



How Ukrainian politicians got rich during the special military operation

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Restoration completed: Puslovsky Palace in Kosovo officially commissioned

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Andrey Sazonov

Orthodox Spiritual and Educational Centre in honour of the Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth in the city of Bobruisk, Mogilev Region. Archpriest Viktor Tolokh. Recipient of the Spiritual Revival Award.

Pride of the nation

Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko awarded the Spiritual Revival award, special prizes of the President of the Republic of Belarus to art luminaries, a special prize of the President of the Republic of Belarus Belarusian Sports Olympus in 2022. On December 30th, the Head of State signed the relevant decrees.

The winners of the Spiritual Revival award include a group of authors consisting of Vasily Baranchuk, Director of the Spiritual and Educational Centre of the parish of the church in honour of the Reverend Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth in Bobruisk, and the rector of the parish of this church, Archpriest Viktor Tolokh, for their great contribution to strengthening spiritual values, cultural and moral education of children and youth.

The winners of the special award of the President of the Republic of Belarus for art luminaries are the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House and the National Archives of Belarus, which were awarded a high award for significant work in shaping public consciousness, popularising the history of the partisan and underground movement in Belarus.



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Important experience

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, visited the 230th combined-arms training ground Obuz-Lesnovsky in the Brest Region. The military-political situation in our region remains difficult. It is blazing in Ukraine. Neighbours in the West are actively militarising. For Belarus, this is a clear signal: our primary task is to be on the alert. And it is more effective to keep the defence together with the allies. A regional grouping of troops of Belarus and Russia has been deployed on the territory of our country for these purposes. Coordination of parts and connections is completed. The Head of State looked at the results at the Obuz-Lesnovsky training ground near Baranovichi. While inspecting his troops, the Commander-in-Chief could not help visiting the Russian military.

“Comrade Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus, formations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation together with units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus conducted exercises, command and staff training as part of the training of the allied forces,” the representative of the Russian Armed Forces reported to the Head of State.

According to the officer, in particular, motorised rifle and tank units, special troops, including air defence units, conducted joint exercises.

“At this stage, the units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are ready to perform tasks as intended. I would like to thank you personally for the assistance provided in the deployment, assistance in terms of measures related to the training of personnel,” he added.

“We are doing a common thing,” emphasised Aleksandr Lukashenko.

At the training ground, the Head of State got acquainted with the location of military units and divisions of the Russian Armed Forces, talked with soldiers



and officers. Aleksandr Lukashenko said that the experience gained during the coordination of military units and formations is of great importance for Belarus.

“This is important not only for me — this experience is important for Belarus ... I will listen very carefully and use it when preparing our armed forces of Belarus and Russia to protect the

common Motherland. Most importantly, the most important thing is that your military leaders and I agreed what you would say about the shortcomings, because we will have to continue to work in the same mode — to train both Belarusians and Russians,” said the Head of State. “We not only helped you, we helped ourselves. We get a lot of infor-

mation from you, this is experience. Figuratively speaking, helping those who have not smelled gunpowder, and those who need to remember their military skills, to prepare, is also a school for them, it is an experience.”

Belarus handed over a large batch of individual first-aid kits to the Russian military. At the training ground, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Belarus had thoroughly studied various options for individual first-aid kits: NATO, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian. It turned out that Western-style first aid kits are more practical. Therefore, doctors and the military were instructed to make a high-quality Belarusian first-aid kit. The corresponding task was set by the President at the same training ground, but in October 2022, when he got acquainted with the domestic developments of the military-industrial complex.

“And in a couple of months they made a first-aid kit that is better than the NATO one. In combat, this is a man’s life. The guys need to have what they need on hand. We are improving further,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko.



The new first-aid kits for the military contain all the best and necessary items. Everything is exclusively of Belarusian production.

State Secretary of the Security Council Aleksandr Volfovich,

“The decision to deploy a regional group of troops on the territory of Belarus was made last year by the presidents of the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation. The grouping successfully deployed, joint combat training sessions were organised both with the military personnel of the Russian Federation and with the military personnel of the Republic of Belarus. The regional grouping of troops is one of the elements of strategic deterrence. An element that today, probably, should cool hot heads in the West with its aggressive policy towards the Union State... Not a peaceful policy comes from our neighbours. Therefore, it was decided to deploy a regional group of troops. It has purely defensive purposes. Designed to protect, first of all, the western borders of the Union State... Here, our Belarusian component is entrusted with issues related to comprehensive support, conducting classes, logistics issues, issues of technical support, repair of equipment. All these issues are resolved at the proper level.”



Allied plans

“It’s good that we start this year with this event. Frankly speaking, we need to update the agenda of the Union State and start by analysing the results of the path we have travelled and making plans for the future. To do this, it is necessary to convene the highest bodies of our Union State in a face-to-face format and hold an appropriate meeting. I think that it would be possible to choose an algorithm for the Council of Ministers to hold its meeting, and based on the results, we will determine the time of the meeting of the Supreme State Council, which will be held at the level of the highest officials of our Union State,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The main issues on the bilateral agenda should be the implementation of sectoral programmes, the President emphasised, “Economic, scientific, humanitarian and other programmes that we finance should not be reduced in any case. We only need to increase funding, based on the most relevant principles and areas of our work in the economy: import substitution and so on. What our states need now — both Belarus and Russia as well.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed the need to speed up work on the creation

The meeting of the Supreme State Council, the implementation of union programs, the creation of a media holding and the concept of information security — these and other topics were the focus of attention during the meeting of President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko with State Secretary of the Union State Dmitry Mezentsev.

of a union media holding, “I remind you again: our common decision, the presidents of Russia and Belarus, is to create a good, solid, powerful, necessarily modern one. Otherwise, we will spend money, but there will be no sense. I am not a supporter of fastening to something, transferring to someone. We need an independent holding that corresponds to the spirit of the times... I think that this media holding should start working this year, preferably in the first half of the year.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the administrations of the presidents of Belarus and Russia should work on this issue together with the Standing Committee of the Union State.

“We know some of your proposals. They are absolutely normal in Belarus. The only thing is that this complex, a media holding, must be independent, if we want to create something serious and complete the 28 programmes that we defined at the time. This movement should be continued,” added the President of Belarus.

Dmitry Mezentsev came to the meeting with the Head of State with a few more proposals. The President touched on some of them.

“I fully accept and like the proposal to de-bureaucratise the activities and the Standing Committee (first of all, you are officials), and that you, from the Standing Committee, send the main messages and impulses to de-bureaucratise the system related to the work of the bodies of the Union State,” said the Belarusian leader. “I think that we will meet again before the meeting of the All-Union State Council after the Union Council of Ministers. Take some time for us to sit down and work out the agenda for the Supreme State Council. Talk to the Administration of President Putin on schedules. We will decide here. If necessary, I will have a talk with President Putin, and we will determine the final agenda for submission to the meeting of the Supreme State Council. And then we will determine the time, we will agree.”

As of January 1st, 2023, 28 union programmes were completed by 67.8 percent. 671 out of 989 events were implemented. About 300 more events are expected to be implemented in 2023. 7 programmes were completed in full:

- on the integration of information systems of state regulatory authorities on the traceability of goods;
- integration of transport control information systems;
- harmonisation of currency regulation and currency control;
- harmonisation of requirements in the field of combating money laundering and terrorist financing for the financial sector;
- unification of accounting regulation;
- integration of information systems of state regulatory bodies in terms of veterinary and quarantine phytosanitary control.
- on the development of nuclear energy. The full operation of the first power unit of the Belarusian NPP has been ensured, the launch of the second unit is expected in August 2023.

The implementation of the union programme in the field of harmonisation of tax and customs legislation is at its final stage.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Core values

On January 7th, the President of Belarus visited the monastery complex of the St. Elisabeth Convent on Christmas Day.

In the church in the name of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, the Head of State lit a Christmas candle and heartily congratulated Orthodox parishioners and people of other faiths on Christmas.

Aleksandr Lukashenko thanked the clergy of Belarus for their great spiritual and educational work, especially important after 2020, when our people have realised a lot.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also addressed words of gratitude to the nuns of the St. Elisabeth Convent and its abbess, to all those who live near the church and do good deeds.

