

CRYSTAL-CLEAR WORK



Construction of the new National Library approaches final stage

In September, the National Library will begin its move into the new building

The new National Library building — set to provide free access to information sources in libraries around the globe using the latest computer technology — is almost complete. We went along to view the construction site with our own eyes. Who are the people erecting one of our city's most beautiful buildings?

Work never stops on the site — regardless of the weather. Until September, the builders are in charge — not the librarians. Their arduous three-shift schedule and their skilled artisanship allow work to continue 24 hours each day, 7 days a week. The deadline is set for less than three years (rather than the estimated six) regardless of the fact that much of the materials and equipment is new to the builders.

"It has been a great physical and emotional strain," admits Lev Leukhnenko, director general of Stroitrest (Construction Trust) No.7 JSC, the project general contractor. "However, we have gained good experience from the project; it's seldom that architectural design goes simultaneously with practical construction. We have had to review our techniques, master new technology and bring in additional labour and equipment to meet the needs of the project. The main hallway will house reading and conference halls; it has been constructed simultaneously with the 'diamond' — a multi-storey book storage facility. This has been a challenge. Currently, over one hundred subcontractors are operating on the site and highly skilled decorators from all over Belarus have been brought to Minsk. More-

over, the Government and Minsk City Executive Committee have provided their support in settling any difficulties. The workers' future is now secured — they have proven their mettle."

Although they may be offered higher salaries with private companies, there can be no doubt that such state projects are invaluable for workers' professional development. "The labour productivity index here is 33 percent greater than that estimated in the forecast — despite the modest salary," says Tatiana Osipchik, deputy director general economic officer of Stroitrest No.7. This final period of decoration before completion is crucial to the appearance of the building; the library is now being glazed and nearly 2,700 people and 70 pieces of equipment are operational. Inner decoration and tiling are also being carried out carefully (tiles were chosen especially for their colour and texture). The electrical wiring and fittings are also being installed.

"I could hardly imagine the beauty of the building," comments a road-builder from Stroitrest No.7, Alexander Bortnik. He has been working on the project from the very beginning. Stroitrest No.7 personnel know where they will be next employed — constructing the Europe Hotel. Mr. Leukhnenko tells us, "Again, design and construction will take place simultaneously — although the work schedule is very tight. The hotel is to be completed by the end of next year. Some builders will remain on the site to work on an information centre close by."

By Lilia Khivstun