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THE DECLARATION OF BYELORUSSIAN INDEPENDENCE

On December 18, 1917 the All-Byelorussian National Congress convened in Miensk. The Congress was attended by 1872 delegates representing all parts of Byelorussia — Byelorussians as well as national minorities. Stalin, who at that time was the minister for nationalities, dispatched Siberian divisions of the Red Army which forced the Congress to disband. However, the Congress elected an executive committee which on February 21, 1918 became the Rada (Council) of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic. The Rada was the first legal government of the Republic.

In its First Constituent Charter the Rada announced the establishment of the Byelorussian state authority and the formation of the government of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic. In difficult circumstances the Rada continued the organization of the Byelorussian state. On March 9, 1918 the Second Constituent Charter was issued outlining the principles of the social and political order of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic. Finally on March 25, 1918 the independence of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic was proclaimed by the Third Constituent Charter which is printed below.

A year ago the peoples of Byelorussia, together with the peoples of Russia threw off the yoke of Russian tsarism, which had oppressed Byelorussia most of all and, without asking the people, precipitated our land into the conflagration of war which totally destroyed Byelorussian cities and villages. Now we, the Council (Rada) of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic, have cast off from our native land the last yoke of national dependence which the Russian tsars imposed by force upon our free and independent land. From this time on, the Bye-

lorussian Democratic Republic is proclaimed an independent and free state. The peoples of Byelorussia themselves, under the aegis of their Constituent Assembly, shall decide on the future national relations of Byelorussia.

By virtue of this, all former national relations lose their force — relations which made it possible for a foreign government to sign the Treaty of Brest for Byelorussia, thus destroying the Byelorussian people by partitioning their land.

By virtue of this, the government of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic will establish relations with interested parties by proposing to them a review of that part of the Treaty of Brest which concerns Byelorussia and the signing of peace treaties with all belligerent states.

The Byelorussian Democratic Republic should include all those lands where the Byelorussian people constitute a numerical majority, namely: the Mahileu (Mogilev) region, the Byelorussian parts of the regions of Miensk (Minsk), Horadnia (Grodno) (including the cities of Horadnia, Bielastok, and others), Vilna, Viciebsk (Vitebsk), Smalensk, and Charnihau (Chernigov), as well as adjacent parts of neighboring gubernias, inhabited by Byelorussians.

The Byelorussian Democratic Republic confirms all those rights and freedoms of the citizens and peoples of Byelorussia which were proclaimed by the Constituent Charter of March 9, 1918.

Proclaiming the independence of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic, its Council expresses the hope that all freedom-loving peoples will assist the Byelorussian people to achieve fully their political and national ideals.

**The Council (Rada) of the Byelorussian
Democratic Republic**

Given in Byelorussian Miensk

March 24, 1918.

ХРЫСТОС УВАСКРОС!

... Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Зь вялікім сьвятам адвечнага ад'жыўленьня віншую цябе, Вялікі Беларускі Народ! Гэтай вялікай ночы страсі зь сябе ўсю пагарду, увесь бруд, каторым аблепліваюць цябе ад вякоў. Чыста вымыйся, прыбярся ў найлепшую вопратку, каб хоць на адзін дзень стаў ты роўным з усімі. Ідзі туды, дзе пачуеш гэтыя вялікія словы:

— Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Услухайся ў іх. Якая вялікая сіла, які ўсёажыўляючы змест захаваны ў іх! Ці ня чуеш, як радасьцю надзеі, радасьцю сорага ўвакрасеньня вее на цябе ад гэтых слоў:

— Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Радуйся, мой родны краю! Надзея, як жывучая вада, льецца ў тваю душу. Скора й ты ўваскрэсьнеш ад доўгага мёртвага сну. Вясна прыйшла й для цябе. Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Над Ім зьдзекваліся. Яго білі па твары, сьцябалі бізуном. Плявалі на Яго. Кпілі зь Яго. Ё канцы расьпялі й расьпятага не пераставалі мучыць. Сьпечаныя смагай вусны зьвільжавалі воцтам і жоўцю. Ён памёр на крыжы паміж двух разбойнікаў. Але ўсёж-такі — Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Уваскрос Хрыстос, і крыж, раней знак пагарды й сорама, зрабіўся сьвятыняй усяго сьвету. Мукі Хрыстовы змылі ўсё зь яго. І што-году вялікай вясеньняй ночы тысячы цэркваў і касьцёлаў сьвецяцца агнямі сьвечак, льецца радасны пераклік званоў, крыж падымаецца над мільёнамі сьхінёных галоў і ў паветры носіцца радасны шэпт:

— Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Што гавораць табе званы, Беларускі Народ? Ці ня віншуюць яны цябе яшчэ і з тваім уласным вялікім сьвятам? Скора-ж і ты ўваскрэсьнеш!

Ад вякоў пагарджалі табой, тваёй мовай, ад вякоў мелі за быдла, годнае толькі на цяжкую, надсільную работу. Не давалі табе расьці й разьвівацца. Воцтам чужой культуры зьвільжавалі твае сьпечаныя смагай сьвету вусны. Лепшых тваіх сыноў адрывалі ад цябе, прымушалі іх зрабіцца здраднікамі. А цяпер пышаюцца імі, называюць іх сваімі. І яны такі іхнія. А хіба-ж яны ня любілі цябе? Хіба лепшы жар свайго сэрца ахвяравалі не табе? А дзе яны? Іх няма з табой! З самага малку адарвалі ад роднай глебы, атруцілі здрадай. І іх, тваіх дзяцей, маюць за зброю проці цябе. Цябе катавалі. Ты цярпеў мукі, але ня ўмёр. Глыбока, глыбока ты захаваў сваю душу. Хрыстос быў з табой у тваіх муках, і Ён разам з табой цярпеў іх. Колькі разоў расьпіналі Яго з табой! Больш разоў, чым ёсьць пясчынак на дне мора! Але кожнага году па ўсёй Беларускай зямлі разносіўся клік:

— Хрыстос Уваскрос!

