

Literature review on belovezhskaya pushcha national park belarus

[Parts of the World](#), [Europe](#)



Belovezhskaya pushcha national park, Belarus

Critical analysis

About Belarus

Belarus is a European country located in the east side of Europe and shares its borders with Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. It is a landlocked country with a total land area of 207, 600 square kilometers.

Minsk is its capital city but it has other major cities across its land area. The country's major economic activities are in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. 40% of the country's land area is forested thus having a cool and favorable agricultural climate. Belarus took shape in the early 1940s after joining the Soviet Union. Its borders were again altered in World War II, when Belarus lost almost half of its economic resources and about a third of its population (Richmond et. al 2006).

The country attained its independence on July 27, 1990 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The country has since then been marred with corruption and dictatorship with the economy being owned by the state. The sitting president Alexander Lukashenko has been in power since 1994 (Janos, 1970). It is also worth noting that the country has the highest Human Development Index (HDI) in the world. The country's literacy levels are at 99.6% and life expectancy is an average of 71.6 years.

This paper focuses on the country's Belovezhskaya Pushcha National aspect relevance to the country and how this national park has influenced the major themes and issue of Eastern Europe. Emphasis will be on the Zoobr mammal or rather the European bison which is not only Europe's largest mammal but

also a major tourist attraction in this park and the Father Frost, an old Eastern European folk tale.

Belovezhskaya pushcha national park

Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park is Europe's only remaining largest habitat for wild life lying in Bialowieza Forest which is popularly known as Belovezhskaya Pushcha. This forest lies between two countries Belarus and Poland. The forest has exchanged ownership through time initially being owned by the Russian empire that largely dominated Eastern Europe. The forest was even the subject of a renowned Russian ballad showing the cultural connections among the people that inhabit the area occupied by this forest (51 st Ed, 2000).

The Park which is part of this forest is about 340 km from the capital of Belarus, Minsk. In 1939 the land was declared a state reserve and in 1944 part of the reserve was given to neighboring Poland. Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992. In 1993 it was granted UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status. It is in the Brest region one of the administrative regions that makes up Belarus. This park is a sanctuary that harbors not only a wide variety of wildlife, but also has much to do with the culture of Belarus and the bordering countries. In essence, these are just the same people separated by boundaries. But they share not only boundaries but a lot of cultural history. The Russian ballad use of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha as the subject of his poem is a good indication of these connections. The park despite now being claimed by Belarus as one of its economic resource lies in this forest which was shared by the different

communities of Northeastern Europe, with Russia being a dominant force (51st Ed, 2000).

The name of this vast forest that the park lies in is derived from Belaya Vezha referring to the white towers of Kamyanets which contrary to that name were never white but were of red bricks. These towers built back in 1271-1279 and are a major landmark of the Kamianiec town. They are a very important aspect of Belarus culture which probably is the motivation of the Belarus people to preserve their name in a forest.

Eastern European countries have had their share of political and economic issues. The region was initially occupied by the Russian federation that controlled much of the economic and political activities. Much has changed now as more and more regions in Eastern Europe got their independence and their autonomy. After World War II, the regions in this area were still much under the control of the socialist Soviet Union. The disintegration of the Soviet Union resulted into fragments of many small countries among them being Belarus and Poland (Janos, 1970). These small fragments which are now sovereign countries have been to a large extent withdrawn from the affairs of the Western Europeans due to their insistence of being independent and autonomous.

Looking at the major attraction of the Belovezhskaya National Park, the Zoobr mammal or the European bison, this aspect of being withdrawn and avoiding any unions is very evident. Belarus border with Poland runs across this vast forest in which the Belovezhskaya National Park is. A point to note is that the European bison or rather the Zoobr are only about 800 in number and this number is set to reduce if human interference is not minimized. A

natural habitat is supposed to be let open in its entirety to allow the free movement of wildlife hence ensuring their chances of survival. This though is not the case between Poland and Belarus, who have erected a fence in this forest since their border runs through this forest. The security fence between Poland and Belarus hampers the free movement of the European's largest land mammals. The mammals are thus prevented to breed naturally due to this control hence their decrease in number. Initially, the forest was wide and open vast land in which animals moved freely from location to another allowing cross breeds and offspring of much stronger species. The erection of the fence on the border of these countries therefore is interfering with the natural adaptation of the European mammals. As of the moment in a bid of each country to control and protect its natural habitat, Belarus biosphere covers only about 1, 771 km², with the national park occupying about 876 km². The Polish protected area occupies about 100 km² significantly reducing the area that the wisent herds once enjoyed. The wisent herds are thus kept from breeding in their actual natural habitat as they are curtailed by this protection. All this is in a bid for each country to acquire tourism revenue independent of the other. Few tourists though visit this area especially in the Belarus side due to lack of adequate facilities (Richmond et. al 2006).

