



The first stage of the Minsk metro's third line opened for passengers on November 7th



Jeweller Oleg Yermolovich describes how he's been recreating the Turov cross lost at the turn of the 12th–13th centuries



INTERNATIONAL

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The first power unit of the Belarusian nuclear power plant has been brought to a capacity of 400MW: Belarus has become a nuclear state

## New page in the country's chronicle

Sovereign Belarus has never witnessed such a grand event. November 7th — a day when socially significant presents are commonly given and received and when landmark objects are launched in our country — was truly historical this year. The President gave permission to increase the electric capacity of the first power unit of the Belarusian nuclear power plant to 400MW. The nuclear station — a pride of our country — was officially launched and Aleksandr Lukashenko, who took part in the ceremony, emphasised, “Our country is becoming a nuclear power today. It’s a huge success, it’s a crowning glory — if you like. It’s a new stage in our country’s sovereignty and independence.” → **3**



# Making peace better and safer



## Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko receives credentials from Apostolic Nuncio and ambassadors

The solemn ceremony was hosted by the Palace of Independence. Aleksandr Lukashenko received the credentials from Apostolic Nuncio in Belarus Ante Jozic, Ambassador of Venezuela Franklin Ramirez Araque, Ambassador of Iran Saeed Yari, Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Ju Jong Bong, Ambassador of Syria Mohammad Aloumrani, Ambassador of Turkey Mustafa Ozcan, Ambassador of Japan Hiroki Tokunaga. From this moment, their diplomatic mission in our country officially begins. This happens in the year of the 75th anniversary of Great Victory — which is a significant date for Belarus. We remember the price we had to pay for this victory. We understand the threat of a major military conflict today. Taking into account the current international situation, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, "Belarus consistently supports the resumption of a broad dialogue on peace and international security."

### Distances and borders are not a hindrance

Addressing the diplomats, the President noted that the beginning of their missions was a difficult and responsible period. Humanity is facing a second wave of coronavirus, international conflicts have escalated, and new threats have emerged in the information space. Focusing on this, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, "That is why the times we are in now are dictating the need to move from empty rhetoric and loud political declarations to real actions. It's very important for us to assess the situation soberly and preserve all the achievements of international co-operation."

The Head of State believes that only

concerted actions by all countries, a display of humanism and solidarity, and the strengthening of an atmosphere of mutual trust can neutralise these threats and create a solid foundation for resolving problems. Belarus is always ready for such interaction and remains open to the world.

### To make people feel at home

For almost every ambassador, working in our country is a completely new page in their biography. Aleksandr Lukashenko is confident that everyone will discover their own Belarus: warm, hospitable, enterprising and responsible, with its rich historical heritage, ready for dialogue with diverse cultures.

True, our country is experiencing a difficult period today. This year's kaleidoscope of events has been a test not only for the acting authorities but also for the entire Belarusian society. However, the President has no doubt that we will pass this test with dignity and overcome all problems, "As the Head of State, I responsibly declare that we are able to effectively resist external challenges and threats, ensure internal political stability, and prevent a civil split and the arbitrariness of certain radical elements. We strongly defend the interests of the majority of our citizens who voted for a united Belarus and stand for an independent and sustainable state."

... Addressing all the diplomats, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that they represent countries located on different continents. However, we all are united by the desire to make the world safer, the economy more sustainable, and the lives of ordinary people better.

"I'm convinced that you will not be simply friendly and unbiased observers of the ongoing processes, but will do your best to help form equal and mutually beneficial relations with Belarus. You can bring our cultures closer and mutually enrich them, and help expand humanitarian co-operation and interpersonal contacts," the President added.

## Direct speech

As is traditional, the Head of State commented upon Belarus' co-operation with each of the state represented by the diplomats



### On Vatican

Belarus and the Vatican enjoy special relations. On the international arena, together we consistently promote such important initiatives as combating human trafficking, combating violence against children, and protecting traditional family values.

The issues of interfaith peace occupy a special place in the bilateral agenda. We count on the consolidating and constructive role of the Catholic Church in Belarusian society. I confirm our interest in deeper interaction with the Holy See.



### On Turkey

Turkey is an important ally that was the first to recognise Belarus' independence. During my visit to Ankara last year, jointly with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan we outlined a number of steps to strengthen trade and humanitarian ties and expand contacts between citizens of our countries.

Minsk and Ankara agree that an effective economic dialogue is the key

to success and progress. Therefore, it is important that the agreements we have reached are not left on paper, but implemented in the near future.



### On Iran

Iran is one of Belarus' significant economic and political partners in the Middle East. We have a great potential which, no doubt, is still largely untapped. Belarus welcomes the suspension of a number of restrictions on Iran by the UN and hopes for further constructive steps to stabilise the military and political situation in the Middle East.

We are grateful to your country for its support of Belarus at multilateral platforms. We will also reciprocate and are ready to continue co-operation with Iran in international organisations.



### On Syria

Strong ties, distinguished by complete trust and sincere friendship, have been established between Minsk and Damascus. Belarus actively supports the sovereignty, ter-

ritorial integrity and stands for non-interference in the internal affairs of Syria. I'm confident that the efforts of the Syrian authorities — aimed at a speedy resolution of the domestic political situation, economic and social recovery — will contribute to enhancing co-operation between our countries.



### On Venezuela

Belarus has gained considerable experience of bilateral relations with Venezuela in Latin America. We will continue to provide your country with all possible support. I hope that the new Ambassador will help intensify mutually beneficial co-operation in trade and humanitarian areas.



### On North Korea

Belarus counts on strengthening its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have an unreasonably low level of relations. We need to work more actively in this direction. We are closely following the development of the situation on the Korean Peninsula. We sup-

port all the efforts to ensure peace and resolve the existing contradictions in the region. We are interested in continuing constructive contacts in international organisations. We ask the new head of the diplomatic mission to pay attention to such areas of co-operation as medication and food production, professional training and professional development.



### On Japan

Co-operation with Japan has significant reserves in trade, industry, investment, science and technology. We highly appreciate scientific and humanitarian assistance in the mitigation of the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. For our part, we are ready to continue helping your country after the Fukushima accident and continue improving the health of Japanese children in Belarus.

I believe the upcoming Summer Olympics and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2021 will not only be a true celebration of sporting achievements but will also contribute to uniting our nations.

## Co-operation with African countries

The President has heard a report of the Head of the Belarus President Property Management Directorate, Viktor Sheiman. Top of the agenda was the state of things at companies affiliated with the directorate. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the directorate is in charge of a large number of various enterprises and organisations.

"This is like a whole ministry," the Head of State said. "How are things going at these enterprises? Three quarters of the year are now over. What is the situation there and what is most concerning?"

Another point of the agenda was trade and economic co-operation with African countries: this area of work is supervised by Viktor Sheiman. "I see progress in the sales of equipment, though it is not so big. However,

we have begun work on the things we agreed on and planned. How are things on this front? What impedes the development of co-operation with African states?" Aleksandr Lukashenko asked.

The President emphasised that co-operation with African countries should be expanded. "These distant states are rich in natural resources. Maybe we will be able to extract something for ourselves there. Maybe



Viktor Sheiman

we will offer them our products in exchange," he said. Aleksandr Lukashenko highly praised the fact that regional banking organisations — with which Belarus co-operates in Africa — are gradually starting to finance joint projects.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

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## Historical Saturday

Aleksandr Lukashenko called the last Saturday historical for a reason, “It will not be long before we fully realise what a feat we have accomplished with the support of our older brothers... We will see how effective the current station is, how safe it is and it will not cause many complaints not only from our neighbours but also from some doubters in our country.”

The President gave many flattering characteristics of the nuclear power plant near Ostrovets, calling it, for example, ‘a new step to the future, to ensuring the energy security of the state’ (the first power unit alone will produce about 20 percent of the country's total electricity demand; the same volume will be provided by the second unit which is currently being built), as well as ‘an impulse to attract the most advanced technology to the country’.

Energy Minister Viktor Karankevich informed the President in detail of how our country will benefit after the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP. According to him, the plant will produce about 18bn kWh annually and its launch will enable the country to annually replace about 4.5bn cubic metres of natural gas. The currency burden on the budget will be cut by more than \$500m, while greenhouse gas emissions will be decreased by over 7m tonnes per year.

The Belarusian NPP launch will open new possibilities for the national economy, while making it possible to develop other areas — like electric transport manufacturing. Among the priorities is the conversion of the housing stock to electricity for heating and hot water.

**“It's a good incentive for economic development: a locomotive that will give impetus to many material sectors. However, this is not the focus. Brains are the key. We've learned to create miracles.”**

Russians shared the technology with us and didn't conceal anything. Therefore, we'll continue working with them,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

## Our own school of nuclear energy specialists

The President gave an example: thanks to close co-operation with Russia's Rosatom State Corporation, a domestic school of nuclear energy specialists has already appeared in our country.

The staff of the nuclear power plant for the launch of the first power unit has already been formed, trained and confirmed their qualifications. The formation of a team for the launch of the second power unit will be completed soon. In total, more than 2,500 people will work at the NPP, including about 60 specialists from Russia and Ukraine.

