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LET'S MEET AS GOOD FRIENDS

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

Events in Belarus and abroad

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CONTENTS



**FAVOURABLE
WEATHER
IN THE PERSIAN
GULF**

4

6 Collective Security Council of the CSTO: We don't want to be feared, but respected

14 Building on foundations State visit of the Belarusian President to the People's Republic of China highlights our trade-economic and investment cooperation, including the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park, in the Smolevichi District



26

**IN FLIGHT —
WITHOUT A PILOT**

18 Hurry to do good

24 When there is true interest

32 Looking upon beauty and immersing oneself in history

34 Preferences for the residents One of the epicenters in Belarus where agrotourism rapidly develops is the Grodno Region

36 The past inspires

38 Bolshoi welcomes all talents Just ten to fifteen years ago, the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus contained native dancers, while now, every performance is done with the participation of stars from many different countries around the world

43 Lucky boomerang Art exhibition 5=3 opened at the Minsk Gallery of Modern Arts ArtPort. Its inspirer and organiser is Larisa Gribaleva

50 The world created by Zuzana The Art Gallery at the University of Culture organises art projects by famous foreign authors, familiarising Belarusians with their creative achievements

52 The ever fascinating museum treasure chest The National Art Museum of Belarus is a real treasure. Here, everyone will find something to interest them in the exhibits. The reason is simple: the museum is one of the richest permanent exhibitions in Europe. From time to time, its exhibition is updated with original artefacts from the collection



**PAINTING
WITH THE SOUL
TO THE BEAT
OF THETA
WAVES**

46

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Events seen in development

Undoubtedly sport has great influence. It's no accident that sporting events on a world scale boast such high status. They can create the emotional atmosphere that unites people and brings them closer. Certainly in recent times, sport has been often given political overtones; however, all things considered, its unifying potential remains the most important thing.

It's a great honour for the country to conduct large sporting competitions. This right must be earned, so the decision that Belarus has been granted the right to hold the 2nd European Games in 2019 is even more significant. The decision was made in Minsk during the recent session of the European Olympic Committees General Assembly.

As far as organization of the forthcoming Games is concerned, neither we nor the EOC Executive Commit-



tee have any doubts. The example of the 2014 IIHF World Championship assured everyone that Belarus can welcome tournaments at the top level. Minsk

demonstrated that it can create a friendly atmosphere. **Under the sign of trust and recognition and Games we'll play together** materials explore this topic in more detail.

Other important events will also be reflected in this issue of the magazine. Primarily, it refers to the visit of the President of Belarus to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. **Favourable weather in the Persian Gulf** will reveal the details. The State of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are amongst those countries with which the level of our trade-economic relationships doesn't correspond to that of our political relations. We're conducting a trustworthy dialogue, perfectly understand each other and share similar positions regarding the contemporary world or-

der in the international arena. Economic interaction doesn't yet correspond to the existing potential. Volumes of trade turnover are estimated at many millions of US Dollars though it's evident that they could be much higher. The visits of the President of Belarus to these countries aims to give greater dynamics to business collaboration.

Today Minsk suggested Doha use a model of cooperation previously tested with various countries several times. Progress needs a motivator and this role could be performed by 3-5 mutually beneficial projects. The respective governments will prepare proposals to be discussed during the future visit of the Emir of Qatar to Belarus.

The talks in Doha resulted in the signing of a package of documents on the development of cooperation across various areas, particularly, in healthcare and finance. The Development Bank of Belarus received an opportunity to attract loans for financing projects in Belarus under very privileged conditions. It seems that there will be more symbols of Qatar in Belarus, as well as Belarusian symbols in Qatar.

The negotiations in the United Arab Emirates were also efficient, with the two sides agreeing on the implementation of significant projects in the spheres of technology and military-technical cooperation, as well as scientific and scientific-production areas.

It's important when events are seen in development. For example, in October, Yerevan hosted a CSTO Heads of State meeting, with Belarus taking over the presidency of this organisation. Meanwhile, according to experts, a collective security strategy was determined until 2025. One of its major elements is that CSTO leaders have decided to stand against international terrorism in a cohesive way.

This also testifies to a principal approach, which is more important than ever in the face of modern challenges. Clear implementation of the agreements will reflect the prospect of opulence and development of the CSTO itself — the organisation which is trying to reinforce its role in the provision of security in the region.

VIKTOR KHARKOV

► Flag in space

Pilot-cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky (born in the Minsk Region's Cherven) to carry state flag of Belarus to International Space Station, leading a launch scheduled for November 16th, from Baikonur, and including cosmonauts from the USA and France

Cosmonauts are allowed to take only 1kg of personal belongings on board. Oleg Novitsky admitted that the flag of Belarus was the first item he decided to obligatorily carry with him.

“It’s a very strong moral support, because one wants to take what is especially dear to them,” he explains.

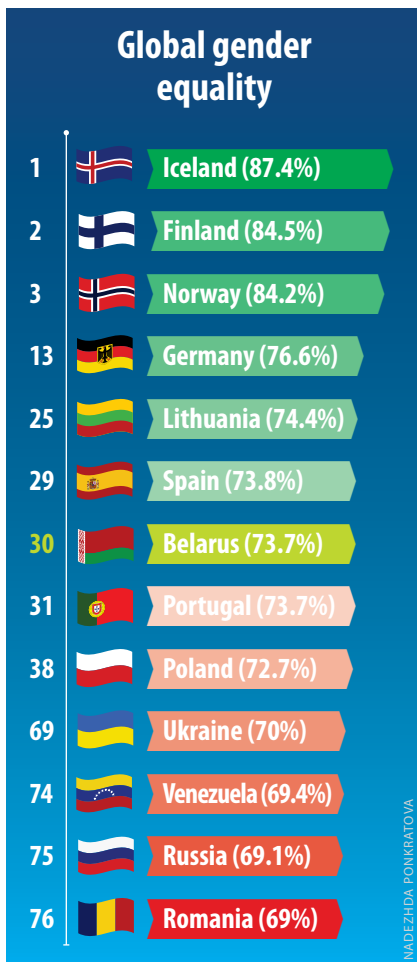
The solemn ceremony of transfer of the Belarusian flag took place on October 22nd, at the Belarusian Embassy to the Russian Federation. Before the launch into space, the state symbol will be thoroughly checked to ensure that it contains nothing harmful. It will then be placed into a special bag. Oleg Novitsky has promised to donate the flag to the Embassy museum after returning from orbit, with it bearing official dates of docking and undocking of the Soyuz MS-03 spacecraft with the International Space Station.

► Political document as a roadmap

First National Human Rights Plan adopted in Belarus, as reported at event dedicated to United Nations Day, by Deputy Foreign Minister Yelena Kupchina



The National Plan has received the support of the President of Belarus and has been approved by the Council of Ministers. “This National Plan is a political document: a roadmap defining the main directions of action for the implementation of our obligations on human rights,” Ms. Kupchina emphasised. “I’m particularly pleased to announce the adoption of the National Plan on the day of the launch of the #InclusiveBelarus campaign.” The latter aims to raise public awareness of barriers and inequalities, and to combat stigma for vulnerable groups.



The fit place

Belarus placed 30th in World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2016, covering 144 major and emerging economies

The report was presented in Geneva, placing Iceland at the top of the rankings, followed by Finland and Norway. Belarus is 30th, between Spain and Portugal, while Russia is in 75th place. The report provides insight into gender inequality, via the Gender Gap Index introduced by the World Economic Forum. This index measures the magnitude of gender-based disparities across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics. Belarus has a total score of 0.737, which means that the country has closed 73.7 percent of its gender gap. This is well above the global average of 68 percent. In Russia, this figure stands at 69.1 percent and Iceland has a statistic of 87.4 percent.

Belarus ranks in the top five in terms of economic participation and opportunity, with a score of 0.823: 29th in educational attainment (1.000), 40th in health and survival (0.979), and 80th in political empowerment (0.146).

The report indicates that 144 countries have closed 96 percent of the gap in health outcomes between women and men and more than 95 percent of the gap in educational attainment. However, the gaps between women and men on economic participation and political empowerment remain wide: 59 percent and about 23 percent respectively.

With current trends, the global gender gap may close in 83 years' time. The most challenging aspect remains in the economic sphere, which, at the present rate, will not close for another 170 years. The education-specific gender gap could be removed within the next ten years. The currently widest gender gap, in the political dimension, could close within 82 years. The health gender gap is, sadly, larger now than it was in 2006.

Favourable weather in the Persian Gulf

Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are amongst those states where the level of trade and economic cooperation could rise to achieve a higher level of political interaction. We are currently conducting successful dialogue and share a similar position regarding many contemporary issues. We also provide mutual support on many international issues, but economic collaboration has not yet reached its potential. The volume of trade turnover is estimated in millions of US Dollars but could be at least double that. The visit of the President of Belarus to these countries is aimed at motivating business interaction.

The central event of the official visit to Qatar was negotiations between the President of Belarus and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Qatar business has already left its calling card in the Belarusian capital in the shape of the Marriott hotel complex in Pobediteley Avenue. At present, another investment project is being implemented with Qatari capital in the sphere of healthcare. These examples can be viewed as benchmarks for cooperation and a basis for further joint projects to be developed.

The heads of both states asserted their mutually trustworthy relations at inter-state and personal levels. They were focused on political interaction but paid special attention to the necessity of expanding economic collaboration. Key promising areas are investments and trade, with a focus on joint ventures. Qatar expressed great interest in Belarusian timber-processing and food products.

Minsk suggested Doha use a model of cooperation previously tested with various countries several times. Several mutually beneficial projects would ensure progress in this regard. The respective governments will prepare proposals to be discussed during the future visit of the Emir of Qatar to Belarus.

portunity to attract loans for financing projects in Belarus under very privileged conditions. It seems that there will be more symbols of Qatar in Belarus, as well as Belarusian symbols in Qatar.

The negotiations between the President of Belarus and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy

The visit of the President of Belarus to the Middle East is, as usual, full of business content. There are concrete proposals for both planned projects and those already under implementation. If such initiatives are patronized personally by the heads of state, their success will be beyond doubt

The talks in Doha resulted in the signing of a package of documents on the development of cooperation across various areas, particularly, in healthcare and finance. The Development Bank of Belarus received an op-

Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, were also efficient, with the President and the Crown prince discussing projects worth many millions of US Dollars.



Alexander Lukashenko and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan

The Belarusian Ambassador to the UAE and Qatar, Roman Golovchenko, said that both sides devoted the greater part of the conversation to the implementation of agreements reached during previous meetings, "In the past year we've worked hard on tasks set by the heads of state for Belarusian enterprises. We're launching significant projects in the sphere of technology, military-technical cooperation, as well as scientific and scientific-production areas."

For example, the Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant (MZKT) will begin delivery of cutting-edge off-road vehicles to the UAE next year. The machinery is now undergoing final tests. This is not the first such deal, since the UAE previously purchased

MZKT produce. This machinery enjoys a good reputation and the fact that cooperation continues testifies to the serious competitive advantages of Minsk automobile makers. Moreover, MZKT offers products, as well as corresponding service, operation and training. Such package deals should be seen as a starting point by other Belarusian manufacturers wishing to enter the Emirate market.

Continuation and expansion of investment interaction is also viewed as especially important. Earning well on exports of energy carriers, the UAE looks to the future and tries to inject money into promising projects all over the world. Emirate business views Belarus as an attractive venue for capital. Like Qatar, the UAE

is interested in Belarusian timber processing and food products. Local businesses speak about readiness to invest funds in the establishment of joint ventures in our country, oriented towards Belarusian raw materials and the manufacture of goods to fit the needs of the United Arab Emirates. Minsk always welcomes such initiatives.

The visit of the President of Belarus to the Middle East is, as usual, full of business content. There are concrete proposals for both planned projects and those already under implementation. If such initiatives are patronized personally by the heads of state, their success will be beyond doubt.

By Dmitry Kryat



Heads of states of the CSTO decided to combat international terrorism together

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Collective Security Council of the CSTO:

We don't want to be feared, but respected

Yerevan hosted a meeting of heads of states who are members of the organization. Belarus took over the Presidency and, most significantly, a strategy until 2025 was agreed.

To forestall all threats

The heads of the states who are members of the organization came to the Armenian capital to participate in the meeting where they agreed to cooperate in the challenging conditions of the current international climate.

“Global security systems have been destroyed. All contacts and cooperation in such areas as counterterrorism, drug trafficking and other challenges and threats have been suspended between the world's leading players”, the CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha said, describing the international situation.

More than 20 documents reflecting the organization's development potential were signed at the summit. But the most important was the collective security strategy through to 2025.

“The states once again confirmed their resolution to build relations with members of the international com-

munity on principles of equality and indivisible security, to refrain from threats of force when dealing with emerging problems in favour of political and diplomatic methods. I believe that adoption of the new strategy has demonstrated a new quality of coordination within the CSTO”, the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, said.

According to the Russian President’s advisor Yuri Ushakov, the document identifies the unilateral deployment of the US missile defense system as an external threat.

In addition, the Collective Security Council took the decision to establish the CSTO Crisis Response Centre. The structure has two main functions. Firstly, its analytical and informational support of the decisions made by the senior executives and, secondly, security information exchange in real time between members of the organization. In the near future, a list of organizations recognized by the CSTO as terrorist and extremist groups will be compiled.

“This is the way to a new high quality level of coordination within the CSTO”, Serzh Sargsyan said.

“We don’t have to wait for recognition from NATO”

Member states of the organization take over the Presidency in turn. At the summit, Belarus took over the Presidency from Armenia. The priorities of the forthcoming Presidency of Belarus in the CSTO will be outlined soon.

Amongst the heads of states, only the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was not able to come due to illness. Several hours were spent at a closed-door meeting where the conversation mainly concerned international military conflicts and the threats that hamper the development of the member states of the organization.

Belarus has promised to develop a concept for transferring the CSTO to a qualitatively new level.

“We don’t want to be feared, but respected”, Alexander Lukashenko said, describing the task of the Belarusian Presidency in the organization. “All of us have stated that nobody wants to recognize the CSTO, particularly NATO. It seems we are not the right sort. They will never recognize us if we beg for their recognition. We have to force them to recognize our organization.”

Meanwhile, there are trouble spots within the CSTO as well. The heads of the states adopted a document, particularly important for Armenia — a statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. It reaffirms the principles of a non-violent solution to the question.

“The CSTO was established to neutralize external threats”, the president of Russia Vladimir Putin reminded. “We must strive to ensure that all problems that we have inherited from the past are resolved peacefully by striking a compromise. The Karabakh problem was discussed in this context.”

What the presidents came to agreement on

- to coordinate positions on regional security issues;
- to open the CSTO for all states sharing its goals and principles;
- to promote the formation of new architecture of Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security based on the provision of equal security for all states;
- to solve the issues of non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their elimination;
- to set up the CSTO crisis response system;
- to approve the issues of promptly equipping the territories of the CSTO member states to the benefit of collective security;
- to coordinate the training programme for military personnel;
- to coordinate the plans on development, production, supply and repair of weapons and military equipment;
- to ensure equal treatment of manufacturers supplying weapons, military and special equipment;
- to act together when dealing with the terror wanted list and blocking recruitment channels to armed conflict zones;
- to set up a database of terrorist and extremist organizations, the persons belonging to or suspected of belonging to them, and their movements, including the use of false documents;
- to deploy humanitarian centres with restock of medicines and humanitarian aid during emergency situations;
- to set up a collective response system to the “colour revolution” threat.

Expert commentary

Yuri SHEVTSOV, Director of the Centre for European Integration Problems (Minsk):

Decisions taken at the summit are not unexpected but long-awaited. Seeking common ground for Russia and its allies lies in strengthening ties between them. This is what happened in Yerevan. The collective security strategy consists not only of military cooperation measures. A set of issues relating to preventing internal threats, “hybrid wars” and “colour revolutions” was taken out for separate discussion. New measures for combating a wide range of challenges: from recruitment of our citizens for terrorist organizations to “dirty” cash flows are being discussed.





Under the sign of trust and recognition

Belarus receives the right to host 2nd European Games in 2019, planning for them to be spectacular

As often happens, the Minsk meeting of the General Assembly of the European Olympic Committee involved intrigue. We were breathlessly following the vote on as to whether Belarus would gain the right to host the Games. Clearly, our merits in promoting sports held sway. The embrace between Alexander Lukashenko and the Acting President of the European Olympic Committee, Janez Kocijancic, spoke volumes.

