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2017 has truly begun

New Year celebrations
in Minsk held with
good cheer, as well
as solemnity



FROM THE EDITOR



Time changes life

By Victor Kharkov

Every year, we wish each other all the best for our health, happiness and aspirations. Originality matters not: only sincerity. With each new year, we make plans: not only as individuals, but as countries. Belarus is no exception.

As the first pages of 2017 unfold, so much yet awaits us. However, we arrive in this new calendar year with impressions of what has recently past. There's no doubt that life is changing rapidly, thanks to technologies.

Let's look at some examples. It doesn't seem that long ago that mobile phones were a novelty. Now, Belarus boasts almost five million subscribers: half of the country's population. Clearly, this is an indicator of disposable income, and prosperity. We can't ignore statistics. Beltelecom, the national telecommunications operator, has recently launched a service enabling subscribers to make video calls, regardless of distance.

It's becoming commonplace to book tickets online, from a mobile phone or PC with Internet access, rather than visiting individual offices. The national airline, Belavia, now offers online bookings, for customer convenience.

Who knows what innovations we'll see in 2017. New services are being developed all the time. What amazes us now we may soon take for granted.

Service mentality is changing too, with staff in shops, cafés and on public transport making greater efforts to be helpful. Providing good service is an essential part of encouraging return custom. It's good for the economy and for our basic human relations.

As we continue our march into the future, our sovereignty and independence guide our state strategies.

Politicians, economists and sociologists will all be releasing reports on the year just passed, but every person's opinion on the passing year is significant. We can make our personal assessment of our own life, while seeing it in relation to others, including globally. It's good to set goals, and make firm business plans, so that we don't waste time: we know it to be precious.

Years begin and end, and begin again. Let's make good use of our time, working together to coordinate our plans, and achieve the greatest success.

Happy New Year 2017!

(from the New Year Address of the President to the Belarusian people)

● It's not been easy to keep Belarus as an island of stability. However, we've done our best to ensure the peace and security of the nation!

● **Our neighbours, friends and brotherly nations should know that Belarus will never be a source of aggression or threats.**

● Step by step, Belarus is strengthening its authority within the international community. The country has taken the spotlight as a platform of peacemaking initiatives.

Belarus' friendliness, hospitality,

and openness to co-operation has attracted many nations.

● Belarus pursues a balanced international and domestic policy.

We have a strong resolution to promote the unity of the nation, preventing extremism and the incitement of ethnic or religious hatred.

● Looking to the future, we've many hopes for 2017. It should be a momentous year, **bringing strong impetus to the development of the country.**

● We're placing the accent on creating new enterprises and new jobs, while promoting business. **Belarusian science will play a crucial role,** and innovative development is our priority.

● For the first time since gaining independence, Belarus has registered **an increase in natural population,** in 2016. Our families have more children, and they are the future of Belarus.

I'd like to see our patriotic young people more actively con-



cerned about the future of the Homeland. There are many talented people among you. I believe in you and hope that you'll find a place under the sun in Belarus, using your talents and skills for the benefit of the country. Twenty-five years have passed since the acquisition of sovereignty; now, you're responsible for the future and prosperity of the Fatherland.

Happy New Year, dear friends!

When it refers to children

'Palliative care' firmly established in medical practice but only recently covered by legislation

By Olga Savitskaya

There has been made a true breakthrough not only in medical care but in psychological, social and spiritual support. New approaches are being discussed at state level, and among the public, especially with reference to treating children. Even if illness cannot be beaten, this doesn't mean that young patients can't be helped.

During a recent sitting of the National Commission on Children's Rights, the issue was high on the agenda, as the Deputy Prime Minister, Natalia Kochanova, notes. She said, "In Belarus, 892 children are included on the register of those in need of palliative care. Most live with families and receive home care, as parents want to care for their children independently. We have a clear system of training (for professionals and family members), to support



Father Frost and Snow Maiden at Vitebsk Regional Maternity Hospital

such care, at all stages."

Ms. Kochanova underlines plans for special training and re-training of all employees involved in this field. The First Deputy

Health Minister, Dmitry Pinevich, adds that over 80 percent of children in Belarus receiving palliative care do so at home, surrounded by relatives.

This is the most effective option, especially for the family, but the latter do need attention and support, so that children may remain with loving and

caring people until their last days.

At present, these children — even in the most remote regions — enjoy an individual approach. Hospitals have beds for such patients and the level of care at special institutions is increasing all the time. Minsk's children's home #1, for children suffering with central nervous system defects, is a wonderful example, having palliative care wards. Since 2002, the hospital has provided support to families whose children are in need. Its four wards can accommodate twenty-five patients, and are equipped with ventilators.

All the children currently receiving support there have loving families and many of their parents are preparing to take their children home, having concluded their special training. These families now need support and, to achieve this, the interaction of all services and organisations is vital.

Barriers need to be eliminated

Work to expand and diversify exports tackled at session of Presidium of Council of Ministers

By Alexander Pimenov

Over the first nine months of 2016, Belarus' export geography expanded by five states, while the number of commodity items being sold abroad also rose. Belarus' exports to Azerbaijan increased by seventy-seven items, compared with the same period of 2015. There were forty-six more items among those sold to the UAE, forty-five more to Ukraine, thirty-eight more to Russia, and thirty-seven more to Vietnam.

"The problem of trade barriers

with our traditional partners, primarily with the Russian Federation, has not yet been addressed. Although the situation on the Russian market is returning to normal, we still need additional resources to keep our position on that market, given that conditions of operation for the economic entities of Belarus and Russia continue to be unequal," highlighted Belarus' PM, Andrei Kobyakov.

He noted that the EAEU share among Belarus' total exports has increased from 39 percent to 46 per-

cent (to include exports to Russia). Meanwhile, that with the European Union has shrunk, mainly due to the reduced value of petroleum exports. The same picture is evident across various other commodities. The structure of Belarusian exports to EU countries leaves much to be desired. The Russian market remains premium for food products; however, competition with local manufacturers is increasing.

Mr. Kobyakov believes that it's necessary to accelerate the entrance of our dairy companies to

the Chinese market, pondering why thirty-four certified Belarusian enterprises are yet to launch exports to China.

Civil servants are being tasked with targeting new markets, while enterprises are encouraged to work efficiently, while expanding their commodity distribution network abroad. Mr. Kobyakov views our Belarusian commodity distribution network, which includes more than 300 entities across forty states, as a foothold in raising export volumes and diversity.

Long established traditions

Alexander Lukashenko visits Nikolayevshchina rest home for war and labor veterans, and the disabled people

By Vasily Kharitonov

The President was welcomed at Nikolayevshchina rest home by Nikolay Pavlovsky and Larisa Gurinovich, who are due to marry on 20th January. Despite being aged over seventy, their faces were radiant with joy, having met at the home. Mr. Lukashenko promised not to forget about the forthcoming event.

It's long been a tradition for children to visit the elderly over the festive Christmas and New Year season. It's important to show that we care. If we forget the past and disregard the future, what prospects can there be?

Teatime at Nikolayevshchina is always a pleasant event. It seems wrong to label residents as 'old';



Alexander Lukashenko visits Nikolayevshchina rest home for war and labour veterans

they seem to have so much joie de vivre. Most grew up during the war years: some even fought; they have seen horrors and endured the difficult post-war years. Who better understands the value of peace and tranquillity?

During his visit, the President gave several instructions. After bidding farewell to Nikolayevshchina residents, he chatted with journalists.

The most important event for Belarus in the past year

We've escaped troubles and misfortunes. Primarily, as regards our children, we saw a record number of babies born, with births exceeding the mortality rate for the first time in our history of sovereignty. This indicates that we're gaining strength. It's a great event!