...І ты ўваскрэсьнеш, мой родны краю! Ськінеш з шыі ярмо адвечнага гора й нуды.

Дагэтуль мы плачам, дагэтуль мы стогнем.

Адвечных ня можам пазбыцца сьлёз...

Ты перастаеш ужо плакаць. Ты падняў свой твар. З надзеяй лавіш зыкі званоў:

— Бом! бом!... Прачыхайся ад сну, Беларусь! Годзе стагнаць ды жаліцца, жалба нічога ня дасць табе. Уставай! Ідзі будаваць зруйнаваную бацькаўшчыну!

MESSAGE FROM SENATOR JAMES L. BUCKLEY

I regret that I am unable to be with you today on the occasion of the fifty-eighth anniversary of the Declaration of Byelorussian Independence. Let me assure you that my thoughts are with you as you celebrate this important day. I am including my remarks of Thursday on the floor of the U.S. Senate with regard to Byelorussian Independence.

There is no doubt that 1918 was an important year for Eastern Europe as well as for the world. Those nations under foreign domination, especially those under the yoke of Russian oppression, proclaimed their independence with the hope that the Allies' pledge of national self-determination for all meant Western help in guaranteeing their freedom. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case.

The last fifty-eight years of Russian rule, behind the facade of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, has proven more tyrannical than the Tsarist government which preceded it. Yet the aspirations of the Byelorussian people have not been dampened. While little information about the continuing struggle for independence in Byelorussia reaches the West, I am aware of these efforts and the persecution which the Byelorussian people have had to undergo at the hands of Moscow.

The struggle for Byelorussian freedom, of which Byelorussian-Americans are an integral part, is a cause of which to be proud. Through your work in the United States, you have informed American leaders, be they in government or in the press, of the continued persecution and oppression taking place throughout the Soviet Union today, especially among the non-Russians.

You have also contributed to the American mosaic of ethnic diversity intertwined with the ideals of liberty, justice, equality, and opportunity. Through organizations such as the Byelorussian-American Association, Inc. and the Byelorussian-American Youth Organization, with their branches throughout the United States, you have brought the Byelorussian culture and heritage to the attention of the American people.

During the Bicentennial Anniversary of the American Revolution and during a period of ethnic awareness, this work is commendable.

Наперад, па шчасьце! Хай злое ўсё дрогне!

Вясна ўжо на сьвеце — Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Бачу, як сьвятлее твой твар, мой родны краю. І, поўны сілы й веры, я крычу ўва ўсю моц тваім нівам, лясом і балотам, тваім панурым вёскам, тваім пакрыўджаным сыном:

— Зь вялікім сьвятам віншую! Зь вялікім сьвятам, Вялікі Беларускі Народ!

— Хрыстос Уваскрос!

Сяргей Палуян



Sen. James Buckley with Raisa Stankievic and George Azarko

But your efforts precede the current awareness of ethnic identity in the United States as evidenced by the date of which organizations were formed. I am certain that your work during the past 25 years has contributed to the current ethnic awareness among all Americans.

Your preservation of the Byelorussian language is an integral part of the effort of ethnic awareness during an age when internationalism and uniformity dominate many views. The preservation of your language in the United States is even more important due to Moscow's policy of Russification throughout the Soviet Union.

In the preservation of Byelorussian cultural identity you perform a valuable service to the people of the United States and to your people in the Soviet Union. You call the attention of the American people to the greatness of the United States in that groups with different cultures and identities have found it possible to live side-by-side in peace and harmony. It also exposes your fellow Americans to the diversity that still exists in a world which seems to be shrinking through technological advances. The policy, advocated by some, of making all things and people uniform is countered by encouraging the view that through technology more people can be exposed to this diversity thus promoting greater understanding among peoples.

EVERY FOURTH ONE

During the last war, every fourth Byelorussian perished. To date the population has not attained its prewar level.

(From official documents)

*Have you seen a wood
cut by great empty clefts?
Seen a pineforest like this one
Which of every second pine is bereft,
Or at least every fourth one?
With my people it came to pass so.
The hatchet of war laid them low.
And there fell, scattered, prone,
Every fourth one.
Then the falling stars fell, thousandfold,
Black had the skyline become.
And on the earth footprints grew cold,
Every fourth one.
Peace shone its torch on us once more,
Thundrously fanfares were rung.
Empty seats, though,
at that festal board,
Every fourth one.
Long years to their hopes widows clung,
Long years mothers waited their sons,
They did not believe dead and gone
Every fourth one.
Never shall we forget our great loss,
Memory like reeds, murmurs on.
O why are you not here with us —
Every fourth one!*

Anatol Viarcinski

Your service to the people in Byelorussia is just as vital in that as you expose others to Byelorussian culture you are exposing them to the plight of that culture in Byelorussia today. You are educating others as to the oppression some people must endure for their devotion to their cultural and historical identity.

I offer my congratulations to you and your organizations for the fine work you are doing. But I must reserve my sincere congratulations and respect for the people in Byelorussia; both those with the courage and foresight to proclaim independence in 1918 and those who are today enduring oppression for their commitment to that ideal.

Sen. James L. Buckley

THE LAND OF POLACAK

POLITICAL DECLINE

After the defeat of the Polacak armies in 1162, the Polacak Duke Vasil Rahvalod did not dare to return to Polacak. The Polacak Viecha asked Usiaslau Vasilkavich, who ruled in Viciebsk, to sit on the throne of Polacak. His father, Vasilka, had been the ruler in Polacak at the time when most of the Polacak Dukes were exiled to Byzantium, including Vasilka's own father, Sviataslau, one of the sons of Usiaslau the Great. There was no unity among the descendants of Usiaslau the Great and, therefore, no political unity in the land of Polacak. Three lines of descendants were enemies; the Polacak Dukes, the Dukes of Druzk, and the Dukes of Miensk. The most powerful were the descendants of Hleb of Miensk.