Another benefit is that the district centre of Ostrovets has transformed into a modern and convenient city. “New residential buildings and all necessary so-



cial infrastructure have been built. We've spent more than 1bn Roubles [about \$400m] for these purposes,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said, adding,

**“Ostrovets should become an example of further development of regional centres. We'll develop other 150 district centres based on this model.”**



## Competition issue

Not all of our neighbours are happy with the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP. They mention security, despite all the positive reviews from specialised organisations, but seem to keep the issue of competition in mind. Therefore, the President once again appealed to the leaders of Lithuania and Poland to stop confrontational rhetoric and return to dialogue,

**“Let's live peacefully. Let's work together. We were once part of one and the same state, lived normally then and afterwards. Let's produce electricity, sell and exchange it. We're neighbours and we do not get to choose our neighbours. I want to address Poland as well... Let's work together, we are ready to co-operate openly.”**

## The greatest value

In his talk with employees and builders of the nuclear power plant, Aleksandr Lukashenko commented on the situation in the country as a whole. “There is a change of generations, whether we want it or not. I understand this more than anyone else. However, there's no need to de-

stroy anything. Let us, as reasonable people, go through this period of generational change in a truly meaningful way — since it's easy to destroy but it will be very difficult to restore it, or even impossible,” he said.

As the President stressed, representatives of the outgoing generation are not ashamed of those who will come after them. He explained, “In the most difficult times after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we joined the ranks of the space powers, along with our Russian brothers. Moreover, Russians supply us, roughly speaking, with a platform for space satellites, while all intellectual components are made in Belarus; they are of the highest, world-class level. Our satellites, together with Russian, American and others, are now ‘hanging’ above us, in space.”

Among the main achievements, the President named the creation of a biotechnological corporation, a developed IT sector and modern agricultural production. Aleksandr Lukashenko summarised,

**“Our generation is not ashamed, while leaving politics and economy, to pass on to you — the new young generation — and show you what we have created. The most important thing is that we are passing a sovereign, independent country on to our children and grandchildren. For the first time in our centuries-old history, we have our own state — with all its attributes.”**

## Nation-based Constitution

Journalists also touched upon the topic of dialogue platforms that operate throughout the country. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he finds this form of interaction useful: actually, it was he who initiated this.

At the same time, proposals to amend the Basic Law take up only part of the time on the dialogue platforms. The information collected for the Belarusian People's Congress will be discussed with experts. A new working group of specialists is already being created to prepare amendments.

“It's a truly complex document — scientific, which must be created by specialists. However, specialists need an order from our society. This order envisages the problems that we will raise from below. In this way, we are involving millions of people not only in the future discussion of the Constitution but also in its formation and writing,” the Head of State said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko called the creation of dialogue platforms ‘the greatest achievement, heritage and experience’.

**“It will only be as the people decide. There will be no falsification. The Constitution our people adopt affects the life and the government that we will have in the future. Life will move forward for us — though without any catastrophes. Belarusians don't need this.”**

# Worth high awards

Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko presented state awards to honoured figures of various spheres and general's shoulder boards to high-ranking officers as part of the solemn ceremony at the Palace of Independence



The ceremony brought together 40 workers of agricultural enterprises and the services sector, educational institutions, scientists, athletes, people serving in the army and law enforcement.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that those present at the meeting were not simply successful people — but builders who are making the present and the future of the country, the future of new generations of Belarusians. “Every sensible person knows that only diligent creative work is the source of wellbeing of every family and the state as a whole. Your professional achievements are the shining example of that,” he said.

Most of those in attendance were village workers: heads of leading agricultural enterprises, farm machinery operators, milkers, workers of animal husbandry enterprises.

“You know very well that a land flowing with milk and honey exists only in fairy tales. The agricultural industry is an open-air workshop where even the smallest step ahead in harvesting is always the result of the work of hundreds of thousands of farmers and representatives of other branches of the economy,” Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed. “We are deeply grateful to you and other agrarians who were not afraid of coronavirus,

who were not tricked by subversives and stayed committed to their sacred duty to feed the country and the people.”

The President also presented state awards to scientists, the military, workers of the services sector, heads of veterans' associations, coaches and athletes — all those who, as Aleksandr Lukashenko said, make the life of Belarusians comfortable and safe, those who glorify our country.

“Today we also present new shoulder boards to generals who showed how you should serve your Fatherland when it is in danger, how you should protect the interests of the state and the people,” the President said during the ceremony. “True patri-

otism is not just a combination of words. It relies on efforts to improve people's living standards and to strengthen our state.”

The Head of State wished everyone good health, great personal happiness and new successes for the benefit of Belarus, “I'm convinced that together we'll manage to overcome difficulties because we are the people and we are in the overwhelming majority. We know what to do and will do our best to protect and preserve our Fatherland and the future of our children and grandchildren.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

# Locomotive for a confident tomorrow



Any nation is strong first of all by its traditions. We have developed the following tradition: to give people significant and much sought after gifts in the first part of November. This year, one of them was the first stage of the Minsk metro's third line. It opened for passengers on November 7th and, the day before, the President checked the readiness of the facility for launch. Before cutting the symbolic red ribbon, Aleksandr Lukashenko addressed metro workers and metro builders — and through them, all our people — with good thoughts and actions, “Thank you all who built it. You are real creators, as you work for the good of people. In this difficult year, nothing has stopped you: not a pandemic, not calls for strikes. Because you were busy — like most Belarusians — thanks to whom the country thrives, becoming more comfortable and more beautiful. This will always be the case (even if some don't want it) if we want to be sovereign and independent. The launch of the first stage of the new metro line today is an indicator of our social and political stability. At this time, states like us don't usually create such things.”

## Wide angle

Four new stations are now integrated into a single underground transport system with two operating lines. These are Kovalskaya Sloboda, Vokzalnaya, Ploshchad Frantishka Bogushevicha and Yubileinaya Ploshchad. More than three thousand people were involved in the construction of the first stage.

The Head of State began his acquaintance with the new highway at the Kovalskaya Sloboda station. He asked how the third line was being built, how the purchased equipment, especially the Alesya tunnelling shield, was managing. Moreover, he wondered about the mood of the team, “If you want to work, you give results, and we say thank you! We welcome this attitude.”

As for the metro, the first phase will be followed by another. The next project is the construction of three more stations in the Slutsk direction, whose commissioning is scheduled for next March. Then the construction will turn towards the Zeleny Lug residential district. Soon the north of Minsk will also begin to build up, that is why Aleksandr Lukashenko suggested making a small corresponding branch. In the future, the fourth line will loop back to all stations.

## The metro was not built immediately

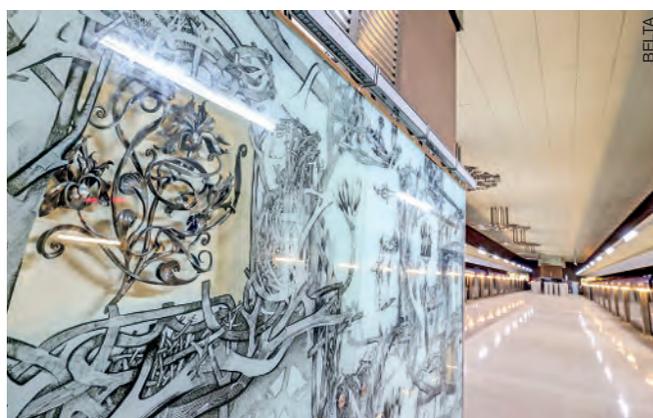
During the conversation with metro workers and metro builders, the President didn't hide his emotions, “This is a long-awaited project. From the moment of its launch to the present, the metro of the Belarusian capital has come a long way in 37 years. Thanks to being cheap, fast and, most importantly, environmentally friendly, the metro has become the busiest and most popular means of transport, we could say, the people's means of transport. More than 700,000 passengers use the services of our metro every day: one third of the total passenger traffic in Minsk. The new line will increase it, connecting the southern and northern districts of our capital through the city centre.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that, at one time, he had to make a principled decision on whether to continue the development of this type of transport, “There was an idea in the mid-1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when things were difficult, to stop the existence of the subway in Minsk... At that time, I made a decision, which I am still proud of. I said that we will have the metro and we will not destroy the metro building.”

The President clarified that the decision was primarily due to the desire to preserve the national school of metro construction, “After all, few cities in the world both then and now are engaged in the construction of metro lines. And I felt sorry for them. If we stopped, there wouldn't be this great school. This is comparable to space, only underground, this is the highest level of construction, there is innovation, the latest technology, and from here the builders above ground draw up modern construction methods.”

## Creative labour is in high esteem

The President formally thanked everyone who designed and built the new branch: for the speed of execu-



tion, for the quality of work and compliance with modern standards, for the aesthetics of station design and deep meaning inherent in their appearance.

Separately, the Head of State noted the safety of the third line. It is equipped with transparent glass safety guards. Everything is done with care for passengers.

The President believes there are a lot of creative people in the Belarusian society. The following words of the Head of State are addressed to them, “There is an absolute majority of people like you in our country — hardworking and decent. Even those who were undecided yesterday, have already seen the true nature of a maidsan, drawn logical conclusions, and started asking me to restore order.

Reasonable people want security, stability, a steady and evolutionary development, and calm changes that they can take. Do not forget: change is a difficult process. The question is whether they will be dramatic or evolutionary and steady. Today modern rolling stock will run on the new line. So life in our Belarus will go further — towards new goals. We will complete the third line, which may have up to 17 stations. My dream is, maybe, at least start a megaproject for the construction of the fourth metro line: the ring, which will relieve the Minsk ring road. Thanks to this, in the foreseeable future, fully-fledged transport hubs will be created between all types of urban and suburban transport. I think you know about this idea. I have long been working to develop this project.”

