

# COUNTRY IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

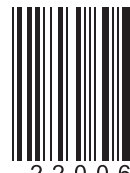


Magazine for those  
who want to know

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# BELARUS

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## WHERE DOES CARE BEGIN







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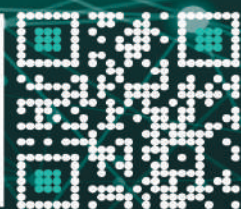
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Vyacheslav Zakharinsky. Orchids series. 1996



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2022 has been declared the Year of Historical Memory. It passes under the sign of preserving the heroic heritage of the Belarusian people. The sacred duty of all Belarusians is both to remember the history and not to let others forget, or, moreover, distort the truth about the tragic past of our country. Therefore, the law 'On the Genocide of the Belarusian People' was adopted (signed by the President of Belarus on January 5th, 2022).

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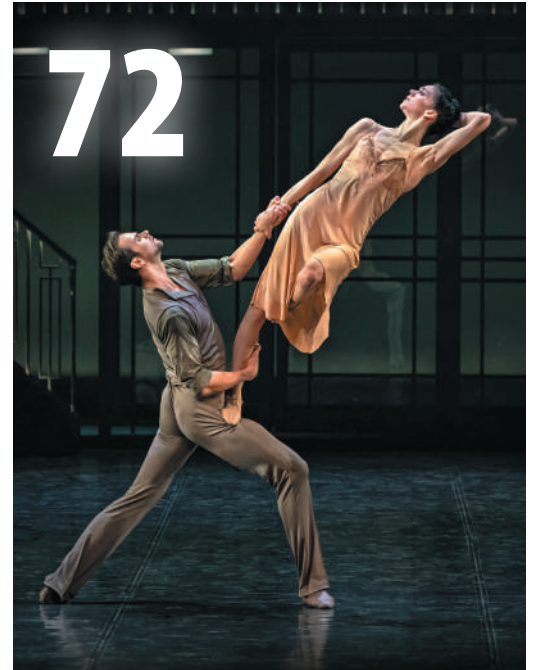
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**"Beauty is one of the main concepts in life"**







# GOOD SIGN OF UNITY

**The President of Belarus met with Patriarch  
Kirill of Moscow and All Russia**



Patriarch Kirill is well acquainted with the President of Belarus. That is why the conversation between them turned out to be very frank, confidential and lasted almost two hours. The President warmly received the distinguished guest, noting that he was glad to see the Patriarch in good health and good spirits.

In honour of the 1030th anniversary of Orthodoxy

Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke about watching on television the events taking place in those days in Belarus and directly in Polotsk in honour of the 1030th anniversary of Orthodoxy in the Belarusian lands, "It was very nice to see the procession. A lot of people came. Moreover, people from Russia, from Voronezh, came to walk down the street there and celebrate."

"Yes, very solemn and uplifting," Patriarch Kirill shared his impressions.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that this is very important for the Belarusian people, "Our Orthodoxy began from there, and our Patriarchate of Moscow supported this date. I think the decision was made at the Synod. Therefore, I am grateful to you that you are in Belarus on this day. I often say that this is your land since your ministry in the church in Smolensk, when you flew to Kaliningrad via Belarus (in previous years, Patriarch Kirill served as Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. *Editor's note*). I remember all your statements of that time. You loved Belarus very much. I remember our first meeting in the mountains (in Sochi. *Editor's note*) and our then conversation, which is still relevant."

The President positively assessed the fact that Patriarch Kirill arrived at this difficult time, when both Russia and Belarus are undergoing difficult trials.

Aleksandr Lukashenko invited the Patriarch to continue coming to Belarus, "I think you will find time to visit us again. Especially on the 900th anniversary of the monastery in 2025 (900th anniversary of the founding of the Saint Euphrosyne Monastery in Polotsk. *Editor's note*). I will gladly receive you in Belarus. Yes, and at any time. Know that you are always here not

like at home, but really at home, on your own land."

### Belarus is a sovereign state

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church frankly admitted to Aleksandr Lukashenko that when he goes to meet one of the heads of state, various thoughts are spinning in his head. But he always goes to the President of Belarus with a light heart, "Because you know that you are going to a close person who has assumed a huge responsibility for security, for the preservation of his people, their identity. This, in the conditions of globalisation, aimed at

### FIGURES ONLY

*There are 36 Orthodox monasteries, 15 brotherhoods and nine sisterhoods, one mission, six spiritual educational institutions registered in Belarus.*

*There are 1,781 temples at the disposal of believers, 160 more are under construction.*

ensuring that all identity disappears, everyone on the planet fits under the same standards, is a struggle for the survival of the nation. Maybe not in the physical sense... But spiritually and culturally, it is survival."

The patriarch is sure: it will be grief for the human race if everyone is reduced to the same level, "And when people are controlled by standards that will be developed outside of their participation somewhere in some centres, and politics, and culture, and when people's lives are adjusted to these standards."

True sovereignty today is more than political sovereignty, the clergyman emphasised, "This is the freedom of the people. And I am glad to testify that Belarus belongs to those states about which it can be said that it is a sovereign state. And God help that it remains so."

### Spirituality talk

Philosophical, lengthy and very informative. This is how His Holiness the Patriarch described the conversation with the President, talking to journalists, "The conversation concerned the worldview. Together we tried to answer a whole series of questions that are related to a very complex problem not yet understood by everyone, which is the survival of human civilisation. Where is the world going? What happens to people? What is happening to human civilisation? And we are talking not only about the challenges related to the theme of war and peace, conflicts. Of course, ecology in the broad sense of the word occupies a large place in this problem. Not only as environmental protection, not only as a danger to the environment, but as a danger to the human person."

The patriarch is sure that if a person loses moral guidelines, he will cease to be a person in the full sense of the word. After all, the task of the devil is to make a person lose the distinction between good and evil, "As soon as this happens, a person becomes controllable. And the development of human civilisation becomes completely unaccountable to man. Where there is evil, there is death, destruction. And where there is goodness, there is life."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia emphasised the unanimity in his conversation with Aleksandr Lukashenko, "And I am glad that the Head of the Belarusian state is concerned about such global issues. And if a person cares about such global problems, then, of course, first of all he focuses this concern on his agenda related to the prosperity of the Belarusian people, the solution of the tasks that are now facing the President, the Government and all the Belarusian people. And since the general political context in Europe today is restless, alarming, and Belarus is located in this border zone, between East and West, although it, of course, belongs to the East, we did not ignore the topic of the significance and place of Belarus in the modern architecture of Europe."

Aleksandr Pimenov



# A BEAUTIFUL TRADITION THAT GOES BACK CENTURIES

**T**housands of pilgrims from all over the country and from abroad arrived in the city on the Western Dvina to celebrate the 1030th anniversary of Orthodoxy in the Belarusian lands. On the day of remembrance of St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk, believers marched in a procession from St. Sophia Cathedral to the Saint Euphrosyne Monastery. The festive liturgy in the monastery was led by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, and was co-served by the bishops of the Belarusian Exarchate.

When we are talking about the thousand-year history of Orthodoxy, we should definitely mean Polotsk. It was here, at the confluence of the Polota River with the Western Dvina, that the political and spiritual vectors that determined the fate of the nation were once laid.

## Significant event

Izyaslav the Scribe, who laid the foundation for the dynasty of the Polotsk princes, Euphrosyne, the abbess of the monastery and the enlightener, Francysk Skaryna, the Slavic first printer...All these famous persons lived and worked in Polotsk. Christianity is the cultural code of Belarusians, and Polotsk is the cradle in which it was brought up.

“This year we remember an important, especially significant event for the Belarusian Orthodox Church, which is the 1030th anniversary of the establishment of the Polotsk diocese. The first in the Belarusian lands. The glorious city of Polotsk, known throughout Russia, became the centre of a pillared cathedra in 992,” reminded the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl.

The celebrations started with a divine service in St. Sophia Cathedral. The place is iconic. The majestic temple in the Byzantine style on the steep bank of the river was founded by

Vseslav Bryachislavich. It became the fourth Sophia in the world (after Constantinople, Kyiv and Novgorod). And although the temple has survived to this day in a slightly modified form, its historical significance is not diminished because of this. After all, Princess Euphrosyne carried the monastic feat in the modest cell of this cathedral in the 12th century. According to legend, one day an angel appeared to her in a dream and announced that she had to go to the town of Seltso and found a maiden monastery there. Having received the blessing, the nun really set out on her journey and founded the monastery, which in our time is known as the Saint Euphrosyne Monastery.

In memory of the saint and her glorious deeds, on June 5th, the believers walked in a procession from St. Sophia Cathedral, where her spiritual and educational path began, to the monastery, where the relics of the reverend reside today. A crowded procession with banners, icons and flowers is a beautiful tradition that goes back centuries.

## Retrace the path spiritually

The end point of the route is the Holy Cross Cathedral of the Saint Euphrosyne Monastery. This year, the service on the occasion of the celebration was led by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.





■ Procession in commemoration of St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk

“This is not only a celebration for the Polotsk land, one of the first to adopt Christianity in the vastness of Kyivan Rus’. This is the celebration for all our lands, that is why I am with you today,” Patriarch Kirill addressed the Belarusian flock. “The adoption of Christianity in this very place served as a strong impetus to the spread of the faith of Christ in all the outlying lands. The history of this diocese, as well as the Polotsk land, is not simple. Here were the fronts. The most complex and difficult is the one that took shape during the Great Patriotic War, but there were many other invasions of foreigners. This border part of Great Rus’, all historical Rus’, took on many blows.”

The Patriarch reminded the believers that it is important to repeat the path of St. Euphrosyne not only in the literal sense, making a procession, but also spiritually. The saint was a model of purity and devotion to God, good deeds and her people.

It is not for nothing that her name has been glorified through the ages. Who else do the peoples of Belarus and Russia revere so much, before whom do they kneel, to whom do they turn their prayers? To the very Euphrosyne, who combined both public service and an undoubted influence on society with the deepest faith, and therefore did great things.

After the liturgy, each pilgrim rushed to the silver shrine with the relics of St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk, which the public can see in the Holy Cross Church.

Another point of attraction for pilgrims in Polotsk is the Transfiguration Church. Modest on the outside, it amazes

with the richness of the murals inside. Frescoes of the 12th century gave historians and art historians more information about how the people of Polotsk lived nine centuries ago than some chronicles. Here, in 1991, the authentic chains of Euphrosyne were found. These were the iron chains weighing seven kilograms, which the reverend wore to tame the flesh. This unique item is also exhibited for believers today. The inhabitants of the monastery and the parishioners confirm that the patroness of the Belarusian land more than once helped those who, with sincere prayer, asked her for help.

Aleksandr Subbotin, Chairman of the Vitebsk Region Executive Committee, “The anniversary of the Polotsk diocese, which was the first to appear on Belarusian soil, the memorial day of St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk, the visit of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill... It all came together. This is a highly spiritual holiday, a day of unity not only for our people, but also for all believers from different countries. For the Vitebsk Region, it has a sacred meaning. To some extent, it became a symbolic start of preparations for the anniversary of the monastery, which we will celebrate in 2025. There are plans to build a hotel and a refectory on the street leading to the monastery. I would like the monastery to flourish. We will try to make it a centre of attraction for pilgrims, an example of Christian tourism in the centre of Europe.”

Vsevolod Yevseyev



# SMART CITY TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE BELARUSIAN CAPITAL

**B**elarus and the United Arab Emirates have trusting political relations. And they are successfully converted into mutually beneficial economic projects. This was confirmed by the meeting of the President with the Managing Director of the Emirates company Emaar Properties Mohamed Ali Alabbar. The priority topics included the construction of the Northern Waterfront in Minsk.





One of the most successful entrepreneurs in the UAE, Mohamed Ali Alabbar, is known not only in the Arab world. His company Emaar Properties is present in the markets of 40 countries. In our country, the investor is implementing a large-scale project to build a smart city in Minsk, which was called the Northern Waterfront.

### **Everything is going according to plan**

It is essentially a city within a city with a total investment of \$4.5 billion. During the implementation of the project, residential buildings with all the necessary infrastructure, kindergartens, schools, a university, sports facilities, and healthcare facilities will be built. The construction of the National Exhibition Centre, the Institute of Artificial Intelligence, the Minsk World Trade Centre is also envisaged. The project is designed until 2040.

In June 2021, a corresponding agreement was signed. The starting point was the meeting of the President of Belarus with Mohamed Ali Alabbar. And now, a year later, there is another

meeting to not only compare notes on the agreements already reached, but also to discuss new mutually beneficial ideas. Aleksandr Lukashenko only welcomes such consistency, "I'm glad to meet you again. You have long been a friend of Belarus. Stay here often. We welcome such a scheme and system of your work. We are always ready to meet you in Belarus, especially since you always come with specific proposals."

### **The project is amazing**

So, about the implementation of the main investment project. Mohamed Ali Alabbar assured journalists that the construction was going according to plan, "Approximately in three months, you will be able to see how the construction of the exhibition centre will begin. Excavation work is underway there, the territory is fenced. In three months, we plan to start building a residential area. I am very optimistic."

The businessman also said that at the direction of the President of Belarus, the company would soon build a public park near the Tsnyansky reservoir. Its design will begin soon.



## CONTEXT

Another announcement from the investor is the opening of a sales centre in 2.5 months. It will be located in the centre of Minsk.

Mohamed Ali Alabbar recalled that he has been in the real estate business for about 30 years, his projects have been implemented in the UAE, Egypt, Serbia and other countries, “I promise: you will not see such a project like our Riverside either in Belarus or even in Europe. All my knowledge and experience that I have accumulated over 30 years will be invested in this project,” the Arab businessman told reporters, promising to also make prices affordable for Belarusians.

“It will be a high-quality client-oriented service, the best level not only in Belarus, but also in Europe.”

While answering the question whether the geopolitical situation in the world would affect his plans, Mohamed Ali Alabbar referred to the wise instructions of his father, “He always said that in life, as in nature, there is winter and summer, day and night. Life goes on

as usual, regardless of coronaviruses or something else. Everything passes, and political crises will also pass.”

### Technology drives the world

Another topic of the meeting is cooperation in the field of high technologies. The Emirates have made significant progress in this regard, and their experience is not at all superfluous for us, as Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised, “I am grateful to you for organising that conversation in the Emirates, when together with you we were able to listen to the leading experts in the field of artificial intelligence development. Then I realised that there is still a lot to be done in this direction in Belarus in order to reach the level that you then achieved together with specialists from around the world.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also reminded that at previous meetings various ideas and projects were discussed that could be implemented in Belarus by representatives of large business of the Emirates, “We are ready to return, if

there is interest, to projects in the field of agriculture, food (a very topical issue now) and many others.”

This topic is close to Mohamed Ali Alabbar, since one of the areas of his business is e-commerce. He is well aware of the trends taking place in this area. The businessman expressed his gratitude to Aleksandr Lukashenko for the support provided to the IT sector, “What you have done is important for the world. At one time, you paid great attention to the Hi-Tech Park, and at that time it was only the beginning. And today we see that the whole world, the economy is driven by technology. If we take the entire population of Belarus and compare it with the development of IT services that are exported, then the figure is higher than in many Western countries.”

However, the most important thing for the development of the IT sector is specialists and the quality of education, the foreign investor is sure. And Belarus also has it. Mohamed Ali Alabbar noted that a lot of technology is imported into the Arab world. According to him, during



■ This is how the new exhibition pavilion will look like. Layout.



the meetings with Vsevolod Yanchevsky, Director of the Hi-Tech Park, the prospects for the Belarusian sector were also discussed in this connection. The foreign guest, in particular, believes that Belarusian companies can bring a lot of new and useful things to the operation of the e-commerce site, which will increase its added value.

### Cooperation in a broad sense

During the meeting, the foreign guest warmly thanked the President of Belarus for the opportunity to meet, the warm welcome and special hospitality, “It is not even like an ordinary guest, but like a friend and brother. It always touches my heart.”

“You have been here for a long time, in fact, you have become a citizen of Belarus and live here,” responded Aleksandr Lukashenko.

After the meeting, Mohamed Ali Alabbar said in a conversation with the press that he sincerely fell in love with Belarus and its people. He even said that the design project of his house, which he plans to build in Minsk, will be ready very soon, “Usually I like classical design, but my house in Belarus will be in ultra-modern style... We will start construction in a few months. It is a great honour for me to have a house in Minsk. There are very good, kind, intelligent people in Belarus, ranging from the President to ordinary passers-by on the street. And very high qualification of specialists. I travel a lot around the world, but Minsk, of course, surprises with its cleanliness. Yesterday I walked around the city for a long time late at night and enjoyed the air, cleanliness, scenery and, most importantly, safety. In the West, you worry about your wristwatch, but in Belarus, you feel comfortable outside even at midnight.”

Vsevolod Yanchevsky, Director of the Hi-Tech Park, “The Hi-Tech Park begins a very long and, I am absolutely sure, long history with the United Arab Emirates. This is cooperation in almost all areas: investment, venture capital (investment in start-ups and established companies), the entry of our IT products into new markets, and not only the markets of the Emirates, as well



### FACT

**Co-owner of large international companies in the field of e-commerce, catering, fashion and design, Mohamed Ali Alabbar is considered one of the largest and most influential businessmen in the UAE.**

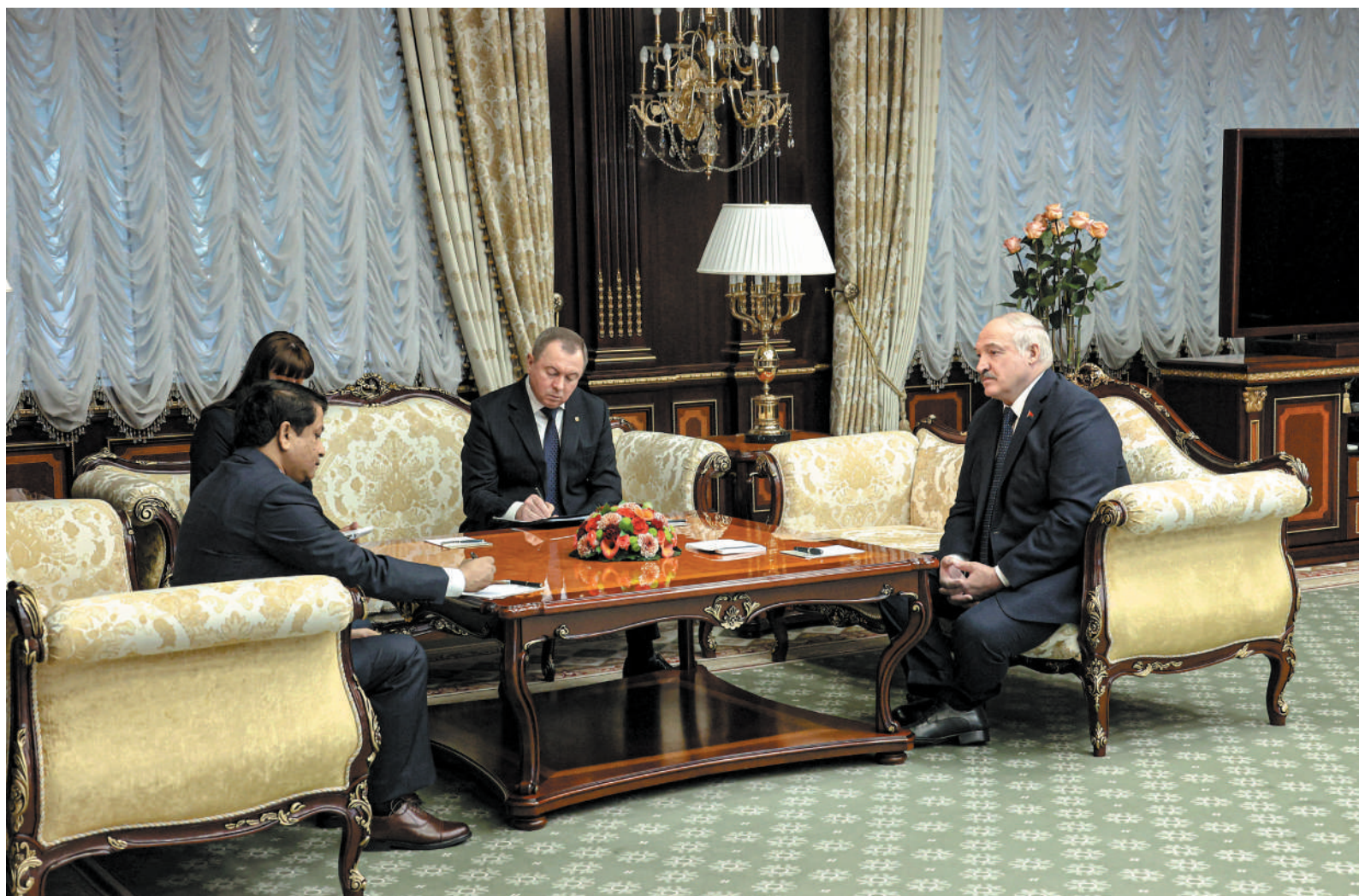
**He is an economic and investment adviser to the leaders of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. In fact, the ideological inspirer and executor of the concept of creating modern Dubai. Mohamed Ali Alabbar's net worth is estimated at \$4.6 billion.**

as IT education. Some of the agreements are at the stage of concrete decisions, some are at the stage of plans, not long-term plans, but those which are being implemented here and now. We have developed a kind of roadmap, it does not leave a single issue unaccounted for.

In all areas that exist in IT and the high-tech sphere, there are not just points of contact, but very specific things that will be implemented in the very near future. I think this is a collaboration for years and decades.”

Vladimir **Velikhov**





# THE OUTLOOK LOOKS IS VERY GOOD



R

# Relations with the countries of the far arc today, more than ever, are becoming relevant for Belarus. One of these countries is India, which has recently been steadily gaining political and economic weight.

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko is confident that very soon Asian countries will set the tone in world politics and economics. He, in particular, stated this at a recent meeting with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Belarus Alok Ranjan Jha, “We welcome such a future for the planet and naturally would like to find our place in the growing Indian economy. We would like to enjoy and have the support of the Indian state at all levels. We will not be in debt.”

## A clear priority for cooperation

By the way, India is celebrating the 75th anniversary of its independence this year. Another date is also noteworthy: this spring marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries. Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that India is one of the most important partners in Asia for Belarus, and the foundation for this cooperation was laid back in the days of the Soviet Union, “We have always given priority in the Soviet Union to cooperation with India. This foundation allows us today to build good relations with your state both in the field of politics, and especially in the field of economics.”

## Breakthrough projects needed

Undoubtedly, almost one and a half billion India is a huge market for Belarusian products. The trade turnover for the last year exceeded 566 million dollars with a positive balance for us. In particular, India is one of the main buyers of Belarusian potash fertilizers. In addition, we supply agricultural machinery, spare parts for mining dump trucks, woodworking and petrochemical complex products there. We bring mainly medicines from India. It is the pharmaceutical industry where there are the largest joint investment projects.

**India is one of the largest and most promising trade partners of Belarus in South Asia. The trade turnover between the two countries in 2021 amounted to almost \$567 million, remaining almost at the level of 2020. At the same time, the balance was positive for the Belarusian side: about \$376 million in exports and \$191 million in imports.**

Cooperation is developing in the field of oil production and oil refining. A couple of years ago, Belorusneft won a tender held by the largest Indian oil and gas company and implemented a pilot chemical enhanced oil recovery project at six onshore fields in India.

However, today, in order to convert the political and diplomatic baggage accumulated over time into trade, economic and investment bonuses, breakthrough projects are needed that would give bilateral relations a new qualitative dynamic. Obviously, with a proper approach, Belarusian exporters would certainly find attractive niches





for themselves in India. By the way, hidden opportunities are seen in the field of high technologies, to which India attaches great importance, interspersing it into the fabric of political dialogue with some states.

It seems very promising to unlock the potential of relationships in the field of education, especially in mathematics, computer science, and science. The medical profile is indicative, where Indian students are prominently represented in Belarus.

Taking into account the conceptual decisions adopted in India to transfer two- and three-wheeled vehicles to electric traction by 2025, a promising area of cooperation is electric transport. By the way, by 2030 the country should completely switch to electric transport. In addition to the supply of Belarusian equipment, the turnkey service package can be supplemented by training. Against the backdrop of continued competition in the field of software development (taking into account the policy of the Indian authorities regarding cryptocurrencies and the use of blockchain technologies), it is possible to attract Indian experts to work in Belarus, where a number of pilot projects are already being implemented. Hidden reserves for cooperation exist in the field of cybersecurity. In short, taking into account the gradual realization of the inevitability of turning to Asia and reorienting their exports there by Belarusian enterprises, India remains a promising and important support point in South Asia for Belarus.

