

MAGAZINE FOR YOU

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# BELARUS

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# ERA OF DIGITAL ECONOMY

INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

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# RECOGNISABILITY IN BROAD SENSE

**S**overeign Belarus is becoming ever more recognisable globally, thanks primarily to its export-oriented economy. Our high-tech goods, such as those made by automobile giant BelAZ, and 'Belarus' tractor enterprise, are famous across many continents but various other goods are also sold under the 'Made in Belarus' brand, enjoying global popularity. Our IT-products are becoming well-established, while the professionalism of our software programmers is becoming renowned.

Our quality is the best recommendation to foreign partners, bringing mutually beneficial cooperation.

Recently, Belarus joined those states who have created space

rock-ets. Meanwhile, with the launch of BelGee Plant, the country has become a fully-fledged participant of the world automobile club, joining such players as the USA, Germany, Japan, France and China.

We've also improved our recognisability as a foreign political power, helping settle the conflict in eastern Ukraine, with Minsk as the negotiating venue, and have demonstrated our readiness to take part in peacekeeping missions.

Belarus is advocating for reduced tension on the European continent, with Minsk voicing its 'Helsinki-2' initiative. European politicians may be cautious but the initiative hasn't gone unnoticed.

This January, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation, António Guterres, presented his 'Making Migration Work for All'

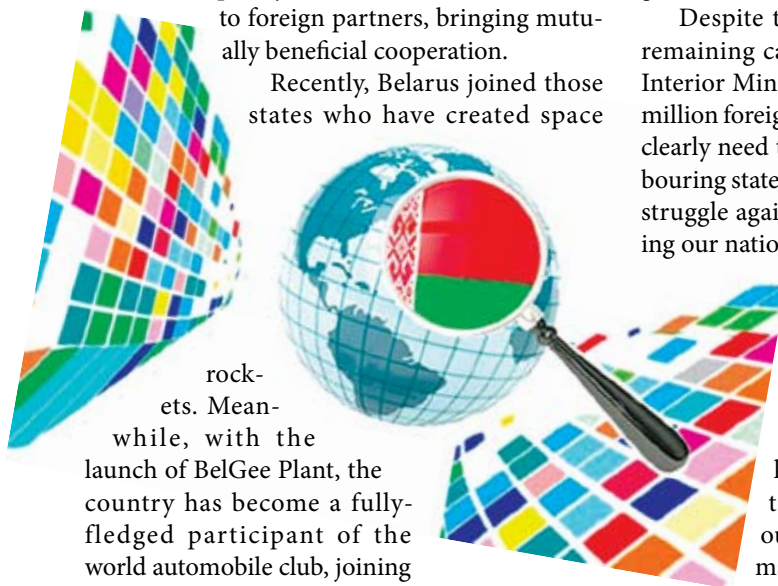
Report. He emphasised the positive aspects of migration, such as stimulation of economic growth, reduction of inequality and strengthening of ties between communities. Migration also helps solve some of the problems relating to an ageing population.

Since 2000, the number of migrants has almost doubled, currently standing at 256 million. Most have moved legally to other countries. According to the UN Secretary-General, the best way to tackle 'stigma' and hostile attitudes towards migrants is to ensure legal paths of migration.

Despite the migration situation in Belarus remaining calm and controllable, according to Interior Ministry data, last year, more than four million foreign citizens arrived in the country. We clearly need to develop partnerships with neighbouring states and international structures, in the struggle against illegal migration, while preparing our national migration policy concept.

Evidently, it's important to take into account the rich experience of the Organisation of United Nations in settling migration problems. This topic is explored in the UN Secretary-General's article, as kindly presented by António Guterres for exclusive publication in our magazine. It's an honour for our magazine, which facilitates Belarus in gaining greater global recognition.

On this topic, Zeynal Hajiyev, who heads the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Mission in the Republic of Belarus, has also given us an interview, which you can read in this issue.





1

## ▶ PLACE WHERE WE WERE BORN

**2018 announced as the Year of Native Land in Belarus**

President Alexander Lukashenko explained that the adoption of this important decision was encouraged by thoughts about the importance of their local Motherland in the destiny of each person.



“Native lands can be different. For some people, it means a hometown, a street, or a small community, a village where they spent the best years of their childhood. For others, it is a piece of wild nature pleasing to the eye and the senses. Belarus itself is the native country for those who have left it to seek their fortunes in other places,” noted the Head of State.

Today, Belarus is a beautiful country with clean comfortable cities, well-kept agricultural lands and rich nature. “The state has done a lot in this respect and plans to do even more. Belarus is our common home, and it is in our interest to make it comfortable so that it becomes an example to follow,” noted Mr. Lukashenko. “Let us show that we are true careful owners of our land. There are many of us, and if every citizen makes a small contribution, our country will become even greater.”

2

## ▶ A SOLID STEP FORWARD

**World Bank: Belarus' economy in 2018-2020 expected to grow by more than 2 percent per year**

From an economic point of view, this promises to be a stable year, outlined in the January report of the World Bank — Global Economic Prospects.

This year, the overall rate of economic growth in Europe and in Central Asia will stand at 2.9 percent. According to the report, Russia has adjusted towards the new level of oil prices and, in line with the forecasts, the growth of its economy will continue and will reach 1.7 percent. The same process in Kazakhstan will be moderate — at the level of 2.6 percent. It's expected that, with the reduction of geopolitical intensity, the economy of Ukraine will become more active: growing from 2 percent in 2017 to 3.5 percent.

Last year, rates of economic growth in Europe and in Central Asia exceeded expectations and reached 3.7 percent against 1.7 in the previous year. According to WB experts, these successes have been reached



after three years of extremely slow growth caused by a sharp drop in oil prices in 2014.

According to the organisation's assessments, in 2018, world GDP will increase to 3.1 percent, but the potential for further growth arouses concern.

3



## ▶ COUNTRY OF WONDERS

**The sincere, though unfamiliar, greeting, 'Welcome to Belarus' was heard for three days in the centre of US business — New York, with our country presenting its tourist potential at one of the world's most prestigious exhibitions, The New York Times Travel Show-2018**

Belarus is known to live by its traditions and for the energy of its sporting spirit. Guests were told about international competitions which will take place in the country in the near future. These include the 2nd European Games in 2019 and within two years — in 2021 — Minsk and Riga will welcome the international stars of the IIHF World Championships.

During the country's promotion at the exhibition, the Sports and Tourism Ministry paid special attention to opportunities given by the five-day visa-free regime for foreigners. Last year, this was used by almost 80,000 people, with the USA being among the top ten countries whose citizens visited Belarus using a visa-free regime. This may explain the enhanced interest taken by American companies in cooperation with the 'country of wonders' as Belarus presented itself in the USA.



**Twelve new ambassadors present their credentials to President of Belarus: from Georgia, Egypt, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Cambodia, Columbia, Cuba, Malaysia, Malta, Nigeria, Tajikistan and Croatia**

# RESPONSIBLE MISSION — TO REINFORCE RELATIONS

**W**elcoming the heads of diplomatic missions, Alexander Lukashenko spoke about the country's openness to constructive interaction with any state. He commented, "Our hearts are always open to partners keen to strengthen relations and expand all-round cooperation. Belarus is a peace-loving European state, promoting security and acting as a venue for settling a range of conflicts in the region. Belarusian proposals on various models of integration, as well as its joint work to counteract modern challenges and threats has earned it increasing support from other countries, as well as from international organisations."

The President outlined Minsk's expectations of interaction with each country represented, noting his desire to see unconditional realisation of the major agreement on socio-economic cooperation until 2026 with Kazakhstan, which was signed during the recent visit of Nursultan Nazarbayev to Minsk. Meanwhile, agreements signed during

the visit of the Tajikistani President, Emomali Rahmon, in late 2017, should drive forward productive dialogue.

Mr. Lukashenko plans to discuss partnership prospects with the Georgian leadership, during a forthcoming visit by the President of Belarus to Tbilisi. Minsk is also interested in developing political, economic, tourist and other ties with Malta and is keen to liaise with businesses in Croatia, to expand trade and investment cooperation. Belarusian-Icelandic trade needs a more balanced character, with focus on bilateral legislation to govern collaboration.

Belarusian enterprises are ready to take part in projects to develop transport and energy infrastructure and mineral extraction in Cambodia, while Mr. Lukashenko stresses the untapped opportunities in Malaysia, where he's keen to see joint economic initiatives set up, and sci-tech and humanitarian ties expanded.

Mr. Lukashenko's visit to Egypt has helped activate partnerships, and he now awaits a return trip from the Egyptian

leadership, believing that it will lead to weighty results.

Activation of trade-economic and humanitarian contacts are his focus for Nigeria, while the Head of State views Cuba as a trustworthy partner. Minsk will continue providing Havana with all-round assistance in promoting its political and economic interests in our region, and Mr. Lukashenko is eager to once more visit Cuba. Minsk is keen to establish production cooperation with Columbia, creating joint ventures to assemble modern automobile, agricultural and other machinery.

The President invited the heads of mission to encourage interaction, with mutually useful results, saying, "Our country is open to new ideas, projects and initiatives. I'm convinced that, as ambassadors, you'll make maximum efforts to achieve positive dynamics in our political and trade-economic contacts. I assure you that you'll find your Belarusian partners ready for fruitful and efficient joint work."

By Dmitry **Kryat**



# BORDER OF SECURITY

## President of Belarus approved decision on the protection of state border in 2018

**T**he decision on the protection of the state border was adopted considering new elements of the situation, including reinforcement of the protection of the EU external border with neighbouring states in connection with the migration crisis, as well as the increased level of terrorist threat in Western Europe and continuing high risk of smuggling of weapons, ammunition, explosives and other means of terror to Belarus. Priority tasks for border state services include the prevention of illegal access by terrorists, extremists and their means of terror, extremist or other criminal activity into Belarus; prevention of illegal movement of smug-

gled cargo and other goods across the border; the fight against illegal migration and drug trafficking; and the improvement of infrastructure at the border and in the frontier territories.

Before signing the decision, Alexander Lukashenko briefly characterised the situation in the border area, saying that, “Border security and the situation at the Belarusian border are the major priorities of the Belarusian state policy. First of all, it is connected with the international situation around Belarus. You know what is going on in the European Union... You’re aware of the situation at our eastern border which we recently discussed, as we reviewed our visa issues with the Russian Federation. The southern border

with Ukraine is under the influence of all the processes that are of concern, first, in Ukraine. As far as the Baltic direction is concerned, we’ve also heard the rhetoric in those countries who describe us (along with Russia) almost as ‘aggressors.’ There are many issues requiring our response, but we must keep our powder dry and do our best to protect our borders just as we have been doing.”

The President doesn’t think that the situation at the border will hardly improve significantly in the nearest future. Therefore, ‘we need to step up efforts to modernise our border infrastructure, create normal conditions for border service, build border outposts and apply cutting-edge technologies in state border protection.’

The President pays attention to an especially important moment. Belarus ensures security at its borders proceeding not only from its own national interests. “Belarus is an island of security on the Eurasian continent. We spend a lot on protecting the state border. We spend large amounts of money preventing all kinds of migrants, bandits, charlatans and criminal groups from reaching Europe and going back to the East. We perform an important international function. But speaking frankly, the international community, particularly Europeans, and Russians at that, could make a more serious financial contribution to our efforts to fight all kinds of trespassers,” emphasised the President.

Figures testify to the intensity of Belarusian transboundary way. Last year, almost 26 million people crossed our boundaries — up more than 3 million compared to the previous period, with increase registered across all directions. However, these are figures which illustrate which partner service is provided by our border guards to their colleagues from the neighbouring states: they detected around 600 border violations within a year. This is 20 percent more than in the previous period. Meanwhile, the growth of withdrawal of narcotic drugs is colossal — 35-fold.

By Denis **Alexandrov**



# IN A RESPECTFUL AND NEIGHBOURLY WAY

**Belarus-EU dialogue has become increasingly dynamic, with Minsk often visited by top ranking representatives of the EU, taking part in constructive negotiations. Alexander Lukashenko's recent meeting with the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Johannes Hahn, was in just this tone.**

**A**

lexander Lukashenko spoke of Minsk's sincere interest in having the EU as a strong partner, saying, "We're ardent supporters of a strong European Union. We're totally against centrifugal forces in the EU, which weaken it. I've no intention to flatter, being a supporter of a multi-polar world. The EU is one of the strongest pillars on our planet, and the destruction of this major pillar of our multi-polar world will lead to the destruction of systems of security, economy, and other spheres of life."

Mr. Lukashenko commented that he has expressed this view openly and honestly to members of the British royal family. Tackling economic interaction with the EU, the President noted the importance of the European Union as Belarus' second most important trade partner.

"In this respect, we're keen to expand our economic ties. I'm thankful to you for the progress we've seen in negotiations for Belarus' joining of the World Trade Organisation."

Belarusian partnership in the Eastern Partnership was also high on the agenda, with Mr. Lukashenko emphasising, "We're focused on cooperation within the framework of this organisation. You can count on us in this regard. Our wish is to make the Eastern Partnership a 'more down-to-earth' and practice-oriented organisation. The Eastern Partnership should address issues topical for Europe and promote projects of vital importance in the energy sector, transport and logistics, as well as those relating to problematic issues affecting public life and visa matters."

Regarding the political dimension of the Eastern Partnership, Mr. Lukashenko said, "Of course, an organisation cannot exist without





Alexander Lukashenko and Johannes Hahn during their meeting in Minsk

politics, but it's inadmissible to turn the Eastern Partnership into an absolutely political organisation. And it's inadmissible to make the Eastern Partnership member states view this belt as a dividing zone between the European Union and Russia, China, and the East."

Mr. Lukashenko assured his guest of Minsk's openness to constructive dialogue and reliability in partnership aspirations. He underlined, "Our country is at the heart of Europe. The geographical centre of the European continent is located near the city of Polotsk, which says a great deal. You can count on us. We'll always remain committed to good-neighbourly relations and are ready to make any contribution to security on the European continent. It's of utmost importance today."

Johannes Hahn thanked Mr. Lukashenko for Minsk's attitude towards European challenges, and not-

ed with optimism, "Over the last few years, the European Union has faced a range of challenges. We've been seriously affected by the international financial-economic crisis, as well as by waves of migration. Moreover,

we're faced with Brexit. However, our structure is based on strong foundations, so the European Union will emerge stronger and more sustainable."

By Denis **Alexandrov**

## REFERENCE

■ **Johannes Hahn met Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei to discuss the negotiation process, and the priorities of Belarus-EU partnership, which will become a 'roadmap' for the development of relations until 2020. He stressed that the EU is eager to strengthen ties and actively supports dialogue with Minsk regarding expanded trade and Belarus' accession to the WTO. The European Commissioner also welcomes measures adopted by the Belarusian Government to create a more comfortable business climate for small and medium-sized enterprises.**

**Belarus' exports to the EU have increased by more than 30 percent, which Mr. Hahn views as demonstrating considerable potential for bilateral economic interaction. Speaking of the EU's interest in strengthening its neighbours' economies, to facilitate peace and stability in the region, he praised Belarus' role in the Eastern Partnership and noted his belief that the country could achieve even more.**

# EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH TRUST

**Special Representative of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly  
for Eastern Europe, Kent Harstedt, visits Minsk, bringing  
meaningful dialogue**



Kent Harstedt:  
*'I must admit  
that I like your  
country and your  
nation'*

**A** whole knot of contradictions is currently evident in the European region, making it imperative that the OSCE leadership and other international structures study all possible solutions for existing problems. Our western partners are especially keen to learn about the position of Minsk which has a deserved status of a donor of regional security. The country has already earned trust, with the President telling his European guest, "Belarus will be a good pillar of support in the centre of Europe for the OSCE. We'll do our best to ensure peace and order in our common European home. Meanwhile, it's essential to take measures as soon as possible to eliminate negative trends

of tension in Europe. We've suggested a variant of the 'Helsinki-2' process so that leading country members of the OSCE can gather at the negotiating table to discuss further how to reduce tension on the European continent. 'Helsinki-2' is clear and understandable and will be a continuation of the process which has begun."

Mr. Harstedt's visit coincided with the middle of the political campaign for election of deputies to local councils, making discussion of improved election legislation pertinent (including OSCE recommendations). Minsk is ready to discuss any ideas and proposals although the President stressed, "Belarus is a sovereign and independent country, just like Sweden, your home country, and we won't tolerate being dictated to or lectured. We're ready to learn from other countries but, just like any other country, we dislike being moralised at. It's a reasonable condition for cooperation."





During the session in 2017

The visit extended beyond the political dimension, discussing not only security but cooperation with the OSCE. Wishing to show the high guest Belarus' investment potential, he received a tour of the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park and the High-Tech Park. Having learnt about the decree on digital economy and about opportunities offered by Belarus to world companies, Mr. Harstedt promised to inform western businessmen about the advantages of working with Minsk.

He underlined, "I like your country and nation. I think Belarus has good prospects to promote various initiatives. As far as 'Helsinki-2' is concerned, particular difficulties exist and there are many ideas on how to launch this process. Many capitals are contemplating this initiative. I'll definitely report to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on this issue," noted Mr. Harstedt.

By Yevgeny **Kononovich**

## POST FACTUM

■ **The Special Representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for Eastern Europe, Kent Harstedt, has praised Belarus' participation in the Assembly's work.**

"The past year was special, since Belarus agreed to host the summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly, which has played a major role within the OSCE PA. Hundreds of parliamentarians, from fifty-six countries, arrived for the session," noted Mr. Harstedt. He added that these people are rather influential and have received a good impression of what's going on in Belarus, which is valuable.

