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INTERNATIONAL

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Participants of the *Memory Train*, a unique cultural and educational project dedicated to the heroism of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War

By glorious roads of heroes

This train is not on the schedule, but hundreds of people meet and see it off very solemnly. This is the *Memory Train* — a unique cultural and educational project dedicated to the heroism of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War. The *Memory Train* was first implemented last year under the auspices of the upper houses of the parliaments of Belarus and Russia. Its passengers are young patriots who by their deeds have proved the right to become participants in this project.

200 schoolchildren from Russia, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan went on a 2.5-week trip to 14 cities of Russia and Belarus. The start was given on June 22nd in Brest. After all, it was it who became one of the first cities, which in 1941 was hit by a treacherous blow from Nazi Germany. In Brest, high school students took part in commemorative events dedicated to the tragic date of the start of the Great Patriotic War. Then the *Memory Train* went to Grodno, St. Petersburg, including a visit to the *Scarlet Sails* festival, Ufa with a visit to the events of the 10th Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Russia. Next on the route are Samara, Volgograd, Kursk, Gomel, Zhlobin, Mogilev, Gorki, Orsha, Minsk (on the Independence Day of Belarus), Patriot Park in the Moscow Region and Moscow.



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The President of Belarus helped to resolve the situation with PMC Wagner

Details of tense negotiations

The past weekend turned out to be very eventful and difficult for the President of Belarus. The Head of our State again acted as a peacemaker and actually saved Russia from an armed mutiny, the consequences of which could seriously affect security in the region. By agreement with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, the Belarusian leader entered into negotiations with PMC Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin and settled the conflict. On Saturday evening, the press service of the Belarusian Head of State reported,

“The negotiations lasted for the entire day. As a result, the sides agreed that it is unacceptable to start a bloodbath in Russia’s territory. Yevgeny Prigozhin accepted Aleksandr Lukashenko’s proposal on stopping the advance of Wagner’s armed units in Russia’s territory and on further steps meant to deescalate tensions. At present an absolutely advantageous and acceptable variant to defuse the situation is available, including safety guarantees for fighters of the private military company Wagner.”

This is how the conflict unfolded

The past weekend turned out to be not just difficult, but fateful for Russia. The founder of PMC Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the man who was largely responsible for the liberation of Popasnaya, Soledar and Artemovsk in the Donbass, attempted an armed mutiny. On the night of June 24th, Wagnerites captured the headquarters of the Southern Military District in Rostov-on-Don, then PMC fighters moved towards Moscow through the Voronezh and Lipetsk Regions ...

On the evening of June 23rd, several audio recordings were published on the Telegram channel of PMC Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin. In particular, he stated that PMC Wagner units were allegedly hit. Prigozhin blamed the attack on Russia’s military leadership.

On the night of June 24th, the Wagnerites captured the headquarters of the Southern Military District in Rostov-on-Don. There were groups of armed people in the city, checkpoints were set up at the entrances and exits. PMC fighters moved towards Moscow. In particular, PMC Wagner equipment was seen in the Voronezh and Lipetsk Regions.

On the territory of Moscow, the Moscow and Voronezh Regions, a counter-terrorist operation regime was introduced. Mayor of Moscow Sergei Sobyenin said that all public events in the capital have been cancelled. In St. Petersburg on Zolotaya Street, the building of the PMC Wagner Centre was cordoned off by law enforcement officers.

Actions of the Russian Defence Ministry

The Russian Defence Ministry called false information about the attack on the rear camps of PMC Wagner.

“All messages and video footage distributed on social networks on behalf of Prigozhin about the alleged strike by the Russian Defence Ministry on the rear camps of PMC Wagner do not correspond to reality and are an informational provocation,” the ministry said. They added that the Armed Forces of the Russian

Federation continue to carry out combat missions on the line of contact with the armed forces of Ukraine in the area of the special military operation.

The Defence Ministry also urged PMC Wagner representatives to be prudent and get in touch with representatives of the department or law enforcement agencies. A little later, the Defence Ministry announced that they had already helped the PMC Wagner commanders and fighters who turned to the department to safely return to their permanent deployment points.

The Wagnerites were approached by Sergei Surovikin, second-in-command of the Russian joint armed force in the area of Russia’s special military operation. He urged the private military company Wagner to obey the order given by the Russian President and resolve all the disputes peacefully. His words are quoted by TASS,



June 24th. On the streets of Rostov-on-Don.

“I urge you to stop. The enemy is just waiting for the internal political situation to worsen in our country. It is impossible to play into the hands of the enemy in this difficult time for the country. Before it’s too late, it is necessary, and what needs to be done is to obey the will and order of the popularly elected President of the Russian Federation, stop the columns, return them to their permanent deployment points and areas of concentration, solve all problems only by peaceful means.”

Sergei Surovikin added that, by order of the leadership of the Defence Ministry, he arrived from the front line, where Russian fighters, including volunteers, fulfil tasks, “We have gone through a difficult, complex path together with you, we fought together, took risks, suffered losses, we won together. We are of the same blood, we are warriors.”

Russia’s Federal Security Service

opened a criminal case on the fact of Prigozhin’s call for an armed mutiny. The department stressed that all the allegations spread on behalf of the founder of the PMC have no basis. The FSB also called on PMC Wagner fighters to disobey Prigozhin’s orders and take steps to detain him.

Reaction of the President of Russia Vladimir Putin

On the evening of June 23rd, Russia President’s Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said that the President of Russia Vladimir Putin had been informed of all the events around Prigozhin, and the necessary measures were being taken. Later, Peskov said that the Defence Ministry, the FSB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Guard of the Russian Federation reported to Putin around the clock on the measures

And therefore, the actions that split our unity are, in fact, apostasy from our people, from our comrades-in-arms who are now fighting at the front, this is a stab in the back to our country and our people.

It was such a blow that was dealt to Russia in 1917, when the country was waging the World War I. But the victory was stolen from it. Intrigues, squabbles, politicking behind the backs of the army and the people turned into the greatest shock, the destruction of the army and the collapse of the state, the loss of vast territories, as a result, the tragedy of the Civil War: Russians killed Russians, brothers — brothers, and all sorts of political adventurers and foreign forces extracted selfish benefits who divided the country, tore it apart. We will not let this happen again, we will protect both our people and our statehood from any threats, including from internal betrayal, and what we are faced with is precisely betrayal.”

Vladimir Putin called the actions of the leadership of PMC Wagner a betrayal of the country,

“Exorbitant ambitions and personal interests led to treason, both to the country and people, and the cause for which, side by side with our other units and subunits, the fighters and commanders of PMC Wagner fought. The heroes who liberated Soledar and Artemovsk, the cities and towns of Donbass, fought and gave their lives for Novorossia and the unity of the Russian world. Their name and glory were also betrayed by those who are trying to organise a mutiny, pushing the country to anarchy and fratricide, to defeat and, ultimately, to capitulation. I repeat: any internal unrest is a deadly threat to our statehood.”

Vladimir Putin warned, “Action against such a threat would be tough. All those who deliberately embarked on the path of betrayal, who prepared an armed mutiny, embarked on the path of blackmail and terrorist methods, will suffer inevitable punishment. They will answer both before the law and before our people. The armed forces and other state bodies received the necessary orders. Additional antiterrorist measures are now being introduced in Moscow, the Moscow Region and a number of other regions. Resolute actions will also be taken to stabilise the situation in Rostov-on-Don: it remains difficult, the work of civil and military authorities is actually blocked. As President of Russia, as Supreme Commander-in-Chief, as a citizen of Russia, I will do everything to defend the country, protect the constitutional order, life and security, and freedom of citizens. Those who organised and prepared a military mutiny, who raised arms against their comrades-in-arms, have betrayed Russia and will be held accountable for this. And I urge those who are being drawn into this crime not to make a fatal, tragic and irreparable mistake, to make the only right choice — to stop participating in criminal acts.”

Help from the President of Belarus

The Head of the Belarusian State had an intense Saturday, which included conferences with officers of defence, security, and law enforcement agencies, contacts

taken after the instructions given by the Head of State in connection with an attempted armed rebellion.

On the morning of June 24th, Russian leader Vladimir Putin addressed the citizens of Russia amid the situation with PMC Wagner. Vladimir Putin stated that the Russian leadership will not allow a repeat of the civil war in the country.

