

BELARUS

THE LAST WALL

DOORS OPEN, WINDOWS CLOSED

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parallelozero



IN BELARUS ANOTHER EUROPEAN WALL FELL, BUT VERY FEW HAVE REALISED IT. WHEN PRESIDENT LUKASHENKO ANNOUNCED THAT FOR THE CITIZENS OF 80 COUNTRIES A VISA WAS NO MORE NEEDED TO ENTER BELARUS, SOMEBODY THOUGHT THIS WAS A KIND OF A REVOLUTION. THERE WAS JUST ONLY ONE CONDITION: EVERYONE MUST ENTER BELARUS VIA THE MINSK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND STAY IN THE COUNTRY NO MORE THAN FIVE DAYS. IT WAS JANUARY 9TH, 2017.

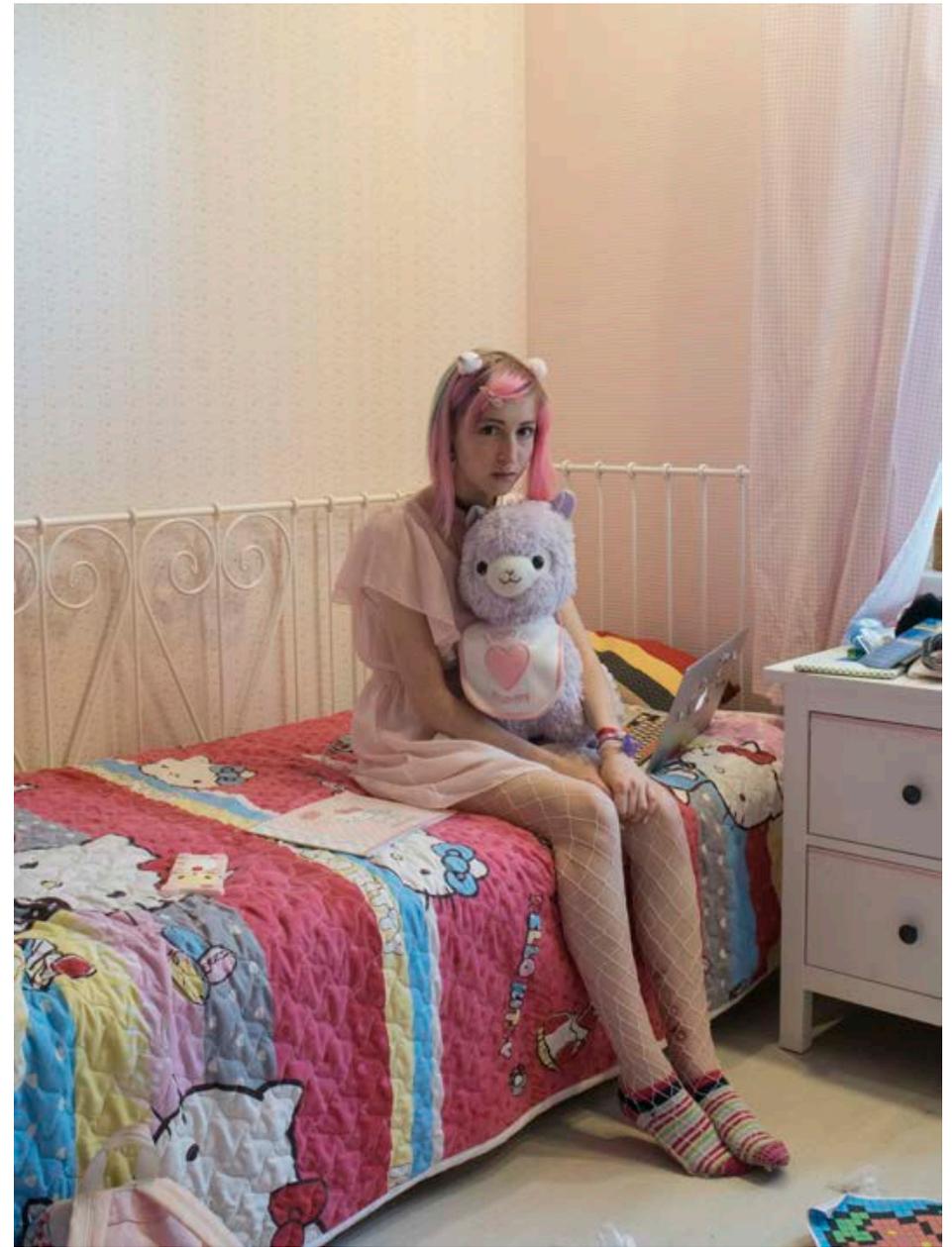
SINCE THEN, THIS SMALL REPUBLIC SQUEEZED BETWEEN POLAND AND RUSSIA, KEPT ON GOING WITH ITS USUAL LIFE: THE SOVIET-ERA MURALS ARE STILL ON THEIR WALLS, METICULOUSLY PRESERVED, THE ROOMS OF THE IMMENSE SANATORIA ARE MOSTLY EMPTY, IN THE COUNTRY WOMEN STILL KNOT THEIR HEADSCARVES ON THEIR HEADS AND MOVE AROUND WITH MARSHRUTKAS (SHARED TAXIS).

THE SO-CALLED "LAST DICTATORSHIP IN EUROPE" DIDN'T COLLAPSE, JUST YET, MAYBE BECAUSE "DICTATORSHIP" IS A LABEL EU, USA OR OECD USE FOR THOSE COUNTRIES THEY DON'T KNOW, OR UNDERSTAND MUCH.

SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF LOCAL ARTIST DARYA GOLOVA, BELARUS IS ANOTHER WORLD: TATTOOED YOUNGTERS WALKING QUIETLY AROUND TOWNS, KIDS OF THE SUBURBS HANGING AROUND WITH THEIR HOVERBOARDS, PUNK TEENAGERS DREAMING OF ADVENTURE WITH HELLO KITTY IN THEIR PINK BEDROOMS. TODAY'S BELARUS IS INDEED KEEPING AN EAGLE EYE ON ITS PRESENT, AS UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA LIVE TOGETHER, AND THE BORDER THAT ONCE LOOKED IMPENETRABLE, NOW IS LOOKING AT THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF A NEW IDENTITY. THE AUSTERE STATUES OF LENIN AND DZERZINSKIY ARE NOW IN SOME REPOSITORY, BUT JUST TO BE POLISHED, WHILE THE SEVERE FACE OF PRESIDENT LUKASHENKO IS EVERYWHERE: AMONG THE SOUVENIR CARDS IN FISHERMEN'S CABINS AND NEAR THE KALASHNIKOV GUNS TURNED INTO VODKA BOTTLES TO BE SOLD TO TOURISTS.