In order for Usiaslau Vasilkavich to remain on the throne in Polacak, he needed the support of neighboring dukes; therefore, he strengthened his relations with the rulers of Smalensk. Together they attacked Kiev in 1168 and Novgorod in 1169. Some time later, the ruler of Novgorod, Andrei Dauharucki, joined this coalition and became its leader. In 1174 they again attacked Kiev. Andrei Dauharucki died shortly after, and the ruler in Novgorod became Raman, who remained in alliance with the Polacak Dukes. The ruler of Smalensk soon became dissatisfied because Viciebsk, which temporarily belonged to him, was returned to Usiaslau's brother, Brachyslau. Therefore, he supported Druzk in the following campaign.

A large coalition of Kievan Dukes, which included Yaroslau and the hero of the epic "Tales of Ihor's Campaign", the Kievan Duke Ihor, together with the Great Duke Sviataslau, Usiaslau of Polacak, Brachyslau of Viciebsk, and other minor Polacak dukes, set out on a military campaign against Druzk; the reason being to completely occupy the important crossover point (waloka), near Druzk, which controlled Polacak's trade via the water routes. Since Sviataslau of Kiev was occupied in Novgorod, he joined the coalition army later. Therefore, David of Smalensk attacked the coalition army with short attacks. However, when Sviataslau of Kiev arrived with his army, David escaped to Smalensk. Druzk was set on fire, and Sviataslau left the city without taking it. Automatically, the Druzk crossover point on the River Asha remained under the control of the Polacak Duke.

Other events which occurred during that time are not mentioned in detail in the local chronicles. More information can be found in the Chronicles of Livonia written by Henrick Latviski, who also witnessed the events. The chronicles stated that in 1186 the first German missionary, Bishop Meinard, arrived in the pre-Baltic territory. It is also men-

tioned that Polacak was ruled by King Uladzimer. It seems that Usiaslau Vasilkavich remained the ruler of Druzk. This is also mentioned in local chronicles. There is no clear information about Uladzimer in the chronicle. He ruled in Polacak for thirty years. After ten years of Bishop Meinard's missionary work there were no results. The land of Polacak accepted Christianity from Byzantium by way of Kiev at the end of the 10th century, but the pre-Baltic tribes were still pagan. The new bishop who replaced Meinard was killed a year later. The next bishop was more successful.

The relationship of the Polacak Dukedom to the Livonians and other pre-Baltic tribes was not only economic in character, but the Polacak Dukes also collected taxes from them. With time, they became protectors of the pre-Baltic peoples and settled their quarrels. When Meinard arrived, the Polacak Duke did not give him much attention and he even encouraged the Germans to spread Christianity among the Livonians. However, the third bishop, Albert, built a fortress, Riga, on the Dzvina River in 1201, thus blocking the water route to the Baltic Sea, which was essential to Polacak's trade. In addition, Albert, together with Lithuanian mercenaries, expanded his hold over more of the territory. Uladzimer responded with an attack and forced him to give up the Lithuanian territory. In order to hold on to the acquired territories, the German Orders built fortified citadels, one of which was Duenaburg. The German Orders were supported by the Pope's newly established order, the Knights of the Cross. They tried to increase their rule over the Livonians and neighboring territories.

At that time, the Polacak Duke was respected and he received envoys from the Livonians and Latvians, as well as from the German Orders. The Duke listened to their complaints, because the Balts saw in him a protector from the aggressive Teutonic Knights. The Germans, on the other hand, wanted to keep Uladzimer in a neutral position. Uladzimer understood the situation and protected the Balts from the Germans. Henrick Latviski mentioned in his chronicle that the Livonians were christianized in 1207.

The two cities of the land of Polacak in the pre-Baltic area Kuke-nois and Herzyke, tried to fight the advancing German Orders. Thus in 1203, the ruler of Kuke-nois, Wiachka, attacked the territories near Riga. Soon after, he made peace with the bishop. In 1208, the German Orders occupied some of the territory belonging to Duke Wiachka, who was willing to give them half of his lands. But the Germans wanted more and, therefore, Wiachka burned the city with all its wealth and left the Baltic. In 1209, the Teutonic Knights attacked Herzyke. They took the city and leased it back to the rightful ruler Usievalod. Usievalod secretly and obstinately resisted the Germans until 1214, when the

YOUNG BYELORUSSIANS AND THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE

A greeting by George Azarko to the participants of the Byelorussian Independence Day commemoration at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City.



As National President of the Byelorussian American Youth Organization it is my pleasure to convey the organization's greetings to all of you who are gathered here today to commemorate the 58th Anniversary

city was finally taken by the Germans. One wonders, why Uladzimer of Polacak did not come to their assistance? It seems that at that time Kukenois and Herzyke were completely independent of Polacak and even hostile.

Bishop Albert wanted peace with Uladzimer of Polacak, and he finally agreed to pay the tax for the Livonians but, in doing so, he took from them three times more. The bishop also hoped secretly that Uladzimer would open up his territories to German merchants. The meetings between them were not successful and, in 1215, Uladzimer was planning a war campaign against the Germans, but he died suddenly. After his death, the Duke of Smalensk took his place in the negotiations with the German Orders.

By that time, the strength of Polacak declined. There were numerous attacks by Lithuanian tribes against various cities of the land of Polacak. So came to an end the long period of political history of the land of Polacak. Quarrels and struggles among the individual rulers caused an end to political unity and strength. It should be emphasized that the Polacak Dukedom took the first blows of the advancing German Orders. It was the Polacak Dukedom that fought the Teutonic Knights and helped the Livonians and Latvians to contain them. As a result, the German Orders did not penetrate into the Polacak territory. It is also interesting that it was the Polacak divisions that defeated the Germans in 1410, at the famous Battle at Gruenwald, where the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Litva, Vitaut the Great, took a stand against the advancing Teutonic Knights.

♦♦

The Lithuanians mentioned here, were a pre-Baltic tribe, which was known for its fighting abilities and which was hired by established dukedoms in order to solve their disputes. Present day Lithuanians are the descendants of the Baltic tribe Samogitian, which was later incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Litva.

Raisa Stankievic

of the Proclamation of Byelorussian Independence. It also gives me great pleasure to see our organization of young Byelorussians participating in the commemoration of our independence on an equal footing with the organization of our parents, the Byelorussian American Association.

