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CONTENTS



2 MIGHTY POTENTIAL OF FRIENDLY COOPERATION

4 "Our countries maintain relations of mutual trust and friendship"

8 "If parties agree and keep their word, then success may come to any business"



13 GREAT STONE HAS PROUD SOUND

18 **Ties growing stronger** Comprehensive Belarusian-Chinese cooperation manifests in media sphere

21 **On Chinese radio wave**

24 **Alternative to military service** New law on alternative civilian service comes into effect on July 1st, 2016

26 **Guests from future**

28 **We're grateful for kind people** They come to continue their studies in Belarus, having learnt about us in China. What attracts them? What do they find amazing in Belarus?

30 **Knowledge for betterment of friendship** Confucius Institute at Minsk's State Linguistic University — where over 800 people study Chinese — celebrates fifth jubilee

41 **Highly indicative dynamics**

44 **Neman crystal on display** Every Soviet home had two types of dishes: those for everyday, and those for celebrations. The first was kept in the kitchen cupboard and the second proudly exhibited in the living room

46 **Rural life with Asian flavour**

50 **A town surrounded by lake**

52 **The highest mark** Belarusian trampolinist Vladislav Goncharov 'jumps over' unbeaten Dong Dong of China, in Rio de Janeiro



54 ARTISTIC MEETINGS IN CHONGQING

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Mighty potential of friendly cooperation

Belarus and China confirm mutual interest in further strengthening and developing multi-sided strategic partnership



BELTA

Belarusian-Chinese cooperation can be illustrated with various figures and facts, from turnover dynamics, investments and credit support to major joint projects. All are serious and convincing, as well as being long-standing, noted Meng Jianzhu, Member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China. He recently met with the Belarusian President, in Minsk. On behalf of Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping, he told Alexander Lukashenko that Mr. Jinping considers him to be his 'closest friend'. He quoted: 'Amidst all global leaders, I can reveal my soul only in talking to President Lukashenko.'

To understand the significance of these words, we should note that the Chinese are generally scrupulous in choosing partners. Therefore, such praise is a demonstration of the highest degree of confidence. Three years ago, Minsk and Beijing announced their comprehensive strategic partnership, agreeing on annual meetings between heads of state. The President's visit to China is being prepared, and should help raise our interaction to new levels. As seen from talks at the Palace of Independence, in Minsk, these are our mutual intentions.

The Belarusian President's position has been constant. He is absolutely against political tourism. An official visit should bring visible results. Previous contacts at the highest political level have had obvious success. We enjoy solid trade but we need to extend our emphasis. China is among the major investors in the Belarusian economy, with total credit lines

Alexander Lukashenko:

In the 25 years since Belarus-China diplomatic relations were established, much has been done to strengthen bilateral ties. Intensification is observed across all spheres, without exception

Meng Jianzhu:

Chinese-Belarusian friendly relations and cooperation are the best they've ever been. We believe that interaction between the Belarusian and Chinese nations has very broad prospects. We're confident of an even brighter future for our cooperation

amounting to billions of Dollars. The Government could offer more projects for the amount of funding on offer, showing that business interaction is yet to match potential, as founded in political dialogue. This aspect must be improved. Moreover, our country is set to play a key role in the global Chinese project of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Joint construction of the Great Stone Industrial Park near Minsk is among the key elements of this strategic plan.

Meng Jianzhu's visit to Minsk was more than a courtesy call. On the behalf of China, he heads the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation. Its session in Minsk focused on preparations for the President's visit to China. According to Mr. Lukashenko, cooperative exchange of technologies and investments is his focus, alongside the development of direct interaction between regions. China accepts and welcomes these initiatives.

According to the Belarusian President, contacts are intensifying across most spheres. In addition, the Belarusian-Chinese Business Forum — held last May — created new impetus for the establishment of inter-regional ties.

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that the Chinese are demonstrating practical interest in close cooperation. During negotiations, the parties agreed on the necessity for even greater intensification of contacts, to promote trade-economic cooperation, helping it reach the same, high, level as political interaction.

According to the President, technological and investment ties should drive Belarus-China interaction. "The recent launch of the Belarusian satellite from the Chinese Xichang Satellite Launch Centre and the creation of modern defense systems have helped advance our partnership to a brand-new, more trustworthy level. In addition to investments, this should propel our bilateral cooperation," he noted.

The President does not doubt that the second session of the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation will be productive and will help determine steps taking forward Belarus-China relations. Mr. Lukashenko thanked his high-ranking guest for his work in enhancing Belarusian-Chinese friendship and partnership. "I think that everything is going to be all right," Mr. Lukashenko said confidently.

Meng Jianzhu noted the multi-sided collaboration enjoyed with Belarus, stating that Belarusian-Chinese relations are developing and strengthening, owing to the two states' leaders. He appreciates the high level of political trust and mutual support at major international events.

"We strongly support each other in the most acute problems of common interest," he said, praising the Belarusian President's role in developing Belarusian-Chinese cooperation. He commented that China views Mr. Lukashenko's forthcoming official visit as a major event in Belarusian-Chinese relations for 2016.

The recent, authoritative delegation is overseeing issues relating to preparations for Mr. Lukashenko's visit to China. "We hope for the efficient development of our bilateral ties," Meng Jianzhu said, adding, "Chinese-Belarusian friendly relations and cooperation are the best they've ever been. We believe that interaction between the Belarusian and Chinese nations has very broad prospects. We're confident of an even brighter future for our cooperation."

According to the official, the political views of our two countries coincide across the most topical issues on the international agenda. "We've an unprecedentedly high level of mutual political trust," stressed Meng Jianzhu, adding that trade and economic cooperation between our two countries grows stronger all the time. He described the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park as an exemplary cooperation project. "In scale and pace of development, it is amazing us all," he noted.

By Vasily **Kharitonov**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus, H.E. Mr. Cui Qiming:

“Our countries maintain relations of mutual trust and friendship”



In July 2013, China's President Xi Jinping and President Alexander Lukashenko adopted a joint decision, in Beijing, to move Belarusian-Chinese relations (as part of our all-round strategic partnership) to a new level, to accelerate the development of this partnership and to stimulate cooperation across all spheres on a large scale.

The historically important visit of the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, to Belarus in April 2015, has brought considerable success in improving bilateral inter-state relations, while giving new impetus to their development. The heads of our two states signed a treaty 'On Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China', stipulating in written form relations of mu-

tual trust and friendship between our two states.

The Belarusian Government is paying ever more attention to strengthening collaboration with the PRC. President Lukashenko released Directive #5, on the development of bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China, both sides being ready to support each other across important issues. Mutual trust between our two states is constantly growing, while real business cooperation deepens and various significant advantages appear for residents of both Belarus and

China. Day after day, communication between our two states becomes ever closer.

Belarusian-Chinese relations are notable for their mutual trust, equality, cooperation and mutual benefit. They are characterised by commitment to developing the potential of bilateral inter-state relations across all areas of collaboration. Also, they are notable for making maximum use of advantages and the mutual complementarity of our territorial locations, aiding business interaction, to spur on greater successes for our mutual benefit.

Trade and economic cooperation

During Xi Jinping's visit to Belarus, in April 2015, it was announced that Belarus would receive \$7bln of financial assistance, over 40 documents being signed on trade-economic cooperation. In 2015, trade between our two states had a surplus balance and China became Belarus' third most important trade partner worldwide, and second most important importer. According to Belarusian statistical data, total trade turnover totalled \$3.81 billion — up 5.6 percent on the same period of the previous year.

Over recent years, with support from Chinese financial institutions, we have implemented several major projects in power engineering, base infrastructure, industrial production, and construction of the Industrial Park, which have significantly contributed to the socio-economic development and modernisation of the Republic of Belarus. According to statistical data, we have realised around thirty projects together — worth \$6bln.

The construction of three cement plants and reconstruction of Minsk electric power stations #2 and #5 is complete, as is reconstruction and electrification of railways, re-building of state highway M5, the supply of electric trains and the development of IT. A Chinese engineering company has been awarded for 'Engineering Works Beyond the Country's Borders' (the Luban Award) for constructing the Beijing Hotel and two electric stations. Moreover, Chinese enterprises have won a tender in Belarus to receive a loan from the World Bank. Chinese entrepreneurship, equipment, technologies and services have gained a positive reputation in Belarus.

The Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park is a joint construction project. Chinese enterprises are taking an active part worldwide in setting up this largest foreign trade economic zone. Our heads of state are paying special attention to this project, personally overseeing the progress of works. On April 12th, 2015, Xi Jinping and Alexander Lukashenko

personally inspected the Industrial Park and outlined major goals and areas of work. Construction and development of the Industrial Park will mark the entrance into a new epoch, while the attraction of new investments will ensure sustainable development.

A year has passed and the first stage of development of the Industrial Park has been launched, with positive results: construction is in full swing while investments are being attracted for the 3.5 sq.km territory. It operates under the principle 'One Flat Place: Seven Connections'. A range of major infrastructural facilities have been laid, including a four-lane (in each direction) motorway, running for 11km, water supply and sewerage, power supply, communication and other underground utilities.

The construction of the Bureau for Attracting Investments into the Chinese-Belarusian Park for Trade and Logistics, covering 100,000 sq.m, has been finished, as has a trade and exhibition centre, a business centre and a bonded warehouse. These are to come into operation this year. At present, the 8,000 sq.m administrative building and a 12,000 sq.m factory building are under construction, with a building also launched to manufacture super-condensers, by Chinese Chengdu Xinzhu and Belarusian nano-pectins. A project dealing with power transmission and conversion is complete, with start-up works launched. Increasing numbers of enterprises are showing interest towards the Park; truly, its popularity is growing.

Belarus and China are scrupulously honest in investing into advanced technologies for the Industrial Park. The next stage of development is the optimisation of its mechanisms, with improved legislation, a steady political course and highly-efficient, quick, comfortable and quality services offered to companies wishing to join this economic zone.

Belarus and China are known to be good friends and partners, with the Republic of Belarus being one of China's key partners in building the Silk Road Economic Belt. Joint construction of the

Industrial Park is a platform for mutually beneficial and eco-friendly internationalisation of industry. This economic zone will become a pearl of our bilateral interaction and the Silk Road Economic Belt, as well as a driving force for the 'green' economic potential of Belarus.

Educational interaction

Belarus-China educational cooperation started long ago, yielding positive results. Back in the 1990s, Chinese students arrived in Belarus to study and to enhance their qualifications. Now, about 2,000 Chinese students are registered at Belarusian universities, working diligently to achieve good results. Each year, three or more young people are awarded scholarships as 'Outstanding Students', from the Chinese State Fund for Education Abroad. Meanwhile, the best students from Xinjiang studying at Belarusian universities are given a scholarship as 'Outstanding Students from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous District'.

This helps inspire good results and, of course, the level of education in the Republic of Belarus is notably high. Two years ago, the Chinese State Fund for Education Abroad finally included Belarus among its programmes of 'Post-graduate Study in Construction, at Higher Educational Establishments Abroad' and 'Preparation of Specialists in the Sphere of Arts'. Since last year, four scholarships have been awarded to study as part of these programmes in Belarus, enabling recipient students to study abroad at the expense of the state.

In 2015, the Chinese and Belarusian governments signed a new agreement on cooperation in education, with collaboration between our two states' higher educational establishments strengthened, thanks to the efforts of our governments. The Harbin Institute of Technology, the Dalian University of Technology and Belarusian universities have agreed on joint training of post-graduates. Particular focus is being given to economic construction and collaboration, to meet today's economic devel-

opment needs, and to promote contacts, for mutual benefit.

At the same time, the two sides have decided to increase the number of students studying abroad at state expense. In 2016, twenty-six people will arrive in Belarus to receive degrees at master and doctorate level, while around forty people from Belarus will go to China with the same purpose. The Chinese Government has prepared a widely developed system of scholarships for students from Belarus: governmental scholarships, scholarships from higher educational establishments, scholarships from the Confucius Institute and local scholarships.

Belarusian-Chinese relations are notable for their mutual trust, equality, co-operation and mutual benefit. They are characterised by commitment to developing the potential of bilateral inter-state relations across all areas of collaboration

Collaboration in education between our two countries is set to bring wonderful results; the prospects are boundless. This reinforces the foundation of friendly relations between our states, facilitating closer contacts in political, economic and cultural areas.

Joint sci-tech projects

Belarus-China sci-tech cooperation has always been an important element of bilateral inter-state relations and has been for many years a foundation for mutual benefit, while being part of the work of the Committee for Sci-Tech Cooperation. In recent years, the number of spheres for joint projects has increased and contacts between specialists have come closer. Joint projects are being implemented across optics, microelectronics, materials sciences, machine building and many other spheres.

The Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China and the State Committee for Science

and Technology of the Republic of Belarus constantly apply efforts to stimulate collaboration between our state enterprises and scientific research institutes, creating a new model of relations. This June, Minsk hosted the 1st session of the Sci-Tech Committee of the Chinese-Belarusian Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee (the 12th session of the Sci-Tech Chinese-Belarusian Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation). During the meeting, we signed a Protocol of Main Goals of Joint Financial Support of Cooperation in Research and Development, which will form the basis for the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology and State

Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus to allocate financial assistance to jointly elaborated research and design projects. The first twenty-five projects have been outlined, and will receive financing.

Cultural ties

In May 2015, in the presence of Xi Jinping and President Lukashenko, an Agreement on the Creation of the Bilateral Cultural Centre of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus was signed in Minsk. Our two countries have successfully conducted Days of Culture ten times.

In October 2015, Minsk hosted the 1st session of the Cultural Committee of the Chinese-Belarusian Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation, signing a protocol. Belarusian-Chinese cultural ties are successfully developing, yielding superb results. Our governments are promoting stronger ties of friendship between our two nations

while ensuring better mutual understanding and communication in the sphere of arts.

Recently, the Director of the National Library of Belarus visited China as part of a delegation of Belarusian painters. A joint event was organised in the city of Chóngqìng, to create and showcase paintings. A Chóngqìng delegation is expected to visit Belarus next year, to conduct a similar event, aiming to reinforce contacts between our two countries' artists.

Over recent years, Chinese artistic delegations have arrived in Belarus many times. According to incomplete statistical data, from February 2015 to August 2016, Belarus was visited by several dozen delegations of Chinese artists, musicians and cultural experts. For example, in February 2015, Belarus was visited by the Nanjing Opera and Ballet Theatre troupe, with its 'Enjoying the Holiday of Spring' programme, featuring a range of performances.

In February, Minsk also hosted the 22nd International Book Trade Fair and, in April 2015, Mogilev Region hosted a pictorial exhibition as part of its Day of Nanjing Culture. Meanwhile, in July 2015, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles organised an exhibition entitled 'Chinese Twelfth Nationwide International Mobile Painting Exhibition — Belarus', at the National Library of Belarus.

In October 2015, Days of Chinese Culture were held in Minsk while, in November 2015, representatives of the Chinese Research Art Institute took part in the 4th 'Traditional Culture as a Strategic Resource for Sustainable Development of Society' forum, held in Mogilev. In February 2016, the Publishing Corporation of Beijing took part in the 23rd International Book Trade Fair in Minsk.

In February 2016, Minsk hosted the 2nd 'Enjoying the Holiday of Spring' Festival, where a company from the Henan Province presented an impressive theatrical performance to Belarusian audiences. In March 2016, famous



Visiting of Minsk Automobile Plant

pianist Li Yundi performed in a concert hall in Belarus as part of his European tour, demonstrating a high level of mastery and expression.

In May 2016, the National Library of Belarus successfully hosted a cinema festival, dedicated to the 111th anniversary of Chinese cinematography. In July 2016, during the 25th International 'Slavianski Bazaar' Festival of Arts, Chinese painters in the guóhuà style organised a joint exhibition with Belarusian artists, at Vitebsk's concert hall.

Tourism

Tourism, strengthening contacts between our nations, has begun to play an active role in Chinese-Belarusian relations. On May 1st, 2015, Air China mapped a new Beijing-Minsk route and, on May 3rd, a delegation from the city of Sanya invited Belarusians to take part in the 'China-Belarus Cooperation in the Sphere of Tourism' seminar. Fourteen tourist agencies from Belarus joined heads of hotels, cooperatives and other organizations of tourist districts of the city of Sanya in analysing how best to expand collaboration. Particular focus was given to extending inbound tourism

of Belarusian citizens, allowing them to see the diversity of the People's Republic of China. Tourist agencies of the city of Sanya signed an agreement on Strategic Cooperation with these fourteen Belarusian tourist companies, moving simple interaction into strategic collaboration.

Sanya's tourist companies and Belarus' largest tourist operator, TOP TOUR, have been successfully liaising, organising a presentation entitled 'International Tourism: Sanya-Minsk', in Minsk, which was broadcast by various local TV channels.

In October 2015, China Intourist signed an agreement on visa-free travel for groups of tourists, approved by the lower chamber of Parliament in May 2016. Relations between our two states in this sphere continue to develop. In March 2016, Gansu Province and Grodno Region signed a range of agreements on cooperation, including in the sphere of tourism.

