

Revolt in the Name
of Freedom:
Forgotten Belarusian
Gene?

Revolt in the Name of Freedom: Forgotten Belarusian Gene?

EDITED BY

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The Academic Discussion of the Mid 1960s in Belarus: between Freedom of Creativity and Political Denunciation



Aliaksandr
Koršunaŭ, the
author of the book
about Athanasius
Filipovič

Aleh DZIARNOVIČ, Belarusian Academy of Science

Public life in the Soviet Belarus in mid 1960s was marked by an unprecedented public historiographic debate. The primary impetus for the debate was the publication of the work by a historian of old Belarusian literature and literature critic, Aliaksandr Koršunaŭ¹ (1924–1991), on Athanasius Filipovič (approximately 1595–1648), Orthodox writer, polemicist, and ecclesiastic of the 1st half of the 17th century². But the immediate beginning of controversy

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- 1 For more details about the life and work of the researcher see: Батвіннік, М. Б. (1992). Даследчык беларускай старажытнай літаратуры. *Весці АН Беларусі. Сер. грамад. навук*, № 3–4, 96–105; Кароткі, У. (1994). “З зычливості к моей отчизне...”. In *Шляхам гадоў: Гіст.-літ. зб.* Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура, 6–10; Ліўшыц, У. (2001). “Ён лёгка адчуваў сябе сярод стагоддзяў”. In *Раскопкі вакол горацкага Парнаса. Літаратуразнаўчыя нарысы.* Горкі, 179–183; Чамярыцкі, В. (2004). Пачынальнік. *Роднае слова*, № 3, 24–26.
- 2 Коршунов, А. (1965). Афанасий Филиппович. Жизнь и творчество. Минск: Наука і тэхніка.

is associated with the name of the author of the review on this book, the Belarusian literary critic Mikola Praškovič (1932–1983).

BEGINNING: PRAŠKOVIČ'S REVIEW

Praškovič himself was quite a colourful figure³. As a specialist in Ancient Belarusian Literature, he worked at the Institute of Literature named after Janka Kupala, at the Academy of Sciences of the BSSR. In 1965, Praškovič defended his candidate's dissertation on the early period of work of Simeon of Polack. Thus, he could fulfill himself in the professional sphere. But, as noted by all who knew him, Praškovič had a temperament that was difficult to lock in an academic environment. In the same way, Praškovič's review on Koršunaŭ's academic work⁴ appeared to be polemically sharp, in the review he used to question the official views and produced a wide resonating effect in Belarus.



Mikola Praškovič, whose review on Koršunaŭ's book provoked academic discussion in the mid 1960s

In general, Praškovič rated Koršunaŭ's work quite highly, but scathingly criticized some historical stereotypes inculcated by the semi-official propaganda. Thus, referring to Koršunaŭ's statement that "(...) *bearing in mind the interests of the lower classes, he [Athanasius Filipovič — A.Dz.] went to Moscow to seek protection from Catholic aggression and tyranny,*" the reviewer evaluated this thesis as "at least unconvincing". Further on, Praškovič wrote more bluntly: "*With his whole flow of thought, the researcher affirms that the Orthodox monk wanted to trade espionage information to the Orthodox tsar for material assistance to Kupiaciŭy Monastery [near Pinsk, where Filipovič lived for some time]*". And for "*an Orthodox monk, the Union was certainly a deadly evil: he wanted help from the Orthodox tsar to destroy the abhorrent Union. The social liberation was out of the question*"⁵.

In general, Praškovič noted that "*Koršunaŭ's view of the Union was obsolete and one-sided*". And "*he takes the purposes of introducing the Union for its ultimate result*"⁶.

3 For more details see: Чамярыцкі, В. (2004). Прашковіч Мікола. In А. Дзярновіч (Ed.), *Нонканфармізм у Беларусі: 1953–1985*. Даведнік. Т. 1. Мінск: Athenaeum, 149–152.

4 Прашковіч, М. (1965). Слова пра Афанасія Філіповіча. *Польмя*, № 12, 174–177.

