

Wonderful legacy of great duke

Vilnius and Shchorsy celebrate 220th anniversary of the birth of Joachim Chreptowicz, the Rzech Pospolita's first Foreign Minister

By Viktor Korbut

The Lithuanian President's library is home to three Belarusian books: three volumes of the *Grand Duchy of Lithuania* encyclopaedia — published in Minsk and presented to the neighbouring state's President by the Belarusian Ambassador to Lithuania, Vladimir Drazhin. In the past, our nations had much in common. Today, this enables us to continue cultural and economic cooperation — despite the border. Not long ago, Vilnius and the village of Shchorsy (in Belarus' Novogrudok District) hosted two scientific conferences, gathering not just scientists and diplomats, discussing the personality of Duke Joachim Chreptowicz. The Duke was the first Foreign Minister of the Rzech Pospolita (the former shared state for Belarusians, Lithuanians, Poles and Ukrainians). At the Vilnius conference, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis noted that Duke Chreptowicz's achievements give cause for us to ponder 'that the nations of Eastern Europe have much in common'.

Duke Chreptowicz's main residence was situated in Shchorsy, where the Belarusian Foreign Ministry organised the celebrations, with support from the Grodno Regional Executive Committee, Novogrudok District Executive Committee, the Belarusian Embassy to Lithuania, the National Academy of Sciences,

the Belarusian State University and Grodno State University.

Several buildings remain in the village, having survived from the former famous residence; among them is a church built at the Duke's order in the late 18th century. Joachim gained recognition for abolishing serfdom at his manor and for building schools for peasants. In fact, it was no great surprise: Duke Chreptowicz headed the Education Ministry at the time (the first in Eastern Europe), known as the Rzech Pospolita Education Commission. Meanwhile, poet Adam Mickiewicz worked at Duke Chreptowicz's library — now kept in Kiev.

The Duke managed to unite the historical fates of several states. The manor of Chreptowicz was among the largest in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 18th century, teaching the most advanced methods of household management. Even the cheese was made exclusively by



Lyubcha Castle restored by volunteers from throughout Belarus

Swiss masters. The education and freedom which the Duke gave to his tenants yielded fruit: in the 19th century, ethnographers noted that local residents stood out from other Belarusians in their domesticity, wit and interest in art. The estate produced bricks, drainage pipes and bone fertilisers, made wine and operated a sawmill and three mills, with locally produced flour sold to Russian cities. Wheels and carts were made, in addition to well-known beer being brewed. Bread, barley, oats and rye were even sold to Lithuania while logs were rafted to Konigsberg. Moreover, each village had its own family doctor, in addition to a pharmacy and an agrarian school. Fields enjoyed drainage via pipes produced

by the local brick making plant and ponds were filled with fish.

On visiting Shchorsy, Mr. Drazhin agreed with the Chairman of the Novogrudok District Executive Committee, Anatoly Markevich, that a petition should be made to the Belarusian Government to fund restoration. Mr. Drazhin joined the Third Secretary of the Lithuanian Embassy to Belarus, Vita Naujokaitytė, in planting an oak avenue at the entrance to the estate, honouring Joachim Chreptowicz's post of first Foreign Minister in the history of our two countries.

The revival of Chreptowicz's legacy is likely to contribute to tourism development in the Novogrudok District. The 16th-17th century castle is now being restored near Shchorsy, in the village of Lyubcha — which once also belonged to the Chreptowiczs (later, given to the Radziwills). In the 17th century, one of the largest printing houses in Belarus and Lithuania operated inside the castle.

The Chairman of Lyubcha Castle Charity, Ivan Pechinsky, tells us that restorers are rebuilding its major towers in Renaissance style, while its unique lime park is being restored. Lyubcha Castle is receiving attention

from volunteers from all over Belarus, among them professors and students from the Belarusian National Technical University. Specialists are now working on its main tower and, this year, plan to restore the stone wall around the citadel. They'll also be digging on the site of the ruined towers, with the basement 'guiding' further restoration.

A two storey palace from the early 20th century is situated near Lyubcha Castle, previously belonging to the noble Nabokovs (forefathers of famous Russian writer Vladimir Nabokov). There are plans to set up a museum at the palace, devoting several halls to this famous family.

The reconstruction of Lyubcha Castle began in 2003. Ms. Naujokaitytė tells us, "I'm here for the first time, but know much about the fortress from the history of Lithuanian architecture. It's hard to believe that it has lasted so well since the 17th century and is almost fully restored now, owing to people's effort." Mr. Drazhin hopes that Lyubcha will serve as an example for the restoration of the Shchorsy residence. Necessary work can be done with help from the state and from volunteers.



Useful meetings in Novogrudok area

Picture galleries head for provinces countrywide

By Yelena Stasyukevich

International Art of the Nations of the World Association, headed by its president — Russian collector, artist and journalist Nikolay Kornilov — donates around 1,500 art works to Belarus

The gallery to which the exhibits have been donated has opened at the House of Culture in the Ostrovets District's Gervyat village. It will keep around 400 canvases and drawings by painters from various countries. The unveiling ceremony was attended by representatives of the association, including the Moscow patron of arts, who met local artists, talented youngsters



and other intellectuals on the eve of the event.

Mr. Kornilov has devoted his whole life to culture. His friendship with painters, poets, composers, performers and cultural figures inspired the establishment of the Interna-

tional Art of the Nations of the World Association and Nikor Gallery-Museum (the major storage place of the collection) in Moscow in 1988, alongside various other galleries and museums. He never sells works from his collection, but donates them to various cities around the world. Almost 40 galleries have opened throughout Russia under the common title of Nikor, displaying works from the association's collection.

In 2009, the association decided to implement a project to donate about 1,500 art works to Belarus, with the Grodno Region selected. The first gallery opened a year ago in Oshmyany, with a second in the Ostrovets District; a similar gallery is soon expected in Smorgon.

Acquaintance with art from masters' younger years

Exhibition of Russian artists opens at Vitebsk Modern Art Centre

The show has been brought to the Belarusian city by People's Artist of Russia Gennady Namirovsky — a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Arts and a

professor at Smolensk State University. The exhibition is the fruit of artistic liaisons between Vitebsk and Smolensk painters.

Seventy works are being displayed in Vitebsk, by painters from various regions of Russia and the former USSR who, in the

1960-1980s, were members of the Senezh House of Art. The show unites works of different genres from those years, allowing us to gain familiarity with the works of well-known painters from their younger years, showing how they have matured over the years.

Both Grand Prix and diplomas

By Lidia Novikova

Grodno Nadezhda (Hope) Theatre, of the city's House of Culture, is a success at Baltic-Satelid-2011 — the 20th International Theatre Festival for Children and Youth, held at Polish Sejny.

Grodno's theatre has been awarded the Grand

Prix prize simultaneously by two juries: the children's and youth. *Symon, the Musician* director Natalia Dotzenko received a diploma for best direction, while Oleg Zhyuzhda was recognised for his costumes and Natalia Kireeva for her choreography. The best male and female actors were Boris Bolokhonov and Ve-

ronika Bortsevich.

Another theatre — Grodno Kolokolchik (Bell) — also brought home an award from Poland, winning the professional jury's prize.

The international festival gathered 19 youth and children's theatres from Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland.