



The deposit of the future — this is how the mine of Belaruskali's Petrikovsky ore department is being known



The Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich is a new milestone in the history of Belarusian cinema



INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 13 (827) ● THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2020 ● WWW.SB.BY



'Gates of Minsk' on Privokzalnaya Square are a major symbol of Belarus' capital

Metropolis builds up super plans

A steady trend has been formed in the world: life in megapolises is changing not only due to the expansion of their borders but also by creating accompanying digital infrastructure. Cities with millions of people are getting smarter. New electronic services are being launched; these help citizens get quality services. The process is only gaining momentum, and the Minsk authorities are accumulating the best world experience for the development of the capital. The Minsk City Executive Committee has joined interested state agencies to develop a programme for the capital's development as a smart city by 2025. → 4



Projects for mutual benefit

China greatly appreciates co-operation and friendship with Belarus. During a meeting with the President at the Palace of Independence last week, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Belarus — Cui Qiming — repeated this several times. He conveyed warm greetings and best wishes from Chinese President Xi Jinping and noted, in his opinion, a very important point: Aleksandr Lukashenko pays great attention to the development of relations with China, promoting Chinese-Belarusian co-operation in various fields. “The Chinese side highly appreciates this,” said the diplomat.

Overcoming the gap

The President noted that the talk with the Chinese Ambassador could focus not only on the present state of affairs but also on prospects for co-operation. According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, it's now important to turn to the restoration of trade and economic liaisons. “We need not only to restore and resume our co-operation with China but also to ramp it up this year overcoming a certain gap. We can do it. We will do it,” he stressed.

The Head of State recalled that a number of projects, including those to build a swimming pool and a stadium, are being implemented in Belarus with China's assistance. “These will be exemplary construction projects. I want to have these two Chinese buildings in the centre of Europe where we will host (and we already have confirmations from international organisations) large scale international competitions,” Mr. Lukashenko stressed.

In 2019, Belarusian-Chinese trade went up 22 percent to \$4.6bn compared to 2018. Exports of Belarusian products increased by more than 30 percent to over \$700m. The volume of Chinese investments to Belarus reached almost \$170m, including over \$140m worth of direct investments.

The Great Stone Industrial Park is the largest co-operation project between the two countries. As of March 2020, 58 resident companies were registered there and the volume of committed invest-



Cui Qiming

ments reached \$1.2bn. 35 loan agreements to the tune of \$8.4bn were concluded with Chinese financial institutions; the financing of 22 projects was \$4.1bn.

Visit being worked out

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated during the meeting that a visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Minsk is being worked on. Addressing the Ambassador, he said, “Will you please tell my friend, Chinese President Xi Jinping, that Belarus is looking forward to his visit.” According to the President, “we still have time to get prepared and fill the agenda with content important for the two countries”.

Experience proves useful

In his talk with the Ambassador, Aleksandr Lukashenko touched on the issue of COV-

ID-19 and thanked the Chinese side. “I get information about the situation every morning. Chinese specialists, our friends, answer all our questions. They willingly share all the bitter experience that they've accumulated during these months with Belarusian epidemiologists, microbiologists, doctors, and so on,” he said. “Thank you and all the Chinese people for your help.”

The President told Cui Qiming about the measures that Belarus has been taking against the spread of coronavirus. “We have a list of countries and test our people and nationals coming from those countries, for example, from Germany, France, Italy, very seriously. We have not closed our country or our borders with other countries. Various people come to Belarus, and at the airport (people usually come by plane) we exercise

very serious control,” he explained. People coming to Belarus are put in quarantine if necessary.

He also said that in this period people are traditionally more prone to respiratory infections and viruses in Belarus. Therefore, healthcare workers should not forget about patients with other serious diseases. Belarusian doctors, first of all, pay attention to people who are at risk of coronavirus complications. These are elderly people and people with pre-existing conditions.

It's well-known that social services and public organisations are actively involved in working with vulnerable groups of the population in Belarus. They offer assistance in delivering medicines and food. This work will be strengthened. No elderly person should be forgotten: this is the principle of work at which the Head of State directs local authorities.

