

The Gospel  
according  
to Luke  
in Belarussian

ПАВОДЛЕ  
Лукі  
СВЯТОЕ  
ЄВАНГЕЛЛЕ



## CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| The Dream Comes True  |     |
| <i>Lizavieta Dziekuć-Malej, Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej Jr.</i> . . . . .   | 82  |
| A Man of the Church and Society   |     |
| <i>Aliaxander Barysiuk, Vasil Kreidzič, Siarhiej Bryščiel,<br/>Siarhiej Radkovič, Jury Apanovič</i> . . . . . | 83  |
| A Word on the Book  |     |
| <i>Aliė Suša</i> . . . . .  | 84  |
| The Bible Translations into Belarusian  |     |
| <i>Antoni Bokun</i> . . . . .   | 87  |
| The Bible – a Source to Transform Societies   |     |
| <i>Johannes Reimer</i> . . . . .  | 98  |
| Brest and the Bible: from Reformation to Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej  |     |
| <i>Valery Maroz</i> . . . . .   | 103 |
| Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej: Christian and Belarusian   |     |
| <i>Andruś Unučak</i> . . . . .  | 107 |

Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej founded the *Khatka* (Belarusian Hut) and cultural activities there. Dziekuć-Malej played the violin) Dziekuć-Malej translated 17 his articles were published in and his wife Sierafima together of the four Gospels into

of Dziekuć-Malej's life, wrote, pastor Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej she was responsible for the Alexander Paško from Canada, stified to that, saying, "When- translated New Testament books and come back with almost no

Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej uncon- the Day of the Bible even in the nence, and proven patriotism

succeeded the long period of example of how the Protestant

Protestantism (along with other become one of the *institutional* story of Protestantism in our aruss belonging to the Euro-

ava

*Andrus Unučak*

## LUKAŠ DZIEKUĆ-MALEJ: CHRISTIAN AND BELARUSIAN

Pastor Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej (1888–1955) is undoubtedly a figure of national importance. The first translator of the Bible into the modern Belarusian language, the founder of the Belarusian schools in the Hrodna region, the founder of evangelical churches in Western Belarus, he left a significant mark on the national history. L. Dziekuć-Malej is a person of the Belarusian Great Evangelical Awakening, who influenced many spheres of society in the 1920s – 1930s.

This edition is the first attempt at reprinting the Gospel of Luke in the translation of L. Dziekuć-Malej and Anton Luckievič. This Gospel was published in 1926 in the Baptist publishing house "Kompas" ("Compass") in Lodz, and this year marks the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that landmark event for Belarusian history and culture. Together with the text of the Gospel, in our opinion, the reader may be interested in the biography of the initiator of its translation and the historical context in which he lived and worked.

Thanks to the multi-year work of many researchers, the main points of the biography and legacy of L. Dziekuć-Malej were studied at the proper level. Here it is worth mentioning the work of the deacon of the Brest church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists on Fartečnaja Street Šciapan Piekun (1944–2018), the British researcher of Belarusian history and culture Guy Picarda (1931–2007), historians Aliena Hlahoŭskaja, Uladzimir Liachoŭski, Andrej Čarniakievič, Anatol Sidarevič, Siarhiej Čyhryn, etc.

## Origins

Lukaš Dziukuć-Malej was born in the village (or in *zascienak*) of Vialikija Šastaki, Slonim paviet, Hrodna guberniya (today it is most likely Dziaŭlava district of the Hrodna region). L. Dziukuć-Malej gave himself information about the place of his birth on October 28, 1925, to the Polish authorities when he was obtaining Polish citizenship. There he also pointed out that Vialikija Šastaki belonged to the “Rahotna gmina”<sup>1</sup>. In 1897 Vialikija Šastaki belonged to the “Rahotna gmina” and it was a *folwark*, where 9 people lived<sup>2</sup>.

According to the All-Russian census of 1897, 226,274 people lived in the Slonim paviet (powiat) of the Hrodna guberniya (governorate). The majority were Orthodox – more than 167,000 people. More than 23,000 people were Catholics and only 156 people were Protestants<sup>3</sup>.

## Historical context

In 1888, the year of L. Dziukuć-Malej's birth, the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' was widely celebrated in the Russian Empire. Festive events were held throughout the Empire. The festive events were organized at the state level. So, in Hrodna, during the church procession to the Kaloža Church, both banks of the Nioman river “were equipped with troops”, the governor, the commander of the infantry division that stood near Hrodna, representatives of the Orthodox clergy and Orthodox brotherhoods took part in the solemn procession. Similar events were held in several places of the native to L. Dziukuć-Malej Hrodna region – Pružany, Vaŭkavysk, Izabielin, and in Brest as well. Almost every celebration ended with the

singing of the anthem “God Save the Tsar”, a demonstration of portraits of Emperor Alexander III and icons of St. Vladimir. Similar events were held in the following year of 1889, when the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Unification with the Uniates” with Orthodoxy was celebrated<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, in 1888, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Uprising of 1863–1864 was celebrated quite widely, although underground. The famous Hrodna writer Eliza Ażeška wrote her famous works especially for this date – the novel “Nad Niemnem” (“Over the Nioman river”) and a series of short stories “Gloria victis”<sup>5</sup>.

The birth time of L. Dziukuć-Malej was a time of cultural and spiritual fight for the hearts and minds of Belarusians. On the one hand, there was a very strong local tradition that has been preserved since the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and on the other – the policy of the authorities of the Russian Empire, who wanted this region to “become Russian”.

After the defeat of the National Liberation Uprising of 1863–1864, the Russian authorities sought to expunge the memory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) from the public sphere. It came to fighting with the names of villages and towns, streets and squares of cities, and even with photos. So, the authorities banned the distribution through the peddler trade of painting reproductions by the famous artist Jan Matejko, among which is “Reception of the Russian Embassy by Stephen Báthory”, “Partitions of Poland” and others. The archives contain several police reports on the sale of paintings reproductions depicting the history of the GDL. Most of these cases related to the Viŭnia and Hrodna guberniyas, where the hero of this essay was born. So, for example, there is information that in the Hrodna guberniya in 1880 photo-

<sup>1</sup> Дзяржаўны архіў Брацкай вобласці. – Ф. 1. Воп. 2. Спр. 2327. Арк. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Гароды і вёскі Беларусі: энцыклапедыя: у 10 т. / Нац. акадэмія навук Беларусі. Ін-т мастацтвазнаўства, этнаграфіі і фальклору. – Мінск: Беларуская Энцыклапедыя імя П. Броўкі, 2004–2019. – Т. 9: Гродзенская вобласць, кн. 2. – Мінск, 2016. – С. 229.

<sup>3</sup> Первая Всесоюзная перепись населения Российской империи. IX. Гродненская губерния. – Санкт-Петербург, 1903. – С. 263.

<sup>4</sup> *Раманаў С.* Спектальны дзень правішчы: афіцыйная святочная культура мясцячка Сівелан (другая палова XIX – пачатак XX ст.) / С. Раманаў // *Мінулае і сучаснасць Сівеланскага краю: зборнік навуковых артыкулаў*. – Мінск, 2018. – С. 156.

<sup>5</sup> *Ажэшка Э.* Над Неманам: раманы «Гloria victis» павесны / Эліза Ажэшка. – Мінск: Беларуская навука, 2020. – С. 17.

copies of Jan Matejko's paintings, dedicated to the Uprising of 1863–1864, were distributed<sup>8</sup>.

Historical research, archival documents, periodical press materials, and other sources show that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> cc. there were several alternatives to the development of Belarusian society. The most important task on the agenda was the restoration of the Belarusian statehood. The stumbling point on the realization of this goal was that the authorities of the Russian Empire, which annexed Belarus at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. denied the very fact of the existence of a separate Belarusian people, considering the Belarusians as a part of the “great Russian nation”. In such circumstances, it was dangerous to even raise the issue of Belarusian statehood.

