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Bright, spiritual holiday uniting good neighbours

Kupala Night Festival (*Alexandria Gathers Friends*) has been held for the eighth time in the agro-town of Alexandria, in the Shklov District, on the bank of the River Dnieper.

“The connection of the peoples of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine will always outweigh political ambitions,” noted Alexander Lukashenko, speaking at the holiday. The Head of State also noted that he always visits his hometown with great joy and pride.

Sovereignty is our most valuable asset

Belarus solemnly celebrates Independence Day

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has confirmed the state's readiness to defend its sovereignty and independence, speaking on July 3rd, at the parade marking Independence Day. He underlined, "Our historical memory tells us that peaceful skies and creativity must be defended. There's no room for complacency! We're taking decisive measures to strengthen military security."

Mr. Lukashenko noted with regret that the world remains 'restless', with innocent people dying in military conflict and during terrorist attacks. The global balance, broken at the end of the last century, is yet to be restored. In these circumstances, Belarus is promoting international dialogue, to strengthen the architecture of international security.

"We're demonstrating a peaceful policy in our relations with all countries and have been strengthening our Union State with brotherly Russia, as well as expanding co-operation with the People's Republic of China, who is our strategic partner, and building dialogue with western countries on principles of mutual respect," noted the Head of State.

This year, the format of the parade was expanded. Taking part were servicemen of not only the Armed Forces of Russia, as is traditional, but those from the People's Republic of China, for the first time. "Paying tribute to the events of the Second World War, we remember that it began in the West and ended in the Far East. It's symbolic that the descendants of the victorious soldiers stand in one line today," said Mr. Lukashenko.

He expressed sincere gratitude to veterans, saying, "By fulfilling your duty, you defeated the aggressor, and defended our right to live in a free country. Your heroism and dedication will always serve as an example for the present and future generations of Belarusians. We bow to the ground in front of you!"

This day is a symbol of the courage and fortitude of the Be-



larusian people, the succession of generations and devotion to duty. It serves as a reminder that the fate of the Motherland, its present and future depend primarily on our loyalty to the ideals of freedom and independence, and our willingness to preserve peace in our native land.

'Sovereignty is the major wealth of Belarus and its nation', read the congratulatory greeting of the President of Belarus to

his fellow countrymen on the occasion of Independence Day. "This holiday, uniting the fates of various generations, reminds us about our duty and the difficult road we've travelled in establishing our country. We're aware of the price of true freedom. We know the power of national unity, patriotism and faith in the future. We understand that sovereignty

is our most valuable asset."

The President of Belarus also underlined the importance of preserving the country's independence, to maintain peace and to develop partnerships with other states. Speaking at the solemn meeting dedicated to Independence Day, he stated,

"We've already paid too much for our independence; therefore, we'll do everything we can to preserve peace within our land and to warn people worldwide of the danger of repeating the terrible lessons of history. We know that we are an indispensable part of Europe and the post-Soviet space, and we offer a hand of friendship and co-operation to everyone," asserted the Head of State. He emphasised that Belarus won't choose between the West and the East, commenting, "Our nation chooses independence, peace and partnership."

According to the President, Independence Day is a symbol of free and peaceful living. Mr.

Lukashenko noted that the ancestors of contemporary residents of Belarus have always tried to live in friendship with neighbours and never coveted others' territory.

He stressed that it's important not to distort history, so that our descendants hear each detail, and realise the spiritual power of the nation, whose character

has been manifested in the most unbearable trials.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, courage, determination, bravery and true patriotism were manifested in the heroic past of our grandfathers and great grandfathers. "Remembering those ancestors, we know who we are. We understand the powers and opportunities inherited in our genetic code. Keeping Belarusian lands beautiful and free is our holy duty, as we owe to the generations who gave us peace and freedom. It's our primary obligation to children and grandchildren."

The President noted that Belarus comprises those who've created modern history, who have grown up in our young state, and all those who, over these years of independence, have shown themselves as a nation independently orienting its development.

"The Belarusian nation has always lived in inter-national and inter-confessional concord. It has preserved its unique features, history and culture of its ancestors," noted the Head of State. "Wherever our roots come from and whatever faith we follow, we're children of Belarusian lands. We may differently assess the experience of the past but we look in the same direction as we jointly create our future."

Mr. Lukashenko asserted that this unity ensures today's security and remains a decisive argument against any interference in the internal affairs of the country.

Country receives congratulations

Congratulations on Independence Day received by President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and all Belarusian nation, from heads of foreign states, and foreign political and public figures

Congratulatory messages have been arriving from the heads of CIS countries, the European Union and other states around the globe, including from Pope Francis, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II — of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sweden's King Carl Gustaf XVI, Jordanian King Abdullah II, Emperor Akihito of Japan, and the UN General Secretary, António Guterres. The Belarusian Head of State has also received congratulatory messages from Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and the presidents of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Turkey, the UAE, Algeria, Bangladesh, India, Syria, Palestine, Venezuela, Iran and Vietnam, alongside the President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers of Cuba, and the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.



Memorialising those who died, with hope for peaceful tomorrow

Presidents of Belarus, Germany and Austria visit Trostenets Memorial

By Vladimir Velikhov

On Friday June 29th, Blagovshchina, near Minsk, drew a large crowd for its requiem service, on the site of Belarus' largest death camp, Trostenets, as existed in the years of Nazi occupation. Presidents of Germany and Austria, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Alexander Van der Bellen, arrived with Alexander Lukashenko, to honour the memory of Nazi victims and the thousands of civilians from Belarus and Western Europe who were murdered.

The President of Belarus addressed the presidents of Germany and Austria, as well as the thousands gathered, saying, "We have a unique opportunity to know the truth about that war, from stories told by those who experienced first-hand. It's vital that we preserve those memories and prevent the dreadful past from reoccurring. History has demonstrated, in no uncertain terms, that we cannot afford to ignore evil, even when it seems to exist only as a nascent idea. Transformation into a real threat is only a matter of time."