This partnership in today's commemoration is only proper, since it truly reflects the aspirations of both young and elder Byelorussians alike: to see Byelorussia free from Russian subjugation. Let us not forget the role of young Byelorussians throughout the long struggle for independence; Kastus Kalinouski's position of leadership during the uprising of 1863 and his subsequent death on the Russian gallows at the age of twenty-six; Ivan Luckievich's role in the revolutionary Byelorussian Socialist Hramada and in the first legal Byelorussian newspaper *Nasha Dolia*, while still in his early twenties, and Maksim Bahdanovich's poetic verses which glorified the Byelorussian past, and were written prior to the poet's death at the age of twenty-six, are illustrative of the important contributions by young Byelorussians dedicated to the struggle for a national identity and an independent state. And who could forget the countless number of young men who perished during the Slucak Uprising in 1920, after the Soviets had overrun the newly proclaimed Byelorussian National Republic?

Though we young Byelorussians in the United States have never seen the fatherland of our parents, we nevertheless are a part of that fatherland, just as much as we are a part of our parents, inheriting certain genetic traits which distinguish us from our friends. But ethnicity is not strictly a hereditary trait, for it can be lost, unlike the color of one's eyes which remain the same color throughout life. It is up to us young Byelorussians to continue the struggle of Kalinouski, Luckievich, Bahdanovich, and our parents, who have passed on the duty to us. By being here today, we have reaffirmed Byelorussia's Proclamation of Independence and our desire to continue the never ceasing struggle. May the dedication of the youthful Byelorussian revolutionaries continue to inspire us, and let us take notice of the following words from Yanka Kupala's poem *The Youth*:

*Upon you, our youth, lie the hopes
Of our saddened and conquered land;
Your aquiline flight will disperse the sullenness
And will light the eternal flame.*

*Summon your aquiline strength, youth!
Force the whirling wind in the other direction,
Take the torch, and follow your destiny,
Spread the sacrosanct word: Беларусь!*

YOUNG BYELORUSSIAN TALKS OF HER HERITAGE

Excerpts from the speech given by Nina Zaprudnik at the Byelorussian Independence Day commemoration in New York City.

**

In this two-hundredth year of the United States and the 58th year of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic we are more than ever aware of our origins, our past and present both in Byelorussia and America. Speaking of our presence in the United States, one could distinguish the demographic and political aspects of it.

The origins of the massive immigration from Byelorussia to America go back to the 1880's and the ensuing decades. Countless tens of thousands of Byelorussians — up to one million, according to some calculations — came to this country in search of a better life and more freedom.

However, our political presence in America, which is more important to us here, goes back to the early twenties. It was then that a number of Byelorussian political leaders, after having failed against the overwhelming military forces of Russia and Poland to establish the Byelorussian Democratic Republic, found themselves in Chicago and maintained there for a number of years some forms of Byelorussian organizational life. And I certainly don't have to tell the senior members of our community present here that it was only after WW II that one can speak of a sustained political presence of Byelorussians in the United States.

The year 1948 marks the beginnings of Byelorussian civic, religious, and cultural organizations. Within a few years such cities as New York, New Brunswick, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit and others became centers of Byelorussian cultural and political activity. Churches, choirs, youth organizations, dance groups, periodicals, scholarly publications, and learned societies began to be active and vocal about the plight of Byelorussians in the Soviet Union.

Byelorussian reality, however, consists, of much more than just political struggle for national freedom. Our people have not only survived the years of oppression, but have also preserved and developed a rich cultural heritage of which we, the young generation, proudly partake.

Our groups have been exhibiting this cultural heritage of our ancestors, and we should keep trying to make ourselves seen and heard.

Our cultural activities are vitally important for our countrymen in the Soviet Union, because we have a message for the outside world.

The Bicentennial is a celebration of the continuity of this country's life, just as we've been continuing and furthering our heritage. As part

of this effort to preserve our own cultural heritage, this past Christmas, the Byelorussian American Youth Organization went carolling in New York and New Jersey. I know the participants had a wonderful time, and I'm sure the families we visited enjoyed hearing the traditional Byelorussian Christmas carols. We are very much aware, of course, that some of us have difficulties with Byelorussian language. This is why I would like to heartily welcome a new book, **Fundamental Byelorussian**, by Mrs. V. Pashkievich, of Canada. I hope this book will be used by many of us to advance our knowledge of the language of our parents.

When America is celebrating her past 200 year history, Byelorussians here will be sharing their heritage with this country and making it part of her future. Indeed, our culture will enrich the activities that will prevail as July 4th approaches. But soon after, it will be a thing of the past — the publicity and commotion will subside. America is an established and free nation and will start toward her 201st birthday. But what about the Byelorussian people in these United States? What about our future?

I think, the Bicentennial will have a special and far reaching effect on our people, too. It's possible that in watching Americans commemorate their past, Byelorussians will too look at their own history with fresh, new interest. In fact, maybe we should take the American attitude as an example of familiarizing ourselves with our own history — to rediscover, so to speak, our own past. Our present spiritual and moral strength stems from what preceded. Knowledge of our history will instill greater pride and self-esteem, as it does among many in Byelorussia. Here is what Praskovich, a literary critic wrote in his 1972 review of two newly published historical novelettes: "What is it — conformity with a law or an accident when one of the founders of Byelorussian Soviet literature and one of its youngest writers almost simultaneously turn to historical themes? Where does the source lie of such a continuity of generations in mastering and artistically interpreting the history of their own people? Today," said Praskovich, "when Byelorussian literature has gained wide popularity, far beyond the Republic's borders, this turning to historical themes by our writers becomes increasingly purposeful. The history of Byelorussia is as rich and variegated as that of Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania, Poland and others."

