

apparatus and its “*nomenklatura* players” very well. Indeed, its rudimentary efforts to prise open the black box of the Presidential Administration are a noteworthy contribution.

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Per Anders Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906-1931*. Pitt Russian East European Series. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. 448 pp.

In his thorough and comprehensive study, Per Anders Rudling narrates the story of the development and decline of Belarusian nationalism from the establishment of the periodicals *Nasha Dolia* (Our Lot) and *Nasha Niva* (Our Field) in 1906 through to the suppression of the national communism in the Soviet Union by 1931. He chooses, quite in tune with the endeavors of Belarusian intellectuals of the last two decades, to look at Belarus as a borderland, characterized by cultural polyvalence (4) and engagement (rather forced than voluntary) into political processes that took place in the region (7–8).

The book's strong focus on the ways in which events outside the territory of Belarus exerted their influence on developments within the country can be perceived as a highly positive development in Belarusian studies. In this book, the general tendency among both Belarusian and émigré historians to confine their scholarly interest to events taking place within the borders of Belarus has certainly been successfully overcome. Rudling's account demonstrates that Belarusian nationalism was by no means secluded; he shows its correlation with the history of other ethnic groups (Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians) within the collapsing Russian Empire and, on the other hand, its dependence on the decisions of the bigger powers. Other particularly impressive aspects of the book include its treatment of the history of the Belarusian Jewry

during the period under study (116–17, 150–54, and 175–76), a topic which, despite its significance, has all too often been ignored.

Also deserving of special mention is Rudling's treatment of the history of the Belarusian Christian Democratic Party (the BKhD) and its activists. In particular, the author's analysis of the BKhD's main periodical *Belaruskaja Krynitsa* (Belarusian Well-spring, published 1917–40) is detailed and convincing (10–11 and *passim*). Previously, despite the significance of its intellectual heritage, this periodical has received little scholarly attention. In general, the extensive list of Belarusian-language periodicals, including pre-revolutionary ones, published in East and West Belarus, studied by the author and cited widely throughout this book, is highly commendable.

The book's timeframe and title raise some questions. First, while it is generally acceptable to date the rise of Belarusian nationalism to 1906, the earlier activities of figures like Kastus' Kalinouski, Francishak Bahushevich, Kazimer Kastravitski, and the *Homan* publishers, to name but a few, should also be taken into consideration. Second, as Prof. Dr. Matthias Niendorf pointed out at a discussion on the book organized by the Department of East European History at the University of Greifswald, the notion that 1931 marks the definitive "fall" of Belarusian nationalism is highly debatable. Certainly it is well known that the most devastating Soviet assault on the national movement in Belarus occurred during the years 1930–31. Moreover, it was just a few years earlier, in 1927, that the largest oppositional Belarusian party in the Second Polish Republic, the Belarusian Peasants and Workers Association (the BSRH) was suppressed. The depiction of the parallel defeat of both Belarusian movements in the USSR and in the Second Polish Republic may be attractive in its symmetry. Yet it is important to note that 1931 by no means marked the definitive end of the story (even if the book's title reflects the publisher's rather than the author's preference). After the repression of the 1930s, nationalism did lose its political influence, but the idea of national and cultural revival remained imperative also for the next generation of intellectuals in Belarus. Some of them, like Maisei Siadneu or Yurka Vits'bich (the pen name of Serafim Shcharbakou) returned from

the Stalinist corrective camps just before the German occupation of Belarus, collaborated with the Nazi regime and, after emigration, continued to cultivate the field of the Belarusian revival. Some, for instance historian Mikalai Ulashchyk or poet Larysa Heniiush, returned from the camps during the Khrushchev Thaw; they continued to live in the Soviet Union, but maintained clearly pro-national views in their official and uncensored writings. Furthermore, the nationalist intellectuals, as Rudling calls them, who were active in supporting the cause of Belarusian independence later, during the perestroika period, did not adopt their nationalism only with the change in Soviet politics, but much earlier. For example, as early as in 1974, in a samizdat publication, the art historian, and later, influential politician Zianon Pazniak (writing under the pseudonym Genrich Rakutovich) clearly expressed his views on the “national issue.”<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, however, these observations relate to periods outside the immediate timeframe of Rudling’s study.

The author does discuss earlier proto-nationalist writers such as Kalinouski, but there are a few minor inaccuracies in this section. For example, Rudling describes Kalinouski as a representative of the *narodniki* movement (36–38), thereby seemingly uncritically borrowing a cliché from the Soviet historiography. As Thomas E. Bird has pointed out, Soviet authors depicted Kalinouski as a follower of Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov and other Russian *narodniki* in order to dilute the anti-Russian character of his writings. The original documents, however, do not reveal any such influence.<sup>2</sup> Rudling correctly observes that Kalinouski perceived the region of Lithuania–Belarus as a single geographical and political entity and evidently counterposed it to Muscovy. Yet, the statement that he made “no distinction between Lithuanians and Belarusians” (37) is rather incorrect. In his *Peasants’ Truth* (1862/3), Kalinouski appealed to the Belarusian, not Lithuanian, peasantry as he used the Belarusian language and called for a return to the Uni-

<sup>1</sup> Genrich Rakutovich, *Polozhenie v Belorusi. 1974 god* (Mogilev: n.p., 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas E. Bird, “Introduction,” in Jan Zaprudnik and Thomas E. Bird, eds. *The 1963 Uprising in Byelorussia: “Peasants’ Truth” and “Letters from beneath the Gallows”* (New York: The Krečėuski Foundation, 1980), 13.

ate Church. In “Letters from beneath the Gallows” (1864) Kalinouski explicitly used the nomination “Belarusians” (*Biatorusy or, elsewhere, Bielarusy*).<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, it is questionable whether the term *smenovekhovtsy* (199–200, 291, 302) should be uncritically applied to those activists of the Belarusian People’s Rada who returned to Soviet Belorussia and worked for its newly established cultural and educational institutions such as the Institute of Belarusian Culture (*Inbelkul’t*, in 1928 reorganized into the Belarusian Academy of Sciences). The term *smenovekhovtsy* appeared in the milieu of the Russian émigré intelligentsia, with whom the Belarusian activists—adherents of socialism and of autonomy for Belarus—were generally at odds ideologically.

