


Business conversation to the point

One of the central points of the agenda of the recent Minsk visit by Pakistani PM was the Belarusian-Pakistani Business Forum **Page 4**


Grodno's historical treasures

There can hardly be a resident of Grodno unable to list a dozen interesting facts about their city's history **Page 7**


Good teacher and master always boasts diligent pupils

Exhibition dedicated to Honoured Figure of Arts of the Republic of Belarus Ivan Stolyarov, a Great Patriotic War veteran, showcases his watercolours, as well as around 30 works by his pupils **Page 10**



On the factory floor at Minsk's Wheeled Tractor Plant

Confident present and clear view of tomorrow are vital for stability

On visiting Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant JSC, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko emphasises that the state has no plans to sell this company

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS—2015

Some have many while others fewer

How is the regional campaign to collect signatures for candidates wishing to run for president going? *MT* correspondents chat with heads of local campaign headquarters and visit pickets.

By Alexey Feofanov

Mogilev

As of the morning of August 6th, the district electoral commission in the Mogilev Region had received signature sheets on which 170,000 residents had placed their signature in favour of the current President.

Vladimir Ryzhkov, who co-ordinates the work of support teams in the Mogilev Region to collect signatures in favour of Alexander Lukashenko, notes, "Residents of the Shklov, Dribin, Krugloe and Cherikov districts are most active; 40 percent have already placed their signatures in favour of the current President. The collection of signatures across the region is active."

According to Mr. Ryzhkov, people's mood is prudent. Typical questions asked by those in the Mogilev Region of teams collecting signatures for Mr. Lukashenko include the availability of bank loans for housing construction, the organisation of Internet

trade by large trading chains and the beautification of courtyards. They also suggest constructing more stations to soften water supplies. All feedback is recorded, for submission to the district leadership.

Brest

It's almost 35 degrees Celsius on the street, yet people are gathering at Brest's Tsentralny Market. The Gramada flag, of the social-democrats, flaps a little in the breeze, as they collect signatures in favour of candidate Tatiana Korotkevich.

However, within a few minutes, it becomes clear that there is a general lack of public support (despite the enthusiasm of the signature collectors). Most people pass by, saying 'No, thank you' or 'I've already given my signature'. Anna Kanyus, the Chair of the Gramada city organisation, tells us, "Early in the campaign, we gained more signatures for our candidate. Now, it's noticeable that interest is waning; many have al-



Signatures being collected for nomination of candidates to presidency

ready placed their signatures. The weather also has its role to play. It's very hot, making it uncomfortable for people to linger. Nevertheless, despite difficulties, the support team has collected more than 7,000 signatures in favour of Tatiana Korotkevich."

Gomel

The 'A Just World' Belarusian Left Party has nine fixed stations collecting signatures in the Gomel Region, in favour of their candidate, Sergei Kalyakin. They are constantly present in Gomel, Zhlobin, Svetlogorsk and Mozyr and have a mobile team travelling through the south-east of the country. They plan to visit every district.

Vladimir Sekerko, the Chairman of the Gomel regional organisation of the Belarusian Left Party 'A Just World', co-ordinates activ-

ity in the region. Of the 'subscription race', he notes, "The process is proceeding normally, without significant problems, except for a few isolated cases. One of Gomel's market complexes forbade us from collecting signatures nearby, saying it was their private territory. In Rogachev and Svetlogorsk they refused to accept donations on behalf of our candidate. However, these issues have been now settled and everything has clicked into place, so we're continuing work as usual."

Grodno

The Chair of the Grodno regional organisation of the United Civil Party, Alexandra Vasilevich, who heads campaign headquarters for Anatoly Lebedko, tells us frankly, "We haven't seen queues lining up to sign in favour of our candidate, unlike in 2010. We

have seven support teams operating in the region: two in Grodno and five in the districts. In the regional centre, our stations in the suburb of Forty and at Skidelsky Market daily collect between 15 and 30 signatures. If it were not for the heat, we may have seen more; however, because of the hot weather, people are leaving the city and many don't take their passports. Accordingly, we've been visiting people at home in the evenings, assisted by just over a hundred volunteers. Most are individual entrepreneurs or are employed by private firms, so it's difficult for them to find time to collect signatures during the day. Most of those signing are young people (aged between 18 and 35). As of August 6th, our support teams have gathered 1,389 signatures but we hope to accelerate our activity soon."

Upon right of responsibility

Chairman of Russia's Central Election Commission, Vladimir Churov, notes our civil duty to vote in elections, honouring the memory of past generations and those to come

Speaking during the Moscow-Minsk video-bridge, dedicated to 70 Years of Peace: Lessons of War and History of Common Victory, Mr. Churov commented upon the Belarusian Presidential election campaign. He underlined, "Belarus is preparing for an important event: the Presidential elections. Of course, if, 70 years ago, our ancestors had failed to claim victory in the Great Patriotic War, we wouldn't be electing presidents of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine today. We'd be electing a fascist prefect instead. Voting in elections is our civil duty to past generations and those to come."

Mr. Churov believes that it's too early to speak of who might form the Russian observer team, or how many people this will comprise; a decision should be announced by October. However, he added that Russian observers will be represented within the OSCE, CIS, and Shanghai Co-operation Organisation delegations (on a bilateral basis). The 2015 Belarusian Presidential campaign may set a record for its number of international observers, including representatives of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the UN Parliamentary Assembly and the CIS, in addition to observers from PACE (an influential international organisation to which there are no Belarusian members).

Journalism: considered and responsible

By Maxim Osipov

American publicist George Prentice speaks of the paradox of our modern times, where even whitewashing is done with the help of ink, through mudslinging. The role of the media in shaping society shouldn't be underestimated — especially during a major election campaign. Transforming the media into a noble weapon is a task we must aspire to, as the Belarusian Union of Journalists agrees.

An unscheduled session of its secretariat has involved many participants and slightly resembled a training seminar.

The Central Election Commission has adopted a provision on the role of the media during the Presidential election campaign. For instance, the Commission's Chair, Lidia Yermoshina, stresses that several leading newspapers must publish candidates' pre-election programmes free of charge. She explains, "Newspapers may publish related materials on a commercial basis and the editorial boards of these editions may have their own reasons to refuse publishing programmes. For example, an editorial board may have no intention of publishing political advertising or ideas (proclaimed by the programme) which don't meet the edition's policy."



At Belarusian Union of Journalists' Secretariat session

Programmes which directly contradict the law are forbidden from publication anywhere: those calling for extremism or inspiring international or religious conflicts. In addition, programmes promoting boycott are prohibited — as envisaged by the Election Code. However, the printed media remains the country's most

open and dynamic information space. According to Belarus' Information Minister, Lilia Ananich, it ensures wide and multi-sided coverage of the election campaign. The Belarusian Union of Journalists is to assess these actions and ask the media to meet acknowledged norms of journalistic behaviour: professional honour, and a sense

of conscience and ethics. Moreover, the Union plans to monitor the media in this respect. British poet and social commentator Matthew Arnold once said, "Journalism is literature on the run." Truly, journalists are required to produce their work 'at speed' but this doesn't mean that their standards need to be compromised.

Learning to select words

By Mikhail Averianov

CEC approves Regulation on media use during preparation and conduct of elections, to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates

Besides publishing their programmes, candidates for the presidency will be able to appear on Belarus 1 TV Channel from September 14th-25th without charge. Moreover, radio time is to be allocated during the working week from September 21st to October 2nd. TV debates are scheduled for October 3rd.

Belarus' Information Minister, Lilia Ananich, tells us, "The most important task is to fully ensure the constitutional right of citizens to access objective and complete information, as well as attracting them to polling stations. Weighty and responsible journalism is vital to media success."

Confident present and clear view of tomorrow vital for stability

On visiting Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant JSC, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko emphasises that the state has no plans to sell this company

By Vasily Kharitonov

Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant is a unique enterprise within the post-Soviet space, producing chassis for powerful nuclear rocket and rocket complexes of various purposes. While the weapons are Russian, the machinery is produced in Belarus. Unsurprisingly, some time ago, the Minsk plant joined those integration projects envisaging merger with Russian and Belarusian enterprises. The process could have been welcomed, since our two states have long enjoyed liaison in this sphere, but rumours of privatisation caused an alert.

Mr. Lukashenko mentioned the scheme of possible privatisation in Belarus, whereby workers must initially voice their opinion, before heads share their views. City authorities and the related ministry should then give their opinions, with the Government taking the final decision to send a proposal to the President.

The Head of State toured the plant's workshops, viewing products and chatting to workers. In honesty, I had no sense that those working at the factory desire a new owner. There seems no reason to do so, since the enterprise remains successful, despite global challenges. Besides making traditional wheeled tractors, the factory is mastering production of passenger buses, machinery for oil exploration and armoured vehicles. Its achievements ensure good salaries for its employees and their future is secure: a vital element.

Plant heads also seem reluctant to embrace privatisation, since their facility remains competitive on global markets and has its own, independent production technologies. Can someone else really introduce something better, or bring access to new markets? With this in mind, the issue of reform seems questionable. It might generate money but the President notes that the state would only consider negotiations if \$3bn were to be proposed. Even in this case, the state would preserve its duty of ensuring that workers remained in employment and that the enterprise continued in operation.

As yet, no such offer has been made, with potential buyers saying that they could build a new plant from scratch for \$1bn. "In that case, do," Mr. Lukashenko replies. There would be no barrier to another company setting up in this way, although there might be problems in finding well-trained, experienced employees. It takes decades to bring together a professional team of qualified specialists. To date, around three generations of workers have passed through the enterprise. Their experience is more valuable than gold.

