

MAGAZINE FOR YOU

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Беларусь. Belarus

# BELARUS

Politics. Economy. Culture

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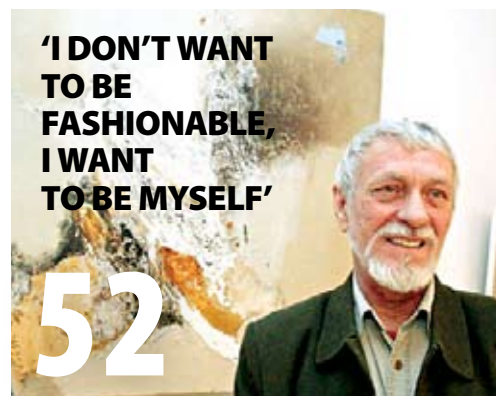
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**'I DON'T WANT  
TO BE  
FASHIONABLE,  
I WANT  
TO BE MYSELF'**

# 52

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**Editor:** Viktor Kharkov

### Executive Secretary:

Valentina Zhdanovich

### Design and Layout by

Vadim Kondrashov

Nadezhda Ponkratova

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### Write us to the address:

11 Kiselyov Str., Minsk, Belarus, 220029.  
Tel.: +375 (17) 290-62-24, 290-66-45  
Tel./Fax: +375 (17) 290-68-31

**E-mail:** belmag@sb.by

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## It was May...

**S**eventy-two years — a great deal or very little? It depends on our viewpoint. It's the timespan of a whole generation. Meanwhile, we're pleased that even those now aged seventy have avoided the horrors of that terrible war, which we remember today through the prism of the Great Victory.

Some events aren't faded by time. Undoubtedly, the Victory Day of May 9th is among them. Whatever happens in our contemporary world, the importance of this date never wanes, and nor do our memories of the unprecedented heroic deeds of Soviet soldiers.

The Great Patriotic War steamed through Belarusian lands, taking with it the lives of around 3 million people; dozens of cities, towns and district centres were destroyed, alongside thousands of villages and settlements. Almost half a million Belarusians were sent to slavery in Germany and, in their years of occupation, the Nazis established dozens of death camps within Belarus, alongside hundreds of prisons and ghettos. Several hundred thousand old people, women and children were killed. This cannot be forgotten.

A resistance movement unrivalled in the world history was deployed within Belarusian territory. The 'People's Avengers' kept the enemy on alert day and night. Over 1.5 million Belarus-born people fought on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War, to the bitter end, in battles near Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad and Kiev. They took part in the liberation of villages and cities across their Homeland,

as well as within Eastern and Central European states. Around 400 Belarus-born people became generals and admirals and commanded armies and fleets during the military years, while 448 were awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union title for their heroism in protecting their Fatherland during those war years (four were awarded twice).

The price of freedom was the life of



every third resident of Belarus, as we continue to commemorate and promote wider global understanding. After the Second World War, Belarus became a founding member of the United Nations Organisation: an honour indeed. Belarus was, at the time, a republic of the Soviet Union and was recognised for its huge contribution to the destruction of Fascism.

May is a special month, being when Victory was declared over Nazism in the Second World War. Belarus continues to honour the heroic deeds of its soldiers. Several thousand former frontline men and Great Patriotic War partisans live still in our country. Their number falls each year, but they are surrounded by the state's attention. Other states may set

aside their victorious symbols but, for us, the Victory is a sacred holiday. The Great Patriotic War left its mark on almost every family...

Today's young people are aware of the sacrifices made by those who fought for them and are often involved in seeking out information on those who died in the war, restoring the names of 'unknown soldiers'. Moreover, they take veterans under their patronage, remembering the war and honouring its victors.

Time passes and, as politicians say, the world is changing. However, certain values cannot be revised. Belarus is building relations with other countries on principles of good neighbourliness: its contemporary political credo. For those seeking to exercise their 'muscle', sporting contests offer the best (and the most peaceful) solution!

Partnerships between people and between countries remain essential, being the strategic essence of international collaboration. Belarus orients towards this path in its foreign policy, taking the format of partnership as the basis for its relations with other countries, for example, with China which was visited by Alexander Lukashenko in May. Political priorities are revealed in the annual State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly. Extracts from this address in our magazine aim to give our readers better understanding of the country's position globally, as it aims towards fully-fledged interaction in the world and opens to the widest contacts.

VIKTOR KHARKOV



BELTA

# No one will deprive us of OUR GREAT VICTORY!

**T**his year, the morning of May 9th was cool but the holiday mood prevailed and nature seemed to follow. During the wreath laying ceremony at Pobedy Square in Minsk, the sky cleared and the sun came out...

Before the President's arrival to the site, I spoke to the veterans. "Do you feel chilly?" I asked. They responded, "Not as cold as waiting in damp trenches for an order to attack the enemy." The eventual order led to victory, hence the holiday. The President laid a wreath at the Victory Monument and the metronome counted out a minute of silence.

We remember...

During the event, Alexander Lukashenko spoke to foreign diplomats, as has become traditional. Global geopolitical speeches are often flowery but the ambassadors and attachés opened their hearts to express ordinary feelings. They sincerely congratulated Belarusians on our great holiday. We are grateful to our partners from around the globe for they share our joy in remembrance of the great victory.

The festive events in Minsk lasted until late at night when the Victory Monument was literally drowned in flowers. A sparkling televised concert, 'Pobedy Square-2017', closed the day, in addition to the traditional fireworks. Congratulations on the Great Victory!

**During the celebrations in Pobedy Square, the President also talked with reporters, sharing his views on the following:**

### **Lessons of history**

This might sound immodest, but we are good pupils. We remember what happened in history and we know the reasons for failures at the beginning of the war. We learned those lessons and we understand that it is necessary to be ready, while keeping our weapons sheathed in peacetime. The most important thing for us, no matter what events may occur, is the economy. If the country continues to develop, it ensures peace, security and internal stability. Our nation should not be concerned about this. We have everything in place to protect this land where we live.

For the third time in just over two decades, we have conducted a programme of reforming, reconstructing and improving our Armed Forces. We anticipate negative events and learn from what is happening in the world, which is currently in a restless state with wars continuing across the globe. We carefully observe what is happening, while drawing our own conclusions to adapt our Armed Forces for the protection of our homeland. It's important to enjoy unity inside our country, so that we can withstand any threats.

### **On development**

There are many small and medium-sized towns in our country. We've put Minsk in order, as well as regional and district centres, agro-towns. We are now 'moving' towards the outskirts. Small villages remain; these were centres of collective farms and state farms in the past. Some of them might be difficult to work with but we need to develop them, we'll repair and modernise the infrastructure to meet local needs.

This approach will be used countrywide. We must do everything possible to ensure families with children have a good standard of living. If it is necessary to drive children to school, then we'll take on this obligation. Importantly, we've already implemented the School Bus programme. We should now lay roads to villages where people live. This is the focus of our programme of local road network development. In 2017, we are focussing on these roads and I think, in three or four years, the problem will be solved.



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### **From a speech by the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, at the wreath-laying ceremony at the Victory Monument on the 72nd anniversary of the Great Victory**

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Dear veterans!

Dear compatriots and foreign guests!

Our history is rich in milestones. May 9th, 1945 however, is a special day as it commemorates the Great Victory achieved by the Soviet people in the most dreadful and cruellest war against fascism.

Salvation from the fascism came at a tremendous cost. During the war years Belarus lost every third resident. Over 200,000 people were killed in the Trostenets death camp near Minsk alone. How many more were killed in burnt villages and devastated cities?!

Our country suffered irreparable material damage. Thousands of businesses, schools, museums, libraries and churches were destroyed. We lost more than half our national heritage.

Nazi crimes cannot be erased from memory particularly by those who are trying to rewrite history today, those who are trying to take the Great Victory away from our nation must not



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be allowed to do so. We will never stop admiring the courage of our countrymen who went through this hellish war. They did not kneel before the invaders. Both old and young revolted against the enemy. Hundreds of thousands of partisans and underground fighters killed the enemy in every part of Belarus. Such a powerful resistance gave a real contribution to the defeat of fascism and the liberation of Belarus.

From the first days of the war, the sons and daughters of Belarus heroically fought at the war fronts. The glorious pages in the war chronicle were made by the soldiers of the border outposts, the immortal garrison of the Brest Fortress, Mogilev defenders, the underground fighters of Minsk, Orsha, and other cities, participants of the legendary Operation Bagration and other major battles of the Great Patriotic War. Here, in the heart of the Minsk Hero City, in Pobedy Square, lay the capsules with the soil from the hero cities: Moscow, Leningrad, Smolensk, Tula, Stalingrad, Kiev, Sevastopol, Kerch, Odessa, Murmansk, and Novorossiysk. Our countrymen took part in the battles for each of them. They showed bravery and courage in fierce battles for the liberation of Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, Bucharest, Vienna and Berlin.

The Motherland highly appreciated the contributions of the Belarusians to the common victory. The highest award — the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union — was awarded to more than 440 of our countrymen, and orders and medals to more

than 300,000. Many received their awards posthumously, unfortunately.

Eternal glory to the heroes! Eternal glory to those who gave their lives for the freedom of the Fatherland! In these tragic moments let's observe a minute of silence in memory of those people.

The Nazis turned our blossoming land into ruins. In order to rise from the ashes, Belarus had to fight yet another enormous battle, that time with the devastation and famine. Dedication and heroism of the people, the unity and fraternal assistance from the Soviet Union republics made the seemingly impossible task a reality. In a short period of time the country rebuilt factories, built new ones, set up agricultural enterprises, built schools, universities, libraries, theatres and museums. The generation of the victors created a powerful economic and cultural potential. This became the basis for the further development of our country.

We are happy that our dear war and labour veterans are among us today. We'll never forget what you have done for the homeland. Your achievements have forever taken the most honourable place in the national history. You are an example for all the generations of the Belarusians. Nothing is worthier than a sacrificial feat in the name of liberty and independence.

As years pass we understand all these more sharply. The international tensions are increasing today, the idea of world domination is being revived. Armed conflicts are raging in different parts of the world. Humanity has come to the brink of a new big war.

There are threats to Belarus. We see military arsenals build up near our borders. Literally next door, in the former Soviet republics, they set up military bases, conduct combat drills. Using our domestic fifth column they are making attempts to destabilise the situation inside the country.

Vigilance and security of the state are of particular significance today. We need to cherish peace and harmony in our home. We must stay united and firm, like our fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers during the time of severe ordeals. Then nobody will dare to test our strengths. We must preserve peace on our land in the name of the memory of those hundreds of thousands of the soldiers who were killed on the fronts, one third of the population that we lost. It will be the greatest gift to not only living veterans but, most importantly, to those who gave their lives for everything that we have today.

Our country has never demonstrated aggression and never will. We have shown that Belarus is a peaceful and friendly state. This does not mean, however, that it will not be able to defend itself. We do not need what belongs to others and we will not give away what belongs to us. This is what our heroic forefathers taught us, and we will always remember about this.

I wish you happiness and peace, dear compatriots and guests of our Belarus!

Happy Victory Day!

May 9th, 2017



Petro Poroshenko and Alexander Lukashenko during their visit to Chernobyl nuclear power plant

# Much can be done working together

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**Presidents of Belarus and Ukraine take part in events dedicated to another anniversary of the accident at Chernobyl nuclear power station**

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**T**he sad date of April 26th has forever entered our calendar as a synonym for tragedy and human grief but also as a symbol of great courage. Thirty-one years ago, Belarus was covered by the Chernobyl radioactive cloud. Few believed at the time that Belarusians would manage to cope with this immense challenge. However, in the 1990s,

Alexander Lukashenko took the decision to restore the affected area. Each year, the President personally assesses how his instructions have been carried out. Soil decontamination, the creation of new products, gas infrastructure development, the construction of roads, housing, hospitals, schools and sports centres — all these are done to enable people in the affected areas to live a normal life: to sow grain for bread, build houses and give birth to children.



April 26th is a dramatic date not only in the history of Belarus. The catastrophe also affected Ukraine, radionuclides know no borders. Today both states are trying to overcome the consequences of the catastrophe so the visit by the two presidents to the Chernobyl station and the facilities nearby, was symbolic.

The station is located just 11km from the Belarusian border. Despite the overwhelming emotion, one also feels relief to see a new cover over the destroyed fourth reactor. “Don’t worry, the level of radiation here is no higher than in Minsk,” said station employees reassuringly.

The intermediate slabs and walls of the cover, built in haste immediately after the accident, began to decay over time, so it was decided to build an improved protective system in Kiev. In this way, a new site appeared — ‘Ukrytie-2’ which was examined by the presidents. Mr. Lukashenko called the construction of the sarcophagus a long-awaited-for event for Belarusians, Ukrainians and the whole of Europe.

“This is a unique construction — unparalleled in the world today. Moreover, the construction of this site, with the support of 40 states, is an important symbol of international solidarity,” noted Mr. Lukashenko. The life time of the new sarcophagus is one hundred years — not short in terms of human life. However, Mr. Lukashenko’s message is clear: we should think about future generations. We shouldn’t skimp on investments in human resources, modern production and technology. Ukraine is currently developing a new strategy to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. Our country has already come a long way and is ready to share its experience and knowledge.

“We’ve implemented several joint measures in monitoring and radiation control, agriculture and the forestry industry. However, the potential of cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine is not yet maximised. I believe our scientists, doctors and ecologists can do much more,” said Mr. Lukashenko.

Ukraine is now experiencing difficult times. Petro Poroshenko spoke at length about current issues, and said that the Minsk agreements should be fulfilled while the border between Ukraine and Belarus should remain a border of peace and friendship. Mr. Lukashenko spoke openly, “Ukrainians have never been strangers to Belarusians. Whether they like it or not, we’re close and no one will be able to divide us. We have a wonderful land and we’ll always be good neighbours.”

The presidents also visited the Wall of Memory where a commemorative bell rings annually on April 26th. Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Poroshenko laid flowers on the memorial and honoured the dead with a minute’s silence. The two presidents then continued their friendly discussion on Belarusian soil.

Lyaskovichi agro-town is well-known to Ukrainians. In March 2014, it hosted the meeting between the President of Belarus and Acting President of Ukraine, Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament, Alexander Turchinov. This time, the

Alexander Lukashenko:

***We’ll manage to cope with the problems we have. Of course, there’s a range of issues which should be settled. Specialists and members of the Government are with us. We’re ready to take concrete decisions after our discussion. I’d like to assure you that all decisions will be strictly observed by the Belarusian side. Our roots are here and the beautiful River Pripyat unites us***

heads of the two states visited the Lyaskovichi church of St. Michael Archangel, where they took part in the Chernobyl prayers. Later they went to chat to local residents who were waiting for them, despite the poor weather. “Today is a difficult but memorable day for our nations, a day with great meaning,” Mr. Lukashenko said, addressing the audience. “With Mr. Poroshenko, I visited the Chernobyl station and saw the marvellous work that has been conducted by the Ukrainian state together with its partners. They have done much to minimise the awful consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe.”

The President focused on the main task, “We’re concerned about one vital thing — how to preserve life in these areas and to make life there as comfortable and secure as it is in this wonderful place — Lyaskovichi. When I first came here, everywhere was dust. The most terrible thing was that people were asking for bread. I instructed the military to bring army kitchens to Polesie immediately. Two years ago, the problems with fresh bread in Lyaskovichi were cured.”

Mr. Poroshenko nodded knowingly and replied with words of gratitude for the hospitality he felt on Belarusian soil, “I’d like to state that the Ukrainian and Belarusian nations are absolutely unique. The feeling of friendship, trust and good neighbourliness which we feel daily shows that this peace and friendship should be cherished. Ukrainians

Petro Poroshenko:

*We have seen the social standards in Polesie. We saw how roads and clubs should be built, what shops should look like, what should be done in culture and sport. This is the main goal of our work — to create better living conditions for people. We're very grateful to you for your strong position on defending the openness of the Belarusian market for Ukrainian goods. This is the attitude of a reliable ally, partner and friend*

and Belarusians, with the help of our partners all around the world, have defended their countries from the atom and enabled us to take decisive measures towards the restoration of Polesie 31 years later.”