Belarus is a wonderful, quiet country with amiable and hospitable people, rich in natural and tourist resources: a country of 'Ten Thousand Lakes'. The famous Belovezhskaya Pushcha is located here, while the country's flora and fauna are

diverse. Belarus boasts many historical and cultural monuments, including Mir and Nesvizh castles, Stalin's Line, Khatyn Memorial and Brest Fortress.

Since arriving, as Chinese Ambassador to the Republic of Belarus, I've visited numerous interesting places, and have enjoyed its natural beauty, as well as seeing its cultural relics, and have felt the hospitality of Belarusian people, as well as their sincere friendship with the Chinese nation. I hope that Belarus will be visited by more tourists from China, so that they may also feel this personally.

China boasts rich tourist resources, possessing many centuries-old cultural and historical sites, such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Dūjiāngyàn Irrigation System, the wonderful natural landscapes of Zhangjiajie, Jiuzhaigou Reserve, and Qomolangma Mount (that touches the sky). China also has the boundless prairies of Inner Mongolia, and the endless curve of the Greater Khingan Mountains, as well as the island of Hainan, surrounded by blue waters.

Of course, there are also rapidly developing cities and villages — full of life — as well as hospitable and friendly Chinese people. I'd like to see more Chinese tourists in Belarus; however, I'd also like to see Belarusian tourists in China. Good friends need to move towards each other. Only then can we understand one another and strengthen our friendship.

The forthcoming visit

In response to the invitation of the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, will arrive in the People's Republic of China in late September, on a state visit. He will exchange opinions regarding the current state and the future development of our bilateral relations while discussing further plans to develop and to reinforce bilateral interaction. This meeting of our two leaders is the most important this year. At present, our countries maintain relations of deep trust and close communication. However, the coming meeting will undoubtedly inspire a new level of bilateral collaboration.



Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of the Republic
of Belarus to the People's Republic
of China, Kirill Rudy:

**“If parties agree
and keep their
word, then success
may come to any
business”**

Cooperation with China enables Belarus to realistically assess its potential export opportunities on the Chinese market?

Over the years, trade and economic cooperation between Belarus and China has taken a clear path, with certain products sold to the Chinese market, despite stiff competition:

- potash fertilisers;
- caprolactam, polyamides, and synthetic fibers (such as are made by Belneftekhim Concern); and
- mining machinery, tractors, combine harvesters and integrated circuits.

Such sales have accounted for 80-95 percent of Belarusian exports in these niches, with potash fertilisers forming the major share. Products from other Belarusian industries and individual large enterprises are not competitive on the Chinese market, either in price (taking into consideration high prime and transport costs), or quality and after-sales services. Almost no light industry, construction or pharmaceu-

tical goods are exported to China from Belarus.

China continues to improve the technical and qualitative characteristics of its products across many industries, focusing on innovation, to displace rivals — including Belarus. BelAZ is a case in point: five years ago, it held a comfortable position on the Chinese market but has now lost its competitive edge, selling no trucks to China since 2014. MTZ is also experiencing problems in China.

What's in demand in China?

In China, everything enjoys demand, as it's a huge market. However, not all products are bought, since competition is high across many commodity items, among domestic goods and imports. As many as a thousand manufacturers may all be making the same product.

There are real prospects on the Chinese market for Belarusian agricultural and food products: beef, poultry, pork, milk (especially infant food) flax, starch, confectionery, and alcoholic and soft drinks.

Much depends on market conditions, including the right point of entry and consolidation in the market.

MTZ JSC, BelAZ JSC and Gomselmash JSC must be careful not to lag behind technologically. New assembly plants are planned for the Chinese provinces, as are alliances with strategic Chinese world-class partners, to encourage joint development and production, creating a united or coordinated distribution network in third countries. Work has begun in this direction and certain progress has been made. Major Belarusian enterprises are negotiating with some Chinese 'heavyweights' — such as Sinomach, Sangjiang and Zoomlion corporations.

Belarusian petrochemical products also have good prospects, but Belneftekhim Concern needs to focus on offering products with greater depth of processing and with greater added value. There is potential for the export of services, such as education and tourism. Chinese students can receive high-quality and relatively cheap higher education in Belarus, while also learning Russian. Following the removal of visa

restrictions for tourists, and the opening of direct flights, the abolition of visas with the SAR and Hong Kong should enhance export of tourist services.

Is high competition on the Chinese market a serious problem for those wishing to supply certain goods to China?

Competition in China is probably the highest in the world. Almost every major multinational corporation is present, as are many strong local players. At the same time, China is a huge market, its territory being about 46 times greater than Belarus and its population being equal to that of the Americas, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand combined. Therefore, there is ample chance of finding a niche. The Eastern regions are the most

in China's diplomacy, but it is not the only one. This is the first aspect.

The second refers to the scale of our bilateral trade. In 2015, Belarusian sales to China amounted to a hundredth of a percent of China's total imports. Accordingly, it's difficult to rely exclusively on political advantage. China is a WTO member and boasts deep economic ties with other countries.

The third aspect is most important. China operates a market economy where market forces rule. Success relies primarily on quality and price, attractive consumer properties, design, after-sales service and other market characteristics.

regardless of world events and external factors.

Secondly, our economic and trade cooperation is vital. In addition to traditional exports, such as potash fertilisers, petrochemical products, and agricultural and other equipment, we need access to the Chinese market for other Belarusian goods boasting competitive advantage: beef, poultry and pork. To promote exports to China, a local partner is needed, so we must create intelligent alliances with Chinese world-class partners, developing new niches for Belarusian goods.

Investment cooperation is the third aspect. In this field, transition from credit financing projects to mutual direct investment is essential. I'm pinning hopes on the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park, which is attracting serious residents, becoming a real 'pearl' of the Economic Belt Silk Road (as Chinese President Xi Jinping has said). It's important to combine bilateral economic mechanisms. A mutual investment synergy might emerge if Chinese enterprises decide to invest in Belarusian companies, to access third markets.

The President has demanded that Belarus embrace new opportunities to develop cooperation. The embassy plays a significant role in this respect. What help can it render those wishing to enter the Chinese market long term?

It's important for the embassy to ensure that bilateral relations develop steadily, evolving on an upward trajectory, without extremes or 'fads'. Our embassy must aim to be counter-cyclical. If an opportunity emerges in a certain direction of bilateral cooperation and parties fail to notice, missing out as a result, the embassy can step in to direct, encourage and support. Conversely, when expectations become unrealistic, we can warn in advance, to help avoid disappointment on either side.

For those who really want to enter the Chinese market, working

Success of the goods on the Chinese market relies primarily on quality and price, attractive consumer properties, design, after-sale service and other market characteristics

popular for foreign companies, while imported products are known less in the centre and, especially, in the west of China. Imports have penetrated the larger cities. I'd say that it's easier to enter the markets of cities which the Chinese consider only medium in size: with a population of only around one to two million. In this connection, partners should be sought in the districts.

Do Belarusian exporters have some advantage over those from other countries, taking into consideration the very close cooperation of our two states? Or are price and quality far more vital?

As you know, Belarus is not the only country with which China has a 'very close' relationship. China is a big country, and is now responsible not only for national but for global challenges: the Hangzhou G20 Summit is the best example. Belarus occupies a special place

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has set the task of achieving a leap in cooperation between Belarus and China, as mentioned while appointing you as new Belarusian ambassador to China. How do you intend to carry out this task?

An ambassador is the representative of the head of state, so must carry out the tasks set. Speaking of a breakthrough in our bilateral relations, I'd like to highlight three areas.

Firstly, political cooperation is needed. Here, our relations have been developing quite rapidly and deeply. Over the past 25 years of diplomatic relations with China, Belarus has achieved a level of trust that can take a country several centuries. It's important to maintain this level of trust: our unconditional relationship. We must ensure it continues to develop,

for a long time, the embassy's assistance isn't usually required. Serious companies with strong marketing services, using the services of international legal and financial firms, don't need us in the same way. The embassy supports them at a political level, viewing them as flagships of bilateral relations. In practice, the embassy is, unfortunately, sometimes addressed by companies failing to independently resolve issues with commercial partners. In this case, our embassy is forced to perform an uncharacteristic role, of a state institution interfering in private business relations.

Which tools are needed to make a breakthrough in bilateral relations?

Firstly, interregional cooperation is required. As regards the trade and economic sphere, it seems advisable to use the potential of regional ties. At the moment, each Belarusian region (and the city of Minsk) has established partnerships or twinning relationships with several provinces and cities of China.

Many Chinese companies from the provinces are beginning a path of joining foreign economic activity, actively seeking foreign partners. These are not small businesses. A Chinese province can be comparable to a European country on an economic scale, while a provincial-level company could have a turnover of several billion US Dollars.

Secondly, traditional export tools are needed. I'd advise our exporters to follow media reports, asking the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its regional offices for information on forthcoming round-table discussions and business seminars. Chinese guests from the regions participate with a view to finding partners.

I believe that there are great chances for establishing business relationships in such cases. Of course, we mustn't forget about exhibitions, especially those which are specialised, where we can demonstrate our goods, looking closer at rivals and finding partners. Our embassy is always ready to offer suggestions on which shows to attend, while providing other assistance. Establishing a Belarusian trade house for consulting, legal and other support is a great help to Belarusian exporters in China.

Thirdly, mutual investment cooperation is important. It's necessary to apply traditional and new tools, creating not simply new joint ventures with equity capital, but encouraging investment, with venture

between our countries, which is of comprehensive and strategic character, in addition to our geographical location, and other competitive advantages, help objectively promote bilateral cooperation in implementing the SREB project.

I believe that development (in cooperation with our Chinese partners) of our transport and logistics sphere should be a priority. It contributes to the transit character of our state. With the participation of China Merchants Group, a 'dry port' and a complex logistics centre are being established at the Chinese-



capital, using the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. It's important to understand that credit investments often need to be repaid, so it's important to shift to direct investment.

How do you see the interaction of our two countries within the Silk Road Economic Belt?

The Republic of Belarus was among the first countries to voice its support of the Chinese initiative to jointly construct the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). This was guided by several factors. The high level of Belarusian-Chinese relations

lished at the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park. Construction of a number of similar facilities, in Brest, Mogilev and Vitebsk Regions, is being carried out by companies from the Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang, Shandong, Guizhou, Qinghai, Hubei, Jiangsu and Henan.

Another important aspect of participation in the EBSR is the modernisation of transport infrastructure (rail and road) and the expansion of Belarus' participation in air transportation between China and Europe.

Another promising area of cooperation is modernisation and

development of information and communication infrastructure, for integration into the EBSR concept.

Do you know what expectations Chinese investors have regarding the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park? Is it a significant project for China?

Both Chinese and international investors are showing great interest in this project. The first residents include Huawei, ZTE, and Zoomlion. Meanwhile, it's important to understand some features of the Park.

Firstly, despite the attention of our two heads of state and strong po-

Thirdly, this is an international industrial park, without restriction on investors from other countries; interest is being shown by well-known European companies. We should call it the Great Stone Industrial Park, without any 'Belarusian-Chinese' phrasing, although it is being established by Chinese and Belarusian companies.

Earlier, you said that Belarusian companies need to more actively cooperate with Chinese partners, incorporating such plans into their production chains. Can you tell us more?

The high level of Belarusian-Chinese relations between our countries, which is of comprehensive and strategic character, in addition to our geographical location, and other competitive advantages, help objectively promote bilateral cooperation in implementing the SREB project

litical support, it's still a commercial project. When deciding on projects, investors act pragmatically, looking at business opportunities with a mind to profit. This is at the heart of the Park's long-term operation.

Secondly, this is an industrial park focused on the development of modern manufacturing and high technologies, providing them with preferences. Chinese investors are already building a major regional centre at the Park, which will provide residents with logistics services and serve the flow of goods from Central Asia to Europe and back along the future Silk Road.

The Park will become not simply logistical but truly industrial and high-tech. Taking into account the latest agreements, a centre of commercial scientific developments is planned for the Park.

Since last year, China has begun a new economic policy of structural reform of proposals. This envisages the establishment of major cross-border Chinese corporations with a wide network of production chains. Chinese companies are combined, amalgamated and buy foreign partners. For example, in 2016, China Merchants Group merged with Sinotrans & CSC (total assets of \$157bln). Meanwhile, rivals in the cement sphere united: China National Building Materials Group Corporation and Sinoma (total assets of \$88bln). Also, Chinese Midea acquired the German manufacturer of robots, Kuka. Overall, in the first half of 2016, Chinese companies invested \$102.7bln into 5,465 companies, across 156 countries: up 62 percent on the same period of last year.

As these figures indicate, China is ready and looking for investment partners. We have the chance to integrate into Chinese cross-border chains and add our costs into final products. In our region, this can be done by Belarusian enterprises and/or European or Russian. Investment transactions will take place in any case (with or without us), while Chinese companies will become partners or competitors. The question is, if we fail to join production chains today, would we face too much of a challenge against competition in the region tomorrow.

What should our priorities be, in your view, taking into account regional strategic cooperation between China and Belarus? Is more dynamic action required? What is needed to ensure obvious initiative from both sides?

In recent years, collaboration between the provinces of China and the regions of Belarus has intensified and the same could be said of 'city-city' level. An increasing number of Chinese business delegations from the regions visit Minsk and our regional centres, while delegations from Belarusian regions travel to China. A great number of agreements are being signed, in addition to memoranda and other bilateral documents. In this respect, it's important not to lose quality in the pursuit of quantity.

Friendly and twin city relationships are impressive but they need an extra edge in realising joint investment projects and specific cooperation points. It's preferable, I believe, to begin with concrete action: 'first word and deed, then feasting and friendship'.

The most important element in regional cooperation is, in my view, the sequence of fulfilling obligations. If parties agree and keep their word, then success may come to any business.

Interviewed by Victor **Mikhailov**



BELTA

Partnership starts from trust

What is necessary for a successful business? There can be many answers; however, everything starts from unconditional trust between partners. In this context, Belarusian-Chinese relations serve as an example in world diplomacy. In an historically short period of time, Minsk and Beijing have achieved an all-round strategic partnership and are now ready to accelerate the rate of cooperation by joining regions. This was confirmed at a meeting between the President of Belarus and the delegation of the People's Government of Xunan Province, headed by Hu Henghua.

The use of the word 'province' doesn't clearly reflect the scale of the potential contracts. Almost 70mln people live in this region, in the south-east of China — 1.5 times more than in Ukraine — while its GDP level has reached \$450mln — six times greater than our own. It would be irrational to lose such a market, and Alexander Lukashenko stressed its importance when speaking to his guests, "This visit is special, taking place in the run-up to the top level meeting with Chinese

President Xi Jinping — scheduled for September. These talks are expected to lay the foundation of a brand-new stage in Chinese-Belarusian partnership — the implementation of large-scale investment projects that will have a huge impact on the work of business circles from the Hunan Province and Belarusian regions."

The Chinese Zoomlion Corporation has already become the pace-setter of such a collaboration. This transnational corporation with the global reputation and advanced technology specialises in the production of machinery for agriculture, power engineering and construction while having

subsidiary enterprises and research institutes in 80 countries. The company has been working in Belarus for more than a year already and has received a good impression, facilitating its desire to continue investing.

Alongside the creation of industrial prototypes of construction and communal machinery on the basis of the MAZ chassis, joint projects have been already launched with MTZ and Gomselmash aiming to expand the model line-up of machinery for both European and Asian markets. Moreover, this will be primarily new machinery for us. The Chinese partners are also eager to settle in the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park.

The project dealing with the production of fire trucks is planned for the next five years. The President also suggested developing the industrial potential of Mogilev Region with the attraction of leading enterprises from the Hunan Province. The benefit is mutual, since our plants will receive investments — so necessary for their development — while China will expand its presence in the states of the Eurasian Union and Europe.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lukashenko promised, "We guarantee Chinese companies maximum favourable conditions for doing business." Every investor would like to be given such guarantees from the first representative of the state.

By Yevgeny **Kononovich**

Great Stone has proud sound

A town is being built 25km from the capital of Belarus, Minsk

The last time new towns were constructed from scratch in the country was many decades ago, in Soviet times. In 1958, two towns were raised within two months. On the 7th of June, the first tents were erected by those building a large oil processing plant, at the site which would become Novopolotsk. Then, on the 10th of August, the first symbolic stone was laid in the foundations of Soligorsk, where the largest deposits of potash salts had been discov-

ered. Specialists from across the entire Soviet Union came to work there.

After almost sixty years, these enterprises are successfully working for the benefit of the economy of independent Belarus. Naftan Oil Refinery produces and exports oil products to many countries, while Belaruskali supplies fertilisers all over the globe. One of its largest contracts is with China, supplying 1.6m tonnes of fertiliser this year. Novopolotsk and Soligorsk are flourishing, remaining among the most comfortable places for urbanities to live.

The city of which we'll talk here differs in being constructed by Belarusians

and Chinese citizens. Driving along the M-1 international motorway, leading from Russia's capital, Moscow, to Europe, via Belarus, you'll see signs for the 'Great Stone Industrial Park', written in Russian and Chinese. They're seen also by air passengers, since the M-2 motorway, leading from the capital to the national airport, also has signs.

