

The Kupała-Kołas Century 1882-1982

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It was in London, where this seminar is being held, that thirty years ago in 1952 a book was published in which, albeit in passing and not in the context of literature, an observation was made which more aptly than anything before or since showed an understanding of the essence of the role which Kupała and Kołas played in Byelorussia, allowing us today to speak of the hundred years since their birth as 'the Kupała-Kołas century'. I have in mind Walter Kolarz's book *Russia and her Colonies* in which he says:

"The role which Kupała and Kołas played in Soviet Byelorussia is unparalleled throughout the USSR. No Byelorussian Bolshevik ever assumed the role of a national leader of the Byelorussians — the leadership was in the hands of Kołas and Kupała. Instead of "removing" the two poets, the Soviet regime tried to direct their poetic creation into the "right channels" and to use them for communist propaganda. Kołas and Kupała were often criticized, at times they seem to have been in disgrace but they never disappeared, as did many excellent writers and poets of almost all the major peoples of the Soviet Union.

The purge of Kołas and Kupała would have been tantamount to the bankruptcy of the Soviet cultural policy in the BSSR since the two were not only outstanding literary figures but actually cultural "awakeners" of their people. Byelorussia could do without its "national democrat" historians and folklorists, it could do without its leading communist politicians. Kołas and Kupała, however, were indispensable. Their case showed that there are limits even to purges in the Soviet Union. The purge in Byelorussia could not be carried so far as to endanger the cultural foundations of the third largest people of the Soviet Union. This is why Kołas and Kupała were spared despite all their "sins" and "deviation".¹

This does indeed explain 'why Kołas and Kupała were spared' by the Soviet regime, but what remains unexplained — what is taken as axiomatic — is the basis of this explanation contained in the assertion that 'the leadership [i.e. the national leadership of the Byelorussians — A.A.] was in the hands of Kołas and Kupała', that 'the two were not only outstanding literary figures but actually cultural "awakeners" of their people' and that 'Kołas and Kupała... were indispensable'. In order to understand fully what it is that allows us to speak of the 'Kupała-Kołas century' it is necessary to elucidate and substantiate precisely these points, however axiomatic they might appear. The main purpose of this paper is to provide such an elucidation and substantiation, at least in its most important aspects and in the general terms which time allows.

That Kupała and Kołas were 'not only outstanding literary figures, but actually cultural "awakeners" of their people' would certainly not be denied by anyone who is acquainted in even the most general way with the principal facts of their life and work. But it is important first of all, in accordance with those facts, to make it clear that although they were from the very beginning 'literary figures', both Kupała and Kołas emerged

initially as 'cultural "awakeners" of their people' and it was precisely in this respect that they became 'outstanding', only with the passage of time — and then not simultaneously but with Kofas following a couple of years behind Kupala — did they confirm their status as outstanding rather than minor literary figures. It is not perhaps generally known that the very concept of the cultural awakening of the Byelorussian people was first put forward in 1882, the year of their birth — was born, so to speak, along with them — so that the Kupala-Kofas century is also the century of the cultural awakening of the Byelorussian people, indeed of the Byelorussian cause as a whole, since this awakening was the first task which that cause set itself. This has come to light in certain documents discovered relatively recently (in the 1960s) in the archives of tsarist Russia.

In the earliest of these documents, dated 16 December 1882 and entitled *Pis'ma o Belorussii* [Letters about Byelorussia] a short introductory note by the publishers begins with the words: 'The interest aroused recently by the Byelorussian question...' (i.e. by the Byelorussian cause); and the 'publishers' (apparently a group of Byelorussian students in St. Petersburg) further express the hope 'that those who sympathize with the awakening of the Byelorussian intelligentsia will attempt to render all possible assistance to the newly emerged cause'² i.e., again, to the Byelorussian cause. This note is followed on 16 hectographed pages by the text of the first *Pis'mo o Belorussii* under the heading 'Danila Borovik. Pis'mo pervoje', in which the said Danila Borovik (apparently a pseudonym but one which has so far not been uncovered), addressing 'our native land of Byelorussia', asserts that:

'...our native land sleeps the sleep of the dead, only now and then awaking in order to see whether anyone has appeared to arouse her from sleep, to come to her aid... And yet there was once a time when our native land also lived a life full of historical events and even had influence over...Lithuania which used Byelorussian as its official language.'³

Borovik then turns his attention to that period in the history of Byelorussia when she came under the cultural, religious and political influence of Poland:

'Since it had not become sufficiently firmly established and since it had not managed to develop its own individuality, the Byelorussian upper class accepted without any great difficulty the attractions of Polish culture as being more powerful and historically more highly developed.'⁴

Observing that 'the ordinary people of Byelorussia' remained unaffected by this cultural polonization of the upper class, Borovik dwells on that moment when in Byelorussia:

'...after 1863 [i.e. after the 'Polish uprising' — A.A.] systematic russification of the country was instituted through the schools and various repressive measures. To carry this out numerous officials were even summoned from the Great Russian provinces and entrusted with the task of implementing the policy of russification. But as we see, their cause is making no headway whatsoever and is even becoming a fiasco.'⁵

Towards the end of his *Pis'mo* Borovik sums up his excursion into the history of Byelorussia thus:

'Having traced in outline both Byelorussia's past and present fortune, we see that until now historical circumstances have not allowed her to awake and take control of her own destiny... Who will lead our poor native land out onto the true path? Who, at last, will awaken Byelorussia's national and social forces from their long sleep?'⁶

Returning to the images of Byelorussia's awakening from sleep which the

Pis'ma o Belorussii, and in particular Borovik's 'Pis'mo pervoje', referred to at the beginning, he calls on:

'...all the best people in Byelorussia to join together, to imbue themselves with the interests of their people, to get to know them as well as possible, in order thereafter to embark on a united effort for the welfare of their native land which for so long has suffered but which, perhaps, has a glorious future in prospect...'⁷

For the present at least we know of nobody before Danila Borovik who put forward similar views on the history of Byelorussia and, moreover, used the images of 'sleep' and 'awakening' to characterize the state of lack of national consciousness and social passivity in which the great mass of the Byelorussian people had found itself throughout history, and to point out the path to be taken in order to deliver them from that state. But it was essentially these views and precisely these images which later, especially at the time when Kołas and Kupała entered the arena, became generally accepted and were most widely disseminated in those by now conscious and active circles from among whose ranks our poets emerged and who, like they, knew nothing of Danila Borovik and his views. Not only that but along with Danila Borovik's *Pis'mo* — in the very same archives — was discovered a response to it: '*Pastańnie da ziemiakoŭ-Bielarusau u sviazi z pieršym "Pišmam pra Bielarus"*' [Message to our fellow Byelorussians in connection with the first 'Letter about Byelorussia'], dated 1 January 1884 and signed with a pseudonym which, like Borovik's, has yet to be uncovered — 'Ščyry Bielarus' [A True Byelorussian]. This is what the True Byelorussian wrote at the very beginning of his *Pastańnie*:

'Two years ago [i.e. in 1882 — A.A.] certain signs of the awakening of our native intelligentsia began to make themselves felt, i.e. a movement began among Byelorussians about which the foreign press, ever alert to unusual occurrences in the public life of its neighbours, began to write... Following this even conservative Russian publications raised a howl of protest against separatism and poured forth a whole series of fabrications invented by the defenders of Moscow and their Byelorussian friends... Then at the beginning of the current year, in one of the first numbers of the journal *Studenčestvo*, there appeared a short review of the first *Pis'mo pra Bielarus*, and finally I managed to see Borovik's letter itself, published, as can be seen from its preface, by a group of Byelorussians. After all this it was impossible not to be convinced that among us, too, the foundation has been laid for that grateful movement whose absence has for so long been felt in our land. In the light of this awakening I send you my warmest greetings, dear fellow countrymen! Good luck! The time has long been ripe to embark on this noble and sacred task!'⁸

Thus, as emerges from these words of the True Byelorussian, in 1882, in the year when Kupała and Kołas were born, there was born not only (as has already been stated) the cause of the cultural awakening of the Byelorussian people or the Byelorussian cause in general, but also the Byelorussian national movement itself, the movement of struggle for this cause. By this token the Kupała-Kołas century may be regarded also as the century of the Byelorussian national movement.

