



Minsk Tractor Works emerged from the turbulent 2022 even stronger and more focused on results

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Our new project *Belarusian Land Treasures* invites you on an exciting journey around the Vitebsk Region

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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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During the relay race

Minsk Ski Track 2023

Almost six dozen teams announced for the start, more than two hundred participants motivated to win, thousands of spectators, a lot of positivity and sincere smiles — Minsk Ski Track 2023 was held last weekend in Raubichi in an atmosphere of universal unity and intense sports competition. And even the weather, which arranged the test with a snowstorm, could not spoil the holiday. The programme of the event included biathlon relay races of various teams, including teams of higher authorities, central offices of law enforcement ministries and departments, republican government bodies and amateur teams.

Traditionally, the President's team was also on the track. This time it competed out of the tournament, so it was a good cross-country skiing and shooting master class for the others. The truth is that there is no one better than the Head of State to lead the rest even in sports. The relay quartet of the Belarusian leader won a landslide victory in the run of collectives of the highest authorities. Following the team of Aleksandr Lukashenko, the squad of the State Control Committee came to the finish line, which became the official winner. The team of the National Olympic Committee took the second place in the final protocol, and the team of the Minsk City Executive Committee closed the top three. → 2



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Belarus and Russia are under pressure coming from everywhere

Last weekend, the President of Belarus showed his compatriots by personal example how important it is to pay attention to physical education and sport, to follow a healthy lifestyle. Aleksandr Lukashenko was warmly welcomed by the fans in the stands during the Minsk Ski Track sports festival in Raubichi.

The President warmly greeted the crowd, wished them peace and prosperity, to bring up children and engage them in sports. After participating in the biathlon relay race, Aleksandr Lukashenko answered questions from the media.

One of the questions concerned the changed rhetoric of international sports organisations. The IOC and its President Thomas Bach are now saying that Belarusian and Russian athletes could take part in competitions under a neutral flag, including in the Olympics. However, a number of countries declare their intention to boycott such competitions in this case. “Neutral flags, other additional conditions. In your opinion, which of these is acceptable for us at all?” Aleksandr Lukashenko was asked.

“Not everything is unacceptable for us. Please, watch it closely, however: the masks have been dropped. The IOC, Bach talked about the possibility for us to compete. If we can, then make a decision! Why are you dragging this out? Today it is not about symbols, flags or anthems. It is about the athletes who have dedicated their lives to sport. They destroy people’s lives. Bach himself is a great athlete. Doesn’t he understand what it means to ban an athlete from competitions? And ban these athletes for nothing. They do it for no reason at all. Are these athletes bandits or what? Were they fighting somewhere? Did they go out to the square to shout slogans like ‘Let’s go to war’, ‘Let’s kill’? They didn’t do that.

What did they do wrong? There is just pressure coming from everywhere. The main goal is to straggle us and Russia, so that we would never arise somewhere, so that we would not be on this planet, so that our civilisation would cease to exist. It will not happen!” the Belarusian leader said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko commented on fake leaks concerning Russia’s strategy towards Belarus and Belarus’ alleged absorption by Russia by 2030.

“Do we have our own strategy? We do. Russia is a major nuclear power. Does it have its own



Fans, guests of the event warmly and sincerely greeted Aleksandr Lukashenko and he answered them in the way

strategy? It does. And Russia has its own strategy concerning Belarus among other things — to live like brothers, in peace and friendship.

They just want to split us one more time. This is why this topic has emerged. There is nothing alive about it. You know my stance. It remains unchanged: we are an independent and sovereign state. Being independent, sovereign, who stands next to Russia? Nobody but Belarus,” the Belarusian leader noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the Russian President understands all these matters in exactly the same way, “He and I talked about these matters during the latest meeting... I will tell you a secret: he and I discussed various topics for a long time yesterday [February 24th]. I’d love our relations to always stay this way. And I’d love them to stay like this after my time... This is why don’t listen to these lies and idle talk. They were generated in order to split us.”

The President is convinced

that all of it is being done in order to shake up and unravel Belarus ahead of the main election year of 2024 (elections of deputies of all levels and the Belarusian People’s Congress) and ahead of the presidential election in 2025, “They have to start shaking up things now. The fugitive oppositionists are abroad and need to train new people. It is true that financing is a bit of a problem for them. We carefully keep an eye on it now. This is why they have started shaking up things little by little. They will find some other topics, too.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also commented on the attacks and provocations against representatives of Belarus and Russia on international platforms.

For example, at a session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly the other day a Latvian MP insulted a Russian MP in totally not diplomatic terms. Chairman of the International Affairs Commission of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus Andrei Savinykh also encountered provocations.

“Well, he endured decently,” the Belarusian leader remarked.

“Do we need such international venues and a dialogue with the West at all then?” the reporters asked the Head of State.

“You know, we do. Due to yet another important reason. They expect us to leave [the international venues]. One should never do what one’s enemy or adversary wants. It is an axiom.

This is why we will not leave. They didn’t offend us or Russians. They demonstrated their face one more time. Who do you insult? You insult Russians and Belarusians, who saved you from the brown plague. You should have thought at least about that... Let them scream and let them shout. We have to follow our own road, our own path. The dog may bark while the caravan has to keep moving. We should live and work according to this principle. We should not pay attention and should not even make comments. Furthermore, we have to show their impudence and idiocy. That’s it. We need to do nothing else,” the Belarusian leader emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko mentioned the United Nations Organisation as an example where powerful nations, in particular, the United States of America, often sway votes of smaller countries by using financial tools.

“I’ve been to the United Nations Organisation many times and have seen it. It has never made a normal decision that benefits...

Well, not a decision concerning the war. They could reduce poverty in the world. They could help some poor people. Likewise, they could address some humanitarian issues. But there are differences everywhere,” the Belarusian leader stated.

He pointed out that even when Russia and Belarus submit resolutions on security matters, then Americans and other nations vote against them, “Well, it is just nonsense. As for the OSCE, there is nothing to talk about...” the President highlighted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out that whatever the situation in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, or Ukraine could be in the past, there is not even a desire to get together and talk about it at the top level, “The West doesn’t want it. The West doesn’t want this conversation. After all, I suggested we should get together and talk when the war began in Afghanistan, in Syria. Heads of state have to get together. I’ve been to such conferences two or three times. Now they don’t even want to get together. They may get together at the level of ministers of foreign

ply disadvantageous for them. The West would love to resolve the problem with Russia in one blow and close this grey hole, as they say, and unite Moldova, push it into Romania or make it pro-Western. It is their goal. Ukrainians don’t need it. I don’t believe that Ukrainians will go crazy and will open some second front,” the Belarusian leader said.

At the same time Russian military personnel, hardware, and weapons are present in Transdnistria. They can strike back if things go south and then there will be hell to pay, the President remarked.

Aleksandr Lukashenko believes that the West exploits the situation in Transdnistria in order to destabilise the situation in the region, “Everything should be undermined. It is in interests of the West. I don’t believe Ukrainians need it. If they open the second front over there, it will be quite fatal.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko made a few comments in response to the Polish government’s decision to restrict truck traffic via Belarusian border crossings.



affairs at best. Because it is a tool to exert pressure. Whoever commands the majority over there starts exerting pressure. The OSCE... What does it have to do with elections at all? It is an organisation for security and co-operation in Europe [organisation’s primary responsibility]. But no, they have to meddle here. Because an election is a tool that can depose someone in some country. The organisation does useless things. Nevertheless, we will be there despite trolling, pressure and the rest in order to demonstrate their idiocy.”

While talking to the President, the reporters mentioned Transdnistria as another potential flash point in the region. Warnings about a possible provocation, about the concentration of hardware at the Ukrainian-Moldovan border have already been seen in the media space. The reporters wondered whether Aleksandr Lukashenko truly believes Ukraine would open the second front.

“I don’t believe it. It is sim-

The President noted that all of it is happening while Belarus invited all the citizens of Lithuania and Poland to visit the country without visas. It seems those governments were particularly irked by the fact that many people started coming to Belarus.

“Poles and Lithuanians came to visit Belarus, saw our ‘dictatorship’ and said they wanted the same. And wishes of the people of Lithuania and Poland do not coincide with wishes and actions of the authorities of Poland and Lithuania. It is the key. But people will sort things out. One election after another will take place in their countries soon, too. We will see how democratically they will be organised. If they allow people to cast their votes [freely and democratically], the nations will sweep them away,” the Belarusian leader stressed.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Why is the West shooting itself in the foot again?

