

Their biographies still being written

Alexander Lukashenko meets talented youngsters at end of academic year

By Kirill Dovlatov

The Palace of the Republic was sparkling with the smiles of young people, anticipating a joyful, exciting and solemn moment. Some were being awarded their first significant prizes, scholarships and Grand Prixes from Presidential funds, as well as diplomas.

"We've focused on talent and intellect in determining our priorities for development," the President underlined. Although the mood was festive, Mr. Lukashenko noted that serious reflection is also required; some time ago, he instructed a group of specialists to sum up the results of the creation of the database of tal-

ented and gifted youngsters.

Belarus' Education Minister, Sergey Maskevich, added that the database already includes over 5,500 people but the Belarusian leader emphasised that their specialties should be such to ensure future employment and full use of their potential. "How many of them are in demand in our country?" he asked, adding, "I'm confident no one can answer exactly, which proves that those in charge of the system have not worked as they should in this area; we'll correct this."

Mr. Lukashenko warned, "It's inadmissible for the state to 'waste' its best talent." He also reminded the youngsters, "Don't think that these

will be your only achievements. Our society — of parents, teachers and the state — supports talent; we found you and helped you to develop your talent, so shouldn't we ensure that you use your talent for the benefit of our country?"

The issue has its reverse, since some young talents receive their education abroad. The President sees no problem in this, except that, on returning, their diplomas may go unrecognised in Belarus. He feels indignantly on this score, saying, "If a good specialist arrives from abroad, what difference is there in which diploma they have?"

According to Mr. Lukashenko, teachers deserve special thanks and

respect for 'stirring the flame of creativity from the spark in a young heart'. He told the youngsters once again, "You're really great people. However, remember that we'll only guide you for so long. You'll then have to compete and struggle in life independently. Talent accounts for only 1-2 percent of success; the rest is down to hard work. I hope that your talent is in demand in our country. This is primarily my task: to ensure that talent is in demand in your homeland."

The scholarship holders of the Special Presidential Fund for the Support of Talented Young People then gave a concert, followed by an informal chat with the President.

Among other topics, the conversation tackled *Eurovision* and its prospects.

"We need a good performance and a unique artiste, who can sing in such a way that everyone is amazed. They need to be surprised that we've given such a performance and sent such a band. We can't say that we've done this yet. If we have to lose, we should do so worthily."

Much of interest and use was debated, with the faces of those youngsters leaving the Palace of the Republic vividly testifying to the fact that the meeting was a great event in their lives. Of course, their biographies are still being written... who can say what their futures hold?

Models of tomorrow day's media in contemporary world

Minsk hosts 7th Belarusian International Media Forum: 'Partnership for the Sake of the Future: Models of the New Era'

By Vasily Kharitonov

Each year, the latest topics are chosen for discussion, with professional experts taking part: political analysts, scientists, sociologists and politicians — alongside journalists. This year's plenary session tackled prospects of development for Eurasian integration.

According to Pavel Yakubovich, Editor-in-Chief of *SB* newspaper, addressing several hundred representatives from 17 countries, who met at the conference hall of the National Library, the forum posed the questions of 'Which challenges await us regarding Eurasian integration?' and 'How can Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan tackle these challenges?'

The State Secretary of the Union State, Grigory Rapota, contributed to the discussion, as did the First Deputy Executive Secretary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, Nikolay Sosonko and the Chair of the Council of the Republic's Committee on International Affairs and National Security, Nina Mazai. Political analysts Vitaly Tretyakov, Sergey Baburin and Mikhail Reutov were among those present. Interestingly, opinions differed widely, with questions from the floor creating heated debate. However, the conclusion was that the post-Soviet space can resist globalisation only by uniting efforts and simultaneously taking into account national interests. "The integration of Minsk, Moscow and Astana is a se-



Participants of 7th International Media Forum

rious and timely measure, as seen especially vividly against the background of the crisis, which has spread all over the EU," underlined Mr. Yakubovich, drawing preliminary conclusions. "The benefits of integration for Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan are evident."