Belarus is taking a more active part in PA work and has

suggested initiatives in various spheres, to tackle the environment, drug dealing and human trafficking. Mr. Harstedt notes that Belarus has seen significant success in this direction.

Mr. Harstedt is convinced that Belarus can become a bridge between the East and the West. Austrian Vienna, Poland and Finland are often referred to in this way. "Undoubtedly, due to the way Belarus has presented itself, particularly, during the Minsk process, we can confidently say that it stands among such states. The territory between the East and the West is huge, so it's necessary to have several linking bridges and Belarus is one of them," Mr. Harstedt asserted.

# CALCULATIONS APPROVED

**2018 started for the country with new budget, signed by President of Belarus**



**S**tate treasury revenue will exceed Br20 billion this year, with fewer expenses than earnings; the Br734 million surplus will be spent on repaying debt. As ever, social policy is allocated the majority of funding, with more money being allocated to education and health than in 2017.

“The main financial document is prepared proceeding from the conservative scenario of economic development,” comments the Chair of the Parliamanta-

***Social policy is main focus for budget expenditure, as ever, with education and health receiving more funding than ever before***

ry Commission on Budget and Finances, Lyudmila Dobrynina. “We already have experience of budget calculation in previous years, which is a starting point of confidence in forming budget revenues. Moreover, our economy is gaining momentum, with GDP and exports are growing.”

Candidate of Economic Sciences Vyacheslav Yaroshevich believes the budget is too conservative against planned economic growth, saying, “From the standpoint of political economy, there’s no surprise: parameters of the kind are applied in states which must fulfil their obligations to creditors. These are lenders who insist on a budget surplus to ensure the return of their funds,” he explains.

Alexander Lukashenko has approved the main directions of monetary policy for 2018. It will retain the strategic focus on price stability, with inflation not exceeding six percent. Taking into account the repayment of Government and National Bank internal and external liabilities in foreign currencies, international reserve assets are likely to stand at least \$6 billion by late 2018.

In addition, the President has signed a Decree ‘On Tasks of Socio-economic Development for 2018’. The Government is to ensure economically sound growth of wages in the country, through creating high-performance jobs.

“Economic growth of 6-7 percent per year should become a benchmark for us,” comments Victor Margelov, the Chairman of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship. “Large enterprises cannot provide such acceleration, while small businesses have enough potential even under modern conditions. However, state assistance is needed. It’s unwise to believe that the free market will solve all problems, ensuring sustainable growth for entrepreneurship. The state needs to systematically stimulate modern, innovative businesses, using well considered targets.”

By Oleg **Bogomazov**



# DIGITALISATION IS CRUCIAL

**'If the 19th century was the age of empire, the 20th century was that of national states, then the 21st century will be the era of the city', notes IBM Vice President on Smarter Cities Gerard Mooney. He refers to the development of the digital economy — a trend which Belarus has been following for more than a year. Continuing stabilisation of the economy facilitates this and opens new opportunities for each of us.**

**W**ith the global economic crisis coming to an end, economic indicators are positive. The UN notes that the world prices for food products have risen to their maximum — good news for our exporters. According to the National Statistical Committee, the gross domestic product of Belarus in 2017 has increased by 2.4 percent — more than it was planned initially. What lies ahead?

Valery Belsky, the Director of the Institute of Economics of the National Academy of Sciences, believes that at the very least, we should expect the tendency for GDP growth to continue.

"Investments in the Belarusian economy are rising, as is consumer demand, labour productivity and the real

incomes of the population. Moreover, the situation has stabilised after a rather complex period in the market of our major trade-economic partner, the Russian Federation. The stabilisation of prices for energy resources on the world market is also an important factor in the growth of the economy and will also facilitate the increase of incomes for Belarusian oil processing facilities."

Belarus' Economy Minister, Vladimir Zinovsky, paints a broader picture at the junction of the current and future five-year plans. His forecasts show last year's record low level of inflation in our country (4.6 percent) isn't the limit. "In an ideal situation, inflation should be 2-3 percent, no more. This will enable us to reduce the refinancing rate and interest rates for loans. It seems to me that we are obliged to reach these figures in 2020-2021."

Alongside the evident slowdown of price growth and enhancement of

availability of loans, this will positively influence the situation in the sphere of employment. For example, the process of the creation of new jobs in the state sector will continue, with a special role played by Decree #8 'On the Development of the Digital Economy'.

"With the adoption of the decree, we've created favourable conditions for the penetration of information technologies into industry, agriculture and the social sphere, and the creation of new business models," explained the Minister.

The most important social areas in the development of the digital economy include healthcare and education, as well as smart homes, mentioned at the beginning of the article. There are few such homes at present and the realisation of these projects are limited: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Vienna, New York, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai. However, in May, it's planned to conduct a digital forum of Eurasian countries in Minsk, aimed at developing various forms of public-private partnership, the harmonisation of national digital markets of the countries of Europe and Asia, as well as the gradual formation of the pan-Eurasian digital market space. Economic stabilisation in combination with digitalisation — isn't this a formula for the promising growth of Belarus?

By Maxim Osipov



# IS THERE LIFE IN CRYPTO-CURRENCIES?

## Mining reaches out

Years ago, young men creating algorithms in their rooms were not popular, now they are the latest thing in crypto currency technology. Initially just for fun, life has now made these programmers 'with bees in their bonnets' some of the most well-to-do people in the world, and Belarus is taking the lead. Our country has become one of the few where it will soon be legal to 'mine' crypto-currencies and even sell them on the stock exchange. In March, the Presidential Decree on the development of the digital economy comes into force.

It's almost as easy to buy an entire technology 'farm' for mining as an ordinary computer. However, one will have to wait for delivery, since the market is currently experiencing a serious deficit and it's almost impossible to find 'mining' equip-

ment. However, it's quite realistic to 'book' a place in a so called 'mining-hotel' — a specialised space where a person can bring their equipment and quietly search for bitcoin. There are those who are trying to bring the expensive equipment into the country illegally, and cases of smuggling of the devices have been already detected at the Belarusian-Polish border. However, the aspiration of Belarusians for crypto-currencies is unlikely to stop anytime soon.

Our businesses are trying not to let the 'hype' take over. Six months ago, one heard of single cases where crypto-currencies were being accepted by some legal entities, likely to be more of a PR stunt than a real business model, now however, the game has moved to a new level, with BelAZ ready to sell its machinery to reliable partners in exchange for bitcoins.



## Advanced farms

Miner Yevgeny Tikhonov and crypto-analyst Moris Polnikov saw 18 months ago that the future belongs to crypto-currencies. Now, they have no doubt at all. “This area is very promising. At present, no other businesses exist that would give such marginality as crypto-currencies: 100, 200 and even 1000 percent. Normal businessmen can hardly take these figures in. For us, everything seemed wildly improbable at the initial stage.”

Yevgeny has technological mining farms. Alongside bitcoins, he also ‘extracts’ Ethereum and Litecoin. He also believes in Belarusian crypto-currency, Taler. “However, it’s difficult to say whether the Taler has a future. Currently around 5,000 people mine it. Nevertheless, everything, including crypto-currency, should have a purpose and function. Now, the market is empty and there’s almost no competition, but the situation may change.”

Even bitcoin is nowadays losing its position, because many large players have appeared on the market. For example, recently, futures for bitcoins have been introduced on the Chicago Stock Exchange. It means that people who don’t have coins can buy them at a fixed price and then ‘work’ for the reduction. Yevgeny Tikhonov warns, “Those who have big wallets know where the market will go. The market can be affected by buying coins and then having 10-fold or 100-fold profit in futures, because a future is a fixed contract.”

## Seasonal factor

Crypto-currency exchanges don’t differ from the usual Foreign exchange market. However, crypto-currencies are subject to seasonality. By summer traders sell them and fix their profit and then buy them in the autumn again at a low price. The peak price growth falls in May and November. It’s also necessary to understand that China occupies a leading position in the crypto-currency market, accounting for 80 percent of mining.

In general, investing in crypto-currencies is very risky, but miners don’t react to these fluctuations. They try to calculate the further growth of exchange rates and hope for their long-term injections. There are two types of investors in this market: those who previously bought at a low rate and those who have come to the currency recently. The first are more inclined to long-term investments and will keep crypto-currency as long as possible. The latter have spent more to appear on the market, so are waiting for a quick return.

Enthusiasts aren’t frightened by the fact that there may come a time when it will become unprofitable to mine, but it’s difficult to calculate when at this point. We don’t know what the rate of the bitcoin or of other currencies will be, how much will be needed to get at least one bitcoin, so Yevgeny and Moris suggest taking profit from the current situation for both ordinary citizens and the country in general.

“This is a market worth trillions of Dollars. Whatever anyone says, people are now mining, and our country can earn from this. How do I see this? Belarus will be engaged in transit. Crypto-currency exchanges at international level already exist and they will start opening branches here. We’ll earn profit by taking a percentage for transactions.”

By Vladislav Kuletsky

***Until January 1st, 2023, individuals are completely exempt from paying taxes on tokens and crypto-currencies, and from activity dealing with mining, purchase (this also refers to donation) or dispossession of tokens for Belarusian Roubles, foreign currency, electronic money or exchange for other tokens***



# CAPITAL WORKS ONLINE

**Increasing numbers of countries are thinking of ways to attract young IT companies or to encourage their own. Belarus is no exception, taking the initiative in this sphere.**

**L**atvia, Estonia and France have introduced start-up visas and it's very easy to move there to develop an IT project. Previously this was done by Ireland, Lithuania and other states. More and more countries are thinking of ways to attract young IT companies or grow their own and we are no exception. At the end of last year, the President signed Decree #7, significantly simplifying life for new businessmen.

Last year, according to Bloomberg's data, European start-ups attracted a record \$19bn of investments, an impressive figure. The popular belief that an investment injection will promote business holds true, including for the high-tech industries. Could Uber have gathered speed without the \$11.5bn injected into it?

Yulia Lokotkova boasts two degrees and considerable experience in marketing and journalism. Today she heads two projects: PingFin — an application which helps control personal finances and Graime — a social network for

street musicians. She is aware of how to launch a start-up with zero injections. "Initially the team on the PingFin project included people such as programmers, a marketing specialist and a web-designer. In general, it's believed that one needs 10-20 thousand US Dol-

loped entrepreneurship policies it's possible to join such structures and receive help. These are not yet developed in our country."

Israel is a good example; it's a true start-up nation and the closest to our model of market formation. Israel is 10

***Companies have grown up in our country which have managed to become world famous. In 2013-2014, Maps.me and Viber successfully appeared on the market, while last year saw the sale of MSQRD to Facebook Corporation. This year, Google purchased Belarusian AlMatter***

lars. However, as a rule, this must come from one's own personal savings," she explains. PingFin is now developing in the Polish accelerator 'Huge Thing'. In such structures, start-ups are supported not only financially, "We are being trained here. This is practical support of innovations in the region at state level. In any country with well-devel-

times smaller than us, but the population is almost the same. It's well educated, especially concerning engineering, mathematics and programming, notes the Director of the Start-up Technology Business Centre, Alexey Shablovsky. "Annually, around 100 Israeli start-ups are sold abroad, while in our country this figure is small. However, the po-





tential is huge. In Israel everything is based on universities, where investors and foundations come to create communities. Our system of education is not geared to business. When we start moving in this direction and money is put into the right areas, I think our country will repeat Israel's experience," said Mr. Shablovsky.

Where will we find the finances? The Belarusian-Russian Venture Fund has been established and there are prospects for cooperation with Chinese investors. Mr. Shablovsky believes it's too early to draw conclusions. "We have many investors who invest into the real sector but there are few who are ready to inject money into 100 projects, with the understanding that only some of these will be successful. It's a completely different level of risk. Big investments — hundreds of thousands or millions of US Dollars — are needed to produce world-level software products and their promotion to western markets."

The start-up movement originated in our country around 5-6 years ago and within this rather short period compa-

nies have grown up which have managed to become world famous. In 2013-2014, Maps.me and Viber successfully appeared on the market, while last year saw the sale of MSQRD to Facebook Corporation. This year, Google purchased Belarusian AlMatter and, according to Mr. Shablovsky, this sale is unique. "Investors who work on international markets have got used to world standards in the sphere of law. We have specific legislation in this area and foreign investors don't want to adjust to it and bear high risks. AlMatter is the first Belarusian company which was sold under Belarusian legislation. I think it's primarily because of the initiative of the team's leader, Yuri Melnichek and it was necessary to make huge adjustments for this."

We know what to work on and we're already taking the first steps. Decree #7 doesn't tackle directly the interests of IT start-ups but it's a powerful impetus for the liberalisation of business initiatives. Today we have 24 business incubators to assist entrepreneurs. Igor Saevets, Director of 'Future with Us' (where today around 50 production and construction

projects are developing), says "The decree will benefit those who are going to open their own business. It was not difficult previously to do this, but now it will become even easier. It's also extremely important to change the practice dealing with vicarious liability. Before the decree much uncertainty was linked to it."

Alexey Shablovsky says that the adoption of the decree is an important step but it's also crucial to see how it will be fulfilled locally, "It's a good signal for business. However, the message of the decree should be broadcast through the whole system of power; then it will start working."

Many IT business issues will be settled in the Decree 'On the Development of the Digital Economy'. Previously key areas have been announced on the attraction of investment funds into the country and the creation of legal conditions for the development of unmanned vehicles and blockchain technology. It promises to be revolutionary and through these changes we have a good chance of building a digital economy.

By Valeria **Gavrusheva**



**António Guterres,  
Secretary-General  
of the United Nations**

This January, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation, António Guterres, presented 'Making Migration Work for All' Report. The UN Head made the accent on positive aspects of migration which, according to him, stimulates economic growth, facilitates the reduction of scales of inequality and strengthens ties between various communities. Moreover, migration helps solve problems, connected with reduction and ageing of population.

António Guterres reminded that since 2000 the number of migrants has almost doubled and currently stands at 256 million people. Most of them legally moved to other countries. According to the UN Secretary-General, the best way to 'cure the stigma' regarding illegals and hostile attitude towards migrants is to ensure legal ways of migration.

This topic is also explored in the article of the UN Secretary-General that was kindly presented by António Guterres for exclusive publication in our magazine.

# TOWARDS A NEW GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION

Migration powers economic growth, reduces inequalities and connects diverse societies. The majority of migrants live and work legally, but migration is also a source of political tension and human tragedy, as a desperate minority risk their lives in the face of discrimination and abuse.

Demographic pressures and the impact of climate change are likely to drive further migration in the years ahead. The global community has a choice. Do we want migration to be a source of prosperity and international solidarity? Or do we want it to be a byword for inhumanity and social friction?

This year, governments will negotiate the first-ever overarching international agreement on migration — the Global Compact on Migration — through the United Nations.

This will not be a formal treaty; nor will it place any binding obligations on states.

Instead, it is an unprecedented opportunity for leaders to counter the pernicious myths surrounding migrants, and lay out a common vision of how to make migration work for all.

This is an urgent task. The recent video of migrants being sold as slaves is evidence of what happens when large-scale migration is not managed effectively.

How can we prevent and end these injustices?

Our thinking should be guided by three fundamental considerations.

Firstly, we must recognise and reinforce the benefits of migration, so often lost in public debate.

Migrants make huge contributions to both their host countries and countries of origin. They take jobs that local workforces cannot fill. Many are innovators and entrepreneurs. Nearly half of all migrants are women, looking for better lives and work opportunities.

Migrants also contribute income to their countries of origin that totalled nearly \$600 billion last year — three times all development aid.

The fundamental challenge is to maximise the benefits of migration while stamping out the abuses that make life hell for a minority of migrants.

Secondly, states need to

strengthen the rule of law underpinning how they manage and protect migrants.

Authorities that erect major obstacles to migration — or restrict migrants' work opportunities — inflict needless economic self-harm and can unintentionally encourage illegal migration.

Aspiring migrants who are denied legal pathways to travel will fall back on irregular methods that may put them in danger and undermine governments' authority.

The best way to end illegality and abuse is for governments to put in place more legal migration pathways. States also need to work together more closely to share the benefits of migration, for example through partnering to identify skills gaps in one country that can be filled by migrants from another.

Thirdly, we need greater international cooperation to protect vulnerable migrants, as well as refugees, and we must re-establish the integrity of the refugee protection regime in line with international law.

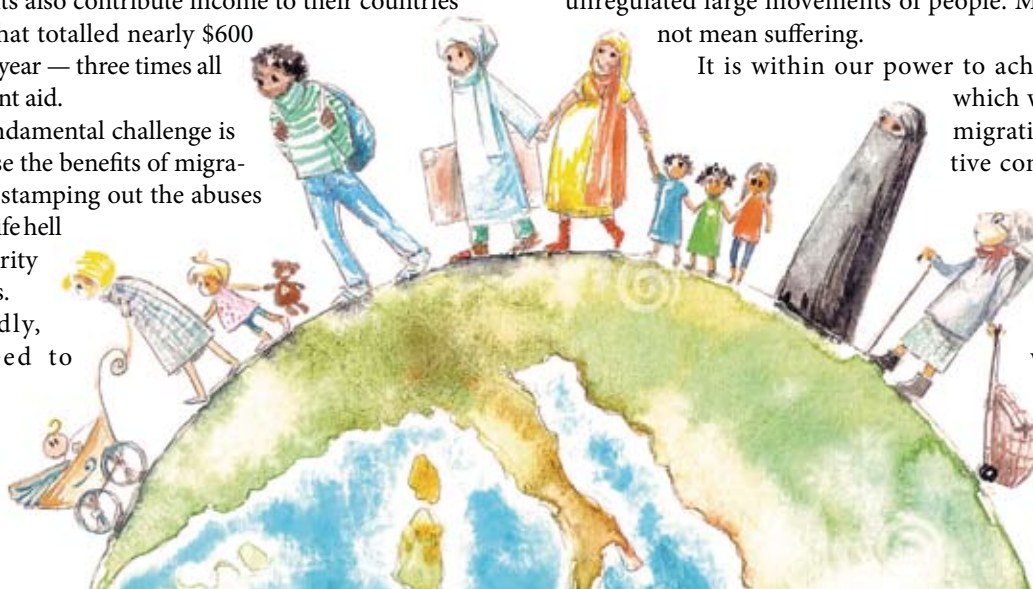
The death of thousands of people attempting to cross seas and deserts is not just a human tragedy. Unregulated mass movements in desperate circumstances fuel a sense that borders are under threat and governments are not in control.

