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MAGAZINE FOR YOU

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WELCOMING NEW ROAD!

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PERSISTENCE PAYS RESULTS

Summer, it must be said, is the perfect season for relaxation, with nature blossoming and the weather favourable. In a word, everything conspires to make us feel the advantages of the summer season compared to others. Furthermore, the summer holidays are at the forefront of our minds. It's impossible to overestimate their importance for those who devote their time to study and teaching. Summer is also the best time for those who have recently heard their last school bell. It's a time for them to be sure they are not mistaken in the choice of their next step in life and to make every effort to bring their dreams to reality, including continuing their education at a higher stage. Alumni, we wish you both ambition and persistence! This is the mood which is reflected on the front page of our magazine, stressing the importance of the holidays for the growing generation.

The truth is that for young people it is extremely important not to lose sight of their plans and to determine their priorities. The most important thing is to make timely decisions, when the goal is clear then there's no need to spend precious time on prevaricating. 'What are your plans for future?' is a question often asked in everyday life. There's nothing unusual in making plans. Some choose to write down several points for the next day or week and live according to this method. Of course, it's very difficult to live life strictly in line with a planned formula, as fate often attempts to interfere in the course of events. Nevertheless, when there's a concrete goal it's easier to follow the right path.

Undoubtedly, education is an important element in life's journey, but there are lots of examples when the epithets 'educated' and 'cultured' aren't synonymous when speaking about the same person. And often an educated person demonstrates lack of culture while others, though they don't have prestigious diplomas, are highly intelligent. It's a sad fact that not all those who should bring culture to the masses due to their professions correspond to its high criteria. Fortunately, our publications have enough examples, particularly on how the rich creative legacy from the past is working for the benefit of cultural achievements in the present.

Such articles are also in the current issue of our magazine, for instance, that entitled *Grateful for Everything, or Boris Gerlovan's Lessons*. The author of this publication, Valentina Zhdanovich, asserts that if it were possible to turn back the clock, today's graduates of the course by Boris Gerlovan — People's Artist of Belarus — would still enter the Belarusian Academy of Arts' Department of Monumental and Decorative Arts specialising in theatrical and decorative painting, to learn scenography from the master.

I believe that modern times will justify the optimism and hopes of the young, while our country continues marching to tomorrow, relying on the principles of its modern history. Sovereignty and independence are the determining features.

On July 3rd, Belarus is celebrating its major state holiday — the Day of Independence. What can be more important than this symbol for a young sovereign country! It's symbolic that the day when Minsk was liberated from the Fascists — July 3rd, 1944, is the starting point for the holiday. We remember that the price of freedom was the life of every third resident of Belarus, as we continue to commemorate and promote wider global understanding. Moreover, after the Second World War, Belarus became a founding member of the United Nations Organisation: an honour indeed. Belarus was, at the time, a republic of the Soviet Union and was deservedly recognised for its huge contribution to the destruction of Fascism.

Time passes and, as politicians say, the world is changing. However, certain values cannot be revised. Belarus is building relations with other countries on principles of good neighbourliness: its contemporary political credo. Today Belarus is becoming more recognisable and not only because of its openness in foreign policy. The country hospitably opens its doors for all those who would like to become more closely acquainted with it. This is shown in a range of materials in the current issue of the magazine. I'm confident that you will find enough interesting and educational articles about the attractiveness of Belarus, with its modern history and traditions.

BY VIKTOR KHARKOV





1

► CYBERSECURITY SUMMIT

Belarusian delegation takes part in the summit in Tallinn, held under the aegis of the Munich Security Conference

The summit brought together about 150 civil servants and experts from more than 30 countries, representatives of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, OSCE, NATO, and other international organisations. The programme of the event included panel sessions on the legal regulation in the sphere of cybersecurity and approaches to cybersecurity on the global scale.



It was the first time Belarus' representatives had been involved in such an event. The head of the Belarusian delegation Yevgeny Shestakov made a speech at a panel session to deliver information about progress in implementing the initiative of the President of Belarus to renew dialogue on security. He also mentioned Belarus' readiness to host a cybersecurity summit in Minsk. Mr. Shestakov also met with Chairman of the Munich Security Conference Wolfgang Ischinger to discuss progress in preparing for a meeting of the Munich Security Conference core group in Minsk this year.

2

► WHEN THERE'S INTEREST

Large German bank can take part in financing investment projects in Belarus



A framework agreement with Germany's KfW IPEX-Bank was signed at the headquarters of the Development Bank in Minsk. The agreement sets forth conditions for providing long-term loans to the DBRB with coverage of European national export credit agencies.

"At present we are in talks with our German partners to discuss KfW IPEX-Bank's participation in financing a series of major investment projects to be implemented in Belarus in the short-term," noted Deputy Chairman of the Board of the DBRB, Ivan Varenitsa.

KfW IPEX-Bank is part of the KfW Group. It supports European exporters on the international market and implements large-scale projects in the field of infrastructure, transportation, environmental protection, renewable energy sources and energy supplies to Europe. KfW IPEX-Bank has offices in major economic and financial centres across the world. Credit ratings assigned to the bank by Standard & Poor's and Moody's stand at 'AA+' and 'A2' respectively.

3

► INVESTMENTS IN THE BIRTH RATE

Package of measures developed in Belarus aimed at stimulating the birth rate

To achieve this, the country has created an efficient system of state support of maternity and childhood allowances. More than 500,000 people today receive various types of state allowances (11 different options are available), accounting for almost 2 percent of the GDP.

In 2011, the one-off family allowance has doubled and now those giving birth to their first child receive 10 minimum living wages while those having their second and consequent child are given 14. In 2013, child care allowances for a child up to three years were revised: those having their first child receive 35 percent of the average salary while those having their second and consequent children receive 40 percent. Belarus is one of the few states which has preserved maternity leave for three years after a child is born.

At present, Parliament is also considering a draft bill tackling changes in the Labour Code. One of the innovations is the introduction of paternal leave when a child is born. Moreover, the development of flexible forms of employment is also envisaged, including distant work, enabling work and child care to be combined.





DIALOGUE SIGNIFICANT IN ALL RESPECTS

Sochi hosts summit of heads of Eurasian Economic Union states

A neighbourly meeting

Once a year, the leaders of Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Kazakhstan meet to compare notes and make decisions. Alexander Lukashenko has not been to Russia since the autumn, so communication between the two presidents has been limited to dialogue behind the scenes. Prior to the summit, the leaders of Russia and Belarus held a special meeting, during which Alexander Lukashenko once again congratulated Vladimir Putin on his official assump-

tion of office. Mr. Putin's inauguration took place on May 7th.

"I'll firstly congratulate you on the high level of trust shown by Russians and the very impressive events held in Moscow: the inauguration and Victory Day were organised on a truly superb level. Belarusians greatly appreciated them," Mr. Lukashenko said. The Union State is moving forward at a rapid pace: last year, bilateral trade between our two countries grew by 23.5 percent to reach \$32.42bn. In just two months

of 2018, growth reached 20.6 percent.

"I greet you warmly in Sochi at our new meeting within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union," Vladimir Putin said, shaking hands with his guest. "Relations between Russia and Belarus are strengthening: these are liaisons of strategic partnership, of our allied character. We have prepared important documents for the development of our interaction, including the main macroeconomic policy guidelines for 2018-2019," he noted.

Working at the summit

On meeting the President of Moldova — Igor Dodon, Mr. Lukashenko noted that — despite recent talks in Chisinau — the countries have already accumulated issues that need to be resolved. “We are closely watching the developments in Moldova, just like you are in Belarus. I am ready to exchange opinions on this matter,” he said.”

Mr. Dodon thanked the Belarusian Head of State for his official visit to Moldova and said that the tractors — donated by the Belarusians — have been delivered to needy regions and the corn planted by the presidents has already grown. “We are pleased to note the growth of trade. Of course, we must do everything possible to return to the level of several years ago. The dynamics that we observe give a very good signal that, this year, the growth of trade turnover will continue,” Mr. Dodon noted. Among the newcomers to the summit was the recently elected Armenian Prime Minister — Nikol Pashinyan. His visit to Sochi was the first foreign trip for him in this post.

The President of Belarus once again congratulated Mr. Pashinyan on his election as the Prime Minister of Armenia and wished him success, “You can count on us, as before. Our policy with respect to the Armenian people close to us will never change. I promise you that. It will be the same constructive and friendly relationship.”

In turn, Mr. Pashinyan said that there is a great untapped potential in the development of Belarusian-Armenian relations, “In the last year, the trade turnover between Belarus and Armenia has increased. This is very impressive. However, openly speaking, there is much unused potential and we must work on this. In Armenia, there is a great deal that is interesting for Belarusian business. I think it’s the same in Belarus.” In Sochi, the President of Belarus also met the President of Kyrgyzstan — Sooronbae Zheenbergov.

Trade disputes

The meeting was not without criticisms, however. Mr. Lukashenko spoke of the weaknesses of the Eurasian Economic Union, “Over the past three and a half years, much work has been done on the issues of interstate interaction, but its effectiveness could be better. Many of our agreements, unfortunately, remain unrealised.”

The President of Belarus complained that politics regularly interferes in trade, saying, “The interests of individual commodity producers are periodically placed above our decisions. This is contrary to our agreements. The only positive is that we finally discussed the creation of promising mechanisms for not only settling disputes, but also preventing them.” Mr. Lukashenko urged the member states not to exchange mutual claims through the media but to resolve disputes in a civilised manner, “At present, these are

the regional integration associations that create the prerequisites for the growth of the world economy. Instead of trading freely, we close ourselves off from each other. Moreover, we exchange opinions in the media, risking the international authority of the Union. We ignore the civilised way of resolving trade disputes through the Eurasian Economic Commission.”

Game follows the rules

According to the President of Belarus, the structure of the economies of the EAEU countries is different: ‘some export more raw materials, some sell more processed products’. However, in general, the raw material and production base of the EAEU is colossal, although final single rules for the common market have not yet been worked out. Mr. Lukashenko said that in such a situation, it is necessary to unite and work in the interest of all countries involved.

ALEXANDER LUKASHENKO SPOKE TO
VLADIMIR PUTIN, ASKING:

‘IF YOU FIND TIME, VISIT MOGILEV’

The main topic of the two leaders’ meeting was the holding of two joint large-scale events this year: the Supreme State Council of the Union State and the Forum of Regions of Russia and Belarus

“The Supreme State Council lies ahead of us. Before the election of the President of Russia, we decided that we would hold it in Minsk; in autumn, the Forum of Regions will be hosted in Mogilev. I hope you will find time to visit Mogilev then. For you, this is a new city. Belarusians and Russians are prepared to hold the forum at the highest level,” said Mr. Lukashenko.

In response, Mr. Putin said that all arrangements are in place, “The relevant departments are preparing for the Supreme State Council of the Union State, which we plan to hold, as agreed, in Belarus in June this year.” Mr. Lukashenko expressed readiness to discuss any issues of bilateral relations in detail and added that if the parties failed to make any decisions in Sochi, they would be able to return to their discussion later. The Belarusian President considered his visit to Sochi as part of the preparations for the State Council. These events make our job easier today,” he remarked. “We can identify some issues. If we can’t study them in detail, then we can discuss them at the Supreme State Council again and make decisions. We have every right to do so.”

PARTNERSHIP FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Minsk and Dushanbe have broad prospects for co-operation. This is the evident conclusion from the official visit of the President of Belarus to Tajikistan.

The Belarusian presence is very welcome here, the head of the host side, Emomali Rahmon, firmly asserted during the negotiations in the National Palace. Mr. Lukashenko pointed out the mutual interests in the partnership, “We’re ready to co-operate in all areas of mutual interest for the sake of our hard-working and friendly nations of Belarus and Tajikistan.”

We should note that ‘across all areas’ isn’t simply a diplomatic cliché. The official political events of the visit were supplemented with corresponding agreements at top level which developed the dialogue between the presidents in practical and applied ways. In the capital of Tajikistan, the Days of Belarusian Culture event was launched, with our

national exhibition, which outstrips in scale all similar foreign events of recent years. The exposition was vast and substantive, showcasing almost all branches of the Belarusian economy. Our opportunities aren’t limited to manufacture and supply to the Tajik market but also deal with establishing joint ventures on site. The Belarusian-Tajik Business Forum preceded the top-level visit and it’s worth our attention.

As a rule, specialists are modest in assessing the capacity of the Tajik market. We can partly agree with them, taking into account the needs exclusively of this country and its slightly more than 8 million population. Though not everything is ‘cut and dried’. For modern purposes, Tajikistan is demonstrating unbelievable growth, which was admired by Alexander Lukashenko during his negotiations with Emomali Rahmon. More than 7 percent growth of GDP shown last year,

especially under the conditions of the reserved state of world markets, is a significant figure. Combined with progress in the Belarusian economy, it explains the more than double growth of our bilateral trade and this tendency continues this year.

The uniqueness of the Belarusian-Tajik Business Forum is also in the fact that representatives of business circles from the neighbouring states — Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan — were also taking an active part. Their interests in co-operation with Minsk are practically identical to those of Dushanbe and include machinery for mining industry, transport, agricultural techniques, food products and food processing, pharmaceuticals and a range of other areas. All the businessmen were in serious discussion on these issues.

It was the business component that prevailed in the negotiations between



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, during their meeting in Dushanbe

the presidents of Belarus and Tajikistan. Summing up the results, Alexander Lukashenko spoke about the detailed consideration of issues of bilateral trade-economic collaboration. According to him, there are good prospects to expand industrial cooperation and interaction in the sphere of agriculture. BelAZ, MAZ and Gomselmash also have serious plans to gain a foothold in the local market while the design of the first assembly production of Belarusian agricultural machinery in the city of Hisar (the visit to the company was also part of the visit programme) should become a starting point for building long-term co-operation ties in various spheres: industry, the agro-industrial complex and pharmaceuticals. In this regard Mr. Lukashenko concluded, "Joint production of qualitative and competitive goods will make economic collaboration of Belarus and Tajikistan efficient and mutually

beneficial. Our countries are united by the aspiration to find reliable business partners and to build long-term relations."

Mr. Lukashenko also addressed promising and interested partners from various countries, who have arrived in Dushanbe to take part in the business forum, "I would like this business forum to serve as a foundation for creating solid trade-economic relations with Tajikistan and countries of the region while we, presidents, will be promoting these tendencies in every possible way."

Collaboration in the educational sphere confirms Minsk's aspirations to develop not simply trade but also its readiness to share technologies and knowledge. In recent years, the number of Tajik citizens who study in Belarus has been increasing. Four joint departments have been already set up at leading universities in our country. A centre of Be-

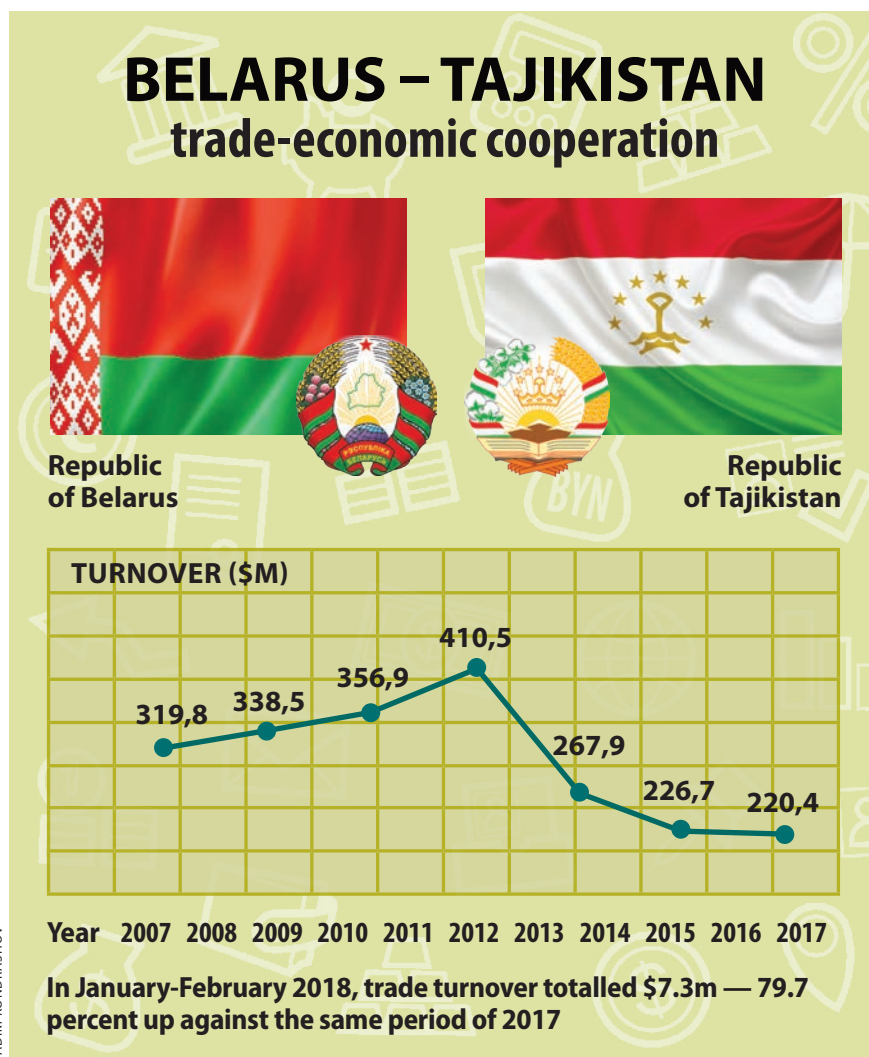
larusian education, science and culture will be established in the Tajik Technical University. Mr. Lukashenko explained the importance of this, "Tractors, automobiles and other machinery is good. It's trade turnover and money. However, there's something more important. That is people and personnel. If there are no specialists, no machinery will help us. Therefore, Mr. Rahmon also encouraged me to train more Tajik young people in Belarus. In our co-operation with other countries we train specialists on site and this can apply to Tajikistan. If, for example, tomorrow we open a joint tractor assembly we will have to train specialists. They will soon become engineers and will be teaching others in Tajikistan."

After the negotiations, around fifteen joint documents have been signed. The most important of them includes the statement by the presidents, declaring

page 7 their intention to actively develop co-operation. Its business dimension determines the approved 'roadmap', fixing on a wide range of areas for interaction. During his final conversation with the press, Mr. Lukashenko also spoke about the initiative of Dushanbe which was adopted for implementation but hasn't been written down yet.

"Mr. Rahmon made a proposal to give our relations the level of strategic partnership and strategic co-operation. I think that a two-year-long 'roadmap' will serve as a good foundation for this partnership. I think the governments will prepare corresponding proposals in the near future," said Mr. Lukashenko.