Strengthening social policy via recent personnel appointments

In any socially oriented country, the state is for the nation, viewing people as the most vital element. As I often say, everything — screws, bolts and the economy — is worth something when public benefit is the guiding principle. Otherwise, who needs such an economy? The nation doesn't need such a state. Social issues have always been, and will remain, in the limelight.

Malaysian market in focus

By Vladimir Khromov

Our political dialogue with some countries surpasses our business interaction, yet our economic presence is evident in some states, including Malaysia

We share views on the world order but could enjoy closer dialogue, as both sides agree. A recent meeting between President Alexander Lukashenko and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Malaysia, Pandikarom Amin

Mulia, saw Mr. Lukashenko outline Minsk's position.

He stated, "We're extremely interested in developing relations with you. This is because you've not placed any preconditions upon us, as some do. We've no claims on you and won't initiate conditions on our relations. We're ready to continue co-operation founded on the relationship we've established."

Pandikara Amin Mulia's programme included visits to major Belarusian companies, proving interest in their prod-

ucts. The President expressed the feasibility of establishing joint ventures, which was accepted by the guest with great attention.

The Malaysian Parliamentary Speaker said that his country looks forward to the Belarusian President's visit, for which plans are being made. An extensive agenda is being prepared, reflecting the potential of all possible areas of co-operation. Both sides agree that the visit should inspire political dialogue and business interaction.

For the benefit of both countries

By Alexander Pimenov

United States of America looks forward to stronger relations with Belarus, according to statement released by US Embassy to Belarus, to celebrate 25th anniversary of our diplomatic relations

The US Embassy notes that, since establishing diplomatic ties with Belarus in 1991, the United States has strongly supported Belarus' independence and sovereignty, on its path towards a more democratic and prosperous society.

The statement reads: 'Over the past twenty-five years, the United States and Belarus have liaised to strengthen European and global security. We welcomed the historic decision by Belarus to give up its nuclear weapons, in 1994. This

made a significant contribution to nuclear disarmament, reconfirming the security assurances recorded in the Budapest Memorandum with Belarus of December 5th, 1994. Belarus has assisted US and NATO efforts in Afghanistan, as part of the Northern Distribution Network. Meanwhile, the United States has provided enhanced security for nuclear and radiological materials in Belarus and is working with Belarusian agencies to help detect such materials along Belarus' borders'.

The Embassy adds that, over these years, thousands of Belarusians have visited the USA on academic and professional exchange programmes. In turn, American experts, teachers, and professors have visited Belarus, to share their knowledge with Belarusian partners.

Spirit of good co-operation

By Alexey Fedosov

Ten days before the year closed, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko welcomed to Independence Palace heads of OSCE mission to observe parliamentary elections: OSCE Special Co-ordinator for the Parliamentary Elections, Kent Harstedt, and the Head of the ODIHR OSCE Election Observation Mission, Cayetana De Zulueta Owtram

The OSCE report contains a comprehensive assessment of our parliamentary campaign, detailing positive aspects, and those requiring discussion. The OSCE has made recommendations to improve Belarusian election legislation, and a special working party has been set



Cayetana De Zulueta Owtram

up, liaising with OSCE specialists. Clearly, dialogue has been established.

A major new event is planned for 2017, with Minsk hosting an OSCE PA session, under the theme of strengthening the stability and security of the European region. Security is a shared concern, as the President of Belarus underlines, saying, "Issues of security and co-operation, and their interrelation, should be in the spotlight today as never before. There can be no security without co-

operation. As they say, if we continue to mistrust each other and talk to each other across fences, there will be no security in the region... You see what is going on in the world: every day is a day of tension in international relations. You must value your region, your homeland and Belarus as a place which is safe and good, where you can live peacefully and work well."

Kent Harstedt called the meeting with the President 'an important indication of our desire to work together to create a strong and flourishing Belarus'. It sent a signal to those failing to promote Belarusian-European dialogue, as he added, "I've said many times that I have a feeling that we're working in a spirit of good co-operation with Belarus."

MFA: more in common than we might think

By Alexey Fedosov

Foreign Ministry of Belarus releases statement on occasion of 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations with USA

'It's symbolic that Belarus and the United States mark the anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations during this time of moving towards the normalisation of bilateral relations, restoring confidence and dialogue across a wide range of issues: from trade and investment to military co-operation, culture and heritage preservation, development of democratic institutions and strengthening of sci-tech collaboration,' reads the statement.

'The United States was the second nation, having recognised Belarusian sovereignty, to invite the young Belarusian

state to establish full diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors. For a quarter of a century, relations between the Belarus and the US have trodden an uneasy path, through ups and downs, co-operation and discord, mutual expectations and disappointments. Our countries continue to have unresolved questions, some being fundamental,' the Foreign Ministry asserts.

According to the statement, diplomatic relations between our countries have just turned twenty-five, but historical and cultural ties between our nations stretch back hundreds of years. 'With this in mind, we remain firmly confident that sincere, friendly and fair relations will help Belarus and the United States put bilateral co-operation on a smooth path of sustainable development,' notes the Foreign Ministry of Belarus.

Builders have definitely confirmed their reputation

Incredibly, our road builders have laid more than 40km of four-lane motorway within the last year, connecting the M6 Minsk-Grodno highway with the 'Olympic' road (M-1 Brest-Minsk-Russian border), closing the second ring road around Minsk and allowing traffic to fully navigate the MKAD-2 (Minsk second ring road)

By Vasily Kharitonov

Motorists are enjoying their New Year 'gift', while builders can be proud of their work being praised by the World Bank. The latter states that Belarus has constructed roads for half the price of its neighbours, while rivalling them in quality. The President of Belarus attended the solemn opening of Minsk's second ring road, in the Dzerzhinsk District, and added his praise of the work achieved.

The wind across the open ground was wet and biting, so that even hot tea served by organisers couldn't warm up the assembled journalists. Belarus' Transport and Communications Minister, Anatoly Sivak, was on good form, however, despite the weather, clearly delighted that Belarus has gained another modern, major motorway. Its first section was commissioned in 2015, connecting the Minsk-Vitebsk and Minsk-Grodno highways. Now, the second stage has been completed, creating a total length of around 160km for the second ring road.

"The launch of the second section will help ease the burden on the first ring road, while uniting key transit routes for the vital trans-European corridors, from the north to the south and from the west to the east. This will improve the ecological situation in Minsk and should stimulate



The newly commissioned section of Minsk second ring road

development close to the new road, including logistics infrastructure and satellite towns," noted the Transport and Communications Minister, with pleasure.

The Chairman of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus, Sergei Rums, also looked pleased: the bank funded about 75 percent of investments into the MKAD-2.

It was decided to construct the MKAD-2 when it became clear that the existing ring road was overloaded, logging 120,000 vehicles daily. Now, a considerable volume of transit transport can be redirected to the second ring road, which utilises con-

temporary technologies, including cement concrete, which has double the life span, halving repair and maintenance costs.

Opening the road, the President warmly congratulated workers from road construction teams, telling them that the road is 'beautiful and reliable' and that he expects it to last many years, allowing us continued pride.

Events in Ukraine significantly enhance the importance of our transit potential. The M-10 highway, traversing from the Russian border, through Gomel to Kobrin, is being reconstructed, aiming to support transport between the EU and China, bypassing

the heavy-traffic hubs of Moscow and Minsk. The Minsk-Grodno highway is being reconstructed using World Bank funding and the road leading to Polotsk is being considered for similar treatment.