A PROPAGANDA POSTER PROMOTING BELARUS' SYMBOL
IN THE CITY OF GOMEL.



ARISHA IS A 17YO COSPLAYER. BELARUSSIAN SOCIETY DOESN'T
LIKE WHAT'S DEFINED AS "EXTRAVAGANZAS",
ESPECIALLY IN WOMEN, AND THIS LED ARISHA TO MANY
INTEGRATION PROBLEMS DURING HER ADOLESCENCE.



A FAKE POLICE CAR MADE OF CARDBOARD ALONG THE ROAD TO GOMEL.
POLICE IS QUITE PRESENT IN BELARUSSIAN SOCIETY: 1,442 RESIDENTS ON 100,000 ARE POLICEMEN – ONE OF THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE IN THE
WORLD.* WORKING IN THE ARMED SERVICES OFFERS A LOT OF BENEFITS: A CAREER, A GOOD SALARY AND ANTICIPATED RETIREMENT.

* INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS ON CRIME AND JUSTICE, BY THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF DRUGS AND CRIME



AN ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS SHOP IN PINSK. THESE ORNAMENTS ARE USED EVERYWHERE AS URBAN DECORATION.



A GUEST OF THE SPUTNIK SANATORIUM.



A KID CRUISING AROUND WITH HIS HOVERBOARD IN THE RURAL AREA OF THE VILLAGE OF LASSZIK, NEAR THE BORDER WITH UKRAINE.



A SOVIET ERA RESTAURANT IN THE CENTRE OF GOMEL.



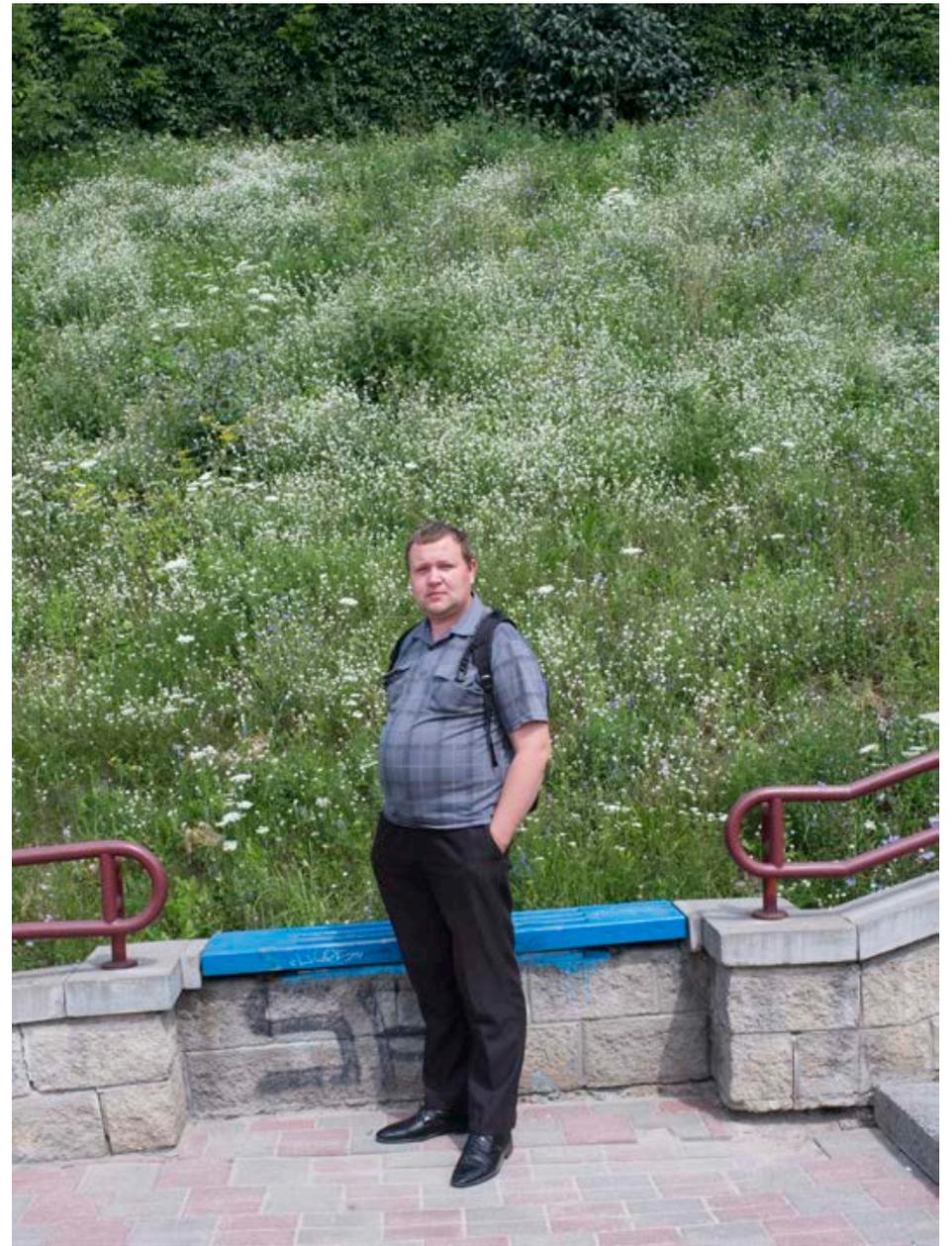
THE FORMER PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN MINSK. THE BUILDING CAN BE PHOTOGRAPHED JUST BY THIS SIDE, AND FROM A PRECISE ANGLE, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF AN OFFICER. WHEN PRESIDENT LUKASHENKO LIVED HERE, WALKING ON THE SIDEWALK OF THE BUILDING AND DRIVING ALONG THE PALACE WAS NOT ALLOWED.



A "GUM" SUPERMARKET'S MEN SECTION SELLING EXCLUSIVELY BELARUSSIAN PRODUCTS.



A CROSS COVERED WITH FLOWERS IN VILLAGE OF LASSZIK.
THE AREA OF THE VILLAGE IS SEPARATED FROM THE REST OF THE
COUNTRY BY SOME CHECKPOINTS REGULATING THE ACCESS
TO THE AREAS ON THE BORDER WITH UKRAINE.



