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INTERNATIONAL

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September 1st sees white hair bows for girls, bow ties for boys and excitement in the eyes of everyone

## Time to learn new things

On September 1st — the Day of Knowledge — the long-awaited first bell rang! In Belarus, 1 million 85 thousand schoolchildren have started the new academic year, including 118,000 first-graders. As is traditional, the academic year began with solemn assemblies. *The Unity of the Belarusian People is the Basis of an Independent Country* was the theme of the first lesson for all pupils — which is traditionally dedicated to our native country.

A total of 2,936 preschool education institutions and 2,940 general secondary schools will be operating in Belarus this academic year, including 7 newly-built schools. On September 1st, classes also began for thousands of pupils and students of lyceums, colleges and universities.



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# Education system: reset mode

The future of the education system, personnel training for the economy, the role of teachers in modern conditions: these and other topics the President discussed with the participants of the National Pedagogical Conference

**A large-scale pedagogical forum worked in the capital for two days. At its plenary session, the Head of State highlighted the most important issues in the development of the educational sphere, with strategic directions of its development until 2030 being in the limelight. Drawing attention to the situation last year, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, “We have learned our lessons. The events that occurred predetermined the importance of the issues that we want to discuss at the pedagogical conference. We have to reset the education system. Today it is a matter of national importance.”**



## On new challenges

About a thousand teachers, heads of educational institutions, Republican and local government bodies, as well as representatives of public associations and the trade union took part in the National Pedagogical Conference. The event became a kind of ‘brainstorming’: after the speech of the Head of State, those present were able to ask the most pressing questions. In this dialogue, applied topics were high on the agenda: from the development of model contracts for target recruitment to the proposal to declare the next year as the Year of Teacher and Education.

The President stressed, “Time poses an unprecedented challenge to the education system... We have been through a lot, including the pandemic that put the education system to the test, prompting it to adapt to new conditions within a shortest period of time. The challenges include political developments that affected education system

employees as much as security officials and civil servants. And today I think those who did not back down and our entire teaching community for their professionalism, dedication and civic position that played a great role.

*You have once again confirmed that education is not a service sector, not a business, but a stronghold of our statehood, a socially significant branch of the economy.”*

## On state policy at school

Aleksandr Lukashenko announced the need to reboot the education system. According to the Belarusian leader, recent events in the country made it necessary to pay attention to one of the main functions of the educational process — pedagogic — while the last year has shown that there are actions that can lead to irreparable consequences.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that politics cannot stay out of the classroom, but this should be official politics,

*“The question in the air now is should schools participate in the political life of the country? The answer is unequivocal: we cannot keep politics out of the classroom. In fact, there is no politics without school. Yet, there should be only one type of politics there: the official politics, the national flag and national anthem. So, let’s stop discussing this issue.”*

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, the civic stance of teachers, their participation in the public or political life of the country are an example for students and teachers to follow. At the same time, he is firmly convinced: a patriot can only be raised by a patriot. In this respect, it does not matter what subject the teacher teaches.

Digital opportunities, according to Aleksandr Lukashenko, should serve educational purposes, and not entertain pupils, “Of course, we will use the elements of distance learning, introducing them into the educational

process. This is probably an objective necessity. Nevertheless, I want to warn you: digital opportunities should serve educational purposes, not entertain pupils. The teacher during the lesson is not a blogger, youtuber or information animator. It is an issue of professional fitness, image and status.”

## On the status of a teacher

The Head of State called the question of the status of the teacher the most urgent,

*“We are all interested in the teacher’s authority to be indisputable in the eyes of pupils, among parents, and in society.”*

Moreover, Aleksandr Lukashenko announced that from January 1st, 2022, it is necessary to find an opportunity to significantly stimulate in material terms the work of class teachers and curators of groups of institutions of vocational and secondary specialised education. He instructed the Government to make relevant proposals in the near future. In addition, he gave instructions to think over and report on how to support the specialists

of preschool institutions.

“We will do everything that we can afford, taking into account the possibilities of the country’s economy,” assured the Belarusian leader.

However, he emphasised that the status of a teacher is also their authority, which is not sold or bought for any salary or money.

The President added that he often says such words: the world has gone crazy and mad. The fact that there is an opportunity to get together and hold, among other things, nationwide events such as this pedagogical council, characterises the fact that people in Belarus live a calm and normal life:

*“Other countries cannot afford it because they are already at war while some are preparing for war. God saved us. Well, we ourselves did not doze and defended our country. So, let’s appreciate what we have so that it doesn’t get any worse, so that we preserve what is valued in our country and what our people consider to be their property.”*

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## PROTOCOL

On the morning of August 30th, President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko held a number of telephone conversations.

The main topic centred around the situation in Afghanistan. Consultations on issues brought up for the CSTO meeting in Dushanbe were also high on the agenda, alongside the development of a common position on Afghanistan.

First of all, this topic was discussed in detail with the President of Tajikistan, then a conversation with the President of Russia took place.

Presidents of Belarus and Russia, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin, will meet on September 9th in Moscow. The date was agreed by the heads of state during a telephone conversation. During the meeting, the presidents will once again discuss the State Union programmes prepared by the governments of the two countries, as well as other topical issues on the bilateral agenda and international issues.

## Area of special attention

The situation in Afghanistan, preparations for the CSTO and SCO summits in Dushanbe, bilateral co-operation: what else was discussed at the meeting between Aleksandr Lukashenko and the Ambassador of Tajikistan

By Dmitry Umpirovich

**The critical Afghan issue and minimising its consequences for other countries of the world are the key topics of the CSTO Summit in Dushanbe, which will be held in mid-September. The tense situation in the Central Asian region was also in the spotlight at the Palace of Independence. In a conversation with the Ambassador of Tajikistan to Belarus, Mahmadsarif Haqdod, Aleksandr Lukashenko asserted,**

*“If the SCO and the CSTO hold a consolidated position, we will cope with this situation. We will help the Afghan people to overcome all these challenges and difficulties. But if everyone tries to act in their own way, then there will be trouble.”*

## Afghan vector

The Head of State stressed that on the eve of his visit to Tajikistan, the meeting with the Ambassador is also important for him.

“You [the Tajikistani side] have

more information than other republics and countries in the world. I am absolutely sure of that. You have more information than even the USA who are working there directly,” said the Head of State. *“And what is surprising, if I may say so, Emomali Rahmon has been giving warnings for decades, as I remember, about very dangerous developments in Afghanistan. We have been listening to all that, understood the situation is not easy in various corners of the world, and, probably, treated it as an ordinary event. But he was right!”*



# Red gold of Belarus

Belarus is strengthening its position in the global potash market, with Belaruskali remaining the most reliable partner while Petrikov may soon become the 'second Soligorsk': the results of the President's working trip to the Gomel Region



**Another mining town has appeared on the map of Belarus while the Petrikov District now has all the chances and opportunities for an accelerated breakthrough. Such prospects are reinforced by the launch of a mining and processing complex in this area. The President gave a start to its work on the eve of Miner's Day in a solemn atmosphere. This is a truly historic event for the country, and Aleksandr Lukashenko explained why, "With the commissioning of the Petrikov Mining and Processing Plant, we will strengthen our position in the global potash market and the entire Petrikov District will receive a new incentive for development."**



By Yevgeny Kononovich,  
Dmitry Umpirovich

## Cause for pride

The construction of the Petrikov Mining and Processing Plant is the largest investment project of Belaruskali. The strategic facility has been built over almost ten years, with investments totalling \$1.25bn. However, this investment will pay off many times over. After all, at least 1.5 million tonnes of fertilisers per year will be produced here annually, with a subsequent increase to 2 million. Experts say that at such a pace the Petrikov complex will be even more profitable than the Soligorsk enterprise in the future. All work at the facility was carried out exclusively by Belarusian contracting design, construction and installation organisations, and the share of domestic equipment amounted to 90 percent.