5 *Ibid.*, 175.

6 *Ibid.*, 176.

Also, issues of terminology — quite relevant even today — drew Praškovič's attention. Here, it is important to understand that the discussion around the semantic field of the terms “Lithuania” (*Litva*) and “Lithuanian” (*litoŭski*) is by no means an invention of Mikola Jermalovič and practice of the 1980s–1990s. The example with Praškovič demonstrates that these issues were raised in the academic community as early as in the 1960s. Here is another typical terminological passage by Praškovič:

‘Identification of the term ‘Russian’ with the times of Kyivan Rus’ compared to its current meaning has also led Koršunaŭ to a misunderstanding. Thus, he affirms that the St. Sofia Cathedral in Kyiv is the ‘pride of the Russian people’. Of course, Koršunaŭ had in mind all the East Slavs of the Kyivan Ruthenia. Then, apparently, he should have said so clearly’.

SOVETSKAYA BYELORUSSIYA REACTS

Mikola Praškovič's review was published at the very end of 1965, and in February 1966 the main official newspaper of the BSSR, *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya*, printed a critical feedback on this review by unknown doctoral students Uladzimir Liukievič and Jakaŭ Traščanok⁷. That was the same Jakaŭ Traščanok (1931–2011), associate professor of Mahilioŭ University who later was going to gain significant influence on the didactics of the Belarusian history. In 2000s, he wrote and edited numerous school and university textbooks of history. Moreover, Traščanok will review other textbooks and manuals on the stage of their official approval. Traščanok's critics will rate him as one of the most significant representatives of the “directive historiography”⁸.

Back then in 1966, polemically disagreeing with some theses of Mikola Praškovič's review, primarily on the possible positive evaluation of the project of the Church Union, the reviewers took the liberty to obviously hyperbolize and hypertrophy Praškovič's views. In particular, they attributed Praškovič with affirmation that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a Belarusian and Ukrainian state, which did not correspond to the text of the Belarusian philologist. But, more importantly, these authors allowed themselves political assessments of the discussed text:

7 Люкевич, В., Трещенок, Я. (1966, February 22). Истине вопреки. Советская Белоруссия, 3.

8 See: Смалянчук, А. (2006). Навошта Лукашэнку Трашчанок? [Рэц.:] Трещенок, Я. И. (2004–2005). История Беларуси: в двух частях. Могилев: МГУ. *Arche*, № 3, 56–64; Смалянчук, А. (2007). Ад Абэцэдарскага да Трашчанка, або Эвалюцыя беларускай “дырэктыўнай гістарыяграфіі”. Репрессивная політика Советской власти в Беларуси. Сб. науч. работ, № 3; Мацкевіч, Я. (2003. January 30). Канцэпцыя а ля Мураўёў: Новае— гэта здабытае на сметніку гісторыі старое. *Новы Час*, № 2 (7).

“The fudge that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania [in lower-case letters in the original — A.Dz.] was a Belarusian state, and that the Belarusian people lived in prosperity, that the Union was a specifically Belarusian religion is not original or new. Its complete scientific failure and questionable political significance has long been disclosed by Soviet historians. Therefore, the appearance of these false allegations on the pages of Polymia (“Flame”) can not but cause surprise.”

And further on more bluntly:

“We do not believe that the editorial board of Polymia share the ‘historical concepts’ of Praškovič, but we are convinced that they have to remember their duties to carefully read all the materials printed in the magazine. It is not appropriate for a basic literary, artistic and socio-political magazine to provide their pages for promotion of views that distort the history of the Belarusian people and have nothing to do with the science”.



Jakaŭ Traščanok
in his elderly age

THE DISCUSSION AT THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The status of the publication raises many questions. This very critical text was placed only under the heading “Letter to the editor.” Could critical texts by unknown doctoral students get on the pages of the BSSR main newspaper so easily in those days? The subsequent events show that the publication was only a part of a planned action. As noted by literary historian Viačaslaŭ Čamiarycki, Praškovič’s publication provoked a sharply negative reaction from historian Laŭrenci Abecedarski and his associates. His article in 1966 served as the basis for a special scientific debate at the Academy of Sciences on the issues of the Belarusian statehood as well as an assessment of the role of the Church Union in the history of Belarusian people¹⁰.

