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INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 01 (959) ● FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2023 ● WWW.SB.BY



Six Belarusian contenders for a space flight

## Space plans

The flight of the first Belarusian cosmonaut into space is scheduled for 2023. However, it is already known that it will be a girl. Six contenders from Belarus are now undergoing a rigorous selection in Star City: a junior research scientist from the Institute of Physical Organic Chemistry of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus Olga Mastitskaya, an obstetrician-gynaecologist Olga Gerasimova, a forensic expert Darya Mikhnyuk, a pediatric surgeon from the National Centre for Pediatric Surgery Anastasiya Lenkova, Belavia stewardesses Marina Vasilevskaya and Viktoriya Fidrus (pictured). It is expected that the Belarusian side will determine the main and backup candidate for space flight in January. → 2





# Space plans

**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, paid a working visit to the Russian Federation at the end of December 2022. On December 24th, Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Centre in Zvezdny Gorodok (Star City) near Moscow at the invitation of Russian leader Vladimir Putin.**

The flight of the first Belarusian cosmonaut into space is scheduled for 2023. However, it is already known that it will be a girl. Six contenders from Belarus are now undergoing a rigorous selection in Star City. It is expected that the Belarusian side will determine the main and backup candidate for space flight in January.

In Star City, the Head of the Belarusian State was accompanied by Director General of the Roscosmos State Space Corporation Yury Borisov, Head of the Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Centre Maxim Kharlamov and Executive Director for Manned Space Programmes Sergei Krikalev. The President discussed future prospects of the Belarusian-Russian co-operation in space activities with them.

The Head of State saw various simulators that are used to train cosmonauts. In particular, the President watched the training in a centrifuge of one of the Belarusian candidates for a space flight. Experts explained that at this moment a person in a centrifuge experiences a gravity load of up to 8g. In essence, this means that the body weight in these conditions increases eight times compared to the original. "Well Done!" noted the Head of State, seeing on the monitor how the girl copes with a gravity load.

After that the President toured the hydro lab, a large pool for training cosmonauts. Aleksandr Lukashenko learned about the training process and the cosmonauts' equipment. A regular space suit weighs 120 kilograms.

The President inspected the ISS simulating equipment. Everything is made life-size and repeats the modules that are in orbit. The Belarusian leader was interested in all the details, including the electric voltage in the modules and how the cosmonauts heat up their food. Aleksandr Lukashenko saw the inside of the Zvezda Service Module, actually being inside the sta-



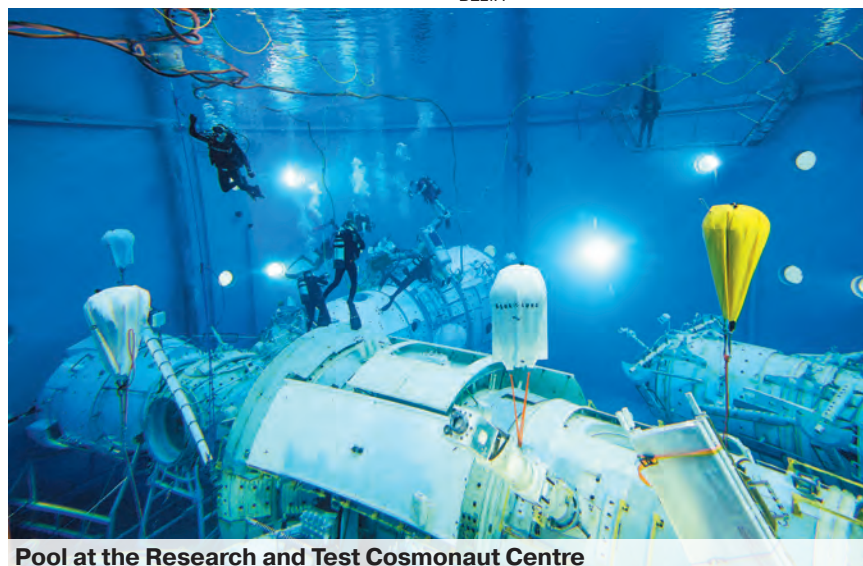
The Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Centre

BELTA

tion, but only in terrestrial conditions.

Then the Head of State spoke warmly with the Belarusian contenders for a space flight and took a picture with them. As noted, more than 3,000 people were interviewed. Six best candidates remain at this stage. More than half of the planned examinations have been carried out. The candidates have high morale and good physical condition.

Aleksandr Lukashenko said what he agreed upon



Pool at the Research and Test Cosmonaut Centre

The President of Belarus has always kept the issue of space under his personal control. Having taken over the government and the country in a state of ruin in 1994 with galloping inflation and commodity shortages and taking it away from the abyss in the first five-year plan, the Belarusian leader already then seriously began to think about long-term tasks for the future. It was the space industry that Aleksandr Lukashenko saw as one of the areas that raise the nation to a higher level of development. Especially since Belarus was one of the major industrial and scientific centres within the USSR. During the years of independence, Belarus managed not only to maintain the existing potential, but also to make significant progress.

As early as November 29th, 2001, Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the S.P. Korolev Rocket and

Space Corporation Energia during his visit to Russia. It was about promising co-operation projects. For example, the issue of launching a joint Belarusian-Russian space satellite was discussed. The most striking statement of Aleksandr Lukashenko, which was replicated by the media at the end of that day, was the following: 'A cosmonaut from Belarus will definitely fly into space'.

Thanks to the efforts of the Head of State, Belarusian scientists and research and production institutes again found themselves in demand in the Russian direction after a long break, orders started to come for the creation of instruments that were to be used in research on the ISS. Aleksandr Lukashenko again visited Rocket and Space Corporation Energia in July 2005 and called for the further development of co-operation with

Russia in the field of space technology, while developing our own scientific school.

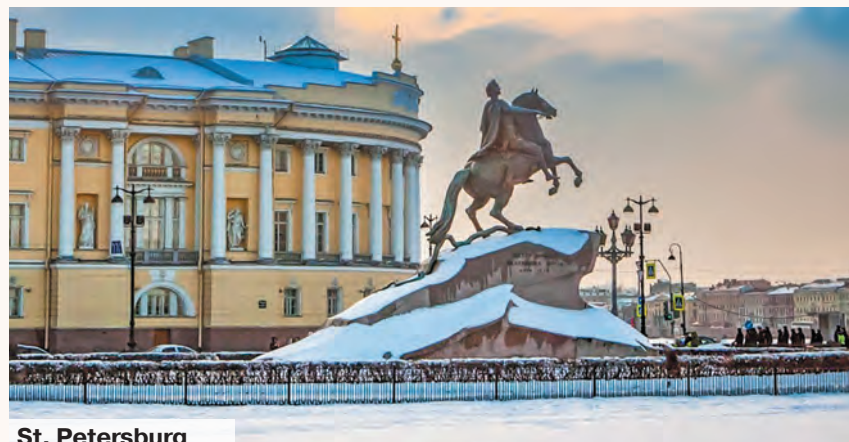
During his visit to Russia on June 11th, 2010, Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the All-Russian Scientific Research Institute of Electromechanics, where they discussed the prospects for deepening co-operation in the space industry.

In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin recalled the proposal made by the Belarusian side on the possible inclusion of a Belarusian cosmonaut in the ISS crew at a meeting of the Supreme State Council of the Union State on November 4th, 2021.

Now it can be safely said that a space industry has been created in Belarus, which involves more than 20 scientific and industrial organisations, employing about 4,000 qualified specialists, and a large strategic space research system has been formed.

## 'WE HAVE DECIDED EVERYTHING'

The President of Belarus took part in an informal meeting of the CIS Heads of State in St. Petersburg from December 26th to December 27th. On the first day of the summit, the communication lasted more than seven hours. During this time, they discussed not only the results of the outgoing year, but also plans for further interaction. On the second day, the distinguished guests of the northern capital



St. Petersburg

of Russia were offered a cultural programme: on December 27th they met at an informal breakfast. The event was held in the building of the Russian Museum in continuation of the informal meeting of the heads of state of the Commonwealth. An excursion was also organised, during which the leaders of the CIS countries got acquainted with the most famous exhibits of the treasury of Russian art.

Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin arrived at the museum building together, given that both Presidents are based in Strelina, a suburb of St. Petersburg. In the morning, the President of Russia called for his Belarusian colleague. And the day before, they also parted together.

The informal breakfast was preceded by a bilateral meeting between the Presidents of Belarus and Russia.

"I thank you, Vladimir Vladimirovich, for Moscow, for the cosmonauts, for the centre [the visit on December 24th by the Head of the Belarusian State to the cosmonaut training centre in the Star City near Moscow]. I've been there, I've seen it. As for our stay in St. Petersburg. We did have a look at some things. Well, if someone, as you rightly said, thinks that we only drink tea, then I must say that yesterday we discussed a lot of issues not only over tea but also late at night when returning home. **Sometimes it takes years for some states to discuss so many things over such a short period of time. Meanwhile, we put many dots over the 'i' in the evening, continuing our Minsk dialogue, since it was mainly about the economy. I thank you for the fact that many issues were finalised yesterday.** The governments will fine-tune them. They should not have any complaints any longer. We have reached agreements on all issues they asked for," said the Head of the Belarusian State.