This week, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has paid a state visit to China. The programme of the visit of the Belarusian leader to China was intense. We will tell you the details in the next issue of *The MT*. On the eve of the visit, the Belarusian Head of State gave an interview to the Chinese media — the Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group. We bring to your attention the key statements and quotes of the Belarusian leader.

During an interview the journalists were primarily interested in dynamics of relations between China and Belarus, their history and prospects. They asked about trade and economic co-operation and major joint projects that are underway in Belarus, including the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone and the Belarusian National Biotechnology Corporation (BNBC), as well as new opportunities in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also answered questions about the geopolitical processes taking place in the world. The focus was on the conflict in Ukraine, the possibility of peaceful settlement.

Speaking about the role of China in solving international problems, the Head of State stressed that he assesses it very simply: no problem in the world can be resolved without China nowadays.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that Belarus maintains the same stance,

“Our way in Ukraine is the way of peace. The Chinese follow this path. I am 100 percent convinced that Russians are inclined towards ending this conflict. It is up to Americans — take concrete steps towards peace and there will be peace. China happened to be at the heart of this entire knot today.”

In an interview with Chinese media, the Head of State spoke about a Chinese civilian balloon recently shot down by the Americans.

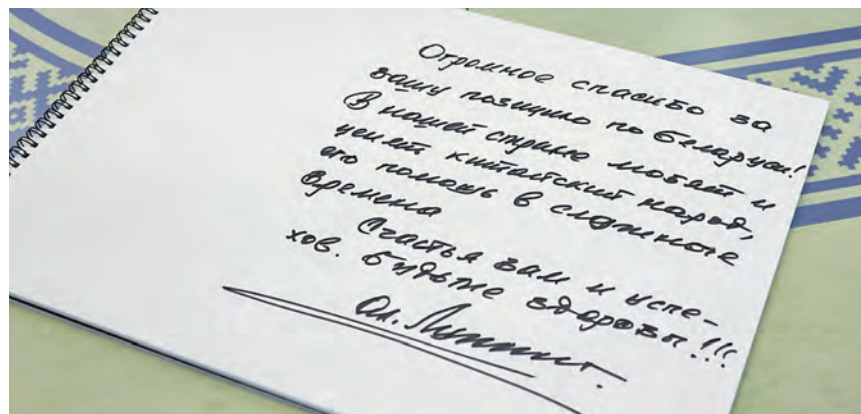
“You understand well what the situation in the world is today. China will not be left in peace. China is the main rival of the United States. The Americans do not hide this. It is sad that they stoop so low,” the Belarusian leader said.

The Head of State explained that we are talking about a Chinese civilian balloon shot down by the Americans, “They put on a show like Americans always do. They made a big deal out of nothing to convince their society of the ‘danger’ of that Chinese object. When the attention of 300 million people, Americans, was glued to that object, they shot it down. For what? The election campaign is round the corner. They did it to show their heroism. ... True, then all the people figured out that it was just an unfriendly step towards China. The Chinese immediately declared that it was a civilian balloon. We could figure out together what it is. No, they demonstratively destroyed it. This is a very unfriendly move.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed confidence that the conflict in Ukraine was inevitable and its root causes did not lie in Russia.

“The Russian-Ukrainian conflict is one year old now. Indeed, we talk about causes of this conflict, but it is easier to see big things from afar as we like to say. Some time needs to pass in order to evaluate causes of this conflict. It is purely the Chinese style — one should never hurry. Time will come and we will dot every i. But I absolutely agree with President Putin, who says that primal causes are not in Russia.

Bullying of Russian-speaking people, of the Russian language. It happened before 2014. And all of it had been ramped up by Western countries. Naturally, no country, neither America nor China would allow their compatriots to be bullied. People, who simply speak Russian and live according to Russian customs. People, who accept Russian culture. Moreover,



Aleksandr Lukashenko left an autographed wish for Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group

territory of Ukraine, the war would take on a completely different character.

“Militarily, we stand ready to respond. We stand ready to give the toughest response. We have communicated this position not only to Ukraine, but also to the UK and the United States of America. I hope that I will have the opportunity to inform France (after all, a nuclear power) about our position. We stand ready to defend the sovereignty and independence of our country. We don’t want war. We want peace here. We want to live peacefully and co-operate with those who want to cooperate with us,” the Head of State said.

The President stressed that the people of Belarus are very peace-loving, “We know what war is. Napoleon passed through our territory during his march to Russia leav-

And I am sure that if this happens we will receive support from the entire international community, including the People’s Republic of China. If aggression is committed against us. We communicate this through various channels to Ukraine, including to the West. I warned them that if the territory of Belarus is attacked from the territory of Ukraine, we will respond, but it will be a completely different war. It will instantly take on a different character. We will resist and defend our land and fight against the aggressor, including together with the troops of the Russian Federation. Together,” the Belarusian leader stressed.

At the same time, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted: in recent days the Belarusians have not spotted any significant military build up on the territory of Poland, or Lithuania, or especially Ukraine that would look like preparations to drag us into the war. And the Belarusian side positively assess this matter.



Li Tongtong, Host of the Leaders Talk programme

In an interview with Chinese journalists, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that the pressure of sanctions will not produce anything while mean tricks in the sphere of economy on the part of some neighbouring countries represent a self-inflicted wound, “They are starting to play mean tricks in the sphere of economy. They closed borders to truck traffic. They shot themselves in the foot. We didn’t really travel much to Western Europe as it is. But a lot of trucks and trains travelled from the territory of the European Union via Poland to China, Kazakhstan, and other destinations. It was cost-efficient for them. Their drivers went to China, Kazakhstan, and Russia. They won’t now. If we close the border from our side, then thousands of people will be out of work.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Lu Jinbo, Head of the Xinhua News Agency correspondent office in Belarus

ing Belarus in ruins. The World War I theatre of operations was here. In terms of the World War II (the Great Patriotic War for us) the theatre of military operations was mainly in Belarus. We have absolutely no intentions to attack Ukraine. But God forbid aggression against the Belarusian state is committed from the territory of Ukraine. In this case we will be forced to respond.

OFFICIALLY

On February 27th, the Head of State held a government meeting to discuss the financing of military-related procurement.

“We have been successfully developing modern weapons not only in the areas where we have scientific and technological capabilities and expertise. We are also mastering new areas that are in demand today, including such as missiles and large calibre artillery ammunition,” the President said. He noted that a robotic complex has been designed to detect and destruct air targets. Development of a medium-range anti-aircraft missile system and an anti-aircraft guided missile to this system is on the home stretch.

In order to equip the Belarusian part of the regional group of forces, Russia has supplied Belarus

with an Iskander operational-tactical missile system. An S-400 long-range anti-aircraft missile system was also transferred. In addition, we received a battery of the Tor anti-aircraft missile system, anti-tank guided missiles, mortars, rocket infantry flamethrowers and more than 830,000 ammunition of various calibres.

“Su-30CM aircraft, Mi-35M helicopters, armoured personnel carriers and other weapons will be delivered. In terms of the development of modern weapons, we are not standing still. I’m talking about a more formidable weapon. This is what we must strive for,” the Head of State emphasised.

Further, the President held a meeting with law enforcement agencies in a narrow format. In the run-up to his three-day state visit to China, Aleksandr

Lukashenko met with heads of military and security agencies to discuss the situation inside and outside the country.

“Once again, I would like to emphasise and draw your attention to the need to ensure the strictest discipline in the military units. Especially on the border. When I talk about the border, you should understand that this is not solely the domain of the State Border Committee. This is the domain of the police, the KGB and the military. We all need to keep our guard on in terms of the border security and be able to identify even the smallest manifestation of aggressiveness against our state in order to take appropriate response measures. They use any opportunity to destabilise the situation in Belarus,” the President noted.



Proactive import substitution as a key strategy

Minsk Tractor Works emerged from the turbulent 2022 even stronger and more focused on results

According to the business plan, this year the company intends to increase production by more than 2,000 tractors and increase exports by at least 9 percent. And this is in addition to last year's successful result. MTZ Director General Vitaly Vovk spoke about this and other things in an interview with *The MT*.

By Yulia Ogneva

Promising African market

— I propose to start with a recent event — the state visit of President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko to Zimbabwe. It is impossible not to notice that the Belarusian tractor was also in the centre of attention — a ceremony was held to hand over about 900 pieces of equipment. Also, during the visit, a memorandum of strategic partnership was signed with one of the leading companies, which involves the supply of at least 3,600 tractors. That is, to paraphrase, much has already been done, but even more remains to be done?

— It's true! In 2018-2022, Minsk Tractor Works delivered over 1,800 tractors to Zimbabwe. It is important that last year the country completely provided itself with grain for the first time in the last half century.