We enjoyed complete mutual understanding, with Belarus being entirely honest in all matters regarding organisation. At the start of his speech, the President pronounced his support for the EOC's Head, Patrick Hickey accused without grounds of speculative sale of the Rio Games tickets. No evidence has been presented and Minsk's position on this issue, voiced by Alexander Lukashenko, coincides with that of the EOC's Executive Committee.

All those present applauded the Belarusian President's words. He said, "It's sometimes insulting, or even funny, when,

for far-fetched reasons, those of us who express an opinion are 'pulled'. Nobody can make us be quiet. We should honestly, openly and essentially speak of all positions. Then, we'll be able to jointly defend our friends or teammates."

As regards the organisation of the forthcoming Games, neither Belarus nor the EOC Executive Committee has any doubt. The 2014 World Hockey Championship convinced everyone that Belarus is able to host tournaments of the highest level. On meeting the President, before the session, Mr. Kocijancic shared his admiration for the organisation of the 2014 World Championship, knowing the extreme challenges involved.

Minsk has demonstrated that it can create an atmosphere of comfort and friendship; of course, it will aim for the same in preparing the European Games. The President assured all those present that Belarus will welcome all athletes and guests, helping them relax. Our country is known for its hospitality.

On meeting the Vice President of Azerbaijan's National Olympic Committee, Chingiz Huseynzade, Mr. Lukashenko

The 2014 World Hockey Championship convinced everyone that Belarus is able to host tournaments of the highest level

confirmed that his 'motto' for these Games is that they will be 'hearty'. Baku set a high standard as the first one to host the event, and Belarus will appreciate its friendly advice. However, plans have already been outlined.

On the same day, Mr. Lukashenko met Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who is not only the President of the Association of National Olympic Committees, but the President of the Olympic Council of Asia and a member of the International Olympic Committee. He also talked to the President of the National Olympic Committee of Armenia, Gagik Tsurukyanom.

On behalf of the EOC, several national Olympic Committees and the International Boxing Federation, Alexander Lukashenko, as head of the NOC, received awards.

Naturally, promoting a healthy lifestyle is a concern for the global sports community. Mr. Lukashenko shared some of his thoughts on doping, saying that Minsk welcomes cross-border events and appreciates sport without boundaries. Another Belarusian initiative refers to the development of an educational system for athletes finishing their careers.

Participants of the meeting were in a good mood and, no doubt, the Games will enjoy a similarly friendly and sincere atmosphere.

By Dmitry **Kryat**

Firsthand

Leonid Taranenko, a 1980 Olympic champion in weightlifting:

Of course, the European Games differ from the Olympics but are, nevertheless, a high level international event. Minsk's hosting of the Games is not only a sign of trust and recognition of Belarus as a serious sporting state but offers an opportunity for the development of sport.

In 1980, I participated in the Moscow Olympics and I well remember the effect of those Games on Soviet sports. We enjoyed their legacy for several decades. Something similar is now coming to Belarus. Preparations for such an event include creating conditions for training and upgrading sports infrastructure. I'm convinced that we'll see the wider establishment of international sporting contacts, strengthening our reputation, setting up a sports economy and taking Belarusian sports to a new level.



Leonid Geyshtor, 1960 Olympic champion in canoeing (Rome):

What emotions this inspires! It's great news! Our capital is more than worthy of hosting a competition at this level. Of course, this is an honour for the country, becoming a platform of European competitions. It indicates that Belarus is among the world's sporting leaders and is being treated with respect. In recent decades, the country has many times demonstrated its ability to host serious competitions, with great efficiency and organisation. We already have experience. This will become a real feast for Belarusians!

Do you mean for Belarusian athletes?

Not only them. Recall the atmosphere at the World Hockey Championship. Our whole nation rose in unity for the occasion. It's great to see famous athletes and to enjoy the fighting spirit of the best among the best. Moreover, it's important that children and young people have the chance to witness the European Games. I remember my childhood; after the war, it was true happiness for us — small boys — to witness a city football competition. When the Gomel team defeated Moscow, every Gomel resident was overjoyed. Strangers congratulated each other and hugged in the street. Children spent hours on playgrounds: day and night, they played football — imitating adult players. Now, we're speaking of a global event...



Firsthand

Maria Mamoshuk, silver Olympic medallist in wrestling (Rio):

Thanks for the news! I already know what the European Games look like: I was lucky enough to participate in the first event in Baku, last year. Those were organised perfectly.

Everything was well thought-out — including our reception, training facilities and conditions. Moreover, the level of the competition fully met the declared plans.

For the freestyle wrestlers, it was a fully-fledged European Championship, in representation and passion. The competition — which I'm happy to see will take place in Minsk in 2019 — is indeed very serious. I have no doubt that our country will prepare brilliantly for the event.

Alexander Karshakevich, vice champion of the 1980 Olympics (Moscow) and champion of the 1988 Olympics (Seoul) in handball:

I'm slightly disappointed that my favourite sport, handball, isn't included in the European Games but I feel pride for our country. We'll hold the European Games, gaining true recognition.

Coming to a World Cup or Olympics, I think more of the competition rather than of how it's organised. Nevertheless, you remember the atmosphere. In Seoul, we lived in the Olympic Village, in the heart of the Olympic movement; it was impossible not to be moved.

In 1980, we didn't live in the Olympic Village, rather staying in Novogorsk. However, I still remember it. A huge teddy bear was sent into the night sky during the closing ceremony of the Moscow Olympics. Perhaps, the whole world was crying. I was crying for a different reason, as we lost by one goal to the Germans in the finals.

Marina Lytvinchuk, a bronze medalist at the 2012 Olympics (London) and the 2016 Games (Rio de Janeiro), in rowing:

Of course, I'm pleased to know that Belarus is being entrusted to host the 2nd European Games. We have all necessary sports facilities to host major competitions at a very decent level. The Games will be a true holiday, as Belarus has so many sports fans — not only in football and hockey, but in rowing, swimming, gymnastics, athletics and other sports. Fans will definitely enjoy the event.

Games we'll play together

Minsk hosts the European Olympic Committees General Assembly

When the heads of the European Olympic Committees and international sports federations decided to get together for an annual summary of the results in Minsk, Belarus viewed the assembly as a reason to celebrate a beautiful date: it was 25 years ago that the National Olympic Committee was established. A solemn evening, organised at the Opera and Ballet Theatre was also dedicated to this event. The evening was a success: no one has ever managed to bring together such a large number of athletes, coaches and all those having made a significant contribution to the development of Belarusian sport over the last 25 years. Over a thousand people were happily recollecting memorable victories. However, all conversations began with one common topic — the European Games in Belarus.

This is a serious challenge. It's difficult to draw parallels between classical and continental Olympic Games; however, the atmosphere of the 1st European Games, held a year ago in Baku, was even better than in Rio de Janeiro. Not all members were pleased with the result, representatives of some team sports complained about the prospect of inclusion of only 3x3 basketball and table tennis into the programme, voiced by Alexander Gagiev, Belarusian First Deputy Sports and Tourism Minister. The list is not yet closed: the host country can determine the range of competitions itself. Moreover, the Aide to the President for Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism Development, Maxim Ryzhenkov, noted that even several non-Olympic sports (where Belarusians are traditionally strong) may be included in the programme of



Reference

■ 43 Belarusian athletes are prize-winners of the Baku European Games. Champions were sambo wrestlers Stepan Popov and Tatiana Matsko, canoeists Andrey and Alexander Bogdanovich, while Marina Litvinchuk won gold both in the individual race and in partnership with Margarita Makhneva. Vasily Kiriyenko and Yelena Omelyusik were unrivalled in cycling, while the national artistic gymnastics squad took the highest medal in the group exercises. Moreover, Vitaly Bubnovich took the lead in air rifle and Vasilisa Marzalyuk earned the champion title in freestyle wrestling.

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the European Games. In turn, the Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Handball Federation, Ivan Semeneya, assured us that the curtain hasn't been drawn over this issue, "We're going to struggle for a place in the programme. It's clear that it's impossible to include all types but handball, like other team sports, first, is spectacular and popular and, secondly, has rich traditions in our country. Moreover, we have good chances of qualifying for the Olympics."

Track-and-field athletes also have big ambitions. The queen of sports shouldn't be worried about its place in the 2nd European Games. Moreover, it will be welcoming its guests to a new venue — the renewed Dinamo Stadium. The Chairman of the Belarusian Athletics Federation, Vadim Devyatovsky, sees a big opportunity to seriously set our sights on a fully-fledged European championships and other international competitions in Minsk. He also reminded us that track-and-field athletes have one more very serious and large-scale event in 2019 — a meeting between the USA and Europe in track-and-field, "The organisation of this tournament is nearing its final stage. We've discussed the prospects of conducting other large track-and-field tournaments in our country together with Svein Arne Hansen, the President of the European Athletics, who has arrived in Minsk to take part in the EOC General Assembly."

Wrestling, cycling, artistic gymnastics, swimming and rowing... the list of traditionally 'Belarusian' sports is rather long. It's unlikely that any of them would like to be defeated in front of their fans, so coaches and sporting heads will need to work hard in the next two and a half years. Moreover, alongside sports sites in Minsk, there are also plans to use other sports facilities for the competitions.

By Dmitry **Komashko**

Competently

First Deputy Vice President of the National Olympic Committee: 'To save, but not in terms of quality':

The European Games are a serious challenge for our country, so each of us will need to work hard. However, we aren't afraid of it. During the EOC General Assembly, there was a special working group, comprising representatives of the European Olympic Committees, and we have established subdivisions that will be responsible for various stages of preparation. Information collection regarding the assistance we'll need from the European Olympic Committees has begun. In the near future, we'll have to agree a list of sports that will be presented at the Games in Belarus.

Do you have an idea which sports these will be?

I can only say that we'll be forming a list preceding from the infrastructure that has been already constructed in the country. This will enable us to seriously minimise expenses for the organisation of the Games. It is likely that we'll take several sports from those which aren't part of the Olympic programme but are traditionally successful for Belarusians, e.g. acrobatics or sambo.

How will the organisation of the ECO General Assembly in Belarus help solve sporting issues?

Over the last few days, Belarus has acquired enough close friends in the sphere of sport. Now, during discussion of 'Belarusian' issues, they will be recollecting impressions of their visit to Minsk. And we won't have to assure them that Belarus is able to accept competitions at the highest level. Moreover, the Assembly in Minsk resulted in an agreement regarding the promotion of Belarusian representatives to the governing bodies of international federations.



▶ Within a reasonable balance

Inflation to the end of the year will not exceed 12 percent, the Belarusian Rouble exchange rate is stable and there have been tangible results in obtaining external funding from the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Finance Corporation: these optimistic statements were made at the 13th International Forum on Banking Information Technologies — BankIT'2016

The Chairman of the Board of the National Bank of Belarus — Pavel Kallaur — is optimistic. “The course is based on the market situation and we can see no tendencies which would negatively impact on the country’s balance of payments,” he says. The population’s trust in the Belarusian Rouble credibility is returning — as confirmed by the growth of Rouble deposits. According to Mr. Kallaur, the calculations of predicted figures for the next year are based on issues of macroeconomic balance. Although, of course, ‘the factor of possible growth of regulated prices on tariffs for housing and communal services has also been taken into consideration.’

The issue of subsidies of communal services is on the top of the agenda at talks with the International Monetary Fund for a new lending programme. “The IMF programme with Belarus should be specific — considering the country’s specific development,” Alexander Zaborovsky — the First Deputy Minister of Economy, stresses. He adds that the fundamental indicators of socio-economic development should be considered.

▶ Forensic specialists preserving evidence

Crime scenes to reveal more, thanks to State Forensic Committee of Belarus prototype to preserve evidence

The director of Belsudexperto-bespechenie, Maxim Mishchenko, tells us, “We’ve developed a wide range of new packing materials for storage and transportation of, for example, money, clothes, handsets, system units, weaponry and other items bearing traces of crime. Of course, the package should

be sealed. Belarus is the only country in the former Soviet Union to launch production of packaging materials for this purpose, and specialists from Russia are already showing interest.”

The Head of the Forensics Department of the Investigation Committee of Belarus, Vladimir Shishko, believes that the innovation will help investigating officers and experts. He explains, “Probably, we’ll start to use them in the near future. Physical evidence found at a crime scene helps us develop a clear case theory in the course of investigation. Thus, it’s vital to preserve such evidence. The development of this area is of particular importance.”



VITALIY GIL

▶ No barriers expected

Roadmap to be drafted to improve the Belarus investment climate

Some of the suggestions discussed at the ‘Broadening the Horizons: Investment, Finance, Development’ Forum recently held in Minsk will be included in the roadmap development. “This document can be used by the Government to correct certain aspects of economic policy,” Natalia Nikandrova — the Director of the National Agency of Investment and Privatisation of Belarus — says.

The roadmap will include proposals by private businesses and

foreign investors on ways to create additional favourable conditions for the attraction and utilisation of investments and the elimination of barriers hindering investment activities.

The ‘Broadening the Horizons: Investment, Finance, Development’ Forum was hosted by Minsk in late September. Experts discussed strategies for attracting foreign investments to Belarus, prospects for investment cooperation with the financial institutions of the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and China, and the opportunities for involving American investors in Belarusian projects. Other topical issues were also in focus.



► The shortest path found

New page opened in the history of friendship between the two border cities — Grodno and Augustów

The Chairman of the City Executive Committee, Mechislaw Goy, and Mayor Wojciech Walulik have signed an agreement for cooperation on cross-border projects. Interestingly, the Polish guests arrived in Grodno by kayaks. The Mayor appreciated the complexity and

beauty of the route: he is personally a multiple Polish Kayak champion.

“The cross-border project — which we plan to realise jointly, envisages the construction of bridges over the Nemman (in Grodno) and the Netta (in Augustow) for cyclists and people travelling on foot,” Mr. Goy explains. “This will reduce the distance between our two border towns. In future, a conference will be held in Lublin: Poland, Belarus and Lithuania, where a working group will be established. The Mayor’s visit is another positive stage in the process of approval by the European Commission. Augustow’s Aquatic Sports School is thriving and we can establish something similar at our Grodno reservoir in future.”

Visiting the Belarusian part of the Avgustovsky Canal by foreigners without visas opens up great opportunities for the realisation of joint projects in various spheres — such as tourism, health, sports and education.



YURIY MOZOLEVSKIY

► Frying pan ignites

It was always clear that the Belarusian Autumn. Potato. Fruits. Vegetables festival would be a success, especially as it was organised by the Scientific and Practical Centre of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus for Potato, Vegetable and Fruit Growing

Thousands of people came to buy potatoes, with dozens of varieties to choose from. There were seeds for planting, apples, beets, onion and seedlings, yet the centre of attention was a huge cast-iron frying pan 3 m in diameter and weighing 2.5 tonnes. It can hold 380 kg of delicious Belarusian Skarb potatoes, which go wonderfully with gooseberry and cranberry wine, or fresh apple juice!

Visitors were able to read about each variety, becoming familiar with machinery for planting, digging, drying and packing potato tubers.

Naturally, representatives of the Russian market were present. Our Union scientific and technical programme for the innovative development of potato production ends this year, as the deputy general director for scientific work at the Scientific and Practical Centre, Vadim Makhanko, notes. He tells us, “Following our programme, we’ve already chosen varieties of potato for growing in Belarus and Russia, which are great for making chips, instant mashed potato powder, and for vacuum packaging. They’re now being tested.”

► Contact with buyers

New bookstore in Grodno ready to speak to customers five languages

Sellers at Grodno bookstore ‘Bagach’ can speak to customers five languages, including English, Italian and Portuguese. Located in Grodno’s historical centre, the shop aims to supply tourists, as well as locals, specialising in Belarusian-language literature, as well as stationery and souvenirs.

Visitors can use electronic services and have a cup of coffee, make photocopies or print texts, as well as charge their mobile devices: a host of essential services in our busy lifestyle.

“The bookstore, situated in the city’s historical centre, where tourists are common, is focused on offering knowledge of Belarusian and foreign languages, enabling us to serve

foreign customers,” asserts the Director of Grodnooblsouzpechat, Pavel Skrobko. He notes that this is the first such shop in Grodno but that the enterprise aims to develop the idea across a chain of stores.





YURIY MOZOLEVSKIY

Building on foundations

State visit of the Belarusian President to the People's Republic of China highlights our trade-economic and investment cooperation, including the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park, in the Smolevichi District. We report in progress how are things onsite, this being not the first material on the construction.