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President Aleksandr Lukashenko touched upon the question that concerns everyone in his New Year's address to compatriots: will Belarus remain an island of security

# ‘Everything in our life will depend on every one of us. And on all of us together.’

The past year 2022, which was declared the Year of Historical Memory in Belarus, was not easy and controversial, the President noted.

“We may have felt a threat to the calm and safe life we are used to even to a greater degree than before. We started worrying more about our kids, family members, friends, and even started thinking about the fate of humanity. We came to more acutely recognise the value of peace in the native land, which became the key accomplishment of the year for us,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

Also, according to the Belarusian leader, the year 2022 became a year of political choice,

**“Belarusians responded with unity in defence of their historical memory, their principles and traditions.”**

Everyone, who takes the fate of the native country to heart, took part in the discussion of the New Constitution and determined the future of Belarus.”

And certainly the year 2022 went down in history as a year of fruitful labour, “We gathered in a record-high harvest of cereals — more than a tonne per capita. We secured our own food supply, fed millions of inhabitants of the planet and earned over Br20 billion by exporting food. We built new clinics, hospitals, schools, kindergartens, bridges and roads — over 50 large-scale projects. Furthermore, we bolstered energy security. Belarusians will not have to spend their last ruble to pay for electricity and heating, which are becoming luxuries for our neighbours. We preserved jobs and the social orientation of the economy — everyone, who needed aid, got it.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted the



contribution of representatives of various fields of activity to the development of our country and strengthening its security, “Despite trials of the outgoing year a lot of good things happened to us. We created new products and penetrated new markets at a time when we were being choked with sanctions.

**Borders were closed for us while we rediscovered our country of Belarus...**

We learned more about the native land and became more proud of it. We responded with trust and friendship to those, who fence themselves off from us. Hundreds of thousands of citizens of the European Union came to Belarus without visas and without hindrances. We took in refugees from hot spots, gave them shelter and jobs. We welcomed new citizens into our family.

**Belarus has been and will remain a hospitable and friendly country. A country open to everyone, who takes our values and traditions to heart, who genuinely falls in love with the coun-**

**try and wants to call themselves Belarusians... This year we've seen how small our spacious world is. Starting a conflict in one country is enough for the entire planet to run a fever.”**

The President also added, “I know you want to hear what happens next most of all. Will Belarus remain an island of security? I am sure this will be the key wish you will make at midnight. The answer is simple: everything in our life will depend on every one of us. And on all of us together. If we want to live in peace and security, then we have to first and foremost respect and appreciate work of the military, security, and law enforcement personnel, raise kids as patriots of their country, and observe the law. If we want to live in peace and prosperity, then we have to work a lot, honestly, and with due diligence. If we want to live in a free and independent state, then we have to safeguard and protect historical memory, spiritual values, and original traditions.”

## OFFICIALLY

**In order to consolidate the Belarusian people, strengthen the ideas of peace and creative work in society as the main conditions for the development of the Belarusian state, the President of the Republic of Belarus declared 2023 the Year of Peace and Creation. The Head of State signed the corresponding decree No. 1 on January 1st, 2023.**

The key areas of focus in the next year will be the improvement of the system of military and patriotic education, the promotion of peaceful initiatives of citizens and the public, the fostering of interfaith dialogue, the demonstration of the advantages of the Belarusian economic model in the context of global turbulence, the promotion of creative labour as the main condition for the development of the Belarusian state. Such themes will strengthen the perception of Belarus as an ‘island of peace’, the indisputable value of which is a weighty argument in favour of reaching agreement on other important issues of public life. Peaceful creative work of compatriots will be the Belarusian response to militarisation in the European region.

**On the last day of the past year, December 31st, the Belarus 1 TV channel aired an exclusive holiday episode of the Good Morning, Belarus! TV show, after watching which, viewers learned a lot of interesting things. The halls of the Palace of Independence, where TV presenters were able to ask the President's Press Secretary Natalya Eismont various questions, became the visiting studio of the show. One of them concerned the backstage preparations for the presidential New Year's address.**

“During the year, the President has a lot of remarkable, fundamental speeches, but on this magical night, which is really a frontier, which people are really waiting for and, all eyes are on the screen, it is very important to choose the most accurate words. But you need to include everything: to congratulate, to thank, to emphasise something, and to predict, perhaps, something, to place every, all the accents. After all, they really listen to every word, then analyse it for a very long time. Therefore, of course, the recording always takes place shortly before the New Year. Especially at the present time, when it is very difficult to do something in advance,” Natalya Eismont noted.

The Press Secretary said that several versions of New Year's addresses are being prepared, sometimes even a dozen, but it is the President who exclusively choose final version and final edits.

Answering the question about what events for the country turned out to be the most important in 2022, the spokeswoman said, “There were hundreds of events. Specifically, here, in the Palace of Independence, and also throughout the country. Lots of outdoor activities. A year of hard work. I would say so. **We held a referendum. And our people voted for the updated Basic Law of our country. This is the document that will determine the future of our country, of each of us for many years to come...** I would certainly call this event number one. And then I would first of all note that, despite everything that is happening around us, despite some incredible processes and events, the most important thing for us is that we really had the opportunity to just live and work all this year.”

Natalya Eismont voiced the top 5 statements of the Belarusian leader in 2022. The undisputed leader is the **‘Our strength is in unity, we have something to fight for, and we have something to lose’** statement.

Second quote: **‘Peace is an absolute value for Belarusians, and we need to preserve it’.**

The third statement from the main ones, and the President spoke about this more than once, is that **the formula is simple: everyone should mind their own business.**

Here are the two more popular quotes: **‘You can't spread dollars on bread’** and **‘Let's not let Europe freeze’.** With the latter, by the way, a big new project for chopping firewood among journalists and bloggers began.

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TV presenters of the show also visited the President's compound. Aleksandr Lukashenko has repeatedly said that cows, horses, goats, rabbits and even ostriches, exotic for our country, live there. Journalists have long wanted to see everything with their own eyes. And on the eve of the New Year, the President invited TV presenters from the main TV channel of the country to see everything. They were given a detailed tour of the farmstead, told how the animals are kept, as well as what part the Belarusian leader himself takes in this. The guests travelled on horseback and even milked a cow.

Cats also live in the courtyard. Some time ago, Aleksandr Lukashenko himself told during one of his working trips about how three kittens came to the farm, “Three kittens came to me. I gave them milk — they took root. Thus, there is no single mouse today.”

As it sounded in the video, there are a great many symbols of 2023 in the rabbitry at the presidential farmstead, including decorative ones: Californian, Burgundy, German angora rab-

bits, French sheep and others. The rabbit also lives here, which was presented to Aleksandr Lukashenko during his visit to the agro-town of Tikhinichi in the summer of 2021.

At the end, the journalists were in for a surprise — a meeting with Aleksandr Lukashenko. The President presented the girls with a rabbit and expressed such a wish, “I wish these rabbits live long with you. If the rabbit live this year, live well, then you will be fine.”

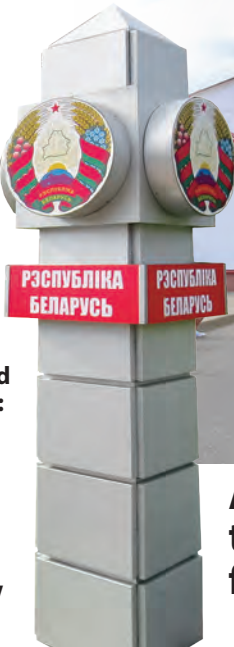


Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



# We welcome guests!

More than five months have passed since the introduction of visa-free travel for Polish citizens to Belarus, and more than nine months for guests from Lithuania and Latvia. This decision allows ordinary Europeans to exercise the right to visit our country without a visa an unlimited number of times and move around it without restrictions. The Belarusian initiative, as expected, aroused frank dissatisfaction on the part of a number of officials from neighbouring countries. The reason for this behaviour of both the Polish and Lithuanian sides is simple and understandable: the picture seen by the Europeans does not coincide with the ideological guidelines of Western state propaganda. The number of people wishing to visit our country has increased significantly with the introduction of a visa-free regime despite a number of bans that Poland and Lithuania now and then introduce to limit visits by European neighbours to Belarus. Seeing the interest on the part of the people, the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus made a proposal to the President to extend the visa-free regime. The Head of State supported the initiative. In confirmation of the openness of our country, focus on good neighbourliness and strengthening interethnic ties, it was decided to extend the visa-free regime.



## At the end of the past year, the President supported the extension of the visa-free entry to Belarus for citizens of Lithuania, Latvia and Poland

The reaction of the Polish Foreign Ministry to the introduction of a visa-free regime by Belarus followed very quickly: citizens were urged to refuse to travel to our country. In addition, Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Pawel Jablonski commented on the situation as follows, "If someone visits the country that treats Poland as an enemy, the person has to recognise the risk."

Western journalists were notably mocked about this topic, who sporadically published screamers in the popular media that people coming to Belarus were in real danger, and they were trying to recruit ordinary Europeans. The State Security Department of Lithuania also joined the process of harassment, which warned in a special appeal: attempts to recruit Lithuanian citizens while visiting Belarus have become more frequent... Belarusian visa-free travel was discussed even in the Lithuanian parliament in the context of threats to national security. True, intimidation and harassment did not weaken the desire of foreigners to visit Belarus.