The President was informed that, by 2025, the production capacity of Belaruskali is planned to be increased

to 15.1-15.5 million tonnes, and by 2030 to reach 16 million tonnes. The results of the first half of 2021 are also encouraging: the volumes of production of mineral fertilisers and their exports have increased in comparison with the same period last year.

Currently, 859 people are employed at the Petrikov Mining and Processing Plant. As the project reaches its design capacity, approximately 300 more workers will be required. The factory is confident that there will be no problems with working hands, as people are coming here from almost all regions of Belarus. The average age of workers at the plant is 33.

## The soil likes order

The President drew attention to the need for further development of the Polesie area as a whole. Although Polesie residents are not deprived of attention, additional measures need to be worked on. Aleksandr Lukashenko believes,

*"We need to support Polesie... You know my attitude to Polesie residents: Polesie is the salt of the Belarusian nation."*

What the commissioning of the mining and processing facility means for the residents of Petrikov and the environs can only be understood by entering the district centre. In fact, present Petrikov and Petrikov three years ago are two different towns.

The Head of State was informed that money had been allocated for the reconstruction of the maternity hospital. The issues of allocating land for the construction of a sports complex, where the pool will also be located, were also discussed. Moreover, thirteen houses have been built for the workers of the mining and processing facility, and three more will be commissioned by the end of the year.

*"In fact, a thousand people received housing. On September 1st, a wonderful modern kindergarten will open its doors for children, we call it the 'centre'. Just have families! These will be the most well-provided for children. Nobody else creates such centres in the world,"* accentuated Aleksandr Lukashenko.

In total, Br50m (about \$20m in equivalent) were allocated for the improvements, according to the President.

## We will not disappoint our partners

Now a pleasant and long-awaited moment has come for the opening of the new mining and processing complex of Belaruskali JSC. The Head of State made a symbolic start to the plant by pressing the start button of the mining heading machine on the control panel. "Today, without exaggeration, is a historic day for Belarus. We are opening another landmark facility: the Petrikov Mining and Processing Plant," he said.

According to experts, the reserves of

potash ore here will last for a hundred years, and this is a serious reserve for the future of Belarus. Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed,

*"Potassium is the brand of our country. We are lucky that our soil is rich in red gold. The demand for potassium is huge and is increasing every year."*

The President explained that this is due to the huge demand for food in the world, "About a billion people are malnourished, half a billion are hungry, and there is not enough food. Without fertilisers, there can be no food. Therefore, the demand for fertilisers in general, and for potash fertilisers in particular, is growing and will continue to grow worldwide. We are ready to help, that is why we are building these giants."

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that Belaruskali is one of the leading players in the world fertiliser market, producing and selling over 20 percent of potash fertilisers,

*"But the main thing (I am not afraid of this word as I am keeping an eye on the production and sales of potash fertilisers) is that Belaruskali is the most reliable partner in the world. We have never disappointed and will never disappoint our partners."*

According to the President, our country is being tested for strength by various sanctions of the United States and the EU countries. Fugitive oppositionists are adding fuel to the fire, begging for these sanctions against their country and their people. However, at the same time, Belaruskali remains true to its obligations, says Aleksandr Lukashenko, "We, on the contrary, are looking for new delivery addresses, new delivery options. Such giants as China, Brazil, India and many other countries are interested in potash fertilisers from Belarus. The world is vast. Due to the coronavirus pandemic on the planet, the issue of providing food, and therefore fertilisers, has become even more acute."

## Being together

One of the reasons for concern is the long length of the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that it needs to be strengthened, "The border is difficult. It was difficult even in Soviet times. All this fell on the shoulders of the Tajik people, Tajikistan. It is clear that you have enough people to defend the border, but you need modern weapons."

However, the main thing is to work out a common position on Afghanistan and to agree on it through the CSTO-SCO.

Aleksandr Lukashenko added, **"This is a difficult area, and it's not just Afghanistan. The situation is difficult in the neighbouring states, in the Middle East. All this radicalism has, unfortunately, objective foundations and reasons today. The leading Western states got involved and made the situation even worse than it was. They**

***gave rise to even more radicalism. Who is to blame? They are. Partly, maybe we are too. Because we thought that this would not affect us. But, as it turns out, this will affect us all."***

## In-person format

In turn, Mahmadsarif Haqdod stressed that the President of Belarus is always welcome in Tajikistan, which will host the CSTO and SCO summits in mid-September, "I am grateful for your attention to this issue. I know that you are focused on security issues not only in the CIS but in the world. You have your own view on these problems."

At the end of the meeting, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Tajikistan to Belarus confirmed to journalists that the meetings in Dushanbe within the framework of the summits will be held in person. Moreover, he assured that it's a great

honour for his country to host events of this rank, "You know that Belarus is an observer in the SCO, but observers also participate in the meetings of the heads of state of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. All leaders have already confirmed their personal involvement."

Speaking about collaboration between Belarus and Tajikistan, he noted that during the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko greatly appreciated the bilateral relations between the countries, which are consistently developing both in the political, trade-economic, and cultural-humanitarian spheres.

## REFERENCE

• The legal framework for co-operation between Belarus and Tajikistan includes more than 60 interstate, intergovernmental and interdepartmental international treaties.

• At the end of 2020, trade turnover

amounted to \$111.7m (a 3-fold increase compared to the level of 2019), including exports reaching \$109.6m.

• In January-June 2021, trade turnover totalled \$82m (207.6 percent compared to January-June 2020) while exports increased to \$80.4m (an increase of 208.3 percent), and imports rising up to \$1.6m (growth of 177.8 percent).

• Tajikistan purchased cars, tractors and truck tractors, as well as oil products and sugar, exporting cotton yarn, uncombed cotton fibre, and dried fruit.

• More than 20 entities of the distribution network and dealers of Belarusian enterprises operate in Tajikistan. On the basis of Agrotechservice in the Gissar Region, the assembly of tractors of Minsk Tractor Works JSC and trailers of Bobruiskagromash JSC has been established.



# The border cut through lives

Negoreloe-Paris: events witnessed at an unusual station between Western and Soviet Belarus

Very soon, we will be celebrating a new national holiday for the first time: Day of People's Unity, established in early June by Presidential decree. The date chosen for it — September 17th — is special for the Belarusian people. In 1939, on this day, the reunification of Western and Eastern Belarus began. Our people were divided against their will back in 1921 under the terms of the Riga Peace Treaty, after which half of Belarus with a population of almost 4 million people came under the jurisdiction of the Polish state. After reunification we again got the opportunity to develop and build a strong country together while creating prospects for future generations...

Historical justice has won. However, twenty years, during which the Belarusians were divided by the border, will forever remain in the memory of the people, responding with pain for broken human destinies, for lost time and unused opportunities.

By Oksana Nevmerzhtskaya

## Unexpected status

Between WWI and WWII, military battles did not subside in Belarus. Józef Piłsudski, who headed the leadership of Poland, decided that it should be restored within the framework of the Rzecz Pospolita before its partition, which meant it was necessary to take possession of both Belarus and Ukraine. The fighting continued with varying degrees of success for over two years. In March 1921, the Soviet republics and Poland signed the Riga Peace Treaty, as a result of which the latter received almost half of the territory and population of Belarus: the border passed several tens of kilometres west of Minsk, along the Glubokoe-Stolbtsy-Nesvizh-David-Gorodok line.

As a result, the small Negoreloe station in the direction of Baranovichy suddenly acquired almost international sta-

sell their own products. Nobody was going to build large industrial enterprises, schools, hospitals or libraries here. Only the network of punitive institutions expanded: any attempts at ethnic expression were not simply ignored, but severely punished.