Visiting the site where the future city is to be built, we can see progress in construction. However, the number of Park residents

fell recently, with Chinese Juxin Malt's refused permission to construct its factory on its originally earmarked site. A different location within the Great Stone Park is now sought. The Chief Engineer of the Industrial Park Development Company, Alexey Semenenkov, tells us, "Malting is always accompanied by a large number of birds. No

matter how up-to-date and technically advanced an enterprise may be, it's impossible to avoid a sharp increase in the bird population in the neighbourhood. This would be dangerous, due to the close proximity of the Minsk-2 National Airport runway. Currently, the investor is waiting for a new site meeting all requirements, which may be found

beyond phase one of our Great Stone construction.”

Great Stone has already begun to acquire its future city features: streets are taking shape and, if you compare the landscape with the projected development plan, you can easily see what’s coming.

At the entrance, immediately by the trailers where the project-developer is sited, Minsky Avenue starts. In about half a kilometer, it crosses Beijing Avenue. Future streets have been outlined, with tentative names: Gorizontalnaya (Horizontal), Vertikalnaya (Vertical) and Proektiruemaya (Projected). Later, they’ll acquire more appropriate names.

completion deadline is approaching. The purification process, cleaning water for reuse, is something of which we can be truly proud. It uses technologies never applied in Belarus before, allowing water to meet fishery standards (i.e. of better quality than is found in Minsk residents’ taps).

Residents of Smolevichi and Sokol and the surrounding dacha condominium were initially concerned, but the interceptor is obviously better than those in Minsk, and has huge capacity. It may even be merged with the interceptors at Smolevichi and Minsk-2 National Airport.

The First Deputy Director General of the JSCC Industrial Park Develop-

on the roof of the administrative centre, which is still under construction. The building is low, with only eight floors, but has a great view of the large construction site.

“Some are evaluating the Great Stone Park by the number of participants but we’re measuring it in hectares coming into operation. So far, 92 out of 350 hectares of phase one have been leased out: nearly one-third. For us, this is the most important criterion,” notes Mr. Koroteev.

On the other side of Beijing Avenue is an area under the responsibility of China Merchants Group. The Chinese state multifaceted conglomerate has begun large-scale activities, per-

At the entrance to the Park, there is a huge banner with the words of Chinese reformer Deng Xiaoping, written in two languages: ‘Time is money, efficiency is life.’ The Park residents are making them their motto

The roads are very wide, with road signs, and lawns alongside. There are even bus stops, although the plates (where route numbers, arrival times and traffic intervals will be written) remain empty. The Park is yet to gain public transport.

In fact, the biggest changes are taking place underground, including communication lines. Confusion over who should be responsible for constructing this Great Stone infrastructure delayed the project for a long time but a 110 kW substation has been built, supplying power to the future city. Six artesian wells are complete, to supply water, although they are yet to come into operation. The interceptor

ment Company, Kirill Koroteev, joined me



A LANDMARK PROJECT

fectly illustrating China's ambitions on the world stage. There is a trade and exhibition complex, a business and shopping centre, a hotel, and huge warehouses, with a vast open area for containers.

Chinese businessmen plan to take full advantage of EAEC privileges. To promote the business environment, the Great Stone Park will be designated as a port, enabling faster processing of goods, with customs clearance and other services to hand. Goods arriving at Minsk-2 National Airport for further movement beyond the Union will be exempt from customs duties.

So far, eight companies have signed up as residents but it's just the tip of the iceberg. About fifty more companies are eager to join the special economic zone, and some agreements will take shape soon, with investors choosing their site, and preparing technical documentation to launch construction.

"It's easy to become a Park resident. You just need to sign an agreement with the Park administration," Mr.

Koroteev says. "According to legislation, from the registration date, you become exempt from income tax for ten years, with the rate reduced by 50 percent in the next ten years. For this reason, some enterprises aren't rushing to sign papers, wishing to begin closer to production startup."

Signing an agreement after enterprise startup is also possible. At the construction phase, an investor lacks certain benefits. It's a case of deciding whether to incur expenses during the construction phase or the turnover one.

Great Stone has been repeatedly criticised for its slow uptake of investors. If the original Government plan had been fulfilled in time, the Park would now be half full and operational. In fact, infrastructure is still being developed, including the walls of future enterprises. Next year, residential construction will launch.

An important agreement was signed during the President's visit to China, envisaging annual allocation of technical and economic assistance

to the project (on top of arrangements from earlier on).

"This memorandum is a system document. In the first quarter of each year, directions and specific projects requiring financing will be determined and agreed by both parties. Priorities have also been determined for social and housing infrastructure. It's been decided to build a kindergarten and a clinic," Mr. Koroteev notes.

Chinese entrepreneurs have been slow starters but are now moving apace. At the entrance to the Park, there is a huge banner with the words of Chinese reformer Deng Xiaoping, written in two languages: 'Time is money, efficiency is life.' The Park residents are making them their motto.

In addition to China Merchants Group, Chengdu Xinzhu Silk Road Development Corporation has begun construction of a super-capacitor factory. Zoomlion Corporation has kicked off and the Park is building production and administrative complexes for Huawei, ZTE and Yoto.

By Alexander **Benkovsky**



Housing construction at Great Stone will begin in 2017, following these plans

Experts see positive practices



For the first time, the IRRS has visited Belarus. IAEA experts have inspected infrastructure relating to our nuclear and radiation safety at the new power station and have concluded that Belarus is meeting its obligations to ensure nuclear and radiation safety. They have called Belarus one of the most advanced countries among 'nuclear beginners'!

“More than twenty experts, headed by Petteri Tiippana, the head of mission and Director General of the Finnish Agency on Nuclear Safety (STUK), have comprehensively studied various aspects of our regulating activity,” Zoya Trafimchik, Deputy Head of Gosatomnadzor, explains. Experts with the mission studied self-evaluation of Belarus and inspected the construction site of the nuclear power station, as well as the Joint Institute for Power and Nuclear Research at Sosny, the Republican Clinical Hospital of Medical Rehabilitation, and the enterprises 'Isotope Technologies' and 'Ekores'.

The experts were engaged in assessing the 'establishment of positive practices', looking at successful experience for onward recommendation to other countries. Two such practices

were noticed in Belarus: strong and effective mechanisms of coordination of work and the organisation of the Department for Nuclear and Radiation Safety of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, with its innovative mechanisms.

The experts were impressed by our decision to give young experts the

important task of sharing knowledge with new recruits. As a result, the IAEA named Belarus one of the most advanced countries among 'nuclear beginners'.

Meanwhile, the team has recommended that constant support be given, and that questions raised in the own report of Belarus be considered further. Petteri Tiippana believes in self-criticism, saying, “Standard requirements need to be updated and improved, so that regulating body and operational organisations can react rapidly in difficult situations.”

He continues, “There’s still much work to do, and it’s necessary to be ready. We can see the many directions in which Belarus is already working. We hope to encourage relevant state bodies involved in the launch of the nuclear station to participate in improving systems successfully.”



The IAEA: Belarus is one of the most advanced countries among 'nuclear beginners'

Hurry to do good

This year, the United Nations celebrates its 71st anniversary. Despite all the challenges of modernity, the UN continues to work in Belarus and all over the world thanks to the commitment and broad support of its members.

Last year, we worked hard to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations and the adoption of sustainable development goals (SDGs), but beginning with this year, we will make more effort to implement our plans. Our task is to make sure that no one is left out in the fulfilment of this important mission. After all, we have a unique opportunity to eradicate poverty, achieve economic and social reforms and strengthen environmental protection and the protection of human rights, peace and security on the planet. The time has come for global action. Perhaps we are the last generation which still has a chance to save our planet.

The new Sustainable Development Goals are interrelated and interdependent. Therefore, we cannot approach them selectively. Before the advent of these 17 Goals, the United Nations were based on three pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. Today, 71 years later, it's clear that sustainable peace and security is impossible without development. Sustainable de-



Sanaka Samarasinha

velopment is impossible without peace and security. And you cannot achieve one or the other without respect for human dignity and human rights.

The same rule applies to the SDGs:

- Economic growth is impossible without good health and qualitative education;
- No sustainable urban development is possible without responsible consumption, clean energy and protecting our environment on land and at sea;
- Without the fight against climate change through innovation and the building of sustainable infrastructure, we cannot be sure that even the developed countries won't face hunger and poverty in the future;
- Without strong institutions, peace, justice and equality, none of the above can be realised.

Combating discrimination, stigma and inequality and the creation of conditions for the most vulnerable populations to have access to basic services are the moral and pragmatic imperatives for all of us. In other words, we need to understand that different situations affect peoples' lives in different ways. If we treat equally those who are in a different position, we will contribute to preserving discrimination. We need to develop approaches suited to different groups.

At the same time, we must strive to create favourable conditions for people with different abilities to live — fully realising their personal potential. Let us not forget that Steve Jobs' father was a refugee from Syria, that one of the smartest people on the planet — Stephen Hawking — lives in a paralysed body, that Marie Curie and Joan of Arc paid a high price for the fact that they were women. There are so many talented people who still work with us and our children while being infected with HIV.

That's why all of us — state bodies, public associations, the private sector, our international partners, the UN team in the Republic of Belarus — have launched the InclusiveBelarus campaign. Although our joint efforts to ensure sustainable development for all have not begun on a single set day and won't end until the goals are met, we hope that nobody will remain behind during this campaign and that nobody would stay indifferent. We hope that our campaign:



The #InclusiveBelarus concert dedicated to the 71th birthday of the United Nations Organisation. UN Resident Coordinator Sanaka Samarasinha says the greeting speech at the opening

- will help people to see the world in which they live somewhat differently;
- will help people to look at each other differently;
- will help people to look at themselves from a new angle.

In the end, we will be able to use the vitality of the human spirit which is the driving force for innovation and inclusion.

Finally, if we are going to save the humanity and the planet, teamwork is essential and imperative. The world is getting smaller, and it's almost impossible today to distinguish global challenges from national or regional problems.

- When an iceberg melts in the Arctic, another island disappears in the Maldives;
- When a bat infects a person in Liberia, Ebola fever appears in Amsterdam;

- When a military conflict disrupts people's homes and families in Syria, we are witnessing a conflict in the streets of Paris;
- When there is a drop in the stock market in New York, the next day people are getting poorer in China.

Countries need to deal with problems that transcend territorial boundaries — far more often than it has ever been. Meanwhile, positive changes are coming but it also leads to tensions between sovereignty and internationalism. Moreover, people are beginning to fear the pace and direction of such changes.

This is the challenge of the modern world faced by the United Nations and its member states. How can we transform international cooperation and interdependence into positive examples and reality? How to make sure that the

outside world has become a source of prospects and potential, rather than a source of danger or problems? How can we achieve the ideal goal in this interdependent world: to ensure that ultimately good decisions taken in the international arena are in the national interests of states? How should we organise our own tasks so that we can effectively solve the problems of this interdependent world?

Therefore, at the end of the present introduction, let me recall our collective slogan of the past year. At present, it is becoming even more topical since climate change, conflicts, terrorism, organised crime and communicable diseases threaten to destroy our global society.

With strong United Nations, we have a chance to become part of the better world.

By Sanaka **Samarasinha**
UN Resident Coordinator in Belarus

Since 1992, almost from the moment of the establishment of the independent Belarusian state, the United Nations have been working in Belarus. Their work in our country covers a wide range of issues: climate change, environmental protection, energy, migration, economic development, human trafficking, democratic governance, human rights and more. Thanks to impressive joint projects and productive cooperation for the past decade, it's possible to speak of the impressive progress achieved in the country.

At present, 8 agencies of the UN country team operate in Belarus. These include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV / AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UN Department of Public Information (UN DPI). All of them — in addition to the agencies which have no country representatives but also work for Belarus — are a part of the UN Framework Programme (UNDAF), aimed to provide assistance to Belarus for its development in 2016-2020. This Framework Programme is the second document defining a joint strategy for the activities of the UN system organisations in the Republic of Belarus. This document was prepared by the UN country team, jointly with the Government, civil society organisations, the private sector, vulnerable groups, national and international partners — with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights in Belarus and improving the quality of life of its residents and citizens.



Express testing for HIV at the exhibition dedicated to the UN Day and launch of #InclusiveBelarus campaign in the Palace of the Republic

The general direction of activity and cooperation between the UN system organisations and the Government for the next five years is defined by the following priorities:

- Inclusive, timely and accountable state management.
- Sustainable economic development.
- Preservation of favourable environment and sustainable use of natural potential — based on 'green' economy principles.

- Sustainable development of human capital: health protection, education, social inclusion and protection and integrated post-Chernobyl development.

The Framework is based on the SDGs adopted last September. All organisations of the United Nations country team work to implement them. To learn more about UN activity, let's focus on some of its agencies and organisations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assists develop-

ing countries in the mobilisation and effective use of aid. In the context of all its activities, it assists in the protection of human rights and women empowerment. The United Nations Development Programme, which has been working in Belarus since 1992, focuses on aid to the country in search of solutions to problems in the following areas: democratic governance; poverty reduction; crisis prevention and overcoming; energy and environment; HIV AIDS; expansion of social influence of women and cross-border cooperation.

The UNDP in Belarus works on the following themes:

- economic development and social protection;
- energy saving and environment protection;
- preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis;
- effective and accountable governance and human security.

In its work, the UNDP uses the resources of Belarusian society, especially the capacity of government institutions at the national and state levels, civil society organisations and the private sector. The UNDP is also seeking to attract more foreign aid to assist Belarus in dealing with these problems.

The Belarusian population is 9.5 million people, including almost 2 m children. The overall objective of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is to protect their rights. Most efforts of the organisation focus on the most vulnerable groups: children under 8, those with disabilities, those who are left without parental care, in addition to adolescents in conflict with the law and children and women who’ve experienced violence and/or witnessed it.

In 1997, the UNICEF Office opened in Minsk. In December 2007, the basic agreement on cooperation between Belarus and UNICEF was signed in New York. Belarus has repeatedly served as a member of the UNICEF governing body: the Executive Council.

Belarusian cooperation with UNICEF is carried out based on a long-term programme. At present, a country programme for 2016-2020 is being realised, based on national priorities of the Republic of Belarus in the field of social development, health and education.

Among the priority areas, there are:

- safe and supportive environment for the child;
- realisation of rights of children with special needs and disabilities;
- favourable environment to reduce vulnerability of young people and their full participation in decision-making;
- monitoring, studying the situation of children and strengthening partnership for realisation of children’s rights.

UNICEF seeks to ensure social equality for all children — no matter where they live and who their parents are. To achieve a global goal is possible only in the distant future, and together with partners who share the mission of UNICEF. In this regard, it’s important to work constantly and systematically.

Every day, wars on our planet force thousands of people to flee their homes. Helping displaced people to build a life in safety is a mission of the UNHCR — the UN refugee agency.

In Belarus, the UNHCR has been operating for over 20 years. In this time, the country has become a new home for representatives of over 60 nationalities; most of them are citizens of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Georgia and Syria.

In total, the number of people who are of concern of the UNHCR in Belarus — these are people who applied for protection, a refugee status or subsidiary protection, as well as stateless persons — reaches 7,720. Working in close cooperation with the Government, civil and private sectors, the UN refugee agency is engaged in providing legal and financial aid, in addition to assistance with education, health care, employment, and general adaptation of IDPs.

The office of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was established in 1996. This year, the IOM celebrates its 20th anniversary in the Republic of Belarus, as well as the official accession to the United Nations family at the global level. During its work in Belarus, the IOM has implemented several projects in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Border Committee and the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus and several NGOs for combating human trafficking, integrated border management, as well as providing direct assistance to migrants, including



Planting a tree dedicated to the 71th birthday of the UN and #InclusiveBelarus campaign in Loshytsa Park

support in the field of voluntary return to their homeland.

This year, the IOM has also launched a campaign: Mom X. It promotes safe migration and public involvement in the fight against exploitation and trafficking. Migration is one of the key aspects of sustainable development, which the countries will reach by 2030.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is the directing and coordinating agency for health within the United Nations system. It plays the leading role in solving global health problems, drawing up the agenda for research in the field of health, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring the health situation and assessing the dynamics of change.

The WHO's country office in Belarus opened in Minsk on April 1st, 1994 — to support the country in improving the health care system and the basic directions of public health. The role of the WHO is to respond to requests for advice and technical assistance in support of decision-making to promote the sustainable development of health and health promotion in general.