The tsarist government sought to maximally weaken the influence of local Belarusian elites in the field of historical memory. This goal was to be achieved by changing the socio-cultural landscape, as well as organizing the celebration of anniversaries related to Russian history, and banning the celebration of memorable dates related to the history of the GDL and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Let us list only some Russian anniversaries, the celebration of which was mandatory in Belarus and had ideological significance for the Russian government: 1862 – the celebration of the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian state, 1872 – the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emperor Peter I, 1877 – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emperor Alexander I, 1888 – the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Baptism of the Russian Land”, 1889 – the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “unification of the Uniates”, 1896 – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Empress Catherine II, 1899 – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, 1902 – 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hrodna guberniya, 1912 – 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary “The Patriotic War” of 1812. At the same time, the Russian authorities changed the Belarusian toponymic landscape, replacing the “Polish” and “Catholic” names with

<sup>8</sup> *Соркіна І. Палітыка царызму ў Беларусі пасля паўстання 1863–1864 гг. (на матэрыялах Літоўскага дзяржаўнага гістарычнага архіва) / І. Соркіна // Паўстанне 1863–1864 гг. у Польшчы, Беларусі, Літве і Украіне: гісторыя і навіны : зборнік навуковых артыкулаў. – Мінск, 2014. – С. 474.*

“Russian” and “Orthodox”. Thus, in 1866 only, 338 localities were renamed in the Hrodna guberniya (which included the city of Brest).

The elites of Belarus, in return, sought to preserve the memory of the GDL and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the wide, though illegal, celebration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lublin Union in 1869, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth army over the Turks near Vienna in 1883, and especially the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the uprising of 1863–1864 in 1888, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the famous Belarusian-Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz in 1898 and 1899<sup>9</sup>.

It is important to note that a special secret committee was established in Viłnia to celebrate the Mickiewicz jubilee to establish a monument to the poet. The secretary of this committee was a classic of Belarusian literature, Francišak Bahuševič, who wrote the famous words “do not leave our Belarusian language so that you do not die...”. The poet wrote these lines in 1891 when the situation with the Belarusian language was very difficult. In 1863–1900, as a result of the ban on the Belarusian press, in the Russian Empire, only 9 small-format pamphlets, with a total volume of 160 pages, were published in Belarusian<sup>9</sup>.

At the same time, the nineteenth century was a period of mass distribution of biblical texts on the territory of Belarus and the beginning of the revival of the Protestant Church. The Russian Bible Society, established in 1812, was engaged in the mass distribution of biblical texts in Belarus in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. The Society aimed to maximize the distribution of the Bible in different languages and among all classes. For this purpose, the Bible books were purchased and printed at the expense of the Society itself, so that they could be sold cheaply or even distributed free of charge to everyone who wanted to get acquainted with the text of the Holy Scripture. The Society consisted of representatives of all Christian denominations. In the guber-

<sup>9</sup> *Соркіна І. Палітыка царызму ў Беларусі ... С. 479.*

<sup>9</sup> *Romanowski A. Pozytywizm na Litwie / A. Romanowski. – Kraków, 2003. – S. 40.*

<sup>9</sup> *Гуронак Ю. Мадэрнізм і гісторыя Беларусі / Ю. Гуронак. – Вільня : Інстытут беларускага, 2006. – С. 167.*

niya cities, departments of the Society were created, and in the paviets Bible associations.

The Lithuanian-Vilnia Bible Department of the Russian Bible Society distributed books of Holy Scripture in Belarus. The Department was headed by the chief superior of the region the Lithuanian military governor A.M. Rimsky-Korsakov. The Lithuanian-Vilnia Department included priests of all Christian denominations, officials, šliachta, and representatives of the Vilnia University. The grand opening of the Department took place on October 25, 1816. Soon a brochure about the Russian Bible Society goals was published in Polish, which was distributed free of charge throughout the territory of Belarus. 147 people were registered as members of the Department<sup>10</sup>.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> cc. – the time of the emergence and expansion of the Evangelical Baptist movement in Belarus. Since the 1880s, the first Baptist churches were established in the Homieĺ region. After 1905, denominational legislation in the Russian Empire began to liberalize, which made it possible for Belarusian Evangelical Christianity to develop more widely. Especially considering that Protestantism was a traditional denomination for Belarus even before the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

The Decree on Religious Tolerance of April 17, 1905, allowed the free transition from one Christian religion to another. Although it was noted that only the Orthodox Church can convince believers of other faiths to accept its doctrine.

In November 1905, an order was issued by the Minister of Public Education of the Russian Empire, according to which the children of evangelical Christians were exempt from studying the Law of God according to the Orthodox canon in public schools.

Finally, on October 17, 1906, a decree was issued "On The Order of Formation and Activity of Old Believers and Sectarian Communities". According to this decree, an application from at least 50 believers was required to register an evangelical church. The value of the property purchased by the local evangelical church could exceed 5,000 rubles only after the Emperor's personal permission. However, the main thing was that for the first time in a long time, the possibility of official registration of evangelical churches appeared.

It should be noted that the most numerous denominations in Belarus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. were the Evangelical-Lutheran (Lutherans) and Evangelical-Reformed (Calvinists) denominations. The total number of representatives of these denominations was 143,627 believers. In particular, Lutherans mostly lived in the Viciebsk guberniya. They were mostly Germans and Latvians. For example, in the Polack Evangelical Lutheran Church, on one Sunday the service was in German, and on another – in Latvian. This was because there were about 300 Germans in the Polack parish, who mostly lived in the city, and 900 Latvians, who lived in the Polack and Liepieĺ paviets. Whereas the Calvinists were mostly from the Belarusian šliachta.

As for Baptists and Evangelical Christians, there was a following situation:

- In the Mahilioŭ guberniya, according to the Orthodox clergy at the beginning of 1906, there were up to 500 Baptists, who mostly came from the Orthodox environment. All these believers lived in Homieĺ and Raħačoŭ paviets. In 1911, Baptists appeared in Čavusy and Bychaŭ paviets.

- In the Minsk guberniya at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., there were about 100 Baptists, some of them converted from Orthodoxy. All of them lived in Minsk, Rečyca, and Mazyr paviets.

- In the Hrodna guberniya, Baptism and Evangelical Christianity developed on the basis of Orthodoxy and Lutheranism. The main centers of the evangelical movement were Bialystok, Hrodna, and Pružany. In terms

<sup>10</sup> Першае публічнае паседжаньне Віленскага аддзелу Расійскага Біблійнага Таварыства // *Arche*. – 2017. – № 3. – С. 246.

of quantity, if we count the members of the registered churches, there were about 200 Evangelical Christians in the Hrodna region<sup>11</sup>.

- In the Vilnia guberniya, small Baptist Churches existed in Vilnia and Valožyn.

Before World War I, in 1912–1914, there was a significant deterioration of the situation with freedom of conscience in the Russian Empire, which also affected Belarus. At this time, the pressure on those who converted from Orthodoxy to Evangelical Christianity increased, the prosecution of one of the main leaders of the Baptist Union of Churches, Wilhelm Feiler, began, and some presbyters of Baptist churches in Russia and Ukraine received prison sentences for “seducing from Orthodoxy”.

However, despite the significant deterioration of the situation with freedom of conscience, Evangelical Churches continued to grow. So, for example, in the Viciebsk guberniya at the beginning of 1912, 27 people officially converted to the Evangelical faith from Orthodoxy, 264 people converted from Lutheranism to Baptism<sup>12</sup>.

## Conversion

It is known that L. Dziekuć-Malej came from a family of teachers. Having lost his parents Mikalaj Dziekuć-Malej and Maryja from Tarasievičy at an early age, he was taken under the guardianship of Funt family. A. Funt was a teacher at the Klimovičy rural public school in Slonim paviet. It is also known that L. Dziekuć-Malej graduated from the teachers' seminary in 1906<sup>13</sup>, but it unknown which one.

<sup>11</sup> Російські дзяржаўны гістарычны архіў (РДЦА). – Ф. 821. Воп. 133. Спр. 3142. Арк. 87 – 87 адв.

<sup>12</sup> Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі. – Ф. 1430. Воп. 1. Спр. 48280. Арк. 169–171.

