

Paradise for readers

Minsk transforms into world's book capital for several days

By Lyudmila Kovaleva

It's no accident that Minsk International Book Fair attracts the attention of publishers, writers, literary critics, printers and marketers from all over the world, as it opens the international calendar of professional book exhibitions and allows visitors to become the first to get to know new products from both domestic and foreign publishers. This year, the Belarusian book forum was held for the 27th time. From February 5th to 9th, about 400 exhibitors from 30 countries presented their products at the exhibition pavilion in 14 Pobediteley Avenue.

In his greeting to the participants and guests of the fair, President Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the book forum has become a bright event of the cultural and spiritual life of Belarus. The Head of State expressed the belief that the exhibition will continue promoting high-quality literature and a reading culture and serve to strengthen international humanitarian co-operation.

This year, the fair was held under the 'Belarus is an Open Book' slogan, with the Russian Federation being guest of honour — presenting one of the largest expositions with an area of 200 square metres and featuring new products of 80 publishing houses from its 15 regions. The Russians pleased not only with many interesting books but also with popular authors and Tatiana Ustinova — a popular detective writer — was among those present at the neighbouring country's stand.

"We are grateful to the organisers that the Russian Federation is an honorary guest of the exhibition. This is an amazing celebration of books, creative discoveries, new meetings and contacts," said Dmitry Mezentsev, Russia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Belarus, at the opening of the forum.

In turn, the United States was the central exhibitor and the US Charge d'Affaires in Belarus, Jenifer Moore, said that the US Embassy in Belarus has been participating in the Minsk International Book Fair for 22 years — revealing the history of America through different themes, genres and formats. This year, the theme of the stand was 'On the Road: American Travel Literature' — aiming to show the magic, mystery and diversity of American roads, landscapes and cit-



Russian Ambassador to Belarus Dmitry Mezentsev, Belarus' Information Minister Aleksandr Karlyukevich, US Charge d'Affaires in Belarus Jenifer Moore during the grand opening of the exhibition



ies. The American stand proved to be one of the most original at the exhibition as it was decorated as a classic American restaurant in the art deco style.

There was something to be surprised by on each of the stands and the variety of books on show was truly amazing, including small books for children and folios weighing up to 15kg. This is how much the facsimile of the Brest Bible of 1563, prepared last year by the staff of the National Library of Belarus, weighs. The National Library was awarded a 'Golden Folio' and winner's diploma in the 'For Contribution to the Preservation of Spiritual Heritage' category of the national *Art of the Book* contest — held annually in Belarus — for its facsimile of the Brest Bible. This contest is used by professionals in the field of book creation, decoration and design to name the best works over the past year. Traditionally, the award ceremony is held as part of the book fair and, in 2020, the best of the best were chosen in 17 categories (thematic, special and personal), as well as the Grand Prix. The

main prize went to publisher Denis Romanyuk for his Belarus: *Church and Landscape* book.

The international symposium of writers — *The Writer and Time* — was another significant event, gathering prose writers, poets, publicists, literary critics and translators from 20 countries who held several round table discussions, seminars, meetings with students and literary evenings.

"The symposium of writers is a platform for peace and good-neighbourliness," said Belarus' Information Minister Aleksandr Karlyukevich. "Belarusians know the price of peace and many generations of people who have lived in the most dramatic periods of history remind us that this is the most important value of human life." The books presented at the exhibition also reminded us of this.

One of the leading topics of the book forum was the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory. In addition, many books were dedicated to the Year of Small Homeland declared in Belarus and the 90th anniversary of a popular Belarusian writer, Vladimir Korotkevich. In particular, the exhibition visitors were shown a collection of the writer's works in 25 volumes, published by the Khudozhestvenaya Literature Publishing House.

This year, the exhibition was visited by more than 60,000 people.

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