Speaking with the Ambassador, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, “Things happen in life, but the main thing is not to panic. My biggest fear is that people will become psychotic from what is happening in the media. Psychosis will cause other illnesses: the experts say this. Your experience [of China — editor's remark] and our experience is used to pass the peak at the maximum permissible level for us. If we survive until Orthodox Easter, then we will live.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Telephone call

Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko and his Latvian counterpart Egils Levits talk by phone on the initiative of the Latvian side

Top on the agenda for the conversation was the visit of the Belarusian Head of State to Riga. The visit was postponed to a later date as Latvia has declared a state of emergency. Aleksandr Lukashenko underlined that Belarus learned the news with understanding. The new dates will be agreed upon by diplomats.

In the run-up to the personal meeting, the heads of state discussed the main areas of bilateral co-operation, mostly trade and economic relations. Other areas of mutual interest include cargo transportation, energy transit and co-operation in the manufacturing industry.

The presidents also discussed co-operation plans in the face of the border closure and travel ban. Thanks to the concerted efforts of Belarus and Latvia, thousands of people could return home with no obstacles. Aleksandr Lukashenko gave his special thanks to his Latvian counterpart for helping repatriate children from a health resort in the town of Jurmala.

Top priority

House of Representatives' Council makes some important decisions

By Yevgeny Kononovich

The President's Address, preparation of the Republican budget for next year, socially significant bills and other topics were the focus of attention at the meeting of the Council of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly

Speaking about the priorities for the next period, the Chairman of the House of Representatives — Vladimir Andreichenko — noted that more than half the bills in the commissions, namely 36 out of 64, have been prepared, included in the draft agenda and will be considered in the Oval Hall at the next meetings. Special emphasis is placed on those draft laws that arouse increased interest of the population and businesses. “These are draft laws on business companies, trade

and catering, advertising, the rights of disabled people and their social integration, as well as a block of bills related to the health sector,” he explained.

According to Vladimir Andreichenko, the preparation of the Republican budget for 2021 and changes to tax legislation will begin in the near future, “Responsible commissions should actively submit their proposals and other parliamentarians should not remain on the sidelines. We need to discuss existing problems and possible initiatives, including with the heads of executive committees and enterprises. All ideas should be real and considered when preparing the budget for 2021.”

The Standing Commission for Legislation will continue to monitor the process of preparing new versions of the Code of Administrative Offences and the Proce-



Deputies Igor Komarovskiy, Oksana Gaiduk and Valentin Semenyako at the meeting of the House of Representatives' Council

dural and Executive Code of Administrative Offences. Deputies will analyse the proposals received from the districts on this topic, with further discussion at the interdepartmental expert commission for the preparation of draft codes.

In addition, the Council of the House of Representatives decided to create a working group on Sustainable Development Goals in the Parliament. It will consist of 14 deputies. A regulation on international commissions and working groups on interaction with parliaments of foreign countries was

also approved. This is a kind of roadmap for developing co-operation with each particular Parliament.

The annual President's Address will be the key for the parliamentary session. “Of course, our plans will be corrected in view of the President's Address to the Belarusian People and Parliament, in which the Head of State will place emphasis on the domestic and foreign policy of our country, identify the tasks facing state agencies, including the Parliament,” concluded Vladimir Andreichenko.

A good example to follow

Belgips enterprise is the only producer of gypsum building materials in the country. It boasts a long history, dating back to 1948. Until 2019, the plant was located almost in the centre of Minsk, but it was decided to transfer production outside the Minsk ring road and modernise it. Last week, Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the factory, which is now located in Gatovo. Here he once again recalled an important point: it's time to return to the topic of building standards so that they were not redundant. Corresponding instructions were given earlier, and soon their implementation will be monitored. The main thing in this issue is that the safety of people shouldn't suffer. The Head of State drew attention to the fact that it's necessary 'to build safely, but there should not be excesses'.

Transition to European standards

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he had instructed to review the regulatory framework in construction regarding the rejection of excessive or needless regulation and the transition to European standards 10-12 years ago.

"Instead of lightweight constructions we have beams and reinforced concrete. We spent a lot of money," emphasised the President.

The Head of State received reports that the needs of the Belarusian construction complex in bulk materials are being provided in full. Last year, organisations of the Construction and Architecture Ministry exported more than \$383m of goods. Mr. Lukashenko was also informed about the implementation of large investment projects in the construction sector, with new lines now being built at the enterprises of the cement, mining, glass and ceramic industries. As far as the new Belgips plant in Gatovo is concerned, the enterprise is operating steadily and is developing new types of products. It's observing growth in all respects: paces and volumes of production, exports of building materials, wages of employees. The major sales markets are domestic and European.

