

## The Route is from Minsk to Vitebsk

HE Dr Pallo Jordan, The Minister of Arts and Culture of the Republic of South Africa, has arrived to Belarus. His meeting with the Belarus' Minister of Culture Vladimir Matvejchuk took place at the National Library of Belarus. Our correspondent has managed to find out primary results of the negotiations.

The Minister's visit is a planned step in developing co-operation between Belarus and South Africa. Intergovernmental Agreement in the Field of Arts and Culture was signed by HE Sergey Martynov, Belarus Foreign Minister, and Minister Pallo Jordan in 2006 and further actions aimed at implementation of the document have been discussed during this meeting.

The South African delegation arrived to Belarus on 8 July. It is composed of 7 persons, including HE Becki Langa, Ambassador of South Africa to Russia and Belarus. During the visit our guests have visited the Belarus National Library, State Philharmonics, Arts Museum and the Palace of the Republic.

On 11 July Pallo Jordan attended the opening ceremony of Slavjansky Bazaar in Vitebsk where a big folklore collective from the Southern African country took part.

In the course of the delegation's meeting with Minister of Culture of the Republic of Belarus the priorities of cultural policy of the two countries have been indicated and possible directions of further co-operation identified.

Vladimir Matvejchuk highlighted rapid development of the BelarusFilm National Movie Company, renovation of National Opera and Ballet Theatre, important role of solving the tasks in the field of culture and arts discussed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Belarusian People's Assembly and priorities of the current sector's programme: HR, theatres, libraries, museums, arts creativity, movies and video.

In his turn, Pallo Jordan underlined that the main task of his Department of Arts and Culture is democratization of culture. "Only 14 years have passed since those times when the society of my country was divided – said the Minister. – In the past that situation was considered as a tragic one, but today we consider this page of our history as a blessing. Nowadays our problem is in opening access to cultural values of our country to all layers of the population, uniting into one nation "the multicolored ribbon" of the peoples that live in South Africa.

As one of the priorities of cultural policy of South Africa Minister Pallo Jordan named liquidation of illiteracy, building libraries. In particular on 1 August the new National Library of South Africa will open its doors to visitors.

"We are interested in developing new technologies, cinematograph and video as means of self expression – said Pallo Jordan – and we deem it possible to hold a South African film festival in the near future". A proposition of co-operation between our countries in the field of modern dance and music was also expressed.

Minister Matvejchuk reiterated the main tune of the talks and the first acquaintance with South African Minister that borders do not exist for culture. We are preparing for the great Festival Slavjansky Bazaar in Vitebsk bearing in mind a number of tasks given by the Head of the State. President A. Lukashenko has advised that the Festival hosts not only performers from Belarus, Russia and the neighboring countries but also guests from other continents. As a result of negotiations for the first time in history the delegation of the Republic of South Africa headed by the minister of Arts and Culture has come to Belarus and Slavjansky Bazaar was happy to welcome the Eastern Cape thirty-members-strong Ensemble. Viteblans will be lucky to enjoy the performances of this outstanding collective. We have also received an invitation by our South African partners to visit their country and agreed that this September we shall not only come to visit them but hold a cultural festival in RSA. It has been a proposition by the receiving side that we come with our State Ballet Theatre. Its high level is well known far beyond the borders of our country. Though in the course of our discussion we have made it clear that traditional arts of Belarus are also worth of being presented in another continent, I believe that the National Academic Bolshoi Ballet Theatre deserves to be the first to present the arts of Belarus in South Africa.

In the course of the meetings Belarus' Minister of Culture gave his endorsement to holding of South African film festival in Belarus.

Our correspondent asked HE Pallo Jordan to share his impressions of Belarus capital, the country generally and its culture.

"I've been here only for some hours – admitted South African Minister of Arts and Culture – but the first impressions of Minsk is that it is a very green city. It's my great desire to see the old part of the city as, to tell the truth, my wife's ancestors are coming from Minsk. Her grate grandmother was born here so our wish to visit it is more than natural. I can see that your capital is a modern city of post-war architecture. I've been told that the city was completely ruined by German fascist invaders and I'm very sorry for that.

Your national Library is very impressive. The way it is built, its design that lets to use the daylight. It is very important nowadays when energy resources cost a lot and use of natural sources of energy let us save natural riches. I've been really impressed by the implementation of modern technologies, internet communications. We've been told about the possibility of using information resources in different parts of the world. In particular, I was shown my own article deposited in a South African library. I hope to play back when my Belarusian counterpart comes to visit us in South Africa.

All this let us realize that information revolution makes the world much smaller and makes different nations closer to each other."

Vladimir Matvejchuk presented Pallo Jordan with an album Heritage of Belarus. The South African Minister in his turn gave as a present to the Belarus Minister a book picturing traditional arts of the Republic of South Africa.