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MEMORIES NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

Events in Belarus and abroad

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THE ELOQUENT COLOURS OF A VICTORIOUS SPRING

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Some events don't fade over time. Undoubtedly, Victory Day on May 9th is among them. Whatever happens in the contemporary world, the importance of this date never wanes, and nor do our memories of the unprecedented heroic deeds of Soviet soldiers.

The Great Patriotic War ravaged Belarusian lands, taking with it the lives of around 3 million people; dozens of cities, towns and district centres were destroyed, alongside around ten thousand villages and settlements. Almost four hundred thousand Belarusians were sent to slav-

MAY IS A SPECIAL MONTH

ery in Germany and, in their years of occupation, the Nazis established dozens of death camps in Belarus, as well as hundreds of prisons and ghettos. Several hundred thousand old people, women and children were killed. This cannot be forgotten. It's no surprise that a resistance movement — unrivalled in world history — was deployed within Belarus. The 'People's Avengers' kept the enemy on alert day and night. Over 1.5 million Belarus-born people fought on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War, to the bitter end, in battles near Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad and Kiev. They took part in the liberation of villages and cities across their Homeland, as well as within Eastern and Central European states. Around 400 Belarus-born people became generals and admirals and commanded armies and fleets during the military years, while 448 were awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union title for their heroism in protecting their Fatherland during those war years (four were awarded twice).

The price of freedom was the life of every third resident of Belarus, as we continue to commemorate and promote wider global understanding. After the Second World War, Belarus became a founding member of the United Nations Organisation: an honour indeed. Belarus was, at the time, a republic of the Soviet Union and was recognised for its huge contribution to the destruction of Fascism.

Yes, May is a special month, the time when Victory was declared over Nazism in the Second World War. Belarus continues to honour the heroic deeds of its soldiers. Several thousand former frontline men and Great Patriotic War partisans live still in our country. Their number falls each year, but they are always the focus of the state's attention at this time of year. Other states may set aside their victorious symbols but, for us, Victory Day is sacred. The Great Patriotic War left its mark on almost every family...

Today's young people are aware of the sacrifices made by those who fought for them and are often involved in seeking out information on those who died in the war, restoring the names of 'unknown soldiers'. Moreover, they take veterans under their patronage, remembering the war and honouring its victors.

Time passes and, as the politicians tell us, the world is changing. However, certain values do not change. Belarus is building relations with other countries on the principles of good neighbourliness: its contemporary political credo. For those seeking to exercise their 'muscle', sporting contests offer the best (and most peaceful) solution.

Partnerships between people and countries remain essential, being the strategic essence of international collaboration. Belarus orients towards this path in its foreign policy, taking the format of partnership as the basis for its relations with other countries. Political priorities were revealed in the annual State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly. Extracts from this Address in our magazine will give our readers a better understanding of the country's position globally, as it aims towards fully-fledged interaction in the wider world.



BY VIKTOR KHARKOV



MEMORIES NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

This tradition continues from year to year. On May 9th — Victory Day of the Soviet nation in the Great Patriotic War — the President lays a wreath on the Victory Monument in Minsk, chats with veterans and diplomats, and at the end of the event — with journalists. This time, answering journalists' questions, Alexander Lukashenko tackled a range of important topics.

Historical memory

We'll keep memories of the war alive as long as we make films, write books, read poems and prose about the war, as long as we learn poems and sing wartime songs in the kindergarten, as long as we discuss it openly and honestly at schools and universities. Belarus traditionally lays wreaths on May 9th and holds commemorative events and parades for Independence Day, marked on July 3rd. This has already become an integral part of our

lives. As long as we continue this policy, the Great Patriotic War and the Second World War, all wars that swept through Belarus will remain in our memory. I am always mindful of these awful events. Let's take the war of 1812, the First World War and the Second World War. Were those our wars? Did we need them? No. But we lost a third or half our population each time. How can we forget about them? These memories are too important to be lost and, no matter who is in power, I don't think the events will ever be forgotten.

Defence capacity

Firstly, I cannot militarise the economy. It will cost a great deal. Militarisation of the economy is not just a phrase. These are factories and people with military thinking who produce military products. What will we do when these goods are not needed? Secondly, people live under a peaceful sky today, and we want our people to have a better life. We cannot inject huge amounts of money into the armed forces. Thirdly, Belarusian doctrine is not based on any kind of aggression. We have an absolutely defensive doctrine. Its essence is to inflict damage on our enemy if anyone dares to fight against us. Should someone, sitting somewhere in their headquarters, in some country, decides to organise a war against Belarus, they must understand that we would retaliate. We have money for this, and we spend the amount we need to accomplish this task. Moreover, money is important but not the main thing in the matter. We have enough technology and weapons to protect our country. We have demonstrated this during military exercises and parades and will continue to do so.

By Denis Krymov



HONOURED FOREVER

73 years have passed since the day of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, and paying tribute to the memory of those who fought for the freedom of our Motherland is a matter of honour and our sacred duty

Thousands of people gathered in Minsk's Pobedy Square for a wreath laying ceremony. The President of Belarus was among those present. Many people kept the portraits of defenders of their Homeland and there was the impression they were once again on the front-line — about 150 former participants of the war who — despite their respectable age (most are over 90) — were strong enough to approach the Victory Monument on May 9th. They were both smiling and sad at the same time...

This ceremony is filled with a special spirit of celebration supported by traditions such as the laying of wreaths, a speech by the Head of State, his warm communication with veterans, the national minute of silence, the guard of honour... However, the programme is ever extended, with something new, unusual and exciting added. Like a symbol of memory, bells were heard ringing over the square, while a team of acrobats and artists — dressed in stylised military uniform — recreated living sculptures: memorials and monuments dedicated to the war (such as the Brest Fortress, and Homeland-Moth-



BELTA



ARTUR PRUPAS

er...) Small schoolchildren released balloons into the sky and a choir performed "The Victory Day".

Victoria Leshkevich — a soloist of the G. Shirma State Academic Choir Capella — said it was easy to sing, since the song is truly the people's and almost everyone knows it from their childhood. "It's a great honour and pride for me to perform "The Victory Day" here on May 9th. The victory is dear to all of us. I love war movies and I asked my grandmother about the war. She told me about my great-grandfather who went missing. We still know nothing about him. She also told me of my great-grandmother who hid from the fascists in the forest with her children..."

Four-year-old schoolgirl Stefaniya Pashukevich is a member of the 'Apelsin' (Orange) pop-sports dance band at the Minsk State Palace of Children and Youth. She was one of the girls with a balloon in her hands. In their family, her great-grandmother — a veteran of the Great Patriotic War — used to enjoy Victory Day. She died in the mid-2000s, but Stefaniya's mother Natalia remembers many war-related stories in their family. "My great-grandmother Maria Vikentievna defended Moscow and received a medal. She fought near Tula. On returning to Minsk, she discovered only a crater instead of her house. She also had another medal: For Courage."

By Dmitry **Ampilov**

VETERANS TAKE THE FLOOR

Dmitry Marchenko, Great Patriotic War veteran and Honoured Figure of Culture of BSSR:



It's a source of great joy that we've managed to live to see Victory. I remember Konstantin Simonov, who wrote about the war in the post-war years: 'It had left such a trace and broken so many lives that even twenty and thirty years later, those who are still alive can't believe that they are'. Even now, seventy years later, I can't understand how it was possible to survive. But we did it! I think perhaps fate allowed us to live so that we could tell the next generation of youngsters what the Soviet nation has suffered during those terrible years of the Great Patriotic War, and to ensure that this won't ever be repeated.

Tamara Vishnyakova, Chair of the Pervomaisky (district in Minsk) district organisation of survivors of the Leningrad siege:



I have already lived in Belarus for almost sixty years, after coming here to provide gas supply to the city of Minsk. At that time, I was a candidate of science with two daughters aged one and four years. Now, I have six great-grandchildren! I have survived all 900 days of the Leningrad siege and I describe my fate in verse: 'Hungry death covered us with its cold and black wings. But we survived by a miracle in this terrible hell and are now bringing our memory of it to you. Then we were given shelter in our close and dear Belarus-Mother. We restored it together with our brotherly nation. I'm proud of this Homeland!'

Tamara Zavgorodnyaya, a Great Patriotic War veteran:



Victory Day always brings a good mood and great joy. When we, veterans, meet on this day, it adds to our health. We can't escape our memories. After secondary school, in October 1941, I was sent to Moscow to a special school #3 where radio operators were trained. In early 1942, a group of intelligence officers and me as a radio operator, were sent to the enemy's rearguard. At that time, I had my first flight experience and first parachute jump. I also took part in railway subversions. A demolition man blew up the target and I later reported on the success of the task. Radio operators always had a grenade: in case of capture by the Germans we had to destroy the radio set. Often radio operators exploded themselves along with the radio. It was extremely difficult during the war and it's important to remember this.

WITH A VIEW TO GOOD RESULTS

Afterword to Alexander Lukashenko's April visit to Moldova

On the first day of his official visit to Moldova, the President of Belarus held talks with his Moldovan counterpart. Igor Dodon met Alexander Lukashenko in the state residence in the centre of Chisinau. The two leaders warmly greeted each other in a friendly manner. This atmosphere of mutual trust was felt throughout the whole meeting.

“I came here not only as a guest but as a person who loves this country and who visited it many years ago. I cannot forget that people close to us live here; these are our people,” Mr. Lukashenko told his colleague. “I’ve been to many republics of the former USSR, but I have never experienced such nostalgia anywhere. While travelling along the

central street of Chisinau, I wanted most of all to walk it on foot — as it was in Soviet times. Here are good people, good land and a very good climate. It’s a great idea to come here to prolong one’s life.”

Mr. Dodon thanked his honoured guest for accepting the invitation to visit Moldova, saying, “Your visit is very important for us. We have a great deal to talk about, there are joint plans to be made.” Said the Belarusian Head of State, “Nothing will hinder our cooperation. We will do everything possible to make you richer. Moreover, we are ready to help you as much as we can. If our partner is richer, then we’ll also become richer.”

This simple truth is an excellent basis for promoting partnership in all areas. In Chisinau, Belarus is viewed positively, and our President is much respected for keeping the country from collapse, taking it away from the abyss at a critical moment, preserving and

Alexander Lukashenko:

We are ready not only to trade but also to establish joint ventures to produce goods which Moldova needs. These might be 3-5 times cheaper than products from foreign companies. This is half the battle. We’ve agreed to train personnel for Moldova, so that they are engaged in the production of tractors, combines and cars. This form of cooperation will enable the economy of Moldova to reach a completely different level



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, and President of Moldova, Igor Dodon

strengthening its economic potential. This was confirmed by factory workers, taxi drivers and shop assistants — all those with whom I had a chance to talk to in Chisinau. Mr. Dodon also said, on several occasions, “I’ll tell you honestly: most of our citizens would like to live in Belarus. You have a very dynamic economy. According to all economic and business ratings, Belarus is placed higher than Moldova. We are interested in your experience in industry, agriculture and social sphere.” Chisinau would love to see more production and jobs. Local people actively advocate the expansion of trade and economic cooperation with Belarus. It is not limited to trade alone, Mr. Lukashenko explained, “We are ready not only to trade but also to establish joint ventures to produce goods which Moldova needs.

These might be 3-5 times cheaper than products from foreign companies.”

White and blue trolley buses in the Chisinau streets attract great attention; these are produced at a joint facility of Belkommunmash and its Moldovan partners. The company has been in operation since 2012 and has already produced 120 vehicles. A contract is likely to be signed for the supply of another 20 machine kits. The Technical Director of Chisinau’s Electric Transport Directorate — Ghenadie Zadisenet — says he is pleased with cooperation with the Belarusians. “Belkommunmash has managed to outstrip competition from the Czech Republic and Russia due to its high quality and flexible pricing policy. You have really efficient and reliable machinery and we hope to develop our production further.” In ad-

dition, Moldova has shown interest in the assembly of Minsk electric buses. An agreement was signed to establish a facility for MAZ bus assembly; these vehicles are expected to replace the dilapidated Hungarian Ikarus buses.

The benefits of such cooperation are mutual. Moldova will get modern production which it lacks, in addition to new jobs. Moreover, the country will be able to join new EU markets with our joint produce, since simplified custom-free trade rules operate between Moldova and the European Union.

Plans also include a joint assembly for elevators, the production of mini tractors and motor blocks. Moldova is an agrarian country. In 2017, it harvested a considerable amount of grapes, corn and wheat, but plans to grow even more. The

page 7 Belarusian experience in the development of agriculture also enjoys demand among Moldovans. Last year, Mr. Dodon visited several Belarusian enterprises and was treated with milk at one of them. Afterwards, the official expressed his satisfaction commenting, “It’s tastier than wine.” The Moldovan authorities aim to implement a pilot project for construction of a modern dairy-commodity complex based on Belarusian technology. Furthermore, in the near future, direct flights between Minsk and Chisinau will be resumed.

In brief, the prospects for expanding cooperation are quite obvious, although Moldovan society does not yet have a clear idea of how to move on, and with whom to build integration. Some propose to focus on the European Union, others see the future of the country with the Eurasian Economic Union. However, both camps want to cooperate with Belarus as they see our country as a reliable partner and friend. Judging by Mr. Lukashenko’s words, Minsk is responding with complete reciprocity, “We have no closed topics. We are ready to cooperate with you — including in the military-industrial complex and any civilian products. Whatever they might say about my visit today, I was reproached for getting carried away in recent months on trips to the GUAM countries [Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova], I’ve come to our native republic. Let Moldova and Belarus try to benefit from this.”

The President believes cooperation between our countries is an example for others, “Do not break down small states. Give us an opportunity to decide with whom we should be working and how to proceed. We do not need to fight with anyone. We must see the good in both countries and try to bring it to our own.” After the official negotiations, Mr. Lukashenko laid a wreath at the monument to Stefan the Great. He is one of the most respected historical figures in Moldova: a diplomat and a commander who — in the Middle Ages

— actively fought for the country’s independence. Meanwhile, the Belarusian delegation revealed a bust to the Belarusian printer, Skaryna. As a symbol of the spiritual unity of our peoples, this monument now adorns the centre of the Moldovan capital.

As part of the President’s visit, negotiations with the Prime Minister of Moldova — Pavel Filip — also took place. In addition, Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Dodon took part in the Field Day ceremony dedicated to the sowing campaign. Businesses also joined top level negotiations: the Belarusian-Moldovan Forum of Business and Interregional Cooperation was held at the same time.

The second day of the President’s official visit to Moldova was rich not only in official events: while businessmen were agreeing on new contacts and contracts at the business forum, Mr. Lukashenko met the former head of Moldova — Nicolae Timofti — and then went to attend the so-called ‘Field Day’ at the Porumbeni Horticulture Institute (where Mr. Dodon was waiting to meet him).

‘Porumbeni’ means ‘corn’ in the Moldovan language. The Institute is located 20km from Chisinau and is famous for its development of hybrid varieties of the plant. This food for Moldovans is like the potato for us, and much attention is paid to its breeding and growth. The seeds are entirely elite and super elite; some time ago, they covered over a half of the USSR fields. The Institute now successfully cooperates with Belarus’ Polesie Institute of Plant Growing, having developed new varieties adapted to the climatic conditions of Belarus. Alexander Lukashenko’s visit coincided with the corn sowing campaign. The presidents of Belarus and Moldova decided to sow the Moldovan field jointly. Earlier, in an interview to BelTA News Agency, Mr. Dodon described how this idea was born, “Last year, at one of the meetings, I reminded Alexander Lukashenko that I had invited him to Moldova. He then

said that he would come when it would be warm, and we would sow the field on Belarusian tractors. It was an unexpected surprise for me. I know that Mr. Lukashenko often works on a tractor. I, in turn, graduated from an agrarian university. I was born in the village and am comfortable with tractors, although I haven’t driven one for the last five or six years, so I had to prepare myself.”

The Moldovan President managed the unusual test drive very well. Afterwards, he left the cabin happy, commenting, “Nobody else has ever been engaged in sowing in Moldova jointly with the President of Belarus. I’m glad we’ve done it, especially in such an historic place. Belarusian machinery is reliable. We use it in all our villages and people have got used to it.” Mr. Lukashenko cautioned against complacency at the results achieved so far, “We should not be limited by trading operations alone. We need to improve relations and establish joint ventures. This is half the battle. We’ve agreed to train personnel for Moldova, so that they are engaged in the production of tractors, combines and cars.” Mr. Dodon responded with a promise to teach Mr. Lukashenko the Moldovan secrets of grape cultivation. “I invite you to my native village in late September-early October to jointly harvest a new crop and prepare the wine.” he said.

Mr. Lukashenko — who is known to be fond of agriculture — willingly accepted the invitation, “We also grow grapes, but they differ from the Moldovan varieties, our climate is changing, I really hope that my friend and colleague will teach me how to cultivate real grapes.”

The topic of bilateral relations was continued at talks with Moldova’s PM, Pavel Filip, who expressed his gratitude to the Belarusian President for the continued support of Moldova, “We remember a time when we experienced difficulties with sales markets; Belarus supported us. We never forget what friendship is and we know how to appreciate it.” Political relations

BELARUS-MOLDOVA: Trade-economic cooperation



Republic of Belarus



Republic of Moldova

Belarus and Moldova established diplomatic relations on November 19th, 1992. In 2017, Moldova was 4th in the CIS in the commodity turnover list.