The Head of State was also shown the process of machine application of gypsum plaster. The President not only familiarised himself with the technology in detail, but also tried a special tool for levelling the plaster — the so-called 'rule'. "Thank you for the science," Aleksandr Lukashenko said in conclusion, ordering to launch this year the production of such units in Belarus.

Important projects

Another key area of the company's work is the processing of Tetra Pak cartons. For example, Belgips-ECO rents a cardboard factory in Pukhovichi where the equipment is being installed for processing this type of packaging. According to experts, Tetra Pak packaging accounts for 9-13,000 tonnes in solid municipal waste per year. Half of this volume is planned to be processed in Pukhovichi. In addition, other industrial waste can be used here: cups, plates, labels, and wall-paper wastes. About 900,000 Euros have already been invested in the project. In total, it's planned to direct about 2m Euros to it. Production launch is scheduled for the second half of the year.

The President supported the initiative, saying that 'recycling is our prospect'.

Belgips is also involved in social projects. For instance, one can see in Minsk

green containers in which citizens leave old books, magazines and other printed materials. They belong to the enterprise. According to the factory, in this way several tens of thousands of books are collected in a year. Sometimes among them are

About coronavirus

The topic around the epidemiological situation in the country was not ignored. Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke about the adoption of the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus COV-

than from the virus itself.

"Today, because of this psychosis, we have stopped the economy of almost the whole world. Even the Russian Federation, which is similar to us, has begun to curtail its production," he said. According to Donald Trump, if the businesses do not start working soon, many more Americans will die from unemployment than from the coronavirus.

"Now you understand why I didn't close businesses. Although there were many people urging me to close our borders and begin a nationwide quarantine. I made a principled decision: we will implement a quarantine only when it's really needed," said the President.

The President also underlined that the entire healthcare system, law enforcement agencies and special services are working and doing their jobs, ensuring the safety of people. In general, the country performs the functions of ensuring the transit of international goods: the main roads and transit corridors, as well as places for service were identified.

People need to be supported

Aleksandr Lukashenko has warned businesses against firing people in difficult times, "I've noticed (information has arrived) that especially private enterprises began to curtail work, primarily construction companies, and, most importantly, to fire people. Tell private owners that if even one company, small or large, throws people into the street (this is impossible in the state-owned companies because we control them), it is unlikely to continue to exist in Belarus.

The President underlined that in difficult times people need, on the contrary, to support and preserve jobs. He is sure that business has the ability to do this. According to him, so far the situation is not problematic in Belarus, but negative trends are already emerging, "This is just the beginning. But it could become worse. Many companies have pockets full of money, especially builders, who have earned profits on constructing apartments. Now they want to lay-off people and spend the money on themselves, and then they will come and say that they can restore the workforce, but they need either a cheap loan or a subsidy from the budget. Let them share their last with people, but don't throw people out on the street," concluded the Head of State.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



unique editions. The majority are saved and given to schools and libraries while the rest is sent for recycling.

"Well done," said the Head of State, praising the company.

On the Victory Day preparations

During the conversation, Aleksandr Lukashenko told the factory's team about preparations for the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory. The company's employees asked if the topic of celebrating the anniversary of the Great Victory would be lost in the negative information flow. The President assured them that preparation continues in the country and no planned activities are cancelled. Along with this, he touched on the theme of the trip to the parade, which is scheduled on Moscow's Red Square, "They often ask me if I will go to the parade in Moscow? Sure. If no one from Belarus goes to Moscow, then who will go? It's clear that no one will travel from Ukraine."

Another important issue is landscaping. We are talking about places associated with military events, monuments and obelisks, and indeed business sites.

"We must do this and hold this event at the highest level so that our children and the whole world can see we remember. Because Belarus is a living monument of that terrible war," Mr. Lukashenko continued. "Not a single country has suffered more than Belarus. Do not worry, this is not the biggest problem for Belarus — to make sure that this war is not forgotten."

ID-2019 in Belarus. He stressed that every service in the country — from doctors to law enforcement agencies — is engaged in this matter in its own business. Contact tracing is being identified and prevention work is underway. However, the President warns against psychosis and panic, "We are on it. But without much ado."