Chatting to staff, the President noted that he is not advocating for privatisation, knowing that the plant is strong and won't squander its assets. It seems only right to preserve



During meeting with workers at Minsk's Wheeled Tractor Plant

the plant's state ownership in this case. There is no contradiction regarding our relationship with Russian colleagues, with whom partnerships may still be strengthened and with whom production co-operation is profitable and useful. This should be taken into account when thinking of the future.

Straight Talking

Chatting with employees at Minsk's Wheeled Tractor Plant, the Belarusian President focused on the following:

On the key issue

The world is being re-divided. The entire world is currently united in its fight against ISIS yet nobody can be bothered to find out how ISIS (which gathers members from around the globe) can stand up to the powerful countries allegedly fighting against it. Entire countries are being broken but the Western coalition — led by America — cannot defeat it. This is because, within this coalition, someone is financing ISIS; someone is benefiting from ISIS. They are eager to change the world's architecture in order to redistribute or, more precisely, capture lands rich in hydrocarbon resources, but don't wish to use their own hands.

The world is being re-divided. While salaries are important, as Belarusian President, I have to defend this country. In this tumultuous sea, we must preserve our boat and prevent it from going down.

DIRECT SPEECH

Alexander Lukashenko, President of Belarus:

You know my attitude towards privatisation. We didn't create this particular entity; it was established by several generations. We are at least the third generation of ownership. We shouldn't act drastically: only if an issue arises.

Not only domestic reasons brought about the crisis in Ukraine: global powers are fighting on both sides. We must find a balance, to defend this piece of land — maybe not for ourselves but for our children. This is what matters today. Things are getting tight over there. Economic factors are manifesting as tough competition and suppression. As an average country, we must stand our ground; we have to survive. We don't want to go under. We should understand that if we slip up, we'll be dealt with even faster than Ukraine has been. We can go on only if we stand together and if we ensure internal stability. However hard it may be, we should preserve peace in our country!

On youngsters' prospects

Young people are our future, however banal this may sound. We mustn't be reproached for failing to offer promising jobs to them. Just 7-10 years ago, those currently applying for the Presidential post were against my decision to launch our own satellite. It now orbits, fully paying for itself and generating profit. However, this is beside the point. On launching a satellite, we put new production facilities into operation,

creating employment for our young people. They now work there; they have opportunities. We're now building a nuclear power station. What does this mean for our young people? Modern jobs for 5,000-7,000 personnel initially. Where can we find these people? We must train our youngsters.

These are only two branches but we can also speak of wood processing. We have new tools and new production facilities but need construction staff and heads: opportunities for our young people. Our key task is to convince our children that they will be protected and provided with everything within their own land. Young people will replace us; it's their future, since we are not immortal. Youngsters will come and occupy our place.

On illegal migration to Europe

They [Europeans] are reaping the results of their actions, since who asked them to destroy Egypt, Libya, Syria or Iraq? People are beyond endurance; they are ready to die crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. However, don't think that all of these are homeless and poor. You know who is coming to Europe as

part of this company. Those seeking to teach Europeans a lesson! They shouldn't have destroyed these states. They should have liaised and, in the course of time, proposed their own values: true values.

As regards migration, we're strictly controlling this. We're a transit country but, having strength and a society worried by this situation, have no such problems [regarding illegal migration to Europe]. We catch these people within 24 hours. Owing to our unity, we're controlling this process. Of course, despite these serious threats, we must not shut ourselves off from the benefits of being a transit crossroads.

On establishing a private sector trade union

Our people will enjoy equal guarantees everywhere. I've supported this process. Our trade unions have received new leaders: normal, clear-headed young people. I've supported you everywhere. See whether this process is developing (formally or otherwise) at private enterprises, and whether these companies are offering the same social package as state companies.

So far, no catastrophe has occurred, although some still complain. If I'm informed that my decisions are failing to be fulfilled (formally or otherwise) I'll act. Tell me and guide me in this direction; who would risk shooting down Presidential decisions in our country? Whether employed by state or private companies, people deserve equal protection.

Business conversation to the point

One of the central points of the agenda of the recent Minsk visit by Pakistani PM was the Belarusian-Pakistani Business Forum. Agreements reached aim to bring the two states closer to a trade turnover of \$1bn, as is confirmed by readiness for co-operation, demonstrated by Minsk and Islamabad.

By Alexander Pimenov

The first acquaintances and business circle contacts, made during the May visit by Alexander Lukashenko, centred around a business forum in Islamabad. This set a record for its weighty portfolio of agreements and contracts — worth over \$50m — within just two days. It seems incredible but, a couple of years ago, annual trade turnover between our two states met this figure.

Current business meetings in Minsk were no less useful but it's still too early to speak about results in monetary terms. However, the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mikhail Myatlikov, supposes that the figure set in Islamabad will be exceeded.

The President of Belarus has announced, "We have the conditions necessary to expand our level of trade-economic and investment co-operation. I've been modestly proposed that we double our turnover within the next 2-3 years. Should we go round in circles? Is \$100m a worthy turnover for our economies? We need to set a target of increasing mutual trade to \$1bn. Our mutual interests are wide-ranging: from agriculture and machine building to the food industry, pharmaceuticals and biotechnologies. Pakistan's economy is oriented towards the agrarian sphere, with almost half of the country's population involved in agriculture. We have much to offer to this market, including tractors and potash fertilisers. Moreover, MTZ is ready to shift from sales of ready-made machinery to the supply of SKD kits for tractors. This will be the first step towards establishing assembly production of agricultural machinery in Pakistan. Alongside MTZ, other enterprises



Belarus presents around 150 sci-tech developments at Business Forum

in the spheres of machine building, petrochemistry and timber processing plan to expand their presence on the Pakistani market." Mountains occupy a large part of Pakistan's territory and the country boasts deposits of oil, gas, coal, and ferrous and non-ferrous metals. Accordingly, Belarusian geologists are proposing collaboration in the development of mineral deposits, notes the Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vladimir Ulakhovich.

A true breakthrough is also expected in the export of food produce. In particular, a contract has been signed for \$10m of dried milk, for supply to Pakistan. Belarusian cheeses, meat and bread products

could all soon find their way onto Pakistan's shelves, while our partner is ready to increase its export supply of rice, fruits and vegetables. Pakistan also has a strong textile industry, accounting for 10 percent of the world's cotton market; it boasts 300 textile factories.

During an informal chat with journalists, the Co-Chairman of the Belarus-Pakistan Business Council, Tariq Khalil, showed off his suit, made of high quality wool. He noted that Pakistan is ready to supply such raw materials in major quantities to Belarus and to launch a joint textile enterprise in our country. The idea would be to supply the Eurasian and European markets. A joint venture to produce carpets (made from raw

materials from Pakistan) at Brest Carpet Factory also seems promising.

Scientific interaction could prove profitable too. Accordingly, Mr. Lukashenko has invited representatives of Pakistani business circles to survey potential at the innovative Great Stone Industrial Park (currently under construction): designed to unite the spheres of pharmaceuticals, IT and communications.

The President outlined the advantages of bilateral co-operation, saying, "Pakistan may become a window to South Asia for Belarus, just as Belarus may become a window to Europe for Pakistan. Opening enterprises in Belarus

will provide unlimited access to the Eurasian Economic Union markets while enabling promotion of goods and joint products to the European Union market."

Pakistan's scientists and businessmen are now analysing proposals from Belarusian colleagues. Around 150 sci-tech developments were presented at the National Library, with the Chemistry Institute showing its unique materials for 3D printing (used to create an artificial kidney). Innovative developments relating to water and air purification are sure to be useful in Pakistan's hot climate while technologies in the sphere of optoelectronic systems, lasers and pilotless aircraft are also of interest. Contracts have been signed, including jointly with Adani: its Director General, Vladimir Linev, tells us that high-tech security provision systems are to be made in Pakistan.

Of course, Pakistan is a relatively new country, with huge global economic potential. It's vital that Belarus create the right conditions to support businesses in their joint work and in fulfilling contracts, on either territory. Mr. Lukashenko has given such guarantees to Pakistani entrepreneurs and assured them that they won't have any problems in our country. His word is his bond. Meanwhile, Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif again stressed that Pakistan highly appreciates its relations with Belarus, and values Alexander Lukashenko's personal work in cementing this partnership.

The current visit of the Pakistani PM has outlined priorities of interaction between our two states while laying the foundation for our economies' rapprochement. Both sides have agreed, this autumn, to set out a 'roadmap' of development for our relations at governmental level, guiding us for the years to come.

Reality-based prognosis

Government forecasts economic growth in H2

By Vladimir Khromov

Prime Minister of Belarus, Andrei Kobyakov, has reported to the President on economic development from the first half of 2015, while making some proposals for a strategy of socio-economic development. President Lukashenko set a clear task: to hit all 2015 forecast targets. "People do not want us to do something extraordinary! They understand that external factors created 80 percent of this situation. However, we have to strain every sinew to find a solution. We cannot wait for improvements in neighbouring countries.

We have to be aggressive, competing with others and penetrating new markets," he said.

Mr. Lukashenko has warned against hoarding goods in warehouses or sending them for consignment storage, since sales are essential to ensure an inflow of foreign currency and stability on the financial market.

Mr. Kobyakov reported that, in the first half of 2015, GDP was 96.7 percent of the 2014 figure for the same period. The statistic is no surprise for the Government, whose focus has been on fulfilling the tough demands of the President. We need to

live within our means during this unfavourable economic period, making sure that our country doesn't spend more than it earns. Since early 2015, the Government has been repaying its foreign currency obligations, making its largest payment (to date) in July, of almost \$1.5bn.

