

Drastic changes undertaken countrywide in retro style

Restorers tackle ancient apartments while businessmen develop modern infrastructure

By Viktor Korbut

New Open World Corporation is a non-commercial organisation which selects the top seven cities worldwide. The contest — running for two years — sees applications from over 1,200 cities, including Belarusian regional centres and the city of Minsk. Nesvizh is Belarus' third city to be the country's cultural capital, following on from Polotsk in 2010 and Gomel in 2011.

Italian colour for cultural capital

In late January, Nesvizh hosted a solemn ceremony to present itself as the cultural capital of the year. Local streets will be noisy and crowded in 2012, as a major cultural programme is planned: concerts of ancient music, opera and ballet, and the Night of Museums at the Radziwills' Residence. Moreover, UNESCO is to host an international seminar in the city, entitled *World Heritage Sites: Preservation and Use to Maintain Sustainable Development* — gathering experts from all over the globe.

Some streets are even to be renamed, and one will acquire a monument to Mikolaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł Sierotka — the traveller and dreamer who, on returning from his long journey across the Mediterranean and the Middle East, was inspired to drastically change his own home, with help from famous architect Giovanni



Belarus' cultural capital of 2012 — Nesvizh — heartily welcomes guests

Visiting Kościuszko's countryman

Specialists from Brestrestavratsia company are repairing the 18th century home of Niemcewicz, in the village of Skoki (Brest District). So far, Br3bn has been spent on restoration works. Five years ago, the mansion of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz — a writer and peer of Tadeusz Kościuszko — stood neglected; now, it has been 80 percent restored.

Brestrestavratsia's Director, Stepan Prikhodko, tells us of recent efforts, "We've

an archaeological study of the site."

You can reach the mansion's first floor via an ancient 18th century oak ladder, allowing us to imagine how the building will look when antique furniture and knights' armour are placed within.

Steam locomotive takes to 19th century

In December 1862, the first railway line was laid through Belarus — stretching from St. Petersburg to Warsaw and passing through Porechie and Grodno. 150 years later,

component needs thorough examination before entering service.

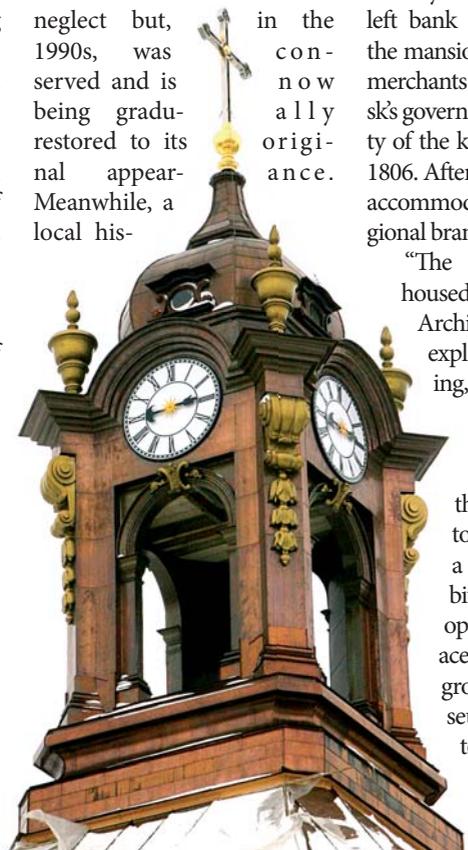
The retro train will start its journey from the old locomotive depot, with a platform being built nearby. The train will connect the stations of Grodno and Porechie — as it did 150 years ago — and will offer several types of carriage, in addition to a restaurant-car, manned by waiting staff wearing 19th century uniform. A museum is to open in Porechie (where the oldest Belarusian railway station is situated). There are also plans to construct a large tourist complex by 2014.

Mysteriously disappeared king

The last king of the Rzecz Pospolita was born in the village of Volchin, near Brest. He was baptised at the local Roman Catholic Church, which is being restored by Polish specialists. Last year, it was crowned with a metal dome, with clocks, and reconstruction work continues.

After demising the crown in the 18th century, King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski lived initially in Grodno, before moving to St. Petersburg — where he was buried with all honours at St. Yekaterina's Cathedral. In 1938, the coffin with his embalmed remains was re-buried in the village of Volchin. During WWII, the cathedral's rich interior was stolen away and the coffin disappeared.

The church fell into neglect but, in the 1990s, was conserved and is now a fully original appearance. Meanwhile, a local his-



Tower of Volchin's Trinity Roman Catholic Church

tory museum is almost ready for launch in Volchin.

Keeping legends alive

The state *Castles of Belarus* programme (running from 2012-2018) includes the conservation of the most romantic ruined castle in the country — in Golshany. It's believed that a ghostly black monk walks the site.

The Head of the Culture Ministry's Department for Protection of Historical-Cultural Heritage and Restoration, Igor

Chernyavsky, would like to see the building tackled as quickly as possible. "Golshany Castle — built by the wealthy Sapegi family — is in a bad state, with only its walls and tower (without roof) surviving. Financing may be forthcoming from state investment programmes and the *Culture of Belarus* programme, among others," he says.

The Head of the Oshmyany District Executive Committee's Culture Department, Galina Balinskaya, tells us that a plan for the castle's restoration and conservation is ready. "Our initial task is to preserve its walls and part of the archway. We also aim to replace the roof and conserve the corner tower," she notes.

Café at governor's residence

City authorities are continuing work in the historical part of Vitebsk; recently, a new observation site opened on the hill opposite Assumption Cathedral. They now plan to revive the neighbouring building, which dates from the 18th century. Built in 1772, on the left bank of the Dvina River, the mansion of the Kudinovich merchants was home to Vitebsk's governor general (the deputy of the king in the region) in 1806. After WWII, the building accommodated the KGB's regional branch.

"The KGB is being rehoused," Vitebsk's Chief Architect, Vitaly Dubik, explains. "A new building, near the *Slavonic Bazaar* ground, is being built for the organisation, leaving the governor's palace to be restored. Besides a museum and exhibition halls, a café will open there and the palace and neighbouring grounds will host a museum, with an avenue to the River Dvina."

Two new monuments are also being installed, dedicated to Duke Olgierd and Alexander Nevsky.

Red Tower reaches skyward

One of the most popular Bobrusik cafés, The Red Tower, is a former water tower, built in 1927. Until the war, it supplied the whole city with water. Now, three more floors are being added, in addition to a glass dome and a lift. The Red Tower bar-restaurant is Bobruisk's calling card, owing to its unusual architecture. Its reconstruction is due to finish in autumn.



Winter Vitebsk: Krylov and Suvorov streets

Maria Bernardoni. Nesvizh thus gained its present appearance. Since the 16th century, the city has been known as a cultural centre of the country and, this year, its status has gained official recognition.

installed a wrought iron fence to the left of the main entrance, with similar work on the right now begun. We've discovered foundations of a wing and part of an 18th century cobbled pavement. We'll continue our work only after

it's been decided to revive steam locomotive transportation along this oldest section of Belarusian Railways.

Inspiring new life into an old 'Er' train will take several months, as the machinery is seventy years old; each