The Ukrainian President also spoke about the common concerns of the heads of the two states: what should be done to enable our people to improve their lives? It's a big question, but it was partly answered immediately. “We're already taking important steps. The trade turnover over two months this year increased by 40 percent, with Ukrainians buying Belarusian food products, tractors and automobiles and oil products, while Belarusians import agricultural produce, chemical and processed iron products from Ukraine. We've agreed that we'll simplify trips to each other. The border should be a symbol of peace, friendship, companionship and partnership relations between our countries. We're looking forward to seeing you in our country.”

Mr. Poroshenko also noted that he had discussed with Mr. Lukashenko the level of social standards in Belarusian villages. “This is very important. Knowing what we can learn and borrow. We have agreed on how we'll be interacting in power engineering and how we'll be co-ordinating our efforts when entering the markets of the third countries. We'll do everything possible to realise this potential,” asserted Mr. Poroshenko.

The heads of state followed with a private discussion. Mr. Lukashenko briefly outlined the conversation, “We'll be discussing ways to make life better for Ukrainians and Belarusians, especially in the border areas.”

There are many topics for discussion between the two presidents. However, issues of improving the situation in the Chernobyl-affected regions were at the forefront. Three decades of struggle against the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe show that we can overcome any difficulties together.

**After the negotiations with the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, Alexander Lukashenko made a range of statements. He was speaking about:**

### **Humanitarian aid to Ukraine:**

In the future, with the help of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Belarus plans to send humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine who live on both sides of the contact line. We will provide for the most basic needs: food and personal care products.

### **On joint enterprises:**

We've agreed to look afresh at production cooperation and to activate work dealing with the establishment of new joint ventures in various branches of the economy. Belarus is ready to increase the supplies of automobile and agricultural machinery, fertilisers and construction materials to Ukraine. In turn, we're keen to purchase metal goods, as well as crops and animal products.

### **On bilateral contacts:**

The President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, invited Alexander Lukashenko to make an official visit to Ukraine in the summer. The President of Belarus responded, “During the negotiations, agreement has been reached to begin the work of the inter-governmental commission. Specialists and experts will have a great deal of work to do, as we're going to hold another meeting in summer in Kiev where we'll adopt a decision regarding the planned issues.”

# 'Green' UNDP projects

**As part of Republican Ecological Forum, held in Vitebsk, the United Nations Development Programme presents ecological focus projects realised in Belarus**

**C**lima-East and the Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus programmes, financed by the European Union, took central place in the UNDP exhibition. The Clima-East stand featured samples of biomass collected in Sporovsky and Zvanets reserves, which can be used as an environmentally friendly fuel, partially substituting for hydrocarbons, as well as finding application in the construction sector.

The second project introduced a pilot initiative for domestic production of eco-friendly coolants, realised by the Business Development Contribution information-consultative establishment. As part of the same project, the Belarusian Country Escape public association presented an initiative to set up the Mythological Tourism Centre at Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve.

A special course, entitled 'Management of Green Development of the National Economy', was presented as part of the round table discussion, developed by Yelena Dorina — a Doctor of Economic Sciences and the Head of the Belarusian State Economic University's Department of Economics and Management at Enterprise. The course is an integral part of the Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus programme.

Round table debates also included a presentation by Mikhail Maksimenkov — the scientific co-ordinator of the



Opening of Belarus' first regional forest ecological education centre, within Gorni Park, in the Grodno Region's Lida District. The new centre will help preserve the unique dendro-park and create conditions for the development of ecotourism, training in sustainable forest use and forest management

Clima-East project, dedicated to the potential of bog areas and the technologies required to fell trees and bushes, mow grass, and cut reeds for use as biomass fuels, as well as for construction and other purposes.

Forum participants became acquainted with other UNDP projects to introduce advanced environmental solutions, in such areas as energy, organic agriculture, biodiversity, housing and communal services, water management and waste management. The 'green' economy helps unify these themes.

At present, the UNDP in Belarus is operating eight projects, with financial support from the EU, GEF, Coca-Cola and other donors. These include such large-scale projects as Clima-East, Peat-2, Energy Efficiency in Buildings, Green Cities, Energy Efficiency in Schools, and the Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy programme.

The Vitebsk forum was organised through the international technical assistance programme Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus, financed by the European Union and implemented by the UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus. This aims to promote economic growth via 'green' principles, including the sustainable use of natural resources, promotion of ecological production and consumption, and the creation of 'green' jobs.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

# President's Address

**As is traditional, in spring, the President makes the annual State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly. We present remarks from this year's announcement by Alexander Lukashenko**

## Relations with Russia

The level of mutual understanding achieved between the two countries ensures a trusting relationship between the heads of state, which has helped us to discuss sensitive issues frankly and find a compromise. This is evident from our last meeting where we managed to find solutions to all sensitive issues for the good of Belarusians and Russians. Today there's no need to argue or escalate; it's necessary to agree, because Russia and we are currently facing a lot of problems. We can and should solve these problems only together.

## Cooperation with the West

The effort represents a key to investments, modern technologies, resources, and large markets. Dialogue serves not

only mutually beneficial economic interests, it is meant to support political stability in the European region. Belarus has been and will remain a reliable partner in fighting the main transboundary threats. A lot can be accomplished in this field if we stop treating each other with prejudice and mistrust and double standards are not used. If we are no longer lectured and have conditions imposed upon us. These factors are not acceptable for us just as they would not be for any other country.

## Situation in Ukraine

People continue to die, including civilians. The region has descended into social and economic chaos. Ukraine is not just our neighbour, it is our brotherly state, our brotherly people. We have welcomed over 160,000 migrants from Ukraine. We are ready to continue as-

sisting these complicated negotiations, as they have already started affecting the lives of our people and the operation of our state.

## Belarusian priorities

Our top priority is to build a stable and competitive economy, the economy of tomorrow. This is the basis of our sovereignty. There is plenty of work to be done in this field. But we do not have to start from scratch. Over 25 years of independence, Belarus has resolved many complex problems. The potential that we have enables us to be resilient even in the most unfavourable times. The last year has proven this.

Looking at other nations' troubles, bloody civil strife, and devastation, we can begin to appreciate the order and accord that we enjoy. The country has managed to keep out of conflict, and



we've preserved friendly relations with neighbouring states. As Head of State, I take full responsibility for the following words: everything will be done to preserve our country's foundation: liberty and independence of the Republic of Belarus.

This is possible only if each Belarusian citizen contributes to our common goal. Today, the main goal is to unite the whole nation for the sake of a strong and safe state.

### **Business inspections**

The work of the controlling authorities should be seriously revised. There should be no excessive inspections, paralysing business. There's no need to

constantly check normally working enterprises. However, some need to be under close state control, even closer than previously.

### **Control over prices**

Control over prices for consumer goods and essential services is an important element. In 2016, we managed to restrict growth. A similar situation is being observed now and control will continue.

### **Demography**

According to the Head of State, an increase in average life expectancy in the country is an important task. "This year it should reach 75 years or at least 74. It

is not the limit for us, there are further improvements to be made."

### **Family**

I'm ready to consider and support the proposal for the establishment of the Order of Family.

### **Sovereignty and security of Belarus**

You should understand that for me, for all those present here and for the clear majority of Belarusian people, stability, security, independence and sovereignty are sacred things. If anyone attempts to violate them, we will use the full power of our state, regardless of its effect on relations.



Chinese journalists — participants of the meeting with the President of Belarus

BELTA

# Friendship only grows stronger over the years

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**The first days of May have seen a press tour by media representatives of the People's Republic of China — the first in the history of Belarusian-Chinese relations. Journalists from 29 printed and electronic media (covering 10 Chinese provinces and its largest cities) used the perfect opportunity to get acquainted with our country and its people and to see our nature and businesses. Their audience is around 1 billion people. Chinese Central Television — CGTN — alone boasts 600 million viewers, while more than 100 branches of the Xinhua News Agency work on three continents. The key event of the press tour occurred in the Palace of Independence, with its participants meeting the President of Belarus and having a detailed and open conversation.**

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**A**lexander Lukashenko sincerely and hospitably welcomed the Chinese guests and explained the format of the meeting, “Firstly, this year, Belarus and China are celebrating the 25th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations. There’s possibly no other country in Europe that is closer to China than Belarus.

I’d like to quote the words of Zhang Dejiang who has recently visited us. The Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of China named representatives of Belarus and China ‘firm friends’.

We see the current year as a landmark in bilateral relations. Secondly, the current press tour has been organised on the eve of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Thirdly, the press tour stresses again the importance of cooperation between the regions of Belarus and China. The regions are major areas of interaction, since each of your provinces is comparable in economic potential with a strong average European state.”

Journalists from China Central Television — CGTN — asked Mr. Lukashenko to share his views on Minsk-Beijing relations that have lasted for a quarter of a century, as well as its achievements and expectations. The answer was substantial and detailed, with a retrospective into history, “We greatly appreciate the relations with the People’s Republic of China. Today it’s a country without which not a single issue is solved: neither regional nor global. I’m proud that I have been an initiator of establishing warm relations with China at a time when this country was a developing state. However, we expect greater results from our relations. We need to advance further and to attract to the Great Stone Industrial Park companies with the most advanced technologies — those of tomorrow or even beyond. When the results of the Great Stone Park businesses have been calculated, we assume that Belarus will receive about \$50bn from exports of produce from the park.”

The famous Chinese project — the creation of the Silk Road Economic Belt — was another topic of conversation. Mr. Lukashenko determined how he sees it, “On setting out this eco-

nomical and logistics route, the People’s Republic of China isn’t imposing its will on anyone. In such cases, almost all states set some political conditions, though a purely economic project is being implemented. However, China is the wisest nation. The peculiarity of China is that as a friendly country, China offers loans, investments and the most advanced technology in the countries through which the Silk Road will pass.”

Meanwhile, Belarus will receive bonuses, as well as China from interaction with our country.

“A new window of opportunity opens for the export of Belarusian products to China today. I once told Hu Jintao that you would receive the most reliable representative of China in Europe in the face of Belarus. Moreover, our country is a member of the EAEU — an organisation which covers an area triple to that of China. This is room for considerable opportunities for PRC both in terms of working resources and natural resources. Moreover, when China is building close relations with any country it always looks to ensure that it won’t upset the balance of its relations with other states. The current situation is unique: because of close relations with Belarus you won’t affect relations with anyone else in the world,” asserted Mr. Lukashenko.

Meanwhile, friendship between Belarus and China promises only to strengthen. It’s known that Mr. Lukashenko has taken part in the Belt and Road summit, held in Beijing in mid-May. This is how the President of Belarus described the forthcoming meeting with the President of China as part of this summit.

“We’ll discuss acute issues on the international agenda and, foremost, topics that are important for the promotion of our bilateral interaction in trade-economic, investment, financial and humanitarian spheres. Moreover, it’s not easy to organise such a large-scale summit, since it will be attended by the leaders of many countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping will be busy with preparations for the event as well. When you are hosting events of this kind it always takes a lot of time and effort. Nevertheless, the President of Belarus will be among those with whom the Chinese President will find time to meet. This speaks volumes about our relations with your leader, as well as Belarus-China relations.”

Alexander Lukashenko:

***This year, Belarus and China are celebrating 25th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations. There’s possibly no other country in Europe that is closer to China than Belarus...***

## Public response

**Representatives of the Chinese central and regional media shared their impressions of the meeting with the President with their Belarusian colleagues.**

*Xe Zhijuan, a correspondent from the Gansu Herald newspaper:*

I was surprised at how well the President of Belarus knows our country. He spoke a lot about China, paying attention to regional cooperation. The second highlight of the meeting was in his answers to our questions. It was a very lively and interesting discussion. My lasting impression of Belarus is our joint project of the Great Stone Industrial Park; the construction rates are truly impressive.

*Yuan Baogo, a correspondent with Shandong TV and Radio Company:*

In China, your president is perceived as a good friend. Strong cooperation has been established between our countries and I believe we should appreciate, study and promote this. Good relations are always important, so we should take the lead from Belarus and its President in creating strong and friendly interstate ties.

*Ren Qi, a correspondent of the China Daily newspaper:*

I liked that the answers of your President were sincere. We're very grateful to him for this open dialogue which has become a symbol of our partnership. The friendly atmosphere testifies to the level of interaction between our countries. The atmosphere in the country has also made a great impression on me: clean air, beautiful streets and a friendly welcome towards us.



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# In line with grandiose plans

**Belarus was the first European country to join the New Silk Road project**





**T**hree years ago, China initiated the revival of the Great Silk Road, proposing to connect Asia with Europe and Africa, via a single transnational network. This is how the ‘Belt and Road’ concept appeared. A huge project, worth tens of billions of Dollars, aims to create and improve land and sea trade routes, providing transport and economic corridors that will link sixty countries. This will entail the development of world trade and allow us to form a fundamentally new global economy. Being located at a busy logistics intersection, Belarus was one of the first countries to support this global initiative and actively joined its implementation. The benefits are undeniable as, when the trade corridor is operating at full capacity, at least ten percent of trade turnover between the EU and the PRC will pass through Belarus, worth hundreds of billions of Dollars. This opens up huge opportunities for the country; to fail to take advantage of them would be a reckless loss.

Specific projects and options for global cooperation were recently discussed at a major international forum in Beijing, attended by Alexander Lukashenko.

The hosts chose a very picturesque venue for the forum, on the shores of Lake Yanji. Literally translated, it means ‘a lake where rare birds live’. Surrounded by mountains, a Buddhist temple, and part of the Great Wall of China, the conference centre resembles a bird spreading its wings: the perfect image to convey the concept behind the New Silk Road.

China has been calling the New Silk Road summit the main political event of the year. In May, the heads of states and governments from twenty-nine countries, alongside leaders of the UN, IMF, World Bank, and WTO, gathered in Beijing. This huge economic corridor, passing through the whole continent, has the power to influence the fate of not only the Eurasian space, but the whole world.

Alexander Lukashenko regards the ‘Belt and Road’ global initiative as more than an economic partnership, saying, “It not only reshapes the economic map of the world and creates new growth points, but forms international relations of a new type. This is integration over the blocks, designed to harmonise all economic institutions and remove barriers to the free movement of goods, investment and people.”

The attractiveness of the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative lies also in China imposing no political conditions. It’s offer-

ing new growth drivers for all countries along the New Silk Road. As we all know, China is one of the world's largest economies, producing trillions in revenue, and boasting huge production facilities and sales markets. Within the past three years, China has invested about \$50 billion in countries participating in the construction of the New Silk Road; Xi Jinping has promised another 8.7 billion Dollars over the coming three years.

At the forum, Alexander Lukashenko outlined his ideas for expanding cooperation on the Eurasian continent. In particular, Minsk suggests using the 'Belt and Road' not just as a trading route but to promote ideas and jointly create innovations. A model for imitation is the Chinese-Belarusian 'Great Stone' Industrial Park, conceived and constructed as a city of the future, to be eco-friendly, innovative and comfortable, for living and working.

Alexander Lukashenko also suggested that forum participants think of ways to combine scientific potential. To implement this, we need to form centres of research and scientific exchange at interstate level. In Beijing, they've voted for this idea with two hands and have already announced plans to create fifty joint scientific centres with other countries.

The problem of digital security is becoming ever more acute. Cyberattacks on the largest banking, industrial and, even, military facilities used to appear only in fantastic blockbusters. Today, they've become a reality. The President of Belarus has called upon his foreign colleagues to co-ordinate efforts to protect the strategically important infrastructure of government and commercial databases. The national security and sovereignty of each state directly depends on this.

In a word, the potential of the New Silk Road is enormous. Against the backdrop of the transformation of international relations and a high degree of uncertainty, the world is increasingly aware of the need for a joint response to global challenges. Although the 'Belt and Road' initiative belongs to China, Beijing won't be working alone. We need a joint 'symphony', in which every performer will win.

A major international summit is an excellent opportunity for bilateral meetings at the highest level, as well as with rep-

resentatives of big businesses. Alexander Lukashenko held talks with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, and invited him to visit Belarus, with his family, this summer.