This leads in turn to draconian border controls which undermine our collective values and help perpetuate the tragedies.

We need urgent action for those trapped in transit camps or facing abuse, whether in South America or North Africa. We must envisage ambitious action to resettle people with nowhere to go.

We should also take steps — through development aid, climate change mitigation and conflict prevention — to avoid unregulated large movements of people. Migration should not mean suffering.

It is within our power to achieve a world in which we can celebrate migration and its positive contribution. This year can be a milestone on the road to making migration truly work for all.







**Despite the migration situation in Belarus remaining calm and controllable, according to Interior Ministry data, last year, more than four million foreign citizens arrived in the country.**

**Clearly, we need to develop partnerships with neighbouring states and international structures, in the struggle against illegal migration, as well as having a clear national migration policy concept. We should learn from the rich experience of the Organisation of United Nations in settling migration problems, as was mentioned in the article by the UN Secretary-General. We discussed the same topic with Zeynal Hajiyev, who heads the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Mission in the Republic of Belarus.**



*Can you comment on the UN General Secretary's recent report on migration? What's the IOM position?*

Issues of migration are acute, as never before. Accordingly, almost every nation is working on the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. This aims to facilitate the creation of efficient mechanisms for controlling migration processes, helping protect the rights of migrants and ensuring safe and regulated migration. It will also support the reduction of

forced migration. The report of the UN Secretary-General coincides with this treaty nearing its final stage. The report analyses modern problems connected with migration, while reviewing possible solutions.

Undoubtedly, the IOM — as a leading agency in the sphere of migration — has an important role to play in promoting international discussion of migration. The report tasks governments with creating universal national systems of migration control, on the basis



# MIGRATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF EVERYONE



of the supremacy of law, and underlines the need to maximise the benefits of migration. The IOM praises the adherence expressed in the report, saying that migration should be a question of free choice rather than a necessity. We also support the protection of all rights, without excluding migrants.

In addition, the IOM shares the concern of the UN Secretary-General regarding vulnerable categories of migrants, including those who've suffered from the worsening ecological situa-

tion and unfavourable climate change. We welcome the position expressed in the report, on the need to counteract irregular migration. I must also underline the report's positive stance regarding migration. The issues enumerated in the document are an indispensable part of IOM activity, confirming its desire for cooperation, and encouraging interested partners in facilitating the creation of a truly efficient Global Compact. The IOM aims to provide governments with assistance in meet-

ing their obligations, which we hope will be obligatorily included in the final version of the treaty.

***How do you see the role of Belarus in creating the Global Compact in the sphere of migration?***

Belarus, like other countries, is taking a direct role in creating this document, starting from the very first stage, of national consultations. These are an important instrument, enabling states to form their position, taking into account the opinion of all interested par-





Participants of youth summer camp — Learn. Act. Share — of the IOM X programme 'Stop Trafficking in Persons'

ties. Belarus has become one of the first countries in the region to conduct national consultations on the Global Compact, bringing together representatives of state bodies and institutions, public organisations, international organisations, the business sector, scientific circles and diasporas.

Recommendations elaborated during national consultations have been used to determine priorities and to form the position of the Republic of Belarus regarding the Global Compact — with a view to their use during other stages of the document's development.

***In which spheres does the International Organisation for Migration cooperate with the Belarusian Government?***

Collaboration between the International Organisation for Migration and the Belarusian Government began more than twenty years ago. Areas of IOM activity in a particular country, as a rule, depend on the needs of the state and its socio-political context. These are determined by fundamental principles of migration control, which are reflected

in the IOM document 'Strategic Frames of Migration Control', adopted and approved by IOM member states. This is the first and only document so far approved at international level, determining the conditions for efficient regulation of migration. According to the document, to control migration, three fundamental principles must be followed: adherence towards international standards; the formation of an efficient migration policy via a nationwide approach; and the involvement of as many interested partners as possible.

The implementation of such principles aims to enhance the level of socioeconomic welfare for migrants and for society as a whole, while ensuring safe and ordered migration — based on respect for human dignity (regardless of status).

In Belarus we are, primarily, focused on the development of an efficient national migration policy, simultaneously taking into account both national interests and the rights of migrants. Being a leading migration agency, the IOM is always ready to provide the Government of Belarus with the greatest support.

We're also focusing on the concept of integrated control of borders. Jointly with the State Border and State Customs Committees, we're implementing international technical assistance projects, strengthening border protection, launching an electronic system of pre-arrival information exchange between customs authorities PRINEX, and creating a system of intellectual video control, while sharing accumulated experience.

The settlement of irregular migration issues is also a priority. I'd like to note the forthcoming realisation of a major project connected with rising numbers of irregular migrants. Financed by the European Union, this project is based on an agreement between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union, on readmission, aiming to reduce risks connected with irregular migration, while observing migrants' rights.

Speaking about irregular migration, we should note the problem of human trafficking, the solution of which has been a priority for Belarus for several years. The IOM, jointly with the In-



terior Ministry and other interested parties, is implementing projects to reinforce collaboration in counteracting human trafficking, while creating a national mechanism of redirection of those who have suffered, and provision of assistance to human trafficking victims, to help minimise the social consequences of this evil.

The IOM has praised Belarus' efforts in this sphere, at national and international levels. Last May, the country helped initiate an event to counteract human trafficking, on the sidelines of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Minsk, bringing together leading international experts in one venue. Belarus was an initiator in creating and adopting the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010 and, later, of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking, established to battle this evil at a global level.

Finally, in 2014, thanks to the initiative of Belarus, the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons was established.

Each year, the IOM joins the Interior Ministry of Belarus in organising thematic and information events. One such is the youth summer camp, held under the IOM programme 'Stop Trafficking in Persons', dedicated to the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. This sees participants discuss issues of safe migration with experts, as well as the struggle against human trafficking, gender equality, domestic abuse, HIV/AIDS prevention and other issues. The camp aims to teach young people, enabling them to take part as volunteers or to organise similar thematic events, teaching and involving their peers.

#### ***How do you assess the current migration situation in Belarus?***

It remains calm and controllable. An example was the pro-active position of the state in 2014. The Republic of Belarus had to face a major inflow of migrants from the neighbouring state because of events in eastern Ukraine, and was obliged to adopt prompt measures. A special working party was established, also involving IOM representatives, in order to efficiently determine the needs of migrants from Ukraine and to quickly react to problematic issues.

As far as the 'brain drain' is concerned, Belarus suffers to a lesser degree than some other countries. We're trying to avoid this term, replacing it with 'brain circulation', since many migrants only move abroad temporarily, intending to return enriched with new knowledge and experience, for application in their own country.

The 'inflow of talent' (attracting talent into the country from abroad) can be viewed as a positive of migration.

#### ***Which myths about migration are most prevalent?***

Undoubtedly, various myths exist around migration and migrants. They are seen as being people on low incomes, moving from poorer southern countries to richer northern states. Actually, adult migrants, moving from south to north, account for just 40 percent of the total number of migrants. Around 33 percent of migrants move between southern states, while 22 percent migrate between northern states and 5 percent move from north to south. Movement between developing states is almost the same as movement from developing states to developed countries.

***In Belarus we are, primarily, focused on the development of an efficient national migration policy, simultaneously taking into account both national interests and the rights of migrants. Being a leading migration agency, the IOM is always ready to provide the Government of Belarus with the greatest support***

The International Organisation for Migration monitored trips by the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, aiming to provide direct assistance to Ukrainian citizens in the form of consultations and assistance in the voluntary return to their homeland, and provision of help to enable re-integration.

Another popular myth is that migrants 'steal' jobs from the local population. In reality, it's absolutely the opposite: migration encourages new jobs to appear. Usually, migrants occupy those jobs which seem unattractive to local residents or they open their own business, creating new jobs.



I also often hear that migrants rely on state hand-outs. In fact, the total revenue generated by migrants, going into the state treasury, is considerably more than the amount paid out in state social allowances to migrants. Numerous research in the UK, Canada, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Spain demonstrates that migrants rely on state funds no more or less than local residents.

Another myth is that developed countries are 'overcrowded' and are unable to accept more immigrants. Actually, the native population in most developed states is steadily falling, so migration is essential to maintaining

rather than unpleasant. By the way, this campaign is part of the UN 'Together' initiative.

Another IOM campaign, the Global Migration Film Festival, is part of the same UN initiative, aiming to show the positive side of migration. Cinema and migration are a unique combination which appeared more than a hundred years ago. At that time, film producers — who were often migrants themselves — made films about people constantly on the move, telling their sad, touching and cheerful stories.

The Global Migration Film Festival — launched by the IOM in 2016 — was

The festival is dedicated to International Migrants Day and aims to change negative attitudes towards migrants. Last year, the festival was held from December 5th-18th, screening more than thirty films, in various languages, in a hundred countries. In Belarus, the festival became part of the annual UN-EU 'Human Dignity, Equality and Justice' Film Festival. As part of the event, we showed a film about the interconnection of migration and health, which is one of the most important spheres of IOM activity.

### *Do you call yourself a migrant?*

Yes, I'm also a migrant, as many of us are at some time in our life. I don't face all the difficulties that many migrants do, but I'm familiar with their problems. I've been working for the IOM — a leading global organisation in migration — for more than twenty years. We provide direct assistance to thousands of migrants daily. Many years ago, my relatives were forced to become migrants when they had to leave their native home in Armenia, like hundreds of thousands of ethnic Azerbaijanis, who previously lived there or found shelter in Azerbaijan. This happened back in Soviet times, in 1988.

We can't speak of those difficulties and troubles they had to overcome (and continue to face) without pain in our hearts but, unfortunately, not only forced migrants — or economic migrants — face these difficulties. Searching for a better life, they often find themselves in a difficult situation because of a lack of legal paths of migration, subjecting themselves to illegal border crossings, which risk life and health. We should here cite the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, who says, "I am a migrant but no one expected me to risk my life on a leaky boat or to cross a desert in the back of a truck to find employment outside my country of birth. Safe migration cannot be limited to the global elite." I'm convinced that migration should be safe for everyone calling themselves a migrant.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

Daren, a member of the 'I am a migrant' campaign



the necessary level of population and to ensure enough people of employable age to support the growing number of pensioners.

As you see, the stereotypes we often see in the media don't correspond to reality, while promoting a negative attitude towards migrants and migration. In order to disperse similar myths and negative stereotypes, the IOM conducts awareness campaigns, such as the 'I am a migrant' campaign, aiming to battle xenophobia and negative attitudes towards migration, via migrants telling their personal stories. We'd like to show that migration has an attractive face

developed in the same spirit. The festival screens modern pictures, reflecting the potential and difficulties of migration for those who leave their home in search of a better life, while showing the unique contribution of migrants to the development of new communities. This is, to some extent, a window into the life of people whom we'd hardly learn about without cinematography.

The 1st Global Migration Film Festival took place in 2016, in eighty-nine countries, screening thirteen fiction films and documentaries, as well as around 200 short videos, seen by more than 10,000 spectators.



## ▶ ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN DYATLOVO MAKES FRONT PAGE OF WALL STREET JOURNAL



A photo taken at the Christmas service at the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the Grodno Region's Dyatlovo, has been published on the front cover of the influential US newspaper

Vasily Fedosenko, a photo correspondent for Reuters in Belarus, submitted the photo, taken inside the Baroque-style church, built in 1624-1646. Registered on the State List of Historical and Cultural Treasures of the Republic of Belarus, the church burnt down in 1743, losing almost the entire interior, including the main altar. In 1751, it was reconstructed by architect A. Osinkevich, funded by Duke Mikołaj Radziwiłł. It gained a new façade and the interior was renovated.



## ▶ EASIER TO FOLLOW FOR TOURISTS

A system of special signage for pedestrians made understandable for guests from the Heavenly Empire

New information boards, located in the Upper Town, Troitsky Suburbs, the Railway Station, Yakub Kolas Square, Nemiga Street and Nezavisimosti Avenue, now have information in Chinese. "The work to update these boards is almost complete. It will become easier for guests from China to find their way in the Belarusian capital," notes Director of Minsk Information Tourist Centre, Yelena Plis.

At the end of last year, a section was created on the tourist portal minsktourism.by for Chinese tourists, where they can find all the necessary information about the sights of Minsk and the visa-free regime and watch a video clip about the city. In addition, advertising materials in Chinese have been published and excursions for tourist groups from China can be conducted only by certified excursion guides.

2018 was announced as the Year of Tourism in China, with both sides aiming to cooperate in this area. For the first time, the tourist potential of Minsk is to be presented at the tourism expo in Shanghai.

## ▶ FOR THOSE KEEN ON CHINESE LANGUAGE

Belarusian State University releases textbook on learning Chinese script

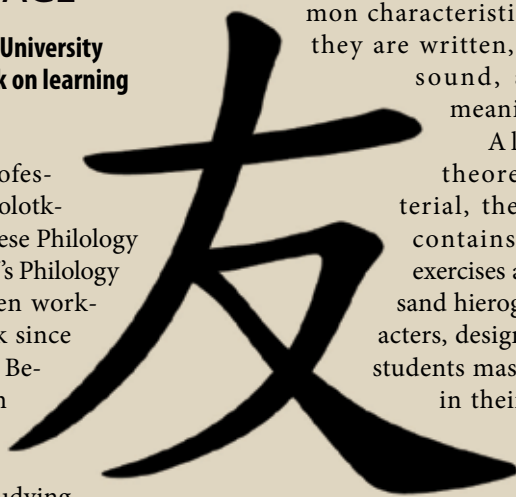
Associate Professor Yulia Molotkova, of the Chinese Philology Chair at the BSU's Philology Faculty, has been working on her book since 2010. Unique in Belarus, it draws on scientific experiments in the sphere of studying Chinese script, as conducted while teaching basic courses at the BSU's Faculty of Philology.

Ms. Molotkova has looked at the linguistic peculiarities of the

system, as well as psychological patterns in learning, developing an efficient teaching method, based on characters having common characteristics: in how they are written, how they sound, and their meaning.

Alongside theoretical material, the textbook contains practical exercises and a thousand hieroglyph-characters, designed to help students master writing in their first year of study. The textbook is aimed at

linguists, Chinese language teachers, students and Master's Degree students, as well as all interested in learning Chinese language.



# PUTTING ON WHEELS

With the launch of BelGee Plant, near Borisov, Belarus has become a fully-fledged member of the world automobile club

EVGENY KOLCHEV





**B**elarus recently joined the club of states producing their own passenger vehicles, following in its tradition of manufacturing quarry trucks, buses and tractors. Without exaggeration, Belarusian power engineering is famous worldwide. We're also among the international leaders for sales of dairy goods. With the launch of the BelGee Plant, near Borisov, Belarus has become a fully-fledged member of the world automobile club, joining solid players, such as the USA, Germany, Japan, France and China.

Elegant hybrids and compact sedan vehicles are being manufactured at the joint Belarusian-Chinese enterprise. Initially, up to 60,000 vehicles will be manufactured annually, with production later doubling. Automatic and manual gearboxes are planned, with engines meeting EURO-5 ecological standards. The flagship Atlas SUV model has a four-cylinder 'non-turbocharged engine' (2 and 2.4 litres) which has been developed with technical assistance from Volvo (now owned by Geely). With up to 150HP, it's enough to satisfy any urge for speed. Meanwhile, Bavarian robots (as used at the Porsche plant in Germany) are welding the auto bodies. Painting technologies have been borrowed from Volvo, also fully automated.

If even a single screw isn't sufficiently tightened, the system won't allow the vehicle to proceed to the next section of production, as BelGee's Assistant Director for Technical Parts, Cheng Wen'an, stresses. He notes the quality of his company's vehicles, saying, "Our equipment has been adjusted to produce three models of automobiles without resetting. Personnel have passed an internship in China, of full-cycle training,

allowing them to work at any automobile factory, worldwide."

Industry Minister Vitaly Vovk tells us, "With the launch of passenger vehicle production, the Belarusian economy is gaining a powerful engine, driving forward various other branches. Each machine building job generates around seven to twelve more, in other branches."

The Geely Atlas NL3 should be priced from about Br34,000: comparable with Russian-made rivals and cheaper than EU analogues. However, the flagship business class sedan Emgrand GT is launching at an incredibly low price for its segment.

Thirty percent of components for BelGee are locally produced, including the accumulator, tyres, discs, seats, and exhaust and brake systems. Within a year, more than half of the components will be produced locally, with local servicing also ensured.

Slovakian experience is useful here. The collapse of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic brought the end to vehicle manufacturing. However, thanks to new investment, this modestly populated country, of just 5.5 million citizens, now produces more than one million vehicles annually: via Volkswagen, Kia Motors and PSA Peugeot Citroen.