Employees of the plant presented the Head of State with a handmade bison statuette made of gypsum stone

The Head of State spoke out about various aspects of the problem, from the opinions being voiced about quarantine and stopping businesses to food safety and variety on offer in stores. He also focused on the impact of global measures on the economy. The situation is affecting our country. He cited as an example the recent statement by US President Donald Trump that the consequences for the economy and people's lives could be harder as a result

Know, remember and move forward

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry has supported the initiative of the Austrian Ambassador to Belarus, Aloisia Worgetter, to mark the first anniversary of the Array of Names monument. Representatives of the Ministry and the Ambassador laid wreaths at the monument to Austrian victims of Nazism in the Trostenets Memorial Complex to show solidarity and support for joint efforts to preserve the memory of the tragedy of World War II.

The Array of Names monument in the Trostenets Memorial Complex commemorating Austrian citizens who were killed in the Trostenets death camp dur-

ing WWII was unveiled a year ago. The inauguration ceremony featured Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko and the Federal Chancellor of Austria, Sebastian

Kurz. The parties' interaction in the implementation of the project to design and construct the monument was an excellent example of co-operation in humanitarian affairs and culture and helped intensify Belarusian-Austrian relations in general.

"The event has a special symbolic meaning as it's held ahead of celebrations timed to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War," the Ministry notes.



Bilateral co-operation in the historical-museum sphere is planned, including expansion of contacts between scientific and museum establishments of Belarus and Austria.

Based on materials of belta.by

Formula for overall success

Mikhail Myasnikov gives information on common energy markets and removing barriers and restrictions

By Vladislav Sychevich

All acts regulating the common energy markets of the EAEU must be adopted and come into force no later than January 1st, 2025, as the Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission, Mikhail Myasnikov, stated in an interview to the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, also reminding that this decision was made by the presidents of the five member states and its fulfilment must be ensured.

“The work on the creation of the electricity market is synchronised with the implementation of the programme for the common gas market. As part of the implementation of the instruction of the heads of state on the earlier start of the functioning of the common gas market, we provide for the preparation of a draft international agreement by 2022, which should reflect the fundamental issues of the functioning of the common gas market. We hope that

all member states will be active in implementing these important tasks and will support the efforts of the EEC,” Mikhail Myasnikov said.

He also stressed that a similar regulatory framework is to be created for the common markets for oil and petroleum products.

“All acts regulating these markets must be adopted and come into force no later than January 1st, 2025. Of course, one of the sensitive and key issues of creating common energy markets is the cost of the tariff for their transportation. So far, not all member states are united in ensuring that tariffs are harmonised. Currently, tariffs are applied within the framework of national regulation. At the same time, on behalf of the presidents of the Union states, it is necessary to ensure the non-discriminatory principle of setting tariffs for gas transportation services. There are also a number of unresolved issues regarding electricity trade. These include, for example,



Mikhail Myasnikov

the possibility of making payments for energy resources in national currencies and using electronic signatures issued by national certification centres within the Union,” he added.

Speaking about another topical issue of the integration association — the elimination of barriers, exemptions and restrictions, the Chairman of the Board of the EEC noted that, at the moment, 66 obstacles have been registered.

“Of these, 15 are barriers, 14 are exceptions and 37 are restrictions. I think it is clear to everyone that

these obstacles will not disappear by themselves. Obstacles are created by states that protect their markets. I have already voiced an idea from Belarus’ Prime Minister, Sergei Rumas: maybe it makes sense to decide that everything is cancelled at once. This is, of course, the competence of heads of state. The Commission will prepare convincing calculations. Moreover, when I recently met with the leaders of the Union countries, I took from these meetings a firm conviction that all the leaders of our states are in favour of further strengthening integration, which means removing obstacles in trade and economic relations. However, there is a big gap between the political decisions of heads of state aimed at strengthening, expanding integration and practical deeds which are carried out by the appropriate ministries of each party. The emergence of obstacles is, in fact, a manifestation of domestic protectionism of countries. It is necessary and possible to eliminate it. It is necessary to compel compliance with the decisions taken at the highest level and directly at the level corresponding to the regulations,” Mr. Myasnikov said.

Important player on global market



By Polina Konoga

Belarus’ export openness index is among the highest in the world — as noted by the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Vladimir Ulakhovich, before the awards ceremony for the winners of the Development of Belarus’ Export Potential open creative competition summing up the results of 2019

“Exports are a driver of our economic development, ensuring a decent social level and replenishment of the budget. The export openness index of our economy is among the highest in the world. In Europe, only Belgium is slightly ahead of us. We are an open country, we produce and supply products to 180 countries. Belarus is an important player in the global market, no matter how pathetic it may sound,” Vladimir Ulakhovich noted.