With the assistance of the WHO experts, a concept was developed and the smoke-free World Hockey Championship was held.

As part of the programme focusing on the fight against non-communicable diseases, two assessment missions have been carried out: the mission of the United Nations inter-agency task for the prevention of non-communicable diseases and their control (July 2014) and the WHO mission aimed at the country's health system assessment to achieve the best results in the field of non-communicable diseases.

In September 2015, a mission on joint assessment of needs to maintain the process of implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in Belarus was held. Jointly with the WHO experts, a



Exhibition dedicated to sustainable development goals in the Palace of the Republic on the UN Day

review of the Belarusian health system was prepared in 2013.

Since 2016, the WHO regional office participates in the implementation of the project Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases, Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and Support of the Health System Modernisation in the Republic of Belarus (BELMED) — funded by the European Union in cooperation with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The project is aimed at improving the effectiveness of government programmes and actions of state and local authorities in reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases, health promotion and improvement of quality of medical services, as well as increase of public activity in the promotion of local initiatives to improve health.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) began its activities in Belarus in 1994. Each of its initiatives responds to the global goal: ensuring the right of every woman, man and child for a healthy life and equal opportunities for its preservation. The UNFPA carries out its activities in the country programme, which is based on national priorities and within the organisation's mandate. The UNFPA is working closely with the Government

of the Republic of Belarus, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, international and national organisations and experts.

The UNFPA's mission is to create the world where every pregnancy is desired, every birth is safe, and the potential of all young people is implemented.

In 2016, it launched a 24-month project to strengthen national capacities in the field of combating gender-based violence (with a focus on domestic violence) in the Republic of Belarus. The project is being realised with support of the UNFPA and non-governmental organisations: NGO Gender Perspectives, NGO Belarusian Young Women Christian Association, in partnership with the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus, the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the National Centre for Legislative and Legal Research of the Republic of Belarus, the Minsk City Executive Committee, the Grodno City Executive Committee, and the Kobrin District Executive Committee.

The project objectives are to improve legislation in the field of combat-



ing domestic violence in accordance with international obligations of the Republic of Belarus and international standards; improvement of practical mechanisms to respond to domestic violence; the formation of intolerant attitudes towards gender-based violence (with a focus on domestic violence).

The Support to Realisation of the National Programme of Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus project of international technical assistance is currently being realised. It aims to improve the monitoring and evaluation of population policies, as well as the system of demographic education in the country. The project is implemented with financial and technical support of the Russian Federation, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The national executing agency is the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Jointly with other UN agencies, the UNFPA is also involved in the implementation of the EU-funded EU-UN project: Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases, Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles and Support to the Health System Modernisation in the Republic of Belarus (BELMED).

The UNAIDS defines, develops and serves as a major source of international practice to determine the ef-

fective and ethical policies, strategies and preventive treatment; assist in and support the relevant research to develop new methods to combat HIV/AIDS. It provides technical expertise and advice to the public and non-governmental organisations in Belarus. The UNAIDS advocates ensuring that all necessary resources are available for comprehensive activities in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The UN Department of Public Information provides citizens of Belarus with reliable information, also sharing data on efforts taken by the United Nations in the field of peace and sustainable development. The Department translates and publishes information materials on the activities of the United Nations and is engaged in further dissemination, as well as provision of services to visitors to obtain information about the United Nations.

These agencies and organisations of the United Nations team play a key role in the United Nations' activities in Belarus. Their activity is directly related to the implementation of the UN Framework Programme for 2016-2020 and the SDGs until 2030. Repeating the words of the UN Resident Coordinator in Belarus, our world is getting smaller and we are all dependent on each other. Therefore, we need to look broader to address

contemporary problems. Everything is interconnected. For example, problems caused by climate change and the promotion of sustainable development are two complementary areas of work, since sustainable development cannot be achieved without implementing measures to mitigate the effects of climate change. In their turn, many of the SDGs include measures to address the main drivers of climate change. Like all other goals, they require an integrated approach to their solution.

This year, the United Nations intends to return to the region to talk once again about the agenda of sustainable development and the goal aiming to emphasise the importance of reducing inequalities. The #InclusiveBelarus campaign leaves nobody on the sidelines in achieving the SDGs. The campaign has three main objectives:

- to share information on existing discrimination, barriers and inequality;
- to overcome the stigma and stereotypes of vulnerable groups;
- to provide a platform for dialogue.

During the #InclusiveBelarus campaign, everyone can learn more about life stories and problems faced by people living with disabilities, the elderly, children and youth, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, women, migrants, refugees, people with various types of addictions, residents of remote settlements for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups.

The campaign was officially launched on the United Nations Day: October 24th. It will run until December 10th. The schedule is ready for each regional centre: Grodno (November 21st), Brest (November 24th), Gomel (November 30th), Mogilev (November 2nd), Vitebsk (November 6th) and Minsk (November 9-10th). More information is available on www.inclusivebelarus.by.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

Various countries take various approaches, but we know that economic success is impossible without scientific development. Applied and fundamental science matter equally. When electricity was discovered, nobody realised the applications. It took several centuries to invent lamps! With this in mind, we must ask what our scientists need to ensure productive work. How much are we prepared to invest, and what results do we hope for?

When there is true interest



Young scientist and scholar of the President Fund Natalya Nadyozhnaya with postgraduate students of the department Andrey Gnidenko and Yegor Chernov

Since the beginning of the century, our country has been reforming its scientific sphere, and has acted correctly in my view. The organisational structure of science has become more

compact, while science itself is now more focused on the needs of the state and society. The National Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Agricultural Sciences have united and the NAS's structure has brought together several concerns. Closer cooperation has been launched with medical and practical scientific

centres. Even Russia — which boasts older scientific traditions — is following our direction.

Debate continues on the best direction for research and how it should be funded. I believe that fundamental studies must remain the priority, as it is true for the whole world. Fundamental re-

search is in the heart of science, as the pillar of all research.

A balanced scientific policy has produced achievements across various fields, from the experimental discovery of the Higgs boson [an elementary particle in the standard model of particle physics] to the creation of dozens of high-tech science and technology companies. My 'native' Institute of Physics (of the National Academy of Sciences) has given birth to such major companies as LOTIS, Solar, Holography Industry, The Magic of Light, LEMT and Cryptotech. The discovery of the Higgs boson is worthy of an independent conversation. Our coordinated team of two dozens scientists is now part of world science history. Jointly with Russian colleagues,

rare but has been a great success. Our scientists have proven worthy.

I'm convinced that we must progress from the current situation, especially in the delicate sphere of scientific activity. It's easy to destroy achievements while it's very difficult to restore them. Think of our scientific staff. In the past, we had to invite them from other Soviet cities, as we lived in one country. Now, such invitations are possible but are expensive. Accordingly, we need to train our own specialists; it's vital.

As regards the current state policy of funding science, one third of costs should be covered by the programme for research and another third from budget agreements — such as those entered into with the Foundation for Fundamental Research.

Debate continues on the best direction for research and how it should be funded. I believe that fundamental studies must remain the priority, as is true for the whole world. Fundamental research is in the heart of science, as the pillar of all research

they made crystals for sensors installed on detectors for the Large Hadron Collider. Belarusians also modelled and tested subsystems for the main detectors which registered the desired particle. These detectors and their sensors helped scientists discover the Higgs boson: a truly momentous scientific event.

I believe that applied research should be funded by the customer and/or the state. Grants are needed for basic research but it can be a challenge when it comes to applied studies. Our cooperation as part of major international projects — such as ATLAS and COMET — indicates that the experience and results obtained from fundamental research can be used for specific scientific and technological projects. For example, our Institute of Physics' nuclear scientists are developing a device. I've had the opportunity to lead this project using international funding. The case is

These also involve sci-tech programmes, as a part of which new technology is developed. The remaining third would include foreign contracts or direct contracts with our companies, for specific application.

When money is available, specialists are found. However, this is not always the determining aspect. From my experience of working at the NAS Institute of Physics, I can say that public interest in science is essential. When we participate in major international projects, such as relating to the Large Hadron Collider, and the COMET project (being jointly realised with Japan, finding responses that lie beyond the standard model), young scientists demonstrate sincere enthusiasm. This confirms that money is not the basis for true scientific interest, although it is important.

By Yuri **Kurochkin**,
Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences
and Chairman of the Physical Society

Reform sets new objectives

Prof. Mikhail Kovalev, Dean of the BSU Economics Department: 'Around 25 percent of Belarusian pensioners continue working, without creating tension on the labour market'



The pension reform has coincided with the economic crisis, whereby the 'compression' of world markets is making it difficult for many Belarusian enterprises to sustain sales. Employees are sometimes being laid off as a result, but crises never last long. Of course, the service industry, small businesses and high-tech enterprises tend to be the spheres which attract the younger generation more than the traditional industry.

The younger generation is being taught now to be independent and venture forth with innovative ideas, setting up new businesses after graduating from education. Courses such as 'Economics and Entrepreneurship' are very useful. In recent years, there has been imbalance in the educational system, with specialists sometimes failing to meet the real needs of the economy. There is an excess of economists and lawyers, forcing some to look for employment elsewhere, to the graduates' chagrin.

Young people need to choose their profession wisely, thinking of prospects in a practical manner, and focusing on spheres which currently lack enough personnel, such as programming. Export of computer services continues to grow.



In flight — without a pilot

VITALIY PIVOVARCHIK

Batch production of unmanned aircraft systems is established in Belarus, delivered to customers both in Belarus and abroad

Many people have heard of unmanned aircraft systems, seen them in pictures and videos, but what about close? A wide range of radio-controlled objects, including aircraft, are now commonplace. Belarusian students of aeromodelling also create excellent machines and robots that win prizes at exhibitions and competitions. In Minsk, there is a 'smart' (but still experimental) vacuum cleaner which not only cleans rooms, but also analyses the air for the presence of harmful gases and smoke and, in a case of danger, automatically contacts the rescue services. Talented

Minsk inventor Alexander Dubovitsky has now finished work on this multi-functional home help.

Nevertheless, flight controlled from the earth is something special. I remember, about five years ago, on one of the Black Sea beaches, we saw a small four-motor helicopter-drone. It was like a toy, however, under it was a video camera. It made striking pirouettes over the sea, following jet skis at close distance — it was breath-taking. While the most surprising moment is that when it returns, it hovers over the owner and then allows them to take it in their hands... All who came to investigate the noise of this 'dragonfly's' motor, were impressed. We will always be full of admiration for the miracles of technology, at any age.

Today, Belarus has many of these serious 'toys', and even manufactures them. They can fulfil a variety of tasks at the command of the operator. A year ago we first saw a beautiful plane, with two vertical stabilizers and a wingspan of over seven metres. It coincided with Turkmenistan hosting the creators of the aircraft (from Minsk), as well as journalists. At the beginning of December in Ashkhabad, there was a joint Belarus-Turkmen exhibition where various enterprises, manufacturers and universities introduced their goods and services. Large exhibits such as tractors, trailers, MAZ vehicles, truck cranes and agricultural machinery were placed on a platform near Sergi Koshgi Exhibition Palace. The unmanned aircraft

‘Burevestnik’ with the number ‘08’ onboard was very apropos in such a ‘technical company’. It is enough to show the modern hi-tech equipment produced by Belarus.

In Ashkhabad we also got acquainted with Yury Jatsyna, Director of Republican Unitary Enterprise ‘Research and Production Centre of Multipurpose Unmanned Aircraft Systems’ of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and Rustam Sindarov, one of the leading designers of the enterprise. Yury Frantsevich spoke to us directly next to the unmanned aircraft.

Yury Frantsevich, could you explain based on which academic institute your research and production centre was founded?

The Physics and Technology Institute of NAS of Belarus.

It is well known that many scientific developments by experts of this institute, even during the USSR, were used in manufacturing, including making of space machinery. We have considerable experience in modern times in the creation of Belarusian remote sensing systems. However, in our work we use

not only our experience, developments and devices made in the Physics and Technology Institute, but all the potential of Belarusian science from other research-and-production centres. Thus, we have a good base for the creation of Belarusian unmanned aircraft. At the Research and Production Centre of the Physics and Technology Institute, where the unmanned aircraft systems were developed, there was previously the Republican Unitary Enterprise entitled the ‘Research and Production Centre of Multipurpose Unmanned Aircraft Systems’ of NAS of Belarus, which continues development and

batch production of advanced technology products.

How many years have you been engaged in unmanned projects?

Not long, only since 2009. Our research and production centre was created to provide development and batch production of multipurpose unmanned vehicles of different classes. For this purpose, it was necessary to concentrate personnel potential and material and financial resources in one place. We had the difficult task of undertaking the necessary research and development work, organise the batch production and warranty servicing of unmanned aircraft and other robotic systems. Why do we need them? Using new equipment, it is possible to solve various topical tasks of social and economic development in Bela-



A ground station used to operate unmanned aircraft

rus. Our production is hi-tech, and it is also for export. At the beginning, we were making model samples for two years but since 2011 we began to fulfil the state five-year scientific and technical programme for the development of unmanned aircraft systems of different classes and components. We developed systems which provide video monitoring, monitoring of regions and objects, and can perform tasks in a radius of 25, 50, 70 and up to 300 kilometres depending on the aircraft type. The airship radius is 50 kilometres.

Is the airship also one of your interests?

Yes, we also work in this field successfully. However, in Ashkhabad we introduced the unmanned aircraft ‘Burevestnik’ which has a radius of up to 300 kilometres. We have developed it following the technical specification of the Ministry for Emergency Situations of Belarus. [It has now passed all phases of the qualifying state acceptance tests. With its help, the Ministry will be able to monitor different regions in the country]. ‘Burevestnik’ is equipped with a video and infrared system as well as a radiation level meter. It is possible to set different tasks: monitoring of fires, flooding and other emergency situations. The system can measure radiation levels, for example, in the Pripyat radiological reserve — in the Chernobyl zone. It is planned that the radionuclides map of Belarus will be updated using this technology.

Is there such a necessity?

We know that radionuclides were an issue in our region after the disaster in April, 1986 in different places. 30 years have passed. Because of fires, wind streams and natural watercourses, radionuclides are transferred.

We hope that our system will be useful for the Ministry for Emergency Situations, including the creation of maps of radiation levels in Belarus. Previously, such information (for example the map issued in the mid-90s), was collected using helicopters with bulky and expensive imported equipment which our experts rented. Based on the scientific and technical programmes described, we developed batch production of unmanned aircraft of different classes. Models of delivery to customers were created, as well as models of technical and warranty service and the training of operators. We developed into a high-grade aviation enterprise

with the whole research-and-production cycle: from the development of models to production, delivery and servicing.

Do you train experts for servicing the system? For this purpose, is it necessary to have higher technical education?

Customers send people who will exploit the systems to attend courses, and we are engaged in training these people. Usually these experts have a higher education, and good computer knowledge. Over a month-long course, we teach the operators all the necessary skills, considering the wishes of the customer. We deliver our equipment to Russia, Vietnam and Turkmenistan. For example, Rustam Sindarov also supervises the group for training operators. It means that he is engaged in these questions, too.

Approximately what percentage of Belarusian scientists are engaged in original development in your projects?

I often answer such questions. 65 percent of the price of unmanned aircraft is from developments by our workers, or using the production of Belarusian enterprises.”

Was the groundwork for Belarusian satellites adapted? After all, is there remote sensing of the Earth, too?

There is another approach, to look at the Earth from space. Though we have special cameras which carry out surveys of the region, they are different. However, the software for data processing developed by satellite experts (holding ‘Geoinformation Systems’) was useful for us. If we do the same survey of the region with

the help of unmanned aircraft, the materials are processed with the use of this software, and thus we receive a photo plan. This is needed for the construction of maps, topographical documents and so on. We work with other experts; our programmes are compatible. We use all information taken from space or the drones. If the sky is cloudy then work from space is impossible, as nothing can be seen. While drones can fly under the clouds and quickly survey what is needed.”

Who shows interest in the Turkmen market?

Experts of different branches of the economy are interested in the equipment. Border guards too: drones are good assistants in the protection of borders. Turkmenistan has coastal areas, remote sites in mountains and desert places: it is difficult to carry out ground patrols of the region but it is all visible from unmanned aircraft, with a resolution of up to 10 centimetres. It is possible to carry out supervision both day and night. The advantage is obvious: for example, border guards can avoid climbing mountains, as unmanned aircraft can fly there. In Syria, for example, any complicated situation or combat operation uses drones. If it is possible to avoid using people for tasks so as not to risk their lives, then such equipment is used. Unmanned aircraft are now seen everywhere.