Vladimir Makei, the Head of the Presidential Administration, gave a much-awaited speech which explored the trends of our new century and possible scenarios of development. Unfortunately, the world is unable to always cope with challenges and threats, especially when old recipes fail and new ones are yet to be invented. He voiced a fresh thought: although the world is becoming ever more interdependent, free movement of goods, capital and labour can lead to unseen economic stratification.

"Globalisation shouldn't

be accompanied by loss of national independence, or identity or the impoverishment of any population," he stressed, outlining the major thrust of Belarusian integration policy. "Belarus remains a socially-oriented state, aiming to enhance standards of living for its residents. Eurasian integration shouldn't be isolated. The Belarusian President believes in an 'integration of integrations' to unite the European and Eurasian unions: from Lisbon to Vladivostok."

This inspired discussion of a range of narrower professional issues regarding the media sphere, with heads of printed editions and TV companies, as well as heads of journalistic unions, sharing their opinions. They debated the summer journalism school, the cradle of Belarusian statehood and spirituality (Polotsk) and the significance of our classical

Belarusian literary geniuses, Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas.

The 7th Belarusian International Media Forum was launched with an expert session at the Town Hall, dedicated to the present and future of Minsk and its plans for the 2014 IIHF World Championship. Friendly greetings in various languages were heard on the square before the meeting officially began, as colleagues from all media spheres took photos alongside characters dressed in knightly armour and velvet and ermine outfits.

The Chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee, Nikolai Ladutko, then announced plans for the development of the capital — whose population now stands at 2m. Afterwards, Belarus' Sports and Tourism Minister, Oleg Kachan, joined the heads of the National Olym-

pic Committee and the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation in explaining preparations for the grand hockey tournament.

Belarus' Information Minister, Oleg Proleskovsky, expressed his pleasure, noting, "This event has already become a tradition and we are developing from forum to forum. This time, media representatives have joined political analysts and the heads of large research centres in sharing their views. Minsk is turning into a discussion ground for tackling acute social problems. The Internet and social networks are now part of our modern world's media forum, bringing new challenges and opportunities to contemporary journalism. In my view, the media is changing into a means of mass communication."

Others at the forum shared their opinions over its four days. Around a hundred guests alone arrived from a total of 16 CIS and non-CIS states — including Russia, China, India, Venezuela and Ukraine. The heads of news agencies from the CIS had their own sessions, as did deans of institutes and journalism departments. Several hundred Belarusian media workers also took part.

At the request of our foreign colleagues, who were eager to see more of the country, trips were organised to Polotsk, which is celebrating its 1150th anniversary this year, and to Kupala's homeland in Vyazyinka. The last day of the forum was dedicated to the Year of Book, organised in Belarus.

Belarusian district in Northern Palmyra

The Business Co-operation Council has met in Minsk, with Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikov suggesting the building of a turn-key Belarusian district in St. Petersburg. According to the PM, Belarus is also ready to consider building a St. Petersburg district in Minsk.

Mr. Myasnikov hopes to see St. Petersburg extend its scientific and technical co-operation with Belarus in the sphere of personnel training. Particularly, he would like to see branches of St. Petersburg universities open in Belarus and vice-versa. A joint university could even be created. He added, "A joint council for the defence of theses could also operate."

He believes that an inter-agency working group is needed to define the most promising bilateral projects, including those in the scientific and technical sphere. The PM also emphasised the need for financial co-operation. "St. Petersburg is a powerful financial centre not only in Russia, but also in Europe. If the major St. Petersburg bank becomes part of the Belarusian banking system, it will contribute greatly to the development of our partnership," he added.

The Governor of St. Petersburg, Georgy Poltavchenko, believes that co-operation with Belarus is already bearing real fruit. At the same time, our countries have potential for increasing trade turnover. "We have larger potential in terms of product volume and range," he underlines. Mr. Poltavchenko mentioned the energy sector, health care, housing and communal services, education and culture as priority areas of development for mutually beneficial co-operation.