The Head of State warmly congratulated metro builders, all Minsk residents and guests of the capital on the launch of the first stage of the third line of the Minsk metro, wishing them new achievements and personal well-being, and prosperity to Minsk.

## On the route

In a solemn atmosphere, the Director General of Minskmetrostroy, Leonid Stukhalsky, handed over to the President a symbolic key, which the Head of State handed in turn to the Director of the Minsk Metro, Vladimir Sotnikov. After that, the ceremony of cutting the red ribbon and starting the movement of electric trains along the new line took place.

After the ceremony, the President decided to inspect each of the four stations that had opened. Aleksandr Lukashenko rode on a metro train and got acquainted

with the design of all stations of the first stage of the third line: Kovalskaya Sloboda, Vokzalnaya, Ploshchad Frantishka Bogushevicha and Yubileinaya. The Head of State praised the quality of the work, noting the functionality and accuracy, as well as cost-effectiveness and beauty. “Purely Belarusian style,” he said.

Particular attention was paid to the fact that Belarusian materials were used in the construction of new stations, including domestic escalators. “Escalators were made in Belarus, just like everything else, including trains [trains were produced at Stadler Minsk near the capital],” noted the Head of State.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also appreciated the running characteristics of the new metro train, “A good machine, it runs smoothly, which is nice.”

In addition, the President was informed of plans to purchase 19 such trains in the near future. It was noted that the new trains, among other things, are distinguished by their efficiency and durability.

Finally, in memory of the trip and another milestone in the history of the Minsk metro, the Head of State was presented with a book about it.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

# Showing oneself to the world

Against the pandemic, Belarusian companies presented their products online at the China International Import Expo

By Vladislav Sychevich

## New format

Belarus is taking part in the Shanghai import exhibition for the third time. As in previous years, a large-scale exposition was organised but, in 2020, the situation is complicated by travel restrictions due to the global pandemic. This is why it was decided by Belarus to present our country in an online format.

Yevgeny Vvedensky, the Director of Belinterexpo unitary enterprise of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, tells us more, “In order not to miss an opportunity to take part in this major exhibition, it was decided to provide a platform for Belarusian companies to demonstrate their new products to Chinese businesses. 35 companies took part from the Belarusian side. In particular, the online exposition presents open joint-stock companies: Naftan, Mozyr Oil Refinery, Belshina, Grodno Azot, Polotsk-Steklovolokno, SvetlogorskKhimvolokno. The joint stand organised by the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus demonstrates scientific developments and modern technologies of subordinate organisations of the National Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Industry. The exposition features food producers, light industry enterprises, the National Tourism Agency, as well as logistics opportunities of our country.”

## Ample opportunity

The opening ceremony of the Belarusian online exhibition was held on November 5th, led by the Belarusian Chamber of



National exhibition centre in Shanghai

Commerce and Industry, participating organisations, and representatives of the Chinese side. In addition, the Belarusian-Chinese business forum was held on November 10th — focusing on the development of trade and economic relations, prospects for co-operation, investment potential of the two countries, as well as opportunities to promote Belarusian products to the Chinese market.

The online exposition will run until mid-January 2021.

Holding exhibitions in an online format is not a novelty for the organisers. They have already worked on such an in-



The Great Stone Industrial Park's stand at the China International Import Expo 2020

teractive platform as part of two events. Businesses are represented on virtual stands. In fact, this is an exhibition space recreated in the digital world where visitors, after registration, enter the area of the exhibition centre and can attend each stand, also communicating with repre-

sentatives of companies via chat. Video greetings recorded by companies are also posted on this site.

“It’s a convenient format since, due to the situation with the pandemic, many exhibitions are either postponed to a later date, or are held with a limited number of participants and visitors,” adds Mr. Vvedensky. “Companies continue manufacturing new products and such online platforms make it possible to meet new businesses and discuss purchasing products with their representatives. Of course, classic exhibitions are a proven format, with confirmed efficiency. For example, at the exhibitions that we held last year, contracts worth about \$220m were signed — at the shows only. As you know, contacts are mostly established here and deliveries then follow. Therefore, we can assert that the real figures are much higher. As for online events, in fact, they are a new format used for the last six months. They have certain advantages, such as a greater geographical coverage. Anywhere in the world and at any time, a person can visit the site and chat. However, on the other hand, the foundation of any business is trust — which commonly is built during personal meetings. Therefore, online exhibitions currently serve as a temporary substitute for classic exhibitions, but they are quite effective.”

Experts are confident that, in the future, these two formats will co-exist. The experience the exhibition companies receive during online activities will be incorporated into the offline events. A kind of virtual mirror of the physical exhibition will be created — enabling all those who can’t physically attend to visit it.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Honorary Consulate of Belarus opens in Cuenca, Ecuador



The news has been announced by the Belarusian Embassy in Ecuador. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Ecuador, Nikolai Ovsyanko, presented a consular patent to the Honorary Consul of Belarus in Cuenca. The new Consul, Ecuadorian medical scientist Claudio Galarza-Maldonado, assumed office as he received the consular document.

The consular district of the Honorary Consulate in Cuenca includes Guayas Province, Azuay Province, and Manabi. According to the Belarusian side, the opening of the Honorary Consulate in Cuenca will contribute to the development of Belarus-Ecuador co-operation.

Diplomatic relations between Belarus and Ecuador were established in May 1993.

### Aircraft of Belarus' Emergencies Ministry continues to help Turkey in fighting forest fires

Two Mi-8 aircraft have already made 284 flights and 1,375 water discharges from Turkey's Kemalpaşa heliport. The total flight time of Belarusian rescuers is 440 hours. In addition, 212 Turkish rescuers were delivered to the places where



fires were extinguished. Flight and technical personnel of the Emergencies Ministry of Belarus will stay in Turkey until the end of November.

It is not the first year that Belarusian rescuers have been providing assistance to other countries in the fight against natural disasters within the framework of international co-operation. The Belarusian Ministry's aviation fleet was involved in extinguishing forest fires in Greece, Russia, Latvia and Georgia, as well as helping residents of Serbia affected by flooding.

### Belarus launches stamp to celebrate artist Ferdinand Rushchits

The first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony for the stamp to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of the outstanding artist, stage designer and teacher Ferdinand Rushchits was held. The ceremony was attended by the Foreign Minister, Chairman of the National Commission for UNESCO — Vladimir Makei. 2020 has been officially declared by UNESCO the year of the artist. The anniversary of the birth of Ferdinand Rushchits has been included in the UNESCO Calendar of Commemorative Dates for this year. Mr. Makei noted that



this is a convincing testament to the worldwide recognition of the artist's work. According to the Minister, it is very important for Belarus that in its history shared with other countries, there are outstanding personalities, whose cultural heritage acts as a language of inter-ethnic communication.

### Zmitrok Byadulya's ashes reburied in Minsk

A solemn ceremony of reburial of the ashes of the famous Belarusian poet, prose writer and linguist Zmitrok Byadulya was held at the Eastern Cemetery of Minsk. The farewell to Zmitrok was organised at the branch of the Belarusian Literature History Museum — The Belarusian House — where he lived and worked from 1914 to 1918. In 1941, Byadulya was evacuated and died in 1941 near the city of Uralsk (Kazakhstan) where he was buried in the city's cemetery. It took decades to return his ashes to his homeland.

Happily, the conglomeration of efforts by the state and the public has yielded results. Symbolically, it's in the year of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory when the ashes of Zmitrok Byadulya have been returned to their homeland. The reburial took place on the day of the writer's death.



During the opening ceremony of the national exposition held in videoconference format at the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

# Souvenir coins

## National Bank will issue 16 commemorative coins in 2021

It has become a tradition to issue commemorative coins dedicated to the bird of the year determined by the APB-BirdLife Belarus public association. In 2021, the fern owl will be such a bird and, accordingly, 'The Fern Owl of the Year' coin will become 15th in the series of 'The Bird of the Year' commemorative coins.

The issue of commemorative coins on environmental issues will continue with the 'Yelnya Reserve' coin as part of the 'Belarusian Reserves' series.

According to the National Bank, sports-themed coins are traditionally popular in Belarus and abroad. In 2021, 'Summer Sports: Basketball' coins will be released.

The issue of commemorative coins will also be dedicated to anniversaries: the 100th jubilee of the Be-

larusian State University, the 125th birthday of Belarusian writer Kondrat Krapiva, the 100th birthday of Belarusian writers Ivan Melezh and Ivan Shamyakin.

2021 marks the 25th anniversary of the tragic date: the death of military pilot Vladimir Karvat who, on May 23rd, 1996, while performing a training flight, diverted a falling plane from the village. In memory of this feat, 'Vladimir Karvat. Hero of Belarus' coins will be issued.

The theme of historical-cultural values — displayed on commemorative coins — will continue through 'Wood Cutting' coins of the 'Folk Crafts of Belarusians' series, as well as 'The Belarusian Costume' and 'Cultural Values. Belarus-Lithuania', commemorative



coins from 'Architectural Heritage of Belarus', 'Fauna on Coats of Arms of Belarusian Cities' and 'Religious Confessions of Belarus: Catholicism' series.

According to the Chinese calendar, 2022 is the year of the Tiger. Traditionally, a commemorative coin — 'The Year of the Tiger' — will be issued next year as a continuation of the 'Chinese Calendar' series.

