Rise and Fall of Belarusian National Identity

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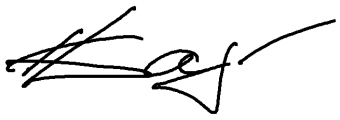
I hereby certify that this material, which I submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of MA in International Relations, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save as and to the extent that, such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed …  …

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather *Nikolai Kuzmich Parfenov* (1915-2003) whose career and lifelong interest in history helped to kindle my interest in international politics.

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Abstract

This paper establishes that Belarusian nation has all vital preconditions for development of strong national identity, however, as many scholars believe, up to now Belarusians failed to have one. To find out why Belarusian national identity is weak, Miroslav Hroch's methodology of studying small and oppressed nations is used. Belarusians failed in initial phase of national revival. However there is an evident relative success in later phases. Contrary to common belief, Belarusian nation almost revived in the early twentieth century.

Abbreviations

BSSR – the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic

GDL – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

GRU- secret police, predecessor of the KGB

Glossary

Batraks - the poorest peasant stratum

Gubernya / *guberyas* – administrative region / regions in the Russian Empire

Litva – Lithuania

Narodnost' - nationality, people

Podlaskie wojewo´dztwo – North-Eastern region of Poland

Sejm – Polish Parliament

Sluzhashchi' - office and professional workers

Szlachta- Polish aristocracy

Tuteishiya or *tutashni* – local population

Zapadnaya Rossia - Western Russia

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Preface: Names and Sources

It is difficult to overestimate an importance of a nation's name to its people. 'The national name is the epitome of the people's past. It contains the people's triumphs and tragedies and their sense of belonging' (Zaprudnik, 1993:1). The problem with the region inhabited by an ethnic group presently known as Belarusians, is that it is known by different names to different people; the name has been changing throughout history. In its early history, the region was known as 'Belaya Rus',' 'Belorussia,' 'White Ruthenia,' or 'White Rus'. After declaration of independence in August 1991 the country was renamed into the Republic of Belarus. Wherever it's appropriate, in order to minimise readers' confusion, the author will use name 'Belarus' throughout this paper.

In different sources a language used by majority of population of the region of consideration is called Chancery Slavonic, Church Slavonic, Ruśian, Ruthenian Lithuanian and Belarusian. Hereafter, wherever it's appropriate, the author will use 'Belarusian language' or 'Belarusian', unless it is stated otherwise.

For a half of the millennium, a place presently known as Vilnius was a capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a provincial capital within Russian empire, a Polish city in the 1920s and 1930s and the Soviet Lithuanian city after the Second World War. Jews called "Vilne" the 'Jerusalem of the North'. Until very recently "Wilno" was claimed by Poles, "Vil'no" (then "Vil'na", then "Vil'nius") by Russians, and "Vil'nia" by Belarussians with help of Stalin in 1939, "Wilno"- "Vil'no"- "Vil'nia" became "Vilnius", a capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and consequently a capital of

independent Lithuania (Snyder, 2003:53). This city will be called ‘Vilna’ throughout the paper.

According to the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) most Cyrillic letters are transliterated similarly from both Belarusian and Russian; but some letters are transliterated from the two languages differently (for example, ‘e,’ which remains ‘e’ in transliterated Russian but becomes ‘ye’ in transliterated Belarusian); and some letters exist in Belarusian but not in Russian. To avoid confusion the author will translate personal names or place-names from Russian Cyrillic.

The data from the first systematic Census of Russian Empire, which was conducted in 1897 (*1897 Census)* have been used by all prominent scholars as Guthier (1977), Zaprudnik (1993), Murples (1999), Ioffe (2003). The author will use this data as well.

Introduction

Belarus is geographically located in centre of Europe (see Map 1). In the twentieth century a country became one of the co-founders of the United Nations. It is home and/or ancestral land of many prominent personalities: Guillaume Appolinaire and Fedor Dostoevsky, Felix Dzierzynski and Tadeusz Kosciuszko, Adam Mickiewicz and Igor Stravinsky (Ioffe, 2003a:1009). However, none of these people 'ever identified themselves as the Belarusian, and none of them publicly expressed an opinion about the Belarusian national cause' (Ioffe, 2003a:1009).

A thesis question of this paper: Why is Belarusian national identity so weak?

If success of nationalism was determined by numbers of people speaking a given language, the Belarusians would have had more reason to hope than anyone else. According to the Russian Imperial *Census* of *1897* more people spoke Belarusian in Vilna province than Yiddish, Polish, Russian and Lithuanian combined. In Vilna, Minsk, Grodno, Mogilev and Vitebsk provinces, contiguous territories of historic Lithuania, speakers of Belarusian were three quarters of population (Snyder, 2003:42).

However, in the twentieth century, Belarusians failed to become a modern nation. Belarus has probably the lowest name recognition of all Europe's countries. Snyder (2003:42) believes that '[t]he Belarusian failure is [. . .] result of social and political contingencies which escape national reasoning, and thus deserve historical attention'. It is

clear that a population cannot constitute a nation unless it has a certain national consciousness.

Understanding failures help us to get a deeper comprehension of successes. Failures do matter. Some scholars believe that the 'Belarusian failure' could be partly explained by similarity of 'Belarusian identity' to Russian and Polish ones.

According to Miroslav Hroch (2000:184), only inhabitants of small towns in the region were able to identify their nationality in the end of the eighteenth century: Catholic peasants would often be called 'Poles' and identified themselves with the Polish national movement even though they said their prayers in Latin and spoke to their families in Belarusian or Ukrainian; Orthodox would identify themselves with Russians (Burant, 1995:1132). However the bulk of the population had no national identity, simply considering themselves either both as Belarusians and as Ukrainians or as *tuteishiya* or *tutashni*, which in Belarusian and Polish language means 'locals' and hence gave a title to the famous play of a prominent Belarusian poet and writer Yanka Kupala (Burant, 1995:1132; Hroch, 2000:184; Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001:165; Davies, 1981:71). Ioffe (2003b:1245) refers to study conducted by Sadowski and states that ten percent of the Orthodox in *Podlaskie wojewo´dztwo* (north-eastern Poland) identified themselves as *tuteishiya* as recently as the mid- 1990s.

The situation at the end of the First World War was most favourable for development of 'national revival' of small nations. Two great empires had collapsed- the Russian and

Austro-Hungarian – and however unsatisfactory the peace treaties that were signed in Paris and Riga (at least from Belarusian perspective), several new nations had emerged in central and eastern Europe (three Baltic states: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia; and Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia). In theory Belarus could have been another. Though it was possibly not ready for statehood, the same could be said of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Yet the small Baltic States became sovereign entities and Belarus did not (Marples, 1999:2). On the other hand, '[t]he achievement of political independence is not necessary an indication that the small nation is completely formed; and conversely the straggle to achieve independence may continue even after that the nation completed its formation' (Hroch, 2000:26).

The name Belarus, which in existing meaning implies to either the modern Belarusian state or the entire ethnographic area settled by Belarusians, dates back only to the last decade of the nineteenth –first decade of the twentieth century, when Belarusian movement began to develop (Zaprudnik, 1993:3). The words 'Belarus' and 'Belarusian' were accepted by most native people of the area only in the wake of formation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR). Under the BSSR: Belarusian became one of the official languages; 'Belarus' and 'Belarusian' became part of the republic's national emblem and anthem, and words circulated widely in regional print media and state documents, including, above all, internal passports initially issued for urban residents and residents of border regions. Among other things, this in point of fact means that 'the Soviet period was the longest time span of the Belarusians' nationally conscious existence' (Ioffe, 2003b: 1245).

As a consequence, Belarus is the only post-Soviet nation that returned to its Soviet insignia, such as ruble as the unit of national currency and Russian as one of official languages of Belarus. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the country persistently tries to preserve closeness with Russia. 'A country whose all but most distinguishing feature is closeness to another country is a questionable entity' (Ioffe, 2003b:1259-1260).

To find an answer on the thesis question, the author shall use a theory which was developed by a prominent Czech scholar Miroslav Hroch, who in the early nineteen-seventieth studies small stateless oppressed European nations and potential nations. Contrary to somebody else, Miroslav Hroch's framework and methodology is concrete and realistic.

Miroslav Hroch studies in depth how the rice of capitalism and a consequent change in social order affected the rise of nationalism. He studies successes of nationalist movements of the Europe's so-called non-dominant ethnic groups, such as Czechs, Norwegians, Belgians, and so on. Hroch does not study Belarusian case, however he studies Lithuanian national revival and mentions Belarusians on quite few occasions (see Hroch, 2000: 29, 137; 146, 147, 151, 152, 158-9, 164, 178, 184).

Hroch defines a non-dominant ethnic group as one distinguished by, first, lack of 'its own' nobility or ruling classes; second, it possessed no state, and, third, its literary tradition in its own language was incomplete or interrupted. In his fundamental work, Miroslav Hroch mentions importance of failures of national movements, however he does not study them systematically himself.

Hroch (2000:3) points out: '[A] discussion on the definition of the nation [. . .] is one of the most fascinating phenomena in modern political thinking.' Kellas (1998) defines nation as a group of people who 'feel themselves to be a community bound together by ties of history, culture and common ancestry.' It is clear that a population cannot constitute a nation unless it has a certain national consciousness. In other words, there is no national revival without national idea.

Moreover, a group of people must perceive itself as a nation in order to become one. Individuals must believe that they are part of the same nation. Breuilly (1993:6) quotes Renan and defines a 'nation as a twenty-four-hour-a-day plebiscite' of each member of the given society. 'As soon as the members of this society ceased to think of themselves as members of the nation, the nation would cease to exist' (Breuilly, 1993:6). Hroch (2000:4) states out that a nation is 'the large social group' where members are not in immediate personal contact with each other and their dealings characterized by a combination of several kinds of relation, namely economic, territorial, political, religious, cultural, linguistic and so on.

Nations have 'objective' characteristics which may or may not include a compact area of settlement, which formed an economic whole, comparable with a national market; a modernized literary language, a religion, or an old-established and distinctive cultural unity (Hroch, 2000:4); and 'subjective' characteristics, essentially people's awareness of its nationality and affection for it. Furthermore, a nation consist individuals which must

be self-represented. In turn, self-representation play a crucial role in the construction of national identity. If an existing (ethnic or geographical) group wishes to become a nation that means that it have political aspirations.

'In contrast with the subjectivist conception of the nation as the product of national consciousness', Hroch (2000:3) maintains that 'nationalism, the national will and spiritual forces' and 'posit the conception of the nation as a constituent of social reality of historical origin.' In his prominent work which was originally published in 1973, 'Social Precondition of National Revival in Europe', Miroslav Hroch (2000:3) considers 'the origin of the modern nation as a fundamental reality and nationalism as a phenomenon derived from the existence of that nation.'

Hroch (2000:5) agrees with Marxists theoreticians and believes that '. . . development of exchange relations and the national market to be the most important and decisive precondition for the formation of the modern nation'. In turn, development of the national market was not possible without development of linguistic, cultural and political entities.

Hroch (2000), analyzing dynamics of the birth of national identity, sees a three stage process, occurring primarily in nations who either lack an indigenous elite, or whose elites were assimilated into imperial culture ("non-historic" nations). The first step occurs when the local intelligentsia develops an interest in artifacts of a distant past and peasant traditions to confirm a sense of national separateness (Phase A); the second witnesses the spread of the idea of cultural separateness from a narrow circle of activists to the masses,

usually peasants (Phase B); and the third takes place when openly political organizations result, fusing the intellectuals and the masses and creating a broad-based national movement, following the path common throughout the nineteenth century in majority of small oppressed nations (Phase C).

Formation of any nation is on-going process. However, the nineteenth and first three decades of the twentieth century is undisputedly the Golden Age of Nationalism for small nations. Many of the abovementioned cases of national revival studied by Hroch happened at this period of time. Thus, the author finds it appropriate to examine developments in formation of Belarusian national identity at the same timeframe.

In order to apply the Hroch's framework for studying small stateless and oppressed nationalities on the case of Belarus as precisely as possible, it has been decided to divide this thesis on three chapters. Chapter 1 is dedicated to preconditions for development of strong national identity. Chapter 2 analyses whether 'Phase A' happened or not. Chapter 3 focuses on 'Phase B' and 'Phase C'.

Chapter1:

Potential Belarusian Nation in the Age of Nationalism (Phase A?)