**The rapid growth of Europeans arriving on a visa-free basis says more eloquently than words that the inhabitants of these countries do not particularly trust their politicians. And those, in turn, become more and more angry, summon those who have been in our country for interrogations, conduct preventive conversations and threaten with security checks, deliberately create queues at checkpoints on state borders.**

biased attitude towards us from some neighbouring countries.

**On the contrary, our country introduced a visa-free entry procedure to Belarus from April 15th, 2022, for citizens of Lithuania, Latvia (as well as persons with the status of a non-citizen of Latvia), and from July 1st, 2022, — for citizens of Poland at a time when the embassies of European countries stopped issuing Schengen visas and began to restrict entry for Belarusians and Russians.**

No one in Minsk concealed that this step would allow the residents of these countries to get an objective idea of Belarus, its politics and economy, to get to know the culture of the people better. For Europeans, in turn, visa-free travel has become an opportunity to freely see friends and relatives, visit once-native places, as well as use the services of so-called medical tourism, buy food and fuel at an affordable price, visit cemeteries during important holidays.

Despite the attacks from the Western neighbours, Belarus intends to continue the policy of openness, as evidenced by the decision to extend the visa-free regime. Moreover, our country is going to simplify the procedure for obtaining a residence permit for representatives of the Baltic countries and Poland with Belarusian roots. Most of the applications from citizens of these countries with a request for permission to permanently reside in Belarus have already been satisfied.

However, not only ethnic Belarusians decided to connect their future life with our country.

By Yevgeny Kononovich, Maksim Osipov

### European authorities dislike visa-free travel

To begin with, it is worth noting that the Belarusian visa-free regime did not actually appear out of nowhere and was introduced back in pre-COVID-19 times. It was then that Belarus allowed citizens from 80 states to fly to our country without a visa. During this time, the hospitality and openness of the republic were not affected by either the COVID-19 pandemic, nor the difficult political situation in 2020, nor the openly hostile and

During the visa-free regime, almost **370,000** citizens of the European Union have visited Belarus.



Citizens of Lithuania — more than **70 percent**,



Latvia — about **20 percent**,



Poland — **10 percent.**



### We opened wide the doors to the neighbours

Despite frankly absurd statements and reproaches from European politicians that the decision to introduce a visa-free regime was politically motivated, all of a sudden, the flow of visitors to Belarus began to grow sharply. Lithuanians are more willing to use the offer of the Belarusian side. It is more difficult for Poles to come to us: there are long queues at the border, provoked by the decisions of the Polish authorities.

Evidence of this is the growing flow of foreigners crossing the border without visas, their positive feedback on the work of all services on the borders of our country and, in general, on Belarusian hospitality, order and safety on the streets of our cities and villages. Journalists of *SB.Belarus Segodnya* more than once went to checkpoints during these months, talked with foreign travellers, asked them for their impressions and purchases.

**"We communicate with relatives from Brest and know perfectly well that everything is calm here and there is no danger for us. We see everything with our own eyes," a Polish traveller from Biala Podlaska expressed his opinion.**

According to him, Poles often travel to Belarus for medical purposes. In particular, to the Brest Regional Clinical Hospital and the city consultative polyclinic, which, among other things, provides cosmetology services. True, the growth of medical tourism is constrained by many hours of waiting at the border.

In an interview with reporters, **a resident of the Latvian Riga Marina** noted that she and her husband had a time bucket for four days, that is, free time, and they used the opportunity to visit Minsk, **"We are absolutely delighted! I liked the city, clean and beautiful, people — they have good, friendly faces. You even have something good in the air. Not at all like ours."**

Marina says that her family loves Belarusian products in general, and she herself loves Belarusian cosmetics. In confirmation, she shows a large bag with products of our brands.

**Visiting her small homeland, Shchuchin District, together with her family in mid-July, a resident of Latvia Irina, told, "Many of our acquaintances, especially young people, use the visa-free regime, and when they return to Latvia, they talk about Belarus with admiration. The reason for the trip is wonderful: the son of my younger sister got married. But a few months ago, the whole family would not have been able to take a walk at the wedding, the visa-free regime facilitated the meeting."**

**Jonas of Lithuania** visited Belarus for the first time — taking advantage of the fact that a visa is not needed, he spent a week in a rest house near Minsk, **"I managed to see a little, but I saw everything — I liked everything. There was completely different information on our TV. They explain that everyone drives Moskvich in Belarus, everything is destroyed and so on. They scare us: there are terrible people, it is not known what can happen to you. In fact, everything is not so. The station in Minsk is chic, the roads are good, the villages are well-groomed. Visa-free is a very good opportunity, I will come to Belarus again. If only it would be easier to cross the border with a car..."**

### IT IS A FACT

Since the beginning of the visa-free regime,



more than **130 Lithuanian citizens** have applied for

a temporary residence permit in Belarus, and **36 citizens** have applied for a residency, that is, a permanent residence permit.



Among the citizens of Latvia, there are **64** and **30** such applicants, respectively,



Estonia — **14** and **6**.



As for Poland, whose citizens freely enter our country from July 1st, **15 people** requested a temporary residence permit and **one** for a permanent one.



# Allied task matrix

Joint response to sanctions, deepened industrial co-operation, strengthening security and new projects: let us analyse the economic results of Belarusian-Russian co-operation in 2022

The year 2022 will go down in history as a time of strength testing for the Union State. The most severe illegitimate pressure from the collective West actually aimed to undermine the independence of Belarus and Russia. Sanctions, all sorts of restrictions and the closure of markets, as conceived by overseas arbiters of destinies, should have led to the collapse of the integration association. In fact, all the restrictions only served as a trigger for closer co-operation between the fraternal countries. The closure of certain markets has provided new opportunities for Belarus and Russia. The result is record figures for mutual trade and emerging joint projects worth billions of Russian rubles.

By Vladislav Sychevich,  
Yevgeny Kononovich

## Budget calculation

At the end of the past year, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia adopted the draft budget of the Union State for 2023. The revenue part of the budget will amount to 5 billion 966 million Russian rubles. It will be formed at the expense

of contributions from Belarus and Russia, as well as unused balances of the union budget for 2022. The expenditure part is planned in the amount of 5 billion 67 million Russian rubles. The surplus will amount to 899 million Russian rubles. 78 percent of the budget in 2023 will be directed to the implementation of four programmes of the Union State, including in the space

sector and the development of new fibre optic technologies, as well as 33 events. Another four draft programmes are in a high degree of readiness. They concern issues of border security, improvement of military infrastructure facilities of the Union State, as well as the fight against infections and viruses. If they are adopted, the funds of the budget surplus will be sent for implementation.



Yury Mozolevsky



Pavel Orlovsky



Andrey Sazonov

ACCENT

Belarus and Russia plan to reach the volume of mutual trade in the amount of **\$50 billion** in equivalent according to the results of 2022.



Belarus' exports to Russia amounted to more than **\$18 billion** for the ten months of 2022.

About **400** contracts and about **650** interregional agreements have been signed between Belarus and Russia.



Russia has provided Belarus with a loan in the amount of **105 billion** Russian rubles for import-substituting projects.



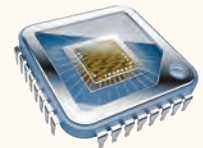
There are **2,240** organisations operating in Belarus with the participation of Russian capital.

Last year alone, more than **70 delegations** of various levels from Russia visited Belarus.



Belarusian food products are sold in **77 regions** of the Russian Federation.

Russia is the main market for Belarusian microelectronics manufacturers, accounting for up to **90 percent** of exports from Belarus.



Belarus and Russia are not inferior to the leading economies of the world and surpass all other countries of the former USSR in the food security rating of the countries of the world.

Belarus is getting rid of dollars and euros in its gold reserves, focusing on **Russian rubles and Chinese yuan**.



President's instruction translated into reality: first Belarusian laptop joined the market

## 'H' means good!

Belarus-made Horizont laptops have gone on sale in the country

A solemn ceremony of the start of sales has taken place on December 22nd, at Minsk's Galleria Shopping Mall. The Belarusian product immediately captured the attention of all those present. Anyone can now look at the new Belarusian laptop, get professional advice from Horizont specialists and purchase a device.

"The creation of a Belarusian laptop was the President's instruction, and it has been carried out in full. Minsk congratulates the Horizont enterprise on the start of mass production of its new product. This is very important, this is import substitution. We have extensive plans related to [laptop] sales on the Russian market and, of course, in Belarus. Minsk supports all the enterprises that are demonstrating development," Nadezhda Lazarevich, the Deputy Chairperson of the Minsk City Executive Committee, noted.

As informed by Yuri Predko, the General Director of Horizont Holding Management Company JSC, the first Belarusian laptop is entering the market in the H-book MAK4 model. He stressed that the domestic development had been



Aleksey Vyazmitinov

created on the basis of advanced experience and technology, so it is comparable to famous brands in terms of quality and productive capability.

"The H-book MAK4 hardware basis has been developed on Intel Core processors of the 11th generation, ensuring uninterrupted operation and high performance both in office and at home,

and when performing tasks of high system load, while maintaining exceptional autonomy," Mr. Predko added.