INSIDE



## Dancing, lyrical, warm

### On November 5th, the national Belarusian ballet celebrated its birthday

On this day 81 years ago, the premiere of the first national ballet — *The Nightingale* — based on the textbook novel of the same name by Zmitrok Byadulya took place at the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus. The performance was rigorously prepared, with rehearsals beginning at nine in the morning and lasting until midnight with two half-hour breaks. The composer Moisei Kroshner himself, who worked at the Bolshoi Theatre as a concertmaster of the ballet, didn't come out from behind the piano. It is curious that the world premiere of *The Nightingale* took place not in Minsk, but in Odessa, from where it flew to Minsk.

This year we should have celebrated

the 120th anniversary of Moisei Kroshner, but the exact date of his birth has not been preserved, and there are questions about his date of death.

"During the Great Patriotic War, he ended up in the Minsk ghetto. On July 28th, 1942, the Gestapo policemen began to shoot prisoners. This is how the outstanding composer and order bearer, Mikhail Kroshner, died," writes the journalist of the newspaper *Vecherny Mogilev*, Gennady Sakhrai.

You will not find this date in any encyclopaedia.

Many of his compositions perished along with the composer. Fortunately, *The Nightingale* survived, and, in 1950, it was

staged again with success at the Bolshoi Theatre of the BSSR.

But the very first production of 1939 became the legendary performance carried out by conductor Mark Shneiderman, choreographer Aleksei Yermolaev and artist Boris Matrunin. With minor changes from the composer, it was shown in June 1940 at the First Decade of Belarusian Art in Moscow.

By all accounts, this experience was successful. For *The Nightingale*, its author was awarded not only the title of Honoured Artiste of the Republic, but also the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. Alas, in our time, *The Nightingale* is completely forgotten. Perhaps we should seek to revive it.

## Unique collection about the heroes of the day

The campaign is the result of the *Through the Thorns to the Stars* project which was launched in social networks — following the proposal and being implemented by students and employees of the BSU History Department.

The project is based on the idea of a complete collection of documents about the formation of scientific schools in BSU and the presentation of little-known facts about the University's establishment. The emphasis is on the historical aspect, since the BSU formation is associated with the names of many famous historians, and primarily, the first rector of BSU, Slavic historian Vladimir Picheta.

In addition, the first academic programmes of almost all specialties included historical subjects.

At present, the achievements of the BSU historians are widely recognised in Belarus and abroad. It plans to cover each month the activities of one of the nine scientific historical schools of the University: the history of Belarus, Slavonic studies, Oriental studies, the history of ancient times and the Middle Ages, the history of modern and contemporary times, ethnography, archaeology,

### Belarusian State University historians to present a unique collection of archival documents covering the last century to mark the BSU jubilee

gy, archival studies and museology.

The information will be adapted for virtual platforms. Users will have access to full-text scientific articles, video and audio materials, photos from personal archives of teachers, diaries and letters by scientists.

To post the documentary information on social networks, students and employees of the BSU have conducted a large-scale search for unique materials in archives, libraries and museums. Among them, the National Archive of Belarus, the National Library, the Belarusian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents, the Central Scientific Archive of NAS of Belarus, the Archive of the Belarusian State University, the Belarusian State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg and the Russian State Library.

The presentation of the Archaeology scientific school will open the thematic year. Social networks users will learn about scientist-archaeologists, expeditions, unique discoveries and unearthed artefacts. December will be dedicated to famous Belarusian ethnographers. Announcements of other topics will be posted in the project's social media groups.

**100th anniversary of BSU — due to be celebrated on October 30th, 2021 — is included in the UNESCO List of Memorable Dates**



## Birds flying to be seen

### Photobirding Championship held in Belarus

Unlike a regular birdwatcher, who observes birds with binoculars, the task of a photo birdwatcher is to photograph birds in their natural conditions. To win the championship, it was necessary to photograph as many different species of birds as possible within seven hours (from 8am to 3pm). The participant receives points for each type. To get the maximum number of points, it was necessary not only to take a picture, but also to correctly identify the type of bird. Based on the results, the winners were determined and the best shot was selected. The winners were awarded prizes.

"Autumn is one of the most interesting seasons of the year, when our northern guests have already appeared. You can see waxwings, African finches, buzzards and other birds that don't nest in Belarus. Moreover, migratory waterfowl species are observed on water reservoirs: black-throated and red-throated loons, scooters and sea ducks. There are unusually also many sightings of a rare kittiwake in our country. During the championship there is a good opportunity to replenish the treasury of this season," noted the APB-BirdLife Belarus public association.

Based on materials of belta.by and sb.by

# Gold on fabric

The National Art Museum received a donation from Greece: the ancient chasuble will adorn the exhibition hall next year

By Natalia Tychko

Priest's silk vestments, volumetric relief embroidery with intertwining shoots, the depiction of flying birds, hares or rabbits, fish: everything is done using the technique of gold embroidery. Can you picture it? It looks vivid and unusual. In late October, artist and sculptor Liza Sotilis donated this ancient artefact to the National Art Museum. The chasuble is now under restoration. What is the unique nature of this new acquisition and when will we be able to admire the new exhibit?

A chasuble is the vestment of a Catholic priest, known since the time of the establishment of Christianity. It is a sleeveless robe made of patterned fabric, which is worn over an elongated shirt with sleeves and a lace border — alb. The lengthy description hides not only historical, but also artistic value. The chasuble looks very attractive and a close look the abundance of details can take a long time.

Liza Sotilis' family collection contains a large number of valuable items. The artist decided to donate one of them to the National Art Museum. The history of the exhibit is unknown. The only established facts are that it was owned by several generations of an aristocratic family.

"We believe that this is a work of Italian or Greek monastery workshops in gold embroidery, dating back to approx-



imately the second half of the 16th-early 17th century. This is the time of the late Renaissance and early Baroque," says Yelena Karpenko, a researcher at the National Art Museum. "We have only a few works from this period. If we talk about Italian fabrics of the 16th century, there is only one chasuble from a later time — the 17th century. This exhibit will become the second."

"It is difficult to find analogues of ornamental sewing on an artefact. Most likely, this is monastery work. Perhaps it was made for a specific high-ranking clergyman — a bishop. Work on the chasuble has just begun and we are re-

viewing published art fabrics from the collections of Italy, Poland, Lithuania, and other European countries. Despite the rarity of the ornamentation used, similar elements were found in Polish collections. Our specialists plan to continue this work," continues Yelena.

"The technique of gold embroidery itself implies a way of working with a gold thread wrapped around a silk thread," explains Ms. Karpenko. "This makes Belarusian art and this work common. But in our country gold embroidery appeared much later: the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century."

The exhibit, considering how many

centuries old it is, needs conservation and careful restoration. A special department at the museum is engaged in this work. There are more than twenty employees on the staff, with three of them specialising in textile work.

"The restoration works will take at least a year. Ahead there's a large number of operations: cleaning, dismantling of the component parts and edging, duplication. This is extremely long and painstaking work," notes Yelena Karpenko. "The stages of the process will be demonstrated at the restoration council."

After restoration the chasuble will most likely be placed in the exposition of ancient Belarusian art. Artistic patterned fabrics are displayed in this hall. If during the restoration of a new exhibit in the Department of Western European Art, such samples of artistic weaving appear, then the restored work will go to this section of the exposition.

This is the first time the National Art Museum has received such a gift from Greece, but it seems that a long collaboration lies ahead. Liza Sotilis plans to stay in our country until the end of the year. Her plans include an exhibition at the National Art Museum that is scheduled for the second half of December. The artist also offered an ancient bas-relief of the Renaissance period to the exhibition, depicting the image of the Madonna and Child.



By Nadezhda Dekola

## With a bell ringing accompaniment

By education, Tatiana is a women's dress cutter. She previously worked at a design bureau, later covered upholstered furniture and worked as a seamstress at a boarding school. One day, her friend suggested she turn to bookbinding.

"You can cut fabric and work with leather," he told Tatiana who recalls how she joined a master class for those wanting to learn a new business for the first time. She is well aware of who attended the lecture as she received her first order: to make covers for five small prayer books in a week. Tatiana succeeded and, around a year later, Vladimir joined the bookbinding business.

We meet the Ostrovsky couple in their own house on the outskirts of the village of Novy Sverzhen. Their workshop is also located here. Tatiana — who is a mother of four children — works at a large table on the first floor, a few steps from the stove. She says it's more convenient for her. Vladimir works on the second floor; nobody is allowed to go there. It's not just superstition: any mistake can be costly. Only his sons Vanya and Kolya sometimes join in — also trying to make something.

## Bookbinding requires a great deal of perseverance, patience and accuracy

The couple show us simple tools: a ruler, scissors, brushes, an engraver. "Actually, the work is simple but it took us almost ten years to learn how to do it efficiently," the craftsmen note, describing in detail all the stages of their bookbinding craft: from the pattern of a new cover to pasting a book block. This activity requires great perseverance, patience and accuracy.

Speaking about the most difficult part of the job, Vladimir notes, "It's stamping." He uses a special press — a cast iron tool from pre-revolutionary times — for this purpose. It was presented to him by his first teacher who had brought it from a church or monastery. A collector once came to Stolbtsy (where it's kept) to buy it but the tool was not sold.

