Belarus remains one of the least known countries in western and northern Europe. There are several reasons for this, the primary one being the fact that in modern times, Belarus did not exist as a political entity. During this time Belarus had no sovereignty, being initially a province of Poland-Lithuania and the Russian Empire. The Cold War contributed to the disappearance of Belarus from Western political and academic discourse. Very few scientific books and articles about Belarus were published in the West before 1991. Despite the Belarusian SSR’s membership of the UN, Belarus was absorbed by the Soviet Union. Unlike neighboring Latvia or Lithuania, Belarus was not independent during the interwar period and had no large diaspora in Europe after 1945. Therefore, Belarusians were often considered by people outside Eastern Europe as so-called ‘white Russians’, a nation without a tradition of statehood, native language and culture, or political symbols. Belarus made headlines in the global media for the first time in its history in August 2020. The rigged elections after 25 years of authoritarian rule by President Lukashenka led to mass protests across the country for the right to vote in free and fair elections. International readers are fascinated by the peaceful nature of the protests and by the thousands of white-red-white flags worn by protestors.

Having a national flag is an old tradition. From the beginning, national flags were an effective medium for political messages that could be passed on to people without having to rely on a certain level of literacy. During the era of nationalism in Europe, several new political nations constructed their own flags that were intended to mobilize a movement and unite a nation around a powerful political symbol. As Gabriella Elgenius pointed out, in the modern world national flags continue to be used as political symbols, as tools of propaganda and control, and as devices for the inclusion and exclusion of different social groups within the entire nation. Why do protesters and officials in Belarus use different national flags? What do the white-red-white and red-green flags symbolize for the people in Belarus? Why are the police hunting the white-red-white flag? Why does the massive...
state-run propaganda against peaceful protests focus on the white-red-white flag and the history of World War II? In this paper, I outline how a study of political symbols of Belarus can contribute to a more detailed understanding of the ongoing situation in the country.

**Historical Background**

The Belarusian national movement was one of the latest in Europe that emerged after the 1905 revolution in the Russian empire. The first political party, the Belarusian Socialist Party Hramada, was founded in Minsk in 1905. The first Belarusian-language newspaper was established in Vilna (nowadays Vilnius) in 1906. The first publishing houses were established in Vilna and St. Petersburg in 1906. The first history of Belarus, written by a Belarusian writer in Belarusian, was printed in Vilna in 1910. The first Belarusian-language newspaper was established in Vilna (nowadays Vilnius) in 1906. The first publishing houses were established in Vilna and St. Petersburg in 1906. The first history of Belarus, written by a Belarusian writer in Belarusian, was printed in Vilna in 1910. The first grammar of the Belarusian literary language was published in 1918. The first network of Belarusian-language schools was created only during World War I in the German occupation zone. As everywhere in Europe, students took an active part in the national awakening known in Belarusian as ‘the renaissance of a nation’ (adradziennie). In the summer of 1917, Klaudzii Duzh-Dusheuski, a student at the Petrograd Mining Institute, designed a white-red-white flag. He was born in 1891 in Hlybokae, Vitsebsk region, into a Roman Catholic family of Belarusian farmers. Duzh-Dusheuski came to St. Petersburg (aka Petrograd) for his university studies because there were no universities in Belarusian lands after the tsarist government closed the Jesuit Academy in Polatsk and the University of Vilna. The white-red-white flag was based on the traditional colors of Belarusian folk dress and military banners of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Ruthenia. Historically, the white-red-white stripes appeared on the dress of Belarusian Orthodox bishops. The flag quickly became popular among the people and the first all-Belarusian Congress, held in Minsk in December 1917, accepted it as the national flag. This congress, that gathered 1872 delegates from different regions of Belarus, was violently dispersed by Bolshevik military. Klaudzii Duzh-Dusheuski was one of the founders of the short-lived Belarusian Democratic republic (hereafter the BNR). The government of the republic that proclaimed its independence in Minsk on 25 March 1918 adopted a white-red-white flag as a national flag.