The President expressed the opinion that the time has come to meet the needs of the departed Belarusians,

“At last very many people have started to understand that no country wants them but their own. Even those, who fled Belarus, are now contacting us in their thousands for permission to come back. We didn’t make anyone leave Belarus. It is their land just like it is ours. But they sought a better life and fled Belarus due to various reasons. Time has come when we, representatives of the government, I as

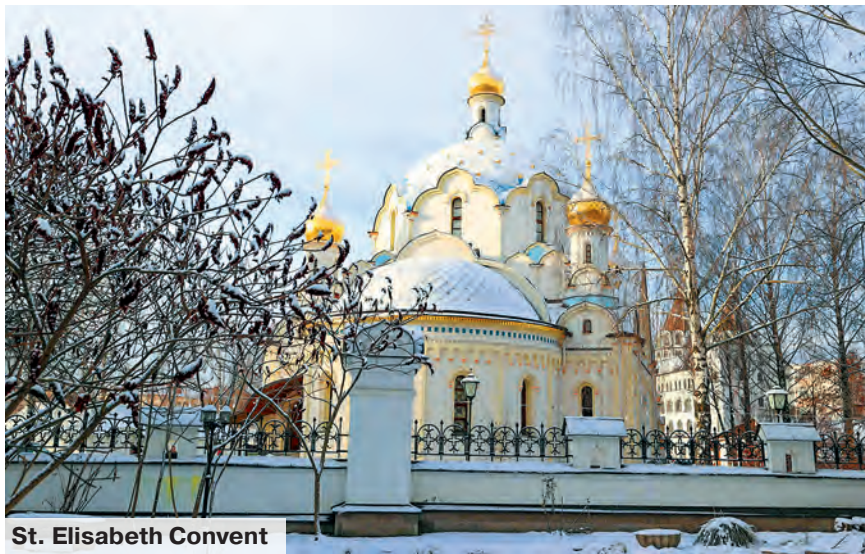


the Head of State, and you, the clergy should make a step towards these people, who made an error either due to going mad or due to losing their guidelines for some time. And it will be possibly in our way, the Orthodox Christian way, to make this step towards them.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that this should be done not at all because of

some demands from the West, “I speak little about it but every day it demands to return and so on and so forth. Even lawbreakers. No. Everyone has to answer for their deeds. But I am convinced that among those, who fled, and among those, who live in our country today, there are people feeling profound remorse, people, who now realize they’ve made an error. They should not be kicked to the curb.”

The Head of State emphasised that there is no need to create tension points in the society, “May God allow us to maintain this peaceful and calm way that we had at least last year. They say that 2023 should definitely be better. Honestly speaking, I already want it to be at least as good as 2022 was. We lived that year in peace, accord, and warmth. It is very important as I look around. This year should be as good from this point of view. We will have conditions for living a normal life, working normally (those who want to), and for living in warmth and peace... “I don’t want to specify anything here. But everything has been done to make things better. I am convinced it will be better. At least a little bit better.



St. Elisabeth Convent

Photo of the press service of the President of the Republic of Belarus

And things will be calmer for us if we don’t create tensions in our society on our own. God forbid if things happen the way they did in our brotherly country of Ukraine, in other countries. Tensions were initially created over there with maidan revolutions and the rest. A civil war followed and then a genuine hot war began. Who could have thought that we, Slavs, would war with each other? It is a terrible thing. And everything begins with small things. This is why steps need to be made in order to destroy points of confrontation in our society.”

The Head of State noted that St. Elisabeth Convent recently collected aid for the Russian military at the front, for which it was criticised by the ‘paid fugitives’, “You are doing the right thing. Do not pay attention to a dozen or two paid people. We not only help our Russian brothers, the Russians, I have never hidden this. And my recent visit to the military, to the Russian military, speaks openly about the fact that we have supported and continue to support our brothers. But we do not forget about Ukrainians either. About 10,000 who fled the war found a permanent place of residence and shelter in our country last year alone.”

The President stressed that it is necessary to extend a helping hand to everyone who needs it. Aleksandr Lukashenko once again warmly congratulated everyone on the holiday of the Nativity of Christ, wished good and peace,

“I want to assure you that I personally, as Commander-in-Chief, Head of State, will do everything to ensure that our Belarus lives in peace and harmony. I will do everything so that you spend your days in the family calmly, in warmth and tranquillity and remember that the greatest and the most valuable thing is peace.”

After the Christmas service, Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke with the clergy, discussing the development of the monastery complex with them.

The Head of State donated the Holy Trinity icon to the monastery. The icon is a copy made from the original. The original of the icon itself was painted by the Monk Andrei Rublev in the 15th century and is one of his most famous works.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also talked outside to the parishioners who had gathered at the church in anticipation of the Head of State.

Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko held a meeting on the export of Belarusian goods

“Last year we managed to overcome the negative trends and achieve positive results in terms of money in terms of exports. Of course, money decides everything, but we would like, as they say, to increase exports by the piece,” said the President. “By the piece means that we sold tons and pieces of tractors, cars, potash fertilizers, oil products less than in 2021. Due to the fact that there has been a sharp increase in prices for the goods that we sell, we have more or less positive results in exports. But the fact that we have not reached the expected level individually and by tons is evidence that we cannot be complacent. We need to think about how to increase exports. Export is a currency without which the country and the economy cannot live, especially since Belarus has an export-oriented economy. We

will have to sell half of what we produce in order to live normally.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that in connection with the attempts to strangle Belarus last year, the existing logistics were violated by sanctions. It was necessary to look for new logistical ways.

“At least what you asked me to solve at the level of the President of the Russian Federation in order to open ports for us, I believe that all issues have been resolved. The only issue that remains is to start shipping in these ports. Although we have already started shipping something. We need to build these ports faster, bring them up to a certain level and trade through our own ports,” said the Belarusian leader.

Export challenges: step up and accelerate

Nikolai Snopkov, First Deputy Prime Minister, told journalists about the results of the meeting. Despite the fact that annual economic indicators will be calculated by the end of January, it is already clear that at the end of 2022, in monetary terms, exports reached the pre-sanction level. Moreover, a record positive balance was obtained in foreign trade — \$4.5 billion. Nikolai Snopkov explained, “This is actually a historical figure, and it is very important. It forms stability in the foreign exchange market, security of the country’s gold and foreign exchange reserves. In fact, it creates stability and tranquillity in the financial sector in the country as a whole.”

Answering the question whether the rhetoric of Western countries regarding Belarusian mineral fertilizers is changing, Nikolai Snopkov explained very

clearly, “In fact, everything is simple: politics is politics, and business is business. Fertilizers are food, food is the stability of the countries that buy our fertilizers. Markets are taking our fertilizers, traditional markets are taking it on the rise.”

Media representatives also touched upon the topic of cooperation with Lithuanian ports. Recall that due to Western sectoral sanctions against Belarus, since December 2021, the transshipment of Belarusian potash fertilizers through the Baltic ports was actually stopped. Recently, the Minister of Communications and Transport of Lithuania, Marius Skuodis, on the air of the radio station Ziniu Radijas, announced the losses of the port of Klaipeda: preliminary results for 2022 show a decrease in cargo transshipment by 21 percent. The greatest losses are related

to the fact that the port refused to transship Belarusian fertilizers in the light of international sanctions.

Answering the question of journalists about whether there were any signals from Lithuania about the return of cooperation through the port infrastructure, Nikolai Snopkov noted, “Regarding the Baltic ports, I will say in non-economic terms: I feel sorry for them. In fact, I feel sorry for the guys who were successfully doing business. And what happened to them... One can only regret. This is the first moment. Second moment. We will consider if we receive signals about the Baltic ports (Klaipeda, Ventspils). Let’s look at the conditions that will be offered to us. Today it is no longer essential. To be honest, thanks to the titanic work of the President, we were able not to spoil the situation. Today, we provide port infrastructure with all the necessary exports of Belarus (80 percent of these are oil products and potash fertilizers).”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

More good products

The national pavilion of Belarus may appear on seven new electronic platforms in China

The national pavilion of Belarus may soon open at seven new Chinese electronic venues. The ceremony of awarding approvals for the opening of electronic national pavilions of Belarusian goods on new marketplaces took place during the meeting of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plen-

According to the Embassy of Belarus in China, during the meeting, the parties discussed the results of cooperation achieved in 2022, including the promotion of the project of national pavilions of Belarus on China's electronic platforms. In addition, a cooperation plan for 2023 was considered.



ipotentiary of Belarus to China Yury Senko with the General Director of the Industrial Park Development Company CJSC Li Zhonghan.

According to Yury Senko, despite the complicated epidemic situation, bilateral cooperation in the field of e-commerce continues to develop rapidly. In turn, Li Zhonghan noted that over the first six months of the Belarusian national pavilion, the number of subscribers among Chinese consumers amounted to over 670 thousand people, and the total number of views exceeded 3 million.

Recall that on July 6th, 2022, the opening ceremony of the National Pavilion of Belarus on the JingDong and Douyin platforms took place in the industrial park. In October last year, the number of subscribers of the National Pavilion of Belarus on the Chinese platform Douyin reached half a million. The project, operated by the Industrial Park Development Company, has become a significant platform for the promotion of Belarus in China and one of the most massive public pages about our country in social media abroad.

