

Pragmatically expanding integration space



Viktor Khristenko, Russia's Industry and Trade Minister, comes to Minsk to meet Alexander Lukashenko

Viktor Khristenko was

also the special representative of the President of Russia at talks relating to the Single Economic Space (SES), meeting the President at his residence at 38 Karl Marx Street. Mr. Lukashenko noted that Vladimir Putin's article in *Izvestia* newspaper on Eurasian integration 'meets our — Belarusian — position'. However, he plans to specify Minsk's interests in his own publication on the topic...

"The future candidate for the presidency and, most probably, the future president of Russia, sug-

gests bringing our former common space in order as the first thesis of his programme; it seems to stand high on his agenda," Mr. Lukashenko told his Moscow guest. "I'd like to discuss how we should behave regarding problem areas within the framework of the Single Economic Space — as is reasonable and justifiable on our part."

The recent statement leads us to suppose that, on establishing the SES, our three states will be more active than was evident in establishing the Customs

Union. The corresponding package of documents for this new integration should come into force from early 2012.

According to Mr. Khristenko, Minsk and Moscow have achieved mutual understanding — in particular, regarding the Eurasian Economic Commission — a newly established body to manage the SES. "Probably, it will be named thus. This is the first time that I've publicly announced its name," stressed Mr. Khristenko. This was his last revelation for journalists. He preferred

to refrain from speaking more on 'certain aspects which need to be legally registered'. However, these were most likely discussed during his talks with the President.

During the process of integration, a certain moment comes when participants need not only to show goodwill but to give up some part of their sovereignty. A supranational body needs to set common tariffs for goods imported into the single customs territory, among other measures. The EU states have already faced this task, hav-

ing delegated the lion's share of their authority to Brussels. Our three states face a similar choice and the major dilemma is how to combine evident benefits (from free movement of goods, services, capital and labour) and the supreme obligation of each state to defend its citizens' interests.

Mr. Khristenko used figures to prove the profits resulting from the Customs Union. Despite the crisis, turnover between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia will have risen 40 percent this year, outstripping \$100bn.

Holiday finds its place in history

Polotsk's 1150th birthday claim for inclusion on UNESCO Memorable Date List

By Darya Kurilova

Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Tozik, who heads the organising committee for celebrating the most ancient Belarusian city's jubilee, tells us that Polotsk's 1150th birthday will become an extraordinary cultural event, never to be forgotten. Patriotism and pride in our past are the major goals, with numerous guests from the CIS and beyond invited to take part — including those from Polotsk's twin cities, business partners and famous personalities born in the city.

An artistic team of people from a cultural, educational

and scientific background are to join those from the Orthodox church in making preparations, with certain ministries and agencies also invited to contribute: the Information Ministry, the Culture Ministry, the Academy of Sciences, the Belarusian Exarchate and public organisations.

The celebrations are planned for late May-early June 2012, as Polotsk usually hosts week-long festivities at that time — including official and church events dedicated to the city's anniversary.

Polotsk has a rich and glorious history, being first mentioned in 862 in the *Tale*



Ancient Polotsk's contemporary biography created in our modern times

Bygone Years. Its advantageous geographical location on the 'From Varangians to the Greeks' route made it one of the most significant trading and cultural centres in medieval Europe.

It has also given us many outstanding personalities: Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya, Frantsisk Skorina and Simeon Polotsky, General Roman Kondratenko — a Port Arthur hero of defence, and

Yuri Tarich — a founding father of Belarusian cinema. About 150 historical treasures are located in Polotsk, including beautiful Sophia Cathedral and Holy Transfiguration Church.

Transit bogs for common cranes

Belarus among top three countries for EuroBirdwatch

According to APB-Birdlife Belarus public organisation, which co-ordinates the event in our country, this year, 5,067 Belarusians logged almost 26,000 birds across the Republic. In terms of participants, Belarus was third among 37 European states; Russia led, with 17,993 people. Switzerland — which co-ordinates the *EuroBirdwatch* — came second, with 5,382 participants. In fourth place, Poland had 3,500 people taking part, followed by Hungary with 2,465.

In total, over 40,000 Europeans were involved in the two day bird-watching event, with over four million feathered friends registered. In many countries, the common starling was among the most observed. In Belarus, rooks, common cranes and jackdaws were most often logged. Rare birds, including black-throated loons, greenshanks, black kites, hobbies and white-tailed eagles, were also registered. In total, 25,986 birds of 95 varieties were observed in Belarus.



Birds under observation

The common crane is of special interest, as it migrates through Belarus, seeking marsh lands in which to settle. Clearly, Belarusian bogs are essential for these migratory birds. The European co-ordinators of the *EuroBirdwatch-2011* event noted significant numbers of cranes in Belarus' Yelnya Reserve — one of the largest raised bogs in Belarus and in Europe.

Fortress lives and remembers

By Veronica Kozlovskaya

Brest Fortress celebrates two important events: 55th anniversary of its Defence Museum and 40th anniversary of its Memorial Complex

In the post-war years, over 20m people from 140 countries visited the city on the River Bug. From the beginning, Brest Fortress Defence Museum was a serious scientific-research institution. Original exhibitions have originated there, later travelling internationally: *Chronicles*



History of Brest Fortress in photos

of Brest Fortress in Photographs and The Defence of the Fortress through the

Eyes of the Enemy — Photos and Documents from German Archives.

The Memorial Complex was set up at almost the same time as the museum, with the project headed by Alexander Kibalnikov — a People's Artist and academic. The creative team was given the whole third floor of the Belarusian Museum of the Great Patriotic War History in which to work. In fact, the memorial is yet to be finished, with only one tenth of the sculptors' dream realised at Brest Fortress.

Valentin Zankovich, a sculptor, architect and laureate of the Lenin Award,

is the only one still living from his team. He explains that more modest plans, with emotional and conceptual meaning, were also planned: small sculptural compositions to be installed at specific battle sites. He was recently entrusted to bring to life one of these plans and, on June 22nd, 2011, a new sculptural composition was unveiled near the Terespol Gates: 'To the Heroes of the Border, and those Women and Children who Stepped into Immortality with their Courage.'