## Proprietary information

The Ostrovsky family mostly work with religious literature and have a simple answer to this: apparently, it's God's will. Moreover, they have little competition in this niche and enjoy plenty orders. The restorers strive to gain a foothold in the luxury market, paying attention to the quality

# New book covers available

## Ostrovsky craftsmen dressing books in leather for a decade

Tatiana and Vladimir Ostrovsky, from the Stolbtsy District, are well-known Belarusian bookbinders, having transformed hundreds of Church books with their own hands — making them works of art with unique artistic designs



of the material used for their covers.

"When we began our business, we experimented with Belarusian leather and later with Turkish. We then tried Italian leather using aniline dye with the 'pull-up' effect. It's much more expensive but the covers look better. Importantly, they'll last longer," the couple explain.

A stub made from fabric — glued to a composite flyleaf — is rarely made now but the couple believe a cover is stronger with it: when opening books, this part is mostly involved. They are also very proud of a two-colour goffered edge.

## God on their side

Working with rare editions is a major responsibility. Recently, the craftsmen re-covered a Bible from 1812. The churches and monasteries, where most

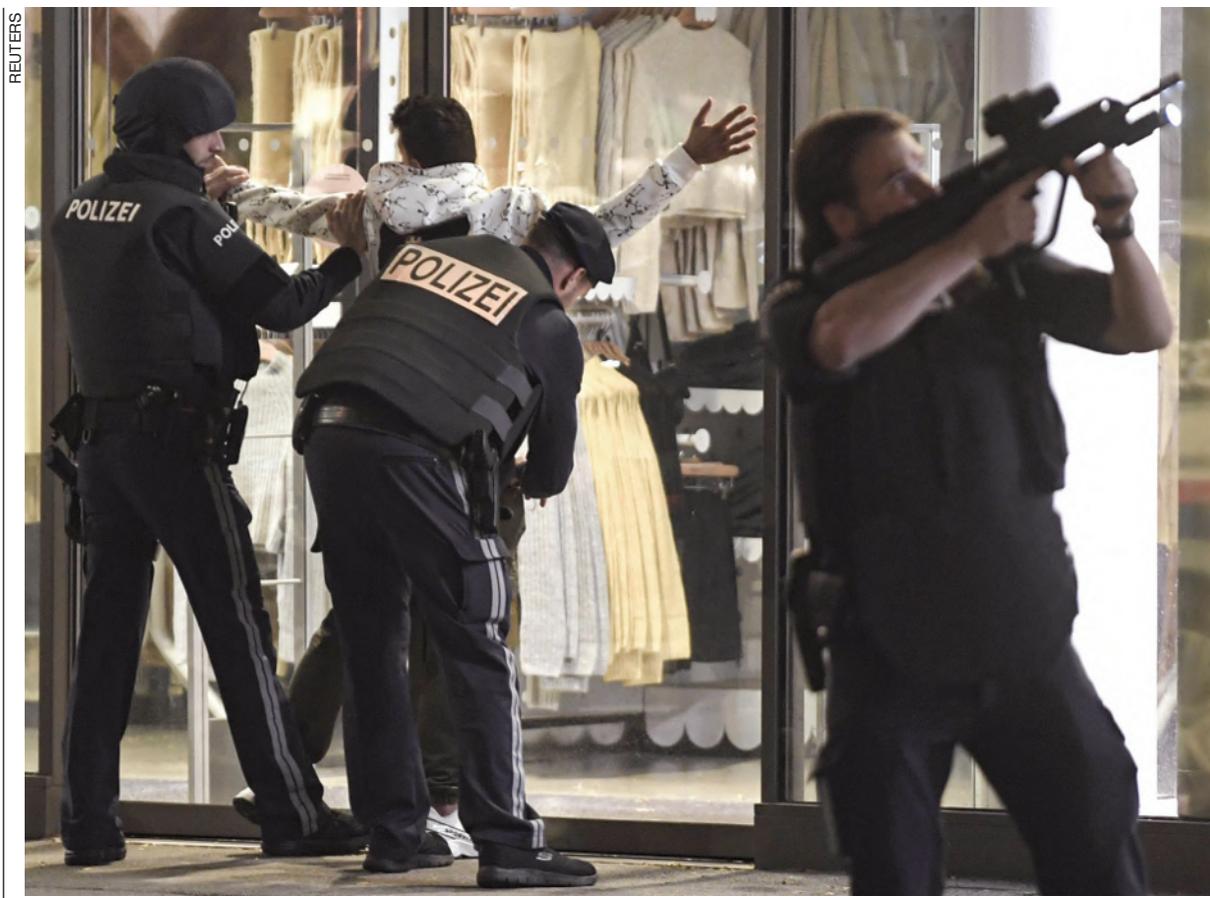
of these orders come from, bless the Ostrovsky family.

"Maybe that's why everything works out," says Tatiana, and Vladimir adds that they start work with a prayer, "People have been praying using these books throughout their lives. They never opened them with bad thoughts. Neither should we."

As an example, Vladimir shows us a pre-revolutionary Bible which is not yet finished. It's been inherited by a local resident from her grandmother. Even when she was grazing cows, she carried the volume with her and read it in the field. Pages are missing but the woman — a grandmother herself — thought about it for a long time: after all, a new leather cover costs almost a third of her monthly pension allowance. However, she still decided to keep the book as a memento.

"Tatiana sorted the Bible into pieces, ironed each one, glued it where possible, and put it back together. It took several days to complete. Then I re-sewed the book block, made new flyleaves and a cover. There are few such orders but when we take them on and everything goes as it should, we get real pleasure from it," Vladimir explains.

"What if you make a mistake?" we ask, "No mistakes are allowed: it's impossible to buy a new book instead, or start again," the artist replies.



# Gun attack in Vienna

At least 16 people have been arrested by Austrian and Swiss police in connection with the Vienna shooting. Authorities say at least one 'Islamist terrorist' was behind the attack and that more suspects could be at large.

Austrian police announced that a shooting rampage in Vienna had been carried out by a known Islamic extremist who had spent time in prison. Authorities are probing the motive behind the deadly attack, which left at least four people dead and more than 20 injured.

Police have arrested 14 people who had links with the Vienna gunman, Interior Minister Karl Nehammer said. "This shows the resolute and relentless approach of our police and justice authorities in the fight against terrorism in our country," Mr. Nehammer noted.

It was not immediately clear what the 14 people are suspected of. Under Austrian law, detention on remand is allowed if there is a risk that suspects could flee, suppress evidence or commit more crimes.

In co-ordination with Austrian authorities, Swiss police arrested a 18-year-old Swiss man and a 24-year-old Swiss man in the city of Winterthur in connection with

the Vienna shooting.

North Macedonia's Interior Ministry said in a statement that three people who were involved in the gun attacks all have dual Austrian and North Macedonian citizenship. All three were born in Austria, the Ministry added, naming the three only by initials.

The shootings came as many people were out and about enjoying the last evening before a nationwide coronavirus lockdown was due to come into force.

One suspected attacker, who was armed with an assault rifle and wearing a fake suicide vest, was shot dead by police.

Mr. Nehammer said that investigations indicated the man was a sympathiser of the extremist group 'Islamic State'. He urged people to stay home as much as possible as police investigations continue. Schools will remain open, though Mr. Nehammer said children will not be obliged to attend.

Mr. Nehammer said the attack was an 'assault' on Austria's values and 'an utterly inept attempt to weaken or divide our democratic society', but added, "We will not let this happen."

Health authorities also said seven victims of the attack were in a critical, life-threatening condition in hospital.

"We are currently experiencing difficult hours in our republic," Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said on Twitter. "Our police will pursue the perpetrators of this despicable terror attack with all determination... I am happy that our police have already managed to neutralise one of the perpetrators. We will never be intimidated by terrorism and will resolutely fight these attacks with all measures."

Austrian authorities have shut down a mosque and an Islamic association frequented by the man who killed four people in a terror attack.

# Biden beats Trump to win US election 2020

**Democrat Joe Biden defeated President Donald Trump to become the 46th president of the United States and offered himself to the nation as a leader who 'seeks not to divide, but to unify' a country gripped by a historic pandemic and a confluence of economic and social turmoil**

Democrat Joe Biden is reported to have secured 290 electoral votes compared with 214 for Republican President Donald Trump, with 270 needed for victory. Biden's victory came after more than three days of uncertainty as election officials sorted through a surge of mail-in votes that delayed processing.

Appearing before supporters at a drive-in rally in Wilmington, Del., and speaking against the din of enthusiastic honking, Mr. Biden claimed the presidency and called on the country to reunite after what he described as a toxic political interlude.

"Let this grim era of demonisation in America begin to end here and now," he said.

Without addressing Mr. Trump, the president-elect spoke directly to the president's supporters and said he recognised their disappointment. "I've lost a couple of times myself," he recalled of his past failures to win the presidency, before adding, "Now let's give each other a chance."

Meanwhile, activists and supporters of Donald



Trump insisted that the presidential election was not finished, displaying defiance after Joe Biden secured victory in the closely fought race. Instead of accepting the results, the president's devotees spurned them. They gathered at so-called 'Stop the Steal' rallies at state capitols across the country to claim, without evidence, that ballot counts favourable to Biden stem from a sprawling, multistate conspiracy to hijack the vote through fraud.