Exploring new horizons

This year, BKM Holding will supply 45 trolleybuses for Yekaterinburg and 60 for Krasnodar, as well as 12 fully low-floor tramcars for Samara and 10 for Barnaul



"In 2023, BKM Holding will focus on maintaining its leadership position in the trolleybus segment, as well as on developing its potential in the tram car market. The enterprise will continue fruitful cooperation with the cities of Belarus, will increase its market share in the Russian Federation and work on entering the markets of non-CIS countries," noted the press service of the company.

By the way, last year BKM Holding supplied its equipment to 13 cities of Belarus and abroad.

Speaking about other results of the past year, they noted here, "The most significant event not only for BKM Holding, but also for the country was the production of the first electric truck, which was presented in February 2022. In September, the enterprise produced the 5000th piece of equipment. This proud title was given to the 32100D trolleybus with increased autonomous running of the OLGARD series. The same month saw the official launch of a new paint shop equipped with state-of-the-art

equipment. And in December, the Brilevichi super-fast charging complex was opened in Minsk. This is a joint project with the Belorusneft enterprise, which combined the charging of both electric cars and public electric transport."

The 43300D trolleybus was delivered to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Belarus, new trolleybuses 321 and 32100D entered the lines in Vitebsk, Brest and Grodno. Kazakhstan got the opportunity to upgrade the Ust-Kamenogorsk tram fleet with 62103 tram cars. A large share of deliveries fell on Russia: 56 32100D trolleybuses went to Volgograd, and 45 to St. Petersburg, deliveries to which will continue in 2023.

"A significant milestone was the launch of the production of the low-floor tram car T811, where the latest motor bogies of BKM Holding's own design were used. The first tram was produced for Nizhny Novgorod, which will receive a total of 170 new tram cars by 2024," said the press service of BKM Holding.



Set the bar high

The volume of production of the Minsk Tractor Works in 2022 increased by 2,243 units of equipment

The Minsk Tractor Works produced 38,136 units of equipment last year, which is 2,243 units more than in 2021. The increase was about 6 percent, according to the company's official telegram channel.

At the same time, the enterprises of MTW-Holding increased the production of equipment by 1.5 thousand units. 2.5 thousand tractors were delivered to the domestic market.

In black and white

The exchange mechanism continues to prove its effectiveness. Thus, the cost of ferrous metal products on the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange in the fourth quarter of 2022 decreased by 8 percent.

"In October — December 2022, the exchange market for ferrous metals and products made from them was characterised by a decrease in the cost of almost all major types of ferrous metal products. Compared to September 2022, quotes in Belarusian roubles fell by 8 percent, and compared to the end of 2021, by more than 10 percent," said the press service of the exchange.

At the same time, BUCE notes that such price dynamics is fully consistent with trends in the domestic market of Russia, which is the main supplier of ferrous metallurgy products to Belarus.

"Adjustment of the price lists of the largest Russian metal producers allowed domestic participants in exchange trading to purchase the raw materials they need cheaper. The largest decline in prices in the fourth quarter was recorded in the segment of steel reinforcement and wire rod. Belarusian construction organisations purchased these products at 1,300-1,900 roubles per ton. In turn, the cost of an angle section and a channel bar, depending on the brand and standard size, varied within 1,560-4,350 roubles per ton," noted the representatives of the exchange.

In the fourth quarter, as well as throughout 2022, there was a steady demand for flat products from industrial



enterprises. The share of these products in the total volume of sales increased from 30 to 40 percent compared to the same indicator of the previous quarter and in physical terms amounted to more than 33,000 tons. The range of prices for exchange transactions with hot-rolled sheets at the end of the year was 1,400-2,900 roubles per ton. Cold-rolled and galvanised sheets fell in price by an average of 4-6 percent and were traded at 2,100-3,300 roubles per ton.

According to stock analysts, the downward price trend in the segment of ferrous metal products, which emerged at the end of last year, will continue in the short term. This will be facilitated by the ongoing recession in the global steel market and low demand for these products from its main consumers.



Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The land of the burning hats

How the top of the Kiev regime profits from the war

The end of the outgoing and the beginning of the coming year is a great opportunity to analyse the results. The Ukrainian division of Forbes decided to keep up and made the top of the richest people in our southern neighbour. As the compilers of the ranking themselves admitted, they included only 20 rich people (some fell out of sight because they lost their citizenship, as in the case of Kolomoisky, while others, like Medvedchuk, were accused of treason). However, the top 20 fat cats are not at all interesting for such 'disappearances', but for the fact that in the race for first place, politicians bypass the oligarchs.



Volodymyr Zelenskyy

By Anton Popov

Oligarchs are not respected

The owners of factories, plants and ships, it must be said, seriously sank. For example, number one on the list, steel magnate Rinat Akhmetov, has fallen from \$13.7 billion as of February 2022 to \$4.4 billion in December. This is explained by the loss of Mariupol, which is strategically important for his business — Azovstal and the plant named after Ilyich were just part of the industrial empire of Akhmetov.

However, these are just the tip of the iceberg: the ex-president Poroshenko has completely fallen out from the list of dollar billionaires. But the current political elite, on the contrary, has significantly improved their positions. At the head of the list of owners of fast-growing fortunes is Zelenskyy himself.

His fortune went from \$650 million to nearly \$1.5 billion. The income of Minister of Defence Oleksii Reznikov increased to 1.3 billion, and the record holder was the Minister of Very Strange Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, who got rich from 450 million to 1.2 billion. At the same time, Vitali Klitschko did not become a billionaire last year, his fortune is estimated at only 800 million. Apparently, financial flows reached the mayor of Kiev already thoroughly thinned — senior colleagues in dangerous business thoroughly nibbled on the Western financial pie.

Everything can be stolen

Back in early November, American political activist Candace Owens openly stated on Fox News that she had information about financial frauds behind which high-ranking Ukrainian officials stand. According to Owens, since February 2022, representatives of the Kiev regime began to enter into large numbers of deals to buy real estate in Switzerland, which Russian businessmen hastily sold due to sanctions. At the same time, the activist noticed an important trend: the growth in sales of villas always coincided in time with the transfer of the next tranche of financial assistance. That is, Kiev officials plundered American funds immediately upon receipt and immediately invested them in real estate.

According to Owens' informants, the savvy dealers came to the deal in expensive cars like the Lam-



Oleksii Reznikov

borghini, flaunting their wealth right and left.

"Where are our 'brilliant' tax officials looking, whose service was expanded with such hype? Why don't they track the money that we send abroad," the investigator asked a rhetorical question on the air with Tucker Carlson.

Where is the money, Zelenskyy?

It is very significant that those who should guard the state interests sometimes run ahead of the corrupt locomotive. This, of course, is about Zelenskyy, a man who earned almost a billion dollars from the war. To ensure that these funds can be easily laundered in the future and turned into completely legal cash, the President of Ukraine approved amendments to the Law 'On Preventing and Combating the Legalisation (Laundering) of Proceeds from Crime, the Financing of Terrorism and the Financing of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction'.

This document, by the way, was one of the prerequisites for Ukraine's accession to the EU, but, apparently, the thirst for profit relegated this 'blue dream' to the background.

The essence of the changes is the abolition of lifelong financial monitoring for politicians and high-ranking Ukrainian officials. Now checks will be carried out only for three years after leaving office. In fact, after this period, any rogue who stole a billion while in office will be able to legalise everything 'acquired by overwork' and not be afraid of any punishment at all.

Zelenskyy himself declares that there is no corruption in Ukraine, because... 'many corrupt officials left the country along with their money'.

This was said, by the way, at the prestigious forum of the new economy Bloomberg-2022, that is, the president does not see anything reprehensible in the corruption mess that is happening in his country.

Moreover, the head of the Kiev regime himself has already prepared a safe haven for his money. Back in 2021, journalists working on the Pandora Archive figured out that Zelenskyy and 38 wealthy Ukrainians set up a number of offshore



Dmytro Kuleba

accounts in Cyprus, the British Virgin Islands and Belize. In the banks of these paradise states, the president and his wife Olena kept the profits of the Zelenskyy-owned telecompany, as well as the Maltex Multicapital Corporation, in which the first couple of Ukraine owned 25 percent of the shares.

Scam of the century with a yellow-blue tint

No less interesting in this regard is the story of the fall of the FTX crypto exchange, the fifth in the world in terms of the volume of transactions. It turned out that the collapse of the financial monster, which took place immediately after the November 8th congressional elections, was planned.

From 20 to 50 billion of client money in FTX accounts belonged to Ukrainians. It is not difficult to guess where such huge funds came from in a war-torn country.

At the same time, which is very significant, judging by the revealed financial flows, not only Western aid to Ukraine was laundered in a grand scheme, but also internal American problems were solved — for example, through transferring into FTT tokens, the taxpayers' funds were passed into the hands of functionaries of the Democratic Party and were used by 'donkeys' in the pre-election campaign.