### Experience needs development

By the way, Belarus can become an 'entry point' for Indian pharmaceutical companies to the EAEU market. This requires targeted work with large companies to determine the prospects for their arrival in Belarus, the organisation of export-oriented industries in the sector of socially significant drugs. A good advertisement in this area could be made by a joint project of the Academpharm enterprise of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the CIPLA company, as well as the opening of a scientific and technological centre within the framework of this project.

The potential in the military-technical sphere, including joint developments, remains unrealised.

And of course, an additional increase in the export of tourism and medical services could be provided by the creation of recreational centres in Belarus based on traditional Indian medicine. Here, Belarusian developments in the field of transplantology and oncomedicine would come in handy.

The work at the level of specific regions with sufficient autonomy is particularly promising. In India, each state has its own economic development programmes, its own political traditions. It is there that the local population is actively involved in the economy. Therefore, the organisation, following the example of other countries, of a permanent forum of the regions of Belarus and India is, of course, also a good idea.



### More active contacts are important

Considering the size of India's territory, it is advisable to build bilateral cooperation on the basis of a strategy of priority attention to small entities. Such an approach would make it possible to increase the mobility and flexibility of the national presence in a dynamically changing economic space, as well as to ensure its stability in the face of possible crises. The strategy of small entities is met by the joint development of an intellectual product in the field of ecology and agriculture. The complex topic of creating systems for cleaning rivers and lakes, waste processing plants, developing green energy and the economy as a whole, as well as producing environmentally friendly products, needs deep study.

However, an intellectual product can be represented not only by high technologies. India needs to do something about the slums, so the development of urban projects with appropriate infrastructure can be another topic of the relationship.

### There are plans to make the relationship stronger

Alok Ranjan Jha thanked the President of Belarus for the opportunity to meet and kind words addressed to India. And he did not fail to clarify, "You say that India is an important partner of Belarus. Let me assure you that for India Belarus is one of the most important partners in this region. And, as I have said more than once when communicating with representatives of the Belarusian authorities, relations between Belarus and India do not depend on relations between India and other partners, states. Like Belarus, India is also going through an important phase of development, and it will be an honour for it to move in this direction together with Belarus and go through this path of economic development."

Later, speaking with journalists, the diplomat expressed confidence that the sanctions are not a serious barrier to the development of relations between Belarus and India, "Yes, sanctions present some difficulties for us. But there are no unsolvable problems. Of course, the sooner sanctions are lifted, the better. However, our relationship continues. We

**The position of the two countries on the main issues of maintaining international peace and security, approaches to the implementation of the sustainable development agenda for the period up to 2030, as well as the decisions of major international summits and conferences, are close or coincide. Both countries consistently advocate against the politicisation of human rights and the use of selective 'double standards'. Belarus and India are constructively cooperating on human rights issues at the UN. India is a member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking and a permanent co-sponsor of Belarusian resolutions on combating human trafficking. Belarus supported India's initiative to declare June 21st the International Day of Yoga. Countries regularly support each other in elections to bodies and agencies of the UN system. Sister-city relations have been established between Minsk and the capital of the state of Karnataka, Bangalore.**

In order to increase mutual interest and recognition, search for new innovative growth points and breakthrough ideas, more active contacts through expert diplomacy are important. Therefore, the leading 'think tanks' of Belarus and India can become drivers of bilateral cooperation.

Speaking about the future of Belarusian-Indian relations, Aleksandr Lukashenko proceeded from the changing geopolitical alignment of forces, "As a historian, I am absolutely convinced (and we will see this in the near future) that the entire planet will develop, focusing on that part of Asia in which India is located. Great China, great India. Very promising and dynamically developing, they will dictate the terms in the near future for the whole world. We welcome such a future for the planet and naturally would like to find our place in the growing Indian economy."

continue to maintain commercial relations, the business continues to operate. We are working to find ways to solve current problems. First of all, this concerns problems in logistics and payments. I think we will find a solution very soon."

The Ambassador expressed his opinion about the shift of the global world centre of influence from the West towards the East, about which journalists asked him, "The centres of power are constantly changing, and this is good, because it gives dynamism to the development of the world, and we are all interested in this," said Alok Ranjan Jha. "But as far as our cooperation is concerned, we intend to further develop relations with Belarus. These relations are already very multifaceted and strong. We have plans to make them even stronger. We will continue to move in this direction."

Aleksei Fedosov



# MUTUAL INTEREST IS OBVIOUS

**Cooperation between Belarus and India in the field of trade and investment, in the scientific, technical and humanitarian fields has already been backed up by real success**

It should be noted that back in 1997, the Belarusian-Indian Intergovernmental Commission for Cooperation in the Field of Economy, Trade, Industry, Science, Technology and Culture was established. The Belarusian part of this commission is chaired by the Minister of Industry of the Republic of Belarus Piotr Parkhomchik. Since then, ten meetings of the Intergovernmental Commission have already been held. Now the eleventh one is being prepared, which should soon take place in Minsk, at least this year.

The following chronology is also interesting in its own way. In 2015, following the visit of the President of India to Belarus, it was decided to recognise the Republic of Belarus as a market economy, as well as to allocate a credit line from Exim Bank of India in the amount of 100 million US dollars. In 2017, following the visit of the Head of the Belarusian State to India, a list of priority projects in the field of education, agricultural engineering, science and technology, pharmaceuticals, oil production, potash fertilizers, investment and other cooperation was determined.

In 2020, the key trade and economic events were the holding of the first Belarusian-Indian investment forum in New Delhi, which was attended by representatives of nine Belarusian and more than seventy Indian companies and organisations, as well as the tenth meeting of the Belarusian-Indian Intergovernmental Commission for Cooperation in the Field of Economy, Trade, Industry, Science, Technology and Culture. During the meeting, the Memorandum on the Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the Investment Agreement was signed, joint working groups were formed on cooperation in the textile industry, pharmaceuticals, trade and investment.

Meanwhile, the export of Belarusian services to India in 2021 amounted to \$98 million (a growth rate of 160 percent, based on the export of maritime transport services). Imports of services fell to \$7 million (64 percent). The positive balance is 91 million dollars. Investment cooperation is consistently moving forward, in particular, there are three investment projects with the

participation of the Indian side in the field of pharmaceuticals. In 2021, direct investment inflows from India increased significantly, to \$1.3 million. It is planned to hold a representative National Exhibition of the Republic of Belarus on November 14th-27th, 2022 in New Delhi as part of the India International Trade Fair 2022 Universal International Trade Exhibition.

**Belarusian-Indian cooperation in the field of science and technology** is implemented on the basis of the agreement signed in 1993 between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of India on cooperation in the field of science and technology. During the visit of the President of Belarus to India in September 2017, an updated text of the Cooperation Agreement between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Indian National Academy of Sciences was signed, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding between the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research on cooperation in the field of science, technology, education and research for agriculture. In 2012, on the basis of the High-Tech Park in Minsk, the Belarusian-Indian Information Technology Training Centre was opened. Since September 2013, the Indian Information and Coordination Centre for Scientific and Technical Cooperation has been operating in Minsk on the basis of the Republican Scientific and Technical Library. The Joint Belarusian-Indian Commission for Cooperation in Science and Technology is functioning. In 2019, a delegation from the Institute of Powder Metallurgy of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus visited India. In the same year, the Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus took part in the 70th meeting of the Committee of Plenipotentiaries of the Member States of the International Centre for Scientific and Technical Information, as well as in the international conference Digital Economy: Space for Scientific and Technical Information in New Delhi. Eight priority joint research projects have been agreed and are being implemented. In September 2019, the Belarusian-Indian seminar Nanomaterials and New Materials

was held in Minsk, and a year later the 9th meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Indian Commission for Cooperation in Science and Technology was held via videoconference.

**Cooperation in the humanitarian sphere** is constantly confirmed by the growing number of citizens of India who are studying at the universities of the Republic of Belarus. Thus, in the 2020/2021 academic years, there were 888 of them. In addition, the network of direct contacts between educational institutions of Belarus and India is expanding. In October 2018, a delegation from Gujarat State Forensic Sciences University visited Belarus to attend the 15th Executive Board Meeting of the International Association of Police Academies (INTERPA). The following year, the head of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus took part in the 16th meeting of the INTERPA Executive Board, which took place in India. And earlier, in February 2016, the first meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Indian Working Group on cooperation in the field of education was held. On the basis of the Faculty of International Relations of the Belarusian State University, an elective for the study of the Hindi language has been opened. In 2019, the Republic of Belarus allocated grants for the education of five Indian citizens in Belarusian universities. A year earlier, 60 Indian students took courses in Belarus on the basis of the Republican Institute of Vocational Training. A year later, 30 citizens from India studied at the same institute. In October 2018, a delegation from the State of Punjab headed by the Minister of Technical Education and Industrial Training of the state visited the Republic of Belarus to study the Belarusian experience in the field of vocational training. On July 10th, 2020, an office of Indian culture was opened on the basis of the Belarusian State University at the Faculty of Sociocultural Communications. Since 1993, the Belarusian side has been actively using the resources of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme of the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Up to 25 representatives of Belarus participate in this Programme every year. In 2017, the Cooperation Programme between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of India in the field of culture was signed. In August 2014, the Days of Culture of the Republic of India were held in Belarus, the Days of Culture of the Republic of Belarus were held in India in January 2017. Joint projects are being implemented in the film industry and television broadcasting. There is a regular exchange of musical and artistic groups, mutual participation in film festivals. Contacts are being developed in the field of the youth movement. As part of the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students in Sochi, the Plan of Joint Activities in the Field of Youth Policy was signed. In April 2017, 60 schoolchildren from India took part in the 25th European International Creativity Competition at the Zubrenok National Children's Educational and Health Centre. In August 2019, 13 Indian children were taken to rest and recuperation in Zubrenok at the expense of the Belarusian side. A similar gesture of goodwill was planned for 2020, but the introduction of restrictions on

international air travel prevented this. Cooperation in the field of sports is carried out on the basis of the Agreement between the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Government of the Republic of India on Cooperation in the Field of Physical Education and Sports. There is an exchange of sports delegations, mutual participation in tournaments in various sports. Indian athletes annually undergo training and participate in training camps based on sports complexes in Belarus. Direct contacts between tour operators of Belarus and India are being activated. The impetus for the development of inbound tourism in Belarus was the inclusion of India in the list of 80 countries whose citizens are given the opportunity to visa-free entry to the territory of the Republic of Belarus for up to 30 days, subject to certain conditions. Since October 1st, 2019, the process of accepting visa applications for citizens of India has been launched through the visa centres of VFS Global in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Chennai. The Indian side made a decision to provide citizens of the Republic of Belarus with services for obtaining electronic Indian visas. On February 1st, 2022, the grand opening of the tourist information centre of the Republic of Belarus took place in New Delhi on the basis of the BelIndTravel travel company.

Aleksandr Pimenov





FOCUS



# WHEN DEVELOPMENT IS A KEY



**In an interview with Belarus magazine, Chairman of the Board of the Development Bank Alexander Egorov spoke about the role and place of the bank in the current system of the national economy, about the new strategy of the bank and expressed his opinion on the vision of the future**

*Alexander Egorov graduated from Belarusian State University in 2007 and obtained a master's degree from Williams College in 2012. He received the qualification of a mathematician-economist, as well as a master of arts. From 2012 to 2015, he held senior positions in the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus, as well as senior positions in Belarusbank JSC from 2015 to 2019. Since January 2019, he has been Deputy Chairman of the Board of Belarusbank. In March 2021, he was appointed to the position of Chairman of the Board of the Development Bank.*







***It seems that at the beginning of the conversation, a certain presentation of the Development Bank for our readers will be justified. This should be done at least for the reason that the Bank is not at all a financial institution in its classical sense.***

Indeed, the Development Bank is not a credit and financial institution in the sense that it is established by the Banking Code of the Republic of Belarus. Moreover, its activities are regulated by the special Decree of the Head of State, in accordance with which it was created in June 2011. Like similar foreign institutions, the Belarusian Development Bank was aimed at eliminating certain 'market failures'. For example, those areas of financing that were not covered by commercial banks due to the specifics of the formation of their resource base and, accordingly, the limited ability to lend specifically to long-term projects for up to 15 years. As well as difficulties in meeting prudential standards for the maximum amount of risk per debtor, which additionally hindered the implementation of larger projects by commercial banks. Since August 2016, the Development Bank has also been under the supervision of the National Bank of Belarus, but at the same time, the standards for its safe functioning have been established taking into account the specifics of its activities as a national development institution.

I want to emphasise that, first of all, the distinguishing feature of our Bank is its focus on promoting the sustainable development of the national economy and the implementation of the state socio-economic policy, and not maximising profits like in classical banks. Profit is one of the criteria for the activities of the Bank's management, but not the main one, but only in terms of further building up the resource base.

***I wonder what served as the basis, or some kind of prerequisites, for the creation of such a specialised financial institution as the Development Bank?***

In our country, historically, the banking sector was directly connected with the financial support of the economy and actively participated in solving the problems of the socio-economic development of the country. Back in the mid-90s of the last century, a list of government agent banks that participated in the implementation of state programmes was determined from among the largest Belarusian banks. However, a number of issues arose that could not be resolved within the framework of interaction between the government and commercial banks. Firstly, for the implementation of investment projects, loans at a low interest rate are needed, and for a commercial bank, the size of the profit received is of key importance. Therefore, lending to long-term programmes was carried out, as a rule, with subsidised interest rates, which required significant expenditures from the republican and

local budgets. In addition, a number of projects and programmes required very significant amounts of credit support. Such projects could not be financed by a single domestic bank, even the largest one.

And, finally, thirdly, there was an urgent need for a radical increase in the efficiency of investments in the national economy. After all, it is no secret to anyone that significant amounts of financial resources that were invested in the industrial and agricultural sectors did not always give the necessary return. And the enterprises that received such support often did not have the opportunity to return the money received for development.

The Development Bank was created to solve these problems in a comprehensive manner.

Three stages can be distinguished in its history.

At the first stage, the main function of the Development Bank was the accumulation and management of problem assets transferred from commercial banks within the framework of state programmes. At this stage, the Bank acquired invaluable expertise in evaluating and, in fact, implementing projects, improving their efficiency using financial mechanisms.

At the next stage, the Bank's key task was to finance new investment projects under government programs. With the financial support of the Bank, entire industries have been modernised, primarily agriculture, including dairy farms, poultry farms, livestock complexes.

Today, the Development Bank is directly involved in the development of annual plans for financing state programmes. At the initiative of the Bank, a mechanism for competitive selection of projects has been introduced for a number of areas of lending to the economy. Its goal is to provide money to those business entities that are able to achieve the maximum effect from their use within the framework of national priorities for the development of the economy.

The main feature of the current stage is the transformation of the bank into a full-fledged national development institution. Expert support for the widest range of government decisions, from the development stage to the implementation stage, digitalisation of the economy, simplification of procedures for doing business, along with already traditional areas of activity, forms the basis of the new format of the Development Bank's work.

I would like to especially note such a component of our activity as export support. Acting at the initial stage as the only channel for providing state support to domestic exporters, the Development Bank carried out purposeful work to expand the geography of promotion and the range of products sold on foreign markets using export credit instruments. The Bank has also gained successful experience in lending to the export of construction services.

By the way, the first loan to support exports was provided by the Development Bank in 2013. And in total for the period from 2013 to April 1st, 2022, the Bank provided loans in the amount equivalent to 6.3 billion US dollars.

***And what are the main tasks facing the Bank today?***

The Bank carries out its mission to promote the sustainable development of the economy and the implementation of the state economic policy by solving the following main tasks:

■ The grand opening of the bridge over the Neman River in Grodno after reconstruction. The Development Bank took part in the project.



- financing of investment projects of national importance (infrastructure projects, construction of new and modernisation of existing enterprises);
- promotion of export activities, which are of strategic importance for Belarus as a country with a high degree of economic openness;
- support for small and medium-sized businesses, which is one of the most dynamic and adaptive segments of the national economy in modern conditions.

First, the COVID-19 pandemic, and then geopolitical turbulence, caused a number of negative phenomena in the economy, both in our region and around the world. In the current situation, another important task of the Development Bank is to provide anti-crisis support to the most significant enterprises for the country, to promote their early adaptation to new economic conditions.

***In your activities, you are aimed at implementing the priorities of the state economic policy. What financial development tools does the Bank use for this?***

The list of instruments and transactions by which the Development Bank carries out the placement and attraction of funds is available to it in the amount that the Bank needs to implement the tasks assigned to it. And, of course, many transactions carried out by universal commercial banks are in the arsenal of the Development Bank. But we do not conduct, for example, transactions with individuals, in cash. The Bank does not provide settlement and cash services for legal entities and some other types of operations.

It should be noted that the list of such transactions can be expanded both due to the emergence of new tasks, and due to the expansion of the range of existing tasks. For example, the Bank has recently been able to provide bank guarantees, and as part of export support, such tools as factoring and discounting letters of credit have appeared.

A significant role in the introduction of new tools in the Bank's activities is played by specialised structures, i.e. agencies in the main areas of activity. Thus, the Bank's financing of long-term investment and infrastructure projects will be expanded by attracting foreign direct investment. This area of activity will be taken over by the Investment Promotion Agency.

The toolkit for supporting the export of domestic goods and services will be used by the Agency for Foreign Economic Affairs created in 2021. By the way, last year another Service and Reengineering Agency was created, the main task of which is to reduce the administrative burden on business through the active introduction of digital technologies.

The Bank's resource base is formed based on the tasks it faces and its peculiarities. Its main sources are: equity (formed statutory fund and earned profit), deposits of government bodies, bonds of the Development Bank, borrowings in the interbank market.

Foreign credit resources are an important source of the resource base. The Development Bank has become one of the most active participants in the international capital market among Belarusian banks.

Although today there are certain difficulties, we continue to actively cooperate in this area with the Eurasian Development Bank, banks of the Russian Federation and other countries,





■ The agricultural brand of the Dzerzhinsky District is the Dzerzhinsky Agricultural Complex



cooperation with which is developing most dynamically today in the financial and economic sphere.

***Restrictions, sanctions and barriers have become a new reality in the modern global financial market. How does this affect the strategy of the Development Bank's presence in the international arena?***

Indeed, the most powerful geopolitical processes that we are witnessing leave their mark on the system of international financial relations. Some credit programmes are curtailed, payment mechanisms become more complicated, joint implementation of a number of projects is put on hold. At the same time, the Development Bank is quite successfully coping with these challenges and adapting to new realities. Despite the sanctions pressure, we continue to interact with our foreign partners, look for mutually beneficial options for making settlements, and develop mechanisms to fulfil our obligations.

At the same time, it is fundamental for us to support the export interests of Belarusian enterprises in new promising markets in such regions as Africa, Asia, Latin America, the EAEU states.

***Assistance to small and medium-sized businesses is one of the main priorities of the Development Bank. How is this direction being implemented today?***

Issues of supporting small and medium-sized businesses are constantly in the focus of attention of the Development Bank. The Company's own programme for expanding the access of such business entities to credit facilities is oriented towards solving this problem.

The Development Bank's financial support programme for small and medium-sized businesses has been operating since 2014. Within the framework of the programme, the Bank primarily acts as a source of 'wholesale' financing. Resources are provided directly to small and medium-sized businesses through

partner banks and leasing organisations. According to the criteria agreed with the Development Bank, the partners select borrowers, evaluate projects and make decisions on financing. The criteria for selecting a borrower are a key feature of the programme for financing small and medium-sized businesses at the expense of the Development Bank. They are harmonised with international standards, according to which both the number of employees of the organisation and the amount of revenue are taken into account.

The Development Bank finances individual entrepreneurs and organisations with an average number of employees of up to 250 people and the annual revenue not exceeding 35 million roubles.

In total, over 8 years of the Programme's implementation, more than 1.1 billion roubles in equivalent were allocated to support 6,434 projects of small and medium-sized businesses.

The programme has a significant positive macroeconomic and social effect. This is evidenced by the high degree of sectoral and regional diversification of projects, the dynamics of borrowers' financial results, and the creation of new jobs. Thus, the number of employees at enterprises financed from the resources of the Development Bank as part of the programme to support small and medium-sized businesses increased by 8.8 thousand people (or 13.0%) compared to the number at the time of applying for funding, and their revenue increased by 5.3 billion roubles. (or 78.8%).

In order to maintain and increase the results achieved, we constantly analyse the market for the demand for certain loan products. To date, the credit facilities allow us to meet the financing needs of the widest possible range of entrepreneurs, from the production sector to the provision of services.

It is also worth noting that, as part of the ongoing work to improve the stability of the national economy, the Board



#### ■ Healthy Baby Programme

In 2018-2021, Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus together with the Ministry of Health implemented the Healthy Baby programme, within the framework of which perinatal centers in different regions of the country were equipped with modern high-tech medical equipment.

of the Development Bank approved the new Stabilisation product in April 2022. It is designed to support both export-oriented and import-substituting investment projects. Credit facilities are provided for a period of up to five and a half years at an unprecedentedly low rate, up to 7.5% per annum, which is significantly lower than existing on the market.

Thus, the Development Bank provides diverse support to various focus groups of small and medium-sized businesses in order to implement the state tasks that are on the agenda today.

*Taking into account the realities of today and the priorities of the domestic economy, and this is, first of all, the support of domestic producers, maintaining country positions while reorienting export flows, the focus of credit policy, which is quite natural and justified, is import-substituting and export-oriented investment projects. How is the bank operating here?*

As we have mentioned before, the Development Bank actively supports domestic exports by providing loans to both Belarusian exporting enterprises producing goods and services, and their foreign buyers. Such support is aimed primarily at industries that form the basis for strengthening the entire real sector of the economy.

The geography of export financing of the Development Bank is in close connection with the main country directions of domestic exports. These are, first of all, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, as well as African countries.

In 2022, we continue to actively develop this important area, ensuring the comprehensive use of financial and non-financial instruments to support Belarusian exports based on the maximum availability and ease of use of these instruments for Development Bank clients.

Much is being done in these areas in terms of supporting small and medium-sized businesses as well. For these purposes, special



■ New building of the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre for Surgery, Transplantation and Haematology





■ The Development Bank actively supports the domestic production

loan products are intended, such as Import Substitution Support and Export Support, the main purpose of which is to stimulate export-oriented businesses and develop import-substituting industries. Since the 'launch' of these products for entrepreneurs, the following has been financed: 256 projects for export within loan agreements worth more than 86 million Belarusian roubles in equivalent, 24 projects for import substitution totalling more than 8.8 million Belarusian roubles.

In addition, the Bank's specialists are actively involved in the development of the regulatory framework for financing export and import-substituting industries, as well as in the consideration of business plans for the largest investment projects in these areas. Our task here, first of all, is to assess the possible risks and problematic issues of their implementation. That is, at the final stage of project development, to make them as feasible as possible for industries and the economy as a whole.

#### ***What are the most significant recent projects of the Development Bank?***

The latest large-scale infrastructure projects include the construction of the 3rd line of the subway, surgery and transplantation building of the clinic on Semashko Street in Minsk, reconstruction of the railway bridge in Grodno, construction of an overpass in Mogilev, repair of roads.

In general, financing of investment and other significant projects accounts for more than half of the total resources provided by the Development Bank to support the economy. For

these purposes, 3.9 billion roubles were allocated in 2021, which is 1.8 times more than the amount of funds issued in 2020.

Last year, the main direction was lending to leasing organisations for the purchase of equipment for enterprises in the real sector, mainly the agro-industrial complex. This direction accounted for 53.3% in the total volume of investment financing.

The main part of investment projects in the agricultural sector is financed by the Development Bank under the state programme for the development of agricultural business in Belarus. The key areas are the construction and reconstruction of dairy farms, poultry facilities and pig breeding complexes.

The largest project in this direction was the construction of a complex for growing and processing turkey meat at the Dzerzhinsky Agricultural Complex. Last year, the Bank financed the construction of 11 dairy farms. At the same time, each of these projects is effectively implemented and generates good income.

A significant part of the funds is directed to support infrastructure projects, including the sphere of social services (construction of healthcare and sports facilities), which accounted for 22% of investment financing. Financing of projects in agriculture and industry totalled 24.5% of the funds allocated for investment.

Last year, loans from the Development Bank were also used to repair roads, in particular, in the Slutsk, Soligorsk and Smolevichi districts of the Minsk Region. After the reconstruction, these roads turned into two-lane routes in both directions, bridges and



overpasses were built, overground and underground pedestrian crossings, as well as noise barriers, were arranged.

Other important projects for the construction and reconstruction of transport infrastructure facilities in the capital and regional centres of the country include the reconstruction of Gagarina Street in Vitebsk, the railway bridge across the Neman River in Grodno, the construction of an alternating route for the area of Yakubovskogo Street — Zagorodnoye Highway in Mogilev, power supply facilities of the Belarusian Railway in Minsk.

