Belarus, despite its perhaps undeserved reputation as the most passive of all the Slav countries, is a land of paradoxes. Responding to ethnographical enquirers in the nineteenth century, the much put-upon Belarusians, deprived of national identity by tsarist policy, were inclined to describe themselves only as tutejsyja (the people who live here); none the less, patriotic feelings play a major part in twentieth-century Belarusian poetry, be it metropolitan or émigré. What is more, Belarusians, despite their apparent passivity in the face of foreign domination, appear to be, of all the Slav peoples, one of the most loth to emigrate. There is nothing in Belarusian history remotely resembling in scale, for example, the three waves of emigration from Russia. The main exoduses from Belarus have been, firstly, the economic emigration to Siberia and America at the turn of the century; secondly, the enforced expatriation to Kazakhstan and Siberia under Lenin and Stalin (in addition to

1. For example, in 1859 use of the Latin alphabet was forbidden, and, following the nationalist uprising of 1863, a total ban was placed on the written use of the Belarusian language that was not lifted until 1889.

In this article, apart from the Cyrillic quotations, which maintain the spelling in their sources, the secondary (Latin) Belarusian orthography has been used. This alphabet, formalized and standardized by Jazep Losik in 1943, is generally preferred to transliterated Cyrillic by Western writers about Belarus, in that it gives a far more precise idea of the phonetic structure of Belarusian.

2. Belarus's national poet Janka Kupala gave this name to his fourth and last play in 1922.

3. The 1996 friendship and co-operation pact signed between Presidents El’tsin and Łukašenka, though seen by nationally-minded democrats in Belarus and abroad as a blatant return to russification, appears to have majority support in the country.


The American emigration forms the subject of a verse of the highest pathos by one of Belarus's most gifted poets: Maksim Bahdanovič, "Emihrackaja pieśnia" (1914).
many individual victims of the purges); and thirdly, what might be called circumstantial emigration, most notably at the end of World War II. None the less, in the late 1980s there has been somewhat of a small industry in Miensk [Minsk] devoted to publishing the work of writers and other émigrés under such suggestive and emotive titles as *Tuha pa radzimie* (Longing for the fatherland). As with Russia, for example, émigré writers are now being welcomed back to Belarus via their works and, in some cases, persons, although, also as in Russia, the welcome is at times mixed with hostility, and in the case of russified Belarus — suspicion. The Belarusians in Poland (almost all in the ethnically Belarusian Białystok region) are an interesting separate case; in creative terms they are 'led' by the gifted prose miniaturist and essayist Sakrat Janovič and the scholar and poet Aleksandr Barsčeŭski (Aleš Barski). Unlike the émigrés, they have always had access to Belarus itself, and have helped to provide a small window to the outside world in difficult Soviet times.

In our century there has been only a relatively small number of significant Belarusians in emigration. They include the following: Vincuk Ądvazny (Jazep Hermanovič, 1890-1979), Aleš Zmahar (Jacevič, b. 1903), Nyhor Krušyna (Kazak, 1907-1979), Uładzimier Duzdzicki (Hučka, b. 1911), Janka Zolak (Anton Danilevič, b. 1912), Piotra Šyc (1912-1964), Uładzimier Kliševič (1914-1978), Michauš Kavyl (b. 1915), Janka Juchnaviec (b. 1921), Aleš Sałaiwjej (Alfred Radziuk, 1922-1978), and Siarhiej Jasien (Janka Zaprudnik, b. 1926). The three most prominent, however, and those with whom this article is mainly concerned, are: Łarysa Hienijus (1910-1983); Natalia Arsiennieva (b. 1903) and Masiej Siadniou (b. 1915). A brief survey of their lives and the circumstances of their emigration will be followed by a consideration of these poets' position with regard to such topics as language, nostalgia for Belarus,

5. Many of the best writers of the inter-war years were exiled or murdered. For more detail, see the present writer's *A History of Byelorussian Literature from Its Origins to the Present Day* (Giessen: W. Schmitz Verlag, 1977), pp. 241-42. Several personal accounts of political persecution and exile have now been published, an early one being Father Jazep Hermanovič's memorable *Kitaj — Sibir — Maskva (Uspaminy)* (München: Logos, 1962).

6. In the Soviet era many direct and indirect attempts were made to discredit this group by wholesale accusations of collaboration with the Nazis. A particularly unsavoury event was the publication of John Loftus's *The Belarus Secret* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982): see J. Dingley, "Little Truth and No Understanding", *Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, 5, nos. 3-4 (1984), 58-64.

7. Subtitled "Paezija belaruskaj emihracyi", the book was compiled by Barys Sačanka (Miensk: Mastackaja literatura, 1992). By contrast, the main anthology of émigré writing published outside Belarus was given a far less tendentious title: see St. Stankevič, ed., *La ćužych bierahot* (München: Bačkaŭścyna, 1955).