

Captivated by the
power of the Word



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23rd Minsk International Book Fair is definitely a landmark event in the life of Belarusian capital

By Vladimir Velikhov

“Minsk International Book Fair is known for reinforcing co-operation between countries,” noted Belarus’ Information Minister, Lilia Ananich, speaking at the opening ceremony of the 23rd Minsk International Book Fair. She sees books as a source of knowledge, and a fount for powerful humanitarian collaboration.

The Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Igor Buzovsky, read a greeting from the Head of State, as well as addressing guests at the 23rd Minsk International Book Fair and at the international literary symposium, *Writer and Time*.

Gracing the forum’s central stand were words spoken by our first printer, Frantsisk Skorina: ‘Man cannot live by bread and medicine alone, needing also words...’ Of course, the exhibition also marked the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book printing.

The National Library’s *Mastatskaya Skaryniyana* series is dedicated to this special, anniversary year, and Belarus celebrates the Year of Culture in 2016. Books are the best ambassadors of national culture, as proven by the popularity of the trade fair. Around 300 exhibitors from 29 countries took part, allowing guests to see many works of foreign literature and to meet authors at presentations, autograph signing



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sessions and concerts.

Vladimir Mulyavin. *With Heart and Thoughts* was presented via a concert, featuring singers and composers. The well-known Pesnyar singer has been immortalised in the album, published by Mastatskaya Litaratura. It is a worthy winner of the Grand Prix of the National Art of Book Contest.

Interest in Belarusian literature is on the rise, especially now that we have our own Nobel Prize laureate in Svetlana Alexievich. Her editions were on show, upon the stand of her old partner, Russian Vremya Publishing House.

The exhibition’s honorary guest, Armenia, had a dazzling stand. The Chairman of the Armenian Union of Writers, the Director of Armenia’s Centre for Books and Publishing, Edward Militonyan, noted, “We’ve gathered



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the best of all that has been released in our sunny and mountainous country over the last two years: albums, historical editions and novels, including books by Belarusian writer Ales Karlyukevich for children, translated into Armenian, and the *Literary Armenia* almanac, featuring Ales Badak’s poem.”

Mr. Militonyan is also a member of the Union of Writers of Belarus and took

part in the international symposium of authors, held for the second time in Minsk.

A seminar of young authors of Belarus and Russia is always an important part of the forum. During the plenary session, young talents were invited to ponder serious topics regarding national literature in this age of globalism, and regarding the nature of contemporary literature, post-modernism and



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Many new editions on show at 23rd Minsk International Book Fair, across various topics

the Internet.

“Sometimes writers forget their obligation to serve humanity,” underlined the Chairman of the Union of Writers of Belarus, Nikolay Cherginets. Speaking at the 2nd international literary symposium, *Writer and Time: Succession in Literature*, he expressed his belief that principles of kindness and humanism should be embraced by literature. He would like to see authors taking an active civil position, and is convinced that writers could do far more.

He wishes to see joint projects with the writing community, to realise plans and ideas and share experience between colleagues. In

particular, Mr. Cherginets believes writers should work with creative unions to translate works by writers from around the world.

“Books aren’t just a source of knowledge; they can bring nations closer,” emphasised Belarus’ Foreign Minister, Vladimir Makei, during his visit to the 23rd Minsk International Book Fair. Mr. Makei underlined that books are often given as gifts between diplomats, noting that they allow familiarisation with a country, allowing us to see a country in a new way, as well as a nation’s attitudes. “We use them actively for Belarus’ rapprochement with other states,” he asserted.

Belarus publishes many books describing its history, and the establishment of the state. These have been translated into foreign languages and Mr. Makei notes that such books are popular, being interesting to read.