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IMAGES OF THE BELARUSIAN VILLAGE ON THE STAGE OF BELARUSIAN STATE THEATRE-1 (1920-1930)²⁵

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The author of the text focuses on three productions staged at the Belarusian State Theatre-1 in the 1920s, at the beginning of the work of the theatre group, which was opened in 1920. The first artistic director was Florian Zhdanovich, and the second was Evstigney Mirovich, the first performance is “The Scattered Nest” (1913) by Yanka Kupala, the second is “Socialist-ess” (1924) by Tishka Hartny and “Twilight” (1927) by Vasily Shashalevich. The first two talk about the situation before the 1917 revolution, and the third after. The main subject of these three plays is the struggle for land in the Belarusian village in 10-20 years of the 20th century. The amount of land owned indicates a person’s well-being and social status. The authors of these dramas show how the Earth forms the character of a person and affects his decision, sometimes it even leads *to murder*.

Keywords: history of the Belarusian theatre, Minsk, Belarusian State Theatre-1, national drama, village discourse.

Introduction

1920-1930 – a very important period in the history of Belarusian State Theatre-1 (BST-1) in Belarus. It was a period of establishing a new theatre group, formation of the Belarusian school of actors and directors. It was time that the Belarusianization policy was taking place [1; 4-24]. Theatre directors, Florian Zhdanovich and Evstigney Mirovich, could not go on despite such an important topic as life and human relations in the Belarusian village [2; 60-72]. The subject of the research will be three performances staged on the BST-1 [3; 12-26] in Minsk in the 1920s. As an example, three dramas will be used: “The Scattered Nest” [Раскіданае гняздо] by Yanka Kupala²⁶, “Socialist-ess” [Сацыялістка] by Tsishka Hartny²⁷ and “Twilight” [Змрок] by Vasily Shashalevich²⁸.

Main part

The land and attitudes towards it, connect with it, as well as freedom – these are the key problems that were brought to the forefront by Yanka Kupala in 1913 with the play “The Scattered Nest” (directed by Florian Zhdanovich, set design Oskar Mariks; on 14 April 1921). The playwright wanted to show how the Belarusian people are gradually waking up and starting to fight for their rights.

The action takes place in 1905 not so long before the first Russian revolution. The Zyablik family consists of father Lyavon (Antuk Krynitsa [Антук Крыніца]), mother Maryla (Leatsyna Skrzhendievskaya [Леацына Скржэндзіеўская]), and five children: Symon (Boris Dolsky [Барыс

²⁵ The article was written on the occasion of the 100th Yanka Kupala Belarusian National Academic Theatre (formerly: Belarusian State Theatre-1).

²⁶ Yanka Kupala (Янка Купала, pen name of Ivan Lutsevich, 1882-1942) – a Belarusian poet and writer. He is considered one of the greatest Belarusian-language writers of the 20th century. He is the author of several plays that constitute the canon of 20th-century Belarusian dramaturgy.

²⁷ Tishka Hartny (Цішка Гартны, pen name of Zmitser Zhylunovich, 1887-1937) – a Belarusian poet, writer and journalist, and a political leader.

²⁸ Vasily Shashalevich (Васіль Шашалевіч, 1897-1941) – playwright. He studied at the seminary (Mogilev, 1910-1914) and at the law school (Yaroslavl, 1915-1916). For material reasons, he should return to Belarus, where he worked as a teacher. In the village Krasnapolle (Mogilev region), together with his brother, writer Andrey Mryj and two sisters, he founded a folk theatre for which he wrote one-act plays. Then he went to Leningrad, where he worked as a screenwriter for the “Belarus Film studio” (1928-1930). He returned to Minsk, where he dealt with literary activities. In 1937, he was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He is the author of several plays.