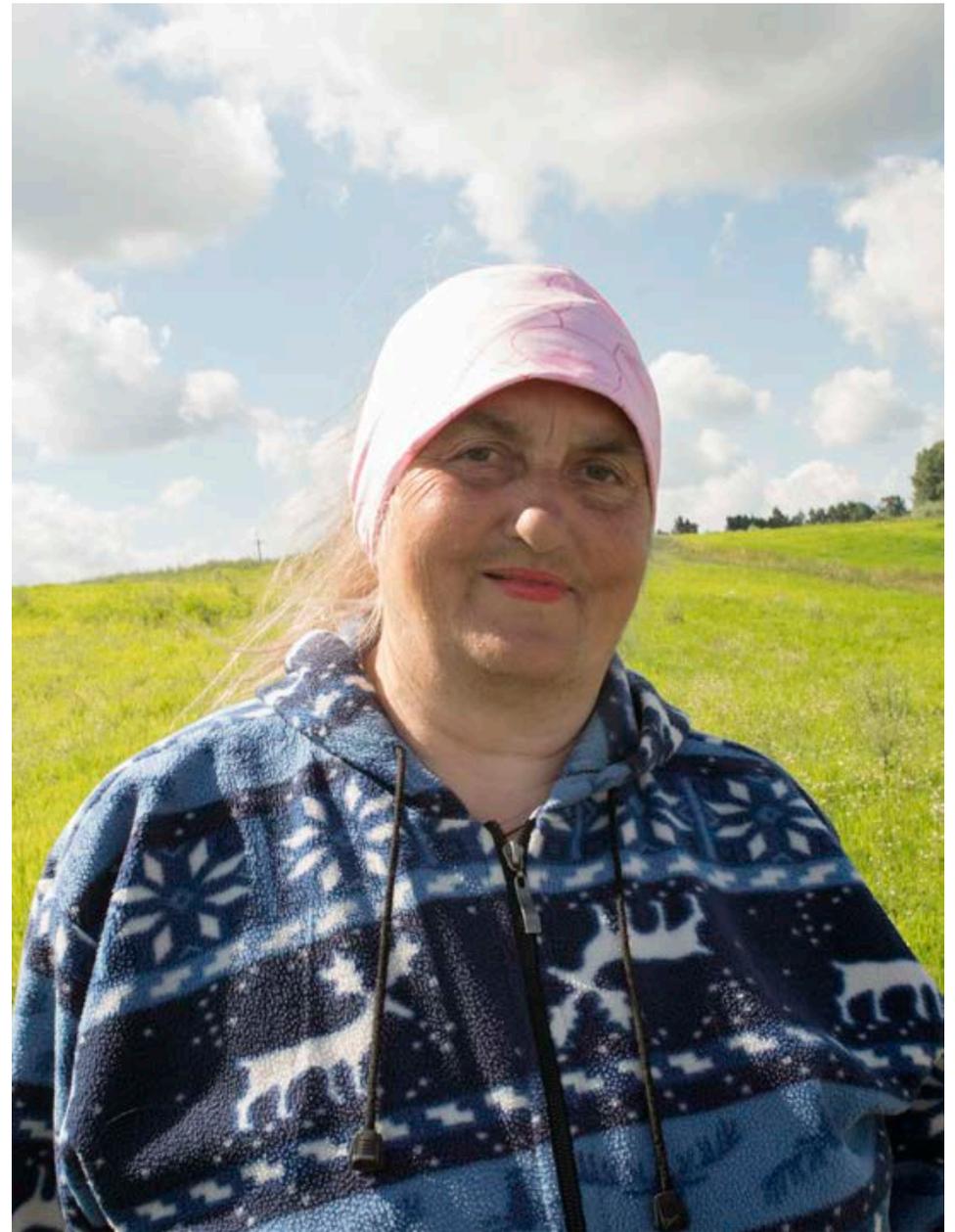
A MAN OF GRODNO CROSSING A PARK WHILE GOING HOME FROM WORK.



A COUPLE DRINKING CHAMPAGNE AFTER A WEDDING IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL OPERA AND BALLET THEATER OF BELARUS IN MINSK.



A MURAL ON A WALL OF A PLANT NORTH OF MINSK.



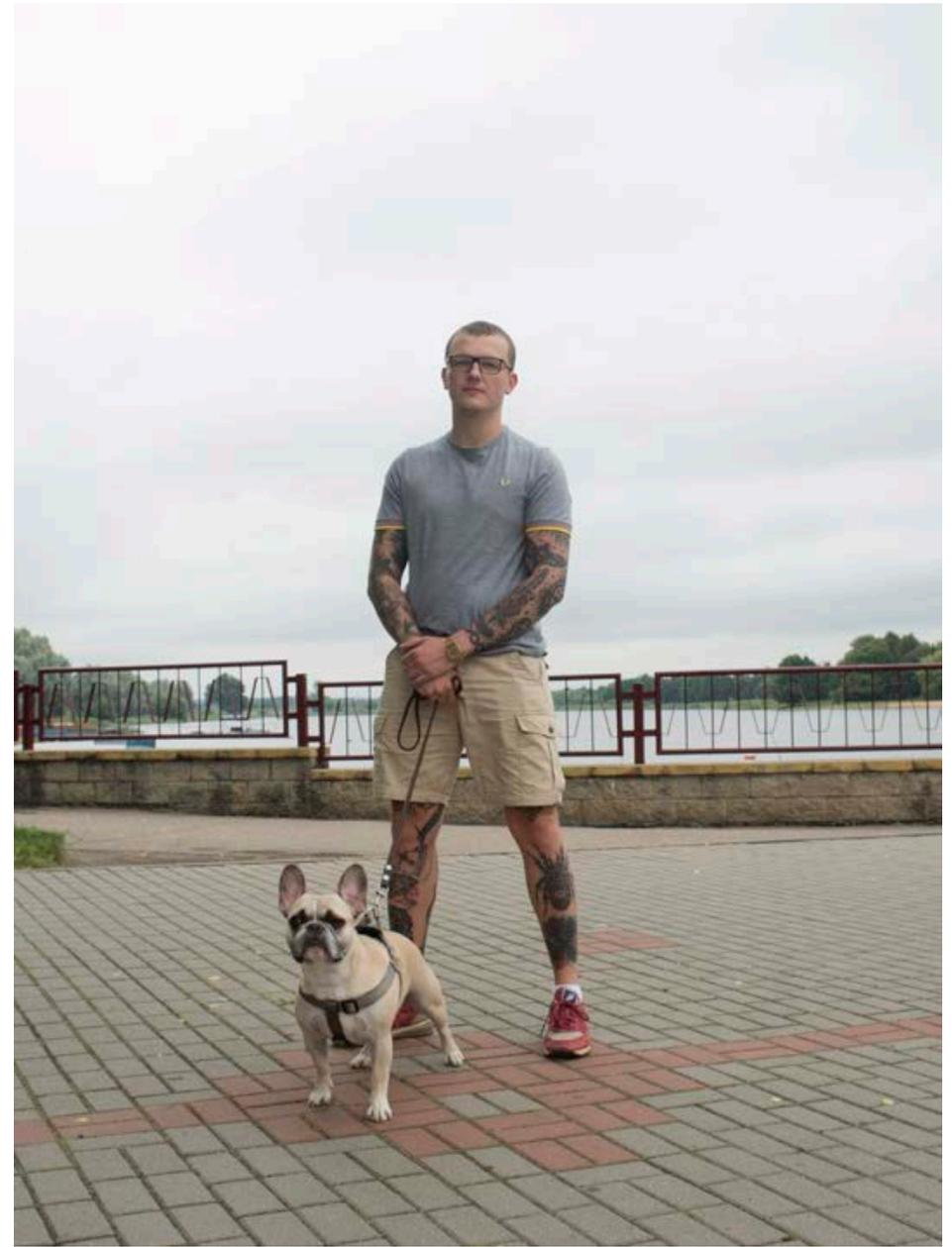
A STREET SELLER OF BERRIES. MOST OF BELARUSSIAN TERRITORY IS COVERED WITH FORESTS, SO PICKING AND SELLING BERRIES ARE TWO OF THE MOST COMMON ACTIVITIES AMONG WOMEN AND ELDERLIES.