Chatting with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Mr. Lukashenko discussed agreements reached earlier, as well as prospects for the development of cooperation in various fields. He also held meetings with the leadership of a number of countries of Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

The final chord of the President's working visit to China was a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The presidents talked, to a large extent, about bilateral cooperation, which covers most spheres today. The negotiations were a logical continuation of the 'Belt and Road' international forum. The two-day political marathon once again showed Beijing's readiness to assume the role of locomotive for economic globalisation. About seventy states signed agreements with China, on cooperation to revive the Great Silk Road across land and sea. Such an event is long overdue, and Alexander Lukashenko sincerely congratulated his

friend, Xi Jinping, on this success, saying, "This is a very big step that you're making, gathering the attention of more than a hundred countries. We're proud to be the first in Europe and one of the first in the world not just to support the idea of 'Belt and Road', but to start implementing this major project on the territory of Belarus."

It's already clear that our country is becoming an important link in the Trans-Eurasian highway, which means that there's good reason to discuss new joint projects of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation. Belarus, alongside powerful Russia, the UK and Pakistan, is among Beijing's closest

allies and partners. This offers a serious signal to potential investors. Moreover, Alexander Lukashenko came to China, as they say, not with empty hands. On the eve of the visit, a decree was signed on new working conditions at the Great Stone Industrial Park.

"This exemplary project of bilateral cooperation should become an experimental platform for lifting trade barriers in the joint construction of the New Silk Road," the President told the PRC Chairman.

***China has been calling the New Silk Road summit the main political event of the year. In May, the heads of states and governments from twenty-nine countries, alongside leaders of the UN, IMF, World Bank, and WTO, gathered in Beijing. This huge economic corridor, passing through the whole continent, has the power to influence the fate of not only the Eurasian space, but the whole world***



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and President of China, Xi Jinping

Strictly speaking, the new decree is focused exactly on this, considerably simplifying administrative procedures and introducing a moratorium on investor examinations. Judging by the reaction of Chinese partners, such an idea is certainly to their liking. Incidentally or not, it was on the days of the visit that four Chinese companies became residents of the park (in addition to the nine that have received this status previously). Three will be engaged in manufacturing LED products. The fourth is related to geothermal developments. In addition, Belarus has suggested that Huawei launch production of components for communication systems.

The presidents agree that innovative cooperation between our two countries should drive growth. The prospects are impressive, but the Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology, Alexander Shumilin, says reasonably, “In addition to scientific and technical potential, we have serious fundamental research which is yet to reach demand capacity, since Belarus is small. China is investing huge resources in fundamental research. Xi Jinping has announced the construction of fifty scientific and technical centres, jointly with other countries, and we’d like some of these centres to appear in Belarus.”

Modern technologies are needed for the private sector, such as for the modernisation of our refineries; certainly, Chinese investors could take part, since about one billion Dollars are needed. World-famous CITIC Group plans to implement an innovative project to create full cycle high-tech agro-industrial production. Meanwhile, another Chinese company

has announced its intention to invest in the construction of milk production complexes in the Vitebsk Region, with products processed at Belarusian plants, for onward sale to China. The project is estimated at more than \$200 million. In addition, the Chinese are ready to buy Belarusian beef.

China will also continue to assist Belarus in constructing social housing, following an intergovernmental treaty on technical and economic assistance, signed in the presence of the leaders of our two countries. Following talks by the heads of state, an intergovernmental agreement was also concluded on the development of international cargo transportation and cooperation in constructing the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Judging by the results of the talks, our Ambassador in Beijing, Kirill Rudy, will be busy. Naturally, he’s happy about this and, despite his incredible workload, willingly chats with reporters. He tells us, “Favourable opportunities are emerging for us, because the Chinese market is changing, becoming richer and growing. Chinese consumers are beginning to increasingly rely on imported goods. In this regard, we can change the structure of Belarusian exports. These are currently based on potassium fertilisers but we need to supply more consumer goods and food. Belarusian milk does well in China, thanks to its quality and taste.”

Simplifying the visa regime between our countries should help activate business contacts, as was discussed at the meeting of our two nations’ leaders.

By Vasily **Kharitonov**

## Worthy exhibits

**Belarus holds first place in the CIS in the index of development of information and communication technologies: this undoubted success was noted by Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union — Houlin Zhao — at the TIBO-2017 show**



Belarusian State University demonstrates student nano-traveller

**N**ovelty of mobile communication, drones and robots, electronic state components, Internet and services which make our life easier are some of the exhibits presented at the 24th

International Forum on Telecommunications, Information and Banking Technologies. The event annually demonstrates how technology is changing our lives.

Among the examples is a classic area: the mail; it is of great value to banks as they cannot all run branches in remote areas. In turn, the self-service system — payment and reference terminals — will help retrieve information and allow access to any documentation in the future, thanks to the nationwide automated information system which is already being implemented. TIBO also presented an online store of Belarusian goods: shop.belpost.by. Its main principle is based on working with domestic producers only and has justified itself already with tens of thousands of orders being received.

The MTS mobile operator showed off its new 'Navigator' service; it improves the quality of life of the blind. In testing, 15 visually impaired people



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and 35 volunteers have used it so far. The idea is that a visually impaired person has a smartphone with a camera and an application that allows online video to be broadcast to a volunteer assistant. The latter becomes a 'navigator' — the eyes of the blind, describing where to move, reading prices in shops or menus at cafes. Another innovation by the company is its megabook application; this will help students use online electronic textbooks.

The Belarusian State University presented a student nano-satellite. Two cubic decimetres contain the systems of navigation, traffic, information reception and transmission, in addition to devices to monitor the Earth. The upper covering is made of solar panels. This satellite is planned to be launched this year.

In turn, the experimental sample of the office supercomputer — SKIF-Geo-Office — is the brainchild of the United Institute of Informatics Problems of the Academy of Sciences; it

could be seen nowhere else but at TIBO. It is unique in the world — boasting special software, 10 independent computing nodes which work in parallel, a unique cooling system and super-fast speed (about 10 trillion operations per second). It was designed for a certain customer. "We work directly with geologists. They have great amounts of data and complex calculations which need to be carried out in a short time to improve efficiency and avoid drilling in unnecessary places, explains Sergey Kruglikov, the Deputy Director General of the Institute.

This year, Huawei has been TIBO's general partner. According to the Director of the Belarusian office — Pang Yong, this is a good opportunity to contribute to the development of information and communication technologies in Belarus. "At the forum, we are not simply presenting flagship models of smartphones (which visitors can test) but also demonstrating our 'smart home' concept (a smart home, a

smart city). We show how cloud technology could enhance the efficiency of enterprises and state structures, making our everyday life better," he says.

For the first time, the Belarusian Federation of Unmanned Vehicle — recently established in the country — has taken part in the forum. Flying drones entertained TIBO guests but the Federation's main task is to show that drones are not toys. The Chairman of its Board — Yevgeny Yermolenko — believes the time has come to establish comfortable — safe and not too stringent — rules to guide development. "Drones can be involved in business projects, in the US, 8 out of 10 farmers use them. We can also collect information on the state of fields and save fuel and fertilisers with their help. Drones are used to monitor the construction of facilities; if there is a discrepancy with the plan, it is registered immediately and thousands of Dollars are saved," he explained.

By Alexey Fedosov



## 3D printer produces medicines

Drugs are already being tailored to individual patients, not just globally but in Belarus. Our reporter visited the A.V. Lykov Heat and Mass Transfer Institute, which is developing 3D-medicine, to learn more...



### Pyramid-shaped pills

“We’ll soon see 3D-printers not only at medical clinics but in pharmacies,” says Sergey Filatov, who heads the laboratory. He knows what he’s talking about, and he’s no fiction writer. After introducing 3D-printing at enterprises and construction sites, at design studios and online, investors are turning to the medical sphere. It’s a global trend.

Mr. Filatov shows us a small container, with pills inside. Each has been 3D-printed. He tells us, “We’re working on personalised drugs, with each pill 3D-printed. Clearly, composition should differ depending on a person’s weight, whether you’re 70kg or 100kg. The volume of active ingredient needs to be altered.”

It’s possible to design a drug to dissolve in the body at various speeds, released over hours or days. In addition, a 3D-pill can be made from several layers, combining different drugs. For example, after organ transplantation, a patient needs to take several medicines simulta-

neously but, using additive technologies, they might take a single pill. As the layers dissolve, various drugs are released, giving multiple treatments.

“We’re used to a cylindrical shape,” notes Mr. Filatov, taking a pill in his hand. “However, a different shape can be used, depending on the desired effect. For example, pills in the form of a truncated pyramid will dissolve faster.”

### Transplantation organs next in line

The possible medical applications seem limitless. 3D-printing can provide three-dimensional models of a heart, a joint or a trachea. Some can be used as teaching aids for physicians.

Mr. Filatov demonstrates a printed heart, saying, “It looks real, even when you touch it. We also print models of joints, using a patient’s computer tomogram. If this joint is cut, it looks real inside. Using these realistic models, Belarusian doctors are preparing for difficult operations.”

Scientists have even more ambitious goals, planning to create organs for

transplantation. Mr. Filatov shows us a printed kidney model, explaining, “In fact, it’s just a plastic frame which can be ‘covered’ by human cells. These grow for several weeks in a laboratory, until the organ can function. After transplantation, the frame of the organ gradually dissolves, until only the human tissue remains, making it ideally compatible with the organism. Moreover, a printer can make organelles. If a person suffers from thyroid problems, we can grow thyroid tissue, but we don’t need to attach it directly to the site of the original gland in order for it to function.”

### Printed skin

Institute specialists are also working on a prototype for artificial skin. We’re shown two palms, both ‘grown’ by a printer. One feels slightly velvety, yielding to pressure. It’s not plastic but not yet skin either. Mr. Filatov agrees, “We’re yet to develop artificial skin but this palm is a great variant for a robot-manipulator, as a working arm. It’s also perfect for making a prosthesis. Probably, these

Sergey Filatov:  
*‘We’re trying to grow artificial skin’*



palms will become a step towards developing artificial muscle.”

There is a problem, since new, functional materials are needed for use by 3D-printers. Some are being produced domestically and some are being imported, for modification by our scientists.

An office behind glass is in front of us. We aren’t allowed to go in, as it’s a clean room, holding the country’s top electron microscopes, for the study of 3D-printing materials. The quality of a future artificial organ can be tested at the highest level, since the microscope can magnify tens of thousands of times.

“We’re now working in several directions,” stresses Mr. Filatov. “We’re ready to cooperate with medical institutions, enterprises, universities and all those interested in new developments in science.”

Who knows, perhaps we’ll soon be able to go to a pharmacy, simply showing our genetic passport or a prescription from the doctor, to receive individually tailored pills, within a few minutes.

By Taisia **Azanovich**

### Comment

#### Sergey Chizhik, First Deputy Chairman of the National Academy of Sciences’ Presidium:

Additive technologies — or 3D-printing technologies — are among the most rapidly developing areas of digital production. These technologies are used in diverse fields — such as mechanical engineering, instrument making and medicine. It’s a very promising niche for the health care sphere. At present, files obtained with the help of computer tomography can be used not only for diagnosis but for visualisation of organs and tissues in 3D, followed by their printing.

Several years ago, this seemed impossible; now, we’re moving in two directions. The first relates to the creation of prototypes for surgery, as used at the Republican Centre of Traumatology and Orthopaedics, in a complicated operation on a joint. The A.V. Lykov Heat and Mass Transfer Institute created an exact copy of a joint, upon which doctors ‘rehearsed’ the operation successfully. Using a ‘printed’ bone model, we studied the impact of structure on mechanical properties: a printed pattern is initially identical to the prototype not only in its external form but also internally. We’ve

already conducted an experiment, printing a joint made to match a patient’s medical tomography. Using ultrasound to see the tomography of the artificial joint, we could see they were truly identical.

The second direction deals with printing an artificial organ (in whole or part) with ‘bio-ink’, from biological cells. We’re already negotiating with the Centre of Organ and Tissue Transplantation. Our project with South Korea is also being negotiated, aiming to develop personal medicines via 3D-printing. The first studies have begun but we’re yet to launch.

This technology of the future has endless possibilities but there are problems to be overcome. We need to work with new materials for 3D-printers, which must be biocompatible for medical use. Staff training is also vital, as we lack enough specialists. Courses on additive technologies have been launched at the BSU, the Belarusian National Technical University and the Belarusian State Technological University, and our scientists are ready to help physicians. Without doubt, doctors and scientists specialising in biomedicine need to actively join the process.

**T**he project, with the laconic title, 'UspeshnaYa' (I'm Successful), has been initiated and organised by Belinvestbank and supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It was launched in Minsk at a business meeting where its participants learnt about EBRD's programme 'Women in Business', and the financial and other opportunities provided to Belarusian female-entrepreneurs by the bank, as well as making new contacts and improving skills in marketing, for example.



# Mutual feelings

## Belarus is successfully implementing a project to develop and support female entrepreneurship

Belinvestbank began its partnership activity last year as part of cooperation with EBRD on its 'Women in Business' international programme. As part of the project, the 'UspeshnaYa' initiative was created, aiming to support female entrepreneurs and to inform them of opportunities within the programme that can assist with the creation or development of their business. A series of business meetings is scheduled; these will take place this year in Minsk and in regional centres.

"The project 'UspeshnaYa' is designed for owners and business lead-

ers, as well as those women who would like to start their own companies. As part of this initiative, Belinvestbank, with the support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, has undertaken to support female entrepreneurs and to offer both financial and non-financial opportunities for professional development. Our task is to bring these opportunities to women interested in the development of their business." noted the Deputy Chairman of Belinvestbank's Board, Alexander Filippovich.



More than 50 attended the meeting in Minsk. Owners and heads of businesses met Olga Kuznetsova, a leading manager of the EBRD's SME Finance and Management Development Group. During the main part of the meeting, Ms. Kuznetsova outlined the opportunities offered by the 'Women in Business' programme, fi-





tion of a company which enables it to be competitive and successful. This function is based on several rules: a study of one's own client in detail; understand their expectations; and offer a correspondingly good end product; to present it efficiently to be seen by customers. Today it's not enough to produce a quality product, to set up a competitive price and to wait for an inflow of clients. The emotional component of the product is important, which should correspond to the values and way of life of the customers. This is an approach that enables you to build successful business," summed up Ms. Sarmont.

the development strategy of Belinvestbank, which resulted in the project 'UspeshnaYa'. The project has promoted the development of female entrepreneurship; it's extremely important and necessary, the large number of responses from entrants testifies to this."

Delegates had the opportunity not only to communicate with consultants. They shared experiences with each other and learnt how to be given financial support under the most profitable conditions. According to one of the participants of the 'Women in Business' programme, Yelena Morozova, who heads a private enterprise, financial opportunities as part of the EBRD programme enabled her to receive a powerful boost at the start-up of her own company. Ms. Morozova's company was given \$10,000 to launch licensed software. "This has enabled us to increase our sales by more than 50 percent and in total to optimise the work of our company. Moreover, opportunities within the 'Women in Business' programme have enabled us to significantly reduce financial investments in modernisation of the company, thanks to EBRD's support considerably less funding was required," noted Ms. Morozova.

The format of the meeting in Minsk envisaged both information and educational elements. Today, it is difficult to imagine any

The first meeting as part of the 'UspeshnaYa' project was held in a warm and business-like atmosphere and was beneficial for both for speakers and participants. Considering the positive feedback, as well as a large number of applications, Belinvestbank has outlined five similar meetings. The process has aroused a great deal of interest and promises to be popular.

nanced by the EBRD, the European Union, Sweden and the Early Transition Countries Fund.