We regard the conclusion of the memorandum on strategic partnership as a new stage in our co-operation, which implies work on a systematic long-term basis. The fact is that Zimbabwe is experiencing a significant shortage of both tractors and other agricultural machinery. According to the Agriculture and Food Ministry, the country needs to purchase up to 3,000 tractors annually over the next five years in order to increase the efficiency of agricultural production. Therefore, we can say that Belarusian equipment is just beginning its journey on the Zimbabwean market.

As a symbol of this path, Aleksandr Lukashenko presented his colleague from Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa with a BELARUS tractor. It is a great honour and a great responsibility for us.

'The Golden Billion' — Coming Soon!

— In general, how did MTZ work on foreign markets in 2022?

— Minsk Tractor Works is an export-oriented company, more than 90 percent of our tractors are sent abroad.

Last year, Minsk Tractor Works exported 35,735 units of equipment, MTZ Holding — 48,706 units. The export growth rate is 128.3 and 127.2 percent, respectively. The holding's export volume exceeded \$900 million.

If we talk about the far abroad, then the export amounted to about 4,500 thousand tractors. Almost 12,000 pieces of equipment were shipped to consumers from the CIS, excluding Russia. However, deliveries to the Russian market increased — about 20,000 tractors went there.

— That is, the export of a billion dollars is the immediate prospect?

— Indeed, this is a definite milestone. Last year, the four millionth BELARUS tractor, which rolled off the assembly line on February 22nd, became such a milestone.

The plant continues to grow. And the best proof of this is the past year, in which MTZ, and most of the machine-building enterprises of the country, not only remained afloat, but also showed growth. Industry has become the locomotive of the economy, as it should be.

— Despite the export orientation, the importance of ensuring the domestic market is always emphasised at the highest level. Is MTZ coping with demand?



— The production volume of MTZ in 2022 exceeded 38,000 tractors, of which 3,100 went to work in Belarusian fields. For us, if you like, it is a matter of honour to provide for the domestic market.

In 2023, we will continue to update the tractor fleet of the country, including energy-saturated tractors with a capacity of 300 and 350 horsepower.

Technology of the future

— As far as we know, more powerful equipment is also in development...

— I agree. Moreover, the leadership of the country has set such a task for us, there is a request from Belarusian farmers. But still, when developing it, we look in the direction of markets with a large field contour. If Belarus needs wide-cutting tools of 10–12 metres, then, for example, in Russia or Kazakhstan — from 18 to 21 metres. Such power is needed there, and such tractors will be in demand. Therefore, we are speeding up development as much as possible.

— What other directions do you consider promising?

— Generally speaking, this year MTZ intends to complete the transition to a new model range and begin processing every single model based on modern

tists from Kazan Federal University — it is perfect for farms, as it can operate in two modes: on electricity and diesel fuel. The absence of gas pollution when working on electric traction is an important condition for the normal maintenance of animals.

— Will unmanned vehicles be in demand? Or is it more about the medium-long term?

— To develop this direction, it is necessary to solve many problems that are both within the competence of the plant and outside it. But in any case, this needs to be done, because, firstly, there are not enough people in the countryside, and secondly, this is a real way to increase efficiency — the equipment does not need much rest, it can work 24/7. We are unlikely to go by leaps and bounds, but there is an understanding of the need to develop unmanned vehicles.



Tasks for tomorrow

— You said that you created an unmanned mini-tractor together with Russian scientists, about 20,000 tractors were sold on the Russian market in 2022. What share of the Russian agricultural machinery market could ideally be occupied by BELARUS tractors?

— By increasing deliveries to the Russian market, we managed to somewhat replace the dropped volumes. The production capacities of Belarusian and Russian enterprises — manufacturers of agricultural machinery make it possible to fully provide the markets of both countries with a domestic product. At the same time, the market is open, we compete with foreign manufacturers, whose products are also subsidised. The choice is up to the consumer.

If we nevertheless begin to ensure our own technological security, then the term 'import substitution' should be left as a tactical term — in order to be able to work here and now. But in a strategic plan, we need to talk about imports ahead of schedule. We must not forget a simple truth: the one who catches up will never catch up. That is why joint efforts should be directed to the creation of a product that has no analogues in the world. Then we will be able to secure ourselves technologically and ensure an export breakthrough. Because it is in the interests of the state, which must be above

trends in the development of science and technology. This stage will last 5–7 years.

We have extended the warranty period to three years for our equipment manufactured and sold on the domestic market after January 1st, 2023. Next year, the warranty period for energy-saturated tractors will reach five years.

As for particulars, we are planning to expand the so-called interspecific areas: on the basis of existing components and assemblies, we will make special machines that are unique in their functions and suitable for performing certain technological operations. The time of 'universal soldiers' has passed. The world is moving towards specialisation. Take for example an unmanned mini-tractor created on the basis of our BELARUS 112. This is a joint development with scien-

all if we want to preserve independence and sovereignty.



Belarus 3523i unmanned tractor

Assault on cancer

Belarusian oncologists have developed sensational projects — a cancer vaccine, 3D modelling of the most complex operations, and an ultra-modern method for treating leukaemia and lymphomas

Our country is starting to organise large-scale production of Elenagen anti-cancer vaccine. During clinical trials, the drug showed the world's best results in the treatment of high-grade ovarian tumours with metastases. It is possible that it will be effective against other types of neoplasms. Learn more about the history of the vaccine, as well as other projects that are designed to be breakthrough in the treatment of cancer, in a conversation with Academician of the National Academy of Sciences, Professor, Deputy Director for Research at the Alexandrov National Cancer Centre Sergei Krasny.

Interviewed by Lyudmila Konopelko

Set of circumstances

— Elenagen was conceived in the USA, but implemented in Belarus. How did this become possible?

— In part, we can say 'thank you' to the pandemic, a certain set of circumstances, but foremost, of course, to our team of highly qualified specialists. This vaccine is the development of the outstanding American molecular biologist Alex Schneider. Of course, before the creation of Elenagen, there were long-term fundamental studies on the examination of tumour growth, carcinogenesis and the search for solutions where the action of the drug could be applied. Chronic inflammation was chosen as such a target, since it is used by the tumour as a defence — this is how cancer creates a barrier around itself, like a purulent focus, where cells of the immune system and various chemicals cannot penetrate. It is for this reason that chemotherapy is ineffective, and after some time the disease is fatal.

When the fundamental research of the vaccine ended, the question arose of where to conduct clinical studies. In America, it is too expensive, we are talking about millions of dollars, so Schneider looked for venues with more reasonable prices. We suggested Belarus. I must say that at first, Alex was sceptical about this idea — he knew almost nothing about our country. However, he agreed to come and study the issue on the spot. Well, he was impressed. Our specialists were required to write a programme of clinical trials, and only after that, their conduct was approved. Moreover, the United States, Brazil and Israel wanted to join the studies, which were scheduled to begin in 2020 — this indicates a high degree of confidence in our programme. Then a pandemic broke out, which practically paralysed the oncological services of these countries, all the forces of doctors there were devoted to the fight against COVID-19. Belarus did not introduce a lockdown, medical and scientific institutions worked as usual. Considering that all stocks of Elenagen remained with us, clinical studies were conducted here. Therefore, the project turned out to be American-Belarusian.

Second chance at life

— What results did the vaccine show?

— I will say without exaggeration — just grandiose, there are no such places anywhere else in the world. The vaccine was administered to patients with chemotherapy-resistant ovarian cancer. Thanks to this, the time to progression of the disease increased by 2.5 times, and 40 percent of women had a long (up to three years) period without tumour progression.



Sergei Krasny

At the same time, in every cancer patient from the group where this drug was not taken, the disease developed progressively within a year after the start of treatment.

Therapy with Elenagen can improve the effectiveness of chemotherapy. In addition, the vaccine, unlike most toxic cancer drugs, is very gentle on the body, causing virtually no adverse reactions.

The effectiveness of the drug was studied on patients in several centres: in the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Oncology, in the Minsk Oncological Centre, patients from oncological dispensaries of several regions were involved. Currently, studies of the drug in prostate and breast cancer are ongoing. There are already positive results.

— How much Elenagen is produced today?

— While the release was limited: up to 40 bottles per week. Currently, there is no vaccine produced anywhere in the world. American partners promised to help set up the production of Elenagen at Belarusian



enterprises. There are plans to increase production to 1000 doses per week and even more. However, I cannot predict how long this will take. Let me remind you that this is done for the first time in the world.

Raising aggression in the cell

— Another subject of special pride of our oncologists is an ultra-modern method for the treatment of leukaemia and lymphomas.