In fact, Belarus has not increased its foreign debt over the past six months, rather increasing its gold-and-currency reserves, and achieving a positive foreign trade balance. Budget proficiency stands at around Br15 trillion: spent on repaying foreign loans and increasing pension allowances. The

level of real salaries (taking inflation into consideration) should match that of 2014.

Restoration of economic growth is the Government's key task for H2. Primarily, this should become possible by raising export volumes and realising promising investment projects — including those jointly with foreign partners.

Preserving labour teams is another key issue, conducted strategically. The President noted, "I don't want to create a bourgeois or a bourgeois-democratic society, with a gap between wealthy and ordinary people. This gap would result in,



Production of microwave ovens at Midea-Horizont

at least, a scandal and might even generate a revolution. We've already been there. Society would be destabilised and the Ukrainian scenario might be repeated."

Mr. Lukashenko warned the Government against ridiculous proposals, including extreme reform, fuelling populist slogans such as 'let's

provide a million jobs'. To create this many highly technological jobs and innovative facilities producing competitive goods for export would require an injection of \$10bn. The President's conclusion is simple: we need reform but proposals should be realistic, enabling us to live 'normally' today and tomorrow.

Vitamins of growth for business

Ideas drive progress and, where supplemented by labour and luck, bring forth successful businesses, note young entrepreneurs bravely launching their businesses

By Andrey Krotov

Despite their fearless attitude, young entrepreneurs admit that their first steps would have been a challenge without help from others. Small entrepreneurial incubators are increasingly popular, with over a hundred now operational country-wide. Most are privately run, which would have seemed impossible in the late 1990s. In the early days of our move towards capitalism, nobody could have imagined that the state would help small businesses find their feet. However, global experience demonstrates that most new start-up companies, despite lacking money or experience, can find success with the smallest of nudges. Expert advice is vital however, including on how to behave with business partners and clients.

The corridors of the Youth So-



VITALY GIL

Incubators of small entrepreneurship becoming more popular for start-up businesses

cial Services building are quiet, although almost 150 new companies work there, in the fields of tourism, design, IT, public catering, advertising and consulting. Some are novices, while others are already recognised as 'successful businesses'.

Gennady Myastovsky, who heads an advertising company, recalls the days when he rented just one desk in the building. "Three years ago, I was registered as an individual entrepreneur; now, my company employs 20 people — including a lawyer and an accountant. Previously, we outsourced these positions to our incubator neighbours. Working here has been truly advantageous, as we enjoy co-operation with those who share our determination: partners and similarly young and developing projects. We help each other, which is vital

EXPERT OPINION



Irina Kostevich,
Deputy Economy
Minister

We're now observing positive dynamics in the development of entrepreneurship: the number of commercial organisations in the country has risen by over 300 within the past six months. There are 5,000 new enterprises registered and 4,665 have ceased operation. We understand that the infrastructure of business support helps inspire business development and we've achieved progress in this sphere: 107 economic entities are operational in the field of infrastructure — including 16 business incubators and 61 centres of support.

In addition, we plan to establish a register of administrative procedures for entrepreneurs in coming years, aimed at three issues. Firstly, an information portal will be launched to help businessmen find the necessary administrative procedure and understand steps to be taken. Secondly, the project will fulfill a transaction function, allowing procedure to be conducted online. Thirdly, we hope to optimise administrative procedures.

in the early days. Rental fees are affordable too, which is an undisputable advantage for newcomers.

Though lacking enough money to rent an office, they can rent a working place," he explains.

The General Director of Youth Social Services, Rimma Yepur, compares the incubator with a beehive, full of worker bees. As each business grows, it helps its neighbours, acting as a mentor. Relatively low rents are a real help for young businesses; in their first year of operation, they are charged just Br90,000 per month per square metre. Importantly, the incubator fully covers its own costs.

However, many problematic issues remain. Ms. Yepur explains, "Our key task is to stir up entrepreneurship across the regions. It's vitally important that we ensure communication between business representatives in Minsk and the regions. It's sometimes harder for the latter to develop, but Minsk colleagues can render support and help. We've already developed a programme for regional entrepreneurs, which envisages a moderately priced two-day stay in Minsk, including accommodation, food and attendance at master classes and lectures at our Youth Social Services. Those at the incubator will thereby help other business bees."

Foreigners have been attending the incubator, such as Syrian Daniel Yusef, who offers services in design and architecture. He sees it as a great opportunity to establish contacts and accumulate experience. Success seems 'inevitable', as Svetlana Koltsova, who oversees small businesses for Youth Social Services, admits. She tells us that only a small number of incubator leavers fail to continue in business; most develop well, although they sometimes change direction. Very few leave the market altogether.

The incubator currently has room for three or four new young companies and is open to applications. Few can doubt the benefits of joining.

Hryvnia actively used in mutual trade payments

The city of Chernigov hosted the 23rd session of the Intergovernmental Belarusian-Ukrainian Joint Commission on Trade-Economic Co-operation. The event is rather usual, although both Belarus and Ukraine hold many such working meetings with various countries and regions during the year, but this time it attracted the world mass media. At the suggestion of Belarus, both countries intend to consider the use of the Hryvnia more actively in mutual foreign trade payments.

By Alexander Benkovsky

The Government included an important caveat: the transition of foreign trade with Ukraine to exclusively Hryvnia format is not the final decision. For now, the two sides have agreed to consider the step and, as our enterprises intend to use the Ukrainian currency more actively, then it is right to expect a reciprocal show of respect in a more favourable attitude to the Belarusian Rouble. Our heavy industry manufacturers already use the Hryvnia actively in trade and have been following this system since April of this year without complaints.

The main question is, whether it is good for us to use a currency which is not the strongest in many respects, a currency that weakened by 280 percent in the last year? It seems this could be favourable. The Dean of the Economics Faculty at BSU, Mikhail Kovalev, explains, "The most important thing is that payments using Hryvnias would allow both countries to save hard-earned Dollars. The use of Ukrainian currency, certainly, will allow us to increase goods turnover between Ukraine and Belarus and to activate our falling foreign trade."

For a long time the two countries have called each other strategically



Hryvnia outweighs in beneficial trade

important partners, but trade has not been developing well for some time. The reason for that was not only the economic crisis in our region, but also the internal disorders of our neighbour. Following the events of January to April of this year, mutual goods turnover reached \$950.8m, only 53.4 percent of the volumes fixed at the beginning of 2014. Certainly, the balance of foreign trade appeared positive for Belarus (\$427m), but it is necessary to recognise that both import and export reduced almost by half.

It is clear that the Ukrainian enterprises interested in purchase of Belarusian machinery, but not wish-

ing to spend 'precious' Dollars and Euros for it, will be more predisposed to make purchases. Besides, the Hryvnia as a unit of payment is favourable for Belarus as payments using this currency reduce the risk of non-payment. Unfortunately, accounts owing in trade with the Ukrainian enterprises, have become rather frequent phenomenon recently. Financial analyst, Valery Polkhovsky, comments, "The question of what currency to use in trade with partners should be considered by all economic and market participants. After all, the situation in the economy of Ukraine is very difficult and the Hryvnia-to-Dollar rate has

sunk considerably. To take advantage of the opportunity however, it's possible that businesses themselves would like to use a weak Hryvnia in payments with Ukrainian companies." At the same time he cautioned that it would be beneficial to involve mechanisms to insure against currency risks at this point.

Recently our country has been actively promoting alternative currencies to the American Dollar in export-import transactions. For example, after the symbolic visit of the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, the Chinese Yuan began to flow in transactions. Even before that, the inflow of Chinese currency was not weak. The scheme is simple: we deliver Belarusian Roubles to the Chinese, while they use their currency, and using this money we actively buy goods from each other. The transition to Russian Roubles in trade with Russia however, has not happened for many years and our partners persistently sell us gas and oil for Dollars. Mikhail Kovalev commented, "If Gazprom and the Russian oil industry would use their currency in trade with Belarus, both countries would benefit."

Studying the history rather than rewriting

International school of historians brings together students and teachers from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine, in Minsk

By Olga Bebenina

This year's forum of historians was dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War. Vyacheslav Danilovich, Director of the History Institute at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, tells us, "Such meetings, which bring us together to share the results of our research and our opinions, and to discuss problems, are very important. Preserv-

ing our historical memory, as well as objectively and impartially outlining events, is especially vital."

It's no secret that, from the moment of finally destroying fascist Germany, there were attempts to reinterpret the role of the USSR in World War II. This issue is especially relevant today, 70 years on. History isn't just being suppressed; it's being re-written in favour of a political situation. It's an issue of dignity to defend the truth and honour



the memory of our ancestors. It's vital that young historians join our forum, shaping how their children and grandchildren will see the world.

Belarus cherishes the tragic memories brought to light over the past year. The huge volume of literature and scientific research shared is proof of interest, with Russian colleagues praising Belarusian work in this sphere.

Victor Ishchenko, the Deputy Director for Sci-



Inside the workings of school life

Participants visit Trostenets Memorial

contribution to the study of the history of the Great Patriotic War, the history of the USSR and, even, the history of the Russian Empire."

The meeting was held under the slogan "The Soviet Union in the Second World War: Acute Problems of History and Historical Memory". History and historical memory differ slightly, explains Mr. Ishchenko, saying, "Each nation and state has its own ideas about an event. Historical memory, like human memory, is selective. WWII events aren't unambiguous. For example, Poles feel the loss of the 'eastern territories', which they believe to be theirs.

Everyone has their own position."

Theoretically, history, as a science, should be single; however, it is not mathematics, where twice two is four. Historians yet believe that a unified viewpoint is needed: a consensus uniting us rather than dividing. Over the last 5-10 years, such terms as 'historical policy' have appeared, describing the purposeful manipulation of historical facts.