The best evidence of the depth of the bottom that the Ukrainian fighters against corruption have reached is the data of independent ratings. According to them, our southern neighbour usually takes places closer to the end of the list.

For example, in 2021, in the corruption perception rating compiled by specialists from the non-governmental international organisation Transparency International, Ukraine scored only 32 points out of 100 and was approximately on the same level with such African states as Zambia and Eswatini, whose bureaucracy is famous for immoderate bribery. In Europe, of course, our southern neighbours have no real competitors.

Weapons that are always not enough

However, the outright plundering of



Mykhailo Podolyak

Western financial aid and humanitarian aid is the tip of the iceberg. From witnesses in different parts of the world, we can at least roughly understand how much Ukrainian officials stole and what they invested in. Another source of income is much darker and from a mile away it stinks of blood and gunpowder.

This, of course, is about the uncontrolled arms trade, which is gradually acquiring the status of a national sport in Ukraine. Fortunately, the weapons generously supplied by Western 'peacekeepers' are in bulk in the country, there is no real mechanism for tracking the flow of weapons and is not foreseen, and there are many resourceful guys who want to sell a machine gun or even anti-tank systems at a higher price.

The scale of Ukraine's 'trade in death' is a matter of concern even at the highest level. At the end of November, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, at the 16th summit of the leaders of the countries that are members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in Abuja, said that weapons from Ukraine were going to the militants of the Boko Haram terrorist organisation, "Unfortunately, the situation in the Sahel region and the conflict in Ukraine have served as the main sources of weapons and militants, replenishing the ranks of terrorists in the area of Lake Chad. Weapons used in the Ukrainian conflict are coming to the region."

The Boko Haram terrorists have earned a reputation as notorious scumbags, even by the standards of Africa that is not prone to moralising, which indicates that the Ukrainian military does not care deeply what crimes the weapons they sold will be used to commit.

As you can see, corruption is firmly ingrained in the structure of Ukrainian society and the state. The political establishment has absolutely no reason to negotiate with Russia, because if the conflict dies out, the flow of aid from the West will also dry up and there will simply be nothing to steal. And for those who have acquired the taste, believe me, it is very difficult to stop.

December 2022 \$1.5 billion

February 2022 \$650 million

December 2022 \$1.3 billion

February 2022 \$780 million

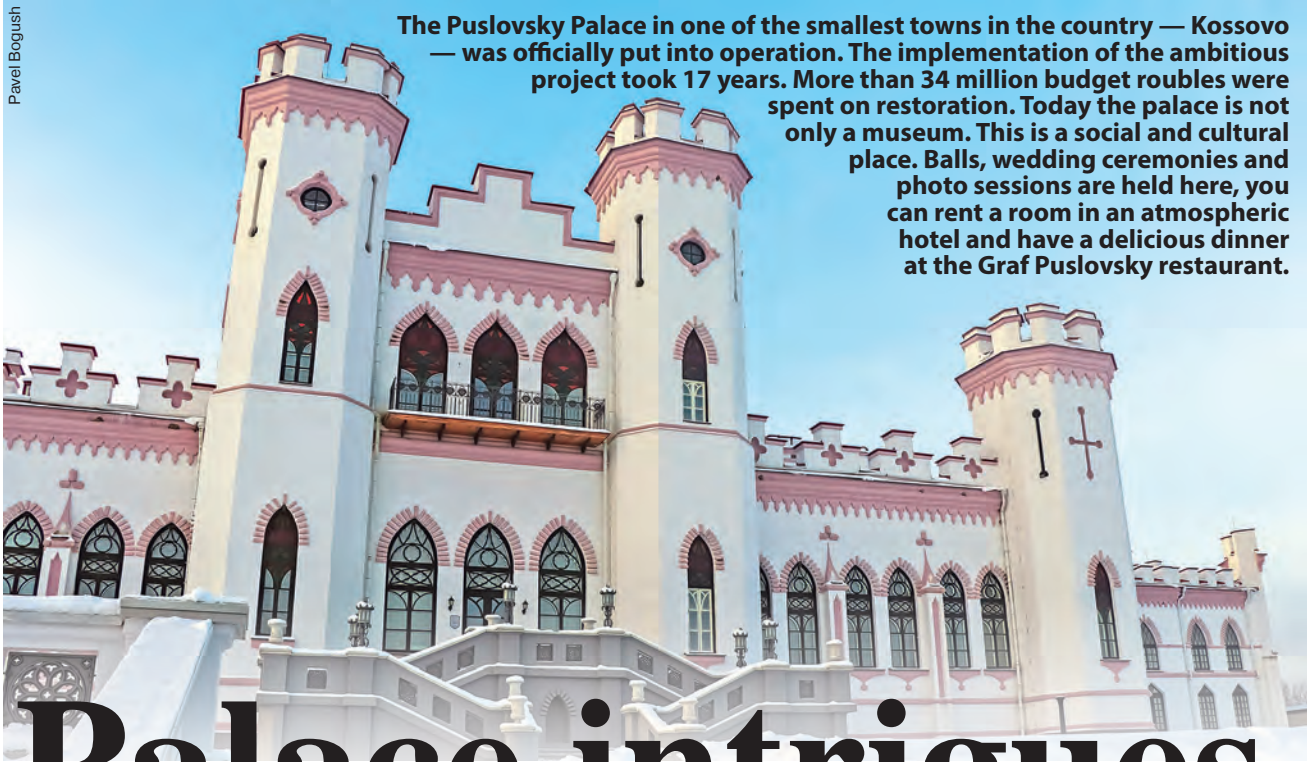
December 2022 \$1.2 billion

February 2022 \$450 million

December 2022 \$1 billion

February 2022 \$620 million

Pavel Bogush



The Puslovsky Palace in one of the smallest towns in the country — Kossovo — was officially put into operation. The implementation of the ambitious project took 17 years. More than 34 million budget roubles were spent on restoration. Today the palace is not only a museum. This is a social and cultural place. Balls, wedding ceremonies and photo sessions are held here, you can rent a room in an atmospheric hotel and have a delicious dinner at the Graf Puslovsky restaurant.

Palace intrigues

What attracts tourists to the revived Kossovo Castle?

By Valentina Kozlovich

A short 'golden age'

The Puslovsky Palace, which many are accustomed to calling the Kossovo Castle, was built in the 19th century by the industrialist and art lover Vandalin Puslovsky. The count wanted to make his residence look like a medieval castle-fortress — hence the English neo-Gothic style. The windows



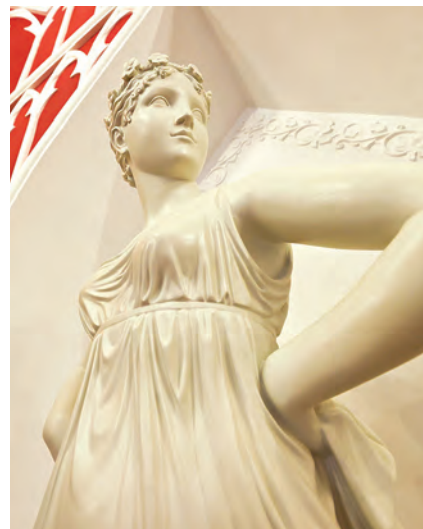
look like loopholes. Each of the jagged towers symbolises a certain month of the year, and 365 small turrets symbolise days. The author of the project was the architect František Jashold. Subsequently, the interior layout of the palace was reconstructed by the architect Władysław Marconi, the interiors were designed by the salon artist Frantisek Zhmurko.

Puslovsky deliberately chose a place for the construction of his residence — near the family estate of Tadeusz Kosciuszko in the Merechevshchina area. Built on an artificial hill, the palace fits perfectly into the surrounding landscape. A greenhouse, a chapel, as well as a terraced park, including the Merechevshchina manor and three artificial ponds, became parts of the palace and park complex. Thanks to the drawings of Napoleon Orda, we know how great it all looked in the time of the Puslovskys.

Alas, the 'golden age' of the palace did not last long. After Vandalin, his son Leon inherited, he sold the palace for gambling debts, then the estate was split up until it became the property of the state. During the First World War, the palace was destroyed, the collection of paintings and other valuables disappeared, and the greenhouse was destroyed. During the Great Patriotic War, the building burned down along with the Kosciuszko family nest...

Through the pines to the light of the sun

The history of attempts to revive the Puslovsky Palace dates back a quarter of a century — they wanted to, but failed to reach out to high authorities. Thickets for a long time hid the walls of the palace from the eyes of those passing by on the road from Ruzhany to Kossovo. And only when in 2004, by the decision of



the Brest Region Executive Committee, the Kosciuszko estate was restored, they started talking seriously about the revival of the count's residence. In 2005, Breststavratsiya specialists began to create design and estimate documentation. In 2007, the palace and park ensemble was included in the State List of Historical and Cultural Heritage, and a year later — in the state investment programme. Restoration work began in 2008.

