



The 3<sup>rd</sup> Minsk Conference of the Institute ‘Political Sphere’

Minsk, 30-31 May 2014

The Institute ‘Political Sphere’ on behalf of organising committee announces a call for proposals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> international academic conference.

2014 conference theme:

**“Wars in Political and Cultural Tradition of Belarus and Countries of East-Central Europe”**



**Main organisers:**

Institute of Political Studies “Political Sphere” (Minsk-Vilnius)  
 Institute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Kaunas, Lithuania)  
 Polish Institute in Minsk (Minsk)  
 Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania)  
 Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Belarus (Minsk)  
 Belarusian Collegium (Minsk)  
 Flying University (Minsk)  
 Lithuanian Institute of History (Vilnius, Lithuania)

Working languages of the conference are Belarusian, Russian, English and Polish.

Estimated number of speakers – 40 people.

In 2014, Belarus will celebrate four important anniversaries: 500 years of the Vorša (Orsha) Battle, 100 years of beginning of the World War I, 220 years of Tadevuš Kaściuška (Tadeusz Kościuszko)

uprising and 70 years of liberation of Minsk from Nazi Germany troops. All these events form war history of Belarus, yet they have different political and ideological meanings, refer to different versions of interpretation of the past and are celebrated by different political groups.

History of Belarus is often regarded as deprived of subjectivity, where the country appears merely a territory of conquests and invasions. Back in 1857, Belarusian historian Vosip Turčynovič in “Review of History of Belarus from Ancient Times” wrote about Belarusian past in a following way: *“This is the arena of century-old battles, a crossroads of powerful rivals, who continuously fought with each other, this is a grand grave of their countless arrays”*. The remains of such narrative can be found in numerous historical and artistic works. As a result, Belarus and its statehood are seen as the victim of neighbours. It has the tragic fate to exist at the junction of battle ways. On the other hand, we see quite a different approach towards the history of our country: it is a history of bellicose people covered with military glory, the history of active creators of their future. But the definition of historical enemies and critical moments of military glory remains widely disputed in Belarusian society and very much depends on ideological and political positions.

Decisive influence of wars on political self-determination of the country and importance of commemoration of military events and victories today is not the unique case of Belarus. One can find plenty of similarities with neighbouring countries of East-Central Europe, which were also politically formed during World War I.

2014, the year of anniversaries, gives a fine reason to discuss how the wars influenced the development of political institutions and cultural traditions of Belarus and other countries of East-Central Europe, how the main ways of representation of war history were formed in the region, and how the cultural memory of wars and the culture of celebration of victories and understanding of defeats developed here.

Main topics of the conference:

- 1) Vorša (Orsha) Battle and wars of the 16th century in history, historiography and ideology of Belarus and other countries of East-Central Europe;
- 2) World War I and emergence of Belarus as a political subject;
- 3) The role of World War I in political and cultural rearrangement in East-Central Europe;
- 4) Liberation, occupation, armed resistance: 1944 in history and historiography of the peoples of East-Central Europe;
- 5) Culture of memory and war in Belarus: Military Glory Day, Victory Day, Independence Day;
- 6) Culture of memory, national holidays and wars in East-Central Europe.

### **Application details:**

To participate in the conference, please submit:

- 1) CV in any working language;
- 2) Abstract of your presentation of 2000-3000 characters in any working language;
- 3) Please indicate whether you need a Belarusian visa.

All applications are due by **15 March 2014** to the email: **info @ palityka.org**

Organisers will assist the participants in obtaining a Belarusian visa.

A theme issue of the academic journal “Political Sphere” will be issued as the proceedings of the conference.