But the True Byelorussian was not satisfied by the mere direction to get to know Byelorussia which Danila Borovik considered a precondition for embarking on work 'for the welfare of our native land'. At the end of his *Pastańnie* the True Byelorussian wrote:

'It seems to me that it is becoming perfectly clear which direction this new movement in Byelorussia should take. The nature of this movement must

be emancipatory, because its main aim must be emancipation from the oppression of absolutism... the new group's main task must consist in a struggle against the contemporary political and social order...⁹

The True Byelorussian was thus speaking not of a national Byelorussian cultural movement, such as Danila Borovik had in mind, but of a political and, what is more, a revolutionary movement. The words just quoted he clarified as follows: 'i.e. a task which is totally identified with the main task of the Russian revolutionary party *Narodnaja volja*'.¹⁰

In 1884, the same year as the True Byelorussian's *Pastańnie*, there appeared two issues of the illegal journal *Homan* [Hubbub], published by Byelorussian students in St. Petersburg who were already joining the *Narodnaja volja* party. When Kupała and Kotas came on the scene, *Homan* was already known about. It was sub-titled 'Byelorussian social-revolutionary review' and from the beginning was edited as an organ of the Byelorussian national political movement. In issue no.1 of *Homan* in the very first article 'Ad redakcyi' the same views on the history of Byelorussia as Danila Borovik had advanced two years earlier were immediately put forward:

'...the Byelorussians' closest neighbours, enjoying *force majeure*, carried out their experiments on them and unceremoniously laid their rough hands on the living organism of the Byelorussian nation, having decided that it must obediently submit to those more powerful than itself and assimilate to them by becoming dissolved in the Great Russian and Polish sea... Fortunately for the Byelorussians, all these experiments had more effect on the upper strata of society than on the mass of the people who carefully preserved all their distinctive qualities and characteristics. These qualities were able to serve as the foundation for the future development of a temporarily oppressed people in whom, sooner or later, national self-awareness was bound to awaken...'¹¹

And in the last article of issue no.1 of *Homan*, in an appeal 'Da biełaruskaje intelihiencyi', the following assertion is made:

'The great and sacred task of the Byelorussian intelligentsia is to shake the powerful forces of its people from their slumbers, to direct its progressive development, which has come to a halt, and to enable it to display its national greatness, buried deep to hide it from the rapacious designs of the Poles and the Great Russian doubled-headed eagle.'¹²

Then in the first article of issue no.2 of *Homan* — 'Ad redakcyi' — a completely new idea began to be developed, one which is nowhere to be found in either Borovik's *Pis'mo* or the True Byelorussian's *Pastańnie* — the idea of the federal independence of Byelorussia: '...our main task, as Byelorussians, is to campaign for the federal independence of Byelorussia'¹³ — and this is the note on which the article ends. The last article in this same issue — 'Zadačy intelihiencyi' — concludes with a brief formulation of the programme of both the journal and the Byelorussian political movement, which it represented:

'...we are Byelorussians because we must fight in the name of the native interests of the Byelorussian people and of the federal autonomy of our country; we are revolutionaries because, sharing *Narodnaja volja*'s programme of struggle, we consider it essential to take part in that struggle (we are linked to *Narodnaja volja* by tradition: Hryniavicki, whose bomb assassinated Alexander II, was one of the active founders of the native Byelorussian group); we are socialists because our main aim is the improvement of the economic life of our country on the basis of scientific socialism. These, then, are the main platforms of our programme which clearly might determine certain of the aims and the immediate practical action to be taken by Byelorussians.'¹⁴

As we know, with issue no.2 *Homan* was forced to cease publication and the government broke up its editorial board and subsequently not just the Byelorussian section but the whole of *Narodnaja volja*. The Byelorussian national movement did not, however, cease to exist; it was merely interrupted and buried itself deep underground, leaving no documentary evidence to compare with Danila Borovik's *Pis'mo*, the True Byelorussian's *Pastaŋnie*, or *Homan*; although who knows, perhaps our indefatigable searchers of the archives will find among them some hitherto unknown documents of this type. In the absence of such documents researchers may well get the impression, with Anton Navina (A. Łuckievič), that until the beginning of the 20th century the Byelorussian movement had no continuity, revealed itself only in a number of sporadic statements and was broken off.¹⁵ Navina's view was shared by Professor Karski, according to whom the Byelorussian movement — 'the so-called Byelorussian movement' as he termed it in rather deprecating fashion — 'manifested itself clearly only from the beginning of the 20th century.'¹⁶ Karski was, however, correct when he said that 'the really decisive impetus to the Byelorussian movement was given by the publication in Cracow in 1891 of Maciej Buračok's (Francišak Bahuševič's) Byelorussian work *Dudka bietaruskaja*' [Byelorussian Pipe].¹⁷

Buračok-Bahuševič provided this 'decisive impetus to the Byelorussian movement' first and foremost by his famous preface to *Dudka* and within that preface above all by the rehabilitation and, as it were, elevation to a place of honour of the Byelorussian language which, in his view, is 'just as human, just as noble as French, German or any other language' and 'for us is sacred because it was given to us by God'. And Bahuševič's memorable 'do not forsake our Byelorussian language, lest you die' — resounded and continues to resound to the present day as the great precept and watchword of the whole of the Byelorussian national movement.

Bahuševič's predecessors in the Byelorussian movement, beginning with Danila Borovik, had also attempted to advance the cause of the Byelorussian language, but only theoretically, in a limited and not particularly energetic fashion. Towards the end of their introductory article the publishers of the *Pis'ma o Belorussii* stated:

It was originally intended to publish the letters in Byelorussian but we were unable to realize this desire because at the present time there are many scientific terms which have not yet been properly worked out in the Byelorussian language.¹⁸

Danila Borovik in his 'Pis'mo pervoje' says that the Byelorussian 'treasures his dialect';¹⁹ both here and later in another place he is careful to use the term 'dialect' (*narečjje*), and only when referring to the 'official language' of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the passage quoted earlier does he employ the term 'Byelorussian language', while his publishers, as we have seen, use only the latter term in their introductory article.

At the end of the first article 'Ad redakcyi' in issue no.1 of *Homan* the editors stated:

'Since we wish to give our readers material which is as real as possible, we intend to publish articles in Russian, Polish and Byelorussian.'²⁰

but in the two issues published all the articles were in Russian and only in the article 'Unutrany ahlad' in issue no.2 are the replies of the peasants given in Byelorussian. In the next article of the same issue the author comes very close to Bahuševič in appraisal of the Byelorussian language:

'...Byelorussia has its own distinctive language which in the view of expert philologists includes much that is of interest because it has preserved the most characteristics of the pure Slavonic dialect (Sreznevskij)... To the Polish gentry and bureaucratic intelligentsia, who continue to regard the ordinary people with arrogant disdain, this language seems extremely coarse, but one has only to listen carefully to rural speakers to realize how highly developed the Byelorussian language is...'

but nevertheless immediately defends himself with this qualification:

'The development of the language is undoubtedly a matter for the future when Byelorussia itself revives spiritually, and this will depend mainly on its economic development.'²¹

Bahuševič, however, did not put off the cause of the Byelorussian language to some time in the future. Not only did he pose the question of the creation in that language of a literature which the Byelorussians still did not have; he also offered his own 'trifling little verses' and invited others 'to write more and better ones', and he attributed his next little volume to a different author, Symon Reŭka from Barysau, who, apparently following the example of the author of *Dudka bielaruskaja* Maciej Buračok whose work he liked so much, 'took it into his head to write a little something' and 'wrote a dozen of his own poems'. Dividing himself in this way into Buračok and Reŭka, Bahuševič attempted to simulate the beginnings of a Byelorussian national literary process, or to be more precise, of a Byelorussian national movement in literary form. Although not immediately and not even in his lifetime, Bahuševič's efforts were crowned with success and there emerged what was no longer a simulated, but a real, solid and continuing national Byelorussian literary process. This form of the Byelorussian national movement became, indeed, its leading and most effective form, bearing the most fruit both in terms of quantity and quality, so that the very figure of its founder and originator ceases to be discerned behind it. Bahuševič and his outstanding role are almost forgotten and now, as we celebrate the Kupała-Kołas centenary, are hardly mentioned. Yet the figure of Bahuševič is, if one may put it this way, the intersection in the Kupała-Kołas century at which meet the lines which stretch from the very beginning of that century and can even be discerned beyond that beginning, and pass through Kupała and Kołas to the very end of their century, right down to the oaths of allegiance to it and its central idea sworn by such 'great-grandchildren' as the young poet Siarhieŭ Panižnik.²²