In 1921, after the treaty of Riga that divided Belarus between Soviet Russia and Poland, Duzh-Dusheuski went into exile in Lithuania where he worked as architect. During the Nazi occupation of Lithuania, he was
The national flag of Belarusian Democratic Republic and independent Belarus in 1991–1995. PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

The state flag of Belarusian SSR (1951). PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

The white-red-white flag on the cover of the pro-Nazi Belarusian police journal Belarus na Varcie in June, 1944. The author’s private collection.

The flag of Belarusian Democratic Republic on the balcony of the republican government (former office of the Russian governor). Minsk, February 1918. The unknown photographer. Originally published in the magazine Varta October 1918, 33. PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

arrested by the Germans for helping local Jews and sent to prison. After the war he was arrested again, this time by Soviet secret police MGB, as “a Belarusian nationalist” and sent to prison. He died in Kaunas in 1959.6

In 1918, Professor Mitrofan Dounar-Zapolski wrote a work on behalf of the government of the BNR, entitled The basis of Belarusian state individuality, which was published in English, German and French.7 Dounar-Zapolski pointed out that a Belarusian state emblem (Pahonia) and a white-red-white flag have deep historical roots in the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Ruthenia.

In interwar Poland, the white-red-white flag was adopted by different political and non-governmental organizations of the Belarusian minority, apart from the Communist party. These include the Belarusian Student Union at Wilno University, the Association of Belarusian-language schools, the social-democratic Hramada and the Christian-Democratic party.

At that time, the flag was considered by all Belarusians in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania to be “a national flag”. For example, in 1930, Maksim Tank (aka Maksim Skurko), a renowned poet and member of the Communist Youth League of Western Belarus, published a poem: “Do you hear my brother”. The poem described the white-red-white flag as a powerful political symbol in the mobilization of the Belarusian minority in Poland.

However, in the early 1930s the Communist Party of Western Belarus in Poland received the directives of the Communist International (Comintern) general office in Moscow to combat a white-red-white flag as being “bourgeois-nationalistic”.8

As happened elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe, the national flag was used by civil collaborationist authorities in Belarus in 1941–1944. At that time, Soviet partisans used the red flag and the Polish underground resistance used the Polish national flag. During first years of occupation the Nazis moved several police and anti-partisan regiments recruited in the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Russia to Belarus. There is no evidence of the white-red-white flag being used by Belarusian auxiliary police. The national flag was used by the Belarusian Home Guard (Weißruthenische Heimwehr). However, this pro-Nazi police and military formation was established only in April-June 1944, few weeks before the withdrawal from Belarus and after the final stage of Holocaust.

On this occasion, Vasyl Bykau, the prominent Belarusian writer and Red Army veteran of World War II, ironically noted: “It is known that Belarusian collaborators used the white-red-white flag; it is also well known that they wore pants – so what? We do not have any other national flag”.9 It should be noted that most pro-Nazi military and police forces recruited in the occupied republics of the Soviet Union and the Baltic states used their national flags. For example, the national flag of Russia (aka tricolor) was used by SS Sturmbriegade R.O.N.A., which acted in 1943–44 in Belarus, and by a paramilitary...
pro-Nazi Union of Russian Youth (Soiuz russkoi molodezhi); the leaders of each moved to Minsk in 1943. For example, in June 1944, the Nazi press reported about the assembly of the Union of Russian Youth in Minsk that gathered in the House of the Russian National-Socialist Working Party. The delegates raised “a Russian national flag” and sent addresses to the soldiers of the Vlasov army, SS-brigade RONA; and the members of the Hitlerjugend and the Union of Belarusian Youth. In post-war western countries, the white-red-white flag was promoted by activists within the Belarusian diaspora as the flag of Belarusian Democratic Republic created in 1918. In the diaspora, the white-red-white flag was used by different political and non-governmental associations, from left to right, as well as the Belarusian veteran organizations that included both former pro-Nazi BKA soldiers and veterans of Belarusian origin who fought the Nazis in the Polish formations of the British army. This situation is typical for many East European diasporas.