The President of the Russian Federation stated that Russia today is waging a hard struggle for its future, repelling the aggression of neo-Nazis and their masters, and virtually the entire military, economic and information machine of the West is directed against Russia,

“This battle, when the fate of our people is being decided, requires unity of all forces, unity, consolidation and responsibility, when everything that weakens us must be thrown aside, any strife that our external enemies can use and used to undermine us from within.”

with President of Russia Vladimir Putin, and negotiations with Yevgeny Prigozhin. The negotiations lasted for an entire day and ways to defuse the situation were finally found.

On the morning of June 24th, a telephone conversation took place between the Presidents of Belarus and Russia. The Heads of State agreed on joint actions. After that, Aleksandr Lukashenko held talks with Yevgeny Prigozhin.

“This morning Russian President Vladimir Putin briefed his Belarusian counterpart on the situation in southern Russia with the private military company Wagner. The Heads of State agreed on joint actions. In further development of the agreements, the President of Belarus, having additionally specified the situation through his own channels, and in agreement with the President of Russia, held talks with the head of PMC Wagner Yevgeny Prigozhin,” the Belarus President’s press service said.

Negotiations lasted throughout the day, as a result of which they came to agreements ‘on the inadmissibility of unleashing a bloodbath’ on the territory of Russia.

Yevgeny Prigozhin accepted the proposal of the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko on stopping the advance of Wagner’s armed units in Russia’s territory and on further steps meant to deescalate tensions. At present an absolutely advantageous and acceptable variant to defuse the situation is available, including safety guarantees for fighters of the private military company Wagner,” the Belarus President’s press service said.

Another telephone conversation between Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin took place in the evening. The President of Belarus informed the Russian leader in detail about the results of negotiations with the leadership of PMC Wagner. The President of Russia thanked his Belarusian counterpart for the work done.

Shortly after the announcement of Aleksandr Lukashenko’s participation in resolving the situation, news appeared that the PMC Wagner columns were turning around and leaving in the opposite direction.

“Understanding all the responsibility for the fact that Russian blood will be shed on one of the sides, we deploy our columns and leave in the opposite direction to the field camps according to the plan,” the boss of PMC Wagner said.

Late on the evening of June 24th, RIA Novosti reported that PMC Wagner fighters began to prepare to withdraw from the headquarters of the Southern Military District. “Ammunition is being loaded into vehicles, tanks are being fired up, perhaps they are getting ready to load vehicles onto trawls. The fighters withdraw from their positions and take an active part in the training camp without commenting on their actions,” the agency said.

Toward nightfall, the governor of the Rostov Region, Vasily Golubev, said that the convoy with equipment, as well as PMC Wagner fighters, had left the territory of Rostov-on-Don. On Sunday, the same messages came from the Lipetsk and Voronezh Regions.

What Dmitry Peskov told reporters

The Russian President’s press secretary Dmitry Peskov stated that the mediation efforts exercised by Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko had been made for a higher cause — to avoid bloodshed. Dmitry Peskov stressed that Moscow highly appreciates the contribution of Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko to the resolution of the conflict.

The mediation of Minsk in the situation with PMC Wagner, added Dmitry Peskov, was the initiative of the Belarusian leader,

“The two Presidents did indeed agree that President Lukashenko would mediate efforts to resolve the situation. You will surely ask me why President Lukashenko in particular. The fact is that Aleksandr Grigoryevich has been personally acquainted with Prigozhin for about 20 years, and this was his personal initiative proposal, which was agreed with President Putin.”

Dmitry Peskov, in addition, clarified that the criminal case against the head of PMC Yevgeny Prigozhin would be dropped, the head of PMC Wagner himself would go to Belarus. As emphasised in the Kremlin, the guarantee that Prigozhin will be able to do this is the word of the President of Russia.

HOWEVER

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held telephone conversations with President of Russia Vladimir Putin and the first President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev on June 25th. In the morning Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke on the phone with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. In the afternoon, a telephone conversation took place with Nursultan Nazarbayev. They discussed the international situation, the situation in the region and Belarus–Kazakhstan relations.

Based on materials of BELTA

Tasks for the government

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting with senior members of the Council of Ministers. This time the conversation was held in an expanded format, many issues were discussed: from attracting investments and the situation in agriculture to the construction of roads and the social sphere.



The President asked the Prime Minister whether all indicators showed positive dynamics, whether they managed to fully overcome last year’s obstacles (logistics and transaction costs, the search for new partners and markets). He also asked how the target tasks are being carried out, the effectiveness of the implementation of the ‘one district — one project’ concept.

On investments and the relevant bill

The bill to facilitate and promote the implementation of investment projects was submitted for consideration of the Head of State. According to the developers, the bill will help level off the situation and increase investment flow.

“In fact, the submitted draft law is to replace Decree No.10, which has served as the legal basis for investment contracts for almost 15 years. It was a breakthrough document in its time. Over the past years, representatives of 20 countries have invested more than \$8 billion. More than 1,000 projects have been implemented,” the Head of State said.

The declining volume of investment, both external and domestic, has been a recent trend, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

“Of course, any country today is trying to provide investors with attractive conditions. We should also create competitive advantages, so that money would be invested in promising, high-tech, innovative industries right here in Belarus. I am not against reasonable innovations, and I am always ready to support them. I would like however to hear your report on the essence of the draft law and its expected effect. Who is the bill aimed at? In the current geopolitical circumstances, it is highly unlikely for Western investors to come to the Belarusian economy. Let us focus on others: eastern, Asian, African and other investors. We should also work with Western investors, we should not reject their proposals immediately,” the President said.

At the same time, the President recalled an important rule: social responsibility must make the basis of any project, including full time employment, good wages, a wide social package and, of course, tax payment,

“I do not think we need projects when they come here to, as they used to say, squeeze everything out of the people and pay peanuts (paying no taxes at all, and offering let us say \$500 to workers), and take the main profit in the form of dividends out to unfriendly countries. I don’t think we need such projects. We are not a banana republic, but a high-tech, highly developed country, and we must work primarily with our investors.”

On the organisation of the 2nd CIS Games

Aleksandr Lukashenko gave instructions to ensure the excellent organisation of the 2nd CIS Games. The competitions will take place in 11 Belarusian cities and towns from August 4th–14th.

“In the current circumstances this sport festival is acquiring special importance for Belarusian athletes and a wide range of our friends, who have confirmed their participation in the Games.

We must not just host the Games at the highest level. We must once again show that Belarus is an open and peaceful country that offers comfortable and safe conditions for people,” the Head of State said.

On tasks and agreements with the Government

The President focused on problematic issues: the workload of warehouses, large accounts receivable, slow development of new markets.

According to the Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, the growth rate of gross domestic product amounted to 100.9 percent.

“And what was the targeted figure?” the Head of State wondered.

“We still have to hit 102.6 percent in June alone,” Roman Golovchenko responded.

“But we feel what performance figures we will get over the half year. You wanted 102 percent, and you got 101 percent,” Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked.

“But in net terms (May to May) we have 7 percent. This is why I think we will either hit the semiannual performance target or will get close to it. The economy is gaining momentum now,” Roman Golovchenko noted.

Let’s make an agreement in public. If you don’t hit specified performance figures, all of you will have to retire. You and the First Deputy Prime Minister will be the first ones. I want reporters to see it and people to understand it. If you accomplish the tasks, you will get thanks, orders, awards. If you don’t, tough decisions will be made,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

“Good,” the Prime Minister agreed.

On the situation in the markets and new industries

Prime Minister of Belarus Roman Golovchenko described the situation in economy. In his words, in five months the economy reached the targeted growth trajectory. Foreign trade surplus amounted to \$203 million in January–April. It is expected that its volumes will increase based on the results of work for the first half of the year.

An increase in added value in the manufacturing sector accounted for the largest contribution to the GDP growth.

The Head of State wondered about the stock in storage at Belarusian enterprises. Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that one should not be hung up on one or two markets, one should also go to other countries.

Summing up the meeting, the President stated that the government and the economy are working today, but there are problems that could seriously affect the situation in the future. Wherein Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded about his instruction: no talks about sanctions, sanctions cannot be used as an excuse. The President also believes that it is necessary to look for more potential among regional governors.