Recalling the atmosphere of that discussion, Adam Maldzis notes that the first time Praškovič came under a “significant trial” in the large conference hall of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences after he published his review on Koršunaŭ’s book in *Polymia*. According to Maldzis, Praškovič in his review “criticized Orthodoxy and praised Uniatism, which at that time was considered a great sedition (...) A command was received from the top: to sort it out, to condemn”. The “trial” lasted for two days, as a real international scientific conference.

9 Люкевич, В., Трещенок, Я. (1966). Истине вопреки...

10 Чамярыцкі, В. (2004). Прашковіч Мікола..., 149.

The hall was full, because many attended such trials as theatrical spectacles. But young people supported Praškovič — some with a word, and some with applause. Therefore, each party considered itself both the winner and the loser.

It will be interesting to note that Koršunaŭ was the one brought on the most “awkward” feelings, because “although the review seemed to praise his book, he was required to dissociate himself from the reviewer...”¹¹. All the leaders — from the science department of the Central Committee of the KPB (the Communist Party of Belarus) to newspaper editors and directors of academic institutions — began to treat Praškovič with suspicion. He broke an unwritten rule of loyalty: triggered a public debate.

Belarusian philosopher Uladzimir Konan in his memoirs adds other features of that discussion. We can see that not all of the scientific community were ready to just passively accept the ideological guidance, and the unwinding intrigue was not one-sided:

“It was then that the Bolshevik ideologist of Sovetskaya Byelorussiya Abecedarski got entrapped: he agreed to participate in an academic debate on the dispute. Even though I, back then inexperienced assistant, understood that Abecedarski and his academic followers would be isolated”.

Everything turned out according to Konan — literary critics, historians, philosophers were delivering speeches one after another, and having paid the service tribute to the official atheism and Marxist–Leninist dialectics, having gently criticized Praškovič for “Unionphilism” and polemical exaggerations, “(...) quite thoroughly, though politely criticized Abecedarism (orig.: Abecedarščyna). Laŭrenci was entirely boiling inside, but was at first keeping cool as Kuliašoŭ’s ‘young man under interrogation’, repeating his well-known arguments and theses”¹².

As Konan recollects, somewhere in the middle of the debate a portly young man with an open and calm face came out to the podium. He did not look like an ordinary stooped scientist with his 83–rouble pay.

“I am an artist Lavon Barazna — an unknown speaker presented himself to the public. — I am not an academic scholar, but I know something about the issue of the dispute. And within formal correctness, but without those compromising ‘however’, ‘nevertheless’, ‘on the one hand and on the other hand’, showed that the Abecedarism was unscientific and convincingly proved the correctness of Praškovič’s statements”.

11 Мальдзіс, А. (2003, June). Асэнсаванні. Новы Час, № 9 (14).

12 Конан, У. (2008). Пра Лявона-рыцара ды Лаўрэнція-аглабельніка. Народная Воля, № 183–184.

As we can see, public debate in the mid 1960s could still develop in an uncontrolled way, violating the planned scenario of condemnation. As a result, being quite confident in the university audience, Laūrenci Abecedarski “(...) exploded, seemed to be shouting something, and finally shook his finger menacingly at everyone (in translation into the official ‘Bolshevik–NKVD language’ that gesture apparently meant: “You just wait, bloody hell, I will show you who you are!”), and left the academic amphitheater”.

One can also assume that the academic discussion in 1966 influenced the formation of already well-known concept of “Chronicles’ Lithuania” (*Lietapisnaja Litva*) by Mikola Jermalovič. Exactly in 1968, Jermalovič finished his book “*Following the Traces of One Myth*”, which for a long time was a samizdat personally handed from one person to another. It was known under the secret name “*A Hundred of Pages*”¹³ and was first legally published in 1989¹⁴.

