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Between politics, memory, and historiography. Mikhail Koyalovich's West Russianism in the reflections of "neo-West Russianism"

Zarys treści: Artykuł ukazuje analizy historiograficznych narracji autorstwa badaczy białoruskich (Jakow Treszczenok, Waleryj Czerepica, Walentina Tiepłowa i Aleksiej Chotiejew) poświęconych osobie historyka rosyjskiego, Michaiła Kojałowicza (1828–1891). Jednocześnie przedstawia proces przekonstruowania ideologii "zachodniorusizmu" w "neozachodniorusizm" oraz stawia pytanie – jak owe narracje wpisywały się w dyskurs naukowy wokół historii i pamięci, zachodzący we współczesnej Białorusi oraz decyzje polityczne prezydenta Alaksandra Łukaszenki.

Content outline: The article presents analyses of historiographic narrations of Belarusian researchers (Yakov Treshchenok, Valeriy Cherepitsa, Valentina Teplova, and Alexey Khoteev) devoted to Russian historian Mikhail Koyalovich (1828–1891). At the same time, it illustrates the reformulation of the "West Russianism" ideology into "neo-West Russianism" and poses the question of how these narrations fit both the scientific discourse over history and memory taking place in contemporary Belarus and the decisions of President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Słowa kluczowe: zachodniorusizm, neozachodniorusizm, Michaił Kojałowicz, Jakow Treszczenok, Alaksandr Łukaszenka

Keywords: West Russianism, neo-West Russianism, Mikhail Koyalovich, Yakov Treshchenok, Aleksandr Lukashenko

Introduction

The fall of the Communist bloc brought the increased interest in works by the historians of whom Soviet science had disapproved. One of them was pre-revolutionary Russian researcher Mikhail Koyalovich (1828–1891). This historian caught the attention of Belarusian authors (a new biography, reeditions of works), who began studying the ideology of "West Russianism", upon which all his scholarly

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narrations were founded.[1] A closer look at their arguments shows that some did not simply analyse the historiographic heritage of Koyalovich but also promoted his ideology. It underwent a peculiar mutation in the meditations of researchers, who became advocates of its new faction: "neo-West Russianism". Moreover, their interpretations were not just scientific: for a time, they were an important part of Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko's historical/memory policy. In this paper, I attempt to follow the treatises by those historians and show the reformulation of "West Russianism" into "neo-West Russianism" taking place within. Since understanding the ideological foundations of "West Rusianness" was crucially important for this process, these researchers studiously pored over Koyalovich's works. I shall, therefore, begin my considerations by presenting the concept of "West Russianism" in Koyalovich's writing, followed by its transformations in selected narrations of such authors as Yakov Treshchenok, Valeriy Cherepitsa, Valerina Teplova, and Alexey Khoteev. Simultaneously, from the perspective of mnemohistory, I will be interested in how these concepts fit the scientific discourse about history and memory occurring in present-day Belarus.[2]

Mikhail Koyalovich and the "West Russianism"

It is worth referring to the origins of the "West Russian" ideology to understand how it was formed. Though the term was popularised by Alyaksandr Tsvikyevich,[3] an active persona in the Belarusian Democratic Republic, its foundations were laid by Koyalovich.[4] He was born in the Grodno Governorate in the family of a clergyman who, due to the Polotsk Act of 1839, left the Uniate Church and converted to Orthodoxy. No wonder then that supporting this Act with science was the *idée fixe* of his writing as a historian. Koyalovich wanted to show in his works that the reasons for the division of Slavic Rus' were climate, geography (White Rus' – sands and muds; Little Rus' – chernozems), and culture. The Orthodox

[1] N. Morawiec, '"Historie" historyka w "historiach" historyków. Dziejopisarstwo Michaiła Kojałowicza we współczesnej refleksji historiograficznej Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej', in: *Najjaśniejsza Rzeczypospolita. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Andrzejowi Stroynowskiemu*, ed. M. Durbas (Częstochowa, 2019), pp. 999–1022.

[2] See А.У. Унучак, '"Заходнерусізм" і "краєвасць": гістарыяграфія пытання', in: *Российские и славянские исследования: Сб. науч. Статей*, vol. 5, ed. О.А. Яновский et al. (Минск, 2010), pp. 243–52; A. Tichomirow, 'Zachodniorusizm jako światopogląd: historia i kontynuacje', *Częstochowskie Teki Historyczne*, vol. 6 (2016), 183–205; М.В. Заблоцкая, 'Историография западнорусизма как общественно-политической мысли Беларуси (вт. Пол. XIX – XX в.)', in: *Копытинские чтения – I, II: сборник статей Международной научно-практической конференции, г. Могилев, 17–18 мая 2018 г.*, ed. М.И. Матюшевской (Могилев, 2018), pp. 39–41.

[3] А. Цвікевіч, *„Западнорусізм": Нарысы з гісторыі грамадзкай мысьлі на Беларусі ў XIX і пачатку XX в.* (Мінск, 1929).

[4] М. Біч, '"Заходнерусізм" і беларускі нацыянальны рух', *Биржа*, no. 2 (1999), http://www.gazeta.grodno.by/103/t93.html (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021).

Ruthenian community (already Russian in his mind) was subordinated first to Lithuania and then to the Polish-Lithuanian state.[5] This subordination became political after the Union of Lublin, then religious after the Union of Brest (1596). The Orthodox clergy, however, adopted the union due to Catholic and Polish betrayal, while the Uniate Church was subjected to Latinisation and Polonisation.[6] Despite the latter, Uniates kept the old elements of their culture and remained Orthodox Ruthenians (i.e., Russians). Even more so, they hoped to be reunited with Russia and the Orthodoxy, which was made possible by the Partitions of the Commonwealth. The Uniate community, however, affected by the political and denominational hegemony of Polish Catholics and the economic exploitation from Jews, gained a new – West Russian – identity.[7] Koyalovich wanted to show that even though these West Ruthenians (Russians) had their language corrupted by Polonisms, and their liturgy by Western customs and Latinisms, they did not threaten the Great Russian identity. Instead of persecuting them, he suggested eliminating "foreign" cultural elements through learning and education.[8] In this context, it is worth noting one more work by Koyalovich, entitled *The History of Russian Self-Consciousness*.[9] Its author – while opposing the arbitrary use of historical sources and indicating the need to evaluate their "objective data" – rejected any aspirations of researchers to remain objective in their historical reflections and wanted to examine all historical production so far in the context of the subjective dimension of historians' research.[10] Indeed, he noticed the socio-political conditions affecting every scholar studying "West Russian" subjects and considered his studies as influenced by "Slavophile subjectivism". The latter was to determine both the methods of reaching the historical "truth" – that Koyalovich adopted – and the means of political struggle he used to preserve Russianness and Orthodoxy. No wonder, then, that the historian combined his intellectual writing with his socio-political activism, contributing to the rise of the "West Russian" ideology. His students (the "school of Koyalovich") cultivated his intellectual heritage. The ideology itself, too, was highly successful, having been inscribed in the cultural memory of the Western community of Russia at the time. "West

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[5] For more, see I.A. Марзалюк, *Міфы "адраджэнскай" гістарыяграфіі Беларусі: манаграфія* (Магілёў, 2009), pp. 16–23.

[6] More in M.O. Коялович, *Литовская церковная уния*, vol. 1 (Санкт-Петербург, 1859), vol. 2 (Санкт-Петербург, 1861).

[7] Id., *История воссоединения западнорусских униатов старых времен* (Санкт-Петербург, 1873).