AN UNAUTHORISED SELLER OF SMOKED FISH SHOWING HIS GOODS FROM HIS CAR'S BOOT.



A BUILDING OF APARTMENTS IN THE SUBURBS OF PINSK.



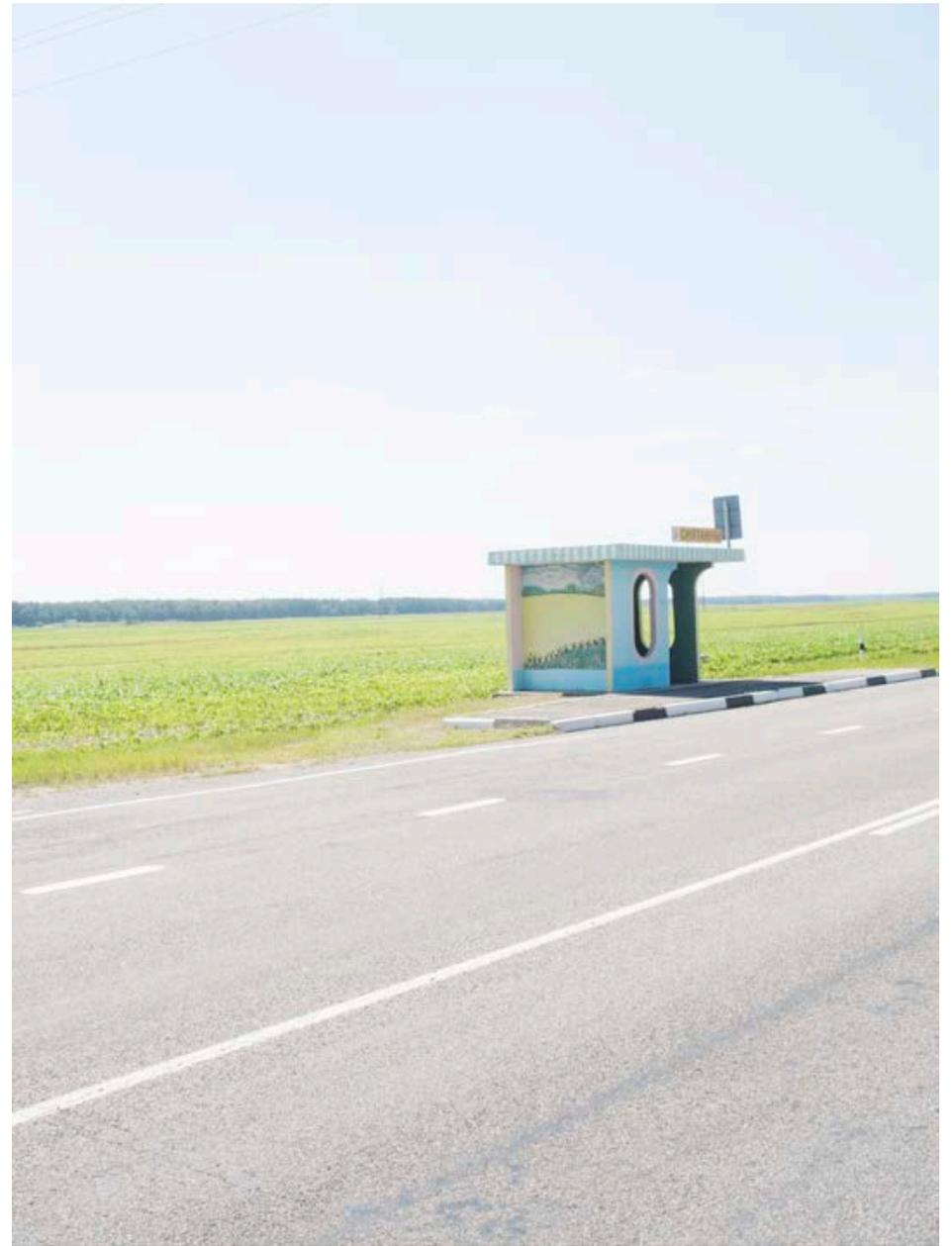
THIS TATTOO LOVER TOLD US THAT TO HAVE YOUR BODY TATTOOED FOR THE 70% OF ITS SURFACE IT'S A WAY TO AVOID MILITARY SERVICE, AN OPPOSITION THAT MAY HAVE CONSEQUENCES LIKE, IN SOME CASES, THE REVOCATION OF THE DRIVING LICENCE.



THE WEDDING HALL OF THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF LASSZIK.



A SHOPPING CENTRE SELLING EXCLUSIVELY BELARUSSIAN PRODUCTS IN MINSK.