THE REPLY OF POLYMIA AND ALIEKSIUTOVIČ

The editors of *Polymia* magazine neither remained voiceless in this situation of pressure. Philosopher Mikola Alieksiutovič (1921–1967)¹⁵, re-phrasing the name of the text in *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya*, published his detailed article “*But where is the objective truth?*” in *Polymia*¹⁶ Already at the beginning of his text, the author formulated the crucial issues that made debate so heated:

“The negative reaction to Praškovič’s review has an explanation. The thing is that even nowadays there is a category of people who fail to understand that not everything related to the activities of Russian tsars and the Orthodox Church was progressive. Therefore, everything that came to



Lavon Barazna, artist and historical and cultural heritage protection activist



Laūrenci Abecedarski — one of the initiators of the discussion on Praškovič’s text to the tribune of the Academy of Sciences

13 Дзярновіч, А. (2004). Ермаловіч Мікола. In *Нонканфармізм у Беларусі...*, 81.

14 Ермаловіч, М. І. (1989). *Па слядах аднаго міфа*. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка.

15 Mikola Alieksiutovič was known as a specialist in Renaissance and 17th century in the history of Belarus, his most important publications are: Алексіютовіч, М. (1958). *Скарына, яго дзейнасць і светапогляд*. Мінск.; (1968). *Светапогляд Ф. Скарыны*. In 450 год беларускага кнігадрукавання. Мінск.; (1968). *Гуманістычныя ідэі в Беларусі: Скарына і яго паследователі*. In *Істория философии в СССР*. Т. 1. Москва. In “*Polymia*”: (1966). 3

глыбінь стагоддзяў: Беларускі філосаф К. Лышчынскі. № 1; (1967). *Імя яго гучыць у стагоддзях*. № 7.

16 Алексіютовіч, М. (1966). *А дзе ж ісціна аб’ектыўная?* *Полюмя*, № 5, 179–185.

us from the countries of Western Europe (and even from the Slavic Poland) is perceived by them as evil”.

Further, the author amplifies his thought:

“This is the reason of curses to all Catholics and praises to the Orthodox ecclesiastics, condemnations of foreign monarchs and feudal lords and bows to the Russian tsar and landlords, curtsies to the Russian feudal state and suspicious attitude to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which by its ethnographic composition, territory and culture was predominantly Belarusian. (...) All above-mentioned leads us to the most important issue raised by U. Liukievič and J. Traščanok in their article. It is the question about the state”.

Alieksiutovič quotes Liukievič and Traščanok: *“The Belarusian people obtained statehood only through the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution”.* But Alieksiutovič uses this thesis only to shift the discussion to another direction, breaking the hard-lined schemes of Liukievič and Traščanok:

“If the authors had clarified — the socialist statehood — there would be no reason for dispute. But a little earlier they claim that in the 13th century, Lithuanian feudal lords integrated the western areas of Ruthenia, weakened by heavy fighting against Mongol-Tatars and German ‘dogs-knights’”.

But precisely in these lands, as Alieksiutovič noted, from the 14th century, the Belarusian nation began to form. And the “Lithuanian and later Polish magnates safeguarded rights and privileges of local feudal lords, thus providing themselves with social support”.

Hence, Alieksiutovič poses a rhetorical question:

“So, what do we have: there were West Ruthenian lands that were fighting against strangers, but there was no state. Who inhabited these lands: savages organized in clans, kins or people who were already familiar with the state system? It is seen from the article of Liukievič and Traščanok that these lands were already ruled by feudal lords, but there was ...no state. And suddenly Lithuanian feudal lords just took these sparse lands and incorporated them into their state. Where is the logic in this?”