Although not intersecting with Bahuševič's line, closely parallel to it runs the line of the poet Ivan Nieslušchoŭski (Janka Łučyna), quite independent of Bahuševič (it is unlikely that they knew of one another's existence), quantitatively less productive, more lyrical and more concerned with the purely literary aspect of creative writing. At times duplicating Bahuševič, at others complementing his work, Janka Łučyna seems even now in some respects to be a follower of Bahuševič, his heir, and is often placed alongside him, even though he began to publish earlier than Bahuševič (from 1887, in print from 1889) and, as we have already said, was unlikely to have been acquainted with Bahuševič's work. As a participant in Kastuś Kaliñoŭski's movement (which movement it is difficult to see as a Byelorussian national movement in the full sense of the word since its main political focus was not on the creation of a Byelorussian nation but on the restoration of the Rzeczpospolita, albeit in a socially reconstructed form) Bahuševič, with his appeal to the peasant and his general anti-Moscow line, can be linked with Kaliñoŭski's *Mužyckaja praŭda* [Peasants' Truth], although

Bahuševič's 'muzhikism' follows quite logically from his position on the preservation of the Byelorussian language, since it was only the peasants who had preserved it from extinction (Kalinouški touched on the matter of the Byelorussian language only in passing).²³ Through his closest friend Habryel Radzievič — this friendship was recently well illuminated by the indefatigable Hienadž Kisialou²⁴ — Bahuševič may also be linked with the True Byelorussian's *Pastannie*; one is even tempted to risk the hypothesis that the True Byelorussian was a pseudonym for Habryel Radzievič, since in his *Pastannie* the True Byelorussian showed the same attitude towards *Narodnaja volja* and Marx's scientific socialism as did Radzievič.²⁵ Moreover, the poeticized image of Byelorussia in Buračok's preface to *Dudka bielaruskaja* — 'She was neither Great, nor Small, neither Red, nor Black, but White and Pure, she killed nobody and injured nobody, but only defended herself' — is in the same key as Borovik's idealized image of the Byelorussian — 'He is kind and gentle',²⁶ and all Buračok's references to the history of Byelorussia in general correspond exactly to Borovik's excursion into history about which we have already spoken. It is perfectly possible that both Buračok and Borovik used a single source (published again in 1882, the first year of the Kupała-Kołas century), the third volume of that well-known publication *Živopisnaja Rossija* [Picturesque Russia], in which Adam Kirkor gave a highly objective description of Byelorussia and its history which later formed the basis of the first national *Karotkaja historyja Bietarusi* [Short History of Byelorussia] by V. Łastoŭski-Vlast and to which Danila Borovik in his *Pis'mo* referred favourably.²⁷ Finally, the very image of Bahuševič-Buračok's *Dudka* can be linked with the anonymous verse published (yet again in 1882, the first year of the Kupała-Kołas century) in the Polish journal *Nowiny* in I. Karabicz's article 'Słowa pra pieśniu' — *Pad dudu* [To the Pipe], a poem of clearly literary rather than folkloric origin which ends entirely, so to speak, in the style of Buračok or Bahuševič.²⁸

'Dudka maja, dudka! Daj ty sercu łhotu,
Daj duży zapłakać, zhani z voć ślazu.
A ja za taboju dy pad tvaju notu
Mužyckuju dolu ludziam raskažu.'*

What Bahuševič does not have, either in the prefaces or in the poems themselves of his two collections, are those images of awakening from sleep with which, as we saw earlier, the Kupała-Kołas century opens. Bahuševič is nonetheless in the highest degree an 'awakener', only so to speak, a practical one, for the whole of his literary output is in effect aimed at the awakening of his people, the awakening of their national consciousness and activeness, warning against national death, that 'demise of a nation' with which it is threatened by 'the loss first of all of its language', which happens 'since the man whose language is taken from him faces death'. Here Bahuševič dramatized the image of sleep used by both his predecessors and his successors as the image of death, i.e. eternal sleep. But in Bahuševič's verses themselves the thoughts on the Byelorussian language, Byelorussia itself and its history to which the preface to *Dudka* is devoted are nowhere to be found, nor indeed are the very words *Bietaruś*, *Bietarus*, *bielaruski*. For the poet recognized that the ideas and the terms which he proposed for his readers and listeners, who for centuries had been accustomed to refer to themselves only by a term marking social status ('peasants') or one marking place of origin ('natives'), were new, would not yet sound natural to their

* 'My pipe, o my pipe! Give my heart ease,/Let my soul weep, drive the tears from my eyes./And I will follow you and to your music/Recount to the people the lot of the peasant.'

ears and therefore, if used in poetic addresses to them, would have interfered with the direct understanding of those addresses; while still more incompatible with artistic truth would have been the insertion of such ideas and terms into the mouths of his heroes, those same 'peasants' and 'natives'.

It is still more important for our theme to trace those lines which run from Bahuševič through Kupała and Kołas. On the general line leading to Kupała we find first of all the *Skrypka bietaruskaja* [Byelorussian Violin] of 'Haŭryła of Połack' published in 1906, the work of Alaiza Paškevič, who attempted a simple continuation of Bahuševič's *Dudka* and *Smyk* [Bow] in place of his *Skrypačka* [Fiddler], the existence of which in manuscript form she may not have been aware of; or perhaps she was but, sharing the view that its publication was undesirable from the point of view of Bahuševič's reputation,²⁹ was all the more determined to prevent it by following Bahuševič's own path of simulation and mystification and adding to his 'Symon Reŭka from Barysaŭ' one 'Haŭryła from Połack', taken from the well-known saying 'There is more than one Haŭryła in Połack', and only occasionally giving away the real author through the use of the feminine rather than masculine gender in some of her Haŭryła's verses. Paškevič was the first after Bahuševič himself to begin to employ his device of proliferating false, mystifying pseudonyms; her later works appeared under the pseudonyms 'Ciotka', 'Maciej Krapiučka', 'Tymčasovy'. Paškevič's *Skrypka* was known to Kupała, who dedicated one of his early Byelorussian poems 'To the authoress of *Skrypka bietaruskaja*', which undoubtedly provided one of the stimuli to his own attempts at Byelorussian verse creation. Without question the greatest direct stimulus in this direction was provided by Bahuševič's *Dudka* as Kupała himself acknowledged. Even without this acknowledgement, however, a direct line from *Dudka*, — or more precisely from the second poem in it 'Durny mużyk, jak varona' [The bad peasant, like a crow] — to Kupała's first published poem *Mużyk* [The Peasant] can be seen, so to speak, by the naked eye and has been remarked on by the critics; it is just that in this year of the Kupała-Kołas centenary they have no wish to mention it. Until the last two stanzas of the poem the derivation of Kupała's *Mużyk* from Bahuševič's 'Durny mużyk...' could almost be said to border on plagiarism. Bahuševič's hero is merely transferred from the third person to the first, the characteristic vitality and sharpness of Bahuševič's sarcasm is slightly blunted and muted, but the same form is retained — that of so-called satirical couplets, equally popular both in Bahuševič's and in Kupała's time; borrowed from Bahuševič, it is often used by Kupała in his early Byelorussian works, all of which can in large measure be classified as platform poetry: the poems 'Ja nie paeta' [I am not a poet], 'Jak tut nie śmiajacca' [How can one not laugh], *Kascu* [To the Reaper] — Kupała's first poem published in *Naša niva* — and others). It was quite possibly because he became aware of the close dependence of his poem *Mużyk* on Bahuševič's 'Durny mużyk...', or perhaps because it was pointed out to him by somebody else, that for a long time Kupała did not republish this poem in his verse collections; it is not in *Žalejka* [The Flute] where it would have fitted with the other poems best of all, nor in *Huślar* [The Minstrel], although it is true that it would have been scarcely appropriate there, and found a place only in his third collection *Ślacham Žyćcia* [On the Path of Life]. In the last two stanzas of Kupała's poem *Mużyk*, however, his almost plagiaristic borrowing from Bahuševič disappears, the muted sarcasm is replaced by an increasingly vocal pathos and Kupała gives us his continuation and completion of Bahuševič's poem, the penulti-

mate stanza appearing to cancel out the previous stanzas by its emphasis on the thesis of the peasant's human worth:

'Nikoli, bratcy, nie zabudu,
Što čalaviek ja, choć mużyk.'*

(The theme of the peasant's human worth is to be found also in Bahuševič, although he gave direct expression to it only in the preface to *Dudka*, when he wrote of the Byelorussian language that it was not a 'peasant' language, but a 'human' one.) In the final line of the stanza and of the whole poem — 'Ja budu żyć, bo ja — mużyk' ['I shall live, for I am a peasant'] — Kupała gives what seems to be a response to Bahuševič's 'lament' over 'the death of a nation', a life-affirming response which Bahuševič himself perhaps both wished and hoped for (a close examination of Bahuševič's work, such as Kupała appears to have made, supports this view). More significant and more explicit, but in the same vein, is Kupała's continuation of Bahuševič's *Dudka* in his first collection *Žalejka*, the very title of which is taken directly from *Dudka* ('Ci pier zrablu dudku... / Ha, zrablu-ž druhuju, žalejku' ['Now I shall fashion a pipe... / Ah, I shall fashion another, a flute']) while in the epigraph to the collection, in Kupała's address to his own *Žalejka*, may be seen that affirmation of the life of his native country so desired and hoped for by Bahuševič: 'I hrymni svabodna, Što żyvie kraj rodny!' ['And sound it freely, our native land is alive!'] This tendency of Kupała's not only to echo and repeat Bahuševič and to write 'in the style of Buračok' (as Maksim Bahdanovič in his time pointed out to Kupała),³⁰ but also to continue and complete Bahuševič's work could be, and should be, traced in the concrete instances of individual poems, though here there is neither time nor space to do so. Here and now one wishes only to think that there is no risk in the generalization that Kupała's Byelorussian works have their origin first and foremost in Bahuševič's, representing the continuation and completion of the latter, or in an even more general sense that Kupała represents the continuation and completion of Bahuševič.

