

It's easy to find one's own book in such a place

26th Minsk International Book Fair became a glittering event in the life of the Belarusian capital

By Alexander Pimenov

As always, the Minsk International Book Fair astonishes visitors with its scale and high level of organisation. This year, more than 400 exhibitors from 37 countries displayed their goods at the administrative complex in 14 Pobediteley Avenue. The slogan of the event — *More Than Books* — corresponded to its literary-musical theme, with visitors able to learn about Belarusian and foreign writers, while also listening to modern music and taking part in numerous competitions.

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, sent greetings to the participants and guests of the 26th Minsk International Book Fair and 5th International *Writer and Time* Literary Symposium. “For many years this forum has been a significant cultural event in the life of Belarus, bringing together famous publicists, writers and publishers from all over the world, and strengthening professional and business ties between them,” he said.

At the solemn opening ceremony of the 26th Minsk International Book Fair, Belarus' Information Minister, Alexander Karlyukevich, urged all its visitors to find their own book. “It's very pleasing to see participants and guests from many countries of the world arriving at the Minsk Book Fair,” noted the Minister.

Special Representative of the Russian President for International Cultural Co-operation, Mikhail Shvydkoy, noted that “the Minsk International Book Fair always opens a marathon of book trade fairs all over the world”. In 2019, this is the first important large event in the world of books. “For us it's very special that Russia is a guest of this forum,” he added.

Turning to the stands of the book forum, as we have begun to speak about Russia, like hospitable hosts, we'll make the first stop here. This year, our neighbouring country, a traditional exhibitor at the Minsk International Book Fair, presents a bright national stand with a total of 200sq.m, displaying more than 500 books by leading publishing houses. Furthermore, famous writers and literary critics have also arrived in Belarus from Russia.

Separate book stands were also presented by Turkey, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Italy, the Czech Republic and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Israel, Poland, China and Greece presented their expositions for the first time. It was impossible to get



close to many stands, as visitors were everywhere, showing great interest in the national literature of each of the countries.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Belarus, Igor Kizim, noted that the Minsk book trade fair is organised at the highest level. “Participation in such projects provides great promotion opportunities for any country. Ukraine has interesting things to show and our stand says it all. Of course, it's the visitors who will see our books and other Ukrainian products who will decide,” he said. According to the diplomat, such projects also introduce people to other cultures. “Moreover, exhibitions like this help Belarusians learn more about Ukraine. Any communication between authors and readers has a positive

impact,” stressed Mr. Kizim.

In turn, the Armenian Ambassador to Belarus, Armen Ghevondyan, invites people to learn about the literature of his country. In his view, Belarus has organised a high-quality book trade fair from both practical and business points of view. “I was astonished at the number of countries and publishing houses represented and pleasantly surprised at the number of very interesting books dedicated to the history of Belarus and I'd also like to mention the facsimile edition of the first *Primer*,” said the diplomat.

It's difficult not to pay attention to the *Belarusian Primer: Four Hundred Years of History* exhibition, informing us about the textbooks for the teaching of basic literacy in various epochs,

starting from the 16th century until the present. A high point of the presentation was awarding a facsimile edition of the first *Primer* to the authors of modern primers and best teachers of Belarus. “In the Year of Native Land, the restoration of the world's first *Primer* has become a truly symbolic event,” said Alexander Susha, the Deputy Director of the National Library of Belarus. “The *Primer* is a monument to Belarusian enlightened thought. I believe that the study of primers has a big future in Belarus. The traditions of our ancestors will be continued in new editions, in the practice of educational establishments and in the consciousness of modern pupils.”

The National Stand of Belarus hosted meetings with writers and presentations, as well as thematic events, cinema screenings,

theatrical performances, master classes and interactive readings. Each day offered something different.

“The exhibition made a good impression on me, I attend annually, and it never repeats itself. Every time there's something new and special. There are many foreign guests, only one day has passed and we have already had interesting meetings and discussions with representatives of Poland and Iran, which will probably grow into new book projects,” noted the Director of the Mastatskaya Litaratura Publishing House, Ales Badak

The German writer and head of the ‘Together into the Future’ charity foundation, Heike Sabel, presented her third book about Belarus in the House of Friendship, entitled *Wsjo budjet horcho — Alles wird gut. Warum die Belarussen das sagen und daran glauben* (Everything will be all right. Why Belarusians say that and believe in that). The German guest arrived in Belarus to take part in the 26th Minsk International Book Fair. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Germany to Belarus, Peter Dettmar, noted at the presentation that Heike Sabel and he have a history of friendship and he highly values her literary and charity work. For many years, Heike Sabel has been coming to Belarus on a charity mission helping people affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Heike put her impressions of Belarus into words and published three books about it in Germany.

The letters ‘Belarus’ in the shape of bookshelves are gradually being filled with books. The installation is one of the symbols of the 26th Minsk Book Fair. The central stand combined in its design an open book and the shape of a rural house, reminding everyone that the event takes place in the Year of Native Land. This was also accentuated by a display window with editions dedicated to the topic and ribbons with Belarusian national ornaments, which young girls in national costume tied on all those who wished.