<sup>13</sup> *Пекун С. Лукаш Дзіекуць-Малеі: жыццё і служэнне / С. Пекун // Лукаш Дзіекуць-Малеі і беларускі перакладчы Губін – аб мадэрнізму. Арт і дзак. – Брэст: Альфа-прам, 2011. – С. 110–111.*

The future famous pastor repented and was baptized at the turn of 1911–1912 while serving in the tsarist army in Bialystok. Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej was baptized by a presbyter of the Bialystok Baptist church Raman Chamiak. Bialystok Baptist church, of which Robert Schloser was the first presbyter in 1901, consisted mainly of German believers. So, before World War I, among the 86 members of the mentioned church, 55 were Germans, 30 were Slavs and 1 was a Jew<sup>14</sup>. So, we note that L. Dziekuć-Malej turned to God in a predominantly German-speaking church.

The 1912 year in the life of I. Dziekuć-Malej was a year of great activity. It is clear that he left the army and began active evangelistic activities. Also in the same year, he began translating the Gospel of Mark into the Belarusian language<sup>15</sup>. In the same year, during the evangelization in the miastečka of Lyskava, Pružany district, he was arrested and transferred to Brest. And from Lyskava to Brest, he was led tied to a gendarme horse. In total, he followed the horse for 170 km<sup>16</sup>.

## Bible courses in St. Petersburg

In 1913 L. Dziekuć-Malej left for St. Petersburg, where he entered the Bible courses of Ivan Prokhanov (1869–1935). It can be assumed that a large influence on L. Dziekuć-Malej was made by the leader of the Russian Evangelical Christians. I. From the moment of his repentance, I. Prokhanov set himself a clear goal – combine service to God with higher education<sup>17</sup>. For I. Prokhanov there was no contradiction between reason and faith, which logically complemented each other. Therefore, he eventually became one of the most educated Protestants of the Russian Empire, and what is important, he was able to use his education. I. Prokhanov recalled that when the

<sup>14</sup> *Bednarczyk K. Historia zborow baptystow w Polsce do 1939 r. / K. Bednarczyk. Warszawa, 1997. – S. 170.*

<sup>15</sup> *Архіў рукапісаў бібліятэкі Аляксандраўскага Літэрацыйнага Рухавішкі (АРБЛІДР). – Ф. 21. Спр. 273. Арк. 1 адв., 19 адв.*

<sup>16</sup> *Пекун С. Лукаш Дзіекуць-Малеі: жыццё і служэнне / С. 111.*

<sup>17</sup> *Проханов И. Воспоминания 1869–1933 гг. / Проханов И. Москва, 1993. – С. 53.*

State Duma appeared, in cases of persecution of evangelical Christians by the state, he asked for protection from representatives of political parties that were represented in the Duma. As a result, the Octobrist and Cadets parties assisted the Evangelical Christians, but not the socialists and monarchists<sup>18</sup>.

When the St. Petersburg community of Evangelical Christians, where the pastor was I. Prokhanov, received registration, he began trying to obtain official permission to organize Bible courses at the church. Less than a year and a half passed from receiving registration on November 26, 1908, to the first petition for permission to open Bible courses on April 10, 1910<sup>19</sup>. I. Prokhanov submitted petitions to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Public Education. To these petitions, he added a program of courses, sent explanatory notes explaining the need for their organization, until finally in 1913 the Bible courses were officially registered and did start their work.

We don't know much about his short period of life and study in the imperial capital. As I. Prokhanov recalled himself among the 19 students of his Bible courses, there were 5 Lithuanians, 1 German, 1 Georgian, 1 Ossetian, and 1 Belarusian<sup>20</sup>. It is obvious that this Belarusian was Lukaš Dziakuć-Malej.

It is worth noting that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> c. St. Petersburg was one of the main centers of the Belarusian national movement. About 70,000 Belarusians lived, worked, and studied there<sup>21</sup>. According to the amount of the Belarusian population, the imperial capital was “the most Belarusian city”. In 1902 Vaclaŭ Ivanoŭski (1880–1943) founded the “Circle of Belarusian Folk Enlightenment and Culture” in St. Petersburg. It was a youth organization that published Belarusian books. At the same time, the future lead-

ers of the Belarusian movement brothers Ivan and Anton Luckievič were studying in the city on the Neva. Lukas Dziakuć-Malej was well acquainted with A. Luckievič (1884–1947) and closely cooperated with him during the organization of the Belarusian school in 1918–1920 and the translation of the Bible. In 1906 Vaclaŭ Ivanouski founded the publishing society “Zahlianie sonca i ŭ naša vakonca” (“Sun will look in our window as well”) in St. Petersburg, which before the beginning of World War I published 38 books in an edition of 100,000 numbered copies. In this publishing society the first books by Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, Alaiza Paškievič (Ciotka), and others were published.

About the time when Lukaš Dziakuć-Malej came to St. Petersburg “Belarusian Literary and Scientific Society of Students of St. Petersburg University” was founded and registered in the city on the Neva River. On December 30, 1912, the council of university professors approved the Society charter and it began its active work. Branislaŭ Taraškievič, a student of the Faculty of History and Philology, was chosen as the head of the Society. The purpose of the student organization was a comprehensive study of Belarus and consolidation of the Belarusian student youth of [St. Petersburg. So, for example, at the meetings of the Circle, there was Janka Kupala, who at that time, as well as L. Dziakuć-Malej was studying in St. Petersburg<sup>22</sup>.

Belarusian students also grouped around a teacher of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy Branislaŭ Epimach-Šypila (1859–1934), published the magazine “Maladaja Bielaruś” (“Young Belarus”) and the newspaper “Ranica” (“Morning”). It is possible that L. Dziakuć-Malej might have been familiar with these publications.

Interestingly, the St. Petersburg Belarusian literary and scientific society was associated with the Hrodna society of Belarusian youth “Chatka” (“Hut”), organized in 1909 by priest Francišak Hrynkievič (1884–1933).

<sup>22</sup> Семанкевіч Р. Янка Купала і беларускае адраджэнне / Р. Семанкевіч. – Мінск: Белліт, 2012. – С. 137.

<sup>18</sup> Проханов И. В котле России. 1869–1933 ... С. 127.

<sup>19</sup> РДГА. – Ф. 1276. Воп. 8. Спр. 590. Арк. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Проханов И. В котле России. 1869–1933 ... С. 134.

<sup>21</sup> Нікалаеў М. Беларускі Пецярбург / М. Нікалаеў. – Санкт-Пецярбург, 2009. – С. 226.



The Hrodna “Chatka” included L. Sivickaja (Zoska Vietas), Adam Byčkovski, who was one of the founders of the St. Petersburg Society, Anton Byčkoŭski – later editor of the newspaper “Boclarus”, Jazep Liavicki, Jan-ka Čarapuk, and others. Hrodna residents held Belarusian parties, staged plays, organized a choir, read lectures and essays. The main goal of “Chatka” was to raise young people in a Christian and patriotic spirit. Even the hectographic magazine “Kolas z našaj nivy” (“Ears from our cornfield”) was published, in the preface to which the sower from the Gospel of Jesus Christ is mentioned<sup>23</sup>.

It should be noted that in 1918–1919 I. Dziekuć-Malej was a member of the Belarusian club “Belarusian Chatka”<sup>24</sup> in Hrodna, and he also began his ministry in Brest with the foundation of the “Belarusian Chatka”<sup>25</sup>.

At the same time, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., cultural and educational societies appeared also among the Belarusian Catholic clergy. Such a society was in the Viłnia Theological Seminary (1911) and the Catholic Theological Academy in St. Petersburg (1912). Many remarkable figures of the Belarusian Catholic movement came out of these societies: priest A. Stankievič, V. Hadlieŭski, K. Stepovič, A. Astramovič, Z. Jakuć, F. Abrantovič, V. Šutovič, P. Tatarynovič, A. Cikota, Ja. Rešač, and others<sup>26</sup>.

In 1913 “Naša Niva” wrote that Belarusians lack only a national Church to have a complete system of national values<sup>27</sup>. Interestingly, before this, in 1909, A. Luckievič believed that the Uniate Church had the historical potential to become a church for Belarusians<sup>28</sup>. But, as one can see, the matter of the Union, which was actively moved by the brothers Ivan

<sup>23</sup> Станкевіч А. З Богам да Беларусі / А. Станкевіч. – Вільня, 2008. – С. 475–477.