The quality of international and Republican roads affects our image abroad and potential investment, as well as transit revenue. Mr. Lukashenko is keen to see local roads improved too, noting that a plan is being elaborated for their reconstruction, with a financing mechanism determined. Within five years, every agro-town should have a decent road link.

Logic of efficient logistics

By Tatiana Kondratieva

Largest transport-logistics centre in Grodno Region launches near Bruzgi border checkpoint, enabling transport companies to store goods close to Belarusian-Polish border

Delivery times should significantly reduce with the centre's launch, while customs clearance should accelerate. Almost 30 million Roubles have been invested, allowing a completely new approach to the organisation of international transportation.

The Chairman of Grodno Regional Executive Committee, Vladimir Kravtsov, explains, "Several years ago, we elaborated a development programme for the region's logistical branch, guided by our beneficial geographical location. Six border checkpoints are currently operating within the border territory, so development of logistics business is a natural progression. The new transport-logistics centre is part of our programme and is the first such project countrywide providing over fifty types of services in one place. It refers not simply to cargo trans-shipment but, as a client wishes, goods can be repacked, re-marked and graded."

Business on track

On a wintry December evening, the 'Strizh' train arrived in Minsk from Moscow, for the first time, able to accommodate 216 passengers and to reach Berlin from Minsk within twelve hours: four hours quicker than previously

By Denis Pirovich

The travel time for the train's route has been significantly reduced thanks to quicker switching from a 1,520mm track gauge to a narrower gauge at the Belarusian-Polish border. From now on, at Brest station, the switching of the train, comprising Talgo carriages, will be auto-



'Strizh' high-speed train at Minsk-Passazhirsky station

matic, taking only thirty minutes (inclusive of border and customs control) instead of two hours.

Alexander Petrunin, the Deputy Director General of the Russian Federal Passenger Company, hopes to reduce the travel time from Moscow to Berlin still further, to less than twenty hours.

"On this section, the 'Strizh'

train is the speediest, able to run at up to 220kmh. However, our task is to prepare the necessary infrastructure to suit such speeds. The train will travel to Germany on Saturdays and Sundays, and will also transport passengers from Orsha, Minsk and Brest to Warsaw, Poznan, Rzepin and Frankfurt an der Oder," he explains.

Five Kopecks and bonus

By Dmitry Umpirovich

The cost of a trip on Minsk public transport has risen by five Kopecks: a ticket for tram, trolleybus or bus now costs fifty-five Kopecks while the underground has risen to sixty Kopecks. Meanwhile, those travelling by bus, trolleybus or tram have now several choices for buying tickets.

The first innovation is that unlimited electronic tickets for ground transportation can be programmed for a period of one, two, three or ninety days, while travel cards are available for a hundred trips. Minsktrans has calculated that a bus-trolleybus-tram travel card for ninety days saves about 15 percent on three separate monthly purchases, while buying a card for a hundred trips saves around 20 percent.



The second innovation will tackle those who have to use express bus routes. Those who have travel cards for trolleybus-tram-bus routes will now be able to use the same travel card for express bus routes as a bonus (previously, for this purpose it was necessary to have a travel card for 4 types of transport, including underground).



View of Troitsky Suburbs and River Svisloch from the Upper Town, in Minsk

Capital to acquire satellites

The city has improved its town-planning strategy and won't enlarge

By Dmitry Leskov

Belarusian architects know exactly how Minsk will look in about fifteen years' time. It's not prophecy but town planning, the horizons of tomorrow's capital set out until 2030.

Sovereign Belarus acquired the first such document for Minsk in 2003, taking into account global trends, planning through until 2020. Of course, plans are flexible, and these have been twice updated. This autumn, plans were extended through until 2030.

"The President set the task of worthily shaping the city: putting town-planning in order. We're trying to reconsider the past strategy of rapid, extensive development," says the chief architect of Minskgrado, Alexander Akentiev.

Demographic top

The starting point for urban planning tends to be the number of residents needing to be accommodated. Five years ago, experts thought that the capital would grow behind the Minsk ring road, enveloping settlements located there. It was expected that, by 2030, the population of Minsk would reach 2.2 million people. Today, every fifth resident of the country lives in the capital, which is obviously too much. Building of homes is outpacing the building of schools, kindergartens and cultural centres needed by residents.

Minsk remains compact and it's been decided that the optimum size for the capital is two million, leading to the same sort of restrictions as were in place during Soviet times. Meanwhile, the focus has shifted to developing satellite

towns: Rudensk, Dzerzhinsk, Logoisk, Fanipol and Smolevichi. These are due to house an extra 100,000 people, with most residents choosing these locations rather than wait for a flat in Minsk. Homes are being built in these towns with state support, and land plots are being made available too.

"In just one year, volumes of housing construction in Minsk have halved, while satellite cities are rivalling the capital in terms of comfort," says the Chairman of the Committee of Architecture and Town-planning of Minsk City Executive Committee, the Minsk's chief architect, Pavel Luchinovich.

Enterprises leaving the city

Large enterprises are being encouraged to depart the city. Well-known Belarusian factory Galan-

teya, which produces leather items and accessories, is among them. It's currently located just one kilometre from the House of Government, which is clearly inappropriate. It's being relocated to Smolevichi. Enterprises are being motivated with stick and carrot, including increases in ground rent in Minsk.

Urban parks set to bloom

Minsk residents and visitors to the capital should see a modern, clean city in fifteen years' time, say town-planners: a city boasting the latest facilities and better able to cope with transport needs. Naturally, the roads can only deal with a certain amount of traffic, and rapid housing growth takes its toll in this respect. Accordingly, public transport is being significantly extended, with extra metro lines added. The

first line of the capital's metro has been extended, and building of a third line, stretching about 25km, is in full swing.

A key goal is to make it possible to travel from homes on the Minsk ring road into the city centre within thirty minutes: this will be the 'golden' capital standard. The second Minsk ring road is being designed to connect satellite cities, while limiting trucks' entrance into the city.

The concept of micro-districts is disappearing from town-planning policy, with a transition to 'quarters'. Meanwhile, more than two thousand hectares of new parks and squares are to appear in the capital, with the first planned in residential areas. Plans include further reconstruction of a quay on the River Svisloch, a unique Loshitsa waterpark and Slep'yanka water systems.

Hilton has grown beautifully

Former heiress of world's largest chain of Hilton Hotels & Resorts, managed by Hilton Worldwide Corporation, Paris Hilton, may never have visited Minsk but the heads of the most famous hotel company are aware of our country, and see great potential for investing in new hotels

By Polina Kononoga

The arrival of Jochem-Jan Sleiffer, Hilton Worldwide's Area Vice President for Northern and Central Europe, went unnoticed by the Minsk public. Nevertheless, on the eve of the Christmas holidays, he made time to cut the red ribbon at the new premium hotel, Double Tree. The atmosphere was cosy and calm, on the 21st floor, with journalists gathering at one of the most famous bars in the city. Mr. Sleiffer (who likes to be called Ji Ji) spoke of the country's and city's tourist potential while crisping shellfish chips.

Since autumn of 2015, the corporation has opened two sites in Minsk: the mid-priced Hampton Hotel and the Premium Double Tree. Of course,



Double Tree by Hilton Hotel

they won't rest on their laurels.

Mr. Sleiffer explained, "Business activity is slowing down but this is a small crisis which can't be compared

to that of 2008. The current time is very good for investments in Minsk and in Belarus. I travel a great deal and see planes full of passengers

flying here from Amsterdam, Vienna and other European cities. This demonstrates that your city and your country have good tourist potential."