Those who were murdered were brought to Trostenets in mobile gas chambers, including by railway. Accordingly, a major element of the memorial

are the concrete walls which symbolise wagons. Entering them is a moving experience, accompanied by a soundtrack playing the noise of an arriving train, and the many voices of adults crying out, in various languages, while children shed tears. It's impossible not to feel overwhelmed by the interactive experience, which sends a shiver of cold fear through your body, regardless of the sun's warmth, outside.

Unfortunately, our modern world doesn't appear to have learnt from the terrors of the Second World War, as Mr. Lukashenko noted, in his speech. "We continue to see the past's firm grip on us. Many do not recognise state borders and the international community faces 'demons of intolerance' that foment hatred and provoke violence."

The President of Belarus is convinced that only trust, respect and open and sincere conversation will strengthen international security. To jointly counteract hostility, hatred and fanaticism, we must provide a happy future for our children.



He asserted, "It doesn't matter where this dialogue takes place. It's not important even which organisation leads; an existing one or one newly established. We desperately need this dialogue, as we all know." He added that, although we may not be living under the Cold War but we must learn our lessons from history.

The Federal President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, cited the famous Soviet film by Elem Klimov, sharing the concern of the Belarusian leader. "This place, Maly Tros-

tenets, was located at the end of the chain of directives. It wasn't shown on any map but it was part of the 'final solution' plan, relating to the Jewish people. It should have a firm place in the historical consciousness of Europe, having left deep wounds, as can be seen by those who want to see them. Go and see! This call — however painful it is — is addressed to us: the generations later born."

The German President is convinced that the history of Belarus is a shared memory for Europeans, especially Germans. He underlined, "After almost three decades of independence, the time has come for this country to emerge from the shadow of the Soviet Union. Primarily, Belarus should be perceived as a state with its own history, present and future. We should never forget that the goal of the war imposed by Germany was to wipe from the map this country and the people living in it. This is to my shame, but I'm grateful to the people of Belarus for seeking reconciliation."

The Federal President of Austria, Alexander van der Bellen, also noted the importance of the memorial near Minsk, saying, "People are aware of Auschwitz but the names of other, no less terrible, places are overlooked. There is a danger of those concentration camps and death camps being forgotten and, with them, the memory of the numerous victims and the gigantic scale of destruction. I wish us to pay tribute to the victims of Maly Trostenets with a feeling of united hope. As the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum states, regarding the Holocaust, we must 'plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past'."

The message from the Polish President, Andrzej Duda, was also read at the requiem service: "Paying tribute to victims of Maly Trostenets, Blagovshchina, Shashkovka and other places of destruction, let's do everything possible to enable Nazism, chauvinism and totalitarian ideology to become a closed chapter in the history of humanity."

White doves were then released into Trostenets' blue sky as an embodiment of the souls of those killed on the site, and as a symbol of peace, kindness and hope, that we'll be able to preserve this world.

Dialogue on present and future, against background of tragic past

Alexander Lukashenko meets presidents of Austria and Germany

The presidents of Austria and Germany arrived in Minsk on a mournful mission. The past often teaches us hard lessons, but we must learn from them. The visit from the top-level guests is a symbol of our determination for productive partnership, as was high on the agenda during meetings between Alexander Lukashenko, Alexander Van der Bellen and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, at the Palace of Independence.

Partnership for the benefit of European security



“I was astonished. We, from Austria, were surprised at how this memorable site — Trostenets — has fallen from pan-European memory. The meaning of this place is especially vital for Austria; it can’t be underestimated.”

The President of Belarus addressed words of gratitude to his Austrian colleague, thanking him for his country’s enduring attention towards Belarus, and support in difficult times, saying that it had played a great role in normalising Belarus’ relations with the EU. Our diplomats and the leadership of the country enjoy productive dialogue with the current Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz. A meeting with the Austrian leadership in Vienna is scheduled for the nearest time, but Minsk also welcomes return visits to Minsk. Speaking to Alexander Van der Bellen, the President of Belarus said, “We’ve maintained warm relations with the current Federal Chancellor of Austria and will soon meet with the Austrian leadership in Vienna. We’re arranging a meeting, which I hope will be productive.”

Mr. Lukashenko is convinced that Austria plays a significant role in strengthening security in Europe. “We’d really like to see Austrian high-level representatives attend the Minsk

conference on security in our region this autumn. We’d also like to have meaningful dialogue on the development of the security process.”

He added, “Minsk is expecting an Austrian delegation at the 2nd European Games, in 2019. For this European Olympiad, we’re looking forward to welcoming as many Austrian athletes as possible. I’d like to take this opportunity to invite you to attend the Games. I believe that, alongside sport, we’ll find other avenues for the benefit of Belarus and Austria.”

Mr. Lukashenko invited Mr. Van der Bellen to visit our country at any convenient time. The guest thanked the President for his hospitable and friendly reception, noting the importance of the new memorial in Trostenets, for Europe. “I was astonished. We, from Austria, were surprised at how this memorable site — Trostenets — has fallen from pan-European memory. The meaning of this place is especially vital for Austria; it can’t be underestimated.”

Drawing lessons is useful when sincere



“I must thank you for this invitation to take part in the opening of the site in Trostenets. We know that this invitation isn’t just a matter of course. The fact that we meet this day, together, is possible because you wish reconciliation.”

Alexander Lukashenko began his conversation with the President of the Federal Republic of Germany by sharing words of confidence that his colleague’s arrival in Minsk would inspire a good response within the Belarusian community. “This isn’t so much a political aspect as a moral, ethical one,” stated Mr. Lukashenko.

Of course, the political side of the event is also very important. Mr. Lukashenko continued, “People in Belarus — politicians and the whole nation — know you well. Our nation is very politicised; no less than Germany. Therefore, they know you well and, of course, your arrival will have good, positive resonance for our people. Moreover, this isn’t your first time in Minsk and in this palace. You’re one of the authors of the famous ‘Normandy Four’.”