[8] Id., *Лекціи по исторіи Западной Россіи* (Москва, 1864). See aslo: N. Morawiec, '"Pany", "chachły" i "kołtuny". "Polskość" a "zachodnioruskość" w "Wykładach z historii Zachodniej Rosji" Michaiła Kojałowicza', in: *Спільна спадщина. Річ Посполита обох народів в польській і українській історичній думці XIX і XX ст.: колективна монографія*, ed. В. Тельвака, Л. Лазурко, and П. Сєрженґи (Херсон, 2019), pp. 147–66.

[9] M.O. Коялович, *История русского самосознания по историческим памятникам и научным сочинениям* (Минск, 1997).

[10] В.А. Белазаровіч, *Гістарыяграфія гісторыі Беларусі: дапаможнік* (Гродна, 2006), p. 138.

Russian" activists published scientific and popular periodicals, founded scientific societies, libraries, and museums, and organised state and Church celebrations.[11] The memory of the inhabitants of the Russian state's western territories gained its "West Russian" template, which did not construct solely "West Russian" narrations. Some researchers believe it had an unexpected impact on the society. Being constantly reminded of the historical "otherness" between West Russians and Great Russians gave birth to Belarusian national identity, further distilled by establishing the Belarusian People's Republic (1918).[12]

Still, the Russian Revolution brought many changes. While the negative evaluation of Koyalovich predominated in the writings of Soviet researchers, they gladly used his historical visions, albeit without referring to his works.[13] They upheld the belief in the common Slavic ethnic origins, which they reinforced with Lenin's thesis of the voluntary alliance of nations. They nurtured the idea of the struggle against "lords–exploiters", obviously implying its class nature. However, they no longer considered religion to be ideological glue: Orthodoxy was replaced with Marxism-Leninism.[14]

Once Belarus gained independence, the country underwent slow democratisation and de-Sovietisation when selected state symbols and holidays became "national". So did sites of memory (Vseslav the Sorcerer, the Battle of Orsha, Kurapaty, Konstanty Kalinowski, Adam Mickiewicz). A selection was made of "national" heroes as well as of historians pursuing "national" history (the "Belarusianness" of the Princedom of Polotsk, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania period as the golden age in the development of the Belarusian nation).[15] This process was stopped mid-way through due to the historical policy of Belarusian President Lukashenko (from 1994 on). The national symbols and the holiday calendar were changed again, sites of memory (Stalin, Dzerzhinsky, BSSR) were restored, and denationalisation began.[16] In history, the Soviet model of history was revived, adding to the state ideology the longing for the lost territorial and social gains of

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[11] See N. Morawiec, 'Dogmatization of Ruthenianism/Russicism. The metaphor of union in the historiography of the so-called "school of Mikhail Koyalovich"', in: *Crossroads. From Rus' to…*, ed. R. Dymczyk, I. Krywoszeja, and N. Morawiec (Częstochowa–Humań–Poznań, 2015), pp. 103–23.

[12] M. Bernardi, *L'identità bielorussa. Etnia, lingua, religione* (Venezia, 2015–2016), p. 33.

[13] С.М. Каштанов, 'Коялович', in: *Советская историческая энциклопедия* (Москва, 1965), vol. 8, p. 17; В.Е. Иллерицкий, 'Историография', in: *Очерки истории исторической науки в СССР*, vols 1–4 (Москва, 1960), vol. 2, pp. 571–74.

[14] J. Bugajska-Więcławska, '"Between Monuments of Winners and Graves in Rural Cemeteries". Poland – Belarus. Reflections on Historiosophy', *Studia Białorutenistyczne*, vol. 14 (2020), p. 76.

[15] W. Śleszyński. *Historia w służbie polityki. Zmiany polityczne a konstruowanie przekazu historycznego na ziemiach białoruskich w XX i XXI wieku* (Białystok, 2018).

[16] А. Смоленчук, 'Культура памяти и историческая политика в республике Беларусь', *Історичні і політологічні дослідження*, Special Issue: *Спеціальний випуск: доповіді на міжнародній науково-практичній конференції 'Трансформації історичної пам'яті'* (2018), 58–67.

the USSR and a sentiment for the imperial rule of the Stalinist period.[17] Lukashenko adopted a Russophile stance and supported Russo-centric activities.[18] Moreover, he presented himself as a man of the people, a charismatic leader, a saviour even, a reviver of the Eastern Slavs, who opposed the Western forces bent on subjugating Belarus and the whole Slavic world.[19] Over the following years, the Belarusian face of the Great Patriotic War – publicised in all narrations and visualisations – became the symbol of historical policy.[20] Lukashenko hoped to assume the leadership of the planned Russian-Belarusian statehood at the side of the then-president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin. To strengthen his role in the negotiations, he strove to show Belarus as an ethnic and civic – yet by no means national – entity. No wonder, then, that suppressing any kind of national aspirations was a key responsibility of the state. This, in turn, required referring to the past, to the historical affirmation of the Belarusian-Russian unity, explaining how the differences arose, suggesting the terms for eliminating them, but – at the same time – rethinking the attitude towards the "West" and its civilisation. A belief arose among those close to Lukashenko in that period that the "new" Belarusian identity could not be built based solely on Soviet and Stalinist models.[21] Even more so, Soviet apparatchiks/post-Soviet decision-makers began discovering their piety and manifesting their religious roots. Remembering the Cold War state of tension and ideological rivalry, they started seeking the causes of the conflict in the militarism of the West as well as in its concept of religiosity and spirituality. Indeed, it was made responsible for all negative traits of today's Western civilisation: capitalist materialism, laicisation, free-thinking, atheisation, globalism, and others. This Western quality was to be remedied by the familiar Orthodox Slavic one, saturated with spirituality and – in terms of civilisation – Russian. Unable to reach an agreement with the Vatican on "dividing the influence" in the matter of the Greek Catholic community,[22] the former

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[17] А. Федута, '"Недосталинизм", или "Лукашенко на фоне Сталина". О неудавшейся попытке реабилитации сталинизма в современной Беларуси', in: *Między nostalgią a ironią – Pamięć reżimu komunistycznego w dialogu międzykulturowym*, ed. E. Tomasi-Kapral and D. Utracka (Łódź, 2018), p. 53.

[18] For more, see A. Kazakievič, 'Concepts (Ideas) of the Belarusian Nation since Gaining Independence (1990–2009)', *Belarusian Political Science Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2011), 60–61.

[19] П.А. Рудлінг, 'Лукашэнка і „чырвона-карычневыя": дзяржаўная ідэалогія, ушанаванне мінулага і палітычная прыналежнасць', *Палітычная сфера*, no. 14 (2010), 95.

[20] P.A. Rudling, '"For a Heroic Belarus!": The Great Patriotic War as Identity Marker in the Lukashenka and Soviet Belarusian Discourses', *Sprawy Narodowościowe/Nationalities Affairs*, no. 32 (2008), 53–54.

[21] А. Браточкин, 'Культура памяти в Беларуси (1988–2016): от раскола к консервативному консенсусу? Советское наследие в политическом и историческом воображении белорусов: тенденции отталкивания и апроприации', *Гефтер*, 25 Nov. 2016, http://gefter.ru/archive/20174 (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021).

[22] Russian state and Church decision-makers were convinced that Pope John Paul II (because of his ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodoxy) and the Polish Catholic Church (due to difficult Polish-Ukrainian historical issues) would avoid supporting Greek Catholics. They suggested,

apparatchiks–current decision-makers were chiefly concerned with Catholicism.[23] In this context, they took notice of Koyalovich and his "West Russianism".