Дольскі]), Zoska (Lydia Rzhetskaya [Лідзія Ржэцкая]), Danilka (Irina Zhdanovich [Ірына Ждановіч]), eight-year-old Alenka and seven-year-old Yurka. The landlord forces Zyabliks to leave their house, farm, and search for another place to live and work. A difficult financial situation, a serious illness of Maryla, and affection for their place don't allow them to leave. A lawsuit filed five years ago to buy a piece of land with a homestead not only did not bring the expected result but drove the family into even greater trouble: they had to sell the last cow and their only horse. Realizing the mistake, under the weight of a huge sense of guilt, Leon commits suicide. Symon – his son decides to continue the process initiated by his father and is waiting for a retrial, but also loses. However, he doesn't want to give up, to agree to change his place of residence, to work for Landlord, nor to give his agree for his family to go begging. Symon decides to stay and wait for winter until there is some other way out. One day they are visited by a Stranger, who tells about the preparations for the big meeting and persuades Symon to go there with his family. He refuses at first, but soon changes his mind, sets the Landlord's house on fire and goes to the meeting [4].

There's a certain difference in attitude towards the land among the play heroes. Lyavon has the strongest connection with the land. He is convinced that "a man and the land grow together like a tree: cut down a tree – it will dry up, take away the land from a man – he will perish" [5; 213]. His grandfathers rented land from the landlord, paid the rent regularly for years, over time his father built the house in which the large Zyablik family lives now. "I've got used to the land, as with my mother... I've already known every stone in the field and every bush on the hayfield since my childhood just like I knew the five fingers on my hand" [5; 213] – the hero confesses. When Lyavon submits documents to the court, he is confident of victory. But after losing the trial he begins to realize his mistake and, at the same time, the naivety of his belief in justice. "I just wanted to seek the truth. Ha-ha-ha! I was fooled and sought the truth" [5; 213], – he ironically assesses his behavior. Gradually, the problem of guilt becomes the main issue for Lyavon. "What am I guilty of? Who loved this land, this native land of ours?" [5; 213] – he asks himself. It heightens guilt over ancestors and a family doomed to poverty. After a while, he decides to commit suicide: "Let them take everything away! [...] I am guilty and I will suffer the punishment for all of you in front of men and front of God" [5; 215].

Lyavon's eldest son Symon has a similar attitude to the mentioned problem. Kupala showed the evolution that took place in the mind of the hero. At first, he supported his father and believed in the positive resolution of the case. He then began to condemn him, watching how easily he gave up the fight and surrendered. "As I am, so I'll be, and I will not let a relative to be offended, even if the world would be turned upside down" [5; 207]; "But we must defend it [the land] with all our force" [5; 214] – says Symon, who wants to use different methods of struggle for this purpose. He is rude to his mother, indifferent to the old man who visits their house, ready to renounce his sister for "spending time with Landlord", and in a tense moment even wants to destroy Danilka's violin, in the making of which he put his efforts and soul. Symon immediately grabs an ax when he's allowed to meet with the landlord – the main culprit of the tragedy. Only thanks to Lyavon's intervention the quarrel ends, and the father's words ("We must seek the truth not with an ax, but with the mind" [5; 215]) remain in the son's memory for a long time. Right after Lyavon's death, Symon changed his point of view: "We need to start a new life. And I'll start it. [...] Father told the truth that we need to fight with your mind, and not with an ax. And I will mentally fight and prepare others for this war. Enough resentment, enough lies!" [5; 216].

Symon is grieving the death of his father and at the same time understands that he have to become the head of the family and take full responsibility for it. After Lyavon's funeral, Symon returns home and declares: "Over there, over father's grave, I vowed not to leave this place alive, from this looted nest of ours [...] And I'll neither leave, nor give in, let them beat, cut, and torture!..." [5; 222]. He tries his best to keep his word, even though the landlord uses more and more harsh methods: first, he requires to snap off the eaves, then – to take away all the family's things, and finally – to destroy the house completely. Symon also refuses the offered job and new housing at the landlord's yard.