The presidents continued their joint working day at the National Exhibition of Belarus, personally opening it by cutting the red ribbon. They immediately altered the term of the exhibition by extending it from the planned three days to a week, to enable all those who wish to discuss in more detail the opportunities for co-operation with Belarus, and Mr. Lukashenko agreed with his colleague. On visiting the exposition, the heads of state stopped at the stand of Kommunarka Confectionery which offered its lively — 'President' chocolate with a new recipe. The product has a history with the president, as a while ago, Mr. Lukashenko suggested confectioners master the production of a product without sugar that would rival famous world manufacturers. They succeeded, as confirmed by Kommunarka's Director General, Ivan Danchenko, "We've used the best cocoa nuts that grow in the world: from Cote d'Ivoire, Venezuela, Columbia and Salvador. They give spicy and soft flavours, and at the same time a slightly bitter taste. The chocolate is however, made without sugar. Instead we use lactitol from milk whey. Thus, we have a unique product unrivalled in Belarus and other countries. I think it will successfully compete with chocolate with sugar made in Switzerland and Belgium. Moreo-



ver, we see that the price of the new line will stay at the level of 'President' chocolate which is currently available on the market."

The presidents tasted the new chocolate and highly praised its taste. Meanwhile, judging by the content of this working day in Dushanbe, enough new products will arrive on the Tajik market and the geography of their consumers will be very wide. One of the central events of the President's official visit to Tajikistan became the joint participation with Emomali Rahmon at the official opening ceremony of the assembly production of Belarusian tractors in the city of Hisar. Here Mr. Lukashenko voiced the major point for co-operation enterprise, "In

September you will report to us which markets you have entered. We'd like to create a base platform in order to jointly move into other markets." The deadline of September was no accidental choice: the CIS Heads of State Summit is scheduled to take place in September in Tajikistan — a good reason to control the fulfilment of instructions, given by the heads of state in the context of developing bilateral interaction and to see how joint projects are being implemented.

The plant in Hisar is a project which targets the future. The Director of Agrotechservice, Jalolidin Nuraliev, said that co-operation isn't limited only to partnership with MTZ. Variants of alliances with Bobruiskagromash and

Gomselmash have been already studied. It refers to the assembly of various towing and attachable equipment, with the first samples being already manufactured. Everything is proceeding well. Moreover, the foundation has been prepared for the new production workshop for three tractor assembly lines which will supplement the existing one. The President approves such a strategy, "All our companies — MAZ, BelAZ and others — produce something separately. These are huge expenditures. Let's create, for example, a single venue in Dushanbe. A customer will arrive to buy a tractor but will see wide range of machinery. Moreover, training will be also offered. If so, it's a good realisation of the idea."

Tajikistan needs the machinery produced in Hisar. Jalolidin Nuraliev spoke about important factors which were taken into account during business planning. The fleet of agricultural machinery in the country is almost obsolete and the need for tractors is assessed as at least 10,000 units. Moreover, the state puts serious efforts into dealing with the creation of new jobs and sees the transformation of the economy from agrarian into agrarian-industrial as its strategic goal. The creation of new productions also coincides with these ideas, so the Belarusian-Tajik machine building project perfectly fits their implementation plan.

Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Rahmon discussed details of its development almost while walking around, getting familiar with the plant. In particular, an interest was confirmed in the initiative of the Belarusian side in organising a system of staff training. The President of Belarus described the experience of such interaction with other partners, for example, with the Venezuelans. Teams arrive at a major factory for further work at a subsidiary company. They spend their internship directly at the assembly line and study in detail the whole technological process. In fact, they are already engineers who

work successfully in their homeland, while also sharing the knowledge and skills acquired in Belarus with their fellow countrymen.

The partners also took a great interest in another proposal from the President of Belarus. A tractor is a universal vehicle. Agricultural towing and attachable equipment is also good. However, Belarus also produces machinery for communal services: to clean streets and improve roadsides. The range here is also vast, but it would be cheaper to assemble such items locally. Moreover, in this way we'll ensure unification of the use of major produce — tractors — which will enhance the economic efficiency of their work. The President instructed that samples of diverse machinery should be brought to Hisar, enabling them to get acquainted with it and to choose what they need.

During the visit to the plant, a surprising dialogue took place between the presidents, thinking about how the experience of our Tajik partners could also be in demand in Belarus. Mr. Lukashenko shared his observations on the way to the company, "We were driving together and looking at the gardens. Here the temperature in winter falls to -30 degrees and even lower but his gardens survive. Can't we regionalise and cultivate these plants in the Gomel and Brest regions? We need to send specialists

to look at the subject and study everything."

Mr. Rahmon addressed his Agriculture Minister saying that, In November, you should send seedlings of grapes and fruit varieties. You will go yourself and take specialists who will look at which species would be of service. Everything will become clear within one or two years."

"I feel confident that these species will grow in Belarus," said the President of Belarus.

"Even the black cherry will grow," the Tajik colleague replied confidently.

Moreover, the project can be bilateral and very symbolic. The garden of Belarusian-Tajik friendship is being laid down in Tajikistan. A site was allocated and 10,000 seedlings ordered. On learning about this, the President warmed to his idea, "The Belarusian-Tajik garden should also be in the Gomel and Brest regions. I think we'll choose the necessary area and it shouldn't be just one hectare. It will be two gardens named after Emomali Rahmon. We should try to grow everything. The climate has changed. We now grow watermelons in central Belarus."

So, the garden of our friendship will blossom and bring fruit in the widest sense of the word. This beautiful allegory reflects the spirit of the bilateral relations and the mood of the visit.

By Denis **Krymov**

WORD-FOR-WORD

Health Minister of Belarus, Valery Malashko:

■ **At least we have doubled the realisation of medicines in Tajikistan. We're ready to share experiences, including by creating joint ventures. We're now actively looking for partners who can quickly implement the project.**

Minister of Agriculture and Food of Belarus, Leonid Zayats:

■ **We have great raw material opportunities in the dairy sector. We are ready to organise joint enterprises, processing Belarusian milk, in Tajikistan, as well as in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, using Belarusian technologies and accompanied by our specialists. We're also ready to assist in the construction of dairy complexes which will be equipped with the necessary technical equipment of Belarusian production.**

DIALOGUE FOR THE SAKE OF THE FUTURE

Peaceful initiatives are being heard from Minsk with ever greater persistence. We're calling on a wide range of participants for a thoughtful dialogue by all countries who are not indifferent towards the fate of the planet and humanity and are ready to speak about it openly, and honestly. Less than a year ago, at the opening of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly session in Minsk, Alexander Lukashenko suggested launching a large-scale international dialogue tackling the issues of security under the conventional title of Helsinki-2. This proposal is currently being considered by potential participants, but the process of opinion sharing never stands still and we're always ready to offer a convenient venue. Another round of discussions took place in Minsk at the international expert conference, *Eastern Europe: In Search of Security for All*, held as part of the Minsk Dialogue Forum. The event was attended by the President of Belarus, who explained in his speech the motifs of Belarusian peaceful aspirations.

"One third of the states on our planet are involved in armed hostilities in one way or another, this exceeds the number of countries involved in the Second World War. However, we can't sit and wait until the horrors of a third war hit us. It would be inexcusable carelessness and Belarusians understand the consequences only too well."

The Minsk Dialogue is clearly not a prologue for a potential Helsinki-2. However, it can be seen as a prototype for large-scale discussion about the future of the world, if not in the format of discussion and level of representation, then at least in its content. It doesn't matter that sometimes there are opposite opinions in the dispute. Often contradictions were voiced which seemed uncompromising at first sight. However, if they are voiced openly this is at least positive, because from a clear presentation of positions and their substantiation, the discussion begins to meet each other halfway. This is extremely vital, as the President convinc-

ingly emphasised in his speech, "The conflicts which have been happening in recent years only prove our worst fears regarding the development of the situation worldwide. The great powers that were expected to be reliable guarantors of stability are unable to agree on any major issue today."



Alas, this is a fact confirmed by numerous hot spots from the Middle East to the neighbouring Ukraine. Even the diversity of expert opinions which were voiced in Minsk illustrates a complicated web of contradictions in world policy. Each voiced idea however, is a thread and finding

it opens up the possibility of solving the whole tangle. Alexander Lukashenko returned to the topic of a potential Helsinki-2 process, "It should be aimed at overcoming the existing contradictions in the relations between the states in the common space of the Euro-Atlantic Region and in Eurasia." The President is confident that, "It does not matter what you call it — the New Helsinki Process, Helsinki-2 or any other name. It is important to make sure that dialogue gets underway and results in a real improvement of international security."

It's time for the large geopolitical players to think about the state of modern international relations, which remind us of those seen before the First World War... Under the conditions of current global geopolitical and economic transformations in the world, principal disagreements between states accumulate. Strategic partnership again comes to the forefront, alongside competition between



President of Belarus speaks at the Minsk Dialogue Forum

leading countries. They are making, with specious excuses, a focus on force, including military, as protecting their interests.

Calling on honest dialogue, Mr. Lukashenko openly spoke about the most acute problems of modernity. One of the most dangerous is opposition between the West and Russia. Tensions between the USA, the EU and Russia are growing and China is also being involved in this process. The President shared the opinions of many experts that the current opposition is even more acute than during the time of the cold war. "Many previous recipes for global and regional management and overcoming conflicts and natural contradictions don't suit any more. Unfortunately, under these conditions, the world players aren't ready to stop the spiral of confrontation or make compromises. We see that no other international problems are really being solved. Examples are: the Middle East, Syria

and Ukraine, partly North Korea and Iran. The consequences of events happening in these regions are impossible to forecast. The interrelatedness of remote conflicts and European problems, particularly to the growth of the terrorism threat, is more and more apparent. We can't but be worried about the situation in neighbouring Ukraine, because, as the President noted, no points of the Minsk Agreements have been completely fulfilled. Minsk is ready to support any format for negotiations aimed at complete settlement of the conflict."

Moreover, Minsk doesn't lay claim to any status or seek praise as a peacekeeper. The President emphasised, "We have our own fair share of problems to deal with. But I've already mentioned our interest in peace in Ukraine, as not only us, but all of you will feel the effects if the situation cannot be resolved. We will do everything the conflicting sides will agree on."

Even if Minsk bears the burden of a peace-keeping mission in a wider sense, this is only because it doesn't try to stand on either side of the global confrontation. Moreover, it constantly speaks about the undesirability of dividing the world into 'us' and 'them'. The President has clearly outlined his position, "Belarus is a sovereign state and is clearly aware of its position in the international axis. We are not with Russia against Europe. Nor are we with Europe against Russia and the entire East. For us, the question of who we are allied with is unacceptable in principle. Our allied relations with Russia and its orientation towards integration within the Eurasian Economic Union does not affect the interests of the European countries. Development of relations with the EU, the United States and the West does not contradict close co-operation in the East, but serves as a basis for creating a zone of confidence."

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From this position, the logic of Belarusian foreign political initiatives is apparent, and is seen in the brief formula: ‘integration of integrations’. “For Belarus, one of the key components of security remains economic. We have been promoting this approach at all levels. To ensure non-confrontation and sustainable development of our region against the background of growing geopolitical confrontation, many states underestimate the implementation of multi-level international projects. Being located at the crossroads of the Eurasian and European unions, Belarus is especially keen on mutual rapprochement. It’s necessary to move from abstract conversations towards concrete interaction.”

Mr. Lukashenko believes that there are many points of coincidence in the economy, power engineering, ecology, humanitarian collaboration, transport and logistics, as well as in the struggle against illegal migration and cross-border crime. “Through these areas, it’s possible to slowly build a model of rapprochement of the two largest integration structures and to develop mutual trust. We believe that this will bring huge benefits for the whole continent: from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Multi-lateral economic collaboration



BELTA

is necessary to allow integration and settlement of conflicts and disprove the logic of those who spread the opinion that the West and East don’t need each other. I refer to Russian, European, American and Chinese partners, as well as to big and small countries, our close and remote neighbours.”

It’s evident that opinions on the expansion of representation of countries in the global dialogue, against the background of the inability of most players towards compromise, acquires special topicality. Minsk suggests developing this area on the OSCE venue and the President voiced this proposal,

“It’s necessary to gradually expand the format of the dialogue as part of the OSCE and to attract such players as India, Japan and, of course, China which, due to the implementation of its Belt and Road initiative, is gradually turning into a factor in European policy.”

According to Mr. Lukashenko, now as never before, the need is great in likeminded states which are interested in constructive discussion of the whole range of accumulated problems. “Because of the uncompromising attitudes of the key players, medium and small countries have a unique opportunity to initiate proposals on dialogue. It’s necessary to use but not to play the role of ‘marginal participants’ or allies on military-political blocs.”

There’s nothing new in the idea of global dialogue. After WWII, the leaders of the victorious countries managed to remove many issues by founding the UN. Forty years ago, the degree of opposition seen in the Cold War was partially reduced in Helsinki. The President summed up by saying, “Today all states — big and small — all politicians and experts need to think about what will be left for the coming generations.”

If the conference in Minsk becomes the motivation for such thinking, then it will have fulfilled its major goal.

By Dmitry Kryat



BELTA

LISTEN AND HEAR EACH OTHER

The discussion, emerging at the forum after the speech of the President of Belarus, was truly revealing: regarding its content and meaning. It perfectly reflected the systemic and even civilisational contradictions that underlie the current difficult situation in Eastern Europe. At the same time, this discussion demonstrated that all problems could be settled if the parties listen to each other.

Almost all analysts today agree that the main problem of modern Europe is the geopolitical and economic confrontation between Russia and Western countries. Not surprisingly, the forum participants paid special attention to this geopolitical issue.

The position of one of the parties was voiced by Nikolay Bordyuzha; from 2003-2017, he held the post of Secretary General of the CSTO. He suggested to initially investigate the reason for the crisis in the European region, “It is important to clearly understand that the events of 2008 in South Ossetia, the internal Ukrainian crisis and Russia’s subsequent accusations of aggressive politics and the demolition of democratic principles are not the starting point of today’s state of affairs. On the contrary, they represent a nervous and painful symptom of a severe and prolonged illness that has long struck the very tissue of global and European security. The first reason for this is the psychology

of triumphs firmly established in the minds of many Western and primarily overseas politicians, manifested in the sense of one’s own exclusivity and permissiveness. After the Cold War, many partners developed the harmful habit of not reckoning with their actions either with Russia, Belarus, or with other participants in international relations.”

Mr. Bordyuzha mentioned many disagreements: NATO expansion to the east and a new round of political expansion of this bloc in the Balkans; the build-up of military groups in the ‘frontline’ (from the point of view of NATO) areas; a significant increase in the military budgets of the United States and other countries of the alliance, whose aggregated volume has almost reached \$1 trillion; and information and sanctioning wars. Moreover, according to the official, none of the post-Soviet states seek confrontation with the United States or European countries.

The position of the second party — that of the North Atlantic Alliance — was voiced in Minsk by the Deputy Assistant Secretary General of NATO for Political Affairs and Secu-

rity Policy — James Appathurai, “The Minsk Agreements were signed literally across the road from here [in the Palace of Independence, located next to the venue of the forum]. However, NATO does not see that Russia is taking action to implement them. This is the main source of friction and tension in Europe. NATO really insists on respecting the territorial inviolability of states. When we return to stabilisation, we create a more productive climate for dialogue.” Meanwhile, NATO is still confident that virtually all military manoeuvres conducted by Russia or with its participation are aimed at the alliance countries. “Large-scale training is held on our borders focusing on working out attack scenarios. We see Russia’s desire for unpredictability, ambiguity in the conduct of military exercises. We need to promote transparency in every way when it comes to conducting military exercises. Belarus fully corresponds to all legal regulations in this sphere.” Mr. Appathurai also noted warmly, “This is my first visit to Minsk. I’m a Canadian by birth but I feel at home here since you have the same trees, climate and hockey.”



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In turn, speaking of Belarus and the emotions it arouses, the OSCE Secretary General — Thomas Greminger — noted, “Belarus is very active and has become a centre of regional diplomacy. I am very grateful to you for this. Within the OSCE, Minsk is often associated with dialogue. I would like to thank President Lukashenko for holding such meetings in your country. A dialogue is an important step towards establishing relations. It is very important to build relationships that are based on mutual trust.” He also expressed the hope that the Minsk forum would transform into a major event, “We must once again show our commitment to the liabilities and principles that were worked out during the Helsinki process. If this is the process that will help us in this, it will be very good. A key to security is the promotion of dialogue.”

This dialogue must start with real topics on which a compromise is possible, as the Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States — Maira Mora — be-

lieves. “If there are issues when we know are unlikely to be agreed upon immediately, then we should put them aside and move forward gradually. We must speak consistently, so that we do not quarrel even more. We should not set unrealistic goals. I was here when Minsk offered itself as a platform for negotiations on this complex and critical issue. It showed itself brilliantly. I think this should be maintained and continued,” she said.

It’s yet unclear what direction to choose. We must believe that the Minsk forum has enabled us to find a clear answer to this question. Some solutions have been proposed by Christine Muttonen who, from 2016-2017, headed the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, “Today, many politicians think about creating what is called a neutral belt in Europe. I know that there are a lot of restrictions on this path. However, it would be worth thinking about the implementation of this. In addition, it is important to think about how to improve the interaction of the EU countries with the Eastern Euro-

pean states, how to deepen many-sided co-operation with them. A significant role in this can be played by liberalisation of the visa regime; this is a very important step in order to get to know each other. We must be as creative as possible. We’ll find then a way to overcome the present stalemate. Therefore, such meetings, as in Minsk, are very important. Their importance lies in the fact that different sides can see, hear and listen to each other, to assess the arguments and conclusions of each side and calculate the possibility of compromises. Moreover, as it seemed to me yesterday, there was even a certain symbolism: the conference was held in the building of the exhibition centre called ‘Romashka’ (Camomile). This flower in many countries of the world symbolises childhood, modesty and sincerity. These characteristics can justly be attributed to the Minsk conference — ‘Eastern Europe: in Search of Security for All’; perhaps, this is a modest but sincere step in the name of a peaceful future.

 By Mikhail **Osipov**

PARTICIPANTS OF THE FORUM SHARE THEIR OPINIONS



Tony van der Togt, Senior Researcher at the Netherlands Institute of International Affairs Clingendael:

The present Minsk forum is a very important platform for discussing various problems. The main one is security in Europe. I am glad to have an opportunity to express my point of view and to hear many other experts. It is important to participate in the common dialogue of the President of Belarus. We are all working out ways to solve the large number of most pressing problems.