The present-day state flag of Belarus is a modification of the Soviet Belarusian flag designed under the rule of Stalin. The concept of the history of the Belarusian SSR as conceived by the Communist Party was adopted in 1948, and in 1953 a collective monograph, History of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, was sent to print by the Institute of History at National Academy of Sciences. According to this concept, Belarus’ political history began in 1919, when the Soviet government was established in Minsk. In 1922 the Belarusian SSR became one of four founders of the Soviet Union. Under the Soviet flag Belarus doubled its territory after 1939 as a result of the Reunification of Western Belarus (the official term for what happened to Eastern Poland after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact). Under the red flag the Belarusians, together with Russians and other Soviet nations, defeated Nazi Germany and successfully reconstructed the country after 1944. According to this concept, the international recognition of Belarus as a sovereign republic resulted in UN membership. In fact, the membership of the Belarusian SSR (together with Ukraine) in the UN was a result of Stalin’s diplomacy, not an initiative of the regional government in Minsk.

However, a new UN member state needed a flag. Until the end of the 1940s, the flag of Belarusian SSR was almost identical to the red flag of the Soviet Union. The only distinguishing feature was the abbreviated name of the republic in gold paint in the upper left corner. The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet On the

State Flags of the Union Republics from January 20, 1947 allowed the use of other colors and additional symbols to reflect the national character of the republics. The flag of the Belarusian SSR, adopted in 1951, was designed as a compromise between communist and national symbols. The red-white-red stripes were placed on the green-red background and a white and red folk ornament was placed on the vertical stripe at the hoist near the communist symbols. The flag was designed by a group of scholars and artists led by Mikhail Karczer, a historian at the National Academy of Sciences, and Mikalai Huseu, a professional artist. According to the 1956 statute, the flag represented both Soviet and national traditions. The white and red ornament was named “Belarusian national ornament” in this document. The ornament was added to a golden hammer and sickle and a red five-pointed star on the red-green background.

Two Flags, One Nation

The symbolic value of the white-red-white flag was kept through the post-war period by both the Belarusian intelligentsia and the Belarusian diaspora in the West. After 1984, this flag was promoted by members of the first underground youth organization, Maistrounia, established in Minsk. In 1988, the white-red-white flag appeared in public for the first time after WWII at the first opposition rally in Kurapaty. This site is the largest single mass grave in Minsk, where from 1937 to 1941 the NKVD murdered between 10,000 and 30,000 residents of Belarus, as well as citizens of the Baltic states and Poland. The peaceful demonstration was brutally dispersed by Soviet militia that confiscated opposition flags. However, the discovery of the previously secret site of mass killings and selective exhumation of bodies in 1988 led to a rapid de-Sovietization of Belarusian society. The exhumation team was led by archeologist Zianon Paźniak, the leader of the Christian-conservative party and anti-communist movement, the Belarusian Popular Front. Mr. Paźniak was the leader of opposition to Lukashenka until 1996 when he had to leave the country for exile in the USA. The collapse of the Soviet Union and growing public awareness of Stalin’s terror in Belarus led to the discredit of Soviet political symbols, including the red-green flag. In 1991, after
the decision of Parliament and the expert report by the Institute of History at National Academy of Sciences, the white-red-white flag was proclaimed to be the national flag of Belarus. As Gabriella Elgenius pointed out, this is normal practice for many East European countries where changing the ideological regime led to the modification of an old flag or adoption of a new one.15

Aliaksandr Lukashenka became president of Belarus in 1994. This was the first presidential and democratic election held in Belarus after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The result was a great victory for Lukashenka, who received 80.6 per cent of votes in the second round. The inauguration of Lukashenka was held under the national white-red-white flag and the president took the oath under this flag.

However, a year after taking office, Lukashenka won a controversial referendum that gave him the power to dissolve parliament. In 1996, he won another referendum that dramatically increased his authoritarian power and allowed him to rule the country in an authoritarian way for the next 25 years. In 1995 the white-red-white flag was replaced by a red-green flag with certain modifications. From this moment the white-red-white flag became a symbol of democratic opposition and was visible at all protest actions. The authorities started to term the white-red-white flag an “illegal symbol” and ordered police to arrest people who wore the flag or put it on their private balcony. The main headline in non-governmental media in 1995 was news about Miron. This was the nickname of an unknown person who placed white-red-white flags on top of towers and high buildings across the country. In July 1995, Miron placed the large white-red-white flag over the 40-meter factory chimney in Liozno near Vitsebsk – hometown of Marc Chagall. A note was attached to the flag: “Return memory to the people! Miron.” That was the beginning. Between 1995 and 2010 Miron placed dozens of white-red-white flags across the country. The political performance was supported by young followers. For over 15 years the police and KGB hunted Miron. He was arrested in 2010 after the installation of a white-red-white flag on top of the main Christmas tree in Vitsebsk. He was Siarhei Kavalenka, an ordinary construction worker. The court gave him a three-year suspended sentence for ‘illegal activity’. In 2014 Mr. Kavalenka was arrested again and sentenced to prison.11 However, the appearance of white-red-white flags in public space continued and many resources within the police and KGB were directed to hunting this flag.