In the second half of 2021, a landmark facility in the country's healthcare system was put into operation, which was the new building of the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre for Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology. Financing of the construction of a block for bone marrow and stem cell transplantation has also been continued. In addition, the Development Bank participated in the financing of important healthcare facilities for the regional centres in Grodno, Brest and Vitebsk.

The sports facilities completed in 2021 included a project to reconstruct the biathlon stadium and shooting range, Hotel No. 1 of the Raubichi Republican Olympic Training Centre for Winter Sports.

***This June marks the 11th anniversary of the day when the Development Bank was established in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus. What are the prospects of the bank's work, its future?***

Since then, the Development Bank has gone from a small financial institution, the entire asset portfolio of which consisted of loans transferred by other state-owned banks, to one of the largest financial institutions in Belarus. For example, according to the results of the 1st quarter, we rank second in the country's

banking system in terms of the size of the authorised capital, regulatory capital, assets, and the volume of long-term loans in national currency issued to legal entities.

As I said before, the Development Bank is currently at the stage of transformation. Last year, a programme was launched to transform the Bank from a classic financial institution dealing with the financing of projects and sectors of the economy that are significant for the country, into a central element of a digital, consulting and financial system to provide comprehensive support to business entities and government bodies.

More specifically, the main focus of this system will be to provide support for:

- attraction of foreign investments
- foreign economic activities
- development of small and medium-sized businesses
- simplification of administrative procedures
- formation of independent expertise on issues of economic development and structural reforms.

Improving the efficiency of the largest projects implemented by the bank projects will be expanded through their independent examination and structuring. This direction will be taken up by the project office created on the basis of the Bank.

This office will ensure a high-quality financial and economic assessment, the selection of cost-effective large investment projects, and the attraction of various types of financing for their implementation.

I am sure that such an approach will both increase the technological and economic feasibility of the planned projects, assess implementation risks and develop mechanisms for their hedging, as well as attract potential investors to the economy.

The financial support for the export of domestic goods and services provided by the Bank and Promagroleasing JSC will be supplemented by a comprehensive system of non-financial support for exports and imports. At the same time, the Bank's financial support for small and medium-sized businesses will be supplemented by its guarantee mechanism, crowdfunding, as well as non-financial support for this business, provided by the planned creation of a specialised organisation Entrepreneurship Support Centre.

In terms of the digital transformation of the economy, the Bank, as a national development institution, will provide its contribution through the digitalisation of administrative procedures, as well as implement model projects to create digital resources in various fields of activity.

The agency and expert functions of the Bank will also be expanded by consulting assistance to the Government on the issues of strategic development of industries, attracting external consultants on various issues of socio-economic and sectoral improvement, which will be provided by the Centre for Expert Decision Support planned to be created.

The formation of such an integrated system will allow the Bank to make an even more significant contribution to the progress of the Belarusian economy, strengthen its position as a national development institution, and ensure the effective use of accumulated competencies.





**tiho 22**

**ENTICING PROSPECT  
OF A DIGITAL FUTURE  
OR THE DIGITAL APPROACH  
IS AS RELEVANT AS EVER  
AND VERY WELCOME**

**In June, Minsk hosted the main technological event of the country, the 28th International Forum on Information and Communication Technologies TIBO-2022. The event has become a unique platform for the exchange of advanced international experience, the generation of innovative knowledge and the discussion of mechanisms for introducing the latest technological trends. Along with the business programme of the forum, there was also a thematic exhibition of the country's digital achievements, where one could get acquainted with the latest in telecommunications equipment, the cloud technologies and services, the fifth generation of mobile communications, the digitalisation of economic sectors and much more.**

### **A place to meet technological innovations**

During the official opening of the TIBO exhibition, Maksim Ryzhenkov, First Deputy Head of the President Administration, read Aleksandr Lukashenko's welcome address. In turn, the Communications and Informatisation Minister Konstantin Shulgan noted that the exhibition brings together specialists from the digital industry, being an important tool for promoting domestic and foreign IT solutions. According to him, it, changing in content, always remains a representative business event in the field of information technologies in our country.

The exhibition formed this year allowed its participants to get acquainted with IT projects in various sectors of the economy and to test many technological innovations of Belarusian and foreign solutions. The exhibition gave everyone the opportunity to answer the questions: how the ID card works, how public services can be obtained without leaving home and office, which Belarusian cities have already moved to smartphones, and what is planned to be done as part of the Smart City project. Furthermore, what new tools for promoting domestic products have appeared in our country.

The Minister emphasised that participation in this landmark event contributes to the establishment of long-term partnerships and business relations, as well as the strengthening of international cooperation in the IT field.

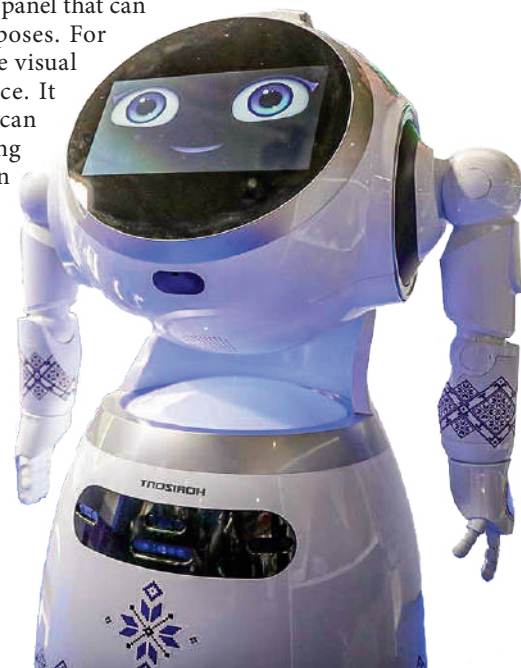
State Secretary of the Security Council Aleksandr Volfovich in his welcoming speech emphasised that for almost 30 years the international specialised exhibition TIBO has been performing the most important function of promoting advanced and innovative information and communication technologies both in the economy and in the field of public administration. In his opinion, within the framework of this event, the results of the digitalisation of the country are annually summed up, burning issues are identified and ways to solve them are outlined. The Forum has always promptly responded to various technological and socio-political risks and challenges. In the context of the aggravation of the international situation and sanctions pressure from Western countries, the tasks of effective import substitution, building new production and cooperation chains and ensuring the digital sovereignty of Belarus are coming to the fore. At the current stage of the digital transformation of

society, the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure and big data is becoming increasingly important to ensure the sustainability of all areas of life.

According to Aleksandr Volfovich, the TIBO forum is considered the leading specialised platform of the country in the field of information security and the participation in the exhibition of representatives of the main manufacturing industries, government bodies at all levels, leading Belarusian and foreign companies operating in the field of communications and information and communication technologies, allows us to hope for successful solution of these problems.

### **Visible innovation centre**

Indeed, the largest domestic and foreign manufacturers of telecommunications equipment, software, telecom operators, developers and suppliers of high-tech products and services for the mass and corporate segment traditionally take part in TIBO. At the current exhibition, the booth of the Horizont holding was noticeable. According to Denis Zhilko, Director of Horizont, it is impossible to fit the entire list of developments of 13 enterprises of the holding at the booth. Therefore, they decided to show the most curious ones, and there were a lot of interesting things here, "Our joint project with colleagues from the Asian region is a transparent video wall panel that can serve for different purposes. For example, to demonstrate visual information in the office. It is multifunctional, as it can be used as an advertising billboard or TV. It can be modified according to the functionality of the client." He also demonstrated interactive whiteboards. Horizont provided them to many enterprises of the exhibition. "This is a touch panel that







■ The largest domestic and foreign manufacturers took part in TIBO.



can run a different operating system, which turns it into a full-fledged desktop. Our panel has already proven itself especially well in institutes, colleges and schools. Video content allows you to quickly convey information, for example, in chemistry and biology lessons.”

There was also a robot at the company’s booth that attracted visitors by dancing, “This is also our project. We did not develop the robot, but we are creating algorithms for its operation. It is planned that this will be a robot consultant that could replace or supplement employees, say, in a store. He can talk and dance. It has a built-in GPS module, it can move along a certain trajectory.”

Anti-vandal touch-screen intercoms with the ability to output video, an interactive table for the development of children were also demonstrated here.

A wide range of developments was presented by the National Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Industry, Belpochta. Their booths were always crowded.

I was especially interested in the booth of the BelGIE Republican Unitary Enterprise for Supervision on Telecommunications. Pavel Baltsevich, Head of the International

Cooperation Department, said that the company presented an automated system for using the radio frequency spectrum, “We are also demonstrating the operation of the communication quality control portal version 2.0. On our website, we quarterly publish the results of monitoring the coverage and parameters of cellular communication. But they are somewhat complex, as they have many parameters. Therefore, we set out to translate this into a more convenient format. At the booth, we are demonstrating our future portal, which provides information on the coverage of each operator, each communication technology that is used in the country. There is a statistics output function.”

A mobile application will also be created for the portal, which will have similar functionality and will allow obtaining information about the location of base stations of other operators. The new portal and application are expected to be launched by the end of this year.

Also at the BELGIE booth, they showed a system for assessing the quality parameters of cellular mobile telecommunications, professional equipment that is used in the daily activities of the enterprise. This is a complex for monitoring the quality of

communication. It reminds of a briefcase with several phones attached to it.

“But it is not so simple,” said BelGIE representative Sergei Borovsky. “We have 14 such units in the country. Here is a scanning receiver to measure the signal level. It simultaneously scans all operators and issues data on them. We evaluate whether there is a zone of reliable reception. In parallel, test terminals work that simulate the behaviour of the subscriber. They make a phone call for two minutes, download and transfer data to the server, evaluate the level of delays, test the quality of video playback, and open web pages. The results are sent to our website and published. Thus, thanks to this information, the user can choose the best operator for himself.”

### Digital approach and global trends

At the TIBO-2022 forum, experts discussed the most important areas of digitalisation of the economy around the world: the introduction of 5G technology, the Internet of Things, big data processing systems, cloud technologies, machine learning, 3D modelling and visualisation technologies. Of course, the forum participants discussed the trends and innovations of the Belarusian IT market.

One cannot but agree that information and communication technologies have already become not just a part of life, but have created a new reality for us. Today they change the companies and even entire sectors of the economy. To keep up with the times, it is important to recognise trends in time. Practitioners shared their vision of how the Belarusian IT market will change during the forum. The topical issues include the creation of infrastructure facilities for digital integration of the EEC countries and the import substitution of equipment for the engineering and information infrastructure of data processing centres. The current realities of the Russian and Belarusian data centre markets, the development of cloud technologies as tools for cross-border cooperation were not bypassed either.



Farid Nakhli, Programme Coordinator of the Regional Office for the CIS countries of the International Telecommunication Union, during his speech noted that according to the report of the Global Association of Telecom Operators and Equipment Manufacturers (GSMA), as of January 2022, our region lags behind a number of countries in terms of launching 5G networks into commercial operation, “We need to work harder in this direction. GSMA predicts that the share of 5G technologies in the CIS will be about 9 percent by 2025, 4G will take up to 70 percent, there will be a rationalisation of 2G, 3G. Smartphone penetration will rise to 86 percent.”

And why is it so important to introduce 5G today, and in the near future? The International Telecommunication Union defines the following scenarios, “This is an improved mobile internet that is focused on improving the user experience for every consumer. Another direction is the work of the industrial sector. It is also important to provide ultra-reliable, low-latency communications for applications such as transportation or surgery. 5G is now in the focus of innovation. Cloud computing is already ubiquitous.”

The expert said that by 2030 the transition to 6G will take place, “According to this technology, the peak of standardisation will be in the middle of the decade. The issue of 6G has already managed to divide the industry very much. There is still no single vision of where to move in the sixth generation of mobile communications.”

He also noted that for smartphones with 5G, attention is shifting not to their presence on the market, but to reducing the cost.

“In addition, now a very trendy topic is the provision of broadband Internet access via low-orbit satellites. A number of global projects are implementing these technologies. At the same time, the Internet of Things will also grow at the expense of the industrial sector. Two or three years ago we said that this sector is the main driver. For three years, the driver is saved.”

### With an ID card for life

Then the conversation turned to the domestic market. Dmitry Moskalev, a representative of the National Centre for Electronic Services, spoke about the introduction of identification cards in our country. He stated with some regret that





although many have heard about ID cards, this product is not yet used as often as we would like. However, the developers expect that this will soon change, because thanks to the ID card, life will become more convenient.

“Given that the law ‘On the Protection of Personal Data’ is in force, the practice of disposing of data freely enough without asking our consent will gradually become a thing of the past. Now, in order to receive this information on the ID card, the consent of the owner is required,” said Dmitry Moskalev.

He also noted that the ID card contains applications that make it possible to use it as a passport when traveling to those countries with which there is an agreement on visa-free visits, “First of all, it is Russia. But now, despite the fact that the ID card has an application containing information identical to that recorded on the passport, our citizens do not yet have access to Russia through the card. The agreements currently in force do not include the ID card. This year, such an opportunity should appear. From a technical point of view, we are already ready. This is a legal issue.”

### Individual comfort scenario

Yury Petruchenya, General Director of Beltelecom, spoke about the novelties that will soon appear in every house and city thanks to the company. He noted that the infrastructure created by the enterprise has become the technological foundation for the digital transformation of many areas of the economy.

“Beltelecom now operates 150,000 kilometres of fibre-optic communication lines. Over the past year alone, more than 8,000 kilometres of fibre-optic cable have been laid. All city and regional centres of the country are provided with fibre-optic routes and are included in loop structures. As of the beginning of the second quarter of 2022, fibre was installed in almost 70 percent of the settlements, where there are from 50 to 100 households. The large-scale modernisation of networks has made it possible to significantly reduce the digital divide of the country’s inhabitants.”

He also noted that the company began to develop innovative solutions for smart cities. In this direction, the services Smart Home and Video Control were implemented, “We are ready to offer not individual elements of a smart city, but full-fledged integrated digital solutions based on our fibre optic network. We plan to implement a smart city scheme based on elements of a smart home, security, telemetry and urban infrastructure.”

Speaking about the smart home service, Yury Petruchenya noted that it allows creating an individual scenario for comfortable living and saving resources. The system involves the installation of up to 30 sensors: smoke, movement, opening doors and windows, water leakage, temperature, humidity. In the future, the interaction of Smart Home service sensors with third-party platforms will become part of the further development of the technology. According to him, more than 50,000 households already use smart home services in the country, “Today we have smart stops in the city of Orsha and in a number of other regions. It is possible to install an

interactive scoreboard on them, through which you can get Internet access, see the transport schedule. We are considering the feasibility of having a Wi-Fi point at each stop.”

### Readiness for an interested dialogue

The Plenary Session of the 4th Eurasian Digital Forum, which was held at the TIBO-2022 site, was attended by Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus Igor Petrishenko. During his speech, he stressed that our country is actively involved in the implementation of all key projects of the EAEU digital agenda, including digital transport corridors, digital traceability, data circulation, digital industrial cooperation and technology transfer, “The implementation of digital projects is one of the central areas of our activity within the EAEU. We have made significant progress in creating an ecosystem to ensure the employment of citizens of the states of our union, the project Work Without Borders Unified Search System has been implemented. Digital traceability tools for the movement of goods, services and digital assets are being actively implemented.”



The Deputy Prime Minister also drew attention to the fact that the heads of state approved the main directions for the implementation of digital projects that have two main goals: firstly, to prevent the emergence of technological barriers and increase the openness of the economies of the EAEU countries, and secondly, to achieve global competitiveness and integration into world trade relations, “To solve the tasks set, an integrated information system of the EAEU has been created and is successfully functioning, which unites the information resources of the Member States and ensures the exchange of information in the field of healthcare and trade, accounting for the production and movement of vehicles. Work is underway to form unified registers in the field of standardisation and other sectors of the economy. The development of this system is one of the priorities of the Union’s digital agenda.”

At the same time, Igor Petrishenko noted that the next step will be the creation of a cross-border space of trust, which will increase the efficiency of electronic interaction, within the



framework of the EAEU, provide an opportunity for individuals and legal entities to access electronic services, being not only in the territory of the EAEU states, but also in other states that will conclude an agreement on joining the transboundary space of trust. To do this, it is necessary to accelerate the implementation of a full-featured trusted third party service, while not losing sight of data link security issues.

“At the moment, the EAEU is actively discussing the Concept of the Digital Platform of the Eurasian Economic Union,” emphasised the Deputy Prime Minister. “It is aimed at the implementation of mechanisms for the provision of interstate information services to individuals and business entities. It is also focused on cross-border data exchange in the interaction of state authorities at the EAEU and national levels and providing access to services and common information resources for individuals and business entities, public authorities of the EAEU member states.”

Igor Petrishenko also named overcoming the inequality in the level of development of information and communication technologies in the EAEU states, unification of approaches to ensuring stable and independent operation of the information and communication infrastructure among the tasks of the EAEU digital agenda, “At the same time, it is important to maintain a balance between solving integration problems in the digital sphere and ensuring the digital sovereignty of the EAEU states.”

The Deputy Prime Minister separately emphasised that the development of agreed decisions on the identified tasks in a short time will ensure the effective implementation of the digital agenda of the EAEU, “In the future, this will create the necessary

conditions and opportunities for the implementation of the four freedoms of the EAEU, which is the freedom of movement of goods, capital, services and labour, and will also help to increase the efficiency of economic processes, improve the quality of life of citizens, improve management processes, increase the competitiveness of products and remove barriers for business, which is what we all strive for.”

Furthermore, according to Igor Petrishenko, the Eurasian Digital Forum has become the leading international platform for organising an effective dialogue of all those interested in the development of the IT industry, “Business and expert circles, state administration bodies of the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union have the opportunity to discuss and jointly develop strategic decisions on regional digital cooperation and the creation of a Eurasian digital market. Given the importance and prospects of digital transformations, the agenda of the plenary session of the forum includes the most pressing issues of digital transformation of the economies of the countries of the Eurasian space, which allows discussing various aspects of the functioning of domestic markets.”

According to the Deputy Head of the Belarusian Government, now more than ever it is important to develop the existing economic relations between the EAEU states, including with the help of information technologies, “Our country has a high potential for the development of information and communication technologies, is ready for an open dialogue with all states engaged in digital transformation, exchange of experience and implementation of joint projects.”

Aleksei Fedosov



YEAR OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

**THIS CANNOT BE  
FORGOTTEN**

СОВЕТСКИМ  
ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННЫМ  
ВОЙСКАМ



**O**ver its centuries-old history, Belarus has repeatedly become a scene of severe wars. Each of them left behind death and ruin. The bloodiest one was the Great Patriotic War which began in the distant 1941. More than 80 years have passed, but its fragments, figuratively speaking, still remind of themselves. On June 22nd, we will remember that terrible day, the victims of the war and the genocide of the Belarusian people. And soon after, on July 3rd, we will celebrate the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the country from the Nazi aggressors. As we know, the victory in that war was achieved at the cost of great losses of our people. The Belarusian land took in millions who not only died on the battlefield but were also methodically, cold-bloodedly killed by the Nazis and their henchmen during the war.

One of the forms of genocide was the destruction of villages with their population. Scary even to think: there are more than 9,000 such villages. More than 5,000 ones were burned with their inhabitants. Thousands of tragic fates... Besides, 209 cities and

remember. Throughout Belarus, many monuments and memorial signs have been installed at the sites of mass extermination of civilians. Two years ago, a new historical object was constructed in the Gomel region – the Ola memorial complex. In this small Polesye village, 1,758 people, including 950 children, were killed in 1944. The complex was included in the new military-patriotic tourist route. People who visit it leave toys and sweets at the monument – in memory of the dead children.

One of the examples of the fascist genocide in Belarus, which the whole world knows about, the scale of which is great, is Khatyn. This word is a burning pain in the hearts of people. It is not surprising that my mother, Maria Cherkashina, participant in the Great Patriotic War, native of the city of Volchansk, Kharkov region, knowing about the Belarusian Khatyn, wanted to go there to honour the memory of innocent victims. I am not sure who told her about the terrible tragedy of this village. I assume it was my father – Mikhail Cherkashin, veteran of the Great Patriotic War. He fought from its very beginning. By the

**2022 has been declared the Year of Historical Memory. It passes under the sign of preserving the heroic heritage of the Belarusian people. The sacred duty of all Belarusians is both to remember the history and not to let others forget, or, moreover, distort the truth about the tragic past of our country. Therefore, the law 'On the Genocide of the Belarusian People' was adopted (signed by the President of Belarus on January 5th, 2022).**

regional centres were destroyed and burned. As a result of the Nazi policy of genocide and 'scorched earth', during the three years of occupation, 2,230,000 people were destroyed in Belarus. According to updated data, every third resident of Belarus died.

For example, it has now been established that as of August 13th, 1941, 13,788 people were killed in Belarus. In September-October 1941, 10 operations were carried out in the territory of Minsk, Mogilev, Vitebsk and Brest regions, as a result of which, according to the reporting documents of the punishers, 7,162 people were destroyed.

No matter what region of Belarus you consider, the statistics are stunning. What will, say, Chenkovsky Forest tell us in the end? This place near Gomel is now well known. Last year, excavations were started there as part of a criminal case on the genocide of the population of Belarus during the Great Patriotic War.

The law provides for the legal recognition of the genocide of the Belarusian people committed by Nazi criminals and their accomplices during the Great Patriotic War and in the post-war period (up to 1951). At the same time, criminal liability is established for public denial of the genocide of the Belarusian people, for instance, by posting information in the media or on the Internet.

All these actions are just confirmation at the official level, including internationally, of the cruel truth that our compatriots

way, he also participated in the liberation of Belarus. In the family, we spoke about the operation 'Bagration', Polotsk and Vitebsk...

When my father passed away, my husband and I took my mother to Minsk. She was 80 years old then. Only 3 years later, on Victory Day, our son was able to take her to Khatyn. It was pouring rain, I remember. However, mother, overcoming the pain in her legs, stubbornly walked, leaning on a cane and on her grandson's hand, up the steps leading to the memorial. I remember her tears when she learned the details about Khatyn. We cannot forget that the terrible tragedy of Khatyn happened on a March morning in 1943. Khatyn disappeared off the face of the earth; it is no longer on the geographical map. The Nazis burned 149 people there, including 75 children.

When we returned home, mother was silent. I saw deep sorrow on her face. I also remember how father did not want to talk about the war.

That war touched many people. Almost every family in Belarus remembers the departed who were directly or indirectly involved in that terrible time. And it is important that our children, the children of their children and future generations do not forget about it and remember those who cannot be returned. For as long as our memory is alive, they will be alive too.

Mikhailina **Cherkashina**



# WHERE DOES CARE BEGIN



**In 1988, the Belarusian Children's Fund came up with the initiative to hold the International Children's Day in Belarus. Since then, June 1st has become a professional holiday for the organisation. And for children, this is a time of opportunities, meetings, travels.**



## Bright start of summer

Such a huge number of caring people join this event that programmes for children are not limited to one day. Throughout the country, holidays, excursions are organised for children, gifts are prepared.

This year, the very first to receive congratulations were the kids from the Children's Home No. 1 for Children with Organic Damage to the Central Nervous System and Psyche. Distinguished guests brought valuable gifts for the healthcare institution, including an oxygen concentrator needed in the treatment and care of seriously ill children, a certificate for the purchase of medical equipment.

Children from the regional specialised Children's Home in Vitebsk also received gifts, and the regional branch of the Children's Fund handed over a certificate to the institution itself for the purchase of equipment for an interactive room.

On the eve of the holiday, 8 family-type children's homes in the Vitebsk Region received modern polycarbonate greenhouses, in which they plan to grow and harvest a vitamin crop this year. Who knows, maybe such work will become not only a useful hobby for children, but will also encourage them to choose professions related to working on the land in the future.

By the way, one of the event organised by the Belarusian Children's Fund is Flowers of Kindness. The fund holds it together with the Republican Centre for Ecology and Local History. The event is attended by children who are fond of landscape design, are engaged in environmental studios and pupils of family-type children's homes. Children's teams, led by specialists, planned landscapes, came up with compositions and put ideas into practice. All these original, enthusiastically and lovingly created flowerbeds and ornamental gardens appeared in the backyard territories of family-type children's homes.





■ One of the summer camps for children under the care of the fund

And, of course, for the wards of the children's fund, the summer began with festive concerts, games, quests, flash mobs, master classes that were held in different parts of the country. One of the largest was held in Minsk. Three hundred children came here for the republican holiday Childhood is a Peaceful Country, which was prepared by the Belarusian Children's Fund together with the Ministry of Education: pupils of family-type children's homes, boarding facilities, foster and guardian families.

The Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War became a platform where young activists met with representatives of the National Commission on Children's Rights, asked questions and expressed their wishes to representatives from various ministries of the republic.