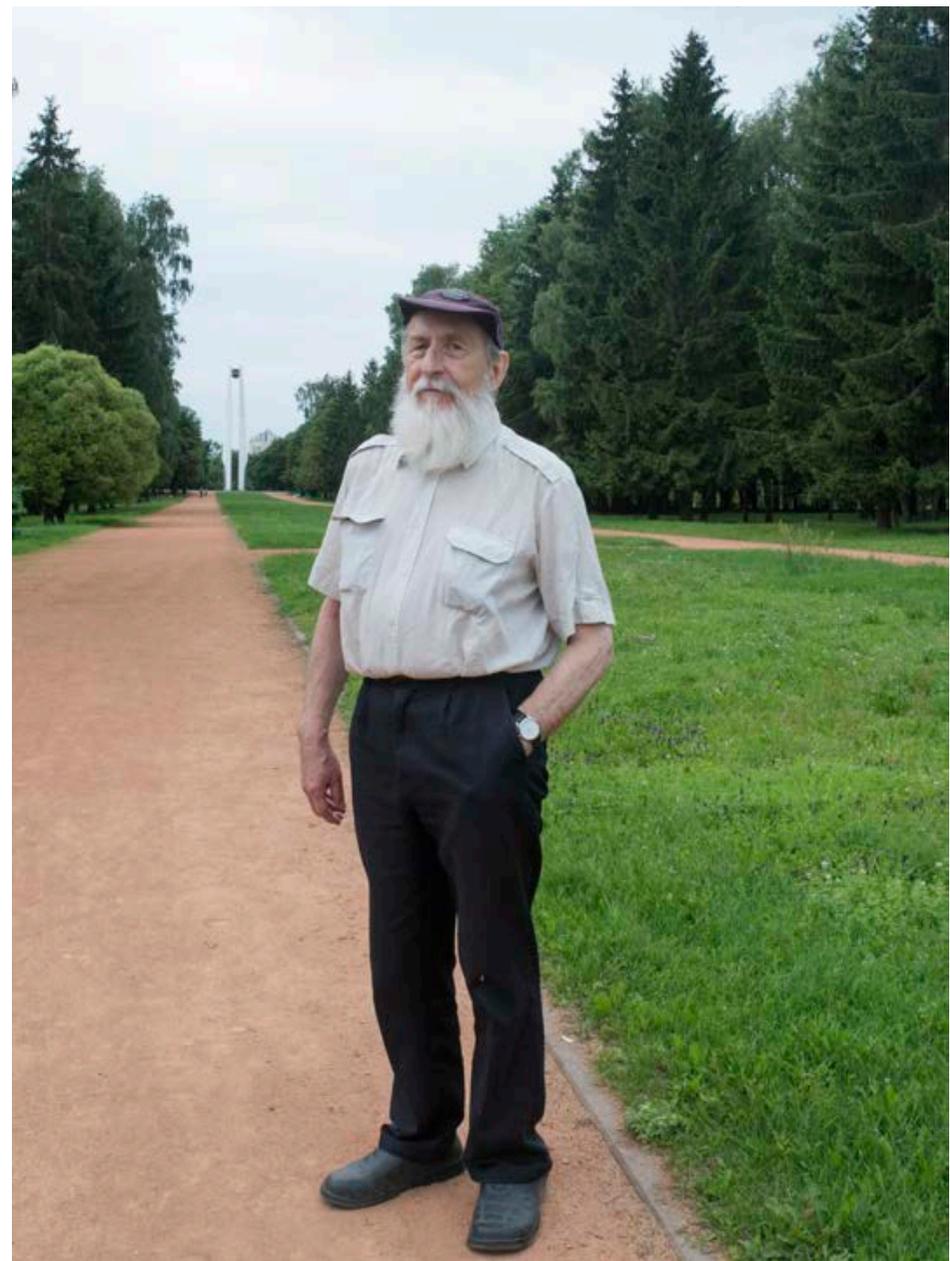
A DECORATED BUS STOP, DESIGNED AND MADE BY ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS DURING THE SOVIET YEARS.



A COUPLE TAKING A SELFIE IN FRONT OF THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY IN MINSK' INDEPENDENCE SQUARE.
LAST MARCH 25TH AROUND 400 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BEATEN UP AND ARRESTED DURING A PACIFIST RALLY IN OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY.
THIS SQUARE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE ARRIVAL OF THE RALLY, BUT THE MARCH WAS BROKE UP BY THE POLICE BEFORE ITS CONCLUSION.



THE EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH ON A POSTER LOCATED AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE TOWN OF BRESLAV. THESE POSTERS ARE PRESENT ALL OVER THE COUNTRY AS A PART OF PRESIDENT LUKASHENKO GOVERNMENT'S PROPAGANDA.



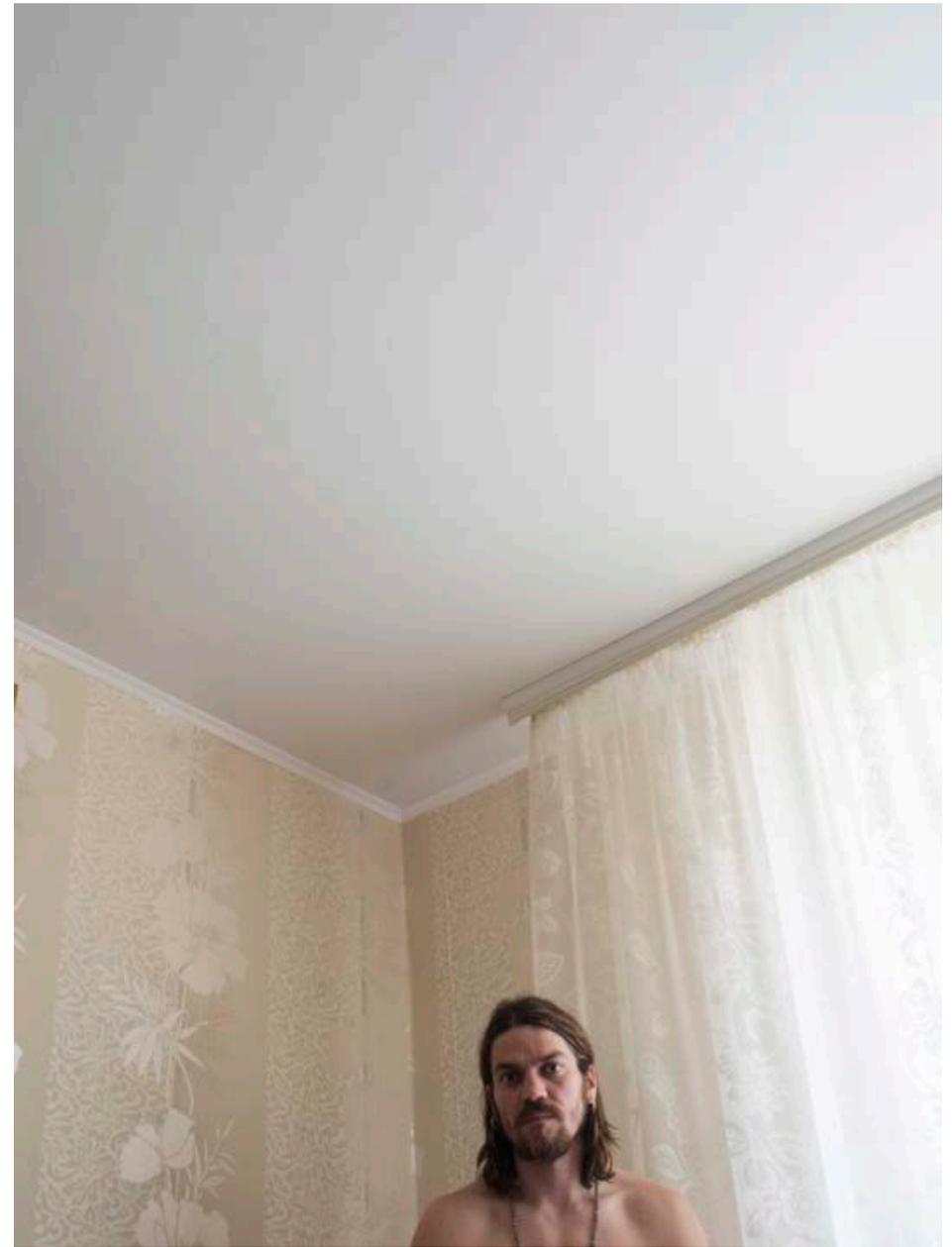
A VETERAN VISITING AN OBELISK FROM THE SOVIET ERA DURING A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.