Originally, the leadership of Hilton Worldwide planned to bring the occupancy rate of the new facility to 70 percent within three years; they later reduced this to 60 percent. Now, the prominent hotelier isn't discussing concrete figures, explaining that a range of factors come into play. However, he is absolutely convinced that the popularity of Minsk will continue to grow. He mentioned the IIHF World Championships, held in the Belarusian capital, as well as the European Games, that are to be hosted in 2019. Mr. Sleiffer is confident that such events are vital in raising Belarus' profile and stresses that his corpo-



Jochem-Jan Sleiffer

ration is keen to focus on developing business tourism.

"People come for an event and stay three or four days, spending a lot of money," notes Mr. Sleiffer. "Believe me, we'll do everything we can to enable this hotel to embrace the Belarusian spirit."

The CIS and Eastern European market is a priority for Hilton Worldwide, which is raising its number of hotels from twenty-eight to fifty-two. The corporation has particular plans for our country, including the possibility of opening new brands from the chain in major cities, which is seen as economically feasible.

Miraculous palms, or white stork flying above Vesuvius

Travelling around the globe, it's a great pleasure to meet our countrymen, who live in some unexpected spots! Around 3.5 million Belarusians live abroad but my recent trip to Italy made me ponder how easily they adjust to relocation.

By Yekaterina Medvedskaya

Before my trip to Italy, I read an article on the #Belarus bez granic Internet portal about a Belarusian woman who'd moved to Georgia. The former Minsker, a co-ordinator of the Belogruziya information project and an ardent traveller — Olga Gradinar — shared her impressions of Belarusians abroad. I agree with two of her conclusions: Belarusians are extremely tidy and admire cleanliness, and they're tolerant. According to Olga, we not only accept foreign guests in Belarus and treat other nationalities with tolerance but find a common language with foreigners abroad.

As a member of the artistic delegation of the *Belarus of Many Nationalities* project, initiated by the Plenipotentiary Representative for Religious and Nationality Affairs, I packed my suitcase and took a bus trip. I wanted to see the rich diversity of Belarusian culture abroad, as presented by various Belarusian folk groups. The project has run for almost five years, with participants having visited Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Austria, Finland, Ukraine, Moldova and Transdnier. This time, the route led to Italian Naples.

Italian landscapes are beautiful, from wonderful small villages to white sheep in valleys, with towering summits above. I saw a great deal through our bus windows. It was so picturesque: even the colours seemed extraordinary, the grass being too green and the sky too blue, above snow-covered mountains. I felt like a heroine in a film for those few days in southern Europe. Italians are artistic, emotional and hospitable, like Adriano Celentano. You can communicate regardless of knowing the language, as gestures speak loudly. Meanwhile, certain words easily stick in the memory, thanks to their melody and beauty.

In Naples, we were welcomed by our countrywomen, who moved to Italy in the late 1990s and early 2000s, establishing the BELLARUS cultural organisation not long ago. They now share information on their original Motherland, organising exhibitions, conferences and festivals. They also participate in competitions: of national cuisine, handmade crafts and fashion catwalks.

Several artistes on the trip shared their surprise, saying, "Citizens in this city move strangely. Why are they all rushing about?" At that mo-



From the town quay, a view opens to Vesuvius volcano



In a Naples street



Carabinieri and artistes of Korean *Arirang* ensemble, from Belarus

FIGURES:

Some indescribable force applies itself to you in Naples. Its unique colours and mood become familiar. Interestingly, the city's beauty was fixed in a proverb in the 18th century: *vedi Napoli e poi muori* (see Naples and die). Similar phrases were later introduced for other cities around the globe.

ment, our countrywomen — Tatiana Pumpuleva, Tatiana Konovalova and Tatiana Leusik — were hurrying to meet us. They bounced into the bus, dressed in Belarusian national costume and holding loaves of bread in their hands. They were in a great mood, which quickly made us feel the same: joyful and brimming with excitement. It seems that our place of residence really does influence our character. Belarusians are known for their reserve and calm, while Italians overflow with emotions and energy.

You can find plenty of information about Naples online, via diverse tourist sites and guides. I love the following description: "Naples may be loved or hated but it won't leave anyone indifferent. This city of contrasts combines good and bad, joy and sadness, beauty and recession. The city is sometimes likened to a 'theatre of life': an open-air theatre welcoming all".

wondered why Naples needed traffic lights but Ivanna, the 12 year old daughter of Tatiana Pumpuleva, who heads BELLARUS, explained, "Our hands perform miracles: we show our palm to a driver and they stop." By the end of my third day in Naples, I also had miraculous palms. Moreover, I learnt how to gesture in place of many unknown words, and was sincerely surprised by everything happening around me.

Early in my acquaintance with the city, I'd have refused an offer to live there for any period of time: I found Naples too noisy and crowded. It abounds with street sellers who press you to purchase their useless, poor quality products. Moreover, the streets are so busy during the day that you wonder who is actually at work.

Over time, some indescribable force applies itself to you in Naples. Its unique colours and mood become familiar. Interestingly, the

I couldn't help but notice Naples' lack of organisation. No one seems to follow traffic rules: motorcycles (which are widely used by city residents) manoeuvre between cars, while pedestrians cross roads without rhyme or reason. I

city's beauty was fixed in a proverb in the 18th century: *vedi Napoli e poi muori* (see Naples and die). Similar phrases were later introduced for other cities around the globe.

Among Naples' undeniable sights are its National Museum, Picture Gallery and Archaeological Museum, which keeps finds from Pompeii and Herculaneum. It even has a famous Secret Room, of scandalous fame. The Teatro di San Carlo is the largest in Italy. Old castles, fortresses and numerous churches amaze, Naples being an ancient city. It's prohibited to build anything new there. When a new metro station was being laid, a new section of the 'old town' was unearthed, presenting local authorities with the challenge of

what to do with the 'find'...

The narrow streets in the centre of Naples will remain forever in my memory. The houses are so close to each other that people from opposite houses might greet each other in the morning from their bedrooms. To apply our Belarusian desire for 'neatness' (painting walls or cleaning streets) would interfere with Neapolitan style. According to some data online, from 2007 and 2008, the city has problems in dealing with its rubbish, creating a 'waste crisis'.

As I've seen with my own eyes, the problem continues, but Naples residents seem to pay little attention. It's almost their defining feature: their ability to endure, without changing anything. The city landscape has been the same for centuries, as 17th-19th century postcards verify, showing the same panorama. This is Naples' secret. Unsurprisingly, in 1995, the city's historical centre (centro storico) joined the UNESCO World Heritage List.

After returning to Minsk, I can't help but ask myself whether I'd be able to live in Naples. I recall Tatiana Pumpuleva's answer to the same question. She said, "It was truly hard in the beginning but I then established the Belarusian association, which has become my job. I now fly around in rhythm with the city."

On this wintery Belarusian morning, I recall Naples' embankment, its huge stones and seagulls, fishermen's small boats, sun and warmth. I recall my sea swim in mid-October, and night stars above Vesuvius. The answer is logical: I'd love to stay in the city for some time. I'd certainly visit for a holiday.

COMPETENT OPINION

Alexandra GURKO, who heads the Ethnography Department at the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences' Centre of Belarusian Culture, Language and Literature Studies:

Several thousand Belarusians have moved to Italy; according to some calculations, there are 7,000 or 8,000. Most arrived in the 1990s and early 2010s, for employment, marriage or seeking education. The second generation of those Belarusians is now growing up in Italy (children born as a result of marriages with Italians). They're building their lives in line with Italian manners, but they know Russian, learn Belarusian and show interest in their native culture. The largest public organisation of our countrymen in Italy — BELLARUS — involves around 200 permanent members. It was founded on October 29th, 2010, to develop and strengthen ties with Belarusians in Italy. Belarusians abroad often use ethnic symbols as logos. For instance, BELLARUS' emblem in Naples is a stork flying above Vesuvius.