Kołas, on the other hand, shows no signs of a direct descent from Bahuševič; his *Pieśnia kala katyski* [Cradle song] has only a common source with Bahuševič's (and later Kupała's) 'cradle song' — Lermontov and Nekrasov. Kołas' 'muzhikism' clearly emanates from Kupała's, and not directly from that of Bahuševič, and makes itself felt incomparably more rarely and also considerably later than Kupała's: Kołas' poem *Mużyk* duplicates Kupała's first published poem of the same name and not Bahuševič's 'Durny mużyk...', except that the sarcasm and pathos are here reconciled in Kołas' characteristic 'lamentation' (this poem of Kołas' appeared only in the middle of 1908, in issue no.15 of *Naša niva* for that year). Kołas had his precursor in Łučyna-Nieśluchoŭski, as was shown in his time by Adam Babareka. In general, however, Kołas belongs more in the Russian tradition of school anthology poetry which appealed to him while he was still a pupil and remained with him later when he became a teacher, inspiring him to write verses in Russian while still at school. Later to this influence was added that of Russian *Narodnaja volja* poetry in the person of P.Ja. Jakubovič from whom, as Kołas himself admitted according to Hlebka's memoirs, he took his pseudonym Jakub Kołas (=Jakub[ovičau] Kołas).³¹ Kołas became a Byelorussian-language poet through the process of national awareness brought about by his participation in the illegal Byelorussian political movement and not as the result of some kind of 'bumping up

* 'Never, brothers, will I forget/that though a peasant, I am a man.'

against' Łučyna-Nieslušoŭski, the latter's *Viazanka* [Bundle of Sticks] published in 1902 or his poem *Rodnaj staroncy* [To Our Native Land] which appeared on a postcard. Kołas' first published poem *Naš rodny kraj* [Our Native Land] may be compared with this latter verse, but in its first Russian-language edition under the title *Belorussija* Kołas' poem was clearly written without any acquaintance with Łučyna-Nieslušoŭski's verse and still displayed the highly unsympathetic influences of Kołas' school and seminary education:

'Rjadom s Božimi cerkvami
Vysjatsja kostely,
Goroda kišať židami
Kraj moj nevesely!'*

(These lines are omitted from the version of the poem published in the most recent edition of Kołas' collected works).³²

The Byelorussian national literary process begun by Bahuševič and taken up by Paškievič and Kupała was able to find real continuity only with the resurrection of the illegal Byelorussian national cultural and political movement among those same Byelorussian students in St. Petersburg who in 1882 had first given birth to the movement we have already examined. At first, as in 1882, this movement was a cultural one — 1902 saw the appearance of the *Kružok* (soon to become *Kruh*) *kultury i prašviety bielaruskaj* [Circle for Byelorussian Culture and Enlightenment] which, among other things published Janka Łučyna's *Viazanka*; in the same year this movement became established also as a political movement with the emergence and activities of an illegal political and revolutionary organization at first under the title *Bielaruskaja revalucyjnaja partyja* [Byelorussian Revolutionary Party], later called *Bielaruskaja revalucyjnaja hramada* [Byelorussian Revolutionary Band] and finally, in 1903, *Bielaruskaja Sacyjalistyčnaja Hramada* (BSH) [Byelorussian Socialist Band]. The movement was given great impetus by the first Russian revolution of 1905, as a result of which, through the relaxing of government rules on publishing and censorship which it brought in its wake, it became possible in 1906 to found in St. Petersburg the first Byelorussian publishing house *Zahlanie sonca i ŭ naša vakonca* (this popular saying 'The sun will look in at our little window too', which the association took for its title, was also, incidentally, used as one of the epigraphs to Danila Borovik's *Pis'mo*, that first document of the Byelorussian national movement from 1882, the first year of the Kupała-Kołas century, which we examined earlier). The same year, 1906, saw the founding in Vilna of a legal Byelorussian press in the shape of the BSH's factual organs, the newspapers *Naša dola*, [Our Fate] and *Naša niva* [Our Field]. As we know, the first of these, *Naša dola*, took a radical revolutionary line and was soon forced to cease publication by the repressions of the censorship which this line provoked, and only *Naša niva*, opened in its place and taking a predominantly national-cultural line, was able to ensure the continuity of a periodical press in the Byelorussian language from 1906 to 1915. From the very first issue of *Naša dola* the Byelorussian national literary process started by Bahuševič also acquired continuity, and in *Naša niva* this process became the leading form taken by the Byelorussian national movement, and in doing so brought to the fore, to a leading role, the figures first of Kołas and a little later of Kupała, the latter soon emerging as the first among the first, so to speak.

* 'Beside God's churches / Tower the [Polish Catholic] churches, / The cities teem with Jews, / O my unhappy native land!'

By 1907 the Kupała-Kołas century, having passed through its first quarter, was clearly the vehicle for the transition of the Byelorussian nation from its previous state of being an ethnographic — or, more precisely, ethnographic and linguistic — nationality to a new state, that of a literary nationality — or, more precisely, a nation with its own literature and language. Vladimir Samojlo, who first discovered Kupała, arranged the publication of his first poem in Byelorussian (*Mužyk*) in the Russian language press in 1905 (a Byelorussian-language press did not yet exist) and later, in 1908, the publication by *Zahlanie sonca i ŭ naša vakonca* of Kupała's first collection of poems *Žalejka* (which was larger than all the books of his predecessors taken together), wrote in a review of this collection published that same year in the Minsk Russian-language press under the title 'Velikij prazdnik' [A great occasion]:

'We are witnessing a historic event of extraordinary importance for our land. The Byelorussian poem is passing from the realm of ethnography to the realm of literature; the Byelorussian people, from being an object of folkloric study, is becoming the subject of national consciousness. And Janka Kupała's *Žalejka* is one of the indisputable proofs of this great fact.'³³

The following year, 1909, saw a significant turning-point in this respect. *Naša niva* even altered its external appearance, its newspaper format replaced by one more in the style of a magazine; it was published weekly instead of fortnightly; the orthography was changed — in the Cyrillic alphabet *и* was replaced by *і*, in the Latin alphabet *cz, sz* was replaced by *č, š*; publication was begun of the first national *Karotkaja historyja Bielarusi*, written by Vlast-Łastoŭski and drawing on Kirkor's earlier work, and in 1910 it came out as a separate and lavishly illustrated book. Increasingly confident talk of a Byelorussian national renaissance rang out in the columns of *Naša niva* both from its authors and editors (an editorial entitled 'Ab biełaruskim nacyjanalnym adradžeńni' was published in issue no.46 for 1909 which was dedicated to *Naša niva's* third anniversary) and from its supporters (e.g. the Ukrainian Dmitro Dorošenko).³⁴ Siarhieŭ Pałujan, who was also active in Ukrainian journalism, in his notes 'Z našaha žyćcia (*Naša niva* issues 35-36 and 38, 1909) wrote, *inter alia*:

'And if we have set ourselves the goal of reviving our people on a national basis, then in the first instance it is necessary for us to revive our language... Only by reviving the language will we be able to place our movement on a firm footing. For a national movement, as a great and vital historical force, can only live when it has beneath it the foundation of a versatile language and a literature and scholarship in that language.'³⁵

Then at the beginning of 1910, in issue no.7 of *Naša niva* for that year, the same Siarhieŭ Pałujan (under the pseudonym S. Jasianovič), in the first annual review of our literature 'Biełaruskaja litaratura ŭ 1909 h.', developed Francisak Bahuševič's earlier, immortal precept (albeit without referring to it) when he wrote:

'...the people which from the deep recesses of its soul can produce a literature, the treasure of civilization — such a people will never die. The life of a people manifests itself in the life of its literature, its development — in the development of that literature, its decline — in that literature's decline.'³⁶

In his review Pałujan gave a sound assessment of the year 1909, which we have called the year of a great turning-point in the direction of raising the Byelorussian ethnographic and linguistic nationality to the status of a literary and linguistic nation:

'Last year was for us a year of great development, in terms of the progress made the best year in our new history.'³⁷

Later, in 1928, an outsider, but nonetheless a sympathetic and recognized observer, L. M. Klejnborst, in the author's preface to his *Molodaja Belorussija* [Young Byelorussia] confirmed and underlined in print his belief that 'the history of Byelorussian literature, beginning with Kupala, is the history of a literary nationality'.³⁸ This statement, though not altogether accurate (it would have been more accurate to begin not 'with Kupala' but Bahuševič and to talk of a literary and linguistic nation and not merely a 'literary nationality'), nevertheless essentially corresponded to the actual state of affairs.

