



In the neighbourhood of the River Berezina



Drawing since the time of the 1812 war

In the footsteps of Napoleon, on Berezina bank

Archaeological digging continues for the second year near Borisov. Scientists are eager to unearth anything related to Napoleon's famous crossing of the Berezina River. Frenchman, Jérôme Beaucour, inspired by the Napoleonic Crusades, has initiated the work.

By Anton Kostyukevich

International bus ride

Borisov welcomes its visitors in true autumn style. Not a friendly Indian summer, but cool weather and swirling fog. At the appointed time, the smiling Jérôme Beaucour appears in his sneakers, sweats, a warm pullover and raincoat. He's dressed like a true archaeologist, and his image is finished off with a Sherlock Holmes' style cap and small spectacles. You can almost see the Frenchman being accompanied by his own Dr. Watson and, in fact, almost ten assistants, made up of Belarusian archaeologists and other expedition members, work alongside him. The team travel to the site early in the morning, returning home after sunset.

The bus arrives and heads out for the village of Studenka, 10km outside of Borisov. Our French guest is travelling this route for the second week and is full of emotions and impressions. For instance, he loves our kvass, a drink which few foreigners have heard of. Jérôme says that juice or sparkling water cannot compare to its wonderful taste.

Globalisation is in the air. On

their way to the site, the French and Belarusians communicate in Belarusian, Russian, English, French and the universal language of gestures. Translator, Irina Matyushevskaya jokes, "Many hours of talks on history are already in the past. After years of working with Jérôme, I've learnt so much about Napoleon that I could guide tourists. What is difficult is to translate jokes from Russian into French and vice versa. The challenge is to preserve the humour than to simply interpret."

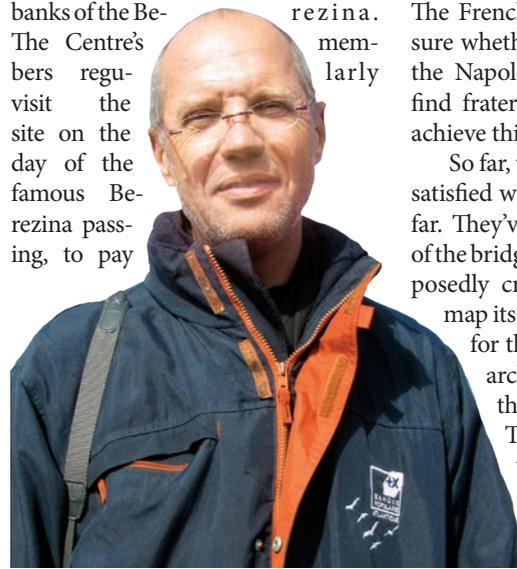
Throwing light

So today, descendants of the French invaders, who retreated through Belarus two centuries ago, are now heading to the country to conduct the archaeological dig and to throw some light on their history. After all, it was the French who initiated the campaign near the Berezina.

The Centre of Napoleonic Studies non-state organisation, which is conducting this dig, relies on private donations and its goals are clear. Every two years, the Centre publishes a thick magazine (which even contains articles prepared by Belarusian scientists), while its members participate in numerous scientific conferences

on the Napoleonic Crusades and hunt for material proof of his grand military activity. Jérôme focuses on Belarus and the Berezina River, a site which the Emperor personally chose. Interestingly, the continuity of generations comes to mind again. Jérôme's father, Fernand established contact with our country long ago and did much to erect a monument to the Napoleonic Army soldiers near Studenka in 1995.

The French often come to the banks of the Berezina. The Centre's members regularly visit the site on the day of the famous Berezina passing, to pay



Jérôme Beaucour

tribute to the countrymen who died there and to remember their history. As for the excavation, much preliminary work has been done, after a study of national archives and the relevant permissions and documents obtained.

History returns

Jérôme intentionally chose the banks of the Berezina for his digging, as he is interested in the detail related to Napoleon's river crossing. The Frenchman does not know for sure whether his forefathers were in the Napoleonic Army but aims to find fraternity graves. The work to achieve this continues.

So far, the researchers should feel satisfied with the results achieved so far. They've discovered the remains of the bridge which the Emperor supposedly crossed, enabling them to map its location and outline plans for the present year. Currently, archaeologists are digging at the site of a supposed camp. This work is only possible thanks to Jérôme's impressive historical studies. His scientific paper was prepared on the basis of archive relics and hand-

written maps of Studenka and its suburbs (made by an eyewitness).

It seems the Berezina has never welcomed so many scientists. Apart from Jérôme, Belarusian Igor Grutso, a Candidate of Historical Sciences, participates in the digging. "Of course, all the discovered artefacts will remain in Belarus, occupying their rightful place in museums across the country. Last year, we unearthed a possible fragment of a French banner, in the shape of an eagle, which was a true success. The study is especially valuable, as it throws light on both the history of the Napoleonic crusade and our own nation. We are also discovering other century's items here, including some from the 11th century," Mr. Grutso comments.

However, the true value of this expedition is not merely in historical and archaeological discoveries. Black bullets, cracked cannon shot and rusty bayonets are secondary. Importantly, two nations, formerly divided by the river and the war, are jointly restoring their past, while establishing friendly ties. In the search for the remains of an old wooden bridge, a new bridge of strong friendship is being built.

Special plates to prevent bicycle pedals from being stolen

By Inna Gorbatenko

State Automobile Inspection gives Brest's cyclists license plates

The main aim of this action is to defend the 'iron horses' from being stolen. The State Automobile Inspection etches a special marking in the frame, which is like automobile marking, and the owner gets a certificate containing his data, the details of the bicycle and its serial number. The State Automobile In-

spection provides a registration card for every cycle, so if it is stolen, its owner can easily identify his property.

"The marking is etched onto the frame free of charge, and only at the owner's request," explains Natalia Sakharchuk, Head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the State Automobile Inspection of the Internal Affairs Department of Brest's Regional Executive Committee. "The first 80 numbered bicycles are already travelling around

Brest."

It is impossible to remove these numbers without damaging the frame. If an inspector of the State Automobile Inspection notices a bicycle with a removed number, he will suspect that the bicycle may have been stolen. It can be easily checked on the State Automobile Inspectorate website, where a special virtual database of all registered bicycles will be created, and the suspect bike will be flagged as possibly stolen.

Production fight was organised in Grodno city

In Grodno, motorists, with the support of the State Automobile Inspection, have carried out an unusual activity to combat conflicts on the road. The organisers feigned a 'road rage' situation between drivers on one of the city's crossroads.

The cars stopped at a set of traffic lights. The drivers stepped out of their cars and started to sort out their 'problem'. Fellow drivers also started to get involved in the argument and when it seemed that

the situation was at its peak and a physical fight was about to happen, the participants of the conflict suddenly started dancing. After the routine had been executed, the participants of the event — a professional ballet company who had been invited to perform the dance, got back in their cars and continued on their way.

The organisers are convinced that this action will help to teach drivers to be respectful to each other and solve arising conflicts peacefully.