I am far from saying that everything has been failed. But there are issues and problems that need to be addressed.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Foundation of everything

What does the National Security Concept project say about the economic aspect

In the current difficult conditions, it is extremely important, as President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko says, to hold on to your own and develop what is available. The Belarusian economic model is built on this idea, as well as on the principle of social responsibility. Belarus adheres to the model of a socially oriented market economy, which today is designed to preserve our independence. It has proven its worth and effectiveness. In general, in 2010-2021, the country's GDP increased in comparable prices by 21.2 percent, with an increase in labour productivity over the specified period by 32.4 percent. However, numerous external challenges and threats, including unprecedented economic pressure in the form of illegal sanctions against Belarusian enterprises, create difficult conditions for its functioning. Nevertheless, the draft National Security Concept of Belarus provides clear definitions of what and how the country plans to protect its economic model.



By Svetlana Isaenok

World trends

The world economy is characterised by instability associated with the redistribution of spheres of influence, including by force, as well as the consequences of large-scale international economic sanctions, which have become a tool to influence the socio-economic processes of objectionable states. The world centres of power are taking actions to disintegrate and absorb the economies of developing countries, giving them a raw material orientation. The promotion of digital technologies, biotechnologies and artificial intelligence forms the prerequisites for changing the structure of the economy, transforming traditional directions for the introduction of productive forces and financial flows. The advanced development of knowledge and technologies ensures the evolution of existing and the emergence of new professional competencies.

At the same time, the need for highly qualified specialists is growing. The use of the latest digital currencies (tokens, including cryptocurrencies) is being activated, competition for control over markets, resources and technologies is intensifying, inequality in the distribution of income from world trade is increasing, and financial dependence is growing.

Of particular importance for states in the implementation of their foreign economic interests is loyalty to the political situation of developed states. Many countries are experiencing insurmountable problems with maintaining the quality of life, economic recession, rising unemployment. There are growing threats to energy and food security.

FIGURES

Belarus took 78th place in 2022 (out of 167 countries) in the overall ranking of national welfare (Legatum Prosperity Index 2019).



The number of people employed in the Belarusian economy in 2022 is 4.215 million people, which is 45.7 percent of the total population.

In 2022, the unemployment rate in the Republic of Belarus, in accordance with the methodology of the International Labour Organisation, decreased to **3.6 percent** of the total number of employees.

The real disposable cash income of the population of Belarus in January–March 2023 amounted to **100.3 percent** compared to the same period in 2022.



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“For three decades now the people-oriented economy has been the foundation of our state policy. This policy is successful, and the nation supports it. Judging by all the indicators that characterise social equality, Belarus is one of the best countries. We’ve created a state without oligarchs. We have prevented a concentration of capital and properties in the same hands. All the national riches are owned by the people. This is why the economy that enables social security of the citizens represents the key target of the West.”

During Address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly on March 31st, 2023

REFERENCE

According to the ranking of the Human Development Index, which is a generally recognised tool for comparing the standard of living in different countries of the world, Belarus ranks 53rd out of 189 countries and is included in the group of countries with a very high level of human development according to the UN classification.



DIRECT SPEECH

Natalya Kireenko, Doctor of Economics, Professor,

“The Republic of Belarus has chosen a rather unique approach to the development of a model of the country's socio-economic development. The importance of this model is that it focuses on the social aspect. The model, which is envisaged in our country, involves preventing significant social stratification in society, maintaining the system of social security, healthcare, education and culture at the proper level.

Therefore, economic security as the basis of national security is one of the priorities. Its importance lies in the fact that in the economic sphere we are considering the issue of economic growth, increasing the competitiveness of products, the development of production, financial, credit and other systems.

Of course, it includes questions on human capital and food security. Economic security is a state that guarantees the protection of the national interests of Belarus from internal and external threats. Therefore, the currently chosen model and the emphasis on the system of economic security indicate that the Republic of Belarus is following the fundamentally correct path of its unique development.”

The main national interests in the economic aspect are:

- economic growth and competitiveness of the Belarusian economy based on its restructuring, improvement of the management system, sustainable innovative development, active investment in human capital and high technology, cost reduction and development of high-tech, export-oriented and import-substituting industries;
- ensuring price and financial stability;
- development of the national financial market and state-regulated integration into the international financial system;
- non-discriminatory access to world markets for goods, services and finance, as well as raw materials and energy resources;
- achieving a level of energy security that ensures an acceptable level of diversification of the country's fuel and energy balance by types and suppliers of consumed fuel and energy resources, economically and environmentally justified use of the potential of local energy resources, reducing the energy intensity of GDP;
- ensuring food security;
- introduction of promising technologies in the country's economy, including through foreign direct investment, the availability of foreign credit resources;
- maintenance of commodity and country diversification of exports of goods and services, balance of foreign trade, ensuring foreign economic security;
- mutually beneficial and non-discriminatory economic co-operation within the framework of international integration associations;
- balanced development of the public and private sectors;
- creation of conditions for balanced development of regions;
- development of digital technologies and regulated digital transformation of the economy.

Internal sources of threats to national security in the economic aspect are:

- lagging behind other countries, primarily neighbouring countries, in terms of economic development;
- outdated technologies and fixed assets, the prevalence of material and energy-intensive industries, low quality of manufactured products and its slow renewal;
- presence of unreasonable administrative barriers to business development and entrepreneurial activity;
- imbalance of economic development;
- unfavourable conditions for attracting investments and loans;
- low diversification of exports and imports of goods and services;
- the impossibility of guaranteed supply of raw materials and energy resources in the volumes necessary for stable economic growth;
- deficit of own working capital, high debt burden of commercial organisations, large share of unprofitable business entities;
- discrepancy between the level of personnel training and the structure of the needs of the economy in specialists and workers, the shortage of qualified specialists for modern production and organisation of business processes;
- insufficient efficiency of state control.

The main external sources of threats to national security in the economic aspect are:

- deterioration in the terms of foreign trade, attraction of credit and investment resources due to unfavourable conditions on world markets and the introduction of unjustified economic sanctions (restrictive measures);
- adoption by foreign states of protectionist measures, the establishment of barriers and discriminatory conditions for the implementation of export-import operations;
- development of transit corridors, systems of transportation of raw materials and energy resources, alternative to those available in the Republic of Belarus, purposeful limitation of its transit possibilities;
- worsening financial imbalances and high volatility in global currency and stock markets.

Power of the forest titans

In November last year, an agreement was signed to provide Belarus with a Russian state financial loan in the amount of about 105 billion Russian rubles. The lists of promising import-substituting investment projects have been specified at the level of the governments of the two countries. Among the largest and most significant are the projects of the Amkodor Holding Company. Director General of Amkodor — Holding Managing Company Andrei Yarotsky talked about how they are being implemented.



Andrei Yarotsky, “In the next two or three years, we plan to completely replace imports of what we used to buy in unfriendly countries.”

By Inna Gorbatenko

Manipulators from Dzerzhinsk

The holding is currently implementing three large-scale import substitution projects. The first is the creation of the production of manipulators on the basis of a plant in Dzerzhinsk. This science-intensive innovative product has never been produced in Russia or Belarus before, says Andrei Yarotsky, “Previously, working equipment was purchased in Finland. Now we do it ourselves. We have designed and put into production a whole line of manipulators — nine models. The most popular ones are already produced in small batches at a pilot plant in Minsk, the rest are at the testing stage. In 2022, we manufactured 76 manipulators that have never been produced in Belarus before. Literally in a year we managed to step from design to a small series.”

The main task for the near future is to scale this project. At the plant in Dzerzhinsk, construction and installation work has been completed by 70 percent.

Director General explains the importance of developing our own skill sets,

“There are no companies in the world that would produce both working bodies, and a control system, and transmission elements, and a hydraulic system, and an electrical system, and the machine itself. This makes us a unique market player.”

At the same time, we are among the world’s top 3 manufacturers with the widest range of manufactured equipment for the timber industry.”

It is planned to equip the plant in Dzerzhinsk with sufficient technological equipment within a year to launch mass production of manipulators for forestry equipment.

“We plan to increase the range of manipulators for log trucks. This is a technique for transporting timber from prepared plots

to storage sites. These are not our machines, but we know that their manufacturers also need manipulators, which used to be purchased abroad. Moreover, we are ready to close this niche with a domestic product,” the interlocutor shares their plans.