The overwhelming majority of Belarusians who found themselves 'under the Poles' were employed in agriculture, so taxes were heavy for them. Peasants were forced to sell their grain and meat to pay state and local taxes, and then on enslaving terms were hired by wealthy peasants, settlers, landowners in order to survive.

The north-eastern voivodeships, as they were called, remained in last place in terms of electricity production, consumption of industrial and colonial goods, and meat. Meanwhile, Western Belarus gave Poland a huge share of timber, agricultural products, more than 40 percent of flax production.

Red Army launched a liberation campaign. The army crossed the border just in the area of Negoreloe station. Of course, the Red Army did not meet any significant resistance, as the local population saw them as their dear saviours.

"The restoration of the liberated territories, the tightening of their economy and social, educational spheres took time and money. But by 1940, pedagogical insti-



John Phillips dla czasopisma 'Life', 1938 r.

Further on there was Poland...

tus and became the only railway gateway to the countries of Western Europe. Today, passing by it in a commuter train, few people realise that from 1921 to 1939 a frontier post and customs office were located here, as well as being the place where the 'alteration' of trains from the broad Russian gauge to a narrower European one took place.

"Employees of the station often joked that in Negoreloe they saw all of Europe and America, as numerous delegations and guests from Western Europe and the United States passed through the station," says Vladimir Mishura, a local historian, history teacher and former director of Negoreloe secondary school No. 2. "In 1926, regular railway routes were opened: Vladivostok-Moscow-Warsaw-Berlin-Paris through Minsk-Negoreloe-Stolbtsy. Express routes of transcontinental trains Negoreloe-Vladivostok started from Negoreloe. There was a Western European route Paris-Negoreloe, and the international express Manchuria-Stolbtsy also passed through the station."

Since Negoreloe station remained on Soviet territory, people lived here as well. There was enough work: the main occupation of the local population was the maintenance of the railway, as well as customs. They also worked on the ground: there were four machine and tractor stations in the Dzerzhinsk District, one of them was located in Negoreloe and had as many as 30 tractors.

Apparently, it was offensive for western peasants, who were under the Polish masters, to look at the equipment, since they were still ploughing on horses.

"The border divided the neighbouring villages where relatives lived and passed through the hayfields between them in a ploughed strip," continues Vladimir, who heard many stories about life 'under the Poles'. "Soviet Belarusians worked from the one side while Polish Belarusians worked from another side. This was the only opportunity to see relatives, they could never meet again. Residents of the village of Velikoe Selo watched scenes such as: 'Sister, dear! How do you live there?' a woman shouts from the Polish side of the haymaking. And then a Pole on horseback appears next to her: 'Did you want to be with the Bolsheviks, dog?' and lunges at her back with a whip.

## 'Eastern frontiers'

The Poles called the annexed Belarusian lands 'eastern frontiers' and perceived them as a market for cheap labour force, a raw material appendage and a place to



Once in Negoreloe, the trains were 'rearranged' from the broad Russian gauge to the narrower European gauge

The Polish state considered the Belarusians not as a separate nation, but as a mass, from which Poles should be 'moulded'. An attack on the Belarusian schools began immediately. As a result, by the 1938-1939 academic year not a single school remained either with the Belarusian language of instruction or bilingual. From 4th grade, the school was paid, and the cost was significant. Studying at the only university in the region — in Vilno — was practically unattainable. For 20 years, the number of Belarusian students in it rarely exceeded 100, while the total number of students amounted to 1,700.

High-quality medical care was not available to the population of Western Belarus. In our western territories there were epidemics of typhus and typhoid fever.

Meanwhile, the Poles actively promoted tourist trips to the north-eastern provinces in order to show how savages live in conditions of an almost primitive nature.

**The prohibition of the Belarusian language in schools, mass Catholicisation, complete indifference to the social needs of the people, the redirection of forces and resources to Belarusian lands, which since 1921 became part of Poland, this was a period of true national genocide.**

## The sacred day

"September 17th, 1939, became a sacred day for Belarusians!" Vladimir Mishura is confident. "The people have finally united into one state."

On September 1st, 1939, Nazi Germany attacked Poland, and on September 17th, the Workers' and Peasants'



Station workers saw different delegations and famous people



Vitaly Pivovarchik

tutes were opened in each regional centre, in fact, even universities appeared, to which there was practically free access. Moreover, Soviet students received a state scholarship for their academic successes."

Today, almost nothing remains of the border which ran through the body of our country beyond the Sula River, in the vicinity of the Kolasovo station. However, not far from Negoreloe, the Old Border military-historical complex was created, where the border outpost of that time, the buildings of the barracks, stables, commandant's office and customs were restored.

To remember ...



The population of Western Belarus greeted the Red Army soldiers as liberators



# Symbol of peacefulness

Grodno craftswomen create 'My Belarus' unique patchwork for the Day of People's Unity

For residents of the western regions, September 17th has always been a special day. Streets and squares bearing this name today exist in many cities and regional centres, and the memories of grandfathers about the distant year of 1939 are still alive. Now, when the day of the reunification of Western and Eastern Belarus has become a public holiday, they are preparing to celebrate the memorable date in style.

By Marina Kuzmich

Belarusians have always lived in harmony, not dividing their fellow countrymen into friends and foes. From time immemorial, Orthodox and Roman-Catholic churches stood side by side in the neighbouring streets, while Orthodox and Catholic believers congratulated each other on their feast days. Moreover, mixed marriages were common. The ability to create and work together is a quality recorded in the genetic code of our nation. The craftswomen from Grodno are convinced of this.

"In many economic and creative issues, a neighbour has long been helping a neighbour," says Marina Chikun, Director of the Heritage Centre of Crafts of the Grodno City Cultural Centre. "So, our craftswomen, together with the centres of social services for the population of the Leninsky and Oktyabrsky districts of the city, decided to create a large canvas 'My Belarus' depicting all six regions of the country — as a symbol of unity, peacefulness and mutual understanding."

The pieces are handmade by craftswomen and members of the circle of the day care department for elderly citizens at the centres of social services for the population of the Leninsky and Oktyabrsky districts in Grodno. The highlight of the canvas is that it is a kind of map of the upcoming craft exhibitions, fairs and festivals this year. Subsequently, new events will be applied to such a kind of poster.



Yelena Malinovskaya, Marina Chikun, Yelena Kondratova and Yelena Panas near the canvas

"Making a map is a part of the art project, entitled *Consent and Harmony are Treasure for Common Goal*, timed to coincide with the Day of People's Unity," notes Natalia Gagauzova, who heads the day care department for elderly citizens at the centre of social services for the population of Grodno's Leninsky District. "The programme of the art project includes master classes by folk craftsmen, poetry and culinary competitions, as well as a song marathon of representatives of different nationalities."

The canvas will be presented in September at the Heritage Crafts Centre of

*The canvas — two metres wide, one and a half metres high — consists of six pieces of fabric. It is made using the patchwork technique, where each patch is made of natural materials, selected in matching shades.*

the Grodno City Cultural Centre. In the courtyard there will be an exhibition of items by masters of folk art, alongside performances by folklore groups.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Belarus is the first in Europe in terms of IT skills and the second worldwide



The ranking was compiled by the Coursera Company — the global giant in online education. This platform has brought together over 77 million users from all over the world. Such a high position for Belarus is, first of all, an indicator of the high level of knowledge of online listeners. For the first time, Belarus took the leading position in the European ranking in the 'Technology' category. In the world ranking Belarus is ranked second, it was overtaken by Japan. Belarus demonstrates outstanding performance in the subcategories of programming, cloud computing, mobile and web development, software development and theoretical informatics.

In the global register, which takes into account the results in all three positions — Business, Technology and Data Science — Belarus is positioned on the high, 12th line.