Invitation to Book Ball

Frantsisk Skorina seems to descend from the famous engraving, thoughtfully studying an old folio inside the festively decorated lobby of the Opera Theatre. The appearance of this famous ancient Polotsk personality near the Christmas tree — decorated with books instead of toys — is no accident: the annual Christmas Charity Ball could hardly be held without our first book printer!



By Lyudmila Ivanova

2017 will celebrate the 500th anniversary since Skorina's publishing of his first book. Meanwhile, the passed year of 2016 was marked with the traditional Book Ball — held as part of the *Our Children* Republican campaign. The auction featured the best samples of national book printing and generated funds for charity.

Information Minister Lilia Ananich notes that the Book Ball is like a Christmas report for readers, showing future plans. She says, "In the Year of Books, our President said that we'd lose the country if we lost books. This is the leitmotif of Belarusian book publishing. We've not lost our books and we're soon to celebrate a landmark date: the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book printing."

Our publishers have many grounds for pride. According to the



Minister, over 10,000 books are published in the country annually: more than 2.3 per capita. In 2016, the *Culture of Belarus* six-volume encyclopaedia was published, in addition to *Olympic Belarus* (featuring the autographs of famous athletes), and *Pride of Belarus: Young and Talented* (with autographs by artistes from the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus).

The recent auction was interna-

national: the Association of Publishers, Printers and Booksellers of Kazakhstan donated a trilogy by Ilyas Esenberlin, called *Nomads*, while the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications of Russia gave *The Journey of Heir Tsarevich* (in three volumes). The latter was among the most expensive lots, gaining a bid of Br1,000. Meanwhile, the most sought-after edition — *Olympic Belarus* — sold for Br1,500. Over-

all, the Ball raised Br8,600 Roubles for Shklov special general boarding school for children with visual impairment.

"There was a feeling of the New Year holiday and magic," admits the Director of Mastatskaya Literatura Publishing House, Ales Badak. "We donated an edition of Yakub Kolas' *New Land*, which includes forty illustrations by People's Artist Vasil Sharangovich. It was our most expensive lot, selling for around Br1,000. In addition, *I'm Not Sad* — released recently for the anniversary of Maxim Bogdanovich's birth — sold out quickly. It's become a rarity."

According to Mr. Badak, bids were so active that it was difficult to intervene. "If a person has money but lacks time to go shopping and buys a good Belarusian book for a high price here, then more readers will gain access in the long term," he adds.

Frantsisk Skorina's book legacy donated to major libraries in Rome and the Vatican

By Dmiry Dubov

A multi-volume facsimile edition, entitled *Frantsisk Skorina's Book Legacy*, has been donated to the National Central Library of Rome and the Vatican Apostolic Library

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Italy, Alexander Guryanov, joined the Director of the National Library of Belarus, Roman Motulsky, at a ceremony to present the book, which is part of the *Belarus Today* international series, with editions previously donated to the National Central Library of Rome.

Novel, story, poetry collection, with autographs

By Svetlana Povtorova

Books signed by Belarusian authors on sale in Minsk

Belarusian writers with Registr Publishing House are taking part in an author signing session at the Tsentralny bookstore in Minsk, as part of a campaign promoting book purchases. On the eve of the New Year, it's always pleasant to buy a book, either as a gift, or for yourself. Such purchases are even more special when you receive a signed edition, from the author.

Igor Polyakov, the author of *The Space*, began his career as a director but won a literary contest for emerging authors, *The First Chapter*, in 2012, which launched his debut novel.

Oksana Khvashchevskaya won the second season of *The First Chapter*; her book, *Not Love*, became a best-seller almost overnight, thrilling readers with its palette of emotions. Her female protagonist's anxieties, sufferings and joys are brought to life as vividly as if we're watching on film. Fans can acquire a signed copy from Oksana herself, at the Tsentralny bookstore.

Tamara Lisitskaya's *The Goddess or the Housewife's Lament* was her first poetry collection, released in 2014, following on the heels of her other books with Registr Publishing House: *Female Women Idiots*, *The Quiet Centre*, and *The Stork's Kiss*. Ms. Lisitskaya has worked as a TV and radio host, a director and a writer.

Belarus and the Muslim world

By Marina Veselukha

New Cathedral Mosque in Minsk gathers Muslim faithful and academics for communal prayer

Academics have joined heads of Muslim communities from Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan for a round table discussion entitled *Dialogue of Religions and Cultures in the Context of Modern Trends in the Development of Islam and Contemporary Challenges*.

The meeting included the screening of a documentary, *Islam — A*

Peace-loving Religion, while researcher and collector Vladimir Lihodedov presented an exhibition of old photos and his book, entitled *Belarus and the Muslim World*.

"100,000-120,000 Muslims currently reside in Belarus," notes the Mufti of Belarus, Abu-Bekir Shabanovich. "Vladimir Lihodedov's *Belarus and the Muslim World* is a wonderful gift, often presented to top officials of Arab states during official visits by the President. It has been presented to the US Congress Library and praised highly. The edition, in Russian, English and Turkish,

tells the history of Tatar settlements in Belarus in the 14th and 15th centuries, through until the present day. Mr. Lihodedov comments, "Our lands have always been known for their tolerance towards various beliefs. My book displays unique photos, collected from various countries. Each picture is more than a hundred years old. I was lucky to find a true rarity — a photo depicting the only Muslim who lived in Polotsk in the early 20th century."

"The project wouldn't have been successfully completed were it not for Vladimir Peftiev, to whom I'm

very grateful for allowing us to use his personal collection and for having helped us in preparing the exhibition and the release of the book," he adds.

Mr. Lihodedov notes that ties have existed between Belarus and the Muslim world for many centuries, as is proven by the discovery of Arab coins dating to the 7th and 8th century. However, there is much to be revealed, including the nature of trade along the River Dnieper to the Volga River, as used by our ancestors to trade with the Muslim world. Research continues, and new findings await.



Sydney welcomes in 2017 with its biggest-ever fireworks display, accompanied by music, thrilling packed crowds

Millions of people have been celebrating the arrival of 2017

After South Pacific islands, New Zealand was the first major country to see in the New Year, Auckland celebrating with a laser light show and fireworks at the city's Sky Tower

Not to be upstaged, Sydney quickly followed suit. The Australian city's harbour provided the backdrop for an elaborate fireworks display which paid tribute to Prince and David Bowie, both departed in 2016.

Isolated North Korea joined in the fun too, half an hour after its southern neighbour. The fireworks in Pyongyang were covered live on

state television.

Hong Kong added an oriental touch to Auld Lang Syne, as hundreds of thousands turned out for the street party and fireworks over Victoria Harbour.

A bell tolled to mark the New Year at Japan's Zentsu Temple in Zentsuji City.

The iconic London skyline was illuminated with fireworks as Big

Ben rang in the new year. Music celebrating artists past and present accompanied the spectacular display.

The start of 2017 in Berlin was a slightly more sedate affair, following a year of terror attacks throughout Germany. The latest, at a Christmas market in the capital, claimed the lives of 12 people.

Amsterdam held what is being hailed one of Europe's biggest street

parties to welcome in a fresh year.

The Great Pyramids of Giza, the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the World, have seen their fair share of new year's celebrations. Egypt let off almost one-minute of fireworks over the tombs.

In Dubai, a reported 2.5 million people gathered to watch the downtown gala, smashing last year's figure of 1.7 million.