Suren Sargsyan, Co-founder of the Armenian International and Comparative Law Centre:

The topics that are discussed at the forum are significant and there are many issues requiring attention. This format is interesting and, in my opinion, useful for many countries in the world. Not only the European region but representatives of the USA and China are also present here — among others. We can jointly discuss new ideas and approaches that will help in resolving many regional and global problems. I also want to note the participation of the President of Belarus in the forum; this is important. We've heard from him about the priority areas that your country has identified. Today Minsk provides a qualitatively new platform for discussions about the present and future of international relations.



Samuel Charap, Senior Fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies:

I believe that the Minsk Dialogue is an important and significant event. Experts from 50 countries of the world are represented here and their coming together is a great success. In general, today we are in a situation of a geopolitical impasse and — without an open exchange of views — the confrontation will intensify. Issues of regional security have also come to the forefront today and it's primarily important to not only discuss them but to look for ways to resolve the existing differences.



Thomas Buchsbaum, Special Envoy for Eastern Partnership of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs:

Today we can talk about a new significant negotiating platform. The Minsk forum is becoming a place where many experts are able to discuss a variety of problems. The geopolitical situation has changed considerably, so we all need to think about updating existing international institutions. We also need to pay more attention to the development of a certain concept of security in the region. In the EU, we now have an interest in Belarus and the initiatives you propose.



Andrea Wiktoria, Head of the EU Delegation in Belarus:

It is constructive that Belarus and the EU co-operate in different areas. Together we can achieve a lot. It is worth remembering that your country is a member of the Eastern Partnership and this opens new opportunities for Belarus. You also played a significant role in the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. The European Union recognises and welcomes this. Speaking of the Minsk Dialogue Forum, this is a great place to come to the necessary decisions on many difficult issues through discussion.



Volodymyr Khandogiy, President of the Ukrainian Foreign Policy Association:

It seems to me that we need to make greater use of the potential of the security system that exists. In my opinion, it was not fully disclosed today. There are many mechanisms that are not involved in problematic security issues, both global and regional. This is a high-level forum. Equally important is the balanced composition of the participants. All the breadth of experts allows us to determine in the course of the discussion the approaches to solving the main problems, and unfortunately today, there are a lot of them.



Yuri Shevtsov, Director of the Centre for European Integration, Belarus:

It seems to me that the Minsk Dialogue is an unprecedented forum for our country. There are a lot of bright and intellectual people here. The President is also among the participants and — through his status — he supports this format and those experts who have gathered here. In general, this conference expands the possibilities of Belarusian politics in the West, without questioning other priorities.

NEW OUTLINES OF REALITY

Vice President of the People's Republic of China Wang Qishan arrives in Belarus on an official visit. Remarkably, this is his first foreign official visit in his current position.

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, met with Vice President of the People's Republic of China Wang Qishan in his countryside residence and the meeting was held as a working dinner. Alexander Lukashenko and Wang Qishan greeted each other warmly. The President noted that there were a number of issues the two sides would have to discuss. In turn, the Vice President shared his impressions of the visit to the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park and spoke highly of the negotiations with representatives of the Belarusian Government.

The Belarusian Head of State invited Wang Qishan to see the local spring well where the Chinese guest could drink pure water with unique qualities. After visiting the well and after a tour of the residence, Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Qishan spent some time in the tea house enjoying Chinese tea and Belarusian jam. They

discussed the situation in the world and international relations. The conversation about bilateral relations continued over supper in a Belarusian fashion. The guest was offered draniki (grated potato pancakes), Belarusian pelmeni (meat dumplings wrapped in dough), and a roast duck. For dessert, Alexander Lukashenko offered his signature dish — curd rolls with ice cream and strawberries.

It's remarkable that the choice of dishes available during the supper was prompted by the Chinese tradition but influenced by Belarusian zest. For instance, instead of rice flour the Belarusian pelmeni used wheat flour. Instead of Peking duck the Chinese guest was offered duck with giblets. The choice of the Belarusian President's countryside residence as the venue for the meeting also underlined the particularly friendly and strategic nature of Belarusian-Chinese relations. Alexander Lukashenko welcomes only the most respected and dearest guests in this manner.

From the first few minutes of Mr. Qishan's visit to Minsk, an intensive

working schedule was prepared. Before meeting the President, he visited the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, the National Art Museum, the Loshitsa park and laid a wreath to the Victory Monument in Minsk. At Minsk National Airport, the esteemed guest was welcomed by Belarus' Prime Minister, Andrei Kobayakov, who greeted him, saying, "We are glad to welcome a good friend of the Belarusian nation. Your visit to Belarus is highly appreciated and is perceived is an additional good sign of the commitment of the Chinese Government to expanding relations with Belarus. We want Belarus-China relations not only to grow stronger, but also to serve as an example to other countries: these are relations based on good neighborliness, mutual respect and equality".

Wang Qishan was elected to the responsible position in March 2018. His arrival in Minsk is the first foreign official visit in the new post. Beijing underlines the special importance of the Belarusian vector in its foreign policy. Mr. Kobayakov said,



Vice President of the People's Republic of China, Wang Qishan

in his speech at the National Airport, “Belarusian society understands the idea of the President of China, Xi Jinping, to build a community based on social justice and equal opportunities for the development of countries.”

The big construction is in full swing in close vicinity to the national airport, where the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park is being built. The heads of the two states stood at the foundation of this global project. The first time Alexander Lukashenko and Xi Jinping discussed this idea was in 2010. At that time, Mr. Jinping occupied the position of the Vice President of the People's Republic of China. Five years later, when Mr. Jinping became the President, during his official visit to Belarus, with Mr. Lukashenko he visited the construction site. In the presence of the heads of state, certificates of registration were given to first seven residents of the Park. Now, their number has increased 5-fold. Mr. Qishan visited the Great Stone Park immediately after his arrival, where the Head of the Park's Ad-

ministration, Alexander Yaroshenko, informed him that, “The preferences given to the Park's residents enabled us to seriously advance attracting investors. In late 2016, we had eight residents, while on May 25th we accepted our 35th resident. Moreover, 19 residents come from China, 9 originate from Belarus while the remaining come from other states. We also have projects from the USA, Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Russia and Israel. We position our venue as an international project. We plan to have no fewer than 40 residents by the end of the year.”

According to most modest calculations, residents of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park have already made applications for the creation of at least 700 new high-tech jobs. This is only the beginning, and the Great Stone is becoming a central platform in implementing a large-scale Chinese concept, Belt and Road. Mr. Qishan said during his visit that, “The Great Stone is a very important project in developing the Belt and Road initiative. If everything is ok here, then

we'll be able to realise this initiative everywhere. It's necessary to reinforce investments in the Park. There are many parks in China, while the Great Stone Park is the only such in the world. It should be successful.”

The Belarusian side shares these prospects and Mr. Yaroshenko added, “We see the interest of our investors to supply innovations and produce to the PRC. If we had established a special legal regime between the Great Stone and China, it would have been very useful for the Park's development. The second proposal tackles the so-called transport green corridor between China, Russia, Belarus and Europe. We'd like to see transport moving in this direction in not more than 4-5 days.”

These are working initiatives, aiming to develop an idea that is actually already implemented. There's no reason to doubt the big future of the project. The mutual interest of Minsk and Beijing in partnership is more than apparent.

By Vasily **Kharitonov**



CHINESE BUSINESS SEES BENEFICIAL PROSPECTS

Our country was visited by the delegation of the Chinese Corporation CITIC Group — one of the largest in the world and strategic in China, boasting assets worth almost \$1 trillion. The delegation, headed by the CITIC Group President, was welcomed by Alexander Lukashenko.

This business titan is well known in Belarus: in 2007-2013, its company — CITIC Construction — built three cement plants on a turnkey basis. In 2015, it began the construction of the BelGee Automobile Plant and a year later, launched the modernisation of the Orsha Linen Mill. At present, the company is building a large multi-functional facility in Minsk's Pobediteley Avenue. Mr. Lukashenko sees great practicality in this, "It's good that we have advanced from simple crediting in various fields to direct investments in certain items. It shows that China and Belarus are ready to work together and develop co-operation. You cannot only count on us but also believe that the commodities that you have been building here will always remain in the ownership of Chinese companies and your Belarusian partners. We've guaranteed your ownership of these objects on Belarusian land."

The Belarusian principality and the Chinese trust have resulted in new mutually beneficial projects. Recently, the CITIC Group launched the construction of a new enterprise — a plant to manufacture special machinery on the basis of Amkodor-Mash LLC in Kolo-dishchi, near Minsk. During the conversation with the Belarusian Head of State, China's CITIC Group President, Wang Jiong, also mentioned the construction of the BelGee Automobile Plant and modernisation of Orsha Linen Mill. "We've successfully completed all works and received positive reviews from our Belarusian partners. We see great prospects for further development of business in Belarus." After the meeting with the President, Chinese businessmen talked with the Prime Minister, Andrei Kobyakov, and also visited the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park.

By Mikhail **Overyanov**

▶ ENTERING JOINT ORBIT

President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences visits National Academy of Sciences of Belarus

The NAS of Belarus solemnly welcomed honorary guest, Bai Chunli, on his first visit to our country. The President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences — the largest in the world — is a famous scientist in the sphere of nano-technologies and scanned probe microscopy. The visit was long expected: in autumn, he was elected as a foreign member of our Academy, this was preceded by serious scientific co-operation between the two countries.



"We have around twenty joint projects and several joint Belarusian-Chinese centres and laboratories established in the NAS. Moreover, there's also a range of agreements on co-operation with the provinces and many proposals for further work: starting from space exploration to biological investigations. The range of issues for discussion is wide: lasers, nano-technologies, new materials, biotechnologies and machine building" notes Vladimir Gusakov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the NAS of Belarus.

Space interaction may become one of the major topics for discussion. According to Mr. Chunli, both states have huge potential here. The Chinese Academy of Sciences has already developed 36 satellites and an innovative satellite centre has been established. On the Belarusian side, there are proposals to take part in the creation of our second satellite for Earth remote sensing and in investigations on when the satellite will be launched. The development of another joint Belarusian-Chinese space apparatus was also high on the agenda.

HEAVYWEIGHTS GO TO THE FIELDS

On the 72nd anniversary of its founding, the Minsk Tractor Works has made a present to itself and the country: the 500HP 'BELARUS-5022' tractor — currently the most powerful in the CIS — has been assembled

Guests could get to know it, admiring the wheels, which exceed the height of a human. A prototype was offered on show for visitors to the plant. Before such a model is put into mass production, it will pass a long path of testing and improvement. For example, its predecessor — the 450HP 'BELARUS-4522' — first appeared in public three years ago but will only be offered for sale by late 2018.

“By releasing such powerful machinery, we are fulfilling the country’s food security programme and helping to reduce the cost of bread,” said MTZ General Director — Fiodor Domo-tenko.

Constructors talk about modern trends: in a single pass, the tractor

would perform as many operations as possible and process the maximum possible area (up to several hundred kilometres). Potential buyers include Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

Meanwhile, chief designer Nikolay Zezetko admits that even a 450HP tractor will not be able to fulfil all tasks, “Much depends on the soil. For example, Kazakhstan’s soil sticks to aggregates. In the Saratov Region, it’s necessary to process heavy clay and loam; these all create additional resistance. In Tatarstan, such a tractor will be useful because of the sowing technology popular there: a ‘BELARUS-5022’ can loosen, plant the grain, roll it and immediately pierce it with a special 12-meter machine in a single pass.”

By Dmitry **Ampilov**



Tractor 'BELARUS-5022'

▶ ROAD WITHOUT FORCED OUTAGE

Initiative of Belarusian Agronadzor on digital tracking of fruit and vegetables is to be introduced through the Eurasian Economic Union. Such measures should eliminate reasons for disputes during supply and transit transportations of agricultural produce between EAEU states.

In practice, this means that along with the cargo, all information about it will also move. A special digital seal is fixed on a vehicle at the starting point, connected with the GLONASS system. Such digital corridors will make the route trouble-free, excluding stops at points of rest, for instance, at customs points.

This is especially acute during the transit of vegetables and fruit from the plot, as a long road with frequent stops badly affects the freshness and quality of ‘live vitamins’. Digitalisation should reduce this time.

“The whole route of containers with such seals will be viewed immediately to hand in the online regime,” notes Karine Minasyan, member of the Board (Minister) for Domestic Markets, Informatisation, Information and Communication Technologies of the Eurasian Economic Commission. “What happens to the cargo will be recorded as well as an unauthorised opening, unscheduled stops, and deviations from the designated route. But the seals are only an example. In future, we should discuss what the project needs to involve. It is important to decide how much the state will handle and how much the private sector will take responsibility for.”

Yes, there are still questions and issues to be solved, but representatives of all interested sides are confident that a compromise can be reached. At present, the project is planned to be launched after 2020.

By Alexey **Fedosov**



ENERGY AND SYNERGY OF SUCCESS

The Belarusian nuclear power plant is still under construction, but the country is already occupying an increasingly strong place in the nuclear club — as confirmed at the 10th Atomexpo-2018 International Forum

I attended the forum with an extensive list of the most important questions in modern times, but I had no opportunity to ask them: the sharpest and most ambiguous issues were commented upon at the very start. Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Semashko, opened his

speech with a reference to whether Belarus would become an atomic country. “We have a single main task: to launch the first energy block by late 2019. The working schedule is already agreed with Rosatom’s management during the meeting at the construction site of the Belarusian nuclear power plant on May 5th. The terms

are difficult but absolutely real,” he stressed.

In general, since 2009 — when the 1st Atomexpo Forum was organised, fifty energy blocks of nuclear power plants have been connected to global energy networks. Another 30 will begin their operation in the next two years. Unsurprisingly, the international community is paying special attention to Belarus, which has firmly embarked on the path of building its own nuclear power station. It’s hardly possible to overestimate the new plant’s benefits for domestic use.

Mr. Semashko told journalists, “Around 5-10 years ago, we imported



up to 7.5bn kW/h from Russia against our annual power consumption in 32-33bn kW/h. Those figures varied in different years but were never lower than 5bn. Another 2.5bn were exported from Ukraine. We've ceased these imports now since we have modernised our own power engineering. Moreover, we even sold 0.42bn kW/h abroad in the first quarter of this year! Now we are doing everything possible to wisely and properly enter the unified energy market of the Eurasian Economic Union."

Other practical results of commissioning a Belarusian nuclear power station have often been discussed. E-tranport is developing in Belarus and the National Academy of Sciences' Scientific-Practical Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation has announced the beginning of works aimed at the electrification of agricultural machinery. Intelligent energy-saving lighting systems and smart houses are appearing. As for analysts not related to the energy sector, many of them even predict that construction of a Belarusian station will entail a socio-economic revolution — not only in the Ostrovets District and neighbouring areas of Belarus, but also in bordering Lithuania.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Energy Minister — Mikhail Mikhadyuk — commented openly on some of the less clear issues, "In line with the project, a nuclear power plant operates for 60 years. However, as seen from world experience, the term of its service could be easily extended for another 20 years. During this time, a whole cluster of new enterprises are emerging around the station and throughout the country. Even now, many Belarusian companies supply industrial equipment to the NPP under construction. They have already adapted to this, carefully studying and observing the requirements for the quality of equipment. This trend will continue in the future."

By Maxim **Osipov**



ALWAYS CONNECTED

It is likely that roaming between Belarus and Russia will soon disappear

This issue is now tackled by high profile ministries, noted Belarus' Minister for Communications and Informatisation, Sergey Popkov.

"There's an instruction from the Head of State, and two ministries are currently working on this task. At present, Belarusian operators suggested subscribers tariff plans which to some extent reduce roaming expenditure and not only to the Russian Federation. However, it's necessary to understand that this is business. Mobile operators are also working with each other," said Mr. Popkov, reminding us about the difficulties connected with the refusal of internal roaming in Russia.

As far as Belarus is concerned, one of the serious tasks for today is preparation for the 2nd European Games in 2019 and the provision of transport corridors, roads and railway lines, with good quality mobile communication. Mobile operators are already investing huge amounts of money in the development of networks. Belarusian specialists are studying the experience of South Korea on the eve of the Olympic Games

and are going to visit Russia during the World Football Championships. Moreover, Mr. Popkov announced that, during the 2nd European Games in Minsk, data transmission services for athletes, judges and members of delegations will be free of charge, while free Wi-Fi will be available at all sports facilities and hotels (which will be accommodating guests of the event), as well as on a range of bus routes.



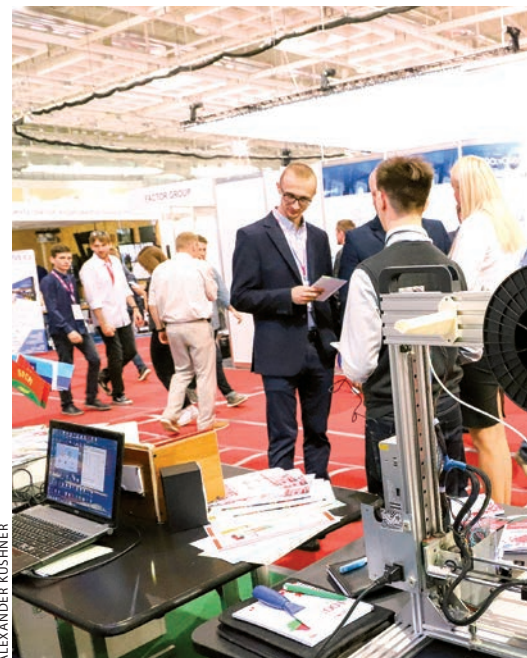
MINSK 2019
2nd EUROPEAN GAMES



Infrastructure and communications seriously influence the image of the state. In the rating of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Belarus is ranked first among the CIS states in terms of the development of information and communication technologies.

In Belarus, there are 11.4 million subscribers to mobile communication (while the number of residents is 9.5m); 74.5 percent of the population is covered with 4G standard mobile communication services.

By Yulia **Vasilieva**



ALEXANDER KUSHNER

DEVICES, ROBOTS AND SMART CLOTHES

Guests to the 25th International Forum of Telecommunications, Information and Bank Technologies — TIBO-2018 — hosted by Minsk-Arena — were welcomed by a tank. This seemed logical: The World of Tanks game authored by a Belarusian company has become one of the country's business cards on the world market, similar to the brainchild of the sensational project of our compatriot Kino-mo (a device for projecting moving holographic images in the air) after its victory in the British start-up competition, Pitch to Rich. Smart clothes, solutions for medicine, transport, business and trade were also on show. Below are the most interesting TIBO exhibits.

