussian prose writers he has for a long time been deliberately neglected, indeed 'erased from the history of literature' (p. 3). It is a pity that this frankness is not maintained throughout what is otherwise a serious attempt to revive interest in Zarecki, for the author fails to mention several of his significant works, thus presenting an incomplete picture of a most colourful and varied figure. For example, in the discussion of the sketches on collectivization of 1930, *Listy da znajomaha* and *Viasna 1930 hoda*, and of the rather dull novel *Viaźmo* (1932) which to some extent derived from them, Majsiejenka specifically contrasts Zarecki with those writers who depicted collectivization in terms of black and white (pp. 74-75), at the same time completely failing to mention his far more critical *Padarožža na novuju ziamlu* of 1929, a book which brought him accusations of 'deviationist' and 'kulak' tendencies, and was partly the cause of his expulsion from the Communist Party later that year.

The other reason for Zarecki's temporary disgrace (he was not arrested as an 'enemy of the people' until 1936) was a nationalistic novel somewhat in the spirit of Vaclaŭ Łastoŭski, *Kryvičy* (1929-31), of which only the first and last parts were published, although the important central section was quite well known in manuscript and deemed by the contemporary critic Orest Kanakocin 'the "highest achievement" of Byelorussian National Democracy in Literature' (see Anthony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature*

(1917-1957), Munich, 1958, p. 118). In his first, and in many ways best, major novel *Šciežki-darožki* (1927), a lively account of the Revolution and Civil War, Zarecki had consistently made his 'villains' more lifelike and interesting than their rather boring 'positive' Communist counterparts, often allowing them to utter anti-Soviet sentiments without contradiction or comment. In *Kryvičy*, however, the expression of nationalist feelings is much more direct, with Byelorussianization, for instance, dismissed as a 'sly trick' (see Adamovich, *op cit.*, p. 19). None of this emerges clearly from Majsiejenka who, whilst according *Kryvičy* 'significance', declines to discuss its literary merits on the grounds that it is unfinished, merely observing that to judge by the published parts it did not justify the attacks made on it by contemporary critics (p. 73). Even this, however, is an improvement on the previous practice of passing the novel over in complete silence or dismissing it, as does Aleś Adamovič (*Bietaruski roman*, Minsk, 1961, p. 142), as one of Zarecki's 'idejna-tvorčyja zryvny'. *Kryvičy* is not included in the Bibliography of works by and about Zarecki (pp. 149-51) which, though welcome in itself, is in fact marred by several omissions in both categories. For instance, no works by Kavalenka are cited although he is mentioned in the Introduction as one of the scholars who have written about Zarecki recently.

Tvorčaść Michasia Zareckaha is a slight and imperfect book, published in an edition of only 800 copies, but it reflects a genuine attempt to redress some of the injustice which this novelist has suffered from critics and publishers in the past. A great deal remains to be done before all Byelorussia's major 20th-century writers

and poets are restored to their rightful place in the panoply of Byelorussian literature. In the meantime all

steps in that direction, however timid, are to be welcomed.

Arnold McMillin

Rjabcevič, V. N. *O čem rasskazyvajut monety*. 2nd ed. 'Narodnaja aśvieta', Minsk, 1977. 398 pp. Illustrations.

Fortunately numismatics is now firmly established as an indispensable auxiliary historical discipline. This book is an excellent example of how a study of coins, their production and circulation, and their changes in value can have direct bearing on our knowledge of the history of a country. Although written primarily for the layman, it nevertheless succeeds in providing invaluable information for the professional historian.

Rjabcevič's book serves to complement the various editions of I. G. Spasskij's *Russkaja monetnaja sistema*, in that, despite the necessarily common nature of the material in the early chapters of both books, the former concentrates primarily on the coinage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, to a lesser extent, Poland. The book's most important chapters are precisely those (6-8, pp. 89-171) dealing with the currency in circulation in Byelorussia between the fourteenth and the end of the eighteenth centuries. The author draws his information from documents of the period and uses extensive quotation to illustrate his material. He makes a careful distinction between the coinage systems of the Grand Duchy and Poland; this is absolutely essential at a time when the Polish *grosz* was lighter in weight, and therefore in value, than its Lithuanian equivalent. He is also precise about identifying the occasions on which currency terms are used to signify a unit of account rather than an actual coin. It is for this reason, and for his tabulation of the exchange values of different types of coin within the currency system, that Rjabcevič's book will be of great benefit to the historian who needs answers to the many complex problems that arise in the course of an examination of the decline of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. It

is obviously beyond the scope of this volume to go into detail on the economic reasons for this decline, but it is sufficiently well documented to be used as an introduction to a complex area of economic history.