### Belarus and China have opened a joint Year of the Regions

The opening ceremony of the Year of the Regions of Belarus and China in 2021-2022 was held at the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, Nikolai Borisevich, and



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Belarus, Xie Xiaoyong, exchanged official diplomatic notes.

The Year of the Regions of Belarus and China is the third thematic year between the two countries. In 2018, the Year of Tourism took place, in 2019 — the Year of Education. A possible extension of the Year of the Regions for 2023 is envisaged.

Belarus is entrenched not only in Beijing, where the embassy of the Republic operates. Consulates were also opened in Guangzhou, Chongqing and Shanghai. In the near future, a consulate general will also appear in Hong Kong.

### Embassy of Belarus in Zimbabwe to open by the end of January 2022

This is provided by the Council of Ministers' Resolution No. 477 of August 23rd, 2021, which is officially published on the national legal Internet portal.

The Ministry of Finance was instructed to finance the costs of opening and maintaining the Belarusian Embassy in Zimbabwe within the funds provided for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Republican budget for



opening and maintaining diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad.

The resolution comes into force on the day of its official publication.

The duties of the Belarusian Ambassador to Zimbabwe are performed by Aleksandr Sidoruk, but there was no diplomatic mission in the African country until the last moment. Currently, the diplomat also represents Belarus in Angola, Mozambique and Namibia.

### Western press deliberately denigrates Belarus

The Austrian and Western press as a whole deliberately slander Belarus and biasedly reflect the situation in the country. This was noted in an interview with BelTA by a member of the Styrian Communist Party, deputy of the Landtag of the Austrian federal state of Styria, member of the city council of Leoben, Dr. Werner Gerhard Murgg, who is visiting our country as a member of the delegation of the Austrian-Belarusian Friendship Society.

He said that the members of the delegation arrived in Belarus to see for themselves what is happening in the country. Their impressions turned out to be radically different from those presented by the Western



press. The guests visited Brest, Minsk, saw that everything calm with us, everything was in order. "There is nothing that is presented by the Austrian press, everything is just the opposite — a normal peaceful life is going on in Belarus," said Dr. Murgg.



China urges global community to firmly adhere to science-based research into the origin of COVID-19 and resist political manipulations

# Pandemic is not a field for politics



**COVID-19 is mutating, and the situation with the epidemic remains tense. Finding out the origin, spread and evolution of COVID-19 as quickly as possible is essential for effective prevention and control, preventing the recurrence of such epidemics and protecting the health of mankind. At such a critical moment, the United States continues to disregard science and facts, being obsessed with political manipulations while agitating and manipulating intelligence-based research into the origin of the virus and fanning the hype around the so-called laboratory leak. All these only hinder global co-operation in the field of scientific research on the origin of the virus and undermines the overall situation of world unity in the fight against the epidemic.**

The international community expresses widespread protest against the US political manipulation regarding the issue of research into the origin of the virus.

*About 80 countries, including Belarus, sent letters to the WHO Director General, issued statements or sent notes to counter the politicisation of the issue of research on the origin of the virus and emphasise the need to protect the results of the report of the joint study by China and WHO.*

More than 300 political parties, public organisations and think tanks in more than 100 countries and regions have submitted a joint statement to the WHO Secretariat against the politicisation of research into the origin of the virus. These overwhelming voices fully reflect the justice and support of the international community.

*China was not only the first in the world to successfully control the epidemic, but also did everything it could to help provide supplies, expertise and vaccines for international co-operation in the fight against the epidemic.*

China is also the first country to share relevant data with the WHO and is fully involved in research into the origin of the virus. Adhering to the principles of openness, transparency, science and interaction, China has twice invited WHO experts to conduct research there. Overwhelming evidence shows that the Wuhan Institute of Virology has not conducted functional research to enhance coronaviruses and has not been developing a so-called artificial virus. None of the staff and graduate students of the institute were infected with COVID-19.

In March of this year, a joint report by China and WHO on the results of the study of the origin of COVID-19 was officially published, which voiced the most authoritative, professional and scientifically-based conclusions. The report provided a scientific assessment of the way the virus entered humanity, made a clear conclusion that 'laboratory leak is extremely unlikely', and offered specific recommendations for further work on the study of the origin of the virus.

The Chinese side has always sup-



Xie Xiaoyong

China was not only the first in the world to successfully control the epidemic, but also did everything it could to help provide supplies, expertise and vaccines for international co-operation in the fight against the epidemic.

ported and will continue to participate in scientifically-based research into the virus' origins. We oppose the politicisation of the issue of researching into it, are against researching contrary to the resolution of the World Health Assembly, and strongly disagree with the rejection of the joint China-WHO report.

*We all need to investigate the origin of the virus with a scientific approach.*

Science has to answer scientific questions while professional opinion is required to answer professional questions. Only scientists should be engaged in identifying the animal origin of the virus and the ways it transmits to mankind; no country has the right to neglect people's lives for its own political interests and to politicise the issue of science or denigrate other countries. We sincerely hope that even more countries — adhering to an open, transparent approach and a scientific spirit — like China, will invite WHO experts to conduct research into the origin of the

virus in their countries, share research results and make a real contribution to a comprehensive, objective and scientific image of the map of virus distribution.

*We all need to investigate the origin of the virus in a spirit of collaboration.*

Humanity is a community of shared destiny while solidarity and co-operation are the most powerful weapons to defeat the epidemic. Resolution 73.1 was adopted at the 73rd World Health Assembly, in accordance with the clear requirements of which WHO should continue to work closely with relevant international organisations and its member states in identifying the animal origin of COVID-19 and how it is transmitted to humanity through scientific co-operation, investigations on places, etc.

The WHO Secretariat should, as required by the WHA resolution, fully consult with member states to develop work plans for a global study of the origin of the virus and follow-up mechanisms, with full respect for the views of member states. The research plan for the origin of the virus in the country concerned should be determined in consultation with it and effective co-operation should be built on this basis.

*We all need to investigate the origin of the virus on the principle of effectiveness.*

Research into the origin of the virus is a race between science and the virus, in which wasting time shows the greatest disregard for human life. The joint report of the working group of specialists from China and WHO recorded the conclusions and recommendations, which were approved both in the international community and among the academic community. They should be respected and implemented by all parties, including WHO. The work on investigating the origin of the virus at the second stage should be expanded on the basis of the work done at the first stage; it should not be repeated if it has already been carried out, especially since a clear conclusion has already been made.

*We all need to investigate the origin of the virus based on evidence.*

Evidence guidance is the best and only way to investigate the origin of the virus. More and more scientific studies

show that the sources of the epidemic are found in many countries, many places and many points. The next step in researching the issue, led by WHO, needs to respect this reality and look globally. It is clear that incidents of the virus attack occurred in the US and other countries earlier than the first case in Wuhan. The next stage of work on the study of the origin of the virus should be carried out in many countries of the world, especially in the United States, where the epidemic situation is currently the most serious and there are many questionable points.

*The United States should explain the reasonable suspicions of international experts regarding the Fort Detrick biological laboratory and its more than 200 foreign biological experimental bases, to clarify a large-scale outbreak of pneumonia from e-cigarettes in Wisconsin and the emergence of respiratory diseases from an unexplained cause in Virginia in July 2019.*

Moreover, they should publish specific details of the University of North Carolina's coronavirus research and information on cases of US soldiers who participated in the Military World Games in Wuhan, thereby providing clarification to people around the world and the international community.

The virus knows no boundaries. All people, regardless of race and ethnicity, suffer from the epidemic. China, like other countries in the world, is a victim of the epidemic, and also hopes to find the source of the virus as soon as possible and stop the spread of the epidemic as soon as possible. We are firmly convinced that if countries around the world unite and adhere to the correct direction of scientifically-based research into the origin of the virus, eliminate harmful consequences of political manipulation, then the source of the virus will definitely be identified and the final victory in the fight against the epidemic will be achieved.