Hundreds of children from all districts of the Minsk Region arrived in Vileyka for the celebration. In Gomel, 47 family-type

children's homes (about 400 children are brought up in them) were invited to the event Children's Laughter is the One Joy for All. The Vitebsk Regional Branch of the Foundation invited children to the theatre, held a thematic day at the local TV and radio company, and awarded prizes to children who showed their talents in creative activities, studies and social life.

Today, International Children's Day is not an easy holiday. For little orphans and children with disabilities, this moment opens up a new world, in which they feel needed and loved. It also serves as a reminder for parents of the responsibility and opportunities that they open for their sons and daughters. For the Fund's employees, this is an occasion to pay attention to the problems of children and show how they can be solved through care and attention. And for 34 years since this Republican public association was founded, a unique experience has been accumulated.



## Warm home

In 1989, the Children's Fund came up with such a form as a family-type children's home. This is a family that has adopted 5 or more orphans. Since that time, with the support of the state, the Foundation began to develop the idea together with the departments of education. The state allocated housing for the first family-type children's homes.

The programme began to fade in the economically difficult 90s. In order to create family-type children's homes, it was first necessary to solve housing issues. Two parents, two children of their own and five adopted children cannot be accommodated in a 2-3 room apartment.

"In 2000, we managed to revive the programme for the placement of orphans in families, which was called Warm Home," says Aleksandr Trukhan, **Director of the Belarusian Children's Fund**. "With the financial support of charitable organisations from the UK and Ireland, 36 comfortable cottages were purchased and seven more families received help to complete and improve public and private housing." All families were assisted in the repair, purchase of furniture, household appliances, kitchen utensils and other household items. In these 43 family-type children's homes, more than 1,500 orphans have gone through or are going through the system of family education."

Candidates were carefully selected. Representatives of the Fund travelled to all regions of the republic, met with potential parents, watched, listened. It was necessary to weed out those who could be driven by selfish goals. Nevertheless, cottages for family-type children's homes were transferred for gratuitous use for a period of 15 years and the possibility of obtaining them in the future. In accordance with the regulation on family-type children's homes, parents-educators were paid a salary equal to the rate of a teacher, they were entitled to all social benefits, like any working person (the length of service was taken into account, sick leave was paid). For each orphan, the state allocated an allowance. The state took on utility bills for each adopted child. For 'warm homes', the representatives of the Fund, together with the educational authorities, were looking not just for educators who would look after the orphans, but for people who could give children warmth and care, who were ready to become mothers for them.

Margarita Kundikova from Klichev was one of the first such mothers. She has already raised over 40 children. Some of the boys and girls have already grown up, managed to get their own families and sometimes bring their grandchildren to visit their grandmother. More than a hundred people gather at Margarita's birthday party.

Family-type children's homes give children something that was so lacking in boarding facilities, which is the right to life in a healthy, full-fledged family. Next to the adults who became their parents, they learn to build relationships, distribute family responsibilities, love and worry about loved ones. Most of these boys and girls, growing up, become what the state wanted them to be, which means worthy citizens of their country. They get an education, a profession, a job, start families and raise children. So they have a future, as well as their own children.

The Foundation monitors the fate of 'their children'. There is a participant in the Olympic Games, an instructor pilot, employees of education departments, leaders, teachers, artists among the pupils of family-type children's homes...

Thanks to the state social policy, about three hundred family-type children's homes have already been created in Belarus. The Belarusian Children's Fund and local authorities are trying to help solve problems that may arise in such large families. They provide them with material support, assistance in treatment, rehabilitation, education, creative development, organisation of developmental, spiritual, moral and educational projects for

them. Children are invited to various festive events, they take them on tours throughout the country.

So, last year, within the framework of the Freshman social project, a large educational, cultural and educational programme was prepared for pupils of family-type children's homes who graduated from school with flying colours and were able to enter higher educational institutions together with the Ministry of Education in the capital. The organisers tried to fill it with information useful to every person who enters an independent life. Lectures were held for the children, meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Education, Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, lawyers, psychologists, social pedagogues. The specialists reminded the graduates of family-type children's homes what rights and obligations they have,



■ The children of one of the family-type children's home

- The Fund invites children to active programmes



*talked about information security, how to manage their money and protect their bank cards from fraudsters, held master classes on time management and the basics of effective communication. The guys visited the National Art Museum, the National Library, went to a performance at the Bolshoi Theatre.*

*Each freshman received a suitcase of things with which they can safely move into a student dormitory. Everything they needed was already collected there: from bed linen, cutlery, personal hygiene products and cosmetic accessories, to tablets and flash drives.*

### Child's heart

A few years ago, guests visited the Belarusian Children's Fund. Opera diva, holder of the title 'singer of the world' Nadezhda Kucher and her mother. The women admitted that they passed by, remembered the past and could not help but enter. When Nadia was seven years old, her mother turned to the Belarusian Children's Fund with her misfortune. The girl with a congenital heart pathology needed an urgent operation. The child's condition worsened. Yes, and Nadia herself thought that she would not live. At that time, such assistance was not provided in Belarus yet. They needed money for treatment in Lithuania. The fund helped send the child for treatment. The surgery was successful...

The goal of the Children's Heart programme of the Belarusian Children's Fund is to provide cardiac surgery to children with congenital heart defects, pre- and postoperative rehabilitation of sick children, assistance to the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Paediatric Surgery in purchasing medicines, materials for surgeries, necessary medical equipment.

"In the early years, we sent more than 500 people abroad for surgeries, mainly with congenital heart defects. Sometimes the children travelled without their parents. You can imagine the state of mothers and children. We were looking for clinics where children received free treatment. Those mothers who accompanied the children needed funds for accommodation and food. Before going back, the child must get stronger, and this implies additional expenses for the stay. Often, parents did not know the language of the country they were flying to, which caused discomfort in communicating with doctors," says Aleksandr Trukhan.

Soon a new solution was found. The Foundation contacted Dr. William Novick from the USA, who had an international programme in which teams of doctors travelled to different countries and performed surgeries there. In the early years, such teams of 14-15 people arrived in Belarus four times a year. They included surgeons, cardiologists, anaesthesiologists, resuscitators, nurses and other specialists. Together with local doctors, foreign doctors saved seriously ill children at the premises of the Belarusian facilities. Many of the surgeries were done for the first time on the territory of the republic. Thus, Belarusian doctors gained valuable experience. This gave much more effect than, for example, an internship of one doctor abroad. Working together with Dr. Novick's team, our cardiologists, cardiac surgeons, intensive care nurses saw the whole process from surgery to the subsequent care of the child. And today, Belarusian doctors note that it was then that the formation of paediatric cardiac surgery in our country began. There were courses in English for nurses and doctors, and specialists from Belarus began to participate in international





■ Dr. William Novick

congresses and conferences, as well as work in other countries as part of Dr. Novick's team. Hundreds of children with the most complex heart diseases were operated on, more than 2 thousand were consulted. The President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko awarded the Director of the Children's Heart International Foundation, professor of surgery William Novick with the Order of Francysk Skaryna for great merits in humanitarian and charitable activities.

Within the framework of the programme, 24 visits of foreign specialists from 11 countries of the world took place. There was constant training of personnel and the transfer of new technologies.

Currently, cooperation with the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Paediatric Surgery continues. Over the past 5 years, the Belarusian Children's Fund has donated 60 units of modern medical equipment to this and other medical institutions.

However, most importantly, today Belarusian children with a sick heart

do not have to go anywhere. They get qualified help here. The Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Paediatric Surgery operates at the level of European and world clinics, and children from other countries are already arriving in Belarus for surgeries.

## Children's rights

"There are always problems, in any state. People write to us, people come to us for help, and thus specialised issues that need to be addressed are revealed. In the 1990s, we saw problems with the upbringing of orphans, and then in paediatric surgery. We solved all issues together with the state. This, probably, is the meaning of a public organisation: to see some kind of problem, to start solving it, like some kind of experiment, to create a platform. If the site is adequate and deserves attention, the state will always support it and this will result in a state programme. And that's great. We cannot always deal with one problem, besides, when working together, the

amount of assistance changes," notes Aleksandr Trukhan. "Some problem can be overlooked at the state level. And in order for it to start being addressed at a high level, it takes time to create a legislative framework, find funding, and so on. We, as a public organisation, do not need so much time. We are mobile. We saw problematic issues, thought out a programme, found funds and began to work. Further, local authorities will learn about us and support us at one level or another, may it be the district, region, or republican one. Cooperation always gives good results. We always work in conjunction with the state. We are conducting the Warm Home programme with local regional executive committees and children's institutions. The Children's Heart programme is organised together with the Ministry of Health and the Centre for Paediatric Surgery."

The Belarusian Children's Fund was presented the Spiritual Revival award, diplomas of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, diplomas of many ministries and departments for the implementation of socially significant projects for the country.

In the 1990s, the Foundation launched the Our Hearts to Sick Children programme. On New Year's and Christmas, employees and volunteers of the organisation began to come with gifts to hospitals to children who will not be able to celebrate the holidays with their families. Artists were invited to perform for the little patients. And later, the wonderful state programme Our Children appeared, which various organisations joined, even ministers go to children, heads of enterprises and organizations hold a 'presidential New Year's show'. Now guests come not only to hospitals, but also to other children's institutions.

Since 2014, as part of the movement for a healthy lifestyle, the Foundation has launched the Street Workout charitable social project to build and equip modern sports grounds for children and youth in Belarus. 18 such zones for sports were equipped in different cities of the Republic. They are available to everyone,



free of charge. The initiative turned out to be ‘contagious’. Today, many organisations are building such sites in their yards.

In 2016, the Foundation, with the support of the Ministry of Health and local authorities, launched the I See! project to provide ophthalmic care to children from rural areas. Parents of rural children are not so often able to take their child to the doctor to check their eyesight. It was decided to arrange such visits on site. Teams of doctors went to schools in Mogilev, Gomel, Brest and Vitebsk regions. Ophthalmologists have tested the eyesight of more than 51,000 children. Pathologies were revealed in 32 percent of schoolchildren, and the parents of many of these children did not know before that their children had problems.

The Belarusian Children’s Fund initiated the adoption of a law on the rights of the child. Such a proposal was

sent in the early 1990s to the Supreme Council. Representatives of the organisation took an active part in its development. Belarus became the first of the former post-Soviet countries to adopt the law ‘On the Rights of the Child’. In 1993, the first children’s parliament in the Republic of Belarus was assembled. Children talked about their problems, made suggestions, the resolution was sent to the ministries and departments. Many of the ideas expressed then have already been implemented in Belarus. So young citizens proposed to create the Ministry of Children’s Rights, and the Commission on Children’s Rights was created. There was a request to create the Save the Children programme, and the Children of Belarus programme was implemented in the country.

The adoption of the law ‘On the Rights of the Child’ served to develop social programmes.

“The law ‘On the Rights of the Child’ states that children have the right to decent medical care, the right to study, to housing, to live in a family. And all the Fund’s programmes just solve problems that relate to the rights of children. The Warm Home programme is for the right of a child to live in a family. Children’s Heart and I See! projects promote the right to receive qualified medical care, while the Street Workout programme ensures the right to a healthy lifestyle,” notes Aleksandr Trukhan.

The Fund has programmes that contribute to the creative development of children, spiritual, moral and patriotic education, and the socialization of children with disabilities. You can learn more about them and how to become a friend or volunteer of the organisation on the website of the Belarusian Children’s Fund <http://www.bcf.by> and on the organization’s telegram channel.

Yelena **Dedyulya**





# A TOUCH OF LIGHT SADNESS

**T**he first decade of June ended with graduation parties in schools, which were held throughout Belarus

## **Good luck graduates!**

Aleksandr Lukashenko, as a father and Head of State, addressed the graduates of schools, among whom was yesterday's eleventh grader, the son of the President of Belarus Nikolai Lukashenko. It was done in an unusual format. The President recorded a video message in an informal setting against the backdrop of the Independence Palace next to the

bike, on which, together with his youngest son, he led the column of the international biker festival. Here is what the President said, "Dear graduates, the second, very difficult, I think, even the most difficult stage of your life has come to an end. The first, of course, was kindergarten. And now the school. Difficult because you had to do everything at once. Study unloved subjects, do unloved work. The next one will

definitely be easier. However, only if you accurately and correctly determine your future path. And you will need to deal with only one, well, maybe two or three specific subjects. If you define it accurately, then definitely interesting subjects. And yet, in this case, I always advise our students, graduates and schoolchildren: do everything on time. Study subjects in time, determine your future path in time, go to work on time, create families in time, give birth to children. In time, all in time! Because then it will be difficult to do this: other things will overwhelm you. In a word, good luck, children!”

These and other words with wishes for success were sincerely voiced by both teachers and parents at various venues where events were held in honour of school graduates. They were large-scale, spectacular, bright. In addition, youth and beauty reigned everywhere. Whichever city of Belarus you take, everywhere you could observe the scope and creativity of the organisers: teachers, parents and the children themselves, saying goodbye to school. Unique scenarios of celebrations, presenters, DJs, show programmes, balloons and white doves, stylish trendy clothes, translucent skirts made of soft fabric, the most fashionable shoes, including bright sandals on a massive platform, contrasting with the monochrome airy outfits of the girls... Well, as well as graduation certificates, gold and silver medals... Farewell waltz. And even staying until the dawn according to the good old tradition... All this took place.

In Gomel, for example, residents of the city admired the parade of graduates. And in Zhabinka, in the Brest Region, graduates of the district's schools laid flowers at the monument to Soviet soldiers and partisans, and then the solemn column went to the city park, where certificates were handed over and the best students were honoured right on the pier of the park lake. In Soligorsk, Vileyka, Polotsk, Molodechno, in other large and small cities and towns, smiles, excitement and joy reigned in the central squares. And there was even a golden glitter rain, sparkling in the rays of the sun, as it was done in Soligorsk. There was also a light sadness caused by parting with friends, classmates, beloved teachers and the usual course of school life. The parents sighed slowly, admiring their children. After all, there are still new excitements ahead: central testing, entrance exams and a completely different new life.

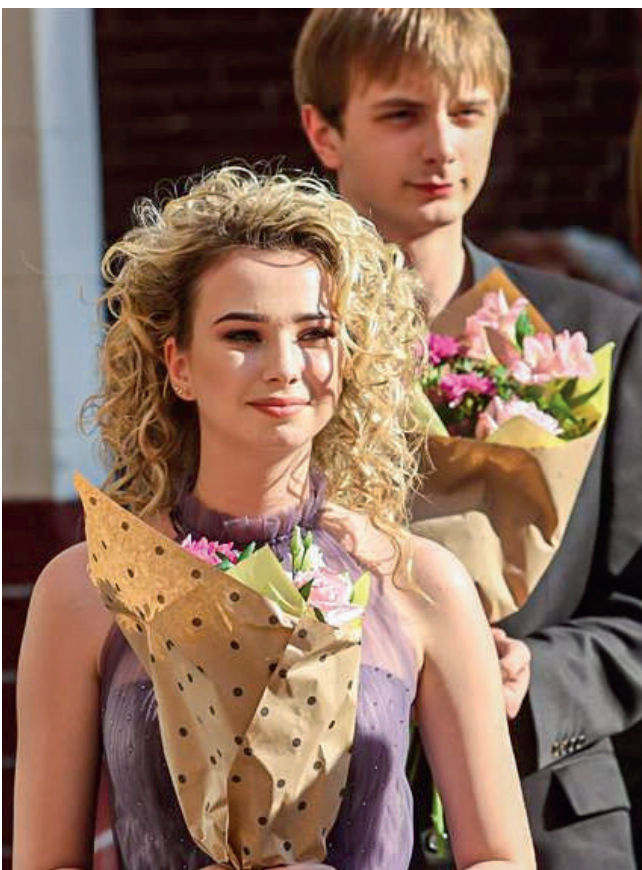
The warm weather favoured everyone who took part in the celebrations of farewell to their educational institutions. Note that all graduates breathed easier without masks, since by this time the coronavirus pandemic had receded.

Let us also remember that on the eve of exams and graduation balls, the last bells traditionally sounded in all schools of Belarus. On that day, May 30th, for example, all 11th grade students in the capital, and this is about 11 thousand people, had fun at the city holiday Last Bell in Minsk Arena. The best of the best graduates were also noted. They were invited to Molodechno for the republican holiday Last Bell. The programme included the laying of flowers at the Victory Monument, the solemn procession of the column of graduates through the city, and the awards ceremony. In



total, more than 1.5 thousand graduates from all over the country took part in the celebration.

To educate the people, three things are needed: schools, schools and schools. These words belong to the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. In Belarus, according to statistics, about 98 thousand graduates of the 9th grade and over 52 thousand of the 11th grade received documents on education







throughout the country. More than 10,000 eleventh-graders said goodbye to school in Minsk alone. For your information: in the 2021/2022 academic year, about 3 thousand institutions of general secondary education operated in the country, in which more than 1 million 66 thousand students studied.

### **There is a lyceum**

The exemplary educational institutions of the country include the Specialised Lyceum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which prepares children for further study in departmental universities and service in the internal affairs bodies. This lyceum enrolls children at the age of 12. The lyceum constantly studies and uses the advanced developments of cadet and Suvorov education. The lyceum is a participant in all events held under the auspices of the Belarusian Union of Suvorovites and Cadets (starting from cadet balls, Law Olympiad and ending with military sports competitions), which also makes it possible to study the experience of colleagues. This year, 47 graduates received certificates of graduation from the Specialised Lyceum.

“The boys from the Lyceum are the pride of the country. Once they made a choice, and, having established themselves in it, today many want to wear cadet, and then officer shoulder straps. We will be happy to meet them at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Given the good training of the guys, they will succeed,” said police colonel Dmitry

Korzyuk, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Belarus. On the holiday, he wished the graduates to go through life boldly, have their own position and principles, and be proud that they are patriots and employees of the internal affairs bodies.

### **Scarlet shoulder straps are pride and honour**

In the Minsk Suvorov Military School, one of the best institutions of general secondary education in Belarus, a solemn event dedicated to the 66th graduation was held. During the ceremony, seven graduates were awarded certificates of a special type with a gold medal.

“We can proudly say that seven out of 69 graduates receive a special distinction — a gold medal. This is a very high figure, it speaks of the serious quality of education that is inherent in our school, of the attitude of officers and teachers to their work,” said the head of the educational institution Andrey Gorbatenko. “I really want our Suvorov students to clearly understand what the attributes of statehood are, what such concepts as the ‘State Flag Square’, ‘Brest Fortress’, ‘Khatyn’ mean ... Therefore, I sincerely wish graduates to become real citizens and defenders of their country. And no matter where they are, no matter what job they work, they must remember that they are Suvorovites.”

Among the Suvorov students of the graduation company there are winners of the International Olympiad for





students of Pre-University Educational Institutions of the CIS Countries in physics, the Start to Science International Festival of Innovative Scientific Ideas, the Republican Olympiad in physics and chemistry, the republican competition of research works of students in the Russian language. There are also multiple winners of republican sports competitions in military applied sports among cadet schools, Suvorov schools and specialised lyceums, Defender of the Fatherland republican contest in winter and summer all-around programmes. Two graduates are presented with the award from the special fund of the President of Belarus for the social support of gifted pupils and students.

The vast majority of Suvorov graduates will continue their education in institutions of the military education system. Continuing their service in the Armed Forces and other law enforcement agencies, graduates of the school, following the Suvorov traditions, will honourably carry a scarlet shoulder strap under a military uniform, show their best qualities, demonstrate their readiness to take responsibility for the fate and security of the Motherland. Within the walls of the school, more than 13 thousand young men received a start in life. 350 Suvorov students graduated from the school with a gold medal, 447 with a silver one. More than 60 graduates became generals, more than 150 became candidates of sciences, associate professors and professors.

Mikhalina **Cherkashina**





# THE SECRETS OF THE THREE CITIES ARE REVEALED

**What will surprise travellers with  
the Mogilev Region**



For a long time, the Mogilev Region remained a 'blank spot' on the tourist map. Today, however, this mistake is being actively corrected. The region reveals its secrets and can count on tourists who have already travelled to other regions of Belarus and are looking for new sensations. Well, this place will surprise them.

### Lion's grave

A professional guide can keep tourists busy for two or even three hours with just the pedestrian Lenina Street in Mogilev. Plaques on houses and other interesting details help reveal interesting facts from the past. So many famous people and events are woven into the history of the city!

In 1708, the Russian Emperor Peter I and his military opponent, the Swedish King Charles XII, visited here. You can find a symbolic key to the city on one of the buildings of the pedestrian street. A similar key was presented by the locals to Empress Catherine II. In 1780, in Mogilev, she met with the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph II. The latter came here incognito, but the townspeople figured out the eminent guest. Joseph II then lodged in one of the best buildings in the city, which belonged to local wealthy merchants. This building has survived to this day. Now it houses the Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya's Art Museum.

During the First World War, the Headquarters of the Russian Emperor Nicholas II was located in the city. He settled in the governor's palace. His young son, Tsarevich Aleksei, also lived here.

When Mogilev turned into a military capital, distinguished guests frequented here, such as Russian generals and allies of Nicholas II from the Triple Entente. The war contributed to the development of city temples. The tsar and his retinue visited the Church of the Saviour. The empress also came here, and after the royal couple, the grand dukes started visiting the temple. Such visitors left generous donations. It is not surprising that the Church of the Saviour became one of the richest in the Russian Empire at that time.

The Church of St. Stanislaus was the main Catholic church in the Russian Empire. It has survived to this day. Moreover, this is one of those temples that can boast of ancient frescoes. One of them shows a plot where Carmelite monks receive a letter for the construction of a church. The artist painted buildings behind them. These drawings are considered the most ancient image of the city.

One of the favourite places of the townspeople is Podnikolie and the complex of St. Nicholas Convent. One of the temples is a monument dated 1672 and is one of the oldest buildings in the city. Here you can bow to the miraculous icon of the Mother of God. More than once, she confirmed her strength, she protected the city from wars and natural disasters. The monastery also has a coin that Emperor Nicholas II was holding in his hands. The tsar gave it to a beggar boy. The orphan kept such a gift all his life, and gave it to the church when he became old.

Unfortunately, the Jesuit Collegium has not been preserved. More precisely, only one wall and the foundation remained, on which the building of the local history museum was built. Now it houses an ethnographic exposition and an exhibition dedicated to the provincial Mogilev.

One of the themed tours of the city is dedicated to the history of the temples. By the way, a hundred years ago, the historian, ethnographer, politician and collector Ivan Lutskevich compared Mogilev to little Prague, because there were about a hundred places of worship in the city. Catholics, Orthodox and representatives of other faiths lived nearby.



■ Square of Stars

There was also a compact area where Jews lived — Shkolishche.

The city has preserved many buildings of the 17th-19th centuries, as well as a memorial arch of 1780, the building of the City Council and the Regional Drama Theatre of 1886-1888.

Mogilev also has the highest tower in Belarus, which is about 50 meters. Catherine II and the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph II admired the views from its top. During the Second World War, it was damaged and, unfortunately, it was demolished. However, the townspeople immediately raised the issue of restoring one of the symbols of the old city. The modern town hall is a building recreated already in the 21st century in the same place. Today there is a museum of the history of the city. Visitors are offered to climb to the observation deck. If you're lucky, you can visit the centre of a complex clockwork.

For centuries, Mogilev has been one of the main cultural and political centres. In the 16th-18th centuries, it was ranked among the richest cities in the lands of Belarus. Representatives of 80 types of specialties lived here, famous schools of engraving and architecture operated here. Local woodcarvers were requested far beyond the boundaries of their city. By the way, it was Mogilev craftsmen who worked on the country palace of



Emperor Aleksei Mikhailovich in Kolomenskoye near Moscow and the iconostasis for the Novodevichy Convent.

Meanwhile, in the late 30s of the twentieth century, Mogilev could become the Belarusian capital. There was even a project for such a transfer. Architect Iosif Langbard designed the building of the House of Soviets for Mogilev. It was he who created the same project for Minsk.

Be sure to visit Mogilev Square of Glory and Gorky Park, which is located on the territory of the former citadel. By the way, the first mention of the city dates back to 1267. You can see a model of the castle from 1526 in the park. It was made by the Mogilev sculptor Andrei Vorobyov, using the preserved descriptions. Nearby stands a sculpture of Masheka, who is associated with the legend of the appearance of the name of the city. Here they like to talk about a daring robber who possessed incredible strength. The place of his burial was called the 'Lion's Grave'. Therefore, lions have become one of the symbols of the city, their figures 'guard' the entrances to the bridge across the Dnieper.

Not surprisingly, various tours have been developed in a city with such a rich history. It can be a city tour with visits to memorable places, stories about the First World War, or about the heroic defence of the city during the Second World War. The older generation, represented, as a rule, by guests from the CIS, chooses a nostalgia trip. The city has preserved objects that remind of their Soviet childhood.