VADIM KONDRASHOV

however, are not built purely on emotion. Concrete projects serve as the foundation and there are already many of them in progress. Mr. Lukashenko suggested seeking new directions for cooperation — such as elevator assembly. Moldova currently needs to replace two thousand lifts. “Why can we not assemble them here? If you need buses, let’s produce them together,” proposed Mr. Lukashenko proposed. “This form of cooperation will enable the economy of Moldova to reach a completely different level. You will receive new businesses and qualified staff as a result.”

Mr. Filip hopes it may be possible to combine the future production of buses with the currently operating company

assembling trolley buses. “It will be products of Moldovan origin but with Belarusian roots — opening a custom-free access to the EU markets,” he said. It was also agreed to build a dairy-commodity complex near Chisinau, in the village of Maksimovka, based on Belarusian technology. This pilot model project will become an example for other farms.

The state of Moldovan roads is another acute problem, and even the centre of Chisinau suffers. At present, Belavtodor’s enterprises are participating in tenders for the construction of roads in Moldova. Mr. Lukashenko voiced a pragmatic idea: to build concrete roads. These might cost 7-10 percent

more, but the lifetime of such highways is up to 50 years. In turn, Belarus is interested in increasing supplies of quality products from Moldova. Moldovan wines and cognac are already bottled in the Republic and there are possibilities to expand joint production of juices, purees and baby food, as well as other programmes in the food and processing industries. The industrial and transport-logistical infrastructure makes it possible to organise high-quality processing of Moldovan vegetables and fruits. The final produce is planned to be sold to not only to Belarusian consumers but also to other countries.

As a result of talks at the governmental residence, ten documents on cooperation in financial, scientific, technical, legal and humanitarian spheres were signed. In particular, the Government of Belarus concluded an agreement with the Moldova-Agroindbank commercial bank on terms of issuing loans for the purchase of Belarusian goods in Moldova. Agreements on cooperation were signed between the State Committee of Forensic Expertise of Belarus and the Ministry of Justice of Moldova, the General Prosecutor’s Offices, the ministries of Health, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Academy of Sciences of Moldova. A number of documents were concluded on interregional cooperation, including the exchange of groups of children for health improvement.

The business forum proved no less fruitful. The Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry — Vladimir Ulakhovich — said contracts and agreements worth \$20m were signed as a result of the talks. A new niche discovered by businessmen is pharmaceuticals. Today, the problem of the price-quality ratio on medicines is topical for Moldova.

After top level talks, Mr. Lukashenko invited the President and the Prime Minister of Moldova to visit Belarus at any convenient time.

By Yevgeny **Kononovich**

TO GROW FASTER, WE NEED TO BE OPEN

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko delivered his annual State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly. Below is a shortened version of the Address which — in our view — outlines the principal moments of the country's development and its foreign policy guidelines.

When defining future tasks, we must look at them through the prism of modern events, being aware of our position in the world. Mankind, unfortunately, is at a crossroads. We've entered an age of uncertainty, unpredictability and I think, sadly, of long-term instability. There is no longer anywhere on the planet where you can hide away and detach yourself from the scene.

Security has become a tangible phenomenon. It is especially acute now we have learnt how easily it can be lost and what incredible efforts are needed to preserve it. Struggle for a place in the world hierarchy is becoming more topical. Strategic rivalry and competition between states have become commonplace. This is accompanied by an increase in

tension and confrontation which are already beginning to go off the scale. We see strong lobbying for economic and political benefits and undisguised hostility to opponents.

National selfishness, neglect of the interests of partners and even allies, egocentrism, violation of international norms has become an integral part of the policy of the world's leading players.

The planet is swept by trade wars. Guided by strong protectionism, the United States is at odds with China. At the same time, a large-scale sanctions war was launched against Russia. We have reached the point where, on advice from abroad, the EU restricts its own companies operating on the oil market with our eastern neighbour.

The world trading system appears to be breaking down. Under these circum-

stances, the peace-loving, balanced foreign policy of all states — the policy that we adhere to — is particularly relevant. Our initiatives are also topical: promotion of ideas of compatibility in Europe, partnership of various integration associations, renewal of the pan-European dialogue on strengthening measures of confidence, security and cooperation.

For our allies, Belarus — with its social and political consent, interfaith peace and a problem-free policy for its neighbours and other states — is of value. There are some who talk about the return of the Cold War. This is an explosive situation. It clearly demonstrates how fragile the world can be.

I don't need to explain that, in the face of threats, any achievements of civilisation, any material blessings and



ambitious personal successes fade away. We understand that our security relies on the unity of our people and our state's strong domestic and foreign policy.

Stability and cohesion in society and its unity have come not easily to us. We must know what to lose and what to protect. It's better to realise this in good time, so that it does not turn out later that people say: 'We failed to save what we have but cried when it was gone.'

The total interdependence of our modern world is no longer simply a nice phrase. The world is transforming into a single global organism. The Internet has become its nervous system, while international finances and banks act as its blood. The image of the world economy is increasingly determined not by national states but by giant transnational corporations. Their commercial interests dominate politics

and agreements. They also provoke economic and even military conflicts. This is the harsh reality of our time.

Independence of a state, its authority, tranquillity in society, qualitative education, high culture and achievements in sport primarily depend on the success of the economy. Like no one else, we confirm this rule. We create our success — unlike other countries rich in natural resources — only by the labour and intellect of our people. This is our advantage.

To ensure a correct choice of actions within the country, we must sensitively and correctly understand the development of the modern world. It is determined by three key factors: the explosive growth of new technologies, the rise of emerging markets and the total globalisation of all world processes.

At the same time, as mentioned, confrontation and mistrust are being exacerbated in the international arena. This is not an easy time. Sanctionary wars will inevitably hurt us. Whether through trade, or through a financial channel, we will feel this personally. However, we'll not shut ourselves out of the world. No country — even those on the list of great powers — can be successful if it closes in on itself.

Our task is to be open for the best outcomes. The goal is to grow faster than others and thus reduce the gap between us and developed countries. This is the guarantee of qualitative changes that we need, and which will allow us to raise the level of well-being of Belarusian citizens in relation to others around the world.

This topic was high on the agenda at a session in Government focusing on the 2017 results. We did not make any secret of our plans and my tough assessments and policy conclusions were brought to the public.

Speaking openly, a year ago, we were set for more modest results than we received. The efficiency with which the country has worked, and the painstaking efforts of the Belarusian people have produced a much more positive result. We've jointly overcome the negative tendencies of recent years.

At present, we are seeing a low level of inflation. Our exports are recovering, and the balance of payments is improving. We have as much money as we earn, and we do not need to consider the printing press to solve our problems. Budgetary funds are spent only for targeted programmes and for specific tasks — enabling us to pursue a balanced exchange rate policy. About the growth of gross domestic product, we are emerging from a two-year recession.

The major goal now is to make these positive changes irreversible. This is the cornerstone of economic policy, something that will give us an opportunity to preserve economic stability and hence peace and order in society!

Our internal potential allows the economy to grow regardless of how much oil is worth and how much it will recycle, what the situation is for potassium or food products. The competitiveness of our goods and services should be such that external factors affect us minimally. This task is a matter of more than one day, although we have been talking about its solution for decades. We need a result.

It is necessary to quickly master new avenues. We have the framework of an IT-country, unique conditions have been formed in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park and a great stake has been placed on small and medium-sized businesses.



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Dynamic development of traditional and new industries will enable us to occupy a worthy place in global processes and not remain in the role of a passive participant.

It's impossible to develop in the existing system without human capital — a core value in the current century. The era of competitiveness for investments will gradually fade. There are enough financial capitals in the world where intellect and human energy are currently highly appreciated.

A new business climate should foster an atmosphere based on business relations and mutual trust. The more complex the external situation, the more well-coordinated and clear the interaction of all elements of economic life should be. Today, the basis is being laid for 2020. We have all the conditions that the five-year programme predicted, not only in figures but in its essence.

In 2020, Belarus expects to present itself to the world as a renewed, progressive and comfortable nation for all those who wish to work peacefully, earn money and raise families. However, this is a peek into the future. Its guarantee is the fulfilment of the tasks

— previously set by me — aiming to restrain prices, increase salaries and provide employment. These issues are still acute for our people. All modern conflicts are based on the struggle for resources, control for their trade flows and, finally, for dominance in world markets. If we drill down deeper, everything pivots around oil. This is especially obvious if we look at the Middle Eastern region, particularly Syria. The Syrian authorities aren't being given an opportunity to stabilise the situation in their country — tortured by a seven-year conflict.

All possible means are being applied to prevent this: starting from support for the armed opposition, hysteria in the mass media and even direct rocket attacks, instead of giving the Syrian nation the right to independently determine its fate at the negotiation table.

However, Syria is not an exception, but rather a logical continuation of the well-known story which includes Iraq, Libya, Iran and other states. Oil is the first reason for sanctions regarding the largest oil exporters: Russia, Iran and Venezuela. However, today, for the world's influential players, it's impor-

tant not only to control oil extraction and supply. Oil is becoming the most efficient instrument of manipulations and putting pressure on the fluctuations of demand and supply.

Instability created in the world market in this way, influences any country and any economy. This doesn't allow countries which depend on 'black gold' to form long-term strategies and development prospects. Belarus is no exception in this respect.

Our country exports two thirds of its produce and, accordingly, our well-being relies on foreign markets. Company leaders must live and breathe this thought.

The CIS vector retains its significance in the system of our foreign policy and foreign economic priorities. 'Roadmaps' of bilateral interaction are being implemented with our main partners in the Commonwealth. The CIS has become a platform for meetings, negotiations and contacts. A single day is needed to talk with all our closest partners — which is good.

Belarus, without isolating itself, maintains economic ties with those states that left the Commonwealth or are at the stage of secession from the CIS. The aspiration of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to deeper integration with the European Union is not an obstacle to our active trade and economic cooperation.

We've established relationships with Moldova which signed a partnership agreement with the European Union. How does this affect us? The answer is not at all, we are already looking for the benefits.

The European Union is our neighbour; this neighbour is God-given. It's an axiom: we must live with our neighbours, but it is better to be friends. In recent years, relations with the People's Republic of China

have seen rapid development. Since 2016, the level of relations of confidential all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation has been established. Our relations are dynamically expanding both in quantity and quality. We are active and equal participants in the initiative of Chinese leader Xi Jinping: Belt and Road. It is a new model of interstate interaction built on the principles of support and joint development. Recently, when meeting an influential Chinese politician and the Minister of Defence, in the presence of the Chinese Ambassador, I said openly, "Thank you for the cooperation but we insist on deeper collaboration."

Our multi-vector foreign policy will remain consistent and predictable. We will continue to build cooperation with different partners, balance our interests between different poles of power, cultivate new geopolitical pillars and 'buffers'. This is confirmed by our first experience of chairing the International Organisation outside the CIS — the Central European Initiative — and holding (for the first time in the country's history) the session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Our chairmanship in the CSTO has also become a success.

The world community has seen the ability of Minsk to implement significant projects. Enhancement of Belarus' role in

Independence of a state, its authority, tranquillity in society, qualitative education, high culture and achievements in sport primarily depend on the success of the economy. Like no one else, we confirm this rule. We create our success — unlike other countries rich in natural resources — only by the labour and intellect of our people. This is our advantage

We haven't ever made friends and won't ever make friends against someone.

We will intensify our relations on the eastern vector — with both Russia and the People's Republic of China. This is our strongest support and it's a blessing.

Belarus has managed to find its own niche in the world, becoming an independent regional player. Global foreign policy initiatives based on ideas of security and cooperation (the so-called Helsinki-2 process) have become a logical expression of the unifying agenda proposed by Minsk to the world community.

regional and international politics is a common strategic task that the Foreign Ministry and other interested ministries, departments and enterprises must solve together.

We have no excessive geopolitical ambitions, but we also do not view ourselves as an outsider. We are proud of our country. Respecting all nations and states, we have every right to demand the same respect for ourselves. Belarus is a European country with a sound emerging economy, a calm socio-political situation, interfaith peace and a decent, responsible foreign policy. We do not create problems for anyone, but only help to solve them if they ask.



BELTA

ON THE SIDE-LINES OF THE OVAL HALL

Our reporters ask for impressions of the President's State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly

Mikhail Myasnikovich, Chairman of the Council of the Republic:

The President's Address proposes ways of developing the economy and civil society. In his speech and in answers to parliamentarians' questions, Alexander Lukashenko gave an exhaustive assessment of events and trends in the country and the world, suggesting ways of developing the economy, civil society and state institutions. Personnel, energy, financial market, intellectual resources, the unity of the nation, the Constitution... This is not a complete list of issues that characterise the novelty of the Address. The task of parliamentarians is to envisage in their plans, actions aimed at unconditionally fulfilling the President's instructions.

Mikhail Orda, Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions:

In his Address, the President made a principled emphasis on the fact that the entire policy of our state is aimed at

each person, so that every one of us feels safe, able to study peacefully, work and grow. In all his trips around the country, every working day, the President invariably pays attention to the need for wage growth, price restraint and creation of new high-performance jobs. In fact, the growth of incomes depends on the efficiency and productivity of labour.

Olga Politiko, a deputy of the House of Representatives:

In my opinion, the main message of the President's Address is that we must grow, develop faster than others, and thereby reduce the gap from developed countries. Therefore, enterprises should accelerate innovative development. The world is changing so rapidly that, only having breakthrough technologies, one can enter global markets and successfully compete. It is necessary either to master something innovative, or to be able to integrate into the technological chains of the world's leading leaders. We have the key to achieve this: human potential.

Tamara Krasovskaya, Chair of the Standing Commission on Labour and Social Affairs of the House of Representatives:

Naturally, social issues are the most important topic for me. We all heard two major ideas: less talking — more business. During his Address, the President paid great attention to the social sphere and social policy. He placed emphasis on the fact that, perhaps, it is worth allocating more funds to people in need of social assistance and protection.

Igor Marzalyuk, Chairman of the Standing Commission on Education, Culture and Science of the House of Representatives:

Some people may have the impression that such annual speeches by the Head of State are specific tasks for the year. However, everything said today is not a programme for a year. Maybe I am wrong, but it seems the tonality and conceptual tasks formulated by the President during his Address are the strategic programme which has much in common with Lee Kuan Yew's action in Singapore. If we can pass — as he said 'on the edge of the knife' — and realise these ideas, then Belarus will be among those who determine the world agenda.

Maxim Misko, Deputy Chairman of the Standing Commission on Law of the House of Representatives:

Personally, I really appreciated the President's answers concerning the state of the Russian and Belarusian languages. This is the most consolidated position; according to it, popularisation of the Belarusian language should not cause a split in society. We need to address this issue evolutionally, promoting the language in kindergartens and schools. However, we should not oppose those who do now know Belarusian to Belarusian-speaking citizens.

It's not often that the world's media uses quotes from the speeches of Alexander Lukashenko to confirm European trends. However, just a day after his State of the Nation Address, they were keen to report his words. The German international public broadcaster Deutsche Welle noted his warning that 'the world has been swept by trade wars' and an explosive situation has developed. DW focused on the role of the media in fuelling tension, referring to the President's words about destructive 'talking heads'; the issue is a now pan-European theme. In turn, the BBC covered the main points of the State of the Nation Address to the National Assembly and the Belarusian People, completing its item with Mr. Lukashenko's words: 'Belarus is an island of stability in a troubled world which is striving to live by its own mind and its work, in friendship and cooperation with its neighbours — even those who show 'disregard to allied interests'. Mr. Lukashenko's belief that the EU countries are our 'God-given neighbours' has become a key strapline for neighbourly relations.

GOD-GIVEN NEIGHBOURS



Both the DW and the BBC it must be said, are working on their own information policy which — let's be honest — is based on a negative attitude towards Russia. Unfortunately, this watershed does exist in Europe, and Alexander Lukashenko also spoke openly about it — noting that the aspirations of Armenia, Georgia and Moldova for partnership with the EU should not hamper our cooperation with Russia, and vice versa. The European politicians who have driven themselves into a tough situation with Russia, need now to present their policy in a more plausible light. Public opinion is not favourable towards the mounting tension on the continent and requires positive input. In this respect, Mr. Lukashenko has greatly assisted them.

The image of 'renewed, progressive, comfortable Belarus' — presented in his Address and characterised by such notions as 'openness', 'peaceableness' and 'initiative' — is the image of a country which the European Union wants to draw closer to. European leaders have already proved their interest in rapprochement, taking a number of steps in both politics and the economy. Moreover, Mr. Lukashenko has once again presented his country as moving for peace in the region. Belarus works for peaceful initiatives, not only in Europe, but around the world where Belarusians are viewed as a peaceful and quiet people. While getting closer to our

country and supporting its initiatives, the European Union is doing what its citizens are already demanding.

There is another reason why European public opinion has positively responded to the ideas and initiatives expressed in the Address. The fact is, that the ideology of today's united Europe differs from the previous European strategy of neo-cons (human rights, European values, etc.). It is understood now that the imposition of these values on others has resulted in conflict, and that wars begun with the help of 'colour revolutions' have given rise to much bloodshed. In contrast to vague invented 'European values', universal human values are now more appreciated. These will find understanding in

Europe, China and in any corner of the globe. It is precisely these values that are mentioned in the President's Address. They embrace new development, the task of integrating into global production chains and the desire to become an attractive place for the cleverest and most capable people. Moreover, the idea that it's now possible to become successful in any country of the world with no need to emigrate is especially popular among new emerging economies. No doubt, the desire to create the conditions for such growth — including quiet, predictable business conditions — will surely be understood by all, especially on our continent, where we all are God-given neighbours.