We aim for a common approach towards our common history, since post-Soviet space nations are connected not only by their USSR history but by a far more remote past. As in all big families, not everything goes smoothly and misunderstandings do occur, as do conflicts. Nevertheless, to settle everything and reach a common decision, we need to make time for discussion. Schools of historians provide the perfect venue for this.

Coming down hard on Tehran

By Yevgeny Kononov

Agreement on Iranian nuclear programme is of global historical significance. The country can breathe a sigh of relief for the first time in many years as, in exchange for the restriction of nuclear developments, Tehran has been promised an end to economic and financial sanctions — including exports of oil and investments into the Iranian economy. This will enable the country to increase its sales of oil on the global market. As a result, prices on hydrocarbons will continue falling and even \$45 per barrel looks too optimistic. Some experts believe that oil will fall to \$20-25 in price. Whether or not these calculations are realistic is worth further investigation.

Iran occupies fourth place in the world as regards the volume of confirmed oil deposits. However, until recently, the country was barred from western financing, technology and sales markets. The USA stopped buying Iranian oil in the late 1980s and, in 2012, the EU joined the sanctions. At that time, Iran produced up to 2.5m barrels daily but, due to the loss of the European market, its mining halved. At present, the situation is reviving and Iranians are convinced that in just a couple of months their former position will be restored. In 1979 (before the Islamic Revolution), Iran produced around 6m barrels a day. Saudi Arabia, for example, mines around 11.5m and Russia produces slightly less. It's unlikely that the appearance of another major player

would leave prices on the global market unchanged. Even OPEC would have little influence. Iran's Oil Minister, Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, is decisive, "We need no OPEC decision to return to the market. This is our right. We were restricted with sanctions and it would be absolutely normal to return to the market with the 'ceiling' we had before the sanctions were introduced."

An authoritative expert on the energy market, Mikhail Krutikhin, has his own view on the situation. "When Iran joins the market, oil prices will stand at \$45 per barrel," he believes. "However, aside from market factors, psychological aspects must be considered. Prices could fall due to traders' panicking." Moreover, the global market is saturated with black gold, with supply outstripping demand. Any negative factors can produce the effect of a falling stone on prices. In recent weeks, the Chinese stock market has registered an evident fall. Potentially, this could slow down the

growth of China's economy and, accordingly, affect demands on energy. The continuing Greek crisis also negatively influences the economy of the Eurozone and can lead to a fall in the global oil market."

Experts' views on the possible consequences of lifting the Iranian embargo differ. Owing to the sanctions, Iran had to cease development of its new mines and conserved old mines. Time will be needed to make them active: around 18-24 months. Aside from this, an additional million barrels per day are not a great vol-

ume and won't cause a shock on the market. An analyst from the Forex Club, Valery Polkhovskiy, reminds us that the current global daily oil consumption stands at 93m barrels. The current economic situation might become another negative factor in Iran's triumphal return to the global oil market. According to the International Energy Agency, next year, the global demand for oil will rise by just 1.2m barrels a day. Under such conditions, the Iranians will need to work hard to find buyers for their oil.

The Head of Russia's National Energy Security Fund, Konstantin Simonov, is convinced that the demand-supply factor should not be exaggerated. "Why did oil prices begin to rise this year after falling in late 2014? What has happened on the market to cause a rise of 50 percent? Nothing has happened. No country has cut its oil volumes and demand has remained almost unchanged," he commented. Mr. Simonov believes that advocates of the 'market concept' are confused, "The volume of money circulated on the market is the decisive factor in oil price forma-

tion, rather than the supply-demand ratio. Future contract transactions and deals on virtual oil exceed deals on marketable oil many times over. The Dollar exchange rate is another factor. In reality, oil prices are mostly dependent on the US' monetary policy rather than anything else." The USA is not a bystander in the process. As politologist Vasily Koltashov considers, Iran's admission to the global hydrocarbon market is not incidental at the moment. In a couple of years, this country would rival Russia in the EU in the oil-and-gas sector. It was in fact the Russians who benefited most when the EU introduced the embargo on Iranian oil exports. Since 2012, Russia's sales to the major markets of Asia and Europe have more than doubled. Moreover, Iran and Qatar have the largest gas deposit in the world at South Pars in the Persian Gulf. In contrast to Russia, this gas is produced in warm weather conditions and, accordingly, is cheap.

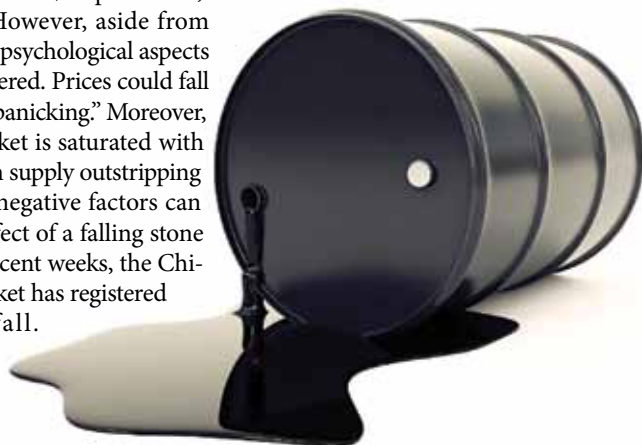
Ensuring tough control over many issues concerning the lifting of Iranian sanctions, Washington will make the most of the opportunity to expand its influence (via Iran) in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. The USA needs someone in the region capable of organising an attack on the Islamic State. There are no other pretenders for the role except for Iran. Accordingly, the country is to head the struggle against the Islamic State while Mr. Obama is unable to participate more actively in the events occurring in the region. The strengthening of Iran's economic potential will enable the USA to take the lead in Asia in the military sphere.

EXPERT OPINION

Alexander SHPAKOVSKY, Director of the Actual Concept information and educational institution, comments:

The dynamics of world oil prices is a two-way street. Our country is also affected. Belarus is a large processor of 'black gold' and an exporter of oil products. Accordingly, we lose revenue as a result of oil prices' falling. On the other hand, we can buy raw materials at a lower price. As regards our relations with Iran, Belarus is open to partnership, evidenced by over \$600m of investments in our economy. A high level of political ties has been achieved between

our two states. Alexander Lukashenko visited Iran twice but a new impetus for trade-economic and investment co-operation is now needed. The turnover of \$100m already achieved can be increased. Until recently, the growth of our mutual trade was hampered by western economic sanctions towards Iran. As they are lifted, we can liaise with our Iranian partners to the full and the situation is expected to change for the better.



Grodno's historical treasures

There can hardly be a resident of Grodno unable to list a dozen interesting facts about their city's history. They'd be able to do so in their sleep! However, few know more than regional ethnographer Victor Sayapin. *MT* correspondent joins the well-known historian on a city tour.

By Julia Popko

FIGURES

63 Grodno sites are included on the State List of Historical and Cultural Treasures



Grodno's chiming tower clock is the most ancient in Europe, located on St. Francis Xavier Cathedral. The calling card of the city is 400 years old and stands on Sovetskaya Square. It's here, at noon, as the clock strikes, that I meet Victor Sayapin.

As we approach a picturesque public garden, he tells me, "Well-known St. Mary's Church once stood opposite the cathedral. Last June, we unveiled a memorial plaque for the lost church. It endured much in its lifetime, having been constructed in the 14th century, and been destroyed by frequent fires. During the time of Soviet atheism, it was demolished, leaving the site bare for more than half a century..."

I try to take a good photo of the memorial but others keep stepping in front; the location is really popular, so it's quite crowded.

Moving on, we reach house #1, on pedestrianised Sovetskaya Street: the former palace of the Sanguszko princes. Constructed in 1742, Mr. Sayapin explains that a tavern once stood there, famous from the 16th century onwards. A QR-code is mounted on the corner of the house and he asks if my phone can access the Internet? We take a photo of the QR-code and are soon downloading information on the site.

"Similar QR-codes have appeared all over the city recently and are installed on 40 of the most significant historical and cultural sites," Victor explains. He helped create the mobile 'guides', which include illustrations.

We pass some beautiful granite columns, which prevent traffic from entering the pedestrianised street. "All kinds of transport used to pass here, including taxis, wedding motorcades and jeeps," recalls Victor. "However, we installed these two years ago, with granite vases of flowers placed at the side entrances, making the street truly pedestrian."

It's a beautiful place, with stylised lanterns, young trees with low canopies and a great many flowers on windowsills. Tourists are photographing a huge panel on the wall of the former Dominican monastery, and on Grodno men's grammar school. "Fifteen years ago, well-known artist Alexander Silvanovich moulded birds to symbolise various people living in Grodno," Victor explains. "This, alongside many other city decorations, was presented at the Republican Festival of National Cultures, which is held on a large scale in the city every two years."

Of course, nothing is perfect. The historical building before us includes a shop with a modern door. Mr. Sayapin cannot hide his indignation as he denounces the decision. "They bought an apartment, cut a new entrance, and made a footwear shop. It's difficult to imagine what will be the result if other businessmen do the same. What will happen to this monument of 18th century architecture?"

The undesirable presence of a great many shops on the ancient street is noticeable. There's a fashionable salon, outlets selling branded European clothes and a lingerie boutique, all of which could easily be housed on the parallel streets. Victor believes that museums, galleries, showrooms and small hotels would be far better suited to the old street, saying, "I hope that someone will implement this idea."

The longer I spend looking, the more I realise that Grodno is a city of craftsmen. You can easily find wonderful hand-made souvenirs.

We pass the former palace of the noble Sapega family, constructed in 1795. Further on is a monastery building, the Church of the Holy Spirit and a hospital constructed at the request of Queen Bona. Surprisingly, all were built in the first half of the 16th century,

yet look fresh, as if built last week.