Of course, to manufacture a high-quality product is only half the battle; finding a market is just as challenging. Customers now expect five year warranties on their purchases and a network of service stations. BelGee boasts these, plus its own design bureau, helping in the popularity of its new models. A flexible payment system will also go a long way to ensure sales.

Sergey Varivoda, an expert in the sphere of automobile markets, notes that some may wonder at drivers choosing a Chinese car, since China isn't famed for its quality in this sphere. However, these days, most cars are manufactured to identical specifications, so you're really only paying for a name with certain companies. He adds, "A system of loan terms and automobile leasing is needed, as is a programme for the exchange of

***With the appearance of passenger car production, the Belarusian economy has received another powerful engine, driving forward other branches***

old vehicles for new by Geely (trade-in). Large families could have their first car purchase subsidised, and there could be tax privileges for buyers of domestically-produced automobiles, e.g. a tax deduction during the calculation of income tax."

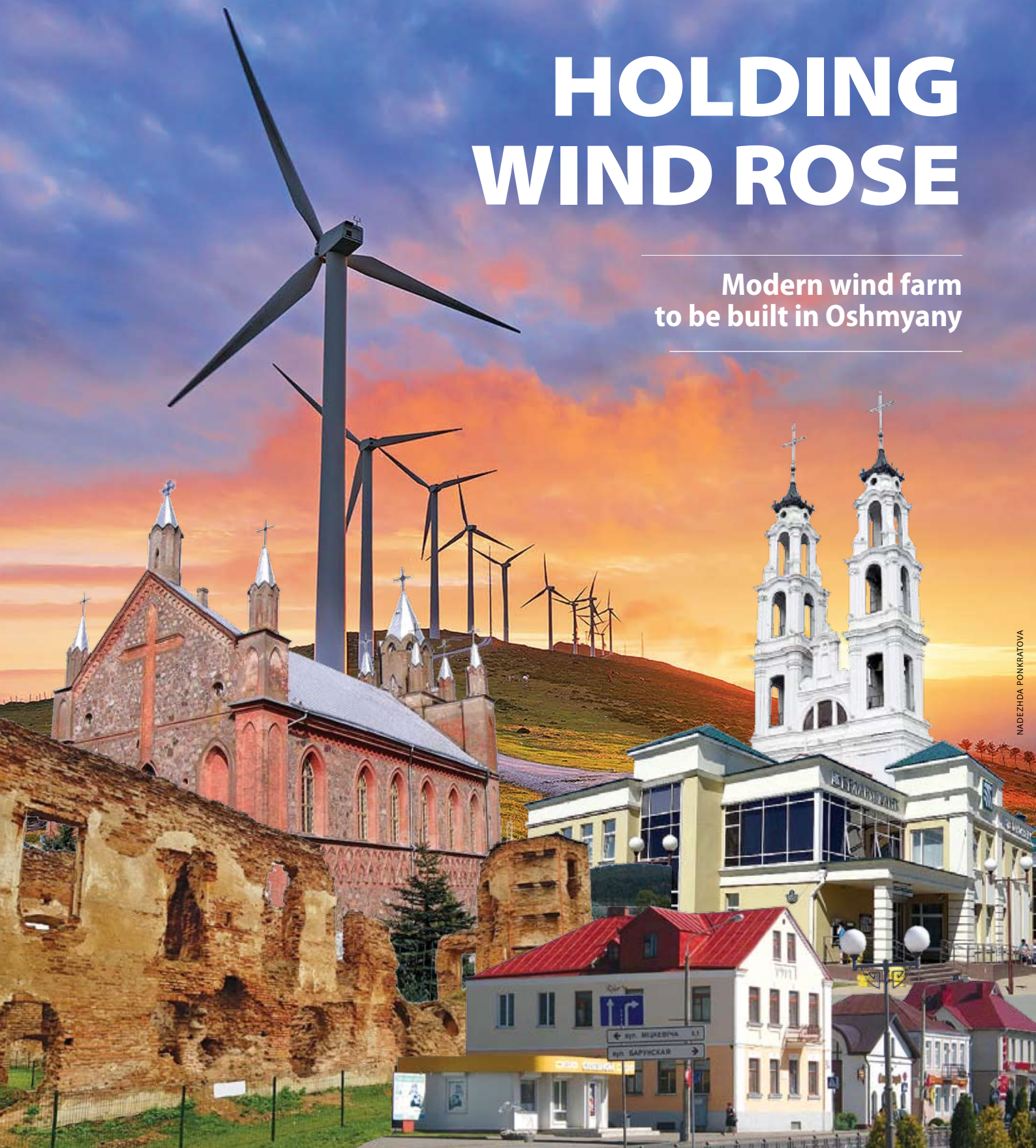
Around fifteen instruments of automobile industry support exist worldwide, with loans the most efficient and most popular route. Half of Russian passenger car buyers this year will use a programme of budgetary support, aimed at stimulating demand. 'The First Automobile', 'A Family Automobile', 'The Russian Farmer', 'The Russian Tractor Truck' and 'One's Own Business' are among these schemes, with the first two aimed at individuals and the others at corporate purchases. These measures have helped push Russian Lada into the lead on the domestic market, so why shouldn't Geely repeat this success...

By Yevgeny **Kononov**



# HOLDING WIND ROSE

Modern wind farm  
to be built in Oshmyany



NADEZHDA PONKRATOVA

**T**

he historical centres of Olshany and Zhuprany remain the most significant points of attraction in the Oshmyany District. Proximity to the Lithuanian border mean that a transport and logistics centre is being built at the Kamenny Log checkpoint, launching by May. Another major investment project is the wind park, whose construction might launch this year, since Oshmyany enjoys good breezes.

## Development path

The backbone of the Oshmyany District's economy is based on nine industrial enterprises, a large construction organisation, eight communal agricultural enterprises and twenty-four farms. These provide jobs, wages and quality of life.

District heads are convinced that the social sphere must be guarded, to ensure well-being. In this respect, the area has many reasons for pride: in 2017, a new outpatient clinic was built in Golshany. The maternity ward's repairs are almost complete and Golshany school of arts has been updated, as has kindergarten #6 and school #1. In addition, a modern gym has opened for the elderly.

Last year, a sixty-apartment house was built in Oshmyany and forty-five large families will soon move in. In 2018, another significant, thirty-apartment social housing site is planned for the city, constructed using a Chinese loan, to provide housing for child-orphans and families

with disabled children. Some apartments will find use as commercial premises.

## Matter for young

Over 300 specialists return to the district annually, with the two main cities inhabited mostly by young families — indicating that young people have faith in finding employment in Oshmyany. There are currently two hundred vacancies in the district and only one hundred jobseekers. Jobs range from factory workers and shop assistants to confectioners! Importantly, on-the-job training is widely offered.

Some might think that young people find it boring to live in a remote area, where they may lack nightclubs, but the local house of culture organises events, and a club of intellectual games has opened not far from the district centre. A centre of traditional

cultures is to open soon, with the site also boasting a 3D-cinema, bowling and other novelties.

Golshany Castle remains the centre of attraction for tourists, with the northern tower, which is on the reserve list of the joint Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian programme, being renovated. However, residents of the Oshmyany District try to give each corner of their land special colour. For example, a stone is being unveiled in Zhuprany; according to legend, Napoleon is said to have waved farewell to his army on that spot. The grave of Frantisek Bogushevich and the surrounded grounds have also been improved.

In July 2017, a boulder in the Bride's Stone Park joined the State List of Intangible Historical and Cultural Heritage. It's a tradition to touch the stone before marriage, to ensure a long and happy family life.

## IN DETAIL

### Miroslav Sarosek, Chairman of the Oshmyany District Executive Committee:

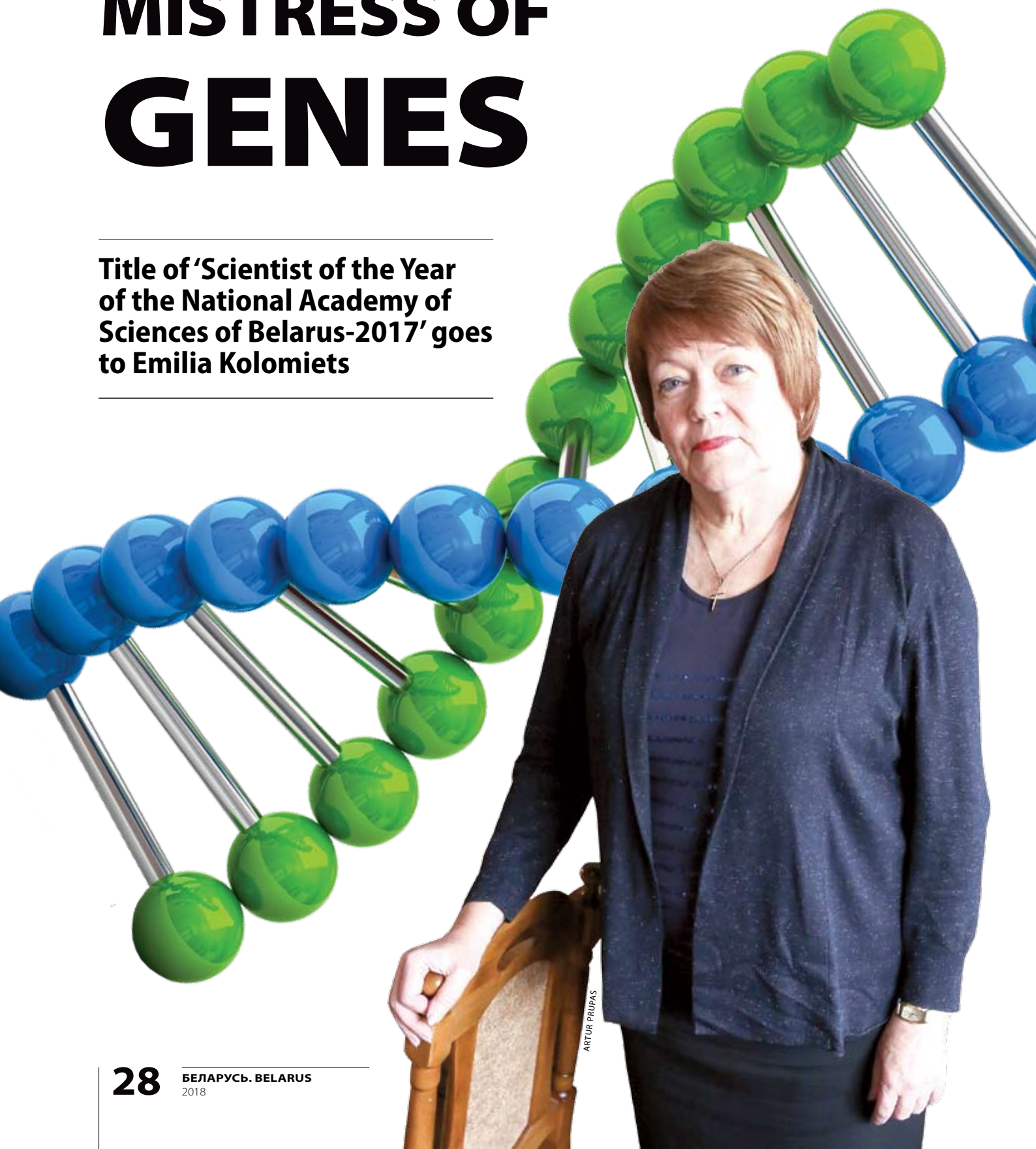
*How should the district develop? Of course, we see our transit potential, with the launch of a transport and logistics centre. This project will bring other opportunities, with land available to purchase, and roadside facilities being updated. A number of our enterprises are looking for strategic partners, including some projects in agriculture seeking investors. We're now negotiating with Polish, Lithuanian and, even, Arab businessmen.*





# CHARMING MISTRESS OF GENES

Title of 'Scientist of the Year  
of the National Academy of  
Sciences of Belarus-2017' goes  
to Emilia Kolomiets



ARTUR PRUPAS



**T**he National Academy of Sciences has named Emilia Kolomiets as the Scientist of the Year. She is a member of the Academy, Head of the Institute of Microbiology and the General Director of the Chemical Synthesis and Biotechnology Scientific-Production Association. The honorary title was awarded for the first time, symbolising the launch of a new tradition: to recognise the most significant person on the eve of the Day of Belarusian Science (celebrated on the last Sunday of January). The name of Emilia Kolomiets will open this new page of national science. She's deserving of the title, being not only a great scientist and organiser, but also possessing a charming personality. She is encouraging to others and strongly committed to the development of the biotechnology industry.

The figures speak for themselves: in the last five years, over \$4m of biotechnological products have been sold; all have been produced based on the Institute of Microbiology's developments. The key idea is that microbial biotechnology can help with problems previously solved using only chemistry; furthermore, it produces nothing harmful to the environment. Among the Institute's developments are uniquely efficient bio-pesticides (able to enrich the soil and fight pathogens), microbial fertilisers improving ecology, probiotics for animal husbandry and fish farming (interestingly, a popular food additive for fish is named Emilin), enzymes used to produce the anticancer drugs Leicladin and Fludarabel, as well as those to make an express-analysis of blood glucose... All these and many other developments are based on a strong scientific school. The Centre of Analytical and Genetic Engineering Studies, established at the Institute on Ms. Kolomiets' initiative, as well as several production facilities, make it possible to bring ideas into practice. Unsurprisingly, the Institute has shown the best indicators of socio-economic development among scientific organisations on many occasions.

The past year was full of events for the Institute of Microbiology. It won a grant in China and gained an opportunity to work with Chinese researchers. Moreover, the laboratory, led by Ms. Kolomiets, was included in the scientific top-10 of 2017. Among the important milestones was the launch of facilities to produce enzymes and dry forms of probiotic preparations, opening the way to the Turkish market.

The awards ceremony took place on January 26th at the National Library, during the National Assembly of Scientific Community dedicated to the Day of Belarusian Science. Many



SEERGEY LOZUK

Opening of lactoferrin production line

other awards were then presented to distinguished scholars. In addition, a major exhibition of sci-tech achievements was organised to welcome visitors at the open-air exhibition square in front of the library and also inside the building: 270 advanced developments were on show. Among them were examples of

#### Emilia Kolomiets describes her emotions on receiving the award:

*"I feel sort of 'not quite here'. It's almost impossible to prepare yourself for such a moment. I think we have many great scientists and it's a hard decision to name someone as the best. Of course, this is a reason for joy. Everyone at our Institute celebrates this award. After all, this is recognition of all our team."*

new machinery designed by MTZ, Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant and Minsk Automobile Works. In addition, the possibilities of additive technologies and an office super-computer (included on the list of the top ten major scientific achievements) were on show. To ensure the effective promotion of developments into production, the Academy of Sciences is considering the possibility of launching the Akademtekhnohrad Technopark.

By Yulia **Vasilieva**



# EXPERIMENTS FOR THE SAKE OF LIFE

January was marked by numerous events dedicated to the Day of Belarusian Science. One of the most important took place at the National Library, which hosted an exhibition of Belarusian most vital scientific-technical and innovative achievements, gathering the scientific community for a conference on 'Science in an Intellectual Economy'. The Academy of Sciences presented over eighty new developments and technologies across seven priority avenues of development: 'IT-Country: Social Artificial Intelligence'; 'Electronics'; 'Nano-industry and Additive Technologies'; 'Chemical and Biological Technologies'; 'Medicine'; 'Industrial Technologies and New Materials'; and 'Humanities'.

Among five hundred representatives of the scientific elite was academician Vladimir Kulchitsky, the Deputy Director for Research at the Institute of Physiology, at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

**L**ast December, he received his honorary title, on the eve of the Second Congress of Scientists, which was hosted by Minsk. Having chatted with 'Belarus' Magazine (issue No. 12) he agreed to give us more detail

on stem cells, explaining how Belarusian scientists and physicians are already using them in treatments. Mr. Kulchitsky talks to us about keeping in shape, the mysteries of the human brain, the Institute's affairs and work at the neurophysiology laboratory.

*Mr. Kulchitsky, what's your impression of the meeting between scientists at the National Library and the exhibition itself?*

Great! Believe me, I felt a sense of pride for my colleagues. After all, the achievements of Belarusian scientists are a source of pride not just for Belarus alone. Owing to their research and developments, new production and entire branches of the national economy are being created, while unique information and medical technologies are being launched and issues of food safety are being solved. To enhance the

prestige of scientific activity, a well-thought-out system of support for talented young people has been prepared, with salaries improved and conditions for research and creativity ensured. As you know, science drives a strong and prosperous state in our dynamic modern world.

***How do you keep yourself on good creative form?***

I've been working on my physical and creative health since my youth. I regularly spent my 'scientific vacations' at the country's leading scientific research institutes — to conduct research, prepare publications and find information for my thesis papers. Even now, I spend some of my holidays in a laboratory, working with unique equipment. In recent times, we've worked with Moscow's Institute of Aviation and Space Medicine, which is headed by one of the founders of space biology and medicine, academician Oleg Gazenko. They have unique centrifuges and analytical equipment, allowing for sophisticated research. We've been liaising with French scientists while working on a joint project simulating microgravity. We also often meet Russian colleagues, to exchange experience.

***Where do you spend the rest of your vacation?***

I'm fond of mountain hiking, though not climbing, which I think is too dangerous. With like-minded people, we quickly 'mastered' the Caucasus and even climbed Elbrus. Afterwards, we turned to the legendary Fan Mountains which, for various reasons, are difficult to access now.