For the second time, he begins a lawsuit, providing the names of twelve witnesses who could confirm the fact that the Zyabliks built the house. He is convinced that the father would have done the same. Preparing the cross for his father's grave, Symon says: "Only my father will recognize me and will come to meet me happily: he will thank me for the cross and give me his blessing for further endurance, for further struggle with my misery" [5; 236-237]. After re-losing the trial, Symon feels depressed but still doesn't give up. When asked by his mother to step back and surrender, he answers her: "Do you even

know, oh mother, what does it mean to obey them? Or do you even guess so? This, my dear mother, means to sell ourselves into captivity to them – to be enslaved forever and ever. Slavery, from which neither we will find a way out, nor those who will inherit this slavery after us” [5; 245]. His position changes only under the influence of the Stranger. Leaving the house, he shouts: “To the great meeting! For the Fatherland!!!” [5; 262]. He realizes that the cause of his family's tragedy is not the landlord, but a system and government. Faith and hope are born that after a while he will return to this land and build a house.

Other heroes: Maryla, Zoska, Danilka, and the Old man (Genrikh Grigonis [Генрых Грыгоніс]) relate to the land in a completely different way. Maryla was convinced from the very beginning that the case was lost: “I told you that nothing would come of it. Is it possible for the poor to sue the rich?” [5; 212] – she reproaches her husband. Maryla is sure that it will be necessary to leave the house and the land. She even starts sewing beggar bags. “But if not today, then tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow we will be [the impoverished]. Such is our fate, and we should not miss it” she says to Zosya [5; 233]. After the second defeat in court, she tells her son: “What will you do against everyone? [...] You had to obey!” [5; 244]. The Old man, who also lost his house and land long ago and is forced to beg, going from village to village and begging for alms, supports her. The Old man advises the Zyabliks to think about begging as one of the possible ways to solve the existing problem. He tells Maryla: “The time has come, oh birds mother, to get out of this scattered nest to protect your children [...] Forget your pride, be full of courage, take your children with you and go, go where your feet will lead, where your eyes will look!” [5; 257].

Danilka and Zoska, in their turn, are uncertain about the land. They are not yet attached to the land and as artistic natures, they yearn to escape from this place, to work not on the land but to do something else. Zoska complains: “It's so suffocating over here” (7: 208) – and runs away to the hayfield, field, and water, where she collects flowers and weaves wreaths. Being in love with the landlord, she believes that he will help her family build happiness. She lives in an imaginary world. She tells her mother about her dream in which a handsome young man took the whole family to a country with beautiful rivers and gardens inhabited by birds of paradise, and asked them to stay there and rule the world; after trying to convince her that better times will come: “Look – what a beautiful sky in the west! Over there, in this heaven, we will live someday. And there will be no such ruined house, no such cruel people: there will be one big house for everyone, and other people will live in it, as here on earth – everyone will be brothers and sisters among themselves” [5; 233-234].

Danilka, despite his young age, is also looking for a way out of this situation. Throughout the play, he makes himself a violin, which should become an instrument of struggle for their destiny and the happiness of the family. He dreams of expressing a new life through the music that should change and improve life. No one in the family takes him seriously, relatives consider Danilka being a god's fool. Even he says this about himself: “Let them say that I am stupid, that I am what I am, but I see everything and understand everything. I just don't want to go up with my mind. No one can go far by using only it in today's world” [5; 238]. For him, it is irrelevant what to do next: stay, go with a beggar's bag into the world, or follow the Stranger. Everywhere he goes, he will make sure the whole family is together and working. He formulates the problem of the “scattered nest” as follows: “That's how our work went today! Zoska wears a wreath, Simon makes a cross, my mother sews bags, and I make the violin” [5; 234].

Another view of the play is expressed by the Stranger character (Ales Terah [Алесь Церах]), who reminds a prophet. He appears after Lyavon loses the court and advises him to leave the house and go to the “big meeting”. The stranger makes it clear that only he alone knows where to look for the truth. “[...] you are free like a bird now – nothing holds you. [...] Your grandfathers and great-grandfathers suffered a lot! The time has come, and you must spread your wings like a mighty eagle and fly to where everyone is now gathering. Eternal human sleep is over, the fiery dawn begins on earth from edge to edge, from sea to sea!” [5; 246] – he turns to Simon. Kupala used the Stranger character to symbolize the pursuit of truth, the struggle for happiness and justice [6; 59].