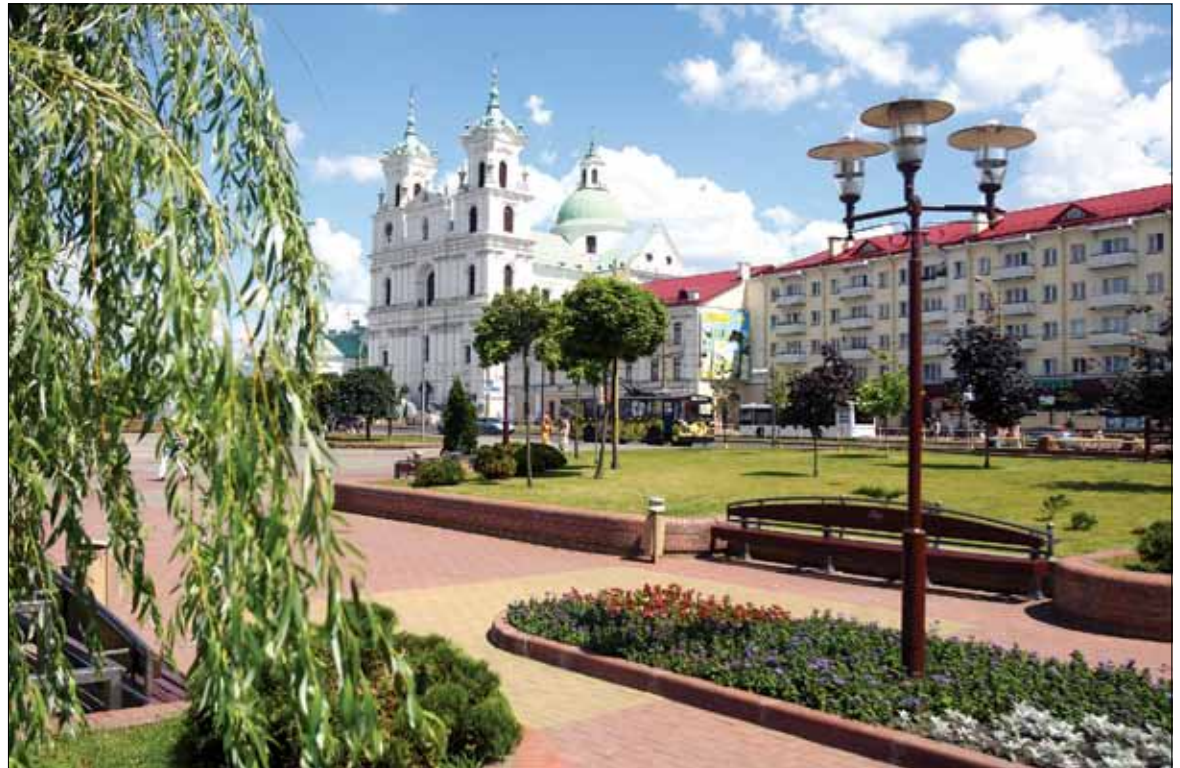
We turn the corner, and my guide invites us into a pharmacy, which he tells me is of medieval construction. Mr. Sayapin directs my attention to cobblestones visible in the floor. His argument is convincing. There's something similar at the end of the pedestrianised street, inside a popular local pub. Victor notes, "Many years ago, there was an automatic machine baking doughnuts here, with a standard cafeteria beyond." These days, the interior has been restored to an antique appearance, with open brickwork walls. In fact, it's the former Masalski family home, a palace dating from the 18th century. The pub is in the basement and is a real gem.

The Palace of Vice Governor Konstantin Maximovich dates to 1803. "When the city was seized by the French, in 1812, Jérôme-Napoléon Bonaparte, the King of Westphalia, located his staff in this building. Napoléon Bonaparte's younger brother was so impressed by Grodno girls, ever famous for their beauty, that his desire to be at war slowly faded and he arranged various balls here," the historian tells me, as we walk around the well-preserved walls of the building. "Why did the French lose the war? Because they liked girls so very much!" Victor Sayapin smiles. It's a well-known saying in Grodno.

On the other side of the pedestrianised area is a bank; at first sight, it appears modern but is out of tune with its surroundings. "In the late 1930s, it was decided to reconstruct a hotel called both 'Switzerland' and 'New York', in the constructivism style," Victor explains.

The Detsky Mir department store doesn't fit the architectural style of the ancient street. About five years ago, it was modified, with an attic floor constructed to chime with neighbouring buildings. Victor explains that another building has waited 30 years to be reconstructed. Peering through the huge windows, we can see that it's empty inside. "In the 1970s, it housed the most popular restaurant in the city, called Bialystok: stylish and serving good cuisine. In fact, a new public catering outlet is due to now launch here."

On my next Grodno trip, I might be able to sample a cup of coffee there, amidst an 'olde worlde' atmosphere.



Grodno's central square as it appears today

FRESH VIEW ON OLD CITY

Historical centre both beautiful and functional

Grodno is unique in Belarus as only city to have preserved its medieval structure of streets and squares, as formed throughout the 15th-19th centuries

Today's historical centre of Grodno occupies 302 hectares. It is not only the centre of administrative-public life but is busy with traffic and is a dense residential area. Genady Talamanov, the Head of Architecture and Town-planning for the Grodno City Executive Committee, and the main architect for the city, tells us, "Every year, we've been reconstructing dozens of historical buildings, bringing a 'facelift' to ancient part of the city. Over 500 municipal and private apartment blocks are located in the centre, with most having been constructed at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. Each year, we've been making major repairs on 4-5 apartment blocks and to the facades and roofs of 15-20 further blocks. Across 17 sites, we've spent Br18.6 billion, in the historical centre of the city, and have plans for seven new sites."

Grodno's Old Castle is next in line for restoration, being listed within the governmental programme *Castles of Belarus*. Meanwhile, city enterprises are sponsoring the restoration of the Lutheran church. The synagogue's



Architectural silhouettes of the city

repairs are being jointly funded by the Jewish religious community of Grodno and by sponsorship.

The city's suburbs are gradually receiving more facilities, including major shopping centres. In 2005, the norm was just 262.7 square metres of retail space per 1,000 people; now, this has almost doubled, to 519.4 square metres. Meanwhile, public catering employment has doubled over the last decade.

Recently, the main city streets have been transformed, using an open plan ring road to serve outlying areas and ease traffic flow. There

are two overpasses, near the railway station and Suvorov Street, and many streets have been converted to two lanes. In addition, there have been major repairs at the railway station.

Public health service buildings have also received attention, being reconstructed and equipped with modern equipment. Repairs are complete at Grodno Regional Clinical Hospital and at Grodno Regional Clinical Hospital of Infectious Diseases, and the Children's Regional Clinical Hospital has a new building, as well as having its former administrative-medical building turned into a hostel. Grodno's regional blood transfusion station is now operational too.

Every year, the city acquires new facilities and services. Between 2011 and 2014, Grodno launched four more pre-schools, as well as two secondary schools, a spa-baths complex and two youth centres. Another school is to open its doors in September 2015, while December will see the launch of a new kindergarten in the suburb of Vishnevets.

Of course, buildings should be pleasing to the eye as well as functional, with good evening illumination of facades and attractive grounds. The city is also known for its sculptural compositions, which are regularly supplemented.

China: clean up begins at chemical blast site

The recovery of toxic materials has begun in earnest at the site of explosions at a chemical warehouse in China's port of Tianjin

The goal is to clear any chemicals found including that of sodium cyanide which has already been detected, before it rains as that could create further toxic gas emissions. Sodium cyanide is soluble in water, and absorbs water from air, and its dust is also easy to inhale. When dissolved or burned, it releases the highly poisonous gas hydrogen cyanide.

An investigation is underway into what triggered the disaster which flattened the area. The number of dead has risen to 112 with 95 still missing, most of them firefighters. More than 720 people remain in hospital.

Government reaction

China's Premier Li Keqiang visited the area meeting victims and environmental monitors who are trying to secure the site. Officials have acknowledged the presence of toxins but claim they pose no threat to people outside a two-kilometre evacuation zone surrounding the blast area.

More than 6,000 people have been displaced by the blasts. The Chinese government has also ordered officials to make nationwide checks on dangerous chemicals and



Medical volunteers walk past tents set up at the playground of a primary school

explosives and to 'crack down on illegal activities to ensure safety'.

Protests

Meanwhile, around 40 family members of those still missing attempted to protest outside the local

city hall. Holding banners which said 'give me back my son', they called on the government for details of their relatives. Others accuse the government of not supplying sufficient information about what chemicals are at the site.

Fire crews have been criticised for using water to douse the flames which may have contributed to the blasts given the volatile nature of the chemicals involved. The operators of the Tianjin facility have been accused of violating safety procedures.



Tens of thousands call for impeachment of Brazilian president

Brazil's third major demonstration of the year drew tens of thousands to Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach to call for the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff

Embroided, although not implicated, in the country's biggest-ever corruption scandal, the left-wing leader has seen her support wither to single digits in recent polls.

Local student Luiz Paulo Loureiro was among those calling for change, "The opposition PSDB Party [Social Democratic Party — opposition to ruling Workers Party] is not leading this protest. This is a non-partisan demonstration, led by the people, not political parties. We are here, people

from the right and the left. Indignant people, who want real change and want to see an end to a corrupt and lying government." Suely Alencar, a resident of Rio, added, "What I want is a better Brazil. I want the Brazilians to make a better choice in the next election because the ruling PT Party is over. There's no possibility of continuing with this government."