Is it possible to say that your work today is at the level of world leading manufacturers? And is there batch production of unmanned aircraft in Belarus?

Yes, at our centre, we organise batch production. We provide the entire cycle unassisted: from development to warranty service. The technical characteristics of Belarusian unmanned aircrafts are at world level as far as we are aware, as cus-

We developed systems which provide video monitoring of regions and objects and can perform tasks in a radius of 25, 50, 70 and up to 300 kilometers depending on the aircraft type. The airship radius is 50 kilometers



Yury Yatsyna, Director of Research and Production Centre of Multipurpose Unmanned Aircraft Systems

SERGEY LOZLUK



Unmanned aviation complex 'Burevestnik' at the exhibition in Ashkhabad

tomers who buy unmanned aircraft in competition to ours, do not show them to us. However, we know their characteristics, and we can compare them. We believe we work at a similar world class level. In view of that our products sell well, there are arguments for the support of Belarusian equipment.

How do you see the future of unmanned aircraft in Belarus? In what spheres is it possible to apply them effectively today?

They are already applied both in military science, and for border protection. They are used by the services of the Ministry for Emergency Situations, for the protection of reserve sand in the struggle against poaching. It is no secret that in Belarusian remote villages there are those who are engaged in the illegal manufacturing of vodka. In just one flight our apparatus found up to five such manufacturers in the forest. Even old skilled poachers are now afraid to fish: after all, the drones fly constantly, including at night. Everything is visible from above; it is impossible to hide. The mere fact of their presence in the

Belarusian sky influences the psychology of people and helps to stop trespassing.

It is like an all-seeing eye...

Exactly... in earlier times only true believers were sure that someone was watching them and even now atheists realise that it is necessary to live following the law. If the wages of sin in the first case could be postponed, then now, according to information from the unmanned aircraft, measures can be taken immediately.

Could you tell us about Belarusian airships? What sizes are developed in Belarus? What load-carrying capacity do airships have? What do people use them for?

The principle of calculation of load-carrying capacity of airships is simple: one cubic metre of gel lifts one kilogramme of weight. Therefore, it all depends on the wishes of a customer. If a customer wants to lift 20 kg, then proceeding from this we calculate the volume of the gondola. We have developed two types of airships within the limits of the state programme. The hull of one airship is compact: 32 cubic metres, fitting

into a garage for lorries. While at the request of a Russian customer we developed an airship with a hull volume of 62 cubic metres. It rises, and fulfils surveillance tasks: people are seen at up to 3 kilometres. A big question is the load-carrying capacity: whether it is comparable with cars.

Are airships batch-produced in Belarus?

Yes, and it is a very effective means for the protection of reserves. For example, in large forests, if a drone moves with a speed of 65-70 kilometres per hour it is impossible to see everything in summer. When there is no foliage it is a different story: from November to April. Airships are useful for supervising animals, for calculating numbers. They do not need much storage space, the most expensive item during the operation of the airships is helium. It can be lost during pumping from the airship to the cylinder and vice versa. When in a reserve, the airship is stored in a shed, then it is taken out and suspended for 2-5 hours or for the time needed in the necessary places and then returned to its shed. The Berezina reserve lost a herd of

By the way



■ Several Belarusian enterprises work on projects for the creation of unmanned aircraft systems and their components. Thus, in 2012 it was the first time the Belarusian air military unmanned aircraft 'Grif-1' was launched. It was created at the 558th aircraft repair plant in Baranovichi. The chief executive of many projects on the 'unmanned theme' which provides also the cooperation of different enterprises is 'AGAT — control systems', the administration company of the holding 'Geoinformation Systems'. According to publications in the mass-media, the 558th aircraft repair plant creates the frame of unmanned aircraft. The scientific and technical centre 'LEMT' of the BelOMO association improves the optical system of video surveillance.

The institute of physics named after B.I. Stepanov of NAS Belarus works on a video surveillance system in difficult meteorological conditions. Experts of the research-and-production unitary enterprise 'ATOMTEX' create equipment for radiation and chemical supervision. The Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant is also involved in projects: it issues a special chassis for ground control stations and the transportation of the flying machines.

It is also remarkable that the software both for aircraft and ground control stations is created by Belarusian programmers.

wild aurochs, but if they'd had an airship, and the aurochs had collars with chips, then an airship would have flown, collected signals and specified the aurochs' location on the map. The Berezina reserve is a difficult place for supervising animals. Around Palik lake for example, there are dozens of kilometres of bogs around: one cannot reach the place on foot.

Perhaps the traffic police are interested in airships?

They have a simpler solution: if there is a difficult site then it is possible to mount a camera on the pole. The traffic police can do without our help.

Do Turkmen experts show any interest in Belarusian airships?

Yes, we have received expressions of interest from them. For them it is important to monitor and estimate the difficult situation on the border with Afghanistan.

Is there any prospect for tourism and excursions using airships? For example, to fly over Yelnya bog: huge spaces of beauty ...

While the beauty of airships and drones is that there is no such necessity to fly. Lifting people into the air is another task, as there are considerable restrictions. Our unmanned aircraft is designed to work with equipment. The main thing is that unmanned aircraft should not collide with manned aircraft.

Afterword

After our acquaintance with unmanned aircraft and its founders in Ashkhabad we were interested to see what our colleagues write on the subject. Soon after the exhibition in Ashkhabad, the newspaper 'Belarusian Market' reminded readers that flight of 'Burevestnik' to Ashkhabad was not casual. In 2013, after negotiations with the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko made a statement: Belarusian enterprises will deliver unmanned aircraft to this country and are even ready to develop their assembly there. The newspaper informed its readers that 'unmanned Burevestnik aircraft capable of fulfilling scout-attack tasks was shown during the exhibition. Production of the drone is already organised at their local enterprises'.

In the same publication, it was described how Belarus and Vietnam also have an agreement about unmanned aircraft regarding deliveries of items already in production and their joint manufacture.

At the end of June of 2016, BelTA informed us about details of cooperation with Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan is interested both in unmanned aircraft with a radius of action of 290 km and in Belarusian airships. Batch products were delivered to the country; hence batch production of Belarusian equipment is developed there. For this purpose, Belarus transferred all licences, processing equipment and documentation. The 'Burevestnik' seen in Ashkhabad had 290 km radius of action. While Yury Yatsyna informed the correspondent that NAS of Belarus developed a series of unmanned aircraft systems of mini-class under the name 'Busel': they can be used for monitoring the region and objects. The radius of action of such devices is 25-70 kilometres.

By Ivan and Valentina Zhdanovich

No secrets between partners

Experts from Kazakhstan, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Switzerland praise Belarusian colleagues' participation in the international scientific-practical conference



Committee Chairman Andrey Shved notes that modern technologies and research methods are enhancing the role of forensic science in detecting and preventing crimes. He explains, "A medical examiner plays an important role in establishing the truth in any proceeding. Shortcomings in their work could play a negative role. Therefore, we strive to improve the quality of our research, using the latest technologies and techniques."

Summing up the results of the international forum, the Committee Deputy Chairman, Yuri Ovsiyuk, tells us that, from the next year, our forensic scientists may begin using computer and magnetic resonance imaging in research. He notes, "Our Swiss colleagues have shared this experience with us. Ukrainian experts also boast good developments. I've worked twenty years in the field of forensic medicine, and I can say that, in recent years, we've been seriously improving our material and technical base (ever since the Committee was established). In the past three years, we've managed to unite and train specialists to deal with all problems. Reviews from our foreign colleagues are definitely flattering but this is the result of tremendous work and efficient organisation of our expertise within a single state agency."

By Lyudmila **Gladkaya**

Foreign guests are admiring the position of Belarus as the only former Soviet Union republic to establish an independent State Committee of Forensic Examinations. Leading experts in the field of forensic science and representatives of enforcement agencies, academic institutions and medical organisations have praised the quality of equipment used and prompt response, having spent two days looking at the state of the forensic medical examination service of Belarus.

Direct speech

■ **Director of the Centre for Forensic Medicine, under Kazakhstan's Ministry of Justice, Ahmetkali Dzhardemov:**

Our centres of forensic medicine and forensic examination operate under the Ministry of Justice. We've yet to form a single service as our Belarusian colleagues have done. Your experience will prove useful to us.

■ **Director of the Russian Institute of Forensic Examinations, Professor Yelena Rossinskaya, an Honoured Worker of Sciences of Russia:**

In developing judicial expertise, Belarusian experience in uniting expert institutions under a single state body is an example of theory and practice developing in a single legal field. I've been struck by how quickly an expert assessment can be given: no more than 30 days are needed in over 90 percent of cases, thanks mostly to well-organised research processes.

Looking upon beauty and immersing oneself in history

Those keen on beautiful landscapes and architecture of various eras will enjoy a journey around the circle of towns comprising Gomel-Vetka-Chechersk-Krasny or Bereg-Turov-Mozyr-Yurovichi-Rechitsa-Loyev-Gomel, as well as simply visiting the region and its surroundings

Visiting the capital of religious exiles

Vetka is one of the most unusual towns of Belarus, being founded in the 17th century by religious exiles who came to escape persecution in Russia. They were considered to be skilful craftsmen, and there is much to admire in the carved shutters and frames while walking the quiet streets.

The history of the town and its way of life is presented in the Vetka Museum of Ancient Faith and Belarusian Traditions,

with a collection of icons being one of the most interesting exhibits.

Many families had a collection of precious books and some of these early printed examples were re-written by hand at the beginning of the previous century. The Gomel branch of the museum keeps the rarest exhibit — a 16th century Gospel from Kositskaya settlement.

There's also a collection of samovars — from a tiny 'hiking' one to an enormous object in the shape of a vase. The tea house did not appear accidentally, since the culture of family tea-drinking was especially prized in Vetka. Water was taken directly

from the Sozh, which was considered to be the purest river in Europe, before the Chernobyl disaster.

Learning about the great battle at the Dnieper

This area is known as the 'Belarusian Switzerland' — a true paradise for fishermen and hunters, since the neighbouring forests offer an abundance of birds while gigantic cat-

fish can be caught in the rivers. From the city's central square one can see the place where another powerful river, the Sozh, runs into the Dnieper.

People also say that the town of Loyev is a town of heroes: over 300 soldiers and officers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for forcing the crossing of the Dnieper in 1943, when fascists fortified the river bank with the 'Eastern embankment' — viewed as unapproachable. One can learn about these events in The Battle for the Dnieper Museum. During the battle, Loyev was wiped off





the map and those who survived had to live in dugouts for a long time.

Seeing where Pushkin entertained

The town of Chechersk has been known in chronicles since the 12th century. One of its major sights is Zamkovaya Gora (Hill). During the reign of Yekaterina the Great this settlement belonged to Duke Chernyshev who built his palace on the site of the ancient castle. None of the grandiose structures has been preserved and today the citadel is a mass grave of soldiers and partisans who liberated these places in the years of the Great Patriotic War.

Belarus has preserved five town halls, with that of Chechersk being the most unusual one. Its architecture is both classical and gothic, as well as having some eastern elements. Moreover, this town hall has not just one traditional tower but five, which now house a museum.

One should make sure to drop into the Holy Transfiguration Church — a rare type of rotunda church with a big round hall. The church was painted by Italian masters and in 1793 its consecration was attended by Yekaterina II.

The town was also visited by other royal personalities: emperors Alexander II and Nikolay I. Alexander Pushkin also

stayed here twice, on the way to exile to the south and back.

Keeping silence in the 'square of the Sun'

Noone drives past the settlement of Krasny Bereg: there's always ringing silence at Zhlobin's memorial hon-

ouring child victims of the war. There's a 'square of the Sun' in the centre: a yellow circle with seven beam pathways, going into the apple orchard — a symbol of joy and happiness. Nearby is a representation of an empty class with 21 empty school desks; a sculpture of a teenage girl is standing before them with her hands hiding her face. She is hungry and thin, in a poor dress...

It's difficult to express everything seen here. During the war years the settlement was a 'collecting point' where they took blood from children for German soldiers. The names of 2,000 tortured are still unknown. During the years of the war there were 16 such concentration camps in Belarus.

Take a rest in the Duke's park

The Tsarina donated the Gomel estate to Field-Marshal-General Pyotr Rumyantsev for his brilliant victories in the war against Turkey. He built his palace on the site of the ancient castle of the Czartoryski magnates. All roads in Gomel lead to it — this is the centre of the city.

The ancient park of the Rumyantsev Palace is one of the oldest in Europe, having trees from various counties, with Siberian firs, Manchurian walnuts and ash-leaved maples neighbouring with birch trees and silver spruces. A special place is Lebyazhy pond, where dozens of pairs of black and white swans slide over the water and only squirrels distract your attention from the spectacular view; they

are almost tame and won't leave you unless you give them some nuts.

Aircraft designer Pavel Sukhoy lived, studied and even taught for several years in Gomel. Moreover, the world tennis star Maria Sharapova also has Gomel roots and locals will show you with pleasure the House of Culture



where singer Seryoga started his rapper career with his song Cherny Bumer (Black Boomer).

Wonderful sand beaches are located not far from the city's central square, with a quay with cosy cafes on the bank of the Sozh. Southern Gomel has more sunny days than any other Belarusian city.



Preferences for the residents

One of the epicenters in Belarus where agrotourism rapidly develops is the Grodno Region

Nobility's nest

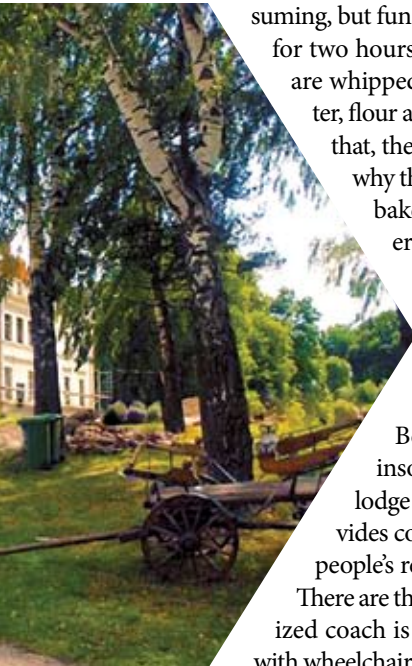
The Grodno region boasts a high land management culture with centuries-old traditions. In Soviet times, farmers would collect 80—90 centners of grain per hectare. Agronomists from all over the Soviet Union would come here to study. The Grodno region is keeping the traditions and grows crops in an ecologically friendly manner. It's a perfect place to visit if you want tasty and healthy food. About 300 lodges operate in the region. One of them is located in the Svyatskie-Gurskie estate in Radzivilki. We're greeted as welcome guests and served a delicious dinner. Potato pancakes with ham shanks were superb. An oak wood table was laid in the 18th century dining-room featuring massive brick walls and vaulted ceilings. Once, this old house was a respectable mansion belonging to the Svyatskie-Gurskie family. In Soviet times, the building housed a fire brigade, and after that — a health resort closed in the 1970s. The deserted house was becoming ruined and dilapidated. Several years ago, the Bartashevich family of Grodno bought it at an auction. "We've given it a second life, saving it from death," the hostess, Irina Bartashevich, says. Hens, turkeys, potatoes, beets, carrots and an apple orchard — tourists can enjoy organic food of all kinds. In the vicinity of the house, there are ponds with carp, crucian and perch. Its function as an agricultural and ecological tourism centre is not new for the Svyatskie-Gurskie's estate, as before the 18th century, the estate belonged to anachoret monks of the Camaldolese order. They grew vegetables and grapes and made

cheese. Urban nobles would come to the monastery both for leisure and organic produce. Now the house attracts regular tourists. Prices are very competitive: a double room in the old house costs just \$15 per person per day.