"The programme 'Women in Belarus' includes three components. The first is financing provided via partner banks. Belinvestbank became such a partner in 2016. The second is consultations, where we help businesses to set up communication with local financial consultants. The third element is to enhance entrepreneurial skills via master classes conducted by specialists and professionals from various spheres," explained Ms. Kuznetsova. "These ideas fit with

successful business without efficient marketing, so expert Darya Sarmont — a founder and Director of the Sarmont Centre of Management Decisions (one of the leaders in the sphere of marketing research) — shared their successful marketing model with the participants. "The master classes offered as part of the 'UspeshnaYa' project are an opportunity to share one's knowledge and experience with the participants, while for those listening, it is a way to learn about existing approaches and tools that really enable businesses to move to a new level. Marketing is a strategic func-

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

# Farewell to the past

**The Government and the National Bank have a plan which is expected to strengthen citizens' confidence in the Rouble after realisation. As a result, the move will slow down inflation and stabilise the situation in the currency market. The focus is on the economy's dedollarisation. Our reporter has studied the document and talks to experts to find out how the perception of dedollarisation can be improved.**



**A**ccording to the prognoses, by late 2018, the country is to significantly cut the use of foreign currency in settlements and fee payments. Moreover, its value as an equivalent measure for tariff, rate and price formation is to be reduced. In February, the Deputy Chairman of the National Bank, Sergey Kalechits, presented a complex series of measures, explaining that the country already enjoys a favourable background for the launch of dedollarisation. In particular, inflation has slowed down, the profitability of Rouble deposits exceeds those made in foreign currency and the situation on the foreign currency market is stable.

However, we must not celebrate too early. It is no secret that Belarus has retained a high level of dollarisa-

tion of the economy in comparison to European and EAEU countries. As of January 1st, the share of foreign currency deposits in banks exceeded 76 percent and the currency component in the total credit portfolio was fixed at 75 percent. This greatly reduces the effectiveness of the interest rate channel through which we try to control inflation. The complex of measures of the Government and the National Bank aimed at reducing the dollarisation level is actually a list of tasks. Some suggestions have already been realised and others are to be implemented by late 2017 and throughout 2018. Complete elimination of foreign currency settlements is planned for 2019.

Among the measures are proposals to determine the value of land in Belarusian Roubles or setting rates of highway tolls in the national currency,

in addition to payments for transportation of cargo. Eliminating pegging to the Dollar rate for value added figures per average worker is planned, as well as abandoning the Dollar peg for prices, tariffs for natural gas, electric and heat energy for legal entities.

According to experts, some measures can be easily implemented, such as paying road tolls in Roubles or eliminating binding to the foreign currency in some cases of compulsory insurance. However, some aspects might be problematic — such as gas and electricity prices. “After all, the state pays in foreign currency when buying energy,” said the Chairman of the Belarusian Scientific and Industrial Association (BSIA), Alexander Shvets. He asks what sources would cover losses in case of a rate difference. Some risks are evident and the realisation of the plan would

depend on the introduction of a fully-fledged system of assessment of risks in all areas, as well as the possibility of hedging currency risks. Unfortunately, Belarusian companies can not make full use of these tools so far: there are too many unresolved issues in the field of accounting and taxation on such transactions.

In addition, the practice of de facto operating foreign exchange rates has been formed in the country. "If everything is so easy, why not, for example, rid the Euro customs clearance of cars right now?" we asked Mr. Shvets, who illustrated his reply using the example of budget formation: here, some revenues are set in Roubles but are pegged to the foreign currency through certain tariffs. At the same time, some expenditure articles are to some extent linked to the purchase of imports or repayment of certain commitments in the foreign currency. Although both these lines are expressed in Roubles, it's clear that they would be balanced at any rate with such an approach. Financial bodies would of course minimise the impact of exchange rate risks on budget implementation.

The Deputy Director of the Centre for Integration Studies of the Eurasian Development Bank — Mikhail Demidenko — has joined economists of the Bank Alexey Kuznetsov and Natalia Mironchik to prepare an article for the 'Bankovsky Vestnik' magazine: 'Reasons and Solutions for Problems.' They distinguish several groups of measures aimed at dedollarisation of the economy. The priority measures are aimed at changing the macroeconomic environment. The second level envisages passive measures focused on the formation of the favourable financial market environment, while the third level includes active measures designed to influence the stimulus of distribution of operations of a particular market segment, as well as the rules of fixing prices on certain commodities. It is expected that the implementation of this complex of measures will lead to a stable macroeconomic situation.

By Galina **Kravtsova**

# Rouble occupies its proper place

**Refinancing rate reduced yet again by National Bank, falling from 15 to 14 percent per annum, since inflation is lower than was forecast**

**T**he share of national currency in Belarus is gradually increasing in the structure of monetary supply and the tendency of pure supply of foreign currency is being preserved on the domestic market.

The Belarusian Rouble is enjoying growing demand. It's enough to note that the portfolio of investment loans of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus has increased over the past year by 17 percent, to reach Br3.7 billion (as of January 1st, 2017). More than Br800 million has been spent on financing investment projects to realise state programmes and measures. As a result, infrastructure projects comprise 34 percent of the Bank's investment loan portfolio (view the most vital in our infographics).

This year, the Bank plans to significantly expand volumes of fund-

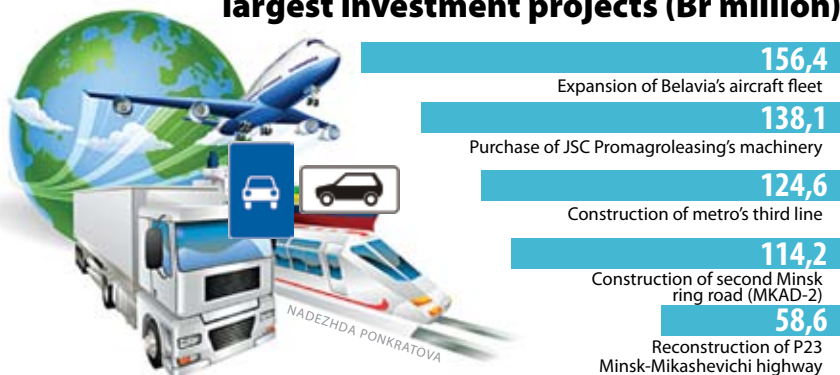
ing to small and medium-sized businesses. Associate Professor Olga Kirvel, of the BSU's Department of International Economic Relations, a Candidate of Economic Sciences, believes that the necessary conditions are in place, including the reduced refinancing rate.

"Reduced interest rates on private sector loans always bring benefit, making credit cheaper and more available. The public may focus on reduced rates on saving accounts but an internal balance is determined by inflation, unemployment and economic growth. All should be balanced."

Taking into account further dynamics of inflation and the economic situation, the National Bank admits that there may be further gradual reductions in interest rates this year.

By Maxim **Osipov**

## Development Bank's financing of the country's largest investment projects (Br million)





At 21st International Mass Media in Belarus Exhibition

PAUL CHUYKO

# Impressive power of straightforward words

**New technology of the future and diverse participants among the attractions at the 21st International Mass Media in Belarus Specialised Exhibition**

In early May, the BelExpo Exhibition Centre turned into a large editorial office for four days; its doors were open to everyone. That was a great opportunity for readers, listeners and viewers to personally interact with the journalists whose materials they follow daily in newspa-

pers and on the radio. The exhibition hall in Minsk's 14 Pobediteley Avenue was crowded from early morning: this year, around a hundred participants expressed a desire to take part in the media forum. Among them were news agencies, editorial offices and media publishing houses. Foreign representatives were also in attendance.

The exhibition was opened ceremonially by cutting the traditional red ribbon. The greeting to participants of the media forum on behalf of the President was read by the Deputy Prime Minister — Vasily Zharko. Alexander Lukashenko believes that this large-scale event is of great public importance in the coun-

try: ‘The annual demonstration of national media opportunities shows their significant potential’. Guests and participants at the forum were also addressed by Information Minister Lilia Ananich, “We enjoy a fully-fledged national information space which includes over 1,600 national printed media and more than 270 television and radio programmes. Our media space is open and has a wide diversity of participants.”

Apart from our own country, the exhibition was attended by representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, India, Germany, Turkey and Georgia. The Chinese mass media was its special guest this year: a press tour for China’s regional media was organised to Belarus and guests visited the landmark technological, industrial, agricultural, historical and cultural sites of the Republic. Particular attention is drawn to joint Belarusian-Chinese projects. When talking to journalists, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Belarus — Cui Qiming — said the Mass Media in Belarus Fair is popular among Chinese media who have taken part in the forum for many years.

Visitors to the show could read printed editions not only in Russian or Belarusian: many other languages were also available. The guests took part in organised round table discussions, seminars and master classes. The regional editorial offices prepared an interesting programme, amongst the many unique stands on show the Vitebsk Region surprised visitors with unusual pastries.

The ‘Media in a Changing World: Professionalism and Responsibility’ conference became a highlight of the fair. Its participants focused on information security. Ms. Ananich proposed that they join forces for the security of the Internet.

“To ensure the Internet is safe for

children and society all participants of the information space must combine their efforts,” she said. “For example, this can be realised in the form of public-private partnerships. Along with artistic unions and media editorial offices, the providers and owners of Internet resources could take part in such projects.” A device gently pressed paper into cubes with hieroglyphs on them: another visitor to the show was introduced to ancient Chinese book printing technology. This year, the Chinese stand attracted visitors with a particularly rich programme as China was the special guest. Over 400 printed media, TV and radio programmes were presented in Minsk and, according to Mr. Quiming, the exhibition is gaining credibility.

The ‘Gomelskaya Prawdа’ stand featured a strange fantasy-like company — a secretary in a military tunic and a red handkerchief near an old typewriter and a revolutionary sailor. The newspaper is celebrating its centenary; possibly this is how its first journalists looked. Close by, a robot-transformer is slowly moving — reminding everyone that the event is taking place in the Year of Science. At the same time, two large

extinguishers are entertaining the crowd: the ‘Yuny Spasatel’ magazine is inventing new forms of teaching safety rules.

The Deputy Information Minister — Alexander Karlyukevich — commented, “It’s nice that regional journalists are actively participating in exhibitions. Stands demonstrate that interesting local newspapers are published nationwide. We welcome the People’s Republic of China as our special guest. The press tour of Chinese journalists has shown off our Belarusian sights; at present, they are getting acquainted with our mainstream media.”

Chen Weiwei, the Press Officer and Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in Belarus, added, “We have strong cooperation with our Belarusian colleagues. We write a lot about Belarus: recently, you’ve been visited by our correspondents from central TV to make a report on Chinese-Belarusian families. It now enjoys great popularity in China.”

This year, Belarusian children’s media (comprising over 20 companies) shared a single stand — full of noise and fun. The Deputy Editor-in-Chief of ‘Vyaselka’ magazine — Natalia Radikevich — said, “We’ve connected our presentation to the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book publishing. Children even have an opportunity to see how an ancient printing press operates.”

At the Indian stand, visitors are collecting stacks of colourful magazines. Om Parkash — a Senior Secretariat Assistant from the Indian Embassy to Belarus — explained, “We are informing people about our country, culture and the nature of different parts of India. The show is very bright and beautiful. I’m glad I’m here.”

By Vladimir **Velikhov**



PAUL CHUYKO



BELTA

# Letters from long ago

**Time is unmerciful; with fewer people still living who witnessed those terrible four years, their recollections become ever more valuable. The importance of our victory over Fascism cannot be overestimated. Naturally, each survivor has their own perspective, remembering the war as they saw it themselves.**

## Rescue

The Germans took our family to Latvia, together with other inhabitants of villages in the Polotsk District, where we were surrendered to a local farmer. I don't remember his last name, but I do remember his appearance: thick as a boar and red as a crayfish. He would groan as he walked. He said to my 33-year-old mother, Maria Yefimovna, "You'll milk my ten cows, clean the premises and do the washing." She worked day and night and I did my best to help her. I also noticed, although I was little, that the farmer cast an eye on my mother. She, however, didn't return the boar's 'feelings'. The only thing we were grateful to him for was feeding us well.

It was August 1944, and the frontline was getting closer. The Germans were wrapping up in a hurry, taking the evacuated with them. The column was long and extremely noisy: people were crying, cows were lowing, horses were neighing and pigs were squealing heartbreakingly. Suddenly, an elderly German escort approached us as we were walking in the column's 'tail'. He said, in poor Russian, "Your army may drown us in the Daugava. Head to that empty shed by the road and wait for your army to come." He chased us away from the column, wiping away a tear. I still remember him: if it were not for him, we might have died.

In the morning, our people appeared: about five from the horse intelligence who'd been watching from a distance, through binoculars. My mother waived a white cloth. The horsemen approached us and told us that Belarus had been liberated but was totally devastated. We were so glad to see the Red Army chasing the enemy away from our land. Everything else could come with time.

Natalia **Vladysenko**, Polotsk

## Old man Shooter's secret place

On a summer's day, a big lorry with German soldiers and policemen rushed into our isolated village of Bokov, raising clouds of dust. It was the first time that the Germans had shown up in this remote and isolated place. Now, almost an entire platoon arrived, making the small settlement bristle in unexpected dismay. The roaring lorry passed half a dozen cabins, before stopping by the house of an old man we called Shooter; it was beekeeper Andrey Ivanovich Yeremin, who lived on the edge of the village. Nobody knew why he had that nickname, as he never had a gun. However, he had a large number of hives.

The intruders pushed away the frightened host and rushed towards the beehives, removing the covers with the butts of their guns. The disturbed bees attacked the visitors, while discovering no honey inside. The Germans shot at the beehives and surrounded the old man, asking where the honey was. He said, "There's no honey this year — because of drought." He was scared to death.

A German officer, losing his temper, grabbed the Shooter by his collar and dragged him to a

broad linden tree nearby. He leaned the old man against the trunk, took a couple of steps back and shot at the old man. To our surprise, before us, frightened villagers, he didn't fall; instead, his lips and chin trembled. The Germans and the policemen guffawed, delighted, and were gone. The old man continued standing by the linden and we could hardly 'tear' him from

the trunk. It appeared that the wicked officer hadn't intended to kill the man; he'd just wanted to scare him. Apparently, he succeeded, as, for some time afterwards, old Shooter could neither walk, nor talk. When he recovered from that dreadful experience, we flooded him with questions about the honey. Everyone knew that he'd extracted a lot of honey a couple of days earlier. "It's in the dung," the old man replied. "There's an iron barrel with the honey in the manure pile."

The villagers took the barrel out of the dung and partied all night long, eating the fantastically delicious honey. We ate fresh apples with mead and thanked the host, who was generous towards his guests and cunning towards the enemy. Long after the Shooter's death, we told stories about him.

Mikhail **Potapov**, 79: a former pumping machine operator at Novopolotsk's Polymir Plant, Polotsk

## Greetings from the Neva River

After the Great Patriotic War, Minsk was literally in ruins. I was three when, in 1946, my father's place of military service moved from Sakhalin Island in the

Far East to the garrison town of Uruchie in Minsk.

Forests surrounded the town, as yet uncleared of mines and where Vlasov army survivors were hiding. German captives were kept with our military unit. In Minsk, the Tractor Works was the first facility to be restored. As Belarus suffered most severely from the war, it lacked manpower. Soldiers from Uruchie were brought to the city daily, to help renovate; they not only served in the army but worked. May success be with you, dear Belarusians!

Lyudmila **Chumak**, St. Petersburg



## Facts

- The first massive bombing of Minsk began on the morning of June 24th, 1941, lasting all day long. As a result, almost the entire city centre was devastated.
- Belarusian radio resumed operation on January 1st, 1942, in Moscow. The first broadcasts

- began with the words: "Listen to us, the Belarusian nation!"
- Fighter pilot Alexey Kasianovich Antonenko, from the village of Vaskovichi, in the Vitebsk Region, was the first Belarusian to receive the title of Hero of the Soviet Union — on July 14th, 1941.

- 15 kilos of gold and around 100 kilos of silver were collected in occupied Belarus to fund the country's defence during the Great Patriotic War years.
- In 1945, the BSSR received 83,737 trophy horses no longer needed by the Red Army.

# Peace on Earth is the greatest value

**Lidia Samosyuk has celebrated her 100th birthday, looking back on her days with undergrounders, travelling up to 40km a day to bring partisans food, clothing and medicine**

**L**idia Samosyuk celebrated her centenary on December 27th, 2016, becoming a celebrity, being congratulated not only by family and friends but by journalists, youngsters and officials. Schoolchildren invited her to their 'Lessons of Courage' — to hear about her bravery.