One phrase from Mikola Alieksiutovič’s article can be considered a refrain to all that debate: *“...one can not simply cross out several centuries from the history of Belarusian people only because at the respective time there was no ethnographic term ‘Belarus’ yet”.*

A MANUSCRIPT FROM A DRAWER

The discussion of 1965–1966 left another written trace which was found twenty years later. We are talking about a manuscript found in a drawer in the office of Kanstancin Šabunia (1912–1984), the head of the sector of the

Belarusian history in the capitalist epoch, Institute of History, Belarusian Academy of Sciences. The manuscript was found after Šabunia's death. It is worth noting it the piece of writing found was not Šabunia's. The text was in Russian. Its author is unknown¹⁷.

From the first lines of the text it becomes clear that Praškovič's publications in *Polymia* were treated as a comprehensive ideological campaign:

"The article "A Page of Old Belarusian Poetry" — Polymia, 1964, №6 — opens a series of Praškovič's addresses on the magazine's pages (in the period from 1964 to 1965)".

The author of the text proves that in this, at first sight purely literature studies article about Simeon of Polack's works, "there appears a biased implication and a particular point of view on the Belarusian past that Praškovič further develops in his next articles". The claims are below:

"Praškovič emphasizes the difference between Belarus' and Russia' historical destinies, creates the image of Belarus as an integral part of Western Europe, and the Belarusian culture as a part of Western culture, contrasting it to the "stiff routine Orthodox culture" of Russia".

Moreover, Praškovič presents Simeon of Polack was not as a Belarusian and Russian figure, his heritage equally belongs to both brotherly nations, but as some kind of *Kulturträger* who brought the light of Western culture to Muscovite barbarians¹⁸.

The author of the manuscript concluded that, according to Praškovič, "even the changes in Russia in early 18th century are not logical consequences of the development of the state, but ...a result of educational activities by Simeon of Polack." The following quote is represented as a proof:

"The significance of Simeon of Polack for Russia goes beyond his poetry. His merit was to be teacher and instructor of Peter, future Russian emperor. Simeon of Polack was the leader of the 'Latin' Party in Moscow. The party stood for secularization of education and closer ties between Russia and better developed at that time Western Europe. It was not Simeon's of Polack fault that he failed to win in this battle every time, as the reactionary forces, led by patriarch Joachim were very strong. Another thing is important. The seeds that Simeon of Polack planted on the Russian soil did not disappear, they started giving fruits later when Peter I came to power".

The section devoted to Praškovič finishes with a typical conclusion: "There is no need to further analyze well-known Praškovič's articles "A New Way to Speak

17 Чамярыцкі, В. (2001). Рукпіс, знойдзены ў рабочым стане. In Шуфляда. Т. 2, 75.

18 Ibid., 77.

About the Past” (*Polymia*, 1964, №9), “*On the Passes of the Past*” (1965, №4), “*Doctor Francišak Skaryna*” (1965, №10), “*A Word about Athanasius Filipovič*” (1965, №12)”. This phrase shows that “*A Word about Athanasius Filipovič*” became a sort of a truism; the discussion about it had already taken place. This makes it possible to date the document by 1966 — end of 1967.

But here is the most important assessment of the entire document:

“Praškovič makes a revision of the history of the BSSR according to a certain concept. His campaign, started in Polymia magazine, was supported by two other employees of the Institute of Literature (when they were doctoral students yet), A. Jaskievič and especially V. Čamiarycki”.

Thus, there were built elements of a conspiracy plotted by Belarusian intellectuals. In fact, it is a draft of denunciation report¹⁹. Now it becomes clear in which way discrediting evidence was being collected to be used for pressure and dismissals campaign in BSSR Academy of Sciences in 1974–1975, known as “Academy Case”.

We still do not know everything about the mechanisms of repressions in post–Stalin times. The quoted fragments of the document prove that in 1960s–1970s a mere denunciation was not enough in the case of scholars, a report with argumentation was required. The author of the text was most likely a philologist who tracked all texts published in Belarus. Though sometimes the text looks proofless and the author hides behind simple accusation schemes: “the trends are from being funny”, “carefully looks for rotteness”, etc.

On the other hand, this draft denunciation proves that many non–soviet theses in the humanities were formulated long ago and were even introduced to the public use by the means Retrieved from that time. In the 2nd half of the 1980s these theses got spread in the society and became elements of civic consciousness.

