

Polotsk Gospel on display

1,025th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in Rus marked with exhibition at Museum of Contemporary Belarusian Statehood — a branch of the National History Museum of Belarus

The exhibition features shots of the last visit by His Holiness, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Alexy II, in September 2008, which coincided with celebrations for the 1,020th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in Rus. Some of the photos cover the visit by Alexy II's successor: His Holiness, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Kirill, in 2009 and 2012.

The visits included tours of churches in Minsk, Polotsk and Vitebsk, with the Patriarch joined by the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, in meeting the Faithful. The visitors also chatted with Belarusian youngsters and viewed the holy relics of Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya and Sofia Slutskaya.

In 2012, Patriarch Kirill unveiled a monument to His Holiness, Patriarch Alexy II, near Minsk's Memorial Church in honour of All Saints.

The Director of the National History Museum of Belarus, Oleg Ryzhkov, tells us, "The exhibition aims not only to show photos but the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church. The Museum of Contemporary Belarusian Statehood has been chosen purposefully to host the event."

On display is a facsimile edition of the 12th century Polotsk Gospel — the original of which appeared almost at the same time as the famous Cross of Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya. The prominent Belarusian



Exhibits presented at Museum of Contemporary Belarusian Statehood

duchess founded a scriptorium (for manuscript rewriting) in Polotsk and may have taken part in the creation of the original. The reproduction is the result of long-term joint work between the National Library, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Belarusian Exarchate Publishing House, the Russian State Library in Moscow and the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg.

At present, only three copies of the edition exist: one is kept at the

Belarusian Exarchate and another at the Family — Unity — Fatherland Foundation. Presenting the manuscript, the Chairman of the Board of the Family — Unity — Fatherland International Charitable Foundation, Vladimir Grozov, noted that similar reproduction projects are being seen worldwide. "In creation such copies we use authentic methods; in this case, specially synthesised materials were used to copy the sheepskin cover.

The facsimile matches the original by 99 percent. When such books go on show, we ask everyone to touch them, so that they can 'communicate' with them — as if with living creatures," adds Mr. Grozov. "The cost of reproducing one such book is 6,000 Euros."

The manuscript has spent several days in the Museum of Contemporary Belarusian Statehood and is now moving to the National History Museum, until late October.

Military heritage for peaceful purposes

Bykhov authorities develop own strategy to make use of old army sites

By Svetlana Andreeva

In Soviet times, the small town of Bykhov, in the south of the Mogilev Region, was a hub of trade and military activity. Women would travel there to buy the latest fashions and products scarce elsewhere. The stationing of the aviation division of the Baltic fleet doubled the population of the town while army shelters, barracks and warehouses occupied significant space. Its military airdrome was considered to be one of the biggest in Europe: the pride of naval aviation.

Checkpoint under the hammer

Shortly after the military left the base, there arose the question of what to do with such a legacy; it was a real problem for local authorities, explains Victor Pugach, the Head of Economic Department at the Bykhov District Executive Committee. He tells us, "Military facilities numbered more than a thousand buildings." An electronic database and documentary archives detail every site but, of course, they soon began falling into disrepair and many were plundered. In order to find new



Former aerodrome runway in Bykhov

owners, Bykhov District authorities decided to auction off sites, and investors responded.

Hens roosting in bunkers

Various investors chose to begin manufacturing inside some of the former military premises. Among them was well-known Belatmit; almost a decade ago, it bought one of the former navy mess halls [dining rooms]. Where soldiers once ate cabbage soup and cutlets, Myasograd sausages are now made. It was one of the first buildings purchased and has since given jobs to more than 700 local residents.

The bunkers presented a different set of problems, admits Mr.

Pugach, saying, "Agroling Company took an interest in these constructions and, since 2004, has been housing broiler chickens underground." Of course, the conditions were checked carefully for suitability, including radioactivity. Levels in the bunkers were actually half that of those within the town limits!

Sheds made from wood were dismantled for building materials, bought by enterprises and private entrepreneurs. Mr. Pugach notes, "We might say that the military heritage 'problem' turned out to be beneficial for the district."

Bykhov authorities don't demand short-term gains or huge injections from investors, being happy to see these old sites revived

for peaceful purposes, to the benefit of the state budget.

On a runway using a bike

Of course, it's not easy to find the right buyer for certain sites, so advertising has been vital, on websites and in newspapers. Since 1995, about 400 state property sites have been sold across the district. The former military camp now houses peaceful companies dealing with cargo transportation, production of windows, waste disposal and public catering.

Various 'lots' remain empty, including inside the airdrome. Its runway is over a metre thick, and stretches over 4km; it received such giants as the Ruslan plane and welcomed President Mikhail Gorbachev. Today, bikers and racing drivers occasionally take a spin along its length. Mr. Pugach tells us, "The airdrome has been used to give lessons in driving to Bykhov lyceum students, as well as hosting regular competitions in drag and circuit car racing and other extreme sporting events."

The airdrome remains for sale and Bykhov continues to welcome proposals from investors.

Through turnstile with code

Second experimental terminal installed on Minsk underground to allow fare-paying via SMS

The terminal has been installed at Lenin Square station (entrance from Nezavisimosti Square) and another was launched at Minsk's Akademiya Nauk station in late May.

"We've completed the first stage of operational testing, with experts having checked the compatibility of the terminal with automatic checkpoints. Soon, we'll start the second stage, linking devices via a single network. For this purpose, the second terminal has been installed and the software is being improved," explains Igor Dadalko, the Deputy Director for Traffic Services with Minsk Metro.

The system is new for Minsk underground but should become widespread if it proves a success, with a terminal at each station hall. Fares can be paid by sending an SMS to the operator (who sends an entry code for the terminal). The fare is then deducted from the personal account of the subscriber.

Another innovation is that metro ticket offices are to gain bank-card payment terminals for the purchase of tokens and travel cards.

Monumental two-metre 'Vishenka'



Cherry Festival takes place once more in glorious Glubokoe

Glubokoe is now famous for its cherry celebration, which included a culinary fair and conference this year. A 2m high sculpture entitled 'Vishenka' (Cherry) was unveiled, created by Ivan Kazak from Vitebsk: a cylindrical 'trunk' crowned by a branch of ripe cherries

The 'Say a Good Word about Rosy Cherry' librarian kaleidoscope was another novelty, alongside a thematic Cinema Day. Meanwhile, the town stadium hosted 'Sporting Cherry' and 'Cherry Marathon' contests. The 'Cherry Abundance' review of farmsteads was another wonderful event.

A postage stamp has been released in honour of the Cherry Festival, with a special postmark. There was even a 'Cherry Wedding' before the Festival ended with a colourful fireworks display.

The Glubokoe District is well-known for its cherry orchards, originally brought by local stock-breeder Boleslav Lapyr, from Poland. His saplings then spread among local farmsteads, and across the whole region.