After the declaration that Democrat Joe Biden had won the race for the White House, Republican President Donald Trump and his allies made one thing clear: he does not plan to concede anytime soon.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**

# Impartial dialogue is important

**The UN positively assessed Belarus' achievements in the protection of human rights, though not everyone liked this assessment**

By Varvara Morozova

The UN Human Rights Council is undergoing the third cycle of the universal periodic review of the human rights situation. Last week, Belarus was 'under the microscope'. Yuri Ambrazevich, the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the UN Office in Geneva, expressed hope for an impartial dialogue on the human rights situation in our country. Mr. Ambrazevich said that as part of the implementation of the recommendations received during the second review, the country's first interdepartmental comprehensive plan was developed, which dealt with all aspects of human rights — from political and civil to social and cultural.

The submitted report was discussed by 98 member states of the Human Rights Council. More than half welcomed Belarus' achievements in the field of human rights. Of course, there were also critics — primarily representatives of western countries. However, against the background of acute social and political confronta-



tion, which is engulfing more and more states, most of the participants in the UN Human Rights Council working group identified the Belarusian efforts in this area as positive.

SB. *Belarus Segodnya* asked for a comment on the UN assessment and the dissatisfaction of some countries to Oleg Gaidukevich, the Deputy Chairman of the Stand-

ing Committee of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly on Foreign Affairs, "The most important achievement of our country, which we can be proud of, is that over the years of independence, we have not allowed a split on religious, national or linguistic issues. We have never killed people because of this, no blood was shed. Representatives of different faiths live in Belarus in peace. We defeated organised crime in the 1990s. We really have something to be proud of."

According to the deputy, Belarus has always adhered to the policy of non-interference in the affairs of other states and respected the right of any state to live as its citizens decide, "Unfortunately, many international organisations have now turned to a political instrument when sanctions are imposed not because they are fair, but in order to put pressure on the country. I would like the UN to remain objective in its assessments and to have more influence in international politics."

# Turov cross returning

Jeweller Oleg Yermolovich describes how he's been recreating this unique relic lost at the turn of the 12th–13th centuries

**The Turov land is accompanied by legends. The ancient chronicles and legends tell through the centuries the history of events that took place in the ancient principality in Belarusian Polesie. Covered with past centuries, they keep many secrets. Scientists still debate the origins of the miraculous stone crosses growing out of the ground. Another Turov altar cross also hides its mysteries. Recently, it's been recreated.**

By Marina Kuzmich

## Work of self-devotion

In late 12th-early 13th centuries, the cross was kept at the Cathedral of Turov which was destroyed in an earthquake in 1230. The shrine also disappeared but, eight centuries later, four lead medallions with faces of the saints were found on the site of the church as part of archaeological excavations. It took decades to prove that they were actually featured on the Turov altar cross. Professor Piotr Lysenko informed the President about the unique find and, on the initiative of the Head of State, an art council was established to recreate the relic. The restoration process was overseen by jeweller Oleg Yermolovich and the craftsman shared his experience of how it was all progressing.

Oleg Leonidovich invites us to his workshop — leading us between work desks covered with various tools. He's been working in fine jewellery since the 1990s, although he is an engineer by education. He graduated from the Minsk Higher Anti-Aircraft Missile Engineering School but later turned to the profession he had appreciated since childhood. For as long as he can remember, Oleg has always been drawing — decorating school newspapers in the past. However, after visiting a Minsk jewellery shop, he decided to take a course. After six months of training, he passed the exam and started his own jewellery business — making jewellery to order.

Later, when he had turned to God, Oleg began visiting churches. He gladly responded to priests' requests to help make church items from metal, as well as crucifixes. In 2005, the master jeweller received an offer to make

a cross for the relics of St. Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya. As a result, the work has become a model for his work on the Turov cross.

“The altar cross was recreated like the famous cross of Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya. However, unlike hers, the Turov cross initially had no documentary sources to tell us what it looked like. Actually, the whole working process — from the very beginning to its completion — was accompanied by miracles. How else can we consider finding the icons? They were unearthed at a depth of about 180 centimetres, in a single soil layer, in neighbouring squares, a short distance from each other.

Piotr Lysenko, who was in charge of the excavations, suggested that the icons might relate to a single object, possibly a cross. Nobody could challenge this version,” Mr. Yermolovich recalls.

One of the icons features the first image of St. Kirill Turovsky. Presumably, the diocesan cross was made centuries ago following a request of Prince Gleb (baptised Mikhail). Another miracle is how did the scientist know that the lead medallions — not unearthed for eight centuries — were part of the Turov cross?

“In the process, there were many similar miracles. When we started thinking about what the back of it features, I was surprised to find an image of the cross — now known as the Turov cross. It's a four-pointed cross shown on frescoes, on mosaics in Kiev's Sofia Cathedral, which dates to the 10th-13th centuries. We found about ten images in various places.”

## Bit by bit

Creating a cross is actually half the battle: it was initially needed to restore the historic view of the relic. Much time was spent on preparing documentation and creative searches. “It's good that we had no medallions with the faces of saints at the initial stage. If that happened, I could have simply made copies. However, the search was launched and I managed to put forward a version that the old lead icons were only an intermediate form in creating ‘images’.

Centuries ago, lead was widely used in roofing. Poor people made dishes from this metal, despite the fact that it was already considered bad at that time: lead didn't keep its shape well and darkened over time. Accordingly, church items were not made from the metal. It was more used as a model material. As a result, the assumption was born that lead icons are an element of the technological

process and that, during the excavations, scientists came across a workshop,” Oleg explains.

“This was also indicated by the somewhat flat features of the saints on the medallions. To make exact copies, I used solid beeswax which is similar to plastic. Centuries ago, wood was impregnated with it during shipbuilding. I created the first detailed models — following a particular method:

a soft wax stamp of the model and a bronze casting are made. Then a thin plate of gold is placed in the

mould and beaten with a hammer. After several strokes the icon is ready,” he adds.

To make the cross it was necessary to use the 12th century technique and, accordingly, the craftsman needs to think like a medieval person. Oleg can now hardly imagine how such complex artefacts were created without a microscope, without the tools that jewellers use in the 21st century.

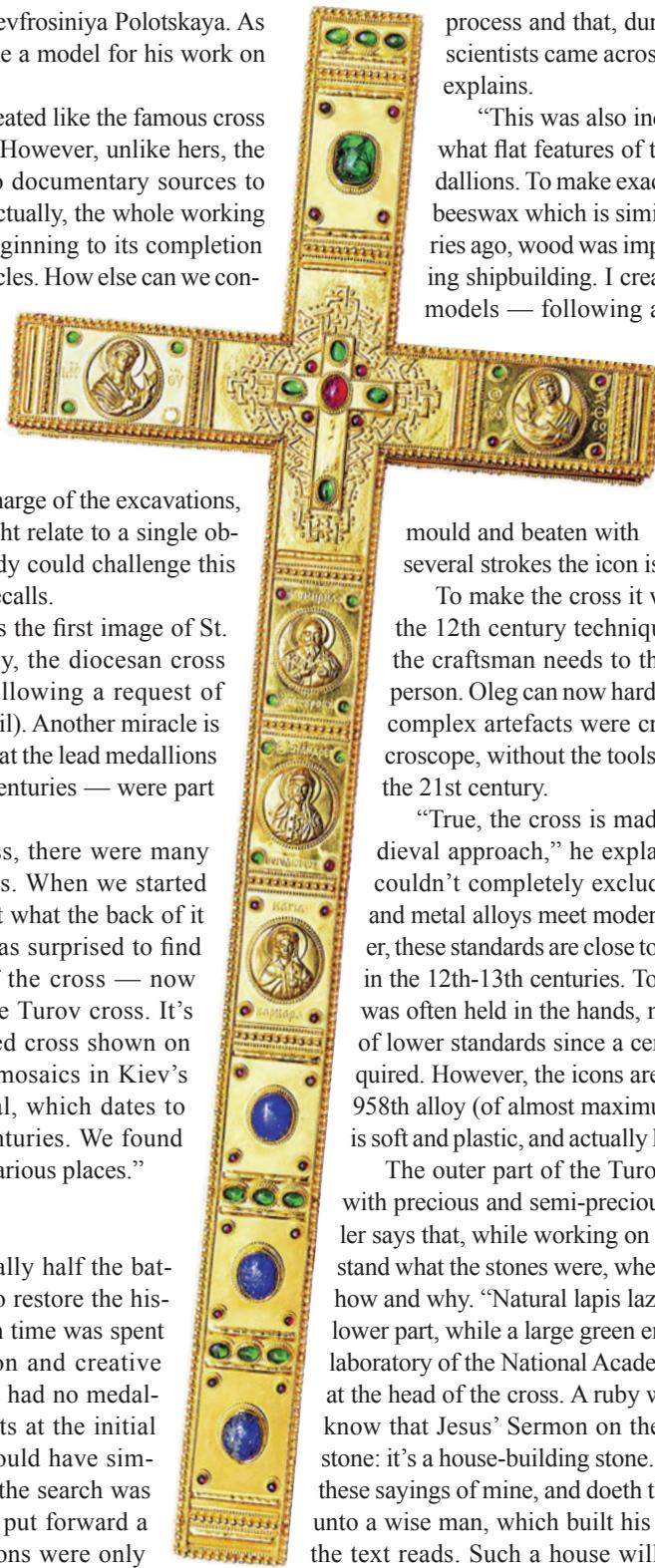
“True, the cross is made following the medieval approach,” he explains. “Of course, we couldn't completely exclude modern methods, and metal alloys meet modern standards. However, these standards are close to the proportions used in the 12th-13th centuries. To make a cross which was often held in the hands, masters used an alloy of lower standards since a certain rigidity was required. However, the icons are made of gold of the 958th alloy (of almost maximum value); this metal is soft and plastic, and actually looks like pure gold.”