Mr. Lukashenko thanked Mr. Steinmeier for his huge contribution to helping normalise Belarus’ relations with the European Union, saying, “We’re very grateful to you for this, and will remember. We’ve realised everything of which we were speaking at that time [during the

Minsk summit of the ‘Normandy Four’] with Angela Merkel.”

Mr. Lukashenko asked his guest to convey best wishes and regards from the whole Belarusian nation to the German Chancellor. Mr. Steinmeier agreed, with pleasure, and recalled the summer meetings of the ‘Normandy Four’ in Minsk, saying, “We spent many hours with you, when the European continent was experiencing a major crisis, seeking solutions to restore peace in a situation which had slipped out of control. After long negotiations, we developed a document directly connected with the name of your capital: the city of Minsk. I hope, very much, not only that this document will continue to stand, but that Russia and Ukraine will continue following these agreements. We’ll then move forward: slowly, step by step.”

The President of Germany also addressed the words of Mr. Lukashenko at the ceremony in Trostenets, saying, “As you’ve already mentioned, today, we should draw lessons from the past and endeavour to avoid repeating conflict on our continent.

French business ready for co-operation

By Konstantin Bakun

France has become an important political and economic partner for Belarus

Recently, Minsk was visited by a delegation from the France-Belarus Friendship Group of the National Assembly of France. French politicians and representatives of the business community had a rather intensive programme, which began with

a meeting with the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, Mikhail Myasnikov. During negotiations, parliamentarians discussed prospects for economic collaboration, including in the investment sphere. Last year, trade turnover between our counties totalled \$3,666 million (up by 28 percent). This year also sees good results; from January-March, growth stood at 12.8 percent. The Head of

the upper house of the Belarusian Parliament, Mikhail Myasnikov, notes that our enterprises need to expand exports to France, saying, “New projects aim to diversify our exports. We currently export around \$100 million of goods and services to France and buy more than \$200 million. Therefore, our task is to significantly improve our foreign trade balance within the next 3-4 years.”

The Chairman of the France-Belarus Friendship Group, Christophe Lejeune, says that a number of French enterprises are keen on co-operation with Belarusian partners and would like to come to our country to conduct negotiations. To achieve this, the head of the friendship group hopes to return to Belarus at the end of this year, together with representatives of French companies. As far as in-

dustry is concerned, he suggests expanding collaboration with Peugeot-Citroen, to assemble automobiles and offer service maintenance.

The French delegation met with various Belarusian ministries and departments, as well as attending the High-Tech Park. They also visited Brest, negotiating with the leadership of the region and representatives of regional business circles.

Multi-vector nature is reinforced by partnership

Peacefulness is at the heart of the Belarusian foreign policy, asserts President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, accepting credentials from foreign ambassadors



Participants of the ceremony presenting credentials

By Vasily Kharitonov

“Belarus is an absolutely peaceful country. We well remember the lessons of the past. We’re careful about today and thoughtful about tomorrow. Therefore, peacefulness is at the core of the country’s foreign policy. This word implies a multi-vector approach, a balanced stance, pragmatism and consistency. This pertains to the foreign policy, first and foremost. Our country advocates an inclusive dialogue across all issues of the international agenda. We highly appreciate sincere, open and respectful attitude to us and are ready to do the same,” noted the Head of State.

Addressing the diplomats, Mr. Lukashenko noted that they came to a modern, dynamically developing, safe and business-friendly European state. “Our country boasts strong industry and agriculture, as well as great scientific capacities and qualified workforce. IT is one of the most promising economic sectors. We have turned into regional leaders in a number of areas,” assured the President of Belarus.

This year marks 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and Uzbekistan. “We cherish friendship between Belarusian and Uzbek peoples. We welcome the decision of our long-standing partner

to open a full diplomatic representation in Minsk. This is an important and timely step that demonstrates the focus on all-round dialogue,” said the Head of State.

Building truly good neighbourly and equal relations with Poland is one of the priorities of Belarus’ diplomacy. “We share not only the joint border, economic co-operation, inter-personal contacts but overall responsibility for stability and security in our region. We need to give our interaction a sustained and coherent nature. We are ready for this,” underlined the President.

Belarus and Italy boast years of successful experience of co-operation across a wide range of areas. “We

have always been able to solve any tasks in an atmosphere of openness and trust. I’m convinced that an active political dialogue, implementation of joint economic projects, collaboration in cultural and scientific fields fully meet the interests of our peoples,” stressed Mr. Lukashenko.

Welcoming the ambassadors from the countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa, Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that interaction with their countries is of special political and undisputed economic interest for Belarus. In recent years, necessary mechanisms have been developed for substantive and full-scale co-operation with Pakistan. Belarus is also open to large-

scale collaboration with Nepal. “Belarus is closely watching the renewal of Myanmar. We believe that new opportunities and prospects will open up and help the two states expand contacts in various areas,” noted the Head of State. Ecuador is one of Belarus’ key partners in South America. “We have similar priorities in domestic and foreign policy, social and economic development,” said the President.

Mr. Lukashenko also accentuated that accreditation of the ambassadors of Zambia and the Republic of the Congo will help find new points of contact and add momentum to bilateral relations, taking into account the complementarity of the economies.

Good starting point for promising projects

By Oleg Bogomazov

Justice Ministers of Belarus and Brazil, Oleg Slizhevsky and Torquato Jardim, sign agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal issues

According to Justice Minister Oleg Slizhevsky, the agreement is a serious step towards protecting and ensuring the rights and legal interests of citizens and business entities from our two states. The treaty creates a legal foundation for law enforcement agencies to share information in the criminal sphere, stipulating legal frameworks for the launch of criminal proceedings. It also governs

the handling of proceeds of crime, and methods to obtain testimony, as well as inspection of crime scenes. The agreement additionally covers the sharing of expertise.