Young people are interested in discovering a modern city with its sculptures and new traditions. For example, tourists like to make wishes in the Square of Stars.

Excursions can become interactive when musicians, mimes or actors in the form of historical characters are engaged at various points of the route.

After traveling around the regional centre, you can go to explore the surroundings. For example, visit the Green Grove ethnographic village, or relax in the Nikolaevskiy Prudy ecotourist complex.

### Town on five hills

Today, not only the regional centre, but also small towns of the Mogilev region are looking for their own approaches to the tourist's heart. Local stories surprise, and sometimes change the perception of the country.

Even the small town of Horki, with a population of about 30 thousand, which is located in the north-east of the Mogilev Region, with the help of guides and museum workers, appears to the guests as one of the historical centres of education and science.

The name of the city is associated with the terrain. The city located on five hills in the centre of transport routes saw interesting events.

Horki is first mentioned in ancient documents in 1544. In 1619, the town gained independence from the local feudal lords by the Charter of Liberties. Crafts were actively developed here. Perhaps it is with the artisans that the change in the name of the settlement is connected. Hory Maliye appeared with their settlement, and during the entry of these lands into the Russian



■ One of the temples, a monument dated 1672, is one of the oldest buildings in the city. Here you can worship the miraculous icon of the Mother of God.

Empire, the two names merged into the one of Hory-Horki. The settlement had this name until 1919, and later officially became just Horki.

One of the hills was nicknamed Parnassus. This is a reference to the late 19th century satirical poem Taras on Parnassus, a mysterious work, the history of which has not been revealed yet. Many literary critics tried to find the author. According to one version, the poem could have been written by students of the Hory-Horki Agricultural Institute.

During the Northern War, Russian troops were stationed in Horki. The tent of Emperor Peter I was located on one of the hills and since then the name 'Petrova Gorka' (Peter's Hill) has stuck to it.

During the War of 1812, no major battles took place here, but the territory suffered enormous economic damage. After the movement of the troops, the fields were trampled down, the houses were plundered. The war was also fatal for Lev Sologub, who owned an estate in Hory-Horki. He had his own theatre, orchestra, greenhouse with outlandish plants. The count signed an agreement with the tsarist government on the supply of fodder for the army, which he did not fulfil. The estate was confiscated and transferred to the state treasury.



In 1833, the Russian Empire turned out to have a poor harvest. The question arose of what to do to prevent future famine. The tsar was informed that the peasants were cultivating the land just like a hundred years ago, reforms were needed, because the quality and quantity of products depended on agricultural science, which at that time was not taught anywhere in the Russian Empire. It was decided to open a special school. For its construction, the territories of the Kyiv, Chernigov and Mogilev provinces were selected. And yet the choice fell on the latter. Many nuances were taken into account, such as the presence of access roads, water meadows. When searching for a place, it was also prescribed that there were no large drinking establishments there.

The All-Russian Emperor Nicholas I signed a decree on the organisation of the Hory-Horki Agricultural School. Considerable funds have been allocated for this. Masons and carpenters from different provinces came here, large-scale construction began, which was headed by the Italian architect Angelo Campioni, invited from St. Petersburg. The buildings constructed under his guidance have survived to this day and today have the status of a historical and cultural heritage of the Republic of Belarus. The oldest of them is the former main

building, erected in 1837. In front of the façade, there are busts of outstanding scientists, including the founder of scientific vegetable growing, a researcher in the field of fruit growing, selection and seed production of agricultural crops Mikhail Rytov.

The ceremony of the opening of the agricultural school took place in 1840. Along with the training of personnel, great attention was paid to science here.

In 1848, an institute was formed here, where agronomists with higher education were trained for the first time in the territory of the Russian Empire.

The first chemical laboratory and a veterinary clinic were created in Horki. Meteorological observations began to be carried out here in 1841, and they began to be published in magazines in 1853. By the way, data from this first meteorological station in Belarus are sometimes inserted into modern weather forecasts for comparative analysis of record high or low temperatures.

After the uprising of 1863, in which students and teachers of the Hory-Horki Institute took an active part, the tsarist authorities decided to remove the higher institution from here, and transport the materials to St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, secondary schools continued to operate.

Andrei Vlasenko, a graduate of the Hory-Horki agricultural school, invented the first grain harvester (a prototype of a combine harvester). It was powered by two horses and one driver, practically did not leave spikelets on the ground. Even in 1869, the Agricultural Newspaper wrote about it. However, the production of such equipment was not established, the inventor was refused, he was told that 'the implementation of such a complex machine is beyond the power of our factories'. In America, something similar will be created 11 years later.

You can learn interesting facts from the history of the educational institution in the museum, which works at the Belarusian State Agricultural Academy in Horki. This is one of the largest multidisciplinary higher educational institutions of the agro-industrial sector among the CIS countries and Europe. It has the status of a leading university in the national education system of the Republic of Belarus in the field of personnel for agriculture.

This is a kind of city within a city: 16 educational buildings, 14 student dormitories, a library with a book fund of more than one million copies, a sports complex, an amphitheatre and its own Palace of Culture. The latter hosts many important city events.

Today, about 10 thousand students study here, and more than 110 thousand specialists have become graduates of the academy. Many of them became prominent statesmen, scientists, heads of large institutions and enterprises. President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko also graduated from this higher educational institution.

Since 1962, the academy has been training personnel for foreign agro-industrial enterprises. More than three thousand young people from nine dozen countries of the world received education there.

The Agricultural Academy can become one of the places of attraction for guests in Horki. Here you can stroll through





■ Belarusian State Agricultural Academy

the cosy territory of the campus, the old park with flower beds of a specific shape, which are called 'Monomakh's hats' (they were the same in the 19th century).

In addition, Horki has the oldest botanical garden in the republic, which adjoins the dendrological park. The collection of the garden contains more than two thousand species of plants. Bananas, pineapples, lemons, cacti, ficuses, orchids and other exotic heat-loving plants grow in the greenhouse.

It is worth saying that in 2012 the city changed a lot. It hosted the republican harvest festival Dozhinki. This event dedicated to agricultural workers is held annually in Belarus. Many new buildings were repaired and built in the city for the festival, including the large sports complex Ice Arena.

In 2012, a historic building of the 19th century was restored, where the once famous pharmacy of Kazimir Podziernski worked. He invented the freckle cream. To demonstrate the miraculous effect of his invention, the owner of the pharmacy invited a boy with him to the world exhibition in Paris, whose freckles were removed on one half of his face. Podziernski received a gold medal in Paris for the magic cream. He patented the invention and called it Kasimi Metamorphosis. Advertising for this cream was in all the newspapers and magazines of the time. The buyers could not even imagine that such a cream was made not in a large factory, but in a semi-basement...

This and many other secrets from the history of the city can be found in the Horki Regional Historical and Ethnographic Museum, which is located in the building of a former pharmacy.

### Partisan region

What can one serve guests when there are no historical objects preserved? Klichev could be included in the unofficial

list of cities wiped out by the Second World War. When the Red Army troops came here in 1944, there were no houses or streets left, everything turned into ruins. Single buildings survived on the outskirts. There was even a question whether it was worth restoring the town on this site, or building houses on a new territory, closer to the railway. Nevertheless, the settlement has revived, and military history has become one of the key topics that is being developed in tourism.

On the eleventh day after the occupation of the region, the first partisan detachment was created here, and by the spring of 1942 the last German police garrison was destroyed and Soviet power was restored. The Klichev partisan zone became the largest in Belarus. It was defended by 18 thousand partisans. Representatives of 67 nationalities fought as part of partisan formations. There were also thousands of civilians here, so during the war years the zone was called the Little Soviet Land and the partisan capital. All the governing bodies of the Mogilev Region, headquarters, hospitals, and a printing house were located on the territory of the zone. A partisan airfield was created, which was the first on the territory of occupied Belarus to receive aircraft from Soviet soil. In order to destroy the partisans, the enemy removed selected troops, motorised units, and tanks from the front line. Aircraft dropped incendiary mines and barrels of fuel on the forests. 'Forest Soldiers' survived several blockades...

In 1985, at the initiative of the veterans of the partisan movement, a memorial complex of partisan glory Usakino was built here using the folk construction method. It was renovated last year.

The complex includes a monument to the villages Vyazen and Selets destroyed and not revived after the war, as well as a



■ In 1985, on the initiative of veterans of the partisan movement, a memorial complex of partisan glory Usakino was built here.

partisan cemetery. From time to time, you can hear partisan poems, ditties in the recreated partisan camp, see how the partisan printing house works, how the wounded are dressed in a medical dugout, or catch commanders at a meeting.

You really feel the history here in the forest among partisan dugouts and funnels preserved since the war. Actors in wartime costumes show the events that took place on this land, including the breaking of the blockade by partisans. The forest is suddenly shattered with the rumble of military aircraft, and a battle unfolds in front of the audience a little frightened by sounds and pyrotechnics.

The military-patriotic theatrical programme is carried out by the regional centre of culture. Local students can also take part in the dramatisations. Spectators are invited to sit by a real partisan fire and eat in the partisan kitchen.

Quests are held for children's groups and modern schoolchildren are interested in trying themselves in the role of partisans.

Military and patriotic tours are one of the most requested programmes of the Klichev Museum of Local Lore. Guides work with children not only within the walls of the premises, but also go to the Usakino forests, where historical events took place. Schoolchildren learn about the war through the stories of real people, their personal tragedies and problems. Children are often asked difficult questions. Real situations that took place in the partisan zone are described and children are offered to try to find answers to them. For example, they ask what they would do if they found themselves in a ring of fire, surrounded by an enemy whose number exceeds the number of partisans by several times, with a handful of cartridges per person, when, it would seem, there are practically no chances to break out of

the blockade, and the enemy offers to surrender and save life.

The children learn about sabotage groups that operated in the Klichev Region, and how partisans stopped trains with enemy weapons on the railway. They are given the opportunity to try themselves as saboteurs, come up with a name for the detachment, choose a commander and develop a plan of action. They also offer children to deal with everyday issues, to figure out how to take care of the wounded, women and children who are hiding in a partisan camp among forests and swamps.

These interactive events allow the museum of a small town to always remain in demand. And while children prefer quests and quizzes, the adults use the museum as a creative platform. Sometimes the halls come alive. Even the exhibits are perceived differently when, for example, girls from the folklore ensemble show a family village evening and start a ritual song in the hall of ethnography. Or when, among the ancient icons, the powerful female and male voices of the singers merge in church hymns.

There is an exhibition hall and a winter garden in the museum, in which the employees tried to recreate the interior of the lost landowners' estates with art galleries, furniture, musical instruments, and utensils. Musical lounges and poetry evenings take place in this cosy atmosphere. Next to the museum there is an apothecary's garden where about 100 species of rare and aromatic plants are grown...

This time, we have revealed the secrets of only three cities, but many surprises have been prepared in other parts of the region. Ancient crafts are being revived here, the legends of springs with healing water live on, regional festivals are held and a new history continues to be written.

Yelena **Dediulya**





VERA POLYAKOVA,

**“IF I SEE A WORK  
BY A BELARUSIAN  
AUTHOR THAT  
AMAZES ME, I WILL  
UNDOUBTEDLY  
STAGE IT”**

**When you call Vera Polyakova, you hear the music of the famous song Silver Blizzard instead of the dial tones. It is no coincidence because this is a hit performed by actress Vera Polyakova as a singer... Here you immediately get acquainted with the many faces of the heroine of the conversation: actress, singer, TV presenter, producer, artistic director, teacher, caring mother, wife of a diplomat... And more recently, the director of the Youth Theatre. Our conversation started with the discussion of this new role of Vera Polyakova.**

*“In addition to the fact that you are a professional actress, you also have a diploma of an economist-manager... Versatility indeed... Have you got many opportunities to play in children’s performances?”*

“Of course, I have a lot of experience in children’s performances. For example, in the Palace of the Republic, where I played in New Year’s fairy-tale shows. And I think that we have good performances for children, which makes me very happy. However, we at the Youth Theatre are now focusing on the evening repertoire, for the age of 12+, teenagers and youth, we would like our theatre to work more for this category. So that we can charm the youth audience as well. After all, we have a wonderful theatre in a beautiful building of historical value.

I think that I got the most beautiful theatre in this country. Yes, I consider it mine now. Of course, I need some time to put everything in order, and I’m sure they will hear about us throughout the republic.”

*“One of the recent conversations with you was subtitled by your words ‘I’ll start with a café’. This is about changes in the Youth Theatre ... What would you like to change as soon as possible?”*

“What would you like to change? Increase the audience’s love for this theatre. I want the audience to dream of coming to our theatre. This is probably the dream of any leader: for tickets to be sold out like hot cakes. This is the first. Secondly, I would like to fill the theatre with life, so that both the café and the foyer would be humming with activity. So that the viewer comes in and immediately sees the history of the theatre. So that the walls are not bare. So that before a person enters the hall, he or she could learn something about this theatre with a history of sixty-five

years. Not every theatre in our country can boast such a rich history.”

“Of course, now there will be new performances, projects in the Youth Theatre... I read about the director from Venice, whom you are going to invite...”

“Yes, I met him at the Bryantsev Theatre for Young Spectators in St. Petersburg. Feruccio Merisi premiered a performance in the dell’arte style there quite recently. I really want this to appear on our stage. Literally tomorrow I am flying to St. Petersburg, to the opening of the Raduga international theatre festival, we will discuss a lot there. We are planning a premiere of *The Canterville Ghost* directed by Anna Kozlova, our young director, for June. At the artistic council, when the discussion about this play took place, everyone said that it was a great play. I cannot but agree with them. I would also like to mention Tatyana Sambuk, director from Moscow, who will stage a requiem concert based on Vasil Bykov’s *Alpine Ballad*. Until June 22nd, we are planning a premiere at the theatre. After June 24th, we will go to the Nesvizh Castle to play this concert.

At the beginning of July, Aleksandr Barkar, a Moscow director, will arrive, who on July 29th-30th will premiere Beaumarchais’ *Le Figaro*. We will also fill a niche with these projects, which is the audience of 12+. Well, in September, Tatyana Sambuk will stage *Eugene Onegin*, in which our colleagues from the Russian Federation already have great interest, and are already waiting for us on a big tour in St. Petersburg, in Velikiye Luki, and in Pskov. I think we will see many more interesting cities... Now we have applied for a festival in Macedonia, we want to participate with the play Mukha-Tsokotukha, and, perhaps, we will win. Well, then, at the end of the year we’ll have New Year’s fairy tales! What else should we do?”



***“And what about the cooperation with Belarusian authors?”***

“As soon as they start writing what I like, I will stage it right away. I give you my word. If I see a Belarusian author who amaze me with novelty, I will do this without a doubt... Unfortunately, I haven’t found my author from the modern ones yet. And so we will take Belarusian classics, or translate Russian classics into Belarusian. *The Canterville Ghost* is now published in Belarusian. I am an economist-manager, I want to sell what we create. A performance is also a product that needs to be sold well. And to sell it, it must be the best. For some time, you can still use your charisma, your connections, but after a while my client will simply ask me to return the money. Therefore, I must fill the theatre with a good, high-quality product.”

***“So, the Belarusian classics will still be present in the Youth Theatre?”***

“Undoubtedly. No performances from the repertoire are removed. We’re just filling up the evening. Right now, we don’t have a lot of performances that we could show in the evening.”



***“And how do you feel about ‘synthetic’ projects, when theatrical art is combined with other genres, about inclusive performances?”***

“I would like to mention *Eugene Onegin* once again. I have an idea to introduce sign language translation so that people with hearing disabilities can come to the performance and get the same pleasure from the action as other people. Recently, I participated in a theatre project with an interesting choreographer Kirill Baltrukov, and I really want him to stage a plastic performance on the stage of our theatre next year. A modern one that we could take to festivals.”

***“The Youth Theatre is not only about adult artists, there are also children on the stage. How do you feel about children who are fully involved in performances, work hard, then receive the applause from the audience... Is there any psychological danger for young stars in this?”***

“In the theatre project TriTformaT, which I directed until recently, children work in two out of four performances. I feel good about it. I always involve children in New Year’s fairy tales, for performances both in the large and in the small hall of the Palace of the Republic. They say that it is impossible to outplay children and animals on stage, they are always so sweet. And we will continue to use it, if both the dramaturgy and the director’s idea allow.”

***“Does your son also play on the stage, together with you?”***

“Yes, Artem has been on stage since the age of five, and tours all the time. I think this is better than he would be sitting at the computer, or doing something with the guys in the alley. And so he is engaged in creativity, gets acquainted with interesting people, musicians from the Presidential Orchestra, with my artists...”

***“This should determine his future fate?”***

“No, no, I will not interfere in any case. He will determine his own occupation. He is too smart for me and developed beyond his years, I think he will find his way.”

***“One of your concerts was called With Faith Through Life. Are you a believer? What is your faith?”***

“Yes, I am a believer. Orthodox. I try to visit temples whenever possible. Recently, when I was on tour in Pskov, where I had the most difficult performance of Karenina in the evening, I went fifty kilometres to the Pskov-Caves Monastery to see the shrine. I believe in people. In recent years, I have received a lot of negativity. Nevertheless, I have not changed my love and faith in people, the belief that I came to this earth to give people joy as much as I can.”

***“So you have your own recipe for confronting negativity?”***



■ Vera Polyakova with her sons

"You know, over the past three years, I realised one thing: if they spit in my back, then I'm ahead. I prove this not with words, but with deeds. And I hope that the Youth Theatre will give me a chance to prove that I will not let anyone down."

***"I know that you are called a one-man orchestra... And yet, how are you going to combine all your occupations? Is there something you might have to give up?"***

"I have already refused to work in the Theatre Studio of a Film Actor. I am grateful for twenty years of creative life there, but I realised that I can't physically pull the repertoire, I have a lot of roles there. I don't plan to play at the Youth Theatre either. My acting activity now is to work on the ONT channel and stage performances."

***"And what about the TriTformaT theatre, the cinema?"***

"So far, I have passed TriTformatT into good hands, to my eldest son, but I myself remained there as an actress. I don't act in films now, I don't have a single offer yet, you can forget about it."

***"But you don't leave the stage, do you?"***

"No way! I think that the Republic of Belarus should not lose such a good artist as me (laughs). I think my audience gets very upset if they can't see me on stage."

***"Will you continue to teach?"***

"Yes, I teach at the Academy of Arts, I have a little workload there, only part-time. This is twice a week. I am currently running two courses. I have courses with puppet-theatre and drama actors."

***"Do you still teach stage combat and fencing?"***

"Yes of course! On December 31st, I was given a certificate of assistant professor, so I am already a 'degreed assistant professor'. I've been teaching for twenty-two years... I can't leave it."

"When you find out that you teach such 'combat' subjects, you just don't immediately believe... True, you have reasons, your relatives were fencing champions..."

"Yes, there were... But I myself never went in for sports, except that I always looked after myself. But when they started teaching fencing at the Academy of Arts, I realised that it was my cup of tea... And in general, I have always been good at dynamic activities. And now I move a lot, dance, do complex choreography on stage... They say I'm good at it. And I thank for this the director and teacher Lidia Monakova. It was she who saw this in me, and she and my mother simply forced me to go to teach, but I did not regret it. A feeling of youthful energy, meeting young artists... In my theatrical project, 70 percent are my students."

***"Do you think about recording new songs?"***

"I sing all the time. In every performance. They say it's good, and even with a live orchestra. Although, of course, there is no time to make records. I'm currently performing my old repertoire, and when they ask me, I perform at some concerts. I don't see the need to expand my repertoire yet."

"I heard that you always protect the interests of artists... Meanwhile, they say that they are the most difficult contingent, it is hard to work with them..."

"Let's start with the fact that artists are in a class of their own. A man from the street cannot be an artist. He has to go a very long way. I have been engaged in this profession for twenty-five years, and every day I study, discover in myself all new facets of my inner world in order to give it to the viewer. If you want to be a great artist, you have to work very hard on yourself, 25/7, to be able to do more and better than others. Therefore, our character is complex, and temperament is complex. We have a very mobile psyche, and any influence from the outside, of course, excites the artist. And so you need to treat him or her almost like a child. I believe that artists are children. And they remain children in the soul to their graves. If people stay with you, then you have to fight for them, for each of them."

Interview by  
Liudmila Rublevskaya



# THIRTY COUNTRIES IN HALF A DAY

“Is it a long way to India? And to Armenia and Greece?” The correspondent of *Belarus* was lucky to meet with representatives of these countries without traveling around the world. At the same time, you can also plunge into their culture, traditions and taste national cuisine. The whole city is lucky. Grodno hosted its regular 13th Republican Festival of National Cultures.











I have a map in my hand. It has numbers from 1 to 18. These are the main locations of the festival, called the courtyards, which have become the most popular for festival visitors. Each number on the map corresponds to a courtyard where one or several ethnic communities are located. It doesn't take long to find them. All of them are located literally along one street, which is Sovetskaya, the only pedestrian street in the city that passes through the historical centre. Here, in open areas or in old courtyards, representatives of the national minorities of Belarus were waiting for the guests.

My first destination is the courtyard of the Chuvash. We turn into a cosy courtyard. We are met with the ancient holiday Akatui. It is dedicated to farming, it is 'the wedding of the land and the plow', according to the Chairman of the International Public Chuvash Association, Gennady Aleksandrov from Minsk. People rejoice at the successful completion of field

work. Here, in Grodno, the Chuvash are regular participants in the holiday. They prepared their national dishes for the guests. Sausage delicacies, such as shirtan, kuplu, as well as a pie with meat and vegetables. The desire for prosperity, profit is reflected in the clothes themselves. Bright headdresses for women with many metal circles mean coins and are symbols of well-being. I must say that the activities here began as early as noon. The entire centre of the city is filled with a crowd moving from courtyard to courtyard. It is felt that the atmosphere is saturated with goodwill and cheerful mood. People are willing to share their experiences.

"It's very nice to be here again, after such a break, though not very long," says Yury Yatsukevich from Novogrudok. "Many were waiting for the festival. My wife and I came to experience its wonderful atmosphere again. I like the hospitality of the participants. Acquaintance with the national peculiarity of





■ Representatives of various countries could be met at the festival

different peoples broadens the horizon, awakens pride in our multinational culture. I was very impressed by the Belarusian courtyard.”

We talk with Yury while walking along the street and see a sign with a number of national diasporas. Afghans, Iranians, Kazakhs, Chinese, Turkmens, Uzbeks gathered in one courtyard. Representatives of the Afghan community came to Belarus to study and stayed in Minsk. Both are married to Belarusians. They say international families are not uncommon for Afghans. “The main thing is that there should be harmony and understanding in the family, and different nationalities only enrich culture and traditions, just like this festival,” says the Chairman of the Public Organization of Afghan Refugees, Safi Saifurahman. Now there are about 670 people in the Afghan diaspora.

As for the dishes that are presented, they are all oriental cuisine, according to my interlocutors. And they name the main dishes: pilaf, manti, samsa.

I go to the sounds of Chyrvona Ruta song. There is the site of the Ukrainian courtyard nearby. Together with the performances of amateur singers, an unusual exhibition of ancient towels took place here. It turned out that this is a collection of Galina Bezborodko, a resident of Minsk Region, Honoured Master of Belarus, who has been collecting towels from her ethnic homeland for 30 years. Some are 100 or even

200 years old. There are also authentic folk costumes. “Here, at the festival,” say Vera and Aleksandr Yakovenko, “you can only see a part of her collection, which is part of the museum collection, which is located at her home. Nevertheless, she gladly gave it to this festival, in which she herself repeatedly took part.”

One of the features of the Ukrainian courtyard is a photo chronicle of the festival, which introduces the history of the forum from its foundation. Ukrainians are its permanent participants. As always, the guests were treated to the Ukrainian national dishes, such as pampushkas, vareniki and pies. And, of course, salo.

One cannot image a celebration without a round dance! The artists in the Russian courtyard invited everyone present to the circle, and no one was left behind. Grodno residents and guests of the city got acquainted with folk craftsmen, who presented their products made of wood, straw, and traditional nesting dolls. In addition, everyone could join the master class on painting them. There were a lot of people who wanted to.

“The festival is a great and very friendly holiday,” believes the Chairman of the Russian Society Republican Association Sergey Molodov. “Over the years, we have made friends with all representatives of national communities, we go to visit courtyards. And there is so much to see, because the best creative teams from all regions of Belarus come here.”





Natives of Azerbaijan met guests with a dynamic lezginka, the famous sirtaki became the leitmotif of the Greek courtyard. Indian dances enchanted with their magic, Italian songs floated in the air...

In the Bashkir courtyard, we were met with the sounds of music near the real yurt. A delegation from the Republic of Bashkortostan headed by State Duma deputy, head of the World Association of Bashkirs Elvira Aitkulova came to support their countrymen in Belarus. She said that this same yurt was brought on behalf of the governor, as well as national costumes so that the Bashkirs could demonstrate their traditions to everyone.