Robot Vasilisa

The central stand of the exhibition is IT-Country Belarus: it's a place to get acquainted with the robot Vasilisa which answers calls from Belavia's customers. The name has not been chosen accidentally: it brings associations with the airline brand — the cornflower. The robot-operator has been 'employed' at a call centre in October 2017.

"It uses technologies of synthesis and speech recognition and machine learning. The robot-operator is able to solve individual, frequently asked questions. The call immediately goes to the robot and it decides whether the question can be automatically processed. If the robot thinks that an operator is needed, it will redirect the client," explains Alexey Pautov, the IT Director of Communications Technologies (Belavia's partner). Vasilisa is able to conduct a dialogue and ask leading questions. It now answers 23-27 percent of calls and is constantly studying. The ultimate goal is to teach the robot to book tickets.

Hypervsn device

This is Kino-mo's device project for demonstrating 3D images literally soaring in the air. The project is now active in two countries: the development centre is situated in Minsk and the main office is in London. The technology is already being promoted in Belarus — for advertising campaigns, in stores and offices. It makes it possible to broadcast any image non-stop for 24 hours and is already used in over 80 countries.

Cobot

Collaborative robots are named like this to ensure brevity. Speaking of their uniqueness, Victor Khamenok — the Head of Belarusian Rozum Robotics, the first developer of such robotic manipulators in the post-Soviet region — explains, "These new



generation robots can work with people. Heavy industrial robots were dangerous and were hidden in special rooms. Our robot however, can interact with a person. This is a completely Belarusian development. We do everything ourselves, including high-precision electric motors, electronics and software.

Any routine or dangerous work is ideal for the cobot. For example, in footwear production, it can apply glue on a sole for 24 hours, smoothly and without tiring. In the coming months, these robots will work in several Belarusian and Russian enterprises of food, light industry and banking.

Application for drivers

They will appreciate the mobile service aisDrive by Intellectual City Systems, which is unique since it unites the maximum number of necessary functions: with its help, it's possible to pay for parking, refuelling or call a tow truck in the same way as we call, for example, Uber. The application has already been tested by over a thousand users.

Smart clothes

Would you like to pat your friend — who lives overseas — on the shoulder? It's now possible. Smart clothes Teslasuit make it possible to transmit sensations on the Internet! This development is demonstrated by a HTP resident — company VRTEK. At once, several systems are integrated into trousers and a jacket — including EMC, electromyostimulation to track, motion capture, temperature control and allow bio-data collection. As a result, a unique integrated solution has become possible,

with a wide application — from sports training to computer games with deep immersion and the transfer of sensations.

For everyone

For those who have always wanted to sing karaoke but were shy to do it, the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics offers the Dectone application — a singing simulator. The screen shows how you sing and how far away you are from the note. Anyone can try — just like in the exhibition by the Delovaya Set (Business Network) which enables visitors to assess the speed of their reactions and their state of health. In the first case, a hoop with sensors is put on one's head and, in the second instance, a person will be asked to put their palm on a special device. The analysis takes a couple of minutes.

In turn, the Ixsoid interactive device by the MTS stand, aims to show children that a person with whom they communicate on the Internet may not be what they describe themselves as. This

is an element of an interactive exhibition which MTS

will launch in Minsk this autumn and later throughout the Republic, jointly with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF. It will become a continuation

of the project — 'Children on the Internet' — to train the younger generation on safe behaviour on

the net. Another general partner of the forum — Huawei — attracts visitors with the presentation of its flagship smartphones Huawei P20 and P20 Pro whose cameras are recognised as the best in the world.

By Yulia **Vasilishina**



ВАДЗІМ КАНДРАШОУ



The initiative 'Supporting Green Urban Development in Small and Medium-Sized Cities in Belarus' ('Green Cities') has begun, financed by the Global Environmental Facility and implemented by the UN Development Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus. Ancient Polotsk is one of the pilot cities.

'GREEN CITIES' COME IN FASHION



First Deputy Chairman of the Polotsk District Executive Committee, Sergey Leichenko:

'A person is at the centre of sustainable urban mobility'

The experience of other 'green cities' shows that one result of the initiative in Polotsk is likely to be an increase in the population's trust towards public transport and the decreasing use of personal cars for urban trips is stimulated. The waiting time at public transport stops falls while the comfort and security of trips increases. It's evident that modernisation and improved cycle paths in the two cities, taking into account the European experience, will enhance the popularity of bicycles as one of the major types of urban transport. Moreover, the new initiative creates equal opportunities for movement for all residents of the city, including the disabled. Our conversation with the First Deputy Chairman of the Polotsk District Executive Committee, Sergey Leichenko, explores this topic further.



Opening of European Mobility Week

Polotsk is the first city of Belarus to sign the Covenant of Mayors. Why Polotsk?

Polotsk — being a city where Belarusian statehood originated — took the liberty of signing the Mayors' Covenant with the aim of gaining some priceless international experience. We can use and adapt to our own situation ideas already in place elsewhere in the world. This initiative gives us an opportunity to take part in various programmes and receive grants, which help the city in diverse spheres: ecology, transport, mobility, etc. Yes, we've taken on serious obligations and serious responsibility, but wide opportunities are open to us. The signing of the Covenant gave the city an active stimulus to move forward and we are trying to support this in every possible way.

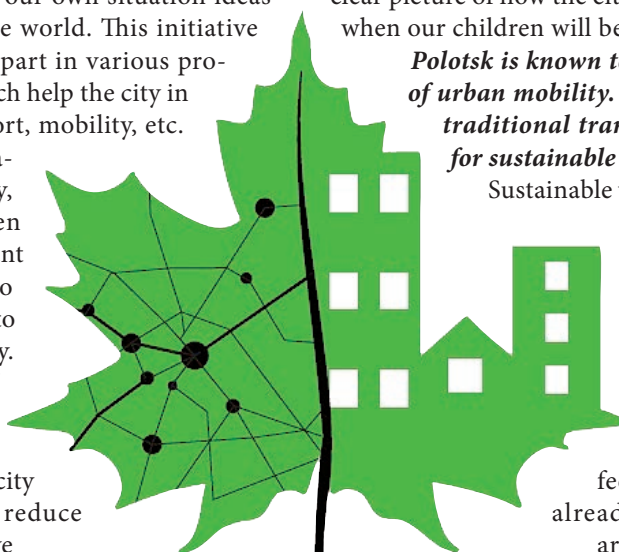
What changes have occurred after the signing of the Covenant of Mayors?

Taking into account that the city has undertaken obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we have actually made a new plan of development, with a strong accent

on ecological components. We've viewed the city from a completely different angle. We began to determine issues to work on and are actively looking for variants on how we can reduce emissions and improve ecology: in businesses, organisations and other spheres of activity. We now have a clear picture of how the city should look by 2020 and 2030 when our children will be living in it.

Polotsk is known to be actively involved in issues of urban mobility. What's the difference between traditional transport planning and planning for sustainable mobility?

Sustainable urban mobility aims to take into account the interests of all participants of traffic: pedestrians, personal and public transport, cyclists and even low-mobility groups, without priorities to any. A person is at the centre and it doesn't matter how they travel. They should feel comfortable and secure. We already have good results in some areas while others are only just starting to develop. For example,



GREEN CITIES

page 25 the cycling movement is expanding currently — a good but new area for us. We need to work with it, not to neglect it, taking into account that it also involves children and teenagers. It's necessary to harmoniously integrate this type of movement into a common scheme of sustainable urban mobility, enabling people to be aware how they can get from A to B with maximum comfort, where they can leave their bicycle, where to repair it and is it an opportunity to use public transport?

How does the launch of sustainable urban mobility influence the common development of the city? Does such interrelation exist?

Undoubtedly, there's interrelation. In total, green urban development is a comprehensive issue and everything is interrelated. Let's take only one example: we're working on a transport scheme and have come to the conclusion that we don't have enough street lighting. We have lights, but they are not well organised. Some streets have excessive illumination while others lack it, and we have begun to tackle this issue. We also look at how energy efficient the systems of lighting are that we use. Of course, we can't do every-

thing immediately, but we're gradually solving the problems.

Are issues of inclusion taken into account?

When we began to organise a cycle track in the city, issues of inclusion had been already taken into account: the reduction of kerb stones, entrances and exits, accessibility for wheelchairs, children's prams. During the construction of the city, unfortunately, no one was thinking about a barrier-free environment, while today it's a main focus. I hope we're creating the city that will satisfy all categories of citizens as far as traffic issues are concerned.

How is the 'Green Cities' project aimed at promoting the realisation of these ideas?

It's another logical stage which is a consequence of those projects which have been already implemented in our city. The major goal of the 'Green Cities' and other projects is the improvement of ecology, realisation of obligations which were undertaken by us as part of the Covenant of Mayors. It's because of our industrial complex and transport hub that we occupy first place in Belarus in terms of emissions, so via transport and lighting, we will try to do anything that will lessen the burden on ecology.

'Green Cities' is a step in a chain of actions that lead to the fulfilment of the Covenant of Mayors.

What are the major difficulties during the implementation of the project? How realistic it's to persuade urban residents who own a car to move to bicycles or at least reduce the use of vehicles in favour of 'green' transport?

The most important thing is not to force people; it's necessary to explain and persuade. Work with the population and local communities is always the most complex part in projects implemented by us. We must persuade those who use their cars to travel through the city with the thought of what might happen in five, ten, twenty years... No one will argue that current drivers, especially their children, would like to live in an ecologically clean city. The air they will breathe tomorrow, the grass they will walk on, will it be safe? The solution of such issues is not only in the hands of city authorities. First of all, it's in the hands of local residents and any person can influence it by changing to some degree their usual model of behaviour. Our task is to help them in different ways.



Participants of the seminar dedicated to the 'Green Cities' project



Bike ride from Polotsk to Novopolotsk

For example, in implementing our projects, we are glad to visit schools and involve children. It's much easier to explain to them while, in turn, schoolchildren explain to their parents that it's good to use bicycles and that energy saving is simple and beneficial. At least, this will push them to try something new: to try to go on foot, to ride a bicycle or use public transport. Recently I met an acquaintance who initially had a hostile attitude towards the appearance of a cycle path in the city, explaining that he can't park his car in the usual place because of it. Now, he says: 'You have done well! I ride bicycles with my children and it's great.' A city cycle track is convenient and wide. Moreover, it was the initiative of the road police to make it wider, enabling it to be of maximum security. Thus, everything will be changing, as well as the attitude of people. It won't happen immediately but it will happen and I'm confident in this.

The route of the first cycle track in Polotsk was chosen by the residents. How does interaction with the local community happen? How real is public dialogue during the implementation of the 'Green Cities' project?

A public group is always a working part of any project. People who directly implement the project can't know everything. I'm personally not a very active cyclist, it was a pleasant surprise to me how many people responded when we spread the word on social networks: 'Those who are interested come to the executive committee and we'll discuss it!' However, when I told them that alongside talking and complaining it would be also necessary to work, two thirds of those present left.

Nevertheless, the really enthusiastic people stayed. We explained that we don't simply want to build a bicycle track which won't be needed and money would be spent in vain. If we want to do everything in a different way we need help. Cyclists went to different micro-districts of the city, compiled detailed schemes with photos and explained where it was necessary to move kerb stones, where to reduce them, where to lay asphalt etc. As a result, we received several variants of cycle paths which we proposed for discussion on social networks. The one that finally won was given to the designers. The story with the bicycles showed that there are many enthusias-

tic people of various ages who are not indifferent towards the future of our city. With their help, we can get the attention of others. They will also bring their knowledge to their friends and acquaintances.

In this way we try to deal with all issues. For example, on City Day we put out tents and displayed Polotsk's development plans, suggesting that people come and make their proposals. We made notes of everything that can bring benefit to the city.

Polotsk has already taken part in European Mobility Week. Will it become a tradition?

European Mobility Week was a great success. Many people attended the event. I also took part and was riding a bicycle. The participants were of all ages. It's no accident that later we received a 'gold star' for the conduct of the events from the CIVITAS Foundation. We'll obviously continue, since Mobility Week is a perfect way to show citizens what sustainable mobility and green urban development mean, what benefits it can bring and the importance of the personal contribution of each resident to the development of the city.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

A HAPPY TALE OF BELARUSIAN POTATOES

In modern times, scientists see potatoes as a botanical masterpiece, phytotherapists view it as a gift of nature to people and cooks consider it the most universal product. Several centuries ago, however, our ancestors had no idea about potatoes. Where did this miracle-vegetable — without which modern Belarusian life would be simply impossible — come from?

Birthplace of potatoes: the Andes

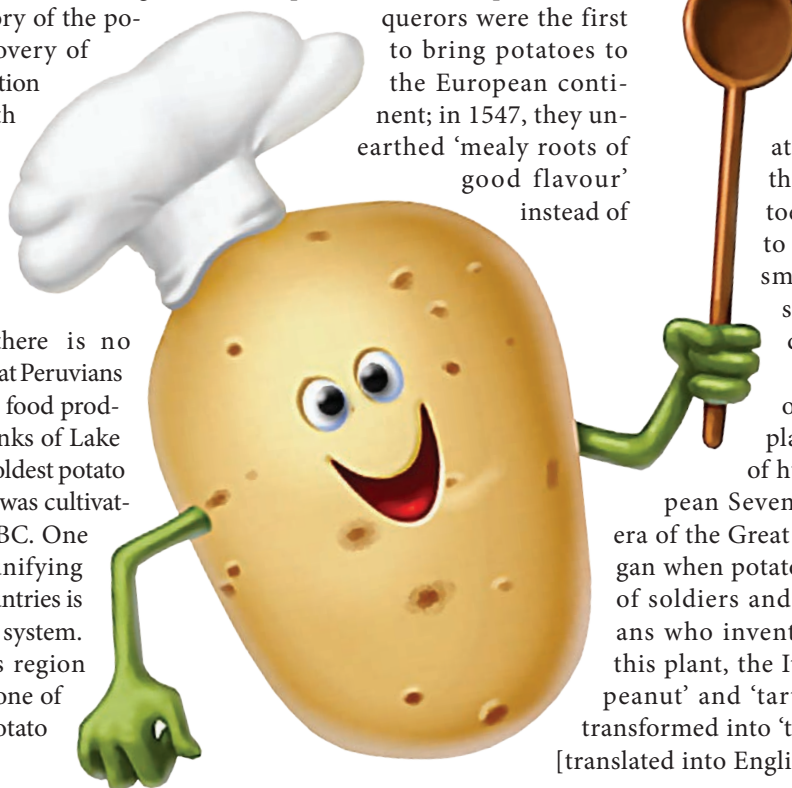
In Bolivian and Peruvian historiography, there remains dispute about which area of the Andes is the right place to start the history of the potato. The oldest discovery of tubers in human habitation was made in the north of Peru, dated to 4,500 years ago. However, Bolivian historians assert that the tubers — unearthed by archaeologists — could have been wild, since there is no conformation to date that Peruvians cultivated potatoes as a food product. In turn, on the banks of Lake Titicaca in Bolivia, the oldest potato field was discovered; it was cultivated in the 4th century BC. One way or another, the unifying factor of both these countries is the Andean mountain system. Scientists believe this region should be considered one of the first areas where potato farming was used.

Potatoes attacking Europe

The potato invasion in Europe proved to be difficult and full of superstitions. The Spanish conquerors were the first to bring potatoes to the European continent; in 1547, they unearthed 'mealy roots of good flavour' instead of

gold. Initially however, the bitter root was not well-liked by fellow Europeans. Moreover, they had no skills to store these unusual root crops, which resembled human faces with eyes on them; the potatoes turned green, rotted and, as a result, generated superstitions. Happily, there were exceptions: potatoes were sometimes served to kings or nobility in very small portions and exclusively as an exotic culinary delicacy.

The Great Potato Revolution in Europe took place much later, as a result of hunger following the European Seven Years' War in 1756. The era of the Great Industrial Revolution began when potatoes became the main food of soldiers and workers. It was Europeans who invented the present name for this plant, the Italians called it 'Peruvian peanut' and 'tartuffoli'. In Germany, this transformed into 'tartofel' and then 'kartofel' [translated into English as 'potato'].





Promising samples of potatoes with pigmented flesh, developed by the Scientific and Practical Centre for Potato, Vegetable and Fruit Growing, of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus

Belarusian potato biography

The history of potatoes in Belarus is no less dramatic. They penetrated our region not from the Russian Empire, as some sources claim, but from Scotland. In the Rzecz Pospolita, the first potato arrived in 1676, but planting commonly began only in the mid-18th century. Poor peasants used potatoes to make soup, added it to bread and seldom ate it as an independent dish, preferring to eat food made from grain. In turn, landlords appreciated the miracle-vegetable as food for pigs, cows, sheep, chickens and turkeys.

The potato revolution in Belarus began during WWI. Due to lack of grain, potatoes were widely used for food. Collectivisation and the reduction of personal farms — which came later — contributed to the expansion of the potato fields. It proved to be unprofitable to grow rye and wheat on small areas, but potatoes planted on the same land could feed a peasant family even in the leanest years. As a result, the potato, known as 'bulba' in Belarusian, became another favourite of local cuisine. It was

not however, made into a single common dish: the statement that 'all Belarusian cuisine was based on potatoes' is as false as 'it was Peter I who gave potatoes to us'. In reality, Belarusian cuisine is the oldest in Europe and the potato simply diversified it.

A hidden bank of genetic resources

The history of Belarusian potatoes is a success story for our scientists. At the beginning of 2017, 145 varieties of potatoes were registered in the state register, including 45 of Belarusian origin. In 2011-2016 alone, scientists of the Scientific and Practical Centre for Potato, Vegetable and Fruit Growing of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus created 13 new varieties of potatoes. Compared with imported varieties, our domestic types are more resistant to diseases and pests. For example, potato varieties of Dutch origin need 2-3 more procedures to protect plants against infection with late blight than Belarusian varieties. In 2017, two more types were introduced in Belarus: 'Tolochinsky' and 'Rubin' both boast excellent taste qualities.

Our scientists also take care of future generations. From 2006 to 2010, a national genetic fund was established for the first time in Belarus; it comprises 30 varieties of vegetable crops. Moreover, the potato genetic bank was declared a scientific object of national value. A genetic bank is a special place for storing genetic material. Seeds of potatoes — cultivated and wild, from different countries (Russia, the EU, Ukraine, Belarus, the USA) — are stored literally in banks; this is not a fad by botanists. It is the insurance needed to survive in the event of unforeseen catastrophe. At the same time, seeds in banks are not dead cargo. An active part of this collection is used by scientists; the latter study, reproduce and send their products to selectors. In turn, the base part is carefully stored. This is our strategic reserve which is resistant to a variety of unfavourable factors.