The scientific director of the restoration, architect Vladimir Kazakov, came from Brest to Kossovo every week, "When we first got here, the ruins of the castle were



BELTA



surrounded by tall pines. To approach and take measurements of the building, we had to cut down the bush. It was hard to start. There was nothing but walls. The work was both physically and technically difficult. It was all the more joyful to watch how everything here was transformed..."

Financing of the construction was carried out on equal terms — from the republican and regional budgets. Since the be-

ginning of restoration work in 2008, more than 34 million roubles have been allocated to the facility, of which more than 6 million in 2022 alone.

Ball invitation

The facade, stained-glass windows, the interiors of the key halls — the restoration of the palace was carried out in stages. As soon as the premises were commissioned, their arrangement began. Antique furniture and crockery were purchased. At the end of 2017, a temporary museum and exhibition was opened in five halls. And in 2019, the Kossovo Palace and Park Complex, a state cultural institution, was created, which included two facilities — the Puslovsky Palace and the Kosciuszko Memorial Estate Museum. The museum cluster has given a new impetus to the development of tourism potential — on average, the complex is visited annually by 35,000 guests.

There are seven exhibition halls directly in the palace — on the basement, first and second floors. The White, Emerald and Ruby Halls have been restored... The Puslovsky Hotel has 6 rooms for 19 people. A small cosy restaurant awaits guests every day, here you can hold banquets and weddings. All this was shown to the guests after the red ribbon was cut at the opening ceremony. The promenade left no one indifferent. It remains to be hoped that tourists will enter a new point on the map of the Brest Region into their navigator and will not pass by.

Of course, balls are associated with the palace. Polonaise, waltz, krakowiak, quadrille, mazurka... An obligatory component is an orchestra. At one time, among the guests of the palace were Napoleon Orda, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Eliza Orzeszkowa, Józef Piłsudski, Vaclau Lastouski ...

In the revived Puslovsky Palace, a regional New Year's ball was timed to coincide with the official opening. By the way, it was held there for the second time. As on the eve of 2022, the best representatives of

the universities of the Brest Region were invited. Perhaps someday they will write in guidebooks that future scientists, writers, statesmen waltzed in the palace...

The restoration of the palace is completed, but that's not all. In 2023, work is planned in the park area with the construction of thematic farmsteads, as well as the reconstruction of the system of adjacent lakes.

BY THE WAY

The Puslovsky Palace is one of the great keepers of legends in the Belarusian lands. They say that in the Main Hall the floor was made of double glass, and aquarium fish swam there. And in the Winter Garden there lived a lion, which was unleashed at night. Only men were allowed to enter the Black Hall — it was for gambling. The palace had 132 rooms, none of which was similar to the other. Thanks to the system of corridors and the special placement of windows, sunlight flooded one of the rooms for 2.5 days a year. Those days the owners celebrated 'Room Day'. During the excavations during the restoration work, only one myth has been debunked so far — about the underground passage between the Kossovo and Ruzhany palaces with 'a width of a carriage and a trio of horses' and a length of almost 25 kilometres. There was none. And it couldn't be!

Magic booth

Mir Batleika will replenish the list of intangible historical and cultural values

A list of 19 elements of intangible heritage has been compiled in the Grodno Region, which in the future may supplement the State List of Historical and Cultural Values of the Republic of Belarus. The first in line is the puppet theatre from the Korelichi District, popularly referred to as Mir Batleika. Who and why has preserved this ancient tradition to the present day, and where can one see a unique Christmas performance?



Aleksey Bibikov

By Tatiana Vrublevskaya

Remember the forgotten

To answer this question, it is necessary to get acquainted with the main custodian of the tradition, Konstantin Petriman, teacher at the Mir State College.

“By and large, inclusion in the list is just a tip of an iceberg, with which one can compare the work done. Nevertheless, it is very honourable and warms the soul, if only because it is not my personal merit, but the work of many people. Back in 1989, when our educational institution had just opened, leading artists and culturologists arrived here, who, on the wave of growing interest in everything national, delved into the heritage of a powerful layer of the folk culture of Mir,” Konstantin starts the conversation.

The city has been a craft and cultural centre for centuries, where Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultures intertwined and formed the life of a typical Belarusian town.

“Mir Batleika is a family dynastic tradition that died out with the death of its heirs. However, Anna Vygonnaya, Galina Zharovina, Valentin Kaunin, who came here, managed to bring memories of their own cultural heritage to Mir, even though the residents no longer remembered it,” the teacher continues.

Bit by bit, art historians began to revive an element of folk culture, visiting, foremost, the Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg, where original Batleika dolls are kept. Already in 1990, the first performances for the local population went on, and in 1997 a troupe of enthusiasts received the title of folk amateur theatre.

“At the same time, information was collected from the old-timers. But only in 2004 it was possible to find people who remembered the family of Batleika puppeteer — the Silko brothers — and even described some moments of performances that had significant differences from the entire Batleika tradition that existed on the territory of Belarus. The secular school is fundamentally different from the others, and when we went with reconstructed performances, experts often asked us questions, they say, why is it like this? And here, each image was written off from a specific resident — both the manner of talking of



Alena Vishchenko, Anastasia Azhgirevich and Dominika Andrievich

the doll, and the location of the characters,” the keeper of Batleika explains.

Over time, a series of modern performances was created, but, despite the success, it seemed more important to revive the performances of the Silko brothers, the teacher emphasises, “We understood that this is a beautiful element of the local culture, which should be returned to the residents. But the matter turned out to be difficult. Even relatives did not know what their great-grandfathers were doing.

The last of the Silko brothers, Eugene, went through the entire war, he was wounded. Zhenik Batlik, as the locals called him, played the violin in the orchestra, but never used Batleika.”

‘That’s exactly how it was...’

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Batleika performances have been held in Mir during the Philip’s Fast, from mid-November. This is not at all typical for the traditional Christmas Batleika, which gave performances from December 25th to January 19th. At the same time, the Batleika puppeteers congratulated both Catholics and Orthodox on Christmas.

“The Silko brothers created an interesting play inspired by World War I called *The Soldier and the Devil*. It showed a person’s attitude to the war, reflections on how a believer will live on. The front line passed 15 kilometres from Mir, and this story was very close to its inhabitants,” says Konstantin Petriman.

The Mir Batleika puppeteers un-

derstood that the literary language was completely unsuitable for performances. They had to study various dialectisms that people used to revive the characters. Take, for example, the same Devil, who likes to use either a Polish or a Russian word to look more respectable. This is how the live speech of the puppets was born. The reconstruction took two years, and when the 20-minute performance was shown to local old-timers, then suddenly an exclamation was heard from the audience: “That’s right, that’s exactly how it was!”

“Surprisingly, people began to recall elements of tradition, songs, chants that could not be found in any collections. In general, by some miracle, we managed to restore three Batleika performances in the original. They began to come to us, bring children, invite them to various festivals, including international ones. Batleika also acts as an element of the education of our students, helps to grow spiritually.

People often ask us: ‘Where can I get such scripts?’ Nowhere. You just need to live the history of your land, your country,” Konstantin Petriman recalls.

Under the star of Bethlehem

In recent years, Mir Batleika is famous far beyond the urban-type settlement of Mir.

“Now we have a golden team, consisting of five or six guys who play with full dedication. In parallel, we are preparing a new shift. It is important that children learn their history and culture not from hackneyed lines from a textbook, but touch their own roots. Many after graduating from college are ready to rush at the first call. For them, Batleika is forever in their hearts,” Konstantin Petriman believes.

The college is really proud that it

was possible to restore another heritage of the Belarusian culture.

“On December 25th, the Batleika season was opened in Nesvizh Castle. Our performance is included in the programme until January 19th. Of course, we are showing a ‘carolling’ action. In fact, this is a classic play about King Herod with an Angel, a Devil, Death and a cruel King,” Konstantin continues.

In ancient times, Batleika puppeteer came to the house in advance by agreement with the owner, he was given a special place. This is a chamber theatre that requires a small space for the best involvement of the viewer. The performance begins and ends with a festive edging. Viewers discover a real multicultural heritage that unites both Catholics and Orthodox.

“Our wooden Batleika booth for performances is 30 years old. It was immediately made with chips in order to get as close as possible to the original. The dolls are also made according to the classic canons of Batleika. There are twelve in total. All made by hand, we did not buy anything,” the teacher shows.

Meanwhile, a rehearsal is underway in a small room.

Three girls are from among the newcomers. They are just learning the art of Batleika art.

“For the role of the Tsar-tyrant, who shouts all the time: ‘On your knees! I am the king!’, it is necessary to deliver the royal voice. Another character of mine is Kamornik. I don’t know much about him yet. I understand that it is only in my power to make this piece of wood come alive,” Anastasia Azhgirevich laughs.

The Nativity performers are worried that there is no room for mistakes, because the

viewer is sitting very close.