The final section of the book, pp. 207-398, contains valuable photographs of coins and reproductions of heraldic devices. Unfortunately the quality of the photographs is not as good as that to be found in Spasskij's book or in D. Ja. Fedorov's indispensable catalogue *Monety Pribaltiki XIII-XVIII stoletij*, Tallin, 1966, but this is essentially a very minor drawback. A far more serious shortcoming is one that this book shares with most modern Soviet publications, even those that lay claim to being 'scholarly': complete lack of bibliography and index.

There is one really noteworthy error, undoubtedly caused by the author's excessive enthusiasm for Kiev's international trading connections in the thirteenth century. At the end of his account of a journey to the Mongol Khans (1245-1247), Friar John of Pian de Carpine gives a list of merchants he met in Kiev who can verify the truth of what he has written: 'Sunt et testes mercatores de Constantinopoli qui per Tartaros in Rusciam venerunt... nomina autem mercatorum illorum sunt haec: Michael Genuensis enim et Bartholomeus, Manuel Veneticus, Jacobus Reverius Acre, Nicholaus Pisanus.' Rjabcevič takes 'Acre' to mean that Reverius came from Accra in Ghana but unfortunately omits to identify his source. M. d'Avezac, in his edition of the text *Relation des mongols ou tartares*, Paris, 1838, makes a much more likely deduction: 'peut-être faut-il lire *Acrensis*, pour *Acconensis*'.

J. Dingley

The Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. A manuscript of the 17th century in the Slavonic text and Latin translation. Ed. and annot. by Č. Sipovič. The Francis Skaryna Byelorussian Library, London, 1978. 205 pp. Illustrations. Index.

Among early known Slavonic liturgical manuscripts the one belonging to the Francis Skaryna Byelorussian Library in London occupies a unique place. It consists of the Slavonic text of the Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom together with a parallel Latin translation — which fact alone makes it something of a rarity. Moreover, unlike the majority of manuscripts of this group written by the Orthodox, it reflects the liturgical customs and practices of the Catholic Church of Byzantine rite (better known as the Uniate Church) in Byelorussia in the middle of the 17th century. For these reasons the facsimile publication of the manuscript is an event of considerable importance, especially for liturgists and all those interested in the history of the Church in Byelorussia. To a somewhat lesser extent it is also of interest to philologists, both because of its paleographical features and as a document of the 'Byelorussian recension' of Church Slavonic.

The editor, Bishop Česlaus Sipovič, Apostolic Visitor for Byelorussian Catholics, has not limited himself to the simple reproduction of the manuscript, but at the same time has provided a thorough critical study of the text, having compared it with texts of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom found in 22 printed Slavonic editions, both Orthodox and Uniate, of the 16th-18th centuries, as well as in some modern ones. Ten of those early publications come from Byelorussia, the earliest of them being the Service Book published in 1583 by the Mamonič Brothers in Vilna. The remaining publications are of Serbian, Ukrainian or Muscovite origin.

The manuscript was originally presented by Bishop Theodore Skuminovič, Suffragan of Vilna for Byelorussia (*Suffraganeus Vilnensis per Albam Russiam*) to the church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Rome, which from 1639 was the official residence of the representative (*procurator*) of the Byelorussian Basilian monks in that city. It could not have been written later than 1652, because it was in that year that Skuminovič visited Rome, where he was consecrated bishop. Bishop Sipovič gives a sketch of Skuminovič's life — a descendant of an ancient Byelorussian noble family, educated in Vilna, Cracow and Louvain, an Orthodox archpriest who later joined the Catholic Church and became bishop, and who wrote his apologia for becoming a Catholic, as well as learned treatises on canon law and the reform of the calendar. Altogether he seems to have been an interesting and colourful figure, whose life could serve as an illustration to the ecclesiastical conditions prevailing in Byelorussia in the 17th century. Furthermore, Bishop Sipovič, on the basis of the paleographical study of all known specimens of Skuminovič's handwriting, has been able to produce some convincing arguments in favour of the latter's authorship of the manuscript in question.

The book is beautifully produced on excellent paper, with a tasteful cover design by Veronica Kendle. It is a valuable and scholarly work, and an example of how such publications should be produced.

A. Nadson