It's an amazing opportunity to talk to someone who's lived for over a century, so I couldn't miss out. Preparing for our meeting, I considered how to build a conversation so that to avoid stirring painful memories. For example, my great-grandfather, musician Mikhail Cherkashin, was a WWII veteran; he disliked speaking of the horrors of the war, during which he dragged around 400 wounded soldiers from battlefields. With this in mind, I wondered how to chat without spoiling the lady's celebratory mood. In fact, I need not

have worried. At the entrance to the staircase, I heard a loud 'oho-ho-ho': it was Lidia Yakovlevna opening the door and calling out to assist me in finding the way up to her flat.

The lady's one-room apartment is bright and cozy, with flowers



Present from great-niece on centennial anniversary, with wishes for good health

seen from the window. "It's quiet and peaceful here," she says. Seeing me glance at the window, she adds, "Spring is late this year. It's still chilly." While taking out my notepad and voice recorder, she stands nearby. Asking why she doesn't sit down, she replies that she's been sitting too long, unlike in the past. She does take a seat though, and begins telling me how, not long ago, she went to the May 9th parade with her friends. She ate soldiers' porridge in Chelyuskintsy Park and laid flowers at Minsk's monuments to the dead.

As she says, many are too old now and many have died. Nobody can drive her around the city these days. Meanwhile, she tries to see her family as much as she can, celebrating birthdays, the New Year, City Day and Victory Day...

*Ms. Samosyuk, tells me please about your family.*

My mother was born in Ryazan, and my father was a Belarusian, from the Brest Region. He was drafted in 1915 or 1916, I don't remember exactly, in Andijan, in the Uzbek SSR.



My mother followed him and I was born there. In 1924 or 1925, we left for Minsk. By that time, four more sisters had been born. My father wanted a son; their first child had been a boy but he only lived for a year. So, I was the eldest. My father was the sole breadwinner, bringing food, clothes and footwear. Our parents helped all their daughters to receive higher education.

***Are your younger sisters still alive?***

They've died — either of old age or, years ago, on the frontline.

***Did you marry?***

No. I was friends with Andrey for a long time. He worked at the Institute of Fine Mechanics and Optics [now known as the St. Petersburg National Research University of Information

***You didn't meet a new love after the war?***

During the war, many men were killed; only old people and small children remained after the Victory. Among those who survived and returned home I met nobody I wanted to marry. It was my fate.

***How old were you when the war broke out?***

I was about 25, studying civil engineering at the Polytechnic Institute [now known as the Belarusian National Technical University] I later worked at the Institute of Architecture and Construction. I was a leading specialist at that time. By that time Minsk had been already occupied by the Germans...

***However, you also fought — in your own way, being an undergrounder. Please tell us more...***

***The war was continuing and we were fighting against the Fascists. It was everyone's civil duty to defend the Motherland***

Technologies, Mechanics and Optics]. When we decided to get married, the war broke out, and Andrey was killed near Leningrad. I have no children of my own. However, I've always been close to my nephew, Grigory. When he turned three, I became his second mother. He often stayed with me, living for a long time at my house. Actually, three of us raised him: me, my sister and her husband. My nephew is my legal guardian now.

Lidia Samosyuk, on the occasion of her 100th birthday, receiving gifts from Minsk schoolchildren



The underground group was organised by Lyudmila Sokolova. We knew where the partisan points were located — visiting them on Sunday. That was market day and Minsk streets were busy, so we were able to easily hide among the crowd. In the morning, we met in Chelyuskinty Park — receiving orders. We then went to buy food, as well as acquiring linen, footwear and medicines for partisans. Our doctors provided them with drugs and dressing materials received under forged receipts from the German hospital. Our trip then began. We had no backpacks at that time, so had to wrap everything in bed linen and hide it under our clothing — making a large knot on the chest. We obligatorily took eggs with us, which we gave to Germans we met along the way, in exchange for them letting us pass. We were young. We laughed, flirted... and continued, without being searched. We usually travelled in pairs, no more three girls — to avoid suspicion. We needed to cover twenty kilometres to reach the partisan brigade and twenty kilometres back, so our legs were very tired.

**Were you afraid?**

It was very scary, especially when we couldn't understand what Germans nearby were talking about. We didn't know the language beyond a few words. Using them, we tried to find out where the Germans were going and for what purpose. They might have been spying on us! Sometimes, we took a circuitous route, to try and avoid leaving an obvious trail.

**That assistance to the partisans was voluntary...**

There were over a hundred 'fighting girlfriends' in Minsk alone! Moreover, each regional centre had organisations. Do you know why there were so many? Nobody thought that it was possible to refuse. The war was continuing and we were fighting against the Fascists. It was everyone's civil duty to defend the Motherland.

**Did you lose ties with your girlfriends after the war?**



Lidia Samosyuk (left) at 'Lessons of Courage', at a Minsk school

***I've never thought of my age and advise you to act the same way***

Not at all! Our 'Fighting Girlfriends' club broke up only a couple of years ago, after the death of Lyudmila Sokolova — its all-time head. Until then, we regularly met as war veterans — jointly celebrating landmark dates and teaching young people how to love the Motherland.

**Looking at you, the phrase comes to mind: 'the rest comes to us in dreams alone.' You were nearly ninety but be-**

**gan to work at the Union of Belarusian Women. It's hard to believe!**

You're so right. I've never been idle — working at the Union for almost fifteen years. Jointly with members of the organisation, we regularly organised the 'Mercy' campaign — collecting things for people on a low income. So many people came to us! We had to talk to everyone. It was important for me to be convinced that no woman addressing us should be overlooked.

**What's the secret to a long life, in your opinion?**

I've never thought of my age and advise you to act the same way. We simply need to live, and we have every chance to do so these days. Of course, as any century-old lady, I have my aches and pains, but I'm still young in my soul — and full of wishes.

**What warms your soul?**

I love opera very much. In the past, I never missed a single premiere. My neighbour, Nadezhda Vasilievna, always invited us to the Opera House while her son headed it. However, when she died, I stopped going to the theatre.

**What are you concerned about nowadays?**

I'm very upset by what's happening globally. After such a terrible war, how can we continue fighting?! You — journalists — should tell people more often about the past. There's no need to repeat monstrous mistakes! After all, peace on the earth is of value for all peoples.

**After our talk, Lidia Yakovlevna sang a line from the children's song. It was touching to observe how, despite her age, she was encouraging herself with a cheerful song, rising slowly to accompany me to the door.**

By Alisa Krasovskaya



Flowers and vintage military cars at Central Botanical Garden

# Flowers for the sake of life

**As is traditional on May 9th, Belarusian cities and villages commemorate the memory of heroes and victims of the Great Patriotic War, with hundreds of thousands of red tulips, carnations and roses laid on beds of honour, as well as at Victory monuments, memorials and obelisks**

**H**undreds of people work to ensure we have enough flowers on Victory Day, for our streets to appear festive. Last autumn, tulip bulbs were bought from Holland and planted by employees of Minskzelenstroy, before the frosts arrived. Now, they're blossoming in flower beds along Minsk's major streets, despite the late spring.

Where do these beautiful roses, begonias, violas, petunias and other species seen on festive days come from? Minsk's Greenhouse Factory, which covers more than 1.5 hectares, grows flowers all year round. The huge red roses used by professional

florists for Victory Day wreaths and baskets give the impression of solemnity and festivity. "Before the holiday, many state organisations contacted us with orders," notes Andrey Guminsky, the deputy director general for production at Minsk's Greenhouse Factory. "A great number of roses, from big plantations, were cut for Victory Day."

Minsk and guests of the capital have been admiring flowers since early May: more than 300,000 are planted in Minsk, with two million blooms on show by mid-summer.

Scientists of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus also take an active part in the decoration of Minsk. Thousands come annually to the Central Botanical Garden of the NAS of Belarus (close to Minsk's

Nezavisimosti Avenue) to admire the numerous lilac species in bloom, in their own special garden. Meanwhile, there are over 300 species of tulips elsewhere, creating an unforgettable scene: the national heritage of Belarus. Some Minsk families always come to admire the blossoming tulips on May 9th, with the Central Botanical Garden hosting its 'Blossoming Garden of Victory'. There's tasty soldiers' porridge on offer and old military music entertains the crowd. You can even sit in a vintage military vehicle or on a motorcycle. Of course, children have the greatest fun. It's a wonderful opportunity for florists to create bouquets on the military theme, using spring flowers.

By Alina **Gyunger**

**Grodno travel agencies are now actively switching to local tourism. A few years ago, there were no more than ten similar companies but their number has recently increased to 70. The reason for this lies in the establishment of the visa-free regime. At the weekend, buses with foreign guests arrive at the Belarusian border. We investigate below who these people are and the purpose of their visits.**



# Return to an unfamiliar city

**E**arly on Saturday morning, buses from Lithuania begin parking in a small lay-by near Grodno synagogue. One of them has brought a large group of tourists guided by Renatas Jokubaitis. He works in the Riga branch of the Intermax travel agency and regularly takes Lithuanians to Belarus. “Our present group consists mostly of adults who are happy to listen to my stories about the historical events which unite our people,” he says. “Young people usually do not often listen as they do not know any Russian. The tour-

ists buy jumpers, medicines, souvenirs, candy and other products at good prices. Prices in your restaurants and cafes are also significantly lower than, for example, in Vilnius.”

Rimma Semaškienė has come from Vilnius with her daughter Katarina. She is very satisfied with the trip, commenting, “I visited Belarus almost 20 years ago, having only sketchy memories. I have wanted to come for a long time and got an opportunity after the change in visa rules. The guides are very interesting: both Russian and Lithuanian. Even the customs officers were wonderful, although we had been threatened that

they would inspect us carefully. I bought a voucher for two for 40 Euros in winter. We called into your restaurant, drinking a coffee for one Euro. In Lithuania, it’s virtually impossible to find it cheaper than 2 Euros.”

The Director of Grodno’s SonNik-Tur travel agency — Pavel Shabeikin — began working with local tourism at the same time as the introduction of the visa-free regime. He immediately hit the bull’s eye. “So far, we are in the lead with the number of tourists accommodated: over 2,200 people have visited Belarus thanks to us,” he says. “I remember our first guests from the Lithuanian town

of Klaipeda; those were single tourists. Since then, we have been visited by travellers from Japan, China, Spain, Latvia, Poland, the Netherlands and other countries. On one of the March weekends, we accepted five buses with Lithuanian tourists. We cooperate with Lithuanian and Latvian tour operators. We always take our guests to the Avgustovsky Canal — so that they have an opportunity to compare it with what is happening on the popular gateways in the summer. City sightseeing then follows. In the past, travellers were fed as an organised group but, in recent years, most guests prefer to eat on their own. This proves that they are beginning to get used to Grodno. They know where to go and what they like here. Shopping at Belarusian stores is extremely popular among visitors, with guests mostly buying shoes, underwear, bedding, chocolate and alcohol. At the final stage, we take our buses with tourists to the city's major trading centre — OldCity; they have two hours in which to buy food there. All our guests have been satisfied so far.”

Another company — Zet (headed by Sergey Yakshevich) began taking foreign guests to Belarus in 1991. It was among the first of its kind, bringing Ukrainians, Russians and Poles. In the last 6-8 years, the company has specialised mostly in Polish guests. Sergey admits that Poles are very special tourists in terms of their stamina. Most want to have 6-8 hours of excursions daily and are interested in everything connected with Polish history and their famous compatriots, writers, musicians and public figures — such as Eliza Oszeszkowa, Czeslaw Niemen, Tadeusz Kościuszko. This is so-called ‘sentimental tourism’. This year, Lithuanians have joined Poles in this. “Since the launch of the visa-free regime, we’ve brought over a thousand visitors. Much has changed. Street names and signs in foreign languages have been put up and souvenir shops are opening. However, the old cemetery — where Eliza Orzeszkowa was buried — remains in a poor state and

foreigners notice it,” said Mr. Yakshevich. “In my opinion, we lack events in the city. It would be great to organise a small festival each Saturday — with the accompaniment of atmospheric music.”

Mr. Yakshevich added that it would be wrong to state that all Lithuanian and Polish guests are only interested in shopping. Not so long ago, he had a group who showed no interest in Bereza Glassware, Marco shoes or Milavitsa underwear. Moreover, school groups also have varied interests: not long ago, the local Museum of Religious History presented an exhibition of old bicycles which the children were happy to visit.

Much more needs to be done. The Deputy Head of the Department of Sports and Tourism of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee — Tatiana Lidyeva — confirms that, in recent years, much has changed in terms of the attractiveness of the visa-free zone to tourists. “Previously, it was unprofitable for tourist agencies to deal with local tourism. It was much easier to send a client abroad and earn guaranteed money. The situation has changed radically. The number of people wanting to work in this area has risen and our tour operators

are promoting Belarusian products to foreign partners. They tell others about the advantages of visa-free travel and advertise the Grodno Region. Just a couple of months ago, people wondered what could fill your time in Grodno but they now realise there are many attractions.”

Ms. Lidyeva believes it's vital for tourists to understand and feel the benefits of a trip to Belarus. A visa-free trip is not expensive and few people would argue about going to Grodno for just \$2-25. They would eat, take a walk and come home without queuing at the border. Some firms have also been established to focus on medical tourism: dentistry, cosmetology and other services — expensive in Europe — enjoy growing demand.

The total number of foreign guests who've visited Grodno and the Grodno Region without visas has reached 7,000. It's hard to say yet whether this is a large figure or not. The summer season is approaching and we'll see whether it will prove record breaking. Given that many have tired of trips to Turkey and Egypt this is possible. Although the experts agree that at least a year is needed to assess the impact of the visa changes.

By Tatiana **Kondratieva**



VITALY PIVOVARCHIK



Saviour Transfiguration Church

# Worthy of world recognition

## Belarusian architectural monuments can be added to the UNESCO List

**A**ny student knows that four famous sites in Belarus are registered on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites. It's good to know that one lives close to monuments comparable to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Pantheon in Rome or the Acropolis in Athens. This means that the world community has recognised the authenticity and uniqueness (two of the required criteria for the prestigious list) of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Mir Castle, Nesvizh Palace and Park Estate and the Geodetic Struve Arch. It's no surprise that after acquiring the status of UNESCO World Heritage Site, the number of tourists has increased. In the UNESCO Tentative List there are also five more entries from Belarus. The committees in charge of these monuments plan to prepare their folios and submit them to the international experts of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris by 2020. There's no need to wait for this however, as the sites can be visited now. All the monuments are worth attention not because of their UNESCO status but because of their history and uniqueness.

### Corner of spirituality

Visitors to the St. Yevfrosiniya Monastery which also includes the Saviour Transfiguration Church, should be ready to admire its breathtaking beauty, harmonious chanting and atmosphere of spirituality. Before getting to the Saviour Transfiguration Church, drop into the Central Cathedral of the Raising of the Holy Cross. Here, the relics of St. Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya — the foundress of the monastery — are kept in a richly decorated shrine, among gold and silver, candles and icons. These remain pristine even after nine centuries. Then you should continue to the Saviour Transfiguration Church — small compared to modern churches but magnificent. Remarkably, this church was built during the life of Yevfrosiniya. According to the textbooks, this was in 1161, and in line with recent investigations of the Hermitage employees, between 1127 and 1135. Despite reconstruction in the classical period, the church is the best example of a preserved monument of ancient Polotsk architecture. Its major value is in the ancient fresco paintings which completely covered the church walls. Works are currently underway

on the restoration of the frescoes so the church building is covered in scaffolding. However, this doesn't stop visitors from examining the holy faces of saints who look down from the ceiling, walls and arches... It's difficult to believe that this is a glimpse into the 12th century! The depiction of St. Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya was most likely painted during her lifetime as people viewed her as saint even before her death.



St. Boris and Hleb Church in Grodno as an example of the Grodno architectural school

CATHERINE CHAROVSKAYA

## 'Speaking walls'

Even if you have read about Kolozha Church, seen it in photos and heard about it from friends it should still be seen first-hand. There's much to see in Grodno; it's no accident that it is called the 'royal city'. Kolozha is one of its main features. It's strong, solid, steadfast yet vulnerable; it's a miracle how this church has been standing on the steep bank of the River Nieman since the 12th century. In 1853, it suffered from a landslide, completely losing its southern stone wall. This year, Kolozha Church is to undergo major repairs.