Yakov Treshchenok and "neo-West Russianism"

The chief ideologue of the new version of "West Russianism" was Yakov Treshchenok (1931–2011), who worked at the Department of East-Slavic and Russian History of the Mogilev State A. Kuleshov University (since 1996).[24] He studied the methodology of history, history of historiography and source studies.[25] He was a teacher of Lukashenko, who was trained as a teacher of history and social studies. Years later, Treshchenok became his trusted advisor on historical education and science and an expert in the Belarusian historical policy sector. In this context, he drafted a reform of historical education (2002) and worked as part of a committee to adapt teaching aids to the political direction of state authorities. He also wrote history textbooks for lower education levels and engaged in political science considerations regarding the Belarusian state and national ideas.[26]

While perusing Treshchenok's works, it is easy to see that he had entirely accepted Koyalovich's historical schema explaining the transformation of Uniates into West Ruthenians/Russians. By referring to the present, he gave the latter a Belarusian face. In the 1997 re-edition of Koyalovich's treatise *The History of Russian Self-Consciousness*,[27] he argued that it makes the essence of Belarusianness easier to understand. It accentuated the existence of a supra-historical "civilisational struggle" between East and West, Orthodoxy and Catholicism, defining all aspects of the socio-economic existence of the Belarusian people. Treshchenok indicated that the Belarusian national movement was created by the refugees who belonged to Polonised Catholic nobility circles and separated themselves from anything Russian and Orthodox. It distanced the "separatists" from the Belarusian "nation"

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therefore, that the Vatican and Moscow should incorporate Greek Catholics into the Catholic or Orthodox community, respectively, depending on the ecclesiastical affiliation of the territory they inhabited. J. Loya, 'Interchurch Relations in Post-Perestroika Eastern Europe: A Short History on an Ecumenical Meltdown', *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1994), article 1 (n.p.).

[23] For more, see N. Morawiec, '*Euntes in mundum*. Pope John Paul II's Millennium of the Baptism of Rus' (Between Political Theology, Historiography, and the Theology of History)', *Textus et Studia*, no. 30(2) (2022), 176–77.

[24] For more on his life and work, See К.М. Бондаренко and П.Ф. Дмитрачков, 'Личность и история', *Беларуская думка*, no. 9 (2011), 84–97.

[25] М.И. Вишневский, В.А. Костенич, and Я.И. Трещенок, *Философия образования и проблема человека: Учеб. пособие* (Могилев, 1997); Я.И. Трещенок, *Введение в методологию исторического познания* (Могилев, 1999).

[26] See Я.И. Трещенок, *История Беларуси. В 2-х ч.*, part 1: *Досоветский период* (Могилев, 2004); id., *Государственная идеология и национальная идея Республики Беларусь* (Могилев, 2006).

[27] Коялович, *История русского самосознания*.

since the Orthodoxy inextricably linked Belarus to Russia as the foundation of the pan-Russian "ethnos". Treshchenok also noticed Koyalovich's reflection that all works by historians have a subjective dimension. He supported it, admitting that since there is no possibility of attaining research objectivism in science, one should accept the necessary existence of subjectivism. Since the "Slavophile subjectivism" determined all of Koyalovich's meditations and actions, it had to be copied in the name of transforming Belarusians into Russians.[28]

We can see, therefore, that the "West Russian" interpretation mutated in Treshchenok's reflections and turned into "neo-West Russianism".[29] The historian had a specific goal, too. He wanted to fight down Belarusian national leaders, show that they were a foreign, Western and Polish product and that they contributed to divisions in the Belarusian society and Russian civilisation. The only alternative would be to merge with Russia within a common statehood[30]. Nonetheless – in formulating his thoughts – Treshchenok failed to distance himself from his Marxist past. In Marxism, the subject of history was the "working people of towns and villages"; in "neo-West Russianism", the Belarusian or Orthodox-Russian nation. Treshchenok turned the Marxian matter of history, the eternal class struggle within socio-economic formations, into the civilisational battle of the East and the West, defining all aspects of the socio-economic existence of the Belarusian nation. The Marxist origin, too, was affected by the problem of subjectivism in constructing its historical images. In the Soviet state (founded on dialectical materialism), the thinking-acting was to be subjected to the interests of the Party, while any "production of history" had to ensue not from "abstract formal schemes" but from "current needs" instead. In modern Belarus – similarly – such production had to undergo relativisation depending on the political expectations of its decision-makers.[31]

The "neo-West Russianism" was quickly accepted by Lukashenko as well, as it explained from a historical perspective that Belarusian "otherness", which was very much needed by the president in his political plans. It was in this context that he formulated his official speeches and constructed the elements of

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[28] Я.И. Трещенок, 'Михаил Осипович Коялович и его время. Послесловие', in: Коялович, *История русского самосознания*, pp. 674–78; F. Nethercott, 'Écrire l'histoire de la Russie: question de paradigmes occidentaux dans l'historiographie nationale', *Slavica Occitania*, no. 30 (2010), 247.

[29] А.Д. Гронский, 'Неозападнорусизм, псевдозападнорусизм: попытки трансформации идеи', *Тетради по консерватизму: Альманах*, no. 20 (2020), 265–73.

[30] For more, see N. Morawiec, '*Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*: Yakov Treshchenok's Two Ideas and the Mutation of "West Russianism"', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, vol. 36 (2022), 1–32.

[31] See "historical materialism" and the [process of] "production of history" and "production of the subject": T.R. Wiśniewski, 'Materializm historyczny jako teoria realizacji wolności', *Nowa Krytyka*, no. 29 (2012), 112.

Belarusian statehood.[32] Proponents of the new ideology entered national science institutions and began publishing scientific treatises and periodicals, and coalescing into formal and informal organisations and societies.[33] Most interestingly, state decision-markers also pushed for "neo-West Russianism" to gain a mnemonic template. Thus, they took care of creating all kinds of narrations and visualisations (publishing and museum activities, as well as monuments, plaques, street names, and so on).[34] Commonwealth natives, who defended Russianness against Polishness (like Konstanty W. Ostrogski), hierarchs leaving Catholicism (Iosif Semashko) and Russians, especially those who cared for the Russian nature of "West Russianism" (Mikhail Muravev, Ivan Aksakov, and Pyotr Stolypin), became historical heroes. Belarusian history handbooks were also mnemonic, written and edited by Treshchenok in the ideological and political manifesto style.[35] They portrayed Belarusians as the primary vanquishers of the Mongols, Teutonic Knights, Polish insurgents, Napoleon and Hitler, but also as Russians to the core (more than Russians themselves). Koyalovich and his intellectual heritage were nevertheless not forgotten.

Valeriy Cherepitsa and the "discovery" of Koyalovich

One year after Treshchenok's reflections, the book entitled *Mikhail Osipovich Koyalovich, History of Life and Work* was published, written by Belarusian historian, journalist and local lore specialist Valeriy Cherepitsa (b. 1945), from Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno.[36] The researchers published many works on Belarusian–Polish relations and the socio-political fortunes of Belarus, particularly the Grodno region.[37] As a researcher formed in the Marxist system, he admitted that his "discovery" of Koyalovich's writing spurred his interest in the "West Russian"

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[32] For more, see А. Ластоўскі, 'Кароткая генеалогія: гістарычнае мінулае ў публічных прамовах беларускіх афіцыйных асобаў', *Палітычная сфера*, vol. 1–2, no. 18–19 (2012), 137–55.

[33] К. Івангородський, 'Трансформації білоруської історіографії в 1990-х рр.', in: *Двадцять шоста наукова сесія Осередку Наукового товариства ім. Шевченка у Черкасах: Матеріали доповідей на засіданнях секцій і комісій*, ed. В.В. Масненка (Черкаси, 2015), pp. 89–90.