A memorandum on interaction between our two justice ministries has been signed, covering joint measures and information sharing, and various areas of justice ministry work. “We’ve outlined areas of mutual interest: preparation of draft legal acts, execution of judgements and decisions of other bodies,” notes Mr. Slizhevsky. The ministers discussed the notarial system, provision of legal services and regulation of such services at state level.

Parliamentarians are planning their activity

Group of inter-parliamentary co-operation with Belarus launching soon at National Assembly of Ecuador

By Olga Korneeva

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Ecuador, Igor Poluyan, recently met with the President of the National Assembly of Ecuador, Elizabeth Cabezas, to discuss inter-parliamentary co-operation between our two countries. Exchange visits are also foreseen for Belarusian and Ecuadorian legislators, with intensified interaction within the framework of

the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Latin American Parliament (Belarus has observer status in PARLATINO).

The expansion of Belarusian-Ecuadorian inter-parliamentary interaction came under discussion in May, during the official visit of Ecuador’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces, to Belarus. During meetings in Minsk, it was agreed to strengthen bilateral collaboration in all areas of mutual interest.

Trostenets: an

Trostenets was organised during Hitler's Nazi occupation, near Minsk, forcibly holding citizens at the labour camp, and being the site of two main places of massacre: Blagovshchina and Shashkovka. It operated from the spring of 1942 to the beginning of July 1944. Each day featured endless human suffering, torment, tears and tragedy. The greatest massacres took place from May 1942 to December 1943, in Blagovshchina — just a few kilometres from the village of Maly Trostenets, where many thousands of civilians were shot, having been brought from across Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, as well as Belarus. Over 20,000 people found their death there, with only a few dozen surviving, by some miracle. Corpses were thrown into mass graves. Now, polished memorial plaques reflect the peaceful Belarusian sky, as if the eyes of those victims perceive through eternal windows. They were present during the sorrowful minutes of the opening of the memorial in Blagovshchina and are with us forever.

By Galina Ulitenok

Black swans of sorrow

Anna Aksenova, the Scientific Director of the Trostenets Memorial Complex, who helped in its design, found time in her intense working schedule to guide us around the memorial on the eve of its opening. She explained, “The project has been challenging in content, size and emotional significance. To do our job, we have to switch off our emotions; otherwise, it would be impossible. Our architects have worked hard, virtually without breaks, trying to make every detail affect visitors powerfully.”

Indicating some trees, she noted, “Look at these beeches, with their weeping branches. This variety is called ‘Black Swan’, with dark-red foliage. We’ve planted mountain ash, with large scarlet berries, near the thirty-four graves. We’ve done so much, but have more yet to accomplish, wanting to landscape the memorial park with apple trees. Their pale blossoms will symbolise the children whose lives were taken, and will contrast well with the dark pine trees, which grew after the war. We’ll have a section called ‘Lost Time’, with twelve weeping varieties representing all that has been lost during war and destruction. Wars prevent life.”

Ms. Aksenova feels the tragedy of the Great Patriotic War years keenly, her own mother having been taken away to Nazi Germany. Her father fought on the front-line. Her portfolio includes not only the State Flag Square, and the Grave of Warriors in Loshitsky Park, but graves in the Military Cemetery, and Pobedy (Victory) Park, as well the Minsk — Hero City Monument. Trostenets Memorial is a logical addition.



Life Square

Architect Leonid Levin co-designed the Blagovshchina memorial, now headed by his daughter, Galina Levina, who took over the professional, creative and spiritual baton from the master of Belarusian architecture. She tells us, “I still have photos taken when everything was just starting. I look at them and I understand how much we’ve achieved over the

past five years.” Galina seems hardly to believe the results. “In 2013, Leonid Levin, for the first time, officially introduced our project at Blagovshchina. We’ve now created a path of sorrow, alongside Trostenets victims, walking it with our hearts.”

Participants of the opening ceremony also took their steps along the road of remembrance — crossing three symbolic squares: white — the

Square of Life; red (curved) — the Square of Paradox; and black — the Square of Death. They also passed through terrible concrete cars, in which people were brought to their death. Those prisoners were transported in terrible conditions, with less than a half square metre of space per person. To somehow recreate the discomfort, the architects made benches of 47 square centimetres’ width.

Volunteers helped with the memorial, alongside professional builders, clearing the site and washing the stone paths. Builders Dmitry and Yevgeny, from Minsk’s Sovetsky residential district, finished the tiling, working as hard as possible, knowing the importance of their task. Students Ilya, Vadim, Ales and Liza know that their grandparents, great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers were affected and stress the importance of knowing the history of our land. After visiting Trostenets, there are few left uninterested in learning about the past. The country is passing into their young hands — as are our memories.

Scary finds

At all stages, the erection of the memorial complex in Trostenets was supervised by archaeologists from the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, under the guidance of Candidate of Historical Sciences Vadim Koshman. Evidence was collected and specifications made regarding burial places and locations of structures. Thousands of belongings destroyed by Nazis were unearthed: medicines, keys to the homes to which people never returned, medallions and cases. All these terrible finds are kept at the Institute of History but shall soon be sent to museum exhibitions.

“There are spoons, forks, plates, mugs, fragments of thermoses, shaving tools, cosmetics, ornaments, watches, and glasses — mostly produced in Western Europe: Austria, Germany, and Czechoslovakia,” Mr. Koshman explains, showing the finds on a computer monitor. “Soviet people are represented by Soviet coins, mugs and shoes with local brands... However, there aren’t many such belongings. It can be easily explained: when

open window into eternity



people were seized, during the round-ups, they had no opportunity to grab belongings...”

Blagovshchina was a place of death not only for deported Western Europeans. Anyone who fell under the suspicion of resistance was taken there to be killed, including those kept at prisons on Volodarsky and Kuibyshev streets, in Minsk. The State Extraordinary Commission believes there may have been 150,000 victims.

