

Alex Kot: Freedom Day-2025 in Toronto

On Saturday, March 22, 2025, celebrations dedicated to the 107th anniversary of the proclamation of the Belarusian People's Republic took place in Toronto. The event was organized by the Toronto branch of the Association of Belarusians of Canada and the Parish Council of the Church of St. Cyril of Turov, Belarusian Orthodox Church.

As part of the Freedom Day celebrations, a solemn procession of Belarusians with the state flags of Belarus, Canada, Ukraine, and the flag of the Kastus Kalinowski Regiment took place along Bloor Street in Toronto.



The procession ended on the steps of the Belarusian Center, where the participants were greeted by the already gathered guests. The clear weather, inspired faces, and friendly atmosphere created a spirit of unity and pride.



The hall was filled with lively chatter. The presence of many young people, who were interested in studying socio-political literature about the history and present-day Belarus, was particularly pleasing.



Attention was drawn to volumes of the archives of the Rada of the BNR, editions of the newspaper "Batskaushchyna", books on the history of the BNR for 1970–1997, as well as old issues of the newspaper "Belarus" - the oldest Belarusian periodical in North America, which has been published since 1950. They contain rich materials about the activities of the Rada of the BNR in the post-war period.

At 3:00 p.m., a festive gathering of the Belarusian public began. It was opened by young presenters Sviatlana and Tamash, whose melodious Belarusian speech gave the event a special solemnity. The words, spoken with respect and inspiration, created a warm, heartfelt atmosphere.



The meeting began with a prayer read by His Holiness Svyatoslav. Then the entire hall rose to sing the anthem of the Belarusian People's Republic, "We Will Go Out in Close Rows," which sounded with a sense of pride and unity.

Then, the participants listened with attention and excitement to the video address of the Chair of the Council of the Belarusian People, Ivonka Survilla, to the Belarusian people.



Iryna Toustsik read the Third Charter of the Council of the Belarusian People's Republic of March 25, 1918.



Vitaliy Koshalev demonstrated a map of the Belarusian People's Republic from the same year and recalled important moments from Belarusian history - as evidence of the depth of the foundation of our statehood.



The representative of the Kastus Kalinowski Regiment in Canada, Dmitry Baranov, spoke about the regiment's struggle on the fronts of Ukraine against the common enemy, and conveyed a welcoming speech from the regiment's commander, Pavel Shurmey, thanking the Belarusians of Canada for their solidarity and support.



Father Vyacheslav spoke about the initiative to issue postage stamps in Ukraine in honor of the fallen soldiers of the Kalinovsky Regiment. This project, organized jointly with the Ukrainian Post, was made possible thanks to the joint work in Kiev by Dmitry Baranov and online collaboration by Father Vyacheslav.



The stamps were issued just in time for Freedom Day and presented during the event. Some of them were purchased by the participants of the meeting, and the funds collected went to support the regiment.



The chairman of the Canadian sector of the Rada of the Belarusian People's Republic, Ales Kot, delivered a speech to the public.



He began his speech with words from the first article of the Statute of the Council of the Belarusian People: “The Council is the highest body and the sole legal representation of the sovereign rights of the Belarusian People, expressed in the Act of March 25, 1918.” The speaker emphasized that the Council of the Belarusian People continues to perform the functions of a state legislative body and a government in exile.”

Ales Kot recalled little-known facts from the history of the Belarusian People's Republic and the activities of the Council and focused on the importance of the presence of information on Belarusian issues in the English-speaking world. According to him, modern electronic tools

allow you to quickly create high-quality information resources that will be useful to researchers, journalists, and a wide audience.

He also noted the need to introduce into circulation the rich archives of the Belarusian diaspora - to strengthen interest in Belarus, especially today, in the context of the war that Russia is waging near our borders.

Among the documents demonstrated by Ales Kot was a historical issue of the newspaper "Batskaushchyna" for February 22, 1948, and theses from the statement of the Council of the Belarusian People's Republic on the illegitimacy of international agreements signed without the participation of the legitimate Belarusian representation.



Special attention was paid to the topic of the forcible redistribution of ethnic Belarusian lands in the 20th century. Ales Kot recalled the loss of Smolensk region to Russia in 1918, Vilnius region to Lithuania in 1940, and Bialystok region to Poland in 1945. He emphasized: "We must know who we were 107 years ago and why there are only 9 million of us now, although in 1918 there were 16. We must be ready to answer when we are asked about Belarus and its history."

A documentary about the Belarusian People's Republic, created by the Belsat-History channel, was shown at the event.



The First Hierarch of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Sviatoslav, spoke about his trip to Ukraine, his visit to the Kastus Kalinowski Regiment, and his meeting with Belarusian soldiers. A photo album from the visit was shown.



During the celebrations, \$500 was raised as part of the "Gift of March" initiative.

At the end of the event, the participants sang together the Belarusian spiritual anthem "Mighty God."

But even after the official part was over, people were in no hurry to disperse. Until late in the evening, friendly conversations and discussions continued over a cup of coffee and tea with sweets and a holiday cake, lovingly prepared by our wonderful women.



New cultural initiatives were discussed. Guests could take home old issues of the newspaper "Belarus" from the archives of the Belarusian Center. Everyone shared a sense of participation in an important and necessary cause.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the preparation and holding of this Belarusian Holiday!