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will not be particularly novel to the average amateur of Byelorussian art, though it is impressive as well as instructive to gain an overall view of so many different fields in a single work. What is of particular value is the insight given into a number of areas which had hitherto been shrouded in calculated, if not embarrassed obscurity. There are for example, welcome sections on chalices, on the ornamental woodwork of iconostases (thought not, alas, on icons), and on tapestry. However, a vast amount still remains to be brought to light.

Those unfamiliar with Professor Kacer's privy thoughts may be tempted to take issue with him, for example over his portrayal of the Byelorussian principalities in the 11th-13th centuries as 'West Russian', particularly as the evidence which he offers in support of this patently official nomenclature, is very feeble and lacks conviction. To say, as the author does, that 'the art of the West Russian principalities has much in common with the art of the East Slavonic tribes' (p. 18), is something of a truism, and certainly proves nothing at all. Perhaps that is precisely what the learned author intended.

Nevertheless, Kacer's work is an admirable synthesis of the very numerous and varied fields of Byelorussian folk art, and brings yet more clearly into focus the hitherto somewhat blurred outline of his country's cultural heritage.

G. Picarda


'A practical handbook for all those who wish to learn to understand spoken and written Byelorussian' is the official catalogue-style description of this book on the reverse of the title page. There can be no doubt as to the qualification of the authors, though of the most important contemporary Byelorussian linguists, to write such a handbook. In the preface they state that the book is the result of increased interest in the Byelorussian language both within and outside the Soviet Union. They go on to say that it is not a textbook for a 'vuz' course on Byelorussian, although it could be used for a course on comparative Slavonic philology or a course on Byelorussian language in non-Byelorussian 'vuzy'.

The book has self-imposed limitations. It does not set out to be a complete grammar of all aspects of Byelorussian, since that would obviously be in conflict with its primary function as a textbook to enable foreigners to learn the language. Since it is written in Russian, the assumption has been made that the reader will be familiar with the grammar of Russian, and the authors make use of that knowledge in compiling what amounts to a comparative, and at times contrastive, study of Russian and Byelorussian. The authors are probably right in assuming that most students of Byelorussian already know Russian, but it must be asked whether a completely comparative approach is pedagogically correct in a textbook for foreigners.

The chapter on phonetics and pronunciation, complete with palatograms and photographs of lip positions, could well stand on its own as a detailed study of Byelorussian phonetics. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the author of the chapter is A. I. Padlužnyj, whose Huki bielaruskaj movy, written in collaboration with A. V. Čekman, appeared last year and is reviewed elsewhere in this issue of JBS. While there may be some justification for the detail in the need to differentiate between Russian and Byelorussian articulation of both vowels and consonants, there is also the very real danger that the learner is presented at once with a vast amount of unassimilable data.

Much the same could be said of the section dealing with morphology. Huge lists of words are presented to the reader to deal with, as best he can, often divided into strange and instantly forgettable categories, e.g. 'predmetnosti kak javlenija, obekte, zaključajuščije v sebe priznaki drugih predmetnostej... javlenija, predstavljujuščije soboj besporjadičnije dejstvija i dr.' — this particular group contains the words navina, jalavičyna and stralanina. To be fair some of these lists are given to
demonstrate the usage of various noun-forming suffixes, such as -ina, but just how useful are they in learning a foreign language, and what on earth does 'i dr.' refer to? Similar lists are given for adjectives. Verbs are divided into productive (four) and non-productive (six) classes. The syntax section follows the traditional pattern of Soviet textbooks, relying throughout on comparison with Russian. The book finishes with a selection of Byelorussian texts, a short Russian-Byelorussian vocabulary, and a number of common phrases in Russian and Byelorussian.

What we have here is a thoroughgoing analysis of Byelorussian on the basis of a comparison with Russian. Of particular interest here are the sections on phonetics (pp. 14-45) and syntax (pp. 149-229), particularly the paragraphs on participles and syntactic synonymy. Quite correctly the authors have here chosen examples which show Russian and Byelorussian at their most divergent. All these points make for an excellent survey of the language, but not, unfortunately, for a really adequate textbook for non-Byelorussians. The first improvement that could be brought about would be to discard the Russian-Byelorussian vocabulary in favour of one going the other way. The morphological section would profit greatly by considerable simplification, if only by cutting out the endless succession of word lists, and the treatment of Byelorussian, phonetics could be made more basic, without sacrificing scientific exactitude. In defence of the authors it should be said that no one in Byelorussia can be expected to have the kind of experience necessary for the compilation of a textbook for foreigners. One only has to look at the Russians with their methodological centre and their journal Russkij jazyk za rubežom (in addition to the journals concerned with the teaching of Russian to non-Russian citizens of the USSR) to see that, with much more experience and expertise to hand, the 'perfect' Russian language textbook has still not been produced. In view of the different requirements and standards of potential learners, it is doubtful whether one ever could be.

It is a sad reflection on someone's excessively modest view of the increased interest on an international scale in Byelorussian that only 2,000 copies of this book were printed. It may not be entirely satisfactory, but it is at least a textbook — and already unobtainable.

J. Dingley


In a country whose heritage in the field of plastic art has been subject to systematic pillage and destruction over the centuries, book-illustration as an art-form takes on a particular importance. Through it the historian can retrace the style and development of graphic art in Byelorussia, even though many of the finest examples of iconography and mural paintings have not survived.

The origins of Byelorussian graphic art go back to the Bible printed by Francis Skaryna, between 1517 and 1525, which contains a number of masterly engravings by the great humanist himself. Nor was there any lack of refined and vigorous talent in Vilna, Ježje, Mahiloŭ and Kucieina. However, with the decline of Byelorussian printing in the 18th and 19th centuries, came a corresponding eclipse of book-illustration as an art, though able artists such as A. Bartels (1818-1885) and S. Bohuš-Siestrancevič (1869-1927) maintained and promoted a tradition of classical realism which effectively dominated the beginnings of Byelorussian art. From it the earlier Soviet artists such as E. Jazcaŭ (b. 1908), I. Davidovič (b. 1911) and J. Pučynski (b. 1922) evolved a somewhat sterile and parsimonious style of sketch-book realism which one inevitably associates with the cheap paper and poor bindings of Soviet books during the period immediately following on the Second World War.

It was not until the mid-50s that a more liberated and characteristic school of graphic art finally emerged, reaching back for its inspiration to Skaryna and the Vilna school, the traditions of folk wood- and linocuts,