The central avenue of the new city catches the eye in having a great number of flags of our two states, attached to street lamps, bearing also the names of famous Chinese brands. These have already 'settled' as residents of the Industrial Park: China Merchants Group,



Model of the future techno-park

Alexander Lukashenko:

In creating this industrial cluster, it's important not to allow barriers. We took this into account from the very outset. Out project is open to everyone and isn't aimed against anyone... The magnificence of this project is in the great idea of union (economic and trade) while the union of cultures and peoples will obligatory follow

Huawei, ZTE, Zoomlion, CAMC, and Sinomach. Flapping in the wind, even on weekdays, these flags create an amazingly festive mood. It seems that people are working not only for the sake of money but are driven by higher motivation. This inspires hope that the city will have the same happy destiny as Novopolotsk and Soligorsk.

Here is a short but dynamic chronology:

March 2010. During the visit of the Deputy Chairman of the People's Republic of China, now the Head of State, Xi Jinping, to Belarus, the project of the Chinese-Belarusian techno-park was first announced.

October 2010. During the visit of President Alexander Lukashenko to the PRC, an agreement on the Park's establishment was signed between the Belarusian Economic Ministry and China CAMC Engineering Co., Ltd.

January 2012. Belarus and China ratified an inter-governmental agreement on the joint project.

June 2012. The Decree of the President of Belarus 'On the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park' determined special legal regulation for this economic territory.

August 2012. A joint company was established to develop the park, where Chinese partners own 60 percent of shares and Belarusian partners have 40 percent.

19 June 2014. Over fifty top managers of the world's leading companies from China, including Sinomach,

CAMC, Lenovo Group Limited, Great-Wall, Huawei, and ZTE, attended the solemn ceremony of the laying of the first stone into the foundations of the Industrial Park.

12 May 2015. During a state visit to Belarus, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, visited the Park's construction site, together with President Alexander Lukashenko. The leaders of our two states signed a general plan for the Great Stone Park and assessed the investment projects put forth by the first residents.

Since laying the first symbolic stone of the Park and the city, just over two years have passed. Why was Belarus chosen? The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr. Cui Qiming, spoke in June 2016, at a round table discussion entitled 'Belarus' Advantages and Prospects in the Silk Road Economic Belt'. The words of the diplomat were cited by BELTA News Agency: 'Being an important part of the Silk Road Economic Belt, Belarus, in my opinion, has a number of advantages... Primarily, and thankfully, these are advantages built on our high level of mutual political trust. In the 24 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Belarus, these have been developing dynamically. In 2013, during the Belarusian leader's visit to China, the President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, joined the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, in announcing the

raising of relations to a level of comprehensive strategic partnership, bringing a new stage of development...'

The Ambassador also paid attention to the advantages of Belarus' geographical position: 'Being a geographic anchor point in the Silk Road Economic Belt in Europe, Belarus occupies a vital strategic position. Belarus is a gateway to the huge markets of the EAEU and the EU, to the Baltic and Black Seas.'

Another question is why this region of Belarus was chosen for the Great Stone Industrial Park. The park adjoins the territory of the National Airport and has the M-1 international motorway nearby. Alongside, runs a railway line, some kilometres north, leading from Moscow and Russia's European side, to Europe.

At first, Chinese construction machinery arrived from Lithuanian Klaipeda port, being dispatched by road but, in May 2016, a train delivered 800 tonnes of metal construction for the Park directly from China. Departing from Hebei Province, it arrived at its destination within sixteen days, via Kazakhstan and Russia. Delivery by sea would have taken three times longer. Mr. Hu Zheng, of China Merchants Group, underlined at the train meeting ceremony that Belarusian goods, including fabrics and crystal ware, have already been supplied to China via train, reducing costs and enhancing competitiveness.

A convenient, almost optimal, logistics hub exists from China to Europe,

close to the Belarusian capital: an ideal 'dry port', ensuring a wide range of opportunities for the transportation of goods manufactured in Belarus, or for the transit of cargo.

Another important factor is that the town of Zhodino, where the world's largest heavy-duty dump trucks are produced, is situated close to the techno-park. Zhodino's BelAZ JSC accounts for one third of the global market of quarry machinery, while the BelAZ-75710 vehicle, with a load capacity of 450 tonnes, is registered into the Guinness Book of Records as 'the biggest 4x4 quarry machinery'.

BelGee CJSC is building its plant not far from Zhodino, aiming to produce to 60,000 cars annually (at first). It should release its first vehicle by the end of 2016. On the 19th of July, the President of CITIC Construction Corporation, Mr. Wang Jiong, visited the construction site and was pleased with the course of work.

Returning to the Great Stone, its success relies on optimal logistics, as well as highly qualified staff. In past times, our Republic was the 'assembly workshop' of the Soviet Union. Since gaining independence, Belarus, unlike some of the former Soviet republics, has preserved its production and intellectual potential, through factories and design bureaus, technical universities and colleges. A large part of this potential is concentrated in the capital, and in neighbouring cities. The highest level of production, in 5th and 6th technological mode, is be-

ing developed at the Industrial Park, so it needs a labour force with the necessary qualifications.

Economic, political, geographical, logistical, technical and demographic factors are involved in this unique project, which is the first such for Chinese-Belarusian relations. Industrial parks of various scale and technical profile operate (or are being set up) in other countries, with which we'll have to compete, but neither Russia nor Europe has a site on such a grand scale. It covers 90 sq.km of thoroughly planned infrastructure, close to the airport and trans-European road and rail highways.

The privileges and preferences given to Park residents are listed on the official website of the Park's administration, calculated using the '10+10' formula: exemption from paying corporate taxes for 10 years and reduction of tax rates by 50 percent over the first decade of operation. Privileges cover terms of employment for foreign employees, and the cost of land plots, which investors can buy, or rent for 99 years.

We should remember that, in April 2016, when delivering his traditional State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian Peo-

ple and Parliament, President Alexander Lukashenko expressed dissatisfaction with the speed of construction at the Park and then dismissed its head of administration. He enhanced the level of responsibility for the implementation of the project, stressing its importance as a state priority, drawing great attention to it.

Across its numerous construction grounds, what's the current situation? Without wishing to sound boastful, I can name myself as the first journalist to have seen the site where the symbolic stone was later laid in the foundations, back in June 2014. At the time, it was a small patch of concrete on a firebreak within a pine forest, resembling a rocket launching pad in miniature. The article I wrote was entitled Starting Key. Today, continuing this cosmic analogy, we can

add that the flight is proceeding as expected. Over the last two years, I've visited the site several times, and remain astonished every time.

Builders have regularly given reason for my visits: laying the foundations of a site, or completing another. Each time, I was surprised at Chinese builders' ability to organise bright and breathtaking

A business centre with hotel will become a part of the logistical park erected by China Merchants Group



VITALY PIVOVARCHIK

spectacles on holiday dates, with fireworks and parades. However, such ceremonies don't allow you to feel the daily rhythm on this huge construction site, where much is taking place. This time, I visited for no particular occasion.

A symbolic stone is now located at the centre of the administrative town. It has several offices, whose doors bear signs indicating the 'host' of the town — Chinese CAMC Engineering Co., Ltd. Behind the office buildings are grounds for construction and automobile machinery, and a site housing Chinese builders, offering amenities, a canteen and everything necessary for everyday life. Mid-morning, all the rooms are empty.

I manage a rapid-fire interview with a young girl, running about with notebook and laptop. Wang Xiaoling is an interpreter and a record keeper, responsible for a huge circulation of documents. She works in an office, where she is also engaged in designing. Together with her twelve colleagues, she lives nearby, in Sokol, where she rents a comfortable urban home. She's been in Belarus for six years, learning the language at Minsk Linguistic University. I asked her what she likes and dislikes about our country but, being in a hurry, she replied with

a joke, saying that she enjoys summer but not winter.

A traditional meeting of building staff is scheduled for today. The Deputy Prime Minister, Anatoly Kalinin, periodically chairs these meetings, organised twice weekly, as required. Today is an ordinary session with the usual chairs: the director general of Capital Construction Management, Valentin Ilyushonok, for Belarus, and, on the Chinese side, the commercial manager of Chinese CAMC Engineering Corporation, Tan Hao. People call him Maxim and he speaks Russian well, without need for a translator.

Valentin Ilyushonok and Tan Hao define the status of the companies they represent. CAMC Engineering Corporation serves as general contractor for the complex and is responsible for delivery of equipment. Meanwhile, Capital Construction Management carries out engineering maintenance and technical supervision. Alongside them are representatives of numerous Belarusian subcontracting companies, who are participating: Soligorsk's building trust #3 (famous in Belarus), Minsktransstroj, Minskpromstroj, and Belgazstroj.

Unexpected visitors suddenly arrive on the site: the President's aide and chief inspector in Minsk, Alexander Yakobson, and the chairman of Minsk City Executive Com-

mittee, Andrey Shorets. They join in the session and follow the group to a model of the future city. Kirill Koroteev, first deputy director general of the Belarusian-Chinese Industrial Park Development Company, explains that the site covers 8.5 sq.km with residential construction beginning nearby, alongside social infrastructure. He answers several questions: on who will build the apartments; who will pay for kindergartens and polyclinics; and other such practical issues, such as who will be responsible for cleaning the streets.

Alongside construction problems (supplies, financial estimates, terms, payment, and interaction of subcontractors) the session also tackles grass mowing, clearing of three fallen birch trees, and the utilisation of large volumes of pine shavings. The Great Stone is being created in a most beautiful place, amongst virgin forest, with a village, a river, a water reservoir and a reserve located nearby. Protecting the natural environment is a priority.

After the meeting, I was invited to see the state of the sites. A second-lift intake station is now ready, while six artesian wells and reservoirs with a volume of 2,800 cubic metres are providing the city with pure water. The equipment

has been repeatedly tested, and is now in operation. Meanwhile, the wastewater treatment site is incredible, boasting an abundance of machinery and builders. Currently, there are 380 builders on site, but the number will soon increase to 520. "We're behind on the August schedule by ten days," says the head of the construction department of Soligorsk building trust #3, Vitaly Vereskovsky. He remains

During work at building of the wastewater treatment site, which is constructed far ahead of the schedule



VITALY PIVOVARCHIK

Xi Jinping:

In promoting the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative, we'll be sharing our experience of development with Belarus, while trying to achieve our own development works for the benefit of the Belarusian nation. We welcome Belarus' participation in the Silk Road Economic Belt project, as it boasts unique geographical advantages. This encourages investments and opening of new business in the Republic of Belarus by large Chinese enterprises. As before, we'll provide economic support and assistance to Belarus, whenever possible

confident that days will be gained in September.

Whilst the builders slightly lag behind in their own schedule, they're essentially ahead of the planned schedule. It was expected that services would be installed by March 2017, while the guideline for the construction period was 21 months. However, the schedule has been revised three times, with the station due to now come into operation in October.

High-tech productions are being established at the Industrial Park, covering five major areas: electronics, fine chemistry, bio-pharmaceuticals, manufacture of new materials, and commercial logistics. Belarus is responsible for infrastructure: roads and approaches, water supply and removal, as well as gas, telephones, electricity and other lines of communication. Investor-resident registration is quick and they can then begin work. Belarus is fulfilling its obligations: the city doesn't yet exist but wide streets and places for bus stops are already lit; traffic lights and road signs are installed at crossings; pavements and cycle tracks are laid and there are cars on the fringes. These cars don't yet belong to residents but to builders.

The Chinese builders are just as speedy, while showing professionalism. The deputy director general of the Industrial Park Development Company Chinese-Belarusian JV, Zheng Minghui,

tells us that China Merchants Group has invested about \$500mln so far, building a large logistics centre (a 'dry port') to supply materials and goods, via road, rail, sea and air.

The solemn laying ceremony of the dry port took place on the 11th of December 2015, although work began only in March. Extreme winter conditions were to blame; it's no wonder that interpreter and record keeper Wang Xiaoling doesn't enjoy our winter. Despite the long break, huge efforts allowed the schedule to proceed. This was later underlined by Mr. Hu Zheng, director general of the Great Stone Industrial Park. He is also the chief representative of China Merchants Groups for Central Asia and the Baltic States, and chairman of the Commercial Chamber of Chinese enterprises in Belarus.

We can already see the impressive outlines of buildings in the logistical park erected by China Merchants Group, including a business centre with hotel, and exhibition and warehouse complexes. Just a few months ago, the area was wasteland; now, a city is growing before our eyes. On the day we visited, 170 Chinese builders and about 2,000 Belarusians were working.

The schedule of Chinese-Belarusian contacts is intense, as these recent events show:

April. The chairman of Minsk Regional Executive Committee, Semen

Shapiro, went to China to conduct negotiations and agreed on assistance from Chinese partners in attracting investors for the Great Stone Industrial Park.

May. The Industrial Park hosted a solemn ceremony of stone laying for the new scientific research centre and a production facility to manufacture super-condensers for electric buses. The project is being implemented by Chengdu Xinzhu Silk Road Development Ltd.

August. The regions of our two countries reinforce co-operation, with President Alexander Lukashenko meeting a delegation of the People's Government of Hunan Province, headed by Hu Henghua. Zoomlion Company initiated collaboration, to implement joint projects in Belarus for more than a year, particularly with Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ) and Gomselmash.

Our magazine cannot report as promptly as the Internet, or the daily newspapers, so you, our readers, may know even more about the Park than is written here. Soon, you'll learn about the results of the forthcoming visit of the President of Belarus to China; undoubtedly, they'll give new impetus to this ambitious project. Over the course of time, you'll learn the name of the new city we've been mentioning. Great Stone sounds well in any language.

By Victor Ponomarev



The Information Minister of the Republic of Belarus, Lilia Ananich, and the Head of the Chinese Delegation, the Deputy Head of the State General Administration for Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, Yan Xiaohong, during signing of the memorandum on cooperation

Ties growing stronger

Comprehensive Belarusian-Chinese cooperation manifests in media sphere

Diverse and objective information is the most vital element in ensuring efficient inter-state interaction. It is the catalyst for growth, including across new, promising areas. Bilateral Belarusian-Chinese partnerships in the media sphere are being successfully implemented via a range of documents, including a cooperative agreement between the Information Ministry of the Republic of Belarus and the Press Secretariat of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, signed on December 5th, 2005, in Beijing.

This document envisages information sharing and exchange of delega-

tions and journalists, as well as participation in international book trade fairs and media exhibitions, international symposiums and conferences. Provisions of the agreement are worked out in detail in the programme for comprehensive strategic partnership between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China for 2014-2018, which envisages Belarus-China interaction in the media sphere.

Major areas of mutual collaboration stipulated in the programme include liaisons in the sphere of TV and radio broadcasting, publication and printing, staff training, and contacts between media editorial offices. In addition, there is mutual participation in international profile exhibitions and trade fairs, con-

ducted both in Belarus and China, as well as translations and publication of works by famous writers and poets from our two states.

We can confidently speak about the success and efficiency of Belarusian-Chinese media co-operation. Close and partnership mutual ties with Chinese colleagues are enjoyed by the Belarusian Telegraph Agency (BelTA), the National State TV and Radio Company of the Republic of Belarus, as well as leading holdings of printed media: 'Sovetskaya Belorussiya' and Zvyazda Publishing House. Forms of cooperation include regular sharing of materials, joint internships of journalists and participation in profile seminars, conferences, forums and exhibitions.

It should be stressed that Belarusian state media focuses on covering bilateral cooperation between China and Belarus across various spheres, particularly, trade-economic, sci-tech, and humanitarian. Cooperation is also developing between public organizations, with contacts established between the All-China Journalists Association and the Belarusian Union of Journalists.

Delegations from China are regular participants in the Mass Media in Belarus International Specialised Exhibition, the Belarusian International Media Forum and Minsk International Book Trade Fair. Last year, China was an honorary guest at the 22nd Minsk International Book Trade Fair, with its large-scale exposition attracting huge interest among visitors of the Minsk book forum.

Speaking at the Belarusian-Chinese forum of publishers and writers, organised during the 22nd Minsk International Book Trade Fair, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus, H.E. Mr. Cui Qiming, noted that China plans to more actively co-operate with Belarus in the humanitarian sphere.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Head of the State General Administration for Press,



The Chinese exposition at the 22nd Minsk International Book Trade Fair included more than 5 thous. books. In the photo: Deputy Head of the Belarus President Administration, Igor Buzovsky, and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus, H.E. Mr. Cui Qiming

Publication, Radio, Film and Television, the Vice Commissioner of National Copyright Administration of China, Yan Xiaohong, notes that China views the development of ties with Belarusian book publishers as important and promising.

This year, on April 21st, there was a working meeting between the Information Minister of the Republic of Belarus, Lilia Ananich, and the delegation

of the All-China Journalists Association (ACJA), headed by Executive Secretary Zhu Shouchen. The meeting tackled Belarus-China cooperative issues in the sphere of information and printing. The two sides noted the need to further interaction, as part of previously signed agreements, to provide far-reaching bilateral interaction between our mass media, as well as to support important events and processes in Belarus and China.

It's important to take into account that one of the results of the 22nd Minsk International Book Trade Fair was the signing of a memorandum on cooperation between the Information Ministry of the Republic of Belarus and the State General Administration for Press, Publication, Radio Film and Television of the People's Republic of China: On Translation and Publication of Classical Literary Works of China and Belarus for 2015-2020. Zvyazda Publishing House is working actively on the Belarusian side, implementing a range of successful publishing projects with Chinese partners.