“We must admit that, even if we excavate all graves and large areas, it’s unlikely that we’ll be able to accurately calculate the number of deaths. From October to December 1943, the Nazi Sonderkommando dug graves and burned remains. It’s impossible to differentiate the remains of the Western European and Soviet population. According to the norms of certain religions, in particular Judaism, buried remains shouldn’t be disturbed. In a place like Blagovshchina, we must take into account not only technical but moral aspects. Sonderkommando soldiers were told that they were burying the ashes of Jews who died as a result of the offensive of 1941-1942. However, everyone knew that the trains were coming and people were being killed continuously.”

Blagovshchina has no classical graves, being one huge mass grave; calcified bones are found all around. Bones are everywhere!



Common pain — shared memory

Two years ago, historian Alexander Dolgovsky joined colleagues from the Historical Workshop of the Minsk International Education Centre named after Johannes Rau, to create a touring exhibition: *Trostenets Death Camp. History and Memory*. The exhibition aims to inform not only Belarusians but all Western Europeans, being those most affected by the Nazis’ exportation of the

Jewish population during the Second World War.

For many years, Trostenets remained terra incognita for Europeans. Its first documented massacre took place on May 11th, 1942. Deportees arrived from Vienna and almost all were killed immediately (bar 81 people left in the camp). By late October, sixteen trains of deported people had arrived, carrying about 16,000 people.

The *Trostenets Death Camp. History and Memory* exhibition has already been

on show at Minsk’s Great Patriotic War History Museum, in Molodechno, at Grodno’s Choral Synagogue, at Brest Fortress, and at Mir Castle (which hosted a Nazi ghetto). It has toured museums in Mogilev and Vitebsk and has been on display at Novopolotsk University. It has also graced German Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen and Cologne. In May, it was exhibited in Switzerland’s Basel and is scheduled to visit Frankfurt, Dusseldorf, Vienna and Terezin. The exhibition is cur-

rently at the National Library of Belarus.

Students and teachers from a German gymnasium have even visited Trostenets. “We also plan to organise literary readings,” explains Mr. Dolgovsky. “In Switzerland, I met the family of Gabriel Jaime. Gabriel gave me his book, which he dedicated to his grandmother. She was taken from Berlin to Minsk and killed in Trostenets. Gabriel has visited Minsk and attended the opening of the exhibition in Brest. Meanwhile, Paul Kohl wrote one of the very first books in German, devoted to Trostenets. We’ll use these publications at our literary readings. Of course, we’ll also read the works of our Belarusian authors. Recently, we organised a contest of school and student works, called *Victims of Nazism and Places of Destruction in Belarus*. We’re co-operating with teachers and, wherever we hold the exhibition, we try to discover local initiatives to preserve our common memory. Representatives of the German Embassy to Belarus have joined the Johannes Rau IMCI and partner organisations in participating in such meetings.”

In addition, Belarus has released several collections of archival documents dedicated to Trostenets camp. The mourning path of Trostenets is complete but it’s our duty to keep that memory alive and eternal!



US-China trade war elevates the risks to the global economy

The trade war that erupted last Friday between the United States of America and People's Republic of China carries a major risk of escalation that could weaken investment, depress spending, unsettle financial markets and slow the global economy

The opening shots were fired just after midnight, when the Trump administration imposed a 25 percent tariff on \$34 billion of imports from China, and Beijing promptly retaliated with duties on an equal amount of American products. It accused the US of igniting 'the biggest trade war in economic history'.

Because of this first round of hostilities, American businesses and, ultimately, consumers could end up paying more for

such Chinese-made products as construction equipment and other machinery. And American suppliers of soybeans, pork and whiskey could lose their competitive edge in China.

The conflict could soon escalate. President Donald Trump, who has boasted that winning a trade war is easy, has said he is prepared to impose tariffs on up to \$550 billion in Chinese imports — a figure that exceeds the \$506 billion in

goods that China shipped to the US last year.

Escalating tariffs are likely to slow business investment as companies wait to see whether the administration can reach a truce with Beijing. Some employers will probably put hiring on hold until the picture becomes clearer. The damage could risk undoing some of the economic benefits of last year's tax cuts.

"Trade disruption is the greatest threat

to global growth," said Dec Mullarkey, managing director of investment strategies at Sun Life Investment Management. "The direct effects will be amplified as business confidence drops and investment decisions are delayed. Markets are still hoping that the key players return to the negotiation table."

The rift with China is the most consequential trade conflict the administration has provoked, but it's hardly the only one.



Polish PM to EU: Don't lecture us

Mateusz Morawiecki questions whether the European Commission is an 'honest broker' in fight over rule-of-law sanctions

Poland's Prime Minister called on the EU to stop 'lecturing' his country and questioned whether the European Commission is an 'honest broker' in the fight over rule of law during a tense debate with MEPs. At a debate on the future of Europe in the Strasbourg plenary, Mr. Morawiecki said he would not back down on Poland's judiciary changes and made a plea for a

'union of nations 2.0' that needs to 'renew the social contract' in Europe. "Judges are more independent now than they were in the past," he said. "Poland is a proud country, please don't lecture us about these sort of things," he said, calling the Commission's efforts to apply its rule-of-law procedure 'disappointing'. "I have to think whether or not the European Commission is really an honest broker," he said. "We've made a great deal of efforts to reach out a hand... Today I think we've come to a point in time where we've made changes."

How a robot in deep water can bring enlightenment



There're thousands of flooded mines in Europe. Many of them may still have industrial value, but it is difficult to know which ones. However, a robot may soon be able to provide some answers.

Back in the 1960s, a pegmatite mine in central Finland was shut down and flooded. Today, it's a thrilling attraction for scuba divers brave enough to explore its flooded caverns. It's also a test site for a peculiar prototype developed as part of European research project, UNEXMIN.

Jussi Aaltonen, Mechatronics Engineer at the Tampere University of Technology, said, "We want to survey flooded mines because mines are seldom abandoned because the minerals are depleted, but they're abandoned for economical reasons. So there might be still some minerals of value, or there

might be some new minerals which we might find."