The editorial board of *Naša niva* became a sort of parliament of the Byelorussian national movement. Vacłaŭ Łastoŭski, in his reminiscences of Maksim Bahdanovič (see *Kryvič*, no. (11) 1 for 1926), described the situation in the editorial office of *Naša niva* in 1909-10 as follows:

'...the editorial staff... was divided into two groups which were aptly characterized by S. Pałujan, newly arrived from Kiev, as the "upper" and "lower" chambers. To the "upper" chamber belonged: A. Ułasaŭ, the Łuckievič brothers and — when present — Cyż (Alhierd Bulba) and Mańkoŭski (Janka Oklič). The "lower" chamber consisted of Jadvihin Š., Kupala, Łastouski and Pałujan, who were joined at the end of 1909 by the painter Ja. Drazdovič... At 20 Vilna Street, where the editorial office was housed, the "lower" chamber occupied the shop which was entered from the street, the "upper" chamber had exclusive use of the room reached from the courtyard...

Behind closed and heavily curtained doors in the domain of the "upper" chamber "important" political matters were dealt with...³⁹

As we can see from the information given by Łastouski, the editorial 'chamber' represented the two forms of the Byelorussian national movement to which we have already referred: the 'upper' chamber was a political movement, still only semi-legal, the 'lower' chamber a cultural movement or more particularly, to judge from the composition of this 'chamber' as given by Łastouski, a literary movement. To the 'politicians' of the upper chamber and especially to Ivan Łuckievič, the leading politician or 'leading Byelorussian diplomat' as Paŭlina Miadziołka later called him in her memoirs, fell the task of obtaining the financial resources for the whole movement and, in particular, for the publication of *Naša niva*. In order to be effective, this matter often had to be conducted with strict confidentiality, and Łastoŭski adds that:

'...the echoes of the "upper" chamber's sweeping plans reached the "lower" chamber only at third or fifth hand, often in a distorted form. Only one thing was certain — a fierce game was in progress and the stakes were high.'⁴⁰

Further on, presumably 'at third or fifth hand', Łastoŭski names several foreign confessors and 'other, native political officials who were powerful at that time, with whom this 'game' was played.

Łastoŭski's overt irony in the words 'important political matters' and 'sweeping plans' expresses the not merely sceptical but entirely negative attitude which both he and the 'members of the lower chamber' as a whole had towards the politics of the 'members of the upper chamber', who often had to resort to the well-known principle of 'the end justifies the means', a principle which is frequently — perhaps even usually — followed by active, effective, but nevertheless completely idealistic political organizations in pursuance of their aims. Łastoŭski was, of course, well aware, even

if 'at third or fifth hand' (though more likely at second hand), how disproportionate the results of these politics were in terms both of their aim and of the necessities which they dictated, and how *Naša niva* was frequently forced to go into debt, to publish late or double issues and to involve itself in a trivial and far from 'fierce' game. Łastoŭski's assessment of the situation was evidence of a degree of disagreement between the two 'chambers', of a division between them not just in terms of the different offices which they occupied (the shop entered from the street and the room reached from the courtyard). But he over-dramatized this division when he wrote:

It is clear that with such a division the "upper" and "lower" chambers thought differently from each other, lived by different ideals and carried within them the embryos of different directions in national thinking.⁴¹

In fact, there is no known evidence to show that the two chambers 'lived by different ideals'; as for their 'thinking differently from each other', this consisted mainly in the fact that the 'upper' chamber thought — indeed, by virtue of its position and task, was obliged to think — not only in idealistic terms, but also practically and tactically. Hence its recourse to the principle 'the end justifies the means' for which there was simply no place in the world of literary and poetic creativity inhabited by the 'members of the lower chamber'. One may safely assert that where ethics were concerned both the 'upper' and 'lower' chambers shared the same moral code which Bahuševič formulated so well in Symon Reŭka's verse *Achviara* [Sacrifice] (in *Smyk bietaruski*). This code was grounded in the Mosaic decalogue, adopted also by Christianity, a fact which was used to advantage by the lawyers in the successful defence of Bahuševič's verses in court. It may be said that in *Achviara* Bahuševič produced, in effect, his own 'peasant' decalogue, a Byelorussian ten commandments which drew their main inspiration from Moses' tenth commandment, touched on several others (the first, second, fourth, sixth, eighth and ninth), but passed over the rest (the third, fifth, and seventh) as being completely axiomatic. To the negative, interditory formulations Bahuševič frequently added corresponding positive maxims e.g.:

'Čužych žon kab nie vioŭ da hrachu,
A svaju kab jak treba lubiŭ.'*

and also introduced certain points reflecting purely national ideas:

'Kab za kraj byŭ umierci hatoŭ,
Kab nie prahnuŭ ajčyny čužych.
Kab nie zdradziŭ za hrošy svoj lud.'**

and of a narrowly peasant-agricultural relevance:

'Kab svaju mnie ziamielku arać'***

But, just as Ignatius Loyola did with the Christian ten commandments, so the 'members of the upper chamber' combined Bahuševič's decalogue with the principle 'the end justifies the means'. Only in this ethical 'splicing' can one discern the 'embryos of different directions in national thinking' (one should add 'and actions') which were later to find their extreme manifestation in the shape of Byelorussian national communism (as a continuation

* 'That I lead not other men's wives into sin, / But love mine own as I ought.'

** 'That I be ready to die for my native land, / That I covet not the lands of others... / That I betray not my own people for money.'

*** 'That I may plough my own land'

of the line taken by the 'upper' chamber) and national progressivism (continuing the line of the 'lower chamber').

In the first and final analysis the division between the 'upper' chamber and the 'lower' chamber probably stemmed from the division of labour which is of course necessary in any organization. The 'upper' chamber, the highest organ of the still only semi-legal political form of the national movement, secured the material resources which enabled the whole movement to operate and came out with the overall ideas guiding it; the 'lower' chamber, picking up these ideas and developing its own along the same lines, carried the movement forward to the creation of a literary and linguistic nation, increasingly emerging as the real 'upper' chamber the basic role of the 'lower' or higher chamber and leaving to the 'upper' — the two chambers manifestly changed places.

It was thanks to the work of the 'members of the upper chamber' that the first concrete attempts at initiating a Byelorussian literary process — Bahuševič's *Dudka* and *Smyk* which had only been able to see the light of day abroad, in Cracow and Poznan, and to be smuggled into Byelorussia and disseminated illegally, and therefore in a very limited way — were reprinted by *Zahlanie sonca*, formed by future 'members of the upper chamber', and only then became in practice part of the foundation of a literary process and hence of the whole process of the creation of a literary and linguistic nation in our country. The future 'member of the upper chamber' Alaksandar Ułasaŭ discovered in a country school-teacher Kāstancin Mickievič, who had been drawn into the illegal Byelorussian political movement, the poet Jakub Kołas, who began to publish regularly in the Byelorussian-language press created by the 'members of the upper chamber' from the very first issue of *Naša dola*. Although not a member of either chamber, merely a participant in the accompanying political and revolutionary Byelorussian movement as a sympathizer in close contact with it, Vladimir Samojlo discovered in his neighbour and pupil, and near coeval, Ivan Łucevič the poet Janka Kupała, and pushed him, so to speak, into print. With the appearance of a regular, continuous Byelorussian-language press other poets and writers began to be discovered so that in the editorial article summing up the first three years 'Ab biełaruskim nacyjanalnym adradžeñni' (*Naša niva*, no.46, 1909), to which we have already referred, it could be stated that 'in the three years of *Naša niva's* existence we have published... 246 poems by 61 poets and 91 short stories by 36 different writers'. However, if we break down the figure of 246 poems spread over 61 authors it emerges that almost half of them (113) were written by just two poets — Kupała (45) and Kołas (68); if we add to this the 93 verses in Kupała's collection *Zalejka*, published in 1908, and Kołas' first three Byelorussian poems from *Naša dola*, then we find that in the three years 1906-1909 Kupała and Kołas between them had 263 poems published — almost twice as many as the 133 produced by the other 59 poets taken together. This figure is highly significant, for each poem was in effect a meeting between the poet and the reader (or listener, since many of the recipients of poems in Byelorussian were illiterate) and it was essentially the frequency of such encounters between our two poets and their readers that ensured their emergence to a prominent, leading position. It is true that apropos the question of leadership Anton Navina was later to make the very pertinent observation that the whole of Byelorussian literature prior to 1917:

'... may be called the literature of the *leaders*: its creators, though unquestion-

ably sons of the working people, were nevertheless as it were only the flower of that people, only the *chosen prophets* of national renaissance.⁴³

No doubt, too, Kupała and Kołas were guaranteed first place among these 'chosen prophets of national renaissance' not only by the quantitative element in the frequency of their encounters with their readers but also by the quality of these encounters — of the works themselves. In addition to Kupała and Kołas, however, there were among these 'chosen prophets' a number of other poets who yielded nothing to them at least in terms of quality, such poets as Aleś Harun, Maksim Bahdanovič, even Jasakar-Biadula; but all of them to a greater or lesser degree lagged far behind Kupała and Kołas when it came to the frequency of their encounters with the reader, that is, the number of poems they had published, even though they sometimes duplicated certain of Kupała's and Kołas' themes and images, and it was for this reason that they were honoured only with a place in the second rank. As for Kupała and Kołas, at first it was Kołas who was to the fore: when Kupała began to be published in *Naša niva* Kołas had already had thirteen poems published in the Byelorussian-language press, that is to say thirteen encounters between poet and readers had already taken place. However, with the appearance of his *Žalejka*, containing 93 poems, Kupała overtook by a long way both Kołas and all his other predecessors in the Byelorussian literary process — Bahuševič, Niesluchoŭski, Paškievič — taken together, in terms of the number of encounters with his readers. Kupała also came to the fore as a national awakener. The reason for this was that in his role as awakener Kołas employed effectively only two devices: for the most part the device of sorrowing, mourning (the first collection of Kołas' poems, which did not appear until 1910, was in fact entitled *Pieśni žalby* [Songs of Mourning]); and the device of an appeal, of direct awakening, which he used only rarely. Kupała on the other hand, in addition to these two devices which he employed to no less a degree than Kołas, was far more inventive and versatile and as a result more effective in his encounters with his readers.

Already in *Žalejka* Kupała produced the powerful image of the Byelorussian movement as a national movement directed at all humanity in his masterpiece 'A chto tam idzie' [Say, who goes there?] which even beyond the confines of Byelorussia was well received and found an echo and in time was translated into virtually all the languages of the cultural world. Here, in the form of a rhetorical dialogue with 'such a mighty throng... of many millions... awakened from sleep', Kupała rose above the platform poetry which he had inherited from Bahuševič (perhaps even directly from Bahuševič's 'Što biazyš, mużyčok?' — a dialogue with a peasant in the form of satirical couplets), rose above the stage on which such couplets were performed to a world forum ('na šviet ceły') as a herald of the Byelorussian national movement with a true hymn of the people, which was indeed for no little time recognized as the Byelorussian national anthem.

In that same year, in 1908, in *Naša niva* Kupała raised his voice in defence of the Byelorussian language from the public platform as a genuine tribune of the people in his poem *Voraham biełaruščyny* [To the Enemies of Things Byelorussian]:

'Čaho vam choćacca, panovie?'

Somehow it seems to have escaped attention until now that this is a clear response to Pushkin's famous attack *Klevetnikam Rossii* [To the Slanderers of Russia]:

* 'What is it, lords, that you want?'

‘O čem šumite vy, narodnyje vitii?’*

In this poem it was Byelorussia that Pushkin had in mind, although in keeping with the terminological practice of his time he called it Lithuania, which, however, belongs to the Slavs:

‘Čto vozmutilo vas? volnenija Litvy?
Ostav’te: èto spor slavjan meždu soboju’**

And it is surely to nothing other than Pushkin’s:

‘Slavjanskije l’ ručl sol’jutsja v russkom more?’***

that Kupała was responding with his cry of conviction:

‘I Biełarus moža źmiašćicca ũ siamje nialičanaj Slavian!’****

Finally, was it not to Pushkin’s glorification of physical power as the determining factor in history that Kupała opposed the power of the truth:

‘Nie pahasić vam praŭdy: žyŭ Biełarus i budzie żyć!’*****

Thus the herald and tribune of Byelorussia and the Byelorussians engaged in a duel with the descendants and loyal followers of one who for many in Great Russia was the greatest poet of all, engaged in fact in a duel with the greatest poet himself...⁴⁴ But, having emerged as the herald of the Byelorussian national movement and the people’s tribune of Byelorussia, Kupała in time saw also the other side of the coin, so to speak: among the Byelorussians who were on the move ‘in such a mighty throng’ for their right ‘to be called human’ he saw those who broke away from the throng and joined the ranks of those who served Byelorussia’s enemies and oppressors, while that right is for ever ... He called these people ‘Byelorussia’s sons’, matching the tone of the insulting expression ‘sons of so-and-sos’ (or in plain language, without resorting to euphemism — ‘sons of bitches’), so that the full formula in the present case would be ‘Byelorussian sons of so-and-sos (bitches)’...

To this later (1919) poem *Biełaruskija syny*, too, insufficient attention has been paid up to now. This image of ‘Byelorussia’s sons’ was first used by Kupała, at that time in pity and with sympathy, in his 1910 poem *Dudar* [The Piper] which was dedicated to the author of *Karotkaja historyja Biełarusi*, Vlast-Łastoŭski, on the occasion of the book’s publication. Here, among other moments in the history of Byelorussia, Kupała recalled the ‘white bones that the sons of Byelorussia lost who forged their own chains, dying in battles for others’.⁴⁵ In the 1919 poem *Biełaruskija syny*, however, this image is developed to its full extent as a negative appendix, so to speak, to the image of the Byelorussians in the poem-hymn ‘A chto tam idzie’:

‘Pa biełaruskim bitym šlachu,
Bjućy ũ kajdanavy zvany,
Brydzie čužyniec, a z im pobač
Chto?

— Biełaruskija syny!

U biełaruskim volnym krai,
Z jaremnaj źbiehšy starany,

* ‘What are you making such a noise about, orators of the people?’

** ‘What has disturbed you so? Lithuania’s unrest? / Ignore it, it is the Slavs arguing amongst themselves.’

*** ‘Will the Slav streams flow together in the Russian sea?’

**** ‘And the Byelorussian too may take his place in the countless family of the Slavs!’

***** ‘You will not extinguish the bright truth: the Byelorussian has lived and will live!’

Caryć čužyniec, a ŭ pašłuhach
Chto?

— Biełaruskija syny!

Nad biełaruskaj biednaj chataj,
Jak połka vyrvana z truny,
Visić čuży ściah, a trymaje
Chto?

— Biełaruskija syny!

U Biełarusi śpieŭ čużacki,
Jak nad kaściami hruhany,
Krumciać čužynicy, a ich składam
Chto?

— Biełaruskija syny!

Na biełaruskim bujnym poli
Ž viasny da novaje viasny
Rastuć kryży, a pad kryžami
Chto?

— Biełaruskija syny!'^{*}

Finally, in one of his poems *Biełaruskim partyzynam* [To the Byelorussian Partisans] — written at the time of the Second World War, in 1941, outside Byelorussia, and to the present day praised in the Soviet Union as being among the poet's best works — Kupała (whose creativity had by this time been forcibly directed into the 'right channels' referred to by the London scholar quoted at the beginning of this paper and was firmly in the service of communist propaganda), without doubt not forgetting the real meaning of his image of 'Byelorussia's sons' (it is difficult for a poet to forget such things; even if his conscious mind should forget, his subconscious will remind him), employed the image again in the very first lines of his address:

'Partyzany, partyzany,
Biełaruskija syny!'^{147**}

Kupała was by now himself numbered among those 'sons of Byelorussia' and, with Kołas and others, found himself, so to speak, in one of the stanzas of his earlier poems:

'U Biełarusi śpieŭ čużacki,
Jak nad kaściami hruhany,
Krumciać čužynicy, a ich składam
Chto?
Biełaruskija syny!'