[34] For more, see N. Bekus, 'Belarus's Winding Path to a Post-Soviet Identity', *Current History*, vol. 118, no. 810 (2019), 258–64.

[35] К. Івангородський, 'Сучасна білоруська національна історіографія у сприйнятті істориків з Білорусі', in: *Історіографічні дослідження в Україні*, ed. В.А. Смолій, vol. 26 (Київ, 2015), p. 88.

[36] В.Н. Черепица, *Михаил Осипович Коялович. История жизни и творчества* (Гродно, 1998). For more, see *Через прошлое – к настоящему и будущему: сб. науч. ст. (к 65-летию проф. В.Н. Черепицы)*, ed. Э.Р. Ярмусика (Гродно, 2010).

[37] See W. Czerepica, *Związki rewolucjonistów Białorusi i Polski w latach 70–80 XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 1985); В.Н. Черепица, *Город-крепость Гродно в годы Первой мировой войны: мероприятия гражданских и военных властей по обеспечению обороноспособности и жизнедеятельности* (Гродно, 2006).

topic.[38] Already in the first chapter, he wanted to understand the origin of the "idea". In his opinion, Koyalovich became aware of the existential foundations of the "West Russian nation", i.e., Russianness and Orthodoxy. This affected his investigation of history in the context of the civilisational struggle of Orthodox Ruthenians-Russians against Poles-Catholics. He showed the religious conflict after the Union of Brest not as a fight between Orthodox and Uniate elements but rather Orthodox and Catholic ones (making Roman Catholics the enemy, not Russian and Orthodox Uniates). Cherepitsa also argued that Koyalovich negated the presence of the union concept in the consciousness of the Ruthenian community. He developed his "West Russian" interpretations in subsequent research works[39], Where he paid particular attention to the adverse impact of Polonisms and Latinisms on the "Russian-Orthodox soil".[40] Cherepitsa analysed all of Koyalovich's activities in the same spirit, including his social, journalistic, and popularisation activities, as well as his efforts to inculcate the idea in further generations of historians.[41]

During the analysis, however, it is worth noticing one more point. Like Treshchenok, Cherepitsa did not focus solely on the scientific quest for the historical Koyalovich. Writing about the reasons for writing his book, he made no secret that it arose as an answer to the transformations observed in the territory of the former USSR in the early 1990s. At the same time, he admitted that historians try to answer the demands of their contemporaries and, by carrying out a scientific interpretation of the past, analyse it in the context of the present, simultaneously bearing in mind a specific forecast of the future. The publication of Koyalovich's biography may have contributed to recalling his work. It may also have explained the Russian-Orthodox essence of "West Russianism" to present-day people.[42]

Many historians praised Cherepitsa's book, his research skills, and the wide range of archive materials he gathered. Others – conversely – criticised his "scientific quality".[43] Aliaksandr Smalianchuk found many errors in his narration, as well as conscious and unconscious distortions (e.g., while Cherepitsa wrote in a treatise that Koyalovich was born in the family of an Orthodox clergyman, he had to know that that man had still been a Uniate then). Thus, from the onset of his narration –

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[38] В. Середа, 'Я вскрыл нетронутые пласты духовности и культуры', *News.21.by*, 13 Feb. 2010, http://news.21.by/culture/2010/02/13/462710.html (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021), n.p.

[39] I analysed these works more broadly in the paper: N. Morawiec, '(De)konstrukcje białoruskości. „Zachodniorusizm" w historiografii Walerija Czerepicy', *Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe*, vol. 42, no. 3 (2021), 141–53.

[40] В.Н. Черепица, *Михаил Осипович Коялович: История жизни и творчества* (Гродно, 1998), p. 53.

[41] Ibid., pp. 205–41.

[42] Ibid., p. 8.

[43] See Д.В. Карев and А.Н. Нечухрин, 'Развитие истрических исследований в республике Беларусь: общие тенденции', *Веснік Гродзенскага джяржаўнага ўніверсітэта імя Янкі Купалы*, vol. 1, no. 3 (2000), 18.

according to Smalianchuk – Cherepitsa forced on his readers Koyalovich, who was "closer to the author's wishes than to historical reality". Even more so, the author adopted the theses of Koyalovich's "West Russianism" uncritically, including his understanding of the essence of historical research and the challenges historians must face. He believed in research subjectivism and voiced the necessity of choosing it consciously to perform specific (also political) tasks.[44] Nonetheless, the topic of "West Russian" became an important part of Cherepitsa's meditations. In 2008, he prepared a re-edition of the Lectures on *Russian History* by Koyalovich.[45] In the foreword, he recalled the activities of the "West Russian" historian, adding that the hastily developed "national concept of the history of Belarus" posed "a real threat of rejecting the principle of historicism".[46] In another treatise, Cherepitsa wanted to oppose those researchers who pointed out the anti-Polish nature of Koyalovich's "West Russianism". According to Cherepitsa, the latter was convinced that the Partitions of Poland were inevitable, that annexing Belarusian and Ukrainian lands into Russia "revived the old Russian unity", leading to "reviving the strength of the Russian nation". Due to the Partitions, the "West Russian" community "shook off not only the state yoke but also the spiritual one with surprising ease".[47] Cherepitsa observed, however, that despite such beliefs, Koyalovich acutely contested the destruction of the ethnic Polish statehood. Russia did not plan this destruction; it was a routine German idea. For this reason, Koyalovich "had never been an enemy of Poles" but rather "understood and sympathised with the true Poland and loudly protested against its reactionary part which had been striving to swallow Belarusian and Ukrainian lands".[48]

Koyalovich and the "creolisation" of Belarusian memory

The narrations by Koyalovich presented above are but a part of a broader "neo--West Russian" intellectual reflection, which filled the pages of many scientific and popular scientific works. It is still worth noting that they underwent many transformations during Lukashenko's rule. They were affected by the activities of the president, who wanted to preserve his power, and the transformations within

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[44] А. Смалянчук (rev.), 'Черепица, Валерий Н., Михаил Осипович Коялович. История жизни и творчества; яго ж, Польское национальное движение в Белоруссии', *Беларускі Гістарычны Агляд. Навуковы часопіс – Інтэрнэт-версія*, no. 5 (1998), http://www.belhistory.eu/cherepica-valerij-n-mixail-osipovich-koyalovich-istoriya-zhizni-i-tvorchestva-yago-zh-polskoe-nacionalnoe-dvizhenie-v-belorussii-ales-smalyanchuk/ (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021), n.p.

[45] М.О. Коялович, *Лекции по русской истории*, ed. В.Н. Черепицы (Гродно, 2008). See also А.Н. Нечухрин, 'В.Н. Черепица как историограф', in: *Через прошлое*, p. 91.

[46] В.Н. Черепица, 'Предисловие', in: Коялович, *Лекции по русской истории*, p. 6.

[47] В.Н. Черепица, *Гродненский исторический калейдоскоп: очерки истории, историографии и источниковедения: монография* (Гродно, 2013), p. 37.