***Poet Yuri Vizbor wrote: 'I left my heart in the Fan Mountains...'***

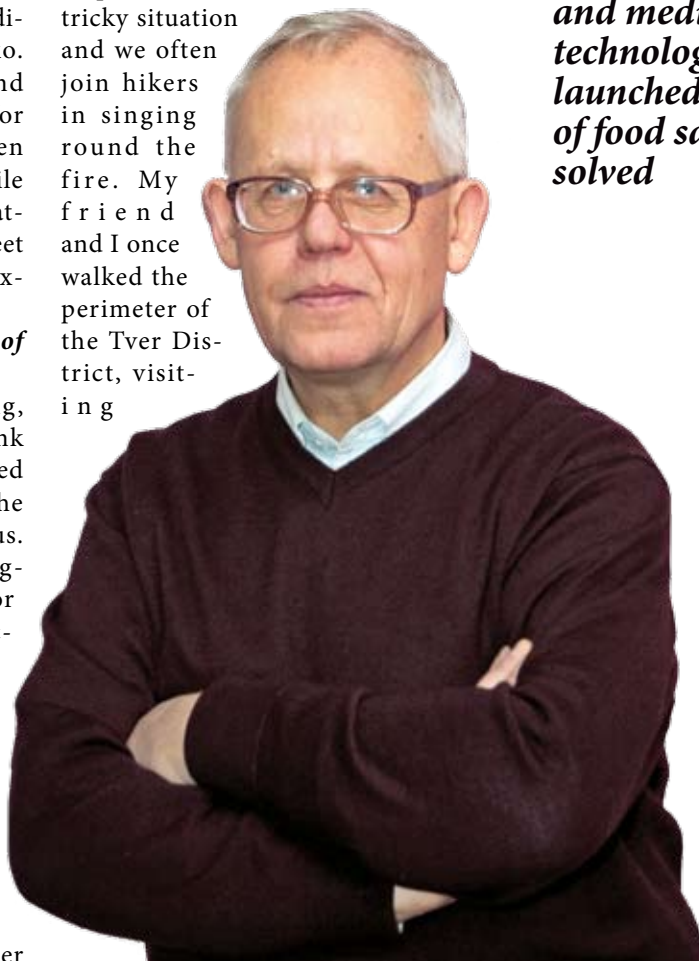
True. I've studied them, joined by my oldest son after he'd graduated from school. He was keen to go, having seen me return tanned from my trips, as if from another planet. He'll remember

that Fan climb all his life. He tells his own children about it: his daughter is three and his son is twelve. This is the impression it left on him! We took a fourth category route and both passed. He now realises how important it is to treat every detail of life seriously, to avoid mistakes. Even a minor mistake at the scientific laboratory can produce a false result, while mistakes in medical practice can be fatal. I'm glad to have passed on my life experience to my son.

***Many well-known scholars and academicians have been mountaineers.***

I've met quite a few, forging friendships with some that have led to my visiting their laboratories, to see their experiments. We are a unique brotherhood of like-minded persons. Guys from Novosibirsk once helped us out of a

tricky situation and we often join hikers in singing round the fire. My friend and I once walked the perimeter of the Tver District, visiting



***Achievements of Belarusian scientists are a source of pride not just for Belarus alone. Owing to their research and developments, new production and entire branches of the national economy are being created, while unique information and medical technologies are being launched and issues of food safety are being solved***





Human brain is a complex system

monasteries near Lake Seliger and the Volga River basin.

***It's a famous lake: the Volga starts there and, if I'm not mistaken, our Belarusian Dvina as well.***

Yes, it's great there. We travelled on foot first, and then took a boat, spending nights on islands. My son, Stas, and my friend's son, Fiodor, joined us, making a team of seven. We visited the Volga basin, where there's a nice summer house, and we took many pictures. We took three photos in which we appeared to be stepping over the Volga but none were printable as the film became over-exposed. However, other photos came out well. Everyone had a camera, but each photo came out in the same way, as if some supernatural force had intervened.

***The Volga is said to be a holy river...***

Absolutely. We understand this and will never forget our trip.

***It's important to pay attention, isn't it?***

True. There are some interesting coincidences in life.

***Some say that our brain is a great mystery and we shouldn't try***

***to understand all its corners: that some should remain secret...***

All areas of the brain are connected by a single neural network. However, if you imagine this network as being like the Moscow metro system, you'll understand that there can sometimes be a 'lull', without trains running. It doesn't mean that the subway is out of action though. A similar situation can be observed in the brain, with areas showing minimal activity at times.

***Like a Belarusian swamp, which might seem stagnant but hides activity beneath the surface.***

This is a great comparison. In the 'Herodotus Sea' region, complex biological processes have been taking place for centuries, like the social processes of the Slavs' formation. If neurons aren't active, it doesn't mean that the cells have died. Hidden processes may continue, even in a single cell. Corresponding member Yuri Shanko said that one of the most powerful laptops is needed to simulate a bit of one neuron — or the information it processes. Other specialists agree. However, this is

simply one neuron while we have billions of them; some think there are 100 or 200 billion of them...

Communication between neurons is the key. What can one neuron or one person do alone? Perhaps not much, but everything changes when they unite and work together, in various combinations. Each brain is unique, with sections like the night sky, its nervous system a maze of stars, able to adapt to any situation. Just as we cannot cross the same river twice, the brain is never the same from one moment to the next. Combinations of neurons connect in different ways continually, as we think. This is what creates new hypotheses, poems and symphonies.

***How do these connections differ when thinking negative or positive thoughts?***

In fact, positive thoughts can arouse a negative response in the neuron network, with conflicts emerging as a result.

***What are you working on at present?***

We're investigating neural networks: seeing why they break down, which brings major problems and diseases. We need to improve the efficiency of those sections of networks which remain: something always remains from those billions of cells. Even if there are fewer soldiers as a result of fighting, they still need to continue struggling. Replacing functions is important, through pharmacotherapy, physiotherapy, cell therapy and other methods. Our path involves rehabilitation through natural methods. Scientists used to assume that stem cells would generate nerve and glial cells. There are more glial cells in the brain (in comparison to neurons) and their role in the operation of neural networks is still being clarified. Stem cells are found not only in the brain but in each organ. They're needed for tissue repair following damage, trauma or inflammation. We grow from

a single cell (following the merging of egg and sperm DNA), with this being the basis for all other organ and tissue growth, creating a whole organism. Stem cells can differ from the 'original', with those of the brain and heart being unique, but some are universal. Through evolution, cells become 'accustomed' to growing to meet a certain organ's needs.

***As we say, there's no place like home.***

Our brain stem cells exist from birth to death, forming new neural networks when they need to remember something. The brain sometimes lack storage space — like a computer — so that more cells are needed, which can be grown in the hippocampus. We can do this all our lives, except where certain damage has been sustained, such as in the sad case of famous racing driver Michael Schumacher, whose brain injury prevents him from forming those new networks, and retaining his memories long-term.

***Tell us more.***

Brain function can return even after major trauma, as happened to Marshal Kutuzov, who was twice wounded in the head. Two Turkish bullets hit almost in the same place and shattered an optic nerve. He suffered frontal lobe contusion (where the youngest parts of the brain govern intelligence) but was able to recover, and went on to become one of the most talented army commanders in history. We know him as Napoleon, whose military tactics were second to none.

***Does an injured brain react differently?***

We can argue for hours but the facts are undisputable: one person may recover and not another. We're looking for ways of helping stem cells work more efficiently, with quantity perhaps enhancing quality. We have methods to increase the number of stem cells, growing them from bone marrow, such as in the treatment of

leukaemia, as conducted at the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Paediatric Oncology, Haematology and Immunology, headed by corresponding member Olga Aleinikova.

***What's happening at the Laboratory of Molecular Cell Biology, led by Igor Volotovskiy, at the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering?***

Under the guidance of academician Igor Volotovskiy, the Centre of Technologies has been established at Belarus' NAS. Jointly, we've been working within the Union State programme on stem cells, alongside academician Sergey Cherenkevich (from the Belarusian State University) and corresponding member Yuri Shanko (of the Health Ministry's Centre of Neurology and Neurosurgery).

Each member has focused on a particular aspect. We've been involved in restoring neural networks while academician Volotovskiy has focused on many other cutting-edge areas. A suspension of stem cells is injected into the bloodstream but can be lost in five litres of blood, making it difficult for them to find their way to the brain. They also need to overcome the tissue barriers which exist in each organ and, especially, in the brain (there, 'watchmen' cells ensure that 'outsiders' don't penetrate). Some stem cells still manage to enter the brain, helping recovery of brain function. However, doctors wish to achieve greater treatment efficiency.

Another method, which must be administered within five to seven days of brain trauma, involves an additional craniotomy, with cells in-

troduced through a burr hole to the damaged site.

***Is this stressful for the patient?***

The burr hole needs to be opened and closed; having cerebrospinal fluid injected is far from pleasant, so Belarus and other countries are developing alternative methods. One such has been tested at an experimental neurophysiology laboratory, under the Institute of Physiology of Belarus' NAS. We simply introduce a suspension of stem cells into the sub-mucosa of the nasal cavity, from where stem cells migrate along the fibril olfactory nerve to the cranial

***Each brain is unique, with sections like the night sky, its nervous system a maze of stars, able to adapt to any situation. Just as we cannot cross the same river twice, the brain is never the same from one moment to the next***

cavity. On reaching the brain, they head to the damaged section — as 'envisaged' by the natural evolution process. Stem cells govern the work of neurons in the injured area and help blood flow and transformation of stem cells into nerve and glial cells. In this way, the destroyed neurons network is restored.

***Do we simply need to drop stem cells into the nose?***

It's not so simple. We tested on mice for several years, which helped us understand the process. Only after completing all legal documents and an official order from the Belarusian Health Ministry, did neurosurgeon and corresponding member Yuri Shanko implant the first stem cells into the nasal cavity of a patient

who'd suffered a stroke, at Minsk's Emergency Hospital.

Sixteen patients have now received similar treatment, leaving hospital in a state that inspires us to be hopeful regarding these new technologies. We, scientists, were lucky to assist Professor Shanko during those operations. A fragment of fat tissue taken from the patient's paraumbilical area is sent to certified specialists in cell technologies. BelMAPO runs a laboratory, where Dr. Marina Zafanskaya cultivates around 10 million mesenchymal stem cells from the sample. These can be introduced into the submucosa of the nasal cavity five to seven days after cultivation.

The operation isn't difficult but is held under anaesthesia. The cell suspension is injected under the mucous membrane of the nose into the base of the skull, with the process repeated weekly, up to five or six times.

***In which cases are such operations conducted?***

In cases of brain injury or stroke.

***Is the process of injection viewable on a monitor?***

Yes, of course: this isn't done by touch. An endoscope is used so that neurosurgeons can see the position of the needle, while controlling possible bleeding and performing cell injection.

***Your operations seem more efficient and cost-effective than transplantation, making the latter redundant. We need only inject stem cells***

***and they'll restore the necessary organ or its damaged section?***

Oleg [Rummo — a specialist in transplantology] isn't yet redundant. We need him to transplant fragments or whole organs. Our work uses endogenous stem cells to help the patient restore destroyed neural networks. Specialists collect stem cells from the fatty tissue, which the neurosur-

geon injects into the patient's nasal cavity; the organism recognises the cells as its own, so there's no risk of unwanted growth, or rejection. We know that stem cells differ, just as

blood groups do, as doctors discovered during early blood transfusions, which were followed by shock and death.

***Tell us about growing cartilaginous tissue for joints, which is a topical problem today. Do we yet have an alternative to joint replacement?***

Scientists and doctors are working on this. Stem cells do work on cartilage tissue, so we're hopeful.

***Does the body remember how its healthy joints looked?***

A joint is formed when we move, since we are in motion most of the time, even when lying prone. Our movements may be passive or active but they enable injected stem cells to reform lost fragments, such as a periosteum.

***Can you tell us of any interesting cases?***

We have a video shot two years ago by Professor Shanko, during an



***Stem cells are found not only in the brain but in each organ. They're needed for tissue repair following damage, trauma or inflammation***





operation on a woman aged 22, who had a brain tumour. She was almost completely immobilised, able only to walk briefly, with her mother's support. She couldn't stay upright without assistance and her left side was paralysed. Doctors tried various treatments without success, so she was placed on the list for injection of stem cells. It took a week to prepare a cell suspension, followed by three injections under the mucous membrane of her nasal cavity (once weekly), injecting 8 million cells each time.

Following those three procedures, she can stand and walk without assistance. It's miraculous, as we agree. We've conducted sixteen stage-by-stage operations, with sixteen patients, using intranasal injection of stem cells to help treat trauma or stroke. Cell technologies are best used in combination with traditional

methods rather than in isolation, as international experience agrees.

***How do stem cells reach the brain?***

They migrate, moving independently. We simply plant them at the starting point of their route — like taking climbers to a valley amidst mountains by helicopter, for them to continue their path. Stem cells produce fascinating amoeba-like movements, as are clearly visible under the microscope. We've recorded them, moving one after another, like a chain.

***Ants sometimes move in a similar fashion***

This is true. Olfactory stem cells are drawn into the cavity, naturally replacing each other after two or three weeks — or, sometimes, a week. It's a wonderful mechanism, with so many cells grown by an organism throughout its life. Olfactory cells replace in the same way, though we don't notice it. We believe that they 'repair' where necessary, so if we irritate a certain area in the nasal cavity with a saline solution, it inspires the patient's olfactory stem cells to come to the 'rescue'. Next year, my graduate student will defend her thesis on the subject. Many experiments have been conducted under the slogan 'don't do harm'.

***Are similar experiments occurring elsewhere in the world?***

Being modest, we can say that we're keeping up with others. We aren't lagging behind for sure. Belarus has penetrated the applied sphere, giving specific assistance to patients. Our Health Ministry actively supports Academy of Science staff, and new innovations are the result. Yulia Stukach's thesis investigates trauma in various locations within animals' skulls, studying where and how stem cells are move. When they reach the affected area, a luminosity appears, like a sun halo. It's very beautiful. Depending on the location of the injury, various cranial nerves should be used as the main path for the movement of stem cells to the 'scene'. We're the first to study this aspect, and have been published internationally.

***Are foreign scientists interested in our Belarusian developments?***

Of course! We've been invited to European countries to report on the subject, and have twice lectured in Berlin and Belgrade. Our student, Alexandra, was invited to London but the trip fell through. Various students are working with us, but we'll talk about this another time.

Interviewed by  
Ivan and Valentina **Zhdanovich**



In the neurophysiology laboratory of the Physiology Institute, at the NAS of Belarus

Brilliant Chinese expert  
Sergey Filonov admits to  
missing his native  
language



# HARMONY OF SOUL

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**Sergey Filonov, from Belarusian Baranovichi, among world's top Chinese language experts**

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**B**orn in Baranovichy during Soviet times, Sergey Filonov was a romantic, loving reading. From early childhood, he was interested in China, which led him on his path to becoming one of the best sinologists worldwide — being able to read ancient Chinese books as easily as if they were in native Belarusian.

## Chinese hot water

Mr. Filonov tells us, “Our city is unique. Polesie is very close and the flavour of western Belarus is also present. It’s an interesting cultural and human cocktail.” His mother was a school teacher and his father worked as an aeronautical engineer, while Sergey also had two elder sisters and a brother. The family lived in a simple cottage, drinking well water but, importantly, Sergey had a love for books, which were an inexhaustible source of discovery. He often listened to the radio, including the ‘Theatre by Microphone’ programme, entranced by the dramatic broadcasts.

Sergey was fascinated by mysterious China. It was the late 1960s, when the Damansky Island events were in full swing and USSR-China relations were extremely poor. At that time, his sister gave him a book about ancient China which he learnt almost by heart. One day, Sergey decided to write to a publishing house, addressing a message of joy and hope to brilliant orientalist Igor Lisevich, author of the famous ‘Literary Thought of China at the Turn of Antiquity and Middle Ages’. Mr. Lisevich replied with a warm letter of support.

In 1983, Sergey entered the Oriental Faculty of Leningrad University, easily mastering the complex language of ancient Chinese books. The relationship between the Soviet Union and China unexpectedly warmed during the Perestroika years and, in 1986, Mr. Filonov went to Beijing for a language internship, as part of the first group of Soviet students. “We were plunged into a different, magical

world. I remember that Chinese students lived very modestly, so that a cup of hot water was a real treat!” he recollects.

## Celestial wisdom

After graduating, Sergey settled in Blagoveshchensk, which offered great opportunities for studying the language, culture and literature of China, having many Chinese residents. “It’s situated just 700 miles from China, so native speakers are common;

you just need to talk to them and learn,” Sergey explains.

He spent the first years of his career in the Far East, working for a company specialising in foreign trade. China became Sergey’s second home. He crossed the border almost daily, so that he was obliged to renew his passport several times a year. Eventually, he decided to return to academia, lecturing at Amur University. He defended his thesis and doctoral paper, becoming a professor in the Department of Chinese Studies, noting, “It takes true courage to devote the best part of your life to studying one of the most difficult languages in the world.”

Mr. Filonov lives with his wife and daughter in a simple apartment, having no car or country house. He possesses dozens of rare dictionaries, which help him unveil the secret mysteries of the Chinese language and this great civilisation’s ancient wisdom. He travels to Minsk every holiday, where he enjoys treating himself to potato pancakes. “True pancakes can only be cooked from Belarusian potatoes!” he asserts. “The potato has the taste of the land.”

This brilliant connoisseur of the Chinese language and complex texts from the days of Taoism admits to missing speaking his native language. “On coming to Belarus, I start breathing a different air. Even when travelling by train and cross-

ing the Russian-Belarusian border, I can feel my native air,” he says. In Belarus, Mr. Filonov loves to listen to the local radio, which makes him feel calm and brings wisdom. His father and numerous relatives still live in Belarus, and Mr. Filonov is convinced that the Belarusian language was created to talk about peace. “Its melody was born to speak about something good — as we can see from those sitting round the negotiating tables,” he smiles.

