

There's bread, and there's a song

By Vladimir Khromov

As is traditional, this event celebrates the results of the grain harvesting campaign. The festival is already 17 years old, and today, the major event of the festival-fair is the honouring of harvest time heroes who get the 'Belarusian gold', with their rough hands, mastery and self-sacrificing labour.

Each year, one of Belarusian towns becomes the centre of festive celebrations and the whole country helps this town improve for the festivity while solving many vital issues. Zhlobin — the current capital of *Dazhynki* — has acquired its second youth over a short period of time. Over 300 sites have been built and reconstructed, houses and streets have been renewed and the railway, connecting it with Minsk, has been electrified.

"What we see today in Zhlobin confirms the established truth that lies at the heart of our policy: if we work harder we will live a better life," noted Alexander Lukashenko. **"Contemporary, successfully and dynamically developing agricultural industry guarantees food security of the country while accounting for a huge share of Belarusian exports."**

According to the President, the agricultural situation largely influences the sustainable economic development which, in turn, means independence. Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that, over the last twenty years, the country had moved away from food tokens and empty counters, to an abundance of food. Moreover, Belarusian exports of agricultural products are now estimated at \$5bn. Sovereign Belarus, like no other CIS member state, has established a reliable foundation for the agro-industrial complex. Belarus has powerful enterprises producing tractors, vehicles, farm machines, and fertilisers. These companies meet the domestic demand while actively promoting their goods on the international market.

The Head of State said that the achievements of the agricultural industry are obvious. For a number of years, Belarus has been leading the CIS in terms of per capita production of major agricultural products, while being on par with Ukraine and Kazakhstan in grain production. Moreover, Belarus has approached Germany in terms of meat production and is almost two times ahead of developed European countries in terms of milk production. The relatively small country is in the top five in the world for dairy exports.

The Belarusian agricultural industry traditionally focuses on grain crops. The experience of the past year showed that, with favourable weather conditions, agricultural companies are able to harvest 10m tonnes of crops. A target they hoped to maintain this year. However, they were unsuccessful, and grain production shrank in all the regions this year. The estimated yield for 2013 is around 9m tonnes.

"Despite weather conditions and other challenges, the expected gross yield of grain crops in Belar-

rus will fully satisfy the domestic demand for bread grain and feed grain, including wheat and malting barley," added the Head of State.

This year, the Brest Region was the absolute winner in competitions related to the efficiency of work, yield, and the development of social infrastructure. The region achieved this largely due to its highly efficient agricultural management. The President also praised the achievements of other regions. Just like in the previous years, each of the regions harvested over 1m tonnes of grain.

Addressing the governors of all regions, the President noted that the achievements can and should be more impressive. Ten million tonnes of grain per year is an absolutely reasonable target.

"Dazhynki is not only a harvest fest but also a chance to talk about the future of our agrarian industry," noted the President. In his words, the state invests almost \$2bn in the agrarian sector every year. The President stressed that in the nearest future such support will be targeted, only for agricultural development programmes and quick-yielding investment projects.

"Today's task for farmers is to learn to work on self-financing and profit-making principles," underlined Mr.

Lukashenko. **"We need to enhance the efficiency by using natural material and labour resources, with a focus on innovation and technology. We also need to continue the optimisation of arable production, while establishing large holding companies. It should become an ABC for all farm managers,"** the Head of State said.

As is traditional, Mr. Lukashenko awarded the winners of the national competition for the harvesting of the most grain and legumes during 2013. These people were awarded cars and money prizes.

A wide cultural and entertainment programme was also organized for the participants and guests of the festival, with the major event being the concert of Masters of Arts — Festival Gomel Region — to Rural Workers of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Lukashenko also took part in the opening of electric, passenger trains travelling along the electrified sections between Osipovichi and Zhlobin.

The President was also informed about the completion of the work to electrify this railway section, as well as about plans to electrify other parts of the Belarusian railways until 2020. The implementation of corresponding plans will enhance the transit at-



Procession of *Dazhynki-2013* participants on city streets

tractiveness of international transport corridors passing via the territory of Belarus while helping reduce operating costs and the prime cost of transportation.

As far as Osipovichi-Zhlobin section is concerned, its launch has finished the first stage of implementation of the investment project, which envisages gradual electrification until 2015 of three sections: Zhlobin-Osipovichi, Gomel-Zhlobin and Zhlobin-Kalinkovichi.

Mr. Lukashenko drew special attention to the need to maximise the localisation of railway equipment production, manufactured in Belarus jointly with foreign partners. This applies in particular to the joint project with the Swiss company Stadler Rail Group.

Mr. Lukashenko also got familiar with beautification and socio-economic development of Zhlobin and

Zhlobin District, while visiting newly built facilities in the town.

Finally, the President visited the Dneprovskaya Zhemchuzhina (Dnieper River Pearl) hotel complex, which was constructed in record time — within six months. This became possible due to a large labour-force and the well-coordinated work of the general contractor, subcontractors and designers. The hotel accommodates 114 guests and boasts a café, bowling alley, a billiard room, a conference hall and a room for business negotiations. The building is a single complex located close to the Olympic Reserve Centre.

The President also answered questions from journalists who were keen to learn his opinion regarding the prospects of development of the *Dazhynki* Republican Festival.

Mr. Lukashenko believes that this holiday could become a tourist brand of Belarus. According to the President, today *Dazhynki* does welcome guests from abroad but their number is small. "Of course, it would be great if we could make the festival so big as to welcome people from all over the world," added the President.

The Belarusian leader said that visitors always have good impressions about *Dazhynki*. The President believes that the festival could attract Belarusians living abroad, as well as people of the neighbouring countries, Slavonic states. "In one word, there is a lot to think about. It is worth working in this direction," summed up the President.

When asked about the requirements for the next steps in the agriculture industry, the Head of State noted that this branch should become self-sufficient. **"The most important things for the country as a whole, and agriculture in particular, are to learn how to trade and sell products at a good price,"** believes Mr. Lukashenko.

Journalists also asked the President about the situation in the monetary-credit sphere, asking him to comment rumours about possible denomination and devaluation of the Belarusian Rouble.

Mr. Lukashenko announced that devaluation of the Belarusian Rouble is not on the agenda today. "The devaluation of the national currency is not currently on the agenda at all. Why would we devalue the national currency?! No leader would ever want to do it. On the opposite, we need to avoid it," the President said.

Mr. Lukashenko reminded that he had announced earlier that he would not artificially maintain the exchange rate of the Belarusian Rouble and other currencies. According to him, everything will depend on the demand and supply.

Holiday in all its beauty

By Yuri Butrimovich

There were a lot of people in Zhlobin on Friday and Saturday. No wonder! The Republican Festival *Dazhynki-2013* was being held here and representatives of the agricultural industry from all corners of Belarus gathered in the city. More than two thousand professional and amateur artists and creative artisans entertained the many visitors to the fair.

But the main celebrants of *Dazhynki-2013* were combine operators from agricultural companies across Belarus. Celebrations in their honour were organised, and they were welcomed by both visitors and participants of the event. More than



Just reward for hard work

sixty representatives of Mogilev Region received 'village worker' awards at the festival. The place of honour among the businesses of this region was given to OJSC Agro-industrial Complex Voskhod from the Mogilev Region (which was also the best last year). Among the other winners were agricultural production co-operative Gigant from Bobruisk District and CJSC Agro-industrial complex Zarya from the Mogilev Region.

The visitors of the holiday were



Lots of fun at the Zhlobin holiday