Yet, though belonging of necessity to what was truly, as the poem says, a congregation of ravens, Kupała managed in a single line, with that single image to send us a message telling us how he understood, as we to whom his poem was addressed should understand, that the Soviet partisans drawn

* 'Along Byelorussia's beaten track, / Jangling the bells of the shackles, / A stranger makes his way, and beside him / Who? / — Byelorussia's sons!

In Byelorussia's free land, / Having fled the land of the yoke, / A stranger rules, and in his service / Who? / — Byelorussia's sons!

Above the Byelorussian's poor abode, / Like a shroud torn from a coffin, / Hangs an alien flag, but holds it / Who? / — Byelorussia's sons!

In Byelorussia there is an alien singing, / Like ravens over the bones, / Strangers croak, but their congregation is / Who? / — Byelorussia's sons!

On the vast plain of Byelorussia / From spring to spring again / Grow crosses, and under the crosses lie / Who? / — Byelorussia's sons!

** 'Partisans, o partisans, / Byelorussia's sons!'

from among the Byelorussians were to be seen as 'those who forged their own chains, dying in battles for others', as has happened so many times in Byelorussia's history. It is just that this important message has remained until now publicly unexplained, like several others (one of which, in the poem *Voraham biełaruščyny*, was referred to above).

And now, after the death of both Kupała and Kołas but still in their century, alarm has begun to be spread (as it was formerly in the poem *Voraham biełaruščyny*) 'about the language in which the Byelorussian answered his name', the language whose cause was one of the most important causes in their lives and indeed in their whole century. But this alarm is sounded no longer by 'the enemies of things Byelorussian'; on the contrary it is the 'compulsion' exerted by these enemies which has caused alarm among those who are no longer the sons but by now grandsons or even great-grandsons of Kupała and Kołas. In the last years of the Kupała-Kołas century attempts have been made to persuade them that, in the words of one of their number, the poet Ryhor Baradulin:

‘Śćviardžajuć historyki i movaznaŭcy,
 Śto pastupova ścirajuca hrani nacyj
 I, nibyta jak pierażytak,
 adžyć pavinna abaviazkova’
 Mova maci majoj — biełaruskaja mova.^{148*}

One after another young Byelorussian poets have begun to confess their love for their native language, to pledge eternal loyalty to it, to declare its immortality, in the way that a year after Baradulin, in 1964, the young poet Michaś Kušniaroŭ was the first to do in his poem *Matčyna mova* [Mother Tongue]:

‘Viečna barom hamanić sasnovym,
 Viečna kałośšiam śaptać žytniovym,
 Vieki budzie żyć maja rodnaja mova,
 Matčyna mova,
 Matčyna mova!^{149**}

Attention has already been drawn to this phenomenon by the young London scholar Shirin Ākiner, who in doing so quoted this anguished line by the young poet Nina Šklarava:

‘Mova maja! Moj ratunak!^{150***}

— and gave the whole poem of another young poet Jaŭhienija Janiščyc, *Mova* [Language] in the original and in a translation by Vera Rich, singling out from it and emphasizing the no less anguished line:

‘Pamru za ciabie biez jenu!^{151****}

In New York Dr. Janka Zaprudnik has compiled an anthology of the poems of Byelorussian poets on the subject of their native language which will shortly be published. Among the poems in this anthology there are around one hundred oaths of allegiance to the Byelorussian language.

* ‘Historians and linguists maintain, / That the boundaries between nations are gradually being erased / And as though it were some relic of the past, / of necessity, must become obsolete / The language of my mother — the Byelorussian language.’

** ‘The sound of the pine forest will be heard forever, / The ears of corn will rustle for ever, / My native language will live for ever, / My mother tongue, / My mother tongue!’

*** ‘My language! My salvation!’

**** ‘I will die for you without a moan’

As a transitional stage in the atrophying of the Byelorussian language against which these young Byelorussian poets are fighting, there has been a recent powerful campaign to speed up Russian-Byelorussian bilingualism. Multilingualism among the Byelorussians is nothing new and nothing unusual. Before the Revolution, as a result of the circumstances in which he found himself, every Byelorussian had to a greater or lesser extent to use, apart from his own native Byelorussian, either Russian or Polish. Kupała gave expression to this phenomenon in his epigram of 1912 *Na ūsie ruki* [Of All Trades] (no longer published in Soviet editions):

‘Jon z načalstvam znaje dzieła:
Parasiejsku valič śmieła;
Liža, vyjšaušy za viosku,
Łasku panskuju papolsku.
Naviet Żydu — u doŭh jak prosie —
‘Gute-morgen’ — burknie ū nosie.
Kali-ż siadzie ū katuzku,
Usich klanie pabiełarusku.’^{52*}

Since the date of that epigram the position has changed somewhat. Gone is the need or even the possibility of ‘abjectly craving the lord’s good favour in Polish’ or the possibility of borrowing from somebody by ‘muttering a “gute-morgen”’. There remains only a Russian-Byelorussian bilingualism which is increasingly moving in the direction of Russian monolingualism. In public the Byelorussian language is used only as the language of literature, the theatre, musical lyrics, inscriptions on paintings and sculptures — in general as the language of literature and art. The Byelorussian nation, which in the course of the Kupała-Kołas century has developed from an ethnographic and linguistic nationality into a literary and linguistic nation, attempted in 1918 to become a fully independently governed nation and indeed, formally remains such in the shape of the BSSR — but only formally: in actual fact and legally it has only literary and artistic nationhood, although it is still at least partly Byelorussian-speaking. Recently, however, certain alarming symptoms have begun to appear of the transformation of this Byelorussian-speaking quality into a new and unprecedented macaronic Russian-Byelorussian bilingualism.

Not long ago in Minsk a small volume of poetry was published which looks as if it might be the first — one does not wish to say ‘swallow’ as is usual in such cases, but simply — fledgling of Russian-Byelorussian macaronic verse creation. The title is in Russian: ‘Valentin Taras, *Dve tetradi. Stichi*’. At the back of the book, as is customary in Soviet editions, there is a short explanatory note (as always, in Russian) which begins:

‘V. Taras’s new book of poetry is somewhat unusual, principally because it is a bilingual book. It consists of two sections: *Russkaja tetrad’* and *Biełaruski sšytak*.’⁵³

The *Russkaja tetrad’* [Russian notebook] comprises 36 poems in Russian on 56 sides; the *Biełaruski sšytak* [Byelorussian Notebook] has 17 poems in Byelorussian on 30 sides. Both the order of the two sections and their ratio are significant. But preceding both sections there is an introductory

* ‘With the authorities he knows the score: / He boldly lets fly in Russian; / Leaving the village, he abjectly craves / The lord’s good favour in Polish. / Even to the Jew when seeking a loan — / He mutters a “gute-morgen”. / But when he lands in jail, / He curses everyone in Byelorussian.’

poem, beneath three asterisks, in which are mixed in macaronic fashion Byelorussian lines and Russian lines. Here is that first fledging, and I quote it in full:

‘Dźvie movy ũ mianie.
 Abiedźvie — čaraŭnicy.
 Kak v dvuch rodných sester,
 v obeich ja vljubljen.
 Dźvie movy ũ mianie —
 kak dva kryła ũ pticy,
 dźvie movy ũ mianie —
 kak svet iz dvuch okon.
 Dźvie movy ũ mianie.
 dźvie rodnyja dubrovy,
 istočniki moi —
 krynica
 i rodnik.
 Rodnaja reč’ z vučit
 jak recha rodnaj movy,
 i recham movy rodnaj
 zvučit rodnoj jazyk.
 Dźvie movy ũ mianie —
 žyćcia majho asnovy.
 Mnie ich nie raz’jadnać
 jak rečyva kryvi.
 Oni slilis’ vo mne
 u patok adzinaj movy —
 adzinaj movy
 bratst va i ljubvi!’^{54*}

Bilingual macaronic verse is nothing new, and in Byelorussia macaronic Byelorussian-Polish verse was quite popular in the nineteenth century⁵⁵ while in the same century macaronic Russian-French poems appeared in Russian literature. But always and everywhere, right from the Middle Ages when verse of this type began to appear in literature, it was of a purely comic nature. The macaronic Russian-Byelorussian verse of Valentin Taras is perhaps the first attempt in the whole of world literature at non-comic, one might even say serious or movingly lyrical macaronic poetry. If it is possible to detect any kind of humour in it, then it is of the type which is called gallows humour...