*My soul finds true peace  
and harmony only  
in my native Belarus.  
Everything is soothing;  
even the forests are  
healing*

## Language of peace

Mr. Filonov recently won a rare grant from Taiwan University, and will be travelling to Taipei to study the Taoist idea of life after death, for several months. Knowing China’s language, way of life, traditions and mentality, he feels comfortable there, and still enjoys studying their wisdom and unique philosophy of life.

“However,” he underlines, sipping his iced tea, “My soul finds true peace and harmony only in my native Belarus. Everything is soothing; even the forests are healing. Leaves rustle under foot, making a peaceful sound.” Having devoted his life to the study of the language and literature of one of the most enigmatic countries in the world, he comments, “Belarusian language is like the rustling of leaves in Polesie: quiet and peaceful, broken only by the slight crackle of twigs.”

After his Taiwanese trip, he plans a holiday, with half spent in the land where he heard his first lullaby and where his sister gave him a book about wise China, many years ago...

By Alexander **Yaroshenko**



# HEALTH IN OUR HANDS

**Candidate of geological-mineralogical sciences Nikolay Ignatenko recommends traditional folk medicine to secure our health**



**P**eople like Nikolay are sometimes called eccentric, for advocating alternative treatments to traditional medicine. However, he has a very normal family life, being a great husband and father to three daughters. The older two are married, while young Darena — of whom he is especially proud — sings wonderfully and shall soon graduate from the Arts College's Pop Music Department.

Nikolay has built a cottage not far from Minsk, planting a large fruit orchard. Lately, he's been taking his grandson to kindergarten. The lad is living with Nikolay and his wife while his older sister (in her second year at school) recuperates from illness.

I can't help but think that Nikolay's alternative way of thinking is advan-

tageous. His research has convinced him of the benefits of self-massage in achieving good health, as detailed in his 300-page book, which is filled with techniques and an explanation of his philosophy, rooted in a belief that our body will naturally self-regulate.

**Valentina:** I've known Nikolay since our youth. As a bachelor, he worked at the Academy of Sciences of Belarus and visited us with his guitar. We used to talk until dawn, singing songs he'd composed with Yuri Vizbor, as well as those by popular singers. During his student years at the Belarusian State University's Chemistry Department, he was an active member of the KVN (the Club for the Lightheaded and Quick Witted). He used to go searching for Napoleon's treasure and also visited Perm's 'abnormal' zone, with UFO-logists. He hoped to find a yeti in Kazakhstan's

Dzungarian Ala Tau, went collecting moomiyo and researched a bear hole. Nikolay travelled to the Carpathians, the Southern Urals, the Caucasus, Altai and Tianshan, Kamchatka and Sayan... As a candidate for the Master of Sports in tourism, he visited many places but his passion for mountains surpasses all others.

Radim Goretsky, who then headed the Academy of Sciences' Institute of Geochemistry and Geophysics, used to be embarrassed when Nikolay requested yet another trip (at his own expense) to, for example, the Lugansk Region's Verkhny Kondryuchy, where the wife of well-known healthy-lifestyle supporter Porfiry Ivanov lived. Nikolay wanted to see how his recovery system worked. After his return, telling the amazing story of the trip, we were impressed. We began bathing in cold water and even walked bare foot in the winter snow.

He told us about Shambhala and Agni Yoga, showing us reprints of some of her books, which we copied by hand. Nikolay was very keen on going to the Himalayas and, in 1995, began preparing for a climbing trip, planning to shoot a film about Belarusian mountaineers. To train, he ran for up to 30km daily. Sponsors funded the trip. We joked about him seeing the Shambhala's holy teachers but Nikolay laughed, saying, 'It's unlikely, due to my sins'.

He took part in boxing while studying at Minsk's school #101 and once took a severe beating from hooligans in Minsk's Grushevka District. Nikolay realised then how important it was to avoid arrogance — no matter how high you may fly. That was probably why he gave up on the idea of going to the Himalayas: his friends told him that it would be better to send the money to orphanages, which he took notice of. He decided that it was for the best.

In February 2004, she also conquered South America's highest peak.

**Ivan:** Nikolay speaks of his parents, who were chemists, with enthusiasm and respect, calling his father 'my guardian angel'. Ivan, who's now 89, nursed Nikolay after his beating, when he damaged his spine. He also rewrote his book on yoga, to ensure he had all exercises for the spine close to hand. Nikolay wouldn't have recovered were it not for asanas [yoga postures] and his father's massage. As Nikolay admits, his father is no fakir or magician: he's a self-massage specialist. He learnt self-massage techniques from his father, seeing that he never sat idle, always flexing an arm or an elbow. His father didn't just stroke the body but placed deep pressure on the muscles, to improve blood circulation. Many of the techniques described in Nikolay's book are those used by his father, Ivan.

**Nikolay:** These exercises look simple but I've personally seen much benefit from them. What's the secret? Everyone knows that simple self-massage techniques produce a profound effect on the immune, endocrine and autonomic nervous systems. Moreover, your internal reserves are activated. Through self-massage, you improve circulation. Anyone who masters these techniques can heal themselves.

If someone asks for help, I first study the problem. I palpate the abdomen and paravertebral (the paravertebral zone). I look at how symmetrical the pelvis is with the spine, and perform some other actions, then chat with the person seeking advice. I clarify their complaints, asking such questions as 'Does your right hand sometimes feel numb?', 'Are you tortured by headaches?' or 'Do you suffer from a nagging pain in the region of the heart?' Some ask if I'm a spirit-healer. They may come complaining of back pain but the above-mentioned symptoms may also be present.

Everything is interconnected in the body. I often manage to rid people not only of back problems but of other unpleasant symptoms. In my 'Self-Massage' book, I mention Vika, aged 38, who suffered from several chronic diseases, including infertility. She consulted eight specialists but only after a course of massage managed to unravel the tangle. She's now healthy and in stable remission, giving birth to a healthy girl at 39. That was about 12 years ago but there have been other cases. It's sometimes difficult to believe in 'miracles' but those suffering become tired of consulting domestic and foreign professors and taking the most advanced drugs.

My patients are often 'shocked' when I start speaking about their health problems simply by seeing how they walk, sit or take off their clothes. They wonder how I manage to tell them everything without ultrasound, surveys and analyses. I know, sometimes, without asking any questions; I diagnose them by my

*Simple methods  
of self-massage  
greatly  
influence  
human health,  
activating  
body's internal  
reserves*

He would have followed in the footsteps of famous Belarusian mountaineer Irina Vyalkova. She spent thirteen hours on a ledge at 8,000m in the Himalayas, with frostbitten feet. She lacked enough daylight to return to the camp. Nikolay shot a film about her after Irina's return from the Himalayas. She went on to conquer Northern America's highest peak: McKinley.

Nikolay recommends his father's exercises. Jointly with Valentina, I'm doing one regularly in the morning: the 'cradle'. It's extremely simple. You throw your legs over your head while lying on the floor, putting them as close to the floor as possible and then returning them forward. Around 10-20 repetitions are needed. Importantly, you mustn't be lazy.



Nikolay Ignatenko consults reflexologist Valery Molostov (right) on delicate issues of anatomy and physiology



IVAN ZHDANOVICH



own methods and then tell them the problem. After such conclusions, I often hear: ‘You are a psychic medium!’ Actually, I’m not. I use no voodoo, ESP or mysticism. It’s just knowledge, experience and practice. My basic principle is that nothing is incidental; everything is interconnected in the human body. I sometimes tell my patients, “Aren’t you tired of painting over the cracks in the walls of your house? Find a way to strengthen the foundations and then the walls won’t crack.”

I help reinforce those foundations. Imagine a person whose pelvis has shifted to the right and upwards. I’ve had many cases of the kind and know the accompanying problems: increased pressure, pain in the right knee, heartburn and bitterness in the mouth, and so on...

A single shift uncovers a whole bunch of problems. I must repeat, this isn’t psychic practice but — I repeat — knowledge and experience. Just imagine how many special doctors you might consult! Modern medicine is not without its pitfalls and shortcomings.

What exactly do I do? First of all, I restore the symmetry of pelvic and internal organs and, later, work with the vegetative nervous system. Afterwards, the body begins to heal, and the bouquet of disease recedes. It’s like a slippery road,

when a car skids into a ditch: you need to drag it out and then the driver — if he’s fit enough — will drive on. Why do we sometimes ‘leave the road’? Reasons vary but they’re always followed by consequences. I repeat: everything is interconnected. This is the basis of my approach to health problems and the basic concept for understanding how to act in any given situation.

When I find a problem, I act accordingly. I apply various techniques, such as acupuncture, osteopathy (craniosacral), visceral and vibration. These are only words for some but each method has its own truth. I didn’t invent them: I’ve simply collected them, mastering what has been researched and tested by others for over forty years. My ‘medical and health-arsenal’ contains the centuries-old experience of our grandparents, which comes from old Slavic healing practices — including the experience of my grandmother, who treated people.

I understand that you have a logical question about my medical education. The actions of any physician are governed by protocols and regulations in our modern times. If they prescribe drugs, they must follow certain rules. My methods of assisting people arouse questions among doctors, who are sceptical and distrusting. However, results speak for themselves. The Chinese have

a saying: a cat’s colour doesn’t matter, as long as it can catch mice. Sometimes, I work with a sceptical doctor for around twenty minutes. At the end of it, he can hardly believe what I’ve achieved, without a diploma! I once met a famous doctor of medicine in Moscow, who asked me to show him what I could do. His voice was full of challenge and arrogance. However, after I’d demonstrated my abilities, we began to speak differently and he admitted that those who boast diplomas, awards and foreign certificates can often do nothing in reality. We quickly found a common language and still cooperate. He doesn’t care that I lack medical education. Hundreds of thousands of people have received real help from me. Actually, I’m a candidate of geological-mineralogical sciences, also having a Belarusian diploma as a massager therapist. I also have two Russian diplomas; according to one, I’m a master of the Russian Academy of Manual Doctors. Our grandparents were known as healers but had no university education. Some could read only by syllables yet were great at healing others. Of course, in our modern times, medical education is mandatory to treat people. With this in mind, I’m in constant contact with doctors.

A doctor might analyse blood before my work and afterwards and see



changes immediately. 'He's a psychic!' some say, but it's not true: I'm a materialistic practical specialist.

Among my friends is Valery Molosotov — a famous reflexologist and an author of over thirty books. Previously, he was also sceptical — calling my ideas 'old wives' tales'. However, he later personally experienced the results. We have to recognise the obvious! Valery hasn't simply changed his mind regarding my work; he's applying my techniques in treating patients. I also sometimes consult him on delicate questions of anatomy and physiology. We're like colleagues. Even acupuncture specialists have studied from me. Last May, Moscow experts invited me to write a book for Russian doctors. It's such a good development! If we manage to combine centuries-old experience, from our traditional folk medicine, with the experience of modern medicine, this will benefit all.

If any reader is eager to learn more deeply about my methods of treatment, they can read my 'Self-Massage' book, which has the fundamentals

— the concept, as scientists say. It's easy to understand, being designed for everyone. Sadly, sometimes, only the disease can teach you, but I know that people do try to help themselves with my book, achieving good results. I know, for example, a doctor of the highest category who has rid himself of spinal hernia. He's among those who — like me — have studied the work of famous chiropractor, Alexander Golovey, from Kobrin. A ten-minute YouTube video is available to show you more.

It was professionally made. I was invited onto a TV show, where they recorded everything, and it was later posted on the Internet by the cosmonauts with whom I worked in Moscow. I'm mentioned there as 'osteopath Nikolay Ignatenko' but I'm far from being an

osteopath. At the end of the video, the scenes of working with children show their parents speaking about the problems I've treated. Doctors are sometimes doubtful, saying that the video is a beautifully shot falsehood, but I assure them that this is a real documentary, not fiction. I've kept the original video footage, from which scenes were cut, so anyone can watch it with their own eyes. The patients whose health is recovering are completely convinced.

I call my method EIC: everything is interconnected. It should be more widely introduced into medical practice. I'm strongly convinced! It's a whole system of diagnostics and treatment, avoiding expensive drugs and equipment. We use self-medication without pills, activating our inner pharmacy to help our previously oppressed and unbalanced immune, endocrine and vegetative nervous systems regain their effective functioning. It would be great to collect data and evidence from people — including from previously infer-

Symptoms will then recede. It's nothing new; it's as old as our world!

I want to clarify. We're not suggesting closing all pharmacies and pharmaceutical facilities. The EIC method must occupy its own niche within medical services: a niche which has always existed. I remember when chiropractor Alexander Golovey was working in Kobrin (he now lives and works in the USA). Dozens of people gathered daily in front of his house: up to thirty or forty patients, who'd found him by word of mouth. This shows that there were results. If you have musculoskeletal pains — in the waist or the cervical spine, or arthritis pain in the joints of your hands or feet — then our meeting can be useful. Doctors sometimes, privately, advise their patients to consult 'chiropractors' or 'old women'. Actually, I'd be very interested to know whether someone else treats thorns in the feet and heel spurs effectively. I've developed a treatment, which takes around a week to remove them.

***It's much easier to maintain health than to struggle against illness; don't forget this, or be complacent***



tile women giving birth. This is a very strong argument! I've no doubt that, over time, interest in this traditional 'folk' medicine, without expensive drugs, equipment or pills, will rise.

We all know our folk traditions, but many seem to have forgotten how they've helped people survive since ancient times, since the days of mammoths! What sort of pills and powder were used then? Mineral and herbal remedies. Doctors now often agree that we should treat not the disease but the whole person, identifying the reason behind the illness, and dealing with that.

Can I help everytime? Alas, it doesn't always depend on me, so I never make promises. However, it's reasonable to try if you suffer from internal organ problems: gastritis, colitis, dysbacteriosis, prostatitis, gynaecological problems, headaches, dizziness and so on.

I'm always searching. This is my path. Those interested in the topic can read my book. Moreover, I often give recommendations on how to recover from certain diseases. People then take action themselves, aiming for good health.

By Ivan and Valentina **Zhdanovich**



# MARKA CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN ITS REPUTATION

## Originality of Belarusian art miniatures recognised at international competitions

**S**urprisingly, neither the development of the Internet, nor the emergence of e-mail and dozens of instant messaging systems have completely stopped the sending of letters on paper. Furthermore, people's

interest in stamp collecting is not fading. Many of these artistic miniatures are real masterpieces which represent the history and culture of the country. Irina Shipilova — the Head of Marka Publishing Centre (which has received a special award from the President for its signifi-

cant contribution to the preservation of our spiritual heritage and for the creation of highly artistic stamps dedicated to the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book printing and the 135th birthday of Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas) — discloses the secrets of stamp making.



Ms. Shipilova, postage stamps are a small window into our country. While traveling around the world, it introduces foreigners to Belarusian history and culture, flora and fauna. What is the first thing to consider when developing new designs?

As is traditional, stamps perform several functions. Firstly, they are used as a payment for postage. Secondly, they act as a collectible. Third, as you've mentioned, stamps are an expressive means of displaying significant events in the history of a state, a means of propaganda of its cultural heritage and natural attractions. Postal administrations of different countries try to produce stamps as attractive, expressive and rich in content as possible. These criteria are also used by the Art Council of the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation of Belarus when developing thematic plans for the release of postage stamps. These plans are prepared 1-2 years before the start of the planned production period. The production of state postage stamps is preceded by a great deal of preparatory work collecting information and proposals from state agencies, public organisations and individuals. The most significant ideas are selected and around 50 blocks of Belarusian artistic stamps are released annually.

***In Soviet times, virtually every family collected postage stamps. Are there many devotees of this hobby at present?***

A postage stamp is not a very old invention. However, it has revolutionised the work and development of the post. Since 1840, postage stamps have travelled a path from simple means of postal payment to artistic miniatures with a variety of complex post-print improvements.

With the advent of the first postage stamps, the rapid development of a new type of collectibles — philately — started. At present, there is a general global tendency of a decrease in interest in collecting postage stamps. This is due to the development of informatisation of society — primarily through the Internet. However, I can say for sure that there is an interest in Belarusian stamps! This was confirmed at the 9th National Philatelic



**Irina Shipilova:**  
***'For a quarter of a century, Belarusian stamps have shown style and diverse themes. In recent years, they have become 'more elegant'***

Exhibition — 'Belfila-2017' — held last year as part of the TIBO Forum. The show was dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the first Belarusian postage stamp and the 950th anniversary of the city of Minsk and gathered 115 collections from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Germany, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. I was pleased to see the interest of children and young people in stamps: 21 of the collections were presented by them.

***What are the most popular topics for philatelists?***

The most in demand in the world of philately are stamps with images of flora and fauna. About one third of our postage stamps are devoted to this topic: the nature of Belarus is rich, beautiful and truly unique.

***The British Post has recently released stamps with the characters of 'Games of Thrones'. Can we have stamps devoted, for example, to stories of the World of Tanks that have battled all over the world or something similar that young people may be interested in?***

Everything can happen; let's keep the mystery... We understand that it is possible to increase the interest in the philatelic production of any country, by expanding the advertising and information work among the population, especially among children and young people. The Belarusian Post has an annual competition for the best postage stamp, organises practical classes in the Philately shop and, following the results of the competitions of children's drawings, publishes postage stamps, envelopes and cards with scenes by young artists.