"The festival was very impressive, I came to Grodno for the first time, but it is felt that there is a history in the holiday. Indeed, it happened historically: many nationalities, cultures, religions came together here. We see it in the courtyards. And the city is very convenient for such a holiday, everything is compact and at the same time spacious. We have so much to learn," said the representative of Bashkortostan.

A 'hut' with an authentic interior was presented in the Polish courtyard. Here they taught how to make flowers from corrugated paper and how to make clay pots. And the mood was created by mazurka, polonaise and krakowiak. Bigus, kishka, flaki, donuts became the main treats in the Polish courtyard.

"We were preparing a lot," said the Chairman of the Union of Poles in Belarus Public Association Aleksandr Sangin. "The celebration provides an opportunity to demonstrate our culture, cuisine. And at the same time, to feel the atmosphere of friendship, unanimity on the Belarusian land, because this is our Motherland and we live and work for the sake of this country."

At the Lithuanian farmstead, I was handed a small scroll with good wishes in rhymed form. As the Head of the Rimdyuny Village Club, Natalya Belyachits said that the amateur association of traditional folk culture Žilvitis, which means 'willow' in translation, is represented at the festival. The delegation that came from the Ostrovets District includes both children and adult women. Lithuanian and Belarusian songs are performed by this team. Folk craftswomen organised an exhibition of linen towels and lace.

Many visitors took photos with the accordion player in the German national costume. Maksim Marveld came from Gomel, and the Germans gave him an accordion. And although Maxim himself is a bayan player, he has mastered this instrument as well. He believes that music and culture really unite people of all nationalities.

The Jewish diaspora presented household items that have been used in their families for centuries. These are a prayer





book (siddur), a men's headdress (kippah), a quadrangular cape for prayer (tallit) and much more. By the way, the first Jewish communities appeared at the end of the 14th century in Brest and Grodno.

"For us, the festival is a long-awaited event," said the Chairman of the Board of the Grodno Public Association of Jewish Culture Natan Shamsutdinov. "We can show all the diversity of our traditions. Not only the tragedy of the Holocaust, but also the fact that the Jewish community continues to live and develop."

In general, every corner of the historical centre of Grodno was saturated with the flavour of different cultures and traditions. About 800 representatives of 30 nationalities introduced the festival visitors to the cultural customs,

traditional amusements and ancient crafts of their people, and also treated them to national dishes.

The largest was the Belarusian courtyard, which occupied the entire area. The Republican festival brought together representatives of all regions of the country. Each region presented its most remarkable craftsmanship, included in the list of intangible cultural heritage of Belarus. Songs of creative groups sounded without interruption, and friendly hostesses treated all those present with canapés and cookies. As Olga Medvedeva, a representative of the Mogilev Region, summed up, the festival brought a lot of joyful emotions and became a source of inspiration. After all, peace and harmony are very important values for every person and society.

Margarita **Ushkevich**



# WALKS WITH THE TOWNSWOMAN SVETLANA

**Svetlana Chubrik, a librarian from Novogrudok, conducts excursions for tourists in the image of an old-world lady**

**You can often see a beautiful townswoman on the old streets of Novogrudok, especially at the height of the tourist season. The girl is dressed in a luxurious dress and hat, invariably holds an umbrella from the sun and a book in her hands. In fact, this is how she lures tourists to the local library, located in the very centre of the city. I have to say, she's doing great. This year, for her efforts, she was awarded the prestigious Aleksandr Dubko Prize in the field of culture and art, presented in the Grodno Region.**

Many argue that in the current age of digitalisation and gadgets, the book is receding into the background. Svetlana Chubrik, Head of the Service and Information Department of the Novogrudok Regional Library, does not agree with this, "Our library has a rich collection of local lore, which contains memoirs, letters and stories of local residents. In 2017, the museum of mini-models The Lost Legacy was opened, which contains copies of the landmark buildings of the historical centre of Novogrudok of the beginning of the 20th century: banks, hotels, shopping galleries, shops, the Jewish district of Ratselo... The mini-museum turned out to be so popular, that the district executive committee allocated a piece of land in the open air, where enlarged copies of the Novogrudok Radziwill Palace, the Jesuit Collegium, the church on Castle Hill and other historical and cultural objects of the region appeared."

According to Svetlana Chubrik, in order for people to be interested in the history of their region, it must be made interactive and alive.

"To do this, we came up with the idea of a retro photo studio, the opening of which became possible thanks to a grant from the President of Belarus. The allocated funds made it possible to create a wardrobe for Novogrudok townspeople who lived in the 1920s and 1930s.

The costumes of an urban fashionista and a schoolgirl were sewn to order, and men's and children's images of those years were also reconstructed. Their



exact copies can be seen in the photographs of Savva Sivko, a well-known photographer from Novogrudok, whose photographic archive is stored in the National Historical Museum. Some accessories were brought by local residents: for example, handbags found somewhere on the mezzanine.”

More than 1.5 thousand tourists visited the retro photo studio last year. But enthusiasts were not limited to one project. Thanks to the support of the sports and tourism department of the district executive committee, the Traveling with a Novogrudok Townswoman interactive programme appeared.

“Tours around the city start from the museum room in the library and gradually move to fresh air,” says Svetlana. “We will definitely take guests to the Castle Hill, the Mound of Immortality, to the monument to Adam Mickiewicz and other interesting locations. During the walk, tourists can not only enjoy the company of Pani Maria (this is my character), but also meet other characters of those years. For example, an avid theatre goer, Pani Sofia, who offers to play parlour games. All the details from the everyday life of the townspeople of the last century were collected bit by bit according to the stories of old-timers, this is not something invented and artificial.”

In a small library room, decorated in the style of the early 20th century, you can hold a photo session or take a selfie as a keepsake.

In addition to walking in an unusual way, Svetlana enjoys traveling around the district on a bibliobus, communicating with the villagers. To serve residents of sparsely populated remote villages, 11 routes have been developed, covering 46 settlements, “The main thing is to satisfy the reader’s needs. We are always waiting, calling, leaving individual orders. Last summer, together with club institutions, we organised an information and local history tour dedicated to the Year of the Small Homeland. The unique facsimile edition of the Lavrishevsky Gospel was of particular interest. The work will continue this year. We have also developed interesting projects for young people. Trust me, people are reading!”

Tatiana **Vrublevskaya**





# A SONG, A PRAYER, AND A CHARM...

# Musician, teacher and researcher Ivan Kirchuk has been working with Belarusian folklore for 40 years

For me, a city dweller, folklore will always be a mystery. When you meet with the bearers of folk traditions, it is as if you find yourself in another world. It is warm and cosy in it, you accept music and rituals at the level of intuition, sensations. Even if the keys to deciphering songs, dances, images, rituals are lost, you understand that folk culture continues to work. Everything is important: sounds, rhythms, energy of the team and each individual person. Folklore is indivisible, if even one song is torn out of it, something breaks, it doesn't work. And therefore, the contemporaries who promote folklore face a difficult task. All the old foundations have been erased, people have left the places where their ancestors lived, the city lives according to its own laws and rules, traditions are not passed on from older generations to the next.

The well-known Belarusian musician, folklorist, teacher, singer, multi-instrumentalist Ivan Kirchuk has been working with folklore for many years, collecting it on expeditions and popularising it through music, performances, books, teaching aids and lectures. He is the author of many programmes and reconstructed rituals and holidays. His unique works have been broadcast on radio and television in Europe, America and Australia. He created and directed educational folklore groups. He is known as one of the founders and leader of the Troitsa (Trinity) ethno-trio, the best ethno-band of the republic, which represented Belarusian folklore at hundreds of international festivals around the world. Ivan Kirchuk has solo performances in which he tries to convey the folk wisdom that he has been collecting for decades. One of them, *My Path...* is the story of a person's life, which is woven with rituals and truths that were passed down from ancestors. Even the household items of Belarusians and musical instruments from all over the world collected by him in his personal museum are used as props during performances and as teaching aids in classes with students and trainees of the Institute for Advanced Studies and Retraining of Personnel of Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts.

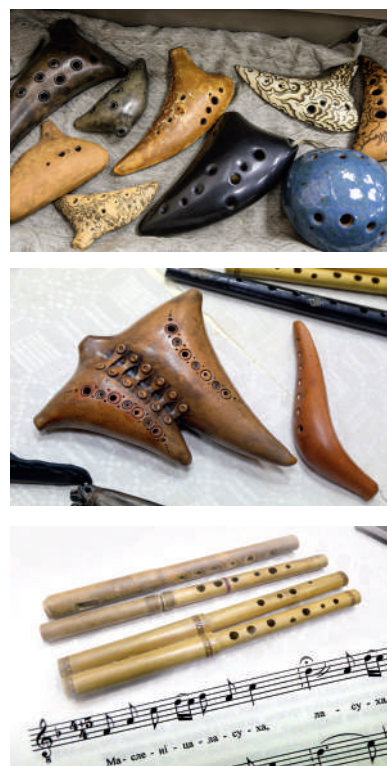
And, of course, the first question that I wanted to ask a person who works with folk culture in a variety of ways was as follows,

*“What is Belarusian folklore? And what do we lose if we don't use it?”*

“For me, it's encoded, encrypted information. Yes, I have been studying folklore for almost 40 years. At first I graduated from a music college in the city of Lida, then the Institute of Culture (*Folk Choral Songs* major field of studies). I worked at the Department of Ethnology and Folklore of the Cultural Education College for 14 years, and for 19 years at the Pedagogical University, where there were many folklore bands that also performed abroad. Before Troitsa, I had a band called Dziva. We spent all our time with authentic recordings, listened to the songs of the older generation, tried to understand where folk wisdom was hidden. After all, folklore is not only about a song. This is a whole complex, from proverbs to lamenting, which accompanied a person throughout his or her life. There are lullabies sung to a person when he or she is born, there are children's songs for games. The person grows, accompanied by sounds and actions. This is something like a mantra or prayer, which served as a talisman. About 400 songs were once heard at a Belarusian wedding: they were addressed to the groom, bride, parents, grandparents, matchmakers, even musicians who came to the celebration. Much is unclear to us today. These are unusual rhythms and texts. Folklore will be coded until we open our soul and heart.

I have been working at the Institute for Advanced Studies since 2016. Students from all regions of Belarus come here: artists, musicians, directors and other specialists related to culture. Some people are quite calm about both Belarusian folklore and folk instruments that sound here (these are ocarinas (flutes), charotkas (reed flutes), gusli, reed-pipes). They grew up with different music, different culture. I remember how my parents once went to celebrate something with their peers. And my own uncle promised to surprise them: a clarinetist, an accordionist, a violinist came... Parents did not dance, they cried all evening, because it was the music of their childhood, youth.





■ Collection of musical instruments.

Today, the folk ritual layer is unfamiliar to many people. The people who left the villages could no longer acquaint their children with this material. At the same time, I have students who cannot get enough of classes. You tell them something, and they ask for more and more. I have been studying rituals and holidays for a long time. I have published books where they are described, and a new one has recently been published, which is *Kvetka Peruna* (*Perun's Flower*). And yet, I think that I know only 30 percent of folklore. This means that the rest know it even less. Folklore is wisdom that will not immediately reveal its secrets. And then, you need to respect the memory of your ancestors. I know cases when people did not give a damn about arrangements of folk songs and rituals. Nothing good happened in their life in terms of culture, music. And for those who came to their grandparents with reverence, both creativity and life were successful."

***"There are songs that are often presented on stage as folk songs. But they sometimes distort ideas about folklore. For example, for some reason it seems to me that drinking songs are not about us."***

"These are rituals that are associated with the end of the year. Our ancestors put a whole head of a pig on the table, it was called 'kolyada'. The peasants had to make a sacrifice when the year ended. In a word, you need to delve into each element of the rite, understand why this happened.

I'm not opposed to original songs or to song similar to the folk ones. However, there should be a place for grandmothers who rarely get to local and regional festivals. Look at Buranovskiy Babushki, who travelled the whole world with their songs! There is such a thing as 'stylised folklore'. This is what I do. I am still a city dweller. Indeed, there is a lot of pseudo-folklore. Sometimes it's just uncomfortable when you see that bands come out to perform in suits with sequins, which is not in line with traditions. The suit is a charm in itself. Each belt, detail, just a rhombus embroidered by a grandmother, meant something, a soul was invested in them."

***"What can be done to make the folk song reach the modern listener more often?"***

"Change attitude to what has been preserved. There is a tribe in Africa where they keep two jugs. One of them is always involved in rituals, the second is guarded in the sanctuary. When ethnographers asked what was guarded there, the answer was simple: 'We only have two jugs left'. And in Belarus there are a lot of jugs, a lot of rushniks (traditional towels), bedspreads, other traditional items. I saw those times when entire houses that interfered with land reclamation were raked into pits by a tractor and no one even went in, did not look at what was inside. My soul hurt, and that is why I began to collect ethnographic items. Recently, I was told how one woman bought an old house, found tubs, a butter churn in it. She took everything



outside and planted flowers in them. In a year these items will be gone. And they should have been handed over to school or an ethnographic centre. It is not easy to change the situation. We need certain projects. It's good that we have adult and children's folk groups. Educational programmes are implemented here. I show my batleyka (wooden puppet theatre), I have three of them, there is a huge one, with which I travelled around Bosnia, and a collapsible one. I tell you how it all works. But first, everyone needs to turn to their ancestors. Previously, grandparents raised their grandchildren and passed on their knowledge to them. And now they are working, and children receive information from mobile phones. Sometimes it comes to funny situations. Grandchildren came to celebrate the granny's birthday. The granny asked one of them: 'Pass the salt, please'. And the boy wrote this request on the phone to other children. Nobody said a word. Everyone sent text messages to each other, brought salt to the grandmother, but she never heard how her grandchildren spoke. Or the second example. I talk quite a lot about culture and traditions to people who already work in this field. Once after the lecture, one of the students came up and said: 'Thank you so much'. I told her that she had already thanked me yesterday after the tour and the film. She replied: 'I didn't understand everything yesterday. My husband is checking on my grandfather. He is 96 years old. Grandfather shuffles his feet, rattles dishes, which irritates me terribly. I didn't communicate with him at all. But after your lecture I sat down with him. He is such an interesting person! I am now writing down everything he says.' This is how a person begins to discover wisdom in himself or herself."

***"Is this becoming a real cultural and spiritual catastrophe when young people listen to pop music instead of folklore?"***

"Not everyone is like that. We had worthy festivals, for 10 years *Kamenitsa* was such a huge gathering place. Another thing is that folklore music is not as attractive as, say, a pop concert. Children who go to music schools look up to Eurovision. Therefore, I do not take any students to teach vocals, although there were many offers. After all, then parents will come and ask why their child did not win. And in order to move somewhere, you need to do everything consciously."

***"It turns out that life-forming truths were laid in folklore. And they were polished, replenished for thousands of years..."***

"Undoubtedly. There are the most important stages in a person's life: birth, growing up, marriage, creating a family... And there was also a calendar, various rituals in which our ancestors took part. They have always had a respectful attitude towards land and water. For every moment of some ritual and holiday, there were certain songs. For example, in winter they sang alone. The children who sat at the gatherings listened to them and watched the women embroider. There was no TV, no computer, but there was information in which they grew up, thanks to which they grew up."

***"Did the rituals save a person from loneliness?"***

"Naturally. People were offended when carollers did not come to their place in winter, or when their house was bypassed



■ Ivan Kirchuk after the single-actor performance *Loaf, My Paradise*





■ Exhibits from the ethno-laboratory of the Institute for Advanced Studies and Retraining

on Easter. For me, all those who came are like mediators between God and man. Participants of the rituals changed clothes, used masks. People felt that if such guests came to them, then they would be able to convey requests to the Creator. It turns out that the space was encoded. And there was an exchange. The ancestors believed that you won't get anything for nothing, neither from the Cosmos, nor from the Creator. Therefore, people gave bread, a piece of sausage. A song was sung, wishes were sounded. And this ceremony was repeated every year."

***"Is it possible to trace the history of a people through folklore?"***

"Today there is a lot of disputable information. Alternative history, geography and so on appeared. When we were in school, we knew that the Earth is round. Until the Internet appeared, and researchers began to offer new versions. Modern man is confused. He does not know what to do, how to understand where is the truth and where is the lie. In my youth, there was no such flow of information. Today it is destructive. Ancestors did not throw anything away from folklore and rituals. Everything they had was twisted into a DNA helix."

***"Is modern folklore being created? Will our generation leave any memory of itself?"***

"I think yes. There has never been such a number of musical instruments as the masters have been making over the past

five years. When our Troitsa team began to work, we collected instruments bit by bit. Now I have a whole museum, where there is a huge number of Belarusian folk instruments made by young guys who study the tradition very closely, work in the archives. Their instruments sound good. The folklore tunes and melodies themselves made it possible to work not only for the famous Belarusian band Pesnyaray. The Palats band of Oleg Khomenko also worked with folk songs. Troitsa existed for 22 years, seven CDs were created, three of them are included in the *World Music* catalogue of European music."

***"When you go to a concert or solo performance, how many props do you take with you?"***

"22 suitcases. For example, I take so much for *Kalyadnye Igrushchi*, for the one-man show *My Path*. For a wedding, I have the old Karavai rite. At the Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle, I showed the play *Confession Under the Roofs*. For more than 20 years, there has been a one-man show that has evolved depending on my expeditions. The latter was to my native village Krupki. The grandmother, 96 years old, sang to me for an hour, this year she died. And that I managed to write down will remain."

***"You have participated in hundreds of international festivals. Is it possible to understand during such trips why our folklore is unique?"***



■ Presentation of new books by Ivan Kirchuk

“We are very powerful in folklore. This is shown in many festivals. People sometimes cry from Belarusian songs when we explain what they are about. In 1996, we started our first trips to international festivals. We had a friend in Holland who translated. He asked what the song was about. And I told him about our rituals, holidays, about Kupala, how the girls picked flowers, how people jumped through the fire, and he was surprised. As soon as we make a translation, people go into shock. How can one translate the song *Winter Meets Summer*? Foreigners may ask where the spring is. It turns out that there are things that you need to comprehend yourself before conveying them to others.

Everywhere our performances sound exotic. For example, such was the Malaysian festival, or performances in Chile and Portugal. There was a funny situation in Spain. We were given a small stage and when we performed, people surrounded us, people started clapping. One man had a red leg because he was clapping it so hard. And despite the tradition that the team can perform once, the next year we were invited to the big stage.

People abroad feel that there is something in our music that permeates. I remember in Hungary we sang *Yablonka*, which is a common spring song. A woman came up with an interpreter and asked in tears: ‘What are you doing to us?’. But that was not our intention, we don’t do magic, we’re just musicians.”

***“Not every Belarusian team is able to present folklore in such a way that it is perceived as exotic. Why do you succeed?”***

“I don’t know. We take a folk song as a basis. I have a large archive, which contains 3,000 CDs, of which 500 are DVDs of various world music. There are Belarusian authentic records: our own, collected by scientists of the Academy of Sciences, Folklore radio club. Once an article was published in Holland, where the authors reported: ‘Ivan Kirchuk is coming to us, who knows 600 folk songs’. Maybe I know more. I cannot explain how the song comes across. I have a feeling that folklore is a living entity that allows us to use this heritage if we respect it. There are songs that did not sound well no matter how much Troitsa worked on them. There was a feeling that the song was closed, there was a ban. In all the years I have not found a way to appeal to water, to fire, to space. Maybe because power is hidden in them, and if people are given these weapons, they can do trouble. The cosmic databank is closed. Folklore is a living being. If there is contact with it, it will open up a little bit. Therefore, 8-12 songs from those 600 that I know get on the discs. Therefore, I sing a cappella a lot, I don’t force any instrument there. I also began to sing a lot of incantation texts. But there was a power not only of the word, but also of the sound. People could perform miracles on a violin, on a pipe. Purify, heal, rejuvenate. You need to know your culture. Study it. Listen to it.”

Yelena **Dedyulya**

Photo: Yevgeny Pesetsky



# RUSSIAN SCHOOLCHILDREN DRAW ILLUSTRATIONS FOR THE WORKS OF YANKA KUPALA

**The life of the classic of Belarusian literature, the beacon of the Belarusian artistic word is connected with various geographical areas. The biography of our legendary compatriot incorporate many Russian locations: St. Petersburg, Smolensk, Moscow, Cheboksary, Kazan...**



# ШКОЛЬНІКІ РАСІІ МАЛЮЮЦЬ ІЛЮСТРАЦЫІ ДА ТВОРАЎ ЯНКІ КУПАЛЫ



**Жыццё класіка  
беларускай  
літаратуры, светача  
беларускага  
мастацкага слова  
звязана з рознымі  
геаграфічнымі  
абсягамі. У біяграфіі  
нашага легендарнага  
суайчынніка – і шмат  
расійскіх адрасоў:  
Санкт-Пецярбург,  
Смаленск, Масква,  
Чэбаксары, Казань...**



## CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

The connection of the Belarusian people's poet Yanka Kupala with Tatarstan is a separate issue in the history of the Belarusian-Russian literary and cultural brotherhood. This is also reminded by the events of this year, when we celebrate the 140th anniversary of the birth of Yanka Kupala.

On April 2nd, on the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia, the museum of the classic of Belarusian literature in the village of Pechishche, located not far from Kazan, presented a special exhibition of artworks by young artists of Russia *Inspired by Kupala* at the House of Friendship of the Peoples of the Republic of Tatarstan. Children from all over the Russian Federation presented their artistic works within the framework of the museum project *Reading Kupala Together*.

The works depict the impressions of young artists from acquaintance with the poems *Heritage*, *The Boy and the Pilot*, *The Man*, *Sycamore and Viburnum*, the play *Paulinka*, as well as other works of the people's poet. 'The swan's song of spring, / Throwing off winter spells, / Whispering sycamore and viburnum / In a sad valley above a ravine. / The leaves boast of greenery / In a language that the sky understands, / They wash themselves with dew in the morning, / Indulge in the southern sun ...' In order to hear and artistically convey this poetic state with the help of paints, one must look closely at what Kupala wrote, which was done by the schoolchildren of Russia.

Now the exhibition is already working in the Museum of Yanka Kupala in the village of Pechishche. It moved here on May 21st.

"Visitors of our museum of Belarusian classics, which unique both for Tatarstan and for the whole Russian Federation, will be able to get acquainted with the works of young artists until September 1st," says the director of the museum, a good friend of Belarus, Rimma Abyzova. "By the way, this year is designated in our country as the Year of Folk Art and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Russia. We invited students from the Fine Arts Department of the Children's Art School of the Verkhny Uslon District to the museum for the opening of the exhibition. Children were able not only to get acquainted with the works of their peers, but also saw their own works at the exhibition of the winners of the All-Russian project. I note that this is not our only event

for the 140th anniversary of Yanka Kupala. The



meeting titled *Singer of the Belarusian Land* is scheduled for the end of June. It will include a festive concert and the opening of a bronze memorial plaque in memory of Kupala's visit to our places, about how kindly the locals reacted to the poet who was evacuated to Tatarstan when his native land was occupied by fascist executioners. At the end of August, we will hold a big poetry festival *Yanka Kupala in the Dialogue of Cultures*, in which the Belarusians of Russia Federal National-Cultural Autonomy, various regional branches of this public organisation, the Union of Writers of Belarus, as well as the State Literary Museum of Yanka Kupala in Minsk, are invited to participate.

Rimma Abyzova is a frequent guest in Belarus, in the Minsk Museum of Yanka Kupala. She is doing everything possible to preserve the memory of the great son of the Belarusian land in Tatarstan.

It is also worth noting that in recent years, a lot of efforts for a new reincarnation of the poetry of Yanka Kupala into the Tatar language have been made by the laureate of the State Prize of the Russian Federation, People's Poet of Tatarstan Renat Kharis. By the way, his translations into the Tatar language were also published in Belarus in the book *Sonnets* by Yanka Kupala, which presented almost twenty translations into the languages of the peoples of the world of the legendary Kupala poetic cycle.

Kastus **Khadyka**



■ Rimma Abyzova, Director of the Yanka Kupala

Повязь народнага песняра Беларусі Янкі Купалы з Татарстанам – асобная тэма ў гісторыі беларуска-расійскага літаратурнага і культурнага пабрацімства. Пра гэта нагадваюць і падзеі сёлетняга года, калі мы адзначаем 140-годдзе з дня нараджэння Янкі Купалы.

Яшчэ 2 красавіка ў Дзень яднання народаў Беларусі і Расіі музей класіка беларускай літаратуры ў сяле Пячышчы, якое месціцца непадалёку ад Казані, прэзентаваў у Доме Дружбы народаў Рэспублікі Татарстан адмысловую выстаўку мастацкіх прац юных мастакоў Расіі “Па Купалаўскіх старонках”. Хлопчыкі і дзяўчынкі літарамальна з усіх куткоў Расійскай Федэрацыі прадставілі мастацкі плён музейнага праекта “Чытаем Купалу разам”.