By Nina Romanova



MASS MEDIA PRESENTS ITSELF ELOQUENTLY

12th International 'Mass Media in Belarus' Specialised Exhibition held in Minsk

At the opening ceremony of the exhibition, a greeting of the President of Belarus to the participants was read out: 'For over two decades, this

Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, China, Turkey and other states.

As is traditional, the 'Mass Media in Belarus' fair demonstrates a full range of the country's information space. It gathers printed and audio-visual Republican and regional media, Internet resources,

tograph sessions, master classes and more. Media heads, journalists and representatives of the expert community discussed important issues in the media sphere and the role of media in the development of society and the state.

A range of events were devoted to the Year of the Native Land. For example, the Zvyazda Publishing House held 'My Native Land' round table discussion with the 'Nastaunitskaya Gazeta' newspaper. BelTA News Agency presented its 'Legends of Native Land: Slutsk Belts' project, while the Grodno Region's mass media held a presentation and organised a master class for the 'Belarusian Castles' project.

The Day of Regional Printed Media was held for the first time as part of the exhibition and the Day of Children and Youth was another novelty. Every day, the children's playground offered diverse programmes, with most events held on the final day.

As usual, the 'Mass Media in Belarus' exhibition honoured winners and laureates of the 'Golden Letter' national contest of printed mass media. As Information Minister Alexander Karlyukevich

Over 50 exhibitors came to Minsk, representing about 400 media sources of Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, China, Turkey and other states

forum is a place of mass media active discussion of media sphere development and strengthening of partnership ties'. The latest achievements of printed media, radio, television and Internet are regularly demonstrated here'. The Head of State stressed that it is especially pleasant to note ongoing interest in the exhibition among foreign countries. Over 50 exhibitors came to Minsk, representing about 400 media sources of Belarus,

news agencies, cable television operators and distributors, printers and publishers. This year was no exception, featuring exhibitions of printed and e-media, specialised and departmental editions, newspapers of higher educational institutions, industrial enterprises and scientific organisations.

The three days of the exhibition were rich in events: there were presentations of information and Internet projects, au-



the exhibition. At present, Chinese and Belarusian journalists have many joint topics for discussion, including tourism. This year, our countries are placing a special emphasis on the fact that Belarus is preparing its infrastructure, enabling the residents of the Heavenly Empire to comfortably rest and travel in our country, while conditions for Belarusian guests are also being created in China.

During the presentation of the Year of Tourism of Belarus in China, (as part of the mass media exhibition) much was again said about Belarusian hospitality, Chinese cuisine and joint plans for the future. At this event, organised by BelTA News Agency, the Press Attaché of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Belarus, Chen Weiwei, reminded us that in China, the opening of the Year of Tourism of Belarus had already taken place in January, in his native city of Chongqing. "I'd like to stress that cooperation in the sphere of tourism facilitates the development of the economies of both states. Of course, the promotion of tourist exchanges will be useful for rapprochement between our nations," he said.

At present, Chinese tourists are welcome guests and many countries try to attract people from the Heavenly Empire. There's even a special 'China Friendly' format for hotels and other facilities, which envisages servicing in the Chinese language and the opportunity to use the China UnionPay payment system. It's to some extent a sign of quality and comfort for tourists from China. Belarus already has such facilities which correspond to this programme, but this list should be expanded, believes the Director of the Tourism Department at the Sports and Tourism Ministry of Belarus, Andrey Molchan.

Last year, Belarus was visited by more than 20,000 Chinese tourists. Though their number has almost doubled, according to Mr. Molchan, these figures are still far from desirable. Of course, there are some barriers, including the long distance, but this is facilitated by the direct Minsk-Beijing air flight, launched in 2015.

By Alexander **Pimenov**

said, journalists should work for the consolidation of society. "Our modern palette of mass media represents a broad picture of the world," he noted, adding that it's important to ensure that reliable information acts as a serious objective story about reality. "When speaking of the present, we need to work on consolidation of our society, our country and be ready for a constructive dialogue," said Mr. Karlyukevich.

The Deputy Head of the News Department of Yangtze Today Publishing

Corporation and the Editor-in-Chief of 'Yangtze Tributaries' — Cheng Dazhong — said, in turn, that 'Mass Media in Belarus' is a good platform for communication among journalists from different countries — including Belarusian and Chinese. He was impressed by the exhibition's scope, appreciating its large number of participants and rich programme.

Furthermore, Mr. Dazhong took part in the press tour of Chinese journalists to Belarus which started on the eve of



VADIM YAKUBIONOK

INFORMATIVE TRIP FOR CHINESE JOURNALISTS

Representatives of major Chinese media visit Belarus as part of press tour

A recent press tour to Belarus aimed to familiarise journalists from China with our country. The visit was a great success: in six days, representatives of diverse Chinese media saw many attractions, visiting factories and plants, theatres and museums. They took part in the traditional 'Mass Media in Belarus' fair in Minsk which presented the Year of Tourism of Belarus in China. Promising Belarusian-Chinese projects were discussed by participants at the final press conference with the Chairman of the Council of the Republic — Mikhail Myasnikovich.

On meeting the Chinese journalists, the Minister of Information of Belarus — Alexander Karlyukevich — said that journalism is a type of people's diplomacy: it helps to bring countries

together in spirit, hearts and aspirations. "We are happy that Chinese journalists have visited our country, learning about our production facilities and seeing the sights, especially since 2018 is the Year of Tourism of Belarus in China. The Ministry of Sports and Tourism does a great deal to represent our country in China. I think that the Chinese journalists are interested in projects being realised in Belarus. Among them is the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park and other joint ventures," said the Minister. He also noted that the Ministry of Information has long-standing ties and agreements with the Chinese side: in 2005, an agreement was signed with the State Chancellery of China on media cooperation and, in 2015, an agreement on cooperation in the field of book publishing and printing was concluded.

The press tour was organised for the second time by the foreign ministries of China and Belarus, the Ministry of Information of Belarus, the Embassy of Belarus in China and the Embassy of China in Belarus and the National Press Centre of Belarus. This year, representatives of not only Chinese central media — such as China’s International Radio and Central TV, the Xinhua News Agency, the Chinese foreign information site, editorial offices of leading newspapers and magazines, and publishing corporations — but also regional journalists from the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Shandong, Sichuan and Jiangsu came. It was evident that our Chinese colleagues aimed to learn as much as possible about the country, its culture and people, while also learning about our tourist potential.

The Editor-in-Chief of the Chinese Foreign News Agency — Wei Yen — shared her impressions with our magazine, “I’m struck by the beauty of Belarusian nature, people’s thoughtful attitude to their history. We’ve all taken many photos and videos. We want to inform our readers, listeners and viewers about the development of Belarusian-Chinese bilateral relations.” In turn, Liang Fafu — the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the ‘Gansu Herald’ — enjoyed the trip to the city of Soligorsk, in the Minsk Region (about 135km from the Belarusian capital). There, after a short tour of the city, the journalists visited the Republican Speleotherapy Hospital. They even went down a Belaruskali mine (one of the world’s largest enterprises for production of potash fertilisers) to see how this unique treatment is conducted in the microclimate of the salt mines. The Chinese journalists also visited milk and confectionery producing enterprises. The Chief Editor of Minsk correspondent point of the Xinhua News Agency — Wei Zhongjie — told us how much they thoroughly enjoyed the products they tasted. The Chinese guests also visited the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Brest Fortress and Mir Castle, enjoying sightseeing tours around Brest and Minsk. They also became closely acquainted with Belarusian art — visiting the National Art Museum and the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre.

To learn more about each other

The creation of infrastructure, conditions for travel and recreation and plans for the future were high on the agenda at the presentation of the Year of Tourism of Belarus in China which took place as part of the ‘Mass Media in Belarus’ fair. Chinese journalists also attended it. The opening ceremony of the Year of Tourism has already taken place in China, in January. This was noted by the Press Attaché of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China — Chen Weiwei. The diplomat noted also that cooperation in the field of tourism contributes to the development of economies of our countries, bringing people together.

The idea that Chinese visitors are always welcome in Belarus was also voiced by the Director of the Tourism Department of Belarus’ Ministry of Sports and Tourism — Andrey Molchan. Currently, navigation in Chinese is being actively developed in

Belarusian cities and a special leaflet — prepared for Chinese tourists and distributed by travel agencies — contains useful information about transport, hotels, restaurants and useful phone numbers. Today, each Belarusian region has partner agreements with the provinces of China which contributes to an increase in tourist flow. Opportunities for tourists to use the China UnionPay payment system are being created in Belarus and two of Minsk’s hotels — Minsk and Beijing — correspond to the ‘China Friendly’ format (envisaging Chinese language services and a Chinese menu). According to Mr. Molchan, a Belarusian-Chinese enterprise will be launched soon to focus on bilateral tourism. Presentations of tourism opportunities of Belarus will be held at exhibitions in China this year and, in June, Chinese tour operators will travel around Belarus.

Last year, over 20 thousand Chinese tourists visited Belarus. Although their number has almost doubled, the figures are still quite small for a country with such a large population, Mr. Molchan believes. Of course, there are objective difficulties — such as the long distance — but the direct Minsk-Beijing flight (launched in 2015) is a great help in this respect.

Belarusian-Chinese visa-free regime and direct investment

In his speech to the Chinese journalists, the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, Mikhail Myasnikovich, focused on the development of tourism. He described how the main outcome of the Year of Tourism of Belarus in China should be an agreement on mutual abolition of the visa regime for up to 30 days. The number of Chinese travellers to Belarus may increase due to the development of medical and informative tourism.

Mr. Myasnikovich tackled other issues, noting that it is important to move from simple trade to large-scale investment cooperation. There are already good examples of such cooperation in the joint projects of BelGee, Midea-Horizont, MAZ-Zoomlion and Volat-Sanjiang.

Our Chinese colleagues were interested in issues of international rail transportation from China to Europe via Belarus. According to Mr. Myasnikovich, the cargo flow along this route is already in serious competition with sea traffic. Last year, for example, about 3,000 container trains from China to Europe passed through Belarus and, by 2020, it is planned to increase their number to five thousand a year. Eight China-Europe-China container trains with 80-100 wagons run through Belarus daily. One of the key tasks today is to ensure full occupancy of trains in both directions. “In this regard, Belarus is ready to help since we have competitive goods, engineering products and agriculture which may be of interest in China,” the official added.

In two and a half hours of lively conversation between journalists and Mikhail Myasnikovich, it became clear that China and Belarus are not only strategic partners but also reliable friends. The two countries have many interesting and promising projects ahead.

By Yekaterina **Medvedskaya**

PARK OF INNOVATION PERIOD

THE JOURNALISTS OF 'FORBES' BUSINESS EDITION HAVE MADE AN ATTRACTIVE PREDICTION: ACCORDING TO THEIR OBSERVATIONS, BELARUS IS ON THE THRESHOLD OF AN ECONOMIC BREAKTHROUGH

In the 1990s, 'Asian tigers' such as Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan were in a similar situation. The conclusion was made by foreign experts after visiting the High-Tech Park and the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park. "We're astonished at the range of reforms initiated by President Lukashenko. The boldness and ambitiousness of decisions that have been adopted on the liberalisation of crypto-currencies, the creation of the Great Stone free trade zone and the expansion of preferences in the HTP are comparable with the reforms of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore", concluded the 'Forbes' authors.

This independent view from the outside, gives confidence that nothing is impossible as far as the economy is concerned. Setting clear goals and sticking to them is all that's needed, in the same way that a powerful ice-breaker finds its way through the ice. External factors, of course, have their role to play. The President's wishes, voiced during the recent annual report of the Government, that, 'in the next five-year period our GDP should reach \$100bn', doesn't seem impossible. Firstly, in the previous five-year period, the Government has already achieved the figure of \$65bn. Moreover, for several years in a row, our economy has been growing by 10 percent per year on average. However, the global economic crisis, the reduction of world prices for resources and the conflict in Ukraine, as well as the introduction of sanctions against Russia by the West — amongst other circumstances, have greatly affected the Belarusian economy. This is why the growth of GDP should rely on internal factors: innovation technologies, the production of goods with higher added value and

the enhancement of labour efficiency. Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Semashko, illustrated their influence on the final results on concrete projects. For example, four years ago, 1,500 employees at Kamvol JSC manufactured 1.1 million linear metres of fabric, while last year 730 employees produced 2.3 million metres. The task for this year is to produce 4 million with the same number of workers. Timber processing is another example. "When we were launching timber processing modernisation, the exports of nine plants totalled around \$240m, while last year the figure stood at \$820m, i.e. a 3 and a half fold increase," explained Mr. Semashko.

What lies behind these figures? GDP is more than an abstract economic figure. "Since GDP reflects the market cost of all goods and services manufactured in the country, it enables us to assess the dynamics of economic growth," explains financial analyst, Anna Kokojeva. "If GDP increases, it means that more goods and services are produced. Alongside this, taxes rise, as do revenues, which are used to pay salaries to teachers and doctors, to finance the construction of housing, schools, hospitals, to pay pensions and social allowances. It means



Trade-exhibition centre of Chinese company — a resident of the Great Stone Industrial Park

the more goods and services are manufactured, the higher the revenues of the state are, enabling it to spend more on social allowances and projects.”

It's not enough, however, simply to produce goods. We need to sell them advantageously in order to bring foreign currency to the country. This becomes more and more complex because of the growing competition in world markets. At present, the CIS states account for 70 percent of our industrial exports. Without losing our position in our traditional markets it's necessary to sell more to the countries of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

It's possible to make our goods more interesting by attracting investments into the creation of innovation production facilities. This will enable us to achieve an equivalent \$1,000 salary in the next five-year period, without consequences for the monetary and financial market of the country, i.e. the growth of population incomes won't stir up inflation or the exchange rate of the Belarusian Rouble against the US Dollar. The more our enterprises earn, the better workers' incomes will be. That's why the President emphasises the creation of highly-efficient jobs. Figuratively speaking, a

trench can be dug by ten workers with shovels. At the same time, the same work can be done with the help of an excavator which will do this 10 times quicker.

It's no accident that so much attention is paid to the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, where super-modern facilities are planned to be installed by leading world brands. When the potential effect from exports of production from this Park was calculated, they estimated an amount of \$50bn. A good example is the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park. Over the last twenty years, it has attracted more than 90 of the largest corporations from the Fortune 500 list. Forbes experts have already named the Great Stone as a jewel in the Belarusian economy: 'It's a strategic ticket for Belarus. It will help rebuild your industrial enterprises, give them innovativeness and efficiency without losing jobs and thus make an unprecedented economic breakthrough.'

The same breakthrough is expected from the High-Tech Park. The new decree on the digital economy, which entered into force in March, creates conditions in which our country will be visited 'not by migrant workers to sweep the streets but intellectually developed

people from the USA, Russia and Canada' to inject their capital and create IT companies. Traditional industries mustn't lag behind either. In particular, the Industry Minister Vitaly Vovk sees the major task to create joint ventures with foreign partners. In his interview to journalists he said, "We don't want to lose the Russian and CIS markets, but we want to expand our presence. Many countries protect their market with duties and say: come to us, create products and enter our market. We have already created 64 joint ventures in various countries and 18 more projects are currently in the pipeline."

The Deputy Prime Minister, Mikhail Rusy, who supervises agriculture, also has ambitious projects, "Our agricultural goods are currently supplied to 82 countries. Over two years we plan to increase the supplies to the markets outside the Eurasian Economic Union by 35-40 percent. For example, Chinese specialists certified 32 Belarusian enterprises of meat and dairy industry. This year, the supplies to China should reach \$100m."

All these investment projects are laid on the foundation for growth which will help our country earn solid money.

By Oleg **Bogomolov**

OFFERS TO BE CONSIDERED

Today even those who are far away from the world of finances are monitoring the stock market. US sanctions against large Russian business and western alliance's air strikes on Syria sent the stock exchange into a 'nosedive'. Crashed shares pulled the Russian Rouble downwards. Frightened investors began to get rid of cheapening assets. Who knows how it would have ended if it were not for oil prices which confidently rose.



There are enough examples in history of oil being used as a comfortable political instrument for the leading players of the market. In the 1930-1960s, the prices for black gold were stable at about \$2 per barrel. This corresponded to the convertible-Dollar standard in line with the Bretton Woods system. The lack of convertibility of the American currency for 'yellow metal' in 1971 and the birth of the world of fully flexible exchange rates has led to the collapse of the oil market. Pricing then went under the control of the 12 OPEC countries (at that time, accounting for half of all hydrocarbons extracted on the planet). However, the actions of politicians began to contradict economic laws more often. For example, after suffering a defeat in the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Arab countries decided to reduce oil ex-

traction by 5 million barrels per day to 'punish' the West, which has led to the immediate 4-fold price increase. Another good example occurred in the middle of the 1980s when Saudi Arabia (not without pressure from the West) sharply increased the extraction of this raw material, which resulted in the price collapse from \$35 to \$10 per barrel. This has negatively influenced the economy of the USSR, engineering the beginning of its collapse.