The result of an international team effort, this robot has the compact shape of a metallic sphere and is stuffed with high-tech electronics. Sixty centimetres in diameter, it's built to withstand the pressure at 500m deep.

According to Norbert Zajzon, UNEXMIN Project Coordinator and Associate Professor at the Institute of Mineralogy-Geology, University of Miskolc, it can spend much more time underwater than a human diver. It can survive for five hours, even at greater depths than what is reachable to divers — because it doesn't need human life support systems, only electricity."

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Pictures evoke what cannot be forgotten

July 3rd in the country's modern history — Republic Day — marks Minsk's liberation from Fascist aggressors in 1944, as depicted in the epic work of famous Belarusian artist Valentin Volkov: *Minsk. July 3rd, 1944*, displayed at National Art Museum of Belarus



Near Valentin Volkov's picture *Minsk. July 3rd, 1944*, at National Art Museum

By Veniamin Mikheev

Various exhibition halls at the Art Museum feature the work of Belarusian artists, on the theme of the Great Patriotic War, as often witnessed by them at first-hand. Among that golden fund are works by Zair Azgur, Valentin Volkov, Andrey Bembel, Ivan Akhremchik, Yevgeny Zaitsev, Mikhail Savitsky, Victor Gromyko, Gavriil Vashchenko, Vladimir Stelmashonok, Mai Dantsig, Leonid Shchemelev, and Vasili Sumarev.

On June 22nd, 1941, Belarus was at the epicentre of the Second World War. By late August, the whole country was occupied by German invaders. In 1942, the Central and Belarusian Partisan Movement Headquarters were set up at the Supreme Command Centre, making Belarus a 'partisan Republic'.

During the 'rail war' and 'Operation Bagration', in June-July 1944, our country was liberated from the Nazi invaders.

The fate of Belarusian art has been closely connected with the course of war, with many artists going to the front-line. Some were evacuated or stayed in occupied territory, while others joined the partisan movement. The pre-war State Picture Gallery (the 'predecessor' of the National Art Museum of Belarus) failed to be evacuated in time, with most pieces either stolen or destroyed, by bombing or fire.

Despite difficult living conditions, Belarusian artists worked throughout the war, in small sketches, front-line drawings, posters, caricatures and portraits. After Belarus' liberation, they revisited the sites of battle, to paint images of war.

The military epoch evokes a range of feelings, encompassing so many social, psychological and moral features. Naturally,

each generation of artists has brought its own flavour to the theme. The 1940-1950s period, as the starting point, is often criticised for being overly stylised, with excessive staging. However, those pictures convey sincere feelings, documenting the times and the personal

ing the evolution of Belarusian fine arts.

Those images have a vibrancy and truth to them, faithful to the feeling of the time, and the huge impact of the war. Monumental scaled works were the norm.

Leading artists of the first

towards the military theme began to change. Other motifs emerged, moving away from documentary accuracy, in preference to philosophical meaning. This enriched and broadened the horizons of fine art, with the military-patriotic theme playing a major role. The latter was suc-

attire, with a child in her arms — in classic commemoration. With lyrical softness, this theme was disclosed in one of the most famous of Fiodor Baranovsky's paintings: *Bath*, which celebrates female beauty, in striking contrast to the inhuman tragedy of wartime.

The war overshadowed and inspired artists of the older generation, leading to their creation of epic works, based on real events. However, as time passed, figurative interpretations took over: psychological, romantic and lyrical. The war gained a 'human' face, shown through associations, emotions, yearning and rejoicing.

In the 21st century, the military-patriotic genre continues to develop. Of course, artists no longer work from their own mem-

ories. These days, they reveal the topic associatively, looking at bravery in the face of the enemy and joy at Victory. The Head of the War Artists' Studio at the Defence Ministry, Nikolay Opiok, tells us, "Our task is to preserve all that is best from the legacy. No theme is taboo. Works are valued by skill: by artists' abilities and courage, and their civic position. If someone aspires to go deeper into history, they shouldn't look exclusively for spectacular moments. It's important to show not only victories but defeats, joy and pain, our strength, courage and bravery. It is necessary to be honest with our history, just as we are in modern life."

Belarusians have enjoyed a peaceful sky for seventy-four years, its blueness reflected not only in children's eyes but in art. Peacefulness and philanthropy are our national features. Our domestic art continues to glorify these qualities, with the help of our sincere artists.



experience of the artist. They were intended to uplift society, so need to be understood in that context.

The Belarusian school of socialist realism relied upon numerous preparatory sketches, leading to unique figurative depiction, recreating scenes of war, in direct response to the recent memory of what had occurred.

Front-line drawings and sketches, showing daily routines of wartime, focused on the themes of the tragedy of death, confrontation, the bitterness of loss, dramatic collisions of battle, the scourge of war and occupation, and individual portraits. The partisan theme occupied a leading position, revealing various aspects of the war, and guid-



Minsk by Fiodor Baranovsky

post-war generation gave more convincing visual solutions, often with multi-figured compositions. Canvases by Yevgeny Zaitsev, Sergey Romanov, Ivan Akhremchik and Valentin Volkov, alongside the sculptural portraits created by Zair Azgur and Andrey Bembel, have become part of our classical art history.

Over time, the attitude to-

cessfully developed by Leonid Shchemelev, Georgy Poplavsky, Victor Gromyko, Nikolay Nazarchuk, Nikolay Nazarenko and Boris Arakcheev. Moral themes rarely tackled before began to prevail, depicting the drama of human destiny. Mai Dantsig's *Partisan Wedding*, Leonid Shchemelev's *Birth*, and works by Mikhail Savitsky proved innovative. Ordinary events were transformed via metaphors and symbols.