Purpose of the following chapter is to argue that there was a reasonable basis for a Belarusian nation. In other words, the failure of Belarusian nationalism was not fully determined in advance. The literature included in this section contributed to author's understanding of the research issues.

Plausible national story

'States not less than nations exist in time' (Snyder, 2003:4). That means that all nations have a history. They are destroyed as well as created. According to Vakar, "[a] memory of a common historical past has proven to be the most compelling factor in promoting the movements of national self-determination which have swept Europe in the course of the last hundred years. Where the historical past was inadequate, appropriate myths have been created to give the movement the meaning and dynamics of a national revival" (Ioffe, 2003b:1258).

As written record of history begins to assume substantial proportions only in the fourteenth century, there is no consensus among scholars on the origins of Belarusian state (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001:3). However, the scholars do agree that a history of the nation presently known as Belarusians is dating back to ancient times, as far as nine-tenth century AD (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001:3; Marples, 1999:1). The point that

scholars cannot agree on the roots of the East Slavic nations has been persistently exploited by leaders of these nations. Each of them stuck with personal favorite interpretation of history.

A favorite version of history of Ukrainian nationalists belongs to a historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky. Hrushevsky believes that Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian roots were different and there is no direct link between Kyivan state and modern Ukraine. Nationalist historians in Belarus did not see a common strand between the three groups either, some even argues that the 'White Rus' had Scandinavian origins (Marples, 2002: 279).

On the other hand, all former leaders of the last multinational empire, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), from Stalin to Gorbachev believe in 'a common root' for the Eastern Slavic peoples, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians (Marples, 2002:279; Zaprudnik, 1993:9). The three nations in the tenth century were incorporated into the Kyivan Rus' by Knyaz' Vladimir. The Kyivan Rus' was destroyed in the invasions of the Golden Horde in the thirteenth century. As a consequence, Belarus and part of Ukraine came under the control of Lithuania. The resulting state was called the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus', and Samogitia (the Grand Duchy or GDL).

In fourteenth century, the territories of the Grand Duchy inhabited by East Slavs made up about 90 percent of the state; they exerted a great cultural influence on the new state. 'Slavs heavily outnumbered the Lithuanians, retained privileges, and in which state business was conducted in the Belarusian language'; the law code was based on that of

Kievan Rus' (Marples, 1999:1). A capital of the new state was Vilna. Then again, as 'Ukrainians can "prove" that they, not Russia, inherited Kyivan civilization', Lithuanians can 'demonstrate' that medieval Vilna (a contemporary name of the city is Vilnius) was neither Polish nor Belarusian but Lithuanian city (Snyder, 2003:10). Lukowski & Zawadzki (2001:47) state that in 1490, Lithuania's eastern border was as far as 700 miles from Vilna – almost as far as to Paris.

In 1569 Polish and Lithuanian nobility established Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by an agreement known as the Lublin Union. Henceforth the Lithuanian and the Polish nobles were together represented as a single parliament, jointly elected monarchs and were supposed to share a common civilization. However, as Burant (1993:396) points out: '[a]fter the Lublin Union, Polish culture came to predominate among the Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian elites who lived on Commonwealth lands' and it was seen as 'a vehicle for the Europeanization of the lands of Grand Duchy.' On the other hand, peasantry remained ethnically Lithuanian, Belarusian or Ukrainian.

Since the creation of the Commonwealth touched directly peoples who presently consider themselves as the Poles, the Belarusians and the Lithuanians, each nation has its own interpretation of the agreement. Unlike Lithuanian activists who in the late nineteenth century became convinced that the 1569 union with Poland had destroyed Lithuanian independence, Belarusian activists favoured the revival Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Academics described the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a poly-ethnic state, in which Belarusian culture prospered along with Polish, Jewish, Russian and Lithuanian (Leschenko, 2004:336). By Confederation of Warsaw of 1573, religious toleration for the entire body of the Christian nobility was established; not only Western Christianity, but Eastern Christianity as well.

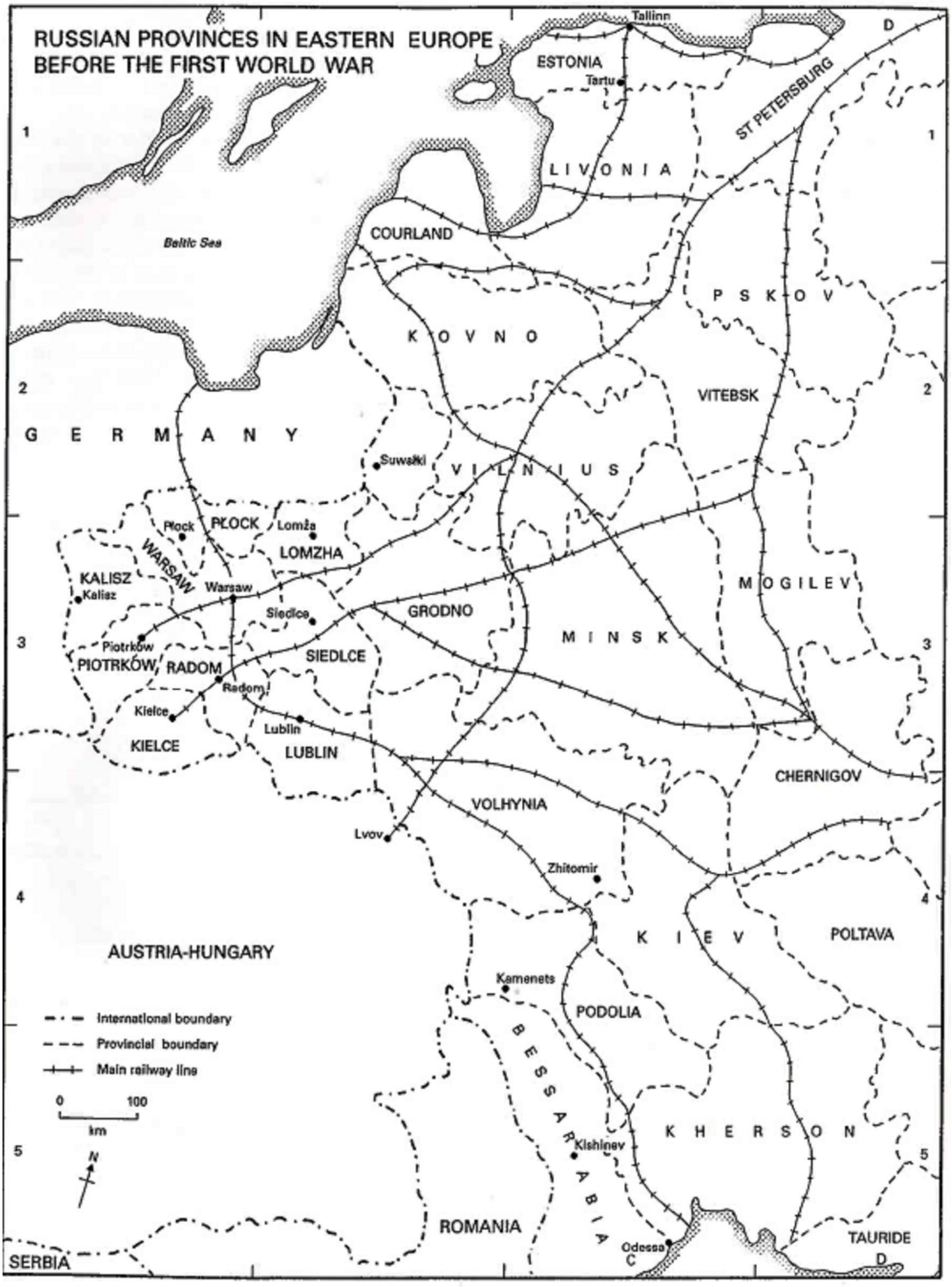
The banned in Europe Jesuit Order opened an academy in Vilna in 1579. In 1803 that academy was renamed the Vilna Imperial University. Polish was language of instruction in the University; up to the First World War it Vilna University remained the largest one in the Russian Empire.

Later on the university became not only a centre of enlightenment for the religious but also a nucleus for patriotic youth of the former Commonwealth of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania inspired by the nationalist revolutions of 1830 in France and Belgium (Zaprudnik, 1993:47;52). And although efforts of national liberation failed determination and hope persisted among the romantic enthusiasts of the Fatherland. However, while the Polish patriots dreamed about national revival of Poland, the Lithuanians of Lithuania, ideas of Belarusian national revival are not so obvious. Zaprudnik (1993:49) mentions 'one group of history enthusiasts [. . .], who were fascinated with the role being played by the Belarusian language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and saw it as the basis for national revival'.

The sixteen-seventeenth century is time of glory for the Grand Duchy. In this period it was an undisputed dominant of Eastern Europe. The eastern border of the GDL was less than a hundred miles from Moscow, but some four hundred from Vilna (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001:45). Lukowski & Zawadzki (2001:84) believe that the era the great multinational state came to the end on the 1st February 1717 when so-called 'Silent *Sejm*' confirmed that Russian troops where allowed staying on Polish-Lithuanian lands. 'In his wars with Sweden at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Tsar Peter I (1682-1725) used [Polish-Lithuanian] territories at will and his diplomats freely interfered with legislative matters of the Commonwealth Diet' (Zaprudnik, 1993:38). Technically, the Commonwealth was reduced to a de facto Russian protectorate.

However, the worst was to come in 1772, when the first partition of the Grand Duchy was masterminded by the German-born Russian empress Catherine II (1762-1796) and executed with participation of Prussian King Frederick II and Austrian monarch Maria Theresa. The Grand Duchy was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria. The following partitions of 1793 and 1795 brought to the end 400 years of common life with Lithuania and Poland; the entire territory of the contemporary Belarus was incorporated into the Russian Empire (see Map 1.1) and had a major historic impact on the Belarusian people (Zaprudnik, 1993:40).

Map 1.1



Source: Crampton & Crampton, 1996:10

Polish scholars Lukowski and Zawadzki (2001:72-109) describe this era in the history of their country as follows:

Be that as it may, from 1795 until the end of the First World War the extensive lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth remained politically divided and under foreign rule. This long period of partition, punctuated with several heroic but unsuccessful bids for independence, did not destroy Polish high culture or many of the traditions and values of the szlachta, out of whose ranks was to emerge the modern Polish intelligentsia, or indeed the Roman Catholicism which distinguished most Polish speakers from Protestant Prussians and Orthodox Russians, if not Catholic Austrians.

Usable National Language (written and spoken)

The importance of language for development of 'national consciousness' of given community can be hardly overestimated. Language is a property of community, but it stretches beyond any one generation. Breuilly (1993: 370) puts it sharply and beautifully:

Only language has made men human. Man is defined by his language capacity. Language can be learnt only in a community. It is synonymous with thought [. . .]. If language is thought, and can be learnt only in a community, it follows that each community has its own mode of thought. Thus the languages are manifestation of unique values and ideas.

Lecturing on Slavic literatures in Paris, Belarusian born and Vilna University educated the most prominent poet and dreamer of Polish national revival Adam Mickiewicz expressed this appreciation of the Belarusian language with which he was intimately familiar (Zaprudnik, 1993:53; Snyder, 2003:42):

"Belarusian which is also called Russinian or Lithuanian . . . is spoken by about ten million people. This is the richest and purest speech of ancient origin and marvellously developed. In the period of Lithuania's independence great princes used it in their diplomatic correspondence."

The state language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was called 'Lithuanian' or 'Belarusian' in the predecessor of the Russian state Muskovy. Ioffe (2003b:1260) states that in much of the existing literature the language of the Grand Duchy was referred to as Rusky. Therefore, 'it is appropriate to assign the language of documents and treaties from the Belarusian territory prior to the first half of the fifteenth century … to ancient Russian literary language' (Ioffe, 2003b: 1260).

Ioffe (2003b: 1260) quoting Vakar (1956:52) maintains that scholars in Moscow described the language as Lithuanian, in order to differentiate it from their own form of Russian. In the Ukraine, its written form was known as Russian, and the vernacular as Lithuanian. The Poles referred to both by either name. The term Lithuanian, of course, referred to the geographical location of the idiom, which in fact was Russian. Local scholars Lavrenti Zizani (Vilna 1596) and Meleti Smotricki (Evje 1619) gave it a

grammatical organisation which was used in all Russia until the Lomonosov reform (1755).