**Xie Xiaoyong, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus, for SB. Belarus Segodnya**



# Our response to the coronavirus

## Developers of a Belarusian prophylactic agent against coronavirus begin the next stage: working on industrial production

**Prototypes of the whole virion inactivated vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 — the first domestic vaccine for the prevention of human infectious diseases — have already passed the test for the most critical indicators. They are non-toxic and elicit a strong immune response.**



**Andrei Goncharov, Director of the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering, tells us how the laboratory version of this agent will be adapted to mass production.**

By Olga Kosyakova

### More valuable than a diamond

Until now, vaccine preparations in our country were created only for agriculture. Vaccines for the population have always been purchased. However, the coronavirus pandemic has pushed for development in this direction. For example, among the projects of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus is the Centre of Virology, enabling in future to continue work on the development of substances for new immunoprophylactic agents.

The Republican Research and Practical Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology and the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus are involved in the development of the first vaccine against SARS-CoV-2.

I take in my hand a box that resembles jewellery packaging. However, its contents are more valuable than a diamond. Inside it are bubbles with protection against heavy COVID. These are the first samples of a domestic prophylactic agent against coronavirus. What do the probes contain?

“There are four bottles in the box,” notes Andrei Goncharov. “Each has the same coronavirus isolate combined with different adjuvants — substances that enhance the immune response. An inactivated vaccine consists of a virus grown in cell culture — devoid of pathogenic properties and adsorbed on an adjuvant — and is presented in the form of a suspension. This is a fairly classical approach to vaccine development. Its main advantage is that, on the one hand, the vaccine gives the full aspect of viral antigens, on the other hand, it is quite safe. Its use will not cause pronounced post-vaccination reactions.”

Coronavirus isolates are constantly extracted at the Republican Research and Practical Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology in order to obtain vaccine prototypes. At this stage, the specialists of the Centre transferred seven purified candidate

SARS-CoV-2 variants to the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering in order to evaluate the immunogenic properties *in vitro*; these were extracted by scientists on cell culture from samples taken from patients.

“Our task in creating a vaccine is the adsorption of the virus on an adjuvant, the selection of stabilisers and preservatives, and the study of the immunological activity of the resulting vaccine,” explains Mr. Goncharov. “We tested five potential immune-enhancing agents. These

uminium phosphate and hydroxide — were selected; these will be further investigated in the course of preclinical trials.”

“It’s almost certain that a completely different isolate will be used when a vaccine is released, or even several isolates in one vaccine. Work on candidate options continues. Most importantly, we have shown that all the proposed isolates to one degree or another cause a cellular immune response and the production of antibodies,” stresses the scientist.



Vaccine prototypes elicit a good immune response

substances turned out to be completely non-toxic even in very high doses. Our research results have shown that all virus isolates induce an immune response. Vaccines activate immune cells, forcing them to produce interferon-gamma, stimulate the proliferation of T-lymphocytes. Moreover, vaccine variants with adjuvants trigger the cellular immune response in a test tube much more strongly than a pure inactivated virus. As a result, two preferred adjuvants — al-

### Two-stage production

The first laboratory step related to the confirmation of the immunological activity of the vaccine has taken place, and the developers are moving on.

“We are taking part in the development of the stage of industrial production,” adds Andrei Goncharov. “At the laboratory stage, the binding of the antigen with the adjuvant was performed in plastic containers. Now we do it in a metal container, which was presented by the Belmedpreparaty enterprise. We estimate how comparable everything is, how long a prepared vaccine can stay in metal vessels. The work is progressing very quickly. We still have many stages to go through. We will prepare 400 doses of vaccine for the immunisation of animals for the Republican Research and Practical Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology.”

Studies enable scientists to say that the Belarusian inactivat-

ed vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 will be easily tolerated.

“It’s not yet known how many injections will be needed, one or two,” continues Mr. Goncharov. “Most likely two. The selection of various buffers that are used in industry is carried out. There are large reactors with a capacity of 50 litres. The technological process is being optimised. We are working out in what sequence the components of the vaccine will be supplied: buffer, adjuvant, inactivated virus.”

countries. To avoid this fate in our country in future, a base for the creation of vaccines is being organised in Belarus.

In future, close to BelVitu-nifarm, a new building is planned, where the entire technological process of vaccine production will be concentrated and, in general, they will create a new science-intensive branch of the biological industry with a high export potential. Scientists have big plans for the development of virology in our country.

“We are thinking of developing a new generation of vaccines, which will allow us to abandon import purchases,” continues Andrei Goncharov. “These will be vaccines for those diseases against which it is not yet possible to carry out medical prevention. Among them are vaccines against tick-borne encephalitis and chickenpox.”

— **What technologies will you use?**

— *Vaccines of different types: inactivated, mRNA-based, vector. The latter, however, are of limited use. They are used as a means of rapid prophylaxis. The problem here is that the immune response is generated not only to the genetic code, but also to the vector itself. We also plan to engage in scientific research on the development of a new generation of live vaccines containing weakened viruses. It would seem that live vaccines are an old topic. However, modern genetic technologies make it possible to reliably modify the virus so that it does not pose a threat in terms of pathogenicity, and the vaccine very strongly activated the immune response. But this will immediately be fundamental research. A number of live vaccines against coronavirus infection are already undergoing clinical trials.*

*We have been producing a dendritic cell vaccine for the treatment of pancreatic, breast and bladder cancers for some time. The therapy gives very good results. The one-year survival rate using dendritic cells is as high as 90 percent for previously considered incurable pancreatic cancer. 45 percent of patients have a three-year survival rate. This is also a fairly large figure. So, vaccines are the future.*

***The production of the Belarusian vaccine against coronavirus will include two stages. The first is directly growing the virus at BelVitu-nifarm. During the second stage, at Belmedpreparaty, it is planned to sorb the virion on an adjuvant, to add all the necessary stabilisers and preservatives, and to bottle the vaccine.***

### Live vaccines

Alas, humanity is constantly faced with new infections, and the coronavirus is not the last pandemic. The situation with COVID-19 in the world has revealed the problem of unfair distribution of vaccines between



First samples of Belarusian vaccine against coronavirus



Two adjuvants were selected





## On verge of big famine

Madagascar is on the brink of experiencing the world's first 'climate change famine', according to the United Nations, which says tens of thousands of people are already suffering 'catastrophic' levels of hunger and food insecurity after four years without rain

The drought — the worst in four decades — has devastated isolated farming communities in the south of the country, leaving families to scavenge for insects to survive.

"These are famine-like conditions and they're being driven by climate not conflict," said the UN World Food Programme's Shelley Thakral.

The UN estimates that 30,000 people are currently experiencing the highest internationally recognised level of food insecurity — level five

— and there are concerns the number affected could rise sharply as Madagascar enters the traditional 'lean season' before harvest.

"This is unprecedented. These people have done nothing to contribute to climate change. They don't burn fossil fuels... and yet they are bearing the brunt of climate change," said Ms. Thakral.

Although Madagascar experiences frequent droughts and is often affected by the change in weather

patterns caused by El Niño, experts believe climate change can be directly linked to the current crisis.

"With the latest IPCC report we saw that Madagascar has observed an increase in aridity. And that is expected to increase if climate change continues. In many ways this can be seen as a very powerful argument for people to change their ways," said Dr. Rondro Barimalala, a Madagascar scientist working at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

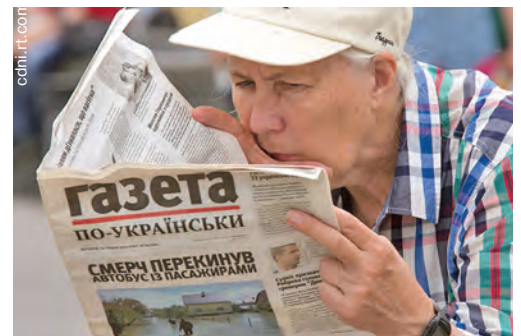
## OSCE reproaches Ukraine

**OSCE Media Freedom Representative concerned about sanctions in Ukraine that endanger media freedom and free flow of information**

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Teresa Ribeiro expressed her concern regarding Ukraine's practice of applying sanctions that negatively affect the work of media outlets and journalists.