Up to 450 vehicles in Logoisk

The second project is an increase in production capacity for the creation of machines for the timber industry complex in Logoisk. Construction work has already begun there.



Own component base brings the production of logging equipment to a fundamentally different level, Andrei Yarotsky says, “This is both service and spare parts... Forestry equipment operates in extremely difficult conditions, which entails a lot of wear on mating parts. Spare parts are required for replacement. Maintenance of the product life cycle is a separate type of business. We have our own distribution network, warranty and service teams. This is additional income that is reinvested in production.”



BELTA

Today, Amkodor enterprises produce 26,700 items of products, of which 145 models and modifications of special machines

sovereignty, Director General emphasised, “Now we can produce about 200–220 vehicles a year in Logoisk. After the reconstruction of the plant, we will be able to double the capacity and produce up to 450 vehicles. These are average numbers.”

Unique technologies in Minsk

The third project is the most science-intensive one — the creation in Minsk of additional capacities for the production of transmission elements — leading steered and unsteered axles, tandem axles and hydromechanical transmissions. Its implementation will cover all existing and future needs of our equipment in transmission elements, Director General explains, “We have retained these skill sets and developed them significantly. Those products that we have created, albeit in small batches, are already being installed on our machines. Along with the Germans and the Americans, we became the third company in the world to master the production of tandem gear axles. Today, our holding’s demand for these products is covered by 50 percent, and we are ready to consume twice as much. But in general, the project’s capacity will be designed to ensure that at least 30 percent is also exported.”

The cost of the project is \$49 million. It will take at least two years to implement it. This project is planned to be implemented as soon as possible, because the main suppliers of such products were Western companies, and without the production of

transmission elements, it is impossible to make vehicles.

Over the past year, Amkodor produced about 150 machines and machine kits for logging equipment. However, the capacity of the Belarusian market of machines for the timber industry is about 200 units per year, not counting small equipment for thinning, Andrei Yarotsky calculated, “In February, we presented the first domestic samples of thinning machines. This is a new niche for us. Now they are being tested in Belarusian forestries. This technique is maximally made from its own component base.”

Comprehensive modernisation is underway at almost all the holding’s plants.

Renovation of fixed assets and expansion of production capacities will allow achieving almost one hundred percent localisation of the production of timber industry machinery within the framework of the Union State,

Andrei Yarotsky concluded, “All three projects are urgently needed. In the next two or three years, we plan to completely replace imports of what we used to buy in unfriendly countries. Already, the percentage of localisation of key models of equipment within the Union State is 95-98 percent. Moreover, about 80 percent of the components, including transmissions, frame structures, batteries and elements of the machine control system are produced at the holding’s own enterprises.”

Surely, when it comes to hero pilots, Gastello's surname will sound one of the first. Of course, they will also remember the place of the iconic feat on Molodechno land. It is not surprising that this Hero of the Soviet Union in Radoshkovichi is treated with special trepidation. A majestic stele crowned with a sculptural portrait of the legendary captain, and a monument in the courtyard of secondary school No. 2, where a unique museum began to be created back in the mid-1960s, remind of this at the entrance to the township.



The only museum of fire and aerial rammings in Belarus in Radoshkovichi has become a place of inspiration for young patriots



Feat of Nikolai Gastello by A. Sibirsky

By Andrei Zakharov

The circumstances of Gastello's death hardly need retelling. For the first time, Soviet people learned about the self-sacrifice of the pilots on July 5th, 1941, from the evening summary of the Soviet Information Bureau. The brief message said, "The squadron commander, Captain Gastello, performed a heroic feat. A shell from an enemy anti-aircraft gun hit the gas tank of his aircraft. The fearless commander sent the plane engulfed in flames to the accumulation of vehicles and gasoline tanks of the enemy. Dozens of German vehicles and tanks exploded along with the hero's plane."

The feat of the crew of Nikolai Gastello, consisting of lieutenants Anatoly Burdenok, Grigory Skorobogaty and senior sergeant Aleksei Kalinin, had two witnesses — the commander of the leading crew, senior lieutenant Vorobyov and navigator Lieutenant Rybas, who controlled the second bomber as part of the Gastello link. Before their eyes, Captain Gastello turned the wrecked plane, from which smoke was coming, towards the column. Then he sent the plane straight into the thick of German tanks and vehicles. Until the last, the crew fired at the enemy from the aircraft in flames: none of its members tried to leave the bomber. Then there was an explosion: the plane crashed into a convoy. A lot of German equipment burned down. The price of the feat was high: on June 26th, 1941, just four days after the start of the war, the entire crew of the DB-3F died.

A month after the feat, Captain Nikolai Gastello was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. His name has become a symbol of heroism and self-sacrifice. Gastello's legendary feat — fire rammings — has been repeated hundreds of times. In total, during the Great Patriotic War, 14 sea rammings, 52 tank, 600 air and 506 ground rammings were made. All Soviet fire falcons of the times of the Great Patriotic War were later called Gastellites.

Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, there were attempts to debunk the feat of the pilot. There were publications claiming that the legendary fire aerial rammings was carried out by the crew of Captain Maslov. The museum also collected rich material about



this hero. Among the arguments in favour of their version, the authors cited the fact that the wreckage of the Maslov bomber and the remains of the crew members of this aircraft were found at the scene. Nevertheless, this find is one more proof in favour of Gastello's feat. Maslov's plane was found because it crashed into the ground, and not into a convoy of vehicles. The explosion of Gastello's plane after rammings a column of fuel and ammunition left no traces, except for eyewitness accounts.

A number of researchers, including the son of Nikolai Gastello Victor, reject the version with Maslov as untenable. By the way, in the school museum of fire and aerial rammings, among the exhibits are books by Victor Gastello with autographs, which were handed over by the sister of Nikolai Gastello.

"The personal belongings of hero pilots is, of course, our exclusive. For example, Gastello's navigation bar or the original letter from Aleksei Kalinin, written four days before his death. The lines in which the pilot writes how he is bored, waiting for a vacation and meeting with the dearest person cannot but touch the reader," the young guide Yelizaveta Filistovich explains.

Through such things, everyone realises the tragedy of war and the sacrifice of the human choice that our defenders had to make. Moreover, of course, the figure of Nikolai Gastello is central, because it all started with him.

The history of the museum goes almost hand in hand with the school, opened in 1960. It was a boarding school for orphans.

Sky of heroes



Nikolai Gastello

Radoshkovichi local historians established 969 names of pilots, heroes of fire and aerial rammings, and also collected interesting materials related to these personalities

Teachers and schoolchildren launched a large-scale search work. They collected new facts and exhibits, corresponded with veterans and brother-soldiers of the fallen heroes, established co-operation with other educational institutions. The expositions were updated with new information about the crew members of Aleksandr Maslov, Isaac Preseizen and other pilots who performed feats on Molodechno land. The names of 18 crews who died in battles in the sky over their native land are known.

There are 1,633 exhibits in the school bastion of memory, 681 of which are the main fund. Zoya Moklyak, who has been running the museum for almost 15 years, specifies,

"During the existence of the museum, guests from Germany, Poland, Mongolia, China, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Italy, Spain, France and other countries have visited it. We had more than a thousand people every year."

This is a significant place for us. The lessons of history and literature on the topic of the Great Patriotic War are held here in a special atmosphere, the children realise at what cost we received peace and freedom, why people sacrificed the most precious things and how important it is for us to never forget our heroes.

Schoolgirl Anastasia Romanchik shared that her interest in the history of her native land prompted her to try herself as a guide,

"The excitement immediately passes when you feel the feedback, the interest of our guests, regardless of age, to the life and feat of the heroes. What were these people, what memories they left — all this finds a lively response. However, thanks to them, our township is known not only in Belarus. The desire to comprehend those events prompted me to delve into the history of my family. I found out that my great-grandfather was a partisan, there was even an article about him in the newspaper. The war did not bypass anyone, every family should have its own heroes. Therefore, Victory Day is always special — our common and family holiday. I think this tradition will live on forever."



Aleksey Matyush



Officially, the year of birth of Minsk is considered to be 1067, the first mention of it is kept by the *Tale of Bygone Years*. But scientists who have been exploring the Minsk settlement and fortress for half a century are not sure about the unambiguity of this date, since they have often come across finds from an earlier period — the 9th–10th centuries. Last year, the Prime Minister instructed to organise a large-scale study of the archaeological complex, because in the 11th century it was one of the most significant ‘megacities’ of the Polotsk land and Eastern Europe as a whole. The start was made in April, more than Br500,000 were allocated from the republican budget.