The arrival of the 'Arab spring', political crisis and war in Libya and Syria resulted in phenomenal increases of oil prices in 2011: \$124-126 per barrel. Now history is likely to repeat itself. Of course, the price for hydrocarbons won't reach these figures in the near future but the fact that it has already reached a triennial maximum (even against the background of the increase in stocks in the USA) is very indicative, as is described by financial consultant Zhanna Kulakova. "The logic is as follows: because of tensions in the Middle East, concerns and risks regarding the possible reduction of hydrocarbon supplies intensify. These risks are immediately put into the price, though no supplies have been really reduced. These are merely expectations and concerns. However, since oil is a speculative asset, the investors' moods are reflected in the demand and supply. Against an expected deficit of hydrocarbons, traders begin to buy it in advance at current 'low' prices in order to later sell at a more expensive price. As a result, the raw material inevi-

tably becomes more expensive. Any stock exchange asset is subject to similar speculations: bonds, metals, gold, the largest world currencies (US Dollar, Euro, Japanese Yen, British Pound and others which are actively traded on the international currency market),” noted the specialist.

Evidently, the increase in oil prices has become a safety net for the Russian currency.

“The major reason for the weakening of the Russian Rouble is not sanctions but general reinforcement of geopolitical tension around Russia, as well as in Syria,” says economist Vladimir Tikhomirov. “There’s also a danger that sanctions against Russia may be expanded. Against this background, the sale of Russian assets began, primarily of obligations and shares from the side of foreign investors. It’s difficult to forecast what will be next.”

Of course, the behaviour of the Belarusian Rouble undoubtedly depends on external factors, as our economy is integrated into the world economy. Moreover, as Russia remains our major trade and economic partner, we can’t be indifferent to the situation with the Russian Rouble. Zhanna Kulakova focuses on one important aspect of the issue.

“Unlike the Russian Rouble (much less the US Dollar or Euro), the Belarusian Rouble isn’t a speculative currency, therefore the consequences of currency fluctuations can be reflected on our market with some delay. Of course, some reaction will appear immediately. During the first days of the Russian Rouble crash the exchange rates of the US Dollar and Euro in our country raised, with the exchange rate of the Russian Rouble falling. If we look at the dynamics of the currency basket however, it practically hasn’t changed,

i.e. generally speaking the Rouble hasn’t strengthened or weakened.”

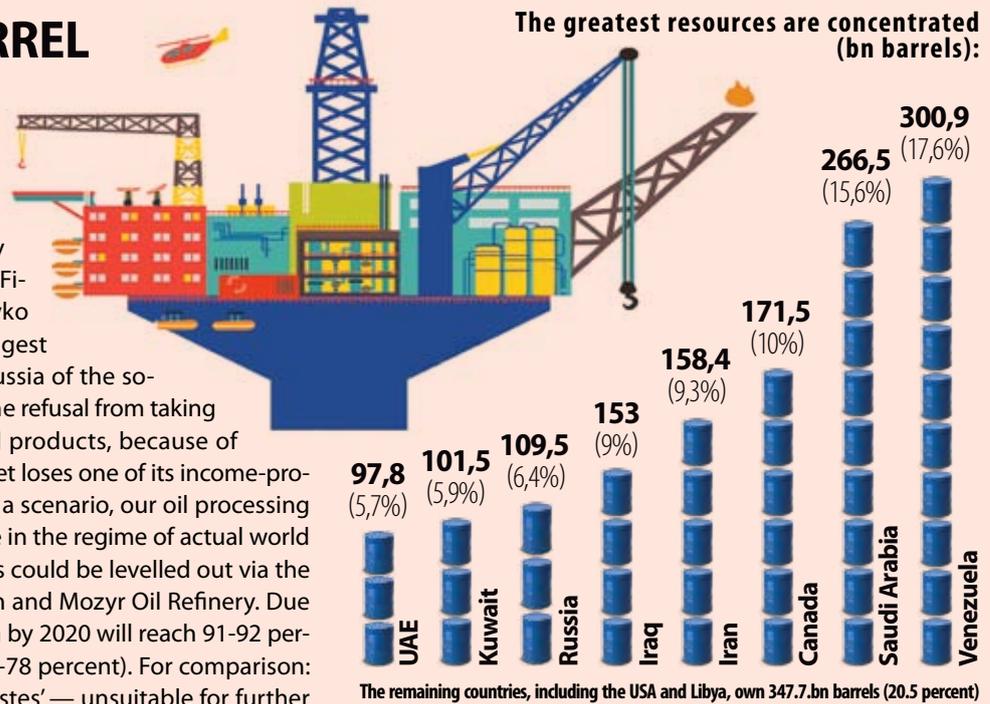
A different matter is that, with the fall of the exchange rate of the Russian Rouble, Belarusian goods became more expensive for Russians, while Russian goods have become cheaper on the Belarusian market. This is not profitable to our exporters. With the change in the balance of demand and supply on the domestic currency market, the Belarusian Rouble may weaken; however, this process can take months.

Experts advise businesses to remain calm in the current situation and to understand that the dynamics of the exchange rate of the Russian Rouble against the US Dollar and Euro is primarily caused by the nervous geopolitical situation. It is senseless to try to earn money on this by buying foreign currency in exchange offices.

By Yevgeny Kononovich

WHERE IS BARREL GOING

Although our currency isn’t linked directly to oil extraction, we also depend on the cost of energy resources. Belarus’ Deputy Finance Minister Dmitry Kiyko believes that one of the biggest risks is the completion in Russia of the so-called tax manoeuvre, and the refusal from taking export duties for oil and oil products, because of which, the Republican budget loses one of its income-producing sources. Under such a scenario, our oil processing industry will have to operate in the regime of actual world prices for oil. Potential losses could be levelled out via the modernisation of the Naftan and Mozyr Oil Refinery. Due to this, the oil refining depth by 2020 will reach 91-92 percent (against the current 73-78 percent). For comparison: during the USSR period, ‘wastes’ — unsuitable for further processing — accounted for 50 percent. “The increase of the oil refining depth and the receipt of new products will enable oil processing plants to receive additional profit and to remain competitive on the world market,” believes Andrey Rybakov, the Deputy Chairman of Belneftekhim Concern.



WORLD LEADERS IN OIL DEPOSIT AND EXTRACTION
 According to the data of BP Statistical Review of World Energy (2016), ten major oil extracting states produced MORE THAN 3 BILLION TONNES OF OIL

VADIM KONDRASHOV



Around twenty activities no longer require state registration, when operating as individual entrepreneurs. Among them are baking and selling confectionery, interior design, shoe repair, tailoring, wall cladding, plastering and painting, making masonry stoves and fireplaces, hairdressing and cosmetic services

RELAUNCHING BUSINESS

Decree on Development of Entrepreneurship radically changes rules of business environment

recently decided to conduct a small experiment — addressing the tax office with the intention of opening a computer repair shop at home, requesting information on whom I should contact to prepare all documents. I took paper and pen, ready to write down step-by-step instructions, having had difficulty in visiting all the necessary agencies, to

collect required certification and permits. However, a friendly tax officer immediately reassured me that there was nothing to worry about. I need only submit my application, paying a single tax (in my case, to a value of Br97), then begin work the next day.

Around twenty activities no longer require state registration, when operating as individual entrepreneurs. Among them are baking and selling

confectionery, interior design, shoe repair, tailoring, wall cladding, plastering and painting, making masonry stoves and fireplaces, hairdressing and cosmetic services. Decree #7 minimises the requirements for fire safety and sanitary standards, and bureaucratic formalities and barriers are significantly reduced.

Until recently, there were over 900 administrative procedures, and over 6,500 technical acts; around six months were needed to open a café. Moreover, some requirements were so costly that they became absurd, exceeding the likely revenue of the business. Happily, the situation is now improved, with the number of procedures and mandatory standards reduced as much as 15-fold. The Ministry of Economy tells us that a draft decree on improving licensing has been prepared, alongside that for a Unified List of Administrative Procedures: both substantially simpler in terms of content and perception. Of course, many laws will need to be corrected but the adoption of the decree

(and other documents relating to business liberalisation) will not be long in coming.

The Deputy Economy Minister, Dmitry Matusevich, underlines that the new rules, which came into force on January 1st, 2018, are already producing results. “About two thousand people have notified local authorities of their desire to launch a business, and have begun work. The decree contains norms for direct action affecting all business entities. This makes it possible to not only increase small and medium-sized businesses’ share in generating GDP (to 40 percent by 2020 — up from 30 percent at present) but to create new, innovative industries and organise effective employment.”

At present, over 1.43 million Belarusians are employed in the work of small and medium-sized businesses, bringing in every third Rouble to the state budget, in the form of taxes. Such

revenue is expected to grow, since the decree significantly reduces the risk of doing business. Not long ago, up to 450 inspections were conducted country-wide, daily, with inspectors from various agencies sometimes visiting enterprises up to fifty times a year. From now on, the number of such ‘visits’ will fall, while supervisory authorities will need serious grounds to conduct an inspection.

The Deputy Minister for Taxes and Duties, Ella Selitskaya, promises that the tax sphere will be simplified. “Between now and 2020, there will be no raising of tax rates or introduction of new taxes, fees or duties. This moratorium provides guarantees to businesses, giving them the opportunity to calmly develop and plan their activities. Secondly, legal entities involved in Internet sales have the right to work under a simplified taxation system.”

By Alexey **Komarovsky**

BELARUSIAN TRACTORS ON NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT

Minsk Tractor Works to increase supply of tractors to North Africa, notes MTZ Director General, Fiodor Domotenko, meeting delegation of dealers from Canada and the USA

MTZ began conquering the North American continent in the 1970s, selling thousands of units annually. Since then, more than 50,000 BELARUS tractors have been delivered to Canada and the USA. “Soon, we’ll double or triple supplies,” noted Mr. Domotenko, thanking American partners for their loyalty to the Belarusian tractor and its manufacturer.

The delegation visited MTZ’s assembly facility and toured the production line, viewing Belarusian tractors with electromechanical transmission. Minsk Tractor Works, and MTZ Equipment Ltd., as the exclusive distributor of BELARUS tractors in the USA and Canada, will soon sign an agreement to supply Belarusian agricultural machinery to the North American continent, in 2018.



ON THE SUBJECT



Piotr Arushanyants, the Director of the Economy Ministry's Entrepreneurship Department:

Thanks to liberalisation of legislation, it's now easier and more convenient for entrepreneurs to work. They're no longer afraid to step out of the shadows. They can try bold ideas, which were previously impossible due to great volumes of unnecessary paperwork and approvals. This will help small businesses, which have most suffered from excessive demands. Entrepreneurs can focus on their business, rather than on overcoming administrative barriers. Decree number 7 will undoubtedly attract new resources into business. It's an indicator of social well-being; if it's good for small businesses, then it's good for everyone.



Vladimir Karyagin, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship:

The past year has brought a turning point in the relationship between the Government and businesses. The nature of the business climate has radically changed. The decree is a kind of appeal to enterprising people, asking them to work and create, since the state is on their side. The decree should reduce various administrative procedures, which overestimate the cost of doing business. Good impetus has been given to agro-ecotourism and craftsmanship development. This sends a good signal to investors, foreign and domestic, who view such documents seriously.



SENSITIVE INDICATOR

We've managed to create a single information system: the Internet, uniting billions of computers. However, we're yet to organise a unified scheme for housing and communal services, and paying for them. In various countries, the system for providing the population with communal fees is influenced by climatic conditions, living standards, and traditions, besides other factors. However, a common element remains: the cost of housing and communal services is one of the most sensitive indicators of social well-being, receiving great attention.

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According to the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, Belarusians paid for just 60.7

percent of housing and communal services' costs in 2016, rising to 69.7 percent in 2017, and 76.3 percent this year. The remaining share is covered by the state budget.

Many countries offer state subsidy. For example, UAE residents don't pay for light or water at all: both are paid for by the treasury. However, only local residents enjoy this privilege — accounting

for one-fifth of the nine million population. In the Emirates, foreign visitors subsidize local citizens. The cost of housing and communal services is also low in Iceland: natural clean water doesn't need to be cleaned or chlorinated, and heat is taken mainly from geothermal sources. Meanwhile, in Australia, water shortage leads many people to collect rainwater from their roofs, while still paying \$150-200 monthly to access water (paying for consumed cubic metres). In Brazil, electricity is expensive, charged at up to \$2 per kilowatt.

In our country, people pay for about 85 percent of the cost of electricity and up to 20 percent of heat. The International Monetary Fund recommends giving up this tendency, stating that Belarusians should pay for housing and communal services in full. However, our leadership



considers such proposals unacceptable. The Professor of the Belarusian State University's Economics Faculty, Boris Panshin, shares the position of millions of Belarusians, explaining, "We traditionally have a system in accordance with which the state provides its citizens with light and warmth. This is a priority; it's our reality. It's unwise to make changes, for the sake of the IMF or anyone else. It might save five Kopecks, but the financial and psychological damage could be significant."

He wonders whether such statements from the IMF are not even based on its official position. "It's quite possible that this is inertial thinking by experts: a stereotyped position that hasn't changed for many years: since the times when our people paid five percent of the value of housing services, and no more." He adds. "Cardinal changes in this sphere are extremely sensitive. Moreover, our economy has many reserves, being well-provided with energy. After nuclear power launches, Belarus will have more power than it needs. We'll independently find solutions for housing and communal services and their payment, meeting the needs of our economy and the mentality of our people."

As regards raising tariffs for housing and communal services, the Government will soon determine the list of state-subsidized services, for full payment by able-bodied, employed citizens, from January 1st, 2019. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, figures announced in April will inspire entrepreneurs to register legally, and the problem of employment will be partially solved as a result. Subsidies have to be paid for from the budget, via the taxes paid by those who work. Redistributing funds from the Republican 'piggy bank', the state seeks to support those who cannot contribute to the economy. This system of targeted assistance is being improved, with self-employed citizens paying more for some services than state employees (as meets the notion of social justice).

By Vladimir **Velikhov**



HOLDING UP THE NATIONAL ROUBLE, TO ENHANCE BUSINESS

The exchange rate of the Belarusian Rouble is close to equilibrium, with gold and currency reserves growing and the refinancing rate falling. Several optimistic forecasts were made at the Palace of Independence, where the President heard a report from the Chairman of the National Bank's Board, Pavel Kallaur.

Mr. Kallaur notes a trend in the de-dollarisation of the economy, saying, "The interest rate for new loans for businesses stands at 11.4 percent, raising demand for loans in national currency and reducing that for loans in foreign currency"

Deposits in the national currency are rising while those in foreign currency have slowed down, stabilising at \$7.4 billion. The situation on the currency market (as far as the exchange rate is concerned) is also stabilising, ensuring macroeconomic balance. This is convenient for exporters, who are able to expand sales to external markets. By the end of the year, the refinancing rate should have fallen to 9.5-10.5 percent (from today's 11 percent).

Commenting on gold and currency reserves, he noted, "We've

prepared a safety cushion in the form of last year's increase in gold and currency reserves, to fulfil our external obligations. The Finance Ministry has already redeemed its Eurobonds, which would bring reduced gold and currency reserves but for our plan of expansion."

Cash and CIT services are to be optimised, with a specialised organisation created to unite services to provide cash and CIT services, by the National Bank, Belarusbank and Belagroprombank. This will avoid duplication of effort by banks regarding cash-in-transit services, transportation, processing and deposit of valuables, while reducing operating costs for material-technical resources and personnel. However, the National Bank will maintain centralised control over cash circulation

By Yevgeny **Kononovich**



PROPOSALS FOR INVESTORS

April was surprisingly fruitful for the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park. Within a single week, several new residents joined. Each project is unique in its essence and promises solid dividends to our economy.

For example, the joint enterprise of MAZ and Chinese Weichai Corporation promises to assemble the first batch of diesel engines for trucks, buses and special machinery by the end of this year.

We may assume that MAZ's Director General, Dmitry Katerinich, is especially pleased. He noted on the occasion of the launch of the plant's construction, "We're cooperating with several suppliers of engines, as having our own engines is a strategic goal for us." The new company will provide the Belarusian automobile

industry while supplying CIS and non-CIS markets.

The Head of the Park's administration, Alexander Yaroshevich, is full of optimism, stating, "If everything works well, we plan to register at least one more partner very soon, and maybe even two. One is a large Israeli-Austrian enterprise, producing solar batteries. The other is Aviation Technologies and Complexes, which was founded by the National Academy of Sciences and Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), producing pilotless aerial vehicles, including for the world market. AVIC is investing in avia-

tion technologies worldwide and is being compared with such giants as Boeing and Airbus in its turnover."

Among Belarusian residents, Mr. Yaroshevich names Standard NUVO LLC, which is producing ecological packaging materials for the dairy and food industries: unique within the EAEU. Demand for high-tech and bio-degradable packaging is increasing, with evident benefits.

Another Park resident, Duo-medika LLC, is establishing production of devices to support heart function and blood flow, aimed at those suffering from weakened cardiac muscle, creating an 'artificial heart'.

In May, the Industrial Park is expecting another large investor: Chinese CITIC Corporation. The goal is to produce robotics for fire extinguishing and rescue operations. Closer to summer, the Great Stone will launch construction of housing and a centre for commercialisation of scientific and technological achievements. Influential world businessmen will be able to stay for longer periods. Naturally, they view Belarus as a reliable partner which has created conditions for safe and beneficial business.