На выявах – уражанні юных мастакоў ад знаёмства з вершамі “Спадчына”, “Хлопчык і лётчык”, “Мужык”, “Явар і каліна”, з п’есай “Паўлінка”, іншымі творами народнага песняра. “Песняй вясны лебядзінаю,/ Скінуўшы зімнія чары,/ Шэпчацца явар з калінаю/ Ў сумнай даліне над ярам./ Лісцікі зеляня хваляцца/ Небу панятлівай мовай,/ Росамі мыюцца раніцай,/ Песцяцца сонцам паўднёвым...” Каб пачуць і памастацку перадаць з дапамогай фарбаў гэты паэтычны стан, трэба ўнікліва ўгледзецца ў напісанае Купалам, што і зрабілі школьнікі Расіі.

Цяпер выстаўка працуе ўжо ў самім музеі Янкі Купалы ў сяле Пячышчы. Сюды яна пераехала 21 мая.

— Наведвальнікі нашага ўнікальнага і для Татарстана і для ўсёй Расійскай Федэрацыі музея беларускага класіка змогуць знаёміцца з працамі юных мастакоў да 1 верасня, -- расказвае дырэктар музея, добры сябар Беларусі Рыма Абызава. – Дарэчы, сёлетні год пазначаны ў нашай краіне як Год

народнага мастацтва і нематэрыяльнай культурнай спадчыны Расіі. У музей на адкрыццё выстаўкі мы запрасілі навучэнцаў мастацкага аддзялення Дзіцячай школы мастацтваў Верхнеўслонскага раёна. Дзеці змаглі не толькі пазнаёміцца з працамі сваіх ровеснікаў, але ўбачылі і свае творы на выстаўцы пераможцаў усерасійскага праекта. Заўважу, што гэта не адзінае наша мерапрыемства да 140-годдзя Янкі Купалы. На канец чэрвеня запланавана сустрэча пад назвай “Пясянр зямлі беларускай” – са святочным канцэртам і адкрыццём бронзавай мемарыяльнай дошкі ў памяць пра наведванне нашай старонкі Купалам, пра тое, як шчыра паставіліся нашы прашчурны да паэта, які патрапіў у Татарстан у эвакуацыю, калі яго родны край тапталі боты фашысцкіх катаў. А напрыканцы жніўня правядзём вялікае свята паэзіі “Янка Купала ў дзялогу культур”, да ўдзелу ў якім спрычыняцца ФНКА “Беларусы Расіі”, розныя рэгіянальныя аддзяленні гэтай грамадскай арганізацыі, Саюз пісьменнікаў Беларусі, Дзяржаўны літаратурны музей Янкі Купалы ў Мінску.

Рыма Абызава – часты госць у Беларусі, часты госць у мінскім Купалаўскім музеі. І зараз яна асабіста робіць усё магчымае дзеля захавання ў Татарстане памяці пра вялікага сына зямлі беларускай. Варта нагадаць, што ў апошнія гады шмат намаганняў да новых пераўвасабленняў паэзіі Янкі Купалы на татарскую мову зрабіў лаўрэат Дзяржаўнай прэміі Расійскай Федэрацыі, народны паэт Татарстана Рэнат Харыс. Дарэчы, яго пераклады на татарскую мову друкаваліся і ў Беларусі – у кнізе “Санеты” Янкі Купалы, якая прадставіла амаль дваццаць перакладаў на мовы народаў свету легендарнага купалаўскага вершаванага цыкла.

Кастусь **Хадыка**



THEATRE



# SUMMER, DANCE, MAGIC

**T**he Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus hosted the Ballet Summer festival for the eighth time. The dance festival opened with the performance The Pygmalion Effect by the world-famous Boris Eifman Theatre from St. Petersburg, and ended with the final Gala concert, in which featured Belarusian and Russian ballet artists, as well as famous masters from other countries.



The *Ballet Summer at the Bolshoi* is a well-known creative project, the continuation of which was especially expected this season, as well as the warm weather, which did not indulge the Belarusians who were longing for warmth and the sun in spring.

On the opening day of the festival, we, journalists, attended a press conference. It was traditionally organised by the Marketing Communications Service of the Bolshoi Theatre represented by the Head Tatiana Aleksandrova and the Editor-In-Chief Yelena Balabanovich. Whenever we see each other in the Chamber Hall, where journalists often meet with participants in the next project, we express respect to our creative colleagues. And this time we were pleasantly surprised. Welcoming the participants of the conference at the entrance to the hall, Tatiana and Yelena presented each media representative with a catalogue. In any case, I thought so. But it was themed chocolate. The cover had a photograph illustrating a scene from a ballet performance,



and there were small tiles with images of mise-en-scenes from the Bolshoi's ballet performances inside. It was a really pleasant surprise, which confirmed once again how important it is to set the tone of the meeting. And the theatre succeeded. The meeting had an extremely positive atmosphere.

Let's talk about how the production team of the Bolshoi and the invited ballet dancers felt on that significant day.

### Afternoon. Anticipation.

**Igor Kolb, Chief Ballet Master of the Bolshoi Theatre, Honoured Artist of Russia,** "I thank all those present for showing such genuine interest in the festival. Its programme is rich, it was compiled by Valentin Yelizariiev (Artistic Director of the Bolshoi Theatre, **auth. note**) even before my appointment as chief ballet master. And the only function that I had was to fill the performances with casts, invited artists. I am proud that the team of Boris Eifman came to the festival for the first time. And I am glad that my colleague, the team's representative Oleg

Gabyshchev, is here now. I am pleased to note that the festival will feature the play *The Little Humpbacked Horse* choreographed by Yury Troyan, dedicated to the anniversary date of Bolshoi Theatre conductor Nikolai Kolyadko: he has served this stage daily and continuously for 43 years as a conductor. It is very nice. By the way, the festival consists of premieres of the current season. This is its peculiarity. However, the key parts this time will be performed by guest artists. I hope that the play *Swan Lake*, which was first shown on the stage of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre performed by the artists of the imperial cast, will also sound on the Belarusian stage with an imperial scale. There is every reason for this. After all, the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre is unique. It has incredible space, huge possibilities in terms of volume. I hope that all the festival performances will sound spectacular on it."

By the way, Igor Kolb returned to Belarus this season. A brilliant principal dancer of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg recently became the Chief Ballet Master of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus. He took the place of Yury Troyan, People's Artist of Belarus, who played an important role in his life. A Minsker by spirit and birth, from 1968 to 1988, Yury was a ballet soloist of the State Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of the BSSR. And, like Igor Kolb, he also had a unique St. Petersburg stage experience behind him: a graduate of the Belarusian State Choreographic School trained at the Leningrad Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre named after S.M. Kirov. Yury Troyan worked in the theatre for more than half a century: as a dancer, teacher, ballet master, director, choreographer. And when he retired, he handed over the post of ballet master to Igor. At one time, it was Yury who determined the fate of a talented dancer from Pinsk, who graduated from the Choreographic College in Minsk. In 1996, Igor Kolb conquered the Mariinsky Theatre, and two years later he was the soloist in the leading classical productions, such as *Le Corsaire*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* and *Scheherazade*. He deserved the love of the public. He was applauded in Paris, London, New York and Tokyo. At the end of September, there is not long to wait, the master will bring to the fans of high art his new work: the ballet *Giselle*. This will be Igor Kolb's first project at the Bolshoi Theatre as the chief ballet master.

**Oleg Gabyshchev, leading soloist of the St. Petersburg State Academic Boris Eifman Ballet Theatre, Honoured Artist of Russia:** "*The Pygmalion Effect*, which we present at the festival on June 7th and 8th, is one of the brightest, life-affirming performances. It has a lot of humour with sarcasm and show elements. This is a 100% hit for the opening of the festival. We are showing the performance in Minsk for the first time. It has already come a long way, was warmly received on other stages: before the pandemic, our team managed to go with *Pygmalion* on tour in different countries. I am pleased to remember how we were received in Chicago, New York. For example, one of the American reviews of *The Pygmalion Effect* read: this performance 'breaks stereotypes about the very essence of ballet'.



■ Scenes from *The Pygmalion Effect*

So, what is our new play about? About the unique power of the art of dance, which can help a person to radically change and realise his or her inner potential. The production was not without experiment: the combination of ballroom classical dance with modern trends in choreography. This is a kind of stylisation, which greatly enriched the choreographic vocabulary. For us, artists, immersion in a different energy was not easy. I even had to retrain in terms of the work of the arms and hands. But we have adapted. Here, too, we will have to adapt to your big stage and try not to fly into the orchestra pit. I am sure that everything will be held at the highest level.

As for the happy ending you asked about, I will say this: the finale of the performance involves reflection. It leaves an aftertaste of humour and a light feeling. It seems to me that in such an energy flow of *Pygmalion*, it is easy for artists to get out of dramatic images that encourage them to experience things deeply. It is more pleasant for me as an artist to remain in a state of light emotional elation than in depression from dramatic feelings. I have already said in an interview that, perhaps, the airy music of Johann Baptist Strauss inspired Boris Eifman for the creation of the appropriate choreography, devoid of internal breakdown and depressive shades. The feeling of lightness did not leave us during the entire production period. It was nice to see the artists having fun. To some extent, Boris even provoked us to improvisation, artistic hooliganism, in order to get funny episodes. By the way, while working on *Pygmalion*, Eifman reviewed films with Chaplin. And he spoke about the fact that the great comedian had a real ballet in the cinema... The myth of *Pygmalion*, as you know, is in demand in world culture, but each

artist interprets it in his own way. Boris Yakovlevich 'divided' the main character Galatea into two characters: Gala and Thea. Gala is a girl from the slums living in a world of poverty, while Thea is the star dancer living in a world of wealth. Eifman has an interesting find: the realm of luxury, snobbery, the elite is correlated with the aesthetics of ballroom dancing with their bright, elaborate costumes and hairstyles. Having met with the champion ballroom dancer Lyon (I perform this part), Gala begins to train under his guidance and enters a new world for herself. However, she will not be able to stay in it in the end...

Our ballet turned out to be both comedic and social at the same time. However, you will see for yourself. Taking this opportunity, I want to express my deep gratitude to the Bolshoi Theatre for inviting me to participate in the Gala Concert. I won't talk about the upcoming performance. I will only note: we prepared it specially with the Hungarian choreographer Balázs Baranyai. *Nothing Serious* is the name of the performance, and let it be a pleasant surprise for you."

**Lyudmila Khitrova, leading ballerina of the Bolshoi Theatre, Honoured Artist of Belarus**, "Festival days mean a lot to me. This is a great celebration for us. It's not every year that we receive such brilliant artists. The whole festive week is scheduled. Starting tonight, I will spend every day at the theatre. I love and appreciate the performance of Boris Eifman. I was very happy when I saw in the poster that there would be two of his performances. Looking forward to *Sleeping Beauty*. This is the premiere performance of the Bolshoi. My body still remembers all the 'pas' of my Aurora, so it will be very interesting for me to watch how Oksana Skorik, an artist from St. Petersburg, works,



## THEATRE

how she embodies this part. And the staged luxury of scenery and outfits will literally dazzle you. I will be dancing the Tsar Maiden in the play *The Little Humpbacked Horse* at the festival. So I, like Oleg Gabyshev, have a feeling of lightness both during the action and after this ballet. It's not overly dramatic. This is one of the few ballet performances that is watched not only by adults, but also by children. I am sure that everyone leaves the theatre with a sense of wonder, goodness and joy. I am very glad that I have the honour to dance in such a performance. Let me remind you that the ballet by Rodion Shchedrin directed by Yury Troyan debuted on the stage of our theatre on October 30th, 2021."

**Nikolai Kolyadko, conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre, Honoured Art Worker of Belarus,** "You ask where I find inspiration for work on performances? Every artist has secrets, but this is personal, and therefore I will not talk about it. As for the profession of a conductor, I will say figuratively: a conductor is like cognac, and the older he is, the better he gets. If, of course, the conductor is good. I hope I'm not the worst. I am lucky to have such friends as Yury Troyan, who invited me to work on *The Little Humpbacked Horse*. A spark, creative passions are embodied in the ballet from the composer Rodion Shchedrin, in his music. If you remember, he dedicated the score to the unforgettable Maya Plisetskaya, whom he was passionately in love with. This is such beauty, richness, fantasy that it is simply impossible to perform poorly. There is so much love out there! But for an orchestra, the score is very difficult. Well, we'll try. I won't say that everything works out, but I'm sure it will work! I have grandchildren who are well versed in transformers, they know who Spiderman is. But the Little Humpbacked Horse



■ Natalia Somova as Odette-Odile. Dmitry Sobolevsky as Siegfried (*Swan Lake*)



■ *Sleeping Beauty*. Oksana Skorik as Aurora

is still a secret for them. And our performance provides an opportunity to see a different world, for both children and adults. It is for all generations. The play has a deep philosophical basis. Music is the deepest! I would say very Russian, which comes from the origins of Russianness. You listen and think: how lucky you are, Nikolai Sergeyevich, with this material! And the costumes! Awesome! Can't take my eyes off them! And when light comes from the artists to you and the audience, you are charged. And music is the connection of the soul with the Universe. I didn't say it, it was Aristotle who said it. So there are no secrets. It's just that we are doing our best to convey the harmony that Rodion Shchedrin's music brings to this world, to our beautiful audience."

**Aleksandr Maksov, ballet critic (Russia),** "This is not the first time I have come to the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus. The fact that I am here at the festival, while a prestigious world-class ballet competition is taking place in Moscow, and I have been waiting for it for five years, says a lot. (From June 3rd to June 11th, 2022, the 14th International Ballet Competition was held in Moscow on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, where the jury included the People's Artist of the USSR and Belarus, Artistic Director of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus Valentin Yelizariyev, **auth. note**) I love Belarus very much, Belarusians and Minsk. And to clarify why, let me go back in time to 1992. At that time, Igor Kolb was graduating from a choreographic college, and Valentin Yelizariyev was already a world-famous choreographer. That's when the festival *I Love Ballet*, organised by the college, started. That festival, which later became a major cultural event in the vast expanses of the collapsed Soviet Union, united us when we were so divided. After the birth of the *Slavianski Bazaar*, the festival went into the shadows. But, by the way, it was during the *I Love Ballet* festival that Igor was noticed and soon became the principal dancer of the Mariinsky Theatre. I am very glad that the Bolshoi Theatre was able to restore the festival tradition. Artists, critics, teachers, and spectators who become co-creators of the theatre need such a festival. Every self-respecting theatre organises festivals in our troubled times, which causes great respect. And your *Ballet Summer* is like a breath of fresh air."

### Evening. Opening.

The festival got off to a great start! The performance *The Pygmalion Effect* exceeded our expectations, completely owning the attention throughout the entire stage action. It seemed that the flow of thoughts stopped: so strong were the feelings caused by the crazy rhythm in which both the artists and we, the audience, were immersed. Coherence and rhythm, perfect synchronisation of movements of the performers, a kind of superhuman precision, brought to automatism, did not allow for a minute to relax and understand with the mind why the usual ballet stereotypes were overturned in this performance. By the way, during the intermission, one of our colleagues, heading towards the exit, explained: 'I still like the classics more...'. Well, tastes differ, as they say... However, the full house in the hall, and the flurry of applause, the shouts of 'bravo' unambiguously testified: such a high modern art of ballet is appreciated in Belarus,



■ *The Little Humpbacked Horse*. Lyudmila Khitrova, Honoured Artist of Belarus as Tsar Maiden



the audience did not let the artists leave the stage for a long time.”

What was in Boris Eifman’s mind when he conceived this performance? You can’t say better than what the director himself said after the world premiere took place on February 6th, 2019, “We do not know our true capabilities. After all, human nature is infinitely mysterious. This is the realm of inexhaustible discoveries. Each of us has a creative energy that gives a person the ability to self-development. However, in order to change oneself, a person often needs someone who is ready to awaken the dormant potential in him or her. And, influencing others, such sculptors of other people’s destinies go through metamorphoses themselves.

The ballet *The Pygmalion Effect* is a choreographic interpretation of the myth about the artist and his creation, a new look at the theme of the complex interweaving and eternal non-identity of art and life.

In the centre of the performance is a daring slum dweller. Having met a champion ballroom dancer, she bursts into a world of wealth and amazing performing skills. Here, beauty and deceptive ease of movement are achieved through hard work, and the outwardly attractive fruits of stage glory do not save from loneliness. Under the guidance of an eminent dancer, the heroine will have to go through the path of plastic reincarnation, which, starting as a curious experiment, ends with a real drama.

Extraordinary perseverance, spiritual virtues, previously hidden under the scum of rudeness, as well as the love that flared up in the girl for the teacher and partner, help her grow into a star. However, the fatal gulf between poverty and luxury can only be bridged in a world of dance that equalizes

therefore  
they  
applaud  
without  
getting tired.  
Both on the  
opening day  
and at the second  
performance of *The  
Pygmalion Effect*,





the inhabitants of huts and palaces. In reality, a vengeful past remains forever inside us, and no one can escape from it.

A miraculous transformation does not bring happiness to the heroine. Harmony invariably dissipates along with the remnants of dreams. But what is life itself, if not a dream, generated by longing for an unattainable dream."

This is the interpretation of the idea of the performance from Boris Eifman himself.

In his own way, he dealt with the famous myth of Pygmalion and its numerous interpretations, where the author's love for his work usually came to the fore. In this performance, no one loves anyone, but everyone is focused on the perfect refinement of movements, brought to computer-aided accuracy. By the will of fate and chance, Gala turns from the wild, but living creature of an incomprehensible sex in baggy pants to an automaton doll with a frozen beautiful porcelain face, capable of the most incredible somersaults and steps. According to Eifman's idea, such soulless mechanicalness can easily lead to success, but is it capable of guaranteeing happiness to anyone?

The performance ends with a beautiful illusion: the heroine's dream of her teacher, with whom she, to the sounds of Mozart's music, unites only in a dream in a gentle embrace. Sad? A little. But that's the reality. How often in it we, striving for professionalism, sometimes brought to automatism, achieve success, each in his or her own field. And at the same time, we do not notice how we gradually become empty, over the years we lose the ability to be happy.

In the play *The Pygmalion Effect* two casts of artists are involved. And I would like to note that there are three Belarusians, two of them are girls, in the cast. This is a native of Minsk, a leading soloist, winner of the Golden Mask and

Golden Soffit awards Lyubov Andreyeva. In 2007 she graduated from the Belarusian State Choreographic Gymnasium-College and in 2009-2011 she was a member of the cast of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus. Lyubov Andreyeva danced the part of the Gala on the second day of the festival. And the laureate of the international competition Alina Petrovskaya, also from Minsk and a graduate of the choreographic gymnasium-college, was engaged in the part of Thea on the opening day of the festival. Leading soloist Dmitry Subbotin graduated from our choreographic college, danced literally all the main male parts in the Eifman ballet, and on the second day of the festival he performed the part of the Coach. These are Belarusians!

Note that the Boris Eifman Theatre came to us more than once, for the first time back in the 1980s. In November 2010, it brought *Anna Karenina*. In April 2013, one of the premiere screenings of *The Brothers Karamazov* took place on the stage of the Bolshoi. And in March 2016, the Petersburgers showed the ballet *Red Giselle*.

### Conclusion

From June 7th to 12th, three premiere productions of the Bolshoi Theatre, which are *Swan Lake*, *The Little Humpbacked Horse* and *Sleeping Beauty*, featured principal dancers, soloists and leading artists from Moscow, St. Petersburg and even Cairo. Most of them took part in the brilliant Gala Concert, which ended the *Ballet Summer* at the Bolshoi. The programme was prepared by the theatre's Chief Ballet Master Igor Kolb, concert director and conductor Oleg Lesun.

Valentina Zhdanovich

Photo courtesy of the Boris Eifman Ballet Theatre and the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus



■ The moment of bow of all participants of the Ballet Summer at the Bolshoi project





# Psychological theatre Luteya: **HEALING WITH LOVE**

N

**Natalya Romanchik, head of the psychological theater Luteya (Love, Theatre and I) had to go through many educational steps. At the age of three, she had a cardboard box which she used as a stage for unusual actors: clay dolls... Her first appearance on stage as an actor and musician was in the 1st grade. Then there was a study at the Minsk School of Arts. And two more higher educations at the Minsk State Pedagogical Institute with the majors in pedagogy and methods of educational work, as well as psychology of family life. A few years ago, Natalya Romanchik qualified as a psychodrama therapist at the European and Norwegian Institutes of Psychodrama.**

**The psychological theatre Luteya is now marking its twenty-eighth anniversary. During this time, many interesting psychotherapeutic performances have been created, where each of its participants undergoes the sacrament of healing.**

### Collective psychologist

“At first, it was just an attempt by my students, whom I taught at the Minsk Pedagogical Institute, to come up with something so that we would not part,” recalls Natalya Romanchik with a smile.

The first cast of the theatre was the most numerous. To this day, more than ten actors of Luteya are from the very first cast. These are former students of Natalya Viktorovna: Vyacheslav Leskovsky, Sergey Zavadsky, as well as her former students: Larisa Galitskaya, Yelena and Aleksandr Pyko, Natasha Bondar, Aleksandr Babarenko, Anna Turova, Andrey Zhukovsky, Alina Shumilova, Yulia Kukhtinskaya... Most of them are professional psychologists. There are also representatives of other professions who are in love with the theatre.

Luteya became their own for the family of Natalya Romanchik. Her husband, Andrey Solovey, has been in the theatre since its inception, daughter Arseniya has

been on stage since the age of five. The girl plays the piano and sings beautifully. Her first appearance was as an angel in the performance for children with cancer titled *Wings to Give*. Lyuteya also has its own composer Daniil Kulikovskikh, who creates music for performances.

“We are very grateful to the Republican Theatre of Belarusian Drama for cooperation, for the opportunity to perform on stage,” says Natalya Romanchik. “Nevertheless, we can use any platform where we can organise a stage. Luteya is a rather mobile theatre that can be quickly deployed in any convenient room.”

There are performances that are staged outdoors. For example, the ritual performance *Kupalye*. The project is already 19 years old. Each year it gets a new name and a new theme. This is a performance with ritual elements.

“All these years, the project has not been interrupted,” explains the head of the





■ To this day, more than ten actors of Luteya are from the very first cast



theatre. “I held *Kupalye* even when I had a seven-month-old child. Every year, our compatriots who live in other countries come to the project: Russia, Ukraine, the USA, Japan. They are amazed by the depth of Belarusian folklore, beautiful rituals, sincere feeling of love for the Motherland and their family.”

The ritual performance *Belarusian Wedding* was taken to Germany as a social project. They performed in a nursing home, in a hospice at the monastery. They showed concerts on the territory of Bavaria, on the land of North Rhine-Westphalia in the framework of cooperation with the Children in Need organisation.

“In 2019, we staged a revelation performance *Status Nascendi. Or Meetings with the Inner Child*, which was at the intersection of psychodrama and my own methodology,” says Natalya Romanchik. “The performance is not at all like the others, it was staged according to its own therapeutic stories. It took a year of preparation. We have identified the most pressing topics to bring them to the theatrical stage. Episodes — mini-performances — turned out to be very touching. The audience took to the stage, helping the actors...”

Those who come to the performances of Luteya understand that they are not alone in their trouble. It is here, on stage,

that they receive the wings that help them live. *Status Nascendi. Or Meetings with the Inner Child* is a revelation performance. It has nine episodes. They are different. Each has its own theme: parental divorce, child abuse, childhood fears, unborn children, transgenerational traumas... The work with the viewer is built by the therapeutic group as a single collective psychologist. Therefore, first and foremost, it was necessary to help the actors solve their problems, learn to be happy and more successful so that they, in turn, could help those who come to the performance. Sometimes it happens that people from the auditorium come to the theatre as participants.



■ There are performances that are staged in nature. For example, the ritual performance Kupalye.



The play *Wings for an Angel* appeared nine years ago. Every year it was updated and was not like the previous ones. Here you can find the answer to the question of how to survive a life crisis. This is a performance about what opportunities are given to a person in order to overcome difficulties. About the search for inner strength, freedom, confidence, inspiration and creativity. The performance helps to look inside your own soul and meet your Inner Child, that part of yourself that is given to us at birth. Here is the theme of the meaning of life, one's purpose, faith in oneself.

Here the audience is formed in advance. The number of spectators is

always limited by the specifics of the psychological theatre methodology, which involves no more than 30 people per show. The work is designed for mentally healthy people who find themselves in a difficult life situation.