The Belarusian village after the revolution of 1905 was shown by Tishka Hartny in the “Socialist-ess” play (directed by Evstignei Mirovich, set design by Oskar Mariks, on 8 March 1923)²⁹. At that time, the implementation of Peter Stolypin's reform began (on 9 November 1906). In the course of this reform

²⁹ Unfortunately, no materials about this performance have survived in the Belarusian archives. Much of the BST-1 archive was destroyed during World War II.

village, communities were terminated and the communities' lands were resold to landlords and wealthy peasants [7; 165-169]. Hartny witnessed these changes: he was born in the province, in the town of Kopyl, in the family of an impoverished peasant. "Socialist-ess" is an interesting example of how the author continues the issues (conflict of generations and attitudes to the land) raised in the "Pavlinka" and the "Scattered Nest" plays by Kupala.

The heroes of the "Socialist-ess" are three families from the village of Plava: two landowners' families – Rykhly and Sliva, and a peasant one – Lis. Simon Rykhly's family over the years became rich on their own, but Ian Sliva received his manor after the death of his father, who, in his turn, received it as a result of the Stolypin reform: he added two large plots of land to the existing property, becoming the richest man not only in the Plava village but also in the neighborhood. Ian's dream is to marry Paluta – Simon Rykhly's incredibly beautiful daughter. The Rykhlys family is also very interested in such a marriage, which would significantly increase its authority and influence in the village. The only problem is that Paluta doesn't like Ian – the unintelligent and unattractive person. Her sympathies are on the side of the handsome, intelligent and, besides, distributor of illegal literature Petrus Lis. For this reason, she is teased as a "socialist-ess" [8].

Paluta's character is directly related to the main heroine of the Yanka Kupala drama "Pavlinka": the girl also tries to convince her parents that her feelings are more important than the profit motives and that she has the right to make her own decisions. "I do nothing harmful ... And in what else I have the right to be independent", "Moreover, the world has changed, it is the other one now; people began to live more with the mind, and not with wealth and nobility because the mind is the best of all. [...] And then, I'm not interested in money" [9; 8–9]. Alone with her beloved Petrus, she swears: "I will not part with you, no one will be able to separate me from you by my own free will" [9; 23]. And he supports her: "Be more persistent, my dear. Be cool with your parents. Don't let yourself be bent in an arch. [...] There is no doubt ... We will overcome the obstacles..." [9; 24].

Paluta's parents, Simon and Domna, do not want to agree to their daughter's marriage to Petrus. They at all costs subdue the daughter of their will. Since nothing works, Ian decides to denigrate the competitor – he writes a denunciation to the police about the threat from Lis: as if he is turning the local youth against the government, and the church, and distributing forbidden literature. Paluta warns Petrus about the denunciation, saving him from arrest. But she is forced to marry Sliva. After six months of married life, she runs away from her husband, who, as it turned out, didn't love her at all, he just wanted to have extra labor on his farm [10].

The dramatic material allowed the troupe to focus on the representation of the pre-revolutionary Belarusian village, and the relations which were established in it. The first three acts play an important role, in which the lives of three families are shown in turn with great accuracy: Rykhly, Sliva, and Lis. Ryhly's farm: a house, a barn, a herd, a barn, a stable, a large garden, a garden with many flowers – had to delight the spectator. The viewer had to understand from the first moment: here lives a family that is not only famous for its wealth but also has a rich history. There is a bench in the garden under the cherry tree, where the whole family and guests (for whom the door is always open) like to sit. It is here that Paluta enters into an argument with her parents, who persuade her to live in harmony with them, to follow their advice and orders. "If we tell you what to do – you shall agree without a doubt. Your dad and I learned a lot by living our lives" [9; 12] – says Paluta's mother. They consider Petrus to be "poor, dishonorable and even debauched", "a beggar, a rascal", "he has no god, no king, no authority, he hates wealthy people, tells terrible gossip about them, and doesn't value anyone", and his marriage to him "ruin the ancestry bloodlines". On the other hand, a marriage with Ian, who's "so much good from his father he inherited: a hundred acres of fields, buildings, and a lot of money", according to the parents, will be very useful for their daughter. "If you marry him, then you'll be in heaven," her father told her. There is a clear resemblance between Rykhly's attitude to Petrus and Stepan Krynitsky's attitude to Yakim. In both situations, the "heads of families" emphasize the anti-government activities of their daughters' chosen ones, thus making it clear that this is the main reason for their refusal. They are extremely afraid of the established order's collapse both in the country and in the family, where the authority of the father is indisputable.