By Andrey **Konovalov**

ORBIT FOR SATELLITE

Report from the Flight Control Centre of Belarusian space apparatus



SERGEY LOZIUK

Belarusian received the right to call itself a 'space nation' in July 2012, when the first domestic satellite for remote Earth sensing was launched. We confirmed our technical presence in space in January 2016, when our geostationary communications satellite BELINTERSAT-1 launched into orbit, becoming a pioneer of the National System of Satellite Communication and Broadcasting.

The ground control complex of the BELINTERSAT-1 satellite, in

the village of Stankovo, not far from Minsk, is already listed as a landmark, with six huge antennas located within fenced territory. The Flight Control Centre and the ground control complex run 24/7, with three staff monitoring space apparatus in the Flight Control Centre all day and night.

The head of the complex, Dmitry Zakalyukin, tells us, "International requirements are imposed on geostationary satellites, which should be located within an imaginary 150km cube in space. We monitor the apparatus constantly, via the control point, correcting its path every ten days by

switching on its engine. We also monitor its functions, sending data via its antennas, which are directed towards earth. Finally, we control the working load, in the interests of clients."

Information is displayed on large screens, vividly showing the 'well-being' of the space apparatus, with all details also seen on computer monitors. Valentina Petukhova, an engineer with the Analysis and Control Department, checks the satellite's vital parameters every three hours, while the head of the duty shift, Mikhail Mikulich, is responsible for the complex' readiness to work with the satellite.

Initially, the satellite was launched for commercial purposes, providing visual data on Belarus and a considerable part of the planet's Eastern hemisphere. Andrey Abramov, who heads the project, comments, "The Belintersat project is export-oriented; therefore, we work with customers all over the world. Our major clients come from countries in Africa and the Asian-Pacific region. One of the largest customers is China, whose Great Wall Industry Corporation bought resources even before the satellite launched. We also have customers in Europe. It's a project dealing with television broadcasting; 5 percent of resources are allocated to Belarus, used by services that respond to technogenic, abnormal and emergency situations, while ensuring border protection and public order. Our goal is to achieve a return on investments injected into the satellite, which is designed to be operational for fifteen years. We're doing everything to achieve this."

By Alexey Fedosov



Around 200 pupils take part in 'Roboquest-2018' robotics tournament, in Gomel

ROBOTS ALREADY TEACHING US

Artificial intellect changes labour market

Soon, robots will be everywhere. Gomel's school #37 already has one teaching English, under the strict guidance of teacher Vitaly Petrovsky. However, this is only the beginning: perhaps, there will be no need for grade-books, or discussion on why homework is late. Without feelings or sympathy, would robots do a better job

FACTS

■ Recently, Rechitsa's Kholmekh agricultural company acquired a robot to give forage to cattle at regular intervals, along a set route. It takes fifteen minutes for the robot to move through the cowshed, before returning to be recharged.

in dealing with students? Vitaly Petrovsky says that robotics is already taking a leading position. He ordered his mechanical assistant online. His 'colleague' wears a shirt, a waistcoat and a tie and it's possible to talk to him. He will run commands 'only if satisfied with your pronunciation'.

At present, almost 300 associations are studying robotics, with the sphere growing annually, becoming the most popular countrywide, and its special-

ists much in demand globally. What role are robots playing in Belarus?

In Gomel, almost two hundred pupils were recently programming robots in the 2nd regional tournament in robotics, 'Roboquest-2018', hosted by the sports centre. The number of guests was twice that of participants. Robotics is certainly the latest thing, combined with radio-electronics. Children are eager to create computer games and algorithms, while parents see them as tomorrow's young engineer-programmers. The director of the Republican Centre for Innovative and Technical Creativity, Sergey Sachko, notes that development is swift. "Over the past three years, the number of schoolchildren involved in robotics has increased 2.5-fold. In 2015, when we began to seriously tackle this issue, there were forty venues teaching robotics in Belarus; their number has now reached a hundred, uniting almost 300 associations. Within 5-10 years, we should see very interesting results."

What does the future hold? Analysts forecast new jobs, with whole economic branches becoming redundant.

The American retail market is being captured by Amazon, which has automated the process of Internet sales and is ready to launch delivery of goods by drones. No operating personnel are needed, being replaced by robots. According to statistical data, ever more companies are using robots (including search and analytical algorithms), with artificial intellect soon to appear almost in every pocket, as we see from leading producers of smartphones: Apple and Huawei. Their flagship models boast in-built neuron network support systems. There's a boom in voice-activated assistants, with automation and optimisation of everyday life as watchwords. Our 'smart' techno-sphere is moving to a new level.

Economist Alexander Novikov is confident that our economy will move in this direction, saying, "A fresh forecast has been released regarding the

world robotics market, and that for pilotless aerial vehicles. In 2017, the branch was worth almost \$85 billion, and is expected to grow by 22.1 percent this year, with an annual average growth rate of 25.4 percent by 2021. The world market for robotics and pilotless aerial vehicles could be worth \$218.4 billion by then. This is one of the most dynamically developing markets, so what can Belarus offer? Serious investment is needed to succeed in this sphere; so far, our specialists are our biggest asset."

Undoubtedly, our training system offer students a good basis to create robotized systems. However, until recently, universities have failed to offer relevant courses. Higher education is now being 'rebooted'; the oldest Faculty of Physics at Gomel's Skorina State University has been renamed as the Faculty of Physics and Information Technology, offering study of 'Intelligent Mobile Systems' (preparing 'robot technicians'). It also has a student scientific-research laboratory of Robotics. According to Yevgeny Shershnev, who heads the Department of General Physics, our secondary and higher education is on an upward curve. He explains, "When I was a student, we had laboratory facilities to train specialists in the sphere of physics and laboratories to teach other specialisations. Today's world of technical opportunities enables us to create intelligent systems: robotised electromechanical devices and 3D-printing. Theoretical knowledge is based on physico-mathematical disciplines. Our task is to teach students to apply their knowledge to build models and algorithms for 'hardware', using code. Moreover, we should teach them to assemble and design this hardware."

Our country has the opportunity to attract major investors, to open new manufacturing enterprises, as is being discussed at the highest level. If we want to compete in the world of robots, we need to create highly-productive jobs for our children, who are already on first-name terms with robots.

By Stanislav **Galkovsky**



Olga Bashlakova,
Candidate of Economic
Sciences and Head of Finance
and Credit, at Gomel's Skorina
State University:

At a recent session, which discussed the economic results of 2017 and tasks for the future, the Head of State raised an acute topic: the creation of highly-productive jobs. It's very important. We have plenty of examples of enterprises opening new production facilities which aren't competitive from a technical point of view. Credits and budgetary funds have been used but there has been no return. It's vital to direct efforts and funding towards the creation of new jobs in branches developing worldwide, to bring economic benefit. Private business should be attracted into these spheres.

In neighbouring Poland, the state is inviting businessmen to enter into public private partnership. The Poles have managed to stop their 'brain drain'. It would be great for small towns to host IT companies and modern technological manufacturing, away from the capital. It would create jobs and local prosperity, while aiding infrastructural development.



17 GOALS — ONE ROAD

FOR THE THIRD YEAR RUNNING BELARUS PROFILES BICYCLE AS THE SDGS'VEHICLE

600+ cyclists took messages on inclusive society, protection of forests, biodiversity conservation, local social and economic development from the city of Grodno to the Belovezhskaya Pushcha in 6 days from April 24th to 29th

Each year Belarus hosts dozens of cycling events and campaigns, actively promotes cycling among urban and rural communities, and is on track to join the ranks of the bicycle-friendly nations.

However, Belarus, probably, is the only European country, which turned to cycling as a way to promote and advocate for the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). The UNDP's annual Bike4SDGs campaign traditionally connects people from all walks of life to demonstrate Belarus's commitment to achieving the SDGs. By bringing all its partners together on one road, UNDP is highlighting the

efforts and the broad-based commitment of the government, private sector companies, non-governmental organizations, international and local communities to achieving SDGs and to strengthen the already strong coalition for advancing the goals for inclusion, sustainable economic growth, environmental protection and partnership for development.

Cycling delivers directly on at least 12 of 17 SDGs. Using a bicycle as the Bike4SDGs' main mode of transport the ride supports zero-carbon mobility,





helps reduce global carbon emissions and air pollution.

Started as a one-day event in 2016, the 2018 edition expanded in both time and distance and transformed into a massive advocacy effort, which took 600+ cyclists to an amazing 6-day journey covering 312km along picturesque country routes in Grodno and Brest regions, and Poland all the way down to the very heart of the oldest forest in Belarus — the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2014.

The ride kicked off on April 24th from the central square in the city of Grodno, where more than 200 cyclists representing the Bike4SDG’s core team, local authorities, NGOs,

and local bicycle associations started their journey.

During the first three days the Bike4SDGs cycled to speak up in support of community participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups and people with disabilities and to initiate open discussions on disability to break the cycle of silence and to shape positive attitudes across society. Along the way the participants met and networked with local people, collected their stories to highlight on practical solutions, which the UN and its partners could undertake to move toward an inclusive society where all people enjoy equal opportunities. The Bike4SDGs delivered a clear message that nobody should be

excluded from the society because of vulnerability or disability.

The following three days spotlighted on the importance of forests for biodiversity conservation, climate protection and the well-being of local communities who are still largely and indirectly forest-dependent.

While riding through the stunning landscapes of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, the cyclists encountered local people who market forest resources with respect to the environment. Staying overnight at local farmsteads helped to highlight the potential of forest-based tourism for protecting the environment and providing lucrative economic opportunities



page 33 for local entrepreneurs. Numerous meetings with local craftsmen gave an insight into local history and unique culture, which are strong assets for fostering tourism development in this part of the country.

A short visit to the Białowieża village at the Polish side of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha showcased the progress that the Poles are making to promote forest-

based tourism there. Dotted along the roadside there are cozy cafes, fancy hotels, and wooden guest houses. The Poles successfully utilized the nature's potential of the Pushcha to boost tourism in the area and attract investments to fuel up local economies. Looking at crowds of holidaygoers on the village's streets, one might presume that the business is flourishing. Poland did a lot for the development of tour-

ism industry, including ecotourism. There are many things on tourism, which Belarus and Poland can share and promote across the border. The Bike4SDGs trip to Poland was supported by the Polish govern-





ment and the Białowieża village community.

The final day of the campaign welcomed 600+ comers to pedal along picturesque 21 km route running through the heart of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. The route was friendly to people of all ages and physical abilities, including people with disabilities, offered refreshment stops with route marshals providing water, moral support and encouragement.

For the participants who had some kayaking experience, Bike4SDGs offered rather attractive alternative to cycling. 39 people took this opportunity to kayak down the River Lesnaya for seven kilometres. People with disabilities also tested their limits in yellow water kayaks. For almost all of them it was a new travel experience. All 18 kayak crews successfully finished on a local beach in Kamenets town.

For those who prefer unhurried walking tours to speedy bike ride and wetkayaking experiences, Bike4SDGs organised a foot excursion across the Pushcha led by a professional forester. Bike4SDGs' partner — Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) company presented a new audio guide, which

Bike4SDGs is a campaign about people who ride bikes, about the people who participants of this unusual bike ride meet on their way. Diplomats, athletes, journalists, officials, the disabled, businessmen and rural residents get on their bicycles not to compete but to tell others how the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved

was designed together with 34travel.me online magazine. The audio tour highlights many points of interests hidden deep inside the Pushcha and can be downloaded in the Russian, Belarusian and English languages.

At the finish all cyclists received a warm welcome, Bike4SDGs med-

als and a chance to try hot and tasty meals from a field kitchen, as well as to take pictures and communicate with other likeminded peers.

The UNDP projects' exhibition and the inclusive SDGs concert crowned the 2018 Bike4SDGs campaign. Disabled performers who come to the event from different parts of Belarus left no one indifferent and cold-hearted. Their artistic talents and abilities communicated a clear message that a society where everyone enjoys equal opportunities is opened for innovations, creativity and development.

Whilst UNDP in Belarus is the initiator and the main organizer of the Bike4SDGs campaign, it has forged a number of crucial partnerships with the government, cycling-related bodies, private companies, local and international communities in order to run the ride this year.

Bike4SDGs 2018 is over, but it is still too far till the journey ends, and we continue to stay in the saddle and pedal our way toward achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. There are years of roads ahead of us and everybody is welcome to join and share this journey with us.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**



SERGEY LOZJUK

BENEFITS EXTRACTED FROM ROOTS

Multiplication of forest wealth is impossible without joint effort

Forests are the main natural resource of our country, but preservation of this wealth is a titanic work of many generations. It is not enough to grow a seedling in greenhouse conditions and plant it in a sunny field. It requires careful management. Nature itself causes considerable danger to the forest. In win-

ter, the snow breaks down the wood and in spring, insects start attacking to transform trees into lifeless skeletons. In summer, the most terrible enemy — fire — approaches and it often comes from abroad. In autumn, numerous mushroom pickers leave their rubbish when visiting the forests. To neglect even one of these problems means to doom the forests to destruction. What has been done and what is to be done in the future?

It all starts with a seed

Every tree is a living organism in itself. It is prone to diseases and its growth and development depend on weather conditions. To minimise negative factors, the forestries annually replenish the strategic reserves of tree seeds in case of natural disasters. Last year, the forestries procured 13.7 tonnes of coniferous seeds, including over 4.4 tonnes of carefully selected

varieties; 18.6 tonnes of oak acorns were stored. Even if future years show poor harvests, the planting stock will still be available: *Pinus sylvestris* seeds are sufficient for 2.5 years and European pine for 5.3 years.

Nursery school

In order to grow a fully-fledged tree, it's not enough to simply plant a seed. It's firstly important to germinate this seed, give it time to turn into a seedling and gain strength and then plant it in prepared soil. Forestry nurseries are used for this purpose. Last year alone, an incredible number of trees was grown: 392m seedlings of standard planting stock (a 122 percent rise on the 2016 figures). In recent years, the Forestry Ministry has been actively promoting an innovative method of growing planting material — with a closed root system. The practice has shown that such seedlings are characterised by much better survival rates and are more resistant to diseases: only 14m seedlings were grown last year using this new method. Although this was 4m more than in 2016, they accounted for only 3.6 percent of the total number. The situation will change once new forest and seed centres are launched. Three are being constructed using the World Bank loan.

Belarusian forests expanded to over 32 thousand hectares last year; the share of trees based on the selection planting material was 47.2 percent, these are the best in the last 23 years.

Systematic approach

To plant seedlings in the soil is only half the story. To ensure that these 'babies' transform into a fully-fledged forest, many years of care are needed — including weeding, thinning and release cutting. Last year, such measures were undertaken in 53.5 thousand hectares (106 percent of the planned figure). The volume of

intermediate cutting was 4.6m cubic metres.

Our country is small but — thanks to its forest resources — is well known in the world. Strict demands are placed on its managers. The quality of forest management activities is confirmed by certification of our organisations in the international FSC system and European PEFS. At present, 93 forestries (out of 98) are certified. This is an important step in development, considering the fact that almost all major international timber consumers require certificates for supplied products.

Gadgets to monitor order

Forestry Ministry staff have joined representatives of other spheres to actively 'race for cleanliness' — having outlined a whole complex of measures to restore order on their land. Reconstruction and repair of buildings is in place and forest areas are being improved. Last year alone, 60 new facilities were built and another 80 underwent major reconstruction.

There is now much less rubbish in the forests. Many forestries actively use photo and video recording to monitor offences (526 cases have

been brought so far). In 2017, over 290 violators were punished — 126 more than in 2016.

Immediate measures taken

In recent years, the number of fires has decreased. This is the result of work conducted by forestries with the Emergency Ministry and local authorities. In the fire season of last year, 121 cases of fire with a total area of 71.5 hectares were recorded. At the same time, over 50 forestries managed to avoid a run of fire on their territories.

In previous years, the greatest damage to forestries was caused by transboundary fires, especially coming from the Ukraine. Since 2016, the Forestry Ministry has been actively cooperating with the State Border Committee to outline common approaches to the development of forests located near the Ukrainian border. In two years, as part of the implementation of these measures, the Brest and Gomel forestries equipped 80km of new fire breaks, including 22km with grubbing. 12 fire-observation towers and masts were built, and 28 video surveillance systems were installed. New fire machinery and motor pumps were purchased.

By Sergey **Muravsky**

REFERENCE

■ **The Forestry Ministry now runs its own YouTube channel: MLH. BY. From now on, all video information about the Ministry's work will be collected in a single place. The server already stores images and films, a film about overcoming the consequences of the hurricane in 2016, animated social videos. A 'News' section will also be added soon to feature films by Belarusian TV channels about the activity of the forestry department.**

■ **Starting from January 1st, 2020, the country plans to introduce an electronic system of timber accounting. The innovation will make it possible to tighten control over the sale of forest products both within the country and abroad, also making the whole process of harvesting, supplying and selling timber as transparent as possible. The model of the system has already been developed and is being tested at three forestries.**

HIGH HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF TREE CLONING

Belarus has been cooperating with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for several years so far and, last autumn, representatives of this international financial organisation once again visited the Forestry Ministry to discuss implementation of the Development of the Forest Sector of the Republic of Belarus project. Our experts were well received, and an agreement was reached to allocate a new credit tranche; an impressive part of which would be spent on the development of the Republic Forest Selection and Seed Centre of the Forestry Ministry. Its Director, Mikhail Chichko, shares plans for the Centre's future activity.