The CEO noted that a large team of designers, engineers, developers, circuit engineers, programmers, production workers and marketers with international

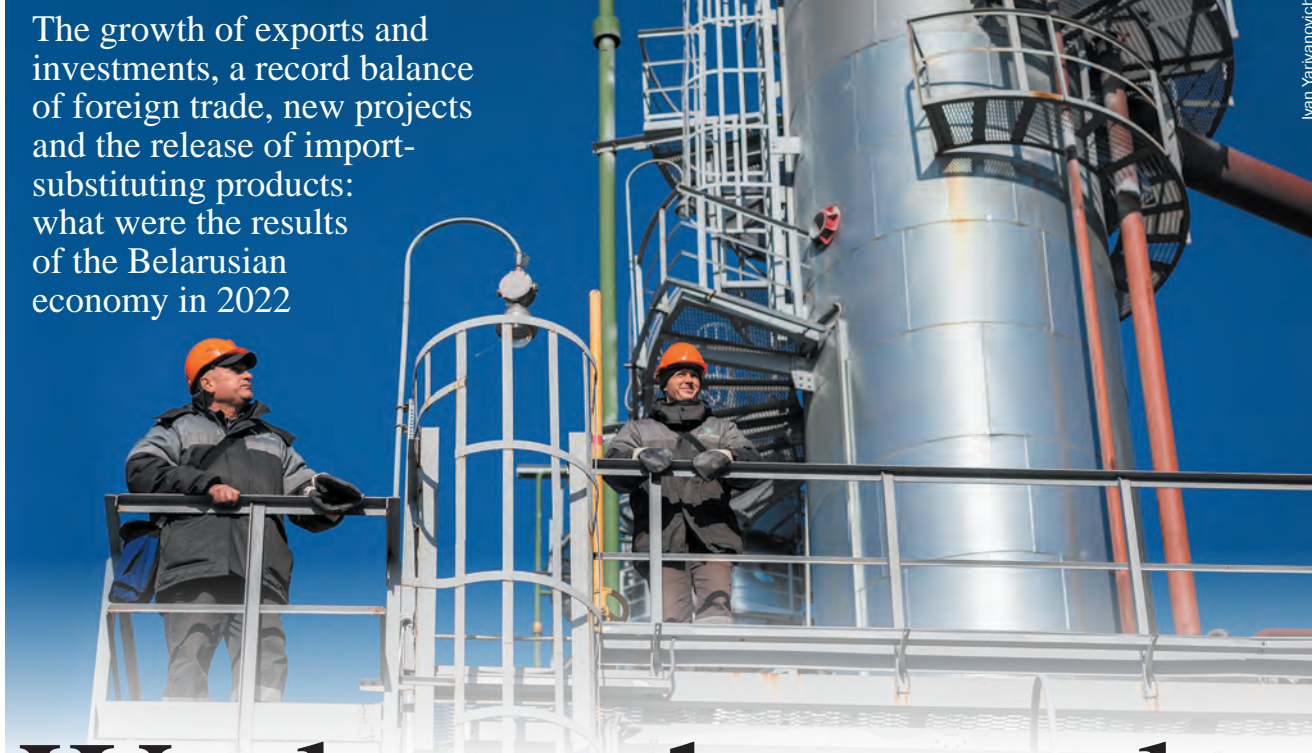
experience joined their efforts to create the Belarusian laptop.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, presented the first domestic laptop on September 1st, 2022, during an open lesson.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



The growth of exports and investments, a record balance of foreign trade, new projects and the release of import-substituting products: what were the results of the Belarusian economy in 2022



Ivan Yarinovich

# Work on the result

**2022 went down in the history of the Belarusian economy as a year of challenges. Before the country had time to recover from the shocks caused by the pandemic, the leadership of the state had to quickly take measures and respond to colossal external pressure from the collective West. Sure thing: is it possible to forgive the path without destroying the economy, introducing quarantine, making decisions to please the collective West and the United States? Geographical position, order, social programmes and many more of our accomplishments — all this is an irritating factor for aggressive forces and serves as a pretext for imposing sanctions. But these restrictions are in vain.**

By Vladislav Sychevich

## Despite sanctions

At the beginning of 2022, unfriendly countries and individual so-called experts predicted a collapse for the Belarusian economy. However, the results of the work show that this is not the case at all. Indeed, of course there were some problems, no one hid them. But with the help of the measures taken by the executive and legislative authorities, it was possible to prevent a decline in economic development. The results of the work show that there has been an increase in GDP in recent months.

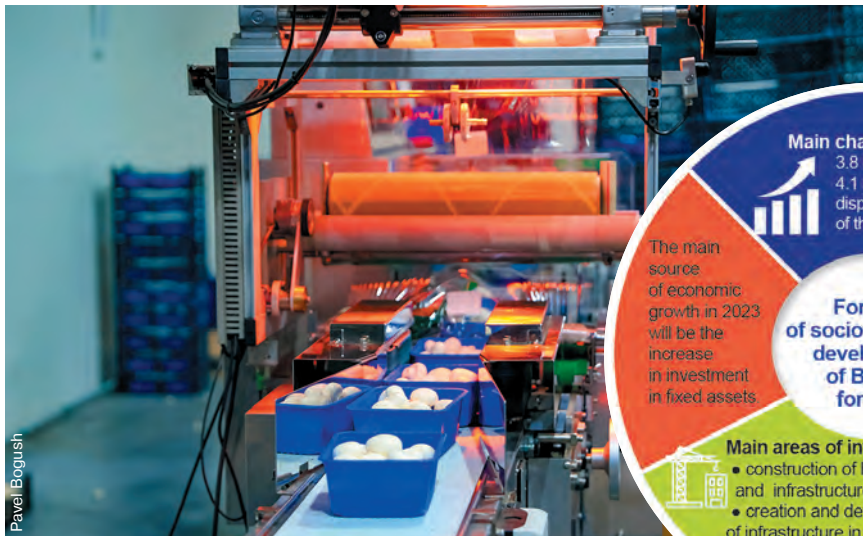
for foreign currency. The term deposits of the population in Belarusian rubles are growing. Effective measures to reorient and support exports made it possible to obtain a record balance of foreign trade — more than \$4.5 billion, increase the export of investment and consumer goods, compensate for more than 85 percent of the loss of exports in the markets of unfriendly countries and Ukraine.

*“The population practically did not feel the sanctions pressure. Wages increased by 13 percent in nominal terms. At the end of the year, we estimate that it should exceed Br1,620.*

*This concerns decisions on the transshipment of Belarusian cargo through Russian ports. Russia helps us as much as possible with infrastructure. The participation of Belarusian investors in the formation of infrastructure for transshipment of cargo to sea vessels in the North-West region of the Russian Federation is being worked out.*

Also, co-operation has been established between the countries on the issue of increasing the supply of 104 commodity items of Belarusian exports to the Russian market to compensate for the falling export volumes, which were previously carried out to unfriendly countries.”

In September 2022, an intergovernmental agreement was signed on the mutual recognition of technological operations



Pavel Bogush

Belarusian Economy Minister Aleksandr Chervyakov notes, “The key achievements of the past year are related to the fulfilment of the tasks set for the top-down command structure by the Head of State.

*Despite the unprecedented sanctions of the collective West, our enterprises did not stop and continued to work. Moreover, they increased production volumes. Net profit increased by almost a billion rubles compared to last year. Profitability of sales also increased.*

All this was the result of the joint work of the government, the management of enterprises, which allowed our flagships to quickly rebuild their business processes and reorient themselves to new markets.”

Citizens see that there is no cause for concern — the state clearly performs its functions, including those of a social nature. The government, together with the National Bank, has carried out work to stabilise the situation in the country’s financial market. There is no rush demand

Store shelves are not empty. Utility bills did not grow heavy: tariffs for heat and electricity remained the same. Finally, we managed to curb inflation,” Economy Minister emphasised.

## Incentive for the development

By the way, experts interpret the sanctions as an additional impetus and incentive for the implementation of import-substituting projects in the country, as well as diversification of export flows. Economist Mikhail Kovalev notes that illegitimate restrictions from the West served as a kind of trigger for greater integration of Belarus and Russia, “Foremost, we must pay tribute and recognise the efficiency of our government and the government of Russia, not only in terms of developing a strategy and roadmap for the work of our two economies under sanctions pressure, but also in making quite important decisions in logistics.



Ivan Yarinovich

**“The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*“A solid economy is a guarantee of stability in the Belarusian society. The task is the following: our performance should not be worse than last year’s. We should hold out whatever the cost. If we do not want to fight (everyone has children), if you do not want our children to take up arms to defend our sovereignty and independence, we must have a strong economy.”*

**During the meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss the functioning of the country’s economy under sanctions and measures to overcome them on August 9th, 2022**

*complex approaches to price regulation are rarely used in world practice. But, as they say, the game was worth the candle. Deflation has been observed in the country for the third month already. Experts are confident that by the end of the year inflation will be 12-13 percent.*

At the same time, they specify: if it were not for the external situation, then there were all the prerequisites for reaching the set parameters of 5 percent. Domestic factors do not play a significant role in inflation. The macroeconomics is balanced, the foreign exchange market is balanced, the Belarusian ruble has been strengthening against a basket of currencies throughout the year. That is, there were no internal pro-inflationary factors. All this is the so-called imported inflation.