The outer part of the Turov cross is decorated with precious and semi-precious stones. The jeweller says that, while working on it, he came to understand what the stones were, where they were located, how and why. “Natural lapis lazuli was placed in the lower part, while a large green emerald (grown in the laboratory of the National Academy of Sciences) was at the head of the cross. A ruby was in the centre. We know that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount mentions a stone: it's a house-building stone. ‘Whoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock’, the text reads. Such a house will survive, no matter what storms and elements threaten. In turn, if it's built on sand, the house will collapse in case of rain or strong winds. Accordingly, the foundation stone is a stone with certain properties; it's firm and strong. Rubies are a symbol of love, garnets are the sacrificial blood of Christ, and emeralds are a symbol of the Holy Spirit. These all tell us about the Lord, about God the Father. As a result, the hierarchy is formed: God the Father, God the Son, Saint, Prince and layman. The hierarchy is preserved and then the world is preserved. It was a kind of sermon in the form of an image of the cross which symbolised unity and unification,” Mr. Yermolovich notes.

Next year, the national shrine of Belarus will go to its home: Turov, to the Cathedral of St. Kirill and Lavrenty. Who knows how many more secrets the cross will reveal to all those coming to worship it. It is not for nothing that they say that all Turov crosses are unusual.



Restoration of the sacred monument was committed to jeweller Oleg Yermolovich



Aleksei Stolyarov



# Castles getting unlocked



Old Castle is gradually gaining its unique face

Alekssei Bibikov

Over the past few years, work has been carried out at almost all significant sites of historical and cultural heritage in the Grodno Region. Among them are the Old Castle in Grodno, the Golshany, Krevo and Lida castles, as well as the Michal Kleofas Oginski museum-estate in Zalesie. This is largely due to the desire to increase the attractiveness of historical sites, given the introduction of a visa-free regime. Over \$150m has been spent as part of the *Culture of Belarus* state programme to restore castles, libraries, clubs and museums in the Grodno Region alone.

By Tatiana Vrublevskaya

## From the height of Novogrudok hill

The global construction boom has affected several important objects from the point of view of architecture and history. For example, in Novogrudok, the strengthening of the slopes of Castle Hill will continue this year.

Yelena Klimovich, the Head of the Culture Department at Grodno's Regional Executive Committee, commented on the project development prospects, "To strengthen the slope, experts decided to install gabions: metal structures filled with stones. The total length of such a structure in Novogrudok will be about 33 metres and the gabions will mainly aim to stop the landslide from a steep slope — which usually occurs after heavy precipitation. In fact, they will act as a new retaining wall with a height of about 2 metres."

The architectural project — *Reconstruction with Conservation and Adaptation of the Historical and Cultural Value of Novogrudok Castle* — envisages six launch sites. In 2014, the conservation of the Church Tower of the famous castle was completed in the city: the tower's picturesque ruins with authentic bricks were hidden under a layer of new masonry.

In turn, after the conservation of the Shchitovka Tower, a small museum exhibition dedicated to the history of the fortress is planned to be housed there. There are no documentary sources indicating what the castle really was like but archaeologists suggest that it consisted of seven towers, while others had no more than five. It's too early to talk about a completion date.



Work continues to strengthen Castle Hill in Novogrudok

Artyom Tulbay

## A cup of coffee in Golshany Castle

As part of the *Culture of Belarus* state programme and with money from the special Presidential fund, the work continues at the most mystical historical object in the country: Golshany Castle. Thanks to Vladimir Korotkevich and his *Black Castle of Olshany* novel, the Oshmyany District has got a unique brand which primarily centres round the legends of the Black Monk and the White Lady. Every year, the brand of the district — the *Golshany Castle Festival* — is becoming increasingly popular.

Reconstruction of the castle was launched in 2011 and, to date, its North Tower — the most beautiful, interesting and better-preserved fragment of the castle — has been revamped from the outside, following original samples preserved from the past. Interestingly, all the masonry of the tower was restored from bricks found at the castle. The museumification concept for each level of the tower has been developed already.

"This year, we plan to open the restored tower," continued Ms. Klimovich. "The key task is to conserve Golshany Castle. However, as for Krevo Castle, we aim not simply to conserve it but also restore — rebuilding not only all four walls but also the Prince's Tower, which will house an exposition."



Thanks to Vladimir Korotkevich, the Oshmyany District has acquired a unique brand

traveling.by

## Say a word about the tower

In the summer, after a major reconstruction, the second tower of Lida Castle — the South-Western — was officially opened. Similar to the Vytautas Tower, it also has a permanent exhibition with halls presenting the art of pottery, black-

smithing, medieval cuisine and mythology. The tower has six storeys and each is dedicated to a specific period of Lida Castle. The exposition features artefacts unearthed during excavations: plates and fragments of decorative tiles.

"In recent years, we have seen a major influx of tourists to Lida: therefore, we are ready to invest in the development of this area," added Ms. Klimovich. "In addition, at the foot of the castle, a monument to Gediminas has been erected."

Lida Castle differs from others — primarily, due to the possibility of organising knights' and equestrian tournaments. Several types of entertainment programmes have been developed, as well as many interactive games, quests and entertaining performances. The first knights' tournament was held in the castle in 2005 and, since then, the museum staff have developed many interesting events — thus promoting the tourist aim and significantly enhancing inbound tourism.

## Old getting new

Reconstruction of the Old Castle has probably become the most discussed and exciting campaign. Scientists continue arguing about its exterior and interior. Nevertheless, construction work continues, and gradually the castle is getting its unique face. The work is now almost complete at the entrance tower, the gal-

lery, the stone house (known as kamenitsa), the middle tower and the cook house with a stove. Interior decoration is underway, while the entrance gates have also acquired their historical appearance.

A project for the second stage of reconstruction is being developed. It refers to the palace. Simultaneously with the construction work, the Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum is working on the creation of a museum exposition which will receive new artefacts found during archaeological excavations. There are over 3,000 of them. The exposition will reveal the history of development of Castle Hill, how the Grodno citadel looked in the 12th-13th

centuries, to reveal the theme of the city's struggle over the Neman River with crusaders in the 13th-15th centuries. A part of the exhibition will be dedicated to the Rzech Pospolita King, Stefan Batory, whose royal residence is being so carefully restored by Grodno builders.

## To the museum with a facemask on

More than 650 museums, libraries, clubs, theatres and children's art schools operate in the Grodno Region — attracting an increasing number of visitors every new year. More than 7,000 people are involved in the field of culture. Last year, over 11m people visited the local cultural institutions, while more than 93,000 festivals, fairs, holidays, cultural forums and other lively events were held in cities, agro-towns and villages of the region. Many have become popular not only among residents of the country: they are now known far beyond its borders.

Last year was significant in terms of the number of tourists who visited both large museums and small expositions in rural areas. More than 300,000 tourists visited Mir Castle alone.

However, this year has become a true test due to the epidemiological situation, since culture is an industry that — jointly with the tourism industry — has been seriously affected. At the same time, it's important to note that the money invested in the reconstruction or restoration of historical and cultural heritage, even under the conditions of the pandemic, has worked. The Michal Kleofas Oginski estate in Zalesie (Smorgon District) is a good example: it has remained attractive to guests, though now working under different conditions. Excursion groups were reduced, a facemask regime was introduced and audio guides are now used more actively.

"We can also mention Lida Castle in this regard; people came here even at the height of the spring rise in the incidence of respiratory infections, including COVID-19," noted Ms. Klimovich. "Their desire to visit this site is very pleasing. This means we've done everything right."

# Great ships need deep waters

In her modest 17 years, Anastasia Shkur dai burst into the elite of world swimming with powerful strokes

By Sergey Kanashits

When the entire sports arena froze with almost complete calm, holding their breath waiting for the impending pandemic, swimmers continue to compete in the recently created commercial competition ISL (International Swimming League). Anastasia Shkur dai is a member of the Parisian team Energy Standard, being joined by such stars as Sarah Sjöström, Chad le Clos, Femke Heemskerk, Florent Manaudou... It is doubly pleasant to note that our 'mermaid' in the company of such inveterate dolphins

um — able to rewrite not only the country's records, but also those of the world. Even the current winning times allow Anastasia Shkur dai to claim medals at the world and European championships, while also making her one of the main contenders for medals at the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

However, let's present the figures together with the facts. A year ago, in the Scottish city of Glasgow, Anastasia Shkur dai made a sensation by winning the 100m butterfly at her favourite distance. This refers to short course competitions (25m pool). For those who don't know, here's a

recently fell, was held for three years, belonging to the Japanese Rikako Ikee at 55.99. At the Olympic Games in Rio in the 100m butterfly stroke, Ikee showed the fifth result (56.86) while Sarah Sjöström from Sweden won with a world record in big water — 55.48. These are exactly the figures that Anastasia Shkur dai and her coaches are currently looking at. In addition, with the result that Anastasia showed currently in Budapest (however, we do reduce it for faster short water), in Rio 2016 she would have been second (!), and would have even won the world championship last year! If we return exclusively to the 25m pool competitions, then the result of 55.64 would have allowed our young swimmer to win silver at the 2018 World Cup; only the American Kelsi Dahlia — an Olympic champion and multiple world champion — was faster there. So far, all these words and comparisons, of course, are merely entertaining arithmetic and assumptions, but, regardless, the trend is encouraging.