Stereotypes are slowly being broken down. Up to now, most people have believed that woods continue to grow without interference, while numerous 'foresters' are firmly wedded to their axe and a chainsaw in order to manage the forest. In fact, despite its apparent conservatism, the forestry industry has invested in a considerable amount of new high-tech development. For example, it runs laboratories, conducts experiments on cloning and selection and new trees begin their growing life in test-tubes. The Selection Centre is the epicentre of new developments.

"Our institution is multi-departmental, but its key function is to co-ordinate all the selection work in the forestry system," Mr. Chichko explains. These few words on selection encompass a great deal of work. The Centre does not hybridise or cross species, we are not trying to create a new Dolly the sheep. With the aim of selection, specialists monitor forests in search of the best trees, which are taller, thicker and more productive

against others of the same age and grown under the same conditions. These so-called 'super' trees are being registered; each receives its own number and a genetic passport. Their seeds are then collected and later germinated on special plantations. Trees are grown, cross-pollinated and, a few decades later, produce genetically improved 'offspring'. "After several generations, forests grown from such material will be much more productive, enjoy an improved structure, be resistant to diseases and so on. They

are the elite!" Mr. Chichko adds enthusiastically.

Genetics is an unpredictable science. Patience is needed, as modern specialists will not be able to see the fruits of their work, but they will leave something better to their descendants. To ensure that the experiments are succeeding, the selected elite trees are repeatedly tested. To do this, test cultures are created, making it possible to check whether certain trees have improved due to genetic work or ordinary confluence of circumstances. So far, the intermediate results are encouraging: trees of the first generation planted 40-50 years ago are more productive. The time has come to lay plantations of the second generation and with current scientific knowledge, we have even more guarantees of success.

Unfortunately, not all the valuable qualities of trees are passed onto new generations exclusively through seeds. Vegetative reproduction is much more effective. Experts at the Centre also conduct fieldwork — harvesting cuttings of 'super' trees and then planting them on ordinary seedlings to enable them to grow and be sent back to the forestries. As a result, the forests are gradually expanding with




EXPERT VIEW

Alexander Kulik, First Deputy Forestry Minister:



The Forestry Ministry is cooperating with the World Bank as part of the Development of the Forestry Sector of the Republic of Belarus project. Previously, the country received a loan of \$40.7m; the money was spent to strengthen the forest guard, purchase equipment, create nurseries with modern technology for obtaining planting material. The loan also enabled us to construct forest and seed centres. Work is underway in three regions (Brest, Vitebsk, Minsk) but the figure will soon double. The first complex will be built at the Ivatsevichi forestry enterprise. The projected capacity of the Centre is about 2.5m seedlings with a closed root system per year. The Ivatsevichi complex will become the first in the country but not the largest: the Republican Forest Selection and Seed Centre will be the centrepiece: after construction of the 'forest bio-factory' over 5m seedlings a year will be grown there.

The figures are certainly impressive. Most importantly however, after the introduction of these centres, we will be able to reduce the regions' need for high-quality planting material for forest regeneration. Moreover, our foreign partners are positive about the implementation of the allocated tranche, which is why negotiations are underway for an additional loan. After half of the loan was spent, we estimated that \$14m is not enough to complete all the planned works and purchase the necessary multi-operation equipment. I believe that these funds will be used for a good cause. It is not for nothing that our forests are called the 'green gold' of Belarus.

elite trees. The method is efficient but extremely time-consuming. With this in mind, it was decided in 2013 to build a modern bio-technological laboratory at the Centre to focus on tree cloning. This work is conducted at cellular level, when a single cutting is divided into microscopic parts and planted into a special nutrient medium. Over three dozen species have already been cloned this way.

“This method of reproduction provides a guarantee that the genetics of ‘the mother’ is passed to ‘the son’. For example, we are cloning the Karelian birch. This valuable type of wood is not sold in cubic metres on the world market but in kilograms. Between 30-50 percent of its seedlings exhibit all the features of the Karelian birch; others transform into ordinary birch. In the case of cloning, this figure is 100 percent,” the expert adds.

This method is however, only applicable to deciduous trees. Pine and spruce need other methods and the International Bank loan will be spent on this. “The latest technology for growing seedlings — with a closed root system — for planting in a forest, is being introduced. This year, about 12m trees are to be planted. So

far, two greenhouses function as the basis of the centre, making it possible to grow up to 900 seedlings with a closed root system. However, soon our capacity will grow significantly.”

Replenishment of forests with trees with a closed root system is a fundamentally new stage in forestry development; all European countries are moving along a similar path. The result is clear: in the first year, the seedlings grow well, and they are more resistant to diseases and pests, requiring less care. At the same time, valuable seeds are saved: the survival rate is close to 100 percent. In addition, the new technology will reduce the amount of planting material per hectare. At the same time, upcoming generations will receive at least 15-20 percent more finished product from the same hectare.

“All forestries in the country will repay the loan (it is divided into six regions for the construction of six similar centres),” explains Mr. Chichko. “This is a fairly significant load but, in the end, all investments will pay off. The results will surely be appreciated by our children and grandchildren.”

By Mikhail **Serpukhov**

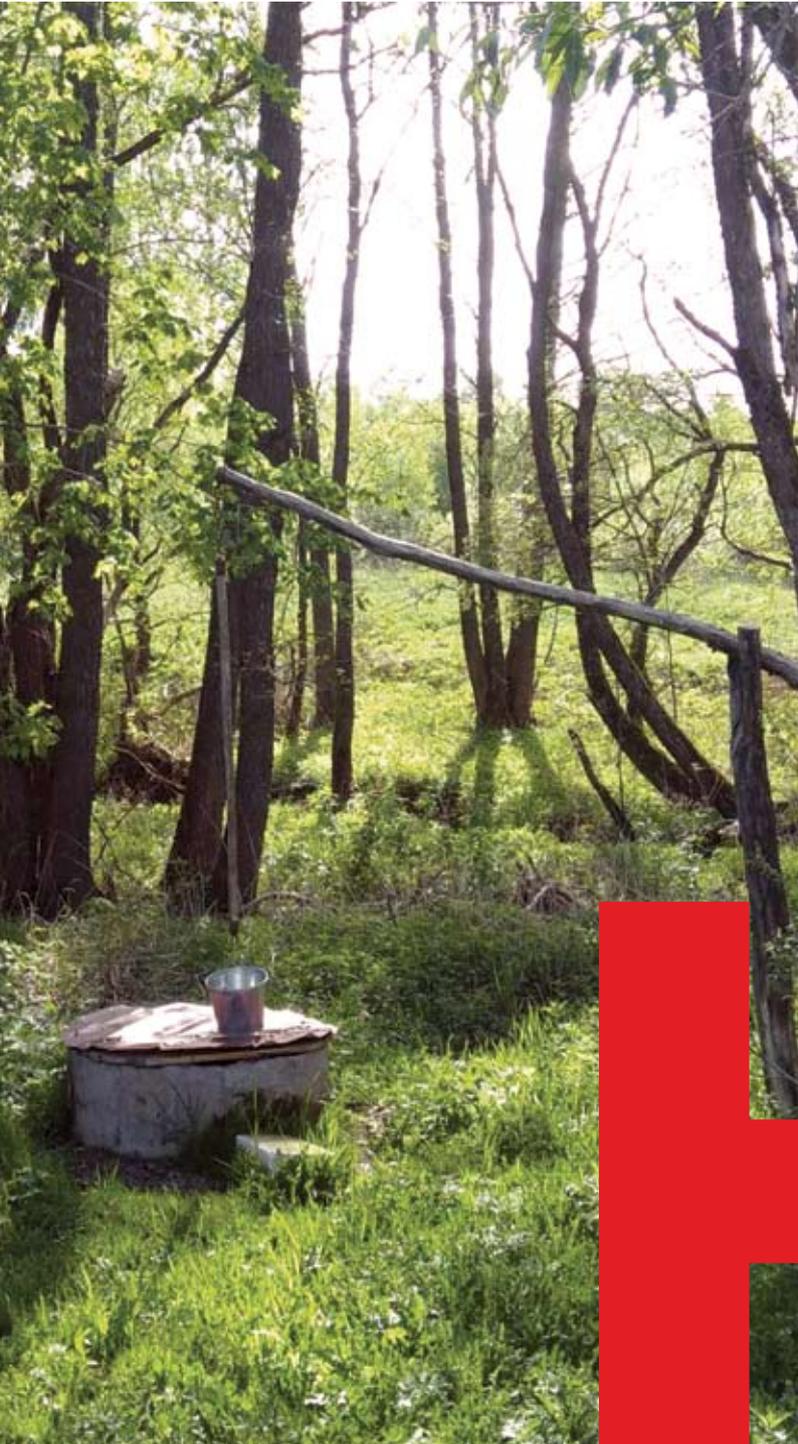


MY FATHER'S PEAR BLOSSOMS

Below are some thoughts from the famous Belarusian playwright Alexey Dudarev, who hopes his native village of Kleny — in Vitebsk Region's Dubrovno District — will not disappear from the Belarusian map but grow even stronger in the Year of Native Land just announced. Those who remember its heyday, as well as new young families with children, live there now.

Herbert Wales — an English writer, publicist and author of several science fiction works — has a wonderful story entitled “The Door in the Wall”. I remember reading it in my childhood and was so impressed that I believed in the existence of this magic door for a long time. From time to time, I returned to it in my thoughts and it happened that the door — leading to a world of beauty where unconditional love for people, animals and plants reigns — seemed to be real to me. Like Wales’ character, I dreamt of finding it. Moreover, I believed: magic is close to us and we only need to find our way to it. Over the years, after many ups and downs and life experiences, I realised that magic lives inside us. The awareness of this miracle is the first step to reconciliation with real life, with a sense of duty, the prevailing stereotypes and conventions, circumstances and events that sometimes turn lives around...

Herbert Wells brilliantly and simply described the state of human happiness which depends on our choice. We do it all the



Parents used to take water from this well

time. On choosing the wrong path or person, we stray from our path and our destiny, while forgetting that much of what is happening to us is the result of parental genes, the worldview of our families and schools and, what is clear, our personal choice. It seems to me that Alexey Dudarev is a happy man. In my opinion, he discovered his 'door in the wall' as a child when he participated in amateur art events. On finding it, he found that there are different worlds in a different dimension. Alexey was later to show these in many of his works: stories, plays and screenplays.

According to Wikipedia's information about Alexey Dudarev, he is a prose writer, a playwright, screenwriter, actor and public figure. The Internet describes Alexey's honoured titles and awards — such as the prestigious USSR State Award for his 'Private Soldiers' play (1985). Of course, this is old news, but it guides readers who want to know more about our outstanding contemporary. In previous years, journalists and publicists — including me — have written

about Alexey Dudarev, but it was only recently that I realised the uniqueness of his personality. He has the sincerity of a child whose openness affects everyone. If Alexey does not want something, he will honestly explain why. It's impossible to bear a grudge against him. Like characters in his plays and stories, Mr. Dudarev is not false. He boasts simplicity and a low-key inner light that remains with you after talking with him or reading his works. Tatiana Likhacheva — Mr. Dudarev's fellow student at the Theatre and Art Institute, an Honoured Artiste of Belarus and a master of the Yakub Kolas National Academic Drama Theatre — described Alexey as: 'Like the sun in our student years. On coming into a room with a smile, there was an impression the light was spreading. He was surprised by everything that touched him, like a child.'

On the eve of Victory Day, I called Mr. Dudarev. While explaining the topic of the conversation, I asked him to talk about his home village as the font of his creativity. Alexey laughingly said, "I've written a play recently and I will send it to you. It's called 'Little Homeland.'" The coincidence is amazing.

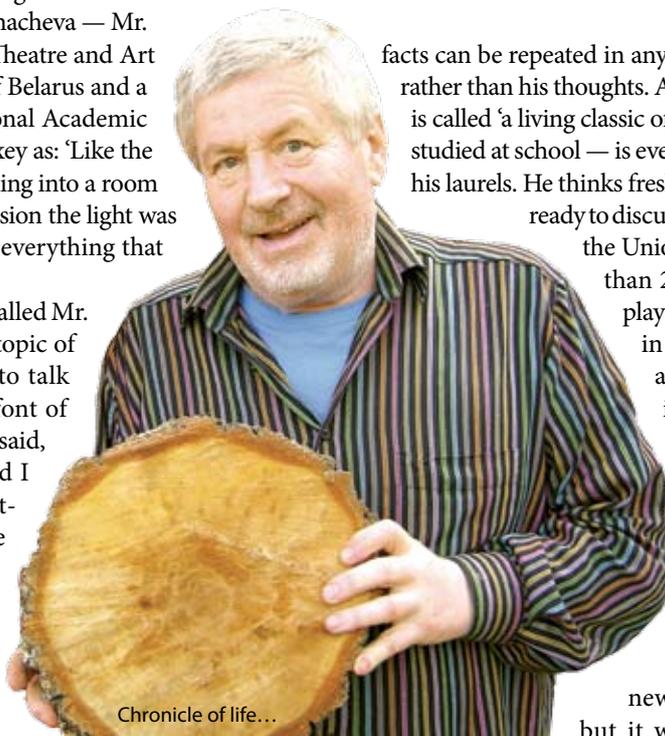
Alexey did not agree to meet at once, explaining that 'so much has already been said that I'm now afraid of repeating myself...' However, I know that only



Road to native home

An extract from 'Little Homeland' by Alexey Dudarev:

*'The Lord always gives to us as we send...
Those who love will be loved, those who
forgive will be forgiven, those who steal will
be robbed, those who kill will be killed...
And so on. For ever'*



Chronicle of life...

facts can be repeated in any article about the playwright — rather than his thoughts. After all, Alexey Dudarev — who is called 'a living classic of literature' and whose works are studied at school — is ever progressing and never rests on his laurels. He thinks freshly and with new energy, always ready to discuss a burning issue. He has headed the Union of Theatre Workers for more than 25 years and continues writing plays. Many of them are now staged in Belarus and abroad. Speaking about why these are still arousing interest, Mr. Dudarev explained: his plays must be staged since they are as understandable as everything in life. If it's light then it's light, if it's dark then it's dark, when it's joy then it's joy and when it hurts — it hurts... That's why they are of interest. I have an example. His new play is ready, but it will be Alexey

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Dudarev who will speak about it and of his native home in the village of Kleny. In our discussion we also remembered Victory

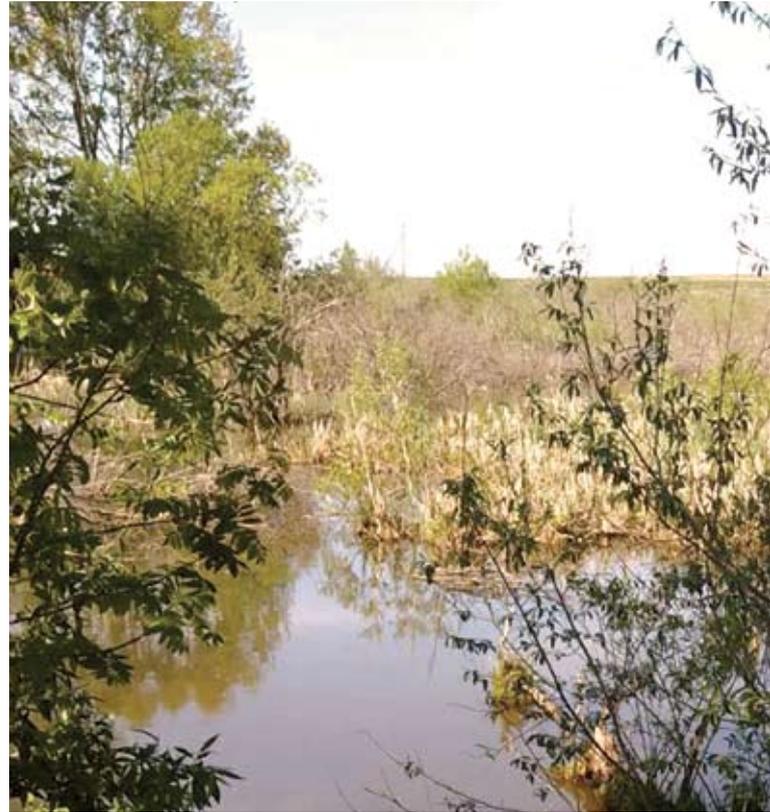
Day which was achieved with the assistance of Alexey's father, Anufry Dudarev and my father, Mikhail Cherkashin. However, before the meeting, I called the Zaruby secondary school. I was interested to hear a first-hand opinion on how the distinguished compatriot is honoured there. 13-year-old Alexey continued his studies in Zaruby after his family moved there from Kleny.