[48] Ibid., pp. 37–38.

the Russian-Belarusian political relations. Once Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency in Russia, Lukashenko had to abandon any leadership thoughts in the planned Russian-Belarusian state. Even more so, in 2002, Putin suggested incorporating six Belarusian oblasts into the Russian Federation.[49] It was undoubtedly an important warning for Lukashenko. He noticed the threat to his power and changed his *modus operandi*. More and more frequently, he mentioned external (not simply Western) enemies. He began stressing the need to preserve the state's independence and protect its borders.[50] Above all else, he announced the necessity of creating an official Belarusian state ideology at the official level (2002). The historical policy of the period bears the mark of trying to negate the political and cultural unity of Eastern Slavs and to perceive the heritage of Belarusian statehood in the autonomy of the Princedom of Polotsk within Kievan Rus' and the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. On the other hand, "neo-West Russianism" (in Treshchenko's terms) was being promoted, stressing the significance of the Orthodox religion and condemning Belarusian nationalism.[51] The Second World War was still being referred to, albeit with its Belarusian face underscored. Belarusians were to be both its greatest victims and heroes, the "guerrilla nation", chief defenders of Russia, Europe, and the world against fascism.[52] Meanwhile, the development of the Stalin Line and the question of Khatyn (Polish: Chatyń; Belarussian: Хатынь) show how much Lukashenko wanted to (de)construct the area of Belarusian cultural memory.[53] Due to the conflict with Russia over oil and gas prices in 2006–07 and the sanctions imposed by Western countries, Belarus became a state suspended between the European Union and the Russian Federation.[54] On the one hand, the Belarusian president referred to the vision of a pan-Russian community for economic and military protection from Russia. On the other hand, he declared his willingness to engage in a dialogue with the West to enjoy all its profits. The Russian invasion of Georgia (2008), however, brought Lukashenko even closer to the West (resumption of diplomatic contacts between the European Union and Belarus, the inclusion of the latter in the Eastern Partnership initiative of the EU, the first official visit in the West in fourteen years, meeting with Pope Benedict XVI

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[49] G. Ioffe, 'Understanding Belarus: Belarusian Identity', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 55, no. 8 (2003), 1241–72 (1266).

[50] K. Radziun, *Political Regime and Institutionalization of Political Science as an Academic Discipline: Analysis of Belarus and Georgia. Bachelor Thesis* (Kaunas, 2020), p. 36.

[51] W. Boradyn, 'Historyczna interpretacja unii w Krewie w białoruskich podręcznikach po roku 1991', *Wb24.org – Wirtualna Białoruś*, https://wb24.org/2021/11/20/historyczna-interpretacja-unii-w-krewie-w-bialoruskich-podrecznikach-po-roku-1991/ (n.p.).

[52] A. Astapova, *Negotiating Belarusianness: Political folklore betwixt and between* (Tartu, 2015), p. 19.

[53] For more, see M.G. Dorman, 'Khatyn and the Myth of Genocide in Lukashenko's Belarus', unpublished academic thesis, University of Texas at Austin (Austin, 2017).

[54] H. Behrends, 'Multi-Vectorism in Belarusian Foreign Policy', unpublished Master thesis, Charles University in Prague (Prague, 2016), p. 20.

in 2009). This period focused on building the Belarusian historical national identity upon the earliest state entities found in the territory of present Belarus: the Principalities of Polotsk and Turov and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (as reflected in the school handbooks of the "Marzaliuk period").[55] The discussions of "West Russianism" were accentuated differently. It was included in a broader reflection upon seeking not Western Russianness but rather Belarusianness.[56] Koyalovich was not forgotten. His treatises were used to prove that medieval Polotsk and the Grand Duchy were Belarusian.[57] Nevertheless, after the Maidan Uprising and the annexation of Crimea (2014), Lukashenko noticed the danger of hybrid war and "little green men". He understood that he could no longer base his rule on Belarusians as either representatives of the local Russian ethnos or citizens counting their social profits. Instead, he needed nationally formed patriots, aware of their distinctness not just from the West but also from the East.[58] This thinking – a peculiar kind of statist nationalism – was enough to stave off the external and internal problems of the state. The deeper Russia waded into the Ukrainian crisis, the stronger Lukashenko's pressure on the Kremlin (for political and economic support), and the weaker the traditional Belarusian opposition (as the society was led to think that Belarus remained "an island of peace and stability" solely through the president's efforts).[59] Even more so, Lukashenko began seeing himself as an arbiter in the conflict between the East and the West (the Minsk agreements), believing that the "dicta-plomatic" political toolset he used would make him acceptable in the eyes of the international community.[60]

However, Lukashenko's political "new line" affected his perception of history as well. He started treating the Belarusian national history more favourably[61] and made efforts to construct new "sites of memory", opposed to Russocentrism (which found a peculiar expression in creating an alternative for Saint George's ribbon: the device of an apple flower on a red-green ribbon as Belarus" own symbol of victory in the Second World War).[62] Yet the "new line" did not dominate the president's historical policy. He could not definitively break up with Russia (particularly

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[55] Boradyn, 'Historyczna interpretacja unii'.

[56] See I.A. Марзалюк, 'Вытокі беларускага заходнерусізму і літвінізму', *Беларуская думка*, no. 8 (2012), 53–59.

[57] И.А. Марзалюк, 'Образ Полоцкого центра', *Родина*, no. 9 (2012), 111.

[58] Y. Kryvoi, A. Wilson, 'From sanctions to summits: Belarus after the Ukraine crisis', *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*, vol. 132 (May 2015), 2.

[59] A.I. Suzdaltsev, 'Republic of Belarus and Ukrainian Crisis', in: *East Ukrainian conflict in the context of global transformations*, ed. A.V. Bilokobylskyi et al. (Vinnitsa, 2015), 94–109.

[60] For the term 'dicta-plomatic', see A. Marin, 'Belarus: time for a "principled" re-engagement', *European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)*, no. 6 (February 2016), 2.

[61] Astapova, *Negotiating Belarusianness*, p. 19.

[62] J. Fedor, S. Lewis, and T. Zhurzhenko, 'Introduction: War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus', in: *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J. Fedor, M. Kangaspuro, J. Lassila, and T. Zhurzhenko (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2017), p. 10.

since Russian nationalists had been allowed to criticise his "new" actions)[63] or replace the Russocentric historical patterns with national ones. We should remember that Lukashenko assumed power negating the existence of Belarusian "nationality". He did not want to strengthen the "national" opposition either. It was also difficult to disavow the mnemonic interpretation schemas to which the Belarusian community was accustomed, reject that "Western" Russianness, negate the triune Ruthenian nation – the product of Russian communal imperialism – but also part with the perception of the fall of the USSR as a historical catastrophe, to rebuild the interpretations of the Orthodox-Catholic conflict, turn historical friends into enemies, and so on. As a result, Lukashenko abandoned the interpretation of "neo-West Russianism" as the "only true" reflection upon history. Instead, he freely combined Russocentrism and nationalism, "soft" Stalinism and "West Russianism", which led researchers to say that he promoted a "creole" view of history.[64] Therefore, he told in his speeches the history of "Ruthenian unity", the Great Patriotic War, "builders of socialism", but also of Polotsk and the Grand Duchy, which were "national" in character.[65] Indubitably, it affected the memory policy of the Belarusian state since the designs of monuments and memorial plaques, names of schools, theatres and museums, streets and squares he and his entourage accepted were of "creole" nature.[66] While the mnemonic template was still filled with Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, it had room for such figures as Grand Duke Algirdas and Lew Sapieha.[67] It was obviously reflected by the activities of "neo-West Russian" intellectuals. Despite losing their previous posts, many of them kept working for the state administration and science (as they could always be used in future political reshuffles).[68] At the same time, the lack of presidential oversight of the "correct" interpretation led to a peculiar result. "West Russianism" was being interpreted by various intellectuals, and of varying national and political standing, too. They discussed how to combine "West Russianism" and "neo-West Russianism" and how the former evolved in the Soviet period. They debated whether "West

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[63] A Wilson, 'Belarus: from a Social Contract to a Security Contract?', *Journal of Belarusian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2016), 80.

[64] P.A. Rudling '"Unhappy is the Person Who Has No Motherland": National Ideology and History Writing in Lukashenka's Belarus', in: *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J. Fedor et al. (London, 2017), p. 71.