Midnight fireworks in Moscow's Red Square lit up the sky over the Kremlin, Lenin's mausoleum and other recognisable landmarks.

Crowds flocked to Paris' iconic Champs-Elysees avenue for New Year celebrations, witnessing a spectacular light show projected onto the Arc de Triomphe as well as a fireworks display as the clock struck midnight.

Britain taps Harry Potter and Sherlock Holmes to lure tourists

Britain is again going literary to boost tourism in 2017

The hope is that anniversaries involving boy wizard Harry Potter, fictional detective Sherlock Holmes and author Jane Austen will lure more visitors. VisitBritain, the national tourism agency, has already shown that is a winning formula. In 2016, it used major anniversaries linked to William Shakespeare, Beatrix Potter, Charlotte Brontë and Roald Dahl to promote tourism in Britain.

This year will see the 20th anniversary of the first *Harry Potter* book and the 125th anniversary of the publication of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. It is also 200 years since the death of Jane Austen, the writer of classics including *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride*

and *Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma*.

Focal points for visitors are likely to include a new *Harry Potter* exhibition at the British Library.

The south-western English city of Bath, which is strongly associated with Jane Austen, is set to see an increase in visitors, along with the county of Hampshire where she lived.

London's Baker Street is also braced for more visitors along with another city in the south-west — Bristol — which was the location for some of the filming of the latest BBC series of *Sherlock Holmes* stories starring Benedict Cumberbatch.

Outside England, Wales is promoting its Year of Legends and Scot-



land celebrates a Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology.

VisitBritain believes there will be 38.1 million visitors to the UK this

year, up from 2016's estimated 36.7 million. It is not sure about the effects on numbers of the fall in the value of the Pound against other currencies.

Reina club massacre: when laughter turned to tears

The ISIL militant group has claimed responsibility for the New Year's Day shooting rampage in a nightclub in Istanbul

A statement about the attack, which killed 39 people, appeared on a social media site used in the past by ISIL to claim attacks. The lone gunman who opened fire indiscriminately in the Reina nightclub, just over an hour into the New Year, is still at large. More than 40 people are being treated in hospital.

The ISIL statement says the attack is part of operations it is conducting against Turkey, which it describes as 'protector of the cross'. Turkey is part of the US-led coalition that has been fighting ISIL. At least 25 of the victims are believed to have been foreigners.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Art trip along Europe starts from Minsk. To be continued...

From Lisbon to Vladivostok through Minsk embraces works by thirty painters, from twenty-eight European states, launching at Mikhail Savitsky Art Gallery in Minsk

By Veniamin Mikheev

The exhibition project, implemented jointly with the Foreign Ministry, the Belarusian Embassy to France and Minsk City Executive Committee, is being held under the official aegis of UNESCO, underlining its international humanitarian significance. The exhibition is unique in Minsk, unifying European representatives of contemporary art.

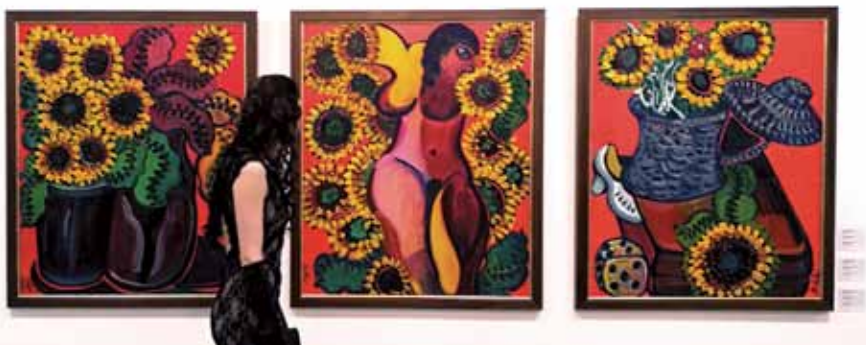
The project is the brainchild of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to France, Pavel Latushko, and Belarusian artist Victor Alshevsky. Within one year, they have made all necessary plans, working with European diplomatic missions in Belarus, and the Foreign Ministry, to organise the art project.

European culture acts as a humanitarian counterbalance to political and social conflicts, drawing on centuries-old traditions, while also demonstrating the most contemporary forms of painting and sculpture. Minsk recently became one of the most active negotiation venues for settling international conflict in the European region, presenting itself as a centre of cultural diplomacy.

Vladimir Makei, Belarus' Foreign Minister, and Chairman of the National Commission for UNESCO, noted at the exhibition



Belarusian artist Victor Alshevsky's works on show



Brightly coloured exhibition

opening, "Belarus, situated at the intersection of roads connecting Europe and Asia, has always tried to promote peace and good neighbourliness to the region. We advocate for the development of good neighbourly relations with other countries worldwide, regardless of their geographical location or length of borders. We have a respectful at-

titude towards our partners and hope for a corresponding attitude towards Belarus from their side. The opening of this exhibition, in the Year of Culture, contributes to Belarusian diplomacy within a diverse palette of cultural events in our country."

The exhibition is being held, symbolically, near the ancient Upper Town, where tourists tend to



gather over the New Year and Christmas holidays. The gallery named after People's Artist Mikhail Savitsky, which is hosting the event, will become a centre of attraction for Minskites keen on modern art, as well as for guests from around the world. The gallery is part of the Museum of Minsk City History: a unique project organised by Minsk city authorities, uniting historic buildings in the Belarusian capital, including recently reconstructed sections of the Upper Town — so

greatly enjoyed by both Minskites and guests.

"Symbolically, Minsk is now a centre of unity and a common cultural space, bringing nations closer," asserts the Chairman of Minsk City Executive Committee.

Artists taking part in the *From Lisbon to Vladivostok through Minsk* exhibition include experienced masters of contemporary art and budding young artists, who are up and coming in their home nations. Their creativity is diverse, yet shares a common thread, linked by a European identity.

Painter Victor Alshevsky, a curator of the exhibition and participant from Belarus, tells us, "The project offers an intellectual journey, via the capitals of the world. It's an inspiration to compare and comprehend the spiritual culture of each capital, each state, and each author's work. Meanwhile, the project shows our desire to embrace the supreme unity of our spirit."

The project is unusual in being artist-led, as Mr. Alshevsky explains. Each artists chose which works to present at the Minsk gallery, while the artists representing each country were also not decided in Minsk. The result is a great diversity of styles, while being consonant and harmonious.

Many of the donating artists attended the opening of the exhibition, showing their interest in Belarus as a centre of cultural community. The exhibition features painters living not only in European capitals, but in Vladivostok — the most eastern city of the Eurasian continent — and in St. Petersburg, which is the recognised cultural capital of Russia.

This is the first exhibition uniting the participants in a single exhibition hall, although many have known each other for a long time. There were delighted reunions at the *From Lisbon to Vladivostok through Minsk* exhibition, which runs almost to the end of winter, before traveling on to Lisbon and through Europe. Truly, Minsk is making its mark.

Local businesses in Minsk have provided sponsorship for the event, as has become a tradition.

'Conveying so many various emotions on the voice-overs'

By Alina Kasel

Zinaida Kuprianovich, aged 14, voices main heroine of Disney animated film

In December, *Moana* premiered at Minsk cinemas, created by the team behind *Cold Heart* and *Zootopia*: all animated films. In the new car-

toon, heroine Moana has been dubbed in Russian by Zina Kuprianovich, working alongside Yulianna Karaulova, Denis Klyaver, Grigory Siyatvinda and Ilya Lagutenko, voicing the new Disney masterpiece.