I would like to finish these few thoughts with two stanzas from a poem by Ales Bachyla, a contemporary Soviet Byelorussian poet, who dedicated many poems to Byelorussian history and especially to the heroic life and struggle of Kastus Kalinouski, the leader of the 1863 uprising for Byelorussia's freedom. Bachyla not only reminds us of our struggle for freedom, but also symbolizes the unity of the generations

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OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

For years the popular conception was to become a true American, the newly arrived immigrant had to totally assimilate into the "American Way of Life". What people, both the immigrants and native born Americans, failed to realize was that, in essence, the American heritage was a conglomeration of cultures brought from all corners of the globe.

In those times, the "melting pot" idea included forgetting one's native tongue and becoming English-speaking and letting "old country" customs fall by the wayside.

However, recently, Americans have begun to understand that one of the most important characteristics of the U.S.A. is its heterogeneous population. People have come to value and respect their own ethnic heritage, and those of others as well. Rather than a "melting pot", in reality, America is a stew, with each ingredient contributing to the flavor of life.

Therefore, what was formerly discouraged, i.e., the public display of ethnic heritage, is now being focused upon, especially in this Bicentennial Year of 1976.

A few years ago, every Byelorussian-American would have been grateful for any recognition of the Byelorussian culture, however, now, the BAYO, the dance group in particular, finds life very hectic.

Speaking as one who has been dancing for a number of years, I remember the days when our big performance of the year was at the Byelorussian Independence Day Celebration at the Biltmore. Well, I can honestly say, "We've come a long way!" Believe it or not, we have actu-

and the unity of the Byelorussians scattered throughout the world, in their desire to see Byelorussia free and independent. Here is how the poet presents thoughts of Kastus Kalinouski, who was already under arrest and awaiting the penalty of death:

*Like a captain, I will be the last
To abandon my beloved fatherland's ship.
You, who will succeed in saving yourselves,
Do not forget the native land..
Do not allow her
To be enfeathered forever.
Be prepared to break up any chains.
Let Muravyov get mad in his rage —
The Muravyovs in this world
Are not perennial.*

(Muravyov was the Russian Governor in charge of the suppression of the uprising.)

ally had to turn down invitations to perform because of too many demands on our time.

With so many Bicentennial towns, and festivals scheduled in most, in New Jersey alone there have been more Bicentennial Heritage Festivals than we ever thought possible. And the amazing feature is that all these festivals attract tremendous crowds.

In the past month, our dance group (Vasiliok of N.J.) has been so tied up with performances and rehearsals, that we've barely had a weekend to breathe.

We started the month of May off with a performance scheduled for a Monday night and a booth to set up in Harrison, N.J. for their Bicentennial Celebration. It wasn't exactly smooth sailing all the way. Through some communication gaps, we were incorrectly listed in the program, something which was corrected thanks to a few phone calls and a day of hard work put in by Dr. V. Kipel.

We performed twice that night to two different audiences in an auditorium packed with over 600 people each time. In addition to that, we had a display of Byelorussian handicrafts, accompanied by flyers telling about Byelorussia. It is amazing how many people tell us they are Russian, and upon reading the flyers which listed Byelorussia's major cities discover that they are Byelorussian.

Then there was the weekend totally devoted to our Byelorussian Heritage — a Friday night rehearsal, and performances on Saturday and Sunday.

Saturday was Hudson County Day at the state capital in Trenton. Through various connections with the Bicentennial Committee in Jersey City, we were cordially invited to perform. In the blistering sun, with one of our dancers recovering from a tooth extraction two hours earlier, Polka Janka, Polka Vasiliok, Mikita, and Lavonicha were enjoyed by spectators outside the state museum.

While the dancers were taking a breather in between numbers, George Drozdowski (our token Hudson County resident) plugged Byelorussia, as well as the Byelorussian Heritage Day at the Garden State Arts Center.

The next evening, we did our annual performance at the New York Folk Festival at the Ukrainian National Home in New York City.

Then, in June, we were invited to participate in a Bicentennial Heritage Festival at the Freehold Raceway in New Jersey. By that time, we had become so expert at informing audiences about Byelorussia, our dances, and the Garden State Festival, we no longer needed pre-written speeches — the facts just automatically poured from our mouths.

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From Left to Right: Rep. Jack Kemp, Rev. Vasil Kendysh, Speaker of the House Carl Albert, Chaplain of the Congress, Rev. Edward H. Loch, Raisa Stankievic, Dr. Jan Zaprudnik and Dr. Vitaut Kipel.

On April 6, a Byelorussian delegation visited the House of Representatives, where Rev. Vasil Kendysh delivered a prayer for the United States and for Byelorussia in commemoration of the 58th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Byelorussian Independence.

This year, largely due to the Bicentennial, the Garden State Arts Center in Holmdel, New Jersey is hosting several heritage festivals, with the Byelorussian being included. However, we are not being included in a "Slavic" or "Ethnic" festival, but a BYELORUSSIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL. This festival indicates that the community at large becomes interested in our cultural heritage and it means that the Byelorussian-American community is sufficiently talented to have its own festival.

For the sake of our Byelorussian Heritage I certainly hope that this awareness on the part of Americans is not a phase which will be forgotten after the Bicentennial Year. Through all our activities we have already made a showing — people are beginning to realize that Byelorussia exists. Now, let's work on having them pronounce it correctly.

Alice Kipel

FREE AT LAST

"It was the best of times . . . An overwhelming success", President John Rakovich called it. The framed picture of The Pahonia slipped from its nail on the wall at the back of the stage, but **biely-tchyrvona-biely** is a colored mixture of fire and integrity, and it has no dropping off point. This writer did not remain during the reception that followed, for too long, but the smiles on everyone that smiled attested to the fact that Dvatzat-Pyaty Sakavik is still a solemn feast of reminiscence and nostalgia and community spirit in Cleveland. It may have all started with the raising of the flag on Public Square on Thursday, the 25th of March. In time, on July 4th, some of us will be dancing in the rotunda of City Hall. It's been a silent and patient life that the word Bielarus has been leading this side of the ocean. Universities are beginning to open their eyes, to understand their guilt in ignoring Byelorussia and to lend a hand in transmitting at least culture, the backbone of the civilized soul.