Trends in potato fashion

Like everything in the world, potato also follows its own fashion — i.e. regarding the colour of its skin, starch and ability to be boiled. Residents of the Caucasian republics, Russians, Italians and Moldovans prefer potatoes with red jackets, while the Germans like yellow skins and yellow flesh. The English, in turn, choose white potatoes with white flesh and Americans prefer purple. According to the Scientific and Practical Centre, about 90 percent of Belarusians now prefer potatoes with yellow and creamy flesh. At the same time, our crop breeders love experiments and sometimes like to surprise 'culinary' fashionistas. For example, they have recently bred potatoes with two-colour flesh and a star that appears inside when cut.

By Zinaida **Gonchar**



MORE WORK PLEASE

Agro-mansion owner restores old mill in Postavy District

The desire to save the legacy inherited from our ancestors is natural for many Belarusians and the Doroshevich family is no exception. They have collected old household items related to grain processing and bread baking for many years, while the head of the family — Alexander — co-ordinates the Green Watch eco-movement in the Ostrovets District of the Grodno Region. We investigated how care for the native land and a love of authenticity have led to the purchase of a water mill in the Postavy District.

The family have been planning a purchase of this kind for some time and initially thought of buying a place on the Stracha River, close to their home in the Ostrovets District. However, the mill there was completely ruined, and the process of registration turned out to be too lengthy. Alexander Doroshevich accidentally learnt about a mill offered for sale in the village of Kozlovshchina in the Postavy District. Though 100km from the house, the mill was in good condition. As a result, the family decided to buy it. “We

came and looked at it and were impressed. After our local ruins, where little is left of the original structure, the mill in Kozlovshchina was in a very good — almost working — state. Moreover, the surroundings were a true feast for the eyes,” says Alexander. The land around the mill is extremely picturesque. It is surrounded by the Lasitsa River on three sides, with a small artificial waterfall. In warm weather, visitors can swim and enjoy the surrounding countryside.

According to Alexander, the mill was previously overseen by a local agricultural production co-operative, but no documents relating to it are available. The contract for purchase and sale is registered and, based on it, an application was sent to the land management service of the Postavy District Executive Committee. “We were promised that, by June, the planning papers would be ready. The local authorities have assured us that we will receive all possible support and that, after all the approvals, a permit will be issued stating that the area around the mill can be used to create an infrastructure,” he added. So far, the mill is being planned as a local tourism project and is called Pansky Mlyn (Noble Mill) — being a branch of the Doroshevich family’s agro-mansion.

Collecting piece by piece

Along with the paperwork, Mr. Doroshevich is collecting information about the history of the mill. He’s already learnt it was previously owned by local landlords and was an industrial centre of considerable scale. Apart from performing its primary function, the mill was equipped with electricity generating equipment; thanks to this, the village of Kozlovshchina had access to electricity (in the past, the mansion of Drutsky-Lyubetsky was to be found there). Shingles — wooden roofing material — were produced in the wooden annex to the mill. Furthermore, the Drutsky-





Lyubetsky family had a fish farm. Ponds surrounded the manor; fish caught in the autumn and not sold by winter were put there. With the help of the gateway system, energy was generated by the Lasitsa River; its water flowed through the ponds to prevent the fish from suffocating and have access to fresh water. The mill was built in 1859 — confirmed by a stone at its entrance with the date inscribed. The equipment was updated at least twice: in the 1920s and 1950s. The mill has three floors: one in a recess, of a semi-basement type; the grindstone is above; the equipment for sifting flour is on the third floor. In Soviet times, the third floor was used to store grain, and because of the large volume, the beams were burnt in some places. In addition, an old freight elevator — probably original — has been preserved, as well as various old mechanisms.



Mill, walnut forest and ponds

Alexander says that he needs a considerable amount of money for restoration. He plans to restore the mill to its working condition, preserving old installations and dis-

mantling all non-original elements. He also dreams of renewing the infrastructure around the mill: creating ponds and putting fish there. The man wants to make it as close as possible to the original version. After all, there are few such well-preserved water mills in Belarus.

“I’ve already taken advice from specialist-restorers. We agreed that — after clearing the mill of debris and unnecessary waste — we will pass certification of the existing facilities and estimate how much they are damaged and what needs to be restored. We will then create a restoration project. We want to plant a walnut forest in the area served by the mill, with cedars, hazel, edible oak, walnut and walnut trees.” After the final restoration, access for tourists will be opened to the mill. Its building will house an exhibition devoted to the history of the objects. Items of everyday life — such as stupas, grinders, scales kept at the mansion — will be displayed here. Depending on demand, the issue of accommodation for tourists will be discussed. So far, there is enough surrounding land to put tents in the summer.



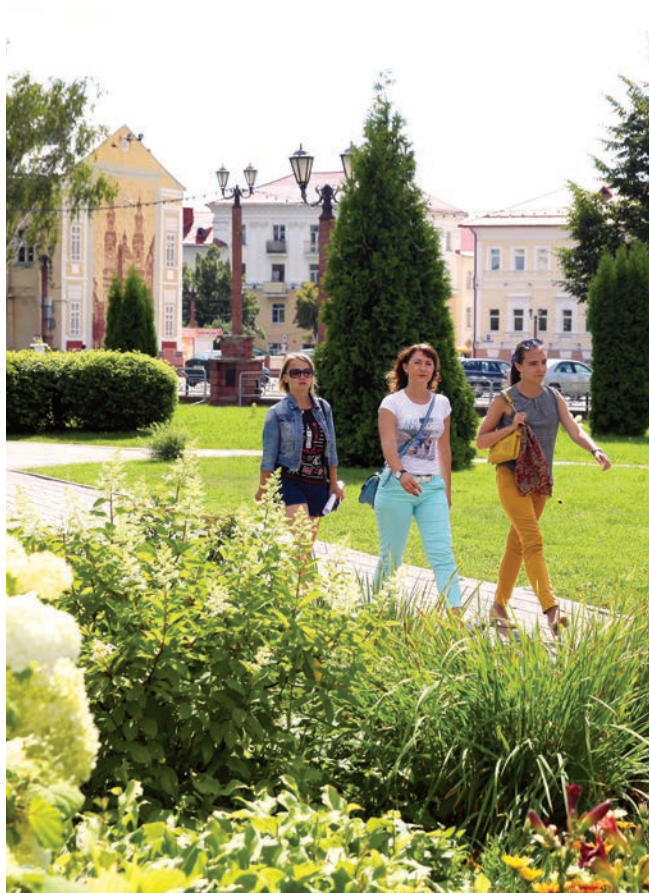
Work begins

At present, the owner plans to restore inside and outside the building and work has already been started. Volunteers have been recruited, and the first cleaning has taken place. Simultaneously, Mr. Doroshevich has placed a project for Pansky Mlyn on a crowd-funding platform to collect money for restoration and the necessary works. “Previously, we sent 10 percent of our mansion’s income to charity, buying office equipment for schools. From now on, funds will be used for the restoration of the mill. We do not view it as a business project. We simply want people to see its interior after a while,” Alexander stresses. Another campaign to clean the venue took place on May 12th and, in June, the first trees of the future forest will be planted.

By Andrey Shcherbitsky

POLOTSK ANCIENT AND NEW

Modern Polotsk is impossible to imagine without the wonderful Dvina River, with its cathedral on the steep bank, beautiful residents and blossoming nature. We were lucky to visit this city at the end of spring when we could breathe the warm air with the dizzying aroma of lilac in the most unusual colours, chestnuts, acacia and jasmine...

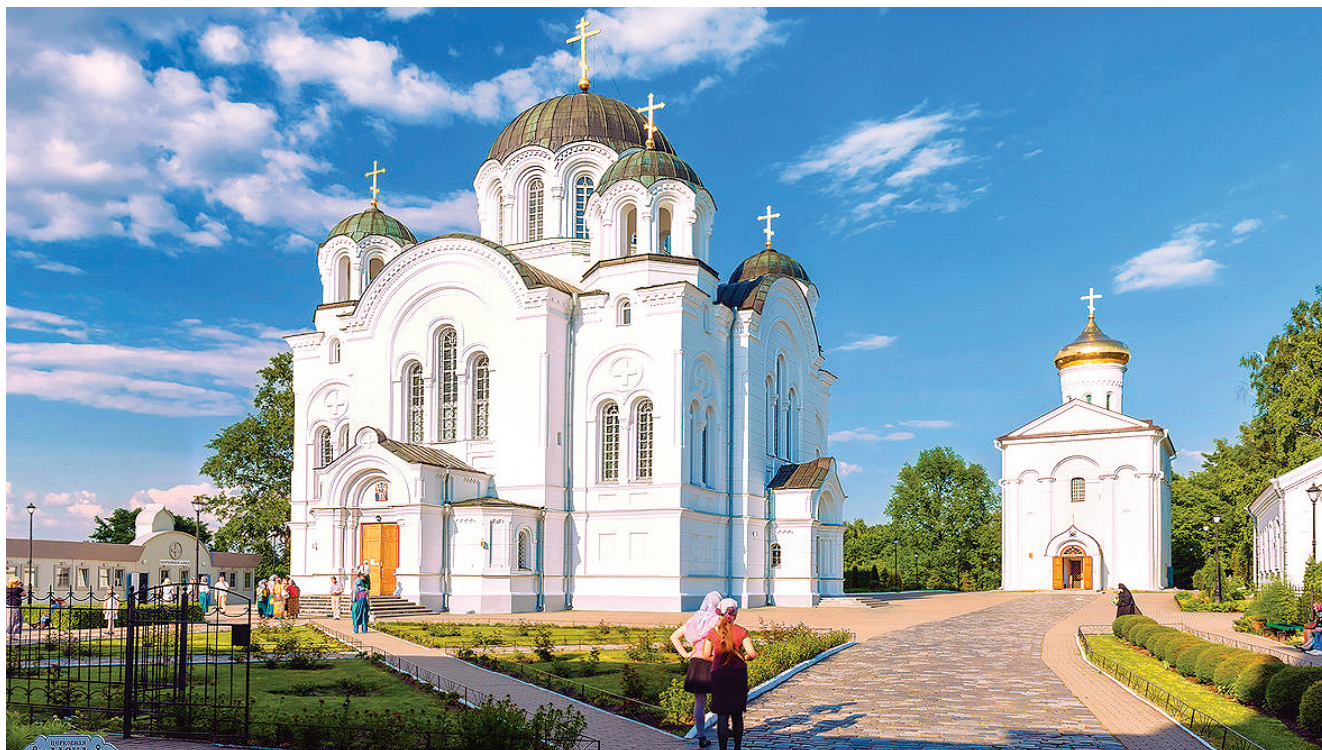


The best view of the city of course, is from the wide river. This view was seen by visitors sailing 'from the Varangians to the Greeks' and merchants who were returning to northern lands. Polotsk has fought, surprised and conquered, sinking forever into the heart.

The monument to the first printer, Francysk Skaryna, in the central square is a firm favourite, honoured and famous in the city. Skaryna looks on the modern streets, as well as Polotsk residents and its guests who live, fall in love, kiss and make dates near the monument. They read while waiting: some read books or newspapers but more often it's a smartphone, tablet or a laptop. Life continues to change and Francysk Skaryna will soon see something completely new. However, these wonderful changes would not have happened without his help.

The first mention of the city is in the Tale of Bygone Years in 862. Polotsk is one of the oldest cities of the Eastern Slavs, the centre of the Polotsk Principality which includes the area of current Vitebsk, and the Mogilev and Minsk regions. During the reign of legendary Duke Vseslav, nicknamed the Magician, in the 11th century, the principality reached its greatest point and Polotsk was a major rival for Kiev...

'Oh, I have been to many places but Polotsk is like my first love! It is the best... It can't be confused with any other city says a smiling man. Nowhere else are the past and present intertwined as in Polotsk. One looks on the magnificent St. Sophia Cathedral — white against the background of blue sky



— and has the feeling that time has stopped, and you don't know which century you're in. Then, a mobile phone rings in my pocket and the voice of my wife, who was born in Polotsk, returns my thoughts from the past to the present. I tell her what I see and where I'm walking, and she gives me advice on where to go next. I hear love for Polotsk in her voice and at the same time sadness that she isn't here with me to enjoy it.

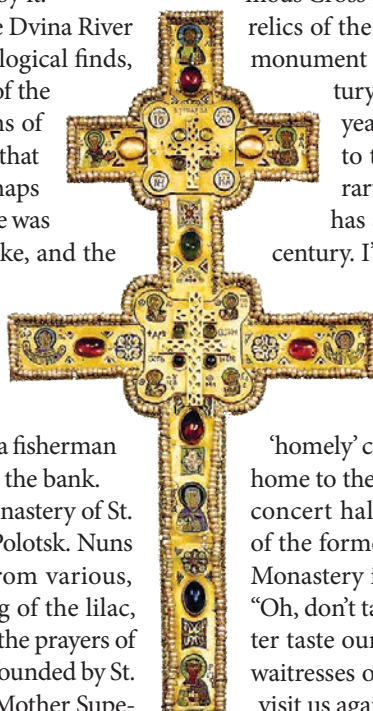
Since the times of the ancient chronicle, the Dvina River has overflowed many times and only archaeological finds, washed by the waves to the banks, remind us of the city's glory. The local boys often find the coins of long lost states and glass beads... We imagine that many years ago, Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya perhaps touched the newly-discovered bead. Maybe, she was walking along the bank, a string of beads broke, and the glass pieces scattered and now, one lost almost a thousand years ago, is found... "Today the fishing was bad as it's hot, but yesterday, you should have seen the two chubs I caught in the Dvina River. They were very beautiful! I live here but work at a factory in Novopolotsk," a fisherman tells me, while packing his fishing rod away on the bank.

Life follows its own laws in the Saviour Monastery of St. Yevfrosiniya without which we can't imagine Polotsk. Nuns in black clothes, pilgrimages and tourists from various, sometimes remote, countries, the blossoming of the lilac, the shine of domes and silence through which the prayers of evening service are heard. The monastery was founded by St. Yevfrosiniya in the 1120s and she was its first Mother Super-

rior. On the site of the wooden church, the architect Ioann built the famous stone Saviour Transfiguration Church — a masterpiece of the architectural school and one of the most ancient in Belarus. According to the legend, St. Yevfrosiniya lived there herself, in a small monastic cell, to the right of the choir.

In Polotsk, under her order, Lazar Bogsha created the famous Cross (1161). Today it's honoured as one of the major relics of the Belarusian nation and is viewed as a unique monument of ancient Belarusian culture of the 12th century. However, in 1941, the relic was lost. Fifty-six years later, a solemn return of the restored Cross to the church took place, created by contemporary master Nikolay Kuzmich. This small church has also preserved unique frescoes from the 12th century. I'm confident that these were seen by Francysk Skaryna and Simeon Polotsky — a great Belarusian enlightener, monk, public and church figure, religious scholar, teacher, educator, poet and writer.

Modern Polotsk is a calm, cosy and very 'homely' city. The historic buildings of the cadet corps are home to the university. St. Sophia Cathedral has a famous concert hall where the organ plays, while the building of the former Brethren School of the Polotsk's Epiphany Monastery is occupied by the museum of book printing. "Oh, don't take photos of us; we're not beautiful, you'd better taste our Polotsk draniki. They are delicious," say the waitresses on the boulevard. "We love Polotsk, come and visit us again!"





POSTAVY CITY JUST 45KM FROM PARIS



Postavy, in the west of the Vitebsk Region, looks like a Slovene or Polish city, its late 18th century square having been designed by Italian architect Giuseppe de Sacco

Walking in the English landscape garden of the Tyzenhaus family

Postavy was first mentioned in chronicles in 1409, being home to one of numerous fortresses across the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. From 1770-1780, the role of the city changed, with Grodno head Antony Tyzenhaus founding cloth, linen, weapon, hosiery and carriage manufacturing in the modest town.

Thanks to Italian architect Giuseppe de Sacco, the central square became the country's first stone architectural complex to be completed in one style.

The Tyzenhaus family palace, in classic style, remains today, with its flat-topped design, subtle decor, and simplicity of form, despite numerous changes made over the years. Tyzenhaus introduced white marble sculptures made by Italian masters, while adding artificial ponds and a linden avenue to the grand park, in European style.

Promenading Postavy's quiet streets, it's difficult to believe that, once, it was the scientific and cultural centre of the Vilna (Vilnius) Region. With its schools, theatre and art gallery, including canvases and engravings by Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Rubens, Bruegel and Dürer, it was a place of significance. Konstantin Tyzenhaus also created an ornithological museum, containing three thousand stuffed animals and birds. Just imagine!



Becoming a European miller

Fire, time and natural disasters have been unmerciful to the local mill; two centuries ago, it was rebuilt on the same site, equipped with the latest equipment. It's now a monument of industrial architecture and home to a house of crafts, entitled the 'Old Mill', where you can make pots and bast shoes, or watch professionals doing so. You can also buy souvenirs made by local craftsmen.

While the Tyzenhaus family estate is classic, Postavy's square is Vilna baroque in style, with ornate roofs, turrets and mansards.

Praying for protection

The 43m spire atop Postavy's red-brick Neo-Gothic Catholic church is visible from every corner of the city. Constructed in 1904, by architect Goibel, it is named in honour of Saint Anthony of Padua, a Franciscan preacher-miracle man, and a patron of the poor and of travellers. With bright stained-glass windows, intricate chandeliers and unique paintings, the church attracts numerous tourists, inspiring them to contemplate the eternal.

As in any other Belarusian city, there's an Orthodox church on the square too: the snow-white Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, in Neo-Russian style, with traditional domes. It was built on Myadelka riverbank in 1894. People pray to St. Nicholas for a miracle but the beauty of Postavy is a miracle in itself.

Visiting local Paris

Just 45km from Postavy is Belarus' own Paris. Some say it received its name from Napoleon, who, passing by in 1812, exclaimed that its beauty was like that of the parks of Paris. The truth may be more prosaic. The landowner called the town after a maggot! However, local residents are proud of their town, especially now that they have their own 'miniature' Eiffel Tower.

After Postavy, it's good to visit the village of Mosar. Priest Juozas Bulka served at St. Anna's Church, his prayers and diligence helping the village become free of alcohol dependency. He brought to life the literary expression 'beauty will save the world'. Together with parishioners, he transformed the territory around the church into a real Belarusian Versailles, with Alpine hills, and avenues of exotic trees and bush-

es. Its man-made ponds and lattice bridges are like those in French parks. In front of the church is an exact copy of the Pietà sculpture by Michelangelo. A footpath leads from this sculpture to the highest cross in Belarus, and a picturesque avenue leads towards curative springs. There's no doubt that these features beautify the village of Mosar, making it one of the most memorable in all Belarus.