***What philatelic novelties does Marika plan for this year?***

We expect bright postal projects and fresh topics. We hope the result of our work will be even more interesting to collectors and those who are simply interested in history and are looking for new knowledge. Among the projects with themes represented for the first time are: '400 Years Since the First ABC Publication', 'Admiral of the Navy', 'Natives of Belarus', stamps from the 'Masterpieces of Painting from Belarusian Museums' series (featuring reproductions of paintings by I. Aivazovsky, I. Shishkin, A. Kuindzhi, A. Savrasov).

***Belarusian stamps have often been appreciated at international exhibitions in Russia, Austria, Indonesia... What distinguishes our philatelic products from foreign ones? How are they unique?***

In the philatelic world, there are many traditions and rules. The issue of a postage stamp miniature requires laborious work, research and, of course, creativity. For a quarter of a century, Belarusian stamps have shown style and diverse themes. In recent years, they have become 'more elegant'. It is no wonder: modern post-printing technologies are now used in their production — such as embossing, selective varnishing, thermal stamping with metalised foil and others. Of course, this is a major step forward. With the development of the printing capabilities of manufacturers, unusual postage stamps are now released in the form of a triangle, a circle or oval. The originality of our art miniatures is acknowledged at international competitions.

By Lyudmila **Minkevich**



# CITY OF YOUTH HOLDS THE BATON



## Novopolotsk becomes Cultural Capital of Belarus

In June, the city of petro-chemists is celebrating its 60th jubilee. It is branding itself as a place for young people, both enterprising and creative. This year is a great opportunity for the youth teams of the city to proudly declare themselves and gain countrywide recognition.

It all began with a victory in the Republican City of Culture Competition: in 2016, Novopolotsk won the 'Best City of Regional Subordination' nomination. Following that success, the local city executive committee decided to compete for the title of cultural capital; where eventually, they defeated Pinsk in the category.

This year, over 230 cultural events will be held in Novopolotsk. Culture Minister Yuri Bondar believes they will all be exciting and interesting. Speaking at the solemn ceremony, he noted. "Novopolotsk was not chosen accidentally. This is a young major industrial centre. Though being unable to boast ancient sights, it has managed to create a rich social and cultural sphere over recent decades. The decision to name Novopolotsk the cultural capital of Belarus was made with certainty that the city could maintain and develop the best traditions of this popular Republican campaign. I wish city residents success this year and hope as many guests as possible will take part in your festival and competitions."



## FACTS

■ In 2017, Bobruisk was Belarus' cultural capital, and, in previous years, the title belonged to Polotsk, Gomel, Nesvizh, Mogilev, Grodno, Brest and Molodechno



The main project of the year — 'Lines of Friendship' — will bring together creative teams, museums and libraries, attracting also twin-cities (there are two dozen of them). Schoolchildren and students from CIS and beyond will get to know traditional Belarusian culture. Many Novopolotsk projects are widely known in the country and abroad. Among them are the 'Kids Couture' Competition of Children's Fashion, the 'September Palette' Festival of National Culture, the 'Musical Lily' Contest of Young Piano Players (attracting musicians from Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus), the 'Dvina Area Palette' open air workshop devoted to Ivan Khrutsky

and, the most famous contest of young pop song performers — 'Hali-Halo'. Previous winners of this festival included Piotr Yelfimov, Natalia Podolskaya, Valeria Gribusova, Alexander Minenok, Anna Trubetskaya and Kirill Yermakov.

The diverse areas of the work and achievements of Novopolotsk's cultural establishments have recently been presented at the 'Piggybank of Creativity' exhibition, while the best artistic troupes of the new cultural capital performed at the Naftan JSC Palace of Culture. It was a challenge to find those appearing on stage: 35 artistic teams with the titles of 'Honoured', 'People's' and 'Exemplary' are registered in the

city. As a result, the audience applauded the 'Komariki' troupe, the 'Yunost' circus, the 'Subboteya' song theatre and the 'Pridvinskije Rossypji' ensemble. A series of concerts, campaigns and exhibitions are planned. Booklets on folk art masters and the 'Artists of Novopolotsk' album will be published, while the Novopolotsk State Musical College will celebrate its 50th birthday.

The cultural life of the city is at the beginning of its journey. All its participants know that the 'Cultural Capital' campaign lasts not just for a single year: the title may come and go, but the cultural benefits remain for many years.

By Olga Kruchenkova



# ALWAYS HAPPY TO WELCOME NEW FRIENDS

## FIVE REASONS TO VISIT KIROVSK

### Hearing a tale of divided love

The palace and park estate in Zhilichi is often called a 'Small Versailles'. Built by the leader of the Bobruisk nobility, Ignaty Bulgak, the palace is unique among neighbouring territories, with its four-story gazebo tower in Classic style. It's impressive in size and beauty.

You can see the former splendour of the noble estate in miraculously preserved photos; sadly, the rich collection of paintings, unique furniture and chandeliers

disappeared without trace after the revolution. The wing which previously housed a greenhouse was destroyed during the war but some parts of the house remain intact: the original front door and ancient oak staircase, which leads to spacious rooms. The ceilings are decorated with stucco; looking closely, you'll see a girl's head amidst the patterns. It's said that a local peasant woman sat for the portrait, with whom the nobleman was in love. Of course, being a commoner, he couldn't marry



In one of the halls of Dobosna manor: columns, pilasters and bas-relief featuring Olympic gods

her, but he chose to capture her likeness in his home.

Many years ago, the estate covered eighteen hectares; you can still walk the quiet avenues of the parkland, where black poplar, lime trees and Norway maples grow.

### Tasting smazhenka

Tourists love to sample local cuisine and a certain town in the Mogilev



Region seems to attract guests from all around the globe, with its mouth-watering aroma of freshly baked smazhenkas (meat pies). Filled with meat, or other ingredients, these are known far and wide, as are the town's mini-pizzas. People often eat them on the spot, and then buy some to take away.

Another gastronomic delight are pastries cooked to an 18th century Old Believers' recipe, filled with boiled potatoes, cottage cheese and stewed cabbage.



Bulgaks' estate Dobosna, in Zhilichi



Brought from the Arkhangelsk Province three centuries ago, when the Old Believers fled, the recipe has been handed down through local families. Some villages still live according to strict church laws, such as Kapustino, where Old Believers have restored the Church of the Exhalation of the Holy Cross.

## Living under Communism

Legendary Rassvet Farm is situated near Kirovsk. The village of Myshkovichi was once home to a major Soviet collective farm, known all over the USSR. Now a modern settlement, it was headed by Kirill Orlovsky, who fought in the Spanish war as a reconnaissance-saboteur. The Hero of the Soviet Union and Socialist Labour inspired the character of Yegor Trubnikov (played by Mikhail Ulyanov in the film 'Chairman'). During the war, Kirill Orlovsky commanded a partisan detachment, losing his right hand and four fingers on his left hand. He also almost lost his hearing but managed to survive. He later brought the collective farm into order, introducing a true spirit of Communism to Myshkovichi.

In Soviet times, the village was visited by delegations from all around the globe and still demonstrates excellent results. Myshkovichi's well-developed streets and luxurious palace of culture, with its winter garden of palms, bananas and lemons, is a sight to behold. You'll



find a monument to Kirill Orlovsky in the central square of the agro-town.

## Learning about the 'village of fire'

If you've watched the terrible film 'Go and See', you'll know the tragic fate of the village of Borki. In the summer of 1942, the Nazis shot and burned alive about two thousand people. Villagers were gathered in the square, allegedly to travel to Germany to enjoy a better life, but were then locked into a barn, which was set on fire. Those who tried to get out through the thatched roof were felled by machine guns.

A memorial complex has been built in Borki, in memory of those victims. Its granite plaque features the names of destroyed villages in the Mogilev Region. Writer Ales Adamovich devoted his 'Punishers' novel to the tragedy, the plot being later used by Elem Klimov for his brilliant film.

## Visiting Chigirinka

Chigirinskoe artificial lake stretches for 20km amidst forests, making it a true Mecca for fishing enthusiasts and for divers. Fish can be easily caught all year round and summer sees the



organisation of the Big Bard Fishing Musical and Sports Festival, uniting the festival of bard songs and a competition for fishing lovers.

The local hydro-electric power station also deserves a visit, being a key site in post-war Belarusian hydropower. Operational for over fifty years, it enabled the creation of the man-made lake on the Drut River.

By Svetlana **Markova**



An old part of the moment: sculpture and stone inscribed in memory of the 1,800 residents of the village of Borki and neighbouring settlements, who were shot and burnt alive by Fascists on June 15th, 1942

**O**ur region is one of the most picturesque and original in Belarus. We cherish the historical and cultural legacy of our ancestors and remember the deeds of our countrymen. We honour the traditions of our parents and grand-parents. Our people have always worked hard and, unsurprisingly, our level of economic and social development is steadily increasing.

Kirovsk people know how to welcome guests and have so much to show tourists. Come and see for yourself! A holiday on our lands will be unforgettable!

**Alexander Butarev, Chairman of the Kirov District Executive Committee**

Square in Myshkovichi village (Mogilev Region's Kirovsk District)

# GRODNO IN LEADING ROLE

**Unusual tourist route developed  
in regional centre**



**G**rodno is the centre of a newly developing tourist route. It will include landmark places familiar not only to older residents of the area.

Around fifty movies have been shot here at different times and some have become blockbusters.

The idea to create a route around these memorable sites has been proposed and supported by the Grodno Regional Executive Committee. As a result, signs are currently being placed in the city's streets. In the future, billboards, forged artwork and information panels will be installed. What do they offer to tourists and citizens?

Last summer, the last houses were demolished in the 'fictional' village of Belye Rosy. They had been miraculously preserved for 34 years since the filmmakers came to shoot their famous film about the merging of the village and city. It was only in 2017 when the story described in the movie was almost repeated in reality: apartment buildings and a shopping centre will be built here instead of private houses. Only a small sign and a well (by which grandfather Fedos reasoned with Mishka Kisel) will soon remind us of the site where the famous film was shot.





The streets of old Grodno are still full of the spirit of the past; unsurprisingly, stage directors are always happy to use the city's natural surroundings in their work. Among the famous films are movies shot in Soviet times: 'I Come from Childhood' (featuring Vladimir Vysotsky), 'My Name is Harlequin', the German-Belarusian 'Babi Yar' film, the 'Smersh' TV series and 'The Dnieper Border'. Overall, 15 films are planned to be 'immortalised' in the trail.

The first information point, dedicated to the Smersh film, was placed in Sovetskaya Street, opposite the famous Farny Roman-Catholic Church. It features film footage and annotations in Russian, Belarusian and English.

Another point is found at the intersection of Ozheshko and Sovetskaya streets. It's impossible to simply walk past this place. Lovers often meet by the sculpture of Cupid, while newly-wed couples traditionally uncork champagne bottles here. Scenes from the 'Traces of Apostles' series are seen in the bank's window; many city residents also participated in the crowd scenes for the film.

The First Deputy Head for Ideology, Culture and Youth Affairs — Yelena Klimovich — shares their plans, "We will try to create an atmosphere to help locals and foreigners to feel they are in the city where these famous films were

shot. We've recently toured the city with experts to decide the places that should be included on the tourist route. We plan to complete the work by the Festival of National Cultures. For example, a bench with a photo area will be arranged near Bolshaya Troitskaya Street. In Telman Street, footage for several films was shot and a large vertical information point will appear here.

The most cinematographic street — Uritsky, will have a large billboard placed on the wall of the historical-cultural building. In the centre of Sovetskaya Street, the windows of the Lily barber-shop will be decorated with large pictures featuring hairstyles from different times made specially for films."

In addition, a sculpture based on the 'Mikolka-Locomotive' film will be sited near Grodno's railway station. This film marked the beginning of Grodno's cinematic career. It features the old railway station and its famous turntable. An old building in the university played the role of a gymnasium, while battle scenes were shot near the fountain. In Telegrafnaya Street (where there is now a café), gallows were built for 'The Seller and the Poet'

film; in line with the plot, guerrillas were killed there. In turn, a two-storey wooden house with an apartment — where the family of Nina Urgant's character from 'I Come from Childhood' lived and where the character of Vladimir Vysotsky returned — was situated. The actor sang to guitar accompaniment at the foot of its

***Billboards, forged artwork and panels will create the atmosphere in Grodno for locals and foreigners to feel they live in the city where around 50 films have been made***

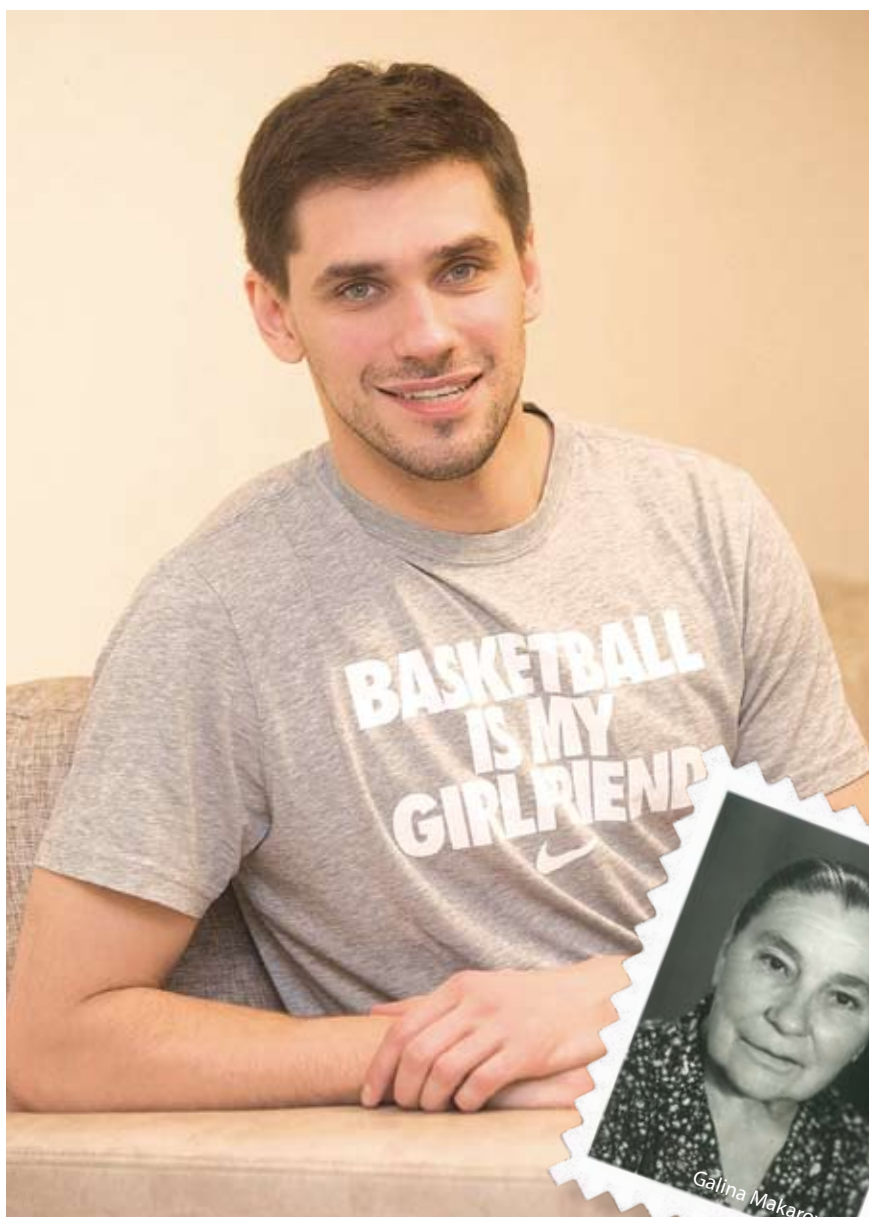
stairs. Sometime later, the famous Zubr restaurant was built; at present, a university building is situated here.

In 2016, Cinema Alley — devoted to Grodno's cinematic career — opened in front of the Youth Centre. Two memorial plaques were laid; one of them aiming to immortalise the famous 'Belye Rosy' film. The alley plaques were made at Grodno's Stone Processing Plant and six films are now represented there. In the future, their number will rise to 12.

By Tatiana Kondratieva



# BRINGING BALL SKILLS TO THE SCREEN



**'Moving Up' was the main Christmas premiere in Belarus: a Russian-made film about the Soviet basketball team's legendary victory over the Americans. As to why the film has gathered full houses, it may be because Belarusians played for that Soviet team. Belarusian Yegor Klimovich, the grandson of People's Artiste of the USSR Galina Makarova, and Honoured Artiste of the BSSR Pavel Pekur, stars as basketballer Alexander Boloshev.**

## **Two years of shooting**

*Yegor, you went to Moscow to study filmmaking but became an actor...*

Actually, I was invited to work as a director for Expert-TV Channel, having worked for STV. I agreed, while attending directing courses, and was later invited to work as a film cutting director. I've made a good career in this sphere, working on two dozen films. I've also worked as a TV series director. However, since I'm tall and handsome, I've also been invited to act in films, taking minor roles and gaining some acting experience. Over time, I gained an agent, who told

me about the basketball script. I was keen from the start as, some years ago, I played in the national championship and have some ball skills. Eventually, I was invited to audition.

**Were you offered the part immediately?**

I need to explain. It's a unique, large-scale project. You're only seeing the tip of the iceberg, as it took over two years to film, and a year to rehearse that legendary final match. My approval for the role and signing of a contract only took place on the eve of work launching. We knew the ensemble cast but understood that actors could be replaced at any time.