A MOVIE THEATER OF THE SOVIET ERA IN THE HOUSE OF CULTURE OF LASSZIK ON THE BORDER WITH UKRAINE.



A FORMER DACIA IN THE SUBURBS OF PINSK. THE GOVERNMENT HAS A PREFERENCE FOR WIDE, OPEN SPACES, AND THESE TYPICAL WOODEN HOUSES ARE DEMOLISHED WITH NO SECOND THOUGHTS TO ENLARGE ROADS OR TO BUILD NEW APARTMENTS BUILDINGS.



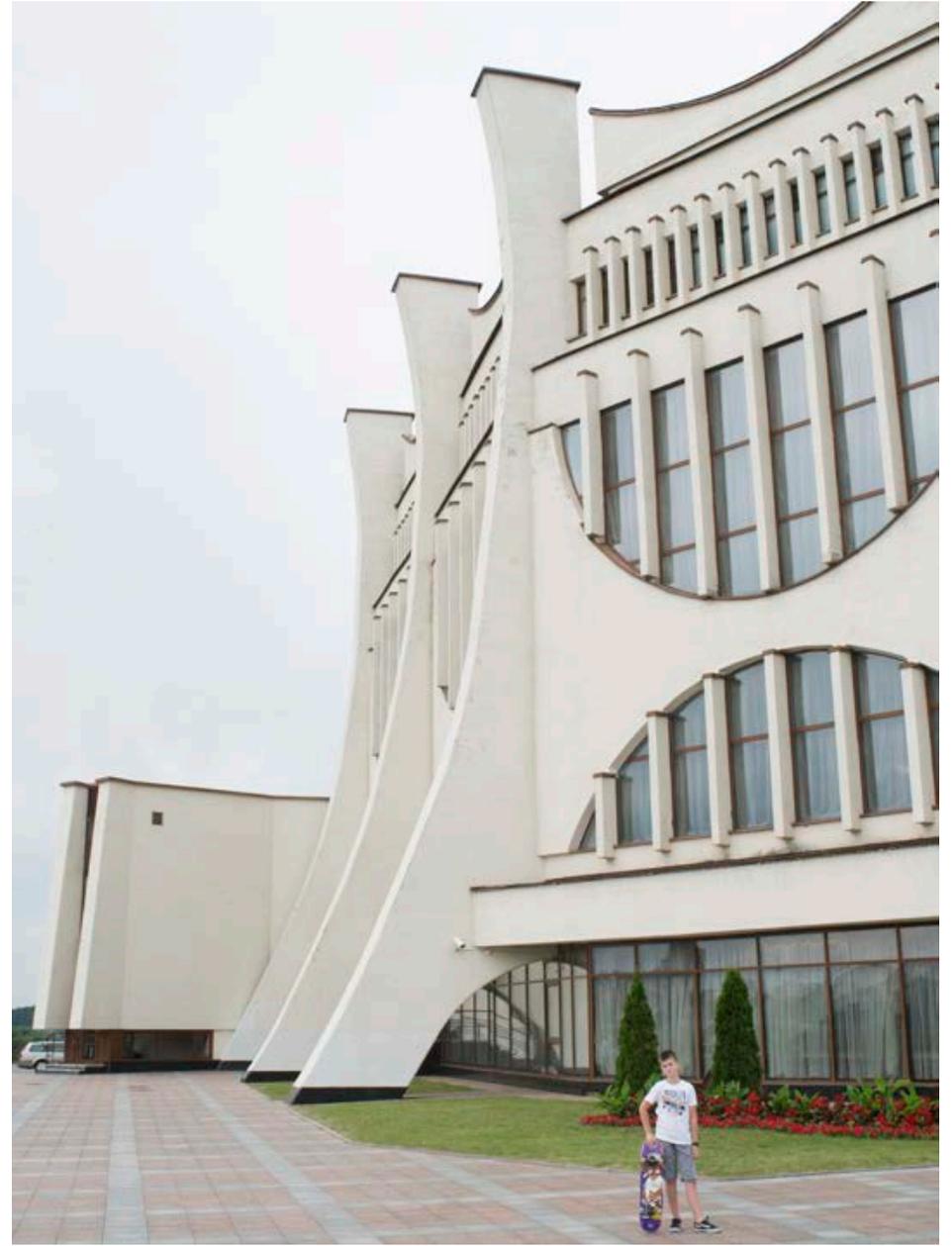
A PORTRAIT OF YASHA IN THE HOUSE WHERE HE WAS BORN, IN THE SUBURBS OF PINSK. YASHA IS A STUDENT OF THE LODZ FILM SCHOOL, IN POLAND. RUSSIA AND POLAND ARE AMONG THE VERY FEW DESTINATIONS ACCESSIBLE WITH A BELARUSSIAN PASSPORT.



A CHEMICAL LANDFILL OUTSIDE THE CITY OF GOMEL.
THIS SURREAL, EXTREMELY POLLUTED SCENARIO IS AN UNEXPECTEDLY POPULAR DESTINATION FOR FAMILY STROLLS AND WEDDINGS.



A CORNER OF THE ATELIER OF SCULPTOR ZAIR AZGUR IN MINSK.



A KID POSING WITH HIS SKATE
IN FRONT OF GRODNO'S PALACE OF CULTURE.