On stage, when the formal program was launched at 4:00 P.M., it was a parade of great minds, fortuitous and hearty individuals, nationalistic and deeply sentimental. Perhaps, the commemorative service, celebrated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Andrew at our Autocephalic **tsarkva**, rekindled the flame that makes feet planted firmly on the ground because our heart is home, and "home is where your treasure lies."

Like a crowd gathering for a party or a banquet, we settled in our seats, and united ourselves with talk of "How have you been since we last met?" President Rakovich greeted everyone and the American National Anthem got under way, Irene Smirnov-Kalada singing to her heart's content. The master of ceremony borrowed Dr. Zaprudnik's concept and made a parallel between the American Bicentennial stemming from its revolution and the 1918 stand our fellow patriots made in Miensk. "Let's share our heritage today," he added. When Colonel John Shimtchik took to the podium, we were settled. He briefly gave a delineation of the historical 1918 events. In a declamatory tone of voice, he read off those happenings. Neither moral hero nor villain had a place in his story. The facts stated were like the results of a family argument. Some people just like to antagonize.

The same Doctor Zaprudnik rose to speak. A graduate of New York University, he was sometime assistant professor of history at Queens College. The Doctor lectured on Soviet surveillance of its people. To this writer's impression, the Russians are the bad guys, naturally in a certain sense. We are the good guys because we have struggled. Dr. J. Zaprudnik, in addition to being deputy-editor of our monthly newspaper, **Bielarus**, is Secretary of the Byelorussian Institute of Arts and

Sciences, and is also currently the Senior Program Specialist at Radio Liberty Headquarters in New York. More precisely, he spoke on "Soviet Reaction to Byelorussian Independence in the United States." Having lectured widely, this eminent guest has contributed a chapter on our Fatherland (FatherMotherLand?) for **The Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities**, published last year in New York by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

It was heartwarming to learn that news of our celebration on that day in March would be broadcast to the homeland, thanks to Dr. Zaprudnik and Radio Liberty.

Important to note, about this time, the Mayor of Cleveland, Ralph J. Perk made his appearance, settling into a seat in the first row. The master of ceremony was overcome with emotion, got some words out to the effect that he was glad to have had the Mayor as a former employer.

A very distinguished gentleman in his later years also sat in the first row, to the right of centerstage. It was the President of the RADA of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic, Dr. Vincent Zuk-Hryskievic, who got his wisened self on stage to extend greetings on this festive occasion.

(It was O.K. Like, you know, the thing didn't go perfectly as planned. Nothing ever does, except the Creation. Yet there was commotion, there was confusion, there was the feeling of "What's next." It would be a sad lie to say that everyone was happy, everyone was smiling, everyone felt like dancing. It's the occasion, the commemoration that held the audience together, to a great degree.)

I was glad cause I got a red and white ribbon with the Pahonia on it, and to me that's almost sacred.

So down the line, the parade unfolded itself. The Mayor spoke, expressing religious sentiment. He got a good introduction. After all, he's a good man, to say the least. This writer was fortunate enough to attend the Mayor's pre-victory celebration during the Cleveland mayoral race last year, or was it earlier this year? "To us, he is an inspiring example of how a man can combine in himself a dedication to his country as well as to the many ethnic minorities he represents and is instrumental in having represented." Cuyahoga County Auditor Mr. George V. Voinovich has been ready and available to help. "We feel that Mr. Voinovich is also one of us, and today our pride in him is renewed for his having been making a continued stand for ethnic minorities." As you've guessed, this man spoke too.

After various guests were introduced in the audience, and a Councilperson spoke, the part I liked got started and was next. The Musical Concert part of the Program.

Victor Miraevsky didn't think the master of ceremony was telling

BYELORUSSIAN YOUTH ACTIVITY



N. Y. BAYO dancing group Miachelica performing the dance Miachelica

the truth when this one said he'd rather listen to slavie musical pieces than go to a rock 'n roll concert. The M.C. still hasn't fully decided. Anyway, Mary Kovalenko, leader of the Cleveland dance group had organized her kids to (kids?!... what d'ya mean kids?) dance what's known as "Lavonicha" and the ever popular among the veterans, "Yurachka."

The music flowed. Irene got up on stage again, with her friend-accompanist, Ms. Nona, and added to the program.

Two touching moments took place, I'm sure for many. Little Natalia Smirnov plays the piano, and delighting young and old, she played the song "Lublu nash Krai", "I Love My Country." The other was when six-year-old Paul Jagoudik recited the Byelorussian Poem "Za Svabodu," "For Freedom" in the original Byelorussian.

Like whirling stalks of corn leaves and flowers, Vasilki, the singing group of women took to the stage and sang three songs. They even looked like cornflowers in their long white peasant's dresses. Nice going, girls!

The Byelorussian National Anthem closed the formal part of the commemoration, and there was a reception, during which time this writer enjoyed a plateful of goodies, the hungry looks of visitors, and mentioned in passing that he ought to write Lena Sazych a letter.

Andrew Gosciejew

On March 18, the New Jersey BAYO dancing group Vasiliok was invited by the Franklin High School Russian Club to perform at their annual Russian Party. Polka Yanka and Polka Vianochak were the two dances performed. Other entertainment was provided by the Baptist Balalaika Ensemble. Those who attended enjoyed the performance so much that they plan a bus trip to see more at the Garden State Arts Center on June 12th.

**

On March 21, as every year, the Byelorussian Coordinating Committee of Toronto, Canada observed Byelorussian Independence Day with a festive program. The dance group Lavonicha of the Byelorussian Canadian Youth Association danced two dances, Lavonicha and Vianochak. Eva Pashkievich recited a Byelorussian poem by M. Tank.

**

Vasiliok, the New Jersey folk dancing group, performed at the Levine Theater of Douglass College, Rutgers University, on Tuesday evening, March 23. The dances performed were Polka Yanka, Mikita, and Polka Vianochak. Amongst the other participants in the program for the Intercultural Communication Conference of the IRES Institute were Lithuanian folk dancers, a Chinese singer and others. This is the second year in which Vasiliok has participated in this multi-cultural program.

