

Folios, bestsellers and other books on display

Publishers from 25 countries take part in 20th Minsk International Book Fair

By Veniamin Khmarin

The national stand of Belarus at the 20th Minsk International Book Fair, held at the BelExpo Exhibition Centre, boasted a logo of old library shelves with a ladder leant against them. The motto of the exhibition was 'Know yourself through reading!'

The President of Belarus congratulated everyone taking part, noting that, over the past 20 years, the forum has become not only a highlight of our cultural and spiritual life but a well-known event in the world book community. His message read: 'The current anniversary exhibition-fair, following the Year of Book, is a great contribution to encouraging reading, literature and artistic expression.' Mr. Lukashenko wished every success to the organisers and participants of the exhibition, and to all readers.

Despite fears that reading may be on the decline as a leisure activity, the huge crowds at the book fair give evidence to the contrary. E-books and new publication and storage formats may appear but our love for books remains.

The book fair saw the presentation of 'The First Book of the Belarusian People' — a reproduction of the 12th century Gospel of Polotsk. Meanwhile, *Polotsk. 1150*, from the Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House, marks the anniversary of the ancient city. The same publishing house also presented its *Belarusians of Moscow in the 17th Century*.

Another series is called *Harmony of Hearts*, whose first edition is entitled *Thoughts of the Motherland*, published by Zvyazda Publishing House.

The guest of honour, Russia, featured about 200 publishing houses at its stand. In addition there was a photographic exhibition featuring shots by the legend of Soviet and Russian journalism Yuri Abramochkin. As a Kremlin



2017 sees 500th anniversary of publication of first book by Frantsisk Skorina in Belarusian language, with forum celebrating achievements of his successors, joined by representatives of 25 countries

photographer, he chronicled an age. Editions were displayed under such themes as 'The World of Slavic Culture', 'History. Culture. Science. Education' and others.

Another exhibition showcased drawings by students of the Graphic Arts Faculty at the Moscow State University (named after Ivan Fedorov) while a similar display of

works was on the Art Floor, by students of the Belarusian Academy of Arts. Discussions were held on the topics of 'The Problem of Reading' and 'The 70th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad.'

Traditionally, families attend the book fair and teachers bring their students. It's wonderful to encourage reading and a love of books from



an early age; the concepts of 'family' and 'books' should be inseparable — as the *Family — Unity — Fatherland* spiritual and educational programme specifies.

On the Art Floor, the international 'Centre of the Family' project was detailed. The 'Semkovo Versailles' — a unique 18th century manor and estate in the village of Semkovo near Minsk — was once the residence of Minsk's last governor, Khmara; now in ruins, the project aims to revive the site.

Also a guest of honour, the French designed their stand to resemble a Parisian café, with discussions held on trends in French literature and on the purpose of the book fair (as a showcase of a country, a reflection of society or a retail opportunity).

Visitors do love to buy books at such events. Among the most impressive was a twenty volume set of works by Yakub Kolas, bound in gold and brown. Meanwhile, green and silver binding encased volumes by Maxim Tank. Both

legends enjoyed anniversary birthdays in the Year of Book in 2012.

Past winners of the national 'Art of Books' contest had their illustrations on show on the Art Floor. Those who won the latest, 52nd, competition were officially announced on the first day of the exhibition at the National Library. In all, 175 works took part in the competition, with the winners chosen by jury in 14 categories.

The *Polotsk. 1150* photographic album received the Grand Prix in the 'Triumph' nomination while the Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House was awarded the 'Golden Folio' and Frantsisk Skorina honorary diploma, as were designer Vsevolod Svetokhovskiy and the Belarusian Printing House Publishing House. Victory in the 'Spirituality' nomination was won by a reproduction edition of the spiritual and educational *Life of Blessed Yevfrosiniya, Abbess of the Monastery of St. Saviour Pantocrator in the city of Polotsk*.

Books require not just authors but illustrators, publishers and distributors. Accordingly, the latter are recognised through the Ministry of Information's award for 'Best Bookstore'.

The Day of Ukrainian Book was another highlight of the exhibition, as was an autograph session by Olympic Champions Alexander Medved and Yelena Belova: who feature in the series *Lives of Great People of Belarus*, by the Mastatskaya Literatura Publishing House. There was also an open microphone on 'Modern Views on Pupils' Education'.

In 2017, our first printer, Frantsisk Skorina, is celebrating 500 years since releasing his first book in the Belarusian language. The achievements of his successors were on display at the book fair, in which representatives of 25 countries took part.