The church is the only surviving example of the Grodno architectural school. Its peculiarities include the use of huge stones in the walls, probably from the ancient pagan temple on which the church was built, and glazed ceramic tiles in the form of crosses of various colours: olive-green, brown and multi-coloured. The inside walls of the church have vase-like indentations which simultaneously add to the acoustics and improve the construction of the church. The composition itself, with round pillars, is very rare for Orthodox churches.



At Avgustovsky Canal

## Paradise for canoeists

If one wishes to enjoy nature, to admire architecture and at the same time relax with friends or family, you may add the Avgustovsky Canal to your list of must-see sites. The Avgustovsky Canal is not merely a waterway, connecting several rivers; it's a unique monument of engineering and material culture, constructed in 1824-1839. Now it's also a tourist and recreational facility of more than 5,500 hectares. There are only three such canals in the world: the Caledonian in the UK, the Göta Canal in Sweden and our Avgustovsky Canal, located in the territories of Belarus and Poland.

Though it was built as an important transport artery for moving timber and goods by raft, it was not used very long for this purpose. Its scenic route ensured it quickly turned into a tourist Mecca: back in early 20th century canoeing began to develop here, with yacht clubs and grandiose 'Holiday of the Sea' event. Tourists are offered a trip on a motor boat or cruiser, canoe rafting, hiking and cycling. Moreover, the canal runs through the Republican landscape reserve — Grodnenskaya Pushcha — one of the most ecologically clean places in Belarus.

By Lyudmila **Minkevich**



## Taking pride of place

■ The following sites also lay claim to the prestigious list as buildings of public worship: St. Michael Church in Zelva District's Synkovichi village, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Shchuchin District's Murovanka village and St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Postavy District's Kamai village. These sites are living proof that Belarus has often been subject to the cruellest wars, even the churches were built in the shape of fortresses.

■ By 2020, there are plans to prepare a dossier, entitled 'Religious Wooden Architecture of the 16th-19th Centuries in Belarus, Ukraine and Poland'. Together with churches of the neighbouring states Belarusian churches may also join the UNESCO World Heritage List: St. Nicholas Church in Bereza District's Zditovo and the Saviour Transfiguration Church in Zhabinka District's Khmelevo. Constructed from fragile material, they managed to survive time, weather and dozens of adverse historical events.



# People of the marshes

**Our reporter takes an extreme outing to Olmanskie marshes in southern Belarus**

**W**ho would think of spending their holiday in the marshes? Some clearly would. Going to ‘drygva’ — as the marshes are sometimes called in Belarus — is a type of extreme tourism in the Republic. Sturdy boots and a good map are essential, the romantic aspects of a trip here is questionable, however.

## Take a walking stick along the ‘drygva’

In Belarus, the swamps occupy nearly 15 percent of the total area and people treat these special places with

respect. During the war, the ‘drygva’ offered shelter from the enemy and now people collect cranberries and cloudberry. Five of us recently travelled to the Olmanskie marshes and took three and a half days to explore them all.

“These are wild places where it’s better not to go alone,” warned an experienced swamp-visitor. “Local people reassure us that the bog has not sucked anyone in for many years though. It’s important to be safe and sensible in the environment and to use a long pole to examine the surface before stepping on it. Walking is difficult. The soil shifts beneath your feet, many places require you to walk through deep mud. Of-

ten causeways or wooden tracks help when they are not too slippery. In a few places, there are patches of perfectly ‘paved’ road, possibly the remains for a farm which existed before the time of Khrushchev. ‘Borti’ — or old hives — are also sometimes seen and are still used by the local villagers”.

## Cranberry price

One of the members of our tour — Digger — explained how he once managed to put a tent directly on the marsh. We decided to spend the night on the islands, searching for a site with access, found in wells dug by cranberry pickers close to their huts. These people spend up to several weeks a year here,



collecting berries. They put the harvest into unsealed bags and put them back in the bog. Both the water and the cold help to preserve the product which is later taken out to be sold.

A local villager tells us that cranberries previously reached a price of Br3 per kilo, but at the end of the season, the price dropped to Br2.5. To make any money, a picker needs to collect at least a hundred kilos.

The season usually starts in September and lasts until the first snow. Collecting is sometimes hampered by fires and the evidence is clear to see on our trip, with some trees merely black sticks, with little or no fruit.

### Sacred lake

Olmany borders Bolshoe Zasomnoe Lake. Its shore is boggy but decking has been laid by the villagers. On reaching a small viewing tower, we see a summerhouse by the shore. It's a great place to stop and eat or just enjoy the lake. Believers might bow to the crosses nearby. According to legend, a duke's daughter drowned here after being prohibited from marrying her lover. After the tragedy, her father commanded that the lake be blessed and set up the crosses.

A 19th century church is situated in Olmany; it was preserved after the war along with the priest's house. The Germans burned the countryside, taking the villagers to camps. Only a few of them managed to escape and survived by hiding in the marshes.

In summer, the swamps are damp, hot and full of mosquitoes. In autumn, the dampness is a special feature: artful, cool and penetrating. Some may wonder why people choose such places for their leisure, the answer is simple: to personally challenge themselves and see how they can conquer the bogs. It's a great achievement to reach places that most people can't go. It's a great opportunity to discover the unknown world of nature and test human capabilities.

By Vasily **Malashenkov**



## Ruffs make a pitstop at Pripyat

**It's unlikely our country has ever seen such a large number of birds registered in the Red Book. 120,000 ruffs (20 per cent of the whole world's population) — slim long-legged wading birds — are spending this spring in the Belarusian Polesie region.**

**A**ccording to ornithologists, they will spend around a month at Turov meadow which is considered the major transit point for migrating birds.

“Ruffs fly from Africa, from their wintering places, to Eurasian cold deserts,” explained the Director of the

Belarus Bird Ringing Centre and senior research officer of the ornithology laboratory at the Scientific and Practical Centre for Bioresources of the National Academy of Sciences, Pavel Pinchuk. “According to bird ringing data, these birds nest from Scandinavia to Yakutia. Migration for birds is a difficult time, so such stops are very important for them to gain weight, for example. Otherwise, the birds won't be able to reach their destinations.”

The floodplain of the River Pripyat is perfect for such a break, so it's vital to preserve it in its unchanged state. Other birds from the Red Book also nest here: black-tailed godwits, double snipers, ring plovers, European oyster catchers, Terek sandpipers, marsh sandpipers and pintails.

By Dmitry **Umpirovich**

### Reference

■ **Turov meadow is one of the most important places in Europe for nesting and migration stop-over for more than 50 species of wading birds. Turov meadow has the international status of an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and has been a local biological reserve since 2008. During migration, one can see more than 120,000 ruffs a day, as well as 150,000 widgeons and 20,000 black-tailed godwits. In March 2014, ornithologists set a record for registered birds at Turov meadow: specialists calculated 200,000 birds per square kilometre! This is the maximum figure over the whole period of observations, starting in 1994. Previously, such a great number of migrating birds hasn't been recorded anywhere else in Belarus.**



# Place rich with history

## Five reasons to visit Smorgon

### Visiting Ogiński's Northern Athens

**1** Smorgon has seen so many famous historical personalities it's as if it was a district in Paris rather than a modest region of Belarus. In June 1655, it housed the general headquarters of the Russian Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich during his campaign in Vilno. During the Northern War, Peter I and Karl XII stayed here, and in winter 1812, the town housed Kutuzov's headquarters. Before this, in severe December, Napoleon passed the command of the remains of his Great Army to Marshal Murat and left for France.

The buildings where Peter I, Kutuzov and Napoleon stayed haven't been preserved, but the estate of Michał Kleofas

Ogiński, the author of the famous polonaise 'Farewell to the Homeland', has survived. His Zalesie estate is known as the 'Northern Athens'. The estate was restored to its previous glory to mark the 250th anniversary of our countryman.

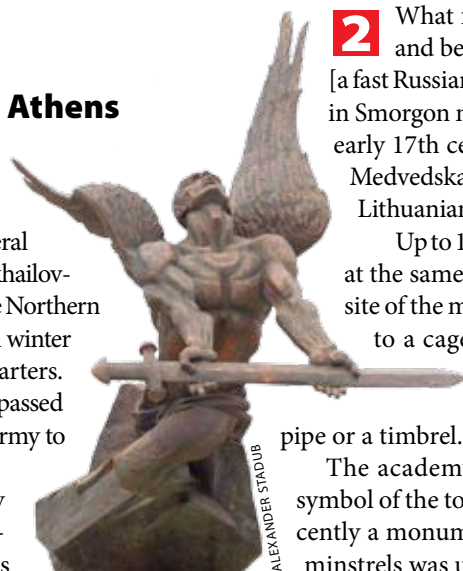
To understand the national character, you should visit Kushlyany, which houses the estate of Frantisek Bogushevich — one of the founders of Belarusian literature. The house of the author of 'Dudka Belaruskaya' (Belarusian Pipe) is now a literary and memorial museum.

### Ferretting out the secrets of the 'bear' academy

**2** What fair can be without wandering minstrels and bears! To teach the bears to dance 'Barynya' [a fast Russian folk dance], the 'bear academy' appeared in Smorgon more than three hundred years ago. In the early 17th century, the town even had a street called Medvedskaya. The 'academy' was led by the baron of Lithuanian Gypsies, Yan Martinkevich.

Up to 10 bears and several monkeys were trained at the same time. The menagerie was located on the site of the modern district hospital. A bear was taken to a cage under which a fire was lit. The metal became hot and the bear shifted from foot to foot while the teacher played a pipe or a timbrel. The bears quickly learnt their lessons!

The academy was so famous that a bear became a symbol of the town and appeared on its coat of arms. Recently a monument to the dancing bear and wandering minstrels was unveiled — a favourite place for selfies.



ALEXANDER STADUB



Smorgon mosaic

### Learning about the place where Zoshchenko and Kataev fought

**3** During WWI, the line of the Russian-German front went through the town and it was here that the Germans conducted the first gas attacks against the Russian army, injuring the staff captain of 16th Mingrelia Grenadier regiment, Mikhail Zoshchenko. To mark the 100th anniversary of WWI, Union State funds were used to construct a memorial commemorating heroes and victims of the war.

Recently a film was shot about Maria Bochkareva. All-female death squads, formed in Russia in 1917, took part in military battles only once — near Krevo. Moreover, writer Valentin Kataev also fought here, as did would-be marshals Boris Shaposhnikov and Roman Malinovsky. Leo Tolstoy's daughter, Alexandra, took care of the wounded in the military hospital.

Within three years of the battles, Smorgon had turned into a desert, the landscape characterised by ruined buildings. It was called a 'dead town' by newspapers; dozens of concrete pillboxes and earth-and-timber bunkers have been preserved in its suburbs.

### Touching 'antiquity'

**4** On your way to Smorgon you won't be able to avoid Krevo. The settlement near the district centre is famous for the ruins of a castle from the time of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — the first stone construction in Belarus. The cellars of the Royal Tower have witnessed events significant

in world history: on the order of the Great Duke Jagailo, the major contender for the throne, his uncle Kęstutis was suffocated. Here, in Krevo Castle, Jagailo signed the decree that united the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland in their opposition against the crusaders.

You may think that Alexander Kerensky was unique in escaping from the Winter Palace in women's clothing a hundred years ago, but the first to perfect this disguise was the son of Kęstutis, the would-be Grand Duke Vytautas. He escaped wearing his wife's maid's dress.

Commander Andrey Kurbsky also escaped in Krevo from the persecutions of Ivan the Terrible. There he wrote his famous letters to the Moscow tsar. Krevo Castle also has its ghosts: from time to time people see a lady with a dog. The unfortunate lady rejected the duke's advances and he ordered her buried in the wall. The beautiful lady has never parted with her pet and it shared the terrible fate of its mistress. For several days, the whole district heard groans and howls.

### Eating true doughnuts

**5** It is believed that the first ring-shaped rolls appeared here. Later people began to dust them with sugar, add honey and poppy seeds. At first, a stiff dough was made from flour and water. Strips of dough, rather than ring-shaped, were then cooked in boiling water and dried. Ring-shaped rolls competed against even those made in Moscow and they were sold in Petersburg, Warsaw and even Paris.

By German **Moskalenko**

# Oksana Kirilyuk: 'If you want freshness, I'll forge it for you'



VLADIMIR SHLAPAK

Oksana will soon finish her dream workshop, with glass walls

## Belarus' only female blacksmith lives in Molodechno



Who says that iron can't bloom?

Oksana Kirilyuk's hands can turn iron into a flower. Ten years ago, she chose a path rather unusual for a girl...

### Shaping her own fortune

Oksana Kirilyuk spends a lot of time at her hearth, but not stirring a cooking pot. Instead, she manipulates heavy pieces of metal at her Bear's Corner workshop. From sunrise to sunset, her hammer knocks the anvil.

Where most girls dream of becoming an actress, wanting to sing and dance on stage, or of meeting their own 'handsome prince' as in fairy-tales, Oksana has always had different aspirations. In kindergarten, she dreamt of a ship with scarlet sails; later, she decided that she'd like to be a marine navigator, and studied books on shipbuilding. She planned to enter the Kaliningrad Higher Maritime School, but then found an interest in foreign languages. She taught herself German, deciding to translate scientific literature. After much thought, she entered the Institute of Management and graduated from the Department of Interna-

tional Economic Relations. However, as she admits, “I had money but lacked job satisfaction.”

She had always loved to dance and, eventually, set up a ballroom dancing school, called Cascade, in Molodechno. Oksana still works at the Palace of Culture. She also established a horse riding school. “I devoted around two years to this sport, studying horses,” she tells us. However, she began to feel that the animals experienced ‘real torture’ in being ridden, so gave up. Her own horses, Golubika, Geraldika, Govardi and Geteborg, remain with her.

### Show behind glass

Naturally, horses needed stabling and new ‘shoes’, which can be expensive. This led Oksana to train as a welder and, while passing an internship at the train depot, she went to the forge. There, she realised that working with fire, water, iron or wood presented amazing opportunities to express herself creatively.

Oksana continues to build her own smithery, with a glass wall, so she can watch her horses outside. “I love seeing them walk close to me while I’m working,” she admits. The word ‘smith’ applies to men only in the Russian language but female hands can also create miracles. Over the past decade, Oksana has made hundreds of unique sculptures, as well as stairs, fences, arches, chandeliers, flowers and interior items. “This is definitely a hard job. However, it’s a false assumption to assert that only men can be blacksmiths. The profession is hard on women and men alike, as it’s an aggressive environment. The fire dries out your skin and it’s hard on your eyesight, while

your spine is affected by lifting heavy lumps of metal. Nevertheless, my job brings me pleasure,” she notes.

### Metal should breathe

Oksana’s business card reads: ‘If you want freshness, I will forge it for you’. She tells us, “The wind is my favourite element. Iron should breathe. I can’t explain this feeling but it makes me continuously change the shape of what I’m making.” Oksana’s next plan is to create a sculpture park. She notes, “Figures should have meaning — each different, depending on the angle, and inspired by the style of Lewis Carroll, with their own mythology and legends.” Oksana’s first collection — entitled ‘Skone’ — is full of the spirit of ancient Sweden, while her second will be devoted to the sea.

By Tatiana Mysova



PAUL CHUYKO

## ▶ Guttenberg visits Skaryna

**Belarusian museums have been preparing for the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book printing for several years**

As the Deputy Director for Research and Publishing at the National Library, Ales Susha, stated at a recent press conference. He notes that the international exhibition dedicated to the history of printing (to be launched on September 15th at the National Library’s Book Museum) will feature fragments of the Gutenberg Bible, which is considered to be the first volume in the age of book printing, according to European experts.