In 2015 and 2016, Zvyazda Publishing House translated into Belarusian works by China's Wang Wei ('Altana Near the Lake'), Ai Qing ('Aroma of a Secret Forest') Li Bo ('Flute's Gloomy Sounds')



At opening of the Chinese exposition



At the meeting with the delegation of the All-China Journalists Association, headed by Executive Secretary Zhu Shouchen, which arrived at the invitation of the Belarusian Union of Journalists

Du Fu ('Loneliness of Mountain Peaks') and Li He ('Song of the Bamboo Flute') as well as a collection of Chinese poetry, entitled 'Under the Dragon's Wings. One Hundred Poets of China'.

The editions, published by Zvyazda Publishing House, promote our Chinese-Belarusian literary and cultural partnership. Works by A I, Wei Wei, Zhu Wening, Lu Min, and Ge Liang (for 'Neman' magazine) have been translated into Russian, as has a collection of Chinese poetry (23 authors) translated by Lee Tso ('Neman' magazine). Works by Li Bo, Du Fu and Ai Qing ('Litaratura i Mastatstva' newspaper) have been released in Belarusian.

Moreover, 'Polymya' and 'Maladosts' magazines have released a range of materials dedicated to Chinese-Belarusian ties. These include:

- Yulia Oleichenko's 'Growing the Ears. Signs: Radiant of China Book Review' ('Polymya' magazine);
- Veronika Karlyukevich's 'First Acquaintance with Belarusian Literature in China: Yanka Kupala's Pipe' ('Polymya' magazine);
- Kirill Metelitsa's 'Sovereigns of the Heavenly Empire' ('Maladosts' magazine);
- 'The Confucius Institute of the Belarusian National Technical University,

or Approaches Towards Cooperation with China by One More Step' (interview with Institute employees) ('Maladosts' magazine);

- Victor Germenchuk's 'Heart's Technique' ('Maladosts' magazine).

The Publishing House has also established contacts with the Republican Institute of Chinese Studies named after Confucius, at the Belarusian State University, with which they're constantly realising joint projects. In 2016, the editorial and publishing institution launched a project online, entitled 'News from China', offering stories of life in China. In 2015 and 2016 alone, 'Litaratura i Mastatstva' newspaper published over 30 materials dedicated to China. Their authors included Ales Karlyukevich, Tatiana Sivets, Maxim Ladymerov, Mikhail Kenko, Vladimir Goryn, Nikolay Khmel'nitsky, Nikolay Berlezh, Alesya Lapitskaya, Marina Veselukha, Arina Kraiko, Maria Voitik, Kastus Ladutko, Yana Yavich and Sergey Shichko.

The Belarusian State TV and Radio Company is also working with China, broadcasting thematic materials and programmes dedicated to developing Belarusian-Chinese collaboration. Belarus International Radio broadcasts for 16 hours weekly, including Chinese language programmes.

Reference

■ As part of collaboration between the Belarusian Telegraph Agency and China's Xinhua News Agency, sharing of information has been established on a regular basis, as published on the agencies' news lines.

■ Materials about China's most important economic, cultural, sporting, political and public events go on air via the National Television (Second National TV Channel CJSC) and are published in the leading state political newspaper 'Sovetskaya Belorussiya'.

■ Representatives of BelTA and the Institution of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Belarus Editorial Office of 'Sovetskaya Belorussiya' newspaper regularly visit the People's Republic of China, including for educational purposes, being invited by the Chinese.

Meanwhile, the Information Ministry of the Republic of Belarus presents updated materials on a regular basis, for the Internet site of the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee for Cooperation.

Interaction between our unions of journalists and our editorial staff is dynamic. Last spring, a delegation of the Belarusian Union of Journalists visited China, at the invitation of the All-China Journalists' Association. This April, during a return visit by the Chinese side, an agreement on cooperation was signed between the journalist organisations of our two countries.

The Chinese-Belarusian media is filled with positive content, targeting the future, for the sake of friendship and creation, and for the benefit of our two states.

On Chinese radio wave

'Your Friend: Belarus' programme broadcast twice weekly on Belarus International Radio, focusing on relations between Belarus and China and our joint cultural and economic projects, with special attention paid to digest news from Belarus



Zhang Haiyan during the programme broadcasting

Belarus International Radio is a versatile media resource not only listened to but watched, with its site (<http://radiobelarus.tvr.by/>) hosting video interviews and reports, as well as comments. It hosts promotional works and various photo contests, while having its own Facebook page.

“We’re expanding our Internet broadcasting in eight languages: Russian, Belarusian, English, German, French, Spanish, Polish and Chinese,” explains the Chief Director of Belarus International Radio, Naum Galperovich. “We can now be listened to through all sorts of gadgets and via HotBird, Galaxy 19 and Belintersat satellites. We also work in the FM-band for bordering regions. Recently, we launched video on our site.”

VITALY PIVOVARCHIK

Belarus' call signs were first heard on May 11th, 1962. Originally, programmes were prepared in Belarusian, with focus on our countrymen living abroad. At that time, it was a department of foreign broadcast at the All-Union Radio. Its main objectives were the propaganda of the Soviet lifestyle, the struggle against ideological opponents and the desire to bring home as many Soviet citizens (who went abroad after the Great Patriotic War) as possible. In 1985, the radio launched German language broadcasting. In the 1990s, when the country gained independence, it transformed its goal to telling the world about Belarus. In 1998, it introduced Russian and English languages and, in 2006, Polish. Since 2010, French and Spanish programmes have been available.

“Our broadcasting schedule includes: news and analysis; radio interviews with scientists, writers and musicians, masters of art and folklore, and athletes; and programmes on history, culture and spiritual values,” Mr. Galperovich comments. “In total, over 100 author projects are planned for the new season, exploring various spheres of Belarusian life. Our compatriots living abroad will continue enjoying access to our World Programme.”

In January 2013, Chinese language programming was introduced; the ‘Your Friend: Belarus’ programme is broadcast twice weekly, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, hosted by Zhang Haiyan, Chen Wanlu, Qu Hao and Anastasia Chekulaeva. Audiences hear about the main political, economic and cultural events of the country. Tuesday programmes offer a digest of news, with the focus on Belarusian-Chinese cooperation, while Saturday programmes are dedicated to Belarusian culture, art, folk traditions and history.

‘Your Friend: Belarus’ also has a practical section for Chinese tourists, detailing which Minsk cafes and restaurants serve national Belarusian cuisine, and recommending hotels and attractions. “These sections are very popular,” comments the Deputy Director of Belarus

International Radio, Vyacheslav Laktyushin. “In Belarus, there are about two thousand Chinese people, with many studying. Some come on business and others visit as tourists.”

Vyacheslav was employed at Belarus Radio in 1998, when English broadcasting was introduced. He has also been engaged in the launch of Chinese broadcasting, selecting hosts and helping to train them, sharing his professional secrets. Among the first voices heard by

The fact that Belarusian and Chinese specialists work together expands the scope of our capabilities, enhancing our vision, and helping avoid offensive and inexcusable errors. Anastasia Chekulaeva, for example, checks texts to make sure that the names of Belarusian cities, families, and cultural and public figures are written correctly and that history is not distorted.

Belarus Radio closely interacts with International Chinese Radio in Bei-



VITALY PIVOVARCHIK

Chinese listeners was that of a Chinese teacher from the BSU, Li Tso, who is also a poet, that of Chinese language teacher Wang Yu Hong, who works at a Minsk school, and that of philologist and journalist Veronika Karlyukevich.

At present, ‘Your Friend: Belarus’ is hosted by a post graduate student of the Belarusian State University’s Institute of Journalism and a member of the Belarusian Union of Journalists, Zhang Haiyan, joined by a graduate of the BSU’s Institute of Journalism, Chen Wanlu, a fourth year student of Minsk State Linguistic University and the Deputy Chairman of the Union of Chinese Students in Belarus, Qu Hao, and BSU Chinese language teacher Anastasia Chekulaeva. Journalists Dmitry Zanevsky, Alexander Kravchenko and Marina Dragina help prepare the programme.

Mr. Laktyushin notes, “All are capable journalists, with good ‘radio’ voices.

Qu Hao and Zhang Haiyan at the studio jing, where Belarusian journalists Olga Galperovich and Roman Myshkovsky work. They exchange materials with Chinese colleagues, and organise joint broadcasts. In 2014, Naum Galperovich visited China as a member of a press tour, visiting various newspapers and magazines, to see how their editorial offices worked. The head of the Belarusian media resource was much impressed by International Chinese Radio. “It has a huge building, employing hundreds and broadcasting almost worldwide. Its workers represent diverse nationalities, including Americans, French, British and Germans, as well as representatives of African countries,” he says.

Belarusian journalists also liaise with the Embassy of China to Belarus. One of the latest joint projects is between Belarus Radio, the Chinese Embassy, the Belarusian Society of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and

the BSU's Confucius Institute of Chinese Studies. They ran a contest requesting essays on the topic of Belarusian-Chinese Cooperation: The Silk Road and Great Stone Industrial Park Through My Eyes. Works were accepted in prose and verse, in Belarusian, Russian and Chinese. So far, over fifty authors from Belarusian and Chinese regions have made submissions, in addition to participants from other countries (such as Poland). All es-

The Head of the International Cooperation Department at the Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Svetlana Kobachevskaya, has sent her 'My China' essay in three languages: Russian, Belarusian and Chinese. She writes: 'For many, China is associated with the legendary rulers of the Shun and Yao, Shang-Yin and Tang dynasties, the Great Plain and the Tibetan Plateau... 'My China', as a discovery, is almost fifty extraordinary

always have their phones with them, like miniature computers, using them as translators, voice recorders, cameras and as a compass. It's easy and professional. They always smile on meeting me and it's impossible not to smile in return...'

"All works are interesting and each deserves attention and promotion," admits Mr. Galperovich. "We've decided to publish a book after the contest is concluded, to include the best essays. Winners will be awarded with prizes."

It's not the first time that Belarus Radio has been 'interactive'. Some time ago, it ran a selfie contest, entitled 'Hi, Belarus!' which attracted over 300,000 visitors to its site. Photos were sent from such countries as New Zealand, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the UAE, and there were many 'selfie-greetings' from European countries, such as Germany, the UK and France. This new information season (launched in September) will feature a quiz dedicated to the 500th anniversary of book-printing and the 'KlikBelarus' contest.

Speaking of Chinese listeners, Mr. Galperovich notes that they are socially active, and aged 25-45. They tend to have higher education, are interested in international projects, and have studied in Belarus or have business contacts in our country. He adds, "For many, our programme is a starting point before coming to Belarus. We also have a fan club of Chinese language broadcasting."

By Yekaterina Medvedskaya

In January 2013, Chinese language programming was introduced; the 'Your Friend: Belarus' programme is broadcast twice weekly. Tuesday programmes offer a digest of news, with the focus on Belarusian-Chinese cooperation, while Saturday programmes are dedicated to Belarusian culture, art, folk traditions

says are being published on the radio's site and on the information portal of Zvyazda Publishing House (with which an agreement on the exchange of information materials has been signed).

young people who study at the Belarusian Maxim Tank State Pedagogical University. Among them are Liu Jing and Zhang Linyuan, Zhao Tunbo and Zheng Jinyu, Guo Cui and Zhang Midoun, Ni Sha and Yang Ibo... They are industrious and inquisitive, direct and open. They

Quiz

Zhang Haiyan:

I arrived in Minsk in 2008 and, in 2009, became a student at the BSU's Institute of Journalism. I'm now a post-graduate student and have been working at Belarus Radio since 2013. I came from the Chinese city of Luoyang. I visit my homeland during the holidays but I plan to live and work in Belarus.

I adore your country, with its many forests, its clean air and its beautiful sky. In the nine years of being here, Minsk has changed drastically, gaining many more cars, shopping malls and high-rise buildings. It's a modern, dynamic city. I also love Belarusian cuisine — especially potato pancakes.

Qu Hao:

I came to Minsk from Xian (Shaanxi Province). I'm a fourth year student at Minsk State Linguistic University. I learnt of the radio from my Chinese language teacher, poet Li Zuo. Two years ago, he returned to Beijing and is now lecturing at the university. I took over from him in hosting the programme and have worked at the radio station since 2014, mostly translating and reading news. Sometimes, I also work as a journalist, preparing interviews and making reports. I mostly cover public-political topics and, in the future, would love to work as a reporter, either in Belarus or China. The Chinese Ambassador to Belarus, Cui Qiming, says: 'Each Chinese student in Belarus is a people's diplomat'. I feel this is true.



Alternative to military service

New law on alternative civilian service comes into effect on July 1st, 2016

The world knows two basic models of alternative service. The first involves signing an employment contract between the 'alternative servant' and the organization,

with all relations between them following the employment and labour law. Russia, Ukraine and Moldova use this model. Belarus uses the second model, whereby young men choosing an alternative civilian service, according to their legal status, are almost conscripts, as in Austria.

Recently, the Council of Ministers issued a list of works for those choosing alternative civilian service. Apart from traditional activities, like washing floors in hospitals, or taking care of seriously ill and disabled people, a conscript may be involved in growing or harvesting vegetables, berries or

mushrooms, mowing grass, or caring for cattle.

The monthly financial allowance is 150 percent of the maximum value of the minimum living wage for the last two quarters (currently, per capita, 169.94 Roubles). Next year, the financial allowance will increase by 20 percent, and, by 2018, by 40 percent.

You cannot? Prove it!

Young people wishing to avoid military service due to religious beliefs can now serve in civilian posts instead, as originally enshrined in the Belarusian Constitution, and now detailed in a corresponding law. Of course, some people may cite religious beliefs falsely, to avoid military service, so any statement must be proven. Civilian service is to last three years (twice the time required of regular military conscripts) while those with higher education must give two years of service.

A list of organizations where alternative civilian service may be performed is being drawn up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security: nursing facilities, hospices, residential care homes, housing and communal enterprises, agriculture and forestry (all places in need of labour and where earnings tend to be low).

The Minister of Defence of the Republic of Belarus, Andrei Ravkov, has a negative attitude towards offering alternative civilian service, believing the option is completely separate from the Armed Forces, rather falling under the mandate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

A hundred men all over the country

Those drafting the law have come under criticism, with opponents believing that other reasons are valid for alternative service, such as pacifism and other philosophies beyond 'religious faith'. The Head of the Legal Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Olga Likhtarovich, tells us, "We must proceed from the fact that it shouldn't be more attractive to undertake alternative civilian service than military service. Otherwise, we'll face too many unfounded appeals from citizens wishing to simplify life."

Those undertaking alternative civilian service should be in the minority, notes the Chairman of the Standing Commission on Labour and Social Affairs of the House of Representatives, Vladimir Vasilenko. He states that, each year, no more than a hundred people are likely to undertake alternative civilian service countrywide.

Reverse side

Benefits for believers

Belarusian legislators are providing benefits and preferences for those who undertake alternative service:

- obligatory state insurance (paid for from the budget);
- free housing and communal services (during service);
- preservation of the right to be registered as 'in need' for housing improvements;
- inclusion of alternative service into record of work, and guarantee of the first employment on completion;
- right to return after service to equivalent position in the public organization within which a person has worked, or into previous educational institution;
- deferment of loan payments during time of service, including privileged loans for construction or purchase of housing, and all interest on such loans; and
- free medication on prescription (within the list of essential medicines).

In specific

Where unusual recruits are awaited

Mogilev Region, along with others, has filed a list of companies and organizations with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, denoting where labour is required.

"This list contains more than fifty organisations: district hospitals, public utilities, dairy farms and forestry enterprises," says the head of the Labour, Employment and Social Protection Committee of Mogilev Regional Executive Committee, Elena

Yakovleva. "Young men can prove helpful while gaining skills."

Soon, we'll learn which organizations will receive such recruits, a list becoming available to the public.

"Such labour will be very useful," says the director of the Neuropsychiatric Orphanage in Bykov, Zinaida Prokopovich. "We're talking about strong young men. It's much easier for them to help a sick person get up or sit in a wheelchair than for a nurse. We have about two hundred patients with impaired motor functions. Care of sick and elderly patients also has an educational factor and requires warm-heartedness. Recruits should understand that they can't opt out. They should be thorough in their efforts and work with full dedication. We'll keep an eye on that."

Guests from future



Graduates are obliged to make choices which are life-changing, rather like choosing the right path in a fairy-tale. They have to decide if a profession will be in demand in coming years. Here are our predictions for popular jobs and which new professions may appear.

According to Forbes, up and coming jobs include sitting (for houses/pets/children), gerontology, and breeding of crops and livestock, as well as human resource management and alternative energy management.

Of course, universities attempt to pre-empt coming trends, offering

courses which are relevant. How could they possibly offer 'cyber-prosthetics' as a specialisation without having good grounds. Inna Bagnyuk, who heads the Specialty and Qualifications Department of the Republican Institute for Higher Learning, tells us, "Many nuances are taken into account: the economic situation, employment trends, and job demand projections. New Government programmes can give impetus to new and unusual pro-

fessional training. Eventually, a list of prospective professions is formed. Jobs no longer in demand are also removed from the list."