According to the official, the Government’s decision to appoint those responsible for the growth and diversification of exports [resolution of the Council of Ministers as of March 20th, 2020 — editor’s remark] is aimed at minimising losses from closed borders in the context of a pandemic. “We have maintained a certain level of openness on our deliveries. True, we see the difficulties that have developed today, we see the closeness of the EU. It is especially important now to preserve the manufacturing sector and our contracts, because we need to think about the future,” he added.

Metropolis builds up super plans

By Ilya Kryzhevich

How Minsk will be turning into a smart city

A steady trend has been formed in the world: life in megapolises is changing not only due to the expansion of their borders but also by creating accompanying digital infrastructure. Cities with millions of people are getting smarter. New electronic services are being launched; these help citizens get quality services. The process is only gaining momentum, and the Minsk authorities are accumulating the best world experience for the development of the capital. The Minsk City Executive Committee has joined interested state agencies to develop a programme for the capital’s development as a smart city by 2025.

According to Pavel Petrulevich, the Deputy Director for Development at the Information Technology Centre of the Minsk City Executive Committee, the programme includes a set of measures consisting of a basic assessment of the current level of digitalisation, a study of the development of other countries and cities, and a plan for developing new projects. Apart from the programme, a basic list of 47 projects has been formed to cover most areas of city daily life: energy, housing, education, construction and transport.

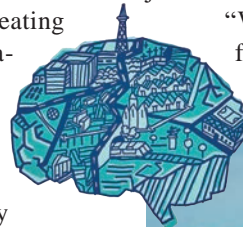
“To control the implementation of these tasks, the Minsk City Executive Committee plans to create a public council for the development of a smart city. It will include representatives of state agencies, public organisations and businesses, enabling us to implement exactly the projects that everyone needs,” said the official.

Pavel Petrulevich named a project to inform drivers about the availability of free parking spaces on the streets of Minsk as one of the concrete ideas for Minsk’s digitalisation; it is expected to become available in the near future. It

is planned to test the system on several streets of the capital which are closer to the centre and experience the maximum influx of cars during rush hours. The tests will make it possible to see what functionality is needed to scale the project to the whole of Minsk.

“We need to create a system for collecting information about parking spaces and

near future, the service will be publicly available. Also, according to him, work is underway to create an online monitoring capability for when and where garbage will be taken out. Waste will also be weighed during the process. “This will enable us to keep statistics on recycling in the context of the city, and later, the district and the region. Also, within the framework of this project, all objects



View of the Trinity Suburb in Minsk

send this information to the driver in an accessible form. The user will receive a mobile app. It will also be possible to send information to popular map services so that users don’t have to switch between apps,” Mr. Petrulevich added, drawing attention to another project: the Minsk City Executive Committee is developing an environmental map of the capital.

“Jointly with the housing and communal services, we have mapped all places of temporary storage and collection of paper, solid waste and glass. Waste collection points were also marked. The map shows garbage disposal sites, landfills, recycling facilities and transport routes that collect waste,” said the official.

Mr. Petrulevich noted that, in the

of the engineering infrastructure will be mapped: benches, pillars, landscaping elements — a kind of digital inventory. This will be done so that you can contact us at any time and put everything in order. This approach will help build city management processes more effectively,” he noted.

Overall, Mr. Petrulevich believes many projects to digitalise the city now exist as self-sufficient systems. The global goal of developing the smart city concept is to bring all these developments together — “to have a single point of use for these resources through a single user’s personal account”. “This will help launch new services and, as a result, all these projects will become a segment of the smart city — separately or entirely,” he said.

Hundreds of metres underground

The deposit of the future — this is how the mine of Belaruskali's Petrikovsky ore department is being known. The implementation of a large-scale investment project at the Petrikovsky potash salt deposit will enable them to produce up to 7 million tonnes of ore per year at the first stage. They plan to reach design capacity after the completion of the third construction phase. In the meantime, considerable construction is underway here, with each day seeing more and more clearly the outlines of the large-scale mining city, boasting dozens of structures and buildings.

Today, the mine is operating around the clock, without holidays or weekend breaks. An exception is made only for small technological stops.