[65] A. Lastouski, 'Creating National Community & History: Official Speeches on Independence Day in Belarus (2001–2012)', in: *The Construction of National Narratives and Politics of Memory in the Central and Eastern European Region after 1989*, ed. E. Aleksandravičius (Kaunas, 2014), p. 125.

[66] G. Ioffe, 'Culture Wars, Soul-Searching, and Belarusian Identity', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2007), 367.

[67] K. Kłysiński, W. Konończuk, *Łączenie przeciwności. Polityka historyczna Białorusi* (Warszawa, 2020), pp. 33–34.

[68] И. Ляльков, 'Кто хочет сделать из Беларуси Западную Россию – досье', *Наша Ніва*, 1906, https://nashaniva.com/?c=ar&i=183059&lang=ru (accessed: 3 Jan. 2021), n.p.

Russianism" saved the BSSR from the "Polish–Belarusian" Bolshevism or, to the contrary, it became the saviour of the Soviet state in the fight against the "Trotskyist national policy".[69] Yet, because of their search for historical "roots" (before the Unions of Brest, Lublin, and even Krewo), the emergence of "West Russianism" was no longer explained as the reaction of the Orthodox to Polish and Catholic aggression. They suggested that both Catholic and Orthodox Ruthenians were originally "West Russian" in nature. Finally, searching for those roots, they referred to primordial Slavicness. By combining "West Russianism" with the ethnocultural Slavic component, they showed its pre-Christian, "pagan" or – as Aleksandr Gronskiy suggested – "neopagan" dimension ("pseudo-West Russianism").[70] However, the question of the political future of "West Russianism" was the most important. Whether it should be reduced to Russocentrism or if its central axiom should be the necessity of purifying the Belarusian community – contaminated with Western influence – and thus pursue an eventual unification with Russia. Or conversely, they should accept this "influence" and promote the triune Russian civilisation connecting distinct – in terms of state and nation – entities: Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.[71] Or, perhaps, make "West Russianism" an important component of Eurasiatism, seen as the remedy to the Euro-Atlantic system. In this context – as suggested by Alexey Dzermant – Belarus might become a "Silk Road caravanserai", controlling human migrations, transport, goods, services, and investments; or, vice versa, a "citadel", a "Brest Fortress", defender of the "Western front", able to lock down – if necessity dictated so – "roads and paths" between the East and the West.[72]

This discourse created research problems and demanded further studies. For Belarusian decision-makers, however, their "scientific" value was not that important. They cared more about testing various interpretations they could use for political purposes. It could be done only by historians who were well-versed in historical issues, doubled as ideologues, were closely connected with Lukashenko, and focused on media communication.[73] It was clear especially since August 2020, when the radical pro-Russian "neo-West Russian" trend grew stronger, whereas the national trend – persecuted, psychologically and physically "broken", and in many cases "sent into exile" – weakened significantly. Again, Koyalovich was not forgotten. The scholar's reflections on the "great" and "just" Duke Vytautas, "who only wanted to restore the civil rights to the East-Slavic population of the Grand

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[69] Н.М. Сергеев, 'Западнорусская идея: от прошлого к настоящему', *Постсоветский материк*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2016), 59.

[70] See Гронский, *Неозападнорусизм*, 265–73.

[71] See А.Д. Гронский, 'Белорусский национализм и западнорусизм: проблема противостояния', *Тетради по консерватизму: Альманах*, no. 2 (2020), 161–68.

[72] А. Дзермант, *Беларусь – Евразия. Пограничье России и Европы* (Москва, 2020), p. 20.

[73] A great example of such a 'researcher–ideologue' is a well-known Belarusian historian and journalist – but also a proponent of both 'West Russianism' and the 'work' of Mikhail Muravev – Vadim Gagin.

Duchy", were used to legitimise Lukashenko's presidential rule. As Igor Marzaliuk argued, "The presidential form of government in our country is a model of power which involves the personification of a statesman, the guarantor of the constitutional norm, who embodies Belarusian archetypal ideas of strong and just power".[74]

Valentina Teplova and the "Orthodox Church History School"

In the context of the above analysis, special attention should be paid to the deliberations of historian, teacher, and lecturer of Minsk Theological Academy, Valentina Teplova (b. 1940). She was interested in the history of the Orthodox community in the Commonwealth and the reflection on the Russianness of Belarusians.[75] Her analyses, done together with Igor Orzhekhovskiy (1933–2002), are particularly interesting. A well-known Soviet researcher of the history of Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, he wanted to understand how economic and socio-political transformations determined the fates of the "Western" Russian community.[76] In their joint analyses, the researchers showed that these fates depended on the economic position of Catholic and Polish nobles, sought the impact of the November Uprising on the so-called unification of Uniates (1839), accentuated the priority of the Orthodox Church and the role of – de-Polonised – education in the effort of Russification of Western Rus'/Russia. As they claimed, "There is every reason to believe that it was the activity of the Orthodox Church on Belarusian soil that led to the birth of the modern Belarusian nation".[77] Still, the character, activity, and intellectual heritage of Koyalovich were an important part of Teplova's deliberations. A broader discussion can be found in the afterword to his book about the "unification" of Uniates with the Orthodoxy.[78] When reviewing

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[74] И.А. Марзалюк, 'От монарха к Президенту: институт главы государства в Беларуси', *Беларуская думка*, no. 7 (2019), 69–71.

[75] Among others: В.А. Теплова, 'Православие в период разъединения Руси (XIII–XV вв.)', in: *Святой князь Владимир и Крещение Руси: цивилизационный выбор восточнославянского мира. Материалы международной научной конференции, Республика Беларусь, Минская духовная академия при Свято-Успенском Жировичском монастыре 14–15 мая 2015 г.*, ed. А.А. Коваленя et al. (Минск, 2015), 135–38; ead., 'Брестский церковный собор и Брестский церковный синод 1596 г. в свете православной экклезиологии', in: *Studia Historica Europae Orientalis. Исследования по истории Восточной Европы. Научный сборник*, vol. 1 (Минск, 2008), 173–83.

[76] В.В. Сергеенкова and О.А. Яновский, 'Российская история в исследовательской и преподавательской практике историков БГУ (1921–2017)', *Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. История*, no. 4 (2018), 117–28.

[77] И. Оржеховский and В. Теплова, '"Польский вопрос" и правительственная политика на территории Белоруссии в первой половине XIX века', *Тетради по консерватизму: Альманах*, no. 2 (2020), 169–80.