In the past year alone, nineteen new specialties have appeared. Inna Bagnyuk says that she literally saw with her own eyes the creation of biopharmacy — with biopharmachemists emerging. Combining biology, pharmaceuticals and chemistry, it's a profession of the future. So far, it is taught only at the

BSU but, as the Belarusian pharmaceutical market is booming, others may follow suit.

Meanwhile, programming and economics combine in the profession of economist-programmer.

Ms. Bagnyuk believes this to be another profession likely to be in demand soon. 'Unmanned aircraft specialist' is also assumed to have a long life ahead. Masters of applied biotechnology, using DNA and cell technology, are also likely to be sought after within the next decade, alongside nuclear power engineers.

It all appears extremely futuristic. The first vice-principal of the Republican Institute for Professional Education, Eduard Kalitsky, has an atlas of prospective professions from the Moscow 'Skolkovo' School on his desk. He tells me, "The projections are surprising: 'living systems architect', 'genetic advisor', 'virtual world designer', and 'game teacher'. It takes foresight to determine prospective professions."

As a matter of fact, the essence of professions remains the same, only the conditions and workplaces alter. For instance, there has long been the job of someone who milks cows, although approaches have changed immensely. At present, a machine-assisted milking operator, ideally, should know the fundamentals of programming and animal science, while being knowledgeable about climate conditions and how to feed animals. Farms have automated systems, sometimes playing music to soothe cows. Meanwhile, plumbers no longer need to cut off water supply but can freeze liquid at the leakage point, using a special device, or can check pipes with a tele-camera.

It's hard to make far-reaching forecasts, Eduard Kalitsky believes. In ten or fifteen years, even traditional blue-collar jobs may alter. Belarus has already produced its first remote-controlled mining truck, showing that, in a few years, tractor drivers will need different skills. They'll come to an office, perhaps

dressed in suit and tie, to press buttons launching plowing tractors 25km away.

"The operator will see more sitting in front of his monitor than through the tractor window, believe me," says Eduard Kalitsky. "That's why our professional schools are teaching professions yet to be 'required'. We have 40 resource centres with cutting-edge equipment that can only be found at specialised exhibitions or abroad."

In 2014, our country first participated in the 'career Olympic games': WorldSkills International. Last year, Olga Zakrevskaya, a student at Minsk State Technical Sewing College, was awarded a medal for perfectionism in the 'Clothes Design' nomination. This event allows us to peep into the future, since the most progressive techniques are employed. Next year, our country will represent 33 professions at the event.

Waiters, apothecaries, drivers and customer support specialists will be replaced with robots in future.

"The service sphere is developing robustly, especially regarding machine-building," says Mr. Kalitsky.

"These are our budget-forming enterprises, and they are rapidly reequipping. Of course, we'll see re-industrialisation and robotics development, which will replace mid-skill workers."

"One way or another, change triggers the creation of new professions. In 2014, two new professions appeared: 'recyclable material sorter' and 'animal (poultry) breeding automated technological equipment field engineer'. Already, six professions relating to nuclear plant operation have appeared," says Yelena Peschenko, an advisor with the Labour Organization and Motivation Department of the Ministry of

Labour and Social Protection. In 2015, three new positions were introduced: operational logistics specialist, senior specialist for handling valuables, and specialist for handling valuables. Meanwhile, 141 job descriptions were amended.

Ms. Peschenko explains, "All changes in professions and positions are recorded in the Unified Tariff and Qualification Reference Book of Jobs and Professions, and in the Unified Qualification Reference Book of Employee Positions. These books, like a living organism, respond to trends.

It's hard to predict the future face of the labour market but we can try. Students would be wise to plan carefully when choosing their path.

By Taisia **Azanovich**



They come to continue their studies in Belarus, having learnt about us in China. What attracts them? What do they find amazing in Belarus? What inspires our post-graduate student guests of the Belarusian State University in their desire to learn more about our country?

We're grateful for kind people



We met in a café, opposite the National Academy of Sciences: myself and three post-graduate students from the Belarusian State University. Bao In studies at the Foreign Relations Department, while Chzhan Hunshan and Chzhao Nenzhan are with the Philology Department. All are friendly and eager to chat, though a little nervous.

Why did you decide to study abroad?

Bao: I chose Russian as a speciality long ago and, accordingly, decided to strengthen my knowledge of the subject. Last year, a project of cooperation was launched between our countries; I've come here as part of an exchange programme.

Chzhan: I've lived in Belarus for six years, and learnt of your country mostly

from the Internet. I've read that it's peaceful, having no wars. People live in peace and friendship. This is why I decided to come here.

Chzhao: Like Bao, I'm interested in Russian. The state has allocated money for me to study here. This doesn't happen often and I've decided not to lose the chance.

Did you face any difficulty in adapting to local culture? Belarus differs from China and Minsk isn't the same as your native cities...

Bao: These aren't difficulties; just the act of joining a new culture. Of course, our countries differ greatly. I lived in Inner Mongolia, in an autonomous district in Northern China, where the local culture is mixed. Many nationalities reside in China. In my city, half of all residents are from ethnic minorities. The remaining people are Hans — the dominating

nationality of China. Of course, Belarus also has many nationalities but all live as a single culture, mostly. In our country, the culture is mixed.

Chzhan: My native city is Xi Chun, in the Hei Long Jiang Province — also in the north of China. I'm a Han — as are most residents of my city. Truly, a certain culture reigns in Belarus and, in our country, there are many cultures without any dominating.

Chzhao: My native town is Antu, in the Jilin Province — not far from the border with Northern Korea and close to Russia. Foreigners are common there: Northern Koreans and Russians. For economic reasons, the city advertises in three languages: Russian,

Chinese and Korean. Accordingly, apart from Chinese, I also know some Korean, and am now studying Russian in your country.

Which of Belarus' two state languages is easier for you to master?

Bao: Until coming here, I'd never been faced with Belarusian: it's actually not taught anywhere in China. I've chosen Russian as my specialty but have tried to master Belarusian since my arrival. As I see it, Belarusian and Russian grammar are similar, and the languages

know Russian would understand this language as well.

Bao [smiling]: No, it's not easier!

Chzhao: I often had to ask for translation during lectures: I failed to understand when teachers spoke Belarusian. In such cases, a Belarusian student neighbored me; I could hardly do without their assistance.

Do you have many Chinese acquaintances wishing to enter Belarusian university?

Bao: No, not many. Only a few people choose Russian as a specialty. Some whom I know now live in Russia,

our place of residence afterwards. I'll work in China initially and then decide what to do next.

Chzhao: As soon as I received my diploma, I began searching for a job, as my girlfriend [pointing to Chzhao] entered at that time. I'll wait until she receives her diploma and then decide what to do.

Chzhao: I have three or four more years here before receiving my diploma. Afterwards, I'd love to find a job here.

Do you love studying in Belarus? What's good in Belarus for foreign students?

Bao: I adore studying here, as people are kind, literate and polite. Order is everywhere and I seldom see rules broken anywhere, even in queues.

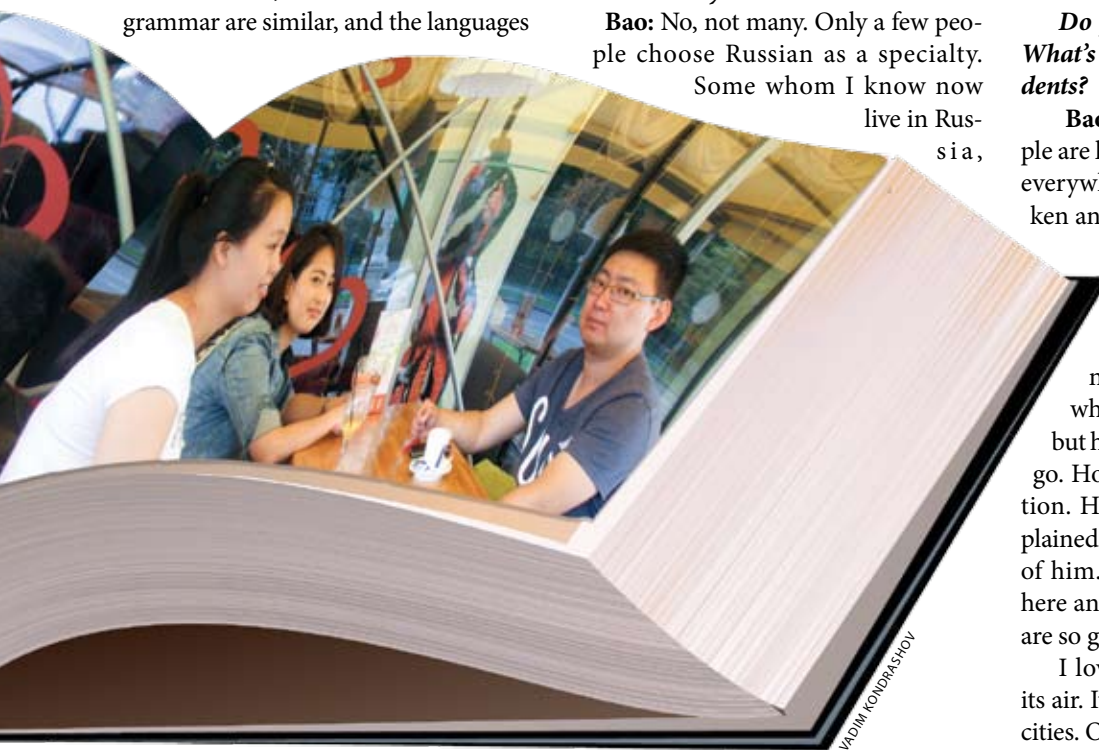
If you have a question, you can easily address a passer-by: everyone is willing to help. On my first day in Minsk, I knew nothing and didn't understand where I was. I addressed a passer-by but he failed to explain to me where to go. However, another heard my question. He then approached me and explained where to go. This was very kind of him. Many people have helped me here and, accordingly, my friends and I are so grateful to these kind people.

I love your clean city — especially its air. It's different in China's developed cities. Overall, Belarus is a good country and I'm happy to study here.

Chzhao: All lecturers are great here. A good student is always much praised. If you oversleep, you're looked after: 'Where is Chzhao? Why is he missing?' [smiling]. Teachers take care of their students. I also love your doctors. I recently visited a dentist to receive a ceramic crown and the doctor was very attentive: I appreciate such specialists.

Chzhao: I also consider your teachers to be professional and responsible. They pay attention not only to studies but to students' life and health. When I fell ill, my scientific leader called me daily to ask about my health. She was really worried.

Interviewed by Anton **Mardilovich**



differ in pronunciation only. However, I consider these two languages to be more complicated than English.

Chzhao: Since I began studying at the Philology Department, three years ago, I've learnt Belarusian also. I decided to 'try' it since all notes in buses and on the metro are in Belarusian. I was surprised, as I could hardly understand anything. Russian and Belarusian differ greatly I think. I read Belarusian quite well now, and can speak a little. However, I know Russian better: Belarusian is truly complicated for me.

Chzhao: I'm here for one year only: not as long as Chzhao. I don't know Belarusian at all but I think all those who

as my native city is situated on the border between China and Russia. Owing to this, I've been familiar with some Russian culture since childhood. I've met Chinese people who've entered Belarusian universities since coming here myself but I didn't know anyone who did so while studying at school.

Do you plan to return to China after graduation or would you like to stay here?

Bao: I'd love to stay here but we aren't allowed. According to the agreement, we're obliged to return to China after finishing our post-graduate studies, to work there for at least two years. We have the right to independently choose



Knowledge for the betterment of friendship

Confucius Institute at Minsk's State Linguistic University — where over 800 people study Chinese — celebrates fifth jubilee

Few can be now surprised by Belarusians' keen interest in China and their desire to learn Chinese. Truly, the study of Chinese expands our citizens' cultural-educational horizons, while contributing to their self-esteem and career growth. Moreover, it's prestigious: Chinese is one of the six official languages of the United Nations and, in coming decades, may become the second most popular language after English. According to statistics, one in five people in the world speak Chinese. Moreover, as those who understand the language admit, Chinese is utterly fascinating to learn.

We here chat with the Director of the Confucius Institute, at Minsk State Linguistic University, the Director of the MSLU's Institute of Qualification Enhancement and Staff Retraining, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences Larisa Trigubova. In December 2015, she was awarded the Hanban Individual Performance Excellence Award in recognition of her 'outstanding and invaluable service to the Confucius Institute'.

Larisa, do you communicate with those who study Chinese at the Confucius Institute? What can you say about them?

I respect people who are not only interested in the Chinese language but

who actively take up its study. Chinese — with its hieroglyphic system — is successfully mastered by those who love to learn, and who are highly motivated, wishing to make practical use of the language. Passion encourages students at the Confucius Institute to study hard, to better understand the unique culture of China. This interest often takes students towards Chinese language courses. I'm very pleased to see the enthusiasm of students in the classroom: people of different ages jointly learn Chinese tones, write hieroglyphs and sing songs. At the end of each school year, all groups at the Confucius Institute demonstrate their achievements and talents at a final con-

cert, arousing admiration and delight among their relatives, friends and the public.

From where does your interest in China originate?

When, in September 2011, the Confucius Institute at our University was established, I became a member of the Board as the Director of the Institute of Qualification Enhancement and Staff Retraining and, a month later, was appointed as Confucius Institute Director. As a result, I had the opportunity (and need) to study and understand Chinese, to help disseminate Chinese language and culture in Minsk and Belarus.

How was the Confucius Institute at the MSLU established?

The Confucius Institutes is an international network of cultural and educational centres set up by the State Chancellery for the Spread the Chinese Language Abroad (Hanban), across leading educational institutions worldwide. The first Confucius Institute was established in 2004 and there are over 500 globally.

Hanban's opening of the Confucius Institute at Minsk State Linguistic University shows recognition of its achievements in teaching foreign languages and, in particular, Chinese.

Not only this. It also shows a great deal of trust. The Southeast University in Nanjing, which is one of China's major universities, has become our Chinese university-partner, developing the MSLU's Confucius Institute. On September 18th, 2011, we organised the opening ceremony of the Confucius Institute at Minsk State Linguistic University. Present was the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Wu Bangguo, alongside Hanban heads, members of the Chinese Embassy to the Republic of Belarus, and representatives from the Ministry of Education of Belarus.



The Confucius Institute at Minsk State Linguistic University was named 'Best Confucius Institute of the Year in 2013'

Some time later, the Confucius Institute was recognised as one of the best in the world. Tell us more...

Minsk State Linguistic University is our leading linguistic university; the establishment of the Confucius Institute offers residents of Minsk, and students of schools and universities not studying Chinese as a 'major', high-quality courses to learn Chinese. It also helps promote the development of Chinese language teaching in Belarus and establishes contacts at various levels. Clearly, this deepens friendly relations between Belarus and China.

In 2013, our Confucius Institute was awarded the title of the 'Best Confucius Institute of the Year' among the 28 Confucius Institutes worldwide. After the opening, we began to promote the spread of Chinese language. In February 2012, we accepted the first group of students to our Chinese language

courses and, every year, the number grows.

What else do you do to draw attention to Chinese culture?

We widely celebrate Chinese festivals, with the participation of students from the Confucius Institute and from Minsk State Linguistic University, as well as Minsk residents. We organise tea parties, exhibitions of folk works, photo exhibitions, Tai Chi classes, days of Chinese cuisine, and master classes in calligraphy and traditional Chinese art...

Lectures by Chinese specialists in linguistics and literature are proving popular, as are exhibitions of artworks by famous Chinese artists and calligraphers. Concerts by Chinese folk groups are also well attended.

The Confucius Institute is already part of our university and, with great support from our rectorate, we're cooperating with all departments and divisions. I'm delighted to note that our Chinese teachers and Belarusian employees work together, leading us towards success and recognition. Our 15-minute film about the Confucius Institute, shot in 2014, is well received: 'On the Path to Success.'

What are the main activities of the Confucius Institute at present?

Firstly, the Confucius Institute organises training courses in spoken Chinese — for pupils, students and specialists with higher education. Especially popular are our training courses for international exams in Chinese: HSK and HSKK. Over 800 people study Chinese at the Confucius Institute and across another ten educational establishments, in Minsk, Grodno, Mogilev, and Molo-dechno.

The main advantage of Confucius Institute courses at Minsk State Linguistic University is that teaching is offered by native speakers: teachers from China sent to us by Hanban. We also use Hanban's educational resources. On May 31st, we launched the Confucius classroom as a branch of our Institute, at Grodno's V. Karsky gymnasium #1. In November, we plan to open a similar classroom, at



Photo as a memento after the final concert of the students of the Confucius Institute with the participation of the creative group from Jiangsu province

Mogilev's gymnasium #3. In September 2016, Chinese language courses were introduced at Volozhin's gymnasium #1. As you can see, the Confucius Institute is contributing to the strengthening of the Chinese language's position within the Belarusian educational system.

The Confucius Institute at Minsk State Linguistic University takes care of methodical training of Chinese teacher-volunteers and teachers of Chinese from Belarusian schools, universities and gymnasiums. It organises consultations, round table discussions, thematic seminars and linguistic and methodological practical studies.

In February 2015, we opened the Centre of Chinese Language and Culture, at the MSLU student dormitory, at 97 Dzerzhinsky Avenue. We've had support from the Chairperson of the Confucius Institute's Board, MSLU Rector Natalia Baranova. Its specially equipped rooms — Great Chinese Wall, Panda and Bamboo — offer cultural events free of charge to anyone interested in Chinese folk traditions and holidays, and in various aspects of modern China, including music, youth fashion, cinema and literature.