— This method is called CAR-T and has shown amazing results. It is being developed in many countries, but it has a crazy cost there — from 500,000 to a million US dollars per patient. We are, of course, much cheaper.

The essence of the method is that in a person with a resistant form of leukaemia or lymphoma, when all other methods of treatment are no longer effective, T-lymphocytes are taken from the blood and modified at the gene level. Simply put, they make aggressive towards this type of tumour. After that, they are propagated outside the body, and at this time the remaining T-lymphocytes are destroyed in the patient so that a void is formed — a chamber, a box. Then modified ones are

introduced into the body — the same CAR-T. They rush to the tumour and begin to attack it, while multiplying intensively. We have had eight patients with refractory lymphoma undergo this method, three of them are still on treatment, but there are already great successes, and four of them have a complete regression of the tumour! You can imagine — these young people were at death's door, they had very little time to live, but now the tumour has completely disappeared, and there has been no recurrence of the disease for a year and a half. Of course, CAR-T is one of the most promising areas in oncology.

Accurate to the cubic millimetre

— Lung cancer is one of the most common oncological diseases both in Belarus and around the world. Today, the main method of its treatment is surgical. How do patients manage to preserve this most important organ?



— When lung cancer spreads to large bronchi or vessels, the entire organ is removed. In this case, the patient becomes disabled person of group II or III,

which, of course, affects the overall quality of life. Today, thanks to the use of reconstructive 3D modelling technologies, part of the lung can be saved.

This is done as follows: data on the preoperative examination of the patient are taken, loaded into a computer. According to the developed algorithm, a 3D model of the lung, bronchi, blood vessels and tumour is built. On the model, a calculation is made where the line of intersection of each struc-

ture should pass, and a reconstruction plan is developed. We calculate to the millimetre the volume of the lung, the size of the vessels and, if necessary, the structures of the heart that will be removed. The portability of the operation is assessed. Then the surgical intervention is carried out strictly according to the plan developed by the algorithm. After the operation, a 3D model of the reconstructed lung is also built and the slightest deviations are monitored, as well as the dynamics of changes every three months. This makes it possible to take the necessary measures in a timely manner.

Such operations can only be performed by surgeons of the highest qualification. In our centre, this is primarily the leading researcher of the laboratory of thoracic oncopathology of the centre, Candidate of Medical Sciences Sergey Eskov, who is actively developing this technology under my leadership. To date, more than 50 operations have been

successfully performed. In the future, of course, we plan a larger-scale implementation of this method in oncosurgery.

The vaccine had no choice

— Why choose Elenagen? Perhaps, in honour of a cured patient?

— Actually, the vaccine has a very difficult name for perception — 'a plasmid, which is a circular supercoiled DNA molecule encoding the P62 gene'. It is clear that I had to choose a simplified version. Nevertheless, the patients have nothing to do with it. It is just that Alex Schneider's wife's name is Elena, and my wife has the same name. Thus, half-jokingly, the vaccine had no choice in terms of name.



The Alexandrov National Cancer Centre



The Principality of Polotsk



Centre of Europe — in Polotsk



The Gavrilo family from Novopolotsk



Gralevo quarry — the largest deposit of dolomite in Belarus

The Republic of Belarus is located in the centre of Europe and is one of the 15 largest countries in this part of the world. Belarus is often called a 'blue-eyed country': there are thousands of lakes, rivers and protected forests. But the country is interesting not only for its unique nature. Each region of Belarus has its own modern industrial giants, amazing historical sites and sights.

Belarus consists of six regions: Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Minsk and Mogilev. Minsk — the capital of the Republic of Belarus — retains an independent status and is not part of any regions. The MT presents the project called *Belarusian Land Treasures* and invites readers on an exciting journey. Let's visit the Vitebsk Region — the cradle of the Belarusian statehood.



VITEBSK REGION

HISTORICAL DIGRESSION, INTERESTING FACTS

The Vitebsk Region celebrates its 85th anniversary in 2023. This is the cradle of Belarusian statehood: it was here that the first state formation on the Belarusian lands appeared in the 9th century — the Principality of Polotsk.

Founded in 862 on the banks of the Western Dvina, the city of Polotsk is the most ancient city in Belarus. During its long history, it survived the attack of the Vikings, the Crusaders, and was occupied more than once by various conquerors.

Vitebsk, as the legend says, was founded in 974 by the Equal-to-the-Apostles Blessed Great Princess Olga.

The first woman of Belarus recognised as a saint was born on the Vitebsk lands — Euphrosyne of Polotsk, the founder of the East Slavic book printing and educator Francysk Skaryna, the Grand Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Lev Sapieha, as well as the world-famous artist Marc Chagall.

In 1954, the first President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko was born in the urban-type settlement of Kopys, Orsha District, the Vitebsk Region.

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION

The Vitebsk Region is the northernmost region of the country. In the northwest it borders with Latvia, in the west — with Lithuania, in the north and east — with the Russian Federation.

Area — 40,100 square kilometres.

Residents of the Vitebsk Region are justifiably proud of the fact that in their region there is not one centre of Europe, but two at once. The first, according to scientists' calculations made in 2000, fell in the middle of Sho Lake. And in 2008, a memorial sign was erected in the centre of Polotsk, indicating that the centre of the continent is located in this city.

The Vitebsk Region is part of the Lake District Euroregion. There are more than 2800 lakes and more than 500 rivers here.

POPULATION

The population of the Vitebsk Region as of January 1st, 2022 was 1,103,833 people, including urban population — 861,519 people, and rural population — 242,314 people.

The inhabitants of the regional centre are 360,419 people, and Vitebsk is the second oldest among the most ancient cities in the country.

Other major cities in the region: Orsha — 104,605 people, Novopolotsk — 97,182 people and Polotsk — 79,896 people.

Belarusian Land Treasures

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"The Vitebsk Region — the northernmost region of Belarus — has always been famous for the beauties of nature, unique monuments, crafts and craftsmen, as well as the valor and resilience of the inhabitants in the years of hard times, as it was during the Great Patriotic War. In the Vitebsk Region, they know the price of victory well, they know how to keep the people's memory, traditions and loyalty to their native land. Thanks to the tireless work of many generations, agriculture is developing, advanced technologies are being mastered, new enterprises are being built, production facilities are being modernised, and a modern social infrastructure is being created. The grandiose festival of arts Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk is famous far beyond the borders of Belarus, which, strengthening friendship between peoples, gathers thousands of bright talents from all over the world every year."

From the greetings of the Head of State, January 15th, 2023

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Vitebsk Region is a highly developed industrial region. The basis of industry is oil refining and chemical production, electricity production, food and beverage production, textile, clothing, and footwear production.

There are about 1,400 industrial enterprises in the Vitebsk Region.

The industrial complex of the region produces more than 27 percent of the gross value added. The production of the region is about 15 percent of the industry of the country.

Naftan, Polotsk-Steklovokno, Belwest, Managing Company of the Holding Company Belarusian Leather and Footwear Company Marko, Dolomit, Vitebsk Concern Meat and Dairy Products, Vitebsk Carpets, Production Association Energokomplekt, Vityaz, Lukoml State District Power Plant and Novopolotsk Thermal Power Plant are the hallmarks of the region.

Enterprises of the Vitebsk Region provide 100 percent of the republican output of dolomite powder for liming, more than 90 percent of linen fabrics, ethylene polymers in the primary form, carpets and rugs, more than 50 percent of footwear, about 30 percent of the country's electricity.

There are 231 agricultural organisations in the Vitebsk Region. Agriculture of the region is focused on the development of meat and dairy cattle breeding, fodder production, the cultivation of grain and fodder crops, rapeseed, potatoes, lake and fish farming is developed.

The share of animal husbandry in the volume of gross agricultural output is 63.1 percent, crop production — 36.9 percent.

Flax, which in Belarus is called the 'golden fleece', is the real pride of the Vitebsk Region. It is here that the largest flax mill in the CIS is located — Orsha, well known for its products in many parts of the world.

In August 1999, the Free Economic Zone Vitebsk was formed on the territory of the region.

Almost a thousand subjects of the Vitebsk Region participate in foreign economic activity, more than 1,500 items of products are exported. In 2022, it was possible to increase the share of deliveries to the countries of the 'far arc' by a third. Enterprises of the Vitebsk Region almost tripled the volume of products to China. The effectiveness of work in the markets of Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Georgia and Mongolia has increased significantly. Co-operation is being successfully established with partners from Tunisia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar, the Dominican Republic, North Macedonia, and the Philippines.