Baking pies on wood

Our next destination is 'U Rysi' (At the Lynx's) lodge in Korevichi, ten kilometres from Volkovysk. Last year, this lodge was awarded the national contest Grand Prix as the best in Belarus. Five houses are located on the Ross river bank near an ancient forest. Each of the houses has its own theme: a potter's house, a wood carver's house, a weaver's house, a herb collector's house, a barrel bath, dozens of sculptures and cosy pergolas. The hosts offer craft master classes for tourists. The wood carver's house has a real Russian oven that is used to cook the national dish of Belarusians, Lithuanians and Poles — bankukha also known as a pie on wood. In ancient times, brides would bake it for weddings. It's time-con-





suming, but fun. First, the oven needs to be heated for two hours, then sixty egg whites and yolks are whipped by hand in separate bowls; butter, flour and sour cream is added later. After that, the dough is spun on a spindle (that's why the dish is called a pie on wood) and baked for two hours. If cooked properly, it stays fresh for a month! The meanders of the river seem to have been created by nature specially for arranging beaches near each of them. The Frog Beach is for families with children, the Swan Beach is for couples, and the Robinson Island is for teenagers. 'U Rysi' lodge is unique in many respects. It provides conditions for physically challenged people's rehabilitation using riding therapy. There are three horses in the stable. An authorized coach is available. The estate is equipped with wheelchair ramps. Accommodation costs 600 to 900 Russian rubles per day which is almost for free compared to Russian tariffs.

River with trout

'Fisherman's House' in Korobchitsy village, five kilometres from Grodno, is a heavenly place for those who like sitting with a fishing rod on a bank or



in a boat. The house is located on the Verkhneye water reservoir where you can catch roach, pike, perch, crucian, carp, white amur and catfish. In the Losyanka river that



flows into the reservoir, even trout can be found. For barbeques, there's a canopy and charcoal grill. You can also play volleyball on the sporting ground. This lovely corner of Belarus is open for visitors all year round. There's a mountain ski piste, a riding club and another agricultural tourism site, Korobchitsy, that even has a small zoo. Accommodation in the Fisherman's House costs from 500 to 1,500 Russian rubles. At the 'Nad Gavyey' (Over the Gavya) estate near Zaleiki at the 144 kilometers of the Minsk-Grodno highway, a Belarusian folk band performs every evening. There's a pine wood and a birch forest nearby with plenty of mushrooms and berries. You can also take a kayak to admire the forest landscapes. Accommodation costs from 700 to 2,000 Russian rubles, you can rent a separate house on a more permanent basis.

Investors are welcome to bother

Those who are ready to invest will be granted preferences and exempt from taxes. The Augustow Canal that links the Vistula and the Neman is a miracle of 19th-century engineering. It's a brilliant example of the careful treatment of historic legacy. It was built when Poland entered the Russian Empire to transport goods bypassing Eastern Prussia. Remnants of wooden spades are still found nearby. Men would work hard to dig the channel as the government paid generously for the work. 22 km of the 100 km-long channel ran through Belarus. During the war, the Nazis blew up all the flood-gates when withdrawing. Poland restored their part and began to use it as a tourist attraction, receiving a good income. Belarus only started renovating the channel in the early 2000s according to the original design. In 2011, the tourist and recreation park Augustow Canal was set up. The main objective is to attract investors for developing the tourist infrastructure. "We offer benefits for residents," says Deputy Head of the Free Economic Zone Grodnoinvest Dmitry Klimenok. "Investors will be exempt from the profit tax for the first five years, and then they will enjoy a 50-percent discount. The real estate tax is not applied at all. Construction sites are available for rent at 0.0125 percent of the cadastre value of a hectare. The minimum amount of investment to become a resident is 200,000 Euros. No one will be allowed to erect a five-star skyscraper, while mini hotels and agricultural lodges are welcomed. Prices for tourists are fantastic compared to those in Russia — 400—700 Russian rubles per person per day. Visitors can bring their tents. The tourist stream is rapidly growing. In 2011, 11 thousand people came here, while in 2015 we had 68 thousand incoming tourists."

By Boris **Orekhov**



War veteran Stepan Tyushkevich, aged 99:

'This is our common history which shouldn't be forgotten'

Eyewitness

The film is special in having had veterans participating in its shooting. Anatoly Tsvetkov, Doctor of Military Sciences and a member of the Russian Writers Union, offered his consultancy, having been connected with the site for much of his life. He did not participate in the fortress defence but tells us, "When I fought near Stalingrad, a defence participant told us, soldiers, how they'd fought at Brest Fortress for nearly a month. It made a huge impression on all of us, helping us not to give up."

Military historian Major-General Stepan Tyushkevich fought in the Leningrad Region and the Baltic States, but has Belarusian roots. His brother, military pilot, was killed in 1944 and buried near Brest. Next year, Stepan will celebrate his 100th birthday. "I took part in the shooting with pleasure," he admits. "Films on the Great Patriotic War should be produced more often. People showed heroism never known to mankind before. This is our common history and we shouldn't forget it."

Piotr Kotelnikov did take part in the defence of Brest Fortress and tells us about the events of the summer of 1941. When the war began, he was a musical platoon pupil, aged 12. He became involved in the first hours — searching for bullets, exploring the territory and helping the wounded.

The first head of the memorial complex, Arkady Krupennikov, also took part in the filming but, sadly, died before the premiere, aged 93, late this summer.

By Irina **Mustafina**

The past inspires

The Belarusian Embassy to Russia recently hosted the premiere of 'The Citadel of Memory' documentary, focusing on the history of the defence of Brest Fortress

Materials worthy of endless filming

For over fifty years, the heroic past of Brest Fortress has inspired filmmakers. The authors of 'The Citadel of Memory' documentary are members of The Spirit of the Elbe public organisation, headed by retired Colonel Zarina Vashurina. Her father, Lieutenant General Piotr Vashurin, was among those at the famous Elbe meeting in 1945. He later set up the Brest Fortress Heroic Defence Museum, which will turn sixty on November 8th. The film not only discloses the events of the summer of 1941 but is also devoted to the history of the memorial complex.

"We've managed to collect so much material: enough for more films. This documentary could become a seed for even greater projects," film director Vasily Kislov asserted at the premiere.

Last year, the documentary authors received a grant from the Russian President, with the Union State authorities supporting the filming process from start to finish. "We helped with pleasure," the Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy of Belarus to Russia, Pavel Legky admitted. "I've been fascinated by the history of Brest Fortress defence for a long time and I've read a great deal. As a child, I climbed the fortress from top to bottom, everywhere possible."

'The Magic Flute' and 'Tosca' accompanied by Shakespeare's sonnets

In the 84th Bolshoi Theatre season, three premieres await ballet fans: 'Paquita', by Ludwig Minkus, staged by Pavel Stalinsky on December 1st; 'Sonnets', by Peter Warlock, choreographed by Alexandra Tikhomirova and a work by Ralph Vaughan Williams, based on Shakespeare's poetry. Next summer will see the staging of a modern ballet by Mikhail Krylov, called 'Orr and Ora'.

In March, Mozart's famous opera 'The Magic Flute' will receive a new staging, in Minsk, by European director and producer Hans-Joachim Frey. Meanwhile, Puccini's 'Tosca' will also see a new interpretation.

Some plays will be taken off the repertoire, won't they?

'Nabucco' and 'The Barber of Seville'; unfortunately, audiences have been dwindling. The operas won't be removed utterly. We'll later revamp them for a relaunch.

Will you go on tour?

In December, we plan a tour of Germany and Egypt. In late April, we're taking the ballets 'Spartacus' and 'Swan Lake' to the Netherlands, and we'll perform in Belarus as well: in Mogilev, Novopolotsk and Gomel. We do this traditionally, every new season.

Are there any changes within the troupe?

The troupe has increased by sixteen people. The orchestra has noticeably 'grown younger' and, after her injury, People's Artiste of Belarus Olga Gaiko is returning to the stage. Her fans will be happy.

Soon, 'Swan Lake' will delight the Dutch spectators



Director General Vladimir Gridyushko spoke on the plans of the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus

The Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus gives unusual staging of opera

The Marriage of Figaro' by Mozart held the stage at the Belarusian Theatre for over three decades, and is returning after a three-year break, staged by Mikhail Kislyarov, the chief director of the Moscow Chamber Musical Theatre named after Pokrovsky. He is joined by musical director Oleg Lesun.

The directorate of the theatre insisted on performing 'The Marriage of Figaro' in Russian rather than in Italian. The libretto, by Lorenzo da Ponte, translated by Tchaikovsky and Pavlova, was taken as the basis. Baritones Alexander Krasnodubsky and Sergei Lazarevich perform the title roles.

'The Marriage of Figaro' is a bright and audacious comedy. The stage direction is simple and clear, as this classic text needs no bold experiments.

Shall Belarusian audiences see the Pokrovsky Theatre on tour?

We're looking forward to your invitation!

By Kristina Khilko



'The Marriage of Figaro' staged by Mikhail Kislyarov



MADEZHDA PONKRATOVA



PAVEL BASS

Vladimir Gridyushko, Director of the Bolshoi Theatre, is professional also in organization of creative projects

Bolshoi welcomes all talents

Just ten to fifteen years ago, the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus contained native dancers, while now, every performance is done with the participation of stars from many different countries around the world.



Yakuts won over the Belarusian public with opera Prince Igor

Integration pros

This integration in the art world is a visible consequence of globalisation, promoting the formation of universal cultural values. The repertoire of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus in November is an outstanding example of such integration, strengthening international brotherhood and promoting peace between people of many nationalities and different religions.

Many people visited Minsk in recent days specially to see acclaimed international laureate Anel Rustemova from Kazakhstan, who danced the part of Gamzatti in one of the most beautiful ballets of Minkus, La Bayadère. In addition, Azerbaijan actress Afag Abbasova, unique soprano of the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, performed the part of Nedda in the performance of Pagliacci by Ruggero Leoncavallo. Several days later, Honoured worker of the Republic of Kazakhstan Ajsul Nijazova-Chio-Chio-san played in Puccini's legendary opera Madama Butterfly.

Yakuts won over the Belarusian public with opera Prince Igor performed large-scale by the State Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Sakha. It pleased

not only the spectators, but also the Chinese in Beijing. The opera includes 49 ballet dancers and 52 members of the chorus, 22 soloists and 44 musicians! It is all thanks to our newly improved theatre, capable of hosting such a big troupe. The critics predict that this staging will be among the nominees for the most prestigious theatrical award of Russia —the Golden Mask.

The following day saw a gala concert by the Yakut stars. The spectators heard choruses, scenes and arias from famous operas by Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Massenet, Delibes, Donizetti, Leoncavallo, Dvořák, Bellini, Puccini and others, and also saw wonderful numbers from the ballets *Talisman* by Drigo, *The Cavalry Halt* by Armsheimer and *La Sylphide* by Løvenskiold. Throughout the evening, the well-known conductor of the Sakha Theatre of the Republic, Alevtina Ioffe, was at the conductor's stand.

Kiev residents then performed the ballet *Giselle*. The choreography theatre 'Kiev Modern Ballet', was recognised by the international art community and is now the calling card of Ukraine. Nobody can describe *Giselle* better than its choreographer-director Radu Poklitaru.

"When we say the word 'ballet', of course, *Swan Lake* is first in our minds and after it is *Giselle*, performed since 1841. Of all the ballets shown on world stages, this one is the oldest. I realised that it was high time to create a new staging and remake of a classical ballet, I decided almost at once that it should be *Giselle*. Firstly, I danced in this ballet on the stage of the Belarusian Opera and Ballet Theatre. Secondly, the music by Adán Adolfo is remarkable. Tchaikovsky himself appreciated the music and considered it the best ballet score in the world. I will also add that this grand ballet provoked opinions even amongst ardent adherents of the classics. Minsk residents were treated to a truly European luxury product with beautiful costumes, scenery and music. The modern interpretation did nothing to hinder the revelation of the central idea of love."

On several other days in October, there were musical feasts for the audiences, as on October 22nd when Mikhail Malafy, laureate of international competitions and soloist of the Lvov Opera Theatre (Ukraine) sang the part of Lensky in Tchaikovsky's romantic drama *Yevgeny Onegin*, while the maestro Arcady Berin

Afag Abassova, unique soprano of the Azerbaijan State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre, performed the part of Neda in *Pagliacci*



Ballet *Giselle* provoked opinions even amongst ardent adherents of the classics

from Germany conducted. On the 27th, on the Bolshoi Theatre stage, it was possible to see *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi with invited soloists from the Italian and French opera. This joint project by the Italian and French embassies aroused great interest from admirers of opera in Belarus. Fransua Rober Zhirolami (France) conducted on the evening. He is now the conductor of the Sibiu orchestra in Serbia, as well as the Philharmonic orchestra of Craiova. Despite offers from many eminent orchestras around the world, he chose to work with the symphonic orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre. It appeared that the public also liked the maestro, a doctor of philosophy whose artistry and modest at-

titude charmed both the audience and the journalists. Rober Zhirolami described at the briefing with journalists how he would return home spiritually enriched, thanks to the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus.

Compliments for Minsk were also heard from Marilyn Leonetti, the French performer of Violetta, she liked the city very much, admiring the beauty of its buildings, and also the beauty of its people. While Marcello Lippi-Germont, Art Director of Teatro Verdi di Pisa commented on the unifying influence of music. The actor described how he invited Belarusian soloist Anna Kozlova for the performance of La Traviata at the theatre. Working with her, Marcello Lippi understood the extremely high standard of Belarusian performers and the ballet school itself.

Sadly, I cannot comment on how one of the most well-known operas in the repertoire of world musical theatre performed by the eminent visitors, was received. I note only that I heard different opinions. Some of my colleagues spoke enthusiastically about the gentle soprano and virtuosity of Marilyn Leonetti-Violetta, the sound of our orchestra and, certainly, the music by Giuseppe Verdi.

The stage of the Bolshoi theatre will shortly complete its acquaintance with the ballet dancers from Kazakhstan — Ajgerim Beketaeva who will dance the part of Odette — Odile in the Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky, Olzhas Turlanov — Siegfried. The following artistes will sing in the La Traviata: Mikhail Malafy — Alfredo, while Nadezhda Pavlova, soloist of the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre from Russia, holder of Grand Prix and the higher award of the young vocalists 2015 will play Violetta.



ALEX SMOLSKIY

Holder of the Grand Prix of the Second International Contest of Young Vocalists-2015 Nadezhda Pavlova (Russia) and holder of the First People's Choice Award Mikhail Malafy (Ukraine)

The Minsk International Christmas Contest of Vocalists was established in 2014 upon the initiative of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus



The Gala Concert of world opera stars in 2015

In expectation of a celebration

December approaches, and with it the pleasurable anticipation of Christmas and the New Year. This atmosphere of expectation is, in my opinion, enhanced by a visit to the Bolshoi Theatre with its numerous festive offerings. For me, visiting the Opera brings a holiday feeling that continues until the New Year.

What will the Bolshoi Theatre give us this time?

As is traditional, the young vocalist competition will host singers from many different countries in Belarus from December 7th to the 13th. As Yelena Balabanovich, leading editor of marketing, information and advertising service of the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus informed us, 226 performers from 20 countries submitted applications for participation in the 3rd Minsk International Christmas Vocalist contest. Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Canada, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Lithuania, the USA, France, Mongolia, China, Armenia, Israel, Latvia, Turkey, Sweden, Korea and even Ireland. It is not only the distinguished jury who will decide on the vocal talents of the participants, but also the spectators. According to tradition, the contestants will sing in the main hall of the theatre on December 11th in the second round of the contest, and on December 13th in the finalists Gala Concert, where diplomas, awards and the People's Choice Award will be announced. The winners of the last year's competition are also invited to perform in the final concert. Their names are now well-known to fans of opera: Ramiz Usmanov from Uzbekistan, Nadezhda Pavlova from Russia, Mikhail Malafy — Ukraine, Lasha Sesitashvili — Georgia, Yelena Stikhina — Russia, Victor Mendeleev and Ilya Silchukov from Belarus.

Usually, the competition is held in three stages, the first two with an accompaniment and the third and final piece accompanied by the orchestra. In the final of the contest, the participants perform one of the main parts in scenes from operas of classical or modern repertoire, and the stars of the Belarusian Bolshoi Theatre will assist them.

The holder of the Grand Prix of the contest will receive a monetary prize of \$10,000, the 1st award — \$8,000, the winner of the 2nd prize — \$6,000, while for the 3rd place it is \$4,000. Many of the young artistes will receive invitations to leading opera theatres and companies all over the world.