Ribeiro's comments follow recent decisions of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine on the application of sanctions against several individuals and legal entities, which resulted in the banning of access to various news outlets, including, among others, Strana, *Vedomosti* and *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.

"While Ukraine has a legitimate right to protect its national security, the authorities should find a balanced and proportional solution in addressing media related concerns, a solution that preserves media pluralism, free flow of information and diversity of opinions in line



with relevant international standards and OSCE commitments," Ribeiro said. "Media freedom is dependent on a healthy, vibrant and competitive landscape, which includes voices that provide a variety of news. Any sanctions on media should be subject to careful scrutiny, accompanied by effective procedural safeguards to prevent undue interference."

## 'Enough is enough'

**Queen Elizabeth's legal team has reportedly begun consulting with libel experts in the wake of a series of comments from Prince Harry and Meghan Markle**



*The Sun* reported the Queen was getting 'lawyered up' after becoming 'exasperated with repeated attacks' from Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

"The feeling, coming right from the top, is that enough is enough," a royal source told the newspaper.

There is a limit to how much will be accepted, and the Queen and Royal Family can only be pushed so far.

"They are getting lawyered up. Harry and Meghan will be made

aware and know repeated attacks will not be tolerated."

Since the Duke and Duchess of Sussex moved to the US, numerous interviews and publications have suggested a falling out between the pair and the Royal Family.

The Queen's legal team have also reportedly consulted with libel experts in the wake of Prince Harry's announcement of a tell-all memoir to be released next year.

"If someone were named in the book and accused of something directly that could be a libel and also infringe their rights to a private family life," the source told *The Sun*.

"The legal team could also contact publishers of the book to ask for advance warning of its contents and a right to reply."

There has been some criticism of the book's release date which coincides with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which will mark the 70-year anniversary since her accession to Queen.

The Queen's legal team is considering issuing a pre-emptive legal warning to the memoir's publishers Penguin Random House, according to *The Sun*.

In 2020, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex stepped away from royal duties and moved into a \$14.7m mansion in California where they live with their two children, Archie and Lilibet.



## Flower Festival in Colombia

**Colombians enjoy the Silleteros Parade during the Flower Festival in Medellin**

Medellin's traditional Silleteros Parade regained its soul when dozens of vendors paraded in the Colombian city to close the annual Flower Fair.

In August, when Medellin — known as the 'city of eternal spring' — blooms in all its splendour and balconies, terraces, gardens, and billboards get flooded with flowers, it is the beginning of the famous fair.

Undoubtedly, the most representative event of the fair is the Desfile de Silleteros (Silleteros Parade). Silleteros is the term used for the farmers who make beautiful

flower arrangements on a silleta (a chair-like contraption for carrying flowers on a person's back). This parade is recognised as a cultural heritage of Colombia.

This year, there was no return to the streets for the growers, who carried traditional wooden frames on their backs adorned with flowers. The pandemic again prevented it, as it did in 2020.

However, flower vendors flocked to the capital of Antioquia to enchant the crowds in an historic edition of the event, with a soccer stadium as the scene of their reunion with spectators.





# Ozarichi camp: that was hell

Classical writer Yakub Kolas once called the Ozarichi concentration camp ‘the personification of grief, suffering, pain and tears of Belarusian and Russian peoples’. The world learnt about this place for the first time on February 14th, 1946, as part of the Nuremberg trial. An assistant to the chief prosecutor representing the Soviet Union, the State Councillor of Justice, Lev Smirnov, presented to the court documents testifying to the Fascist atrocities on the Belarusian land. One of them read: ‘On March 19th, 1944, the advancing units of the Red Army near the town of Ozarichi in the Polesie Region of the BSSR found three concentration camps at the forefront of the defence of the German army. Over 33,000 children, disabled women and the elderly were kept there...’ Other documents proved a deliberate use of bacteriological weapons by the Nazis against the civilian population. Elderly people, women and children were deliberately infected with typhus.

In the early 1944, the front line passed through the territory of Belarus — along the Dnieper and Berezina rivers. The Red Army continued its successful offensive. The Fascists, becoming enraged, began to widely practice new brutal methods of exterminating Soviet people. Adhering to the scorched-earth tactics, the Germans destroyed all infrastructure. The civilians were pushed to the frontline zone.

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In late February 1944, the German regular military units began clearing the front-line territory. The civilian population in the rear zone of the 9th army front — the elderly, women and children — were driven into the swamp by Fascists. The reports of the commander of the 56th tank corps, F. Hossbach, preserved the order of the commander of the 9th German army as of March 8th, 1944 ‘On Sabotage’ which specified the task: to create a human barrier to protect military facilities from attack by Red Army troops and cover the military operation to withdraw troops of the 35th, 110th infantry divisions from the

front line of defence.

In late February-early March 1944, the invaders, under the guise of evacuation from the operational zone, began to drive the disabled population from the Gomel, Mogilev regions of Belarus, Smolensk, Bryansk and Orel regions of Russia to specially designated places in the Ozarichi-Podosinnik-Dert area. A military operation — planned by the Wehrmacht to create concentration camps on the front line of defence — was launched. The Fascists brought more than 30,000 people to those camps within three days. In total, about 50,000 Soviet citizens were held in three camps.

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Lieutenant General Pavel Batov, who commanded the 65th army of the 1st Belorussian Front which liberated Ozarichi, wrote in the book *In Campaigns and Battles*: ‘In March 1944, on the border north of Ozarichi and further towards Parichi, reconnaissance officers of the 37th guards division found three death camps created by the Hitler command in the marshes. Thousands of Soviet citizens languished and died there — mostly the elderly, women and children. The history of these camps is one of the most heinous atrocities committed by Fascist invaders during the war on the Belarusian land’.

The camp existed for ten days

which seemed an eternity for thousands of prisoners. The average life expectancy there was just three days. There were no buildings in the camp — even of a light type, where it was possible to hide. People were under the open sky on the bare ground around the clock.

On high areas, people were in water up to their ankles, on low sites — to their knees. It was forbidden to light bonfires. Many lost the ability to move and lay unconscious in the mud. Along the perimeter there were towers with machine gunners. People died from exhaustion, infectious diseases, cold. The camp was fenced with six rows of barbed wire, with anti-personnel mines on. The approaches to the camp were also mined.

A few days of staying in that hell left a mark on the prisoners’ life.

Doctors write in their memoirs: after the explosions of mines stopped, they paid attention to the cry of women. The examination showed that they had gone mad. Women clutched long-dead children to their breasts, wept over the snowdrifts of the dead.

Over that time, about 17,000 people died in inhumane conditions.

**The former prisoners recollected,** “It was especially difficult for the kids who lost their parents. They wandered helplessly around the camp, crying, calling for their mothers. The camp was getting quieter every day. The children were no longer crying, no one



Vera Kuryan, a prisoner of a concentration camp in Ozarichi

was called. They were sitting on the icy hummocks, clinging to each other. The strength was leaving these little human beings, and they could no longer fight for their newly begun life.”

**Gennady Parkhomenko, born in 1935, from Zhlobin recollected,** “I remember well a pile of corpses in front of my eyes, not far from the place where we were located. It was fifteen or twenty metres long and higher than the waist of an adult. Dozens of corpses of old men, women and children, stacked one on one, stripped to their underwear, bare-foot. Clothes and shoes were taken by still living prisoners, fleeing from the cold. Some of them were lying with their eyes open and staring unseeingly at the sky.”