“I learn to play an Angel! It’s not as easy as it might seem. You need to have a voice range. After all, you are not visible, but you need to play in such a way that the people believe the doll. It seems to work. The most difficult thing is to smoothly move the dolls, ensuring that the voice matches the action,” first year student Alena Vishchenko says.

Future Batleika puppeteer Dominika Andrievich explains, “It’s a little easier for me, since I studied this skill in Nesvizh for two years at school. But here, in Mir, it is particularly felt that this is not some kind of remake or pseudo-folk, but the original folk art of our ancestors. And whether you like it or not, you are proud!”

The teacher carefully takes out small battered dolls from the same shabby suitcase. And then — you just have to see it with your own eyes...



Aleksey Bibikov

NASA boss sounds alarm at Chinese lunar ambitions



In an interview with Politico, NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said that the race to the Moon between the United States and China is getting tighter and the next two years could determine who gains the upper hand

Bill Nelson has warned that Beijing could establish a foothold and try to dominate the most resource-rich locations on the lunar surface — or even keep the US out.

“It is a fact: we’re in a space race,” the former Florida senator and astronaut said in an interview. “And it is true that we better watch out that they don’t get to a place on the Moon under the guise of scientific research. And it is not beyond the realm of possibility that they say, ‘Keep out, we’re here, this is our territory.’”

Nelson’s hawkish comments follow NASA’s 26-day Artemis I mission, in which an uncrewed Orion space capsule flew around the Moon. That mission,

widely regarded as a success, was the first big step toward NASA’s plan to land astronauts on the lunar surface to begin building a more permanent human presence — which could come as early as 2025.

But looming ever-larger is China’s aggressive space programme, including its recent opening of a new space station. Beijing has announced a goal of landing taikonauts on the Moon by the end of this decade. In December, China’s government laid out its vision for more ambitious endeavours such as building infrastructure in space and creating a space governance system.

Any significant delays or mishaps in the US programme, which is counting on

a series of new systems and equipment that are still under development, could risk falling behind the Chinese. And NASA’s moon-landing timeline has already slipped a year from the Trump administration.

Over the past few years, Beijing has launched a series of robotic landers and rovers to collect lunar samples — including for the first time ever on the far side of the moon — as well as an orbiter, lander and rover that reached Mars.

The US military, which has also expressed growing concerns about Beijing’s development of space systems that could threaten US satellites, has been sounding the alarm about the security implications of Beijing’s forays into deep space.

Swedes reject legal concessions

Almost 80 percent of Swedes do not support the idea of changing the country’s laws in order to fulfil Turkey’s demands and join NATO as soon as possible, according to the poll commissioned by newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*

Sweden should continue to abide by its laws in the face of Turkish demands even if it means delaying its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, according to 79 percent of people who responded to the poll. In contrast, 10 percent said Sweden should seek to join as soon as possible regardless of whether that entails concessions on its legal principles.

The poll also showed a 60 percent approval for Sweden’s NATO application, an all-time high.

Turkey’s President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has objected to Sweden and Finland joining NATO since they put in bids in May, arguing that the Nordic countries need to do more to combat terrorism, including extraditing people who Turkey accuses of terrorist links.

Both Nordic governments have insisted they will step up counter-terrorism efforts, while underscoring the independence of courts in deciding on extraditions. 28 of 30 NATO countries have ratified their entry into the bloc, with Hungary also stalling.



‘Unprecedented’ wave of bankruptcies

About 59 percent of hospitals in Germany expect massive financial losses this year, according to the head of the German Hospital Federation

The German Hospital Federation has warned of an ‘unprecedented’ wave of bankruptcies this year due to the energy crisis and high inflation.

“Our clinics could be hit by a wave of insolvencies in 2023,” Gerald Gass, the group’s chairman, told local media, adding that the government’s financial aid plan has been insufficient.

According to an annual survey conducted by the German Hospital Institute, 59 percent of hospitals expect massive financial losses this year, and they are already operating on negative margins. The survey also found that 56 percent of hospitals expect the economic situation to further deteriorate.

Gass criticised the government’s inadequate response to the current crisis. “Health Minister Karl Lauterbach had said that medicine has priority over the economy, but this remains an empty promise,” he said.

Gass said while the government’s recent plan to compensate for energy price increases was a positive development, it was not sufficient, as hospitals need more financial support due to inflation-related general cost increases.

According to German Hospital Federation estimates, hospitals need around \$16bn in financial support to overcome the current crisis. The staffing situation in hospitals is also tight.

Food cards for the poor

Estonian authorities are preparing to introduce a system of food cards for low-income citizens

The Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs is preparing to introduce a system of ration cards for the poor with a loaded amount of money with which they can buy food of their choice, Thea Varrak, Head of the Ministry’s Crisis Preparedness Department, said.

According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, assistance to the poor is now distributed through the Food Bank, which collects unsold products in stores, as well as donations from individuals, and transfers them to social workers and charitable organisations that distribute products to those in need. At the same time, people often received food packages that contained products that they did not need.

“In 2023, the ministry wants to introduce a more flexible and convenient system of electronic food cards, to which a certain amount will be transferred quarterly. A person can use this money by independently choosing food and essential goods at any store that won the state tender, food and essential goods at their own discretion,” Varrak told MK-Estonia.

According to her, food cards for 30 Euros will be issued once a quarter. “The same criteria apply here as before for receiving food assistance. The cards will be issued to recipients of subsistence benefits who applied for it, recipients of compensation from local government and a number of other people,” Varrak explained.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



The past year 2022 has become a year of difficult trials for many countries, significantly complicating and worsening their lives (somewhere through the fault of external forces, somewhere through their own stupidity and short-sightedness). However, there were those who managed to benefit from the global political and economic chaos, strengthening their own positions. Turkey certainly belongs to the latter. The year 2023 will be the starting point for a new century of success and will allow the country to enter the top ten world powers, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made such an optimistic message on Monday in his article published in the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper. According to him, Turkey is a 'stabilising force' at the forefront of efforts to create a more just world order.

Turkey is growing louder in favour of a fairer world order

At new poles

By Aleksei Belyaev, political scientist

Step on the gas and go!

The struggle of the collective West against common sense in the energy sector, which led to a significant reduction in direct supplies of cheap hydrocarbons from Russia, has strengthened Turkey's position as the largest alternative gas supplier to Europe.

The Blue and Turkish streams make it possible to receive Russian gas, the Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline delivers from the Azerbaijani Shah Deniz field, and the possibilities of connecting Turkmenistan to the project are being explored. As Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Dönmez recently stated, the potential for gas supplies to the EU through Turkey is up to 100 billion cubic metres (at the moment, annual pumping volumes are at the level of 30—40 billion cubic metres). In addition, next year, Turkish authorities plan to start production at a recently discovered field in the Black Sea, whose reserves are estimated at 540 billion cubic metres (at today's prices — at least \$400 billion). President Erdogan estimated the total cost of Turkey's own Black Sea gas resources at \$1 trillion.

An important step in strengthening energy security should also be the launch of Turkey's first nuclear power plant, Akkuyu, which is being built by Rosatom since 2018, planned for 2023. Negotiations on construction began back in 2010. It is expected that this nuclear power plant will satisfy up to 10 percent of the country's electricity needs...

Diplomatic activity

Turkey was also successful in the diplomatic field last year, becoming a kind of 'hub' for various kinds of initiatives and projects. Tripartite negotiations with the participation of the foreign ministers of Turkey, Russia and Ukraine after the start of a special military operation have gone down in history. However, let us recall that before this, Belarus was the first to initiate its services as a negotiating platform.

With Turkish mediation between Russia and Ukraine, negotiations were carried out on the exchange of prisoners. Finally, Turkish diplomats managed to lobby for a grain deal, concluded under the auspices of the UN, on the export of food accumulated in Ukrainian ports, despite obvious violations of the terms of the agreement for one of the parties (Russia, which was also promised to unblock the supply of its grain and fertilizers to foreign markets, did not receive these opportunities).

Ankara provides diplomatic, military-political and other support to Azerbaijan, trying to weaken Russia's

“ Thus, the country is really entering in a good political and economic shape into the second century of its existence (2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the creation of the current Republic of Turkey). And in the conditions of the reshaping of the global world order, it can indeed take the place of an influential regional power with a claim to participate in deciding the fate of the multipolar world.

position in the Transcaucasus. A visit to Turkey in March last year by Israeli President Isaac Herzog demonstrated the improvement in relations between the states. Ways of dialogue between Ankara and Damascus have also been outlined. At the end of December, a meeting of the defence ministers of Turkey, Syria and Russia was held, and a meeting of the heads of the Turkish and Syrian Foreign Ministries is being prepared in the near future.

And although there are no significant breakthroughs and visible changes in Syrian-Turkish relations yet, the facts of increased contacts in themselves give external observers a reason for cautious optimism.