The highly acclaimed jury, which includes directors of opera theatres, impresario and famous musical workers, will choose the best of the best. According to the protocol, the jury will be headed by Vladimir Gridyushko-Director General of the Bolshoi Theatre



The VII Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum will open with Carmen starring Oksana Volkova, Honoured Artiste of Belarus



ALEX SMOLSKY

of Belarus. Among the judges will also be Tadey Eder — Director General of the Lvov National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre of S. Krushelnitskaya (Ukraine), Academician Plamen Kartalov -Director of the Sofia National Opera and Ballet Theatre, John Ellison — Editor of the magazine 'Opera' (Great Britain), Professor Christoph Meyer — Director General of the German Opera on the Rhine (Deutsche Oper am Rhein), Germany, Morris Xiberras — Director General of the L'Opéra de Marseille (France), Dzhankluka Marchiano — Conductor and Art Director of the Festival 'Al Bustan in Beirut' (Italy) and many others.

Right after the contest, from December 14th to the 20th will be the 7th Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum, in which the stars who won famous opera contests around the world will participate!

The programme includes the operas Carmen, Macbeth, The Queen of Spades, The Marriage of Figaro and Turandot. While Carmen will open the festival with the brilliant Oksana Volkova in the title role of Carmen, and will be finished with a great Gala Concert.

By Valentina **Zhdanovich**



New interpretations for old favourites

Much anticipated non-competitive International TEART Theatre Forum coming to end in Minsk held for the sixth time

The event has no jury, but features many headliners, and regular TEART participants: Lithuanian director Oskaras Koršunovas, Yuri Butusov from St. Petersburg, and theatres from Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, France, Germany, Switzerland and Russia.

The concept of the festival is modern, embracing a variety of form and directorial interpretations. We may have seen Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Measure for Measure* a dozen times, alongside Gogol's *Marriage* and Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, *The Visit of the Old Lady* by Dürrenmatt and Gorky's *Lower Depths*, but the audiences here gain new experience and insight. It's always entertaining to see perennial classics receive an update, inspiring us to revisit the original texts.

The world is changing, and so are the audiences. Previously, we might have seen a hen laying golden eggs. Today, an enormous egg might appear beside a refrigerator, while a giant dissects the chicken.



The event comprised ten international performances and thirteen Belarusian ones (with most of the latter based on Russian plays staged here and abroad). Belarus benefits from comparing its staging with that of Europe and Russia.

Three dramatic repertory theatres participated for Belarus this year: from Minsk, Mogilev and Brest. There were also four puppet theatres from the same cities, plus Grodno. Visitors enjoyed choreographic project *Subject Talk*, *The Life of Insects* (featuring music and singing) and *The Belarusian Opium*, written especially for the forum that reached the short list of new drama contest *Remarka*. Cultural Enlightenment website named it one of the best performances of the year. In fact, every staging at the event cast light on trends in the Belarusian theatre world.

Young Belarusian directors and actors involved in *The Life of Insects* (based on the verse of Russian OBERIU's representative Nikolay Oleinikov) and in *Second Hand Time* (based on Svetlana Alexievich's prose work) received huge attention. Meanwhile, *The Kreutzer Sonata* (based on Leo Tolstoy's work), *Lower Depths* (based on a play by Maxim Gorky) and *Fro* (based on Andrey Platonov's story) were given controversial new stagings.

St. Petersburg director Semen Alexander brought his monologue, *Fuel*, about the life of mathematician David Yang, who developed electronic dictionaries and founded flash mobs in Russia.

The Moscow Pushkin Drama Theatre, working with British director Declan Donnellan, gave a surprising rendition of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, and a shocking essay by Yuri Butusov (based on Gogol's *Marriage*) closed the festival.

By Tatiana Orlova

Lucky boomerang

Art exhibition 5=3 opened at the Minsk Gallery of Modern Arts ArtPort. Its inspirer and organiser is Larisa Gribaleva

admit being surprised at the participants in this project, introducing Maxim Petrul and Anton Slyunchenko (Anton Snt), two artists who neither have diplomas from the Academy of Arts nor an

academic view of painting. Larisa explained that 5 and 3 is the number of works exhibited by the authors, who promise to update the exhibition completely within three months. The transformations will be made directly in presence of the public. The numbers 5 and 3, it appears, are consecutive numbers of the Fibonacci sequence, their correlation is the golden triangle formula. For those spectators, not so well-informed it is difficult to say whether the harmony of the golden ratio is present in Maxim's and Anton's works. Nevertheless, there is something in their stylish exhibits destroying can-

ons of classical art, that bewitches the viewer and induces one to reflect.

Larisa Gribaleva is a well-known singer, TV anchor, actress and director of her own event-agency 'The Festive Bureau of Larisa Gribaleva', it is difficult to imagine how she finds time for everything. She works with artists in her free time, she continues her career and brings up children, recently having become mother for the third time!

Larisa is young, beautiful, in a dress of pastel shades with her eyes full of optimistic pleasure in her life. She has invited us to her house as preparations for a birthday celebration kept her busy. The Belarusian variety star met us in a house-dress and without makeup.

While the coffee cooled, she cooked porridge for her



ALISA KRASOVSKAJA

baby daughter, treated me with raspberries and had time to put on some make-up as we chatted in a comfortable atmosphere.

Larisa, why does the agency, which works with such large organisations as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and large insurance companies, suddenly start to organise exhibitions of little-known artists?

It somehow came naturally to me. Sculptor Andrey Ostashov who is very in-demand in Belarus, came to see us. Every year he organises a new exhibition and he has a personal gallery. He

Modern Art Theatre. I also heard that soon we will see the film ‘Small Motherland’ by Vyacheslav Sikora with Larisa Gribaleva in the main role. You sing in concerts tirelessly and participate in TV programmes ... Finally, children and a husband wait for you at home. How do you find time for all that?

I often do not make everything in time...

Perhaps, it is time to have a rest?

Public life does not give us such opportunities. It is easy to drop off the radar for some time but it might be that when you return, nobody will remember you.

experience in this sphere and contacts, I oriented myself quickly. As, for example building supermarkets for children and pregnant women was a no-brainer! Thirteen years ago, having given birth to my first daughter, I faced the problem of ‘running about’ the city in search of diapers and baby food.

You have said that you helped the authors of exhibition 5=3 without seeking profit. In what other charitable projects do you participate?

Unfortunately, I have no time for much development of my ideas yet. Now I only sing in charitable concerts.



Anton Slyunchenko (Anton Snt) presenting his works



wanted a type of performance during the opening of the next project. He set us the task to make the opening creative so we thought up a programme. Andrey liked it very much, and subsequently other clients appeared. We have many talented artists, famous abroad. We would like to help them to become similarly famous in their homeland. I think that such art-exclusives will find customers.

If I am not mistaken, your agency for the organisation of festivals was repeatedly recognised as the best, following the results of the festival-competition ‘Choice of the Year’. You have prizes and awards in the show business sphere. While as an actress you debuted in a performance of ‘Two Henpecked’ at the

The musical programme ‘All is Good, Mom!’, which you hosted for more than twenty years, still lives in memories. While ‘Morning Mail’ together with Yury Nikolaev, Peoples’ Artiste of Russia is well remembered, though it ended in 2012.

At that time, ‘All is Good, Mom!’ was ground-breaking in media, there had been nothing like it. Today there is the Internet where it is possible to find any musician and listen to all you want. The world has become more high-speed, mobile and virtual.

Therefore, you decided to open a personal event agency?

When the idea came to me, the market for similar services was free. Having

While I give my ideas to others free of charge (laughs). For example, I suggested an idea to artists I know, to try their works in the homes of potential buyers. After all, a person could buy a work of art for a large amount of money, while the picture won’t fit with the décor of the house. Thus, an expensive picture will collect dust somewhere in the corner of the room.

Larisa, why haven’t you remained ‘just a singer’?

Well, I did not intend to become a singer at all! As my mom says, it is not a profession. I graduated from a pedagogical university and was going to teach children at elementary school. But destiny gave me a chance, and I used it. So, I sing.

After all, how could I refuse interesting TV projects, which later became hits?

Would you like to continue your career of a dramatic actress?

I doubt it. Telling the story with a camera is more to my liking. I admit, I miss shooting for the cinema, as I acted in films for about ten years. I would be happy to consider interesting offers.

What can you say about the Belarusian variety?

I am happy that we have versatile music, but, alas, we have not learnt to be proud of ourselves and our achievements yet. Even though Belarus, such a

comfortable when other people feel good. After all life is such a gift!

What's the meaning of happiness?

Both in love, in children, and in doing your favourite job qualitatively. When I hear a flattering review about me I think it means, I made it all good.

It is likely that you will enter the list of the top-10 prosperous women in Belarus. What's the secret of social success?

My personal secret of success is never wait for anything from anyone. Remember: nobody owes you, neither the state, nor people. It is necessary to start doing something for yourself. But

taking care of my grandchildren." Before that, my cousins were babysitters for the children but before long they were all married. Once I jokingly offered my single friend the chance to look after my children. It is strange but true that she was soon married too!

Your marriage has lasted for twenty years. Do you suit each other?

I'm sure we do, in my opinion, it is very important how comfortable you feel in marriage. Families are strong where people are capable of also managing without each other. Certainly, respect and compromise in a marriage are essential.



VITALIY GIL

Sculptures by Maxim Petrul could not leave the visitors indifferent

small country, has many talented singing children.

What performer would you like to see on the stage?

Besides vocal abilities, a singer should be an actor too. Many people compose songs and music, put on sequins before appearing on the stage, but forget about the image in which an artiste should live.

Nevertheless, who are you: actress, singer, TV anchor or business lady?

I am all of these, but I also dare to call myself a person who aspires to bring people kindness and positivity. I feel empathy for other people. I also feel good in any place which is good for other people. I am entirely an optimist and I feel com-

remember: in life, everything returns like a boomerang.

What about the secret of 'eternal youth' which people comment on when speaking about you, is it in your genes?

I can find no other explanation because I do not have time and energy for sports and cosmetic procedures, and I like to eat something in the evening, and even before bed. So, thanks to my mother and father: they gave me an opportunity to look good without any effort.

Who takes care of the children when you are away?

My mother does. It was her strong-willed decision, though she liked her work. She said, "I cannot work well knowing that someone unfamiliar is

If a marriage fails, is it necessary to try to keep it for the sake of children?

There are different situations, but the family formula should remain: the father is an example to follow and a figure of authority, the mother is loving and careful. It is not important where this scheme is followed, in marriage or out of it. Children, of course, are always a priority but the mother needs to feel happy, too.

Do you describe your happy private life in many interviews? Are you not afraid of jealousy?

The Bible says 'You will receive the way you believe'. I consider that all problems are in our heads. We attract the things about which we think.

By Alisa Krasovskaya

Painting with the soul to the beat of theta waves

How often we hear about one artist or another that they paint with their soul. I have experienced this feeling of painting with a 'sixth sense' only once and I must admit, when the brain works to the beat of theta-waves, it is a wonderful feeling...



Master classes on painting for adults — a project by Minsk psychologist Natalia Al Fayad (on the left)

A friend told me about a project by Minsk psychologist Natalia Al Fayad called 'Painting for Adults'. With the help of like-minded followers, she holds master classes on painting for all interested people in Minsk. I visited them.

I decided to go to one of the city's art studios, remembering, how I drew using colour pencils when I was 4 or 5 years old and curious to discover what good it would do me. I won't hide the fact that, deep inside, I was intrigued and excited to find out what would happen. I reminded myself of the times I made pencil sketches of the faces of my relatives and friends, not forgetting to paint myself more beautiful than I really was ...

Even today, I remember that naive painting. It seemed to me that it was a real masterpiece. I remember an image of a garden, a boy playing with a ball and a girl with blue sky over them and a smiling sun... And I also remember my happiness: I had no doubt that the painting was good. I recall my favourite bright green pencil, like the grass in the garden of my Ukrainian childhood, also the blue one, reminding me of the 'eye' of my favourite flower, barvinok, I liked to peer at its violet bell and imagine: I remember the praise of my kindergarten teacher Valentina Pavlovna, who said I could become

IVAN ZHIDANOVICH



IVAN ZHDANOVICH

Svetlana Kolkovskaya, artist and teacher of highest category, is obeyed even by adults holding the brush for the first time

an artist ... I also remember the conversations of parents on their children's education: where to study, what profession to have. And my 17-year-old brother Yuri, saying how can he be an artist with our poverty... And, indeed, we were poor at that time. Though the family of musician and front-line soldier, Mikhail Tcherkashin, was not starving, we did not have

enough money for a piano which I passionately wanted to learn to play, or for a large box of colour pencils, though my father worked hard, playing at recreation centres at the weekends and also serving as a supply manager in the kindergarten.

Many of my friends and those who have come to the art studio to express their ideas of beauty through canvas and

paint, had in their childhood something that prevented them from developing their creativity. I drew this conclusion based on a sad story which I heard from an economist during the tea break: we discussed how wonderful it is that in Belarus there are so many places for creativity: it is possible to choose many options where children can develop their abilities.

Natalia Al Fayad

My main education is the school of life. I treat any situation as a lesson from which I take wisdom. Life is a journey! And in order to follow it consciously, easily and comfortably, you should not be afraid to reveal yourself and your own intuitive abilities





Natalia Berezovskaya, author of many pictures, can help beginners in painting

“I dreamed I might become a ballerina,” she said, I will give her the name Olga. She recollected how her kind relatives killed her dream of ballet, having asked her what she wanted to become. It appeared that the seven-year-old girl had read a book about the famous Russian ballerina Galina Ulanova and was so impressed by her destiny that she started to dream about her own choreographic life in future.

“I painted ballerinas everywhere: on sand, on paper, and the paintings were really good,” she said. “I still can do ballet steps, and dance ... Now I understand that it was probably not my destiny, as I did not fight for it but gave it up after the words of my aunt who commented, “what a ballerina you will be, your feet are too

big...”. We chatted with Olga about how important it is to support children in their creative aspirations, after all, all of them are talented, they see the world differently, not like adults ...

Recently, I have learnt that children from 2 to 8 years old can concentrate on one source of information and their brain is in the theta condition, that is, a frequency range of 4-8 hertz. This range promotes deep relaxation of the brain, deeper and faster processing of information and awakening of individual creativity and talents.

After I had visited Natalia Al Fayad’s master classes, having experienced these intense feelings, I decided to study the question connected with the theta condition on the Internet. It appears there are

five frequencies at which our brain can work: beta waves, alpha waves, theta-waves, delta and gamma waves. Everything that we do and speak is controlled by the wave frequency of the brain. When a person feels creative enthusiasm and inspiration, when his experiences have a spiritual character, theta-waves prevail. I experienced something similar while painting. I believe that artistic people are in this condition during their moments of expression of creativity.

Hydrangeas were the first. When I came to the studio ‘Sotvorenie’ (Creation), there was no room to swing a cat. There were ladies of different ages who examined nature in hydrangeas painted by the painter Svetlana Kolkovskaya and checked their easels. In the room was the smell of paint and perfume, unostentatious music was in the background. When all the members were gathered, and took their seats near the easels, Natalia Al Fayad introduced Svetlana, the artist-teacher who conducted the class. She approached us and helped to correct our horrible ‘mistakes’. At first she explained how to hold a brush, use a palette, how much paint to take... we started to work on A-4 sheets of paper, so as not to spoil the canvases. Time flew, while the drawing process made the heart soar. I was in a state of extreme happiness, for the first time working with canvas and oil paints. In her welcoming address Natalia Al Fayad encouraged us to feel ourselves in a stream of creativity and inspiration, painting hydrangeas. She said that all of us are talented people, and we should never forget it, trusting ourselves only. Natalia also told about unconditional love, about that love which the Creator feels for all of us, and which all of us are able to feel if our thoughts are pure. Svetlana added, and her words impressed me, “We will see at the end of our class what your soul paints, what kind of person you are. At the end of the master class those who painted for the first time were inaugurated as artists and photographed in a blue beret with their own freshly painted picture.

I can say that all 15 people painted good pictures. All were different, all without exception unique.



IVAN ZHDANOVICH

During the master class at art studio 'Solntse' (The Sun), we painted peonies

At the second class a couple of weeks later, when the hydrangeas had not yet dried up, we painted peonies. Alla Keyge worked with us. She is a member of the Union of Artists of Belarus, painter, teacher and head of the art studio 'Solntse', which is known in Minsk for its creative projects. Alla is an innate teacher. Her sincerity won me over at once. The atmosphere of the class was special, excellent for peace of mind, when you simply take a brush and paint, listening to the teacher, having forgotten about the spirit of competitiveness and about a selfish desire inherent in us to be the best and to prove something to someone.

We painted peonies with another technique, using our fingers, and that was even more fascinating for me. At times, it seemed to me that I fell out of reality and there was only me and my canvas ...