Beginning of history

Large-scale archaeological excavations are underway in the village of Gorodishche — it was here on the Menka River that our capital was born

By Inna Gorbatenko

Place with history

The Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences conducts large-scale archaeological research in the most promising areas of the fortified settlement and the settlements adjacent to it. Everyone understands that it is impossible to fully explore such a gigantic archaeological complex in one field season. Imagine, only the fortified Small and Big settlements occupy an area of 2 hectares, the height of the defensive ramparts is 8–12 metres, and the settlement behind the fortress walls is 30 hectares. The excavation will take at least two years.

Now they are being conducted from the western side of Gorodishche. A curious artefact was found at this place — the handle of a bronze vessel of Arab origin of the 10th century. As well as ingots of non-ferrous metals, silver coins, jewellery, belt pads, cast defective products and tools. According to the Head of the Department of the Middle Ages and Modern Times of the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Head of the Prospecting Work Andrei Voitekhovich, this confirmed the assumption that from the second half of the 11th to the beginning of the 12th century there was a jewellery workshop, “Having completed work on this site, we will lay an excavation on

the western side in order to localise the boundaries of the jeweller’s estate, to determine its dimensions in order to understand the context of this place. There is an assumption that this is the territory of a trade and craft settlement, where there were workshops and forges. The site is limited by the Dunai Creek and the Menka River, and for safety reasons, our ancestors located such fire hazardous industries near the water. This version is supported by a dozen lead seals found that marked goods.”

The depth of the cultural layer in this place is 80 centimetres. Layer by layer, the soil is carefully removed and sifted, and all the finds are fixed on the plan and photographed. It’s unfortunate, but the chemical composition of the soil near the banks of the Menka River adversely affected the preservation of organic matter — wood, leather and fabric...

However, the remains of earthworks of our ancestors have survived to this day. The oak fortifications of the city are hidden in them. This summer, experts will reopen them to take samples of coal and logs. Dendrochronological and radiocarbon analyses will give the date of the ramparts erection and remove all disagreements about whether this settlement is the ancestor of Minsk.



Find for science

The locals joke: here, wherever you dig, there is a treasure everywhere. The territory of the Minsk settlement really hides many secrets. Archaeologists continue to open them, raising to the surface unique artefacts of the 10th–12th centuries: weights, elements of a belt set, women’s chest and head ornaments, a fragment of a silver dirham, a key to an interior lock, and other items.

Archaeologists made a landmark find last year — the bottom of a potter’s pot, which depicts the prince’s trident. Andrei Voitekhovich explained why the find is interesting for science, “This is a royal badge. To be precise, it is the personal family sign of Izyaslav, the son of Vladimir Svyatoslavovich and Rogneda. We are talking about the beginning of the 11th century. This is a unique find, because his personal sign has never been found on the territory of modern Belarus before.

It was found only on a seal discovered in Novgorod. The symbol on the fragment of the pot in the future will allow us to de-

HOWEVER

On April 22nd, Minsk settlement received the status of a monument of national significance.

to determine the chronology and status of the settlement, in particular, the period when it became part of the Polotsk land.”

Open-air museum

The settlement on Menka River should become one of the favourite tourist routes of Belarusians, First Deputy Head of the President Administration Maksim Ryzhenkov believes. “It is the capital, that in many ways people are always guided by the antiquity of a particular people, country, its cultural traditions, historical memory. Now the task is to provide maximum scientific confirmation not only from some chronicle sources, but also to put the finds in justification,” he said during a visit to archaeological excavations last summer.

During the nationwide subbotnik, a new security sign ‘Archaeological complex on the Menka River. Historical and cultural value of the 2nd category’ appeared here, the spring of Vseslav the Sorcerer was maintained, paths from the village to the settlement were arranged, trees along the path to the St. Nicholas Church were planted, and bushes in areas that will be explored by archaeologists were cut down.

Having thoroughly studied the found artefacts, scientists will be able to interpret the significance of the settlement and its role in the formation of the Belarusian statehood. Andrei Voitekhovich has no doubts that soon this important historical and cultural site for our country will become a new brand of Belarus.

TO THE POINT
There is an idea at the excavation site to recreate the appearance of an ancient settlement, replicas of houses and outbuildings, reproduce the interiors of jewellery and pottery workshops, living quarters... This will be a kind of small corner of Ancient Rus’ near the Gorodishche.



Students of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts at the excavations in the village of Gorodishche, Minsk Region



Aleksey Matyush



Police raid Paris 2024 Olympics HQ in corruption probe

Prosecutors say they are investigating Olympics organisers over alleged embezzlement of public funds and favouritism

The headquarters of the Paris 2024 Olympics organising committee and those of its infrastructure partner have been searched by French police as part of investigations into alleged embezzlement of public funds and favouritism, prosecutors say.

The National Financial Prosecutor's Office (PNF) said the Paris 2024 headquarters was raided after a preliminary investigation was launched in 2017 into contracts made by the Summer Games organising committee.

The headquarters of SOLIDEO, the public body responsible for delivering Olympic and Paralympic infrastructure, was also searched as part of a preliminary

investigation dating back to 2022 after an audit by the French Anti-Corruption Agency, the PNF added.

A PNF spokesman told the AFP news agency that the probes concerned 'illegal conflict of interest, misuse of public funds and favouritism'.

Paris 2024 confirmed in a statement that a search was taking place at the headquarters of the organising committee.

"Paris 2024 is co-operating fully with the investigators to facilitate their inquiries," it said. It did not give any details and made no further comment after the prosecutors' statement.

The Paris 2024 Olympics, which organising committee President Tony

Estanguet has promised will be 'beyond reproach', will be held from July 26th to August 11th, 2024, and the Paralympic Games will take place from August 28th to September 6th next year.

The searches coincided with the start of a two-day International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board meeting to discuss a number of issues, including progress of Paris 2024 Games preparations.

"We are aware that there has been a search by police of the Paris 2024 headquarters," an IOC spokesperson said. "We have been informed by Paris 2024 that they are co-operating fully with the authorities in this matter."

UK is saddled with debt

Britain's debt mountain hit an eye-popping £2.6 trillion in May — or more than the country produces in a year, official figures revealed

The UK's net debt has reached £2.6 trillion as of the end of May, which is estimated at 100.1 percent of the UK's entire gross domestic product, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has confirmed.

Government borrowing soared year-on-year to £20 billion in May to cope with substantial spending on energy support schemes, inflation-linked payments and interest payments on debt.

Borrowing in May was £10.7 billion higher than a year ago and comes in as the second-highest May borrowing since monthly records began in 1993.

This is the first time the debt-to-GDP ratio has risen above 100 percent since March 1961, except for during the pandemic, but this was later revised lower.

Economists warn that once a nation's debt reaches such eye-wateringly high levels it is increasingly hard to get the public finances under control given big borrowing interest payments.

It also casts a gloomy cloud over the economic prospects of future generations to have the country so weighed down by high debt.



Venezuela said US had imposed sanctions on it to seize oil for free

Washington imposed sanctions against Venezuela with the aim of seizing its oil — as noted by Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez, TASS reports

She recalled the recent statement by former US President Donald Trump, claiming that his intention to seize the oil of this Latin American country was quite feasible. Delcy Rodriguez noted that these words 'are in fact an admission' that the sanctions against Venezuela were introduced in order to 'grab Venezuelan oil for free'.

According to her, 'sanctions have become a weapon of economic warfare' and are being introduced against countries that oppose the hegemony of the United States and its allies. Rodriguez recalled that Venezuela was disconnected from the SWIFT interbank system in order to 'isolate the country from the global financial system'.

The Venezuelan Vice President underlined that the US has imposed over 20,000

sanctions against thirty-five countries and has been 'waging economic or military warfare against the entire world'.

She also indicated that after Washington declared Venezuela a 'threat to its national security' in 2015, the West introduced 929 unilateral sanctions against the Latin American country, with US measures accounting for 60 percent of all Western restrictions. The Venezuelan economy has been hit hardest by the tough sanctions imposed in 2019 on state-owned oil and gas company Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A., which include a ban on oil exports. Venezuela has lost more than \$232 billion from US sanctions on the oil industry, \$30 billion belonging to this country is blocked in Western banks.