Emotions beyond the ideological framework took centre stage in the depiction of war. For example, Iosif Belanovich's *June 22nd: Brest Fortress* shows a mother in mourning



Cultural diplomacy in its beautiful and practical form

Minsk's Artel Gallery presents personal exhibition of paintings — *Touch of Beauty* — by Eduard Zenchik, from Estonian Tallinn

By Alexander Pimenov

Eduard Zenchik's creative impulse takes various manifestations: he is a painter, a photographer, a graphic artist, a designer, and an author of installations, performances and musical improvisations. He also organises youth exhibitions and events and has enjoyed over a hundred personal shows. Eduard has taken part in diverse projects worldwide, winning international competitions of art and photography. This April, he represented Estonia in the United States, at Art-Expo New York: the most prestigious venue of modern world art. He's a member of the Estonian Artists' Union, a member of the Painters' Union, a member of the Photographers' Union of Estonia and a member of the Association of Russian Artists of Estonia.

The exhibition at Artel features over fifty of his paintings, created in recent years, exploring the mystery and sense of ancient symbols, the hidden essence of the Universe and the meaning of life. The author tries to penetrate the essence of love, opening



doors between man and the world of fantasy, using timeless images of female beauty: a unifying, universal motif.

"The exhibition is a multifaceted song to beauty," the artist underlines. "In today's busy world, people need to take time to breathe and get in touch with the idea of pure BEAUTY. That's the aim of my show."

The *Touch of Beauty* international exhibition project is transforming and endlessly updating, having already toured Latvia, Finland and Estonia, before coming to Belarus.

The artist is Belarusian but, although widely known in Estonia, his works are being exhibited in Belarus for the first time. The project supports cultural ties between our two countries, including diplomacy between Estonia and Belarus.

The exhibition is being organised with the participation and support of the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Estonia, and the Embassy of the Republic of Estonia to the Republic of Belarus. This cultural rapprochement is practical diplomacy at its best.



Sincere stories via art of photography

Irena Gudievskaya's photo project about Belarus' symbols, dedicated to Year of Native Land, goes on show at Mikhail Savitsky Art Gallery

By Olga Korneeva

The gallery is showcasing around ninety works, revealing the country's beauty. Landscape shots depict storks, aurochs, flax, cornfields and cornflowers, Polesie, the Pushcha and castles.

The project aims to show the optimism inherent in Belarusian symbolism, which is part of our genetic memory, telling a story, revealing a belief, or evoking a custom or song through an image.

The project continues the author's *Enchantment*

series, launched more than eight years ago, with Tamara Goncharova: *Pushcha. Flax. Beauties*.

A member of the Belarusian public association of photographers, Irena Gudievskaya creates artistic photography, having first ex-

hibited at 64 Eme Salon de Printemps in Paris, in 1994; since then, she has taken part in major exhibitions, and has been on the jury of various fashion and design contests. She has also several times won prizes at international advertising festivals.



In the spotlight, at Wimbledon

Belarusian athletes crush world top tennis rivals

By Konstantin Krivosheev

Alexandra Sasnovich has caused quite a stir, having beaten Petra Kvitova in three straight sets at Wimbledon. Among the favourites, having twice won the British tournament, Ms. Kvitova suffered a full defeat from Alexandra, who played with strength and style.

As for her teammates — Vera Lapko, Arina Sobolenko and Victoria Azarenko — Arina has previously beaten Ms. Kvitova twice at Wimbledon but, sadly, was knocked out early at the event this year. Her loss to Romanian Mihaela Buzarnescu was largely due to exhaustion, after an amazing run of victories in March.

Agnieszka Radwanska reached the finals in London, losing to the legendary Serena Williams, but Arina smashed both in Eastbourne, as well as beating Julia Gerges and Elise Mertens (both in the top-20). Arina was also close to defeating Caroline Wozniacki, enabling her to climb thirteen positions, to 32nd seed worldwide. Over the past four years, Karolina Plíšková has won a dozen tournaments (including the Premier series), and currently

ranks eighth worldwide, while Kvitova is 7th.

Victoria Azarenko suffered an injury to her knee during her match against Yekaterina Alexandrova, due to a bad fall, but still managed to win the day. Of course, she is a veteran of the courts in comparison to her younger colleagues. Vera Lapko's success at the start of Wimbledon went almost unnoticed, despite her confident defeat of American Christina McHale in three tough sets (5:7, 7:5, 7:5). Meanwhile, although Sasnovich defeated the seasoned favourite, she noted that she has played better. Some might view her words as bravado but, according to the ex-captain of the Belarusian team, Eduard Dubrov, underlines that our sportswomen are more concerned with playing to the best of their ability than in gaining trophies. With more Fed Cup matches to come, great things are expected.

P.S.: After her victory over Czech Petra Kvitova, Alexandra Sasnovich defeated US Taylor Townsend. In 1/16 finals she also beat representative of Australia Daria Gavrilova and lost only in Wimbledon 1/8 finals to Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia: 6:7, 0:6.



Alexandra Sasnovich makes progress

Good test of opportunities and strengths in Falcon Club

By Svetlana Savelieva

Test badminton tournament ahead of 2nd European Games to take place in Minsk, in September

The Belarus International tournament will be held in early September, at the Falcon Club sports and entertainment complex, and will be the first event in the European Badminton Cup (Futures series).

The technical delegate of the European Badminton Confederation (BEC), Jimmy Andersen, joined other organisation experts in visiting Minsk, to see preparations at the Falcon Club, ahead of the 2nd European Games. According to the Directorate, the badminton confederation delegation discussed issues of refereeing and examined courts and warm-up zones at the Falcon Club. Jimmy Andersen has praised the sports facility.

The 2nd European Games Minsk badminton tournament will count towards the European Championship. In June 2019, Minsk will feature five medal events: men's and women's singles and doubles, and mixed doubles. Participants will have the chance to earn points towards qualification for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games, being hosted by Tokyo.