<sup>24</sup> Ляхоўскі У. Гарадзенскі «эпізод» жыцця пастара Лукаша Дзекуць-Малей / Ляхоўскі У., Чарнякевіч А. // Лукаш Дзекуць-Малей і беларускія пераклады Бібліі : зб. матэрыялаў, арт. і дак. – Брэст : Альгэргнагіва, 2011. – С. 113.

<sup>25</sup> Пекун С. Лукаш Дзекуць-Малей: жыццё і служэнне ... С. 148.

<sup>26</sup> Станкевіч А. З Богам да Беларусі ... С. 481–483.

<sup>27</sup> Лішні, Наша цэнсарацыя // Наша Нива. – 1913. – 31 траўн. – С. 1–2.

<sup>28</sup> АРБАТДП. – Ф. 21. Спр. 336. Арк. 16.

and Anton Luckievič, who had established contact with the Metropolitan of Galicia Andrey Sheptytsky<sup>29</sup>, slowed down.

It was difficult at the very dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. to demand permission from the Russian authorities to form Belarusian schools, while there were no Belarusian textbooks, and first of all, the grammar of the Belarusian language. It was also difficult to talk about the national church if there was no Bible in Belarusian, no church environment that could potentially be interested in the Belarusian translation and use of the Holy Scripture.

As for the Orthodox Church, we can only recall the problems with which the issue of translating the Bible into Russian was discussed in the 1860s. But even after the appearance of the Synodal translation in 1876, the dominance of the Church Slavonic language in Orthodox worship remained. The situation was a bit different with the Catholic Church. There was a tradition of supporting national movements in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, including the Belarusian ones. There was even an attempt to translate various religious literature into Belarusian. In addition, in 1912–1913, princess Mahdaliena Radzivil advocated for the Holy Scripture to be translated into Belarusian. Thus, in the announcements of the Belarusian Publishing Society, which existed mainly on the money of the princess, it was indicated that the primary task of the society is to translate the Old and New Testaments into Belarusian<sup>30</sup>.

So, in 1912–1913, when L. Dziekuć-Malej started to translate the Gospel of Mark, the Belarusian National Movement voiced ideas about the need for a Belarusian national church and the need to translate the Bible into the Belarusian language. And what is even more important – not only they were announced, but specific measures were taken for this purpose.

<sup>29</sup> АРБАТДП. – Ф. 21. Спр. 2215. Арк. 690; Ф. 138. Спр. 2229. Арк. 449.

<sup>30</sup> Наша Нива. – 1913. – 16 жніўн. – С. 1. / Z rúchu bielaruśkajho // Belarus. – 1913. – Czynniki. – 5, 5.

## World War I in the fate of Belarusian Protestantism

The beginning of World War I was also the beginning of a large-scale anti-protestant campaign. Already on August 4, 1914, the director of the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire sent a “completely confidential” letter to the governors informing the local authorities that the department had information about the “anti-militaristic propaganda” of the Baptists<sup>31</sup>.

After a series of unfortunate events for the Russian Empire on the front, anti-protestant government measures intensified, and a specific ideological base was put under it. So, in the second half of 1915, the Minister of the Interior wrote to the governors that it was Germany that was preparing “Baptist personnel” to undermine the Russian state. The Hamburg Baptist Seminary, – he claimed, – had 18 students from the Russian Empire – compared to “only” 36 from the rest of the world. The same proportion, according to his data, was in the Stettin Women’s Missionary Seminary, and the Berlin Bible School. Many immigrants from the Russian Empire studied at the seminary of Hausdorf (Prussia). Besides, natives of the Russian Empire studied for free. Therefore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, together with the Holy Synod, began to draft new legislation to restrict the Protestant movement<sup>32</sup>.

In his reflections, the Minister of the Interior went even further after a while. He began to develop the idea that Germany “skillfully uses the religious organizations of England and America” to turn the baptists against Russia<sup>33</sup>.

On June 24, 1916, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Empire officially published in the Petrograd press information that the Bap-

tists wrote allegedly a letter to the Minister of the Interior, in which they allegedly praised Kaiser Wilhelm II, calling him “the first Baptist” and wished him victory in the war. At the same time, the Ministry of Internal Affairs officially called all(!) Baptists “German agents”<sup>34</sup>.

On the other hand, from the reviews of the periodical press devoted to Evangelical Christianity, which were made by the Department of Foreign Confessions, it followed that there was an increase in hostility to Protestants in society, under the influence of propaganda<sup>35</sup>.

In the meantime, the imperial authorities were preparing for a radical revision of the liberal religious legislation that was introduced in 1905–1906. Already on May 12, 1916, the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent to the Synod and the Ministry of Justice a “draft conclusion on sectarians”, which provided for the protection of public evangelical services<sup>36</sup>.

Moreover, almost immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, the Russian authorities began large-scale deportation of the Lutheran population from the frontline. As a result, German-language newspapers and public organizations were closed down out-of-court<sup>37</sup>. Not only men of military age were deported, but also other “suspicious” persons. Among those deported were many Lutheran pastors<sup>38</sup>.

If we talk about Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and Stundists, the situation was similar. On December 12, 1914, the Minister of the Interior drew the attention of the governors to the fact that Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and Adventists could carry out activities of an “anti-government nature”. On that basis, the minister ordered the gover-

<sup>31</sup> РДГА. – Ф. 821. Вон. 133. Спр. 312. Арк. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Спр. 369. Арк. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Арк. 27.

<sup>34</sup> Лиценбергер О. А. Евангелиско лютеранская церковь в Российской истории (XVI–XX вв.) / О. А. Лиценбергер. – Минск, 2003. – С. 219.

<sup>35</sup> Яноўская В. Евангельскія дэманіацыі Беларусі ў другой палове XIX – пачатку XX ст. / В. Яноўская // Евангельская царква Беларусі: гісторыя і сучаснасць : да 500 годдзі Мікалая Радзівіла Чорнага : зборнік матэрыялаў II Міжнароднай навукова-практычнай канферэнцыі. – Минск, 2016. – Вып. II. – С. 119.

<sup>31</sup> РДГА. – Ф. 821. Вон. 133. Спр. 312. Арк. 67.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Спр. 314. Арк. 3 адв.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Арк. 19.

nors to keep a particularly close watch on the representatives of these denominations<sup>39</sup>.

In the autumn of 1915, amid the German attack, the pastor of the Minsk Baptist Church, Hierasim Andruchoŭ, was deported from Minsk<sup>40</sup>. Before the deportation, Hierasim Andruchoŭ sold books of Holy Scripture, mainly in synodal translation.

Thus, World War I radically changed the attitude of the Russian authorities towards the Protestants, who were declared “hostile elements”. The Bible School of I. Prokhanov was closed back in 1914, and one can see, L. Dziekuć-Malej returned to the Hrodna region, to his native places. There, he most likely began to cooperate with the Belarusian Society for Assistance to War Victims. And in the autumn of 1915, the future famous Brest pastor found himself on the territory occupied by German troops.

In 1917 I. Prokhanov himself, after the February Revolution in Russia, attempted to organize a Protestant political party and participated in the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly, which he won and became a delegate<sup>41</sup>. However, the establishment of Bolsheviks authorities did not allow his plans to be realized.

## In the name of independent Belarus

At the end of February 1917, the Russian Empire ceased to exist. A chance for the restoration of an independent Belarus and the realization of democratic freedoms appeared. In March 1917, the Belarusian National Committee was established in Minsk, which set the goal of achieving the autonomy of Belarus as a part of democratic Russia. However, negotiations with both the leadership of Democratic Russia and Soviet Russia have reached an impasse. It became clear that there was only one way out of that political impasse for Belarusians – the declaration of independence.

<sup>39</sup> РЦГА. – Ф. 821. Вол. 133. Спр. 314. Арк. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Спр. 312. Арк. 270.

<sup>41</sup> *Проханов И.* В колы России. 1869–1933... С. 159.