Learning about the cembalo

Near Postavy is the village of Gruz-dovo, where people have made cembalo musical instruments for several centuries. Known across many Eastern European countries, similar instruments have been available in India and China, but the Belarusian cembalo is special. In Gruz-dovo, people make not only the simple cembalo, but a diatonic version, which has only one tone: F-major.

Local folk group 'Poozerie' was the guest of honour at the traditional International Cembalos and Harmonics Ringing summer festival, attracting many fans annually.

By Kristina **Khilko**



DESDEMONA KEPT IN A BOX MADE FROM AN OLD DOOR FRAME

Thirty years later, FBI agents discover Chagall's stolen picture

Manhattan robbery

"Hello. I have an offer for you," said an unknown voice, to the owner of the Washington art gallery. "You have never seen a Chagall like this." The voice was not lying: the famous painter's 'Othello and Desdemona' had not been seen by anyone for thirty years, since it had been stolen. The collector knew the sad story of the picture very well and immediately dialled the number of the FBI...

"This work by the Belarusian painter, based on Shakespeare's plot, disappeared without trace in 1988, after being stolen from the New York apartment of jeweller Ernest Heller and his wife Rose," said FBI employee, Tim Carpenter. The couple were avid collectors and their rich apartment in Manhattan was more like a museum — with works by Picasso, Renoir, Hopper, sculptures and elegant furniture... Everything had been turned upside down when the family

returned from their vacation. Jewels, carpets, silverware and thirteen of the most valuable pictures — including a Chagall — were stolen. The total cost of the stolen items was around \$1.3m.

"Investigators came to the conclusion that, as the alarm in the apartment was not set off, someone who worked in the building and had access to the security system must have committed the theft," Mr. Carpenter added. "Most likely, this was one of the guards who never came to work again. He probably stole the works to order — passing the canvas to an intermediary who, in turn, sold it to the customer. However, the deal failed, and new attempts were made

to retrieve the paintings, with the help of an intermediary, in 2011 and 2017. The expensive work of art spent thirty years in an attic in Maryland in a homemade box made from a door jamb and plywood with a label reading: 'Miscellaneous. School works'.

Sentimental value

The police report called Chagall 'a Belarusian artist' though the picture was drawn during his stay in Paris. Chagall painted 'Othello and Desdemona' in 1911. The Hellers owned the picture for over fifty years: the father of Ernest Heller — who was eight at that time — bought it from Chagall in 1913 for \$50. In 1974, Sotheby's estimated the canvas

HIS PAINTINGS SIGNED AS LEVITAN'S

Why are the paintings of Marc Chagall still emerging around the world? According to Ms. Voronova, the key to the matter is in the constant wanderings of the artist, "In 1911, Marc Chagall had to leave Paris for Russia. He left his works in storage to his friends. His absence

because of WWI and the revolution lasted for several years and his disciples thought they'd never see Chagall alive again. Workshops were split and dismantled; painters used his canvases for their work and drew on them. It's hard to say how many works were lost in this way. In 1914, the first large personal exhibition of Chagall was held in Berlin and the canvases suffered a sad fate: they also disappeared. Moreover, in his 'My Life' book, the artist wrote that he



INTERESTING FACTS

■ Marc Chagall is the only artist in the world whose stained-glass windows decorate cathedrals of almost all faiths around the world: synagogues, Lutheran churches and Roman Catholic churches.

■ By order of Charles de Gaulle, the artist decorated the plafond of the Grand Opera in Paris. Two years later, he painted two panels for the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

■ In July 1973, a museum opened in Nice: the Biblical Message of Marc Chagall.

■ In bad times, he painted only biblical scenes or flowers. Flowers sold better, and it upset the artist to paint for this purpose.

at \$50,000-65,000 but Ernest did not want to sell the picture, saying it was of sentimental value. Art critics are 99 percent certain that the picture is original. On its front is Chagall's signature and, on the back, there are the inscriptions: '1967, Kunsthau, Zurich'. This is the place where the picture was exhibited. Authenticating the works of the Vitebsk genius is one of the most difficult things to do. To protect his rights, a Chagall

Committee has even been established in Paris.

"When assessing works, they have an important job to do. If the picture submitted for examination is fake, then it is destroyed," the Director of the Marc Chagall Museum in Vitebsk — Irina Voronova — explains. "Chagall's 'Othello and Desdemona' is unlikely to experience such a fate. It has a good provenance [the history of creation and ownership of a piece of art]. The motives of the artist's favourite

plots also come to the fore: Desdemona — lying in bed — looks like a woman in childbirth from Chagall's 'Birth.'"

Destiny to be decided by heirs

Neither the thief, nor the intermediary will be punished, since the statute of limitations has expired. The owners of the canvas died a long time ago and the picture will be handed over to their four heirs: grandchildren Bella, Meret and Piet Meyer and illegitimate son David McNeil. They have already announced that they will send the picture to auction. Part of the proceeds will go to the insurance company which, thirty years ago, transferred \$100,000 to the Hellers for their lost Chagall. Another sum is to be donated to charity: a colony of artists founded in 1907, the Columbia University and a medical centre in New York. However, experts believe that 'Othello and Desdemona' will not set new records. The lost and newly found canvas is unlikely to generate more than \$1m.

By Yulia Konovalova

often took his works to the store and the seller used to put Levitan's signature on them to encourage them to sell.

"Given the circumstances it's surprising that, from time to time, things still come up," Irina says. Part of the lost paintings were restored by the artist personally and therefore some of his pictures now exist in two versions — i.e. 'Above the City' (featuring Chagall and his beloved Bella hovering over Vitebsk). One

of these paintings (the larger) is kept at the Tretyakov Gallery and the other is stored in Europe.

Paintings by the master can be found in different parts of the world. Marc Chagall National Museum of Biblical Message in Nices in the largest museum there. Belarus now has three works by the master. Vitebsk — Chagall's homeland — also has his unique graphic drawings.

CHINA: POETIC PORTRAIT OF THE COUNTRY AND NATION

The attention of Belarusian translators to Chinese poetry at the beginning of the 21st century testifies to the appearance of a new level of Belarusian-Chinese literary ties

In 2012, an anthology of Chinese poetry — ‘Under the Dragon’s Wings: One Hundred Poets of China’ was released, translated by laureate of the State Award of the Republic of Belarus, Nikolay Metlitsky. In January 2013, this work was marked with a Special Prize by the President of the Republic of Belarus. At the end of 2014, the Zvyazda Publishing House launched a series entitled ‘Light Signs: Poets of China’, covering four books by Wang Wei, Du Fu, Li Bo and Ai Qing. They were presented at the 22nd Minsk International Book Trade Fair, where China exhibited as an honorary guest. Today, a team of translators is being put together, who will translate from the original for the famous Belarusian poets Naum Galperovich, Ales Badak and Leonid Dranko-Maisyuk. At first, Darya Nechiporuk and Yelena Romanovskaya were translated directly from the Chinese language, joined by young literary specialists: Yulia Oleichenko, Valeria Radun, Tatiana Sivets, Rogned Malakhovsky and Alexander Yemelyanov-Shilovich.

One after another, books were released by Li Qingzhao, Meng Haoran, Wang Guozhen, Xu Zhimo and Weng Yiduo.

A new project is currently being planned, the Mastatskaya Litaratura Publishing House released the anthology, ‘Petals of the Lotus and Chrysanthemum: One Hundred Poets of China of the 20th Century’, translated by Nikolay Metlitsky. Verses by poets from Huang Zunxian to Shu Cai are collected in one edition. The first of these poets was born in 1848 and worked in literature until his death in 1905. The ‘youngest’ of the one hundred poets, who created a poetic portrait of China in the 20th century, is Yin Lichuan, who was born in 1973. However, as far as this and other poets are concerned, Nikolay Metlitsky chose to translate their verses written in the 21st century. It seems that, in this way, the translator is giving a signal both to the publishing house and himself: new work still lies ahead that will be illuminating for the poetic world of a new century of Chinese history.

Turning the pages of the anthology, we can see that it contains several works

connected with Russia and the Soviet Union, which vividly remind us about the traditionally good relations of the Chinese with their neighbours: ‘A Sea in Vladivostok’, ‘In Moscow’ (Ying Xiuren), ‘News about Victory near Stalin-grad’ (Yuan Shui-po), ‘I’m Going along Baikal’, ‘Siberia’ and ‘Near the Monument to Pushkin’ (Yan Chen), ‘A Meeting with Mayakovsky’ (Ge Bizhou), ‘Near the Quiet Lake Razliv’, ‘To Yuri Gagarin’ (Li Ying), and ‘Evoked by the June Hurricane Night in Moscow’ (Ying Yuan).

Did these poets actually visit Belarus? What do they know about our country, its history and modernity? These questions are rhetorical nowadays, though one of the authors of the anthology — Chinese poet Xiao San — was in Belarus in 1936 at the session of the Union of Soviet Writers in Minsk. This was mentioned in the newspapers ‘Zvyazda’ and ‘Rabochiy’ (current ‘SB. Belarus Segodnya’), as well as Litaratura i Mastatstva. When a Belarusian poetic anthology of China’s poets of the 21st century appears, it is likely to contain the works about Belarus and our special places.



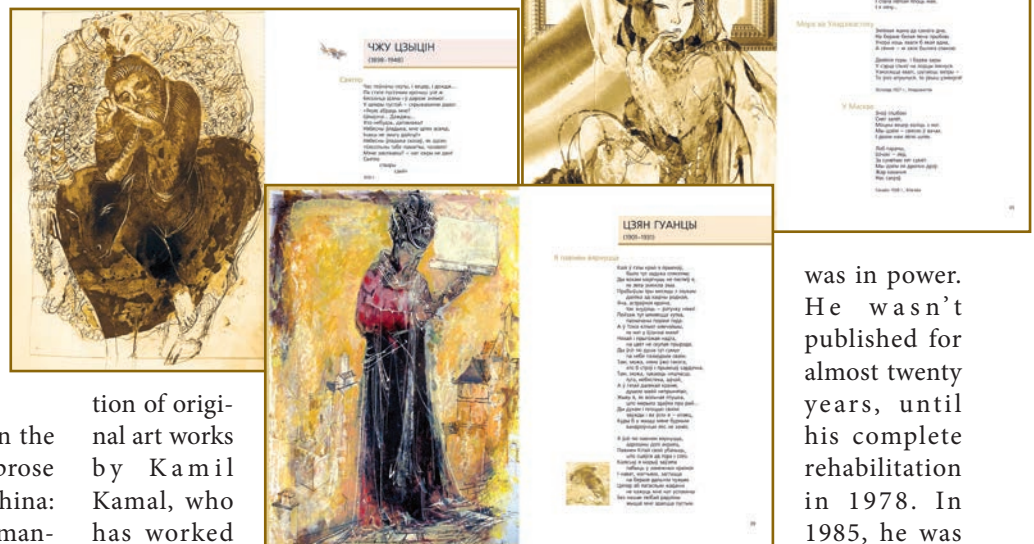
The Mastatskaya Litaratura Publishing House has released 'Petals of the Lotus and Chrysanthemum: One Hundred Poets of China of the 20th Century' anthology, collecting in one volume verses by poets from Huang Zunxian to Shu Cai

Furthermore, Chinese writers are also expected to visit the international symposium, 'Writers and Time', begun in 2015. Chinese figures of art, and calligraphy specialists also visit our literary museums, especially those of Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas. Moreover, recent years have seen meetings with Belarusian literary figures in Beijing and other cities of the Heavenly Empire. In the 21st century, Belarusian poets, prose writers and translators visited China: Naum Galperovich, Mikhail Shimanovsky, Mikhail Shelekhov, Valery Kazakov, Alexander Kozhedub, Darya Netchiporuk, Yelena Romanovskaya and Alexey Charota...

The illustration of the books in the anthology 'Petals of the Lotus and Chrysanthemum', create a special atmosphere for reading Chinese poetry in the Belarusian language. The artist of the book is a Belarusian book graphical painter of Azerbaijan origin, Kamil Kamal. It sometimes feels that it's an art volume in front of us, which contains scenes from Chinese poetry. If someone is brave enough to make a presentation of the anthology, it should be combined with an exhibi-

tion of original art works by Kamil Kamal, who has worked with inspiration and love for China and Chinese art and words.

Nikolay Metlitsky showed familiarity and knowledge of the history of Chinese culture in choosing whose works to translate. These verses represent the fates of Chinese masters of the word — rich in various events, e.g., of Mao Zedong or Ai Qing. The first of the poets brought China to a communist system and was leader of the state for almost twenty-seven years, while Ai Qing survived arrests and the prisons of Guomindang then exile, for his criticism of the repression of freedom of speech when Mao Zedong



was in power. He wasn't published for almost twenty years, until his complete rehabilitation in 1978. In 1985, he was even awarded

the Literary Award of the President of France, François Mitterrand.

Poetry is a mirror of civil and social events, an imprint of a nation's fate. It's no accident that the foreword to 'Petals of the Lotus and Chrysanthemum: One Hundred Poets of China of the 20th Century' is entitled 'China: A Poetic Portrait of the Country's Development and People's Fate'. Let's hope that those keen on poetry, as well as all those who are interested in China and its fate in the 20th century, will admire and enjoy the book.

By Ales **Karlyukevich**

GRATEFUL FOR EVERYTHING, OR BORIS GERLOVAN'S LESSONS

History does not recognise the subjunctive mood. Yet, if it were possible to turn back the clock, today's graduates of the course by Boris Gerlovan — People's Artist of Belarus — would still enter the Academy of Arts' Department of Monumental and Decorative Arts specialising in theatrical and decorative painting, to learn scenography from the master.

They each revealed their thoughts in a personal conversation on the eve of receiving their diplomas. To begin with, I will gladly present the master craftsman whom the BelTA News Agency named 'the alchemist of our time', on his 80th birthday. President Lukashenko's congratulation read: 'You've contributed greatly to the preservation, development and promotion of the best traditions of our national culture. Thanks to your talent, people of different generations both in Belarus and abroad, discover the value and significance of theatrical art for themselves.'

This unique Titan of Belarusian theatre is a brilliant artist who has been enriching the stage art of Belarus for over half a century. Boris Gerlovan is a laureate of awards of the USSR and Belarus, also holding the Yevstigney Mirovich Theatre Award. He is a winner of the Special Prize of the President of the Republic of Belarus for his contribution to the education of creative youth. The Union of Theatre Figures of Belarus also acknowledged him: Mr. Gerlovan was awarded its highest prize — the Crystal Paulinka, for his great personal contribution to the development of theatrical art, he was also awarded the Medal and Order of Francysk Skaryna.

Performances with the scenography of Boris Gerlovan have become legendary at the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre, where, since 1976, he has worked as the chief artist. He has prepared over 100 productions, also working on decorations for performances in other cities in Belarus and abroad: Russia, Poland, Slovenia and Ireland. Among his best and most unique works are the performances 'The Middle Class Gentleman' by Moliere, 'The Last Chance' by Vasil Bykov, 'Wisdom' by Nikolay Matukovsky and many others.

Mr. Gerlovan worked with many talented filmmakers — including Boris Erin, Georgy Shcherbakov, Vladimir Malankin. However, most of his productions were done in creative partner-



ship with Valery Raevsky. As reported by BelTA (<http://www.belta.by>), a kind of decorative Belarusian suite was made up by performances of Yanka Kupala's 'Broken Nest', Ivan Chigrinov's 'Weeping', Alexey Dudarev's 'Threshold'. The best achievements of the Kupala Theatre of recent decades are associated with the name of Boris Gerlovan: 'Romulus the Great' by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 'Chichikov' by Nikolay Gogol, 'Lost Paradise' by Andrey Kureichik. His 'Prince Vytautas' and 'The Black Lady of Nesvizh' by Alexey Dudarev were a success, creating a festive journey to our legendary past.

"I'm always very interested in the search, the state when I still can't work out what I need, when I can create, fan-

***My students
are my life,
artistry,
pride
and youth.
I wish
success
to them
all***



tasise and not worry that I don't have enough money for my ideas. Such a state can probably be compared with a premonition of love," Mr. Gerlovan said, in an interview to the news agency about the creative process.

The craftsman has lectured at the Academy of Arts of Belarus for the last thirty years and his new alumni are soon to follow. Four students are gaining their diplomas with Mr. Gerlovan. I interviewed them all, asking about their studies at the Academy, their first experience of theatre productions, about the subtleties of the profession of the stage designer and, of course, about their attitude to their teacher Gerlovan... below are their thoughts.

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Lidia Malashenko:

A theatre is a world in which you have to have passion. Sometimes it seems to me that my love for the theatre is in my genes. I have never regretted that I came to the Academy six years ago, although it seems to me that for most of the six years — while getting ready for productions — we were crying instead of sleeping! I got into the Academy at my first attempt, to begin my studies on a free basis. I was incredibly happy, but when my course began, it was unexpectedly difficult. There were so many questions that none of us could guess the answer to.

My choice of the profession of artist-set designer was a conscious one. Since childhood I drew well and studied at the Minsk State Gymnasium-College of Arts. In the past, I experimented with batleika and dolls but quickly realised that I wouldn't be a very good actress. As a result, as a teenager, I asked myself how I could both paint and at the same time be in the theatre. The answer came to me quickly. Furthermore, I also saw the performances that Boris Gerlovan had created.

The strongest impression from my years of study was my practice. My first production on the Yanka Kupala Theatre's small stage was 'Antigone', directed

by Nikolay Kopyltsevich — a disciple of Nikolay Pinigin. This was my third year at the Academy and I felt as if I had gained some experience. However, real life work with actors and production workshops differed greatly from my ideas about how it should be done. These are completely different things: a plan of the play with its tiny scale in comparison with the stage, and the embodiment of the scenery. Not everything went smoothly; I had to master the skills that existed in my head in theory. I also didn't want to show my lack of knowledge when going to workshops and talking to professionals. I had to learn quickly. It was a kind of psychological balancing act, but I wasn't worried, because the process when a mock-up turns into a performance is akin to magic. I was inspired by the fact that it will be easier to carry on: I will know how to communicate in workshops and how to ask for what I need from them.

This was taught me by Mr. Gerlovan. Without false modesty I can now say: I am not afraid of anyone. I will not get into a professional situation when I see no way out. Our teacher also taught me to distinguish between personal relations and work, saying that they should not influence the process of creating a performance. As he often repeated: 'A performance is your ultimate goal'. Professionalism goes hand in hand with quality and even a seam in a suit at a dressmaker should be done with the mark of quality. I had a useful experience in Karaganda last summer, in the Musical Comedy Theatre, where I got into a difficult situation. I had to explain to the accounts department why I needed such expenses for suits and couldn't agree to a smaller budget. If you want a bad performance, you can have it — I said. I also had a disagreement with one of the women who did not want to sew on the buttons saying it was manual work; she eventually did as I asked. Moreover, Mr. Gerlovan also taught us that if we had learned something, then we should not doubt ourselves, but if, for example, a carpenter

sees your drawing and suggests another option, you have to agree with him. This is teamwork, when all members are aiming for a quality performance.