Sliva's home is a large whitewashed room with two windows towards the meadows. There are two icons of penance: Christ and the Virgin Mary. There are two beds with high stacks of pillows near the wall. A large number of hanging paintings (landscapes and historical scenes) catch the eye. Ian talks to

his mother, Matruna, about the difficulties of maintaining such a large farm, complaining about the costs. Both decide that “the world is too bad now: people are worth nothing [...] lazy, disobedient, and debauched fools, who do neither fear the God, nor respect the rich and noble people” [9; 26]. Like Rykhly's family, they consider Petrus Lisa, who comes from an impoverished family and does not believe in God, to be the greatest danger in the village. They accuse him of allegedly bringing illegal literature from the city and distributing it to local youth, setting fire to the houses of landowners and urging: “All you rich people should be burned down” [9; 28]. Ian says that he has repeatedly called him by various nicknames and even threatened to kill him. “It is impossible to let it go on like this is now. He's already squandered too much, and dare to ask for more. If we don't say anything – then he'll instigate all the poor to burn us down. They'll set on fire, and steal – and afterward, we won't be able to look for our rights” [9; 27], – sums up Matruna. She cannot hide that the real reason for their aggressive attitude towards Petrus is his affair with Paluta. Together with their son, they believe that the girl became a victim of Lis' intrigue. “The daughter of rich, noble landlords in relations with a poor beggar and a socialist, an atheist! It is necessary to get rid of it. And marrying Ian is the best way out” [9; 34], – says the mother. They decide to write a denunciation that would help settle the case. The scene during which Ian is left alone in the room is well done. Ian walks and looks closely at his imprint in the mirror between the two windows, grimaces, tries on a hat, a shirt with a floral pattern, and a jacket. He imagines how he will be fashionably dressing after his marriage and how he'll be bragging among the village boys, though a minute ago he complained that he has no money for new pants.

In both acts, the playwright came up with an interesting plotline solution, while the stage director and actors picked up this ‘mechanism’ of the highly negative reaction of the Rykhly and Sliva families to Petrus and his relationship with Paluta. This topic returns three times, gaining more and more strength each time: in the first scene with Paluta and her father, then with Paluta and her mother, and finally with Paluta and Petrus (when Paluta retells a conversation with her parents). And in the second act with Ian and his mother, with Ian's mother and Vintsuk (Ian's friend), and later with his mother and brother Yakov Kishka. This solution is aimed, on the one hand, to show Petrus as a negative hero and excuse their behavior, and on the other – to build up an extreme tension between the two sides [11].

The House of Lis family, in turn, is presented very modestly: a small crooked wooden house, with the old harrow and plow lying next to it. There is a bench in front of the house where Eugenia, Petrus' mother, is talking to her neighbor Hanna. Both complaint about the world (“The world is so poorly made that it is impossible to express it. People are just like wild beasts or dogs: they would eat each other just to get more wealth. They have no shame, no humiliation, they have forgotten what humanity is” [9; 41]), about landowners (“They plundered the land, by all means, built lordly buildings, bred animals – and feel they are the owners of the whole village” [9; 41]), and about local authorities and the church (“Hand washes hand. They always shake hands, drink together, visit each other. [...] Say something, and they ready to eat you alive. It turns out that strength and right are on their side, though there are just a few of them”). Eugenia admits that after her husband's death she was forced to sell her plot of land to feed her four children, two of whom died soon after.

In the last (the fifth) act of the play, Hartny tries to rehabilitate the family of Rykhly (especially Simon), by showing there is still culture repentance in these people. As the village began to talk more about quarrels between Ian and Paluta, about the use of the girl as a labor force, a meeting took place at Rykhly's house, during which the whole family spoke in favor of Paluta's return and divorce. “We don't need that wealth. Let them burn with it, except a good people” [9; 59], – says the mother in a moment of despair. No sooner than she said these words, her daughter, who had run away from her husband, returned home. Paluta remembers how she was repeatedly beaten, remembered how Ian began rummaging through her personal belongings, looking for evidence of her cheating. A father with tears appeals to his daughter with an apology: “We were deceived... How could we have thought that it would be so” [9; 64]. Thus Hartny wants to emphasize: the authority of parents is still very high, but they also have the right to make a mistake and correct it. It should be noted that this view starts to dominate the stage plays, which were written after the revolution.