In nineteenth century scholars of Warsaw considered Chancery Slavonic/Belarusian as a dialect of Polish language, but scholars of St. Petersburg as a dialect of Russian. However, at the time, it differed significantly from both languages in terms of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar to be differentiated and to be considered independent (Zaprudnik, 1993:37).

Snyder (2003:41) maintains that:

[A]n uncodified low-status Slavic dialect located morphologically between Polish and Russian, whose speakers were located [. . .] morphologically between Polish culture and Russian power. Belorussian peasants regarded Polish [and later on Russian] as languages of [achievement]. . . To advance from the peasantry into society was to speak and to become Polish or Russian.

Frantsysk Skaryna was the first printer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He published much of the Bible in Chancery Slavonic around 1517. Marples (1999:1) believes that for Belarusian nationalists, 1517, symbolizes an emergence of 'distinctive Belarusian culture'. The sixteenth century is generally viewed as a time of maturation of the Belarusian national consciousness, of which the major component was the language.

‘The past is connected to the present in the sense that the latter selects what is important of yore and uses it as building block of the future’ (Zaprudnik, 1993:35). The nationally conscious Belarusian could point to a few other peaks of Belarusian in the past. A predecessor of the modern Belarusian language was used in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569, as the native language of politics and law (Snyder, 2003:21). At the time, Muscovite tribes had translated the Lithuanian statutes into Moscow dialect, to be of use to their court (Marples, 2002:57; Snyder, 2003:19). Later on the fact has been carefully avoided by both Polish and Russian scholars.

According to Zaprudnik (1993:35), the Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (codes of law), which were written in Belarusian and propagated in 1529, 1566 and 1588 - ‘stand as a monument to the role played by Belarusian culture in the early period of the Grand Duchy’. Although the 1588 Statute remained in force until 1840, dietines (local assemblies of nobles) and trials were held in Polish (Snyder, 2003:44). Moreover, in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania an imported Polish supplanted Belarusian, and forestalled the further literary use of the local vernacular.

However, Lukowski & Zawadzki (2001:63) maintain that ‘[t]he Polish written and spoken word was, by the late fifteenth century, making rapid progress . . .’ Cultural Polonization was certainly not opposed by Lithuanian elites: many, not least Rus’ Orthodox, it was embraced as a channel to a more sophisticated western European culture. In 1697 the sejm adopted Polish, in place of a hybridised Belarusian, as the

Grand Duchy's official chancery language marked the progress of cultural unification (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001:69).

Following the 1863 uprising, the Russian Tsar' perusing policy of Russiafication approved transfer of all primary schools to the Orthodox clergy and banned Belarusian, as well as Ukrainian, as a written language (Burant, 1995:1132; Eke et al., 2000:525). It was not recognised from the Tsarist authorities until 1906 and written both in Cyrillic and Latin. Belarussian language was totally banned from school buildings. Belarusian patriot Kastus' Kalinowski complained that (Zaprudnik, 1993:57):

"In our country, Fellows, they teach you in the schools only to read the Muscovite language for the purpose of turning you completely into Muscovite. . . You'll never hear a word in Polish, Lithuanian, or Byelorussian as the people want."

However, according to Hroch (2000), linguistic assimilation does not play a decisive blow against the further development of a nationality. The examples of Ireland and Norway prove Hroch's statement.

No Name

Since the seventeenth century, when the Russian autocracy began to compete for control over the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian authorities were able to classify Belarusians, as well as Ukrainians, simply as 'Russians' (Eke *et al.,* 2000:525) and the region itself as 'Western Russia' (*Zapadnaya Rossia*)(Burant, 1995:1132). The word 'Belarus', as well as '*Litva'* (Lithuania) were banned from official use in 1840;

official name of the region since then was the 'North-Western Province'; it was also called 'Western Russia' or simply Russia (Zaprudnik 1993:46;50). On the other hand, the Poles considered Belarusian territories as they were Western Provinces of Poland and people as the Poles (Davies, 1981:18).

The long-lasting absence of a geographical name that would be perceived as the symbol of their collective identity is, possibly, the biggest phenomenon of the reality of Belarusian nationalism. Though, technically, 'Western Russia' and 'Eastern Poland' remained 'a nameless province' of the Russian Empire throughout most of its history (Leschenko, 2004: 337).

Identifiable Territory Populated by Relatively Concentrated Group

In 1802 St. Petersburg introduced its administrative system into the acquired Belarusian territories by establishing five *gubernia*s with centres in the cities of Vilna, Minsk, Magilev, Grodno and Vitebsk (Zaprudnik, 1993:46) (see Map 1.1). According to the *Imperial Census of 1897*, the total population of the five *gubernias* of the Russian Empire, was 7.3 million of which 74.6 per cent considered Belarusian as their native language and therefore were counted as Belarusians (Guthier, 1977a:40-41).

In 1875 Rittich defined Belarusian national territory as land lying from Białostok in the west to Smolensk in the East, and from the Dvina in the north to the Pripet in the south (Burant, 1995:1132). At the time serfdom was abolished in the Russian Empire in 1861,

Belarus was essentially a nation of peasants and landlords. Although they had their freedom, the peasants had little else: they remained poor and largely landless.

Religion

According to Ioffe (2003b:1242) and Snyder (2003:45) perhaps four-fifths of the peasants in the Grand Duchy belonged to the Uniate Church from 1569 to 1839. The Uniates were Greco-Catholics who abided by Orthodox rites but recognized supremacy of the Pope. As morphologically Belarusian language situated between Russian and Polish; as geographically Belarus located in the borderland between Russia and Poland, the Uniates represented halfway faith between the Roman Catholicism and the Russian Orthodoxy.

The Uniate Church was created at the time of the Commonwealth and since the Lublin Union operated in Polish predominantly. The religious union unavoidably became an instrument of the Polonization Belarusians (and Ukrainians) (Zaprudnik, 1993:38). In 1839, the Uniate Church in these lands had been absorbed by the Orthodox Church. Even the hierarchy had not really used the local vernacular for almost two hundred years, the shift from Polish to Russian amounted exchange of one imported literary language for another.

'Belarus was viewed [by its neighbours] as the Polish-Russian borderland, in which the Orthodox associated themselves with the Russians and Catholics with the Poles, and after collapse of the Uniate Church there was no or at any rate little room for Belarusians *per*

se' (Ioffe, 2003b:1242). 'The Uniate Church, had it survived in Belarus, might have become [the] Belarusian national institution . . .'(Snyder, 2003:45). Potentially, it could play the same important role as the Catholic Church played for development of Irish national consciousness.

Conclusion

This chapter gave a short historical overlook of the territory populated by relatively concentrated group, language spoken and written by this group, and religion of this group. According to Miroslav Hroch (2000:3) 'the conception of the nation [is] a constituent of social reality of historical origin'. Hroch (2000:4) states that following classical definition of the nation it has to consist following features: (1) an old-established and distinctive cultural unity; (2) a modernized literary language; and (3) a compact area of settlement.

Belarusians do represent 'an old-established and distinctive [from Polish and Russian] cultural unity'. However this unity had almost non-representation among aristocracy and most of the examined period populated the country called the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which in turn became a part of the Russian Empire.

On the other hand, at the examined period Belarussians were in possession of 'modernised literary language', which in the Middle Ages was a dominant one in cultural and state affairs. Furthermore, most of ethnic Belarusians belonged to the church which differed from Polish Catholic or Russian Orthodox churches. Thus, this suggests that

despite of the absence of name and gaps in the history; the Belarusian nation had fair chances for development of a strong national identity.

Chapter 2:

The Age of Nationalism

This chapter assesses Belarus' pre-World War I progress in 'Phase A' and the reasons for this progress or lack of progress. Miroslav Hroch (2000:22) believes that 'the beginning of every national revival is marked by a passionate concern on [a] part of the group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture, the history of the oppressed nationality' (Phase A). Hroch (2000:15) recons that following information regarding patriots is vital for studying national revival of small nations (wherever it is possible): (1) social status (occupation) and what position they took within society; (2) social origin; (3) territorial distribution, and location of patriotic activities; (4) place or district of origin; and (5) educational background.

Than we must establish 'a complex class structure of a society in transition to capitalism' (Hroch 2000:15), in order to analyse conditions in which patriots had to operate and to conduct their patriotic agitation during next phases of national revival. In Hroch's (2000:22) words:

[. . .] *the success of patriotic agitation was possible by the establishment objective relations of economic, political and other types; the driving force in this era of national agitation was a group of patriots who were already dissatisfied with the limitation of interest to the antiquities of the land, the language and the culture, and saw their mission as the spreading of national consciousness among other people'* .

It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of creative writing in home language for patriotic agitation. The last subsection is dedicated to Belarusian literature and periodicals published prior World War I.

Hroch's Phase A: Does it ever get started?

Hroch (2000:14) states that '[t]he influence of the objective relations on the intensity of diffusion of national consciousness can only be traced by the historian where national consciousness has found expression in the conduct, the activities, of concrete personalities.'

In Belarus, awareness of ethnic distinctiveness began to develop among Catholic intellectuals of peasant origin in the mid-nineteenth century. Ioffe (2003b:1246) believes that:

The idea of a separate Belarusian identity grew out of folklore research by some Vilna University professors and students, notably Jan Barszczewski (1790–1851) and Jan Czeczot (1796–1847), whose language of everyday communication was Polish. . . On the basis of linking their folklore research with literary and official documents of the GDL (1253–1569), they came to the conclusion that they had inherited a cultural–historical legacy that had all the trappings of a tradition distinctive from that of the Poles'.

It has to be noted that Polish- speaking intellectuals played first role in the development of the Belarusian national idea. Although, first Belarusian nationalists began to define themselves in opposition to Poland, they 'stood a chance of falling into the embraces of Russia' (Ioffe, 2003b:1248). On the other hand the Polish Belarusian-ness was to tackle

'West-Rusism', the theory that emphasised Belarusian-ness but only within confines of the Russian cultural universe. Ioffe (2003b:1248) believes that '[t]hese two perspectives on what it meant to be a Belarusian fought each other from the time Belarusian ethnic awareness emerged'. The best example is a Polish-Belarusian nobleman Konstanty (Kastus) Kalinowski (1838–64): who was anti-Russian and pro-Polish (in contrast, another member of the Belarusian nobility Mikhail Koyalovich (1828–91), embraced the ideology of West-Rusism).

Belarusian Nationalists

Kalinowski was a leader of a group of young radicals, responsible for publishing in Belarusian language a rebel journal *Muzhytskaia Pravda* (Peasants Truth). Seven issues of *Muzhytskaia Pravda* were printed and distributed in the region of Grodno and Białystok (Zaprudnik, 1993:56). With his journal Kalinowski aimed at three categories of audience: first the peasants, to whom he promised land in their own language; second, the faithful adherents of Uniate Church, which had been officially abolished since 1839; and third, those who valued the Belarusian language; Kalinowki thought of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as his fatherland. By publishing the journal, Kalinowski tried to inspire a Belarusian uprising in solidarity with the Polish-Lithuanian insurrection against Russia in January 1863.

Following the rising, the Russian Governor-General of Vilna Muraviev (nicknamed 'hangman' and 'Russifier') had the Belarusian patriot hanged in Vilna as the ringmaster

of a Polish and Catholic plot. These days Kalinowski is regarded as the founding father of Belarusian Nationalism (Davies, 1981:354). His last letter 'From Beneath the Gallows' has become a political credo of Belarusian nationalism (Zaprudnik, 1993:58):

"Accept, my People, in sincerity my last words for it is as they were written from the world beyond for your own welfare.
There is no greater happiness on this earth, brothers, than if a man has intellect and learning. Only then will he manage to live in counsel and in plenty and only when he has prayed properly to God, will he deserve Heaven, for once he has enriched his intellect with learning, he will develop his affection and sincerely love all his kinsfolk.
But just as day and night do not reign together, so also true learning does not go together with Muscovite slavery. As long as this lies over us, we shall have nothing. There will be no truth, no riches, no learning whatsoever. They will not drive us like cattle not to our well-being, but to our perdition.
This is why, my People, as soon as you learn that your brothers from near Warsaw are fighting for truth and freedom, don't you stay behind either, but, grabbing whatever you can – a scythe or an ax – go as an entire community to fight for your human and national rights, for your faith, for your native country. For I say to you from beneath the gallows, my People, that only then will you live happily, when no Muscovite remains over you."