Thus, on March 25, 1918, in Minsk, the Rada of the Belarusian People’s Republic (BPR) voted for the declaration of complete independence of the BPR. This caused great enthusiasm in the patriotic circles of the Belarusian society, many representatives of which became involved in national and state building.

Pastor Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej didn’t stand aside. After returning from St. Petersburg to his homeland, he was actively involved in the organization of the Belarusian school. For that reason, he joined the Belarusian Society for Assistance to War Victims. As A. Luckievič’s memories witness on the break 1915–1916, L. Dziekuć-Malej started organizing Belarusian schools in the Hrodna region<sup>42</sup>. Thus, it can be stated, that at that time he was already a member of the Belarusian National Movement, which sought to engage not only in humanitarian activities (material assistance to war victims), but also in educational activities. For him, as well as for I. Prokhanov, education was one of the priorities.

In the second half of 1918 L. Dziekuć-Malej had already been the representative of the government of the BPR in the Hrodna region. At that time, the situation in the region was very difficult. During the German occupation, which was coming to an end, the Polish-Belarusian struggle for the Hrodna region began. The revived Polish state claimed these Belarusian territories, and the government of the BPR sought to defend them and prevent them from joining Poland.

As representatives of the Polish community testified, Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej with the support of the Germans “expanded the Belarusian agitation” in the region<sup>43</sup>. The fact that L. Dziekuć-Malej managed to find a common language with the German authorities testifies about his diplomatic abilities and about the use of his experience of serving in the German-speaking church in Białystok, and possibly personal acquaint-

<sup>42</sup> Беларускі дзяржаўны архіў літаратуры і мастацтва. – Ф. 3. Вол. 1. Спр. 176. Арк. 118–119 адв.

<sup>43</sup> *Лычовец А.* Гарадзенскі – гісторыя жыцця пастара Лукаша Дзікуці-Малея. С. 111.

tances in the German speaking protestant environment of Białystok and Hrodna.

However, the Germans at that time were already retreating to the west and their place was occupied by Polish troops and the Polish government. On behalf of the Belarusians of the Hrodna region with a mandate from the government of the BPR, L. Dziekuć-Malej met the Poles as the owner of the region, and as can be seen from the letter of Stanislaŭ Ivanoŭski (brother of V. Ivanoŭski) to A. Luckievič from February 13, 1919, he was ready to defend the region even with arms in his hands: “Dziekuć-Malej was arrested in the area occupied by the Polska samoobrona on the basis of an agreement with the German authorities as a result of the fact that a carbine and a revolver were found in his possession without a corresponding permit for the right to bear arms, also, about a dozen permits for the right to bear arms (Waffenscheinow) issued by the German authorities on forms aroused suspicions that they were forged. A considerable number of various seals were also found in the prisoner’s possession, as well as messages and proclamations that incite the population against Polish nationality and legionnaires”<sup>44</sup>.

Then L. Dziekuć-Malej managed to escape from Polish arrest thanks to the request of A. Luckievič and the protection of S. Ivanoŭski. But already in March 1919, at the Belarusian-Polish negotiations in Hrodna, he said: “We are well aware of what the Bolsheviks are bringing to us, but we do not know what the Poles intend to do with Belarus. Maybe the Polish grace will be worse for us than the Bolshevik harsh regime of the dictatorship. If the Poles are interested in our view on Poland, then the Polish government must show its face, express the goals and thoughts that it is going to implement to the Belarusians. We haven’t seen that yet. We consider the occupation of our land not as a Polish occupation, but as a possibility to struggle against the Bolsheviks. We consider the Polish troops to be the Vanguard of the Entente. At the same moment, if we abandon this point of

<sup>44</sup> Цэнтральная дзяржаўная архіўная Ф-281 Вол. 2 Спр. 32 Арх. 27.

view, we will consider you as an army of our enemies and begin to fight you at every step. I repeat that we really want the Polish government to declare the situation on the Belarusian issue as soon as possible and the sooner it is done, the better it will be for both nations”<sup>45</sup>.

Not surprisingly, on April 1919, L. Dziekuć-Malej was arrested for a second time, and almost died in prison of typhus. Again, he was saved from death by the protection of S. Ivanoŭski.

The question is, where did L. Dziekuć-Malej had developed such a principle attitude and even radicalism in relations with the Polish authorities. Reflecting on this, it is necessary to recall the information of one of the first biographers of L. Dziekuć-Malej S. Piekun, who wrote that in 1912, immediately after the repentance, Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej began to actively preach the Gospel in the Hrodna guberniya, so that even an Orthodox priest and several people from the Orthodox choir in the Pružany region converted to baptism. As a result, L. Dziekuć-Malej was arrested by the tsarist authorities and placed in the Brest prison, where he was led by the hands tied to a horse saddle. He was detained for the second time in 1913 in St. Petersburg, where he was also engaged in active preaching<sup>46</sup>.

Taking into account these facts, and the further biography of L. Dziekuć-Malej, it can be considered that his radical position on the preaching of the Gospel and the Belarusian situation was influenced by the Bible. In the Acts of the Apostles there is an answer of the apostles Peter and John to the Jewish leaders: “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!” (Acts 4:19). Taking the Bible seriously, he could not but preached, even if it threatened freedom and life itself. As for Belarusian patriotism, the influence of the Holy Scriptures, and especially the words of the Apostle Paul, which are the quintessence of the biblical understanding of patriotism, is also evident here. In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote: “For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut

<sup>45</sup> *Лядоўскі У. Беларускія калоніальныя жывячкі пастараў*. С. 112, 113.

<sup>46</sup> *Пікун С. Лукаш Дзікуць-Малеж: жывячкі і служба*. С. 141, 142.

off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites” (Rom. 9:3-4). Here Paul manifests his willingness to die for his people. As you can see, these words could be very close to L. Dziekuć-Malej, who considered the translation of the Bible into the Belarusian language to be one of the main goals of his life. On October 22, 1928, he wrote to A. Luckievič: “May God allow us to wait not only for the publication of the Full Gospel with the Psalms but also to be able to see the complete Bible in our native Belarusian language”<sup>47</sup>.

Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej gave great importance to the participation in the Belarusian movement: he was a member of the Hrodna club “Bielaruskaja Chatka” (“Belarusian Hut”), a member of the Belarusian Paviet Council of the Hrodna region, the Belarusian National Committee in Hrodna, one of the initiators of the creation of a Community of Belarusian youth.

From March 26, 1919, L. Dziekuć-Malej became a member of the Central Belarusian Teachers’ Union. As the de facto head of the Belarusian education in the Hrodna region, he constantly informed the government of the BPR about the Polish education policy. An important concern of L. Dziekuć-Malej was a personnel problem with Belarusian teachers, which is why he encouraged many people to take the Belarusian teacher courses in Viłnia. Moreover, he managed to get some money from the BPR government for this matter. At the same time, L. Dziekuć-Malej was involved in the organization of the Baptist church in Hrodna so that the Hrodna Belarusian activist Janka Antonaŭ even accused him that he prioritized religious matters over national ones. And the Polish school inspector in the Hrodna region, Rafal Vazniakoŭski, called L. Dziekuć-Malej a “very dangerous person”<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Лісты Лукаша і Серафіма Дзекуць-Малеяў да Антона Луцкевіча (1926(?)–1929) і Яна Піетроўскага (1945) // Лукаш Дзекуць-Малеяў і беларускія пераклады Бібліі: зб. матэрыялаў, арт. і дак. / Брэст: Ашчэрпатыва, 2011. С. 61

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. С. 112.

It can be assumed that the pastor tried to combine educational activities with religious ones, which was similarly done by Poles and Lithuanians back in the days of the Russian Empire when the secret schools appeared at Catholic churches. As history shows, secret schools were very effective in the absence of Polish and Lithuanian statehood.

In Hrodna, L. Dziekuć-Malej also actively participated in the Belarusian cultural work. At the same time, in the city on the Nioman Paŭlina Miadziolka lived, who left quite detailed memories of 1919. After the Congress of Belarusians of the Viłnia and Hrodna regions which was held in Viłnia on June 9–10, 1919, at which the Central Belarusian Rada of the Viłnia Region and Hrodna Region was established, P. Miadziolka was sent to Hrodna as an instructor of Belarusian schools. At the same time, she was elected to the leadership of the Belarusian youth community, and L. Dziekuć-Malej was the treasurer of this organization. The community created a drama club and staged plays<sup>49</sup>.