In 1926, Vasily Shashalevich also touched upon rural issues in the “Twilight” play (directed by Evstignei Mirovich, set design by Oscar Mariks, on 30 January 1927). Thanks to the policy of Dmitry Pryshchepov – the People's Commissar of Agriculture of that period, the Belarusian peasantry was able to bring their farms to order, some wealthy owners had the money for rent, there was an opportunity to

use modern agricultural machinery. However, there were a lot of dissatisfied people, because there was still not enough land. After nationalization, peasants received only 23.3% of the land, and land reform in Belarus covered only 15% of farms [7; 266-268].

Shashalevich showed the Belarusian village (Kremenki, Mogilev region) of the first half of the 1920s in the eastern part of the republic in the “Twilight” play. The author lived in the province for many years (he was born in the Mogilev region, spent his childhood there, and later worked as a teacher) and watched with his own eyes the processes that took place in the first half of the 1920s. The author had the opportunity to observe how the conditions of village life changed after the revolution, how peasants began to receive land, how agricultural cooperatives were established. However, there were situations when power was concentrated in the hands of wealthy peasants who tried to get the best land while offending the weakest and poorest. The villagers were shown by the playwrights as an ignorant, cowardly, frightened mass, which is ready not only to offend but also to destroy a human. Mikhalka Khramionak, son of one of the poorest peasants, who is trying to make changes, falls victim to the crowd. This is a typical “new human”: active, energetic, sincere, and enterprising. The first scene of the play shows the relationship in the village [12].

During the meeting of residents, there is a division of land. Anis Mikityonak (Vladimir Krylovich [Уладзімір Крыловіч]) – the chairman of the Village Council, proudly informs everyone that he managed to expand the territory of the village to the meadow that connects Kramianki with the neighboring village – Brylyovka. He received a document confirming the rights to this territory for a bribe. Those who have gathered accept the news enthusiastically, but Ilya Khramionak (Genrikh Grigonis [Генрых Грыгоніс]), is very dissatisfied with his plot, which, in his opinion, is poorly located and low-yielding. The chairman and the two richest peasants – Timokh Tsmykh (Florian Zhdanovich) and Kakei Nastasionak try to force Ilya to agree with the decision, while trying to slander and humiliate him.” Whether you alive or not, it doesn't matter. You are useless, to hell with you.” [13; 7], – says one. But they have high self-esteem: “We are the working masses and of course benefit the state” [13; 7]. Everyone present at the meeting starts laughing at Ilya, saying that he is lazy, incapable, and unable to earn a living. These words eventually make him shout angrily: “You blackguards! Take everything from me! Drink my blood, come on, drink! ” [13; 10]. After such words, some people try to reassure Ilya, reminding that they have always supported him by borrowing grain and giving him bread. “Thanks to the policy of the Soviet government, we can help you, as to the poorest one” [13; 13], – says Nastasionak to Ilya. Unexpectedly, representatives of the neighboring village enter the hall to discuss the situation with the meadow. They are trying to prove their rights to own this land. But all their hopes are immediately ruined when Mikityonak shows them the documents. The guests start fighting, which is interrupted by the arrival of Ilya’s son – Mikhalka (Mikhail Zorov [Міхал Зорав]), who went to America to earn money seven years ago. Everyone present is worried and somewhat frightened by the thought that Mikhalka brought money with him, so the poorest peasant Ilya could become the richest one.