African tea pickers break robots

Kenyan tea pickers destroy machines brought in to replace them in violent protests that highlight the challenge facing workers as more agribusiness companies rely on automation to cut costs, *Semafor Africa* reports

According to local media reports, at least 10 tea picking machines have been set on fire during protests over the past year. In the latest demonstrations, one protester was killed and several people were injured, including 23 police officers and farm workers. The Kenya Tea Growers Association (KTGA) estimated the value of the destroyed machinery at \$1.2 million after nine machines belonging to Ekaterina, maker of the best-selling Lipton tea brand, were destroyed in May.

In March, a local government task force recommended that tea companies in Kericho, the largest city that hosts many of the country's tea plantations, adopt a new ratio of 60:40 between mechanised

and manual tea picking. The task force also wants legislation to be passed to restrict the importation of tea picking machinery. Nicholas Kirui, a member of the task force and former CEO of KTGA, tells *Semafor Africa* that in Kericho County alone, 30,000 jobs have been lost to mechanisation in the last decade.

As the government task force has found, a machine can reduce the cost of picking tea to 3 cents per kilogramme compared to 11 cents per kilogramme for hand picking.

Analysts partly attribute Kenya's unemployment rate — the highest in East Africa — to the automation of industries including banking and insurance.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Any war is not just a series of battles and political intrigues, but also a serious test for the economies of the participating countries. The special military operation, launched by Russia on February 24th last year, is apparently taking much longer than originally intended. The confrontation between Moscow and the collective West is gradually turning into the format of not only a military-diplomatic struggle, but also a competition of economies. Simply put, we are once again returning to the situation of the first half of the last century, when the great powers and their allies, who fought to change the established world order, had to transfer their economies to a military footing. Moreover, the winner, as a rule, was the one who was able to do it more effectively than the opponent.

By Anton Popov

Russian approach

Now this task will be complicated by the fact that the opposing socio-political formations belong to the same type of society — a consumer society, which is extremely sensitive to even a slight drop in its level of well-being. Politicians and economists on both sides will have to find a reasonable balance between the production of military and civilian goods, or be prepared for a serious decline in public morale.

In Russia, at the moment, the dilemma of guns and butter is being solved by finding a reasonable balance. In February of this year, during Presidential Address to Federal Assembly, President Vladimir Putin said that the country is able to solve strategic problems without dismantling its own economy, “Defence of the country is, of course, the most important priority, but when solving strategic tasks in this area, we must not repeat the mistakes of the past, we must not destroy our own economy.”

Young and aggressive

Moreover, judging by information from open sources, the NATO and EU countries are increasing military production, and this is hardly connected only with assistance programmes to Ukraine. Thus, amid a general increase in military spending in the world in 2022 to \$2.24 trillion, 55 percent of this amount, that is, approximately \$1.2 trillion, fell on the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, which is almost directly involved in the

The highest growth rate of defence spending since 2014 was shown by

-  Lithuania (239,5 percent)
-  Latvia (173,8 percent)
-  Slovakia (140 percent)
-  Türkiye (119,6 percent)
-  UK (116,6 percent)

war against Russia. Moreover, Western Europe spent the most on defence last year, which increased spending to \$480 billion, which is 13 percent higher than in 2021.

The most belligerent, as expected, were the neophytes of the alliance: Finland, which sharply increased its military budget by more than a third, and Lithuania, with its jump in spending by 27 percent. Behind them, by a wide margin, are Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland.

The monstrous grin of militarism

EU and NATO countries are hastily transferring their economies to war footing



The minimum level of military spending by NATO countries was revised last summer and adopted for 2 percent of GDP. Some countries, such as Greece, the USA, Lithuania, Poland, Britain, Croatia, Estonia and Latvia, have already reached the coveted mark and even exceeded it. And Warsaw announced back in January that it wants to bring its military spending to 4 percent of GDP in the near future.

Sirs, credits and tanks

Poland is accumulating in itself a truly explosive cocktail of Anti-Russian sentiment, territorial claims against its neighbours and rabid militarism.

The ruling PiS party is truly building one of the largest arsenals in NATO, regardless of the current and future losses to its own budget.

Contracts with South Korea for the supply of 230 multiple rocket launchers, 980 tanks, 648 self-propelled howitzers and 48 fighter jets totalling \$12.4 billion have been repeatedly mentioned, as well as the purchase of Abrams tanks and Apache attack helicopters from the United States. Warsaw has made serious progress in acquiring the HIMARS MLRS complex, the first copies of which have already arrived in Poland, and turned its eyes to such weapons as submarines and electronic reconnaissance aircraft, which they urgently plan to purchase in Sweden.

Interestingly, Poland buys South Korean weapons on credit. How the Poles are going to repay their huge debt in the conditions of 20 percent inflation and the approaching recession is completely incomprehensible.

The Duda-Morawiecki's regime does not offend its own producers. Polish defence plants are literally inundated with orders for various weapons and equipment. Therefore, two weeks ago, Minister of National Defence Mariusz Blaszczak signed a contract with Huta Stalowa Wola immediately for 24 Baobab-K remote mining systems, and a day later, the 16th mechanised division, holding the Kalinin-

grad and Grodno directions at gunpoint, received the 12th batch of self-propelled Rak mortars.

Large military construction

In addition to acquiring huge quantities of weapons, Poland is feverishly building the infrastructure that is designed to ensure the smooth functioning of all this shooting and clanging equipment. In recent weeks alone, at least three alarming facts have become known.

First, near the settlements of Graevo and Kolno (70 and 110 kilometres, respectively, from our lines), the construction of logistic support bases for the 16th mechanised division has been completed. These facilities combine the functions of ammunition depots and military equipment, and have repair facilities.

It seems that by placing its warehouses at a range of literally a pistol shot for our missiles, Warsaw is preparing to carry out a quick breakthrough in the Belarusian direction and, in order to uninterruptedly supply the advancing troops, reduces logistics routes, even with the risk of a missile attack on rear bases.






Secondly, work on the Rail Baltic project, the railway connecting Tallinn and Warsaw, has intensified — railway tracks, marshalling yards and train stations are being hastily repaired. Obviously, the project, originally conceived for the rapid transfer of troops and resources along the borders of the Union State, was needed by NATO for a reason.

Finally, thirdly, Poland announced that the newest cargo terminal in the port of Swinouiste will work in military interests. It will replace Germany's Bremerhaven as one of NATO's main Baltic harbours.

Peace Facility — money for war

In recent years, the EU has significantly increased the number of defence programmes and funds and significantly increased their budgets. The European Defence Fund alone is worth more than \$8

Military budgets of some Western countries

Country	Expenses, billion dollars	Share of GDP (%)
 US	877	3.5
 UK	68.5	2.23
 Germany	55.8	1.4
 France	53.6	1.94
 Italy	33.5	1.7
 Poland	16.6	2.4
 Türkiye	10.6	1.23
 Greece	8.1	3.7
 Lithuania	1.7	2.52

billion for 2021–2027, which is intended for military research and development of defence capabilities.

But, perhaps, the most influential structure of the EU involved in the development of the military industry is... European Peace Facility. These are the ideas of today's Europeans about peacefulness and creation.

EPF works in three areas: reimbursement to member states of €1 billion for shells delivered to Ukraine, allocation of another €1 billion to compensate for expenses if Kiev requests it, and stimulation of the development of the defence industry in the EU countries. In addition, if everything is clear with the first two points, then the third one is of interest in the context of preparing the West for a big war. It involves the expansion of existing capacities for the production of 155-millimetre ammunition and missiles, the creation of new and re-profiling related enterprises, the establishment of cross-border cooperation in the military-industrial sphere, the widespread involvement of private firms and the creation of reserves of raw materials and materials. EPF assumed the functions of a supranational body coordinating the distribution of funds and the expansion of the European defence industry. In other words, we have before us the reincarnation of the old unkind German Ministry of Armaments and War Production, which, under the leadership of Speer, provided the Nazi Wehrmacht and the SS with weapons and shells.

Geopolitical tensions in the world tend to intensify. It is obvious that the countries of the West will continue to increase their military spending simultaneously with pumping Ukraine with weapons. Experts predict that by 2026, defence budgets in Europe alone will grow one and a half times. Therefore, the decisions taken in this area in Belarus and Russia look logical and timely.