A highlight of my student years was a trip to Prague's quadrennial in 2015. This international competition for scenogra-



phy and theatre architecture is the largest and most prestigious in the world. It also provides a unique opportunity to meet theatrical cultures and artists from around the world, share experiences, discover new theatrical trends and technical opportunities. I am still on friendly terms and continue correspondence with students from Britain, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand, Mexico and Hong Kong. We — Mr. Gerlovan's students — held our own: after all, our academic school is good but as I see it, we stage designers lack opportunities during our studies to work closely with future directors. If we could prepare productions at the Academy during our studies, then we'd go into theatres more prepared. I like that my profession and my hobby coincide. I believe that I will go through all my life with such passion. When I grow old and

become successful, I hope I will still say that I made the right choice.

I start my professional career at the New Drama Theatre where I'll be going after graduation. I hope to succeed and wish my fellow students the same.



Alexandra Kovalchik:

The theatre was not just a dream for me but my natural habitat: my grandfather Mikhail Kovalchik, is a theatrical director and my father Sergey Kovalchik is the same. They are both successful directors: my grandpa at the Belarusian Academic Music Theatre and my father at the Maxim Gorky National Academic Drama Theatre (known as the Russian Theatre). My mother — Victoria Kovalchik — also works there as an actress. They made a whole set — apart from a stage artist, so I've joined them in this role. Seriously, I've enjoyed drawing since childhood and was attracted by the world of backstage theatre. It seemed magical with its special smells, transitions, make-up and costumes. I only needed to learn

how to create this magic: I was involved in the process during my student years. Time will show whether this was successful.

As soon as I faced practical work at the theatre, I was shocked by the conflict with production. I was struck by the enthusiasm of the workshops at the theatre. During my 4th year at the Academy; director Sergey Kovalchik suggested I make the costumes for the fairy tale 'By the Pike's Will'. The main designer — Alesya Soroka — had already prepared the scenography and I had to make 30 costumes very quickly. I will not say that all of my ideas pleased the director, but in the end, we came to a consensus. I often recalled how Mr. Gerlovan said that models and costumes are one side of the process but there is also a director's conception that may not coincide with your own ideas. Of course, I was disappointed when something didn't work well, but I never regretted that I was studying here.

My favourite subject was composition — from the first day and until graduation. It was terribly hard. I suffered from sleepless nights and stress... Mr. Gerlovan is a demanding teacher. In the junior courses his style of training seemed incredible. He always wanted us to prove our ideas, the viability of our compositions. Later, in the senior courses, I got my head around it. I remember how I was insisting on my view in a conversation with the teacher. 'Lysistrata' by Aristophanes was my course project. I imagined an image of a column in the form of the Caryatid; it had to rise up slowly... I do not remember exactly what I said but Mr. Gerlovan was ready to agree with me. I was very happy about that. He taught us the ability to defend our ideas,

to believe in them and in ourselves and to be persistent.

The quadrennial in Prague — where I met artists from South America and Europe — showed that we are very different. We differ from Lithuanian and Polish scenographic culture, for example. Lithuanians tend to minimalism, while Asian artists pay special attention to details. Our school is the school of classical scenography based on academic traditions. This is its strength and, in part, weakness. I think we should not be afraid to experiment, which, by the way, is increasingly penetrating Belarusian theatre.

To be happy in the profession I think you should not lose the desire to improve. I also want to travel, see the world, communicate with interesting people. Of course, I also want to stage performances in creative collaboration with a director with whom we'll enjoy complete mutual understanding.

Yekaterina Shimanovich:

After graduating from the I.O. Alhremchik Gymnasium-College of Arts, I was determined to enter the Academy of Arts' Department of Monumental and Decorative Arts — specialising in painting. However, when

I took my documents to the Academy, I found out that the department was closed: it was the last day for applications. As a result, I applied to the Theatrical Decorative Painting Department and do not regret now at all. When recalling those times, I believe in fate. It turns out that I joined Mr. Gerlovan's course by



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page 43 chance. However, I can hardly imagine another profession for myself now. I was too late for the first lecture. I remember entering the room with an apology. Everyone was looking at me, including Mr. Gerlovan and I was embarrassed.

I have never been disappointed that fate played such a trick with my enrolment; my professional future was based upon it. Strange as it may seem, the first year of study was easy for me. I was proud when — during the first semester's formal composition, as we all were trying to understand what a layout was like and how to work with it, Mr. Gerlovan praised me. He now admits, my first project was accepted unconditionally. My inspiration was inexhaustible. There was so much strength and energy... It began getting more difficult after this. Like my other my classmates, I complained about lack of time and found it difficult to work... Mr. Gerlovan demanded irrefutable evidence as to why you are working this way rather than that... Sometimes it seemed that you would burst with explanations, and he would continue repeating: 'Why? Prove it...'

I will never forget how I worked on the layout for the unfinished script of Alexey Balabanov's 'My Brother Died' (this Russian actor authored the well-known 'Brother' film). The layout was ready, and I proudly thought I would have time until the commission, including Mr. Gerlovan, gathered on the eve of the viewing. I was happy, but do you know what happened? Right before the preview I fell onto the layout: I either stumbled or got caught on something. The construction bent, and I was in hysterics. If it were not for my parents, who are designers, I would certainly be lost. They worked all night and sent me away to calm down.

I was very lucky having the chance to participate in an international student exchange programme. Thanks to that project, I studied for four months at the Kunst University in Linz, Austria. There I realised one very impor-



tant truth: you need to live, study, work and rest so that you get pleasure from all these. The culture of work and the culture of leisure are equally important. In Linz, I became friends with many of my peers, some guys from Poland and Romania became my friends. They are more liberal than us — being less complex and fixed on problems. They prefer to act and not to fall into depression if a mistake occurs. Perhaps I was just lucky enough to meet such friends. After Linz, I became a little simpler. I would say, it's easier to deal with difficult issues for me now. I've learnt how not to dramatise problems but solve them.

Learning from Mr. Gerlovan is a rich life experience, it's just invaluable! It seems to me I will always remember with pleasure and gratitude how he transformed us into staunch personalities with a tempered character.

Thanks to him, I learned to treat both my mistakes and achievements with humour.

Of course, I can openly admit that I'm very pleased to win Belgazprom-bank's 'Autumn Salon-2017' competition jointly with Sergey Ashukha; we presented a series of decorative works — 'Songs of Life'. I also recollect with pleasure my victory in the 'Fine Art' nomination at the Delphic Games-2012 in Kazakhstan's Astana; this was the time when I began my studies at the Academy. I am grateful to Victoria Ignatenko — the organiser of our group, the Head of Educational Projects and PR Department at the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts — for that trip.

I experienced the strength of the profession of the artist-stage designer eighteen months ago, as soon as I joined the team of the Chief Artist of Belarus' Bolshoi Theatre — Alexander Kostyuchenko. Under his guidance, I was responsible for costumes for 'Cavalleria Rusticana'. It was difficult but interesting. Of course, I was excited when working with such venerable masters of the opera scene as Nina Sharubina, Stanislav Frankovsky, Yekaterina Golovleva, Oksana Volkova, Stanislav Trifonov... It was necessary to take into account their figures so that my costumes made them feel comfortable. The Bolshoi Theatre's artistes are really kind and treated me — a beginner — well. I became friends with them. Several months ago, I made a scenography for performances staged at the Yanka Kupala Theatre's small stage. My other work includes scenery and costumes for the play based on Andrus Gorvat's 'Radio Prudok' — staged by actor Roman Podolyako. I really enjoyed working with him as a director as he is open to new ideas. There were, however, difficulties with technical issues but we overcame them. As a result, everything turned out great. My teacher Mr. Gerlovan attended all the performances: 'Matches' staged by director Tatiana Larina, 'Elza's Land' by Alena Ganum (I worked on the scenery for

this play with Sergey Ashukha) and the recent premiere. I think he was pleased and that's why I'm doubly happy. I will never forget his embarrassed smile on the day of his birthday. We presented him a voucher for swimming with dolphins: the group decided to creatively congratulate him. I wish my dear teacher health and creativity so that he can continue teaching the art of scenography to those who come after us.

Sergey Ashukha:

When I entered the Academy of Arts, it seemed six long years would be ahead, but they have passed quickly. I am very glad to reach the finish line. I am also glad that my teacher was Boris Gerlovan. He taught me the profession. I calmly accepted his methods and his exacting nature. Before becoming a student, I worked at Gomel's Youth Theatre as a decorator, after graduating from the Gomel art school: that year, the Academy was not enrolling new students and I wished to enter only this establishment. While

working at the Gomel theatre, I got to know the theatrical life from inside, getting acquainted with the process of production and performance preparation. I understood that a tough approach to my studies was necessary and exactingness was really appropriate: after all, an artist-set designer has no right to make mistakes even for the reason that they are connected with production. After all, this work costs money.

I am grateful also to the Maria Sharapova Foundation which — jointly with the United Nations Development Programme — has established scholarships for students who have the status of victims of the Chernobyl nuclear power



*I am very glad to reach the finish line.
I am also happy that my teacher
was Boris Gerlovan; he revealed
the secrets of profession
of a stage designer*

plant accident or who have lived at least 10 years in one of the districts of Gomel, Brest and Mogilev regions. Maria wanted to allocate money to representatives of artistic specialties. As a result, I was among them. I would also like to thank Yekaterina Kenigsberg — the Head of the Academy's International Relations Department — for an opportunity to take my works to the exhibition project of the Academy of Arts at the Dresden School of Fine Arts. There was also a trip to a Vienna university where we learnt — with help of local artists — about new technologies without which we, modern artist-stage designers, could not manage. I will also be working under the leadership of Yekaterina at the Academy Art Gallery where I have been sent since I studied with their bursary.

Fate is strange. I could also work with design but — thanks to my trip to Dresden — I opened up the world of painting for myself, during my 4th

year at the Academy. I fell in love with it. During my first year of studies, I noticed Katya Shimanovich who attracted my attention with her unusual talent. Katya was the single freshman whose layout was appreciated by Mr. Gerlovan. She is also very sincere and open. I liked her style, charm and contagious laugh... Initially, we were silently competing — proving our artistic credentials. Now I can't imagine my life without Katya. I like working with her. Her ideas are usually interesting and we've also prepared a joint diploma. We exhibit designs of scenography and costumes for 'Midsummer Night's Dream', the 'Bluebeard' fairy-tale, costumes for 'Radio Prudok', dolls and scenery for 'Little Muck'. As soon as we receive our diploma, we'll take these to the Tallinn Russian Puppet Theatre. Summer will pass, then we'll get married.

By Valentina **Zhdanovich**



Sergey Ashukha's work

As always, participants of the 'On Seven Winds' street art festival will be responsible for creativity

WALKING THROUGH THE BAZAAR SEEING ALL THE DELIGHTS

will be orchestras, and the musicians of Emir Kusturica and Goran Bregović will perform at one of the events

As far as the number of projects goes, the 27th International Festival of Arts 'Slavianski Bazaar' is setting a record. The major arena, the Summer Amphitheatre, will host 19 large concerts. The exhibition programme promises to be no less interesting and extensive. An exhibition of Vologda lace will take place in the art museum which will be also showcasing picturesque canvases and drawings of Ilya Repin's Zdravnevo period, alongside his 'Moon Night', from the collection of the National Art Museum of Belarus.

Another unique exhibition space recently appeared in the festival's capital: the Museum of History of Vitebsk Art College, where early 20th century landmark painters of the Russian avant-garde worked. Andrey Dukhovnikov, Director of the Vitebsk Centre of Contemporary Art, states that during the 'Slavianski Bazaar' it will host unmissable exhibitions.

"With the assistance of the Culture Ministry of Belarus and Belgazprombank, an exhibition of the Vitebsk-born representative of the Paris School and outstanding sculptor, Ossip Zadkine, will be unveiled. His 'Return of the Prodigal Son' is to be installed on one of Vitebsk's streets. It will also be exhibited in our museum. Additionally, we'll organise an exhibition of a photo taken by El Lissitzky in 1926 — 'Runner in the City'. We also plan to display the originals of the documents that are kept in the Vitebsk Regional Archives connected with Kazimir Malevich and Marc Chagall."

As in previous years, the Summer Amphitheatre will be the major festival venue. On July 12th, it will host the solemn opening concert. There will be other festival grounds such as the Vitebsk concert hall, which will host a jubilee concert by the composer Igor Luchenok, as well as that of the Gzhel Moscow State Academical Dance Theatre. The stage of the Vitebsk Regional Philharmonic will see a Russian trio of pianists — 'Bel Suono' — that will present a unique piano show.

What new is Vitebsk preparing for the festival

Each year, the organisers of the 'Slavianski Bazaar' try to make the programme as exciting and diverse as possible. The theme of the 27th festival, taking place in Vitebsk from July 7th-18th,

ROMAN SHCHERBYANKOV



SERGEY GOLESNIK

Six-metre long wooden spoon — one of the 'sights' of the festival. It's almost ready

They will be playing the music of Beethoven, Mussorgsky, Strauss and Bach in a modern arrangement. Spectators will also see exciting battles in festival competitions for pop song performers. The geography is constantly expanding. For example, this year, young performers from the UK, Canada and Columbia will take part in the children's competition, while applications to take part in the Vitebsk-2018 international contest of pop song performers have been received for the first time from Guinea and Egypt.

By Sergey Golestnik

Records of the festival

■ The 'Slavianski Bazaar' has its own Record Book. For example, a lengthy marathon of verses, dedicated to Vitebsk, is recognised among the festival's achievements, in addition to a 6-metre-long wooden spoon, created by Belarusian and Lithuanian craftsmen. It's expected that in 2018 a new festival record will be established with the help of circus artistes.

EUGENE CHAPLIN TO BE JURY MEMBER IN GOMEL

Son of the great comedian — Eugene Chaplin — to become a member of jury of first International Circus Arts Festival, Idol-Belarus

Idol-Belarus will take place in the Gomel State Circus from September 13th-16th. The jury at the festival will be composed of big-name circus directors, impresario and iconic cultural figures and also Eugene Chaplin, the filmmaker, screenwriter and son of the great comedian Charlie Chaplin.

The festival will feature five shows. At present, the directorate is busy selecting applications and developing the programme of the upcoming cultural events. The directorate has already reviewed almost a hundred acts.

Organisers are paying special attention to the cultural programme for foreign artists and guests. The

must-see list will include visits to the iconic sights of the region, including the Palace of Rumyantsev-Paskevich — a pearl of the Gomel Region. The participants of the international festival will be also offered the opportunity to taste the national cuisine, including the famous local dish — 'galki'.

The organiser of the first International Circus Arts Festival Idol-Belarus is the Gomel State Circus — an award-winning group of Belarus. The project has been initiated by People's Artists of Russia Askold and Edgard Zapashny and is held under the patronage of the Culture Ministry of Belarus.

By Olga Korneeva





Belarusian opera star Oksana Volkova talks about herself and her profession

You've performed at the best global theatres — such as the Metropolitan in New York, Covent Garden in London and La Scala in Milan. This summer, you'll be at the legendary summer festival in Salzburg — performing Pauline in the premiere production of 'Queen of Spades'. Taking these into consideration, can you say that all your wishes have come true?

I've not sung major parts in these theatres, so I still have something to strive for and dream about. I've never performed in Paris, Sydney or Berlin. I want to sing Charlotte in 'Werther', Princesse de Bouillon in 'Adriana Lecouvreur' and Adalgisa in 'Norma'. I can extend this list further. I would also like to have more opportunities to tour with my family and show the world to my

children. Unfortunately, school dictates its own rules and often separates us.

Is it difficult to be a prima donna and a mother with many children?

I have only two children: a daughter, Renata and son, Arsen. Are they many children? I do my best to devote as much time to my children and to my career as possible. Of course, this would hardly be possible without the help of their grandmothers and my husband, but all my relatives support me. My children also understand the complexity of my work, so I can do what I love. Secondly, I want to note that being a prima donna is not natural for me. I hate it when people think they are superior just because of some success on the stage. I speak to many opera stars and I see that the majority of them are friendly and easy-going people.

Once you wanted to represent Belarus at the Eurovision Song Contest. How did this idea come about and why has it not been implemented yet?

This was a very interesting idea to me. However, it is a song contest, and someone needs to compose the song first. It's not yet been realised, and I don't think now that it will ever happen.

You've won many competitions. Is this the evidence that it's taken you so long to gain recognition?

I was not too lucky at contests. I won only a few and didn't participate for the sake of recognition. When I was a student, I really liked the competitive atmosphere: the excitement, preparation of the programme, competitive spirit. I also gained experience of other singers and new contacts. It was necessary to analyse what is

valued in the world, how winners sing and what I lacked. When I finally realised that I could do something myself, the competition age had passed. I then had to go to auditions for plays — which I really do not like.

Why?

This is because in a short period of time you need to show everything you can do and there's no chance to go back and correct your mistakes. I once made a mistake which I will always remember: I was not very well at the audition coming straight from the plane; I made a mistake with the programme. I hoped that I would not need to sing the most difficult aria, but I was asked to. I was squeezing out the sound like toothpaste from a tube, until, at the most inopportune moment, my voice broke. I think the theatre had never heard such a bad mistake. As a result, I never sang at that theatre, but it was a good lesson for me.

Did you want to become a singer since childhood?

No, in my childhood I wanted to be a cartoon-maker. I imagined it as a very important profession. I thought it was unusual and only a few people wanted to do it; I thought I would have more chances to show off. Actually, on growing up, I did not have a clear plan of what to become. I always loved the musical theatre, but it seemed to me that it was for other — more perfect — people. I did not believe that it would be so easy to become a singing actress. I was preparing for a more serious institution — the Technological Univer-

sity, the Faculty of Certification. I even almost finished the preparatory courses and only failed in chemistry. My mother always reminds me that I owe her a million: that was the price of lessons at that time. At the same time, I was planning to enter the Music Academy to study vocal signing. I really fell in love with the theatre. I was fascinated by the beautiful world of the Kalman operettas and so gradually the desire to be involved in this beautiful world was formed.

Interestingly, your characters are mostly fatal temptresses...