However, the leader of the Turkish parliament, the Chairman of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Mustafa Şentop, without any modesty and caution, said that President Erdogan's candidacy would be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Based on the above facts, there are grounds for this. And there are definitely more of them than for the Nobel laureate Barack Obama who, during his presidency, unleashed a bloody massacre in Libya, invaded Syria and continued the destruction of the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan.

NATO please don't?

At the same time, Turkey does not develop further relations with its NATO allies — the United States of America, as well as with the EU countries. The Turkish authorities systematically ignore the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, as they consider them interference in their domestic sovereign policy.

In response, threats to expel Turkey from the Council of Europe follow (the last such statement was made in mid-November). True, given the significant cooling of the interest of the Turks in joining the EU after many years of fruitless waiting, few people take these threats to heart.

More sensitive are statements demanding Turkey's exclusion from the North Atlantic alliance. Just the other day, John Bolton, former security adviser to former US President Donald Trump, made such a demand in an article for the British newspaper *The Telegraph*.

According to a former US government official, Turkey's NATO membership should be called into question if Erdogan is re-elected in the upcoming presidential election. The leaders of the alliance are annoyed by Turkey's position, which prevents Sweden and Finland from joining NATO.

Ankara, in order to approve the admission of new members, requires them to refuse support for Kurdish organisations recognised as terrorist in Turkey, as well as to extradite a number of Kurdish activists who are in Sweden. At the same time, Turkish diplomats frankly declare that their country is not experiencing 'time pressure', that is, it can wait a long time. Unlike the candidates themselves and the main countries of the alliance.

It must be said that Turkey also has claims against its allies. In particular, Ankara is dissatisfied with the supply of American weapons to Greece, with which Turkey has long-standing territorial and civilizational disputes. Also, the Turks are under pressure and condemnation from the allies for the purchase of Russian S-400 air defence systems (for which Turkey was deprived of the right to participate in the development programme for the latest F-35 aircraft).

However, there is no need to talk about a complete break with NATO. The Alliance needs the second (after the American) army in terms of the number of ground forces, which, moreover, covers the most explosive direction — the Middle East. Turkey is dependent on NATO nuclear forces.

And thanks to the principle of unanimity in the decisions of the union, Ankara can issue ultimatums to Sweden, which it gladly uses to its advantage. So mutual loud statements and accusations are just a game for the public and trade.



Pictures for all times

What was the New Year in Soviet postcards

It is now easier than ever to wish 'Happy New Year' and 'Merry Christmas'. Bright stickers on social media, a funny gif or a sensational video may do this... Meanwhile, postcards are waiting for their connoisseurs in post offices. They are simple, made of paper, but so real... Postcards were carefully kept in families for years and decades, as well as the sincerest words from the dearest and closest people they convey.

By Anna Kasper

Greetings from the past

Is it fashionable to give cards today? Rather, it is exclusive. It's much easier to turn to messengers for help, but personally, it's more pleasant for me to find a small postcard with wishes in a mailbox or in a craft gift box. And here sellers of flower shops will definitely understand me, as they still attach small cards to bouquets. As the postmen said, many postcards are still being sent around the world for the New Year and Christmas holidays. I did not stay without postcards during the holidays. While sorting out old boxes, I received a 'greeting' from the past from the former owner of my private house. There were piles of postcards in old large envelopes. Previously, they were bought in advance in dozens and sent by mail to different cities and villages.

I found about 80 postcards. The oldest postcard is about 70 years old. A real find for deltiology! Postcards created a mood of celebration and some kind of genuine children's happiness. The kind Father Frost and the modest but insanely beautiful Snow Maiden, rosy-cheeked Soviet kids, cheerful forest animals, cosmonauts, soldiers and even... BAM activists smiled from magical pictures. Every year, the reverse side of the postcards contained almost the same, but such cherished wishes: health, happiness, good luck, love and family comfort.

Congratulated both in word and drawing

If we turn to the history of postcards, it dates back to 1843, when Henry Cole sent holiday greetings to friends in the form of a small drawing on cardboard. Since then, the tradition has taken root throughout Europe and gradually reached Russia. The first Russian postcard for the



Anna Kasper



New Year was drawn by Nikolai Karazin in 1901 or Fyodor Bershnam, a librarian from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. There are some disagreements about the appearance of the first Soviet greeting cards. A turn in the history of New Year's cards began in 1935, after the October Revolution, when they began to celebrate the New Year again and small printing houses began to print greeting cards.

Previously, postcards had images of Christmas and religious symbols, but in the new country, all this fell under the ban. They did not congratulate each other on the New Year, it was allowed to congratulate comrades only on the first year of the October Revolution. It was possible to lull the attention of the censors only with children's stories. However, very few such postcards were printed, so cards issued before 1939 are of great value to collectors. Before the start of the Great Patriotic War, postcards often depicted the chimes and stars of the Kremlin. During the war years, postcards appeared with the support of the defenders of the Motherland. In the 40s, you could also get a postcard with the image of Father Frost, who drives out the Nazis, or the Snow Maiden, who bandaged the wounded. Around 1940, the Izogiz publishing house began to print editions of New Year's cards with the image of the Kremlin and chimes, snow-covered Christmas

trees, Christmas lights. After the war, postcards became even more popular, because it was the most affordable way to congratulate a relative or friend by sending a message to any corner of the country by mail.

Joy is in the little things

In the post-war 50-60s, there was no money in the country and people learned to enjoy the simplest things. Postcards were among them. Their main theme was peace and victory: symbols of victory over fascism, images of grandfathers with grandchildren, children with mothers were used. In 1953, mass production of postcards was launched in the USSR. It was considered mandatory to congratulate friends and relatives on the New Year with a postcard. There were so many of them that handicrafts were made from cards. My mother also told me that small boxes and angle sections for storing letters made from postcards were a great gift.

Soon Goznak began printing postcards with drawings by prominent Russian artists. In addition to the traditional chimes, the postcards featured airplanes and trains, fairy tale characters, winter landscapes, morning performances in kindergartens, children with bags of sweets, dads carrying a Christmas tree home... In 1956, the famous film *Carnival Night* was released on Soviet screens. On postcards, scenes from the film and the image of

actress Lyudmila Gurchenko become a symbol of the New Year. The oldest postcard in the stack

I found dates from 1956, but it depicts not an actress, but children on skis.

The sixties open with Gagarin's flight into space, and this quickly found its reflection on New Year's cards.

You should have seen what brave astronauts in spacesuits send greetings from postcards of those times! How rockets with the inscription 'Happy New Year!' are striving into space! During this period, the subject of greeting cards expands, they become more vivid and interesting. They depict not only fairy-tale characters, children, but also the life of Soviet people.

In the 70s, sports became a hot topic in the country. Many cards depict people on a ski track and a skating rink. In 1980, the USSR hosted the Olympics, which gave a new impetus to the development of themes. The genre of photo postcards for the New Year is also becoming popular. Usually they depicted Christmas tree branches, balls and Christmas lights, glasses of champagne. At the end of the Soviet period, images of the animal symbol appeared on postcards: photographs and pictures.

Talking about the Soviet New Year's card, one cannot fail to mention the names of prominent artists Vladimir Zarubin, Ivan Dergilev, Yevgeny Gundobin, Vladimir Chetverikov. Their postcards were popular in the USSR and literally entered every home.

All postcards of past years are so different. They reflected the trends and achievements of the times. One thing has always remained unchanged: a warm and sincere atmosphere. Soviet-era New Year cards continue to warm people's hearts to this day, reminding us of glass toys, the magical smell of spruce, a carefree childhood and a holiday that gave and gives magic.

In the Australian sun

Aryna Sabalenka started the year with a victory at the tournament in Adelaide

Aryna Sabalenka won the first title in a year and a half. At the opening tournament of the season in Adelaide, Australia, the Belarusian was without real competition round after round, and in the final she dealt with the Czech Linda Nosková. At the same time, Sabalenka did not give up even one set to her competitors!

Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated Aryna on winning the title,

“To the delight of numerous fans from Belarus and all over the world, you achieved this victory by showing an excellent game, iron endurance and self-control on the court. I am sure that we will have a bright season in which you will be able to conquer the highest peaks of world tennis.”

The President wished the athlete good health, happiness and good luck.



By Tatiana Pastushenko

Last season for the first racket of Belarus was not the best. She repeatedly reached the semi-finals and finals at various tournaments, but she never managed to win. After the triumph in Adelaide, Aryna said: a lot of time has passed since the last title won in May 2021 in Madrid, and the sensations experienced after victories have almost been forgotten. Now she was able not only to remember, but also to enjoy them in full.