Threads. Eyelets. Neon

Recently Minsk hosted the final of *Fashion Mill 2023*, the 32nd edition of national festival-competition of fashion and photo. Young designers presented 61 collections to the jury. The costumes were created together with professionals especially for the festival-competition and were shown on the big podium for the first time. We got acquainted with the participants and new trends in the fashion world.



By Inna Gorbatenko

Your time, your opportunities

There were a few hours left before the gala show at Prime Hall. There was a festive atmosphere behind the scenes. Behind several stages of selection, master classes from leading experts in the field of fashion, design and photography. Now 300 representatives of the beauty industry — trendy designers, charming models, extravagant stylists, creative hairdressers and photographers, overcoming excitement, were preparing to demonstrate their skills.

Jury member, artist creating three-dimensional textile sculptures, author of *The Tree of Knowledge* nine-metre installation at the *World Expo 2020* in Dubai Khristina Vysotskaya noted that this time the collections are more avant-garde, “Fashion designer is a difficult profession, but promising, you just need to work hard. If there is a desire and energy to create something new, it will be possible to break through. These are the qualities we are looking for in young talents.”

The leitmotif of *Fashion Mill* this year was ‘The Time of Your Opportunities’. Some well-known brands left the Belarusian and Russian markets, leaving a niche for our young designers. Moreover, they did not miss their chance. Daria Shurpakova brought the *No Name* collection from Grodno. Conceptual monochrome things with elements of deconstructivism will easily enter the wardrobe of any girl, “Many elements, such as wire for frames, were bought at a regular hardware store. When the budget is small, you have to spin. I wanted to create things in which you can go out into the street right from the catwalk. My mom helped me in the work — she has been in the sewing business for more than 30 years. Therefore,



Aleksandr Kulevsky

it is not a shame to look at our products from the inside: all seams are even and neat, no protruding threads and uneven edges.”

The main idea of Daria Shurpakova’s collection is ‘don’t be afraid to stand out’. She broadcasts the entire creation process on TikTok: already more than 10 thousand subscribers write a lot of motivating comments. The young designer already has her own brand.

VSTU student Nikita Zakharchuk dreamed of becoming a designer from the age of six. A lot of time has passed — and here is Nikita at the *Fashion Mill*, for the third time, however, “I twice participated as a designer and even took second place, and this year I decided to try myself in a new role — a photographer. I present the *Life Is Woven with the Threads of Time* project, in which, through the author’s *Gerly* collection, I showed my creative path. It was not easy, but now I can say that I succeeded. This photo project is about this — about striving for a dream, about audacity on the way to the goal.”

Nikita is sure that the festival-competition is a real fashion event for the whole of Belarus, an opportunity not only to show oneself, but also to listen to speakers who inspire young creators to new projects.

From art objects to everyday outfits

The student of the Baranovichi State College of Technology and Design Pavel Kozin has quite impressive background — behind him is the victory at *Fashion Mill 2022* and the Grand Prix of the 28th edition of the *Admiralty Needle* International Festival of Fashion, Art and Design in St. Petersburg, “The new collection called *Time Trouble* is dedicated to the problem of lack of time. I wanted to remind everyone to appreciate every moment. Time is intangible, so I used light translucent fabrics. Cyclicity is emphasised by shuttlecocks cut in a spiral.”

And here are the images in black, white and pink. Unusual shapes, grotesque

shoulder line, voluminous sleeves... In the collection for teenagers, BSU second year student Evelina Isakidis combined the audacity of youth and the elegance of ballet dancers, “All of my items are wearable. It can be integrated into your wardrobe, the main thing is to combine it correctly. It’s easiest with the basics.”

BSU was also represented by Victoria Berezovskaya at the *Fashion Mill*. This year, the girl transferred to the fashion department, which is very happy event for her. In her dresses from the *Negative Effect* collection, many schoolgirls would dream of going to graduation. But Victoria explained that her products are rather an art object, “About 95 percent of the images are handmade. Emphasis is made on natural fabrics dyed by hand. I wanted to add embroidery with beads, but did not have time. Maybe I’ll use this idea in future works.”

It was impossible to pass by the riot of neon in the *Cyberpunk* collection by Victoria Kursakova, who represented the Mogilev Regional Centre of Creativity at the competition for the third time. This year the products are avant-garde, the designer noted, “I wanted to work with the game industry, create an image of a cyborg. I was inspired by the computer game *Cyberpunk 2077*.”

The models have a lot of reflective elements, flexible neon — in the dark they are coolly highlighted. Many eyelets were used, thanks to which the products turned out to be collapsible: they can be changed to your taste, for example, remove sleeves or length.

Creative symbiosis

Fashion Mill helps young designers to move on, to realise themselves. The driver was a joint project with Kamvol enterprise, which made it possible to create images

from Belarusian fabrics. This path was followed by Pavel Kovalevsky from Grodno, who participated in the *Fashion Mill* for the fifth time. This year he brought the *Sesto* men’s collection to the competition, “I don’t do anything extravagant: I want my clothes to be worn in everyday life. Basically, the products are made from the fabric of the Belarusian manufacturer Blakit, and all the coloured elements are applied by thermal transfer.”

In general, the competition projects of designers this year are a symbiosis of the conceptual and traditional, an appeal to national history and culture. The audience and the jury highly appreciated the new technologies in the design of clothes and fabrics, the desire for conscious consumption and the search for new creative solutions.

Nadezhda Vasilchenko, Director of the National Centre for Children and Youth Artistic Creativity, is sure that such competitions form the professional skills of the participants, “It’s great that young designers have so many interesting ideas. Often, objects of culture and history of the country become a source of inspiration for them; our national features are reflected in the collections. For the third year we have been promoting Belarusian fabrics, the quality of which we can be proud of.”

Belarusian students and students show a high level of training, because a strong fashion school has been created in the country. The Education Ministry and Belleprom support young designers on their way. This is very important for the guys, their professional development and further employment. A nice bonus for the best young creators is the opportunity to have an internship at the enterprise and launch the highlights of their collections into production.



Aleksandr Kulevsky

With cordiality and hospitality



A press tour for foreign media dedicated to the 2nd CIS Games is underway

By Sergei Kanashits

Almost everything is ready for the start of the 2nd CIS Games, which are scheduled to be held in 11 cities of Belarus from August 4th to August 14th. Representatives of foreign mass media, for which the Information Ministry, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organised an exciting press tour, will be able to make sure of this. A rich program awaits reporters all week, and the sports and tourist excursion began on Monday morning with a visit to the Dinamo National Olympic Stadium.

A modern, beautiful, clean and comfortable city where the past is preserved, the present is taken care of and the future is thought of. The writing and filming community were unanimous in their assessments and first impressions of Minsk. Guests from Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan, Russia and China got acquainted with the infrastructure of the main arena of

the country with undisguised interest, asked questions, shared their opinions. Representatives of sunny Azerbaijan have a special interest: this country will host the 3rd CIS Games, which will be held in 2025, and therefore our experience is doubly interesting for them. By the way, the Azerbaijanis have already decided that they will follow in the footsteps of Belarus and also spread all kinds of a rich programme around the country, not concentrating

the holiday only in the capital.

Dinamo made an impression on everyone. The guests visited the shooting gallery, where they took the opportunity and tested themselves for accuracy by shooting from rifles and pistols, then moved to the climbing wall. This recently opened facility meets all world standards; athletes of our team are already training here on the Olympic



slopes. For reporters, they showed a master class, and whoever wanted — experienced all the hard work of a rock climber.

The journalists also managed to assess the level of the emerald lawn of the national arena. In the bowl of the stadium the Sports and Tourism Minister of Belarus Sergei Kovalchuk met with the guests and answered their questions. He invited everyone to Belarus to cheer on the athletes, enjoy the culture, customs, traditions, nature of our country, as well as the famous Belarusian cordiality and hospitality.

“Nine CIS countries have officially confirmed their participation. In addition, athletes from Mongolia, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates will take part in competitions in various sports... The list of these states can grow, but now more than two thousand athletes from 18 countries have officially passed through the accreditation system of the Games,” the minister said.