The Confucius Institute also organises biannual international exams in Chinese: HSK and HSKK. Since 2012, around 1,300 people have taken these

certificates, which entitle students to apply for Hanban scholarships, to study at Chinese universities for a semester or a year. Over five years of operation, more than 130 University students have been sent to Chinese universities under such scholarships, of the Main Directorate of Hanban Confucius Institutes.

Since 2012, a hundred Confucius Institute students have taken part in a two-week summer camp at the Southeast University in Nanjing (our Chinese partner university) studying the language and gaining acquaintance with Chinese culture.

Professional contacts, established during Chinese specialists' visits organised by the Confucius Institute, aid cooperation between Belarusians and Chinese people, including in the sphere of medicine. What was most interesting at the recent Belarusian-Chinese Medical Forum, held in Minsk?

It was attended by around 170 Belarusian specialists in traditional Chinese medicine, endocrinology and oncology, who were able to enrich their knowledge, learning from Zhongda Hospital specialists, who travelled from the Nanjing Southeast University. They could evaluate their professional skills. The forum was organised jointly with the Health Department of Minsk City

Executive Committee and the 10th Minsk City Clinical Hospital.

Why do you think Belarus is interesting to China?

I recently asked my colleague this question. The Director of the Confucius Institute on the Chinese side, Professor Keqi Xu, of the Southeast University in Nanjing, told me, "As Confucius said, it's a pleasure to make friends from afar. Although Belarus and China are geographically distant, our countries have much in common regarding their philosophy, their attitude towards life and the relationships of people. This may explain the strong strategic and political relations between our two countries."

China is interested in Belarus for at least two reasons. On one hand, Belarus is a beautiful country, with wonderful forests and well-preserved nature. Chinese people come to Belarus to enjoy its beauty. In addition, Belarusians are very polite and hospitable, as well as being eager to learn. Belarus has well-developed science, art and literature, which attracts Chinese students to study here. Secondly, our two countries are working closely in the international arena. China is now implementing the 'One Belt One Way' project and Belarus has become an important strategic partner in its realisation. Development of the Great Stone Belarusian-Chinese Industrial Park brings benefit to both countries.

How are you going to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Confucius Institute?

We're planning a series of events: a gala evening at the University, with the participation of representatives of educational institutions at which Confucius Institute teachers work; master classes in Tai Chi and calligraphy; a photo exhibition of books; contests; thematic round table discussions; artistic workshops; and media presentations.

Let's congratulate all those directly related to the Confucius Institute on the forthcoming jubilee, wishing you all further success on the path to mastering Chinese culture.

Interviewed by Valentina **Zhdanovich**



Loud summer accords

The last summer months will remain in the minds of hundreds of Belarusian and Russian teenagers, thanks to events organised and financially supported by the Standing Committee

Moscow has hosted a true creative marathon in the Union State to Young Talents of the 21st Century master classes, while Anapa has hosted the Artistry of Youth Union State Festival, and Orlyonok Camp has been training cadets. Each has brought not only unforgettable experiences, but new friends.

Meanwhile, young artists and musicians from special educational institutions gathered at the Sergey Andriyaka Academy of Watercolors and Fine Arts for master classes, as well as at the Central Musical School of the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory. Over the past decade, around a thousand young talents have trained via this mini-course. This year, in mid-August, the winners of various artistic contests, from nearly two-dozen Belarusian and Russian regions, came to Moscow, promenading Kremlin Square and Arbat Street. They spent several

hours daily on studies, with the best teachers from the Moscow Conservatory and Andriyaka Academy, creating works now on show within the Central Musical School's concert hall lobby.

The best young musicians performed on its stage, with pianist Genrikh Korol opening the concert. Speaking of his master classes with Professor Arkady Sevidov, of Lida Musical College (Grodno Region), he tells us, "I learned a lot. It's important that classes were held at the school where the greatest musicians studied in the past. In honesty, the level of teaching is supreme here and the competition with musicians from other regions is serious. However, we made good friends, despite our rivalry."

The concert impressed the State Secretary of the Union State, Grigory Rapota, who proudly said, "Many young people who attend our workshops later become well-known musicians and artists and we're pleased to offer this social lift."



Anapa's Zhemchuzhina Rossii (Pearl of Russia) sanatorium attracted Union State teenagers to participate in the Artistry of Youth Festival. Last year, the jury selected seventy brilliant artists, aged 10-15, from Russia, alongside sixty from Belarus for a chance not only to compete on stage but to holiday at the seaside, free of charge.

Mr. Rapota congratulated the participants, stressing that the best representatives of the Union State's talented younger generation have visited hospitable Anapa for the eleventh time. "We'd like your performances to be bright and emotional and for the Festival to become a significant and exciting event in your artistic biography. The Union State will continue rendering support to initiatives aimed at the development of children's creativity, as well as their aesthetic and patriotic education," he said.

This time, the selection round focused on folk creativity, with folk traditions from across Belarus and Russia presented on stage. Yakutia's Duoray ensemble amazed audiences with their ancient khomus, which resemble small catapults and were invented five thousand years ago. It takes full concentration to control your breathing rhythm with the musical instrument. Soloist Andrey Fedorov travelled 6,600km to take part. He comments, "We first travelled by car from the village of Suntar to Yakutsk, then flew to Moscow to fly to Krasnodar, before taking a bus to Anapa. The sea here is so warm and the sun is bright!"

This year, participants included past 'stars' of the Voice: Children programme, including Belarus' Sasha Nekhay. She amazed Dima Bilan, Pelageya and Leonid Agutin with her rendition of Victor Tsoi's Cuckoo, while her video attracted 40,000 hits in a single day: a record among young musicians. She won the Slavonic Bazaar's bronze in 2011 and follows in the footsteps of her great-grandmother, who sang in the choir for Nicholas II's coronation, at the age of 8.

The highlight was a joint Belarusian-Russian performance during the closing concert, with choirs accompanying dance teams. Meanwhile, acrobats and jugglers from

the Belarusian Circus (named after Valery Abel) performed alongside Vladimir's Musical Frigate. The Day of the Russian Flag was also heartily celebrated in Anapa, with all children gathering at Teatralnaya Square to sing the national anthem of the Festival: Boat of Friendship Floating.

Perhaps the most memorable day of the State Flag of Russia was held in Orlyonok, with its impressive military and patriotic change of 382 Belarusian and Russian cadets. They lined up on the square and the ten metre Russian 'tricolor' was passed over-

head, each person reaching to touch the flag. This year, the Union State allocated 25mln Russian Roubles for the event, gathering cadets from 14 Belarusian and Russian educational establishments. Eduard Senkevich, a member of the Union State's Parliamentary Assembly on Security, is convinced that the Union State's future relies on such communication. With this in mind, the Day of the Union State was warmly celebrated, with cadets laying a themed avenue of fourteen maples. Each delegation brought a bag of soil from their homeland. By the time these trees gain strength, the cadets

may be officers. The Festival ended with songs around the campfire, performed standing in a circle.

Traditionally, the military and patriotic change takes place in Anapa's Vita Camp. Since 2007, 654 boys and girls from Belarus have joined 1,084 Russian teenagers in holidaying there. However, this year, young people gathered in Orlyonok, known for its glorious history. Among camp members have been Sergey Shoigu and Vladislav Tretyak, and cosmonauts Alexander Serebrov and Sergey Volkov. Its infrastructure is impressive, including a climbing wall, a stadium and the House of Aviation and Astronautics, while the sea is just 200 steps away. As well as trips to places of military glory, ascending the summits of Indyuk, Semashkho and Dva Brata (where the 1942 defensive operation took place) cadets visited the graves of Soviet soldiers. A Cadet Ball ended the event, with youngsters showing off their Viennese waltz, padegras, gallop, quadrille and, even, the Russian end-around...

By Olga Pasiyak

The last summer months will remain in the minds of hundreds of Belarusian and Russian teenagers, thanks to events organised and financially supported by the Standing Committee





The Union State sci-tech programmes in the field of macro-electronics ensure world level of developments



VITALY PIVOVARCHIK

Microelectronics with macro-effect

Belarusian and Russian scientists are jointly implementing about a dozen scientific and technical programmes for the Union State. Each contains specific areas of cooperation across topical fields of production, science and technology. The importance of such co-operation is proven by the fact that over half of the Union State's budget is annually allocated to realise these projects: the sum exceeds 5bln Russian Roubles. The effectiveness of joint work is well demonstrated by the results of cooperation, especially in the spheres of knowledge-intensive and high-tech industry microelectronics.

Since the first years of its existence, the Union State has been a patron of sci-tech programmes, including such major projects as Osnova (Base), Pobeda (Victory), Microsistemotekhnika, Luch (Ray), and Kosmos-NT (Cosmos-NT), covering fundamental and applied research, development and manufacture of equipment, and the development and serial production of electronic circuits and semiconductor devices.

Not long ago, the results of the past 10-12 years were summed up, drawing the conclusion that modern Belarusian and Russian microelectronics rival major international achievements. Russian and Belarusian scientists and experts recently took part in an ambitious project involving several European countries, alongside Japan, aimed at sending a spacecraft to study the planet Mercury. This involves a complex trajectory

of tens of billions of kilometres, which will take 6-7 years to complete. Naturally, the sensitive electronic devices onboard will be subject to the powerful effects of electromagnetic radiation and radiation. Moreover, temperature differences of 500 degrees will have to be endured on the surface of Mercury. Truly, hellish conditions!

The issue is to decide on how best to protect the on-board equipment. To solve this problem, scientists of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Space Research have joined forces with staff from the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences. Highly efficient multilayer film screens have been developed, which will provide highly effective protection against magnetic fields and electromagnetic compatibility of various spacecraft blocks.

The Belarusian NAS has also developed composite materials for the protection of integrated circuits and electronic equipment units from radiation. The innovation reduces the radiation load and thereby enhances the stability of microelectronic products against radiation exposure by anything up to a hundred-fold. These developments will be used in Russian and Belarusian space apparatus operating in orbit, in aviation, in the nuclear industry and across diverse research equipment. Imported technologies are often unavailable; special-purpose chips cost hundreds and thousands of US Dollars each. Due to federal scientific and technical programmes, Belarus and Rus-



sia have mastered production of such electronic micro-devices independently, keeping their enterprises busy and saving much money. Belarusian and Russian products are high quality, while being cheaper.

Thanks to such cooperation, achievements of past decades have been preserved and new technologies of production of microelectronic circuits, and high accuracy associated equipment, have been developed. The First Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Sergey Chizhik, demonstrates

a silver silicon disc with crystals placed on it, commenting, “It comprises about 15 thousand future integrated circuits. Even if each is worth only a Dollar, it’s an impressive sum. To control the quality of products, we’ve developed an atomic force microscope, which allows working with plates of up to 200mm diameter. The microscope’s needle tip is 10 thousand times thinner than that of a gramophone, allowing analysis of complex surfaces at submicron and nanometer spatial level. These coordinated analytical systems belong to the fifth and sixth technological orders, which determine the future of science and industry.”

Using this fundamental basis, Belarusian specialists, in collaboration with scientists, have developed a range of equipment for the manufacture of miniaturised electronic products. It’s necessary to attach dozens of the finest wire leads to the crystal heart of an electronic circuit. As regards complexity and accuracy, this is comparable to splitting a human hair. Such high-precision equipment has already been developed and is commercially produced by Minsk’s Planar. Similar results have been obtained across an entire range of equipment for the production of microelectronic devices; there are dozens of positions.”

General Director Gennady Kovalchuk explains, “The Union State’s sci-tech programmes have played a prominent role in this field. Among them are Osnova (Base) — a micro-element base — and Pobeda (Victory), aimed at equipment development. They have brought together Belarusian and Russian

Alexey Kubrin, the Deputy State Secretary of the Union State:

This work contributes to solving important Union State tasks, such as the need for equipment for the radio-electronic, automobile-tractor, tool-building, cosmic, medical and other branches, while strengthening member states’ competitiveness and technological independence



potential. This is a good support of the Belarusian Microelectronics state programme. Much of what has been created since 2003 is already being successfully exported, primarily to Russia.”

In all years of the Union State’s programme implementation, Planar and Belarus’ NAS have developed and produced about 500 pieces of analytical and assembly equipment, and over 300 operate at Russian enterprises. Approximately 150 pieces have been delivered to the Belarusian market — primarily to Integral JSC. Thereby the basis for the development and

mass production of integrated circuits for special purposes has been significantly improved. The technological security of the Union State much depends on it.

Integral’s Director General, Vitaly Solodukha, explains, “In 2013, the Osnova programme came to a close, having developed over 100 types of chips and semiconductor devices, including over 70 at Integral. These products are already being manufactured for delivery to customers. A new Union

State programme, aimed at developing technologies for the production of microelectronic products of dual and special purposes, is ready, with agreements in the pipeline. The Union State programmes envisage not only a permanent order for the execution of research and development but ensure loading for our working staff and their development.”

Russian benefits as well, receiving strategically important, highly technological goods. Integral JSC supplies around three thousand varieties of semiconductor devices and integral microcircuits to Russia, with many fulfilling Russian orders, for manufacture within 3-5 (or more) years.

Not long ago, Union State programme permanent participants, from Belarus’ NAS, Planar JSC and Integral JSC, were nominated for the State Award of Belarus, for their development and organization of micro-electronic production. Their Russian partners fully share this success with Belarusians.

By Vladimir **Bibikov**



Where the Motherland begins

Children learn about state symbols of Belarus and Russia from books

Pachatkovaya Shkola Publishing House has joined forces with Russian Petrotsentr Publishing House to realise a unique project, releasing two colour illustrated books for preschool children within the Union State, entitled Coat of Arms, Flag, Anthem. One describes the state symbols of the Republic of Belarus while the other is dedicated to symbols of the Russian Federation, as presented at the 11th St. Petersburg International Book Salon.

“One of the key tasks was to explain the meaning and significance of our flag, coat of arms and anthem in a simple way,” notes Vladimir Malyshev, Director of the House of Writers of St. Petersburg, who took part in the presentation. “Often, an anthem is performed at some event but no one knows all the verses. Meanwhile, in many counties, small children have been taught the words from a young age. It’s very important. For example, in Greece, before classes, children gather at the playground to sing the state anthem, as the flag is raised. Unfortunately, we don’t have this tradition. Therefore, we have this book.”

“The book also talks about national symbols,” adds Olga Vanina, the director and editor-in-chief of Pachatkovaya Shkola Publishing House. “For Belarus, such symbols are ‘Belarus’ tractors, aurochs and storks, while the Kremlin, birch tree and bear are symbols of Russia.”

Teachers and methodology specialists who worked on the edition have tried to inspire young readers, adding tasks and puzzles to the book, such as guessing the nationality from national costumes. Meanwhile, adults may enjoy finding the pattern of ‘the orient sun’ among samples of national Belarusian ornamentation.



NATALYA DINDILEVICH

The Russian book includes ‘dot to dot’ drawings, which can then be coloured in, to create a Russian bogatyr knight on horseback, bearing weapons, as depicted on Russia’s coat of arms. Children are invited to create a family tree, with the help of parents and grandparents, gathering their own family history, from photos and letters. Of course, the history of each family is part of the nation’s history. It’s important that children find their own context, through relatives, within history.

The Russian book’s author, Andrey Antonov, noted during the presentation of the project that further editions may be released, to familiarise children with the history and geography of Russia, Belarus and other CIS states. Ms. Vanina believes that the project should continue, noting that her publishing house has experience of successful cooperation with the Union State Standing Committee. They released a guide entitled Polotsk-Smolensk. Landmarks of Common Fate, under the order of the Union State Standing Committee, to mark the 1,150th anniversary of the cities. In addition, they’ve released 2011-2015 Concept of Social Development of the Union State — A New Stage of Formation of the Common Social Space and an edition entitled Union State. Development and Prospects. Pachatkovaya Shkola Publishing House has organised an information project for children, entitled World of Professions of the Union State.

“We’d like to publish a bright and exciting book, accessible to children, about the Union State,” notes the director of Pachatkovaya Shkola Publishing House. “Our countries are efficiently interacting across various spheres and we should tell our children about this.”

By Lyudmila Ivanova



Polar house open to friends

The Union State polar researchers gain new possibilities for joint work

Not long ago, Belarusian Antarctic explorers celebrated a housewarming, thanking their Russian colleagues for helping them build a modern research station. Transport operations were complex, with modules taken, initially, by ocean and then by helicopter, from the ship to the land. The Russians also helped assemble the module, often working bare handed at minus 20 degrees, under extremely windy conditions. Extra modules can later be added to the polar station, with a small scientific town eventually planned.

The continuation of the station's construction became a focus of attention at a recent meeting of Union State polar mission heads, held in Minsk. Results of the past research season were discussed and, importantly, prospects of cooperation for late 2016 and early 2017 were discussed. The Deputy Head of the Republican Centre of Polar Research at Belarus' National Academy of Sciences, Alexey Gaidashov, who also heads the Belarusian Antarctic expedition, joined the Deputy Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of the Arctic and

Antarctic, Valery Lukin, who also heads the Russian Antarctic expedition. They have agreed to link the programmes of the forthcoming 9th Belarusian and 62nd Russian missions, with a Union State expedition scheduled for autumn 2016.