A detailed study of anamnestic and epidemiological data testifies to the deliberate, intentional infection with typhus. To strengthen the infection, 7,000 people with typhus were brought to the camp. The German microbiologist Blumenthal said, “A

glass of drunk water, every cubic metre of inhaled air should infect every person.”

**Z. Gavrilchik, from Novogrudok, said,** “People suffering from typhus were brought to the camp by car for three days. As a result, many prisoners became ill. I asked a Polish guard in Polish for what purpose children, the elderly and women with typhus were driven to this camp. He replied: ‘Probably, the Germans would retreat. Russian soldiers and residents will probably then be infected by all those with typhus’.”

The epidemic affected the 19th corps of the 65th army which was directly involved in the liberation of the camp. The corps was removed from the front and sent to quarantine. However, that measure didn’t affect the front-line events in any way: the Red Army continued its offensive.

At the military tribunal of the Belorussian Military District held in Minsk in January 1946, a group of 18 war criminals was brought to criminal responsibility for the murders and tortures of the civilian population. They were sentenced to the highest penalty: hanging.

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We live as long as we remember. Today, hundreds of people of different generations, nationalities, religions from many regions of Belarus and neighbouring countries, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of witnesses of those events come to Ozarichi.

“For the sake of the memory of the victims, for the sake of respect for the survivors, we must realise and learn the lessons of the war. The main one is that there can be no forgiveness for those who preached and implemented the policy of genocide, mocked women, the elderly, children, killed them or condemned them to death — as in Ozarichi, and not only there...” (from the book *Polesie: Tragedy and Memory* by Arkady Shkuran and Mikhail Sinkevich).

**By Zinaida Khlebovets, the Head of the Museum In Memory of Ozarichi Death Camp Victims**





# Welcome to Belarusian Written Language Day



In just a few days, Kopyl will host Belarusian Written Language Day

By Sofia Arsenieva

## Hello from the past

Critic and publicist, Lev Kleinbort, wrote in his memoirs, “When Lenin saw an envelope with the stamp of Kopyl on my desk, he questioned me about it for a long time...” He was originally from this Belarusian town but, by early 20th century, he had become a very influential person in the publishing business in St. Petersburg. It was owing to Kleinbort that ‘a young yellow-haired boy with a Ryazan dialect’ published his first collection: *Radunitsa*. It was Sergei Yesenin. Lev also helped Yanka Kupala take his first step on the great path to literature.

The Kleinbort family estate has been preserved in the centre of the town. On the festive day, a trademark with the Kopyl coat of arms on colourful holiday envelopes will be made nearby. Everyone can send a paper ‘hello’ to friends on the model of what once greatly impressed Lenin.

## Find the Kopyl horn

Traditionally, cities and towns with a rich history become the venue for Belarusian Written Language Day. Kopyl was founded back in 1006. That’s why the outlines of a medieval settlement are clearly visible in the city.

What was the wooden castle like? Today we can only guess. The local steep hills, covered by the rivers Mazha and Kamenka, hint that the fortifications were



Trinity Church in the village of Telyadovichi

notable. It’s known from the chronicles that neither the Tatar khans nor the neighbouring princes could conquer them.

Legend has it that the ancient town went underground after the curse of an evil witch doctor. The locals, telling this, even hint, “Zamkovaya Mountain is cup-shaped, as if it really swallowed the castle!”

The first pedestrian QR-quest in Belarus — ‘Kopyl Horn’ — will help plunge visitors into this mysticism. Participants will be offered the chance to show their intellectual abilities, logical thinking, the ability to navigate the terrain and try their hand at Belarusian folk riddles. There are no promises of gold treasure

at the finish line, but lasting impressions are guaranteed.

## Appreciate the street art of the province

One of the main advantages of holding large-scale festivities in small towns is that they always leave an impressive legacy. Kopyl streets are already unrecognisable: stylish murals have appeared on the facades of old Khrushchev-era houses. These depict the literary celebrities of the region: Kuzma Cherny, Ales Adamovich, Adam Rusak, as well as simple abstract images.

The unique Avenue of Writers, with named benches, has appeared in the park in the

In autumn, Belarusians harvest not only grain but also cultural fields. The main September event in the country is Belarusian Written Language Day — celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. This year, the literary holiday will be hosted by the town of Kopyl in the Minsk District.



Stylish murals appeared on the facades of some houses in Kopyl

Kopyl District. Local benches have a QR-code with biographies and works hidden there.

The memorable Master-Tanner sign will become a recognisable symbol of the city. Why this particular craft? The name of the city came from the word ‘kapyl’ — a wooden shoe, on which the skin was stretched to make boots.

## Unite in Belarusian style

The main festivities in Kopyl will take place at the ‘Memory’, ‘Traditions and Modernity’, ‘Together with the Book We Grow’, ‘The Word of the Writer’ and ‘The Unity’ interactive pavilions. Each of them will host thematic lectures, exhibitions, autograph sessions and meetings with authors.

We advise you to take a look at the ‘Unity’ site which will present a unique author’s project by the winner of the Prize ‘For Spiritual Revival’: Vladimir Likhodedov. This will be a collection of postcards that were used by Belarusians more than

eighty years ago. A newsstand with newspapers published in 1921-1939 will also be on show, in addition to rare photos with smiling great-grandparents.

## Warm up at the holy fire

We all know the saying: ‘In the beginning was the Word...’ The holiday in Kopyl is not only about literature, but also about spirituality. The Orthodox faith gave impetus to the development of writing in our area a thousand years ago. The son of Vladimir and Rogneda — Izyaslav — was generally the first prince-bookkeeper in Ancient Russia.

Kirill Turovsky, Yevfrosinya Polotskaya, Francysk Skaryna are Belarusian educators who are known all over the world. Therefore, it’s not surprising that, on the eve of Belarusian Written Language Day, a scientific and educational expedition — ‘The Road to Shrines’ — will go from the capital to Kopyl with the Holy Fire from the Holy Sepulchre.

In five days, the pilgrims will walk a couple of hundred kilometres and visit temples along the way. One of the most interesting points on the route is the wooden Trinity Church in the village of Telyadovichi. You can’t pass this painted beauty without bowing! It was built in 1792, decorated with rich carvings and doll turrets. Initially, the church belonged to the Uniates, then to the Catholics and only after that did it become Orthodox. The church has never closed its doors to parishioners for two hundred years.



Zamkovaya Hill is now empty, but historians have a good idea of what the fortress looked like and created a realistic visualisation



# Strong in spirit

Belarusian Paralympian athletes continue the medal marathon at the 2020 Games

By Sergey Kanashits

The Paralympic Games in Tokyo are gaining momentum while swimmer Ihar Boki has already become their hero. The Bobruisk resident brought his first medal for our team on August 25th setting a Paralympic record, finishing ahead of his rivals in the 100m butterfly.

The President congratulated the athlete on his victory, “All Belarus was waiting for this medal. I’m glad that the first final in Tokyo was victorious for you. Having shown strength of will and great sportsmanship, you achieved outstanding success: you became the 12-time Paralympic champion.”

The Head of State also wished the swimmer more achievements

in the waters of the Japanese capital. Ihar Boki not only heard the warm words and wishes, but took them as a direct guide to action and his further success wasn’t long in coming: the next day, Boki won the 100m backstroke with a clear advantage, earning his second gold in Tokyo and his 13th in total, as well as setting a new world record at this distance!

Ihar Boki claimed his 3rd and 4th gold medals in Tokyo, becoming the best freestyle swimmer at the distances of 400m and 50m.

Bronze was also added to the medal standings of Belarusians last week, with Belarusian track-and-field athlete Lizaveta Piatrenka, performing in the F-13 class, sending her javelin 38m 99cm in her best attempt. This is a continental record.