**Did you have a stand-in?**

Me and two other guys — Alexander Ryapolova (who played Alzhan Zharmukhamedov) and Kuzma Saprykin (Ivan Yedeshko) had no stands-in. Others did. Shooting was complicated and lengthy because, initially, scenes were shot with body-doubles. Only then did the real actors repeat the same movements, shot close.

**Why did you give up basketball?**

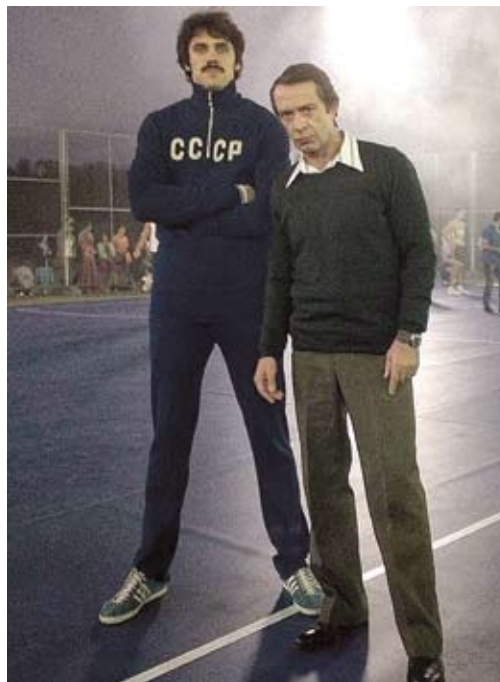
I had two open fractures and, as a result, changed my sporting career for cinema. I've no regrets. My best trick in the film is throwing a ball down into the basket. When I was an NBL champion, I was known for my slam-dunks in Minsk.

## Americans not rivals but friends

**How did you get on with such stars as Vladimir Mashkov, Marat Basharov and Andrey Smolyakov?**

I met Vladimir before shooting, as we read the script together, and took part in rehearsals. We were like a large family, keen to produce a great film. Our directors always advised us where we had problems in conveying a certain emotion or reaction. It was great acting experience, as well as good exercise! We played basketball up to 12 hours daily, our hard work earning us respect.

Ivan Yedeshko was our on-site consultant, having been the one to make the last pass to Alexander Belov in 1972



Vladimir Mashkov and Yegor Klimovich at the basketball film set

(which earned the USSR the championship title). He's unique in his ability to encourage team spirit. Over time, we became close friends, spending the New Year together. We now constantly call and email each other and have been attending film screenings together. We love recalling filming memories, being nostalgic. We've even become friends with the Americans!

**You've really only acted in TV drama cameo roles before. This is your first major role. Do you plan to shift to acting from directing?**

Unfortunately, my role isn't large in the film. I had dramatic scenes and interesting dialogue but, after cutting, these have been removed. I now plan to spend six months on my documentary about Hollywood actor and Russian UFC champion Oleg Taktarov. It's a major international project which I'll be producing and

directing. Of course, I've received some offers for roles but, after working on such a serious project as 'Moving Up', I've no desire to accept most proposals. However, I'd consider an interesting project.

## Following in grandmother's footsteps

**I don't know whether your grandmother wanted to continue the dynasty but it's happened, albeit skipping a generation...**

I still feel her energy. She's an example for me to follow. She was a national record holder in motocross and later became fascinated by cinema. I appear to be following in her footsteps. I don't remember her ever shouting at us. Her warmth and kindness help me in working with people.

I see my grandmother's features in my younger sister Agata; actually, my granny had the same name and Galina was her nickname. My sister also decided to connect her life to cinema. We recently shot 'Coubertin's Rule', which is nominated for the Golden Eagle Award, for 'best non-fiction' film. This is Agata's debut as a director, although she has already won a prize for 'best debut' at an international festival. Definitely, something has passed onto us from our grandmother. She 'nourishes' us with her energy.

**Do you plan to release a film about your grandmother? Next year, she would have celebrated her centenary.**

I've already written a synopsis. She really had an incredible life. I'm convinced I'll make a film about her in the future; it's just a matter of time. I hope Belarusfilm will support my idea.

By Natalia **Stepuro**





# LEONID SHCHEMELEV'S LIFE PALETTE

**People's Artist of Belarus Leonid Shchemelev is 95 years old! It's reason enough to discuss the work of this outstanding master of national pictorial art. Wishing the hero of the day good health, alongside his many other admirers, we here look at the passion that makes Mr. Shchemelev's works unique.**

**O**n the occasion of Leonid Shchemelev's birthday, the National Art Museum of Belarus launched an exhibition. The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, congrat-

ulated the painter on his 95th birthday. "Significant achievements of the Belarusian school of painting are connected with your name," underlined the Head of State. "You have made a big contribution to the preservation, development and promotion of the best traditions of



Belarusian fine art. Your paintings are an example of great mastery, and your professional and public activities are an example of selfless service to your country.”

His creativity is known as a chronicle of the age. In his works, Mr. Shchemelev glorifies Belarus by creating elevated and poetic images of his native land and its residents.

Mr. Shchemelev has always been faithful to his professional credo, painting that which appears important or interesting to him. In fact, his choices have not always brought him praise but he kept to his chosen path and, in the end, has received the recognition he deserves, being famous and popular.

With global fame, and bestowed with the title of People’s Artist of Belarus (the highest of merits) we might think that the master has all he wishes. There’s even a Shchemelev Art Gallery in Minsk. However, Mr. Shchemelev does not seek popularity; it comes of its own accord, as a result of his talent. He happily shares his works with his audience, which is diverse in itself. He truly was born to be a People’s Artist — by vocation.

Mr. Shchemelev’s kaleidoscope of colour and shades brings alive his world of images and characters, which portray the past and his hopes for the future. He conveys his impressions with skill, giving us not just beauty but an understanding of life’s rich palette. Each of his works presents his view of the world, drawn from imagination or experience, but going beyond the frame, to show us universal truths

Mr. Shchemelev is interesting to listen to, being sincere in his views and unafraid of speaking his mind. He always has something to say: about art, the role of the artist or the national component of art...

***How do you reflect your personal feelings in your works?***

You need to follow your gut. Society may not always appreciate your work but your own intention remains true, with its own value, since your feelings live in the canvas. Painters tend to think



in a different way to most other artists, often living quietly. In order to portray the world, you need experience, but also more than that. You need to listen to your subconscious, and allow this to speak to your waking self, to create something original. We should be cautious in saying whether a work of art is ‘good’ or not. Art is more than mere technical ability. Sometimes, people fail to see what a talented artist has achieved.

***Do you consider yourself to be a Belarusian painter? Or is art international?***

I don’t know what international art is. Each artist is a product of his environment, portraying his attitude towards it. National interest is foremost for me. Thank God, we have a strong idea of our national culture and national ideas about art. I’ve always wanted to show this in my work, demonstrating how our national emblems are connected with our present day, as well as the past.

If I write about war, this is also connected with our life today. Even in peaceful times, people and landscapes should be presented with national flavour, demonstrating the culture of Belarus, helping us to understand our place in European civilisation.

***How do Belarusian artists differ from those in other countries, including those from Europe?***

Our use of colour and our themes are different. We show people in relation to nature and we don’t copy others. We desire to express ourselves, wishing to leave a legacy for the future. It’s very important. It’s no accident that our older generation believes that many young painters are too frivolous. It worries me too.

***Does time impact creativity?***

Very much so, as artists reflect their time and the society they live in. Think of how the collapse of the Soviet Union and its change of power influenced us. However, national culture and its vision doesn’t die. Some thoughts live on. Regarding Belarusian art, I’m optimistic that many painters identify with national culture, connecting their creativity with eternal emotions. Not everyone, of course, since each sees life in their own way but, as a Belarusian, I feel my national identity deeply.

***How is the creativity of Belarusian painters interesting to foreigners?***

I’ve noticed interest in our national culture from abroad, often welcoming French and Italians to my studio, who sometimes buy works. They tell me what they see in my pictures. Their perception of our art is outdated, but they do recognise the freedom of our work, with its space and culture, all connected with Belarus.

***Do you think an artist gains recognition through sales of his work, or in being spoken of and written about?***

It's a complex concept, since it relies not just on sales but on the artist feeling their own public recognition. It implies acceptance and support by the state, so that works can be displayed, to gain public awareness. I'm convinced that artists need this state support to succeed, and that funds should be set aside, and rooms, where today's painters can exhibit. There should be more spaces where art is on show.

***How would you describe your style?***

Most of my works are modern portraits and landscapes. However, I'm also interested in historical themes, exploring plots connected with Napoleon, Pushkin and war. I'm attracted by contemporary views and modernity, as it wouldn't be satisfying to only portray military topics. You need to know history but it's also interesting to see how we live now and our attitude towards the modern world. Time does play a very important role in art.

***Do you think art should always be beautiful, or is that attitude likely to lack truth?***

Beauty can never be false, but our idea of it changes with time, and is a product of our society. Our beliefs are changeable, as are our attitudes towards art and beauty. It's good to form judgements, since they show considered thinking.

***Are you concerned about preserving the traditions of Belarusian painters? Is it important that we unite them?***

Belarusian painters are interesting to Americans for their national flair and spirit; art is one way of portraying the flavour of our nation and its culture. Officials in the sphere of culture have an important role to play in promoting this. I'm widely exhibited in Moscow, bringing my perception of Belarusian nature to citizens there.

***Is art changing in our country, or is it simply enjoying a boom?***

It's likely that there is a boom. Art hasn't changed greatly in recent years but social attitudes have. There's more



appreciation. Are our contemporary times favourable for creativity?

***Are our contemporary times favourable for creativity?***

For me — yes. I'm already at an age where I can say more than I do, so I can be critical. However, I think others find it difficult. Artists are individualists but must compromise, following the dictates of their own heart. It's not easy. Art is inspired by living but requires dedication and reasonable judgement.

***About which principles of Belarusian pictorial school can we speak today?***

School should have national foundations — this is foremost. It's necessary to feel the national culture.

***What is the philosophy of painter Shchemelev?***

I have people who surround me. There's the world which is interesting to me. Our world is Belarusian. I've been to many countries and was also writing there. However, when I arrived home I always worked with great inspiration! This is the luggage which a person should possess who has his homeland.

***Have you experienced such a feeling as creative failure?***

Of course. I've often had creative failures. There hasn't ever been a situation when I have travelled light along

this world. Failures shape a person and strengthen their will.

***Do you want to inspire deep thought from audiences or simply be admired?***

Delight lasts but a moment while art which provokes thought endures. All artists are philosophers to some extent.

***Is rural topic close to you?***

I was born in the city, though at that time Vitebsk was a big village for me. I saw ordinary people and nature and this was enough for me to feel proximity with earth.

***You've come through the war but the topic didn't become major for you...***

In 1943 I was heavily wounded. I didn't even think whether I would be painter or not. But I was drawing. However, each person has some denial of war. The military topic wasn't of interest to me; moreover, new life opened after the war.

*Leonid Shchemelev has been a participant of art exhibitions since 1958, his pictures have been on show in Canada, the USA, France, Italy, Israel, Finland, Germany, Austria and Spain. They have been purchased by famous galleries and museums. Of course, Mr. Shchemelev's works are also present in the National Art Museum of Belarus and in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.*

Life wasn't easy for Leonid Shchemelev, as for many other painters of the older generation. His creative biography can be viewed as a reflection of the country's history. The painter took part in the Great Patriotic War. Undoubtedly, these dramatic events influenced his creativity, affecting the emotional depth of his painting.

*"My life is embodied on the canvases. This is the history of my Homeland. This is memory as one of the most cherished ideas. These are people whom I love endlessly. This is nature without which I can't exist,"* noted Mr. Shchemelev.

When one boasts such considerable professional and life experience, even in such a delicate sphere as art, it's important to pass it on. Of course, many know this famous master mainly for his numerous substantial pictures in which the author has expressed himself passionately. Today however, Leonid Shchemelev is presented in the centre of our publication as a painter who has given all his professional experience to the development of Belarusian pictorial culture, as a master whose influence on the creativity of many contemporary Belarusian painters is multi-faceted and fruitful. Our conversation with the famous artist was dedicated to this topic.

***To what degree does the professional and creative growth of a young painter depend on their teacher?***

Teachers should treat young artists seriously. I see teachers as understanding high culture, although they don't need to be great painters themselves. They do need to understand the essence of art to help their pupils' progress. Art is produced only by the most able.

***Do you speak from experience?***

Of course. I'm not speculating; I know this for sure. I always yearned to teach but it's now too late, as it requires much effort. I once taught at a school for talented children and then at an art school, which I loved, but I left to pursue my own creativity. I really wanted to work at the Institute, but the feeling wasn't reciprocated.

***Surely, not every painter can become a teacher. Much depends on their cultural and intellectual experience and their ability to pass on knowledge.***

You're right. It's the only possible approach towards teaching art. A painter can't just take the place of a teacher; they need to have an endless desire to teach. Pedagogic activity ties together our country and its culture. A teacher is like a creator, always opening something to reveal what lies beneath.

***When a pupil breaks away from their teacher, it's like breaking the past from the present. French pictorial art seems to have lost a great deal because of this.***

You're right that France has lost many of its traditions. French painters used to demonstrate love for their homeland through their art, encapsulating the spirit of all things. Their work now lacks this element.

***To what degree are your current works contemporary and what elements from the past inspire you?***

Art has its own attitude towards the world: what has been and what is. For example, I'm working on the 1812 war, when France attacked Russia, trying to perceive those events in a new way. Historical moments need to be understood; it's at the core of everything. However, I'm also a contemporary person, more concerned about the present than the past. The past and future can be viewed in the light of modernity.

***So, you had the opportunity to compare sights with those of your homeland. How does Belarus differ and what do you think visitors notice most when arriving here for the first time?***

Primarily, our countryside, as Belarus is covered in a whole system of pure spring lakes and a network of large and small rivers. These nourish nature, keeping the colours fresh; it can't be ignored. Colours don't fade, they simply change with the seasons, remaining vivid. The rich green of spring and summer flowers is replaced by the amazing shades and tones of autumn. The transition is seamless and filled with majesty. Winter then takes over, with its purity and white snow. Our lace-frosted trees are like nothing else. Our countryside never looks weary. It is always alive and fresh. This may be why Belarus has always had so many wonderful landscape-painters.

***From the autobiography of People's Artist of Belarus Leonid Shchemelev:***

*I was lucky, being born in Vitebsk — a city of artists. I spent my childhood surrounded by art lovers, albeit amateur. I learnt about colour, canvases and*







the smell of freshly painted pictures early on. The Dvina River was nearby, which is still sacred to me. My most treasured childhood memories are of delightful winter skiing and playing on the banks of the Dvina in summer. There were trips to my grandmother's village and, of course, films.

The war ended all that of course. In 1941, I left, like others, to fight. In 1943, during the liberation of Belarus, I was seriously wounded and sent to hospital. However, I recovered sufficiently to fight again. In short, I survived those terrible war years of the last century. Destiny saved me. My artist's life is the best gift I've received from God: my admiration of the world and ability to depict its surprising paradoxes. Creating art brings me great happiness.

**How do you view the days when social realism ruled?**

Talented masters always find ways to realise their creativity, making true masterpieces. One of the greatest drawbacks of social realism was the way that privileges, knowledge and posts were unfairly distributed. Of course, a painter's own personality had a role to play in whether

they succumbed to temptation; not everyone became infected with the disease. I find it difficult to say how many pictures I dedicated to the historical-revolutionary theme, as such works aren't limited to showing the act of shooting people. Sometimes, a single face can show the fate of a whole generation.

**Judging by your biography, you've toured a great deal of the Soviet Union, as well as Europe and Asia. What did you gain from these trips as an artist and for what were you searching?**

I toured a lot — mostly through the former Soviet Union's fifteen republics. Only the Far East remains. I also toured elsewhere; each trip resulted in a vast amount of artistic material. The most precious aspect was the chance to compare my new experiences with my knowledge of Belarus. I wanted to dedicate most of my pieces to Belarus and was keen to understand what 'nourishes' the creativity of outstanding artists in the USSR and abroad. Do you know what I found? I realised the enduring truth that professional art grows, nourishes and blossoms only on its native soil, borne from folk culture and traditions. A painter can only achieve remarkable

heights if they focus on what makes them unique, becoming well-known at home and achieving global recognition (becoming 'supranational'). Artists should present their own perception of their native legacy.

**Many portraits of your loved ones appear in your paintings...**

Like all artists, I paint that which I love. Since I love my family, I paint them with pleasure. However, I create portraits of those who are close to me in spirit and in conviction with equal pleasure. In my opinion, they are good as they are.

**I've seen your still-life paintings at many art exhibitions over the years. You have several here in the studio; they're bright, emotional and beautiful, as are most of your works. Aren't you embarrassed by the word 'beautiful' — recently used by critics in the same manner as 'pretty' and 'with public appeal'?**

I believe that beauty is a feature and function of art. It's said that 'beauty will save the world' so why should we treat it negatively? Any work of art should be primarily beautiful, being created by an artist. Nature is beautiful and good, being filled with colour. Without this palette, life would be a desert. A good painter once said that we should learn from nature, emulating it to create true art. Folk art reveres beauty. It can never be incorrect to imitate what is beautiful in nature.

Leonid Shchemelev remains brimming with creativity, despite his grand age. His passion for art keeps the fire lit in his heart while his soul continues to bring forth every human emotion, without which art can only be hollow, as he has long ago learnt.

*P.S. Painting exhibition, dedicated to 95th anniversary of People's Artist of Belarus, being hosted by the National Art Museum of Belarus, aroused big interest among spectators, and it's not accidentally. The exposition embodies the way in art of Leonid Shchemelev whose life and destiny are an example of human and creativity longevity.*

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



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