**

On March 28, Byelorussians in Los Angeles and vicinity commemorated Byelorussian Independence with appropriate activities. The festive program was organized by the local Byelorussian organizations, including the BAYO. A well prepared speech was presented by Karnella Najdziuk, member of the Los Angeles Branch of BAYO. The speech described the glorious past and turbulent struggles of the Byelorussian people from the very beginning and until the present day. She emphasized the aspirations and sacrifices of the Byelo-



Nina Zaprudnik speaking at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City

russian people for freedom and national independence.

**

The Byelorussian community in Cleveland, Ohio commemorated Byelorussian Independence with a festive program on March 28. The Creative Writing Editor of this magazine, Andrew Gosciew, was the master of ceremonies. The BAYO Cleveland folk dancing group performed two dances. Little Natalia Smirnova played "Lublu Nash Krai" (I Love My Country), and Paul Jagovdik recited the Byelorussian poem "Za Svabodu" (For Freedom).

**

On March 28, Byelorussians from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and vicinity gathered at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City to observe the 58th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Byelorussian Independence. The program started at 3:00 P.M. in the Music Room of the Hotel. Due to the encouragement of Mr. Anton Shukieloyts, National President of BAZA, the emphasis this year was on youth participation. The BAYO, together with the BAZA, sponsored the event which also commemorated America's Bicentennial. George Azarko, National President of the BAYO, greeted the assembly with

Byelorussia in the "Miss Captive Nations" competition. On Saturday, May 15, "Miss Captive Nations" was chosen by the Captive Nations Committee, and Sonia Klenjow was the first runner-up.

**

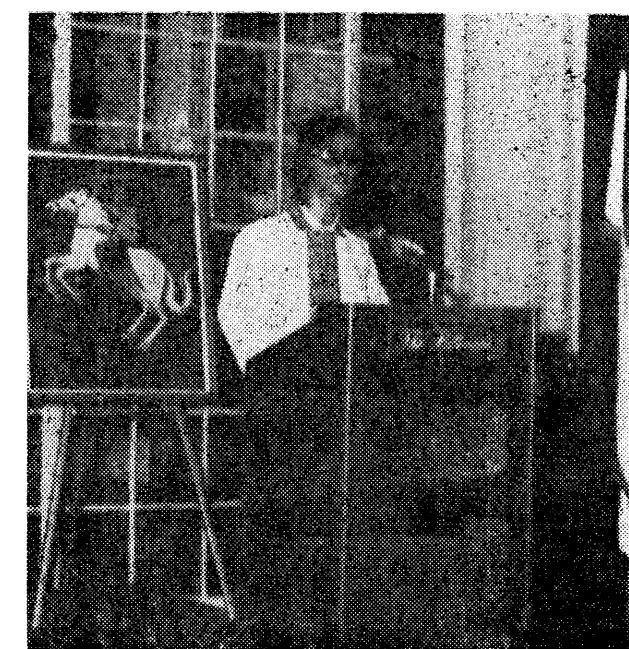
For the first time ever, a Byelorussian Club has been organized at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Although still only in the developmental stage, it has participated in the two Pan-Slavic Days held last semester, on April 3 and May 1, at the Cook College Log Cabin, Rutgers University. The Byelorussian Club shared equal status with the Polish, Ukrainian and Russian Clubs, which have been in existence for quite a while. The Club's constitution has been approved and the Club will be in full operation in the upcoming school year. Mrs. Halina Rusak is the faculty advisor, the President of the Club is Luda Rusak and Anna Bojczuk, Vice President.

**

On April 4, the Byelorussian community in Richmond Hill, New York ob- an inspiring message. Nina Zaprudnik, President of the New York Branch, delivered a well prepared speech in the English language. Excerpts of the speech are printed in this issue. Raisa Stankievic, Editor-in-Chief of this magazine, presented the main speech in the Byelorussian language. Bohdan Andrusyshyn recited the beautiful and patriotic prose poem "Chrystos Uvaskros" (Christ is Risen). The poem describes and compares the sufferings of Christ to the suffering of the Byelorussian people. Bohdan also sang two Byelorussian songs. The BAYO folk dancing groups from New York and New Jersey performed a total of four dances.

**

Every year the Byelorussian community in Bradford, England select "Miss Byelorussia" during their Byelorussian Independence Day commemoration. This year 19-year-old Sonia Klejnow became "Miss Byelorussia", and represented



Bohdan Andrusyshyn reciting the poem "Chrystos Uvaskros"

served Byelorussian Independence with appropriate activities. Danny and Vinny Mierlak played the song "Lublu Nash Krai" on the accordion. Students of the Byelorussian Saturday School, Christina and Nancy Zachariewicz sang Lavonicha, and Vinny Mierlak recited the poem "Ty Moi Brat" (You Are My Brother). The New York BAYO folk dancing group Miacielica performed two dances and Raisa Stankievic recited the poem "Dziady" (Ancentors).

**

On April 4, the Byelorussian community in New Jersey observed Byelorussian Independence Day at the church hall of St. Mary of Zyrovicy Byelorussian Autocephalic Orthodox Church in Highland Park, New Jersey.

Members of the BAYO, Alherd Kazura, Michael Schwed, and Leanid Wojtenka read the proclamations issued by the Governor of New Jersey and the Mayor of New Brunswick and also some of the speeches delivered by Congressmen in the Congress of the U.S. for the commemoration of Byelorussian Independence.

**

On April 8, an article appeared in the Bradford, England newspaper **Telegraph and Argus** about the Byelorussian



From Left to Right: Daria Lemiesznek (former Miss Byelorussia), Sonia Klejnow (Miss Byelorussia) and Anna Jaswilowicz

sian community. The reporter interviewed several leaders of the Byelorussian community and also talked to some young people including Anna Jaswilowicz. Anna, as is stated in the article, is anxious that traditions and culture are preserved. She married a Byelorussian. Anna, who holds a B.A. degree in German and Russian, has visited Byelorussia. "I feel more at home with Byelorussian people. I have been brought up to their culture and studied Byelorussian at Reading University."