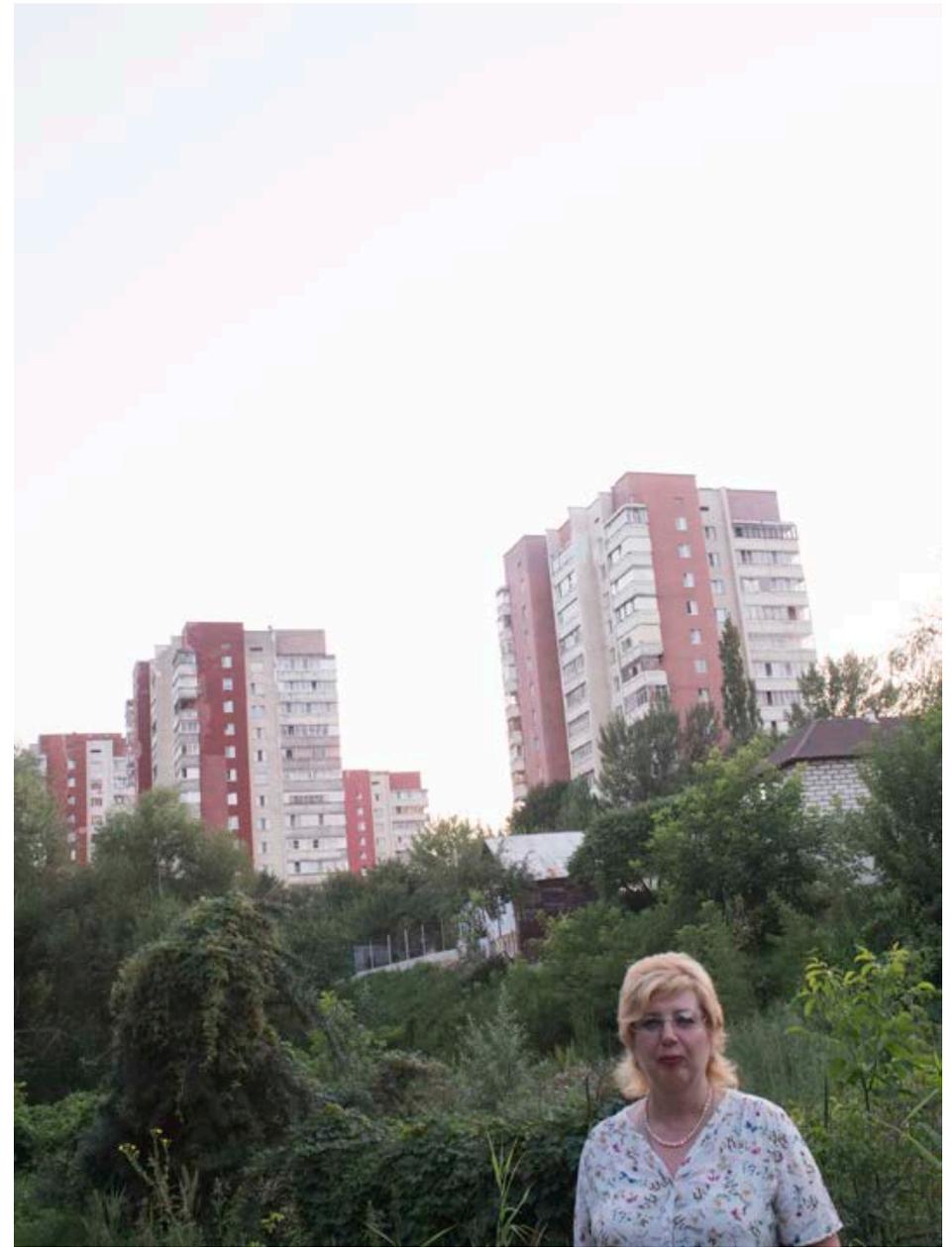


BERRIES STREET SELLER ALONG THE ROAD TO GOMEL.

THIS AREA STILL PRESENTS AN HIGH DENSITY OF RADIOACTIVE RESIDUES, BEING THE UNFAMOUS NUCLEAR PLANT OF CHERNOBYL JUST 70 MILES AWAY.



INTERIOR OF AN APARTMENT IN A CONDO OF THE SOVIET YEARS IN THE SUBURB OF PASTAVI. THESE APARTMENTS BUILDINGS LOOK THE SAME FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT THE INTERIORS ARE QUITE WELL-FINISHED, SHOWING A TRADITIONAL STYLE WITH SOME KITSCH ELEMENTS.



A LADY WALKING AROUND IN THE PARK OF JUBILIEJNY. THIS PARK HOSTS A SPRING AND A FOUNTAIN OF HOLY WATER VISITED BY MANY ORTHODOX BELIEVERS.



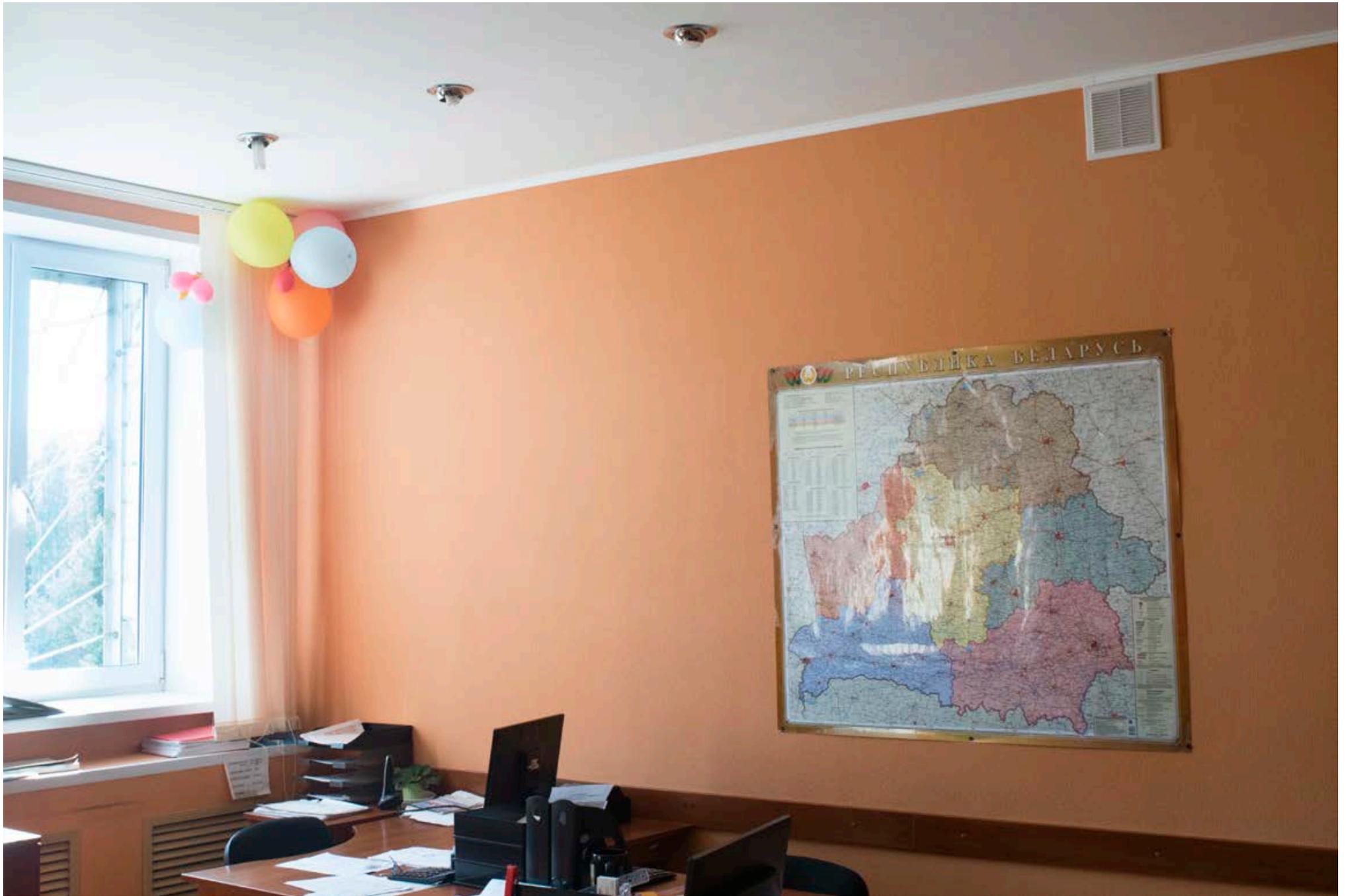
A "GUM" SUPERMARKET'S WOMEN SECTION SELLING EXCLUSIVELY BELARUSSIAN PRODUCTS.