With the arrival of Mikhalka, Khramionak’s life is gradually changing. Above all, he supports his father in the land issue. During the meeting, Mikhalka condemned Mikityonak's illegal step in the meadow case and said it straight out: “If you are fair men, you shouldn’t do that” [13; 71]. Mikhalka begins a serious study of the land laws, and as a result, he promises the residents of Brylovka to help them in the legal solution of the case. They, in turn, offer him to join the commune organized by them and promise him a house and tax exemption for the next five years. He meets Ulyana (Lydia Rzhetskaya [Лідзія Ржэцкая]), long ago they were in love with each other, but after his departure, her parents forced the girl to marry Mikityonak. However, now her feelings are returning. Ulyana’s words are filled with bitterness: “It is hard for me to live with him. It is so hard that I’d even run away blindfolded” [13; 47]. Mikhalka confesses his love, and offers Ulyana to leave her family, and start a new life with him.

One of the main scenes is a visit to Khramionak’s house. Mikhalka decided to invite all willing villagers to tell them stories about American life. We see a large room: a furnace (at the left), an icon, a wooden door, and a window. There are two wooden tables and four benches on the right side of the room. Ilya – the owner is a gray-haired old man in a long white flax shirt and striped trousers. He stays on his feet with difficulty. Mikhalka is dressed in a beautiful suit, gray shirt, and black leather boots. He covers the table with white tablecloths.

Soon the villagers enter the room: men dressed in old, worn-out trousers and jackets, white shirts and long boots (some are shod in bast shoes), and women dressed in traditional Belarusian costumes:

embroidered shirt, long colored skirts, aprons, headscarves and bast shoes. It is obvious that men look older than women: uncombed, with tousled hair, sunken eyes, and wrinkled faces. Many of the guests bring hooch, bread, and scrambled eggs. Then the fun begins: everyone sings (“Oh a garden, garden o’ mine”) and dances. Mikhalka takes the floor, he talks about new technologies he saw in America, about the people he had to work with and to overcome difficulties with. On the occasion, he also remembers the difficult working conditions that led to his homecoming: “But I was fed up with American life” [13; 59]. He admits that he was surprised by the situation in Kremenki: “I thought that the two of them started living in a new way after the revolution. But as you lived before, so you continue to live now. [...] We need to start living a new life” [13; 55]. In the end, Mikhalka says that he had to give all the money he earned to the bandits in exchange for his life. This news makes the guests laugh, and drives the father mad: he stomps his feet and tears the last hair on his head.

Mikhalka's extraordinary energy, seek for change, desire to live an honest life contribute to the escalation of the conflict with his father, Ulyana, and the village authorities. From now on, the action goes quickly. The father refuses to join the commune in a neighbor village (“I’d rather die, but I won’t join ‘em’ – he says) and kicks his son out of the house saying “Scat, you weak-minded!” [13; 81]. During the second meeting with Mikhalka, Ulyana confesses to him: “I’m afraid it won’t lead to any good” she talks about the suffering of conscience towards her husband and children (“I can’t look into his eyes. My conscience tortures me” [13; 86]) and suggests Khramionak not to look for meetings with her, and to forget everything they’ve experienced together. Moreover, she has a bad feeling: “I am afraid that something bad will happen. If trouble happens and I’d be ashamed, I’ll have to kill myself” [13; 97]. Mikityonak finds out his wife’s meetings with Mikhalka, and angrily shouts: “Whore! I’ll strangle this slut with my own hands” [13; 113]. Someone sets Ulyana’s father’s barn on fire, and Mikhalka appears to be a suspect.

There is a scene of Mikhalka’s trial. One by one the villagers criminate him. Only Ulyana tries to defend him, telling everyone that he is not guilty and he was at her house during the fire. Mikityonak takes the floor, hinting that the case should not be moved to the city, but the decision should be made here. He offers the death penalty, and everyone agrees with him. The villagers attack Mikhalka and beat him severely. Before his death, the guy says: “I curse your dark gnawing village! Let it be burned down indeed!” [13; 141].

But Mikityonak suffers the pangs of conscience. He invites several friends to arrange a funeral service for the murdered Mikhalka. Suddenly he speaks out words that make others numb: “I’ve brought my arch enemy to the scaffold... But did I feel the relief? Oh, no. Ferocious worm eats away my heart. Leeches suck my blood” [13; 152-153]. At that moment, the police enter the house together with the residents of Brylouka, and the god’s fool Stefka Galdadrym, who tells in detail how Mikhalka was killed.