At the tournament in Adelaide, Aryna started from the second round, and this match already showed that one should not expect an easy walk: the fight against the Russian Lyudmila Samsonova was a stubborn struggle and ended with a score of 7:6, 7:6. After that, on the way to the final, the Belarusian beat the Czech Marketa Vondrousova, the Romanian Irina-Camelia Begu. In the final, she had a meeting with, perhaps, the main opening of the tournament in Adelaide.

Linda Nosková recently turned 18 years old. In 2021, she won Roland Garros Junior, and last year she made it to the main draw of the Grand Slam tournament for the first time. The Czech started her performance in Adelaide with a qualification, where she coped with two Russians — Anna Kalinskaya and Anastasia Potapova. Linda said: she expected to win the first round of qualification, then, perhaps, to go further. She managed to do even more. In the 1/16 finals, she forced Daria Kasatkina to leave the tournament, then she beat the

American Claire Liu, knocked out Victoria Azarenka, and in the semi-finals she sensationally defeated Ons Jabeur from Tunisia in three sets — 6:3, 1:6, 6:3. But Linda failed to break the resistance of Aryna Sabalenka — she lost to the Belarusian with a score of 3:6, 6:7.

The title obtained in Adelaide was the eleventh in Aryna's career. The tennis player said, “I am very happy with another title won, it was a great week. I have enjoyed every moment here in Adelaide and am satisfied with my performance. My serve helped me a lot, especially in the final match. I was able to put pressure on Linda during her serve. I think that's why I won. I feel that I am ready to show my best side, and I am ready for even more serious battles.”



Linda Nosková

During a press conference after the tournament, Aryna Sabalenka admitted that she had changed a lot since winning the tournament in Madrid,

“I think I'm different now. I'm older. Maybe I have become a little smarter, calmer. Everything has changed a bit in psychology, technology, everything.”

Aryna Sabalenka still occupies the fifth line in the world ranking, but now the gap from the fourth Frenchwoman Caroline Garcia is only 75 points. As for other Belarusian players, Victoria Azarenka moved up one line to 25th position, Aliaksandra Sasnovich, who was eliminated in the first round of the tournament in Adelaide, lost eight lines and is now 38th. Ilya Ivashka, who withdrew from the qualification of the Adelaide-2 tournament, which started the day before, is in 72nd place in the rating of the Association of Tennis Professionals, Egor Gerasimov is in 367th place.

Ahead is the first Grand Slam tournament of the season — the Australian Open. The organisers allowed tennis players from Russia and Belarus to participate in it, despite the fact that Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia Vasily Miroshnichenko demanded that the Australian Tennis Federation ban athletes from the two countries from participating in this tournament. The Australians remained adamant, “Players from Russia and Belarus can participate in international tennis tournaments on an individual basis, which will happen at the 2023 Australian Open games.”

ARENA



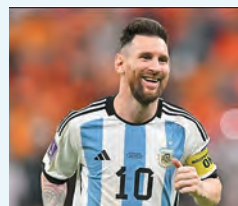
● **The decision on the return of Belarusian and Russian hockey players to the world championships will be made at the IIHF congress in May**

The official website of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) has published the composition of the groups for the 2024 Youth World Championship in Gothenburg, Sweden, the national teams of Belarus and Russia were not included in the list of participants. The head of the federation, Luc Tardif, said that the decision on the return of Belarusian and Russian hockey players to the international arena, including the youth world championship, would be made at the congress of the organisation in Finland at the end of May.

Earlier, the IIHF refused the national teams of Belarus and Russia to participate in the planetary forum in 2023. Last September, the federation congress decided that the national teams of both countries,

after the suspension from international competitions was lifted, would return to the elite division of the World Cup.

● **Messi named the best player in the world in 2022 according to IFFHS**



recognised by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS) as the best player in the world in 2022.

According to the voting results, Messi scored 275 points and pulled out far ahead. PSG and France team striker Kylian Mbappé scored 35 points. The three leaders were closed by the striker of Real Madrid and the French national team Karim Benzema with 30 points.

Previously, in 2020 and 2021, the award was given to the Polish football play-

er, Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski.

Real Madrid and Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois has been named the 2022 IFFHS World Goalkeeper of the Year. He got 125 points. Argentinean Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa) and Moroccan Yassine Bounou (Sevilla) completed the top three, having performed well at the recent World Cup in Qatar. They have 110 and 55 points respectively.

● **Canadians win 20th World Youth Ice Hockey Championship**

Team Canada defeated the Czech Republic 3-2 in overtime to win the Youth World Championship title for the second time in a row. In total, Canadians now have 20 victories at the youth world championships, which is a record figure.

It is noted that the tournament was originally to be held in Novosibirsk and Omsk.

However, the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) decided otherwise, so the championship was held in Canada.

As for the Czech national team, it is known that it played in the final for the first time since 2001. At that time, the Czechs were able to defeat the Finns (2:1), winning gold medals.

● **Italian athlete banned for 36 years**

Italian track and field athlete Alessandro Braconi, who specialises in long-distance running, has been banned for 36 years.

In November 2022, Braconi was found guilty of using doping, possession of prohibited substances and attempting to sell them. For this, the athlete was disqualified for 12 years, but he continued to compete in marathons, and tried to register as a volunteer for one of the races. During this period, the suspension was extended to the athlete, increasing it three times.

As a result, Braconi will be able to return to the running track only on March 23rd, 2058. By this time, he will be 71 years old.



BELTA

Photo of the week

Bison in the Mogilev Zoo

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



January 14th is Old New Year. The tradition to celebrate this holiday comes from the divergence of the Julian and Gregorian calendars, which is 13 days in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Old New Year is a rare historical phenomenon, an additional holiday that resulted from a change in the chronology. Due to this discrepancy in calendars, a number of countries celebrate two 'New Years' — under the Julian and the Gregorian calendars.

On January 14th, 1953, Nadezhda Mikulich was born, a Belarusian pop singer, Honoured Artist of Belarus. Her performing style is characterised by emotional expressiveness, thorough mastery of various song genres. She plays the guitar, accordion, harmonica, etc. The repertoire includes songs of Belarusian composers and poets, as well as author's works.



On January 15th, 1908, Zair Azgur was born, a Belarusian sculptor, People's Artist of Belarus, People's Artist of the USSR, Academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, full member of



the Academy of Arts of the USSR, Hero of Socialist Labour. He worked in the field of easel and monumental sculpture. The most significant monumental works: bust monuments to Sergei Gritsevets, Yanka Kupala in Minsk, a monument to Pyotr Masherov in Vitebsk, etc. The author of the sculptural ensemble of the monument to Yakub Kolas on the square of the same name in Minsk. He died in 1995.

January 15th is World Religion Day. It has been celebrated on the initiative of the United Nations since 1950. The purpose of the holiday is to inform people about the common essence of all religions and overcome differences between representatives of various faiths. The motto of the holiday: 'Religion should be the cause of unity'.



January 16th is World Beatles Day. On January 16th, 1957, The Cavern Club opened in Liverpool, where the then-unknown young musicians John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison began their path to fame. A few years later, they were joined by another future 'Beatle' — Ringo Starr. The group had a great influence on the development of world music. According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, The Beatles are number one on the list of the greatest artists of all time.



On January 16th, 1963, Nikita Khrushchev made a statement in which he informed the world community that the USSR became the owner of a new weapon of terrible destructive power — a hydrogen bomb (its action is based on the use of energy released during the fusion reaction of light nuclei). He stated this in Berlin at the 6th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.



On January 17th, 1377, The Vatican becomes the seat of the Pope. Enclave is located in Rome on the hill of Vatican Hill, has its own flag, anthem and government, the Academy of Sciences, its own newspaper and radio station. In the subjects — about a thousand Catholic priests. Great architects, sculptors, artists worked on the buildings of the Vatican. For example, Michelangelo participated in the construction of St. Peter's Basilica, which can accommodate 10,000 people.



On January 18th, 1943, the blockade of Leningrad was broken during the Great Patriotic War. To this day, about 800,000 people remained in the city. Around midnight, a message was broadcast on the radio about the breaking of the blockade. The townspeople began to take to the

streets, shouting and rejoicing. Although the blockade ring was completely removed on January 27th, 1944, the significance of this day for the future fate of Leningrad can hardly be overestimated.

January 19th is Emergency Rescuer's Day in the Republic of Belarus. In Belarus, an integrated system for the prevention and elimination of emergency situations has been formed, consisting of sectoral and territorial subsystems. In the structure of the Emergencies Ministry of Belarus, 17 special services have been created and are functioning, including firefighting and rescue operations, chemical and radiation safety, engineering, diving, medical, explosives, aviation, search and rescue, parachute, pontoon, cynological and other.



January 19th is an Orthodox holiday — Holy Theophany or Baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. On this day, 30-year-old Jesus Christ was baptised in the waters of the Jordan River. The holiday is also called Theophany, because during the baptism of Jesus, God revealed himself to the world in the Holy Trinity.