## Assignment for tomorrow

The forecast for the socio-economic development of the country for 2023 was formed on the basis of the target task — reaching the parameters of economic growth provided for by the programme of socio-economic development for the five-year period. Presidential Decree No. 411 of November 28th, 2022, established the following key parameters for 2023: growth of gross domestic product — 103.8 percent, growth of real disposable money income of the population — 104.1, investments in fixed capital — 122.3, growth in exports of goods and services — 105.5 percent.

*Increased investment in fixed assets will be the main source of economic growth next year. To achieve the projected growth of the economy, exports are planned in the amount of \$47.7 billion with a growth rate of 105.5 percent. As a result, the positive balance of foreign trade will amount to \$1.6 billion.*

This will ensure a sustainable balance of payments, will have a positive impact on maintaining the country’s economic security at the proper level. In general, the nominal accrued average monthly wage in the economy will reach Br1,938, in the public sector — 1,454 rubles.

Monetary policy will be focused on slowing down inflation to the level of 7-8 percent and maintaining financial stability.

## Reduce price wants

Let us remember that the Head of State signed Directive No. 10 ‘On banning price rises’ in October. Then the government introduced the regulation of prices for goods of the commodity bundle.

*Experts point out that this was quite extraordinary decision, such*



# Almost like in Grimms' Fairy Tales

What will the coming 2023 bring us: next cataclysms — natural, social, economic, military — or is there still hope for world peace? Investment funds, banks and think tanks made the top forecasts for 2023. We study the main trends that will determine the development of the countries of the collective West and not only.

By Aleksei Avdonin, an analyst with the Belarusian Institute of Strategic Research

## Forecast No. 1. Technological

It is highly likely that major Western banks and corporations will jointly implement a new Third Stone project, which should allow the countries of the collective West to rise above other states, primarily Russia and China.

Most likely, we are talking about the development of the so-called artificial Sun (thermonuclear fusion facility), which will allow generating huge flows of heat and electricity without any restrictions. They, in turn, will power numerous data centres to create super-powerful artificial intelligence based on them with unprecedented speeds and capabilities.

Previously, US officials have openly stated more than once that in order to maintain the leadership of American corporations for the next 100 years, it is necessary to independently conduct research in the field of thermonuclear fusion. The rest of the countries and regions of the United States will create problems in the form of permanent wars, conflicts, revolutions, economic ruin and social disasters.



## Forecast No. 2. Financial

In such circumstances, in the coming year 2023, there will be further destruction of the global financial system, devaluation of national currencies, a sharp rise in prices and a significant increase in the cost of monetary gold to \$3,000 per troy ounce.

General distrust will lead to an increase in the militarisation of regions, primarily European countries, naturally, in favour of US defence corporations. Key countries and organisations of the world, such as Russia, China, India, OPEC+, will withdraw from the pro-American international structures — the IMF, the World Bank, thereby undermining the foundations of US hegemony.

In return, these states will be guided by the creation of their own interregional financial, economic organisations and security structures. This will lead to the strengthening of the role of regional blocs and their means of payment (national currencies). Our President also spoke about this at the EAEU summit in Bishkek on December 9th, 2022.

## Forecast No. 3. Protectionist

Western countries will continue to close themselves off from the rest of the world with increased protectionism in 2023, focusing on the concept of the 'tree with the golden apples'. So, in May next year, the EU will start operating the ESS system — a system for monitoring and recording the entry/exit of people into/out of the EU (an additional control and security system in the EU).

And already in November 2023, the ETIAS system will start working in the EU. Now entry into the European Union will be paid — €7 per person. If one wants to get from the jungle to the garden — one has to pay!



## Forecast No. 4. Conflict

Experts predict a shift in the points of conflict of key centres of power from the European (Ukraine) and Asian regions (Taiwan) to Africa. On December 20th, The Hill wrote that the United States could immediately abandon Ukraine, as they did with Afghanistan. Abandon Kiev to confront China and Russia on the African continent for rare earth metals and radioactive minerals.



## Forecast No. 5. Chinese

China will gradually increase and restore economic growth rates, displacing European and American counterparts in the main markets with its products after the lifting of restrictions on the control of COVID-19 cases. This will lead to increased consumption of liquefied gas and an even greater increase in prices for it.



Analysts predict that a 7 percent increase in demand for gas in China will certainly exacerbate the global energy crisis on the entire planet and hit Europe hardest of all, which clearly chose the wrong time to abandon Russian energy carriers.

## Forecast No. 6. Starving

According to the RAND Corporation, the problem of hunger will be one of the key issues on the agenda of world powers and organisations in 2023.

The sanctions policy of the West in 2020-2022 has already led to failures in the traditional ways of supplying fertilisers and, as a result, to a drop in soil fertility and a decrease in crop yields.

In the past year, we saw that the grain deal did not lead to a reduction in the level of hungry in African countries. Most of the grain from Ukraine was sent to the European commodity exchanges, which made good money through speculation.

Due to food shortages in Europe itself, mass food riots are not ruled out this winter/spring.



## Forecast No. 7. Cold

The coming year can be called the year of cold. The forced refusal of European countries from Russia's energy resources has led to a shortage and high prices in Europe for motor fuel, electricity and heat.

The political and business establishment of European countries, through propaganda, has imposed on its citizens a belief in hopelessness and the need to endure cold and lack of electricity.

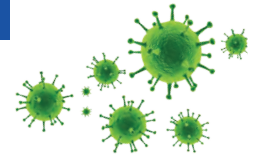
The impossibility of the European economy to quickly adjust to the use of liquefied gas in the absence of pipeline gas supplies from Russia plunges the Old World into an 'Ice Age', actually returning it to the domestic and economic Middle Ages. Under such conditions, there will be an increase in contradictions within the European Union, which will inevitably affect the stability of the currency and the unity of the union itself.

## Forecast No. 8. Viral

Cold, famine, war and poverty always go along with deadly diseases.

2023 may become the year of the so-called old diseases of mankind (malaria, cholera, typhoid, smallpox), as well as the year of new, previously unknown viruses or bacteria (biological weapons).

At the same time, the 'battle of viruses with humanity' will be fought all over the world, especially in the US control zones — Afghanistan, Ukraine, the EU. So, on December 20th, the Tolo News channel already reported an outbreak of an unknown disease in the Afghan province of Zabul.



## Forecast No. 9. Catastrophic

This year, an increase in the number of 'grey swans' is predicted: earthquakes, floods, landslides, tsunamis, hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Man-made disasters (pipeline explosions, oil spills, etc.) will be added to natural chaos. At the same time, the events of 2022 showed the readiness of Western countries to carry out terrorist attacks against energy and transport infrastructure.

Under these conditions, the states and their control systems will enter a state of constant testing, which will cause the weakening of states and the immersion of territories in a state of 'war of all against all'.



## Forecast No. 10. Fair

2023 could be the year of justice. The devaluation of the US post-war institutions of security and international law will accelerate the process of creating new structures and institutions of 'more equitable global governance'.

On December 21st, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that China is ready to move closer to Russia for the sake of such new forms of governing humanity on planet Earth. The destructive, hostile, aggressive policy of the West creates threats of the destruction of all mankind or its return to the prehistoric period (after a nuclear war). The aggression of the West will be restrained, and it will be given a legal assessment.



As we can see, Western forecasts are like *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, scary and gloomy. Such assessments of the future are often aimed at creating an internal conviction among opponents that such negative prophecies will indeed come true.

However, we should not take these assessments of the future for granted. No, we, Belarusians, see everything differently: our task is peace, order and prosperity in our land. But for this we need to work, become economically strong and follow our own way.

The events of 2020-2022 showed the veracity of such statements: the West prophesied ruin, economic collapse and social disasters for us, but, despite sanctions, provocations and pressure, we are developing and becoming stronger. Therefore, the main approach to be followed in assessing the future is that there is no future. We do it ourselves every day. The future is today!





# Major gas hub project underway

**Russia and Türkiye have started practical implementation of the gas hub project**

Ankara and Moscow have already begun to work on the implementation of the project to create a gas hub in Türkiye, Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller said.

“Now, together with Türkiye we have started working on a gas hub project in this country. This decision was made at the level of the leaders of the two states, and we have already begun its practical implementation,” he noted.

The gas hub will ensure transparent and fair pricing in the natural gas market, Mr. Miller said.

“The global gas market will develop rapidly, and according to the long-term forecast, consumption will grow by 20 percent in the next two decades. Therefore, of course, we are thinking about the future, we are thinking about our new projects, we are thinking about energy security,” Gazprom CEO added.



# ‘Once-in-a-generation storm’

US authorities continue to assess the dire consequences of a colossal winter storm. Extreme weather has caused widespread power outages, a Christmas traffic collapse and at least sixty deaths across the country.

The storm has caused road closures and forced the cancellation of thousands of domestic flights at one of the busiest travel times of the year.

Thousands homes and businesses nationwide were without power Christmas Eve, thanks to an Arctic blast and winter storm that tore down power lines with destructive winds and heavy snow and dipped temperatures dangerously low.

The snowfall pummeling western New York is called lake-effect snow, which occurs when cold air moves

across the Great Lakes and forms cloud bands that can produce 2-3 inches of snow per hour.

Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz called the city of Buffalo ‘impassable’, detailing numerous abandoned cars scattered across roads in all directions. In hardest-hit areas, many emergency crews that tried to reach the stranded became stuck themselves, Poloncarz said. He also added that 100 military police personnel worked with New York State Police to manage traffic control and get people off the roads.

“We’re used to snow here, we can handle snow,” Poloncarz said. “But with the wind, the blinding views — it was complete whiteouts — and the extreme cold, it was some of the worst conditions that any of us have ever seen.”

Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown called the blizzard ‘a very devastating and difficult storm’.

“This has been called a generational storm — a once-in-a-generation storm,” Brown said. “It’s unlike anything that even the city of Buffalo is used to getting.”



# France has introduced vouchers for firewood

**Residents of France are able to receive a check for the purchase of firewood for heating their households — as reported by the French edition of *Ouest France***

French residents who use logs, wood chips or pellets to heat their homes can now receive between €50 and €200 from the government to help them cope with the energy crisis.

The ‘exceptional energy voucher’ programme launched on December 27th is designed to help lower-income families survive the winter as the price of firewood has risen by 30 percent this year, officials said.

Funds can be received by applying online through a government-run website. The sum depends on the family’s income, the size of the house-

hold, and the type of fuel used.

The French parliament allocated €230m last December to aid people struggling to buy firewood. At least 2.6 million households are eligible for the programme, according to the Economy Ministry.

Similar vouchers were introduced in November 2022 for households using heating oil, with families eligible for aid between €100 and €200. Like many other EU member states, France has rolled out an energy-saving scheme seeking to avoid shortages and power outages during the winter season.

# ‘East is rising and West declining’

Nearly 80 percent find current global economic order unfair — according to *The Global Times* poll

*The Global Times* released the second part of the annual survey that covered participants from 33 countries, which showed that most participants from Western countries are unsatisfied with the current development of their countries while those from China and many non-Western countries or emerging economies are more satisfied and optimistic about their future, and many participants, especially the ones from non-Western world, believe that China could be a role model for development and able to play a leadership role to guide global development.

Most participants from non-Western countries including China (72 percent), Saudi Arabia (75 percent), the United Arab Emirates (69 percent), Singapore

(67 percent), Vietnam (57 percent) and India (58 percent) are satisfied, while participants from Europe, as well as the US and its allies are mostly not satisfied.

How people think of their country’s development is an indicator that reflects how the overall governance of a country performs. The US’ irresponsible and selfish financial policy has impacted people’s daily lives around the globe. Europe has also felt great shock from rising energy bills after the breakout of Russia-Ukraine crisis, Gao Lingyun, an expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, said.

Following the trend of ‘the East is rising and the West is declining’, China’s development is bringing an outpouring of great opportunity for the world.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



# Trendy Nazism



Halloween 2022 in the American family. Aren't you afraid?



Hitler fan Kanye West and Donald Trump at the White House

By Anton Popov

## Root of all evil

Nazism was not only a consequence of the dissatisfaction of some participants with the results of the World War I, but was also an organic product of capitalist society. The failure of the geopolitical ambitions of a number of states of the Old World, which were hatching plans for revenge, the nationalist frenzy that began to gain momentum back in the era of nation-building in the 19th century and reached its peak during the global clash of peoples, caused a pan-European dream of reason. And it gave birth to a monster — Nazism.

Everyone knows how the global 'fascist experiment' ended last time: almost 60 million lives, colossal destruction, and the transformation of the main beneficiary of the war, the United States, into one of the two superpowers. Germany, on the other hand, was waiting for denazification, which, however, did not become a panacea for the revival of fascism: it was carried out carelessly in Trizonia, which was under the control of the Americans, the British and the French. Of course, the main Nazi criminals went to the scaffold, but millions of low-ranking figures escaped punishment. Many of them even began to return to work in 1949 after the creation of the FRG, and the faces of Nazi bosses periodically flashed even in the government of the first chancellor Konrad Adenauer — there were desperately not enough specialists in public work, and no one could come up with a smarter move than to return to system of former functionaries of the Third Reich.

## He Who Must Be Named

The Nazi ideology was banned for many years, at least formally — walking the streets at night with torches and shouting a well-known slogan was not *comme il faut*, and the near-literary opus of one Austrian corporal was treated with caution. But on the other hand, in the past few decades, restrictions — not so much legislative as moral — have been seriously weakened, and Nazism has turned from a universal scarecrow and something that cannot be repeated into a completely ordinary ideology, which a significant part of society (and especially young people) perceives quite calmly.

*Moreover, the image of Hitler, one of the bloodiest dictators in history, was transformed first into an Internet meme, and now even some opinion leaders say that the killer of 60 million actually was a nice guy.*

Historical memory is a very capricious lady. As soon as you stop paying attention to her, she leaves you. Fortunately, in Belarus they understood this in time and make every effort to know and remember our past.

## From devil to comedian

Nazism cannot be forgotten — the atrocities of the criminals, committed under the spider swastika, left too deep a mental wound in the collective self-consciousness of the entire civilisation.

*However, the lack of a correct interpretation of the causes and consequences of the planetary catastrophe gave rise to a specific phenomenon, which in Germany itself is known as Hitler's Kitsch. Its essence is to use the image of a dictator to attract the attention of the audience, and Hitler can be portrayed both in a caricature style and in a completely ordinary, and even with a certain degree of sympathy.*

How the ideas of Hitler and his clique become a popular trend in the West

So, back in the mid-1980s, the *Stern* magazine published allegedly the diaries of the Fuhrer. Of course, such a historical document never existed, but the circulation of the publication increased dramatically. Following this, Western Europe was embraced by real Hitler mania — films were made about the main Nazi, new books appeared. Among them were both serious studies and a product aimed at attracting the attention of the audience: the authors of such masterpieces talked about the beloved dog of the 'fascist murderer', his mistresses, family, and associates. The information was presented in an emphatically neutral way, and the audience gradually began to see Hitler as a man with his own oddities, but not the fiend of evil that he really was.

The next step was to expand the Overton window to introduce the paradigm that the Fuhrer was, in principle, not the worst figure in the rich German history. From the expressive comic character, which Hitler appeared in the *Adolf, the*

strating contempt for death and icy Aryan calmness with their whole appearance. This image has migrated almost unchanged to modern Western cinema and the video game industry. The Nazi aesthetic, known from the films of Leni Riefenstahl and the works of lesser-known glorifiers of German fascism, has become firmly ingrained in the minds of too many to be written off as eccentric hobbies. So, for example, the global network is full of videos from last Halloween, where the Americans and the British chose not witch rags or vampire costumes as a costume, but SS uniforms.

*They followed, so to speak, the example of Prince Harry, who showed up in a brown shirt of a Nazi stormtrooper with a characteristic bandage on his sleeve at one of the parties back in the mid-2000s.*

## Swastika over the horizon

The creeping fascisation of society and the rejection of the principle of realism in the depiction of the Nazis, it must be said, is bearing fruit. According to recent US polls, 36 percent of young Americans believe that 2 million or fewer Jews died in the Holocaust, when in fact the generally accepted number of victims is 6 million. However, one in ten does not know about the genocide of the Jewish people at all or denies it, and 19 percent of millennials and zoomers are sure that the Jews themselves are to blame for the massacre unleashed by the Nazis.

The leaders of public opinion in the West also pour oil in flames. World rap star Kanye West called himself a Nazi on the air of one of the shows, and spoke extremely positively about Hitler, "I see good things about Hitler. I love everyone. This guy invented the highway, invented the microphone that I use as a musician. You can't deny that he did something good. I'm tired of it. Every person has some value, especially Hitler. Even Hitler was a Christian. I like Hitler."



Ukraine. Torchlight procession.

*Nazi-Pig* satirical comic book by Walter Moers, the image of the leader of the Third Reich has evolved almost to a fighter for justice in today's Germany in the *Look Who's Back* film based on the novel by Timur Vermes, which was released screens in 2016. It is quite symptomatic that the picture was a success at the box office and received awards for the best German and European film in the year of release.

## 'Simple guys' from the SS

Of course, a kind of rehabilitation of Nazism would have been impossible if it had not had some external conditionally attractive image. In real life, fascist criminals were vile and mean people, but the ability to create a bright wrapper, which, even after 80 years, excites the minds of immature youth, does not occupy them.

The ceremonial newsreel of the Third Reich presents us with Nazi officers in the form of blond beasts in a perfectly fitting black uniform from Hugo Boss, demon-

*Following this, Ye, as the rapper now officially calls himself, accused the Jews of spoiling the Fuhrer's reputation because he 'expelled them from the country', and also demanded that the Israelis forgive the Nazi dictator.*

The fascisation of the modern West is somewhat reminiscent of the processes that led to the emergence of Nazism a century ago. The deep crisis of ideas, the awareness by Western elites of the gradual fading of their own power inevitably leads to a search for ways out. And judging by the latest trends, it was decided to stake on the reincarnation of fascism: somewhere, like in Ukraine or the Baltic countries, in its small-town format, and in such developed countries as Germany and the United States, the old, unkind classic Nazism is being revived with its chauvinism, anti-Semitism and Anti-Russian sentiment. More than 80 years ago, this led to the worst war in history. How will it all end today?



