than half of the total number of Cyrillic publications in Byelorussia during the initial period of the development of printing in that country up to the middle of the 17th century. The fact that the books are described from first-hand knowledge, many of them for the first time in this way, enhances considerably the value and

authority of the whole work. Last but not least one should mention the exceedingly high standard of bibliographical description which has been established by Luk'janenko in her *Katalog* and which can be ignored by all future Byelorussian bibliographers only at their own risk.

A. Nadson

Mayo, P. J. *A Grammar of Byelorussian*. Anglo-Byelorussian Society in association with the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, 1976. 66 pages. Bibliography.

Byelorussian used to be one of the Slavonic languages most neglected by philologists. In recent years there has been a tendency to redress the balance. A great deal of extremely valuable work has appeared, the majority of it produced by Byelorussian scholars themselves. Comparatively little has been written about this language in English. The first, and for long the best general description of it was that given by Professor R. G. A. de Bray in his monumental *Guide to the Slavonic Languages* (London, 1951; rev. ed. 1969). A new and more detailed work has long been needed. Mayo's *Grammar* provides a most welcome remedy to the situation. It is a short book and it limits itself to one, clearly-defined aim: to provide a reference book for those wishing to acquire a passive knowledge of the language. It is a measure of its excellence that it succeeds not only in this, but also in providing an invaluable aid to anyone involved in the teaching or studying of Byelorussian, whether it be at a very elementary level or at a more advanced stage.

It deals exclusively with the modern

language. Comparisons with Russian and Ukrainian are made, where appropriate, in order to establish Byelorussian's relationship to these other members of the East Slavonic group of languages. In this respect it is of particular use to students of comparative Slavonic philology. There is an informative introductory section (pp. I-II) on pronunciation and orthography. One of the great virtues of this work is that, despite its extremely concise nature, it never contents itself with the formulation of general rules. It is meticulous in noting exceptions to the rule. This detailed and orderly approach makes it possible for the author to give an admirably lucid exposition of the use of prothetic (or, as he prefers, prosthetic) consonants. The main body of the book is devoted to morphology. The material is clearly set out. Paradigms are supplemented by notes which discuss individual grammatical endings and provide further phonological information. The bibliography provides a comprehensive guide to works on modern Byelorussian, including dictionaries, in Byelorussian, Russian and English.

S. Akiner

Wexler, P. N. *Purism and Language: a study in modern Ukrainian and Belorussian nationalism (1840-1967)*. Indiana University, Bloomington (USA), 1974. 446 pages. Bibliography.

Any review of this book should certainly begin with a clear statement of the admiration that readers will undoubtedly feel for Dr. Wexler's erudition as reflected in the scope of his subject and the extent of his reading. Whatever individual shortcomings may be found cannot detract from the fact that the book is likely to become a classic in the thorny field of 'language planning' studies.

The analysis of the development of

the Ukrainian literary language follows Shevelov's periodization, starting at 1840 and taking Ševčenko as the first major writer; the analysis of the development of Byelorussian starts in 1890. The opening chapters deal with general matters of approach to the problem, the gathering of primary data on linguistic prescription, and the establishment of terminology. Wexler examines degrees of 'openness' and 'closure' (to external

linguistic factors) of a developing literary language, thereby offering a typology of prescriptive linguistic intervention, although after due presentation of prescriptive evidence from Byelorussian and Ukrainian he does query the feasibility of such a typology (p. 315). He singles out one particular type as 'externally directed purism' and identifies the major controlling principle of purism as 'ideological' (p. 32). Here is the justification for the juxtaposition of two apparently disparate areas of human activity — language and politics — in the title of the book. Wexler proves on the basis of an analysis of how Ukrainian and Byelorussian have been consciously moulded into the literary languages we know today that purism in language has overt political ('ideological') significance. As far as Byelorussian is concerned this is as true of those who sought and are still seeking to make Byelorussian as distinct as possible from Russian (primarily) and Polish, and of those who desire Byelorussian to show a still more 'progressive tendency towards internal unity with Russian'.¹ Clearly linguistic considerations were not uppermost in decisions relating to numeral genitives in literary Byelorussian: the choice for the genitive of e.g. *plac* (*placi*, close to Russian; *placióch*, as far removed from Russian as possible) is still motivated by 'purism', which, as Wexler shows, is inextricably linked to ideology. Wexler demonstrates how choosing an obscure word or grammatical form from one dialect may result in the non-acceptance of that word or form in the literary language, e.g. Taraškievič's advocacy of the 'unique' forms *adzinancać* and *dvanancać*, as opposed to *adzinaccać* and *dvanaccać*. Uniqueness does not of itself imply that the forms are 'purer' Byelorussian, or that, even if they are 'pure' Byelorussian (whatever that may be), they will be accepted by all speakers of the language. One of the justifications used in the search for truly Byelorussian forms in the dialects is the difficulty of 'twisting one's tongue on Polonisms and Russianisms'. Once again the assumptions are obviously ideological — if the Polonisms and Russianisms were real 'tongue-twisters', it is doubtful whether they would ever have been acceptable in normal