The current design of the Belarusian red-green state flag was introduced in 1995. The communist symbols
were removed, as were the white-red-white stripes along the national ornament.

The official propaganda promoted this flag as a symbol of a great Soviet history and an even greater life under Lukashenka. In fact, the red-green flag also has a dark history. Under this flag, the Stalinist regime implemented forced collectivization in Western Belarus (part of Poland before 1939). Thousands of people in the countryside were forced to leave their farms and resettle in newly established kolkhozes; some of them were sent to the Gulag. Under this flag, the security police destroyed the patriotic youth organizations in Western Belarus and the last detachments of anti-Soviet partisans. Therefore, for many Belarusians this flag was associated from the beginning with mass violence and political repressions. It is little known that a designer of the 1951 flag, Mikalai Huseu, collaborated with the Nazis and was sent to prison in 1944. During the Nazi occupation, Huseu was one of the most sought-after artists in Belarus. In particular, it was he who painted the large portraits of Hitler that hung in Minsk streets. After prison, he returned to socialist realist art.

Nevertheless, for the young generation which grew up under the long-term rule of Lukashenka, a red-green flag became the national symbol. Under this flag, national teams won international competitions. Under this flag, official holidays and ceremonies were held in Belarus. Since the mid-1990s the state flag, coat of arms and a portrait of Lukashenka were hung in each classroom, military barracks and administrative office in Belarus. As a result, the red-green flag was normalized.

The administrative persecution of people with a white-red-white flag led to the next phenomena. Since the early 21st century the national flag began to be associated with the anti-Lukashenka democratic opposition only. Referring to the white-red-white flag, official propaganda described the leaders of the opposition as heirs of the pro-Nazi collaborators. The fact that Belarus proclaimed its independence under this flag in 1918 and in 1991 was suppressed. The propaganda’s use of the memory of World War II was not accidental. The Nazi occupation was the biggest disaster ever experienced by the civilian population of Belarus. According to Per Anders Rudling, World War II in particular became a foundation for the creation of a modern Belarusian identity. As a matter of fact, no historical event has had a greater influence on today’s Belarus. Lukashenka’s nation-building project is based in great measure on the memory of World War II. Exploiting the mythology of war and occupation certainly has a practical political significance for the regime, not only by claiming a special place for Lukashenka as the last defender of Europe against Nazism, but also supporting the myth that the democratic opposition is ‘heir’ to the Nazis and ‘servant’ of the West. Speaking in 2010 at a ceremonial meeting dedicated to the victory in World War II, Lukashenka noted:

The Great Victory is sacrosanct for every Belarusian. And even if a bunch of such rogues exist [the democratic opposition], who like the idea of ‘an independent Belarus in the new Europe of Adolf Hitler’, we know them. We know in whose service their idols were during the Great Patriotic War, and we fully understand whose lackeys they are now.
Unlike many East European countries, the Lukashenka regime politically marginalizes such ethnic referents of Belarusians like native language and national history, basing its nation building on the idealized past of Soviet unity. The country has had two official languages since 1995: Belarusian and Russian. However, officials and the state-run media use mostly Russian and the opposition, independent newspapers, and digital resources use Belarusian. Therefore, describing the white-red-white flag as ‘anti-Soviet and nationalistic’ uses negative terms only and the narrative of the red-green flag avoids any references to the dark pages of its history. Therefore, the government promotes the red-green flag and use it as a tool for conservation of Homo Sovieticus. The ornament of the state flag was designed in 1917 by Matrona Markevich (née Katser) a sister of Mikhail Karcer. Her husband Aliaksei was arrested by the NKVD during the Great Terror, murdered without trial and buried in an unmarked mass grave. The family found out about this only in 1986. Today the relatives of Ms. Markevich visit both a monument devoted to the red-green flag, which was erected in her hometown Sianno, and a mass grave of the victims of Soviet terror at Kabylitskaia Hara.