# To the 100th anniversary of the formation of the USSR

In Soviet times, new buildings would be handed over by such an anniversary date, they would report on the results of socialist competition, they would name streets, parks and collective farms. Now, the centennial anniversary of the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is passing much more modestly. And yet, even today, when a whole generation has grown up that did not find that great country, the memory of it is alive, and Soviet nostalgia does not go anywhere. What kind of amazing energy was born then, back in 1922? And how did the Soviet Union come into being?



By Ph.D. in History Vadim Gigin

## The issue of inter-ethnic relations

Critics of the Soviet system are trying to present the USSR as a banal reincarnation of the Russian Empire, only under the rule not of tsars, but of the Bolsheviks. Say, everything was decided by Moscow, the voice of the republics was not heard. To put it mildly, these are fakes.

*The Leninist Party, having come to power, sincerely tried to solve the issue of inter-ethnic relations. And in discussions they thought about how to arrange the life of all the peoples who inhabited Russia. Approaches have changed and evolved. This was clearly demonstrated by Stalin's textbook work Marxism and the National Question, published in 1913.*

In it, the future leader cited the example of Poland: Marx, for example, advocated its separation from Russia, but by the end of the 19th century, Polish Marxists were already against such a separation, seeing an alliance with the Russian proletariat as a guarantee of the victory of the revolution. At the same time, Stalin himself did not exclude the possibility that, given the changed situation, the question of independent Poland would again be on the agenda.

In any case, the Bolsheviks were not imperialists of any kind and stood for the self-determination of peoples, up to secession. They believed that then the international interests of the struggle for the rights of workers would still force them to agree to a state-political unification.

## The principle of voluntariness and equality

The term 'union' itself first appears in the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People, approved in January 1918 by the 3rd All-Russian Congress of Soviets. This document stated: 'The Soviet Russian Republic is based on the basis of a union of free nations, as a federation of Soviet national republics.' Then, in June 1919, the military union of the Soviet republics of Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus was formalised.

*The end of the Civil War, the gradual strengthening of the position of Soviet power in the international arena sharply raised the question of completing state-building in the former Russian Empire.*

The Genoa Conference was

a true breakthrough, which took place from April 10th to May 19th, 1922. At it, Soviet Russia represented the interests of eight more republics: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Bukhara, Georgia, Ukraine, Khwarazm and the Far Eastern Republic. So it was these states that could have originally established the Soviet Union. However, this did not happen. The Far Eastern Republic became part of the RSFSR, Transcaucasia was united into a federation. In Bukhara and Khwarazm, the military-political situation remained difficult. In addition, in tsarist Russia they had a separate status. Therefore, on December 29th, 1922, delegations from the Congresses of Soviets of the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the BSSR and the ZSFSR gathered in Moscow for a unification conference.

*When establishing a single union, it was emphasised that 'the union is to be based on the principle of voluntary consent and equal rights of the republics, each of which shall retain the right freely to secede from the Union of Republics'.*

On December 30th, the 1st Congress of Soviets of a new state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, opened at the Bolshoi Theatre. 1727 Russian delegates, 364 Ukrainian, 91 Transcaucasian and 33 Belarusian delegates adopted the Treaty and the Declaration on the Creation of the USSR. Each founding republic continued to be considered a sovereign state. For example, there has never been a criminal code of the USSR, but only of the Union republics. It was sovereign status which allowed the BSSR and the Ukrainian SSR to join the ranks of the founders of the UN.

## Belarusian political tradition

The attentive reader has noticed that our republic had the fewest delegates at the 1st Congress of Soviets of the USSR. Indeed, back then Belarus was the smallest constituent part of the Soviet Union. True, this did not last long. Consolidations in 1924 and 1926, and then the reunification of the western lands, corrected the situation. Be that as it may, it was Belarus that gained the reputation of being the Soviet republic itself. And quite rightly so.

*According to our political tradition, the idea of self-determination went hand in hand with the desire to live in a single union with Russia and other, primarily Slavic, countries.*



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

*"If the Soviet Union had survived, we could have avoided all sorts of conflicts in the world. The West and the United States always had to take the Soviet Union into consideration... With the Soviet Union, the world was multipolar, and one pole balanced the other. Now the reason for what is happening in the world is unipolarity, the monopolisation of our planet by the United States."*

During an interview with the Japanese TV channel TBS on March 17th, 2022

The formation of the BSSR was the result of the development of Soviet political thought, ideas about a new type of federation as a form of equal association of peoples. From the very proclamation of the Soviet republic, its founding fathers understood the inevitability of co-operation with other similar state entities. "Only by uniting and rallying into one working family, the workers and peasants of all countries where the proletarian revolution has won, will be able to carry the socialist banner across all of Europe and merge in a single Soviet Union with the workers and peasants — the working people of the whole world," stated the Declaration of the First All-Belarusian Congress of Soviets in February 1919.

*It is important to note here that at first the idea of such a union really meant the unification of people around the world. That is, the USSR was conceived as a planetary federation. It was a truly global project, the implementation of which was supposed to resolve all the accumulated centuries-old problems of mankind, including interethnic conflicts.*

## Loyalty to common ideas

Then the Belarusians repeatedly proved their loyalty to the ideas of a common union home. It was for a great common power that our ancestors fought during the Great Patriotic War. The 'For our Soviet Motherland!' slogan could be seen and heard everywhere. During the years of perestroika, many representatives of the Belarusian leadership resisted the destructive processes. It is worth recalling the bold and open position of Vladimir Brovnikov and Alexei Kamai, thousands of other communists and non-party Soviet people.

*Our fellow citizens also voted for the preservation of the USSR at a referendum in March 1991. Then the will of the people was ignored.*

However, it is no exaggeration to say that Aleksandr Lukashenko, who was elected President of Belarus in 1994, picked up the banner of a great power. Our State Emblem and Flag are a continuation of Soviet symbols. For many years Belarus has been the locomotive of integration in the post-Soviet space.



## Interesting facts about the USSR

- ▶ The Soviet Union covered an area of 22,400,000 square kilometres and was the largest country on the planet. The size of the USSR was comparable to the size of the mainland North America.
- ▶ 294 million people lived in the USSR by the time of its collapse.
- ▶ The Soviet Union ranked second in the world in terms of industrial output, behind only the United States, — 16.5 percent of the world's total.
- ▶ Athletes from the Soviet Union took part in 18 Olympics and won 1204 medals (473 gold, 376 silver and 355 bronze).
- ▶ At the time of 1988, the Soviet Union was in the top 10 countries of the world in terms of purchasing power, only slightly behind Italy, which largely determines the standard of living of the population.
- ▶ In the field of cosmonautics, the USSR for a long time was the most advanced state in the world. It was in the Soviet Union that the first launch of an artificial satellite (Sputnik-1, 1957), the first launch of a man into space (flight of Yuri Gagarin, 1961) and the first spacewalk in a spacesuit into outer space (Alexei Leonov, 1965) took place.
- ▶ It was the Soviet T-34 tank that was the most massive in the world, and it remains so to this day. By the way, at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, there were often not enough tanks, so sometimes tractors were sheathed with armour and equipped with light weapons. The crews called them NI-1, which meant Na ispug, literally 'for fright'.
- ▶ For all the years of its existence, the USSR participated in three wars — the Soviet-Finnish, the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet-Japanese. The Soviet troops won in all of them, so officially the Soviet Union never lost a single war.





# Champion of our hearts

Hero of Belarus Darya Domracheva talks about biathlon, family and the situation in the world

It is no secret that we all still miss her. Dasha is unique both on the track and in life, for which she is loved by a huge number of fans. Four titles of the Olympic champion, two world champions, the owner of the Big Crystal Globe and six small ones... But the main thing, perhaps, is still different: she is a happy wife and mother. Together with the great Norwegian biathlete Ole Einar Bjørndalen, they go through life together with the same confident victorious step: they raise their daughter Xenia, and do not forget about their favourite biathlon. They worked in China, where they were preparing the national team for the 2022 Olympics, and after... Well, what about after? In search of an answer, including to this question, the TEAM BY magazine, published by the NOC in close co-operation with Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, recently managed to talk with Darya Domracheva and asked her for an interview.



By Sergei Kanashits

— Recently, biathlon fans, and specifically yours, have lost sight of you a little, so please tell us about yourself: how did you spend your summer, what are your plans for the next year?

— My family and I spent all summer in Minsk, resting after a rather stressful period of work in China. Now I devote time to my family and my education. At the moment we live in Monaco, Xenia went to school, and this is a very important period in the life of a child and the whole family. For six years from the moment when my daughter was born, we could be quite mobile, I managed to combine professional sports activities and raising a child. Today, the daughter's school schedule obliges a lot, and the profession of a coach, as you know, is associated with frequent trips. I want to devote more time to Xenia's interests, so for the next year I do not set myself professional goals. But I am engaged in education, I study in the 'dietology and nutrition' specialty. As you know, healthy nutrition is a very important matter in sports. Over the years of my sports career, I have accumulated a lot of experience and knowledge in this direction, and now I want to expand the theoretical part a little more.

— How often do you visit Belarus?

— The last time we came to Minsk was during the autumn

holidays. For the winter we plan to go skiing to Norway.

— What does your spouse like most in Belarus, where does he like to go?

— We visited beautiful natural places, forests, lakes... We managed to visit the Mir and Nesvizh Castles, Ole and Xenia were there for the first time. But still, he knows Raubichi and Minsk the most.