In spite of heroic life and inspiring letters, Kastus' Kalinowski was not able to win many hearts. The followers appear in the early 1880s in St. Petersburg, known as Social-

Revolutionary Group of Belarusians. The group, many of whom were students, managed to publish clandestine magazine, *Homon* (Clamor). In leading article of the first issue (in 1884), the publishers declared their firm intention to "put the first stone in the foundation of the federated independence of Belarus" and pinned their hopes on the native intelligentsia (Zaprudnik, 1993:59):

"The Belarusian people as a plebeian nation is still waiting for the emergence of their intelligentsia. Until now, they have been relinquishing from among themselves talent who served either Polish or Great Russian culture. Mutely but persistently they protested against treacherous attempts to Polonize or Russify them, and both cultures, forcibly foisted on them, failed to take root. Piously they preserved the foundations of their life while waiting for emergence of their own intelligentsia who would not uproot those foundations but would develop and build on them. . . . Then once more the Belarusian nationality will prove what has been proven many times by other plebeian nationalities (the Slavic peoples in Austria, the Finns in Finland and others), that a low level of culture does not lead to its subjection, but on the contrary, subjection causes stagnation."

However, only two issues of their clandestine magazine were published and it took at least for decades for Belarusian native intelligentsia to establish itself. But at that time Belarusian land was a part of the Soviet Union.

In the nineteenth century, according to Davies (1981:71), Belarusians belonged to the least developed branch to the East Slavs and their national movement was extremely

small and insignificant. They were at odds with the Poles, with the Russians, with the Lithuanians, and with the Ukrainians. Davies (1981:71) quotes Lewis Namier (1946) who reckons that all Belarusian national movement "[c]ould have been seated on one small sofa". Belarusian nationalists spent most of time and resources trying to prove to the world that it had no interest in neither Polish nor Lithuanian politics, and that they culturally differed from Great Russians (Davies 1981:71). Ioffe (2003b:1263) quotes Andrei Okara who believes that "Belarusian intellectuals developed an understanding of Belarus as non-Poland and non-Russia but failed to rise to the next level, that is, to spell out what Belarus' unique nature and commonly understood historical mission are'. Up to 1920s, the message from Belarusian national movement is rather 'who we are not' than 'who we are'.

Belarusian society was overwhelmingly concerned with status; few of Belarusian patriots had any very high regards for the Belarusian peasant (Snyder, 2003:43). Zaprudnik (1993:57) claims that the 1863 uprising was dominated by mainly landless Polish gentry, about seventy percent of the insurgents belonged to that class and only eighteen percent were peasants. The uprising was definitely anti-Russian, but cannot be interpreted as Belarusian under any conditions.

The author agrees with Hroch (2000:26) that 'class structure of the national [Belarusian] community' is 'the fundamental yardstick of the completeness of a nation's formation'. The following subsection analyses Social-Political Structure of Belarusian Society at the end of the nineteenth century.

Social-Political Structure of Belarusian Society

Hroch (2000:15) recons that:

We cannot restrict our classification to a simple division of society into its basic classes: there is also the internal structure of the classes to be considered, and the existence of a series of further social groups which were richly represented in the transitional society. The ruling class itself contained two fundamentally antagonistic elements at this epoch: the old ruling nobility of the ancient regime, and the emergent bourgeoisie of capitalist society.

Ruling Class

Before the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569, the elites who dominated the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were largely Belarusian speakers. The creation of a closer union between Grand Duchy and the Kingdom of Poland caused Polonisation of the nobility in the region. (Snyder 2003:24). Three consecutive partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795 did not bring changes in social order. Lukowski & Zawadzki (2001:110-111) believe that:

Much of the distinct social order of the western gubernii of the Russian Empire was to remain unchanged for many decades: the local Polish-Lithuanian landed gentry retained many of its social and legal privileges, and some vestiges of local self-government.

On the other hand, as we shall see from the level of industrialisation of the region by the beginning of the twentieth century number of bourgeoisie was quite insignificant.

Urbanisation

In Hroch's words '[t]he class of the oppressed also falls into two basic components: the peasantry in process of emancipation and the emerging proletariat' (Hroch, 2000:15). According to Guthier (1977a:43) and Titarenko (1999:161) in 1897 Belarusians, like Ukrainians, were basically rural population, 97- 98 per cent percent of which were peasants. They lived in the countryside or in the communities fewer than 2,000. As the size of towns increased, the number of the Belarusians declined significantly. So, in 1897 in seventeen towns with population between two and five thousands, the Belarusians constituted 36 percent of the population. On the other hand, in three towns over fifty thousands- there were 7.8 percent of the Belarusians only (see Table 2 in Guthier, 1977a:43).

The level of urbanisation is one measure of the socially and politically mobilized population. Zaprudnik (1993:60-61) recons that between 1863 and 1897, the population of Belarus grew from 3.3 million to 6.5 million. The number of city dwellers rose by nearly the same proportion (96.4 percent), from 330,000 to 648,000. However, the ratio of the urban population in Belarus remained the same (9.8 percent), whereas in the whole of European Russia the ratio grew (from 9.9 percent to 12.8 percent).

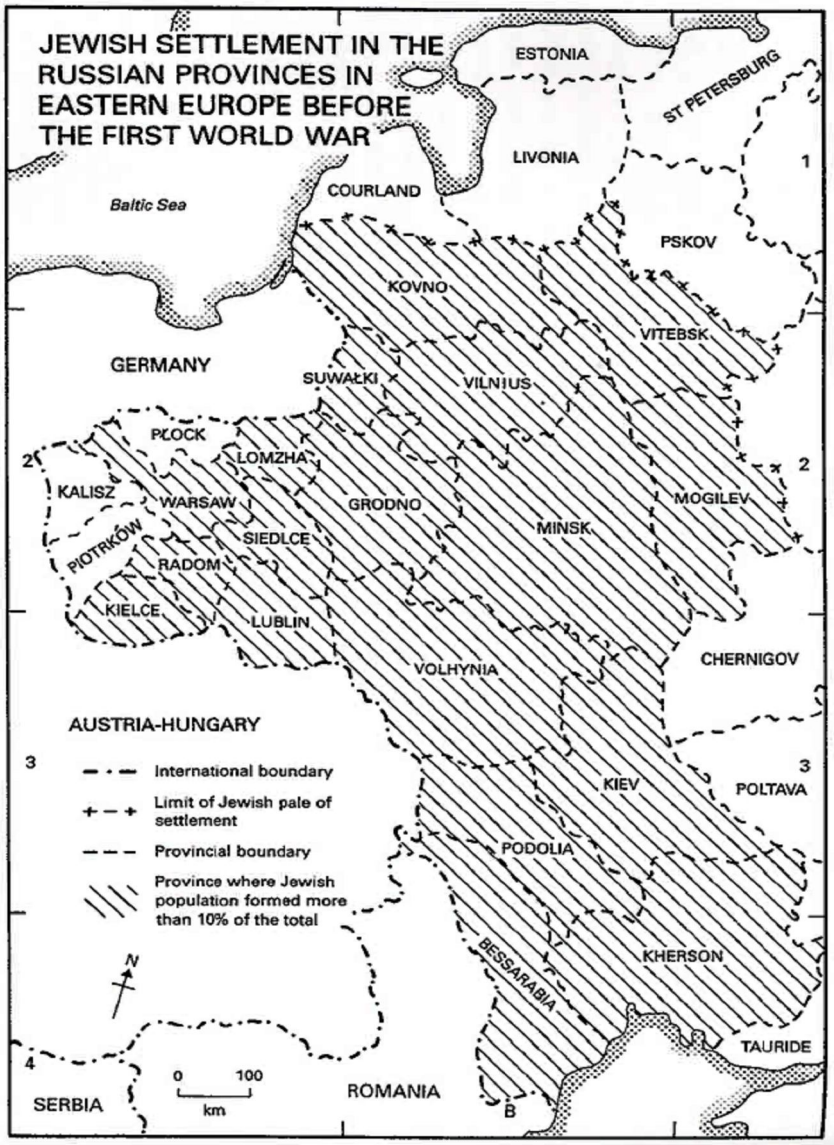
In major cities, the dominant Christian culture was Polish and Roman Catholic but the political regime was Russian and Orthodox (Snyder 2003:56). The language of streets, schools and churches in major cities was the Polish, which has been the local language of culture for at least three hundred years in the region. According to *1897 Census*, out of

154,532 inhabitants of Vilna- 30.9 percent recognised Polish as native language, 20.0 percent – Russian and 4.2 percent – Belarusian. In 1897 Minsk, out of 90,912 11.4 percent were Polish speakers, 25.5 percent Russian speakers and 9 percent Belarusian. Out of nine cities included in Table 3 in Guthier (1977a:45), Mogilev (43,119 inhabitants) had the lowest proportion of Polish speakers and largest proportion of Belarusian speakers – 3.1 and 29.8 percent respectively, Russian speakers constituted 15.9 percent of the population there.

Jewish Community in the Region

Guthier (1977a:43) refers to the study on the urban population of Russia conducted by Robert Lewis and Richard Rowland (1969) between 1897 and 1966, which confirms the low level of urbanisation in Belarus even by standards of the 1897. Poles, Russians and by the turn of twentieth century predominantly Jews dominated in towns (Burant, 1995:1132). In some town Jews represented up to 90 percent of the population. 'This was a result of the Empress Catherine's decree of 1794, which bared Jews from settling in Russian provinces; and of Tsar Alexander III's prohibition of 1883 against Jews settling outside cities and towns' (Zaprudnik, 1993:63) (see Map 2.1).

Map 2.1



Source: Crampton & Crampton, 1996:10

Indeed if one looks at the major cities at the end of the twentieth – beginning of the nineteenth century, the percentage of Yiddish speakers is the most remarkable phenomenon. In 1914 the Jews represented 40 percent of Vilna, which they inhabited in large numbers for four hundred years and called it the 'Jerusalem of the North'. Minsk, at this time was about 51 percent Jewish, Mogilev- 49.8 percent Jewish, Homel- 55 percent

Jewish, Pinsk- 74 percent Jewish, and Vitebsk- 51 percent Jewish (Snyder 2003:56; Guthier, 1977a:45). It is the fact that the language spoken in one third of the homes was Yiddish, and the Jews controlled two-thirds of the trade in the region. After all it is not a surprise that Belarus is the home for four prime ministers of the state of Israel – Golda Meir, Menachem Begin, Itzhak Shamir and Shimon Peres (Ioffe, 2003a:1010). However, Hroch (2000:96) maintains that 'the Jews formed a closed group, which was unable to assimilate other nationalities and itself only underwent assimilation in certain individual cases'.

Proletariat and Peasantry

Hroch (2000:26) insists that 'it follows from the very definition of a small nation that its formative process could not be completed before the bourgeois revolution and the rise of the industrial revolution.' However, as we shall see, at the turn of the twentieth century Belarus was least industrialised region of the Russian Empire. Zaprudnik (1993:61) states that at the end of the century, unemployment and poverty were widespread in rural areas.

Although, there were few people who could be counted as 'proletariat', the proportion of Belarusian speaking community which worked outside agriculture was even smaller (Guthier, 1977a:45-46, see tables 3-4). So even the Belarusians constituted 4.2 percent of the population of 1897 Vilna, they composed only 3.1 percent (737) of the 23,730 employed in Industry, Manufacturing, Construction and Transport (IMCT). Out of 13,678 people employed in IMCT in Minsk in 1897, 1,039 were the Belarusians, which is around 7.6 percent (where they constituted 9.0 percent of the total population). Mogilev is an

exception again, there were 29.9 percent Belarusians employed in IMCT when they constituted 29.8 percent of population of the town.

As we see the number of people involved in industrial production was quite insignificant. Urbanization and industrialization had not yet created a substantial Belarusian proletariat which could have served as a focus for national agitation. Guthier (1977b:282) believe that '[d]uring the period of upheaval (1917-1921), when conditions were most favourable for the non-Russian peoples to assert their sovereignty, the Belorussians were unequipped for national straggle'. Zaprudnik (1993:67) states that:

The main obstacle was the fact that the political landscape in Belarus, were 97.4 percent of the urban population consisted of non-Belarusians, was dominated by Russian, Polish and Jewish parties with their own goal, not necessarily coinciding with – and in some cases antagonistic to – the Belarusian revival.