"I was called from Moscow and invited to casting," Zina tells us. "I learned later that the film team has been follow-

ing my career since I was six. I spent six hours daily, over several weeks, on the voice-overs, conveying so many emotions, from being angry or cheerful, to sad. It's my first voicing experience and certainly wasn't easy but I've learnt a great deal and it was fun!"

Zina has previously worked with Yulianna Karau-

lova and Denis Klyaver on stage and has conquered Belarusians' hearts with her talent. She's been awarded at various domestic and international competitions, including the *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk*, *Young Talents of Belarus*, *Children's New Wave*, and *The Voice: Children*.

Zina asserts that she liked



Playbill featuring a character from the animated film

the character of Moana immediately and that it took no time at all to 'find' her personality. "I took to it like a fish to water," she tells us. "I read the text and sang in the cartoon.

It's rare for just one person to do both. The cartoon is worth seeing; it's so heartfelt, and dazzling. You'll cry and laugh, and it'll be loved by children and adults alike," she asserts.

Couturier Yuri Kot: 'I want to show Europe the beauty of Belarus'

At the age of thirty years old, Minsk resident Yuri Kot moved to Toulouse, becoming the first Belarusian to open a Fashion House in France, designing with linen

By Yelena Karlina

Frightened Parisians

With needles between his teeth, and huge scissors sticking out of his pocket, the couturier stands, attaching lace to a blouse. Beyond the wall, you can hear sewing machines. The team is fulfilling a large order, making outfits for the National French Symphonic Orchestra. Among his clients are members of the royal families of Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Having found success in Europe, the fashion designer has decided to return to Minsk.

The student of Minsk's Light Industry College began by clothing Soviet celebrities such as Boris Moiseev and Laima Vaikule. For many, this would have been enough, but Yuri had huge ambition. He packed a suitcase and bought a one-way ticket to France. That was twenty-seven years ago.

"At the time, I didn't know any French," Yuri recalls. Just imagine, I came from the USSR, while there were such stars as Christian Lacroix and Jean-Paul Gaultier..."

It seemed that the capital of world fashion had seen everything so Kot decided to shock the public, creating sumptuous designs. He tells us, "I'd been designing for a long time. I bought very expensive fabrics, deciding that I'd make everything very special."

The collection caused a stir but didn't sell, as people thought the designs impractical. He recalls, "It was like a slap in the face. I began thinking how to reconcile haute couture with everyday life."

Then success came.

'I recreate in Minsk'

Yuri is now 57 years old and has spent almost half of his life in France, but has no desire to change citizenship. He comments, "I have a Belarusian passport, and I love my native land dearly. I visit it as often as I can; Belarus is the only place I go on holiday. Some go to Paris on holiday, while I go to Minsk," he laughs. "You can live anywhere in the world, but you only belong to one country."

In 2015, Yuri Kot visited the *Zacharavanne* exhibition, by photographer Irena Gudievskaya. It made a huge impression on him. He relates, "There were photos of famous Belaru-



NOTE

Yuri Kot was born in Minsk in 1959. After graduation, he worked as a tailor at the House of Models (now known as the Belarus Fashion Centre). In 1980, he moved to Moscow, sewing stage costumes for Soviet stars. In 1988, he moved to Toulouse. During Belarus Fashion Week-2016, he showed formal dresses and 1970s and 1980s inspired outfits.

sian linen and I was so impressed that I took a notebook and began sketching. In this way, my linen collection appeared. We approached everything creatively, using unique models, and making not everyday clothes, but evening dresses and, even, wedding gowns."

Frenchwomen loved the collection, buying every item within a few short weeks, despite them being expensive. Kot then added linen clothes to the stock in his shop.

"Linen fabrics used to be rough, so nobody wanted to work with them. Now, they're soft, they look good and importantly, they don't crease. I know that many Belarusian designers have tried to enter the European market with linen clothes but have been unsuccessful. If you just embroider some fabric with beads and flowers, it won't sell. You need to take a certain approach."

I go home

Having won over France, the couturier decided to storm Belarus. In October, he opened his first showroom in Minsk. He explains, "The fashion business is difficult in Russia and Belarus, as we lack outstanding designers. Even if you've created something ingenious, you need a lot of money, as fabrics are very expensive, as is equipment. In due course, everything will change; after all, we have great potential!"

Yuri Kot is now in Minsk, taking part in Belarus Fashion Week. He tells us, "One year ago, on one of the leading European TV channels about style, I saw a clip from Belarus Fashion Week and was so surprised! I was glad that the Belarusian fashion industry had reached a world level."

Prêt-à-Porter

The first fashion week was organised in New York in 1943, when enterprising manufacturers realised that they needed to be inventive to compete with French fashion houses. The American fashion industry soon attained world level recognition, with the US Fashion Week becoming a key event of the season. Russia Fashion Week launched in 1999, with Belarus following suit in 2007. Moscow Fashion Week, showing spring-summer 2017 collections, ran from October 18th to October 23rd, 2016, while Belarus Fashion Week occupied the Central Exhibition Centre from November 3rd until November 6th. As well as Belarusian designers, the event attracted collections from the UK, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland and, of course, Russia. There were charitable activities, photo exhibitions and film screenings, as well as catwalk shows.



New Year present for true ice hockey fans and lovers

Belarus' U-17 ice hockey team wins international Mac's Midget AAA World Invitational Tournament in Canadian Calgary

By Alexey Grishin

Scotiabank Saddledome arena — seating almost 20,000 — has hosted the finals, with Belarus beating the Saskatoon Contacts — 6:1 (2:0, 1:0, 3:1). Vasily Filyaev and Pavel Azhgirey both scored twice, while Dmitry Savritsky and Ivan Nekrasov each scored once.

“The tournament has been difficult for our team, which has played seven matches in a short period of time. We're pleased with our victory, as emotions were running high. All our guys performed brilliantly, doing their best in every match. It was this that brought success. We're taking the cup home; this victory is a New Year present to our fans and to all ice hockey lovers,” announced the captain of Belarus' U-17 team, Dmitry Savritsky, after the match.



From the final match against Saskatoon Contacts

The head coach of the U-17 team, Vladimir Magdeev, notes that the final match against the Saskatoon Contacts (6:1) was less intense than the semi-final match against the Cariboo Cougars (5:4 in overtime).

He tells us, “We played the final match in the evening. In the semi-finals, we faced a more serious rival, witnessing much provocation and struggles for power over the puck. Our guys demonstrated determina-

tion and won. In the decisive match for the trophy, our rivals appeared on the ice with clear understanding of our supremacy. The Saskatoon Contacts understood that Belarusians were, simply, stronger. We attacked confidently, and defended our net. Our rivals' low spirits certainly helped us to succeed. Our U-17 players performed as a true team, supporting each other. It's a well established squad: a true challenge to defeat.”

In the preliminary round matches, Belarus defeated the Vancouver Chiefs from the Main Junior League of British Columbia (BCMML) — 5:3, the Calgary Buffaloes (a leader of the Junior AMHL League) — 4:2, the Regina Pat Canadians (the leader of the Main Junior League of Saskatchewan) — 5:0, and the Arizona Bobcats U18 (from the NAPHL 18U Junior League) — 4:3.

Mr. Magdeev's trainees entered



the playoffs in first place in their group and, in the quarter-finals, defeated the Red Deer Optimist Chiefs — 4:0 (1:0, 2:0, 1:0), from the Junior AMHL League of Alberta.

In the semi-finals, our guys enjoyed the upper hand over the leader of the Main Youth League of British Columbia (BCMML) — Kugerz Caribbean — 5:4 OT (1:1, 3:1, 0:2, 1:0).