— What dishes of Belarusian cuisine do you and your spouse both like? However, what is usually on the table when you prepare a family dinner yourself?

— We try to diversify our diet. We love to cook fish, turkey. We don't eat red meat very often. There will definitely be a lot of greens and vegetables on the table. Well, pizza is a dish that we love to cook with the whole family.

— How is your daughter Xenia doing? What is her hobby, what about skiing?

— As I already said, Xenia went to school, today a lot of new things happen for her during the day. In general, she loves to draw, she is great at writing stories that she asks me to write down from dictation, she enjoys climbing trees, roller-skating and cycling. In the winter, yes, she also skis a little.

— They say that children easily learn foreign languages. What languages does Xenia speak?

— Russian, Norwegian and

English. This, for sure, is a big advantage for a child when, without memorisation, but in an absolutely natural way, several languages are absorbed at once just because they are spoken and communicated with the child by mom and dad. Ole and I communicate in English, dad speaks Norwegian with Xenia, and I speak Russian.

— How satisfied were you with your work in China?

— We are satisfied with the work done in China, although we have not achieved our goals. We understand that athletes had every chance to achieve better results with stable work without many unplanned failures. A year and a half without competition for athletes of the level of the Chinese team was very noticeable in the results of all training.

— How would you rate the performance of the Belarusian team in Beijing?

— In my opinion, it was not the easiest Olympics for our athletes. In order to draw conclusions and put estimates, one need to have sufficient information about the preparation of teams in different sports and internal situations. I can only judge from the outside... In biathlon, Anton Smolski's silver is definitely a success! The girls, it seems to me, did not quite manage to cope with their emotions, we saw that they lacked quite a bit.

— In recent years, we have had world-class leaders in both the men's and women's teams, which has not been the case for a very long time...

— Strong men's and women's teams — this is good news! Probably, to some extent, the guys and coaches of both teams spur each other on. Of course, this is a double interest for the fans and, of course, a worthy example for the younger athletes.

It is important that today, in the absence of the opportunity to compete at the world level, athletes can remain motivated to train and perform. I think they'll manage with this pressure.

— Have you ever thought that you ended your career early and could still perform? Let's say another five years. Or like your spouse — up to 44.

— I think that I ended my sports career at the most opportune moment for me. After the end of my career, I still had enough

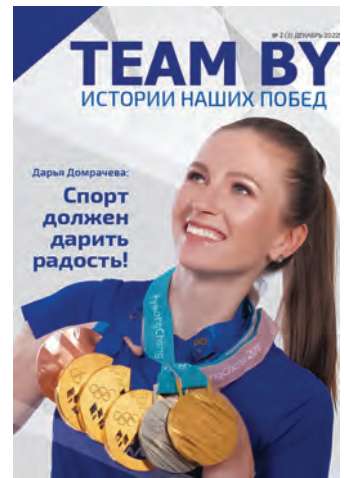
strength to continue, but, considering all the factors, I made the only right decision for myself.

— When was the last time you overcame the track at speed?

— Today I train almost every day, I enjoy the movement, the process, but I have no desire to turn on the stopwatch.

— Today, world sports and biathlon in particular are going through very difficult times: Belarusian and Russian athletes were excluded from international competitions for political reasons. You have already commented on this matter. Let me quote you: 'I consider it absolutely naive to believe that the removal of Belarusian and Russian athletes from international competitions will help resolve the conflict. In my opinion, such measures only contribute to inciting discord among people. Before talking about the global, let's start with ourselves, with our human qualities and our environment. We are sports people, let's start with sports. Sport has every chance to bring PEACE to the world, to unite rather than divide, to be fair and honest. I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity. I would like to see punishments, suspensions, disciplinary measures for specific violations of specific people. It is sad to read the comments of athletes supporting such measures, athletes who shook hands, clapped on the shoulder, congratulated each other when they hit the podium, discussed the difficult moments of the race, competed shoulder to shoulder, and today only kicks a colleague in the back to throw him out of the fight. Let's lead the way, maybe the world will be a better place.'

Has your opinion changed since then?



— I, like many, am at a loss that real hostilities are taking place these days, but, as before, I believe that the removal of athletes from racing does not in any way positively affect the resolution of the conflict. Today sport has been drawn into politics. I want to see a sport free from politics. Sports are great. Politics, in my opinion, not so much. I am sure that many athletes are already tired of this topic around them. Sport should unite, not vice versa.

— How often do you visit 'familiar territory': in Raubichi, Antholz, Östersund... Places, where you once performed?

— We spent the first part of last season with the Chinese team at the World Cup in all the places specified. I haven't been there since. But I will gladly come.

— Which World Cup event was your favourite and why?

— Antholz. Great place, just beautiful! And I was able to perform there successfully, almost every time, however, the atmosphere was perfect, the location was amazingly beautiful, the weather was almost always good and sunny.

— What feelings do you experience when you come to Raubichi?

— A huge number of hours of work have been spent in Raubichi, this is a wonderful sports complex with excellent track relief. What feelings? Feeling of power! As well as some nostalgia.

— Is it theoretically possible that Russia, Belarus and China will create their own biathlon tournament, which will allow them to perform at a high level and help athletes to fully realise their ambitions?

— Of course, this is possible. But Chinese athletes today have the opportunity to compete at the world level, and this opportunity for gaining experience and professional growth should not be missed.

— What are you dreaming about right now?

— I hope for peace on earth.

— Have you thought about writing a book about your path in biathlon, its inner workings and funny stories? Many people would be very interested.

— Well, perhaps I will implement this idea in the future.





Aleksandr Kulevsky

## Photo of the week

Little Belarusians born on New Year's Eve received gifts from the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko. Minsker Yulia Matyushevskaya gave birth to her daughter Valeria in the first minute of the new year.

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**January 7th** is Christmas for the eastern Christians — one of the most important Christian feasts and a public holiday in more than

100 countries around the world. In Orthodoxy, Christmas is celebrated on January 7th and is preceded by Advent. Christmas services are held in Orthodox churches on the night of 6th to 7th January. After Christmas, Big winter Christmas time comes — holy days or 12 days during which the feast is celebrated.

**On January 7th, 1610,** Galileo Galilei discovered the moons of Jupiter. He directed the 32-fold telescope he created to the sky and saw there not only the lunar landscape, mountain ranges and peaks, but also discovered the four largest satellites of Jupiter, which are now called the Galilean. Thanks to his discovery, which he described in the *Starry Messenger*, Galileo soon became the most famous scientist in Europe. To date, scientists know 79 satellites of Jupiter, among which the Galileans are the largest.



**On January 8th, 1851,** Physicist Jean Bernard Leon Foucault obtained proof that the Earth rotates thanks to the apparatus he designed. The device, later called the



Foucault pendulum, consisted of a five-kilogramme brass ball suspended from the ceiling on a steel wire 2 metres long. Having rocked

the ball, Foucault observed the rotation of its rocking plane by several degrees. The scientist concluded that nothing more than the rotation of the Earth is observed.

**On January 8th, 1942,** the Battle of Rzhev began — the fighting that took place during the Great Patriotic War from January 8th, 1942 to March 31st, 1943. Under this name, they conditionally combine 4 offensive operations that were carried out by the Soviet troops of the Western and Kalinin Fronts against the Army Group Centre in the Rzhev–Sychyovka–Vyazma direction. According to various sources, up to 2 million Soviet soldiers died on Rzhev land.



**January 9th** is International Choreographers Day. This holiday is dedicated to those people who carefully preserve and multiply the technique and plasticity of dance art, teaching it to future performers. The term

'choreography', which came into circulation in the 18th century, is of Greek origin and literally translated as 'recording of a dance, hopping, round dance', is the art of composing and staging a dance.

**On January 10th, 49 BC,** Gaius Julius Caesar (being a commander and governor in Gaul) approached the Rubicon, the boundary river of Rome, returning from Gaul he had conquered. By law, Caesar had to disband the army at the borders of Rome. Crossing the Rubicon, Caesar deliberately cut off his retreat, deciding to become the sole ruler of Rome. The expression 'to cross the Rubicon' has since become catchphrase, meaning the point of no return....



**On January 10th, 1863,** the world's first underground line opened in London. The London Underground is the oldest and one of the largest in the world. It now carries over a billion passengers a year. The London Underground network consists of 11 lines, it has 270 stations, and the length of the tracks exceeds 250 miles (more than 400 kilometres).



**January 11th** is International Thank You Day. Words of gratitude have magical properties — with their help, people give joy to each other, show attention and convey positive emotions.



**On January 12th, 1628,** Charles Perrault was born (1628-1703), a French writer, poet, art theorist and critic of the Classical era, member of the French Academy, one of the greatest French storytellers of all time. The author of the *Puss in Boots*, *Cinderella*, *Bluebeard*, *Donkey Skin*, *Sleeping Beauty* famous fairy tales and others. His fairy tales are still popular among children and adults around the world to this day. They were published in many translations and retellings, gave rise to successors and imitators.



**On January 12th, 1998,** the Protocol on the Prohibition of Cloning (Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine of April 4th, 1997) was opened for signing at the European Conference of National Committees on Bioethics in Paris — the first international legal document prohibiting human cloning.