Similar to the first class, economist Natalia Berezovskaya, a friend of Natalia Al Fayad helped us: she gave us palettes, squeezed out and mixed paints, added solvent, running from easel to easel, prompting us. I asked whether she painted herself. "I have never been fond of painting. Once I visited Natalia Al-Fayad in her summer cottage, it was August of 2015. It was there where I felt inspired! Natasha has a fabulous workshop! There is a wonderful atmosphere of creativity, the smell of

oil paints mixed up with solvent went to my head. "Maybe, you also want to try?"; she asked me. I did not know what to do and how, but a burning desire appeared and I took a brush... Exactly one year has passed, and I have painted many pictures. Some I painted as a gift, some were sold, while others went abroad ... And now I help with pleasure at the master classes which Natalia organises."

The classes do a good job, giving people the possibility of developing their talents and abilities. Why is this important for Natalia Al Fayad? She graduated from an economic university (the BSU), and after that received two more diplomas of higher education. She studied business at the Academy of Leon Kozminsky in Warsaw, and psychology at the Minsk University of Culture. Incidentally, she began her career as a primary school teacher because since childhood she dreamt of teaching children. This, however, was not her dream, more likely her early aspirations were cast by an environment of favourite school teachers and she wanted to follow their example.

Inauguration as artist



Very often, choosing a profession we don't become what we want to be, and we reach our dream following a long and hard path and it is fortunate if we come to realisation of our dream. Natalia also reached her dream, but not at once. Having experienced huge grief at the age of 16-years old when her parents, brother and relatives died in a car accident, she did not give in, but decided to become strong and successful. She searched for herself in different trades but could not settle in management, nor in business, though she considers herself good at business creation. Psychology is closer to her heart. Today Natalia is a practicing psychologist, using a new direction in the self-knowledge sphere of theta-healing, one of her unique methods based on the discovery of quantum physics."

Healing means recovery or cure, while theta is the name of certain frequencies of the brain. Theta-healing is not a medical procedure and is not a replacement for medical treatment. Theta-healing is a method of meditation promoting the harmonisation of natural vital forces of an organism for the increase of its abilities of healing and recovery. Once Natalia, having understood that the method works, became stronger in it. Therefore, she constantly deepens her knowledge and helps people to learn to help themselves, to open their intuitive abilities and to find answers to exciting questions. Painting pictures is one of the ways which once helped Natalia in life, having filled it with beauty and the energy of love. Her master classes on painting are created for those who understand that life is a journey and all of us are pupils on its path, only we choose which way to follow.

At times before sleep, looking at my peony where the stamens shine golden in their flower bell (with Alla Keyge's brushstrokes), I plunge into its depths. And then it seems to me that a magical world is nearby.

By Valentina **Zhdanovich**



Artist Zuzana Graus Rudavská

The world created by Zuzana

The Art Gallery at the University of Culture organises art projects by famous foreign authors, familiarising Belarusians with their creative achievements

would like to remind the readers about the Art Gallery at the University of Culture in Minsk (a division of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts), situated in the Palace of the Republic on Octyabrskaya Square. The main mission of the gallery is to create favourable conditions to develop the creative potential of students and gifted young artists, as well as offer them support to realise their aims. It is important for them to see how artists from different countries reach their potential in art, hence we are



CATHERINE ALEXEEVA

Such works of art will prettify any interior

keen to organise art projects by well-known foreign artists.

Bold experiments with form, colour, technique and the use of varied materials are a distinctive feature of the work of the well-known Slovak artist, Zuzana Graus Rudavská. At the exhibition, she introduces works made from copper, bronze, string, paper, crystal, precious and semiprecious stones. Each work is distinctive. The jewels Zuzana designs are both elegant and original. Her works of art encourage the audience to search for new meaning in them. Zuzana shares her creativity, offering us the opportunity to become co-authors, as everyone can have their own interpretation of what they see.

Her skills as jeweller, sculptor and designer successfully compliment each other, while the imagination of the author has no limit. Her desire to make items of beauty from everything around her inspires her next composition, as the natural world shows beauty in all its varied forms, so she attempts to replicate this in her designs.

Each artist uses their own traditions and reflect the cultures they have absorbed in their work. In a similar way, the flavour of the wine depends on the vineyard the grape was grown in. The guidebooks tell us that Slovaks are skilled wine makers sharing the glory of the famous Tokay wines with Hungary. The Slovak crystal is valued around the world: vases, chandeliers and sculptures made from engraved glass and crystal. Through the works of Zuzana Graus Rudavská, the whole of Slovakia can be viewed as if through a prism. The title of the Minsk exhibition prompts the visitors the right direction: "Touch of Slovakia. Image. Object. Value".

The exhibition was successfully held in the centre of Minsk, receiving a positive response in the Belarusian press. The author has previously shown her original works in the cities of Bratislava and Košice (Slovakia), New York and Tucson (USA), Rome (Italy), Copenhagen (Denmark), Prague (Czechia) and Toyama (Japan).



This year was her first time in Belarus. Initially, the Zuzana's exhibition was held in Vitebsk at the Art Museum (in the summer), during the International Festival of Arts 'Slaviansky Bazaar'. We welcomed the artist to Minsk on

the Constitutional day of the Slovak Republic and its Chairmanship of the European Union Council.

On the opening day, the Ambassador of Slovakia in Belarus, Jozef Migaš, expressed his satisfaction that, in the capital of Belarus, the first action of Slovakia in its status as Chairman of the Council of the European Union had a cultural character, "Thereby we confirm our priorities for the development of culture, the advancement of higher values and the development of intercultural dialogue." While Yelena Kupchina, Deputy Minister of foreign affairs of Belarus noted, "Culture has always been and remains an important factor of diplomacy." The exhibition of Zuzana Graus Rudavská, will promote cultural contact between our countries.

From the biography of Zuzana we discover that she graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, and also the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. Then she lived for many years in the United States; thanks to her creativity, she became one of the most well-known representatives of Slovakia abroad. Zuzana is a laureate of the Socrates Sculpture Park's award (New York), has been awarded the 'Golden Eagle' (Washington) and a grant of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. The creative projects of Zuzana in Belarus, will, we hope, continue to delight and inspire all who visit the exhibition.

By Pavel Sapotko,

Director of Art Gallery 'University of Culture'



The jewels of Zuzana Graus Rudavská are elegant, original and elite



Exhibit at the National Art Museum of Belarus

The ever fascinating museum treasure chest

The National Art Museum of Belarus is a real treasure. Here, everyone will find something to interest them in the exhibits. The reason is simple: the museum is one of the richest permanent exhibitions in Europe. From time to time, its exhibition is updated with original artefacts from the collection. Sometimes, the museum gathers a full house even for planned shows. The exhibitions are planned very carefully and the criterion for their selection is always professional.

Great interest emphasises the uniqueness of the collection

At present, the National Art Museum's exhibition of works from the collection of private collector Alexander Volodchinsky enjoys great popularity. It opened two months ago but the hype is still growing.

The exhibition features over 100 works of 19th-20th century Russian paintings. The show will be open until February 2017, showing pictures by such masters as Vasily Perov, Ivan Aivazovsky, Ilya Repin, Isaak Levitan, Victor Vasnetsov, Konstantin and Vladimir Makovsky, Alexander Benois, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, Nathan Altman and others. The works include the author's version of famous pieces, including *A Birch Grove* (by Arkhip Kuindzhi), *A Knight at the Crossroads* (Viktor Vasnetsov), *Mirage in the Desert* (Pavel Kuznetsov) and *In the Window* (Boris Kustodiev). The collection also includes works of artists belonging to the Blue Rose association: Nikolay Sapunov, Pavel Kuznetsov, Martiros Saryan, Arthur Fonvizin, as well as works by artists from the Jack of Diamonds society.

Works by masters connected with his native Belarus (where Apollinary Goravsky, Grigory Bobrovsky, Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya and Stanislav Zhukovsky were born) — occupy a considerable place in Mr. Volodchinsky's collection. The collector presented one of the works by famous Belarusian landscaper Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya to the National Art Museum on the opening day of the exhibition.

It is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Volodchinsky's collection will be interesting to a wide circle of art lovers and professionals in the field of painting. The present show features pieces from the second half of the 19th century and focuses on daily routine, Russian landscapes and paintings of Wanderers and Russian Impressionists.

Owners of collections are very different. Some hide their treasures behind locked doors, enjoying their art



Works from Mr. Volodchinsky's collection

pieces alone. Others prefer to show their paintings at exhibitions and museums. Mr. Volodchinsky's collection has been showcased at the National Art Museum of Belarus for the first time. However, this debut exhibition has turned out to be a worthy addition, with all the paintings meeting the museum's high standard. Surprisingly, pictures from different genres sit comfortably next to each other in the halls. The secret probably lies in the fact that all of them have been collected with great love and taste.

Indeed, all names at the exhibition are 'old-timers' of 19th-20th century Russian pictorial art: Alexander Kiselev, Alexey Bogolyubov, Viktor Vasnetsov, Isaak Levitan, Ivan Aivazovsky, Vasily Perov, Konstantin and Vladimir Makovsky, Ilya Repin, Alexander Osmyorkin, Alexander Deineka, Alexander Tyshler, Nathan Altman. Apart from aesthetically admiring paintings by Russian masters, visitors enjoy pleasant discoveries and surprises as some authors appear in a new aspect. For example, a small winter landscape of the Moscow Kremlin is a picture by battle-painter Vasily Vereshchagin, while a large historical canvas — devoted to the trial of the surrender of Port Arthur — is authored by landscaper Nikolay Dubrovsky. *La Marseillaise* was unexpectedly painted by Alexander Tyshler and *Whitish Landscape with Sailboat* (by Isaac



Chaim Soutine. 'Still-Life with Fish'. 1917



V. Makovsky. 'A Funny Anecdote'. 1901

EXHIBITIONS



D. Burliuk. 'A Summer Landscape'.
1910



V. Vasnetsov. 'A Knight at the Crossroads'.
Early XX century

Levitan) resembles Arkhip Kuindzhi's works rather than the usual canvases by the devotee of Russian nature.

A separate hall is devoted to the Makovsky brothers. Pictures of Vladimir Makovsky prevail; he painted scenes from 1900s' city life. The artist subtly portrays his characters, treating them with fatherly warmth. The author's narrative works are full of morality. In his *Family Despot*, he is ironic about the lifestyle of some painters: he portrays an artist who is painting a large canvas, making all the family members pose — including an old man and a baby. In turn, many modern art lovers would see everyday capital open air shows in his *The Exhibition and Interview*.

The exhibition also showcases portraits by Ilya Repin, Konstantin Somov and Konstantin Makovsky. Other works include graphic portraits of the playwright Eugene Ionesco (painted by Yuri Annenkov), in addition to a caricature of the director Vsevolod Meyerhold drawn by Nikolay Kulbin. One of the latest ac-

quisitions of Mr. Volodchinsky is Nathan Altman's *Sleeping Mikhoels* which is also on show.

Mr. Volodchinsky has collected art for over 25 years. He was born in Belarus and considers the country his homeland. As the man admits, his path to collecting was thorny — although his interest in art originated in his youth owing to his music teacher who spoke not only about musicians but also painters from different eras. Initially, Mr. Volodchinsky bought albums of artists which were of interest to him. Later, he began buying paintings. Any collection reflects the owner's intellect, preferences and taste. The preferences of Alexander were changing: he was once interested in avant-garde painters and later shifted to impressionism. In the course of time, the collector became fond of realistic works. Feelings are the key to him. "If you buy a painting and see it just as a painting, then it does not work. It should move to a new stage: when it touches and attracts you," he says.



Standing near the works
from the collection by A. Volodchinsky

At present, Mr. Volodchinsky's collection consists of around 300 works. Moreover, it continues to evolve — 'with the emphasis on love'. The collector is not limited to a certain time or style. Art critic and expert Vladimir Petrov specially appreciates Alexander's works of the second half of the 19th century, work of the Wanderers and 'Russian Impressionists'. Apart from Russian classics, the collection also features works by European masters: Moise Kisling, Suzanne Valadon and Camille Corot.

The Minsk exhibition brings 'top names' to the fore — such as the author's version of *The Knight at the Crossroads* by Viktor Vasnetsov, *Yaroslavna's Lament* by Vasily Perov, landscapes by Ivan Aivazovsky, *Harvest* by Alexander Kiselev and *Port Arthur Case* by Nikolay Dubovsky (which is truly dramatic against his landscapes as it depicts the trial of the case of Port Arthur's surrender during the Russian-Japanese War). Some well-known authors come from a new angle: the almost symbolic *Sailboat* by Isaac Levitan and the *View of the Moscow Kremlin in Winter* by Vasily Vereshchagin painted in shades of white.

The collection is gradually flowing into the twentieth century: with paintings by Konstantin Korovin, Boris Kustodiev, transparent *Province. Bazaar* by Konstantin Juon, wonderful *Zadvorny Prudok. Zhabovschizna miniature* by Ivan Pohitonov. The phrase 'like in the Tretyakov Gallery' is often heard in the exhibition halls. Accordingly, a landscape by Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, portraits by Yuri Annenkov, a drawing by Nathan Altman (*Sleeping Mikhoels* is the recent acquisition by the collector), works by Robert Falk and Alexander Osmerkin (his *Peonies*, 1951 set the upper time limit of the show) seem to be no surprise.

Mr. Volodchinsky notes that his collection is messy, as his tastes have been ever changing. "While collecting, I experienced victories and disappointments. However, this did not stop me.



The Light and Air. Paintings of Natan Voronov exhibition

On the contrary, it fuelled my excitement. One day, I realised that this is a huge part of my life. While buying a work, I wondered whether it would be interesting to my daughters, whether they'd love it. When they grew up, I began to consult with them. Collecting is a great pleasure to me — even when our views and tastes differ," he notes.

Status stands high

As regards the National Art Museum's temporary shows, another large-scale exhibition truly deserves attention: it is devoted to Natan Voronov's 100th anniversary.

The *The Light and Air. Paintings of Natan Voronov* exhibition presents works from the 1940s through to the 1970s, not only from the National Art Museum, but from his family's collection and private collections. Most are from his later years of creativity.

In a productive lifetime, he created works varied in theme and style, but always beautiful and expressive. He was called up to fight in the Great Patriotic War while still a student, in the last year before gaining his diploma.

Sadly, the war took his sight when an enemy mine exploded in his face. However, he continued to embrace colour, and retained love for all that is



N. Voronov. 'Roses'. 1956



N. Voronov. 'An Interesting Book'. 1954



Natan Voronov's creative work remains interesting over the years



N. Voronov. 'A Sunny Midday', 1977



N. Voronov. 'An October Morning, Minsk, 1917', 1955-1957

admirable in our world. From darkness, he sought light.

Natan Voronov was vocal in his opinions, and was more than once elected to the Board of the Union of Artists in Belarus. From 1963 to 1965, he fulfilled his duties as the Chairman of the Union's Board. As an artist, he remained faithful to the ideals of his time, following the dogma of socialist realism: the 'official' art. For three decades, he created works on historical-revolutionary and military themes, as well as painting portraits of his contemporaries, and creating industrial and lyrical landscapes, and still-life works.

Natan Voronov's artistic legacy is of interest in demonstrating Soviet ideologies. He gave his own creative reconsideration of impressionism and postimpressionism, influenced by the art of early 20th century avant-garde and by outstanding Soviet artist and teacher Alexander Osmerkin. Combining various art traditions, and talented use of colour, his manner remains distinct.

Honoured Worker of Arts of the BSSR Natan Voronov died at the height

of his talent, so we'll never know what else he may have accomplished. His legacy, nonetheless, is significant. For his family, his canvases are more than masterpieces of the Soviet art; they embody family history, especially through portraits. His grandchildren, Vladimir and Pavel, are artists themselves, and aided in framing Natan's works for the exhibition.

The National Art Museum presents more than fifty canvases by Natan at this exhibition: portraits, industrial and lyrical landscapes, and still-life works. Moreover, the first album devoted to his life and creativity has been released, as has the 'first day' envelope, bearing a stamp in his honour: both were presented at the exhibition launch.

...Once, plunged into a world of darkness, he dreamt of colour. After recovery and until the end of his life, he experimented with his palette. The victory of colour over gloom allowed Natan Voronov to preserve his status as one of the best colourists in the history of Belarusian painting.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



Natan Voronov. 'A Sunny Day'. 1958