

Country plunges into holiday

By Alexander Pimenov

Meetings, concerts and gatherings including veterans have been held countrywide, while new sites are launching in time for the holiday. In Minsk, the major events to mark Independence Day began on June 29th, when the capital hosted the Republican Track-and-Field

Competition. Belarusian sports stars took part, including Darya Domracheva, Yulia Nesterenko and Alexandra Gerasimenya. Meanwhile, the *Devoted to You — Belarus!* charity race enabled many to raise funds for the construction of a new children's hospice.

The Palace of the Republic hosted a festive concert divided

into several thematic sections, featuring the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre and various dance groups. Those from Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria and Venezuela arrived to take part. State Flag Square in Pobediteley Avenue (located between the BeLEXPO Exhibition Centre and the Palace of Inde-

pendence) hosted the *Be Beautiful, Belarus!* musical TV show for young people on July 2nd. A silent drill platoon performed *Our Flag* and closed celebrations with an artillery salvo. The G. Tsitovich National Academic Folk Choir, the Belarusian TV and Radio Company's Academic Choir, Belarus' State Chamber Choir and a children's

choir comprised of members of Minsk art schools provided entertainment.

Independence Day in Minsk began with a parade by Minsk's garrison, as well as youngsters and athletes, while the *Flourish, My Belarus!* gala-concert was organised in the evening, close by the Minsk — Hero-City Monument.



Participants of World Congress of Russian Press lay flowers at Brest Fortress Eternal Flame

Words, deeds and memories echo through human souls

The 15th World Congress of Russian Press — hosted by Belarus for the first time recently — gathered participants from 60 states. All were eager to discuss professional matters, with editors, publishers and journalists focused on our common history. Meeting at Brest Fortress in the early hours of June 22nd, they commemorated the start of the Great Patriotic War...

By Valentina Kozlovich

Journalists arrived in Brest from Minsk on the evening of June 21st: in 1941, the last peaceful day. In Sovetskaya Street, a gramophone played music of the time, while people promenaded in 1940s dress. At 4am, commemorative events began by the Terespol Gates, with the programme continuing at Ceremonial Square. It later finished by the fortress'

Northern Gates.

Addressing delegates on the evening before, the President of Belarus stressed that the gathering would be of special significance. He views Brest as a sacred site we all should visit: an idea echoed by the Russian President's address, read by the Head of the World Association of the Russian Press, Vitaly Ignatenko. His speech opened the forum, thanking Brest residents for the memories

they cherish. He emphasised, "It's here that we can gain an understanding of what's needed to live a worthy life. Despite the tragic and dramatic events on this site 72 years ago, the future victory was founded in those June days at Brest Fortress. We won by standing united and through strength of spirit. My colleagues have all been influenced by the war theme in some way so, on behalf of them all, I'd like to express



Commemorative events dedicated to June 22nd, 1941 — when war arrived

extensive gratitude to the Belarusian nation and to Brest residents for the memory they have tenderly cherished for so many decades."

This year, the organisers supplemented the traditional ceremony with a piano recital at sunrise near the Terespol Gates; famous Belarusian Brest-born pianist Rostislav Krimer performed Schumann's *Arabesque* and two etudes by Chopin. Mr. Krimer's performance was divided into three themes: peace, invasion and requiem. To this musical accompaniment, soldiers from Brest's border guard division floated wreaths into the Zapadny Bug River — as is traditional. Many of those present could not help tears escaping.

At 5am, Kobrin fortification hosted 'Citadel' a military-historical reconstruction

involving around 500 members of military-historical clubs from various countries, who recreated the defence of the Eastern Fort (commanded by Piotr Gavrilov).

Leila Saralayeva, a journalist from Kyrgyzstan, admitted being moved, saying, "We knew that we'd attend this historical event and are, naturally, impressed at how tenderly you cherish the memory of those heroes who died; our tears keep choking us."

Andrey Avsitidiysky, the Editor-in-Chief of *Europe-Cyprus* weekly, observed the reconstruction from close by and noted, "I'm greatly impressed with what I've seen. I'd like to thank Brest's residents and the Belarusian nation. We remain worthy victors while we remember the dear price of this victory."

The Editor-in-Chief of *The Crimean Echo*, an online analytical edition, Natalia Gavrilova, added, "The Great Patriotic War will always have the power to influence us. The media — as the major source of information distribution — should help preserve those memories for future generations. The theme remains relevant."

The event included discussions on the development of a single Russian language media space, hosted by the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, where guests were invited to the museum, Father Frost's Residence and Viskuli (where the Soviet Union's dissolution was officially agreed). Russian language is familiar to all Belarusians, as are the Russian people, Russian journalism and Russian mentality.