"He doesn't visit Kleny often. When he comes, the villagers mob him with questions about his life. Two years ago, he arrived with his wife and daughter. Alexey was showing Alesya his childhood places:

the banya where his father liked to wash and the Krutaya (Steep) hill where children still love to go in winter to sledge. They collected apples in their orchard," says Irina Titenkova, the deputy director of Zaruby's secondary school. She lives in Kleny, 7km away from Zaruby, close to the Dudarev family's house. "The pear — planted by Alexey's father, front-line soldier Anufry Dudarev — still grows there. It even blossomed recently. Even now, bees love the tree which resembles a bride with its white flowers. There will be probably a rich harvest of pears and apples in autumn. The old red-currant bush is also still growing there. Who knows, Alexey will most likely come again. He is called Alik by local people, as well as by my mother. She is a friend of Dina, the sister of our dear countryman. When I was born, Alexey already worked at the Young Spectators' Theatre in Minsk, after graduating from the Institute," she added.

I hear in her voice that it's a great pleasure for Irina to talk about Mr. Dudarev. She happily recalls the details of his visits to Kleny, of which Alexey has not told me. I learnt from her that Alexey is called 'veselun' (a person with a sense of humour). "His sense of humour is great. He is also friendly to others. You can't imagine how 82-year-old Olya — who is still full of energy — jokes with him. Mr. Dudarev calls her Vasilita: her husband's name was Vasily." According to Irina, Mr. Dudarev is sad that the village has changed: previously, over 100 families lived here but there are now only around 30 people in 12-15 families. "However, there are also young families with children. In the past, there was an eight-grade school and a hospital in Kleny. Young people who decide not to leave Kleny are thinking about what can be done to keep the village alive," she says.

As far as I understand, this is a concern for the local village council. Their job is to consider the village and its appearance; it is already part of the history of our Belarusian culture.



...Kleny lives in my memory and in my heart — in the smell of apples, the taste of my father's pears and the sharpness of the green currants... My most peaceful memories are associated with my childhood home. I grew up surrounded by picturesque nature. Forests fenced the village and that village often comes to me in dreams. One of the pictures of my childhood is me, with my hands stretched out at my sides, running down the steep Krutaya hill and it felt to me as if I was about to fly. I will never forget the Rosasenka River; I mention it often in my plays. It was rich in crucian carp (karas in Russian) and the neighbouring forest was called Karasnik. I remember well how I mastered the role of a shepherd. It was easy to deal with cows but not with sheep. They wandered around the meadow in different directions and to gather them together I had to resort to the help of the dog, Daz. It is from my native village that the truth, described in my plays 'Private Soldiers' and 'Don't Leave Me', comes. I remember sitting on the stove, with my mouth open, listening to my father, mother and neighbours remembering the war and how they survived. Some of them were here under occupation and some joined the partisans. Others — like my mother with her two sisters Nadya and Dina (born in 1937 and 1941) — were refugees. I was even more impressed with stories of those who fought on the front-line, like my father Anufry. He joined the struggle at the beginning of the war and celebrated victory while in Yugoslavia. He returned home as a sergeant-



Rosasenka River in Kleny, mentioned in some of A. Dudarev's plays

major with the Order of the Red Star. All my childhood was spent in an atmosphere of war. There were not only my father's stories. The Dnieper border crossed our region; in 1941 and 1944, there were terrible battles. We, children, played war with German and Soviet helmets on, finding bullet cartridges, shell cases and even German bayonets...

If you are drawing a branch, you need to hear the breath of the wind — as a Japanese saying advises... I remembered this when we started the conversation...

...Perhaps, when writing plays, I hear and feel something, not actual voices. There is no mysticism here. I've absorbed everything from my homeland. Therefore, both plots and images are born within me. I do not invent phrases. They are written independently, by themselves; this happens when I feel a character and their melody, capturing the core of them. Is this a sort of energy? Call it what you wish. Where did the music of Chopin, Rachmaninoff or Tchaikovsky come from? They felt it in themselves. Prose, poetry, drama are also music expressed in words. However, drama is the most complex genre. For example, a prose writer may say: the sun has risen... In turn, a reader understands that means this morning. Meanwhile, in drama, this phrase can have a different semantic meaning. The character, mood and intense inner life can also be reflected through the

intonation. Some view 'the sun has risen' as a new day bringing joy and meeting with a lover, while others could pronounce this phrase with a note of impending doom...

Alexey's modern manner of writing is easy and simple. There is the impression he hears the breath of that virtual world about which he narrates. His stories and plays are always read with great interest. It's even more fascinating to listen to him personally. I think that his 'Private Soldiers' play about the war proved such a success as it was about a matter very close to his heart: a man at war. Mr. Dudarev passionately plunges into other worlds as if he is really in contact with future characters. Sometimes it seems to me that this natural gift of Alexey is supernatural. He has personally admitted that sometimes it is difficult for him to return from those worlds in which he writes... Not everything related to individual creativity can be explained...

I'm often asked about the phenomenon of Igor Dobrolyubov's 'Belye Rosy' film for which I wrote the script. Every time I watch the film, I laugh until I cry. I felt like this too when I worked on it. Maybe it was the ghost of my home town [laughing]. I also have another childhood home — the village of Zaruby...

Irina Titenkova proudly informed us that the Zaruby school library keeps a shelf of Mr. Dudarev's books, while all his books are on display in the room of Belarusian language and literature. She also recalled how Dubrovno celebrated the 50th anniversary of the writer and how he presented a screenplay of 'Belye Rosy' to everyone. She found the film interesting and shot in a modern way. However, Irina loves the first part more.

The characters in my work come from ordinary life but there're no bad people among them. Some from the places where I was born and went to school, both in Kleny and Zaruby, some I met in my childhood and others — later. After all, we know that everything that affected us in our youth remains for life — and people most of all. I never copy real people however, though they appear as true to life in my works. Those who deal with literature understand how characters are created. A certain dominant feature is attractive in one person and another is taken from a different person. When writing, it seems everything is being created as if by itself. Is this intuition? Probably... I think creativity is linked to mystery. Therefore, it is very difficult to explain how the characters are created... If they are thought through and formed on the basis of logic, then they appear 'stilted', not living and breathing.

Mr. Dudarev's characters are alive and warm. I know myself: on reading a book sometimes, its character might slip away. The consciousness refuses to interact with them and you get distracted. This is the lifelessness of a character which is not filled with the energy of the author's soul...



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In this case, actors also experience difficulties on stage. As you know, 'Belye Rosy' was watched by many millions of

people in a year and, in 1984, the film was recognised as the best people's comedy. I've heard that both my peers and young people still watch it with pleasure, though the film is over thirty years old already.

Alexey once said: there is sometimes more truth in art and on the stage than in real life. it took me a long time to understand how this fits the famous saying from Shakespeare — 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players'...

For example, when a play is on and we hear how two characters are communicating: one is proving something to another, beating himself in the chest, swearing that he is tell-

ing the truth. However, I feel that he's telling a lie. We also understand the reasons why he is lying. Meanwhile, in real life, someone might accept this 'truth' and be fooled. In turn, others might not see the heart of the person and understand what is really going on.

I've read about this, but do not remember the author of the story entitled 'Everything is Clean in a Clean Man'. It was a story about the 'curved' mirror of the soul which I think comprehends the message of Apostle Peter to Titus. It's a quiet summer evening. He is the owner of a cottage outside the city, she is the guest, a friend of the host's wife. They are sitting by the fire, looking at the coals. The woman talks about how she put her faith in the supreme celestial world and shares her secret, knowing that her friend's husband is also looking for answers to questions about the secrets of life... A group of people are celebrating the hostess' birthday not far away. The hostess' sister is walking nearby. She is observing how the woman smiles and touches her husband's cheek...

An apple tree in his father's garden



How did she dare? Eventually, both sisters indignantly come to the fire with a complaint: why had the host left his guests? He was urgently needed to entertain them... The end of the evening saw the man shut in his room and wouldn't come out, everyone quarrelled, the guest was blamed for seducing the friend's husband and sent out of the family. This all happened because the woman's sister saw everything in a distorted way. She did not know that the friend was speaking of pure and spiritual matters. This was the truth of the sister, far from being real. Simply put, this was jealousy in its saddest expression... As a result, the friends parted and until now — as the author writes, the hostess's sister does not know that the Angel of the Lord himself was the one who drove the woman's hand.

This is an example of truth in art and in life. If we saw this story on stage, we would immediately understand what happened. That's why there is more truth for me in the theatre. As for Shakespeare, everything is true: in life, people play their roles; some do this sincerely and others not...

Mr. Dudarev is open to those who ask him about meetings: at schools, colleges, universities. Irina Titenkova hopes that he will come back to visit his native Zaruby school. After all, 2018 is the Year of Native Land! The children would be very happy. She adds, we only need to agree on the date. Perhaps he'll read a play for the teachers and senior schoolchildren, telling them about his life. He may also show the pear tree — planted by his father in honour of his first grandson's birth — to his grandchildren. I told Irina that Alexey has three grandchildren: his son Maxim's Arseny and Yana and Alesya's son Andrey. The women replied, "We know! Everyone in the village knows of this. Some old people say the younger grandson greatly resembles Alexey, while his wife is as pretty as an actress. She even speaks beautifully."

My new play is about love. It's a comedy about how, after arriving in the deserted town of Drevlyansk to visit the grave of her deceased firefighter-father, the character — young Masha, who has already experienced grief, sorrow, and poverty in her life — meets her love. The man unexpectedly turns out to be a crown prince...

There are many funny moments in the play: conversations about crypto-currencies, bitcoins and mystification. The talking doll Gaby acts as a symbol of the past. The story describes how, for the rest of our lives, the memory of a pure world — called childhood — is preserved in us, even if we, when growing up, move to other cities and remote countries for our love and destiny, where we find another homeland. The latter becomes part of our real life, while the former continues to live in our hearts — unless, of course, we break the threads of spiritual communication with it.



'The summer house in the Logoisk District is also now my small homeland'

P.S. I was once examining a fireplace in a small summer house owned by the Dudarevs when I noticed several red bricks sticking out of the white side wall of the stove. "Is it decoration?" I joked. Mr. Dudarev answered with unusual seriousness, "These are the bricks from the stove in my parents' home. During one of my visits to Kleny I took them from our homestead. When I was building this summer house I asked the stove builder to insert them into one of the walls. My son polished the bricks and they are smooth to the touch. From time to time I touch them with my palms. When the stove is hot and I sit at the fireplace I sometimes feel the warmth and breath of my native home. It seems that everyone who was dear to me in life and who lives in my memories sometimes drops in here to get warm..."

By Valentina **Zhdanovich**

WHERE HISTORIAN HERODOTUS ONCE STEPPED



FIVE REASONS TO VISIT STOLIN

Tasting green cucumbers

The agro-town of Olshany, near Stolin, is the cucumber capital of Belarus, with almost every family having its own greenhouse. Heavy trucks from Moscow, St. Petersburg and, even, Murmansk arrive to purchase the crisp cucumbers, which harvest until late autumn.

Residents spend days and nights in their greenhouses, even sleeping there! They joke that 'if you work on a vegetable patch, you lie down with it!'

Seeing Polesie Amazonia

In spring, the area around Olshany turns into a 'tropical jungle', due to the flooding of the River Pripyat, through boggy lowlands, which joins with its deep side streams into a single water system. Ancient Greek historian Herodotus, after visiting, named the Polesie waters 'a sea'. In honour of the great traveller and historian, the water 'mirror' was called the 'sea of Herodotus'. The view is like that described in Nekrasov's verse: 'Water understands all and raises the village in spring'.

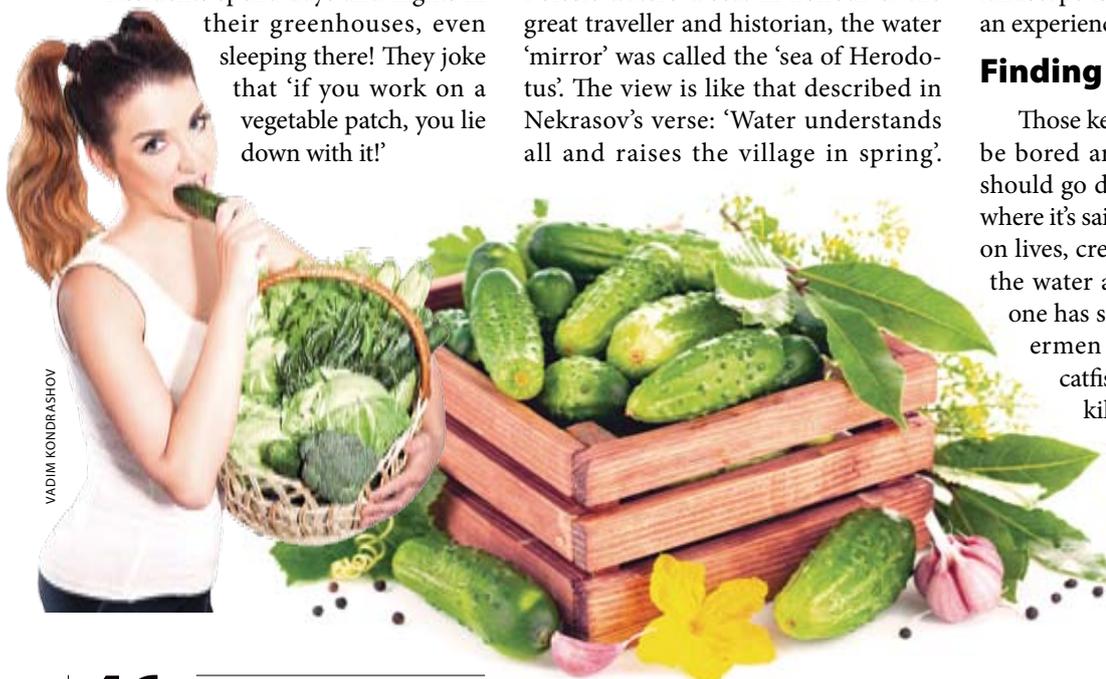
Wooden and rubber boats are essential transport and there were times when cows and pigs spent weeks on floating boats, tied to sheds.

The famous Olmanskie marshes attract hundreds of tourists with their flora and fauna, registered in the Red Book. There are many rare birds to photograph: egrets, black storks, night herons and blue-throated robins. Of course, the landscape is wild, so it's vital to go with an experienced guide.

Finding Gorynych

Those keen on mystical stories won't be bored around Stolin. Adventurers should go directly to the River Goryn, where it's said that a fire-breathing dragon lives, creating mysterious circles on the water and sudden 'fountains'. No one has seen a dragon but local fishermen sometimes catch gigantic catfish, weighing more than fifty kilograms.

According to legend, the name of the town derives from 'fish'. Once, there was a huge lake, in which a lucky man caught one hundred tench.



VADIM KONDRASHOV



ALEXANDER STADUB

Driving 'horse' on carnival night

The Stolín District remains unique. You may think that carnivals only take place in Venice but it's not true. Polesie's flamboyant 'Koniki' (Horses) ritual, held in David-Gorodok just before New Year is a riot of colour and excitement, transforming the tranquil town.

Just imagine: a devil with horns jumping in the streets, a splay-footed bear frightening young girls, and gypsies in motley costumes singing to the accompaniment of guitar and timbrel. Youngsters love 'Koniki', with new masks depicting Batman, Superman

and Jack Sparrow joining traditional versions.

The main character of the magical night is the 'horse', whose head is made from a felt boot and whose body is made from basket weave, with a flax tail fixed behind. A soldier in an overcoat leads the horse by its reins, followed by a noisy crew with songs and dances, going from one house to the next, singing carols. The custom appeared during the First World War. On the eve of the old calendar New Year, Russian Cossacks created a 'horse' from materials to hand, wishing to amuse honest folk. Today, the tradition has been entered for registry on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Belarus.

Guessing the mystery of petroglyphs

Five hundred years ago, the town was owned by the magnates Solomoretskie, then Vishnevskie and Patsy. Meanwhile, Stolín was glorified by a representative of the richest family of the Grand Duchy



of Lithuania, Anthony Radziwill (or, to be more exact, by his sweetheart, French Duchess Marie Dorothea Elisabeth de Castellane).

The elegant mademoiselle renovated the shabby castle in Nesvizh and then began to restore Stolín. She brought an architect from Berlin, who constructed a luxurious palace for her. An oak-grove under the window was joined with exotic trees. Alas, during the war, the residence was burnt down; only the park survived.

Another attraction for tourists is four dozen ancient boulders. Fanciful signs and inscriptions have been carved on those pagan stones.

By Kristina **Khilko**



VALERIA AND 'VICTORIA'

When speaking about Valeria Grechenkova — an accordion teacher at Zhodino children’s art school in the Minsk Region — it’s better to use such words as ‘beauty’, ‘artistry’ and ‘style’. The lady also heads the Theory Department and lectures musical and theoretical disciplines. In addition, she visits her Minsk alma-mater, teaching college students with orchestral parties and personally playing in the orchestra. Valeria soon plans to join other college lecturers and participate in an international music contest in Slovenia.

I’ve always believed that dreams can come true if a person makes the effort to fulfil them. Amongst mine was a long-standing desire to listen to the accordion: not in a concert hall of a philharmonic or a large palace with hundreds of spectators but in a small cosy café — as once happened in my youth. I remember well how we were sightseeing in Budapest with friends and came across a pretty restaurant with around five tables. They all were empty, while a couple were dancing on a small stage in the centre of the café; The lady had a small bouquet of white lilies of the valley in her hand, which rested on the man’s shoulder. Their heads were silver-grey... and the accordion was playing. I also remember how the man and the woman — while looking at each other — were singing something by Edith Piaf, as a very young black-haired accompanist was playing... Or maybe it was another French chanson...