People of Free Professions

People of 'free professions' could play an important role in development of national consciousness. Hroch (2000:15) maintains that '[a]n especially complex problem in the social definition of those professions whose members had a higher education and lived by their intellectual labour, and whom we characterize in a general way with the term "intelligentsia"'. Hroch (2000:16) divides this category on three subgroups:

(1) those who '[d]irectly associated with the ruling class; selling their intellectual labour at a such 'high-wage' that one cannot speak of exploitation: highest state

officials, the managers of the big estates and the elite of the free professions (lawyers)'.

(2) the strata which neither shared political power nor engaged economic enterprises, but was, as well as the previous subgroup, outside 'labour-wage' relationship: lawyers and doctors (in so far they were independent), artist, journalists and scientists.

(3) And finally, 'those who stood in a relationship of wage-labour, so-called intellectual proletariat: lower and the middle class officials, clerics and teachers' (Hroch, 2000:16).

Unfortunately, there is no data available in regard to the first category of 'professionals'. However Guthier (1977a:46-48, table 5-6) maintains that during *1897 Census* out of 760 lawyers in 'designated Belarusian area', 76 gave Belarusian as their native language and can be considered as the Belarusians. One Belarusian-speaking lawyer was based in Vilna, seven in Minsk and six in Mogilev (it could be interesting to calculate the proportion of Belarusian lawyers out of the total number, however the total numbers are unavailable).

Guthier (1977a:46-48 table 5-6) recons that the total number of people which worked in 'Medicine & Sanitation' was 5,672, out of which 1,233 were Belarusians (21.7 percent). The composition by city was as follows: 45 in Vilno, 24 in Minsk and 57 in Mogilev.

In 1897 total of 1,339 people were employed in the collective group 'Literature, Science & the Arts', and only 105 (7.8 percent) of them could be counted as the Belarusians (Guthier,1977a: 46-48 table 5-7). Though if we consider that 2,252 (34.7 percent) of the Belarusian speaking population of Vilna were literate, there were 5 Belarusian 'artists, journalists and scientists' in the city; one potential Belarusian writer for 450 potential Belarusian readers. There were 4 potential writers and 1325 potential readers in Minsk: the ratio is 1/331. However, the most appalling situation existed in Mogilev, 2,274 (17.7 percent) of the Belarusians there were literate and only 3 'writers' were available in 1897: 1 / 758.

In regard to 'wage-labour' category, so-called 'intellectual proletariat' – there were 16,741 people teaching in Belarus in 1897, 3,502 of them were Belarusians, which is 20.9 percent of the total; Vilna had 68 Belarusian teachers, Minsk had 47 and Mogilev had 79 (Guthier,1977a:46-48 table 5-6).

However, we have keep in mind that in 1897 only 8.2 percent of the population lived in towns larger than 10,000 (Guthier,1977a:45). In general, nine out of ten Belarusian lived in the countryside, so there were 64 Belarusian speaking teachers available for 100,000 Belarusians, which made mass-agitation and mass nationalist education very difficult.

Hroch (2000:91) explains a low representation of the Lithuanians among professionals, that in nineteenth century university graduates could find no chance of employment in region, is also quite true in Belarusian case. 'Belarusians lacked the educated and

articulate personnel as well as the financial resources to sustain an effective national propaganda effort' (Guthier, 1977a:45). Furthermore, those few Belarusians who were able to move up on the social ladder would fall prey to vertical and horizontal mobility, Belarusian people when promoted in the ranks and/or moved to an urban area would lose that separate identity and identify themselves either with Russian or with Polish nation. Ioffe (2003b:1246) believes that it would be the case as recently as the 1970s: 'urbanisation in Belarus spelled loss of national character'.

There was insignificant number of Belarusians with the consciousness, training and skills to conduct an intensive and extensive effort of nationalist agitation for five and a half million Belarusians in 1897. As Zaprudnik (1993:63) puts it:

Thus we have an explanation for the difficulties faced by the Belarusian national revival and political movement, which at the beginning of the twentieth century had to rely for support on the lowest, most passive, and least educated social stratum, the peasantry.

Writing in Belarusian Language During Phase A

'One can hardly imagine the emergence of an Italian national identity without Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the emergence of a German national identity without Luther's translation of the Bible into the vernacular, or the emergence of a Ukrainian national identity without Taras Shevchenko's *Kobzar*.' (Prizel, 1998:16)

'A continuous tradition of cultural production in a literary language' in Hroch's (2000:9;18) words, is an essential prerequisite for 'formation of a modern nation out of a small, oppressed nationality'. 'In a Europe . . . literature was universally regarded as a condition of nationhood' (Snyder, 2003:37).

Snyder (2003:42) argues that '[a]lthough a Belarusian . . . vernacular was used as a literary language in the sixteenth century, after the triumph of Polish after 1569 very little had been written'. It was only early in the 20th century that Belarusian literature began to develop in a mass form, until then Belarusian literature was strongly connected with Polish culture and language. Zaprudnik (1993:53) explains it by the fact that Belarus had been for more than 300 years part of the Commonwealth of Poland. Such writers as Vincent Dunin-Marcenkevich (1807-84) and Frantsishak Bohusevic (1840-1900) represented minor gentry from the Vilna region. They wrote in Belarusian as well as in Polish and published their poems in Krakow in Belarusian language, and Polish orthography.

Dunin-Martsinkevich was educated in Petersburg. He 'took for granted that the best sign of the dignity of the folk language was a proof of its equality with Polish, and that the most convincing demonstration of that equality was the translation of Polish literature' (Snyder 2003:42). The fact that the Russian translation Mickiewicz' *Pan Tadeusz* had already existed, brought the writer to idea of translating the long, complex and beautiful poem 'about the Polish-speaking gentry in Belarusian-speaking lands' into then un-codified Belarusian. However, translating a literary masterpiece into the peasants' speech

proved to be uneasy task. Furthermore, publication of Dunin-Martsinkevich's translation was stopped by a censor in the midst of printing in 1859. 'The decision of the Main Office of Censorship was "not to allow use of the Polish alphabet in Printing works in Belarusian dialect"' (Zaprudnik, 1993:55).

Frantsishak Bohusevic, on the other hand, made an attempt to draw attention to ancient documents written in Belarusian, which he saw as a mirror of his nations past. He wrote in foreword to his collection of the poems *'Dudka Bielaruskaya'* (The Belarusian Fife) published in Krakow in 1891 and smuggled to Belarus. Bohusevic writes (Zaprudnik, 1993:62):

"I have read many old papers written two and three hundred years ago in our land by great lords, but in our purest language as they have been written right now. . . . Our language is no less civilised and nobble than French, German, or any other tongue."

Both are now regarded as fathers of Belarusian literature (Snyder 2003:46; Davies, 1981:71; Zaprudnik, 1993:62). 'The modest beginnings of [the] Belorussian literary revival, based largely on Polish models and even encouraged by Polish patriots as a means of resisting Russian influence . . . ' (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001:168)

In 1897 villages and towns of 2,000, 5,000 even 10,000 inhabitants characteristically lacked such mobilizing factor, as regularly issued newspaper, for example. According to Guthier (1977a:44), in 1900 not a single town with fewer than 20,000 people printed its

own newspaper. Regarding cities with population less than 50,000 people, only Gomel had a newspaper in 1905; this paper failed after three weeks.

The relaxation of the Russian policies toward national minorities after the 1905 revolution resulted in cancellation of the ban on non-Russian languages. Once again Vilna became a centre of multicultural life. Zaprudnik (1993:63) states that more than sixty newspapers and magazines appeared in the five Belarusian *gubernia*s: most of them in Russian, nine in Polish, nine in Yiddish, six in Lithuanian, and two in Belarusian. It has to be kept in mind that two-thirds of periodicals were published in Vilna (Zaprudnik, 1993:63).

The most remarkable weekly publication was launched in 1906 in Vilna by activists of the Belarusian Socialist Union (Hramada) and was called *Nasha Dolya* (Our destiny). Very shortly after launch, due radicalism of publications, *Nasha Dolya* ran into trouble with authorities, and had to be reborn as *Nasha Niva* (Our cornfield). This periodical lasted until 1915 and imprinted its name in history as the first big success. It was headed by two brothers, Ivan and Anton Lucevich, who declared in the first edition (Zaprudnik, 1993:64): “Do not think that we wish to serve only the gentry, or only the peasants. No, never! We want to be servants of the whole long suffering Belarusian nation”. However, the impact of *Nasha Niva* was limited due: first, that its circulation did not exceed 4,500; second they were distributed almost exclusively in Vilna region (two-thirds of all periodicals were published in Vilna).

Nasha Niva gathered around itself a group of young authors who wrote the classics of the modern Belarusian literature. Zaprudnik (1993:65) believes that between 1908 and 1914, 77 titles of Belarusian books were published, totalling 226,660 copies.

On the other hand, writing about Eastern Belorussia, Guthier (1977a:59) states that '[i]n 1913 a Belarusian language press was non-existent on [that] territory. Out of nineteen newspaper titles published in 1913 – seventeen had Russian Titles, none Belarusian ones; furthermore none of the books were published in Belarusian language. (Guthier, 1977a:56 (Table14)).

Conclusion

This chapter has had an objective to assess Belarus' pre-World War I progress in 'Phase A' and the reasons for this progress. The overview of Belarusian patriotic movement has been given; readers have been introduced to the leading personalities who had an interest in the Belarusian national revival. However, first, there were few members of this group; second, few of these people had high regards to the peasant majority of Belarusians (most of patriots originated from a local aristocracy); third, Belarusian patriots were either anti-Russian or anti-Polish, but not pro-Belarusian.

Social-Political structure of Belarusian society has been analysed. It is possible to conclude that ethnic Belarusians were in absolute minority in urban areas. Cities were dominated by Yiddish, Polish and Russian speaking population.

Marxists theoreticians believe that the development of mass production, exchange relations and the national market to be 'the most important and decisive precondition for the formation of the modern nation' (Hroch, 2000:5). However, in the nineteenth century, nine out of ten Belarusians were involved in agriculture. The level of industrialisation of the Belarusian lands was quite low even by standards of Russian empire; furthermore, the number of Belarusian proletariat was insignificant. Most of exchange relations was conducted through Jewish middlemen. Moreover, there were very few ethnic Belarusians among people of free profession.

The last section of this chapter has been dedicated to an important for national revival element, literature. An overview of the published in Belarusian language literature has been given. There was very few publications in Belarusian at the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth century.

The overall conclusion of this chapter: first, there was very limited evident interest in Belarusian national revival among intellectuals; second, preconditions for spreading Belarusian idea were unfavourable at the examined times. Thus, in the examined period, there is very limited evidence of the progress in development Belarusian national idea (Phase A).

Chapter 3:

Interwar Period: Phases B/C?

While Polish and Lithuanian nationalists began to make distinctive attempts of challenging integrity of the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century, nationalism came rather late to Belarus. 'At the turn of the century Belarusians lacked the educated and articulate personnel as well as the financial resources to sustain an effective national propaganda effort' (Guthier, 1977a:45).

This chapter contains assessment of the progress in development of national consciousness made by Belarusian nation along Phases B and C, in the period between late World War I and beginning World War II. In other words, we shall see whether the idea of cultural separateness spread from a narrow circle of activists to the masses (Phase B); and, probably, created a broad-based national movement (Phase C).

It is a general assumption that a separate national identity leads, in most cases, to political aspirations. Therefore, we shall have a look into whether 'national consciousness' played a role in a declaration of Belarusians independence in 1918. Than as territory of Belarus was divided on Eastern and Western Belarus at the given period, we shall look into progress in development of national consciousness along with industrialisation in each part separately.

Changes of Belarusian Borders I: Late WWI and After

Guthier (1977a:38) believes, that '[a] nations ability to compel is dependent on mass support which the national cause can mobilize. Therefore, the successes and failures of the national movement cannot be analysed only as the emergence of political or intellectual elites.' Miroslav Hroch (2000) fully supports the argument. He maintains that the group of patriots had to spread an idea of national separateness among masses in order to achieve success.

Hroch (2000:5-6) states that development of the capitalist mass production (industrialization / modernisation) is an important and decisive precondition for social change, which in turn influenced formation of a modern nation. On the other hand the determination works in the opposite direction: social changes determined developments in economic relations. In other words, developments in industrialisation were vital for progress in mass education and urbanisation.