As it was noted before, the author of the text is unknown. The document was given to Viačaslaŭ Čamiarycki, one of its ‘heroes’ by Michaś Bič (1937–1999), who in 1983 took Šabunia’s place at the Institute²⁰. Kanstancin Šabunia is known as a researcher in the field of agricultural history of Belarus of the late 19th — early 20th centuries. His monograph²¹ contains standard ideological clichés, but it is rich in statistics, stands out due to its reserved style and, in gen-

19 Дзярновіч, А. (2001). Праект даносу. In Шуфляда. Т. 2, 83.

20 Біч, М. (2002). Мой шлях у навуку. Гістарычны Альманах, т. 6, 22.

21 Шабуня, К. И. (1962). Аграрный вопрос и крестьянское движение в Белоруссии в революции 1905–1907 гг. Минск: Издательство Министерства высшего, средне специального и профессионального образования БССР.

eral, makes a good impression²². Why was the manuscript kept in his drawer? Before moving (returning) to the Academy, Kanstancin Šabunia worked as an advisor, head of sector, and deputy head of Science Department in KPB's Central Committee. It is likely that analyzing such text was Šabunia's duty. It is difficult to add anything more concrete at this stage of the study.



Kanstancin Šabunia, a manuscript by unknown author was found in his drawer

PERSONAL DRAMA

Concerning the history of the pogrom of the “Academy Center”, it is rather well described. Those events have also left archival sources in open archives²³. We should give a little more detail to the fate of Mikola Praškovič, since his text was in the heart of the debate and provoked such response. Viačaslaŭ Čamiarycki writes that Praškovič was a trustful, open and unnecessarily emotional man who was used by the special agencies, “under the watchful eye of which he was kept,” for discrediting some national patriots, fabrication of the case and “revealing” a “nest of Belarusian nationalists” at BSSR Academy of Sciences of the (“Academy Center”) in 1973–1974. As a result, along with Praškovič, a whole group of Belarusian scholars suffered, especially Aleś Kaŭrus, Ściapan Misko, Valiancin Rabkievič and Michaś Čarniaŭski, who were dismissed from their jobs and could not find any employment of professional qualification for a long time. In 1974, on a charge of Belarusian nationalism, Praškovič was also dismissed from his job at the Academy of Sciences. For some time, he was unemployed, later worked as a loader, a proof-reader in *Rodnaja Pryroda* (*Our Nature*) magazine and *Vechernij Minsk* (*The Evening Minsk*) newspaper. In 1982, he left the job for health reasons. Praškovič tragically died in a fire in his home village²⁴.

Adam Maldzis describes our hero's qualities in the following way:

“[Praškovič] was earthly, peasant-like, trustful Belarusian maximalist. Even doctoral studies at the Leningrad Pushkin House did not deprive Praškovič of his peasant naivety. He could tell anyone about his correspondence with Ukrainian patriots, about him collecting money for those fired from their jobs. He could

22 See also: Біч, М. (1973). Канстанцін Іванавіч Шабуна (Людзі савецкай навукі). Весті АН БССР, № 1; Токць, С. (2004). Савецкая гістарыяграфія беларускага сялянства перыяду Расійскай імперыі. Гістарычны Альманах, т. 10, 49–51; Белазаровіч, В. А. (2006). Гістарыяграфія гісторыі Беларусі: вучэбны дапаможнік. Гродна: ГрДУ, 285–286.

23 Нацыянальны архіў Рэспублікі Беларусь (НАРБ), ф. 447, воп. 4, спр. 2, арк. 81; спр. 6, арк. 52–54 (Выключэнне В. Рабкевіча з КПСС); ф. 4, воп. 20, спр. 518, арк. 248 (матэрыялы па супрацоўніках АН БССР).

24 Чамырыцкі, В. (2004). Прашковіч Мікола..., 150.

invite anyone — for the sake of speaking Belarusian — to his doctoral student room, and later to a studio flat in Kuybyshev Street”.

