**GOMEL**

Well, my native town is Gomel. I’ve been born here and I’m a long time resident of this city. I’m fond of this place and always talk willingly about the town and wonderful people who live in it.

  Gomel is situated in a picturesque place. The landscape in this part of the country is very beautiful – a wide river Sozh with sandy banks and large forest areas is stretching for many kilometers.

  I’d like to say that there are a lot of legends connected with the name of my home town, but the most believable is that Gomel got its name from a small river Gomeyuka that flows into the Sozh.

  Gomel is the second largest town in our Republic and the largest town in Belarusian Polesye. It covers an area of about 120 square kilometers and has a lot of suburbs. The population of the town is about 600 thousands citizens. My home town has several twin-towns, among them there are: Chernigov in the Ukraine, Aberdeen in Scotland, St. Petersburg in Russia, Guttenberg in Germany, Zelengura in Poland, etc.

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Maybe you are a bit bored by the statistics, and I’d rather tell you about the history of my native town.

  First of all, I’d like to mention that it has a long history. Gomel, as a town was first mentioned in the chronicles in 1142. Distant ancestors of the present day Gomel citizens Radimichi, were strong, courageous, freedom loving and full of endurance people. Like other Slavs tribes they often had to take up arms to defend their motherland first against the devastating inroads of Northmen and later against the fearful Tatar yoke and the crusades of German knights.

  For more than four centuries Gomel stayed dominated by Lithuanian and Polish princes. In 1772 the Eastern part of Belarus, including Gomel, was joined to the Russian Empire. And in 1775 Empress Katherine the Great gave Gomel to her minion colonel Rumyantsev-Zadunaisky.

  November 12, 1917 turned a new leaf in the life of the town. The Gomel Council of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputes passed a resolution on the transition of all power on its area to the Soviets. But peaceful, creative labor of the Soviet people was interrupted by a sudden attack of the fascist Germany. Thousands of Gomel citizens left for the front and those who stayed in the town worked selflessly to contribute to the victory. The struggle never ceased for a day during the occupation. On the 26-th of November, 1943 Gomel was liberated from the aggressors, but citizens of our town will never forget what their town looked like. Soon the town was raised from the ruins, and in the early fifties the industry had reached the pre-war level. Among the main branches were match, paper, textile and food industries. Nowadays there are a lot of various plants and factories in our town, such as factory “Spartac”, Gomselmash, factory “The 8th of March”, plant named after Kirov and others.

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Gomel has always been a cultural centre. Here one can find a great amount of houses of culture, libraries, musical schools and schools of art. We also have the Drama Theatre, regional philharmonic, state and social museums. Great happiness both to children and adults bring bright performances under the dome of Gomel Circus.

  But the beloved place of Gomel citizens is our park. A shady park where a number of rare exotic trees grow alongside with oak, limes, maples and elms, which are very popular in our country, stretches around a marvelous building – the Palace of count Paskevich. The construction of the Palace Complex was started on the bank of the river Sozh in 1785 by the willing of colonel Rumyantsev, who had neither wife nor children, that’s why after his death Gomel had been given to the Empire Treasury and later to count Paskevich. He continued the construction of the Palace Complex and some other architectural monuments such as St. Peter and Paul’s Cathedral and a chapel with a family vault. I’d like to admit that nowadays Gomel park as well as the Palace Complex is under protection of UNESCO.

  I like Gomel very much and I think if I were proposed to change my town for a village, I would refuse. Of course, I can’t deny that life in a big city or town has a lot of disadvantages. The first and foremost is an enormous air- and noise-pollution. The car exhaust contains a lot of harmful substances, which influence our health. Besides, life in a big city is much more stressful than that in the country. Drivers suffer from car crashes, pedestrians curse rush hours, constant queuing and irregularity of public transport. There are a lot of unemployed people in big towns. Everyone grumbles about exorbitant rents that must be paid for tiny flats, and apart from accommodation, the cost of living is very high.

  But whatever the disadvantages are, I personally wouldn’t swap live in the city for anything in the world. I suppose the monotony and harmony of rural provincial existence would very soon bore me. I would certainly miss the stimulus of the big town life. There are several valid reasons fro that.

  Firstly, life in a big city is more anonymous: you can be who you want to be and do what you want to do. Secondly, I find the city as easier place to make friends in. Another reason, why I like living in the town is because there is so much going on. And it is needless to say that the citizens are more advantaged in education and employment.

  And in the end I’d like to say I consider Gomel one of the best towns in our Republic. It’s a wonderful and beautiful place to live in, so I don’t want to change it for another place of living.