In the conclusions of his work, Hroch (2000:185) states that '[t]he fight of the serfs against the old regime whether it expressed itself in open insurrections or . . . individual legal disputes and manifestations of disobedience, was unquestionably one of the objective conditions for the formation of the small nation'. However, contrary to Hroch's believes, in Belarus, beginning of the national liberation did not start from any manifestation of disobedience nor from development of industrial production and was not led by middle class; but its initial point was an abolition of all social distinctions for the Belarusians by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and it came from Moscow. Most

importantly, it was noted by several scholars (Ioffe, 2004:1257; Marples, 1999:126), forces instrumental in achieving statehood for Belarus in 1919, as well as in 1918 and in 1921 had nothing or very little to do with Belarusian nationalists. They have been always external, not internal.

Furthermore, proclamation of independence and establishment of the Belarusian National Republic on the March 25, 1918 was possible because of German occupation. Nationally conscious element of the Belorussian National Republic remained painfully small (Guthier, 1977a:49). Ioffe (2003b:1255) quotes 'Von Beckeret, the German adviser on Belarusian affairs, [who] reported to the military command of the eastern front that "the Belarusian secessionism, supported by a few Vilna archaeologists and journalists, ought to be considered a local matter of no political consequence"'.

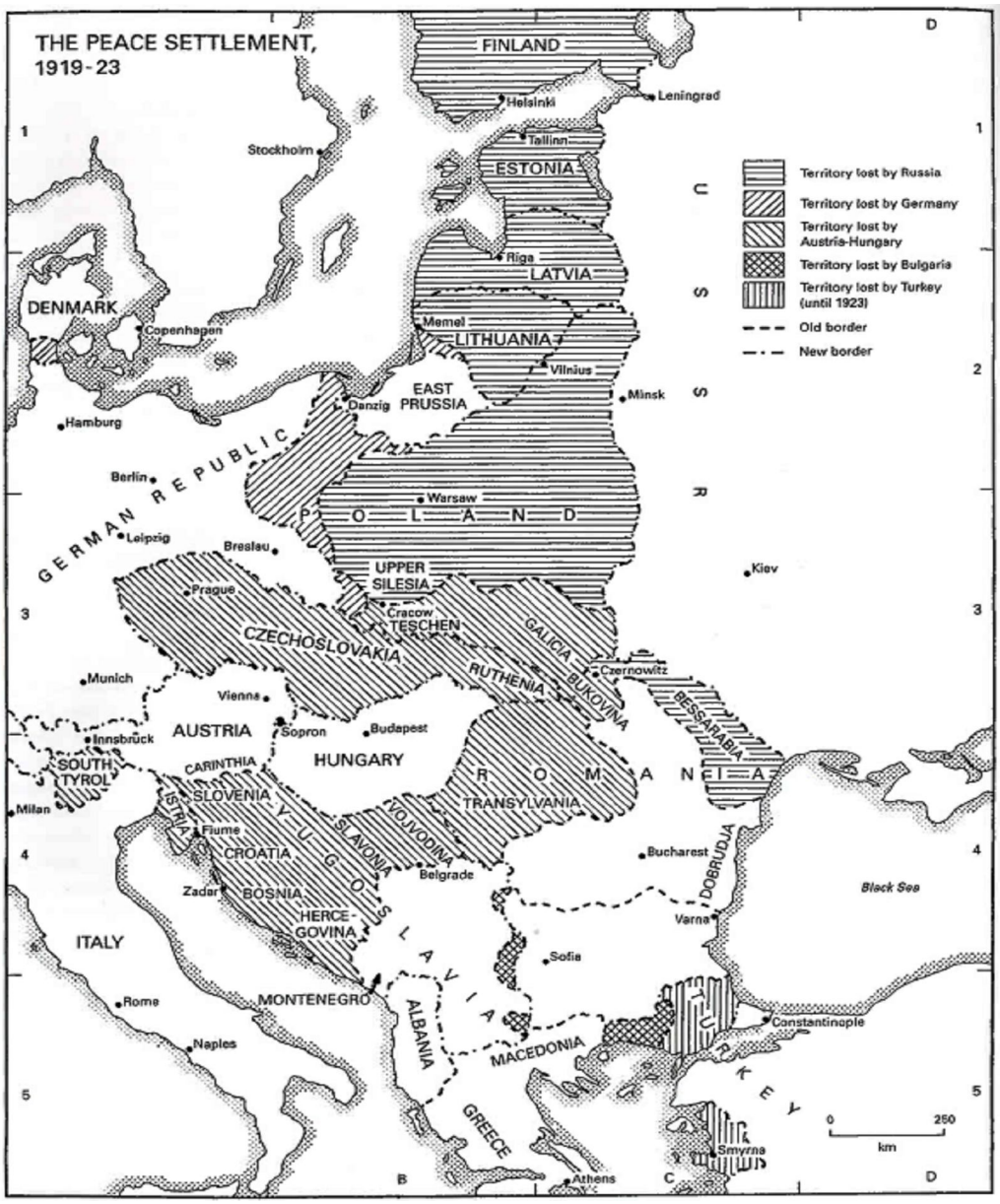
The Belorussian National Republic ceased to exist with collapse of the German government by the end of 1918. The Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (Belorussian SSR) was proclamed on January 1, 1919. Initially an establishment of the Belarusian SSR in 1919 was the least significant of the early republics of the USSR, a tiny ramp state around the city of Minsk. On the other hand, the Belarusian SSR itself became the foundation stone for the later manifestation of Belarusian nationalism.

In Manifesto the Bolshevics declared that 'all power was in the hands solely of the Soviet workers, peasants, *batraks* (the poorest peasant stratum) and Red Army deputies' (Marples, 1999:5). However, less than two month later (on 19 February 1919), Polish

army occupied the city of Brest-Litovsk and Soviet authorities decided to join together the Lithuanian and Belarusian republics. The 'Lit-Bel SSR' lasted from a middle of the April 1919 until mid-July 1919, the beginning of the Polish-Soviet war. In July 1920, the Red Army reoccupied the city of Minsk and a new Soviet republic of Belarus was proclaimed on 31 July 1920.

The borders of the new BSSR were formally established by Soviet-Polish treaty signed in Riga on 18 March 1921: Belarus as a territory was divided into two roughly equal halves, with population around 5 million each (see Map 3.1).

Map 3.1



Source: Crampton & Crampton, 1996:36

According to Hroch (2000:20-24), an existence of political aspirations among leading representative of the oppressed nation is an important indicator of the beginning of national revival on the mass scale. On the east, the non-Belarusian leaders of Bolshevism, obsessed by the spirit of world revolution, were primarily adverse toward the idea of a

Belarusian national state; nevertheless, their animosity allowed room for a policy of Belarusization. The first republic's government was dominated initially by All-Russian Bolsheviks, however the composition changed in favour of Belarusian Communists, who advocated building a Belarusian National Home. By 1926, Belarusians occupied 51.3 percent of all government positions in administration, 30.8 percent in economy, 26.3 percent of position in the republic's juridical system and 59.5 percent of position working with agriculture (Zaprudnik, 1993:76).

Marples (1999:6) believes that 'the augmentation of the BSSR was a direct result of campaigning by Belarusian nationalists rather than Soviet benevolence'. While initially the BSSR of 1921 consisted of the city of Minsk and a narrow band territory around it, between 1923 and 1926, with Moscow's concurrence, to the BSSR were added Belarusian ethnographic areas that, as a result of the civil war and foreign intervention, had remained with Russian republic. Thus, the territory of the republic increased from 20,000 square miles to 48,500 while the population almost tripled, from 1.5 million to almost 4.2 million (Zaprudnik, 1993:78; Marples, 1999:6).

State Policies, Social Change and National Identity I: BSSR

Although, prior the Revolution 1917 Russian nationalism carried strong elements of the civic nationalism and its emphasised on nation-building and politics of integration, when Bolsheviks came to power they switched to the ethnic based formula of nation-building. The Soviet Encyclopaedia defines nation as 'historic entity of people with its territory,

economic ties, literary language and specific culture and character, comprising the whole of a nation's features' (Tishkov, 1996:23).

Generally, historians agree rise of 'Belarusiasation' began in the 1920s. As with border transformations, Belarusian cultural development was initiated from Moscow. After ceasing the power in October 1917, the Bolsheviks proclaimed new Soviet state a federal republic. The Soviet authorities permitted the cultural development of the BSSR, but only as a part of the Soviet Union.

An establishment of highly important for Belarusian culture All-Belarusian Association of Poets and Writers called *Maladnyak* in 1924 could be considered as a starting point of Phase B. Two most prominent members of association were Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas.

If in 1913, out of 19 newspaper titles published in the ethnically Belarusain territories 17 titles were Russian and none Belarusian; in 1928, out of 37 titles, 4 were Russian and 30 Belarusian (in 1938, out of 199 titles, 48 Russian and 149 Belarusian). In 1913, 0.2 million copies of books were published in total; none of them were Belarusian. In 1927, out of 1.8 million books published, 1.3 million were Belarusian (72 percent) (in 1928, out of 2.2, 1.8 were Belarusian (82 percent); and in 1938, out of 14.7, 12.3 million were Belarusian (84 percent)) (Guthier, 1977a:56).

Hroch (2000:23) states that 'in the concluding stage of development of the national revival we meet with a situation in which national consciousness has become the concern of broad masses' (Phase C). The developments in education of nineteen-twentieth could be counted as a peak of the Belarusian national revival.

Under the tsar's there were not a single institution of higher learning existed in Belarus. The Belarusian State University was opened in 1921, followed by Belarusian Institute of Culture in 1922 (transformed in 1926 into the Academy of Sciences), the Veterinarian Institute in 1924, the Agricultural Academy in 1925, and fifteen community pedagogical colleges in 1928 (Zaprudnik, 1993:80; Marples, 1999:7).

The decree of 1924 established equal rights for the four principal languages of the republic: Belarusian, Russian, Yiddish, and Polish; and national minority schools were opened. However, during the period 1922-1926, a majority of primary schools had switched to instruction in Belarusian. Moreover, Belarusian language was also being gradually introduced into institutions of higher education.

According to the first Soviet *Census* of 1926, the level of literacy in the republic among Belarusians had risen from 24.5 percent in 1897 to 55.1 percent: 80.7 percent in all cities and 52.5 percent in rural areas (among non-Belarusians the level of literacy was still higher, 77.7 percent: 89.9 percent in the cities and 63.5 percent in rural areas) (Guthier, 1977a:54). On the other hand only 10.3 percent of urban population were educated in Belarusian language only. Vast majority of urban dwellers, 58.9 percent, were educated

in Russian and 30.4 percent were educated in both languages. Regarding 'rural area': the percentage of literate population educated in Belarusian is significantly higher, 26.3 percent; however Russian is still much more widespread- 51.1 percent; 22.1 percent of literate rural dwellers were educated in 'both languages' (Guthier 1977a:56, Table 13). In 1931 when compulsory seven-year education was introduced, the republic had 32 institutions of higher learning with 11,000 students, 104 professional schools with 20,000 students (Zaprudnik, 1993:81).

Urbanisation of Eastern Belarusian Lands

On the republic's total population of about 5 million nine out of ten Belarusians were still employed in agriculture in the beginning of 1920s. Even in comparison with other parts of the former Russian Empire. According to Marples (1999:11), the first five-year economic plan and Moscow's economic policies were aimed at 'drive rural residents into rapidly developing cities, and second to increase substantially proportion of ethnic Belarusians among the urban community'. With economic recovery and Belarusization of the governmental structures, villagers gradually began moving into towns. In the mid-1920s about forty percent of the urban inhabitants were former villagers. By 1925 the level of industrial production had reached the 1913 level and by 1926 Belarusians, Jews and Russians made up the urban population in a ratio of 40:40:15 (Zaprudnik, 1993:78-79; Guthier, 1977a:52).