Rousseff has had a turbulent second term so far, after being re-elected in October 2014. A survey carried out in August show the poorest and least-educated Brazilians — the very people who helped her win re-election — are now calling the loudest for impeachment.

Sacred sinkhole cave found under Kukulcan Castle Pyramid

A group of scientists from the Autonomous University of Mexico has discovered a sacred sinkhole cave, known as a cenote, under Chichen Itza's grand Kukulcan Castle Pyramid, which could shed new light on the ancient Maya civilisation

According to scientists, the body of water measures up to 35 metres across and has a depth of over 20 metres. "Remember what happened in the middle of the limestone, where we can have caverns, a subterranean river. It's very possible that the pyramid is sitting on top of a cenote," said scientist, Rene Chavez.

Mexico's Kukulcan pyramid is one of the new seven wonders of the ancient world, renowned for its perfect astronomical geometry. Denise Argote from Mexico's National Anthropology and History Institute said the discovery of the cenote could provide new insights into why the pyramid was built at this site in the Yucatan peninsula.

"We know that in caustic areas, its surroundings have subterranean waters. So, taking into account the concept of the maternal womb, the



origins of life and water which is the original of life, we have a double meaning which is very significant. Therefore, taking all these concepts into account we link it with a step to the sky in magical and religious thinking," said Argote. The base of the pyramid dates back to the pre-Hispanic age but the structure is believed to have been built over various time periods. The next phase of the project is to place the electrodes on the pyramid structure to make a map of its interior to date its construction periods.

The powerful Mayan empire reached its height between approximately 250 CE and 950 CE. It extended its reach into what is now Guatemala, Honduras and western El Salvador.

Colorado River is contaminated after mine clean-up goes wrong

Workers from an environmental protection team have accidentally caused an environmental disaster — releasing millions of litres of toxic wastewater into a river in Colorado

The spill has turned the Animas River into a mustard-coloured pollution zone with the contaminated leak said to contain heavy metals like arsenic, mercury and lead. Three times bigger than initially thought, the leak has spread beyond Colorado's borders, notably into neighbouring New Mexico.

It started when workers from the US Environmental Protection Agency were cleaning up an abandoned mine and inadvertently unleashed a flow of the orange-tinged slurry. There are reports of residents weeping as the once crystal-clear Animas River was closed down in an emergency measure. The long-term environmental effects of the spill remain unclear.

UK government fast-tracks fracking in England

The British Government has announced a series of measures which would fast-track fracking applications in England

Ministers will be allowed to intervene on shale gas planning applications if they believe local councils are not processing them quickly enough, a decision likely to prove fractious. The government believes that developing shale gas is a national priority to ensure energy security, while campaigners claim they are running roughshod over local people. Fracking was suspended in Lancashire in 2011 after it triggered two small earthquakes.

Egyptians swelter in deadly heat wave

The demand for ice has reached a record high in Egypt where a scorching heat wave has killed at least 93 people in recent time

Most of the victims have been elderly. Hundreds have been admitted to hospital for heat exhaustion. With temperatures soaring to 46 degrees Celsius and forecasts of more to come, warnings have been issued calling on people to stay out of the sun. The Mideast has been hit by a heat wave since last July. Egyptian summers are usually hot, but meteorologists say the current temperatures are exceptional.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



National Art Museum Director Vladimir Prokoptsov, and his *My Vitebsk*

Acknowledging alma mater

By Veniamin Mikheev

Vitebsk Art Museum gains new exhibit, as National Art Museum Director General Vladimir Prokoptsov donates picture

Mr. Prokoptsov donated his *My Vitebsk* to mark his birthday: on August 8th, at 8.08am (and 8 sec-

onds). He emphasised his gratitude to Vitebsk's State Pedagogical University (named after S.M. Kirov), saying, "This year marks the 40th anniversary of my graduation from Vitebsk's Art and Graphical Department. In acknowledgement, I've decided to present the city with my picture, the plot of which is directly

connected with Vitebsk."

Asked what inspired him to create the canvas, Mr. Prokoptsov explained, "Last May, I went to Vitebsk to draw the night city. Just imagine: a painter standing with candles burning on this hat..." *My Vitebsk* will be exhibited at Vitebsk's Art Museum for a full month. Come and see!

Images of Comandante, reflected in photography

By Vladimir Velikhov

Venezuelan Life Journey of Comandante Hugo Chávez photographic exhibition hosted by Belarusian National Library's Rakurs Gallery

The exhibition is one in a series of events organised by the Venezuelan diplomatic mission to Minsk, to mark the 61st anniversary of Comandante Hugo Chávez's birth. The Embassy stresses that the strategic partnership between Venezuela and Belarus, initiated during the presidency of Hugo Chávez, remains a foreign policy priority for both countries.

The exhibition aims to reflect key moments from Hugo Chávez's life. "Many of the photographs on display have never been shown before. Visitors will have the chance to see how, from a modest boyhood, and faithful to the ideals of justice and love for his Homeland, he became a leader of the Bolivarian

Revolution. He is a stronghold for Latin American nations and an inspiring example for nations worldwide," notes the diplomatic mission.

Hugo Chávez suffered defeats and misfortunes but they enabled him to reinforce his moral courage and continue his struggle towards the ideals of freedom, equality and social justice. "Faith in his Homeland, firm will and determination predetermined his heading of revolutionary change in Venezuela. This inspired other nations to believe in the possibility of constructing a better world," the Embassy underlines.



Exhibition at Rakurs Gallery

Painted Chagall to appear in film

In the past, the corridors at Belarusfilm were a marvellous place to visit: each door had a label with information on the film being shot. It is still interesting to walk along the studio's renewed corridors and it's impossible to walk past a portrait of Marc Chagall placed on one of its doors.

By Natalia Stepuro

On seeing it, one would think that Belarusians have decided to shoot a feature film about their famous countryman. However, Yelena Petkevich's appearance indicates that the film is an animation. The idea of shooting several films devoted to famous Belarusian personalities was born at Belarusfilm after the success of *Fairy-tales of the Old Piano*: a series of cartoons on famous composers prepared jointly with a Russian Studio. Our directors — Irina Kodyukova, Vladimir Petkevich and Yelena Petkevich, created four musical biographies: of Beethoven, Bach, Prokofiev and Chopin. Moreover, Ms. Petkevich was awarded a prestigious animation award: *The Golden Eagle*. There is no one more suited to shoot a film on Marc Chagall.

"When I was asked to prepare this film, I was close to losing my motivation," the director admits. "It was a true challenge to work on Bach and Strauss; this was difficult and responsible work. I understood that the same situation would occur during my work on Chagall. Why did I agree? I love this artist. He greatly influenced me in my youth. I was impressed with his pictures.

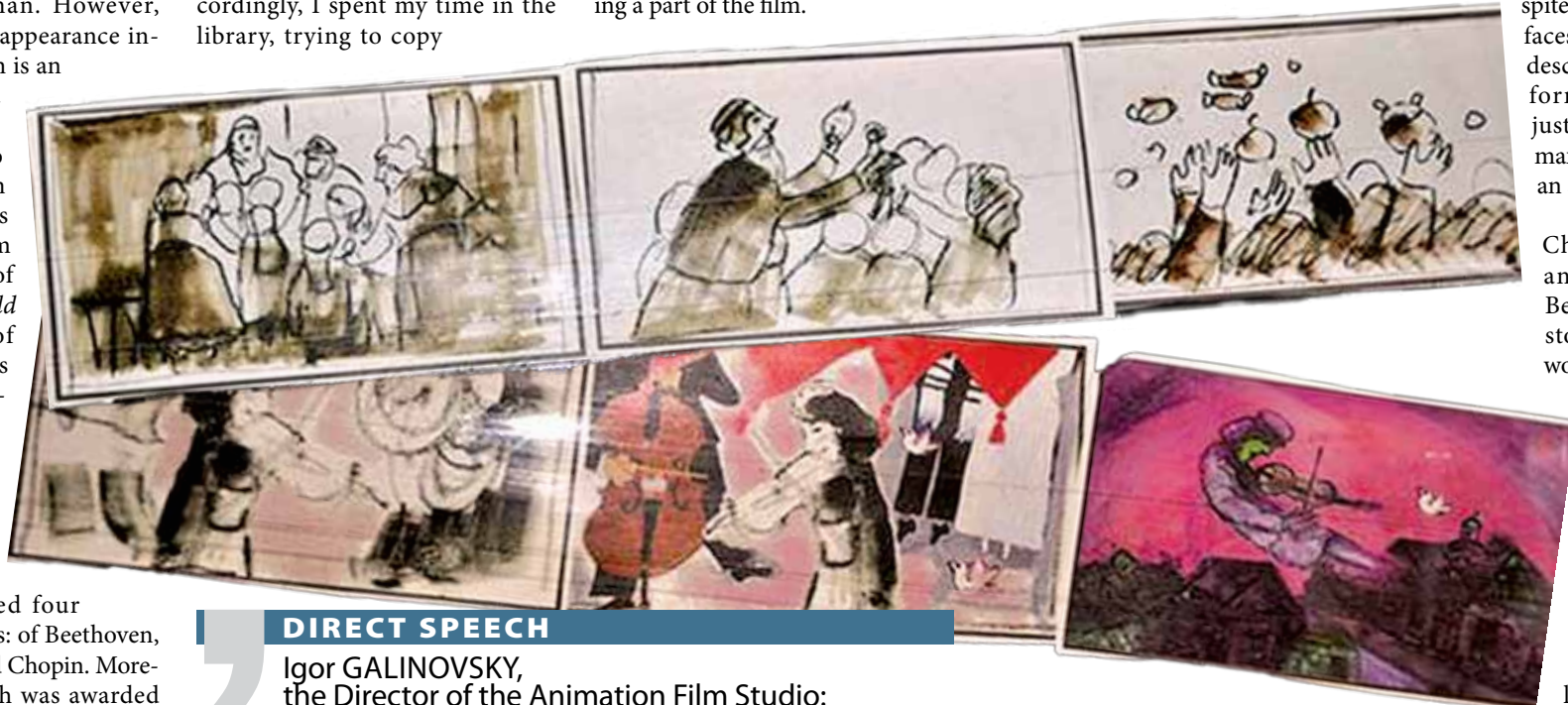
As a student of the Architecture Department, I spent hours in the library reading his books. At that time, it was extremely expensive and I could not afford to buy it. Accordingly, I spent my time in the library, trying to copy

his drawings." The director admits that books on Chagall (she now has many, including some brought by her daughter from France) were on her table each time she was shooting a part of the film.