The region maintains foreign trade co-operation with 116 countries of the world. The basis of exports is oil products, insulated wires, cables, meat and dairy products, ethylene polymers, longitudinally sawn timber, fiberglass, compounds containing a functional nitrile group, televisions, monitors and projectors, carpets, excavators, tractor trailers, linen fabrics and products, rapeseed oil, as well as alcoholic beverages, vegetables, confectionery.

PRIMARY RESOURCES

The main mineral resources of the Vitebsk Region are dolomite, sapropels, clay, building sands, sand gravel, peat, mineral and fresh underground waters.

The region has 100 percent of republican reserves of dolomite, about 70 percent of sapropel reserves, 40 percent of clay reserves, 33 percent of sand gravel reserves, 12 percent of building sand reserves, and about 30 percent of peat reserves.

NATURE

The modern relief of the Vitebsk Region was formed during the retreat of the last glacier. The final ice age ended 14,000 years ago. It left behind more than 10 types of relief in the Braslav Lake District, which became one of the main features of the region. There are picturesque hills and moraine ridges, numerous swamps, rivers and lakes in the Vitebsk Region. However, numerous fragments of the Scandinavian mountains — huge boulders, which in pagan lands were the subject of special worship, are witnesses of that time are. The largest of them is located in the Shumilino District near the village of Gorki. Its length is 11 metres, width — 5.6 metres, visible height — 3 metres.

The Vitebsk Region ranks first in Belarus by the number and area of lakes. There are over 2800 lakes (the largest are Osveiskoye Lake, Lukomskoye Lake, Drivyaty Lake, Nescherdo Lake, Snudy Lake) and more than 500 rivers (Western Dvina River, Dnieper River, Drysa River, Obol River, Disna River and others).

A third of the region's territory is occupied by forests, about 60 percent of which are centuries-old conifers. There are 1 nature reserve, 2 national parks, 25 national and 66 local reserves, 228 natural monuments in the region.

The Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve has the status of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and has been awarded a European Diploma for Protected Areas.

The Yelnya National Landscape Reserve is one of the largest massifs of ancient raised bogs and glacial lakes in Europe.

In 1995, the Braslav Lakes National Park was founded.

CULTURE AND MAIN ATTRACTIONS

The Vitebsk Region is a special spiritual and cultural region, which is geographically and historically located at the confluence of the cultures of Western and Eastern Europe. The cultural heritage of the Vitebsk Region is more than 3,000 monuments of archeology, history, culture and architecture. 3 monuments of architecture have the highest category of value — the Church of St. John the Baptist in the village of Kamai, Postavy District, Saint Sophia Cathedral and the Transfiguration Church in Polotsk.

The ruins of the Bely Kovel castle have been preserved in the Vitebsk Region, agro-town of Smolyany, Orsha District, earthen castle fortifications in the agro-town of Drutsk, Tolochin District, and Disna, Miory District.

Guests of the region should definitely visit the Mark Chagall Museum in Vitebsk, Ilya Repin Zdravnevo Museum Estate, the Breakthrough Memorial Complex (one of the most significant creations of the monumental art of the BSSR).

The famous international festival of arts Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk is an iconic landmark of the region.



Naftan



At the Polotsk-Steklovokno



Golden Lyre — the main prize of Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk



Ilya Repin Zdravnevo Museum Estate

The West is extremely cruel to refugees



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“Do not even think that we are provoking someone here. If we are fighting with them there over refugees, this does not mean that I brought them from Somalia. It seems that the situation is no longer with refugees, but it only seems to you. They come and they will keep coming. They go straight. However, I warned the West — they used to fly on airplanes, but now they went on foot. The issue must be addressed at the root.”

During a meeting with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus on January 25th, 2023

The economic crisis, armed conflicts and political instability are forcing hundreds of thousands of people from Third World countries to seek a better life in more prosperous lands. Including they flee from poverty and wars and through the border of Belarus with the EU. Why do Poland and the Baltic states act inhumanly towards many guests? All this and more in a conversation with political analyst Piotr Petrovsky.

Sense of superiority in a new wrapper

“Double standards are applied to refugees today in the European Union. Thus, the millions of Ukrainians who left the country after the Russian-Ukrainian conflict are treated with loyalty. They are accepted in the EU, resources are allocated to them. But others, trying, in particular, to get into the European Union through Poland and the Baltic countries, are pushed back by local security forces to the Belarusian side,” Piotr Petrovsky notes.

The European Union demonstrates authoritarian traits in its attitude towards refugees. Let me remind you that even 7–10 years ago, the entire mainstream press, EU officials not only harshly criticised, but ostracised all those who disagreed with the acceptance of migrants. Today, for such attacks and political harassment in political science, a separate term ‘cancel culture’ has appeared. In 2021, we saw the manifestation of a culture of cancellation in relation to those experts and figures who criticised the harsh actions of the Polish and Lithuanian border guards against refugees. Then the European bureaucrats said that ‘wrong guests’ appeared on the border with Belarus. But what is their ‘wrongness’ expressed in?

In 2022, the leaders of the European Union generally demonstrated open racism. They began to show segregation towards refugees no longer on the issue of their place of origin in the EU, but on their origin. There are refugees of the first, second grade, and there are generally the lowest, against whom all means are used, up to and including murder. For Brussels, as they say, the EU is an island of civilisation in the middle of the jungle. The feeling of superiority has not gone away since the days of Hitler. It just turned out to be in a new wrapper for the European bureaucrats.

By Igor Savostenko

People filling the voids

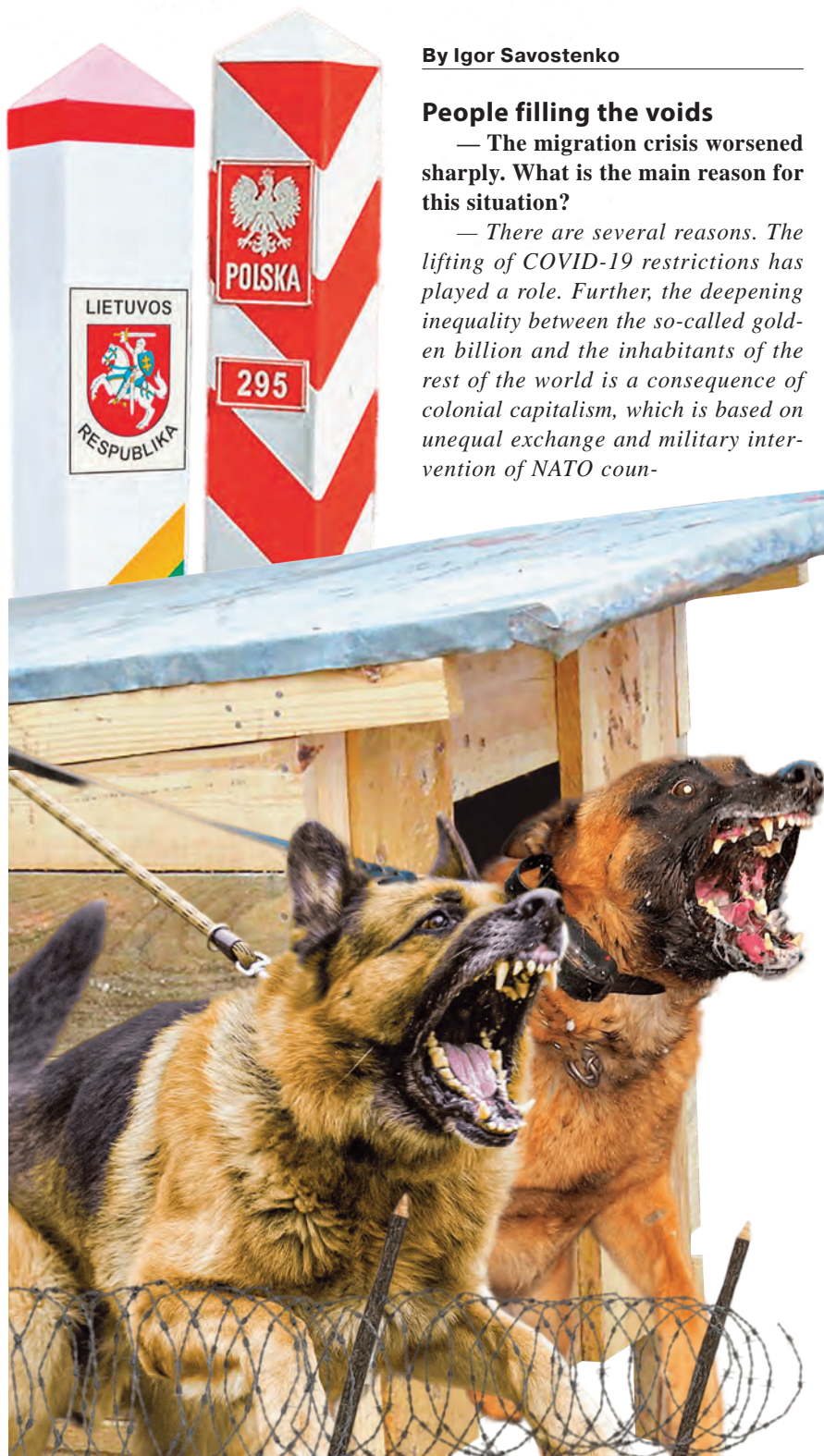
— **The migration crisis worsened sharply. What is the main reason for this situation?**

— *There are several reasons. The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions has played a role. Further, the deepening inequality between the so-called golden billion and the inhabitants of the rest of the world is a consequence of colonial capitalism, which is based on unequal exchange and military intervention of NATO coun-*

tries. In addition, the West in a sense stimulates migration. This is due to the demographic crisis, which does not allow reproducing their own population.