Games on final straight

By Denis Kovalev

2nd European Games being hosted by Minsk from June 21st, 2019, welcoming over 4,000 athletes from fifty countries

Welcoming a delegation of Russian media representatives affiliated to the National Olympic Committee, the Deputy Director

of the Directorate of the 2nd European Games 2019 Foundation, Anatoly Kotov, commented, "Minsk will be hosting four official European championships. Initially, the number was five but, because of scandal within the Boxing Federation, this sport no longer has a place in the next Olympiad programme. So, it was decided not to conduct the European Championship in Minsk, although other qualifying Olympic competitions will be hosted for ten sports (with four offering direct tickets to the Games). In total, fifteen sporting disciplines will be represented: from track-

and-field to beach football and sambo."

Although the Games' major arena, Dinamo Stadium, is open, organisers will be completing construction on the rifle range (named after Marshall Timoshenko) and the sports medicine dispensary. Student Village hostels will be open by the end of the year, with all sites within twenty



Participants of the meeting with journalists

minutes of one another. The European Olympic Committee Co-ordination Commission believes that, even now, Belarus is ready to welcome competitions.

A more interactive and informative version of the official website of the 2nd European Games is online, detailing topical information on the forthcoming event. Meanwhile, the *Informa-*

tion Ambassadors and *Star Team* is launching, comprising famous athletes from various countries.

Mr. Kotov is pragmatic in his assessment, saying, "Much is ready and, in recent years, we've considerably improved various areas, as required. However, it's important to understand that we're primarily assessed by our organisational successes. Moreo-

ver, there are a range of spheres, from marketing to transport, which still require improvement. We're liaising with companies developing technological IT-platforms, to ensure that forthcoming competitions go smoothly. From one week before the Games, to one week after, all tolls will be removed from roads in Belarus (for automobiles weighing up to 3.5 tonnes). Very soon, the Games' mascot will be presented. The trophies will soon be ready for their 'reveal' and, although Minsk isn't ready to welcome the Games tomorrow, it certainly will be by next year."

Sports arena of new generation



By Svetlana Savelieva

Minsk's Dinamo Stadium receives IAAF Category 1 certificate

The IAAF President, Sebastian Coe, has joined the Head of the IAAF Technical Committee, Jorge Salcedo, in signing off on the certification, enabling the arena to host international tournaments of the highest level, including world championships.

Belarusian athletes have praised the new facility, including Alina Talay, who recently clocked her second-best time (of 12.50 seconds) at the Minsk stadium. She comments, "It's of the highest class. Before entering, I felt as if I were at the world championships or the Olympic Games."

The state coach of the Ukrainian national athletic team, Vyacheslav Tyrtyschnik, has called Dinamo Stadium 'amazing'. "I'm surprised by its cleanness and tidiness, and the range and quality of its sports facilities. Its cycling and roller-skiing tracks are in excellent condition, while everything is illuminated at night. This is without mentioning its sports arenas!" Belarus' Dinamo Stadium can host not only athletics events but those for winter sports, on the indoor ice rink and arena for skating, as well as at the incredible House of Rhythmic Gymnastics, he notes. "You drive down the avenue and also see the House of Football, and the House of Rowing. Everything looks so amazing," he stresses.

Photo of the week



Urban residents and pigeons

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS

20 Lenin Street
Until 26th August. Equos. Kon. Horse

NATURE AND ECOLOGY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 2nd August. Live Dragons

GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY MUSEUM

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 13th August. Piotr Masherov: His Heart Beats for People

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 14th July. Clothes of Our Forefathers. Graphics from 18th-19th Century Until 31st August. Enlightenment. Experience. Progress
Until 15th September. ABCs from Around the Globe Until 31st January. Maly Trostenets: exhibition-chronicles of large-scale horror

HOUSE-MUSEUM OF FIRST RSDRP CONGRESS

31a Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 29th July. Amazing Astronomy. Miracles of Universe

VANKOVICH'S HOUSE

33a Internatsionalnaya
Until 18th July. Dreams of the Past

HIGH PLACE

2A Gertsen Street
Until 26th August. Hello from Minsk

YAKUB KOLAS SQUARE

Until 8th September. The Artist and the City: open air exhibition of Georgy Skripnichenko's pictures

CAT MUSEUM

23 Internatsionalnaya Street
Until 31st August. Summer Season at Cat Museum

MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Ozertso village
Until 18th August. Folk Images of Belarus

DANA MALL

11 P. Mstislavets Street
Until 15th July. Future Live interactive exhibition for whole family

NATIONAL CENTRE OF ART FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

16 Kirov Street
Until 27th July. Generation Selfie

THEATRES

BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
12 and 13.07. Titanic
15.07. Cleopatra
17.07. Jane Eyre 18.07. Mister X
19.07. Wedding in Malinovka

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
12.07. Zoika's Flat
13.07. Red Hot Mamas
14.07. How to Become Rich

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street
12 and 17.07. Tolerance
13.07. Paulinka 15.07. Inspector
16.07. People of the Marsh
18.07. Local Cabaret
19.07. Pinsk Gentry

CONCERTS

UPPER TOWN

23A Svobody Square
12.07. Summer Musical Nights in Upper Town

GENNADY GLADKOV'S THEATRE TERRITORY OF MUSICAL

25 Nezavisimosti Avenue
17.07. Territory of Musical -- 5 Years gala

THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue
12.07. Wolves and Sheep
13.07. Abduction of Yelena
14.07. Even a Wise man Stumbles
15.07. The Same Place Next Year
16.07. Mechanical Man
17.07. Pygmalion
18.07. Night of P. Chekhov's Miniatures
19.07. Forgetting Herostratos

REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street
12.07. BelDrymShow
14.07. Wedding
16.07. Kind Man from Sychuan

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
12 and 13.07. Double Double

concert

RE:PUBLIC

62 Pritytsky Street
15.07. Disco from 1990s

TSENTRALNY CINEMA

13 Nezavisimosti Avenue
12.07. Muse: Drones World Tour

ZHURAVLI