speech; it is certainly open to doubt that some of the proposed Byelorussianisms were any less 'tongue-twisting'. Wexler provides excellent detail on the development of scientific terminology in both languages, identifying two basic approaches: predominantly ethnographic and modified ethnographic. The former is exemplified by drawing mainly on native resources, e.g. rendering 'chlorophyll' as *listazieleń* (exactly equivalent to Finnish *lehtivihreä*), thereby deliberately excluding international words. German provides many examples of such an approach, e.g. *Fernsehen*, *Fernsprecher*. The modified ethnographic approach involves fewer neologisms in the form of loan translations, and draws on established internationalism. Byelorussian *telebačanie* provides an example of a fusion of the two approaches with an international (originally Greek) prefix plus native root and suffix. One debate in the 1920s centred around the choice of a Byelorussian word for 'torture', whether it should be *muki*, taken from old Byelorussian legal terminology, or *katavaŋnie*. One wonders what the word was actually needed for at the time.

Wexler is surely right in seeing linguistic purism as a means of strengthening national consciousness and in going on to say (p. 320): 'The inability of purists to close the language entirely to all nonnative elements (both Slavic and non-Slavic) suggests that speakers of a language, in the final analysis, do not have a choice between establishing connections with foreign sources or maintaining linguistic isolation'. This is undoubtedly true; the problem, however, lies in how the connections are made with the foreign sources. Wexler himself provides part of the answer: 'The process of robbing Belorussian and Ukrainian of their distinctive defining features began in the early 1930s and has continued up to the present time... [Byelorussian and Ukrainian fail] to disappear entirely, and on the other hand, fail to secure themselves as fully independent literary languages' (p. 321). This appears paradoxical;

1. Birillo, N. V. et al., 'Belorusskij jazyk', *Jazyki narodov SSSR*, I, Indoevropejskije jazyki, Moscow, 1966, p. 154.

Burak² describes what is undoubtedly an independent linguistic system, yet it is patently obvious that Wexler is correct in his formulation, certainly as far as Byelorussian is concerned. Its failure fully to establish its independence *vis-à-vis* Russian must be seen within the context of the political and social situation of the USSR as a whole. If Byelorussia had full political independence, the problem of the language would not arise in such an exacerbated form (cp. the development of Estonian in the period of independence, 1918-1940, to which Wexler draws attention, and the development of Norwegian).³ On the other hand, is the weak position of Byelorussian due to its being systematically 'robbed' (and this is the closest Wexler approaches to an emotive appraisal of Soviet linguistic policy) of its distinctive features (by deliberate act of government?), or to other 'centralizing' factors such as films, television, military service in formations that are most decidedly not under the control of technically independent Union republics, the prestige of Russian, and so on? The author's description of the situation (p. 293) is one of the fairest possible: 'One gets the impression that post-1953 regulators are accelerating towards convergences with Russian, but not without occasional application of the brakes'.

The insecurity of Byelorussian is certainly documented in the Soviet Byelorussian press through articles complaining of poor language and literature teaching, poor pronunciation on the stage, poor newspaper style. There exists a very real danger that Byelorussia, perhaps along with Ukrainian, will become a museum piece of enlightened Leninist language policy, a survival of the countryside and *belles lettres* — 'the language of the rural granny' in one of Wexler's most felicitous phrases. It is very much to be hoped that the Byelorussian language will serve its speakers as a living means of communication in all spheres of activity, but the pressures of Soviet society may well determine otherwise. It may simply be

the fate of minority languages to go to the wall in any modern technologically-minded state. Ray's ideals⁴ of 'efficiency, rationality, commonality' — are as applicable to Byelorussian as to any other, with the clear implication that once the language ceases to be an 'efficient, rational and common' means of communication (for whatever reason), it ceases to have any *raison d'être*.

Wexler's book opens up new dimensions in western linguistic literature on language planning. Hitherto Soviet language policy has received little attention. It is time for western scholars to pay some attention to the way in which this policy has affected the languages of the USSR that had already become, or were in process of establishing themselves as, literary languages before 1917; in particular the combined effect on Byelorussian and Ukrainian of close genetic relationship with the language of the dominant nation, plus attempts at linguistic prescription of all kinds, plus social engineering, together with the level of Byelorussian national self-awareness in 1917 (and in the 1970s!), needs close study. Wexler's book is a valuable contribution to that study. If it can be faulted anywhere, it is in the presentation of footnotes; surely some of the material relegated to the end of each chapter could have been placed within the body of the text? On p. 281 Wexler is, I believe, being somewhat unfair to the author of *Ab movie* (1920); he does not seem to be suggesting a reflex **pukny*, merely pointing out that the Byelorussian reflexes of Polish *ę*, *q* are *ja*, *u* respectively. One misprint hurls itself at the reader on p. 227: 'Interbellum Russia' for 'Belorussia', serious enough, but perfectly understandable in a text of this complexity.

J. Dingley

2. Burak, L. I., *Sučasnaja bielaruskaja mova*, Minsk, 1974.
3. See Haugen, E., *Language conflict and language planning*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966.
4. See Ray, P. S., *Language standardization*, The Hague, 1963.