[78] В.А. Теплова, 'М.О. Коялович и русская православная историография', in: М. Коялович, *История воссоединения западнорусских униатов старых времен* (Миск, 1999), pp. 385–95.

the literature on the "West Russian" historian, she pointed out that his work was forgotten for the majority of the twentieth century, and his socio-political views became distorted. He was deemed a representative of the "monarchist–Church trend". Such a "vulgar" interpretation of Koyalovich's writing – she wrote – could be found even in the "national" Belarusian historiography after the fall of the USSR. Seeing Koyalovich as a Russian historian excluded him from the history of Belarusian historiography, as well as impoverished and distorted the history of socio-political thought in nineteenth-century Belarus. According to Teplova, the works of Treshchenok and Cherepitsa, which tried to "discuss Koyalovich's worldview in the context of the philosophy of history", were the only exceptions.[79] Following Cherepitsa's deliberations, Teplova indicated Orthodox and Russian elements responsible for forming young Koyalovich's mentality. The area where he grew up was the constant arena of the "people's struggle between the Belarusian element and the foreign Polish one". Teplova pointed out the division, which was then prevalent in the Uniate community and generated two mental systems. Its one part was fixated on Polishness and Catholicism, the other – on Russianness and Orthodoxy. Koyalovich witnessed the brutal struggle between them. Thanks to Semashko, he saw the need for reviving the region's Orthodox culture. He also realised that revival was only possible by "referring to the historical past of the fatherland".[80] According to Teplova, Koyalovich was the first historian to address the crisis in the Uniate Church due to Latinisation. As a result of this crisis, a desire arose among Uniate hierarchs to restore ritual "purity", which inevitably led to a conciliation between Uniates and Orthodox and the thought of "unification". However – as Teplova observed – Koyalovich was aware of strong "anti-unification" tendencies, mainly from the Polish-Catholic side, so he wanted to counteract them. He condemned all threats from Polish nobility as well as the pro-Polish orientation of Belarusian nobles.[81]

In Teplova's case, the reflections upon Koyalovich were also of broader significance. In her analyses, she wanted to demonstrate the truth of Treshchenko and Cherepitsa's interpretations and support the Russian and Orthodox face of "West Russianism" while seeking its origins. The historian's reflections show the desire to include Koyalovich in a broader ideological trend. Thus, he became a representative of a separate school in the Russian historiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: The "Orthodox Church history school".[82] It included scholars of Russian and (Russian-speaking) Belarusian descent, strongly identifying with the Orthodoxy,

[79] Ibid., p. 387.
[80] Ibid., p. 389.
[81] Ibid., pp. 393–94.
[82] В.А. Теплова, 'Православная историко-церковная школа Беларуси XIX – начала XX в.: истоки и традиции', *Izdatsovet.by*, http://www.izdatsovet.by/index.php/arkhiv-novostej/konferentsii-i-seminary/item/173-pravoslavnaya-istoriko-tserkovnaya-shkola-belarusi-xix-nachala-xx-v-istoki-i-traditsii (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021), n.p.

focused on studying Church history. Examining the works of those historians, Teplova noticed their "West Russian" dimension and opposition towards the Polish-Catholic domination. Moreover, Grigori Konisski (1717–1795), the Orthodox Archbishop of Mogilev, Mstislaw and Orsha – and a historian – was to be the forerunner of the "school", with Count Mikhail Rumyantsev (1751–1811), a collector of manuscripts, and historian–archaeologist Ivan Grigorovich (1792–1852) as its advocates. Thus, Koyalovich was included in a broader chronological sequence and shown as a successor of the anti-Polish and anti-Catholic movement in the Eastern reaches of the Commonwealth before its partition.[83]

There is a diversity of evaluations of Teplova and her studies in the scientific circles. Researchers have found her evidence of interpretative links between Konisski and Koyalovich doubtful, and including them in the "Orthodox Church history school" seemed an overreach. Teplova's analyses – also regarding Koyalovich's "subjectivism" – were noticed by Aleksandr Litvinskiy. He disagreed with her views, which placed Koyalovich and his students in the "Orthodox" historiography. He explained that such historiography (as well as other religious historiographies) is founded on the openly stated principle of providentialism. Yet, he did not see such a principle in Koyalovich's thoughts. He also argued that, even if historians consider the apparent involvement of the "school" in the matters of the Orthodox Church and its system of values, they should still refrain from labelling it as Orthodox.[84]

Alexey Khoteev and the Russian-Orthodox Civilisation

The works of the representative of the younger generation of scholars, Alexey Khoteev (b. 1976), Orthodox clergyman, historian, journalist, and lecturer of Minsk Theological Seminary, also had a "West Russian" undertone.[85] Besides works about the history of Orthodoxy in Belarus, he studied the subject of Belarusian history in Russian historical and literary periodicals in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and devoted much reflection to Koyalovich's writing.[86] In the treatise "Foundations of the West Russian Idea in the Works of

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[83] В.А. Теплова, 'М.О. Коялович и православная историческая школа Белоруссии', *Sobor.by*, http://www.sobor.by/kojal.htm (n.p.); ead., 'Православная церковно-историческая школа Беларуси XIX–XX в.: генезис и традиции', in: *Беларусь, Расія, Украіна: дыялог народаў і культур*, Гістарыяграфічныя даследванні Series, ed. Д.У. Караў (Гродна, 2013), pp. 205–13.

[84] А. В. Литвинский, 'Методологические аспекты изучения западноруссизма как явления историографии', in: *Состояние и развитие методологических исследований в исторической науке Республики Беларусь и Российской Федерации*, ed. А.Н. Нечухрин et al. (Гродно, 2008), pp. 10–11.

[85] А.С. Хотеев, 'Белорусская Православная Церковь. Минская духовная семинария', https://minds.by/ierej-aleksij-hoteev#.X1M1iVUzbIU (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021), n.p.

[86] Among others: А.С. Хотеев, *Переписка канцлера Льва Сапеги и архиепископа Иосафата Кунцевича* (Минск, 2015); id., 'Белорусская историография в российских исторических

M.O. Koyalovich", he wrote that the lands of Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine were parts of the Russian "empire" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and "West Russianism as an ideological trend supported the unity of that state against Polish separatism, which dreamed of restoring the old Commonwealth".[87] It was the context in which Khoteev explained the rise of the Belarusian national movement. He wrote that "local Belarusian separatists emerged from the circles of Polonised Catholic nobility, whose political views slowly evolved towards the future Belarusian state independent from Poland and the Russian Empire. In their radical circles, the idea of 'West Russianism' was perceived as negative, which trend continued even after Bolsheviks established their power".[88] According to Khoteev, Koyalovich was aware of the existence of ethnic differences between the communities of West and East Russia, yet considering them both together as one Russian nation, as he perceived the Russian cultural – or, more broadly, civilisational – unity, transcending all local differences.

Khoteev also observed that, during his studies, Koyalovich formulated three main theses of "West Russianism": (1) West Russia is an organic part of the Russian civilisation; (2) the unification of West Russia with Poland led to the cultural and social stratification of its inhabitants; (3) the population of West Rus'/Russia has always sought to restore unity with Russia.[89] Further on in his treatise, Khoteev wanted to verify these theses, in which he decided to refer to the studies of earlier and contemporary historians (mainly Sergey Solovyov and Soviet and "West Russian" researchers) and source material (printed materials from the nineteenth century and the Soviet times). Khoteev analysed Koyalovich's works by showing the history of the East-West clash of civilisations and the Polish-Catholic expansion in the Western lands of Rus'/Russia. He supported Koyalovich's deliberations when the latter outlined the basic traits unifying the Russian nation throughout history and dictating the "state life" (common historical tradition, language, and faith). Both scholars also believed that the loss of importance of Kievan Rus' and the rise of competing political centres, first in Halych and Volodymyr, then in Vilnius and Moscow, did not break the national unity. The struggle between these centres did

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журналах второй половины XIX – начала XX века', *Тетради по консерватизму: Альманах*, no. 2 (2020), 210–18; id., 'Генезис церковной унии в 1569—1596 гг. в трудах М.О. Кояловича', in: *Региональные аспекты современных историко-правовых, филолого-культурологических, психолого-педагогических, естественнонаучных и экономических исследований: сборник материалов международной научно-практической конференции, посвященной 85-летию Брянского государственного университета (г. Новозыбков, Брянская область 15–16 октября 2015 г.)*, ed. В.В. Мищенко, В.Н. Пустовойтов, and С.Н. Стародубец (Брянск, 2015), 124–31.