The mine already has an initial network of mine workings in the near-barrel yard and two tunnel shafts.

Currently working in the mine are employees of the contracting organisation, Trest Shakhtospetsstroy, who carry out the mining of main developments — mine workings of the main directions and official use chambers.

The miners are already collecting the fifth tunnelling machine. In total, five tunnelling machines of the Shakhtospetsstroy Trest will be working at the mine in the near future, as well as seven tunnelling, two heading-and-winning machines and two mechanised treatment complexes of Belaruskali.

“One of the distinguishing features of mining equipment at the Petrikovsky mine department is shearer-loaders with more powerful electric motors than the equipment used at the Starobinsky deposit,” emphasises Aleksandr Zhukovsky, acting head of the Petrikovsky mine department.

In artificial lighting, the arches of tunnels and arches look as if they're painted, with multi-coloured stripes diverging in ornate lines in circles.

“These are sylvinite layers,” Mr. Zhukovsky explains the natural patterns. “These layers are completely red in the Starobinsky potash deposit, enabling us to navigate easy. Petrikovsky has a different structure. The layers of potash horizons have a different colour with a predominance of purple. The content of useful components in them is quite high.



A heading-and-winning machine in the mine

In particular, the content of potassium chloride in the third sylvinite layer exceeds 40 percent. There's also quite a lot (compared to the Starobinsky deposit) of magnesium chloride — up to 7 percent. On the contrary, the clay layers are very thin and in a smaller amount.”

What is the approximate age of this natural splendour? “Potash deposits are more than 250 million years old: the end of the Devonian period,” noted Mr. Zhukovsky, adding that artefacts are often found in mines such as ancient crustaceans, ferns, and the remains of vegetation. A whole collection of ‘messages’ from the very distant past is kept in the Belaruskali museum. Precious finds haven't been unearthed at Petrikovsky so far, but it is a matter of time.

An important object of the underground city is an underground bunker with a diameter of 8m and a capacity of 970 tonnes. When all construction



Prepared ore to be sent from the warehouse to the processing plant

BELTA



Sylvinite layers create natural patterns on walls of a tunnelling shaft

size is obtained from ore and sent via conveyor to a flotation concentration plant, where the final product is prepared.

The first high-quality concentrate of potassium chloride from ore mined at the Petrikovsky deposit was produced at the factory on January 30th, 2020. It was a process of testing and checking the connection of technological equipment with each other.

The new factory focuses on the most advanced solutions for process automation and acting mechanisms. Everything corresponds with the latest technology. Pleasingly, a lot of the technological equipment used was produced in Belarus: hammer crushers, rod mills, drying drums, flotation reagent preparation lines, bag filters for aspiration systems and more. The dimensions of the units are impressive.

When the construction, installation and commissioning works are completed in full, the processing factory will be able to reach its design capacity and produce 1.5 million tonnes of potassium chloride per year.

Reserves on the potash horizon of the Petrikovsky mine are estimated at approximately 1.8 billion tonnes, meaning several decades of continuous production.

Based on materials of belta.by

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minsk tops CIS list of cities for virtual tours



A rating of the CIS best cities for virtual tours and travels, virtual excursions to museums and attractions has been compiled. “The rating was compiled based on a study of the number of offers for virtual tours and excursions in the CIS cities in search engines,” explains the TourStat agency.

First place in the ranking of the best cities for virtual travel is occupied by Minsk. The top three also include Almaty and Tashkent. Minsk boasts more than 660,000 Google requests for ‘virtual excursions’, while Almaty has nearly 240,000 and Tashkent — almost 170,000.

The ten most attractive cities for online travel also include Belarusian Vitebsk.

Belarus' most visited theatres named

The Bolshoi Theatre remains the most visited theatre in Belarus, being attended by 254,300 spectators last year, according to the data of the National Statistical Committee of Belarus (Belstat). The Belarusian



Musical Theatre is ranked second in attendance with 135,600, followed by the Gomel Drama Theatre, which boasted 95,000 spectators. Among the most popular are also the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre — 94,800, the Grodno Regional Puppet Theatre — 90,600 and Mogilev Regional Drama and Comedy Theatre (named after Dunin-Martsinkevich) — 74,100 spectators.

In total, according to Belstat, in 2019, the country's theatres were visited by 1,754,800 spectators.