Other sections of the Belarusian Antarctic station are being delivered, once again, by Russia's Academician Fiodorov ship, alongside Belarusian fuel, diverse research equipment and food: a total of around 40 tonnes of cargo. Six Belarusian polar explorers will also travel on the ship for the 9th mission, one more than was sent for the 8th expedition. They will primarily need to learn how to assemble the metal constructions of the station's additional sections. Departure from St. Petersburg is planned for November and, in December, the ship will arrive in Antarctica, with practical works beginning soon after, close to Molodezhnaya station.

Mr. Gaidashov stresses the inter-state importance of such collaboration, saying, "The intergovernmental Belarusian-Russian agreement on cooperation in Antarctica, signed in 2013, has come a new fulcrum. We now annually realise joint scientific, logistical and environmental programmes, achieving more than we would individually."

During the previous expedition, Belarusian researchers studied across five areas, including the physical characteristics of the atmosphere and the ozone layer, local flora and fauna, and samples of water and air. From this, our Belarusian researchers are now preparing Candidate degree papers, and the country's first Doctoral degree work on a polar theme is being prepared. All these results are available to Russian colleagues.

Speaking of how Russians assess their cooperation with Belarusian scientists, Mr. Lukin notes, "We're interested in using Belarusian equipment to study ultra-violet radiation. Russia is developing large scale projects for the Mars mission and construction of a lunar observatory; in both cases, powerful ultraviolet radiation will be present. We need to learn in advance how it will affect humans and materials. This can be best done in the Antarctic, as all the energy of the solar wind converges at the South Pole. We feel certain that there will be other areas of cooperation."

The famous polar researcher has praised Belarus' Antarctic studies, noting that cooperation between the Union State partners has already achieved serious results. Mr. Lukin believes the Belarusian Antarctic station fully meets international requirements; to ensure successful studies, its construction should be completed.

Belarusian and Russian Antarctic researchers have agreed to meet in September, in St. Petersburg, to outline the terms of the Academician Fiodorov's loading and departure, in addition to other aspects of cooperation.

By Victor **Semenov**



Brave colonel

One hundred year old veteran Vasily Michurin, a Hero of the Soviet Union, awarded the Union State Standing Committee prize

Minsker Vasily Michurin, from Kostroma Region, has celebrated his 100th birthday. He was awarded the Hero Star in 1939, for heroism during the Finnish war. He also participated in the Great Patriotic War. A retired colonel, despite his age, he often chats with young people, and is an honorary member of the Military and Scientific Society.

This August, he received acknowledgement from the Union State Standing Committee, not only for his birthday, but for his public activities and great personal contribution to raising young people with military and patriotic awareness. The document was signed by the Union State Secretary, Grigory Rapota.

Vasily Sergeyevich remains easy-going and open-minded, just as he was in his youth. He grew up in an ordinary, rural family in the village of Kuzmino, in Kostroma Region, working alongside adults. After finishing seven years at his village school, he went to work at a collective farm, and was then commissioned to work at a machinery and tractor station. There, he managed the collective farm's reading room, half-librarian and half-cultural-worker. However, it was during his Red Army service that he showed his true mettle.

He showed his loyalty to his patriotic oath, as well as his courage and intelligence, during the war against the Finnish. Michurin was fighting on the Karelian Isthmus, where severe frosts were accompanied by snowstorms, seriously impeding the fight against the enemy. The latter occupied the well-fortified Mannerheim Line, with wire fences, permanent fortifications and earth-and-timber emplacements.

They had to capture those fortifications, receiving a field order to secretly occupy the edge of the forest and mount defences. The machine-gunners under Vasily Michurin's command moved through deep snow, in almost 30-degrees of frost, to approach a shell crater, where they organised a firing position, as best as they could.



BELTA

The veteran still remembers in detail what happened next. He first ordered the soldiers to keep silent and only shoot when the enemy attacked. The neighbouring squad opened fire, and Vasily Michurin followed. The third machine-gun didn't work because, as it turned out, a lopsided bullet had become stuck. Vasily quickly fixed the problem, and the gun became operational.

In that fight, the Soviet soldiers repelled six severe attacks. After the first, a machine-gunner was killed and another was seriously wounded, Vasily continued resisting the attacks alone, creeping between the machine guns to fire on the enemy. He put all thoughts of death from his mind, despite being in constant peril. One bullet struck his woollen coat

but, as the saying goes, bullets don't take the brave.

Vasily Michurin was awarded his Hero Star for that battle, by Mikhail Kalinin, on behalf of the Kremlin. The division commander suggested that he should enter Minsk's Military and Political College, which Michurin finished on the eve of the war against Fascist Germany.

Vasily fought through the entire war, from beginning to end. He headed a squadron on the Front, where the Nazis concentrated their efforts against Moscow, and was wounded three times in one fight. However, he returned to the battlefield after his wounds were bandaged.

After another injury, he was sent to hospital for a while, and then returned to the Front. Vasily helped liberate Gomel, Slutsk, Baranovichi and Brest, and helped storm Berlin. Later, he participated in the liberation of Czechoslovakia.

His post-war service centred on Belarus where, upon the order of the Defence Minister, Vasily was enrolled as an honorary soldier of the 120th separate guards mechanized brigade, headquartered on the outskirts of Minsk. He regularly meets pupils, young army servants and attendees, to tell them about his military experience and to explain the need to strengthen the Union State's defence capacity. Such meetings keep him young.

By Vladimir **Ivanov**



Poet's wide soul

Union State Award laureate in the field of literature and art, Ivan Yurkin, to help young talents

This year, the prestigious award has gone to the authors and performers behind the Where Viburnum Blooming musical album: the soloist and head of the Syabry Vocal-Instrumental Ensemble, Anatoly Yarmolenko; composer Oleg Yeliseenkov; and poet Ivan Yurkin. Each has independently decided on how to use their prize money, with Mr. Yurkin investing some into a private charitable foundation supporting talented young people.

To understand the spiritual impulse of the poet, it's necessary to understand the significance of the motherland for him. He was born and grew up where Smolensk and Mogilev Regions meet, with their bathhouse standing directly in the neutral zone. However, neighbours never divided themselves by nationality, working together, participating in holidays and festivals and dreaming of the future together. They also jointly defended the homeland. The poet's father, Zakhar Kupreevich, reached Berlin but returned home disabled and soon died. From the age of two, Ivan was brought up by his mother, Eva, alone.

Ivan recalls his school years fondly, saying, "My primary school was situated nearby, while the secondary school was in the district centre of Khotimsk, seven kilometres away. We had to travel there in the morning and then return in the evenings. As a pupil, I walked much on foot. I'm especially grateful to our teachers, as they taught us to love our homeland, imparting a desire to act for its good."

Mr. Yurkin's path to adult life started there and, decades later, he realised what he wished to convey through poetic language: his love for his native land, family, women and children. His recollections of his mother, his native land and its residents



PAUL CHUYKO

are always a source of inspiration. He tells us, "My attitude towards my native land has not changed in all these years. Everything with which it's connected remains exciting."

With this in mind, it's no wonder that, after learning of the Union State Award, Mr. Yurkin knew how he wanted to use it. Part of the awarded money is being spent on the establishment of

a charity to support talented youngsters in Khotimsk District. The idea gained strength after talking to the regional intelligentsia at a meeting at the local museum. They came to the consensus that young people urgently need a cultural alternative to the Internet. Moreover, the district has many talented young people. Some time ago, Mr. Yurkin supported a promising young man and, five years later, he gave the poet his first pamphlet of poems. Some young people wish to try their talent in drama but many initiatives fail to be continued.

"We should give young people more opportunities," Mr. Yurkin stresses. "This won't be my personal fund: it will operate under the auspices of the District Execu-

tive Committee. I hope other famous people won't refuse to financially support my idea. I've already sent a letter with the proposal to the District Executive Committee."

As regards his family, Ivan's wife Nadezhda is truly his muse, while being his most avid critic. She worked as an editor and a journalist and can give truly professional advice. Nadezhda fully supports the idea of the fund. Moreover, Ivan isn't taking any fees for his musical hits, giving his royalties to 'development' projects, to promote the publication of literary works. Not long ago, he released his symbolically entitled Springs, which contains dozens of poems. Many may inspire new songs.

By Vladimir **Yakovlev**

After learning of the Union State Award, Mr. Yurkin knew how he wanted to use it. Part of the awarded money is being spent on the establishment of a charity to support talented youngsters in Khotimsk District



Highly indicative dynamics

The number of transplants in Belarus over the last decade multiplies



Oleg Kalachik, the Head of the Department of Nephrology, Kidney Replacement Therapy and Kidney Transplantation at Minsk's 9th City Clinical Hospital:

The number of operations conducted since 2005 has enjoyed a 55 fold increase

"The number of operations conducted since 2005 has enjoyed a 55 fold increase. In many respects, this is possible owing to the fact that — alongside posthumous organs — we've been developing organ donation from living donors. This year, over 500 organ transplants will be made", the Head of the Department of Nephrology, Kidney Replacement Therapy and Kidney Transplantation at Minsk's 9th City Clinical Hospital, Oleg Kalachik, explains. He is renowned for his work on the Development and Deployment of the Technology of Organ Transplantation in Children and Adults; the latter is on the list of papers competing for the state awards in science and technology in 2016.

Mr. Kalachik reminds us that the coordination service for organ donation is already established in Belarus. It is engaged in the identification of potential donors. "Thanks to it, Belarus has

increased the number of organ donors 42 fold. It compares well in the international ratings: our country is now tenth among the states conducting transplant activity," he adds.

In addition, the specialist notes, since 2006, members of the research group have been actively participating in work aimed at changing transplant legislation. As a result, we have a progressive law which enables each Belarusian to use his Constitutional right to specialised medical care in the form of transplants.

Transplants have already become a specific brand of Belarusian medicine. A new avenue in clinical medicine has virtually been created. "Moreover, we've ensured the export growth of medical services: last year, it exceeded \$5mln. We've achieved the economic benefit of over 45 million Euros thanks to saving money on sending patients abroad for treatment," the doctor commented.

By Vladimir **Velikhov**



Skyward game

Picturesque aircraft presented at Minsk airport

"Belavia's Director General, Anatoly Gusarov, explains, "The united efforts of Belavia and Wargaming shows that many people in our country think and work in a contemporary and creative way. We promote the products and services of our companies worldwide."

A medium-range Boeing 737-300, with registration number EW-254PA, has been chosen to implement this creative project. The orange part of its pattern includes the image of a tank, while the aircraft's sides bear the inscription 'The Game from Belarus, Enjoyed Worldwide' in Russian and English, as well as the logo for World of Tanks.

To paint the livery, three hundred litres of enamel and 540 square metres of stencil plates were used, with thirteen people painting the aircraft, even sleeping in the flight hangar in Czech Ostrava.

"The main idea is to show that the game, known all over the world, originates from Belarus. It has over 40 million fans in the CIS alone. It will be great for them to be in an aircraft with such a brand," believes Denis Voronkov, the Head of the CIS Administration at Wargaming.

The aircraft's salon is also being revamped to include the theme, with the branded plane due to be used for two years, across all routes.

By Alexander Pimenov

Reference

- World of Tanks is a computing tank simulator, developed by Belarusian Studio Wargaming. Gamers from all over the world have been playing it since 2010. According to its developers, the game boasts the CIS' largest budget ever, though the sum remains confidential.
- WWII tanks and modern tanks are presented in the game with maximum historical authenticity. Meanwhile, more than 150 million people play the game globally.





BELTA

Snow formations at 5,000 metres

Parachutists train several months to create air formations, setting new record in Belarusian aviation

The #Pronebo-2016 festival recently took place at the Voluntary Association for Assistance to the Army, Air Force and Navy's Minsk Air Club. Hundreds of participants gathered to fly airplanes and helicopters, to jump with parachutes and to give an exhibition performance in aviation and military and applied sports.

The highlight of the festival was the national record set in the sky over Belarus. Thirty people jumped from a height of 5,000m, arranging themselves in a snowflake formation while freefalling as a 'large formation', jumping from the world's largest helicopter: a Mi-26. The last parachute group acrobatic record was set by twenty people.

Festival organisers tell us that the new record is a sign of development for Belarus' aviation sports.

A helicopter pilot competition was the most spectacular element of the #Pronebo event, with crews flying buckets of water as their 'cargo' in relay races. Thirteen crews from four countries took part: Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and the Czech Republic.

"We hope that our festival will inspire people to become involved, to train and perhaps to take part next year, rather than watch," notes the general secretary of the Belarusian Federation for Aviation Sport, Anton Bystrov.

By Alexey **Fedosov**

Neman crystal on display

Every Soviet home had two types of dishes: those for everyday, and those for celebrations. The first was kept in the kitchen cupboard and the second proudly exhibited in the living room.

Glassware is the most commonly exhibited item in the home, from stemware to ornate salad bowls. Even today, we're likely to take the same attitude with our 'special pieces' lifting them out carefully a few times a year for proud use. In Soviet times, owning crystalware was

a sign of being well-off and having good connections, since it was difficult to acquire. Of course, as we all know, serving from a crystal salad bowl makes the food taste more delicious, just as champagne tastes better from crystal.

One of the largest crystal production centres in the USSR was the town of Berezovka, sited in Grodno Region.



BELTA

History

Glass and crystal production in Berezovka began as far back as 1883. Even earlier, they began to blow beer bottles for the local landowner. The workshop was bought by the chief engineer of the famous Dyadkovo factory, Krayevsky, and the head of the atelier Stolle. They built a few more shops, and founded the Neman factory. By 1911, the company's price list contained almost two thousand items, sold not only in Russia but in Western Europe. The factory was rebuilt from scratch twice, having been blown up by the retreating White Army,



and then damaged during the Great Patriotic War. The first pieces produced in peacetime had to be designed almost from memory.

A spring tide of prosperity began in the 1960s, when Neman gained new shops and workers began to beat Stakhanovite records, making six million stem glasses annually. Belarusian crystal began to be found in every home.

“After the Dry Law was issued, we were forbidden from making glassware, or anything associated with alcohol, having to melt down pieces, and turning carafes into vases,” says factory employee Anton Gerasimov.

Today

The 1990s left a serious imprint on the factory, since demand for luxury glassware fell dramatically. It survived only due to state support. . Now Neman exists mainly thanks to the help of the state. The Deputy Director for Sales, Zoya Novitskaya, tells us, “Recent years’ conditions haven’t been very favourable for the company, which specialises in handcraftsmanship. Inexpensive dishes from Southeast Asia have claimed most of our traditional market”

Belarus continues to support its factories. Moreover, Berezovka, with its

10,500 residents, relies on Neman as an employer. About 2,000 are employed there, with crystal hand blown and hand painted.

The management of the factory is seeking out new markets, since two thirds of goods are exported. Neman crystal is appreciated even in the USA, where deliveries began ten years ago. Boxes of valuable and fragile cargo are sent to France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Bulgaria, and, of course, to the CIS countries. The factory’s portfolio contains more than 5,000 items of glasses, vases, dinner sets and other utensils.

By Dmitry **Kozurov**



Rural life

Who wants to undertake physical work outside and to pay for the privilege? It sounds insane. Fed up with the weekly routine of tending vegetables at our childhood dachas, most of us only want to escape the city to relax, but foreigners enjoy immersing themselves in authentic Belarusian activities. For two days, students at the Minsk State Linguistic University — a third-year student from Turkey, Ertugrul Besheoglu, and a fourth-year student, Kim Sung Jae, from South Korea — learned to chop wood, mow grass and fry potato pancakes, in Rossony District.

Rural tourism has grown significantly in popularity in our country, with guests keen to enjoy traditional customs and activities: fishing and boating; horse riding and cycling; lake bathing and Russian baths; visiting local museums of old, rustic utensils and taking cooking master-classes; and excursions to places of historical and cultural interest; and petting domestic animals.

Alla Khoren, from Klyastitsy village, has an excellent view overlooking the River Nishcha. Three cows are on the shore, peacefully eating grass.

“Some time ago, Germans came here to rest,” says the hostess. “They wanted experience, planning to acquire their own farm, and asked me to allow them to milk a cow. They wanted to see if they’d manage. I agreed, although we have our superstitions about not allowing strangers into a barn. Those foreigners were really interested in our way of life:

how we heated the stove, made hay, and cooked. Most prefer to watch, but some want to learn.”

The heroes of our story, Ertu and Song Jae, are like this. A scythe and axe are like artefacts from a local history museum to them: as if from the Stone Age. In fact, Ertugrul once visited friends in David-Gorodok, so has some clue about hay, chopping firewood, the rituals of the banya and other rural customs. He had a go at chopping wood, while noting that agriculture became automated long ago in his own country, with manual labour forgotten.

“Grab the scythe-handle with your left hand, and the other handle with your right,” says Stanislav Kozlov a soloist with Yankovichy folk band Krynitsa. He has come to Klyastitsy to show his friends our country ways, meticulously showing them how to sharpen a scythe’s blade, how to hold it, and the sweeping motion at a certain angle (to avoid being hurt). A good scythe should mow itself.