— **According to statements by American politicians, including former US President Donald Trump, the country is ‘dying from the inside’ because of the actions of the current authorities, as thousands of strangers massively penetrate into it through the southern border.**

— *For Trump and Biden, the US is two different countries. Trump wants to see a classic Anglo-Saxon conservative America dominated by traditional white families professing the Protestant ethic and the values of the Founding Fathers of the United States. For Biden, the United States is a huge racial multicultural salad bowl, where everything is determined by the interests of transnational corporations and globalisation. However, cheap labour is needed for business, regardless of skin colour. And here we must understand that the United States is far from being a welfare state. There are tough competition laws, so Biden and many others do not care how visitors adapt to life.*



REFERENCE

According to the State Border Committee of Belarus, the refugees found in the Polish forests are being moved to the border with Belarus and left in a life-threatening situation, instead of carrying out appropriate procedures and providing assistance. Moreover, these poor fellows are pushed through the animal gates. In August-December 2022 alone, about ten refugees were found dead at this border crossing. Today the situation is no better. So, a border patrol noticed a refugee near the Belarusian-Lithuanian border on February 18th, next to him was the body of a woman. The man turned out to be a citizen of Nigeria. He, not hoping for the mercy of the Lithuanian military, asked for help from the Belarusians. Unfortunately, by the time the paramedics arrived, the woman had died, they said in the State Border Committee of Belarus. This is the sixth death of a refugee due to the fault of the security forces of the EU countries. Similar cases were recorded on January 9th, 10th and 31st, February 4th and 10th.

Iron kaputt of Rzeczpospolita

Having abundantly saturated the border area with nameless graves of migrants, Poland with no less enthusiasm and passion buries the fundamental principles of the European Union and democracy in general, as well as the loyalty of its own population. It is anyone's guess what Warsaw is counting on.



It seems that experience teaches these people nothing: building up military muscles and defiant rhetoric, Poland acquires the features of the No. 1 aggressor in Europe

By Maksim Osipov

Striking the Schengen with a channel

Having built a fence on the border, Poland (which in itself contradicts the spirit of the Schengen agreements) itself violates its impenetrability, forcing illegal migrants to overcome this wall towards Belarus. Moreover, many of the migrants did not come to the EU from the Belarusian side at all. As the Polish Border Guard recently reported, EU countries submitted about 6,500 applications for the return of refugees to Poland in 2022. This is provided for by the rules, according to which a foreigner must submit an application in the first EU country that he entered. Most of the deportation orders came from Germany, Norway, France, Sweden and Austria, with more than 500 refugees already returned to Poland.

As the telegram channel of the State Border Committee notes, given the policy of ill-treatment of refugees pursued by the Polish authorities, the facts of forced displacement, the concealment of information about detention centres for foreigners and the restriction of access to media, refugees deported from the EU countries, most likely, will face the fate of being taken to the border with our country.

“The Belarusian side has repeatedly released evidence that the Polish security forces are delivering refugees from the depths of the territory to the barriers in order to try to push them to the adjacent side. Threats, physical force and pepper gas are used against those who refuse to cross the border,” the State Border Committee reported.

Be in the clutches of enemies

At the same time, Poland, which seriously considers itself the new geopolitical centre of the European Union, as in 1939, starts the same old story about Russia and Germany, which are interfering with its life. Again, so to speak, squeezing the Rzeczpospolita. Everything is clear about the ‘intrigues of Russia’: the raking ‘hand of Moscow’ has long become an integral part of the political discourse in Warsaw. Nevertheless, when the European Commission blocked the payment of about a hundred billion euros to Warsaw in the fall of 2022 due to non-compliance with the principles of the rule of law, Deputy Minister of Justice of Poland Sebastian Kaleta immediately said in an interview with Die Welt that he considers this a pretext for putting pressure on his country. However, the statement was more like a tantrum,

“How dare you to accuse us of being anti-democratic! For the EU and the Germans, the principles of the rule of law are just a pretext to oppose Warsaw. If we do this, as the European Commission and the Germans want, then we will plunge our country into chaos. Berlin is interfering in our election campaign. They want a change of power in Poland.”

The anti-German rhetoric of the Warsaw official not only once again confirms the obvious crisis in the EU, it is quite impressive, “The European Commission and these German politicians think that democracies in the west are more mature and therefore more stable and better than those in the

east of the EU. This is a form of racism... Of course, Germany does not attack by military means. But it wants to weaken us economically and partially deprive us of statehood under fake pretexts.”

Polsko, poznaj swoje miejsce

As Warsaw continues to assert itself as the self-appointed new centre of Europe, the American Bloomberg puts a clear end to this dispute, “The truth is that the West as a whole has only one leader — the United States. And Europe has no leader at all.”

Bloomberg is even more merciless on Polish foreign policy, “Parliamentary elections are to be held there in the fall, and the country’s populist government wants to excite its voters by talking anti-German and anti-Russian in equal measure. For example, attacking Berlin, Warsaw is demanding reparations of €1.3 trillion from it for the World War II. And as part of the opposition to the Kremlin, Poland has become one of the most staunch and determined supporters of Kiev.”

At the same time, the American publication sententiously indicates its place to the ‘hyena of Europe’, “Warsaw, like Budapest, spends too much political energy on swearing at Brussels and the EU, and itself weakens the rule of law and democratic institutions in its country. The EU responded by imposing sanctions on Poland and Hungary, denying them a total of €138 billion in funding. Moreover, it hurts because Poland remains the top recipient of

EU funds, ahead of Greece and Hungary. Germany and France, meanwhile, remain the biggest donors.”

‘Hyena’ is armed to the teeth

Last week, Pentagon-controlled Defence Security Co-operation Agency (DSCA) announced that the US Department of State had agreed to sell 484 HIMARS systems to Poland, 18 of which will be in the US version. The maximum value of a possible contract is \$10 billion. To comment on this news, the Polish radio Tok FM invited Mariusz Chelma, a columnist for *Nowa Technika Wojskowa* magazine, who did not hide his pessimism, “I think that when the Pentagon considered what was happening, they opened their mouths in surprise. The United States has HIMARS systems or its tracked counterparts within 650 copies. This is puzzling, given that Poland wants to get about 500 of these HIMARS, and in addition, buys about 300 Korean launchers, in which twice as many missiles.”

Even more indicative are the comments of Tok FM radio listeners, which are cited by the portal inosmi.ru. Here are the most typical ones:

• “They know that they will lose the elections, and they buy everything for billions, so that later they can lie on the stolen money and blame those who won for not coping and sequestering the budget. Alas, we do not have educated politicians rooting for the country, there are only pigs who care about one thing: how to get to the trough”.

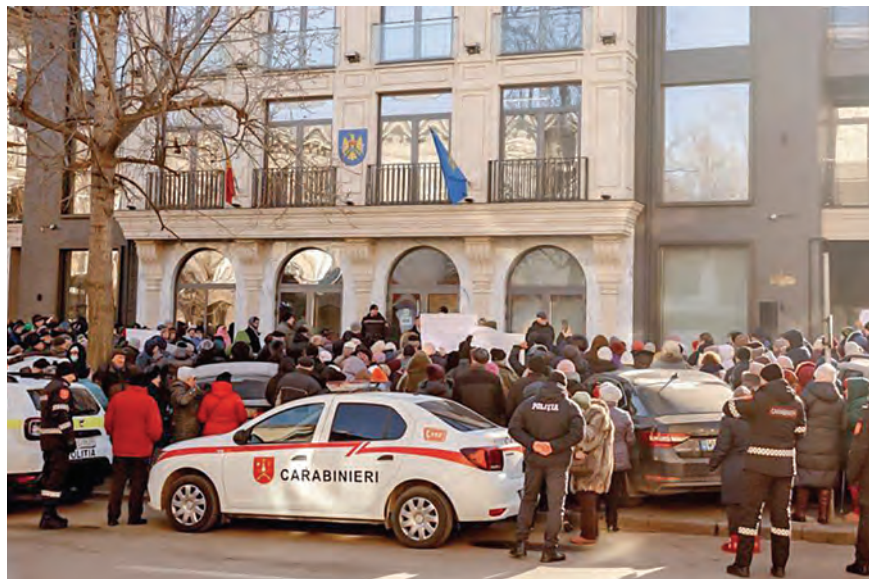
• “And also buy a couple of hundred steel swords and spears. A gang of idiots that drives the country into debt until the tenth generation.”