Ms. Petkevich has a great team. The script was written by Dmitry Yakutovich, while Alla Matyushevskaya is the art director. Jointly with director Irina Tara-

trate some scenes from Chagall's life and his outlook. The animation will be mainly devoted to the painter's childhood and youth: the period of his life in Vitebsk. Despite this, the director faces a tricky task: to describe thirty of his formative years in just 13 minutes, the maximum length for an animation.

The film on Chagall is serious and complicated. Belarusfilm understood this and the work has been scrutinised by the artistic council, the director is pleased by this, as she is proud of her work. Ms. Petkevich is among those who appreciate her colleagues' opinion. "Criticism is very



DIRECT SPEECH

Igor GALINOVSKY, the Director of the Animation Film Studio:

Animation has never produced much money. Its mission is to teach and inform tastes. Belarusian cartoon makers are involved in the process. Films such as *Masha and the Bear* are like chips: they are tasty and attractive. However, what we are doing can be likened to porridge: it's nourishing and educational. All our films — even those not very successful ones — are aimed at adding to the growth of our children. Accordingly, we cannot view Belarusian animation via the prism of an exclusively commercial benefit.

Of course, we are not against making money. We are aiming for different goals. One of them is to sell a package of 180 animation films to a specialised Internet resource. The above mentioned *Masha and the Bear* has earned over \$1m this way. As regards self-funding, we aim to reach 15 percent. This will not be easy but I hope we'll succeed in the course of time. So far, we can boast that our full-length animation film — *Nesterka's Adventures* — has paid 13 percent of its own costs.

sova, the latter was awarded the *Gold Vityaz* for their *Soldier* animation film for children. Irina is also a passionate fan of Chagall and, unsurprisingly, the two women have no disagreements on the artist and his environment. Their Chagall in film will resemble the artist in real life.

They have no plans to distort the truth. The script is based on his *My Life* book and, interestingly, facts from the great artist's biography will be accompanied by depictions of his pictures, which aim to illus-

useful," she explains. "Antonina Korpilova and Lyudmila Peregodova are respected film critics and their advice is extremely helpful." The results of all this intense work will be ready after the New Year. It's no surprise that the studio is now experiencing a revival. The success of Marc Chagall will determine whether other animation films on our countrymen will be made — including *The Bear* (a film on Pelageya Azarevich — one of the first Belarusian ballet stars).

Good teacher and master always boasts diligent pupils

Exhibition dedicated to Honoured Figure of Arts of the Republic of Belarus Ivan Stolyarov, a Great Patriotic War veteran, showcases his watercolours, as well as around 30 works by his pupils

By Veniamin Mikheev

Ivan Stolyarov is a talented master of watercolour painting, his name inseparably connected with the famous Vitebsk watercolour school, of which he is a founder. During his long period of creativity, Mr. Stolyarov has honed his techniques to perfection.

His works are notable for their virtuosity, freedom and imaginative originality, and are executed as if in one breath. They charm with their transparency and with their pure view of life.

Having been long a teacher at Vitebsk's State Pedagogical Institute, Mr. Stolyarov has educated several generations of talented painters. They have each gone their way, to live in various parts of Belarus, continuing the best traditions of their teacher. More than 90 of his graduates are members of the Belarusian Union of Artists, of which 57 work with watercolour. Mr. Stolyarov has helped publish training programmes and textbooks, explaining how best to work with the watercolour medium.

The current exhibition features Vitebsk Region landscapes: intimate, lyrical and romantic in character. He captures the 'mood' of various seasons and the beauty of Belarusian nature. Even when modest in size, his compositions and sketches give the impression of a final work and show his creative



experience. His knowledge of colour science, history, art and watercolour technique guides his artistic principles and their expression. He is a true master of colour combination and nuance.

Meanwhile, his favourite theme is that of

the Great Patriotic War, as shown in his series entitled *In the Footsteps of Partisan Glory* (painted in the 1960s). Having lived through the war years, Ivan Stolyarov draws from first hand experience in conveying the life of a soldier and a partisan.

His easel and paints show the landscapes of the Dvina River area



Works by Ivan Stolyarov and his pupils

and the urban landscapes of Braslav, Vitebsk and Polotsk, as well as his works created in Armenia, Latvia, Lithuania and elsewhere abroad. From the collections of the National Art Museum of Belarus, the exhibition displays his series of watercolour landscapes dedicated to his

native Vitebsk: including *Usvyacha River* (1993), *Luzhesnyanka River* (1992), *Waiting* (1994), and *Fisherman's Hut* (1993). Works from private collections are also on show.

His rich experience and practical skills have been sincerely transferred to Ivan's followers, with the

Alexander Maley, Mikhail Mironov, Nikolay Mishchenko, Vladimir Napreenko, Vladimir Rynkevich, Mikhail Svistunov, Alexander Shiyonok, and Anton Yasyukait. Some are from the National Art Museum of Belarus, while others remain the authors' property.

FILE



Ivan Stolyarov

Ivan Stolyarov was born in Vitebsk on May 20th, 1923. In 1939, he entered the Vitebsk Art School, where such Belarusian art masters as Ivan Akhremchik, Vladimir Khrustalev, Alexander Mozolev, Valentsin Dezhits and Leo Leytman taught.

During the Great Patriotic War, Ivan Stolyarov fought in the partisan brigade under the command of Minai Shmyrev (Batska Minai). Together with troops from the First Baltic Front, he helped liberate his native Vitebsk Region, as well as Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. He continued his studies at Minsk Art School (1947-1951) and, in 1960, graduated from the Graphic Department of Moscow Polygraphic Institute.

From 1958 to 1985, he taught drawing and watercolours at the Graphic and Arts Department of the Vitebsk State Pedagogical Institute. In 1965, he became a member of the Belarusian Union of Artists. In 1986, Mr. Stolyarov was awarded the title of Excellent Teacher in Public Education of the USSR.

In 1988, he published his book *Watercolour. Materials and Methods of Painting*. In 1993, he was awarded the title of Honoured Artist of Belarus. Works by Ivan Stolyarov are kept at the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus, at the Belarusian Union of Artists, at the Modern Fine Art Museum in Minsk, and at Vitebsk's Regional Local History Museum.

Classics to be popularised with renewed vigour

By Andrey Skorokhodov

Zinaida Komarovskaya and Natalia Ashimbaeva, who head the Yakub Kolas State Literary Memorial Museum and St. Petersburg's F.M. Dostoevsky Literary-Memorial Museum, sign agreement on co-operation

According to Ms. Komarovskaya, these two museums are united by an atmosphere of creativity and a love of life.

"These aren't merely cultural institutions but homes to national literary classics," she notes. The director of the Belarusian museum won't reveal all the plans for future collaboration but is confident that, next year, there will be a special display on Dostoevsky in Minsk. Meanwhile, the St. Petersburg museum will host an exhibition dedicated to Yakub Kolas. Joint participation in scientific conferences is planned, as is

organisation of joint projects and exhibitions.

Ms. Ashimbaeva notes that though the writers are completely different, they boast many points of spiritual coincidence, and 'deep alliance'. She believes that Yakub Kolas appreciated the work of Dostoevsky, as confirmed by his notebooks and manuscripts. "This is very precious for us," she asserts. On August 13th, on the anniversary

of Yakub Kolas' death, Minsk hosted events dedicated to the memory of this People's Poet of Belarus; in particular, there was a commemorative meeting at the poet's grave, at the Military Cemetery in Minsk.

According to writer Anatoly Butevich, who attended the meeting, the day provokes people to ponder how the memory of Belarusian classical writers is being perpetuated. In his words, much still



Agreement on co-operation

needs to be done to preserve the immortal honouring of their work. He is keen that every generation, including those yet to be born, not only learns about the lives of great writers but gains an understanding and love of their

works. He would like to see those works further popularised globally via translation. "By appreciating and studying our ancestors, we build strong cultural foundations for today and tomorrow," underlines Mr. Butevich.

Dinamo squad restores intrigue

By defeating Soligorsk's Shakhtyor — 1:0 — Dinamo Minsk returns the interest of fans to battle for Belarusian football championship title

By Igor Grishin

On the eve of the match, BATE Borisov's draw with Gomel was guaranteed to please Dinamo. BATE lost precious points in the city over the River Sozh but, of course, the Minskers still had to turn the situation to their advantage. Shakhtyor, ranked third in the tournament table, arrived in Minsk to face Dinamo and, from the very first minutes, showed its determination.

Dinamo is known for rising to

a challenge and its 100th 'shut-out' match for goalkeeper Alexander Gutor was no exception. Alexandru Neacsu's goal determined the power balance in the first half, as well as for the whole match and the team's future in the championship. BATE still leads in the championship but, after the current round, the two rivals are separated by just three points. It's not an unusual situation, taking into account the number of matches ahead, as well as the performance recently demonstrated by the Minsk squad.