The Flag Revolution

The political symbolism of the white-red-white flag illustrates the rule of law that existed in independent Belarus in 1991–94 before Aliaksandr Lukashenka took office.

The white-red-white flag also symbolizes the peaceful heritage of the BNR that was destroyed by the military forces of Soviet Russia and Poland that divided Belarus in 1921. The mass opposition celebration of the BNR centenary in Minsk in March 2018 was a strong showcasing of the fundamental principles of democracy violated by Lukashenka’s regime. For decades, official media constructed an iconic image of the red-green flag as a symbol of stability and prosperity. August 2020 changed this picture dramatically and this flag became a symbol of state-run mass violence. At the same time, the regime played with existing contradictions around the flags in order to divide society and spark off the conflicts. On the day after the brutal police repressions against protesters, a red-green flag was placed on all police vans and prison trucks in Minsk.

"Official propaganda focuses on the World War II period only, trying to connect the flag with some individuals who collaborated with the Nazis."

The official mass media that monopolizes all TV channels and dominates periodicals in Belarus began a massive propaganda campaign against the white-red-white flag, blaming it on the Nazi connection. According to the propagandists: “Under this flag the Nazis and their collaborators burned the population of Khatyn and other Belarusian villages.” In fact, the population of Khatyn, a Catholic Belarusian village near Minsk, was almost entirely exterminated in 1943 by the German Dirlewanger SS special battalion and Schutzmannschaft Battalion 118, comprising Ukrainian nationals and Soviet POWs of different ethnic origin. These detachments never used a Belarusian national flag. The national memorial was opened in Khatyn in 1969 and the former policemen of Schutzmannschaft Battalion 118 were tried in a Soviet court in Minsk and executed in 1975 and 1986. Khatyn is a symbol of mass killings of the Slavic civilian population by the Nazis and a site of memory known to every Belarusian.

On August 20, 2020, the country’s main state TV channel showed a reportage with Viacheslau Danilovich, the director of the Institute of History at National Academy of Sciences. Dr. Danilovich stated that the use of the white-red-white flag is absolutely unacceptable, since it is the flag of collaborators who sought to create a fascist state under Hitler’s protectorate. On August 21, dozens of professional historians, including those from the Institute of History, published an open letter to Mr. Danilovich under the remarkable title Danilovich is lying and this is an act of immorality. In the letter the historians once again tell readers about the origin of the national flag in the early 20th century and pointed out that the national flag of Belarus was used by different political forces, as national flags were everywhere. Despite these facts, official propaganda focuses on the World War II period only, trying to connect the flag with some individuals who collaborated with the Nazis. The authorities use this technique to blacken the national flag. At the same time, propaganda is silent on similar stories behind the red-green state flag.

On August 23, the Belarus Minister of Defense, Viktor Khrenin, made a statement on the history of the white-red-white flag. According to General Khrenin:

"Today we cannot calmly watch the actions under these [white-red-white] flags, under which..."
the Nazis organized mass killings of Belarusians, Russians and Jews, representatives of other nationalities. The mass actions are held near our sacred places, the memorials of Great Patriotic War. We cannot allow this to happen. I categorically warn you that in case of violation of order in these places, you will not deal with the police, but with the Army.  

In fact, there is no evidence of the white-red-white flag being used by pro-Nazi military and police collaborators during the Holocaust and the mass crimes against the civilian population in Belarus. Therefore, the speech of the Minister of Defense is a clear example of what is called a “half-truth”, in which incorrect references to the white-red-white flag work as a propaganda tool to legitimize illegal actions of the Belarusian army against peaceful protesters. It is practically impossible to buy white-red-white flags in Belarus, and the Covid-19 pandemic stopped international shipping. In response to state-run propaganda against the national flag, people began en masse to sew white-red-white flags at home. After that, the authorities forbade the sale of white and red fabric in Minsk. People had to be more creative. Hundreds of flags were placed on high buildings in many cities of Belarus. When police and emergency services forcibly removed these flags, people started to design them from hundreds of stripes that complicated “the work” for police.