Bunker hysteria

While politicians sort things out and puff out their cheeks, ordinary people react to what is happening much more naturally.

With the beginning of the Russian special military operation in Ukraine, the topic of shelters became relevant in Poland. Private construction companies included in their offer a new product — home bunkers, and journalists immediately discovered another proof of the deceit of official Warsaw.

Reports from the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, as well as the State Fire Service, state that as of June 2022, there are more than 62,000 shelters in Poland, which should ensure the safety of 1.3 million people. This is only about 3.5 percent of the country’s population, but that’s not even the point. The head of the Shelters in Poland society Krzysztof Posluszny said this week on the pages of the country’s largest Internet portal Interia, “This data is very puzzling to me, I doubt that at least half of these objects have been properly verified. According to official figures, in 2017 there were about 40,000 protective structures in Poland (both shelters and bunkers), and today there are reportedly about 62,000. That is, in 6 years Poland has added 22,000 objects, which is an undoubted achievement. The only pity is that they were added only on paper.”



“
The new head of government is a significant figure, saying only that Sandu and the European integrators, on whose behalf she speaks, have taken a final and irrevocable course towards a confrontation with Russia and drawing Moldova into a military whirlwind.

Recently, speaking in Brussels to his European hosts and sponsors, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a loud statement that he had conveyed to his Moldovan counterpart Maia Sandu a plan to ‘destroy Moldova’. Of course, the terrible monster that suggests nothing less than ‘destroy the democracy of Moldova and establish control over Moldova’ is Russia. Where the valiant Ukrainian intelligence officers got a detailed plan for the destruction of a flourishing little republic on the Dniester remained a mystery. As well as how the Russian Federation, which does not have direct land and sea borders with Moldova, could carry out its insidious plans. Well, only if you would first completely conquer Ukraine! But the President of ‘Mother-Ukraine’ himself tries not to believe in such a development of events, and does not allow others to! And then why frighten the Moldovan society?

Moldovan gambit

By Aleksei Belyaev, a political scientist

Fear and horror!

Although the representatives of the Moldovan authorities themselves coped well with the role of intimidator and alarmist. So, at the end of the past, in 2022, the chief intelligence officer of the country, Director of Information and Security Service (ISS) Alexandru Musteata, pretty much tickled the nerves of the Moldovans. According to him, Russia’s attack on Moldova is scheduled for January-February 2023, well, or a little later.

The voiced information frightened the political beau monde of the grape and tomato republic so much that it was their Romanian friends who had to reassure the descendants of the Bessarabian haiduks.

The official Bucharest then stated that his heirs of the Securitate, that is, representatives of the special services, do not have any data on threats to the security of Moldova.

Nevertheless, Musteata’s last year’s fabrications and Zelenskyy’s fresh stuffing (instantly confirmed by the same SIS, which, like the Ukrainian President himself, refused to disclose details) have a quite obvious task: to increase the degree of Anti-Russian sentiment fomented by the pro-Western regime of Maia Sandu, and also justify Moldova’s rapprochement with NATO and pave the way for a possible abandonment of the country’s current neutral status.

Following the path of intensifying confrontation with Russia, President Sandu (by the way, who has a second citizenship of Romania — a member of the North Atlantic Alliance) has repeatedly made harsh statements and demonstrative unfriendly gestures towards Moscow.

Impossible dreams of NATO

Chisinau recently tried to get modern air defence systems from its Western patrons. The Moldovan military regularly participates in NATO exercises, and the country has begun a large-scale modernisation of the armed forces according to NATO standards, which required a sharp increase in the military budget. Western sponsors even allocated €40 million for this. Increasingly, sharp statements about the need for a radical solution to the ‘Transnistrian problem’ are being heard from the lips of repre-

sentatives of the ruling political elite. This implies the return of control over the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic by force, which will require getting rid of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, which has maintained fragile peace and security in the region since the 1990s.

At the same time, the actions of the current government of Moldova do not at all correspond to the aspirations and moods of the people.

According to a recent poll conducted by the SBS-AXA Centre for Sociological Research, 55.5 percent of respondents were against joining NATO, and half as many were in favour. Almost half of Moldovans (47.7 percent of respondents) stated that they do not consider Russia a threat, and 46 percent would refuse to fight in the event of a direct military conflict with this country.

On the edge of the economic abyss...

We can understand ordinary Moldovans. Until recently, a significant part of the country’s able-bodied population worked in Russia, sending up to \$600 million annually to Moldova as assistance to their families.

In 2014, up to 586,000 migrants (with a population of 2.6 million in Moldova) were employed in the Russian economy. After the introduction of visa-free communication with the European Union, this figure has decreased, and today it is about 77,000. Nevertheless, the reorientation of Moldovan migrant workers towards the European direction did not significantly change political likes and dislikes. And this is largely due to the internal politics of the ruling Party of Action and Solidarity, he representative of which is Maia Sandu.

The activities of the party government, which until last Friday was headed by Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita, brought the economic situation in Moldova to the extreme.

According to the results of the past year, inflation in the country was estimated at 30-34 percent. On average, food prices have risen by almost a quarter (and for some indicators, such as bread, milk, meat, they have doubled!), while the cost of food has become higher than in neighbouring warring Ukraine! Gasoline has risen in price by one and a half times, diesel fuel — by almost two times. Tariffs for water supply have doubled, for electricity — more than three times, gas for end users

Why was the PM eliminated from the political board?

has risen in price by six to seven times!

At the same time, the Moldovan government, trying to bargain with Gazprom, itself concluded such an unfavourable pricing agreement that in January 2023 the cost of a thousand cubic metres of Russian gas for the republic amounted to more than \$1,200, although blue fuel was traded no more than \$700 on the EU exchanges. The real disposable income decreased by more than 12 percent in Moldova last year.

No wonder that with such ‘care’ for the people, they responded with a counter ‘love’! Throughout last autumn and the first month of winter, Moldovans periodically went to protests and demonstrations demanding the resignation of the government and President Sandu.

Farmers went on strike, deprived of fertilisers, which were previously purchased by 75 percent in Russia. The rally was held by pensioners whose pension, in violation of Moldovan laws, was indexed only by half of the required amounts. Entrepreneurs who remained in the country expressed their dissatisfaction, because last year not a single large or medium-sized enterprise was opened, and more than 2,600 companies closed.

So why do they need a new PM?

However, the resignation of Prime Minister Gavrilita and the government the Friday before last did not take place for this reason at all. The protests were crushed, some of the opposition were imprisoned, all Russian-language TV channels were closed in the country, in other words, they got the bit between their teeth.

It’s just that in the course of bureaucratic games a former Defence and National Security Advisor to the President — Secretary of the Supreme Security Council Dorin Recean was brought to the post of Prime Minister.

He will soon have to form a new government, which will largely consist of former ministers. So it’s not about them, the ministers. But changing the PM is another matter. The new head of government is a significant figure, saying only that Sandu and the European integrators, on whose behalf she speaks, have taken a final and irrevocable course towards a confrontation with Russia and drawing Moldova into a military whirlwind. Military provocations against Transnistria are not far off. Well, of course, all economic troubles can be attributed to the war.

The Kletsk resident received the honorary title of People's Master of Belarus two years ago. Last year, she was the best in 'Spirituality and Culture' nomination in the regional competition Woman of the Year of the Minsk Region. Thanks to her initiative, many folk costumes of the Kletsk District were found and restored. Three local rituals at once claim the status of the intangible cultural heritage of Belarus. The works of Volha Piletskaya are exhibited in Minsk, as well as at international festivals of cultures. Not so long ago her Malyavankas returned from a forum held in Türkiye. There, Belarusian swans, pigeons and deers captivated the audience with amazing light and magic.



