

BOOKS SETTLE INTO THEIR NEW HOME



Moving of the National Library to the new building has begun — books gradually find their places in storerooms

Over the next four months, around 8 million books, documents and audio and video records (weighing more than 2,000 tonnes) will move into the new National Library building — no easy task indeed!

The first truck to arrive was met with applause and Minsk Mayor, Mikhail Pavlov, personally assisted in placing books on the shelves. Over coming months, the librarians will be extremely busy carrying resources from the store-

rooms in Radialnaya Street (where 358,000 books, including those from the 18th century are being kept) to their new home. The library should be open to its first visitors by May.

Roman Motulsky, director of the National Library, says, "Other libraries take years to accomplish what we are doing on a tight schedule. We'll do our best to cope. According to our estimations, about 600 transportation trips and 4 months are needed to transfer the packed book collec-

tions (and documents — stored in special containers). Rare books are being moved under tight security. The biggest challenge is stacking books correctly in their final destination."

All the library's personnel — 1,000 people — are involved in the operation but, even working for twenty-four hours a day, they would be unable to manage the task alone; the military and students are being called in to assist.

Staff have greeted the mission with enthusiasm as the old build-

ing has long been dilapidated; rare books require special conditions to keep them in good condition and this has been increasingly difficult.

The new 'diamond' library has special temperature and ventilation controls and heated floors. All books are being shelved rather than kept in piles. In addition, the latest computer technology is being installed with fibre-optic cables connecting the library with Minsk's largest organisations and scientific institutions. The librari-

ans will also be able to summon requested books by a telerift so that readers will have their materials within 15 minutes.

The builders assure us that everything will be complete by May. The interior is now being finished and furniture is being brought in. Designers, painters and landscape architects have begun aesthetic decoration of the rooms. International meetings will be able to be held in the library's halls.

By Alexander Tomov