The event will be held for the first time in Belarus and Mr. Susha is cautious in his prediction for its success. The National History Museum is working on a reproduction of Skaryna’s printing press, similar to collector Vladimir Lihodedov’s achievement. The State Museum of Belarusian Literary History is not in the most advantageous position, being under a state of ‘repair’. Nevertheless, it’s sure to please visitors with its retrospective mobile exhibition, ‘Life in Words’, in addition to its ‘Skaryniana in Belarusian Literature and Art’ exhibition. Polotsk is the birthplace of Francysk Skaryna and is to host the Day of Belarusian Written Language. The local Museum of Belarusian Book Printing is already offering Skaryna’s traditional lessons and there are plans to present the enlightener’s life as part of a puppet show. On August 25th, the ‘Polotsk in Engravings of Modern Artists’ open air workshop will launch.

Brest is marking the anniversary with the opening of a faux 19th century second-hand bookshop.



# Festival expands artistic borders

**From July, traditional Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk Festival of Arts will take place. Its Director Alexander Sidorenko shares his view on novelties of forthcoming 26th Slavonic song forum**

*Is it true that tickets are sold out for some concerts already?*

Our prices are reasonable — even for concerts of top stars. This is probably why tickets have already sold out for some concerts.



*Every year, you try to attract a global star. Who's performing this time?*

Julio Iglesias Jr. will come to Vitebsk for the first time, to perform on the main concert stage. We've contacted Kim Breitburg's 'Kasanova' musical staging, which features young Belarusian actors and students. We've already received many applications for the street festival, and the puppet event is always popular. Theatres from Sweden, Italy and France plan to come.

*What's new for the song contest?*

The number of national selection rounds, applied by various countries, will be increased. For example, the Mayor of Acapulco has requested a qualifying round in his city, and there will be one in Riga.

*Tell us about the countries participating...*

The festival enjoys great interest. We're launching a special Italian project — with a concert and an exhibition — and we'll widely represent Ukrainian artists. The Ukraine broadcast of the 'Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk' last year enjoyed the highest ranking on Ukrainian TV. This year, we're likely to see the Grigory Verevka Academic Choir, as well as Irina Bilyk and Oleg Vinnik. In the past, we welcomed Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian masters, and the practice is being revived.

*In your speech at the Russian-Belarusian Theatrical Workshop, in Moscow, you mentioned the establishment of theatrical stagings as part of the 'Bazaar'...*

Yes, eight performances will be staged. For the third year in a row, we're hosting an international puppet programme, in addition to street art. The theatrical workshop focuses on the important issue of cooperation, and there's the 'Theatrical Meetings' programme. All need greater support. Every year, leading theatres come to Minsk but, in recent times, we've moved towards non-repertory theatres, which are cheaper. If we receive particular support from the Ministry of Culture, this project could be developed.

*Which young contestants deserve attention?*

I love the participants from Italy and the United States.

*What's the festival's main purpose?*

The motto of the festival is 'Through Art to Peace and Mutual Understanding'. It aims to bring people together. I'm convinced that cultural cooperation is much more efficient than politics. We long ago crossed the borders of the Slavonic world. Over the years, the festival has been attended by artists from more than eighty countries around the world, with core partners established. In the past, only Cuba hosted qualifying rounds but these are being held in several countries across Latin America at present.

By Tatiana **Khoroshilova**

## Wisdom in understanding our spiritual heritage



**Zvyazda Publishing House prepares new edition in 'Luminous Signs: Poets of China' series**

**F**or the third year, a multi-faceted creative project has been implemented with support from the Information Ministry, presenting Chinese poetry in Belarusian language. The new volume is the eighth in the series, entitled 'Wisdom of Silent Mountains', and has been sent already to the printing house.

The collection comprises the verse of Medieval Chinese poet Meng Haoran (689-740), translated into Belarusian by Valeria Radun, Ales Badak, Darya Nechiporuk and Yulia Aleichenko. Ales Karlyukevich has written the foreword.

The series brings together diverse poets and translators. Darya Nechiporuk, a senior teacher of the Chinese Philosophy Chair within the Belarusian State University's Philology Department, has translated Meng Haoran's verses into Belarusian and has also made a word-by-word translation of pieces translated by other Belarusian poets. Painter Kamil Kamal has prepared illustrations for the book and is involved in illustrating the third in the 'Luminous Signs: Poets of China' series. Previously, he has illustrated collections of verse by Li Qingzhao and Wang Guozhen.

Undoubtedly, the series will be continued, as there is, currently, unprecedented interest in Chinese culture and Chinese civilisation in Belarus. It's pleasant that a true translational school

of Chinese poetry is being formed against this background. In recent years, Mikola Metlitsky, a laureate of the State Award of the Republic of Belarus, as well as Ales Badak, Ragned Malakhovsky, Tatiana Sivets, Naum Galperovich, Leonid Dranko-Maisyuk and Yelena Romanovskaya, have taken part in translating the verse of Du Fu, Li Bo, Wang Wei, Ai Qing, Wang Guozhen, Meng Haoran and Li He into the language of Yakub Kolas and Yanka Kupala.

Chinese poetry has long been translated into Belarusian language but was, previously, only issued through newspapers and magazines, alongside the work of Belarusian poets, rather than having exclusive editions. Even Mao Zedong was translated. From the 1920s to the 1980s, Chinese masters were translated by Vladimir Dubovka, Rygor Borodulin, Maxim Tank, Olga Ipatova, Sergey Dergai, Mikola Avramchik, Valentina Kovtun, Neli Tulupova and Igor Bobkov. Meanwhile, People's Poet of Belarus Rygor Borodulin dedicated a section of his book of translations, 'Call from the East', to Chinese poetry. In other sections, he presented Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese poetic worlds.

Chinese poetry attempts a philosophical apprehension of the universe so it's little wonder that it has attracted Belarusian translators across the ages.

By Kirill **Ladutko**



White coats embroidered with cornflowers are among the most recognisable images of the 'Belarusian Beatles'

PAUL CHUYKO

# Bell-bottoms from 'Pesnyary'



Scientific researcher from the National Historical Museum, Yulia Krivdyuk

PAUL CHUYKO

## Minsk hosts an exhibition of the 'Pesnyary' ensemble's unique costumes

### Bold experiment

We all remember the bell-bottomed trousers, shirts with bright patterns and folkdecoration! The legendary 'Pesnyary' were not only performers of nationwide popular hits — 'Belovezhskaya Pushcha', 'Yas Mowed Clover' or 'Vologda' — but also true style icons.

The exhibition displays over fifty sketches by artists Valentina Bartlova, Galina Krivoblotskaya, Yuri Piskun and Olga Demkina. There are also musical manuscripts, photos and concert posters

— in addition to the maestro's favourite instrument: the double-necked guitar.

Vladimir Mulyavin chose the stage designs personally and often sent back a costume for revision if he disliked even a single detail. "Some patterns have even preserved Mr. Mulyavin's signature and his hand-written 'Agree,'" comments a scientific researcher from the National Historical Museum, Yulia Krivdyuk.

Original costumes are the main exhibits. Mr. Mulyavin loved aristocratic outfits and his image with a long moustache was emphasised by his unique and



recognisable style: the maestro put a coat on over his peasant's overcoat — tying it with his wide belt which resembled the traditional Slutsk sash. He always had a fur hat with feathers and vintage boots of brown leather.

Not all the musicians appreciated those outfits, as they were hot and the boots were uncomfortable — with high heels or a platform sole. It was a real challenge to perform a concert with them on. One of the musicians once sawed the high heels off. Mr. Mulyavin was strict. “Fix them or leave. You can do anything you want but you must appear on stage as intended,” the maestro told him. The next day, the heels were returned to the shoes.

## Heavenly gardens

One of Mr. Mulyavin's favourite outfits in the show was based on a work by the Belarusian artist Alena Kish. In 1994, the ensemble prepared a new programme for the ‘Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk’ — ‘The Soul's Voice’. The musicians performed with the chamber choir and the Khoroshki dance ensemble. Colourful costumes were designed specially for the occasion. Mr. Mulyavin's shirt featured flowers, trees and whimsical patterns — wonderfully resembling the naïve art pictures of Ms. Kish who loved to draw paradise gardens.

Two years later, ‘Pesnyary’ presented their ‘Freedom: Cossack Liberty’ programme. They enjoyed a large-scale tour from Brest to Vladivostok, and the band ap-



In 1994, a special series with bright patterns and exotic animals was designed for the ‘Soul's Voice’ programme



One of artist Yuri Piskun's outfits (left) made in the aristocratic style with luxurious embroidery, rich finishing and fur hats, only the Slutsk sash is lacking. The ensemble toured the USA in the mid-1970s in these costumes (right)

peared in public in velvet suits embroidered with Cossack patterns.

Their outfit sketches were approved at the highest level in the Ministry of Culture for each concert programme and the costumes trace the evolution of the legendary band's work. ‘Pesnyary’ has left their bright and unmistakable trace both in the music world and also in the history of stage costume of Belarusian and Soviet music.

## Hello, America!

In 1976, ‘Pesnyary’ became the first Soviet ensemble to tour the United States. For their trip, the musicians sewed costumes from fashionable jeans, obtaining the fabric from abroad in a special order. The ensemble went on the US tour with the winners of the Grammy Award — the ‘New Christy Minstrels’ folk band. The latter played for the popular Soviet ensemble in the opening act. After the concerts, fans ran backstage — thanking the musicians, asking for autographs and talking about the friendship between the two peoples. ‘Pesnyary’ were appropriately nicknamed the ‘Soviet Beatles’.

On their return, Mr. Mulyavin told reporters with a smile, “Those concerts were no different from those we give at home, in small towns. Soviet audiences are more attentive and Americans are more emotional.”

By Kristina **Khilko**

*The latest premieres — ‘The Magic Flute’ by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and ‘Cavalleria Rusticana’ by Pietro Mascagni — have occupied a worthy place on the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus*

## Bringing joy and inspiration

It's a long-standing tradition for the Bolshoi to perform certain legendary works, and also a tradition for them to invite directors to create new stagings and interpretations. Without question, this company of professionals produce quality performances and every visit to the Bolshoi Theatre is memorable, be it for a press conference dedicated to a full-dress rehearsal, a first night performance or a show starring guest dancers or singers.

### ‘The Magic Flute’ as a voice of eternity...

**T**he Magic Flute' is clearly suitable for audiences of all ages. With an exciting plot, magic, the struggle between good and evil, confrontation of the powers of light and powers of darkness, and love, it has everything to thrill opera fans. It also includes the theme of our human search for meaning and significance.

The latest performance contains references to the history of masonry

and masonic lodge ceremonies, as reflected in its computer-generated sets and stage mechanisms. The idea of masonry is especially distinct at the end of the opera, when the choir appears on stage. According to Nina Lomanovich, the choirmaster, the choir well manages the most complicated tasks. Hartmut Schörghofer, who created sets for three productions of ‘The Magic Flute’ before coming to Belarus, says, “It's so rich; it has so many worlds, and enough creative potential for a hundred stagings. This work by Mozart first made me addicted to opera.” Remarkably, as a teenager, he acted in this opera, performing the part of ‘the third boy’.

Music conductor Manfred Mayrhofer believes that the opera is absolutely perfect and cannot be improved upon.

He tells us, “I love ‘The Magic Flute’. It's so diverse stylistically. For instance, Papageno has bright national colour and is as simple as a folk song; his part matches his image. Pamina and the Queen of the Night are characters of lofty operatic art: representatives of serious opera. Meanwhile, the numerous arias, ensembles and choral pieces make a unified whole.”

Mozart divided his opera into several parts: the unilluminated world, where the Queen of the Night reigns,



SERGEY LUKASHOV



Scene from 'Magic Flute' performance

in the world of the subconscious; the world of Sarastro — bright, sunny, divine, as the world of consciousness and reason; and the 'interim world' — natural, unsophisticated and simple, where bird-catcher Papageno lives, an earthly man who values food, water and simple human joys.

What ideas are promoted in this staging of 'The Magic Flute', this fascinating production, with its impassable forest, its natural wilderness, its giant dragon, as a symbol of living energy, and the sun as a symbol of the conscious? The sun rules the stage in the final scene, when the powers of light, lofty love, and the enlightened human

mind triumph: ideals with which we can all empathise. Some will just enjoy the splendid singing by Belarusian artists, taking the opera as a beautiful fairy-tale. Importantly: the lead parts in 'The Magic Flute' are performed by established Belarusian operatic singers and young artistes.

Director Hans-Joachim Frey, who staged Richard Wagner's 'The Flying Dutchman' in Belarus in 2013, emphasised at the meeting with journalists that, when creating the concept of this famous opera, he drew on modern influences, to be comprehensible to today's audiences. The opera's fairy-tale plot has been translated into the

realm of fantasy, which is so popular today. It is timeless, events unfolding that could occur in any age. Its sets and costumes will strike a note of familiarity with fans of 'The Lord of the Rings' and 'Game of Thrones'.

Goethe admired the deep philosophy of 'The Magic Flute', saying: 'May the obvious delight the majority of viewers, while those who are devoted, figure out the true sense'.

'The Magic Flute' at the Bolshoi Theatre is a joint production by the Brucknerhaus concert hall, in Linz, and the theatre itself: a fairy-tale opera, full of magic and fantasies. It praises the victory of light over dark-

ness, good over evil, love over devilry, friendship over animosity. However, there are deeper, hidden meanings.

This masterpiece, by great Mozart, explores the sacrament of rebirth, of giving up old illusions and habits, dying to be reborn. To find the unity of the soul, and mind, and integrity, a person chooses the way of purification. Led by love, he reaches a place of harmony and integrity.

'The Magic Flute' is also about the victory of consciousness over the subconscious, the exalted over the earthly, and about our search for a path towards understanding of inner self, in its best manifestation. The image of the flute can be interpreted as the call of Eternity to hear your supreme 'self'. I was so happy when, working on this publication, I ran across some thoughts on 'The Magic Flute' which matched my own, in the magazine 'Man without Borders' (<http://www.manwb.ru/>).

After reading the plot cursorily, you feel like dividing the characters of the opera into pairs: 'positive — negative'. Noble and courageous Tamino might pair with chatterbox Papageno, while the hostile forces are led by sage

Sarastro and the insidious Queen of the Night. Meanwhile, we have the Three Ladies who serve the Queen (similar to evil fairies from fairytales) and the Three Geniuses, who look like angels, being messengers of the Temple. However, such a position fails to explain some of the paradoxes of the plot.

The Queen of the Night conspires against the powers of Light, while being the mother of pure-hearted Pamina, who is beloved of Prince Tamino. The magic flute, a wonderful instrument, leads and protects Tamino in his trials, yet is also the Queen's gift. The Queen, surely, is meant to represent more than 'evil'; Mozart has even given her one of the most beautiful and memorable arias of all opera. The Three Ladies are similarly ambiguous, since they rescue the protagonist from the pursuing Dragon and 'heal' Papageno from lies, while helping the Three Geniuses arrange the life of the prince. The High Priest Sarastro, the embodiment of an ideal lord, meanwhile, commits a cruel reprisal against the moor Monostatos, ignoring his attempts to justify himself.

It is also surprising that the Temple guards force Papageno, against his will, into trials with Tamino, although Papageno assures them of his complete indifference to the ambitions of the prince. Such contradictions abound in this opera.

However, all disappear once we survey the characters as symbolic personifications of facets of the human character and qualities of the human soul. Then, we see not a fairy tale but the story of our own inner life, and inner conflicts. Their voices are the ones which whisper in our own ears: of our whims, moods, and desires, sometimes with the piercing voice of duty, reason, and conscience.

The latest performance stars Yuri Gorodetsky, Victor Mendeleyev and Alexander Mikhnyuk (as Tamino), Tatiana Gavrilova, Irina Kuchinskaya and Diana Trifonova (as Pamina), Margarita Levchuk, Yelena Sinyavskaya and Yelena Shvedova (as the Queen of the Night), Andrey Valenti, Dmitry Kapilov, Alexander Keda and Dmitry Trofimuk (as Sarastro), and Andrey Klipo, Sergey Lazarevich and Denis Yantsevich (as Papageno).



Margarita Levchik (Queen of the Night) and Irina Kuchinskaya (Pamina) in the centre



Nina Sharubina (Cavalleria Rusticana) in the role of Santuzza

#### Nina Lomanovich, choirmaster:

'Cavalleria Rusticana' is considered to be one of the most 'choral' operas in the history of music. Pietro Mascagni's choral pieces represent spiritual and folk music. They are melodic, yet diverse rhythmically, in timbre, and in dynamics.