The “Soviet Belarus” newspaper published a letter from one of the viewers entitled “Does the ‘Twilight’ play reflect modern village?” [14; 8]. The author himself answers his question negatively. He believes there are two reasons: first, there are no longer villages controlled by the Village Council, and second, the peasants were shown as stupid and ignorant people, which is false. Besides, the author of the play didn’t provide a way out of the situation shown. Such an assessment was typical in those years. The urban public no longer wanted to see on stage the impoverished Belarusian village and its misfortune, tragedy, and pain. After all, a significant part of the audience ran away from such villages to the city to improve their living standards. This audience wanted to see the village to be rich and reformed, while the villagers to establish their life well. But the audience didn’t understand that the village changes were very slow, and with the beginning of collectivization, a famine began in the village (1929).

Conclusion

It should be remembered that Belarus was an agrarian country. The village, where a large part of the Belarusian population lived, was the main center of Belarusian life. Slowly, in the 20-30s. In the 1980s, the situation changes and the city also becomes an important part of the structure of Belarusian society. The purpose of the theater was to show these processes. First of all, he drew attention to the Belarusian province, to the village, to the system of life and values prevailing there, interpersonal relations. In dramas which were selected life before and after the revolution was shown. The authors of these texts wanted to lay special emphasis on three problems. The first problem is that the changes in the village were happening slowly, with great difficulty. The second problem is that the vast majority of

peasants lived according to archaic rules and regulations (if it was necessary, they were ready to destroy anyone who will stand in their way). And the third one is the fact that there's a person in any community, who's different in energy and intellect, and who's ready to confront those who act by force, lies, or intimidation of others [15; 8].

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Белорус мемлекеттік театры-1 сахнасындағы белорус деревня бейнесі (1920-1930)

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Мақалада 1920 жылдары Белорус Мемлекеттік театрында қойылған үш пьеса талданған, осы кезеңде ашылған театр үшін бұл маңызды кезең болды, бірінші көркемдік жетекші Флориан Жданович, екіншісі Евстигней Миронович болды. Ф.Жданович Янка Купаланың «Шашыраған ұя» (1913) пьесасын, Е.Миронович Тишка Гартныйдың «Социалистка» (1924) мен Василий Шашалевичтің «Ымырт» (1927) пьесаларын сахналады. Алғашқы екі шығармада 1917 жылғы революцияға дейінгі жағдай суреттелсе, үшіншісінде төңкерістен кейінгі оқиға баяндалады. Үш пьесаның да басты тақырыбы – белорус деревнясындағы жер үшін күрес. Жер үлесінің көлемі адамның әл-ауқаты мен оның әлеуметтік жағдайын байқатады. Шығармалар авторлары жер мәселесі адамның мінезін өзгертіп, күрделі шешімдерді қабылдауға әсерін тигізетінін көрсетеді. Тіпті адам өлтіруге дейін апарады.

Түйін сөздер: белорус театрының тарихы, Минск, Белорус мемлекеттік театры-1, ұлттық драматургия, деревня мәселесі.

**Образ белорусской деревни на сцене
Белорусского государственного театра-1 (1920-1930)**

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В статье проанализированы три пьесы, поставленные в Белорусском Государственном Театре-1 в 1920-х годах, очень важном периоде для театра, который был открыт в 1920 году. Первым художественным руководителем был Флориан Жданович, вторым – Евстигней Минович, первый осуществил постановку пьесы «Раскиданное гнездо» (1913) Янки Купалы, второй – «Социалистка» (1924) Тишки Гартного и «Сумерки» (1927) Василия Шашалевича. Первые две говорят о ситуации до революции 1917 года, третья – после революции. Главная тема этих трех пьес – борьба за землю в белорусской деревне. Размер земли указывает на благосостояние человека и его социальный статус. Авторы этих произведений показывают, как земельный вопрос формирует характер человека, влияет на принятие им сложных решений, а иногда даже приводит к убийству.

Ключевые слова: история белорусского театра, Минск, Белорусский государственный театр-1, национальная драматургия, деревенская проблематика.

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