The twenty-five teams in the tournament were divided into five groups (five squads in each), playing matches upon a one-lap system. The winner of each group, in addition to three teams with wild cards, went through to the quarter-finals.

Belarus' U-17 hockey team was participating in Mac's Midget AAA World Invitational Tournament for the second time, and celebrated its first victory.

Results summed up and 'best' recognised

By Igor Svitov

As ever, the start of a new year is a time to look back at achievements, with the world of sport always of interest. In December, we named our top athletes, polling a hundred journalists. Olympic champion Vladislav Goncharov was easily acknowledged as the 'Athlete of the Year', while Olympic wrestling silver medalist, Maria Mamoshuk, was clearly the 'best' among our sportswomen.

Goncharov's performance in Rio de Janeiro was called a sensation, as the Belarusian unexpectedly outshone China's two favourites: 2014 medallist and world champion Dong Dong, and 2015 world champion Gao Lei. No Belarusian has ever taken a trampolining medal at the Olympics, so Goncharov's success was

all the sweeter. Logically, his coach, Olga Vlasova, was acknowledged as 'Best Coach of the Year'.

She shows no surprise at her pupil's new title, telling us, “It's actually rather an expected result, though still delightful. It's not the first time that we've been awarded such prizes. In 2014, I was named 'Person of the Year' in Vitebsk and Vladislav was granted the same title a year later. There have been several other titles: from early training, others saw our potential, and we were recognised, at various levels. Of course, it was pleasant for Vladislav and I to be awarded the Order of the Fatherland of the 3rd degree. Such awards invigorate you, because your steps of achievement are being 'seen', inspiring you onwards.”

Maria Mamoshuk tells



Vladislav Goncharov

a great surprise to learn that I'd been nominated. My victory is completely incredible, though very pleasant. After the Olympics, this 'Athlete of the Year' title is the best news ever. I hope that I deserve it, not only for my sporting results but for the way I behave outside the wrestling ring.”

Neither athlete will rest on their laurels. Having had some down time after the Olympics, and recovered from his eye surgery, Goncharov has hit the gym once more, training with Ms. Vlasova for the new season.



Maria Mamoshuk (R)

us that the 'people's recognition' award is an even greater surprise than her Olympic medal in Brazil. Her sporting success, she feels, is in her own hands, while the award was a surprise. She admits, “I didn't even know that such polls were conducted. It was

“Our life hasn't changed in any way following the Olympics, except that we can now afford to treat ourselves to freshly squeezed fruit juice,” she jokes. “Our routine remains the same: training daily. If one is unable to keep up the pace, they should take a holiday or retire. We're not going to take any break or a recovery season. We're gradually returning to form and preparing for new challenges,” notes Ms. Vlasova.

Ms. Mamoshuk welcomed in the new year while flying to a tournament in India, as part of the Belarusian national team.

“Last season, I completely exhausted myself. However, since then, I've rested. I'm ready once more to achieve new victories. I must keep my focus on sport though. I'm deep 'in training'. Everything that happened to me in 2016 is motivating me to prove my status and surpass my previous achievements.”

Baby boom continues

By Kirill Karin

Famous Belarusian footballer, Belarus' national team half-back, Alexander Hleb, becomes a father

Following Victoria Azarenko and Darya Domracheva's new days of motherhood, famous footballer Alexander Hleb has joined the parenting 'team', welcoming a daughter into the family. His wife, Svetlana, delivered her baby at Minsk City Clinical Hospital #6, where Darya Domracheva also gave birth, on October 1st.

Alexander has received congratulations with thanks and tells us that mother and baby are doing well. He promises to share his thoughts on fatherhood in good time. Meanwhile, his brother, Vyacheslav, tells us, “I can't quite believe it. Of course, we've been looking forward to this event for a long time and are absolutely delighted. Alexander and our parents have been counting the days, but I'm also glad. The birth of a child is a great event.”

Photo of the week



New Year tree silhouettes, on Minsk's Pobedy Square

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 10th January. *Kalyady Fairy-tale*
Until 23rd January. Exhibition of Yuri Karachun's works
Until 30th January. *Celestial World on the Earth*
Until 5th February. *Russian Pictorial Art of 19th-20th Century*

NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 15th January. *Time of Silent Stars: from Black-and-White to Red*
Until 29th January. *Belarusian Trade in History*
Until 29th January. *Day of the Past — Day of the Present*
Until 28th February. *Time of Miracles: Winter Holidays and Entertainments*
Until 1st June 2017. *From Romanian Dinary to Belarusian Rouble*

HOUSE OF PICTURES

89/3 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 8th January. Konstantin Muzhev and Yevgenia Muzheva: *Movement*
Until 22nd January. *On Height*

EXHIBITION HALL OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY MUSEUM

9A Bogdanovich Street
Until 13th March. *Noisy Feathered Rainbow*

BELARUSIAN STATE CIRCUS

32 Nezavisimosti Avenue
06-08 and 11.01. *Mystery of Magic Chest*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 22nd January. Exhibition of carnivorous plants

LEONID SHCHEMELEV CITY ART GALLERY

10 Revolyutsionnaya Street
Until 31st December. *Pictorial Art Opening*
Until 29th January. *Robo Art*

ARENA CITY

84 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 1st February. *IllyuzIum* interactive entertaining exhibition of illusions and 3D pictures

OUTLET

44 Zhukov Avenue
Until 31st January. *Hidden Reality*
Until 31st January. *Quintessence: To See the Unseen* show-exhibition

YAKUB KOLAS STATE LITERARY MUSEUM

5 Akademicheskaya Street
Until 30th September 2017. *In Waves of Endless Movement: Along Kolas' Automobile Paths*

UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE ART GALLERY

1 Oktyabrskaya Square
Until 12th January. *Charm of Embroidered Pictures*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
06, 08.01. *Firebird*. *Chopiniana*. *Bolero*
08.01. *The Little Tower Chamber (Terem-Teremok)*
10.01. *Figaro's Wedding*
11.01. *Don Quixote*

BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
06.01. *Cinderella's Ball*; *Yunona and Avos*
08.01. *Cinderella's Ball*; *Cleopatra*

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue
06.01. *The Makropoulos Case*
08.01. *Smeshow*; *Aisedora*. *A Love Dance*
10 and 11.01. *A Very Simple Story*
12.01. *Even a Wise Man Stumbles*

MODERN ARTS THEATRE

5 Oktyabrskaya Street
06.01. *Two Henpecked Husbands*
07.01. *Barmaley Against New Year*; *New Year Dinner with Keira Knightley*
08.01. *Time to Pair*

REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street
08.01. *Feint-Kruaze*
10.01. *Three Giselles*
11.01. *Pelican* 12.01. *Mr. Joke*

BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street
06.01. *Wash-em-Clean*
07 and 08.01. *Christmas Story*

BELARUSIAN REPUBLICAN YOUNG SPECTATOR'S THEATRE

26 Engels Street
06.01. *Road to Bethlehem*
10.01. *Taras on Parnassus*
11.01. *Teddy*
12.01. *Intimidate Apostle*

MINSK CONCERT HALL

5 Oktyabrskaya Street
06 and 07.01. *Twelve Months New Year musical fairy tale*
06-08.01. *New Year Mess in Ice Age*

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street
08.01. *Kolyady Night* 10.01. *Paulinka*
11.01. *Local Cabaret*
12.01. *ZhArt to You*

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
06.01. *Circle of Love*
08.01. *As if by Magic*; *Viva Commedia!*
10.01. *Testosterone*
11.01. *Truth is Good but Happiness is Better* 12.01. *Pesnyar*