

RFE/RL: Vera Rich, a British Translator from Belarusian, Dies at 73

Belarus is a lonely country and Belarusian is a lonely language ignored by its own state and by most Belarusians, who almost exclusively use Russian in their everyday life. The death of [Vera Rich](#) is a big loss for Belarus although most Belarusians will hardly even hear of it. And it is God's big gift to us that there were and there are foreign friends of Belarus like her. Vera Rich has also been known as a translator of Ukrainian literature to English. However, her work was much more vital and important for Belarus than for Ukraine, where the national language and the national culture are in a much better state. Ukraine has awarded Vera Rich with the Order of Queen Olga, one of the country's most important awards. But despite her significant work in promoting Belarusian culture, she has been ignored by Belarusian officials who since mid 1990s continue the Soviet policy of Russification and discrimination of Belarusian national culture.

Her first translation of Belarusian literature to English was published by the Belarusian Munich newspaper Bačkaŭščyna in 1957. Vera Rich translated works by Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Natallia Arsiennieva, Maksim Bahdanovič, Aleś Harun, Ciotka, Larysa Hienijuš, Zmitrok Biadulia, Kandrat Krapiva, Voĺha Ipatava, Nil Hilievič and others. Vera Rich was born April 24, 1936 in London. In 1960 she published Outlines, her first collection of poetry. In 1963 she published her second collection of poems called Portents and Images. In 1969, the magazine Nature appointed Vera Rich as correspondent for Eastern Europe and the USSR. She has for the first time visited Belarus only in 1991. After that, she has been visiting

Belarus every year or every six months. In 1971, under the patronage of UNESCO, she published the first-ever anthology of Belarusian poetry translated into a Western language: Like Water, Like Fire: An Anthology of Byelorussian Poetry from 1828 to the Present Day. The book was banned in the USSR. In 1977 she published a translation of Taras na Parnasie together with Arnold McMillin. In 2004 Vera Rich published a new collection of Belarusian poetry: Poems on Liberty: Reflections for Belarus.

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