Praškovič was single, so to meet at his place — in the room or later in the flat — was easy, and sometimes there were no alternatives. Young scholars, mostly recent migrants from rural areas, had simply no other opportunity to meet outside of work. And then “someone often intentionally began political fantasies: like who would get which ministry when we come to power. Most of us took it as a game.” *But it was quite a risky game for that time: And Praškovič as the host was sitting and listening, sometimes naively echoed, not realizing that someone needed this to get promoted. And from above came the pressure...*”

Dismissed, Praškovič for long time had no work, and “*to have something to eat, he sometimes visited the Karatkievičs and us. Later he somehow got a job as a proof-reader. Praškovič died tragically: he lit a cigarette in his native house in Biarezina district, lay down on bed and burnt...*”²⁵.

CONSEQUENCES AND THE END OF THE PERIOD

Not only does the tragic story of Mikola Praškovič illustrate the hard choices of humanities’ scholar, but also shows us what was at that time the weight of a written word and, despite the circumstances, bravely expressed thought of a researcher. During the debate of the mid 1960s, the main theses of the Belarusian historiography had been clearly voiced; they would continue to be the target of propaganda campaigns — particularity of the history of Belarus, its difference from the Russian and Polish visions of history; cultural — including religious — distinctiveness of Belarus; the importance of the presence of the Western (Latin) civilization for the socio-cultural space. For more than a century, these virtually neutral points of view remain the irritant points for the followers of Western-Russism and its contemporary primitive versions (the founders of Western-Russism in the middle of the 19th century wrote about the cultural distinctiveness of the region).

External features of that campaign reveal some hidden mechanisms of public censure. A rather timely publication in *Sovetskaya Byelorussiya* of a letter by two doctoral students, Liukievič and Traščanok, (a month and a half after Praškovič’s review was published in *Polymia*) does not seem accidental. Traščanok was a student of Laŭrenci Abecedarski, who was the leading figure in the Academy of Sciences public discussions. The anonymous text from Šabunia’s drawer

25 Мальдзіс, А. (2003). Асэнсаванні...

proves that the organizers of the campaign were not going to stop at the level of discussions. It was also corroborated by further events.

Two years after the discussion in the Academy of Sciences, on July 17–18, 1968 a plenary session of the KPB Central Committee took place. KPB CC Secretary Stanislaŭ Pilatovič (born in 1922, KPB CC Secretary from 1965 to 1971) made a speech “About the situation and measures to improve mass political work in the republic”²⁶. The difficulty of reading such speeches is that there is plenty of rhetoric but few facts. Of course, those present in the party hall during such speeches can get a lot from the general context. But ordinary people of that time or researchers have to collect the pieces of real life and nomenclature conspiracy puzzle.

Among other things, Pilatovič noted that “in the hope to undermine the Soviet society from the inside, the imperialists stake on the psychological war aimed at artistic workers”, in this particular environment they are trying to “pursue their concept of peaceful coexistence of ideologies,... seek to revive nationalism and sow hostility between the peoples of the USSR”²⁷. It would seem that it could be traditional for the communist party audience, the words uttered just to maintain the “ideological tone”. But during the discussion of the report of the KPB CC Secretary, the Director of the History Institute of the BSSR Academy of Sciences Nina Kamienskaja (1913–1986, Director in 1965–1969) proposed to create in the forthcoming year “new scientific and non-fiction works that will expose the bourgeois non-scientific authors with their speculation about the origin of the Belarusian people, the history of its culture, the formation of the Belarusian nation”. Kamienskaja felt it necessary to “reveal the reactionary nature of the so-called “works” by Belarusian nationalistic “scum”, who act in the service of imperialist reactionist forces and bourgeois historians on such important issues as the creation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic and its achievements in the building of communism”²⁸.