There is some scope for greater consideration of the initiative of the Belarusian actors themselves. While Rudling’s book otherwise provides an integrated image of Belarusian nationalism, well situated on the canvas of the broad regional perspective, there is little discussion of agency here. What purports to be a study of a “few hundred nationalist intellectuals” (8) is more often rather a study of the political forces that sometimes motivated, but, more often, hindered the activity of intellectuals. In addition, the author mentions a few dozen rather than a few hundred names, and perhaps something like a third of these receive in-depth consideration. In the conclusion, the author aptly notices that “[w]hereas the nationalist intellectuals perished in the purges, the institutions they help established remained, from the BSSR itself, the school system, the publishing houses, the Belarusian Academy of Sciences, to Belarusian State University” (313). Considering the scale of work done by a small group of intellectuals in such a short period of time, the aspect of agency might also have received more accentuation in the main text.

There are a few instances of minor errors in translation from the Belarusian. For example, Frantsishak Bahushevich’s dictum from the foreword to his first Belarusian-language collection of

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<sup>3</sup> “Listy ‘Z-pad Shybenitsy’. List 1,” in Zaprudnik and Bird, *1963 Uprising*, 42 and 44.

poems *Dudka Belaruskaja* (The Belarusian Fife) (Cracow 1891) is rendered: “As long as it hasn’t perished, don’t give up our Belarusian language...” (187). In fact, Bahushevich, who often been called one of the “fathers of Belarusian nationalism,” entreated the Belarusian people “not to abandon our Belarusian tongue, in order not to perish” (“Ne pakidaitse movy nashai belaruskai, kab ne umiorli.”)

Rudling is sometimes not fully convincing in his handling of the secondary literature, especially that published in Soviet Belarus or authored by contemporary pro-governmental Belarusian historians. For example, it is not clear why the author refers to a dubious publication by the belletrist Nikolai Zen’kovich when presenting the ideas of Vatslau Lastouski (47).<sup>4</sup> Likewise, when citing Anton Luckevich (108), Rudling quotes a textbook authored by a former CPSU historian Petr Chigrinov.<sup>5</sup> In her detailed review of the book (the only one published to date in the Belarusian language), historian of the politics of Belarusization (the Belarusian variety of Soviet *korenizatsiia*) Alena Markova registered the inaccurate use of some sources and the neglect of others.<sup>6</sup>

The author’s decision to transliterate from the Belarusian deserves particular recognition, especially since transliteration from the Belarusian (subjected to the competing spelling rules—the result of the 1933 Soviet reform of the Belarusian language) is by no means a simple matter. Previously, following the tradition of western Sovietology, Belarusian names of people and places have usually been transliterated via their Russian versions. It is very gratifying to see an English-language work that transliterates direct from the Belarusian. Yet there are occasional minor errors here,

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4 Nikolai Zen’kovich, *Tainy ushedshego veka: granitsy, spory, obidy* (Moskva: Olma-Press, 2005). References to Zen’kovich surprisingly appear throughout the book, see for instance, pages 46, 53, and *passim*.

5 Petr Chigrinov, *Istoriia Belarusi s drevnosti do nashikh dnei* (Minsk: Knizhnyi Dom, 2004).

6 Alena Markova, “Pakarats’ smertsiu nel’ha zlitavatstva: belaruski natsyianalizm u dasledvanni Pera Andersa Rudlinha,” *Belaruski Histarychny Ahliad* no. 23 (2016), accessed 23 December 2016, <http://www.belhistory.eu/alena-markova-pakarac-smercyu-nelga-zlitavacca-belaruski-nacyyanalizm-u-dasledavanni-pera-andersa-rudlinga/#more-3905>.

seemingly reflecting confusion with Russian or other languages. For example, *tsiomny* (poorly educated, unenlightened) and *sviadomy* (enlightened, possessing national awareness) are rendered as *tsemni* and *svidomi* respectively (25 and 61).

To sum up, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism* definitely deserves the attention of the historians of Eastern Europe. Per Anders Rudling has written a solid historical study that vividly depicts the complex and entangled development of Belarusian nationalism during the first third of the twentieth century. Rudling's intention to place "Belarusian nationalism in the context of political rivalry in a regional contested borderland" (8) has certainly been realized, and, hopefully, it will serve as a stimulating example for other historians of Belarus to move across political and territorial borders.

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Irina Solomatina and Tatsiana Shchurko (eds.), *Kvir-seksual'nost': politiki i praktiki*. Minsk: Haliiafy, 2014. 194 pp.

This book is the result of the conference "Queer-Sexuality: Policies and Practices" that was held in Minsk in October 2012. The aim pursued by the conference organizers and book editors, Irina Solomatina and Tatsiana Shchurko, was to encourage a critical discussion about sexualities and gender normativity in the post-Soviet context. The conference participants and book contributors are researchers, artists, and activists from Belarus, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. They presented a variety of approaches, drawing upon sociology, psychology, philosophy, and gender and cultural studies. Literary fiction and art projects are included in the book as well, based on the editors' position that art projects should be considered as a particular kind of intellectual statement about sexualities in the local context.

The book does not aspire to reopen the horizons of theory. It is rather aimed at creating an opportunity for communication and