Ihar Boki

The current week in Tokyo began with swimmer Yahor Shchalkanau earning a silver in the 100m backstroke. Yahor is only twenty and these are the debut Games for him; however, he’s already an experienced swimmer, claiming his first medal at the age of 13. Shchalkanau has always been on close terms with sport: he plays football, rides a bicycle, skates and has even boxed. This is despite the fact that he has a prosthesis below his right knee. In one of his interviews, the Tokyo 2020 medallist recalled how he got into Paralympic swimming, “Once my dad, grandfather and I went diving to the Brest Regional Centre of the Olympic Reserve for Water Sports. When we left the pool, the instructor came up to me. He called the coach Vladimir Masly, who offered to try to train

with me. I found this idea interesting. I used to go to the pool in kindergarten, and my dad had taught me how to swim even earlier.” Yahor has two more events at the Paralympics ahead, so we hope that this medal won’t be the only one for him.

Then our ‘amphibian man’ Ihar Boki once again set his weight in the pool: another victory and another world record! This is his fifth victory out of five swims — one hundred percent result! His personal score for gold medals has increased to 16 (!).

Ihar Boki’s achievements in Paralympic sports are unique, and it is not for nothing that they compare him with the legendary Michael Phelps — the most titled swimmer in history, who has 23 Olympic gold medals.

Ihar is only 27 years old, he’s in amazing shape and is quite capable of surpassing Phelps, having taken so much gold in the individual competition that Fort Knox can’t even accommodate it. There’s every reason to believe that the number of champion titles of a simple guy from Bobruisk — Ihar Boki — will approach two dozen after these Paralympics. It’s fantastic! Nevertheless, Paris 2024 is just around the corner...

At the end of August, our team boasts 7 medals: 5 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze. We continue to follow the performances of Belarusian athletes and wish them new victories!



## Ilya Ivashka’s dream week

By Yuri Bakarenko

The final saw the total domination of Ilya Ivashka, it’s enough to say that he won 100 percent of the points in his first serve (18/18) and left six games serving and receiving at zero.

As a result, in the first set, the Belarusian gave his opponent a score of nil, and in the second game he didn’t allow him to do more.

Some may say that the Swede does not have the highest rating. But this, as they say, is not Ivashka’s problem. For his part, he achieved a lot at this tournament. In particular, he previously knocked out a number of very strong tennis players, while showing strength of will and character, as in the game in the second round, when he was losing — 4:6, 2:5 — but was able to change everything and, as a result, beat the ex-world number three Croatian, Marin Čilić (ATP: 36th) (4:6, 7:5, 6:4).

**Ilya Ivashka (ranked 63rd in the ATP) has won the ATP 250 tournament in Winston-Salem, USA, with a prize fund of \$717,955. In the final match, the representative of the Belarusian tennis school defeated the Swede Mikael Ymer (ATP: 90th) in 55 minutes — 6:0, 6:2. Ivashka claimed his first title in the ATP competition and became the first Belarusian after Maksim Mirnyi since February 2003, who managed to take the title in a tournament at such a high level.**



Moreover, on the way to the final, Ilya Ivashka left behind

Italian Andreas Seppi (ATP: 88th) (6:4, 6:4), Jan-Lennard

Struff from Germany (ATP: 52nd) (6:2, 6:1), the first seed-

ed Spaniard Pablo Carreño Busta (ATP: 12th) (7:6, 6:3) and Finn Emil Ruusuvuori (ATP: 76th) (6:2, 6:1).

It’s not surprising that, having done such a great job, the Belarusian didn’t skimp on emotions after everything was over. “This week has seen everything. In the second round, I was already booking tickets to New York. I was two points away from defeat, while now I’m standing here, having won the title. It’s incredible how one match can change everything. It was amazing to perform here. I really liked it. It was a week of dreams,” he said after the final, according to the official website of the ATP.

A brilliant performance at the Winston-Salem competitions, which was the last test of strength on the eve of the US Open, will allow Ilya Ivashka to climb to a record 53rd place in the world rankings. We want to believe that this is not the limit for him.







## Photo of the week

During the international *Bison Race* obstacle extreme run in Logoisk

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

**On September 3rd, 1731**, Stanislav Bogush-Sestrentsevich was born — a Russian and Belarusian scientist, writer, church and public figure. He served as an officer in the Prussian Hussar Regiment and the Dragoon Regiment of the Lithuanian Guard. In 1761, he retired and served as an educator in the Radziwill family. After converting to Catholicism in 1763 he was ordained as a priest. Since 1773, he headed the Belarusian Catholic Diocese and since 1798 he was the Metropolitan of all Roman Catholic churches in the Russian Empire. He studied Belarus and the problems of the origin of the Slavs while also fighting against the Jesuits and promoting the ideas of enlightenment and humanism. He died in 1826.



**On September 3rd, 2016**, a monument to the creators of the Belarusian national classical opera — composer Stanislav Moniuszko and playwright Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz — was opened in Minsk. The monument appeared in the very centre of the Upper Town, in the public garden near the Town Hall. Not far from this place is the house in which Moniuszko lived for some time and where he received his first music lessons. Meanwhile, the former palace of the Radziwills (where the Hotel Europe now

stands) housed a city theatre in the middle of the 19th century. In February 1852, *Sielanka* (Idyll) was staged there — the first opera in the Belarusian language. The music was written by Moniuszko, the libretto was written by Dunin-Marcinkiewicz.

**On September 3rd, 1941**, the 'Cyclone B' gas — which was a crystalline hydrocyanic acid — was first used to kill prisoners in the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz. Gas chambers were widely used in Nazi Germany as a means of murder in death camps, as is confirmed by numerous testimonies, as well as documents provided at the Nuremberg trials.



**September 5th** is the Day of Oil, Gas and Fuel Industry Workers in the Republic of Belarus. Oil and gas were and are key raw materials, their production is a strategically important sector of the Republican economy. Most of the fields are located in areas with harsh climatic conditions, so the hard work of gas and oil workers is well-respected.



According to statistics, more than 70 percent of the oil products manufactured in Belarus are exported to 90 countries.



showing the inviolable unity of the Belarusian people, its close connection with the Slavic origins, as well as understanding the historical path of writing and printing in Belarus. The enlighteners of the Belarusian people are figures of a European scale: Francysk Skaryna, Kirill Turovsky, Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya, Simeon Polotsky. The capital of the Day of Belarusian Written Language in 2021 will be the city of Kopyl, Minsk Region.

**On September 5th, 2001**, Mogilevskaya metro station was solemnly opened in Minsk. This is the terminal station of the Avtozavodskaya line — the fifth busiest metro station in Minsk; on average, it is used by about 50,000 people a day. The construction took seven years. Mogilevskaya became the twentieth station of the Minsk metro. The station is two-level: on the lower one there is a stopping platform, on the upper are entrance lobbies and side pedestrian galleries.



**On September 7th, 2001**, the public garden in Minsk, near the Belarusian State Musical Theatre on Myasnikov Street, was named 'The Public Garden Named after Twin City Sendai', on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of twinning relations with the Japanese city of Sendai. The main attraction of the location is the clock. Its double-sided dial displays Sendai and Minsk time. It is especially beautiful in Sendai Park in spring, when the pink mountain Sakura begins to bloom; a whole avenue is planted with it.



**September 8th** is International Literacy Day, celebrated since 1967 by the decision of the 14th session of the UNESCO General Conference, at the proposal of the World Congress of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy on the day of its inauguration on September 8th, 1965.

**On September 8th, 1941**, the fascist blockade of Leningrad began. Fascist German troops reached Lake Ladoga in the Shlisselburg area and blocked the city from land: 900 days and nights of heroic defence began, showing the world an example of the unprecedented courage of both the soldiers and townspeople.