In the first weeks of the protests, a spontaneous initiative arose to create local flags based on the national white-red-white flag. Today the Virtual Museum of the White-Red-White Flag has collected more than 650 flags of Minsk quarters, various cities and villages of Belarus as well as the associations of the Belarusian diaspora around the world.

Belarusian women, the most active group of protesters, developed the creative way of thinking further. Many of them began to dress in red and white dresses, and to use red and white jewelry and umbrellas.

The reaction of police was aggressive, and many women were arrested just because of their clothes. The persecution of people for wearing the white-red-white flag in Minsk reminds the older generation of the tragic events in interwar Poland. The Polish authorities in Western Belarus confiscated white-red-white flags as “corpus delicti of anti-state activity”. Just like today, hundreds of Belarusian flag bearers were arrested at that time and sentenced to short prison terms or fines.

In December 2020, the Department of Heraldry, Genealogy and Numismatics at the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences, led by Professor Aliaksei Shalanda, was closed. Professor Shalanda and many of his colleagues were fired by Vadzim Lakiza, the new director of the Institute. After that, some historians wrote a letter of resignation in solidarity with their dismissed colleagues. Many historians from the Institute of History took an active civic position during the peaceful protests. They participated in the peaceful rallies, and five of them were arrested. On the request of a Belarusian court, Professor Shalanda gave a number of official expert opinions regarding the white-red-white flag. He pointed out that it is a historical political symbol of Belarus and not “an illegal symbol” as the police claimed. On November 24, Aliaksandr Lukashenka announced a new law against the glorification of Nazism. He stated in particular that:

In the near future, our parliament will consider a bill on the inadmissibility of the glorification of Nazism in Belarus. Many countries sin today with the so-called ‘heroization of Nazism’. Especially our neighbors.

What is most interesting is that a law against the glorification of Nazism has already been adopted by the parliament of Belarus and has been in force since February 1, 2020. In my opinion, Lukashenka’s new initiative is aimed solely at discrediting the national white-red-white flag as it was used by the collaborationist administration under the Nazis. Indeed, on December 6, 2020, SB-Belarus Segodnia, a propaganda flagship of Lukashenka’s government organized a round table titled “The brown shadows of white-red-white flags”. In the discussion participated: Sergei Klishevich, a member of the Parliament and Historian by education, Boris Lepeshko, a Pro...
The prohibition of Nazi and semi-Nazi symbols is actively discussed in the Belarusian society. Previously, the white-red-white flag was, in fact, in a grey zone. The flag was not registered, but at the same time it was not included in the list of extremist symbols. This may not be sustainable in the long term. The problem is clear and requires our solution.

On December 10 2020, Viktor Morozov, the prosecutor of the Homel region declared that:

The white-red-white flag is a Nazi symbol, which must be equated with the swastika and other Nazi symbols and attributes, which are banned in Belarus today. The penalty must also be relevant, at a minimum administrative sanction.

At the same day, the Minsk Police stated that the displaying white-red-white flags in private windows and on balconies will be equated with illegal picketing, which will give 15 days of arrest. However, to pass a new law, the expert opinion of the Institute of History will be needed. This explains the liquidation of the Department of Heraldry, Genealogy and Numismatics led by Professor Shalanda.

Conclusion
The hunting of the white-red-white flag illustrates an ongoing collapse of the dialog between the state and civil society. Unlike the revolutionary events in Georgia and Ukraine, the demonstrators in Minsk hardly use the white-red-white and red-green flags without any negative reaction from the opposition to Lukashenka.

The regime’s attempt to divide society according to the colors of the flag is doomed. The symbolism and esthetic power of the white-red-white flag represent the beliefs of the Belarusian nation in Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, just as at the time of the French revolution. As David Gaunt and Tora Lane point out in the introduction, today “we are thus dealing with an old phenomenon – the re-interpretation of historical events for political reasons – in a new form – that of the political manipulation of memory and remembrance”. The academic community of historians is strongly divided in today’s Belarus. The part of historians that collaborates with the dictatorship act not as scholars but as propagandists. The part that had stood up to the impunity of Lukashenka’s rule have suffered in the political repression and lost their employments. Over and over again, historians are used to form and reform the perception of the main political symbols of Belarus.