**

Now an official member of the United States Volleyball Association, South River's Nioman team has been participating in various USVBA tournaments, in addition to their competition with Byelorussian teams.

Recently, Nioman participated in an unofficial tournament held on Long Island, sponsored by staff members of the association, due to the lack of larger events this season.

On April 10, they played in the Princeton Open held at Princeton University in New Jersey, competing with fifteen top-notch teams and finishing among the top five.

Also, on May 1, Nioman travelled to Paramus, New Jersey for the North Bergen Invitational, again demonstrating its ability to give the competition a tough fight.

**

On May 3, the New Jersey BAYO dancing group Vasiliok took a trip to Harrison, New Jersey. The purpose was to perform in front of a very large audience in celebration of the Bicentennial.



Karnella, Jadviga and Victor Najdziuk at the Byelorussian stand

ennial. A booth telling about Byelorussian culture was set up and informed the audience about Byelorussia.

**

On May 8, the first official dress-rehearsal took place at Middlesex County College in Edison, New Jersey. In attendance were performers from New York, New Jersey, and much appreciated representatives from Cleveland.

**

On May 15, the dance group Vasiliok performed in a Bicentennial Festival in Trenton, New Jersey. Despite the blistering heat, the group turned in a fair, four dances.

**

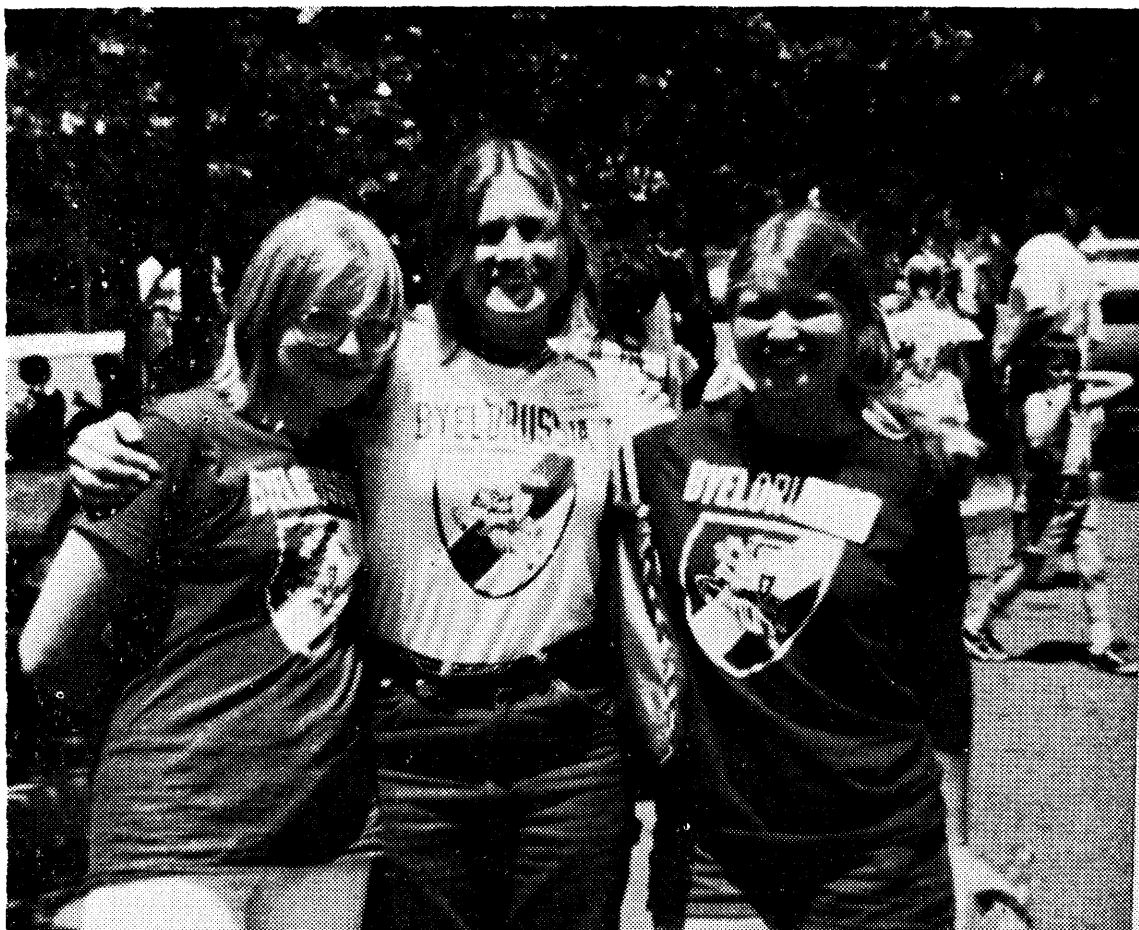
Once again the dancers of Vasiliok took part in the Nationality Evening at the Folk Festival Council of New York City on May 16. The evening consisted of performances of various nationalities and attempts by the audience to try the steps. The steps also included

the American popular dance "The Hustle". The event is always an enjoyable one for the group and they are always well received.

**

On May 22 and 23, the International Heritage Team of Los Angeles Bicentennial Committee presented the International Heritage Festival. Sixty ethnic communities took part in this festival which included displays of ethnic arts and crafts, foods and musical performances.

The Byelorussian exhibit was organized by Mr. and Mrs. C. Najdziuk. The **Los Angeles Times** mentioned Byelorussians as one of the participating ethnic groups. The Mayor of Los Angeles, as well as some 10,000 to 15,000 visitors visited the festival. Helping out at the Byelorussian stand were Karnella and Jadviga Najdziuk, members of the BAYO Los Angeles Branch as well as their brother, Victor.



Mary Bojczuk, Anna Bojczuk and Alice Kipel displaying their Byelorussian T-shirts

Byelorussian T-shirts are now on sale from New Jersey BAYO members. Available in white lettering and Pahonia on a red shirt or red on a white T-shirt with red trim, they may be purchased for \$4.00 and \$5.00, and come in a children's size, S,M,L, and XL. WEAR YOUR HERITAGE PROUDLY!

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