Victories at European level stimulate better play during domestic championship

Coach seals deal

It has long been known that Canadian Dave Lewis is to continue working with the Belarusian national ice hockey team but his contract is now signed and sealed, running until May 31st, 2018, to include the next Olympics



Dave Lewis inspires team to claim medals

By Igor Leshin

Michael Lenner, Craig Woodcroft, Oleg Antonenko and Andrey Mezin are also to continue working with the national squad. However, Alexander Zhurikov, who has concluded a contract with a Supreme Hockey League club, is to be replaced by Yuri Fai-kov.

The Chairman of the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation, Igor Rachkovsky, comments on the signing of the contract, saying, "The Federation doesn't doubt

even for a second the need to continue working with Dave Lewis. As soon as we first met him, he showed his professionalism. It was difficult to assess his coaching style immediately, but not his character. I won't enumerate the names of the many previous coaches whose first words were about how much they wanted to be paid, but Dave had no interest in this. On the contrary, he proposed that he demonstrate his usefulness before we chatted about long-term collaboration. We understood that, after the

World Championship, Lewis would be made suggestions from abroad. Fortunately, Dave has chosen to continue working with us and we've found consensus across all positions. Of course, the sum of the contract has increased in line with the success of the team."

At the press conference, Dave Lewis was in good-humour. The huge golden NHL championship ring shone symbolically on his hand. The message was clear, the coach is aiming for championship titles with the national team of Belarus.

He emphasised, "The goals for the forthcoming season are to try to win medals at the World Championship, hosted by Russia, and to ensure Olympic qualification. There's nothing surprising in my words. However, it's necessary to make the players believe that they can do this, through persistent hard work. At the world forum in Russia, we'll first face teams from Finland, the USA and Canada. Frankly, it doesn't matter which order we play them. The 2015 World Championship in the Czech Republic has assured us that there are no easy games at that level."

Silver in final fight

By Kirill Karin

Belarusian boxer Pavel Kostromin (under 69kg) claims silver in finals at 2015 European Boxing Championship, hosted by Bulgarian Samokov

In the semi-final match against Sweden's Clarence Goyeram, Pavel Kostromin had received a cut to the brow but had claimed victory. In the final, against Lithuanian Eimantas Stanionis, Pavel received several sharp blows to the same place, blinding him with blood. Nevertheless, Pavel continued fighting, having been given medical assistance.

Eimantas took the lead after the first two rounds, despite Pavel putting up a worthy fight. Sadly, the referee gave preference to Stanionis both times due to Kostromin requiring medical assistance. In the third round, however, the flow of blood was significant enough for the referee to stop the match and award victory to Stanionis.



Pavel Kostromin

Belarusian Sergey Loban (52kg), Vazgen Safaryanets (60kg), Yevgeny Dolgolevets (64kg), Vitaly Bondarenko (75kg) and Yan Sudzilovsky (over 91kg) also fought at the 2015 European Championship in Bulgaria.

In the overall team standings, the Russian squad finished in first place, with four gold awards, followed by Ireland and the UK.

Pavel Kostromin won bronze at the 2013 European Boxing Championship, held in Minsk.

Second in long course distance

By Kirill Pirogov

Pavel Sankovich claims silver at World Cup second stage, hosted by French Chartres

Pavel Sankovich covered the 50m backstroke sprint within 25.27 seconds, behind season leader Camille Lacourt, of France. Third place went to Singapore's Quah Zheng Wen.

Previously, Pavel covered the same distance during the World Cup first stage, in Moscow, within 25.28 seconds, finishing fourth. In France, he also came fifth in the 100m backstroke, with 54.96 seconds. Camille Lacourt took first place, with a time of 53.39 seconds.



Pavel Sankovich

The current season's FINA World Cup is being held in a new format, over a long course rather than in a 25m swimming pool (as previously). The total World Cup prize fund totals \$96,000: distributed across 32 individual events. An athlete will be awarded \$10,000 for breaking a world record. The next World Cup stage will take place in Hong Kong, on September 25th and 26th.

Meteor shower of the week



On the night of August 12th to 13th, residents of Belarus view Perseid meteor shower

Exhibitions

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street

Until 24th August. *My Floral Calendar* Until 6th September. *Dedicated to 70th Anniversary of Great Victory* Until 27th September. *Belarusian Iconostas* Until 27th September. *A Husband, a Man, a Warrior* Until 2nd November. *Great Patriotic War in Art* Until 30th December. *Celebrating Victory Day in Museum*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 31st August. *Belarusian Musical Instruments* Until 6th September. *From Hoop Skirts and Tournures to Modern* Until 6th September. *Three Stories about War* Until 13th September. *Fascination* art-project Until 31st December. *Major Presentation of Museum Relics: 79 Steps Inside History*

NATURE AND ECOLOGY MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 28th August. *Boletus: Beauty is their Family* Peculiarity photo exhibition Until 30th August. *The World of Big Parrots and Singing Birds*

NATIONAL LIBRARY

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue

Until 27th August. *Spirit of Religious Tradition and Printed Icon* Until 31st August. *Feeling of the Colour*

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

121 Kalinovsky Street

Until 30th August. International festival of sand sculptures

Theatres

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street

21.08. *Caught by the Net*
22.08. *Tricks of Khanuma*
23.08. *He and She* 25.08. *Bridegrooms*
26.08. *Pygmalion* 27.08. *Viva Commedia!*

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street

25.08. *Pinsk Gentry* 26.08. *The Black Lady of Nesvzh* 27.08. *The Seagull*

MODERN ART THEATRE

5 Oktyabrskaya Street

21 and 27.08. *Love and Doves* 24.08. *Folks*
25.08. *Comedy about Penny Pincher*
26.08. *A Midsummer Night's Dream or King Lear*

UPPER TOWN

23A Svobody Square

22 and 29.08. *Summer Musical-Tourist Season*

Concerts

MINSK-ARENA

111 Pobediteley Avenue

27.08. *Linkin Park*

PALACE OF REPUBLIC

1 Oktyabrskaya Square

21.08. *Colour of Aloe*

REPUBLICAN PALACE

OF VETERANS' CULTURE

21 Yanka Kupala Street

27.08. *Legend of world jazz — Harbie Hart with his Saxophone — The King of Jazz* premiere

BELARUSIAN STATE

PHILHARMONIC (SMALL HALL)

50 Nezavisimosti Avenue

26.08. *Dedication of Piotr Tchaikovsky*

NIGHT CITY

3 Nemiga Street

26.08. *Night of Qualitative Music*

SVOBODY SQUARE

22.08. *Encore cycle of concerts: Khoroshki*

23.08. *Wind orchestra of the Minsk Garrison in Svobody Square*

Kaleidoscope of history unveiled

August of decades and centuries past comes to life

August 21st. In 1929, a alpinist, a founder of Belarusian alpinism and a master of sports of the USSR — Vladimir Prazdnikov — was born.

August 22nd. In 1904, Ivan Yevmenko was born in the village of Polzukhi of the Mogilev Region's Gorki District. He was a head of the partisan movement on the territory of the Vitebsk Region, during the Great Patriotic War.

August 23rd. In 1957, an outstanding boxer — Vyacheslav Yanovsky — was born in Vitebsk. He was an Olympic champion (1988), a three time world champion, a silver and bronze winner at European championships and a holder of the World Cup.

August 25th. In 1910, a poet, a fable writer, a satirist and a Hooured Figure of Culture — Vladimir Korban — was born in Baran (Orsha District). From 1952-1971, he worked at the *Vozhyk* magazine (since 1967, being its Editor-in-Chief).

August 26th. In 1924, a Belarusian weightlifter and an Honoured Master of Sports of the USSR, a champion of Europe and the USSR — Yevgeny

Novikov — was born.

August 27th. In 1860, Karol Czapski — a representative from ancient Hutten-Czapski family — was born. From 1890-1901, he was Minsk's Head.

August 21st. In 1911, a station studying marshes was established in Minsk; in 1930,



the All-Union Scientific-Research Institution of Marsh Economy was founded on its basis.

August 21st. In 1928, the Belarusian Scientific-Research Tuberculosis Institute was founded in Minsk.

August 22nd. In 1910, the first aeroplane flight took place in Minsk.

August 22nd. In 1916, the third city postal department opened in Zolotaya Gorka.

August 22nd. In 1952, summer Raduga cinema opened in the Chelyuskintsev Park.

August 22nd. In 1953, a decision was made to build Minsk's Watch Plant.

August 22nd. In 1965, construction of a 12-storey hotel started on banks of the Zaslavl water reservoir.

August 22nd. In 1965, a memorial plaque to the USSR Hero, Feodosy Smolyachkov, was unveiled on the façade of house #1 of Smolyachkov Street.

August 23rd. In 1920,

the Central Statistical Bureau was established — known as the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis since 1994.

August 23rd. In 1953, the Electric Measuring Plant was launched in Vitebsk — now known as VZEP RUE.

August 24th. In 1889, the community of Red Cross nurses was established in Minsk.

August 24th. In 1924, the first issue of the *Belarusian Medical Thought* magazine was published.

August 24th. In 1932, editing of the first Belarusian language film — *Victors* — was completed.

August 24th. In 2001, Minsk's Partizansky Avenue opened after reconstruction.

August 25th. In 1624, Metropolitan Iov Boretsky blessed opening of a nunnery at the St. Peter and Paul Church.

August 25th. In 1975, a monument to the Mother-Patriot was erected in Zhodino. It was inspired by Anastasia Kupriyanova, from Zhodino, whose five sons were killed during the Great Patriotic War.

August 25th. In 1991, Belarus' political and economic independence was proclaimed.