Guthier (1977a:52) notes that it is difficult to predict how the Belarusian-speaking peasant of 1897 would have responded to a question of nationality and it is also unlikely

that a significant number of people who did not speak Belarusian in 1897 would have identified themselves as Belarusian by nationality. However, in 1926 the people were asked to which '*narodnost*'' (nationality, people) they belong, as well as their language. Therefore, according to the *Census 1926,* in the period between 1926 and 1939 urban population, as a proportion of total population of BSSR, increased from 17.0 to 24.7 percent; and the proportion of the people living in the cities over 50,000, from 8.4 to 14.0 percent (Guthier, 1977a:61). Guthier (1977a:53-54;61) believes that the Belarusian gain of the cities was triggered by two factors: first, by a significant decline in number of Jewish inhabitants, who emigrated from Belarus to Russia between the WW1 and the Civil war (between 1897 and 1934 the number of the Jews in Belarus fall from 470 to 375 thousands and in the Russian Federation rose from 258 to 967 thousands); second, by the increased demand of the cities for labour resulted from 'by moderately rapid industrialisation'. Table 3.1 illustrates changes in number of the Belarusians in the cities between 1897 and 1926.

TABLE 3.1: Belorussians and Belorussian Speakers as % of Population, 1926 vs. 1897

	1926 Belorussians By Nationality	*1926 Belorussian As Native Language*	*1897 Belorussian As Native Language*
BSSR	80.6	67.2	77.7
All Cities	39.3	20.0	19.1
Rural Areas	89.1	76.9	84.8
Major Cities:			
Minsk	42.4	22.9	9.0
Vitebsk	29.5	4.7	12.2
Gomel'	21.8	0.6	17.6
Bobruisk	30.4	5.3	4.9
Mogilev	49.0	28.8	29.8

Table from Guthier (1977a:53), calculated from *1926 Census,* Table 8, and from *1897 Census*, Vol. 5.3, 22, 23, Table 13.

It is interesting to note that even in the 1920s many people who considered themselves Belarusians did not consider Belarusian as their first language.

Industrialisation

As noted by Hroch (2000:5) quite often it is difficult to determine whether social change / cultural revival cause industrialization / modernisation or another way around. It is definitely true in Belarusian case as it is hard to establish what came first; because cultural revival coincided with industrialisation. Furthermore, industrialisation of Belarus was also designed in Moscow.

The initial five-year plan called for an increase of output in heavy by 3.3 times in the period of 1929-1933. Capital investment was to be raised by 6.5 times over the five years, with over 78 percent of that investment assigned for the construction of new factories: 79 large industrial enterprises, including machine factories, cement works wood processing combines in Mogilev, Krichav, and Gomel' respectively. The rise of industrial output was well above the All-Union average, presumably because the starting base was so slow. In 1927 the republic had 410 industrial enterprises which employed 32,000 workers (Marples, 1999:11; Zaprudnik, 1993:78).

By 1933, gross industrial output rose in the republic by 2.7 times, exceeding the level of 1927 by 4.8 times, while the plan specified an increase of 3.7 times. 'The number of workers per factory more than tripled during the first two years of the plan, while the proportion of workers among the overall population increased from 11.3 to 20 percent from 1929 to 1932' (Marples, 1999:11).

However, in the second decade of the twentieth century, Belarusians made most remarkable progress was among intelligentsia. By 1926 the Belarusians constituted 70.7 percent of the total number of 'Teachers, Professors, Academics' and 38.7 percent of 'Writers, Editors, Journalists'(Guthier, 1977a:55).

State Policies, Social Change and National Identity II: Western Belarus (Poland)

The Poland 1921-1939 had an eastern frontier much like the one in 1793, before the second partition of the Commonwealth of 1793. According to Zaprudnik (1993:83), the new Polish state of 150,000 square miles and a total population of 35 million (in 1939) included 40,000 square miles of Belarusian ethnographic territory and a total population of more than 4.6 million in 1931 (Zaprudnik, 1993:83). The national minorities in Poland between the two World Wars constituted about one-third of the state's population. The number of ethnic Belarusians stood about 3.5 million[1].

The striking difference between Soviet and Polish approach to the Belarusian dilemma is that the new Polish state was firmly opposed to any form of autonomous Belarusian national development. However there is evidence that the Polish territories also have served as a source of national rebirth (Phase B). In order to prove the world that national minorities treated fairly, immediately after the Riga Treaty of 1921, 'the [Polish] government financially supported some Belarusian activities and even subsidized Belarusian press' (Zaprudnik, 1993:83). More than 400 Belarusian primary schools, seven high schools, and three teachers colleges were opened (Phase C).

[1] It has to be mentioned that demographic statistics inevitably vary according to who is counting. Polish authorities, for example, conducted their own census in 1921, when the number of Belarusians in West Belarus was reduced to slightly over 1 million, and in 1931, when the number was lowered to 890,000. The census-takers simply counted all Belarusian Roman Catholics as Poles, even if they were not of Polish background and had no knowledge of the Polish language (Marples, 1999:7; Zaprudnik, 1993:83).

However, the democratic experiment lasted exactly as long as the border dispute. By 1924 Polish authorities began to put pressure on the minorities: they closed non-Polish schools, banned non-Polish publications, and settled Polish colonizers. Speeches by Belarusian and Ukrainian deputies in the Polish Sejm, as well as petitions to them from their constituents in the mid-1920s, catalogue a long list of complaints about abuses and atrocities at the hands of the authorities at all levels (Zaprudnik, 1993:83).

The president of the Belarusian Parliamentary Club and a deputy Branislav Tarashkevich, in the speech before Diet in July 1924 stated: "The government closed 400 Belarusian Schools. Instead of land reform, we have [Polish] settlers and the Ministry for Land Reforms is nothing other than a Ministry for Colonisation and Settlements" (Zaprudnik, 1993:83).

In August 1930, by dissolving the Diet, Marshal Pilsudski officially brought to the end the era of Polish liberalism upon Belarusian cultural revival. Within a month, members of political opposition were arrested and election results were forged. One hundred and forty Orthodox churches were closed. In the sixty-mile-wide swath of territory along the Soviet border, Orthodox inhabitants were forced into Catholicism under threat of deportation. Nationally conscious Belarusian Catholic priests and monks were forced to leave their land. The Orthodox citizens of Poland were denied the right to acquire land. In the mid-1930s, most prominent Belarusian intellectuals and leaders were sent in a notorious concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska. In 1935 the last Belarusian deputy lost a seat in Polish parliament. On September 13, 1935, Poland cancelled the treaty on ethnic

minorities at the League of Nations and claimed that its laws were ‘adequate’ (Zaprudnik, 1993:85-86; Marples, 1999:7).

In comparison with Eastern Belarus, there were no many changes in the level of industrialisation on the Polish side of the border either. Around 85 percent of the total population of Western Belarus still lived on agriculture. The land was distributed very unevenly. Fewer that one percent of all landholders owned more than 50 percent of the private properties. Each of their holdings totalled 1,250 acres on average, while the other 99 percent of the landholders had to satisfy themselves with less than 17 acres; or none. The taxation system was designed to favour the big landed estates in the hands of Polish lords and military settlers. Moreover peasants were obligate to perform a number of corvée assignments entailing road construction, transportation and so on (Zaprudnik, 1993:83-84, Crampton & Crampton, 1996:106).

According to Zaprudnik (1993:83), out of the 4.6 million inhabitants of West Belarus, only 38,000 were engaged in industry. It remained an agricultural appendix to the more industrialised Poland.

Fact that between 1925 and 1938, 78,000 people in search of work emigrated from West Belarus to France, Latin America, and other countries, is a fair indicator that at the beginning of the 1930s, unemployment in rural areas was quite extensive (Zaprudnik, 1993:84).

State Policies, Social Change and National Identity III: Stalin's Terror

However, in the 1930s Stalin reviewed Moscow's attitude towards rise 'Belarusian national revival'. In 1933 a language reform was directed: Belarusian orthography was brought closer to Russian, the Belarusian language was banned from higher education and official places. In 1937, after 128 writers had been arrested, only one literary organisation remained in the republic: the Writers' Union of Belarus, with 39 members, only 14 of whom wrote in Belarusian. Speaking Belarusian in formal gatherings became a sign of "bourgeois nationalism". The history was once again completely rewritten: in this version, a single historical desire of the Belarusian people from the beginning of civilisation was to be united with the Russians (Zaprudnik, 1993:88).

One of the first victims of the Stalinist repressions was U.M. Ignatovski, the first president of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences (founded in October 1928) and director of its institute of History. He committed suicide on 4 February 1931 during a period of interrogation by the GRU (secret police). By the end of repressions, the Belarusian Academy of Sciences lost nearly 90 percent of its members. Of the 238 writers arrested during the years of repression, only about 20 survived and we released from captivity by the time of Stalin's death in 1953 (Zaprudnik, 1993:87; Marples. 1999:8).

There is an ironic symmetry in the methods and synchrony in time used by Russian and Polish imperialisms to combat Belarusian nationalism. While in Poland Belarusian activists were mainly accused in a Communist conspiracy, in the USSR the most frequent accusation was 'Polish espionage'. What's more interesting, the repressions coincided in

time as well. In 1927, in Poland leaders of BPWU were arrested and put on trail the following year; in Belarusian SSR the head of the government Jazep Adamovich was demoted for promotion Belarusization, GRU (secret police) started cleansing of Belarusian intelligentsia the following year.

On the other hand, Polish and Russian ways of dealing with Belarusian nationalism differed significantly in ideological and physical terms. The Poles preferred to see Belarusians as "raw ethnographic material" to be swallowed and digested' and categorically rejected any idea of 'Belarusian State' or Belarusian autonomy; Marshal Józef Pilsudski believed that only "historical" peoples entitled for 'statehood' and 'sovereignty', the Belarusians were considered a "non-historical" entity (Zaprudnik, 1993:86).

Contrary to the Polish approach, the Bolshevik accepted the idea of a Belarusian national state, but only as a part of the USSR: all those who wanted to give substance to the form and make out of the proletarian state a true Belarusian National Home were brutally exterminated on genocide scale. If political prisoners in Poland, at least enjoyed some kind of rights, in the USSR they had none. Branislav Taraskievc, for example, was able to translate *Pan Tadeusz* while been imprisoned in a Polish jail; in the Soviet prison he was simply shot (Zaprudnik, 1993:86).

The scale of the Soviet genocide is beyond comprehension: in the single mass grave in the forest near Minsk (Kurapaty), Soviet's estimates accounted for 102,000 bodies. Other

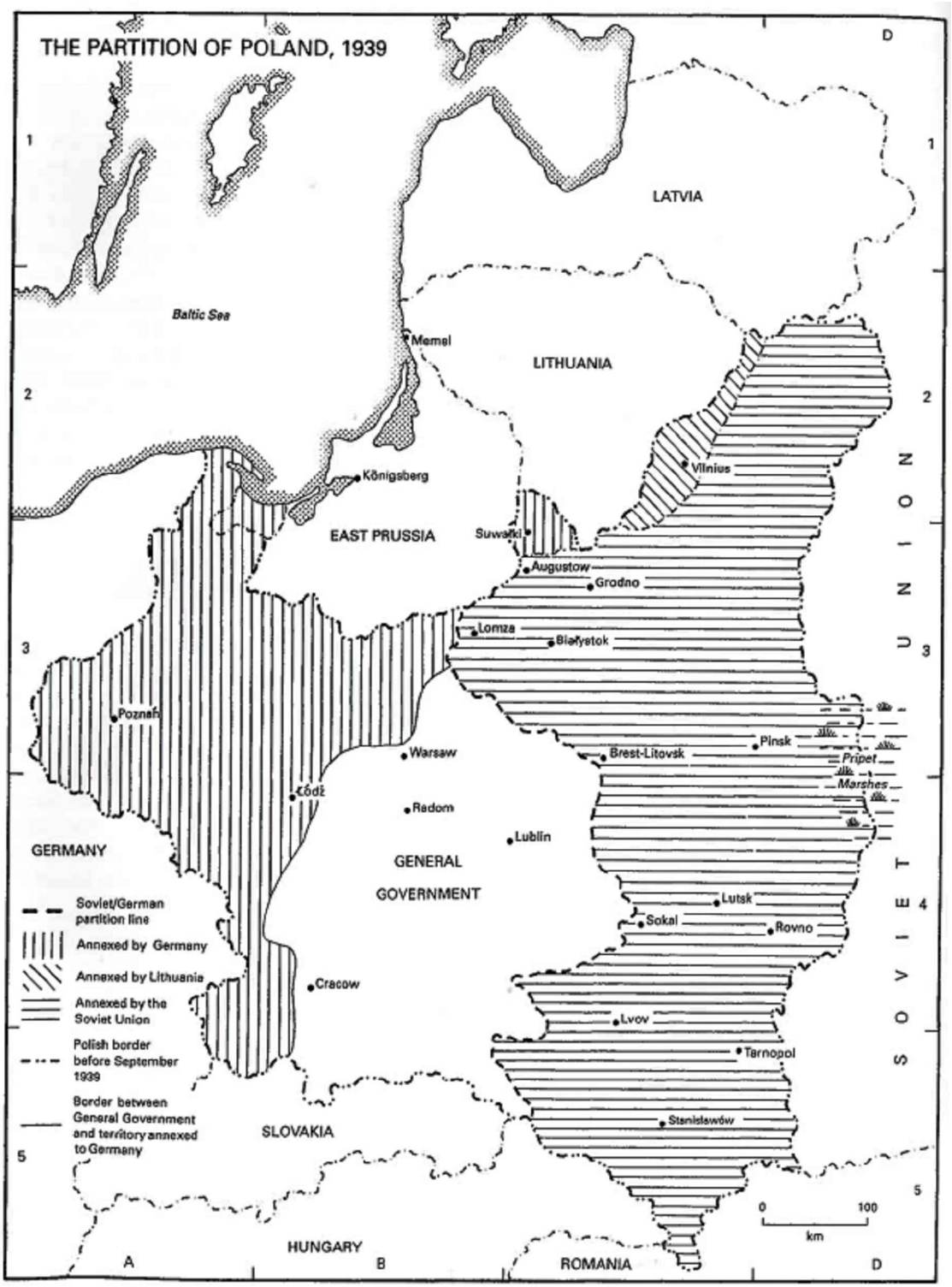
sources estimate of 250,000 to 300,000 for the single forest in one city were people were exterminated. Zaprudnik (1993:88) quotes a specialist in the subject of the 1930s repressions, who noted that "the number of victims equals the number of those who perished during the Great Patriotic War", around 2.2 million people.