In her native Brest, everyone supports Nastya: both numerous relatives and ordinary townspeople. Today it is she who is perhaps the most popular and recognisable face of the city from among the active athletes. In general, Brest is a sporting city, and it is good to note that the money invested in its sports infrastructure brings visible and impressive results.

As far as the sporting future is concerned, it is quite unusual for Anastasia Shkur dai. Nastya found herself in the pool thanks to her grandmother Regina Konstantinovna — a big fan of swimming. At first, the family was surprised at their daughter's choice. Her mother Valeria Vladimirovna told our newspaper in an interview, "Nastya was born at eight months old, so her lungs were not expanded. At three months,

we were treating her in hospital with inflammation. As soon as she went to kindergarten, I had to take sick leave twice a month. At the age of 7, my mother-in-law — Regina Konstantinovna — began to take Nastya to the swimming pool of the health and fitness complex. She swam herself while Nastya paddled after her like a dog. It was there that coach Viktoria Astakhova drew attention to our daughter. When the Aquatics Palace was opened in Brest in 2010, Victoria Yevgenievna went there to work as deputy director while Olga Yasenovich from Borisov came as a coach. We got into her the first team. Olga Yakovlevna is energetic, being interested in various methods and the experience of foreign coaches. Moreover, she is strict and keeps discipline as if in the army. This also played a role. Nastya, by the way, has an older brother Nikita. When they were small, the surgeon put their backs together and said they had absolutely identical figures: shoulders, hips and long legs. The doctor advised our son to swim, and our daughter to dance. But Nastya made her choice, and, as we can see, she was not mistaken."

At the age of 14, Anastasia Shkur dai surpassed the standard of a Master of Sports of international level in the 50m butterfly, becoming the youngest Master of Sports of international level in the history of Belarusian swimming: 21 strokes and only two breaths at a distance is just fantastic! Then, one after another, national records fell. Finally, recently, the world junior title also couldn't resist, and she is still only 17...



Anastasia Shkur dai

photo: brestcity.com



isi.global.by

is by no means a modest athlete: the Belarusian junior has recently won the 100m butterfly at the competitions in Budapest, thus rewriting her own national record and setting a new world junior achievement. Our congratulations!

In addition to the victory, which is always pleasant, and the record that flatters one's pride, the progress of Anastasia Shkur dai draws attention and pleases the fans: every year in her performance we see her outperforming herself and reaching new frontiers. This allows us to assert that a real fish is growing up in the Belarusian aquari-

short educational programme: the times are faster here than in a 50m swimming pool, thanks to the greater number of turns, and consequently, kicks off the board, which give the swimmer an additional accelerating impulse. So, in Glasgow, Shkur dai showed a result of 56.21, and now in Budapest — 55.64! Such progress in a year is a very serious claim. If progress continues to advance at a similar pace, then very soon Anastasia will become a real 'shark' of world swimming.

To support the above, there are more statistics. The junior world record, which

## ARENA

### ● Shakhtyor and BATE play out a draw in Belarus' championship



Shakhtyor Soligorsk and BATE Borisov didn't reveal any winner in the central match of the 28th round of the Belarusian championship as it ended in a 1:1 draw.

At present, the Belarusian championship standings are as follows: BATE (Borisov) — 54 points, Shakhtyor (Soligorsk) — 53, Neman (Grodno) — 50, Torpedo-BelAZ (Zhodino) — 50, Dinamo (Brest) — 48, Dinamo (Minsk) — 45, Isloch (Minsk District) — 44, Rukh (Brest)

— 41, Minsk — 37, Energetik-BSU (Minsk) — 35, Vitebsk — 35, Slavia (Mozyr) — 33, Gorodeya — 30, Slutsk — 27, Belshina (Bobruisk) — 21, and Smolevichi — 14.

The list of top scorers is headed by BATE striker Maksim Skavysh who scored 17 goals; Dzhasurbek Yakhshiboev from Shakhtyor has a score of 16 goals.

### ● Ilya Shimanovich sets national and European records at the International Swimming League tournament in Budapest

The 100m breaststroke proved successful for the Belarusian who finished first, with the result of 55.85 seconds. He also updated the national record for the 50m breaststroke at the preliminary stage of the competition: 25.57 seconds. In the decisive round of this event, Ilya was second: 26.27 seconds.

In the combined 4x100m relay, the team with Ilya Shimanovich scored the largest number of points in 3 minutes 21.95 seconds. The Belarusian swimmer's performance was 55.6 seconds.

### ● Belarusian athlete Sergei Zaslavsky sets a new record



The three-time record holder of the world and Guinness Book of Records, Sergei Zaslavsky, has broken the world record in knuckle push-ups in 60 seconds, with a result of 101. This achievement by the Be-

larusian athlete was officially recorded by a team of referees headed by an international category judge, Sergei Matskevich.

The event was held at Minsk's Uruchye Sports and Recreation Complex as part of the *For Strong Belarus* sports and patriotic project. Sergei Zaslavsky recently set a world record there in knuckle push-ups in 45 seconds, with a count of 82.

### ● Belarusian sambo athletes captured 13 medals at the World Championships in Serbia: 3 gold, 5 silver and 5 bronze.

Andrei Kazusenok — who has won yet another gold medal in his career — has become a four-time world champion. Apart from him, Anzhela Zhilinskaya and Aleksandr Koksha also captured gold. In the team rating, our national team was placed second — behind Russians who took 17 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze medals.



BELTA

## Photo of the week

Equestrian sport is the main hobby of Anastasia Trakimaite from Mogilev

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**On November 12th, 1920,** Andrei Makayenok was born (in the village of Borkhov, Rogachev District, Gomel Region) — a playwright and People's Writer of Belarus (1977). He worked on the magazine *Vozhyk*, the Writers' Union of Belarus

and was the chief editor of the magazine *Neman*. He wrote humoresques, feuilletons, essays. He was the author of the well-known plays *Tribunal*, *A Pill under the Tongue*, *An Intimidated Apostle*, *Levonikha in Orbit* and others. Such films as *Kondrat Krapiva*, *Horned Bastion*, and *After the Fair* were shot based on the playwright's scripts. He was a laureate of the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize (1962) and the State Prize of Belarus (1974). He died in 1982.

**On November 13th, 1930,** the Forest Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus was founded. It began in Gomel as the Belarusian Forestry Institute on the site of the Forestry Department of the Belarusian Scientific Research Institute of Agriculture and Forestry, since 1932 — the Belarusian Scientific Research Institute of Forestry, and



since 1992 — a state scientific institution with a modern name. It provides scientific support for the forestry industry, aimed at preserving, increasing and using the national wealth, forests of Belarus, wisely.

**On November 14th, 1905,** Vasilek Mikhas (Mikhail Kostevich) was born in the village of Bobrovnya, Grodno Region — a Belarusian poet. He wrote satirical poems, hymns and epitaphs. He is the author of collections of civic lyric poetry *Noise of the Pine Wood* and *From the Peasants' Field*, in which he poeticised the liberation struggle of the people. The Polish authorities persecuted him for his revolutionary activities and the 'national liberation' character of his works. In 1939, he was mobilised into the Polish army, was taken prisoner by the Nazis, from where he fled to his homeland in August 1941. He was the secretary of the Skidel underground anti-fascist committee and collaborated in the partisan press. He died in 1960.



**On November 14th, 1990,** on the initiative of the Pinsk Society of Partisan Veterans, the Drogichin Museum of Partisan Glory named after D.K. Udovikov was founded. In 1998, a memorial sign to 'Partisan Glory' was unveiled in front of the



and Ivanovo districts, as well as the names of their commanding staff. The archives of the museum boast photos, documents, memoirs and letters of veteran partisans, alongside personal belongings of the leaders of the movement and examples of weapons from the time of the Great Patriotic War.

**November 15th** is the Day of Workers of Agriculture and Processing Industry of the Agro-Industrial Complex in the Republic of Belarus whose hard work and professionalism ensure the food security of the country and the living standards of the people. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the national economy of the Republic of Belarus — a country with centuries-old agrarian traditions. Belarusian food products are greatly appreciated for their high quality and are in demand in more than 90 countries around the world.



**On November 15th, 1925,** the first programme of Belarusian radio went on the air in Minsk. Now it is part of the National State Television and Radio Company of the Republic of Belarus (Belteleradiocompany).



**On November 16th, 1960,** Ellina Zvereva was born (Tula, Russia) — a Belarusian athlete (athletics, discus throwing), Honoured Master of Sports of Belarus (1995). She is a champion of the 27th Olympic Games (2000) and a bronze medallist of the 26th Olympic Games (1996). She also claimed victory in 1995 and earned silver in 1997 and 2001 at the world championships. Ellina is also a silver medallist of the European Championship (1994) and a winner of the European Cup (2000) and the Goodwill Games (2001). She is a six-time champion of the USSR.



**November 17th** is International Students' Day, established in 1946 at the World Congress of Students, held in Prague, in memory of Czech patriotic students who were shot by the Nazi invaders in 1939.