Paŭlina Miadziolka wrote, that in Hrodna on Paliavaja street, 8 the Belarusian Club was located, which was mainly a youth organization. The club occupied a two-story building on the ground floor of which there was a dining room, a large hall where Belarusian parties took place, and a conference room where courses for Belarusian teachers were held. On the first floor, there were living rooms where Belarusian teachers lived. Probably, L. Dziekuć-Malej could have lived there, too<sup>50</sup>.

In the Belarusian youth community, where Dziekuć-Malej was one of the leaders, there were 3 sections: self-educational, dramatic, and choral<sup>51</sup>. It was especially difficult to find good Belarusian lecturers for the regular work of the self-educational section, as well as good Belarusian literature. It can be assumed that Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej had to speak as a lecturer more than once.

<sup>49</sup> *Мядзелка П. Сяспяжам жыццям / П. Мядзелка: прадмова, падр. тэксту, камент. Ганна Зінтарыца. Мінск: Літаратура, 2013. С. 19, 20, 26.*

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. С. 124.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

As for the work of the drama and choral sections, they usually arranged performances in the City Theater. Belarusian performances or choir performances were held on Saturdays. P. Miadziolka recalled that it was not easy to get permission for such activities from the Polish authorities<sup>52</sup>. At the same time, almost always the hall of the City Theater was full, which testified to the great demand for Belarusian art in Hrodna.

The repertoire of the drama section of the Belarusian youth community included the performances “Paŭlinka” and “Raskidanaje hniazdo” (“The Scattered Nest”) based on the plays of Janka Kupala, “Cham” (“Cad”) and “U zimovy vječar” (“In the Evening Night”) based on Eliza Ažeška, etc. As for the atmosphere that was in 1919 in the Hrodna Belarusian club P. Miadziolka recalled the following: “Every evening the house on Paliavaja Street, 8 buzzed like a beehive. There were a lot of people, especially young people. Some people came to read newspapers and magazines, someone went to the rehearsal of a drama or choral club, someone came to just meet people, talked about many things, and someone danced in the lower hall”<sup>53</sup>. As L. Dziekuć-Malej was a musician (played the violin) and had acting skills, it is obvious that he often performed on the stage of the Hrodna City Theater.

If we read the reports of the Central Belarusian Teachers’ Council of Hrodna region, we can see how principled was the position taken by L. Dziekuć-Malej in fighting with the Polish authorities for the rights of the Belarusian school. He did not want to give in to almost anything, not in the matter of buildings, not in the matter of subordination<sup>54</sup>. At any cost, he wanted to preserve the position of the Belarusian enlightenment in the Hrodna region. For that, within 2 years, he was imprisoned 4 times.

<sup>52</sup> *Мядзёлка П.* Сцежкамі жыцця ... С. 174.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* С. 175.

<sup>54</sup> Адвостраваўне чынасыці Лукаша Дзекуць-Малея па тэме беларускай школьнай справы ў Горадні ў архіўных дакументах (1919–1921) // Лукаш Дзекуць-Малея і беларускі перакладчыкаў бібліятэкаў і мастацтваў, архітэктары. Брэст: Акадэмія, 2011. С. 124–139.

In May 1920, the Belarusian School Council was established in Hrodna, the chairman of which was Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej, and the secretary – Sierafima Kiška<sup>55</sup>. In 1921 L. Dziekuć-Malej participated in the Belarusian courses for teachers, which were organized by the Belarusian School Society. But soon he was deported from Hrodna without the right to return.

It should also be noted that in Hrodna L. Dziekuć-Malej met his future wife Sierafima Kiška. She worked in Belarusian institutions in Hrodna, was a teacher, secretary, and responsible for an orphanage.

### In the name of Christian Belarus

In March 1921, after the end of the Polish-Soviet war, the territory of Belarus was divided between Poland and Soviet Russia. Legal public activity for the benefit of independent Belarus had become impossible on both sides of the border. As the last attempt to revive the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in 1920–1922 under the Polish protectorate there was a middle Lithuania with its capital in Viłnia, but soon the Poles abandoned the idea of a federal state. In the east of Belarus, there was a Belarusian autonomy in the form of the BSSR, but the Soviet atheist policy was carried out there.

L. Dziekuć-Malej, realizing that the Polish authorities would not allow him to live in Hrodna, wanted to move to Viłnia, the capital of central Lithuania, to do missionary and national work there. In March 1921, he even received permission to engage in missionary activities from the Polish authorities. At that time, there were famous Belarusian figures in the government of central Lithuania B. Taraškievič and V. Ivanoŭski. But this permission was later revoked after the Polish Interior Ministry informed the Ministry of Religious Confessions and Public Education that Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej was engaged in “harmful to the Polish statehood” activities<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> Направаўна на архіў Рэспублікі Беларусь. Ф. 604. Воп. 1. Спр. 1. Арк. 37.

<sup>56</sup> *Tomaz ewski II* Baptyści w Polsce w latach 1918–1930 // *Tomazewski*. Warszawa, 2008. С. 24.

In September 1921, L. Dziukuć-Malej was elected deputy chairman of the Union of Slavic Baptist Churches in Poland, he became a minister at the episcopal level. Two months later, L. Dziukuć-Malej appeared in Brest. In December 1921, Brest was already the center of the Paliessie Voivodeship, and therefore quite a promising city for missionary work. Especially since the great evangelical awakening was beginning in Western Belarus, with thousands of people eagerly reading the Holy Scriptures, which changed the lives of entire regions. The only drawback of Brest was that compared to Hrodna, there was a very weak Belarusian movement.

Let us note at once that the Brest period of the life of L. Dziukuć-Malej was one of the most fruitful and probably the happiest periods of his life. In Brest, L. Dziukuć-Malej lived for 23 years from 1921 to 1944. There he founded a church, here his children were born, there he together with his wife Sierafima performed the main work of his life—translated “The New Testament and Psalms” in the Belarusian language.

As the pastor himself recalled, he first appeared in Brest when he was arrested “for preaching the Word of God”<sup>57</sup> in 1912. The second time L. Dziukuć-Malej found himself in Brest 9 years after those dramatic events. In 1921, the situation changed radically: the state affiliation of Brest, its economic condition and appearance changed, and Lukaš Dziukuć-Malej himself changed. If the previous time it was an unknown Baptist believer, now the deputy bishop of the Union of Slavic Baptist Churches in Poland and a famous figure of the Belarusian National Movement had appeared at the platform of the Brest railway station<sup>58</sup>.

From what place L. Dziukuć-Malej came to Brest for the second time, remains unknown. He reported that it was in December 1921 and that

he had arrived by train.<sup>59</sup> It is most likely that he came from Białystok.<sup>60</sup> The pastor began his ministry, as a priest should, with the foundation of a church, about which S. Piekun wrote<sup>61</sup>:

Lukaš Dziukuć-Malej held the first service in Brest on December 12, 1921 in the house of the Brest railway worker Jazep Tur. Already at that time, the Tur, Milančuki families gathered for the service, as well as S. Kiška, who came to Brest from Warsaw, and P. Kavalieŭskaja<sup>62</sup>. Ja. Barysiuk was one of the first to repent at the services held by Lukaš Dziukuć-Malej.

A characteristic moment for the beginning of Lukaš Dziukuć-Malej’s ministry in Brest was also the foundation of the cultural and educational society “Belarusian Chatka” in 1922. So pastor Lukas Dziukuć-Malej also in the Brest period of his life combined Christian and national activities.

Already in 1923, thanks to the Great Evangelical Awakening, the Brest Baptist Church grew to such extent that it was able to take over the organization of the All-Polish Unification Congress of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, which was held in Brest on June 7–10, 1923<sup>63</sup>. It should be mentioned that L. Dziukuć-Malej was a great supporter of the unification of these two evangelical denominations, believing that there was no essential difference between them. Unfortunately, due to objective, but mainly to subjective reasons, this unification did not happen.