### Untie knots of memory

Now the team of Luteya is working on a new performance titled *Live Earth*. The first part of it is ready. The focus of the viewer is on the model, which gives an opportunity to look into the life of their ancestors. The nearest plans are to translate this performance into English, making an English version with subtitles.


Last year, the staff of the psychological theatre Luteya was invited to Bulgaria for an art therapy festival. And now the team is preparing for a conference at Perm University (Russia).

They did the play *Elven Tale* in different variation. This is a play about self-love, about the ability to believe in a miracle. They made it for different audiences: for orphans, for those children who live in an orphanage. The play *Off-Season. The Fifth Season* about how to survive grief, the death of a loved one is very popular. It has been shown over a thousand times!

Svetlana **Khorsun**

Photo from the personal archives of Natalya Romanchik





HOBBY

IRINA ROMBALSKAYA,  
“MY LIFE AND  
CREATIVE  
CREDO IS NEVER  
SAY NEVER!”



**She loves to surprise and shock, and she certainly is not afraid to go beyond the mainstream. The creative activity of Irina Rombalskaya is known not only in our country. Her works are in private collections in Italy, France, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and even China. Bright and daring, filled with deep symbolism... Works by Irina make you think about life in the era of globalisation and what one little person can do to make this big world a better place.**

**We met with Irina to talk about her creative activity and that very daring art intervention at the Yakub Kolas House-Museum she made, depressurizing the space of the classic of literature with modern painting and sculpture.**

*Irina, you are an artist with many years of exhibiting experience. What is the most grandiose and significant exhibition in which you had a chance to take part?*

This is, of course, the Louvre where in 2019 I had the opportunity to exhibit my work 'Go dance'. A holy and prayerful place for all artists. It does not matter at all that it was a platform for young talents and your only work that was exhibited was not next to the Mona Lisa. Getting there is already a grandiose event!

*And if we talk about the recognition of your work in our country...*

Indeed, I do exhibit in Belarus. For me, as an artist, a very important stage was getting into the short list of the National Prize in the field of fine arts. In the top ten of those sculptors who were selected by our commission. While with European galleries it is most often an element of taste and subjective opinion (whether they like you or not), and you do not have to be evaluated by a huge commission, Belarusians are very scrupulous in this regard. It is doubly pleasant when you, a non-professional, without a specialised education, are recognised by professionals in their field.





***This probably proves your talent.***

I realise it as not exactly talent. I realise it as my alienness. They even give me strange flowers for birthdays – not roses but some kind of thorns and burrs.

***But you perceive such bouquets as a compliment, don't you?***

Yes, I do, certainly. And I try to approach my work in view of this my essence. There is a category of absolutely conservative people who have a systematic approach to work, and this is very cool. But sometimes you need to forget everything you know and immerse yourself in a new environment. Every time I try to look at a new task through a child's eyes, as if I do not know what it is about and how to do it. And then, headlong, I jump into the car and start rushing towards the goal.

***Work on television, participation in various projects...***

***It may seem a unique opportunity for self-realisation.***

***However, the soul demands more. What is your art about?***

It is a fantasy; it is a parallel world that I leave for. In self-expression, there are no limits

for me. The only thing that I do not accept is cruelty... Anything that would promote cruelty towards people or animals has no place in my work.

***Irina, where are the roots of your creative ideas?***

In dreams. For many years, I have been trying to turn off this function of my organism, but I do not know how to do it. I see dreams all the time – bright, colourful and eventful. Ideas can be born right in the middle of the night. A lot of insights come during jogging. Unexpectedly, massage became a catalyst for inspiration. And even in negative reviews about my work, new ideas are born.

***And what about belonging to two historical eras?***

This is where I get my inspiration, too. For example, my picture with a carpet. At one time, the Soviet carpet was for us as TikTok and Instagram of the modern world. Against the background of this carpet, home feasts were held. I remember going to bed and being unable to sleep looking at this carpet because you draw dinosaurs or someone else on it in your head. This carpet was the whole world! But its time is over, and now we live differently, and our children live differently. We, who grew up at the turn of the epochs, are cool and strong at some points and burdened with complexes at other ones. But there is a positive thing in this – people born in the 80s, very responsible, able-bodied, can work in absolutely any conditions. After you have survived a difficult period of the 90s, enjoying a comfortable life now, you have a desire to express your life experience.

***Why have you chosen metal as the material for sculptures?***

A woman working with metal is rather incomprehensible, and I do not know how I managed to become connected to it. In general, sculpture is a difficult activity for a girl. Chipped nails, lack of manicure, work with wire that you bend and constantly scratch yourself... Many times I thought painting is easier and more convenient in transportation – you take a piece off the stretcher, roll it and go. With sculpture, everything is much more complicated. The stand for my last work weighs about 20 kilograms. To the Louvre, I took a sculpture weighing 40 kilograms. It was a very difficult journey! On the way, I repeatedly stopped to check if everything was in order. Seeing me, men offered to help me carry the bag, saying: "I guess you are going to the fashion week!" They lifted the bag and realised they could not cope with it.

***And what an ideal place for Irina Rombalskaya's creative activity looks like?***

Now I have my own workshop, though it is a home one. Of course, ideally, working with far from environmentally friendly materials requires a separate room. But due to my employment at the main job and inability to leave the city for a long time, I have to work at home.

Do you need to wait for inspiration for creative pursuits?

Inspiration for creativity is the availability of free time. You need to force yourself first, and in half an hour the process will go. The most difficult thing is to get into dirty clothes and lay out the materials.





*Is the concept of IRRA (irrational) more about creativity or your life in general?*

Let me tell you one of the most recent stories. For a couple of years I have been dreaming of going to dance classes. Finally, the day comes when I have to go to the first lesson, but instead of this in the evening of the same day I pick up a cat which the owners abandoned and brought to the clinic for euthanasia. I take the cat in my arms, and we go to buy food for it and arrange a place at my house while we look for new owners. This is the irrationality of my life. When things do not go according to plan! The same is in creative work. You start with one idea, and at the end there is a transformation in a completely different direction, and absolutely nothing remains of the original thought. Never say never – this is my credo! And do not judge! When I judge someone, I often face a choice in life when I have to do almost the same thing that I condemned.

On the eve of the Night of Museums, the fruits of your creative activity literally burst into the interior where the classic of Belarusian literature Yakub Kolas lived and worked. How did the idea of such an unusual collaboration come about?

In fact, it was Irina Matyas, director of the museum, who offered me such cooperation. Besides, this is the anniversary year, and the museum hosts a great number of events. For a long time, I could not decide on the exhibition, but I realised that it had to be done. Belarus lacks art interventions. We have a huge number of interesting museums that people do not go to – they do not know, they do not remember or they have forgotten you can spend your free time so.

*Irina, what would Yakub Kolas say if he saw your exhibition in his house?*

Well, Yakub Kolas welcomed young artists. Obviously, if he lived now, it would not be the ones who create frescoes. It seems to me if Yakub Kolas saw my exhibition he would say, like one of his granddaughters, “We need this too!”

As a rule, every artist strives to convey some important thoughts to the outside world. What is your creative message?


My work can sometimes look angry and aggressive, but it is, on the contrary, the sublimation of some inner thoughts and experiences in order to do good. My works are a reflection of our complex reality; therefore, they abound with symbols. Take ‘Mickey Mouse’ – it is about the globalisation of our world. During the war in Syria, I had a work where the main character is a naked woman who covers her face with a T-shirt so as not to see soldiers lying in blood around her. My main message there is that women are not ashamed to be naked, but they are ashamed that their children are at war. I really want wars to stop and mothers to raise kind children. My last work, ‘The Power of the Family’, is about that we, women, reproduce both the bad and the good, and it is in our power to reverse this process in favour of the good. To give a little more love to our child, to show how to behave and how not to, starting with the most banal things. I really like the phrase: “Save yourself, and it is enough for you!” If we all start with ourselves, we will definitely be able to save this world!

Ekaterina **Tumas-Tishkevich**

Photo: from the personal archive of Irina Rombalskaya







# “BEAUTY IS ONE OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS IN LIFE”

**It is difficult to argue with the statement that creative people leave a memory of themselves, first of all, with their works: films, literary and musical works, sculptures, paintings... However, the authors themselves are not always necessarily bright personalities. But if it is or was so, the memory of such people is still very strong. For me, for example, it is the artist Vyacheslav Zakharinsky. He has, unfortunately, passed away. And he is remembered both by the original palette of his painting, and by interesting, often philosophical, reasoning. Here are the notes about this made based on the memories.**



■ At the opening of the personal exhibition of Vyacheslav Zakharinsky at the National Art Museum. 2013



### As if everything was recently

I had been planning to get acquainted with the work of the artist Vyacheslav Zakharinsky for a long time. I remember how we called each other a few years ago, but something prevented us from meeting then. And now I'm calling again. Literally in a few minutes I arrange a meeting in the workshop. However, Vyacheslav himself called his workshop a studio, putting a broad meaning into this word. And I immediately felt its external attractiveness as soon as I crossed the threshold: bright, cosy. And clean to such an extent that I wanted to take off my shoes. I realised that this room for Vyacheslav is something more than just a haven, where the artist, as a rule, spends years of his life in a lonely wilderness. Yes, for Vyacheslav Zakharinsky the studio is a place where he thinks with himself while working on a picture, where he rests his soul, where his friends feel comfortable.

I went to the meeting unprepared, only superficially knowing that Zakharinsky stands out for his style, his manner of painting among many colleagues. He philosophises in painting, delving without a trace into this deep process. He is driven by the impressions of reflection, he does not hide his subjectivity, sometimes far from being understood by the surrounding people. He seeks his beauty in the matter of the surrounding world...

Our conversation began with the understanding of 'beauty'.

"Beauty is one of the main concepts to which art appeals," said Vyacheslav categorically. "No matter how we treat this word, it was not invented by us. It is laid down by God's



presence. Man is endowed with beauty, nature is endowed with beauty. Beauty is external, there is internal. And there is a harmony of beauty, where both external and internal are combined. Art, including painting, deals with the synthesis of beauty, harmony. Therefore, beauty is very important. And my goal as an artist is to comprehend the heights of this concept. The painting should have the most powerful energy, because it radiates beauty from itself: something that can attract a person's attention, make him or her think, rejoice, have fun. Or to evoke feelings of despondency, empathy. All this is possible for a real work of art that works with the concepts of beauty. However, many philosophers say that this word should not be used often, because we begin to idealise beauty. I want to say that for me, as an artist, beauty is one of the main concepts in life. A strong work of art is the harmony of true beauty."



***“When did you come to this understanding of art? Apparently not right away?”***

“Of course! Is it possible to be born philosophers? All comes with experience. Therefore, making mistakes, studying, exploring certain laws of the world around us, we acquire skills that help shape our worldview, philosophical understanding of life and beauty. In art, there are two questions that the author needs to answer: what do you depict and how do you depict? These are the components that determine the value of works of art. Thought, concept and level of skill. It is necessary to take into account these moments. And if you do, then something worthwhile is being born. If this is not the case, you can refer to a headache, to malaise, to bad weather, but this will not be an excuse. For me, as an artist, the first question is: what am I going to work on? This is my top priority. In second place, there is skill and professionalism. The fantasies of a not very skilful artist always come to the fore: he is interested in something that may not be masterfully executed. What matters is the original idea. An example of Marc Chagall with his original ideas. He did not attach much importance to the skill of execution, although he was a professional. But he took place as a world artist. And vice versa, there are wonderful masters

who can paint a portrait, a landscape skilfully, but there is no big idea, no fantasy and no great meaning. The birth of a work of art doesn't happen when the most important thing is not there, when there is no thought, no concept: what was it made for? Maybe that's why with the advent of the camera, skill faded into the background. You need to know what you are shooting, what you are showing, what is the idea, what is the essence, and then how it all looks. But this is my understanding.”

### **The soul must work...**

***“Do you paint with your soul?”***

“Is it possible not to think about the soul? You need to feel that you have a soul. Otherwise, there is no point in growing bread, building a house, creating a work of art. The soul is always in the first place, as a factor that helps the artist. Even if brain work is carried out, it always goes in conjunction with the work of the soul. Thought and soul must be in harmony, they work together.”

“You can hardly be called a realist artist in the full sense of the word. Did you strive to ensure that the viewer understands what you paint? Or you give everything at the mercy of him: let him reason on his own, think what he wants.”





“The time has come when there is no need to use the terms ‘realist’, ‘abstractionist’, some ‘ists’ or some ‘isms’ to come up with. Why? The viewer has become so informationally prepared, life has become so universal and diverse that today there can be elements of realism, abstractionism and avant-garde in one painting at the same time. The authors have become so universal, so diverse that it is unnecessary to define realism or abstractionism. And if you want to ask what I like more, well-known realistic methods or abstract ones, I would say what determines everything thought, idea. When a picture is conceived, naturally, the style of execution is also determined. There may be a realistic element. Or conditional. Everything has become universal. As an artist, I am always tempted by the highest level of skill, professional, execution. A talented artist, like a good musician, who can make the instrument give out the tune that the performer needs. The artist must have the skill to use various painting techniques. You have to be a virtuoso! To comprehend the highest elements of a professional school, it is necessary to learn from the old masters. And they have a lot to teach you, believe me. It is important to visit the museum, look and be sure to learn. Then it will be easy to execute any idea.”

### **The school is created by the master**

*“What is the place of the Belarusian school of painting in European culture?”*

“Now it is difficult to talk about schools. Why? Previously, art was formed around certain personalities, famous artists. Let’s take the Renaissance. The great artists of that time had their students, who specifically studied the manner of painting, the compositions of those masters and, of course, adopted a lot from them. So there was a school. Today there is no such system of education. By the way, I really liked the system of training of the old masters. I had nostalgia for it when I had to study with modern methods. Indeed, today it is not a teacher who recruits students for himself, but people who teach other subjects do this through exams. They determine who to study in an art institution. Previously, when the master recruited students for himself, it was he who chose them, he had the right to do so. Then he trained them.

Today we can talk about high Belarusian art of the 70s or, for example, Belarusian art of the 50s, 60s of the twentieth century. But this is not a school. The school is created by a separate master: pronounced, with its own principles, professional, philosophical. And today we can talk about artists of a certain period of time.”

*“Then let’s formulate the question in a different way: what place does the Belarusian fine arts take in the context of, say, European culture?”*

“It reminds me of sports competitions: our swimmers won so many medals, took such a place. And what place should be

given to Belarusian contemporary art? Or what about Italian contemporary art? I would not be engaged in the definition of places. You need to move away from the competition: who is the best, who is the worst. I cannot definitively answer your question. Yes, there are Belarusian artists whose fans live in Israel or, say, in Florida. The German artist may also interest the Belarusian viewer. When there is information about art, when it is written about, it is shown, it becomes more famous. The attitude towards it is more active than towards the one that is little known and seen. Belarus needs to popularise its artists, show them to the world. Because they are very interesting and talented. I myself witnessed the attitude of both viewers and professionals to Belarusian artists at international exhibitions: very attentive, interested. Many viewers want to purchase and have the works of our artists in their collection. What needs to be done for this? Show more. Publish albums, create TV shows. After all, Belarusian art is our national treasure. And you can say this: the best brand of our country is our culture and art."

### **The essence of the author's philosophy**

*"What is the philosophy of your paintings?"*

"Philosophy? It would be very easy to put it all in one word. I really envy those artists who succinctly designate the philosophy of their work. Although it is, probably, this word. This is love: for life, for man, for God. We have come to know earthly life, to know the essence of man. Through this I want to convey the beauty of a magical creation. I'm interested in a lot of things. The image of a woman, for example. From time to time, I turn to it when some kind of emotional charge accumulates, when emotional relationships arise. I have whole cycles called Nude, Lady. You can see in them a different plastic execution. Why? I am always attracted not by one plastic solution, but by different ones. An artist is like a child: creativity is a game for him. Playing with shapes, playing with mood. It would seem that this is not serious. No, this is serious. And it's a great quality to preserve in oneself a childish spontaneity and enthusiasm for the study of forms, colours while remaining an adult..."

*"Do you think an artist should go through an academic school?"*

"Preferably. Because a good academic school helps to solve professional issues of his training. Although there were many brilliant artists who did not graduate from academies. But purposefulness helped them to take place. Sometimes the academy is harmful. It all depends on the level of teachers. But our academic school is very strong. It is strong in its highly professional tradition, which must be protected and cannot be lost."

*"I noticed that you like to write cycles. Why?"*

"The cycle of paintings makes it possible to more fully delve into the content of the designated topic. Even at a young age, I thought, dreamed about how I could take and depict all



my thoughts on one canvas. Sometimes I gather my thoughts and start painting a picture. I may start. And it even seems to be a good picture. A week passes, and fifteen more thoughts are added to those that were. What to do? It is necessary to change the composition, colour... And I say to myself: 'Stop!'. If you start the painting, you must finish it. If you have other thoughts when painting one work, then take a clean canvas. And publish subsequent thoughts under one motto, under one theme. So there are two paintings. During the second one, five more thoughts come in addition to these. Then the third... I do not drive away thoughts. When you work, they flow together, and you start thinking about whether it can be done differently. So what? Take off the paint? What for? Write, finish. Take a clean canvas and shape the thought that attracted you. Please work. It has become very convenient. One theme is revealed in ten, fifteen scenes. And you can see how thoughts were formed. It captured me, it became my creative principle."

### **Everything matters**

*"What do you consider the main thing in your work?"*

"I have no secondary, I have everything important. One cannot be singled out. The creative process itself consists of equivalent components. And the end result is a work of art. For me, everything is important. Up to the mood in which you go to the workshop. This is also a very important point. There are no small things in life. Everything is intertwined here. Everything matters."

*"Do you strive to bring up the aesthetic taste of the viewer in your works?"*





"It reminds me of the Soviet period of art, when in order to raise the aesthetic level, it was necessary to write the theme Steelworkers. If you do not think about what aesthetic pleasure your work will bring to the viewer, then there is nothing to take on it. Although it seems to me that initially this is the goal of any artist. In order for his work to resonate with the viewer. Indeed, through the attitude of the viewer to a particular work of art, aesthetic contact is obtained. A man came to the exhibition, saw the picture, kept his attention on it and began to examine it. So there is a contact between the picture and the viewer. There is work."

***"Do you trust creative intuition?"***

"Mine is good, reliable. Man is arranged in such a way that intuition is the voice of God. This is an angelic clue. Whether we like it or not, it lives with the person."

***"Are you biased towards your work? Do you repaint your works often?"***

"Yes, I have a serious relationship with them. Sometimes it even gets in the way. I envy authors who work jokingly. If this is work with a smile, there must be an appropriate mood. I take painting very seriously. Because it should cause the viewer aesthetic pleasure. How is it done? How is it technically done? All this is of great importance and requires painstaking, serious relationships. Not to be lazy,

but to be patient, to be able to wait, to painstakingly correct what does not suit you, and what you do not like. You need to have these qualities."

***Captivated by interesting ideas***

***"What are your plans? What would you like to implement in your work?"***

"I ask the Lord to help me to open the world of interesting ideas. The idea is very important. The birth of a painting begins when interesting ideas come up."

***"Should the artist exhibit? What is an exhibition for you?"***

"In this period of my creative life, I am not so much interested in the exhibition itself, but in the process of painting. At a young age there were interesting exhibitions. But most of all I liked to arrange personal exhibitions, when you can show as much of your work as possible. Exhibiting is very important, but it is an expensive pleasure. This is technically very difficult. Therefore, I use any printing opportunity to convey information about creativity to the viewer. The exhibition requires a lot of expenses, effort, time to show your paintings. And printing gives the opportunity to present work to as many people as possible who may even leave the work that they liked as a keepsake. I know that many of the calendars I have released were framed and people used them for their interiors. This is a very relevant technique

for a person to learn something about your work.”

***“What is the creative credo of the artist Vyacheslav Zakharinsky?”***

“To penetrate into the meaning of human existence as deeply as possible. You and life, you and the world around you, you and the person living next to you... To understand the truth of God’s plan: man and the Universe, man and love.”

***“How interesting do you find today’s time for creativity?”***

“Any time is interesting for creativity, because everything depends on the artist himself. From what his mood is, how much he has the strength to feel the life around him. Of course, an important factor is the environment. These are interlocutors, those people with whom it is possible to communicate. The artist lives not only for himself. He lives and works to show his paintings to people. And it is important to find viewers, like-minded people, interlocutors who could participate in a conversation with you about the vital.”

***“Did your origins, your small homeland matter for your creative thinking?”***

“Of course. I have these words: ‘My small homeland, my dear land’. I was born in the town of Glusk, on the beautiful Ptich River, in the midst of divine nature and surrounded by kind people. All of this instilled humanity in me. I am sure that everything starts with the upbringing. We come to the profession, to the craft with a formed human character.”

### **His universities**

***“When did you start painting?”***

“I, like all children, was fond of drawing from a school desk. There was a wonderful person Ivan Bulgakov in my totem. This is a Russian man who was captured during the war, fled, ended up in my native Glusk. He made his way behind the front line to come to his own, but since the front was moving quickly, he could not get out of the encirclement and he had to stay in Glusk. Here, over time, he had a family, children. He taught drawing at school. He had a very good professional background: before the war he studied in Moscow at an art school. He surrounded himself with local talented children, organised courses at the House of Pioneers, taught drawing and led a fine arts studio in high school. And thanks to this man, I discovered a wonderful world called painting, fine arts. In general, it was about books, and about the Bible, about the history of art, about artists of different times. He was a very educated man who was very fond of art and did his



best to help children discover the world of art. Ivan Petrovich Bulgakov is my angel.”

***“Did you study further?”***

“I graduated from the Minsk Art College and the Belarusian State Theatre and Art Institute. There were many searches, visited art museums. Even if you just visually examine the work, the manner of painting, colouring, technical execution of paintings, it is all important factors that an artist needs. This needed to be mastered.”

***“Did you have a period when you lived abroad?”***

“One Polish gallery became interested in me. And at the international plein-air in Poland, I met the rector of the European Academy of Arts, who invited me to the academy. I taught there, I was the representative of this academy in Belarus.”

***“Nevertheless, you returned to your homeland.”***

“I returned because I was offered to do my personal exhibition in Minsk.”

***“Who suggested?”***

“Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were in the workshop, they saw my paintings. And in 1996 my personal exhibition took place, where I showed paintings from ten years of my work. It was a very significant exhibition for me. But it became a discovery for the Belarusian audience as well. At the request of the audience, the exhibition was even extended.”

**When the author’s subjectivism touches you**

***“Is the recognition factor significant to you?”***

“Probably, for each person who is engaged in a particular





business, it is important to know what is the attitude towards his work. This is not just for the artist. It is important for any person to hear feedback on the results of work. And the artist also wants to hear a kind word about his work. This is the psychology of a person. He must feel that someone needs his work, that he is in demand. If I had not become an artist, I would have become a grain grower: I would plough the land, grow bread, and collect it. Or maybe I would be a janitor. But he would be such a janitor so that people would recognise and say: Zakharinsky sweeps this street so well that we go and there not even a speck of dust on our shoes, he cleans the street with high quality. The most important thing is that the attitude to your work should not be indifferent. And so that you do your work with desire, with high quality. This was instilled in me by my parents since childhood. And this became an axiom of my whole life, its principle: whatever you do, you must do it with high quality. Our tractor Belarus is one of the best in the world, because it is made with high quality, convenient for users. This is how everything should be done. We should strive for this. I dream that everything Belarusian is the best or one of the best in the world.”

I remember that on this passionate note of Vyacheslav Zakharinsky, I turned off the recorder. It seemed that he revealed the essence of his nature, expressing his attitude towards both craftsmanship and painting as a subject of personal creativity. Moreover, he did not hide his life

principles in a conversation, as they say, he opened his soul. I got an idea of both Zakharinsky the artist and Zakharinsky the man. And there was a firm conviction that he was not alone in two guises. He has a whole nature. Zakharinsky's personality wasn't split. He was open in his life judgments, not indifferent to the place where he lives, fascinated by its nature. By the way, Vyacheslav conceived a project where, not with the help of picturesque paintings, but with the help of documentary photography, he wanted to show the beauty of the Glusk Region. Even he, the artist, considered that paintings could diminish the charm and attractiveness of his native expanses. But the photo will be a real lens in reality. Vyacheslav Zakharinsky wanted to know more about Belarus. And today, his paintings, scattered around the world, popularise the country from which he comes.

His original paintings, full of the author's subjectivism, have also become a kind of brand. After all, Vyacheslav identified himself with the region where he was born and raised, where he reached heights in his professional career. Even then he was full of creative plans. Literally a day after our meeting, he was in a hurry to leave the capital for the provincial Glusk, where he built himself a bright house to paint. Reflect on life and not let go of new thoughts. To turn all this into images that, despite their complexity, today attract and beckon with their subjective originality many admirers of the talent of Vyacheslav Zakharinsky.

Veniamin **Mikheyev**