Malyavankas, icons on glass and carving: craftswoman Volha Piletskaya revives ancient rituals and traditions

The country of the bird of paradise

By Marina Kuzmich

Song of the stork

Malyavankas, icons and drawings on glass of Volha Piletskaya are widely known in her birthplace — Kletsk District. Having travelled with scientific expeditions throughout the countryside of the district, the master was convinced that each village is a separate planet, unique and mysterious. "Kuhcitsy is one thing,



Moroch is completely another," Head of the Sector of Traditional Crafts and Arts of the Kletsk Regional Centre of Culture Volha Piletskaya notes and invites us to the workshop. There are Malyavankas on the walls. A huge wardrobe with antique icons in massive frames. On the floor are antique suitcases with drawings, paints and brushes. Every item needs to be seen. Something tells me: even a modest paper spider hanging from the ceiling has an interesting story.

"Our grandmothers did not have much time to decorate the house. After the Great Patriotic War, many of them had to take on the task of all household chores. There was no one to help the widows at all. In addition, this is what one grandmother told me: although there was a lot of work, the spider in the God's corner (a place for icons) had to be attached. In order not to waste time on weaving from straw, they took tissue paper and made a charm out of it," Volha Piletskaya said.

Volha is a devoted person. She can talk endlessly about trips to the villages of the Kletsk District. It seems that during her research work there was a kind of reincarnation. The images of ancestors and their worldview crystallised in the soul of the young artist. She loved to draw since childhood. From a young age, she was inspired by the Polesian landscapes of the village of Bolshie Chuchevichi in the Luninets District, where she came on vacation. She remembers how close the storks came up to



their house, played scenes from family bird life. I wonder why, then, on the Malyavankas painted by Volha, not storks, sparrows and larks are more often found, but parrots, firebirds, tigers, lions and various mythological characters? Here is the answer: our ancestors, like us, dreamed of something, they also waited for warmth in the icy winter. Hence, the plots with overseas animals, paradise gardens and fairy-tale characters. In ancient times, they were painted on an accessible basis — on homespun cloth.

Tales of life

"The background of the drawings was originally linen, grey. Then the craftsmen saw that if the foundation is made black, then the plot will become brighter, more magical," the master explains.

"Malyavankas were more than just decorative elements for our ancestors. It is also a sacred symbol, a kind of map of desires. Therefore, relatives gave the newlyweds wedding Malyavankas with the image of doves, which symbolised eternal love since ancient times," Volha Piletskaya says.

Similar scenes can be seen in the drawings on the glass. They get unusualness and volume with the help of an uneven foil base, which shines through separate, pre-defined areas. Why did our ancestors need shine? Everyone wanted

travelled to the western regions to earn money. That's where fashion trends come from. A veil up to five metres long looked especially chic, the bride could even turn into it several times. For example, there were no wedding dresses in Moroch, they were replaced by a shirt, skirt and vest," the interlocutor says.

Traveling Volha managed to reconstruct the traditional costume of the 1930s Kletsk District. It was kept by the former cultural worker Irina Shilina. The outfit worn in the village of Novoselye previously belonged to a woman born in 1901. It was given to Irina by her relative Maria Karazhan from the village of Zaostrovechi.

Volha Piletskaya recreated the traditional Kletsk outfit using the example of the found costume and now demonstrates it at exhibitions. Compatriots, seeing their local outfit for the first time, are amazed at its bright colours. The Morochan costume is distinguished by the peculiarities of weaving, embroidery, and corset with ties, as well as the number of coloured stripes. In addition, the folds on the scrunched up skirt are a completely different story. It turns out that grandmothers used to make folds using wrinkle technology: they moistened the fabric with a solution of water and vinegar, made folds, then ironed it with a loaf of hot bread and applied it like a press so that the folds did not diverge. This process took several weeks.

Once, having driven into the village of Moroch, Volha saw interesting Vytinankas from old newspapers on the windows. The patterns were not made with scissors, but by punching holes with real cartridge cases. Along the contour, they are painted in different colours. The colours are the same as for the fabric. Vytinankas for some time replaced the curtains on the windows. At the initiative of Volha Piletskaya, the Morochanskaya Vytinanka was included in the list of intangible cultural heritage of Belarusians.

Our heroine also restores the ancient rites of the Kletsk District. Together with the staff of the National Academy of Sciences, she managed to discover and describe the ancient Kletsk rite, similar to Kalyady Tsars from the village of Semezhevas, as well as Schedrets and Puppeters (the village of Rubezh). Fragments of expeditions to the villages of Kletsk District are posted on social networks. The artist notes, "My main principle as a master is that the objects of traditional art should not be museum exhibits, but go to the people, resonate with contemporaries."

to have a piece of paradise in his or her home. That is why the peasants could give the artist a sack of potatoes for such a masterpiece even in times of famine.

The secrets of the amazing world of the fine arts of the ancestors were not immediately revealed to Volha. She graduated from Soligorsk State College, worked as the head of a children's hobby group in the Kletsk Regional Centre of creativity, then as a methodologist at the local House of Culture. She began to study the local features of the traditional costume. Thus, there was a need to go on expeditions in order to see the art of folk art with her own eyes.

Forward to the past

"The village of Kolki was the first on my route. There I found grandmothers who still have wedding wreaths, veils and photographs. It turned out that every village in the Kletsk District had its own wedding fashion. Until 1939, our region was under the rule of Poland. Local residents



Photo of the week

International *Maslenitsa* of Vitebsk State Order of Peoples' Friendship Medical University brought together students from around the world

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On March 2nd, 1983, the compact disk was invented. The rapid development of computer technology has led to the emergence of the possibility of storing and reading any information in digital form from the appropriate media. The CD was one of them. Reading and writing data on it is carried out using a laser beam. For that time, the novelty was a real sensation. Now Audio-CDs are in danger of oblivion, as previously happened with records and cassettes.

March 3rd is International Writers' Day. It is considered a professional holiday not only for writers, but also for representatives of the print media. The holiday was established by the decision of the 48th PEN International Congress of the PEN International in 1986. PEN was founded in London in 1921. The name of the organisation is an abbreviation formed by the first letters of the English words Poets, Essayists and Novelists.



March 3rd is World Wildlife Day. It was proclaimed by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 2013 in order to



raise the level of awareness of the public in matters of wild fauna and flora. The appearance of such a holiday is due to the understanding of the need to preserve biological diversity on the planet.

March 4th is Day of the Police of Belarus, officially approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 157 of March 26th, 1998. The origins of this holiday are from 1917, when a decree was signed in the office of the civil commandant of Minsk, according to which Mikhail Frunze, an employee of the All-Russian Union, was appointed temporary head of the All-Russian Zemstvo Union for policing in the city of Minsk.



On March 4th, 1877, Pyotr Tchaikovsky's ballet called *Swan Lake* was staged for the first time at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. It is hard to believe, but the premiere of the composer's only lifetime production was not successful. Only eighteen years later, already in St. Petersburg, *Swan Lake*, in the choreography of Petipa and Ivanov, shocked both audience and critics. Since then, *Swan Lake* has become a classic of world choreography and the main performance of the best ballet scenes in the world.



On March 5th, 1946, Winston Churchill called the European dividing line the 'Iron Curtain'. 'Iron Curtain' is a political cliché that refers to the informational, political and border barrier that for several decades separated the USSR and other socialist countries from the capitalist countries of the West. However, the policy of isolation was mutual. The Iron Curtain fell in the late 1980s as a result of the policy of glasnost and openness pursued in the USSR and Eastern European countries. The fall of the Berlin Wall was the symbol of its final collapse.



On March 7th, 321, Roman emperor Constantine the Great declared Sunday a day of rest. A cross in the sun and an inscription that promised victory with this sign appeared to him in a dream on the eve of the most important battle. The dream turned out to be prophetic, Constantine really won. That is why the emperor forbade physical labour on Sunday and dedicated it to the Lord. Nowadays, Sunday is an official holiday in most countries of the world.



On March 7th, 1876, the telephone was invented. Its inventor is the American scientist Alexander Bell. He managed to convert a sound signal (speech) into an analog electrical signal, and then transmit it over a certain distance and convert it back into sound. He also created the first device, which consisted of a small membrane and a signal horn to amplify the sound and was a tube, where at the same time both transmitter and receiver were present. It became the ancestor of all telephones.



On March 7th, 1912, Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen (1872-1928) informed the world about his discovery of the South Pole. He reached the South Pole with four fellow travellers on December 14th, 1911. Only by March 1912 did the Amundsen expedition successfully reach the city of Hobart on the island of Tasmania, from where they announced their discovery.



March 8th is International Women's Day. The modern celebration of Women's Day no longer has the goal of affirming equality, but is considered the day of spring, female beauty, tenderness, spiritual wisdom and attention to a woman, regardless of her status and age. In some countries — including Belarus — this day is a national holiday.