In 1969, as a part of this party program implementation, Laŭrenci Abecedarski published a brochure “In the Light of Irrefutable Facts”, where, according to the author, he highlighted “some of the issues of pre-Soviet period in the history of Belarus, which are most often distorted by bourgeois falsifiers”²⁹. These issues, according to Abecedarski, were the following: “Who are the Be-

26 According to Michael Urban, Stanislaŭ Pilatovič was a member of the “Partizan fraction” of political groups in the BSSR, see: Урбан, М. (2010). *Беларуская савецкая эліта (1966–1986): алгебра ўлады*. Вільня: ЕГУ, 176.

27 Доклад секретаря ЦК КП Белоруссии тов. С. А. Пилотовича “О состоянии и мерах улучшения массово-политической работы в республике” (1968, July 18). Советская Белоруссия, 2.

28 Прения по докладу секретаря ЦК КП Белоруссии тов. С. А. Пилотовича “О состоянии и мерах улучшения массово-политической работы в республике” (1968, July 19). Советская Белоруссия, 4.

29 Абэцэдарскі, Л. С. (1969). *У святле неабвержных фактаў*. Мінск: Голас Радзімы, 1969.

larusians by origin?"; "Was there a Belarusian state?"; "Belarusian "people's" religion". It was a program text of the party (Soviet) vision of the Belarusian history. Slightly abridged and translated into the Russian language it was issued again during Gorbachev's perestroika³⁰, when the debate on historical issues was extremely acute. Back in 1969–1970, there appeared several laudatory reactions on Abecedarski's text³¹. It is revealing that Polymia magazine, which in the mid-1960s regularly gave the floor to Praškovič, was also involved in this campaign. In 1967, Maksim Tank quit his position of the editor-in-chief of this oldest Belarusian literary magazine.

Neither Abecedarski nor his clientele in the late 1960s had publicly linked their denouncing texts with Praškovič's publications and academic discussion of 1966. They directed their indictments charges against the historiography of the Belarusian emigration, "Radio Liberty" and international imperialism. In 1972, in response to Abecedarski's theses Paviel Urban (1924–2011) published a book "In the Light of Historical Facts"³², the title of which symbolically echoes the name of Abecedarski's booklet — "In the Light of Irrefutable Facts". In his text, Urban already linked the provocative tone of Liukievič's and Traščanok's article, Alieksiutovič's quite cautious participation in the discussion, Abecedarski's ideological brochure in a consecutive chain of events³³. The issue of Belarusian ethnogenesis was also brought to attention through publications of Moscow archaeologist Valentsin Sedov³⁴. But that debate should become subject to another historiographic study³⁵.

The public debates on historiography matters, as occurred in mid 1960s, could not get to the pages of legal publications in 1970s, after the pogrom at the Academy of Sciences and other intellectual circles. Therefore, samizdat started to actively circulate, determining the specification of civic activity of the next period.

30 Abecedarskiy, L. S. (1987). В свете неопровержимых фактов. In И. Н. Осинковский (Ed.) Дары данайцев. Минск: Беларусь, 24–89.

31 Москаленко, В. (1967, July 12). Достойная ответеь. Советская Белоруссия; Хазянін, А. (1970). Супроць фальсіфікацый гісторыі. Полымя, № 2, 241–242.

32 Урбан, П. (1972). У святле гістарычных фактаў (У сувязі з брашурай Л. С. Абэцэдарскага). Мюнхен—Нью-Ёрк: БiНiМ.

33 Урбан, П. (1972). У святле гістарычных фактаў..., 10.

34 Седов, В. В. (1967). К происхождению белорусов. Советская этнография, № 2, 112–129; Седов, В. В. (1970). Славяне Верхнего Поднепровья и Подвинья. Москва: Наука.

35 See also: Грыцкевіч, В. (2000). Гісторыя і міфы. Мінск: БелФранс, 39; Лінднэр, Р. (2003). Гісторыкі і ўлада: нацыятворчы працэс і гістарычная палітыка ў Беларусі XIX—XX стст. Санкт-Петербург: Неўскі прасцяг, 446–448; Смалянчук, А. (2004). Феномен беларускай савецкай гістарыяграфіі. Гістарычны альманах, т. 10, 11–22.