The opera begins with an amazingly beautiful melodic choral prologue, as the Sicilian peasants celebrate nature and love on the day of the great holiday of Easter (Gli aranci olezzano; 'The fruit adorns the trees magnificently'). The prologue is followed by a fast-moving scene: Al-Fio (Il cavallo scalpita; 'The horses are frisking wildly'). The pinnacle of the performance, a powerful, majestic apotheosis, is the Easter service, when Santuzza sings her prayer with the choir (Regina Coeli, 'Queen of Heaven'). This praise of the Lord has tremendous emotional power. Then, the choir performs a scolion with Turiddu: a cheerful song with festive ringing of wine glasses (Viva il vino spumeggiante, 'Long live the glass of gold').

#### Alexander Kostyuchenko, art director:

Tackling famous operatic scores and performing tasks set by the director, the set designer has an interesting opportunity to explore expressive means and stylistic nuances, capturing the imagination of the audience.

More than a hundred years ago, Pietro Mascagni, a verismo composer, created a dramatic work that impressed his contemporaries. Today, theatrical productions all over the world seek to enchant audiences, using a range of memorable, often cinematic, techniques. Our main task is to make the performance relevant and spectacular, tugging at the hearts of modern audiences.

'Cavalleria Rusticana' unfolds in Sicily, during the celebration of Easter. There's a lot of light in the play, our stage allowing us to convey the beauty and purity of the festive morning. At the same time, with the help of scenography tools, we emphasise the tragedy of the relationship between the characters and the events taking place.

Set designers for grand opera have the chance to realise interesting artistic solutions through the synthesis of musical and visual components.

By Mikhailina **Cherkashina**

## A story of love, betrayal and sacrifice

'Cavalleria Rusticana', according to experts, has long been included in the golden operatic repertoire. For more than a hundred years, it has been successfully staged worldwide, telling of universal human passions, of love, betrayal and faithfulness.

#### Mikhail Pandzhavidze, stage director:

'Cavalleria Rusticana' is a wonderful example of verismo (a realistic opera), in both the literary source and in its musical embodiment. Meanwhile, its magnificent music has evoked delight and awe from audiences for many years.

Our performance shows the power of public opinion, that rarely takes into ac-

count the truth and is swayed not by the majority, but by a handful of people. Events taking place in Sicily in the 18th century are transferred to the 1920s, telling of the relationship between man and society, of how 'ancient' wisdom becomes twisted, to form propaganda.

It's a version of the Easter story, about love, betrayal and sacrifice, with a human being at its centre. He protests, seeing the lies and double standards of those who pray, yet commit sin. In order to fight these hypocrisies, we must endeavour to free ourselves of them. However, the main character, Turiddu, like all the other characters, behaves badly, including with Santuzza (who, in turn, trying to keep her beloved, betrays him).

The Italian name 'Cavalleria Rusticana' means 'village chivalry', conveying the idea of conflict, and hinting at the composer's attitude towards public opinion, and double standards in society.

Anatoly Kuznetsov:

# ‘I don’t want to be fashionable, I want to be myself’

More than sixty paintings, created over two decades, have been on show, at the ‘Earth and Heaven’ exhibition, by talented Belarusian artist and teacher Anatoly Kuznetsov. The exhibition opened at the National Art Museum and was accompanied by a presentation of an illustrated album by the same name, prepared for the artist’s 70th birthday and to mark the 40th anniversary of his artistic career.



*Painter Anatoly Kuznetsov was born in 1947, in Russia’s Ust-Kamchatsk. He was a pupil of famous teacher V. Vorobiev at Bryansk’s folk painting studio and then graduated from the Belarusian State Theatre and Art Institute. He is a member of the Nemiga-17 Artistic Association (since 1986) has been involved in abstract painting since 1994. His major series of work include ‘Coloured Spaces’, ‘White Suite’, ‘Vibrations of Light’, ‘Return to Egypt’, ‘A Metaphor of Forgotten Truths’ and ‘The Way’.*

**"A**natoly

Kuznetsov's works affirm that mystery lies at the heart of art, with only the artist them-

selves able to see the hidden harmonies of the world, uncovering them to give us a glimpse of nature's truths," explains Minsk art historian Olga Rybchinskaya. Anatoly Kuznetsov explains things in a slightly different way, saying that he conveys his impressions, associations and feelings on canvas, finding inspiration from watching the world, as it is perceived by his soul, and reborn through art.

In fact, Anatoly Kuznetsov not only conveys his impressions of the outer world, but creates a new world, not known before. His art is absolutely intuitive. "When I approach a clean canvas, I don't yet know what I'll paint. Images are born as I improvise," he admits. Anatoly's works rarely contain fully realistic forms, rather using impressions and abstracts. He has released himself from portraying specific objects and focuses on feelings, thoughts and sentiments.

To discover more about the soul of the artist, we met in his studio, amidst his paintings.

***All your conscious experience has been connected with painting. How did you become an artist?***

Having served in the army, I could choose to study in St. Petersburg or in Moscow, but chose Minsk, thinking it less conservative. My opinion had no real grounds, but I entered university in Minsk and began my studies. My intuitive thoughts about the freedom of creativity were soon confirmed. We had the opportunity to express ourselves. Although our teachers mostly represented the Moscow and St. Petersburg schools, the general atmosphere was different.

***What was so special about the Belarusian artistic school at that time?***



We just had good teachers, who were well-trained. They not only taught us techniques but allowed us, students, to express ourselves. They worked from the heart. There were strict academic constraints but I could improvise, which was precious to me.

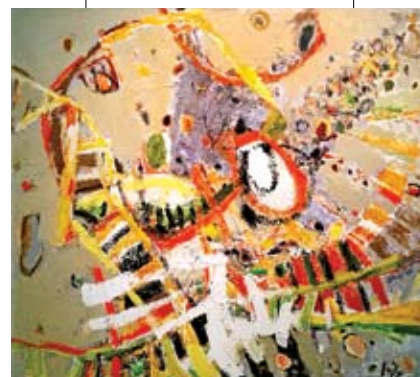
***What prompted you towards seeking artistic freedom?***

I liked colour, and still do. It energises me. Sometimes, it spoils drawings, although the St. Petersburg school denies that. The drawing is thought to be above anything else. It's always been this way: if you're a colourist, your drawing isn't thought to be good. It's a well-known fact. If you use a thick brush and make wide splashes, you'll definitely break the outlines. I wouldn't say that I was a poor painter; I painted as everyone else did. I always had good marks. I rivalled the St. Petersburg school level. My teacher, Piotr Krokholev, would let me go to St. Petersburg; I'd disappear for a week, painting in the city on the River Neva.

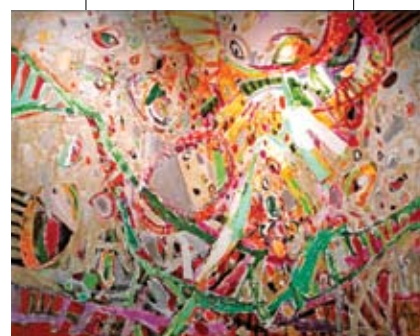
***Why should your teachers have understood you? Piotr Krokholev, a famous Belarusian artist, painted in a different manner.***

No, Krokholev was a colourist too; he understood colour.

***Perhaps, Krokholev and others were colourists, but they were also realists.***



'Protuberances VIII' (2016)



'Protuberances V' (2016)



I was a realist, too. If a peach was velvety, I depicted it as velvety, and pepper was rough. I observed all this.

**Many people are going back to earlier works by Belarusian artists, believing that Belarus had a more professional painting school in the 1960s. They suggest that young painters should take this as their guide. If you compare present paintings with those of your student days, what would your conclusions be? Has there been considerable evolution?**

These two things cannot be compared, because it was a different time.

**These days, you're a non-figurative artist. I suppose that you see this as being more sensible. How would you describe this manner of painting?**

I prepared for quite a long time. While working in the figurative manner, I wanted to release myself from the strict rules of figurativeness. I tried to translate figurativeness into a painted state. Naturally, sooner or later, I would come to abstraction, or, to be precise, to non-figurative painting. What does it mean to me? It means that I got rid of the dictation of theme. I learnt to think subconsciously. I developed a sense of the subconscious, feeling vibrations and connections, through sound and taste. My ears also see. I don't deny colour; on the contrary, I include it. I now use colour in an absolute manner, to show sorrow and joy, feelings and nuances.

**When you're working, do you imagine those who'll view your work,**

**hoping that they'll understand what you're trying to express? Or do you use a subjective approach, writing what's clear to you?**

Honestly, I concentrate on trying to hear myself. Why? If I can find a response within myself, I can try to convey my emotions to others. Not everyone will understand, but one or two will. I have many acquaintances who want to talk on these topics and, when such communication develops, I explain how I want to reach the viewer. In this way, an artist acquires their audience. This happens during personal exhibitions, when an artist is constantly present, appointing meetings and conducting round table discussions... I nearly always do this. In this way, everything becomes clear to those who want to understand me. Those who don't, simply don't come.

**Being in your own niche, do you feel more challenged than other artists?**

Of course, each artist has their own audience. People who prefer to see realistic things see them while those who'd like to see contemporary art arrive in crowds. Sadly, there's almost no abstract painting now; nothing with rhythm or colour. It's been the case for some time in Europe. Artists need to accumulate knowledge through experience, finding their true internal state. I know my inner priorities well: they revolve around colour, which finds expression through rhythm, which is tied into systems and trends.

However, this is another issue. This is an issue of development. You need to avoid idleness, always keeping busy. My periods change and transform but I try to this smoothly, without going from one side to another.

**If we compare the Belarusian pictorial school and the pictorial art of modern Europe, it's apparent that European painters are more often involved in abstract painting.**

This is what I'm talking about. Obviously, we want to be free. However, freedom has a price, and needs to be controlled. There are many talented painters in Belarus and some have been long living in France, Holland and Belgium. People know them and they work wonderfully, in various directions, because they have the necessary level of competence. It's a tradition. We had a perfect school. The ability to create in line with the laws of academic art was brilliant. People still do so: our Belarusian painters.

**Are you talking about the school where even ordinary pupils managed to become professionals? Or are you referring only to bright personalities? How far are the school and personality connected in Belarusian painting?**

Of course, it's a peculiar feature of our pictorial art. We have few personalities. For me, Zoya Litvinova is a personality; she's already a mature artist. She doesn't simply create pictures; she draws the state of the soul. It's priceless. The essence is that she speaks to



her audience. Not everyone does so and many lack deep, internal feelings.

**Many collectors are interested in paintings from the earlier period of Belarusian painters' creativity, from the time when there was almost no avant-garde abstract painting. Where does such interest come from?**

It's simple. That period isn't coming back. This is the answer. The English Museum has long been a museum of totalitarian art, displaying wonderful works. We don't have such a museum yet. Why do people continue to collect Dutch painters and works from the 18th century? Simply because there can be no more such works.

**This testifies to the fact that everything has its season. Will today's contemporary painters receive the same popularity?**

They are already. It's very difficult to speak of benchmarks in art. It's not easy for an ordinary person to see what's good or bad. Training is necessary, as is competence in understanding trends. Without training, we must be guided by intuition.

**When you studied at the Art Institute, was your unique style already developed?**

Of course, your style develops over time, and with experience.

**Did your teachers understand your vision?**

Yes.

**Did some fail to understand?**

I wasn't a dissident. I worked and studied in the regular way. I don't see myself as an avant-garde artist; I'm not turning anything upside down. However, I do feel that I can reveal myself in this direction and say something new.

**What's your attitude towards exhibitions? Are they an event for you? Or are you indifferent?**

No, I'm not indifferent. I organised many shows in the past but, then, fewer people began to attend. I firmly believe an artist needs an exhibition, so they can gain an objective perspective. Your pictures are so close to you, while shows enable them to have a different life. An

artist needs to be able to find their direction, and find how to improve, to become more convincing and active. Exhibitions are important for all artists.

**An artist spends many hours alone in their studio. What do you tend to think about while working?**

I have many thoughts. I often think about giving up (smiling), since it takes so much effort to create something worthwhile. You always want to 'win' and each new canvas offers that opportunity. It takes physical and moral effort to create a picture, and there are often difficult periods, when colours fail to work well or no image comes to the fore. Then, I consider giving up. However, I go to my studio and begin again, working to achieve my targets and 'win'.

**What role do names play in your pictures?**

I place them in cycles. My 'White Suite' portrays my life and began with figurative works. Later, I created 'Coloured Spaces' and 'Vibrations of Light'. My 'Valley of Pharaohs' appeared absolutely unexpectedly, as I never imagined I'd create anything on the Egyptian theme.

**What do the names of these cycles mean?**

The 'White Suite' uses white canvases, delicately depicting the soul



'Protuberances XIII' (2016)



'Protuberances IV' (2016)





and those emotions which can't be explained in words. Why has this cycle of my work endured my whole life? Because there are particular periods when we're mature enough to tackle certain topics; later we can't write anything similar. Time passes and we return to a particular cycle because we're ready again. We all know our shifts in mood, which change from one day to the next. The same happens with art.

***Where an artist works in a realistic manner, they tend to portray events, more or less unambiguously. However, you use only colour, and some other elements. Is this adequate?***

I use rhythms of expression, which strain at the surface, relax, and pass from one state into another. Colours range from warm to cold and back again. It's like a directorship, where the concept of space reigns. I work with this space. What is it, and how is it formed? It's more than points or spots. They move and talk, helping us. Their contact occurs on an intuitive level. The space can be deep and philosophical. There are many spaces and, when they accumulate, it creates a general theme. I have written a cycle of pictures connected

with philosophy of the Chinese philosopher from 3rd century BC, Laozi. He has a work, entitled, 'The Way and Perfection' — a conversation about perfection of human soul. These texts appeal to me and I understand how a person should find himself. My cycle is called 'A Metaphor of Forgotten Truths'.

***If you had time, what would you create?***

I draw a lot of emotional pictures. I often go to lakes and commune with nature. This is close to my heart. I never thought that I'd 'win' on coming to Belarus (Anatoly Kuznetsov was born and spent his childhood in Russia) but it's my place. My 'Memories of Kurosawa' was inspired by my time sitting by a lake, looking at the old reeds, with the snow falling in large flakes. It seemed to hang rather than fall. For some reason, I connected my feelings with Kurosawa, who was a neorealist, working in contrasts. Belarus is my place, where I perceive vibrations connected not only with colours but hearing and my sense of smell.

***Would you perceive such feelings in some other place?***

Local colouring is special. I've been brought up with it.

***I suppose that most of your works come from your imagination, from the inside. Only a few are inspired by an external source. What's foremost among your influences, as an abstract painter?***

It's hard to explain how the brain works, with its nerve effectors, knots and patterns. It's impossible to say why something happens in a particular way, and not another. My eyes find many of my influences, but it's difficult to explain where others come from: life and experience, perhaps. I experience many feelings in a single day and some find materialisation in my work, through my painting of trees, houses and reflections in water. I paint from nature but I try to see what others don't see, what ordinary people don't see at all.

***Are you an optimistic painter?***

I don't think I'm an optimist though I'm positive by nature.

***Do you ever edit your works?***

Of course; I'm very whimsical with colour and work spontaneously. Complex processes take place, and I need to think consciously. I might spend an hour or two without a brush, simply thinking and watching. It's very useful. Being an artist is not a profession: it's a state. You need to know how to communicate with yourself. There's no benefit to being in the public eye. It's a mistake. I don't want to be fashionable. I want to remain myself. I say the same to youngsters: go where your heart calls you. When I studied at Bryansk's folk studio, my first teacher, Victor Vasilievich Vorobiev, told me: 'Painting is a woman who never forgives betrayal.' Once, I was having a crisis and began behaving poorly, from an academic point of view. I suffered for three years and destroyed everything I created. I had to go to my teacher and said: 'Victor Vasilievich, I don't know what to do. I've become lost.' He told me simply: 'Go to the attic and find your first works.' It was in 1979. I returned to Minsk and began to work once more. I found my direction again.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



'Protuberances XII' by Anatoly Kuznetsov, 2016