

The Journal of Belarusian Studies: Between Belarus and the West

On 9 June Belarusian state television [reported](#) the launch of the Journal of Belarusian Studies in London. It appears that even the Belarusian state TV channel, usually silent about such initiatives, appreciated the importance of the event – the oldest academic journal on Belarus making its return after a 25 year break.

Published by the Centre for Transition Studies and the Anglo-Belarusian Society, the Journal remains faithful to the original mission to promote Belarusian studies in the West. But unlike in the past, the revived Journal will come out in two languages: Belarusian and English to serve as a bridge between Belarusian and Western scholars.

Helping Western Scholars Discover Belarus

The Journal builds on a long tradition. Fr Alexander Nadson, one of the founders of the Journal and the librarian of Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library in London, explained to Belarus Digest that back in 1950s they wanted to promote Belarusian culture in the United Kingdom.

Fr Nadson underlines that these were primarily British people who pushed the whole project forward. Among them was Lord Auberon Herbert and Anglo-French lawyer Guy Picarda, who both took an active role in publishing the Journal. Already in 1960s the Anglo-Belarusian Society began organising public lectures about Belarus in London. Guy Picarda came up with the idea of publishing a journal which would cover Belarus from different academic angles.

In 1965 the first issue of the Journal came out. Professor Robert Auty from Oxford University wrote in the introduction that its mission was to be "a source of information for non-specialist readers about a little-known East European people and its contribution to civilisation". Although Belarus did not exist as an independent state between 1965 and 1988 the Journal of Byelorussian Studies, as it was known in the past, presented Belarusian culture and history to the English-language readership.

The Journal Launches at the University College London

On 21 May 2013 those who were involved with the journal in the past and with its resurrection gathered for a formal launch at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies – one of the world's leading specialist institutions for the study of Central and Eastern Europe. The panel included Fr Alexandr Nadson, Professor Arnold McMillin and the Journal's editor Dr Yaraslau Kryvoi.

The panellists recalled the history of the Journal and that the renewed Journal aims to cover a broad spectrum of disciplines such as Belarusian culture, history for the Western readership. According to Yaraslau Kryvoi the new vision of Journal also includes an ambition to become a platform for Belarusian and Western academics to share their ideas. In addition to academic articles, the Journal will also include a chronicle of current events of the Anglo-Belarusian Society, as well as sections reviewing books and Internet resources.

The revived Journal of Belarusian Studies is a joint initiative of Anglo-Belarusian Society and the Centre for Transition Studies, an independent think tank with analysts based in London and Minsk. Dr Kryvoi explained that the two most important challenges included finding a team of dedicated people and funding.

Although the idea to put out the journal was already established in 2011, raising money and putting together an editorial team, translators and designers took a while. Attracting high quality academics required not only management skills but also relying on personal connections and the reputation of the Journal which it had developed since 1965.

A Platform to Exchange Ideas between Western and Belarusian Scholars

The renewed Journal represents a truly international and interdisciplinary publication. It features articles from the social science and humanities disciplines ranging from literature and history to political science.

In the new issue, Journal's editorial is followed by an article of Dr Andrej Kotljarchuk from Stockholm who deals with [memory politics](#) in Belarus and how Belarusian authorities are using it to achieve their own ends. He presents and interprets contemporary trends in memory politics of the authorities. In particular, through the way the state commemorations of the World War II tragedies such the Holocaust, genocide of the Roma people and mass killings of the representatives of the Polish minority.

President of the North American Association of Belarusian Studies Professor David Marples looks at [foreign policy of Belarus](#) towards the West and Russia. He examined relations between Brussels and Minsk between 2006 until the 2010 presidential elections. The author sheds light upon the reaction of the European Union to the aftermath of the elections and the effect of sanctions imposed on Belarusian authorities.

Natalia Sliz, a scholar from Hrodna, describes the rules of [noblewomen's dowry](#) within the legal system in the 16th and 17th centuries Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Many consider the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the golden age of

Belarusian history. The Belarusian element was particularly prominent during the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The core of its territory occupied by what is today Belarus, the language was old Belarusian and it had a slavic population constituted the majority of population.

Professor Emeritus Arnold McMillin's of University College London wrote on the [poetry of Belarusian prisoners](#) serving their sentences for political crimes under Russian, Polish, Soviet and today's rulers. Father Alexander Nadson prepared a bibliography of the assets Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library which deal with proclamation of the Belarusian People's Republic in 1918.

Readers and libraries can order hard copies of the Journal [online](#). Since the main idea is to popularise Belarusian studies for a wide English-language readership, the archive of all issues of the Journal, including the most recent issue are available free of charge at belarusjournal.com. The editorial board has already opened a call for papers for the next issue. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis and the final deadline is 31 August 2013.