

Lady with crown remains always true to herself

Dreams of Miss Belarus — Lyudmila Yakimovich, from Grodno

By Lyudmila Nesterova

Lyudmila Yakimovich isn't the typical glossy beauty who sets others in the shade and seems to have an almost shy disposition but, the longer we talk, the more attractive she becomes; her features are delicate and her gestures are charming — especially when she touches her unruly curls.

Our consciousness is so influenced by the media that we tend to imagine the world's beauties as being always bright, bold and self-confident. Lyuda is quite different, belonging to that group of girls who take acquaintance to be appreciated. Even during the *Miss Belarus* Pageant, she failed to become an immediate favourite, only gaining the jury's attention after the 'Miss Photo' round. Her close-ups showed her special qualities and she won, despite being only 172cm tall. It was an unexpected outcome.

My ninety minute interview has

not changed my opinion of Lyudmila; on the contrary, I have only added some new impressions. It's clear that this delicate, gentle girl has clear priorities and enough clarity of mind not to let winning a national beauty pageant turn her head. Is this the major reason for her success?

How has your life changed on winning the title longed-for by many beauties?

Many events — which are true 'gifts of fate' — have happened but actually little has changed in my life. I still live in Grodno, in the same flat. My boyfriend is still nearby and I'm still surrounded by the same people and friends. The 'Miss Belarus' title has not changed this, as I cherish what I have. On building new plans, I try to take care of everything dear to me.

There have been many bright moments. I especially recall a month long trip to France, participating in the 'Battle of the Titans' TV show. It was unforgettable, including many excursions and meetings with in-



Lyudmila has enjoyed many memorable moments as winner of honourable 'Miss Belarus' title

teresting people. It was a valuable experience.

The 'Miss Belarus' title has also given me another wonderful chance: to take part in the Days of Belarusian Culture held in the United Arab Emirates. I was given the honour to host a concert of our masters of arts on the Abu Dhabi stage. The trip lasted for just one day but was full of wonderful impressions.

Those holding the title of 'Miss Belarus' travel widely abroad, representing their country. What events do you conduct within Belarus?

I was most impressed by a charity action held in the Grodno District. We visited orphanages and boarding schools to support children and I left some with tears in my eyes. It's impossible to get used to this.

As a future psychologist, I view

this experience as extremely valuable. I hope my life will somehow be connected with helping others.

Another meeting also left its trace upon me. During a presentation of 'Alesya' magazine — dedicated to Grodno District women — I met members of the regional Council of Women. They were interesting, active and purposeful; I wanted to become one of them and joined their public association. I realised that this was the right thing to do. It happened during the 'Woman of the Year' Contest in Minsk, which gathered women of incredible inner and outer beauty.

As you've mentioned, you're studying to become a psychologist. Do you still plan to follow this path?

Knowledge of psychology has many things helped me, including at contests. I can say for sure that my studies at the

Institute have been useful and I'll soon pass my state exams, receiving my diploma. I'd prefer not to discuss my future plans but there is a youth project in which I plan to participate.

Has your personal life been affected by your title? We know you have a boyfriend, as discussed by the media after the pageant...

We're still together and I think our plans for the future remain unchanged.

Can I ask a hypothetical question? How do you imagine yourself in ten years' time?

I see myself as a wife and mother — with at least two children. I want to live in Belarus. Having visited other countries, I'm convinced that I'll always miss home; my soul is here. Travelling brings new impressions, development and education, but I want to connect my life with Belarus.

Passionate people bring home lost treasures

Repatriated historical and cultural heritage of Belarus

By Tatiana Pastukhova

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry has hosted a ceremony to accept the return of items removed from Belarus over the centuries. These have been donated to the National Library of Belarus and Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve.

Valery Kazakov, the Chairman of the Federal National and Cultural Autonomy of Belarusians of Russia, noted that the ceremony is another step, but not the last, in returning our historical and cultural legacy to its homeland. "Lots of treasures have been taken away from Belarus over the centuries. Now, we're doing our best to return them," he stressed.

Mr. Kazakov ceremonially donated the following treasures to the National Library of Belarus and Nesvizh Museum-Reserve: a medal in honour of Ludwika Karolina Radziwiłł (1667); a medal marking the 'Capture of Smolensk by Vladislav IV, King of the Rzecz Pospolita' (1634); an engraving belonging to

the Radziwiłłs; *The Manual on Compiling a Family Coat of Arms* (German edition 1711); two reprints of the Slutskaya (15th century) and Barkulabovskaya (17th century) chronicles; an original edition of the Bible from 1816; Alexey Sapunov's *Old Times of Vitebsk* signed by the author (1885); and twelve albums of *The Great War in Images and Pictures*.

Accepting the rarities, Roman Motulsky, Director of the National Library of Belarus, noted that work on their return has significantly intensified in recent times, while the Radziwiłłs' library is currently being transferred to electronic form. "We wish to see both electronic copies and originals return," he asserted.

Belarus' Foreign Minister, Sergei Martynov, thanked Mr. Kazakov for his efforts and awarded him a certificate of honour from the Belarusian Foreign Ministry in acknowledgment of his assistance in the search and acquisition of treasures. For many years, the Federal National and Cultural Autonomy

of Belarusians of Russia, headed by Mr. Kazakov, has been conducting such work, aiming to return Belarus' cultural heritage. Its *Vyartanne* (Return) programme has resulted in the return of *Chants of the 17th Century* — a book donated to Mogilev's Local History Museum — and four out of six famous portraits belonging to the Nemtsevich family (removed in the early 19th century); these have been digitised and brought to canvas. Moreover, *John Chrysostom's Exhortation* has been donated to Mir Castle (previously part of the collection of Mogilev's archbishop), alongside four volumes of the *Illustrated Chronicle Compilation of Ambassadorial Records*.

The 2011-2015 *Culture of Belarus* State Programme envisages spending around \$1m on acquiring historical and cultural treasures removed from the country's territory. Pavel Latushko, Belarus' Culture Minister, announced the sum at the recent ceremony of handing over treasures to the National Library of Belarus and Nesvizh National



Returning values

Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve. Mr. Latushko thanked Mr. Kazakov for his great efforts in aiding the return of so much of Belarus' historical and cultural heritage. He noted that it's difficult for museums to regain authentic items, "Therefore, digital copies, reprints and exhibitions of items on loan are more common." For example, several Slutsk sashes from the State Historical Museum of Russia were on loan to the National Art Museum of Belarus while Belarus' digital copy of the Polotsk Gospel was made with the assistance of Russian colleagues.

Truth born in dialogue

Union of Writers of Belarus and Turkish Union of Writers and Journalists implement joint book project

Dialogue and Tolerance, published in Belarus, has opened up a new series of translated Turkish literature. The book was recently presented in Minsk.

"Dialogue is known to be the most important instrument in bringing countries closer to each other. It promotes understanding while helping solve social issues and economic problems," notes Nikolai Cherginets, the Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Writers and Chairman of the Public Council for Morality. He adds that the joint project will be continued with works by both Turkish and Belarusian authors. The author of *Dialogue and Tolerance* is Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim scientist and theologian, thinker and writer from Turkey. He asserts that true religion teaches us to love, tolerate and sympathise, so we can achieve harmony with ourselves and with nature. He tries to answer the question of the meaning of life, calling on us to change the world by first altering ourselves, clearing hatred and rage while embracing virtue and goodness. Mr. Gülen's humanistic ideas are known worldwide and his works are studied in many European universities.