The topic of politics was not spared either. When asked by reporters whether the 2nd CIS Games can be considered as ‘our answer to Chamberlain’ and

some alternative to the Olympics, Sergei Kovalchuk stated clearly, “We do not say anything about the alternative, we have one principle: sport is out of politics. Sport is designed to unite people and countries, not to divide them. We are trying to prove to everyone that today it is necessary to remove the concept of politics from sports. In the arenas, people should compete and make friends, sorting things out in an honest and open fight.”

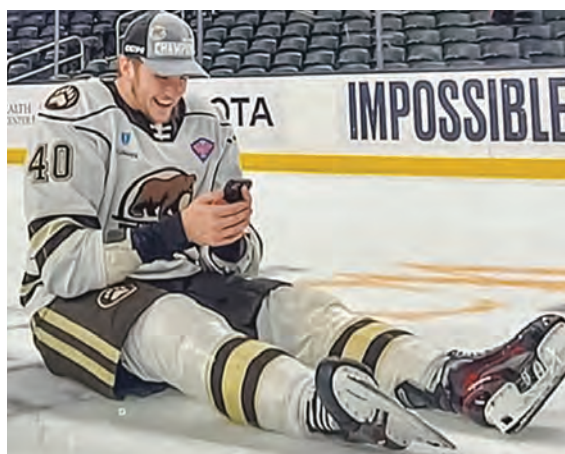
After Dinamo Stadium, the media delegation went to Zhodino, where an excursion to BELAZ was prepared for the journalists, and then a visit to Borisov with an inspection of the BelGee was made. What follows is a no less exciting and rich programme. Everything is scheduled right up to Saturday: a trip to Soligorsk to Belaruskali with a descent into the mine, acquaintance with other sports facilities in Minsk, moving to Belovezhskaya Pushcha, visiting the Brest Fortress, Mir Castle and other significant places in the region. Knowing the broad Belarusian soul, there is no doubt that the guests will take home not only souvenirs and a sea of impressions, but also the desire to return to Belarus as soon as possible.

Protas did his job, now Protas can rest

In the American Hockey League, the Belarusian hockey player ended the season with a resounding victory in the Calder Cup, the second most important club hockey trophy. In any case, they think so in North America, believing that the victory in the playoffs of the American Hockey League is inferior in status and importance only to the Stanley Cup, which is generally beyond any competition. However, in our parts, of course, they will argue with this and insist on the solidity and authority of the Gagarin Cup, but, in general, the truth will remain somewhere nearby: winning the Calder trophy is really a great achievement. Which was subdued the day before by Aliaksei Protas — he became the third Belarusian hockey player in history to raise the coveted prize above his head.

By Sergei Kanashits

The denouement was just crazy! In the final, the Hershey Bears (the farm club of Washington), for which our forward plays, fought with Coachella (a subsidiary of Seattle). The beginning of the series turned out to be catastrophic for the ‘bears’: two away defeats with a devastating score (0:4 and 0:5) seemed to bury hopes for success, but the guys did not give up. This was followed by three home victories (5:4, 3:2, 1:0), another defeat (2:5), and



everything was eventually decided in the final, seventh match. On the court of the rival Hershey, losing with a score of 0:2, managed to find the strength to turn the tide of the match and won in overtime — 3:2! Aliaksei Protas scored an assist on the second goal, and only the 22-year-old striker scored 13 (5 + 8) points in 20 meetings in this playoff — this is the third result in the team. Add to this indicator 58 matches in the National Hockey League for Washington (4 goals + 11 assists) — and you will understand how eventful and successful the season was

for the pupil of the Vitebsk hockey school. Do not forget, moreover, that this was the first full-fledged season at the adult level for Protas overseas — he was withdrawn to Washington from HC Dinamo Minsk in March 2021. By the way, in the KHL, Protas also managed to show his best, scoring five goals and breaking Yegor Sharangovich’s record for goals in one season for Zubr players under the age of 20.

Before Aliaksei Protas, only Mikhail Grabovski and Andrei Kostitsyn managed to win the Calder Cup, and in the same year and in the same club.

It happened in 2007, when Hamilton defeated their Hershey in the final series. Both then successfully played in the NHL, becoming leaders of their clubs. Let’s hope that a bright future awaits the newly minted champion. In any case, the appointment of Spencer Carbery, with whom Aliaksei worked quite successfully in previous years at Hershey, to the post of head coach of Washington, and great reviews about the actions of the Belarusian from the local press, calling him the future of the team, are very pushing to such thoughts. Now Aliaksei Protas, therefore, it’s time to take a swing at the Stanley Cup, which so far has not been earned by any of the Belarusians.

Photo of the week



Andriy Sazonov

Vladislav Tsurpanov is only 25 years old, but at the Mogilev Thermal Power Plant they say: such welders are worth their weight in gold

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



June 29th is International Day of the Tropics. As a region, the tropics account for 40 percent of the world's land area, approximately

80 percent of the planet's biological species, and a significant portion of its languages and cultures. The zone of the tropics is the most important component in the system of sustainable development of the planet.

On June 30th, 1898,

the first electric tram in Belarus was put into operation in Vitebsk. The tram fleet consisted of 18 motor and 16 trailer tram cars, the length of tram lines was 5.1 kilometres. During the Great Patriotic War, the cars were burned, the equipment was destroyed. Tram service was restored in October 1947.



June 30th is International Asteroid Day. On this day in 1908, a large-scale asteroid catastrophe occurred — the Tunguska meteorite

collided with the Earth in Central Siberia. The blast wave, similar in power to the explosion of a hydrogen bomb, was recorded by

scientists from different countries. Territory of 2,000 square metres was devastated. However, researchers, scientists and enthusiasts have not yet come to a consensus on this event.

On July 1st, 1751, the first volume of the world's first *Encyclopédie* was published in France. The very first encyclopaedias, or

terminological dictionaries, appeared in Ancient Egypt during the Middle Kingdom (2nd millennium BC), and codes of knowledge were also compiled in Ancient China (12-10th century BC). But it was this encyclopaedia, which had a completely modern look, familiar to us, that became this one. The main edition of the *Encyclopédie*, or an explanatory dictionary of sciences, arts and crafts, consisted of 35 volumes.



July 2nd is World Sports Journalists Day. It has been celebrated in many countries of the world annually since 1995 at the initiative of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS). On this day in 1924, AIPS was formed in Paris, which today unites almost one and a half hundred national unions of journalists from 130 countries of the world. Sports journalism covers sports and physical culture, as well as related social events.

July 2nd is Vyshyvanka Day in Belarus is a nationwide campaign on the eve of Independence Day. The event is aimed at promoting national traditions, expanding the spiritual consciousness of Belarusians, and is also a kind of connecting thread of generations. On this day, all residents of the country are invited not to remain indifferent to the holiday and wear clothes or use accessories with national Belarusian ornaments. Respect for cultural traditions is a distinctive feature of the mentality of the Belarusian people.



July 2nd is Water Transport Worker's Day in Belarus. The main navigable rivers of the country are the Dnieper River, Berezina River, Zapadnaya Dvina River, Sozh River, Neman River and Pripyat River. There are 10 river ports on the rivers, from which passenger and cargo ships depart. In ancient times, the path from the Varangians to the Greeks passed through the territory of the modern Republic of Belarus, and today water vessels surf its expanses of water.

July 3rd is Independence Day of the Republic of Belarus (Republic Day) — the main holiday of Belarusian statehood, celebrated annually on July 3rd in honour of the liberation of the

capital of Belarus, Minsk, from Nazi invaders in 1944. The decision to celebrate Independence Day on July 3rd was made during a republican referendum in 1996.



On July 4th, 1865, the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll was published. Math teacher Charles Dodgson created this wonderful story for his student Alice Liddell and her sisters Edith and Lorina. Its sequel — *Through the Looking-Glass* — appeared six years later, in 1871. Both



novels, which are over 100 years old, are still popular today, and the handwritten copy that C. Dodgson once gave to Alice Liddell is kept in the British Library.

On July 4th, 1957, the first flight of the Il-18 passenger aircraft took place. This is a four-engine turboprop airliner for medium-haul airlines, created under the direct supervision of the eminent Soviet aircraft designer Sergey Ilyushin for medium-haul airlines. This aircraft has become the most popular in its class of the first generation of passenger liners with gas turbine engines, and, moreover, the most cost-effective.