The faces of those dancers and the musician — who later began playing a Hungarian melody — have disappeared from my memory but I will always remember the warm and tender atmosphere of the Hungarian summer night...

For a long time, I’ve been dreaming of plunging into something like this, with accordion accompaniment.

The name of my guest appeared in the YouTube search among the best accordionists in Minsk. I decided not to bother the ‘golden’ accordion of Belarus — Igor Kvashevich, the best accordionist in the world — Belarusian Vladislav Pligovka, laureates and grant holders of the President’s Special Fund for Support of Talented Youth, winners of numerous Republican and international competitions. Instead, I contacted

On the appointed day, we met in a small café in old Minsk and I managed to realise my long-held dream. I began dancing myself — enjoying the repertoire, which included the French chanson and Valeria’s artistic performance. She played virtuoso and the heavy 20kg instrument seemed weightless in her thin arms. Later, we discussed Valeria’s path to professionalism.

Did your passion for music come from your parents?

Competitions are both an impetus and a great opportunity to understand how much you’ve grown as a musician in a year, for example. It’s a chance to get to know many creative people and listen to how Germans, Russians, Poles and Italians play...

Valeria Grechenkova and invited her to my birthday party. Valeria agreed, telling me that she had a programme ready to perform: Accordion in Jazz, French Accordion, Dandies (songs from the 1960s-1980s), songs of past and recent wars and others. After talking for a while, we agreed that the accordion is fashionable, stylish and elegant.

No, my father is a military doctor and my mother is an economist. Neither grandfathers nor grandmothers were connected to music. My uncles and aunts also never studied music. I later learned that my godfather’s parents wanted him to study at music school. They even bought him an expensive accordion which remained unused: music



page 49 proved not to be in the man's soul. When I was a four-year-old schoolgirl, I was sent to Minsk's music school No. 11. I was not very enthusiastic about it as I had no idea whether I wanted to study music or not. However, from the first day, everything in me connected with the accordion — the instrument, its keys, sounds and even its heavy weight on my young knees and in my arms — all turned out to my liking, though it was not easy. After five years of studies, my teacher invited me to participate in the prestigious I. I. Zhinovich Republican Contest. I prepared for it for 5-6 hours daily and, honestly,

by the end I was crying with fatigue. I even wanted to give up music. However, I managed to overcome it and entered the Minsk College of Arts' Department of Instrumental Performance and Folk Instruments. I studied with great pleasure. Our orchestra travelled a good deal — visiting Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria and participating in many international competitions. We often returned home with awards.

Did you enter a university?

After graduating from the College with honours, I entered the Maxim Tank Pedagogical University's Department of Aesthetic Education and became a

Master of Pedagogical Sciences. Maybe I will continue the 'Development of Musical-Figurative Thinking Based on Gaming Methods of Teaching'. However, to do so, I need to complete my post-graduate studies. The college has given me much in terms of performance, while the university taught pedagogy. On the one hand, I can teach playing (for example, how to get out of a difficult situation that may happen during a performance) and, on the other hand, I know how to make a performance interesting and artistic.

Did you participate in competitions during your studies at the university?

There were endless concerts during my studies. I turned to competitions after graduation from the university — going to Poland, Germany... There is such a wonderful international project called 'The Caravan of Culture'; it unites various competitions — choral, theatrical, variety, instrumental... I have often won prizes there, also taking a Grand Prix with the orchestra. I go there often, visiting it two years ago, last time to return with a diploma! First prize once again.

What do you get from such projects?

These are not only a stimulus but also a great opportunity to understand how much you've grown, say, as a musician in a year. After all, you get to know many creative people. You listen to how Germans, Russians, Poles, Italians play.

Are you going anywhere in the near future?

I'll go to Slovenia in July, it is hosting a competition on cultural traditions. The ensemble participating in the contest consists of five of my colleagues — school teachers: bass guitar, saxophone, flute, cello and, of course, accordion (me). My husband Konstantin Volkovich, also a school teacher, plays the saxophone there. It was actually him who took me away from Minsk to Zhodino. At present, we are arranging original Belarusian music for the ensemble. It has no title yet, but this is a very interesting work in terms of self-education and experience. After all, this is the music from the 15th-16th century. It has an unusual system.

What is its complexity for you, as a musician?

Modern music is aimed at technique; it has passages, broken melodies — very different and complicated. It also has rules. In turn, folk music lacks these. It is adjusted to the voice of a person. It has narrow ranges but wide opportunities for improvisation.

Don't you wish to take part in the Acco Premium international contest in Minsk this November as an accordionist?

Perhaps I will try if this does not interrupt the schedule of my main work.

Who is your idol in the accordion world?

I admire our Belarusians, Igor Kvashevich and Vladislav Pligovka, the Russian Piotr Dranga and winners of numerous contests and festivals. This is natural for me as a musician. They all are great, but I could hardly speak of any as an idol. I've always listened and continue listening to a lot of music, both solo and orchestral. I listen to guitarists, violinists and saxophonists. I take the best of them for myself, but I never copy: I love to arrange my own work. Perhaps I am self-sufficient. Is this bad?

I have three now. One of them is inexpensive; it is used at school and for studies. It can also be used for entertaining performances. I also use it for concert performances. It's possible to dance while holding it. In turn, the instrument which I used for my own studies costs \$3,000, while my third accordion — a 20kg Victoria — is truly beautiful. It is large and impressive. At present, electronic instruments are available; they weigh 3-5kg.

Do they produce different sounds?

Yes, their sound is not live. It's electronic and I call it 'plastic'. If you wish to play in the way that France or Latin American melodies sound, then take a Victoria.

Valeria Grechenkova is a laureate of many international competitions. However, she especially cherishes the diploma won at her first prestigious Zhinovich Republican Contest of Folk Instrument Players

How do you teach children to show artistry?

It's enough for a capable child to see me. I play for them myself, not complicated pieces but something which modern children can understand. I arrange songs that everyone knows. These are hits which even small children know. That's why they trust me. Pupils look at me and like the songs — thinking that they can also learn them. I show them entertaining videos, with dances, plays and bright costumes. Through this approach I gradually gain their attention and awaken their love of music. As they grow older, they become interested in classical pieces. I also resort to video, for example, excerpts from very good films with aesthetically pleasing videos and beautiful music.

How many instruments do you have?

Is it necessary to have a certain type of fingers and hands to play the accordion?

Not at all. There are no specific requirements. Of course, it's good when your hands are wide; it's then easy to make chords. My hands are of medium size but there are also small hands which can produce sounds wonderfully.

What about a manicure?

I have no manicure: I cut my nails short and do not cover them with varnish. When there is a glissando, a musician needs to pass along the keys with their fingers; this creates certain inconveniences. Moreover, an instrument can be damaged.

What does music give you if you play for others?

It's a pleasure, drive, ecstasy... After all, while playing for others, I play for myself.

By Valentina **Zhdanovich**



THE ELOQUENT COLOURS OF A VICTORIOUS SPRING

The war and the artist make a truly complicated union, where it's easy to lose the truth. A painter who depicts a reality contrary to human nature should not lose themselves as a creator. At the same time, the war should not simply be transformed into a set of refined postcards. The key is not the victory over this evil in itself, but the fact that victors do not come out of the war with hardened souls. It's not for nothing that in Belarus, where people keenly felt all the horrors of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, the visual arts received new impetus. Strictly speaking, the post-war years became its golden age and it was then that the national school was formed.

The theme of the war has always occupied a significant place in the work of Belarusian artists. The topic has been treated with great variety — including the drama of Mikhail Savitsky's paintings and the life-affirming still-lives and landscapes of Leonid Shchemelev. The huge breadth of the subject has always been present in Belarusian art, as evidenced by exhibitions on military themes. Although, to a greater extent, their exhibitions were inherently traditional, the artists sought, as a rule, to show the strength of the human spirit and the heroism of soldiers in their mission to liberate our country.

The National Art Museum's permanent exhibition has devoted much space to works on a military theme. These works — with all the power of



the authors' emotions — reveal the essence of the incredible experience that people faced in the war years. Of course, paintings by artists who personally took part in the war are showcased here as well. Among them are People's Artists of Belarus — Leonid Shchemelev and Victor Gromyko. They experienced the war and have enough life experience to reveal its terrible essence.

We used to say that such people simply stood apart. Victor Gromyko, for example, not only saw the hardships of the war with his own eyes, but also was a soldier and a liberator of his native land from fascist invaders. In 1941, he became a member of an underground organisation in the city of Orsha, and later acted as a reconnaissance officer, a machine gunner and even a commissar of a detachment of the special purpose regiment. He edited the 'Narodnye Mstiteli' (People's Avengers) newspaper. The bare facts

of Victor's military biography show a great deal of strength, courage and human dignity. The war also exposed the inexhaustible cheerfulness of Vic-

A famous battle artist — Fiodor Baranovsky — is another example. One of the first graduates of the Minsk Art Institute was a painter of Soviet

The National Art Museum's permanent exhibition has devoted much space to works on a military theme. These works — with all the power of the authors' emotions — reveal the essence of the incredible experience that people faced in the war years

tor Gromyko, which he revealed in his rich creative diversity. The artistry of Victor Gromyko invariably correlates with ideas about the sense of life, spiritual ideals and beliefs, of the artist's responsibility. He joined Belarusian art as a master of historical and heroic pictures, large-scale epic landscapes and psychological portraits.

realism; his works were thought of as the basis of Belarusian fine art. Fiodor painted soldiers and their characters. His pictures feature human emotions, will power and determination, his characters are courageous people who have had hard times but managed to live their lives honourably.



that helped him reflect on the richness of life, the beauty of its moments. Ivan is an outstanding landscape painter and he truly realised his talent and abilities in this genre. A former participant of the Great Patriotic War — Iosif Belanovich — fully explored the theme of war in his works. Even the titles of his paintings — ‘Brest Fortress’, ‘Heroes of Immortality’, ‘Memory’, ‘Soldiers’ — demonstrate the subject of his works. Iosif managed to reflect the humane soul of a soldier-liberator. The artist worked on this topic until the last days of his life, drawing canvases dedicated to the heroic defence of the Brest Fortress, the courage of the Leningrad blockade, fights in Berlin and the liberation of his native Minsk.

In general, many of the works by Belarusian artists devoted to the war are tragic; they are dominated by the themes of heroic resistance and people’s heroism. This also applies to the creativity of People’s Artist of Belarus — Georgy Poplavsky. In his opinion, Belarusian artists’ form a unique and eloquent point in the history of the Great Patriotic War. “This is our duty, since those sacrifices that Belarus suffered during the war are unforgettable,” Mr. Poplavsky said.

page 53 Belarus was liberated 73 years ago. The war has become a part of our history, but it’s also part of the fate of almost every Belarusian family, it could not be otherwise in country that lost a third of its inhabitants in that war.

whose works have also been exhibited many times.

Ivan Dmukhailo is among those rare artists who — after surviving the Great Patriotic War — could not depict it on canvas. In creativity, he followed a path

Fiodor Baranovsky was born on July 3rd and, on the day of Belarus’ liberation in 1944, the artist celebrated his 20th birthday. Later on, he painted ‘Our Minsk’ featuring a joyful meeting with soldiers who were liberating the country. However, one of the most famous works of Fiodor is ‘The Bathhouse’; outside a routine everyday plot, it demonstrates a protest against the war that ruined young lives. The picture is perceived as significant, not only because of the artist’s professionalism and unexpected approach to the topic, but also to the paradoxical combination of external cheerfulness and hidden tragedy.

Certainly, Fiodor Baranovsky is a shining star in Belarusian fine art. The same might be said of Nikolay Zalzozny, Ivan Dmukhailo and Iosif Belanovich,





It is true, that the fate of Belarusian art in the 1940s was closely linked to the course of military events. Some artists went to the front-line, some were evacuated, and others were forced to stay in occupied territory, whilst some joined the guerrilla movement. The collection of the pre-war State Picture Gallery (the predecessor of the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus) was not evacuated: most of the works were plundered or destroyed during bombings and fires.

Despite hard times and difficult conditions, many Belarusian artists did not stop working during the war. They found for themselves the most appropriate way of reflecting the reality: small studies, sketches, front-line drawings, posters, caricatures and portraits. After the country's libera-

tion from the enemy, they often went on artistic trips to places of war events, while creating images of heroes of the recent past. The military theme in Belarusian art began flourishing in the late 1940s, with the trend continuing until the 1970s. The National Art Museum keeps many works of painting, graphics and sculpture dedicated to the protection of the Brest Fortress, the liberation of Minsk, images of partisans, perpetuation of the memory of Heroes of the Soviet Union who died during the war. Among the heroes whose deeds inspired not only artists but also writers, composers, film and theatre directors are Father Minay (Minay Shmyrev), Nikolay Gastello, Lev Dovator, Alexey Danukalov, Konstantin Zaslouov, Piotr Kalinin, Piotr Kupriyanov, Yelena Mazanik, Mikhail

Silnitsky and Grandfather Talash (Vasil Talash).

In turn, the museum's permanent exhibition features works of the most famous artists of Belarus: Zair Azgur, Anatoly Anikeichik, Ivan Akhremchik, Andrey Bembel, Gavriil Vashchenko, Valentin Volkov, Alexey Glebov, Victor Gromyko, Alexander Grube, Lev Gumilevsky, Mai Dantsig, Yevgeny Zaitsev, Arlen Kashkurevich, Raisa Kudrevich, Pavel Maslenikov, Georgy Poplavsky, Mikhail Savitsky, Sergey Selikhanov, Vladimir Stelmashonok, Vitaly Tsvirko, Vasily Sharangovich and Leonid Shchemelev.

A typical representative of the 'severe style' is People's Artist of Belarus — Mai Dantsig who recently passed away. No large-scale exhibition is organised



page 55 without his work. Mai Dantsig is among the artists who tried to speak directly with his unique manner, always remaining true to himself, to his beliefs and ideals. His best works — thematic canvases, city landscapes, still-lives, portraits — are based primarily on the idea. The artist's paintings are characterised by large scale, clarity of plot and semantic significance. This is especially seen in his canvases on the theme of war: 'The Saved World Remembers...'; 'Belarus is Partisan Mother'; 'On Guard of Peace'; these are part of the golden collection of national fine arts. Generally speaking, Mai Dantsig's works stand out for the unique atmosphere of the time and nobility. Mai Dantsig used his own style to speak about the war, about peace, about his beloved city-hero of Minsk, about the people with whom he was familiar and, most importantly, about the time he lived in.

Moreover, the exhibition dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Great Victory included works by those Belarusian authors who were not previously represented in the permanent exposition of the museum — though they also created an art chronicle of the war. Among their authors are Leonid Osedovsky, Piotr Danelia, Abram Krol,

Eduard Kufko, Sophia Lee, Boris Nepomnyashchy, Valentin Savitsky, Boris Uss, Vladimir Khrustalev and Yevgeny Tikhonovich. The genre range of their works was very wide — including portraits, landscapes and subject-thematic pictures. For several decades, artists emotionally and dramatically conveyed the tragic, tense atmosphere of the war days. Among these works are 'Ballad of the Mother' by Leonid Osedovsky, 'Unconquered' by Vitaly Tsvirko, 'Standing to the Death' by Yevgeny Zaitsev, 'We Will Return' by Olgerd Malishevsky, 'To the Memory of Brother-Soldiers' by Natan Voronov, 'Poppies' by Nikolay Zalozny, 'Remembrance' by Israel Basov, 'Vitebsk Gates' and 'Partisan Madonna' by Mikhail Savitsky, '1941: Over Prip'yat' by Victor Gromyko, 'My Birth' by Leonid Shchemelev, 'Breakthrough' by Gavriil Vashchenko, 'Thanks, Mom!' by Ivan Rey and 'The Song of Partisans' by Vasily Sumarev.

The victory was reflected by Belarusian artists in an acute, not indifferent and sensitive manner. There are many worthy works on this topic and the best of them are kept at the country's main museum. There are definitely more exhibits to show and, unsurprisingly, it's been decided to organise another impressive exhibition. As a result, a

new show — 'War and Victory in the Works of 20th Century Belarusian Artists' — is on display at the 1950-1980s Belarusian Art Hall. It presents dozens of paintings, drawings and sculptures dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, including works by artist-veterans of the war and the post-war generation: 'Portrait of Nikolay Gastello' by Andrey Bembel (1905-1986), 'Defence of the Brest Fortress' by Ivan Akhremchik (1903-1971), 'Minsk. July 3rd, 1944' by Valentin Volkov (1881-1964), 'Partisan Madonna' by Mikhail Savitsky (1922-2010), 'Over Prip'yat' by Victor Gromyko (1923), 'Thirst' by Arlen Kashkurevich (1929-2013), 'A Still-Life with Tulips' by Leonid Shchemelev (1923) and others. The museum is especially proud of the works created during the war.

The 'War and Victory in the Art of 20th Century Belarusian Artists' show will be open for some time and will undoubtedly attract attention. After all, it reflects the fearlessness, self-sacrifice and heroic feats that presented to the new generation the most valuable treasure on the planet: human life. 73 years separate us from the Great Victory, but there is no doubt that it will remain forever in the memory of our contemporaries.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



Leonid Shchemelev. The First Day of Peace. 1983