And so the Kupała-Kołas century draws to its close. Whether the next hundred years will prove to be for Byelorussian literature a second Kupała-Kołas century — or whether it will turn out to be some kind of Valentin Taras century, the century of a Byelorussian literary and artistic macaronic nation — can only be guessed at but it is perfectly permissible to doubt the prospects for *tarasaŭščyna*, and to wish those prospects a comic end, as is appropriate to all macaronics, is both permissible and desirable.

* ‘Two languages I have / Both are enchantresses. / As with two sisters, / I am in love with both. / Two languages I have — / like the two wings on a bird, / I have two languages — / like light from two windows.

Two languages I have — / two dear oak-groves, / my sources — / spring / and spring. / My native language sounds / as an echo of my native tongue, / and as an echo of my native language / sounds my native tongue.

Two languages I have — / the foundations of my life. / I cannot separate them, / like the substance of blood. / They have merged in me / into the stream of a single language — / a single language / of brotherhood and love!’

Notes

1. W. Kolarz, *Russia and Her Colonies*, London, 1952, p.158.
2. S. Ch. Aleksandrovič, V.S. Aleksandrovič, *Biełaruskaja litaratura XIX — pačatku XX stahoddzia. Chrestamatyja krytyčnych materyjalaŭ*, Minsk, 1978, p.20.
3. *ibid.*, p.23.
4. *ibid.*, pp.23-4.
5. *ibid.*, pp.24-5.
6. *ibid.*, p.26.
7. *ibid.*
8. *Biełaruskaja litaratura XIX stahoddzia*, comp. S.Ch. Aleksandrovič, A.A. Łojka, V.P. Rahojša, Minsk, 1971, pp.187-8.
9. *ibid.*, p.190.
10. *ibid.*
11. *ibid.*, p.191.
12. *ibid.*, p.194.
13. *ibid.*, p.195.
14. *ibid.*, p.199.
15. A. Navina, *Za dvaccać piac hadoŭ (1903-1928)*, Vilna, 1928, p.II.
16. Je. F. Karskij, *Belorusy. Tom III. Očerki slovesnosti belorusskogo plemeni*. 3. Chudožestvennaja litaratura na narodnom jazyke, Petrograd, 1922, p.151.
17. *ibid.*, p.153.
18. S. Ch. Aleksandrovič, V.S. Aleksandrovič, *op. cit.*, p.20.
19. *ibid.*, p.24.
20. *Biełaruskaja litaratura XIX stahoddzia*, p.192.
21. *ibid.*, p.197.
22. Siarhiej Panižnik, 'Maciej Buračok' — a poem in his collection *Słowa na dabrydzień*, Minsk, 1982.
23. *The 1863 Uprising in Byelorussia. 'Peasants' Truth' and letters 'from beneath the galls'*, text and commentaries by Jan Zaprudnik and Thomas E. Bird, Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, 1980, pp.12, 24-5, 33, 54.
24. Hienadź Kisialoŭ, 'Z suzor'ja Bahuševiča', *Litaratura i mastactva*, 6 August 1982, p.12.
25. *Biełaruskaja litaratura XIX stahoddzia*, p.189; Kisialoŭ, *op. cit.*, p.12.
26. S. Ch. Aleksandrovič, V.S. Aleksandrovič, *op. cit.*, p.24.
27. *ibid.*, pp.18-19, 26.
28. *Biełaruskaja litaratura XIX stahoddzia*, pp. 46, 340.
29. See A. Adamovič, 'Da pabudovy navukovaje historyi biełaruskaje litaratury', *Zapisy*. Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences, 2, Munich, 1968, pp.89-90 fn.55.
30. Maksim Bahdanovič, *Zbor tvoraŭ*, 2, Minsk, 1968, p.96.
31. Piatro Hlebka, 'Maja ankieta', *Matadość*, 9, 1981, p.170.
32. Jakub Kołas, *Zbor tvoraŭ u čatyrnaccaci tamach*. Tom I. Vieršy 1898-1917, Minsk, 1972, pp.407-9.
33. S.Ch. Aleksandrovič, V.S. Aleksandrovič, *op.cit.*, p.232.
34. D. Dorošenko, 'Biełarusy i ich nacyjanalnaje adradžeńnie', *Naša niva*, nos 49-62, 1909.
35. S.Ch. Aleksandrovič, V.S. Aleksandrovič, *op.cit.*, p.134.
36. *ibid.*, p.13.
37. *ibid.*
38. L.M. Klejnborn, *Molodaja Belorussija*. Očerki sovremennoj belorusskoj literatury 1905-1928 gg., Minsk, 1928, p.5.
39. V. Łastoŭski, 'Maje ūspaminy ab M. Bahdanovičy', *Kryvič*, no.1 (11), 1926, pp.62-3.
40. *ibid.*, p.63.
41. *ibid.*
42. As a decalogue Bahuševič's (Symon Reŭka's) verse *Achviara* may be presented as follows:
 - Malisia-ž, babulka, da Boha,
 1. Kab ja Panam nikoli nie byŭ:
Nie žadaŭ-by nikoli čužoha,
Svajo dzieła jak treba rabiŭ.
 2. Kab prad mienšym ja nosu nie draŭ,
A prad bolšym nie korčyŭ špiny.
 3. Kab hrech svoj pad saboj ja paznaŭ,
U druhich kab nie vidzieŭ viny.
 4. Čužych žon kab nie vioŭ da hrachu,

A svaju kab jak treba lubiũ.

5. Kab mnie dzieci byli ũ sluchu,
Kab ja bačkam dla ich viek dażyũ.
6. Kab ludziej pryznavau za bratoũ,
A bahactva svajo mieũ za ich.
7. Kab za kraj byũ umierci hatoũ,
Kab nie prahnuũ ajčyny čužych.
8. Kab ja Boha svajho nie akpiũ,
Kab nie zdradziũ za hrošy svoj lud.
9. Kab svajho ja dabra nie prapiũ,
I nizašta nie mieũ čuży trud.
10. Kab pa dvojčy mnie hrošy nie brać
Za pradany kusočak ralli,
Kab svaju mnie ziamielku arać
I umierci na joj choć kali.
Dyk prasi-ž ty ũ Boha, mali,
Kab ja panam nikoli nie byũ!
43. Anton Navina, *Adbitaje žyćcio*. Lekcyi i staćci z biełaruskaje litaratury. Knižka I, Vydanie Biełaruskaha Vydavieckaha Tavarystva, Vilna, 1929, p.22.
44. Nowadays Kupała is everywhere hailed as an alleged great follower and disciple of Pushkin, but Kupała himself wrote in 1928: 'I admired Lermontov, Nadson, Pushkin (not greatly). The place where he refers to "the mob" I disliked intensely, it offended me' (*Lubimy poet biełaruskaha naroda*, AN BSSR, Litaraturny muziej Janki Kupały, Minsk, 1960, p.9).
45. Janka Kupała, *Zbor tvoraũ u siami tamach*. Tom IV. Vieršy. Pierakłady. 1908-1910, Minsk, 1973, p.202.
46. *ibid.* Tom VI. Vieršy. Pierakłady. 1918-1942, Minsk, 1974, pp.51-2.
47. *ibid.*, pp.382-4.
48. Ryhor Baradulin. *Biełaja jabłynia hromu*. Vybranyja staronki liryki, 1954-1978, in the series *Biblijateka biełaruskaj paezii*, Minsk, 1979, p.60.
49. Michaś Kušniaroũ's verse *Matčyna mova* was included in a selection of the works of those who took part in a young writers' seminar, published in *Litaratura i mastactva*, 24 November 1964, under the heading 'Na pačatku tvorčaj darohi'. In Aleś Asipienka's article on this seminar ('Znajomstva było cikavaje') which introduced the selection, he wrote of Michaś Kušniaroũ that this young poet was a livestock specialist from the Białynicki region and noted that his poems 'gave grounds for thinking that an interesting poet is entering literature. Now, of course, everything depends on him. We wish Michaś Kušniaroũ a fruitful harvest in the field of poetry'. However, no further poems by Kušniaroũ have appeared in journals or books published since then.
50. S. Akiner, 'Contemporary Young Byelorussian Poets (1967-1975)', *Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, III, 4, 1976, pp.343-4, 352-3.
51. *ibid.*, p.358, 363, 344.
52. Janka Kupała, *Spadčyna*, Biełaruskaje Kooperacyjna-Vydavieckaje Tavarystva 'Adradžeńnie', Minsk, 1922, p.215.
53. Valentin Taras, *Dve tetradi*. Stichi, Minsk, 1982, p.96.
54. *ibid.*, p.3.
55. See 'Ž makaraničnych vieršaũ' in Maksim Harecki, *Chrystamatyja biełaruskaje litaratury, XI wiek — 1905 hod.*, Vilna, 1923, pp.73-4.