PAN JANUSZ KEEPS GOING THIS OLD CEREAL PLANT AT THE BORDER WITH LITHUANIA MOSTLY ALONE. LIKE MANY MEN HIS AGE, HE'S ALWAYS A LITTLE TIPSY.



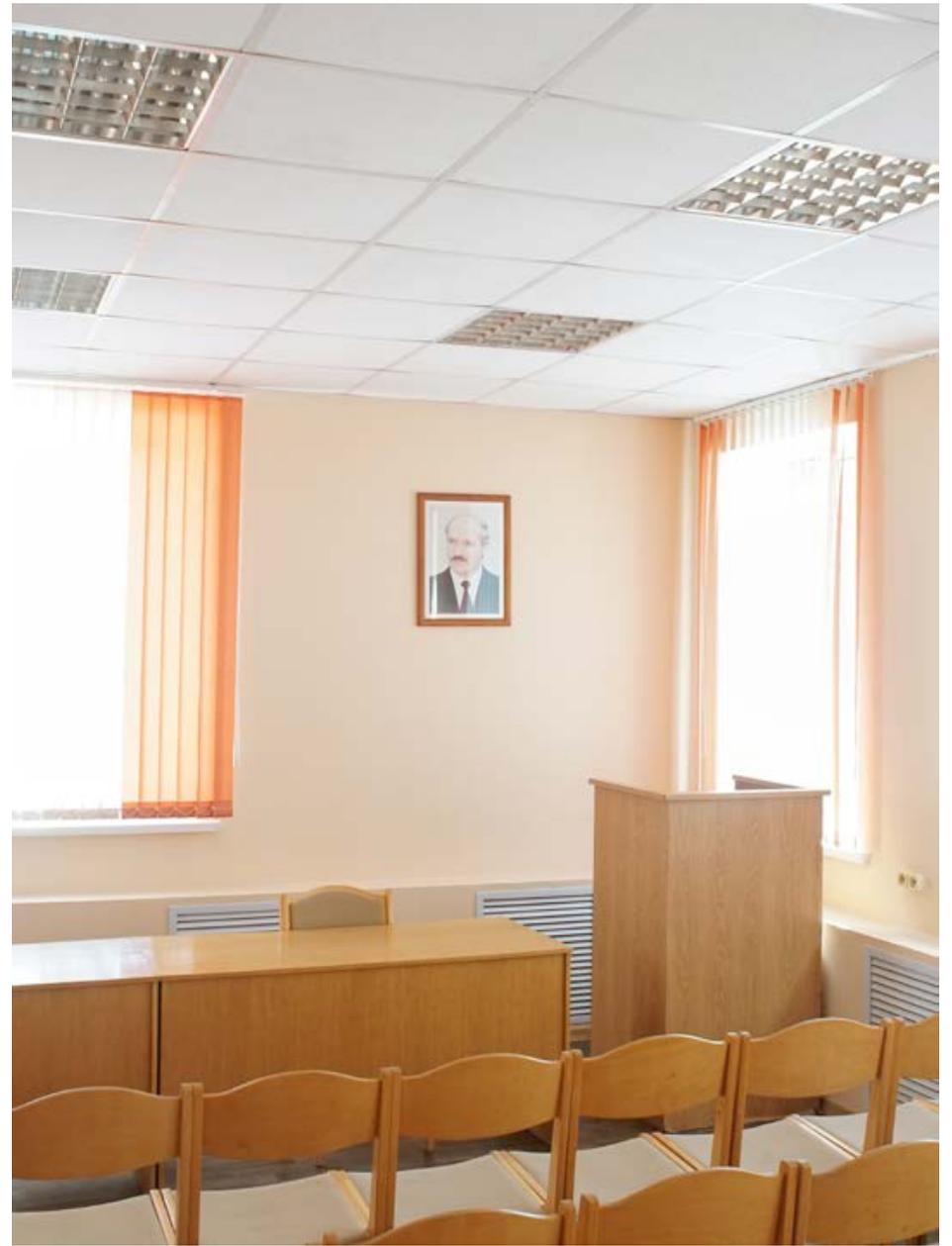
THE VEHICLE ENTRANCE OF A MILITARY BUILDING BLOCKING THE SIGHT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ST. FRANCIS IN GRODNO.



AN OFFICE OF A GOVERNMENT COMPANY, NEAR GOMEL.
THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE EMPLOYEES IN COMPANIES' LIFE IS QUITE HIGH: BIRTHDAYS ARE CELEBRATED TOGETHER, HOLIDAYS ARE SPENT ALL TOGETHER AND ONCE PER YEAR EVERY SINGLE PERSON, FROM THE MANAGER TO THE LAST WORKER, CONTRIBUTE TO THE PAINTING OF THE BUILDING.



A DETAIL OF THE STATUE OF LENIN IN THE CENTRE OF PINSK,
A CITY NEAR THE BORDER WITH UKRAINE.



A PORTRAIT OF PRESIDENT LUKASHENKO IN THE CONVENTION HALL
OF A BELARUSSIAN GOVERNATIVE ORGANISATION.



A FAMILY VISITING THE SPUTNIK SANATORIUM ON THE LAKE OF NARACH.
THE GOVERNMENT OFFERS MONTHLY STAYS TO ITS EMPLOYEES. IN THESE SANATORIA PEOPLE ARE PROVIDED PARAMEDICAL TREATMENTS
(STARTING WITH ICE COLD BATHS EARLY IN THE MORNING) AND MUST FOLLOW A RIGOROUS DIET.

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