It's great when a woman has a mystery and energy that attracts people. It's really interesting to perform such roles; these women always have a strong character and 'vigour'. It would be difficult for me, for example, to play a convincing Juliet or Gilda if I were a soprano. I have a completely different temperament and character. It is good that nature correctly distributes the roles.

Is your favourite Carmen?

Of course, it's Carmen — three hundred percent. This is my character — regarding voice and temperament. I get great pleasure from this opera, I'm always looking for new colours, shades in the voice and features, details of the character. This opera could hardly be spoiled with direction, because the main thing in it is the story of Carmen and Jose. I love modern productions of Carmen because they are not only relevant today but also very expressive.

By Maria **Babalova**



▶ POWERFUL AND BEAUTIFUL SPECTACLE

With a roar of engines and 6,000 bikers in shining helmets from 12 countries: the H.O.G. Spring Challenge motor season opened in Minsk with a spectacular festival

Accompanied by GAI (Road Traffic Inspection) employees, a column of legendary Harleys, Yamahas, Kawasakis and the no less legendary motorcycles Izh and Minsk, drove from the Mount of Glory along the major avenues of the capital to the ground near the Football Manege, where a show of world stars with flying bikes and superb stunts was held. Belarusian artistes also performed, with an exhibition of rare Harley Davidson models to please the eye, as well as the popular food court. Alexander Borisik was among the participants of the event. He has known bikes well since childhood: his father — an ardent biker — always took him along on motorbike trips. When he takes the wheel, the young man follows certain rules and traditions: 'A motor world means order, rules and rites of initiation. It's a philosophy and way of life. I appreciate such things and I won't ever put my bike into a wheelie at the crossroads or thoughtlessly burn rubber when setting off.'

By Svetlana **Isaenok**

Calling card

■ **Oksana Volkova was born in Minsk. She graduated from the Belarusian Academy of Music, specialising in vocal singing. In 2002, Oksana was invited to the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus and, from 2009-2010, worked for the Youth Opera Programme of the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia. Opera singer Oksana Volkova was the first Belarusian woman to open the season at the New York Metropolitan Opera in the last 100 years. She performed Olga's part in 'Eugene Onegin'. Oksana has been awarded with the Grand Prize of the Special Fund of the President of the Republic of Belarus for the Support of Talented Youth, the Francysk Skaryna Medal for 'prominent artistic achievements, high professional skills and merits in the development of national culture and art', and others.**



ARTUR PRUPAS

COLLECTING TALENT IS WORTHY OF PRAISE

The 27th Republican Festival-Competition of Fashion and Photo — Fashion Mill 2018 — names the winners: the best and the most promising have been chosen from almost a hundred collections of new designers by the international jury. As usual, preference was given to skill, bold ideas and creative imagination rather than to the abstract: this imagination can easily be transferred to a strong manufacturing product.

The Fashion Mill 2018 pleased the visitors with many appeals to the Belarusian theme. In the past, there were plenty supporters of Orsha linen to make it a fashion trend or add national colour with embroidery from their grandmother's linen chest. However, even in comparison with previous years, the character and variety in national culture is amazing. Of course, the competitive slogan

of this year played its role: 'Belarus is a Country of Sport and Creativity'. Meanwhile, creators are creators — able to process any idea in an original and unexpected way. The young designers turned to native landscapes and men's clothes appeared with inscriptions in the Belarusian language. Dresses, skirts and raincoats are decorated with recognisable silhouettes of architectural monuments: Mir Castle, St. Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk, Minsk churches, the National Library. The new generation of fashion designers determines independently what is

a symbol of the country or the personification of homeland for them. Designer Svetlana Knyazeva has, for example, turned to the theme of Kolyady; where the goats are smiling, and Christmas stars are shining on her teenage coats.

“Sooner or later, a person begins to realise their belonging to the nation, the country, the city. We want to find something historical and unique to state proudly: we are Belarusians. It is the easiest way to promote your national culture through clothing. That’s why I’ve decided to use folklore techniques: vytynanka and mythology unique for Belarus; among them are ‘Thunder-Bearer, fern flower, tree of life and Kolyady’. I even named my collection ‘Dyavoya’, after the pagan goddess who protected girls before their marriage,” said the designer.

Awards for the worthy

My many years of attending the festival have not been wasted: I managed to guess almost all the winners. In the ‘Fashion Master Craftsman’ nomination, the 1st place given to Minsker Alexandra Zhuk was no surprise: the experienced participant — who has repeatedly won prizes and held many creative seminars and workshops of the Fashion Mill — won easily and deservedly. Also, second place of Anna Krasner from Vitebsk and third place of Brest’s Anastasia Batrachenko were no surprise: both young fashion designers have already demonstrated their impressive creativity and quality of work at competitions in recent years.

The ‘School of Fashion’ nomination attracted the greatest number of participants. Here, awards are distributed separately for men’s and women’s collections, clothes for children and teenagers. This makes it possible to appeal to different age categories: Belarus needs fashion artists ready to sew for all segments of the population. In the design of women’s and men’s clothing, first place went to Karina Ganina (Vitebsk) and Darya Khilko (Minsk). 1st place for the children’s collection went to Tatiana Rudak from the city of Kirovsk; her humorous clothes with the author’s portraits of cats look modern and recognisable. In teenage fashion, the collection of Alexandra Logvina won; last year, this lady was granted an internship at Svi-

tanak: the jury appreciated her complex cut, original ideas and a charming mixture of patchwork, shabby-chic and pyjama style. The ‘Photo’ nomination was won by Yelizaveta Shaveko (Minsk State Linguistic University), while Natalia Bogdanchik from the Fashion Style podium school won the ‘Miss Model-2018’ title.

From study to production

Fashion Mill is a launching ground for beginner-designers who work under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the National Centre for Art of Children and Youth. As Igor Ivanov — the Head of the Fashion Style state podium school — says, participation in the project is free of charge. “Participants are provided with the services of stylists, hairdressers and make-up artists. They do not need to search models for the catwalk and pay them: the Fashion Style school gives a choice. We are very pleased that, this year, the Bellegprom Concern has taken part in the festival’s work: the winners and prize holders will be presented with fabrics produced at the concern’s enterprises for their further work. We hope to expand co-operation, since many models demonstrated by our participants are suitable for production and can be manufactured even in large batches.”

Winners traditionally receive educational and production related awards: participation in international creative workshops, internships in European fashion houses. To select the most promising young fashion designers, experts from Italy, France, Russia,

Latvia and Georgia have come to Minsk.

“I remember the Bylinsky sisters who, in other years, won the contest twice — while still being schoolgirls!” Dzhemal Makhmudov, from the Russian Silhouette Charity Fund, said. “The girls spent a year selling fish on the market to earn money and sew a collection. After the competition, they received significant support. I want to thank the festival organisers. The Fashion Mill is a unique event. Collecting talent from all over Belarus and giving them a way to progress is worthy of praise.”

By Irina **Ovsepyan**



EMOTIONAL RELEVANCE OF CREATIVE WORKS



Different exhibition halls in a single artistic space feature the works of the Belarusian artists who witnessed the Great Patriotic War. Symbolically, this is taking place when the country is celebrating Minsk's liberation from the fascists on July 3rd, 1944.

Minsk's Palace of Arts Gallery at the Belarusian Union of Artists traditionally exhibits an exhibition of paintings by veterans. The organisers have continued this idea in 2018 and, as a result, the gallery features works by People's Artists of Belarus Victor Gromyko and Leonid Shchemelev, in addition to the Honoured Figure of Culture — Boris Arakcheev. All have personally followed the hard road of the last war and know it from experience. Unsurprisingly, many of their paintings are devoted to the theme of our heroic and tragic past. This time, the gallery has chosen their more positive pictures drawn in recent times; they all radiate optimism and aspirations for the future.

Domestic fine arts have managed to preserve the most serious attitude to the events of the last war. None of the major artists whose names are included in the treasury of our national culture — including Zair Azgur, Val-



People's Artist of Belarus Leonid Shchemelev in his studio

entin Volkov, Andrey Bembel, Ivan Akhremchik, Yevgeny Zaitsev, Mikhail Savitsky, Victor Gromyko, Gavriil Vashchenko, Vladimir Stelmashonok, Mai Dantsig, Leonid Shchemelev, Vasily Sumarev and others — have stayed away from this topic in their work.

The military epoch is a whole world of feelings and experiences, with its social, psychological and moral features. Each generation of artists sought its own key to discovering this world. The art of the 1940s-50s — which is a starting point in the portrayal of military issues — is often reproached for glorifying events. However, when studying these pictures, we should not forget that they nonetheless conveyed sincere feelings. Acting as a document of the age, the personal experience of an artist and part of the general spiritual mood,

they can be adequately understood only in context. An artistic method of the 'classical style' — which required numerous preparatory sketches and drawing — was common for the Belarusian school of socialist realism and led to a unique figurative and literature-style depiction and recreation of war events. The art of that time was a direct response to the military actions which were close to everyone's hearts. As a result, the sharpness and excitement of creative expression, the faithfulness of the depicted images and events, and large scale of the dramatic plots were common.

Some works from that time perhaps lacked psychological depth, but leading artists of the post-war generation discovered convincing visual solutions for their paintings — which

determined the creative longevity of their works. Major compositions by Yevgeny Zaitsev, Sergey Romanov, Ivan Akhremchik, Valentin Volkov and the sculptural portraits of Zair Azgur and Andrey Bembel have become part of our classical art history. An important role in the formation of military-patriotic subjects of the visual arts was played by front-line drawings and sketches; their authors captured the daily war routine. They showed the tragedy of the character's death, confrontation, the bitterness of loss, dramatic fights, the scourge of war and occupation. The partisan story has a leading role; it revealed many different practical and moral aspects of the war, determining the evolution of Belarusian fine art.



page 53 Over time, the attitude towards the military theme began to change. Other motives and accents were emerging and it was not the documentary accuracy coming to the fore but the disclosure of the deep philosophical meaning of events, connections, generalisation and publicity. This new direction enriched and broadened the horizons of fine art; the military-patriotic theme as a whole may have played a major role. The latter was successfully developed by Leonid Shchemelev, Georgy Poplavsky, Victor Gromyko, Nikolay Nazarchuk, Nikolay Nazarenko and Boris Arakcheev. The moral motives — which were seldom revealed in their previous works — began to prevail: the drama of human destinies was depicted on canvas. Mai Dantsig's 'Partisan Wedding', Leonid Shchemelev's 'Birth' and works by Mikhail Savitsky proved to be innovative in the depiction of the subject. Ordinary events were transformed with help of metaphors and symbols. However, interest in the roots of documentary details was awakening. In the 1970s, the work of some artists were full of desire to return to

the past and plunge into truthfulness: multi-figured compositions by Ivan Tikhonov, Anatoly Shibnev and Sergey Romanov confirm this. At the time, Mikhail Savitsky created his unique 'Figures in the Heart' series based on autobiographical material: its pictures were not simply dramatic stories about war trials but monologues of a participant and witness of those horrible events. Mr. Savitsky's interpretation of the military theme stands out for its special emotional nature.

Over time, for many artists — including war veterans, human emotions which were beyond the ideological framework — were becoming key to their depiction of the war. For example, the mother's figure in mourning attire with a child in her arms — drawn by Iosif Belanovich in his 'June 22nd: Brest Fortress' — is associated with the classic motive of commemoration. This theme was lyrically shown in one of the most famous paintings of Fiodor Baranovsky — 'Bath'. A cheerful plot glorifies female beauty and creates a striking contrast to the inhuman tragedy of wartime. In general, since the 1970s, symbolic compositions be-

came popular: through people, nature or architecture. Vladimir Kozhukh's 'Old General and a Boy' (drawn in a minimalistic manner and based on the principle of a fragmentary film shot), religious-symbolic plots of Grigory Nesterov ('Moments of Eternity') and Nadezhda Liventseva ('The Year 1941') are perceived as the continuation of that trend.

However, the main feature of the present exhibition is that the veteran-artists have presented mostly their lyrical landscapes and still-lives. Although the theme of the war continues to return to them — through the choice of the landscape motif ('Above the Buinichi Field' by Boris Arakcheev), the figurative recollection of the past (Alexey Zinchuk's 'Front Roads', Leonid Shchemelev's 'Occupation', Nikolay Nazarchuk's 'Year 1945: from My Biography', Victor Gromyko's 'Dedication to Glorious Scouts of My Regiment').

Sadly, there are not many works by young artists at the show. Only a few dare to address the topic of the so-called 'civic sounding' which envisages their personal great responsibility. It's not the idea that matters: the resistance of this material is the key. The theme



of war — as not only a social but also a cultural phenomenon — does not require the obligatory pathos of the artistic language. It has always been close to the eternal problems of good and evil, happiness and suffering, life and death, loyalty and betrayal — in short, everything that is a solid foundation for creativity in any style. Innovative interpretation of the topic — as observed in the Belarusian art — can appear only as a result of searching for the most relevant concepts, free creative rethinking of the traditional incarnations of the war theme. This will largely depend on the requirements of the time, professional mastery and intellectual experience of a new generation of artists.

No doubt, the war was part of the biography of artists of the older generation. Many of their works have become epic stories — often built on specifics of real plots. However, the farther away from us the military event is, the more often artists turn to them with the help of figurative interpretation: psychological, romantic or lyrical. The war was gaining a 'human' face. The new authors not only reflected certain real circumstances and actions of their



characters but sought associations, expressed emotions, yearned and rejoiced — demonstrating all those feelings on the easel. The painters took the opportunity to reveal secret, intimate thoughts and feelings.

It's true to say that in the 21st century, the military-patriotic genre is developing. The difference is that, previously, the war was described 'in the first person' and authors strictly focused on their own memories. In modern times, they reveal the topic associatively — shifting it to historical grounds, people's courage in their fight against the enemy and depiction of the joy of Victory. The Head of the War Artists' Studio at the Defence Ministry — Nikolay Opiok — states, "Our task is not to forget all the best achieved by our predecessors. Everything depends on artists' abilities and courage, their civic position. If someone aspires to go deeper into history, they should not look exclusively for the most spectacular moments. It is important to show not only victories but also defeats, joy and pain, our strength, courage and bravery. It is necessary to be honest with our history and modern life."

The recent permanent exhibition of the National Art Museum's Contemporary Belarusian Art section presented military-patriotic pictures by a People's Artist of Belarus — Mai Dantsig. The painter confidently declared himself in the late 1950s — early 1960s when a new generation of artists joined Belarusian fine arts. Those representatives of the 'severe style' demonstrated a sense of personal, romantic involvement in the world which was reflected in their interest in the poetry of everyday life and revealing the vivid features of their culture. Mai Dantsig authored several hundred paintings; most of them are part of our national art heritage. Even at the very beginning of his creative path, the master chose several major themes which he developed and interpreted throughout his life: the war, city, new buildings, work days, portraits of cultural figures.

The war theme occupied a special place in Mai Dantsig's artistry. He brought his own understanding of the inhuman essence of the war, the tragedy of its losses and the heroics of the struggle, into Belarusian art. Unsurpris-

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page 55 ingly, he viewed May 9th — Victory Day of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War — as the most important day of the year. “This is not just great, but the greatest victory!” he used to say.

Interestingly, no pictures by Mai Dantsig devoted to the military theme had a single battle scene; there were ‘no shots’, as he said. However, as regards the strength of emotional impact, the depth of meaning and the originality of the composition of his ‘military’ works, Mai Dantsig had no rivals in Belarusian art.

The artist’s life was fully connected with Minsk and he created a generalised poetic image of the city in his works — combining the past and present. Mai Dantsig showed Minsk from the most diverse and sometimes unexpected angles: its old pages and youth, rhythms and colours, and many-sided life. He did not simply paint Minsk: the artist breathed and loved it. Mai Dantsig spoke about his native city through his pictures. He worked out the themes of construction and labour in the everyday life of Soviet people, especially in the post-war period. The images of newly built houses were extremely popular in early 1960s art; at that time, new cities were actively being built throughout the Soviet Union. Growing at a huge speed, new residential districts were becoming an analogy of the reassess-

ment of values of ordinary people’s private life and daily work. Large-scale paintings by Mai Dantsig — devoted to this topic — are of expressive and integral structure, with the smallest details depicted.

Bright, talented and energetic, Mai Dantsig loved to paint portraits of his contemporaries: talented, selfless and strong people, with a great inner depth and inspired by art.

From today’s standpoint, Mai Dantsig’s artistic manner is distinguished by an epic scope, monumental-generalised interpretation of forms, expressiveness of colour solutions and the depth of the psychological features of his characters. Speaking of the impressive size of his paintings, the master used to say: ‘Wings do exist. An artist must have eagle’s wings!’

Belarusians have enjoyed peaceful skies for seventy-four years; its blueness is reflected not only in children’s eyes but also in painting. Peacefulness and philanthropy are the national features of Belarusians and our domestic art glorifies them with help of our authors. There are artists whose moral values are not subject to fashion. For example, in the variety of modern pictorial art, works by Adolf Gugel and Raisa Kudrevich stand out not for the extravagance of their style or the complexity of technical approaches. The world of these painters attracts the viewer with optimism, loyalty to their

ideals, sincerity and warmth. It is akin to quenching the thirst of a traveller. Having drunk, anyone would become morally richer, purer and kinder. In the post-war years, the theme of the nationwide struggle against Hitler occupied a major part in the works of these Belarusian artists.

Adolf Gugel’s ‘At the Hero’s Tomb’ (1947) and ‘Important Message’ (1949) became a serious testament to the artist’s potential. Again, and again, the author experienced the events of the brutal war. In turn, Raisa Kudrevich was attracted by a completely different topic. She drew pictures about the peaceful life of her contemporaries and about love. Already in her first major works — such as ‘To Native Collective Farm’, ‘Harmonist is Coming’ and ‘Belarusian Singers’, the key features of Raisa’s poetics, lyricism, romance and ability to find the exact psychological characteristics of her characters came to the fore. She painted portraits, landscapes and still-lives with great inspiration, aiming to convey the mood of her characters or depicted natural environment. Her style of drawing was free and relaxed, with preservation of a freshness of emotional sensation.

The two pictures — ‘Eternal Glory’ and ‘Devotion to Belarusian Partisans’ — perfectly reflect the war days. These works differ but are united by the monolithic composition and expressiveness of the visual language. ‘Devotion to Belarusian Partisans’ stands out for its vivid emotionality, echoes of the memory of war and the personal empathy of its authors.

Without exaggeration, the pictures of these masters are also a document of the period of time performed in vivid artistic images. They give an opportunity to feel the essence of the thoughts of their authors who were people of their time. The personality of each artist is inseparable from the surrounding reality.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**

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'Horsemen' by Leonid Shchemelev, 1974