Kim Sung Jae’s first attempt seems to be a failure, like the first pancake, but then he gets the hang of it.

with Asian flavour

“Scything is hard work on the muscles,” says Stanislav.

Ertugrul questions why we used scythes when they are so slow but Stanislav asserts that hand cutting of grass keeps you fit. “It can’t be good for you to mow all day under the scorching sun!” comes the reply, but Stanislav asserts that there’s no need to go to a gym when you have a scythe and grass to cut.

He shows the students an axe next and Alla steps forward, to the young men’s bewilderment. In response to their surprised looks, she waves her hand, as if saying: it’s no big deal! In their family, her husband tends to chop logs and she splits these into smaller kindling.

As the boys have a go, I shout, “Stand clear.” I fear that a fragment may fly off, or that they’ll miss, being beginners...

Michael Malashenka is teaching this master-class, on how to split a birch log. He says, “I’ll do it with one hand but you start with two.”

One swing and the log is split. When you’re physically strong, it’s not difficult and there’s nothing to be afraid of.



A fourth-year student, Kim Sung Jae, from South Korea, and a third-year student from Turkey, Ertugrul Besheoglu, are satisfied with their rest in Rossony District

PAUL CHUYIKO



PAUL CHUYKO

Ertugrul and Song Jae share their impressions, saying that there's no need to use an axe in Turkish or South Korean everyday life, but they found it fun.

As for heating a stove or preparing an outdoor grill,

they say that neither are popular in their countries. They don't gather for barbecues, although they do grill samgyeopsal and bacon. "But we don't use firewood; we use charcoal," says Kim Sung Jae.

"If you really need firewood, you can buy it in bundles, prepared by specially trained people," echoes Ertugrul.

Naturally, foreign visitors are keen to try local delicacies, and the table at Alla Khoren's place is heavy with potato dishes, alongside baked tench in sour cream, homemade cheeses and pickles, and various mushrooms, including chanterelles. There are mugs with birch juice and glasses of local liqueur. Instead of compote, there are herbal teas.

Guests are invited to prepare draniki themselves but Ertugrul refuses, saying that he prefers to eat in cafes, although he can cook pasta with various sauces, as well as



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Kim Sung Jae, South Korea

Compared to our country, yours appears stuck in the 1980s, so it inspires nostalgia from us. This type of tourism will certainly be interesting to my compatriots. For a long time, they had no idea where to go beyond Minsk, or how best to travel. Agencies didn't seem to offer tours, centrally or individually, with departure from the capital

Ertugrul Besheoglu, Turkey

“House-stays are your niche, as ‘all inclusive’ hotels are ours. We prefer to relax and be looked after, but people here are independent. You say that, on vacation, one needs to rest. However, for many people, simply changing activity is relaxing. It’s great that you can attract tourists just by doing what you do normally.”

making Turkish salads and kebabs. He asserts, however, that the best cooks in Turkey are men, although the kitchen is a woman’s realm. His mother always cooks at home.

Song Jae doesn’t mind at all, despite, by his own admission, only knowing how to cook rice. “Have you eaten dog?” we ask, and he admits ‘only once’, diplomatically evading a true answer.

“Don’t cut your fingers,” warns Alla, as he begins grating potatoes, “And don’t make the pancakes so thick.” Ten minutes later, the draniki were ready and it was as if he’d cooked them his whole life.

By Dmitry **Umpirovich**



PAUL CHUYKO

Expert comment



Dmitry Subtselny, Vice President of the UNESCO European Federation of Associations, Centres and Clubs:

One of the objectives of our organization is the establishment of cross-cultural communication. Accordingly, in our work, we often cooperate with foreigners. They are almost permanent experts on our international projects, including at educational and volunteer camps. An obligatory part of the programme is acquaintance with the country. Sightseeing of castles and other historical and cultural heritage sites is one aspect but, to better understand the mentality and establish ties, it’s best to immerse into daily life. This gives the opportunity to ‘feel’ Belarusian, while showing a side of Belarus which most tourists fail to see. We’re attempting to do this.



Valeria Klitsunova, Chair of the Country Escape Association:

Some foreigners know they’ll find calm tranquility in Belarus and simply want to view apple orchards out of the window. However, the trend of modern tourism — for which many are willing to pay a great deal of money — is for ‘active’ holidays, full of experiences. Take, for example, mowing. You work physically, feeling the grass and hearing its smell, observing the sun and birds. For those who’ve never before mown grass, it brings strong emotions. Of course, people can distinguish between a ‘show’ put on for them and a ‘real’ experience. I speak first-hand, having spent a week with a Maasai tribe, wanting to gain an experience for my soul.



A town surrounded by lakes: or Five reasons to visit Braslav



1 Live like Robinson Crusoe

Like a gem in a crown, the township of Braslav is surrounded with about 300 lakes. The lakes appeared due to a glacier that ‘ironed’ this territory about 20,000 years ago. Due to the great number of lakes, this area is called Poozerie (meaning ‘Lacustral Area’).

The Braslavskie Ozera National Park (Braslav Lakes) occupies the largest part of Poozerie. Fans of ‘back to nature’ vacations can choose a stay on numerous islands, in the style of Robinson Crusoe. The purity of the

water makes swimming a delight and exploring the underwater life a stunning aquatic adventure.

Here, you can go fishing even when you’re in the middle of town. Perch, bream, sander, and pike abound in the Drivyaty Lake, with one of its shorelines also being an actual Braslav street.

2 Become King of the Hill

Climb up Castle Hill, the site of an 11th century ancient settlement. Long ago, there stood a wooden castle with seven towers. Five hundred years ago,

Alexander Jagiellon, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, visited the town, accompanied by his wife Helena, the daughter of Moscow Duke Ivan III. The Duchess was so astonished with what she saw that the lovestruck Duke presented his beloved with the town of Braslav and all surrounding lands. Helena, in appreciation and acknowledgement, founded an orthodox nunnery in the area.

In summertime, the hill becomes a venue to host international knight tournaments, feasts and related events, bringing together thousands of participants and onlookers every year.



3 Ask the Lake Mistress for help

Stairs from the Castle Hill lead to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church. Construction of the church started in 1824. The altar holds a much-lauded icon of Braslav — Holy Mother of the God who is said to work miracles. Also known as the Lake Mistress. Believers say that the icon helps those afflicted with alcohol addiction.

Across the road, visitors will find the Holy Assumption Church. Savvy tourists might complain that the white plastered building is modest and unassuming. Yet,

inside there is a true cultural treasure — a three-level iconostasis, crafted by Kyiv masters.

4 Drink living water

Locals believe that the Okmenitsa healing well is a genuine miracle. They say that the water is rejuvenating and remains fresh for several months. To honour the life-giving spring, custom dictates that partakers of the healing waters should throw in a coin or make a knot on a tree branch. That is why the trunks of all the nearest pine trees are decorated with colourful knotted cloths.

5 Photograph wildlife

Braslav is a perfect destination for a family weekend. Children are always happy to visit the Traditional Culture Museum where they can learn to make pots using a real throwing wheel or weave a belt on an ancient loom.

Deer are kept in a local safari park. Currently, visitors may ‘hunt’ them with a photo camera. Exciting developments within the park will soon enable visitors to take part in a costumed royal hunt with bows and arbalests (traditional crossbows).

The highest mark

Belarusian trampolinist Vladislav Goncharov 'jumps over' unbeaten Dong Dong of China, in Rio de Janeiro

Smart tactics

The first week of the Olympiad didn't bring a single medal for Belarus but the situation then drastically changed, with awards 'snowing in'. Trampolinist Vladislav Goncharov, aged 20, took a miraculous gold, defeating the famously unbeaten Chinese, who inspires fear even among Russians.

The Chinese usually win by the complexity of their programme, making it essential to surpass the height of their somersaults. Vitebsk's Vladislav, with his coach Olga Vlasova, decided to use alternative tactics, simplifying their programme two years ago, to ensure purity. It was a risky move, but paid off.

In the qualification round, Goncharov finished second in both exercises and confidently entered the top eight. Performing last but not one, the Belarusian already knew the results of almost all his major rivals. He incorporated his best moves, and gained the highest number of points from the judges — 61.745.

Our athlete outstripped the leader of the Chinese team, the London 2012 Olympic champion, Dong Dong, to standing ovations. The great Dong sat on the bench with a stony face...

"Our rivals panicked in the finals. I stayed calm and did everything bril-

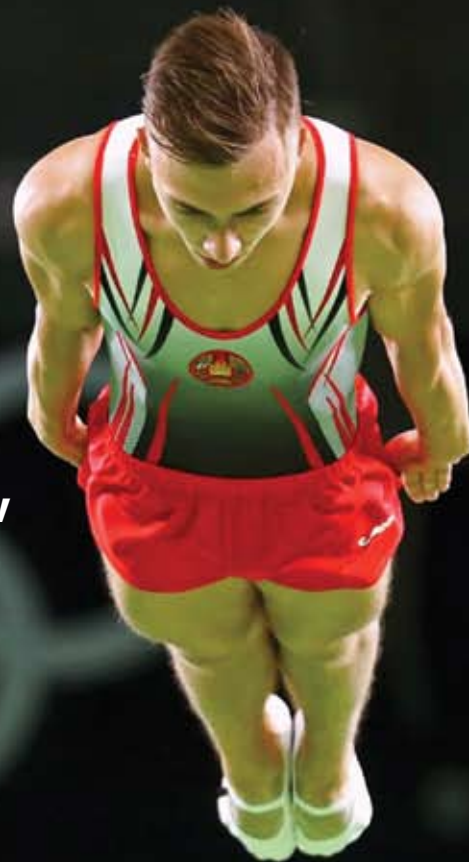
liantly in my final performance. I devote my victory to all Belarus and to all those who believed in us and supported us," noted Vladislav Goncharov, after the awards ceremony. The golden Olympic medal shone on his breast like the Brazilian Sun: the first in the history of Belarusian trampolining.

Viewed as hopeless

When Vladislav was six years old his mother enrolled him in gymnastics but he was axed three months later, as coaches thought his ability to stretch was poor. Since Soviet times, the Vitebsk school has been viewed as one of the strongest in the world. Vladislav met Olga Vlasova at the gym and she, with her experienced eye, immediately saw his divine spark, which brought him to Brazil 14 years later.

Vladislav also has an aptitude for languages, having picked up English, French and Italian. He is now mastering Spanish, studying at the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture.

He hasn't forgotten his native sports school #1, auctioning his smartphone to raise money for talented youngsters wishing to travel abroad to take part in competitions.



Vladislav performed victorious somersaults to a height of 8m, surpassing the 'godfather' of the Chinese team, Dong Dong

Vladislav has no doubt that his smartphone will be bought with enthusiasm, since the device is unique, being released as part of the limited Olympic series. Moreover, it boasts lots of Vladislav's personal photos from Olympic Rio, and not only from his performance.

Office affair

The champion has been dating his national teammate, Anna Gorchenok of Vitebsk, for several years. Anna is a European champion and a prize winner of world championships, but had bad luck in Rio. Having overshot the trampoline on one jump, she was placed eighth in the final. However, after Vladislav claimed gold, she forgot about her own failure and was the first to congratulate Goncharov on his Olympic victory.

By Yuri **Bakerenko**,
Boris **Orekhov**

Belarusian Olympic uniform popular worldwide

Belarusian Olympic uniform creates stir at the Games opening ceremony, with orders flooding worldwide

Parade look

Our guys are the most stylish! I was thinking as I watched the Olympic opening ceremony. Milk-grey trousers, red jackets, national ornament embellished T-shirts, and slip-ons...

I was not the only one to think so. Following the Rio Summer Games official opening ceremony, USA Today website rated the national teams' outfits, placing those of Belarus within the top ten.

"They look like an ordinary suit, but the men's shirts have the same ornamentation as on the flag, using local floral motifs" wrote foreign experts, speaking about the Belarusian uniform.

I liked the T-shirts most and want to buy one! I read that the uniform would soon be on sale. Google helped me find the show room of Yulia Latushkina, who designed the parade collection, and I headed over.

Embroidery-patterned T-shirts

You need to book an appointment to visit the show room, at latushkina.by, and I arrived at the agreed time. The show room is spacious and light, featuring not only the famous T-shirts but silk skirts, evening dresses and summer dresses.

"They're in great demand. Girls buy dresses most often, while men purchase polo shirts, with small and

medium as the most popular sizes," says Anastasia Rudkovskaya, the administrator of the fashion house.

"Red or blue?" she gives me two T-shirts featuring the embroidery-like patterns.

Red symbolises life and the Olympic flame, while blue represents purity and the morning freshness of our lakes: known as blue-eyed. The pattern resembles the cornflower, familiar to every Belarusian. The stretchy T-shirts are figure-hugging and don't hinder movement, looking good for work and for going out.

I ask if I can buy trousers and a jacket, as seen in the parade and am told that these need to be ordered, being tailored to fit.

I choose a red T-shirt, at RUR 1,600, which seems reasonable, and another as a gift for my cousin, who lives in Israel.

"Our clothes sell worldwide. Items are universal and can be matched with various clothing elements," says Anastasia.

Part of the team

While I was turning in front of the mirror, a girl bought a T-shirt for her husband, saying, "Dima's a professional sportsman: a multi-champion of Belarus in rowing. Now he's keen on CrossFit. He dreamt of participating in the Olympics, but the dream never came true. In this outfit, he can feel part of the team."

The next day, in the media, I saw Dima wearing the Olympic T-shirt, receiving only compliments in the comments.

By Kristina **Khilko**



Artistic meetings

Prominent Belarusian artists attend open-air workshop organised by Culture Committee of Chongqing and Chongqing Art Museum, with support from city's People's Government, Chinese Embassy to Belarus and Belarusian Embassy to China. The director of the National Art Museum, Vladimir Prokoptsov, has headed the Belarusian delegation of Vladimir Vasyuk, Vladimir Kozhukh, Vasily Kostyuchenko, Nikolay Mishchenko, Konstantin Kachan, Maria Isaenok, Ilona Kosobuko, Yekaterina Sumareva and Pavel Prokoptsov.



Vladimir Prokoptsov



Vladimir Vasyuk



Vladimir Kozhukh



Vasily Kostyuchenko



Maria Isaenok

in Chongqing



Artists Ilona Kosobuko and Yekaterina Sumareva at the plein air in the PRC

The open-air workshop was organised in accordance with the plan of action of Belarus' Year of Culture, and in anticipation of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Belarusian-Chinese diplomatic relations. It also follows a co-operative agreement between the Confederation of Art Unions of Belarus and Chongqing Art Museum.

Over a period of around two weeks, Belarusian artists visited local attractions and scenic spots around the city, creating paintings. Most were dedicated to the theme of Chongqing's natural landscapes, with all works then exhibited under the title Vagaries of Landscape.

The key speakers at the opening ceremony of the exhibition were the Executive Director of Chongqing Art Museum, Pang Maokun, the Chairman of the Confederation of Art Unions of Belarus and the General Director of the National Art Museum, Vladimir Prokoptsov, and the Counselor of the Embassy of Belarus to China, Sergey Vergeichik.



Ilona Kosobuko



Konstantin Kachan



Nikolay Mishchenko



Pavel Prokoptsov



Yekaterina Sumareva



Vladimir Prokoptsov presents Belarusian artists' works



The Belarusian artistic delegation on the stairs of Chongqing Art Museum



There was the atmosphere of benevolent interest at the vernissage

The exhibition opened with a speech by a representative of the Chongqing's People's Government, Li Shukui. He noted that Chinese people have enjoyed the chance of seeing national features of Belarusian artists' works. As a symbol of stronger artistic collaboration and the spread of modern Belarusian pictorial art traditions, each painter presented a work to the Chongqing Art Museum. The exhibition aroused great interest among the Chinese artistic community, attracting art critics, painters and the public.

The Belarusian artistic delegation gave a lecture and a briefing on Belarusian contemporary art, at Chongqing Art Museum, and took part in an artistic conference, under the 'One Belt, One Road, Joint Prosperity' slogan. The event is also inspired by the development strategy for the Yangtze River Economic Zone. Mr. Vergeichik views Chongqing as a cultural centre of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation.

Mr. Prokoptsov and the Deputy Director of the Chongqing Art Museum held talks, signing an agreement to release, with the assistance of Belpochta mail service, a set of postage stamps and envelopes depicting iconic paintings from Chongqing Art Museum and the National Art Museum of Belarus.

Artists from Chongqing have been invited to take part in the Chagall open-air workshop, which will be held in Vitebsk Region in July 2017, dedicated to the 130th anniversary of the birth of the famous Belarusian artist. The National Art Museum is planning to arrange an exhibition of paintings created during the 2016 Chongqing workshop.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



Vladimir Prokoptsov. Morning



Vladimir Prokoptsov. Silence



Vladimir Kozhukh. Road in the Mountains



Yekaterina Sumareva. Borderline State



Vladimir Vasyuk. Reflection I



Vladimir Vasyuk. Reflection II



Vasily Kostyuchenko. Towards Evening



Nikolay Mishchenko. Red River



Nikolay Mishchenko. Dark Day



Vasily Kostyuchenko. Morning



Pavel Prokoptsov. Mountain River



Pavel Prokoptsov. River Boat Station