References
4 Vaclav Lastouski, Кароткая гісторыя Беларусі [A Brief History of Belarus] (Vilna, 1910).
6 About Duzh-Dusheuski and his saving of Jews during the Holocaust in Lithuania see: Gurnevich, Dmitry, “We will always be grateful to him. How the creator of the white-red-white flag saved a Jewish girl from the Holocaust”, Radio Free Europe, December 2, 2020. Available online: https://www.svaboda.org/a/30980211.html?fbclid=IwAR2J65TZGpXTe64ai...fM5Af7i4j6y1yQ8R5e5cOKVYoN_JbXHjtq2HxR6g
7 Mirafan Donour-Zapolski, The basis of White Russia’s state individuality, Hrodna, 1919.
10 Cited in: Sergei Shapiro, “We have no other flag! What Vasil Bykau, Ryhor Baradulin and Henadz Buraukin said about the white-red-white flag”, Novy Chas, August 28, 2020.
11 “Патриотический слёт русской молодежи”, Рул, [Patriotic Gathering of Russian Youth], “Патриотических слет русской молодежи,” Рул, June 21, 1944.
Essay


15 Elgenius, Symbols of nations and nationalism, 61.


17 Eugene Tikhonovich, Portrait of the Century (Minsk: Limarius 2015), 119. Many thanks to Viktor Korbut for this reference.


19 Aliaksandr Lukashenka, Stenograma vystupleniia na torzhestvennom sobranii, posviashchennom 65-oi godovshchine Belskogo poiska, (Minsk: Limarius, 2010).


21 On the National Day, July 3, 2015 the leading official newspaper SB-Belarus Segodnia published a pathetic article about Matrena Markevich and the erection of the monument in Sianno. The tragic fate of her husband was not mentioned. See: Sergei Golesnik, "A monument to Matrena Markevich, the author of the Belarusian flag ornament, was unveiled in Senno", SB-Belarus Today, July 3, 2015, online: https://www.sb.by/articles/v-senno-otkryli-pamyatnik-matreny-markevich.html

22 Jan Verbitsky, "Matrena Markevich is the author of the ornament on the state flag of Belarus and the wife of the enemy of the people”, Belsat, August 12, 2019, online: https://belsat.eu/in-focus/matrena-markevich-autarka-armamentu-na-dzyarzhaunym-stsagyu-belarusi-i-zhonka-voraga-narodu


25 “Дырктар Інстытута гісторы: Пад бел-чарвона-белым сцягам апирые рухающа да знеснага прагатэнтару”, Наша Нива, [Director of the Institute of History: Under the white-red-white flag they move a priori to the external protectorate]

26 “Дырктар Інстытута гісторы: Пад бел-чарвона-белым сцягам апирые рухающа да знеснага прагатэнтару”, Наша Нива, [Director of the Institute of History: Under the white-red-white flag they move a priori to the external protectorate]

27 "State-owned stores do not sell white and red fabric to people", Novy Chas, September 6, 2020.

28 "650 samples were collected in the online museum of flags of urban districts, regions and diasporas, Radio Free Europe. December 5, 2020, available: https://www.svaboda.org/a/30985415.html

29 “Chronicle of persecution and trials”, Viaeña, August 28, 2020, online: http://spring96.org/be/news/99272


31 See: t.me/tutby-official 19882

32 Ob izmenenii zakona Resoubliki Belarus’ “O protiwoodeststvi ekstremizmu” [On Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Countering Extremism”]. Available at: https://online. zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=36885283#pos=1;70


35 "Za vyveshanne bel-chervona-belai simvoliki pradzhledzhanu administrystsinaia adkaznast”, Nasha Niva [Administrative Liability Is Provided for Posting White-Red-White Symbols, Nasha Niva], December 10, 2020. Available at: https://nn.by/?c=ar&i=265059

36 "Гэта антымаральны учынка: адказ гісторыкаў інстытута гісторыі", Наша Ніва, [Director of the Institute of History: Under the white-red-white flag they move a priori to the external protectorate]