The loss of human lives is only one dimension of the tragedy, another one is cultural. Almost entire Belarusian intelligentsia was exterminated in the 1930s. That was a heavy knockdown, which left a permanent damage for development of Belarusian national consciousness. If these people survived, they would definitely play an important role in maturity of Belarusian national idea.

Reunion (Changes of Belarusian Borders II)

On 17 September 1939, the Red Army entered Western Belarus. The reason given to the people was 'to protect the life and property of the population of West Ukraine and West Belarus'; as we know now, a fourth partition of Poland in 1939 was done in the best traditions of the eighteenth century, these time the USSR and Germany acted under the auspices of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Treaty (see Map 3.2).

Map 3.2



Source: Crampton & Crampton, 1996:110

By 22 September, the Soviet Army had reached Brest, the Westernmost of what was to become the new BSSR. As result, territory of the republic enlarged by 45 percent and population by 46 percent. Western Belarus annexed by The Riga Treaty of 1921 became a history and the Belarusian people found themselves in one state; though the border between them was strictly guarded until the outbreak of war (Marples, 1999:14).

Exactly five weeks after invasion, on 22 October, elections to a People's Assembly took place; according to the Soviet data, over 96 percent of people eligible to vote took part, 90.7 percent of those supported the selected candidate. 28 October, 1939, 926 elected deputies met in Białostok. Though the proportion of Belarusians in Western Belarus was probably no more than 40 percent, 67 percent of all deputies were Belarusians (14 percent were Poles and 8 percent were Jews). The assembly discussed four questions: state power; the incorporation of Western Belarus into the BSSR; the confiscation of the estates of the landowners; and nationalisation of banks and heavy industry (Marples, 1999:13).

Euphoria of the reunion came to the end on November 1, 1939; Belarusians were deeply shocked to discover that Moscow government granted Vilna region (2,750 miles in size and 457,500 population) to Lithuania. The concession was not merited on ethnic grounds; according to the Polish census of 1931 Lithuanians constituted 0.7 percent of the population of the city of Vilna and around 18 percent in the area as a whole; on the other hand Belarusians comprised about 50 percent of the population of the area (Marples, 1999:13). Evidently Soviet government exchanged Vilna for the right to establish Soviet

military bases in Lithuania. The agreement was signed on October 10, 1939 but kept secret until the election to the National Assembly of West Belarus were completed and petition requesting the reunion of Western Belarus with Belarusian SSR was signed.

The lost of the historical capital and the region where Belarusians constituted an absolute majority was a terrible loss for Belarusians and their national consciousness. Ioffe (2003b:1247) describes Vilna as 'the most significant centre' called by early Belarusian writers as '"Belarusian Zion" (Z. Byadulya) and "Krivitskaya Mecca" (Uladzimir Zhylka)'.

Though the border between the two parts of Belarus remained closed, in contrast to the party policy of Russification on the east, the Soviet authorities allowed Western Belarus to develop some aspects of Belarusian culture: Belarusian schools and cultural clubs were opened; periodicals subsidized.

However, Soviet multiculturalism was short-lived. In the winter of 1939, Western Belarus was subjected to repressions, beginning with the deportation of some 25,000 (principally Polish) state officials; total about 300,000 persons were deported to Siberia prior the German invasion in 1941. The losses of population were substituted by an influx of non-Belarusian party personnel over the course of the next twenty-four month from the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

This has been an examination of development of the Belarusian national consciousness in the interwar period. A cause of declaration of independence in 1918 has been analysed. Because most of the interwar period Belarusian territories were divided, development of national consciousness in each part of Belarus has been looked into separately.

There is evident spread of Belarusian idea and rise of national consciousness in BSSR in 1920s which coincided with developments in industrialisation and urbanisation. There is also some evidence in development of the Belarusian cultural revival on the Polish side of the border, but on lesser extend.

Although, Hroch (2000:26) believes that 'it follows from the very definition of a small nation that its formative process could not be completed before the bourgeois revolution and the rise of the industrial revolution', cultural revival of the 1920s has little to do with developments in industrialisation or urbanisation. It was caused by temporary liberalisations in cultural policies initiated from Moscow and Warsaw.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that 'Belarusian national revival' reached Phase B (and to some extent Phase C) at the end of the second decade of the twentieth century. However, the same external forces which initiated it, also brought it to the end in the 1930s. The downfall of the Belarusian national idea coincided on the both sides of the border. The last section was dedicated to the reunion of the Belarusian lands.

Conclusion

A group of people must realise that they constitute a nation in order to become one. It is a common observation that since gaining independence in 1991 Belarus persistently tries to preserve closeness with Russia, which could result loss of distinctive features of the Belarusian culture. The main aim of this thesis is to find reasons for relative weakness of Belarusian national identity.

Chapter One has main focus on preconditions for development of strong national identity for Belarusian nation. It has given a short historical overlook of Belarusian territories, which most of times were incorporated into the state known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Modern Belarusian nationalists continue to cast the Grand Duchy as a precursor of modern Belarus.

Belarusian history indeed 'required what Smith called "creative recombination", that is, extensive reinterpretation of historical findings' (Ioffe, 2003b:1261). In order to fill out the gaps, 'unable to find 'Belarus' and 'Belarusians' in the annals of medieval history' (Ioffe, 2003b:1264) nationalist authors 'use "historical leaps" over centuries of uncertain existence' (Marples, 1999:4).

We also established that Belarusians were in possession of distinctive spoken and written language, which in the Middle Ages was used widely by the church and in the state affairs. However, on the later stages of history Belarusian language was replaced in the cities by morphologically similar Russian and Polish. Former became a language of

politics, latter a language of culture. Moreover, most of ethnic Belarusians practiced a religion, which was different to the dominant religions of their neighbours.

It has been concluded from Chapter One that despite of the absence of name at times and gaps in the history; the Belarusian nation has reasonable preconditions for development of strong national identity. There is the evident potential for a Belarusian national movement.

Hroch believes that a national revival begins when a group of intellectuals researches the roots of the oppressed nation (Phase A). Chapter Two has been dedicated to this initial Phase. Contrary to the cases of other ethnicities of the Grand Duchy, the number of the well-known Belarusian intellectuals is rather limited. Those few Belarusians who were able to gain education and were lucky to find a job in Vilna or Minsk, were spoiled by choice, whether to take up one of the oppressor's side and chose between either Russian or Polish national identity or to chose a hard way and to stay Belarusian. There is no evidence that many have chosen the former at the examined period.

There is also an examination of ethnic composition and social-political structure of the Belarusian society in the second chapter. Out of 7.3 million residents of the 'designated Belarusian area' 74.6 percent gave Belarusian as their native language, according to the *Census 1897* (Guthier 1977a:41). However, the demographic character of the region suggests sufficient quantity of reasons for the weakness of Belarusian nationalism in the turn of the century. Demographically, ethnic Belarusians lived in the countryside rather

than in towns; in 1897 none of the larger cities was Belarusian in character. An estimated 92 percent of Belarusians made their livelihood from agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing (Marples, 1999:2). Urbanization had not yet created a substantial Belarusian proletariat which could have served as a focus for national agitation. According to Hroch (2000:184), the distinctive feature of Belarusian peasants is 'low level communication and mobility' which made spreading of Belarusian national idea a very problematic task.

Moreover, at turn of the twentieth century a middle-class intelligentsia which 'would invite masses into history' (Hroch 2000: xiii) was late in coming. Within the middle and trading classes, Belarusian representation was extremely weak. Belarusians were rarely found among the educated stratum. As a result, residents of Belarus had the least discernible sense of separate ethnic identity, and Belarusian nationalists did not seem to have much following among predominantly peasant Belarusian masses. Most importantly, no sense of shared identity between the social classes had been forged in Belarus before the communist revolution in the Russian Empire.

Belarusians admittedly formed an ethnic unit, but never an independent political or administrative unit neither as a part of the Russian Empire nor as 'Western Belarus' within Poland after the First World War. Until the brave but short-lived attempt to establish the independent Belorussian National Republic (March 25, 1918 - January 1, 1919), the historical Belarusian territories where the Belarusians totally outnumbered all other ethnic groups have not experienced sovereignty. The failures of the national movement to establish a popular base in 1917-18 suggests that in terms of mobilisation

and consciousness the Belarusian people had not substantially improved upon their conditions of 1897.

Foundations of Belarusian national revival are different to Hroch and classic theories of nationalism. They have been the main focus of the third chapter. Spread of identity was not led by Belarusian middle class. As it has been observed by Marples (1999:126) and quoted in Ioffe (2003b:1257) 'forces instrumental in achieving statehood for Belarus (or altering parameters as crucial as national borders) have been always external, not internal. They were designed, initiated and sponsored by Moscow.

Moscow's hand played a major role in 'three partitions' of Poland, all short-lived Belarusian experiences of 'independence' of 1918 and 1919 (and in 1991 as well). Belarusian national movement had very little to do with it. Also, the 1921 division of Belarus, the enlargement of Eastern Belarus (BSSR) in the 1920s, the 1939 unification following the fourth partition of Poland, and the loss of Vilna to Lithuania were all initiated from Moscow and had barely anything to do with the Belarusian national movement.

It has been established that following liberalisation of Soviet cultural policies, the 1920s were the golden age for Belarusian cultural revival. We have observed a rapid increase in publications in Belarusian language and an unprecedented rise in level of cultural awareness among Belarussians. Belarusian State University and Belarusian Academy of Science were established at this time. First time Belarusian language became the

language of culture. The Belarusian cultural revival evidently coincided with industrial development and rapid urbanisation of the region.

We have also established that on lesser extent changes in cultural awareness were also evident on the Polish side of the border. However, in the 1930s, Stalin's and Polish genocides brought to the end hopes for Belarusian cultural revival. By the beginning of the Second World War most of the representatives of Belarusian intelligentsia were exterminated. It is possible to argue that if the genocides did not happen, these people could play an important role in development of Belarussian national identity.

The framework for studying small, oppressed and stateless nations developed by Miroslav Hroch has been applied throughout the paper. It is possible to conclude that despite the obvious failure of the Belarusian national idea in the Age of Nationalism, Phase A and Phase B (never mind Phase C) have been completed in the 1920s. In turn, this suggests that common understanding of Belarusian national identity is wrong. A lot of nations failed to revive, however Belarus is not one of them. Belarus almost did happen.

Yes, that is correct, rise of the Belarusian national revival was preconditioned by external forces. However, it is not so important, many nations even being in more favorable position failed to achieve the same progress as Belarus did. To get a deeper understanding of successes it is vital to study failures.

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Appendix 1

Map of Cotemporary Belarus

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/belarus_pol_97.jpg (date of access: 15/08/2005)