87 Id., Основы концепции западнорусизма в творчестве М.О.Кояловича', in: *Белорусская православная церков. Минская Духовная семинария*, https://minds.by/news/osnovy-kontseptsii-zapadnorusizma-v-tvorchestve-m-o-koyalovicha#.Xc7bwLhYDTA (accessed: 8 Apr. 2021), n.p.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

not involve division and fragmentation but rather the cumulation of common heritage. These transformations were disturbed by the political and military relations between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. The "bases" of the Polish existence (nobility ideology, Catholicism), foreign to Ruthenians, began suppressing the "bases" of the Russian civilisation. Once "the ruling class abandoned its Ruthenian (Russian) roots", the "folk" was subjected to religious and national oppression.[90] The "folk" looked for relief from that difficult situation in the Russian state, where the undisturbed development of similar cultural and civilisational "bases" (language, faith, nationality) was observed. According to Koyalovich – Khoteev wrote – this search was "spontaneous, intuitive, with no clear programme", as the "folk" in the Commonwealth and the Moscow state took no active part in political life. Khoteev also stressed that the Ruthenian/Russian "folk" living in the Commonwealth territory always sought to regain unity with the Russian Orthodox Church. The first wave of Uniates "returning" to Orthodoxy occurred on Ukrainian soil. In contrast, the Uniate clergy of the Belarusian territory was "unified" in 1839 "after several Polish and Catholic intrigues". The emancipation of peasants in 1861 dealt the final blow to the nobility ideology of dominance over the "folk", and "all obstacles to the civilisational development of the Ruthenian/Russian nation had been overcome".[91]

We can see that, in Khoteev's interpretation, the essence of Koyalovich's idea of "West Russia" was the supra-historical struggle between the Orthodox Ruthenian–Russian "folk" and such "non-folk" elements as the Polish-Catholic nobility or Belarusian nationalists. At the same time, it was a civilisational struggle, a clash between distinct cultural elements. Even though this struggle left such remnants as the cultural differences between West and East Russians, it was possible to unify them thanks to the separation from the Polish-Catholic expansion.[92] As Khoteev observed, the 1917 Revolution stopped this process. In the Bolshevik period, the "West Ruthenian" idea was forgotten, while now it is seen as the ideology of the "imperial" past. The historian called for restoring its memory while observing that historical analyses based on the "principles of civilisational approach" were the foundation of Treshchenok's handbooks of Belarusian history. The latter connected old "West Ruthenians/Russians" with contemporary Belarusians. Even more so, he analysed the past in the context of the "folk". It was that orientation towards the past, combined with the focus on "folk" themes, which was supposed to make contemporary Belarusians aware of their proximity to "West Ruthenians" and, therefore, Russians, as well as their civilisational and cultural detachment from Poles and Belarusian nationalists.[93]

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

Conclusion

As we can see, Koyalovich's writing became the subject of scientific interest, sparking a debate surrounding "West Russianism". This interest, however, was not solely related to scientific studies. It contributed to the creation of "neo-West Russianism", which started playing a significant role in the debate between two Belarusian intellectual circles: the Orthodox-Russian and the national one. Simultaneously, "neo-West Russianism" and Russocentrism became an important part of President Lukashenko's "programme" to suggest a face – other than the national one – of the Belarusian state. It was difficult, however, to erase old ways of thinking from the memory. No wonder that in Treshchenko's reflection, "neo-West Russianism" replaced… Marxism, and Koyalovich – Marxist ideologues. Still – faced with the cultural transformations of the last quarter-century – "neo-West Russianism constantly mutated, becoming one of pro-Russian trends. The researchers who analysed those trends within the so-called Russocentrism project noticed that they all shared particular traits: (1) idealism – evident from the constantly underscored prevalence of the spiritual (religious) over the material (mundane), departing into an irrational and irrationally justified world-view; (2) dualism – describing the world through dichotomies, black and white, good and evil, and proclaiming an eternal and total war between two principles (e.g., the highly spiritual Slavic world and the decaying, materialistic West); (3) conspiracy – perceiving the world through the set of conspiracy theories, seeking hidden intentions behind all actions, paranoid in constructing enemies (Belarusian nationalists, the West, Poles); (4) eschatology – in which the human civilisation is perceived as standing on the verge of annihilation (Belarus, as part of the Russian super-ethnos, may be saved from the fall only through the alliance with Russia).[94]

In this context, let us return to the works I have analysed above. Thus, what is discussed in Treshchenko's meditations are the actions of Koyalovich as a historian and socio-political and church activist, but also as the ideologue whose thoughts were to show the way of political transformation in present-day Belarus and the interpretation of its history. "West Russianism" became the – accepted by Lukashenko – "neo-West Russianism". Already in Treshchenok, Koyalovich's ideology had Russocentric traits. The former Soviet researcher placed Orthodox spirituality and religiosity above everything material and mundane (idealism), described the world through the East-West dichotomy (dualism), sought "Western" and "national" plots (conspiracy), but also predicted the fall of Belarusianness without the Russianness (eschatology). It was also the case of Cherepitsa's works. He copied all of Koyalovich's meditations, not only historical but also political ones, as well as research skills and methodology, even the whole axiological resource.

[94] А. Ластоўскі, 'Русацэнтрызм як ідэалагічны праект беларускай ідэнтычнасці', *Палітычная сфера*, no. 14 (2010), 59–60.

Even though in the works of Teplova and Khoteev the topic of Koyalovich undergoes further (re)constructions, its Russocentric qualities are still present. However, there are visible efforts of the authors to place Koyalovich in a broader interpretive reflection. By showing the supra-individual dimension of Koyalovich's historiography, Teplova argued that the "West Russian" ideology had a broader chronological scope and was an element of a wider process, an articulation of a fixed tendency. As such, it could not come into being in the mind of a single intellectual: rather, it was a constant meditation articulated in the works of the Orthodox Russian historiographic school. Was "West Russianism", however, only a scientific construct, an invention of historians? It was an important question, particularly in the context of – increasingly more pronounced – "creolism" of Lukashenko. In response, attempts were made to show that "Western Russianism" was not just a whim but rather a fixed element of the Russian-Orthodox culture, or civilisation, in which the roots of East and West, Orthodoxy and Catholicism constantly competed with each other, while the "folk" had to struggle with "nonfolk" elements: Poles-Catholics and Belarusian nationalists. Whereas Khoteev understood, thanks to Koyalovich, that only the Orthodox-Russian "folk" guarantees the Belarusian-Russian unity, and that only through the "folk" one can… pursue historiography.

Abstract

The historiographic writings of Mikhail Koyalovich (1828–1891) remain an object of scientific interest, while he himself is seen as an ideologue of "West Russianism". The author of this paper was interested in the mnemohistorical question of how narrations concerning Koyalovich were incorporated into the scholarly discourse about history and memory in present-day Belarus and the political decisions of President Aleksandr Lukashenko. Yakov Treshchenok discussed Koyalovich's activities as a historian and socio-political activist, observing at the same time that his ideology should define the way of political transformations in present-day Belarus (neo-West Russianism). Valeriy Cherepitsa showed the interpretive transformations of Koyalovich's "West Russian" history writing. Valentina Teplova – while stressing the supra-individual dimension of his historiography – argued that the "West Russian" ideology was a fixed meditation articulated in the treatises of the Orthodox-Russian school of historiography. Whereas Alexey Khoteev was convinced that "West Russianism" was an element of the Russian-Orthodox civilisation, and Koyalovich's merit was to show the Orthodox-Russian "folk" as the guarantor of Belarusian–Russian unity. The author of this paper concluded at the end that the fixation of Belarusian historians on Koyalovich served to create a new interpretation of "West Russianism", which began an important component of President Lukashenko's "programme" which was meant to suggest a new face of the Belarusian statehood, different from the national one.

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