Another contemporary issue facing these nations is the need to join the European Union. Many countries in Western Europe have seen the need of joining the Union. There are massive economic and political benefits of joining this union. For instance, Belarus would gain significantly if it were to join the European Union in terms of tourism and a larger market for its

culture and agricultural products. Belarus boasts of habiting Europe's only remaining big land mammals but benefit less from them due to their seclusion. Note that Poland which became a member of the European Union in 2004, and which occupies a smaller area of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha forest receives more tourist than its Belarus counterpart. There conditions set forth for joining this union. Member countries must be ready to abide with all the statutes of the Union, which mainly require that a country must exercise the doctrines of democracy and liberal market. This proposition does not auger well with the Belarus system of governance which is largely dictatorial. The current president has been in power for the past 18 years and still there is no hope of the ruling elite letting go off the political power. There is no liberal market in Belarus as the economy is owned and controlled by the state. This would not favor foreign investors in that country. The state ownership of the economy is the major reason of that country's seclusion thus their tight borders with their neighboring countries (Janos, 1970). The zoobr mammals can be a very good of Belarus and Poland opening up their borders. This though is not a likely occurrence in the near future as the Belarusian government continues to be stringent and dictatorial. If a democratic government were to be instituted, then there would be chances of the borders being opened up not only for the wisents, but also for the people allowing free movement of goods and services and a liberal market. The flora and fauna of Europe's largest inhabitant which is vital for the weather patterns of Europe as a whole would flourish in a much better way.

Father Frost

This was a mythological figure representing Santa Claus in the region of Russia. Contemporary Father Frost is represented with his granddaughter presenting presents and gifts during the Christmas period. Father Frost emerged during the late 1900s and was referred to as the 'Dead Morose' which meant Grandfather Frost. He usually appears as a tall man who wears a long white beard and is thin unlike Father Christmas in Western Europe who is bulky and heavy. He adorns blue and white robes flowing all the way to his feet. This figure is believed to have lived in the Russian forest most and always rode a sleigh or troika pulled by three white horses on the snow (Fedorovich, doevskii & Shul'zhenko, 1981).

Father Frost is linked to the famous Russian fairy tale that in which a step daughter was left for dead in a snow field only to return home with a lot of goodies as she had been polite to father frost. Apparently, there lived a wife and a husband who had a daughter of their own and a step daughter. Now the wife never loved or liked the step daughter and always heaved praises on her daughter even when she deserved none, but reproached the step daughter despite her efforts to be nice and polite. So one day, the woman fails to contain her rage and commands her husband to take the step daughter to a snow field and leave her for dead. The husband obeys and takes the step daughter there, who later meets Father Frost and is kind to him. So she is given gifts to take back home with her. The step mother thus decides to try her luck with her own daughter who is killed for being rude and thus her body is returned for burial (Fedorovich, doevskii & Shul'zhenko, 1981).

This folk tale's theme is jealousy and discontent. It has been used in these regions, incorporating all the countries that were under the Soviet Union. It has often been used in the culture of this people to incorporate good moral values and discourage hatred and jealousy. Looking at the way of life of the Belarus people, there are characteristics of kindness. Belarus people are said to be very accommodating and welcoming and all so eager to have visitors in their midst. This tale there really reflects therefore their way of life as a people.

The nature of nationalism as espoused by the eastern European countries and especially in Belarus. Belarus has almost no social divisions as there is an element of unity brought about by socialism. Belarus has the highest (HDI) which could be attributed to their national ideologies. The social gap between the rich and the poor that is inherent in many capitalistic societies is virtually not present in this society. The country might be in the hands of a dictatorial regime but Belarus boasts being among the countries with the highest quality of life (Janos, 1970). The story approves of having a heart to help one another in the society despite an individual's state of being. The death of the actual daughter of the woman with an evil heart is an indication that hatred breeds contempt and is a recipe for disaster.

Belarus therefore as is evident in this study is a country of mixed possibilities and activities. On the one hand it is a secluded socialist country with a dictatorial government and on the other side, it is a country filled with people with warm hearts and who strive to see that the livelihoods of all individuals in that country is catered for in the best way possible.

References

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