In Brest, L. Dziukuć-Malej had an opportunity to resume the work on the translation of the Bible into the Belarusian language. In 1923, A. Luckievič managed to contribute to this work, and in 1924–1925 to establish contact with the head of the Lodz Publishing Society “Kompas” (“Compass”) Waldemar Gutsche and the British and Foreign Bible Society. Thus, almost simultaneously with the great work on the organization of church life, and the revival of the Belarusian national movement in Brest in the early

<sup>57</sup> *Дзекуць-Малей Л.* Развитие дела Божия в Бресте / *Л. Дзекуць-Малей // Святель істыны.* – 1928. – Март. – С. 12.

<sup>58</sup> *Ляхоўскі У.* Гарадзенскі «піліюд» жыцця на гары. – С. 111–118.

<sup>59</sup> *Дзекуць-Малей Л.* Развитие дела Божия в Бресте... С. 12.

<sup>60</sup> *Пекун С.* Лукаш Дзекуць-Малей: жыццё і служэнне... С. 140.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* С. 146.

<sup>63</sup> *Tomaszewski H.* Baptyści w Polsce... 5: 48–49.

1920s, Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej managed not only to translate all four Gospels but also to draw the attention of the Belarusian and foreign public to the need to print them. The first Belarusian Gospel of Luke was published in mid-1926<sup>64</sup>.

As already mentioned, the 1920s were the time of the Great Evangelical Awakening in Western Belarus, the Brest Church was growing rapidly and on December 13, 1926, pastor Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej made an appeal to the Paliessie voivode with a request to register a church under the name “Brest Church of Evangelical Christians Baptists”<sup>65</sup>. At the same time, it was said that the church would be led by the church council; and Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej was responsible for the Church before the authorities<sup>66</sup>. At the same time, the Brest Church was the main one for the whole Paliessie region. Its prayer house was located in a rented building in Brest on Lublin Union Street, 44 where Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej lived with his family. This appeal was signed by 55 members of the Brest Church. From this, we can conclude that the church at that time already had a fairly significant number of believers since only those who had a legally registered status in the Polish state put their signatures. Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej himself received Polish citizenship only on October 28, 1925<sup>67</sup>.

Brest Baptist Church, as a result of the active work of L. Dziekuć-Malej, had the press attention. The grand opening of the Brest Church’s own prayer house, which took place on December 18, 1927, was widely covered in periodicals. Believers themselves built a wooden building of a prayer house for 400–500 people on the land purchased at their own expense in Brest, on Šyrokaja Street, 36. Construction began in 1926 and lasted for more than a

year<sup>68</sup>. A year after the grand opening of the house of prayer, the anniversary of this event was celebrated, which was also reported in the newspaper:<sup>69</sup>

In January 1927 the Brest baptist church chose the church council and decided to create the Brest Church District to which many of the churches, founded by Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej during evangelistic trips in the Brest region belonged. The church council consisted of 15 ministers, and its elected chairman was Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej<sup>70</sup>.

As per the resolution of May 2, 1927, the Paliessie voivode issued an official permit to L. Dziekuć-Malej to perform religious rites on the territory of the voivodeship. It was necessary to inform the local police authorities about the time and place of services in advance, at least for 3 days, as well as about changes in the time and place of services. It was emphasized that “public speeches are not allowed”. As an example of such an appeal to local authorities, we can cite the appeal of L. Dziekuć-Malej dated September 4, 1929, addressed to the Brest starosta: “I kindly ask you to grant permission to hold a service on September 15 of this year according to the rite of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the village of Liaphouka of the Damačava gmina, Brest region, beginning at 10 a.m. in the house number 10 of Andrej Jakimuk under the leadership of the minister Clarence Kiryčuk from the church in Rahozna”<sup>71</sup>. Immediately after the pastor received the appropriate permission, the Brest starosta office informed the police commandant about the issue of the permission and instructed him to draw up and provide an appropriate report on the service performed<sup>72</sup>.

The baptisms also required the permission of the local authorities. For example, on September 30, 1929, L. Dziekuć-Malej appealed to the Brest Starostvo with a request to issue a permit for the baptism on October 6, 1929

<sup>64</sup> Сідарэвіч А. Да гісторыі першага выдання Новага Запавету і Псалмаў на сучаснай беларускай мове (1931 год) / А. Сідарэвіч // Arche. – 2012. – № 1-2. – С. 112–113.

<sup>65</sup> ДАБВ. – Ф. 1, Вон. 2, Спр. 2313, Арк. 11 – 12 адв.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Арк. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Спр. 2327, Арк. 48.

<sup>68</sup> Открытие мощнейшего дома в Бресте // Маяк. – 1928. – № 4. – С. 6–7.

<sup>69</sup> Одышко М. Годовщина открытия молитвенного дома в Бресте / М. Одышко // Маяк. – 1929. – № 4. – С. 10.

<sup>70</sup> ДАБВ. – Ф. 1, Вон. 2, Спр. 2313, Арк. 11 – 12 адв.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Ф. 1, Вон. 1, Спр. 1123, Арк. 136 адв.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. Арк. 136.



“on the Muchavice River between the railway and highway bridges in the direction of Kovel”. The baptism was to take place at 8 a.m. The Starostvo gave permission, informed the local police commandant’s office about this event, and demanded a report from the police<sup>73</sup>.

The Polish authorities stated that there were 500 baptist believers in Brest in the late 1920s and early 1930s and that almost all of them signed up as Belarusians<sup>74</sup>.

The Baptist churches of the Paliessie region grew rapidly, and there was an urgent need for pastors and ministers. On January 27, 1931, L. Dziękuc-Malej asked the Paliessie voivode to provide certificates for the right of religious activity for three presbyters: Mikalaj Fiedarčuk, Jakaŭ Kur-rec, and Illia Kobak, who took the place of ministers in the Brest region of evangelical Christians Baptists<sup>75</sup>.

Since the activities of the church cover all issues of human life and death, an important aspect of church care is the cemetery. In 1926, as can be seen from the documents, Lukaš Dziękuc-Malej compiled a sample of the request of the believers from quite a few Baptist churches to the local authorities with a request to allocate land for the Belarusian Baptists for a cemetery since there were constant misunderstandings with representatives of other denominations in the burial of the dead<sup>76</sup>. However, the matter with the cemetery was not so simple. The request of the believers was never granted until 1939.

So, during the first decade of his church ministry in Brest, Lukaš Dziękuc-Malej managed to organize a fairly large church, which numbered several hundred believers and supporters, to establish some local churches in the Brest region, to register them, and to establish a system of their relations with the authorities, to build their own prayer house. In the

<sup>73</sup> ДАБВ. – Ф. 2. Bon. 1. Спр. 1123. Арк. 139.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Арк. 100.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Ф. 1. Bon. 2. Спр. 2319. Арк. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Ф. 2. Bon. 1. Спр. 1123. Арк. 63.

Brest Church, a magnificent choir was organized, which consisted of about 40 singers, led by Lukaš Dziękuc-Malej.

The Brest Church included 19 regional churches, where crowded services were regularly held every Sunday, and about 80 church village groups<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, there was an orphanage at the church, and permanent regency and Bible courses, as well as craft courses, were held<sup>78</sup>.

## Belarusian Bible

At the end of 1926 and the beginning of 1927, violent political events took place in Western Belarus, where almost the entire Western Belarusian intelligentsia were involved. These events were associated with the emergence, rapid growth and defeat of the Belarusian Peasant-Labor Community. In October 1927, in the case of Belarusian Peasant-Labor Community A. Luckievič was jailed, where he remained until May 1928. It was this political context in which the Belarusian Gospels were published in separate books, the last of which, the Gospel of Mark, was published in 1928.

In 1927, in the All-Polish Baptist magazine “Mayak” Lukaš Dziękuc-Malej founded his own project called “Bielaruskaja balonka” (“Belarusian page”). It should be noted here that “Mayak” was published in Russian and was intended mainly for churches in Western Belarus and Western Ukraine (Volhynia), as well as to some extent for churches in the USSR. In the “Mayak” there was a separate “Ukrainian branch”, and from the middle of 1927 there was a “Belarusian page”. Lukaš Dziękuc-Malej clearly outlined the purpose of its creation in his first article: “To you, my native Belarusian people, I dare to speak through this magazine and draw your attention to the wonderful words of your only Defender and Guide. He is the very Truth; then His words are just. Trust Him, and He will set you free. Only He will send you a star that will spill over you the light of will and peace, will stop

M. L. Ochronka sierot w Brzesciu // Słowo Prawdy. – 1926. – № 3. – S. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Pokwitowanie na ochronkę w Brzesciu nad Bugiem // Słowo Prawdy. – 1926.

№ 1. – S. 6.

your torment and will strain you, a tormented beggar, to His heart. It is you he calls, for you who labor and are heavy laden. He has already seen you, although you are still far away. While there is time, run, hurry to Him, He is waiting for you, the prodigal son, and will receive you”<sup>79</sup>.

In his publications on the “Belarusian page” Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej used numerous biblical examples to show that the answer to the “Belarusian question” is found in the Bible. Very often he addressed not to an individual, but to the people, seeing one of the main national problems in the lack of a national translation of the Bible and Christian literature. The Brest pastor not only stated the lack, but he also sought to correct it by making Bible translations, compiling brochures with Bible stories, and placing the texts of Belarusian gospel songs in the “Mayak”. In fact, every issue of “Mayak” since 1927 ended with the following editorial announcement: “Friends of the Belarusian people. There are Belarusian Gospels and pamphlets for distribution. Distribute them among your neighbors, fellow villagers, and fellow citizens. You can issue it in an unlimited number, only for postage cost”<sup>80</sup>.

At the end of 1927, “Belarusian page” of “Mayak” published an article by Dziekuć-Malej “In the footsteps of Christ”. In that article, he raised the question of the difference between nominal Christians and real ones. The pastor stated that many Belarusians only call themselves Christians, but their life is far from the biblical standards<sup>81</sup>. He called on Belarusians to turn to Christ, as in life there are only two roads: the road to God and the road to the devil.

The expansion of the Belarusian Bible among the people was the dream and goal of the Brest pastor. In that dream he went beyond his church, denomination. L. Dziekuć-Malej considered it important that all Christian denominations use the Belarusian Bible. He wrote about this to

<sup>79</sup> Беларуская балонка // Маяк. – 1927. – № 6. – С. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Друзья беларускага народа // Маяк. – 1928. – № 8. – С. 8.

<sup>81</sup> На сьвідох Хрыста // Маяк. – 1928. – № 11. 12. – С. 12.

A. Luckievič. “My heart also rejoices because the clergy are beginning to understand the power of the Holy Scripture – the Word of God in their native Belarusian language, and that they will even give their consent to this and that they will undertake to expand it among the people. God bless that they may be sincere bearers of the God’s light in this”<sup>82</sup>. It is important to note that Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej himself massively distributed Belarusian Gospels during the evangelizations, and some copies of his publications are still kept in Protestant families in the Brest region.

In 1929, there was a breakthrough in the relations of Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej with the British and Foreign Bible Society, which finally recognized the feasibility of publishing the entire New Testament in Belarusian, and even spent the finances on translation, proofreading, and printing<sup>83</sup>. Things went faster, and at the end of June, 1931, the New Testament and the Psalms translated by L. Dziekuć-Malej and A. Luckievič came out in a fantastic for that situation edition of 25,000 copies.

On the first Belarusian translation of the New Testament and the Psalms, two translators mainly worked – L. Dziekuć-Malej and A. Luckievič. Personal relations between them were friendly. L. Dziekuć-Malej called A. Luckievič “Dear brother in the Lord Antoni!”, as usually Christians address each other. L. Dziekuć-Malej began every letter to A. Luckievič with biblical quotations or coordinates, for example, “Isaiah 40:28-31” (these are inspiring lines that a person who hopes in God never gets tired). Obviously that the work on the translation of the New Testament and the Psalms brought these people closer together. And if you look at the biography of A. Luckievič, this convergence was natural.

For a broader context, here is a fragment of the memoirs of another Protestant pastor of Western Belarus, Jan Piatroŭski: “In 1935 or a little earlier, I first met with mister Anton Luckievič in his apartment on Piŭnaja Street in Vilnia. The exceptional cultural pose of the house owner, the

<sup>82</sup> Листы Лукашы і Серафімы Дзёкуць-Малею ... С. 61.

<sup>83</sup> *Сьвідрыц А.* Да гісторыі першага выдання ... С. 121.

interior appearance of the room, and his erudition in front of everything created an impression and awakened the belief that to be a Belarusian, you do not necessarily need to be identified with a chicken hut, a worn-out casing or farm labor”<sup>84</sup>.

The release of the New Testament and Psalms was a very significant event in the life of Western Belarus, as the above-mentioned pastor Jan Piatrouŭski recalled: “When the New Testament with Psalms was published in the Belarusian language in the first half of the thirties, from Vільnia to Warsaw, the name of Anton Luckievič was on the lips and in print in Orthodox, Catholic as well as Protestant, non-believers as well as believers circles”<sup>85</sup>.

For Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej cooperation with A. Luckievič was very important, both in professional relations (A. Luckievič’s knowledge of the Greek language) and in terms of the great authority of A. Luckievič among the Belarusian intelligentsia. It is obvious that both translators treated each other with respect and understood the importance of translating and spreading the Bible in the Belarusian language among the people.

## War and emigration

In September 1939, on the basis of a secret German-Soviet treaty, the Red Army occupied Western Belarus, which was annexed to the BSSR. For the Western Belarusian churches of all denominations, hard times came, which ended in fact only in 1991.

The beginning of World War II brought very significant changes in the life of Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej and his family, his service. On the night of June 19, 1941, he was arrested by the Soviet authorities and sentenced to death, and his family was exiled to Kazakhstan. Only the German occupation of June 22, 1941, saved Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej from death.

<sup>84</sup> Пятроўскі Я. Антон Луцкевіч – арыстакрат беларускае думкі / Я. Пятроўскі // Прагэстанцкая царква і беларускі нацыянальны рух на пачатку XX стагоддзя: артыкулы і ўспаміны. – Мінск: Кнігабор, 2006. – С. 59.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

During the German occupation, the Brest pastor again returned to the translation of the entire Bible into Belarusian. In 1946 Vitaūt Tumaš wrote to the British and Foreign Bible Society in London that in 1942 there was an initiative to reissue the New Testament in the translation of Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej and Anton Luckievič in an edition of 20,000 numbered copies. However, the permission of the German authorities was never obtained<sup>86</sup>.

During the Nazi occupation, Lukaš Dziekuć-Malej started a very risky and life-threatening activity – organization of the translation of the Old Testament into Belarusian. Let us recall that the Nazis persecuted the Old Testament as “Jewish Writings”. By the request of L. Dziekuć-Malej V. Tumaš began translating the book of Ecclesiastes<sup>87</sup>. Unfortunately, that translation was lost in the vortex of war.

In 1944 L. Dziekuć-Malej went to the west because he could only expect the death penalty from the Soviet government. But even there, he did not leave the matter of publishing the complete Bible in the Belarusian language. On January 13, 1945, he wrote to Pastor Piatrouŭski: “For a long period of time I have had in my mind the thought that our people, like other nations, should have a complete Bible. I am looking for all possible opportunities for this and I was very happy that Pastor wants to help our people to have a Bible in the Belarusian language”<sup>88</sup>.

Unfortunately, these plans were not destined to come true. The last 10 years of his life, pastor L. Dziekuć-Malej spent in Poland, in 1946 God allowed him to meet with his wife Sierafima and the children who had returned from the Soviet camps. The famous Brest pastor died on January 20, 1955 in Gdańsk, where he was buried.

*Translated from Belarusian by Hanna Stanislavienka*

<sup>86</sup> Юрэвіч Д. Шматгалосы літэліграфум. Гісторыя людзей і ідэй на эміграцыі ў літэлавні / Д. Юрэвіч. – Мінск, 2012. – С. 426.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. С. 431.

<sup>88</sup> Листы Лукаша і Серафімы Дзюкуць-Малею. – С. 66.