Visa agreement with EU to be ratified at the Parliament's spring session

“Given all the procedural aspects, we believe that the agreement will be ratified in a priority order,” notes Andrei Savinykh, the Chairman of the Standing Commission on International Affairs at the House of Representatives. “This will happen on April 2nd, or April 3rd at the latest. I want to express confidence that when the coronavirus epidemic declines and people return to normal liv-



ing conditions, begin to travel and go on business trips, the agreement will come into force and the cost of visas will be lower.” The parliamentarian noted that the epidemic will not affect the work of the spring session: it will be held in the usual format and on time.

Belarus in support of Italy, tricolour at the National Library in Minsk

Belarus has joined international solidarity initiatives with Italy in connection with the coronavirus emergency. The colours of the Italian flag illuminated the huge glass tower of the National Library in Minsk — one of the country's symbolic buildings. This sign of respect was also supported in social networks by the message ‘solidarity with the people of Italy’. “Belarusians remember that Italy was one of the first countries to immediately come to their rescue after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster,” said the Italian Ambassador to Belarus, Mario Baldi. “Now Belarusians give us strength and hope for a better future.



In anticipation of July

The second stage of ticket sales for *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk* launched



By Sergey Golesnik

The organisers of the *Slavianski Bazaar* are confident that the festival will take place on schedule and according to its programme. The second stage of ticket sales has just started: the 29th International Festival of Arts will be held in Vitebsk from July 13th to 21st.

During the first stage, tickets to concerts at the Summer Amphitheatre and the Vitebsk Concert Hall were offered and now these are supplemented by such projects as *The Theatrical Meetings*, *The Festival Without Borders* and *The Puppet Quarter*. Until April 20th, there is a special offer of a 29 percent discount for tickets to the Vitebsk — 2020 International Pop Song Contest, as well as the children's music competition. Festival tickets are sold at ticket offices, as well as on the websites kvitki.by and ticketpro.by.

According to the Director of the *Slavianski Bazaar*, Gleb Lapitsky, *The Theatrical Meetings* are among the key programmes of the festival, "This year, instead of the dominance of the non-repertory companies, we'll represent repertory performances as widely as possible. In addition to dramatic productions, there will be plastic projects and modern choreography."

The Theatrical Meetings will open with an enchanting performance: *Vivat*,

Panov! concert featuring ballet stars from Belarus, Russia, the UK, Israel, Spain and Germany — on July 15th. There were many reasons to invite the great artist and choreographer. Gleb Lapitsky explains, "Valery Panov, who emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel in 1974, was born in Vitebsk. His family were friends with the family of Marc Chagall. I think through his art we will touch on the theme of the 100th anniversary of UNOVIS, which is be-

Also on July 15th, a performance featuring Maksim Averin — *Teach Me to Live* — will be held. On July 16th (the opening day of the festival), artistes of the Belarusfilm Studio will show the *False Note* psychological drama and, on July 17th, the festival city will welcome its neighbours from Smolensk's A. Griboedov State Drama Theatre and their *Love Me, Love* comedy, staged by an Honoured Artiste of Belarus, Vitaly Barkovsky, who was the Artistic Direc-

come to *The Theatrical Meetings* event. Actors from Sofia will accompany the play *Glass Menagerie* by the American author, Tennessee Williams, with subtitles, so there will be no language barrier when viewing it.

In addition to the hosts, the Belarusian Lyalka Theatre, troupes from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Penza, Mytishchi, Orenburg and Vinnitsa will perform in *The Puppet Quarter*. Meanwhile, the geography of *The Festival Without Borders* project is no less impressive: Russia, Georgia, Moldova and Israel. On July 18th-19th, the Regional Philharmonic will stage the 2nd International Dream Dance Fest.

For the sixth time, Vitebsk will host a street art festival: *On Seven Winds*. As for the postponement or cancellation of the festival due to coronavirus, such a situation is not being considered according to Mr. Lapitsky. "We and our partners continue working on the project. The difficulties that arise have united us even more. Artistes do not refuse to perform. Their managers call and ask to keep up to date. The only problem is the suspension of the ticket sales for the concert with *Eurovision* stars. It arose because of the cancellation of flights between the countries. Now it is impossible to calculate the logistics of delivering artists to Belarus. Due to the fact that the contracts with the European Broadcasting Union have not been signed yet, we cannot reveal the names of the performers, though, believe me, they are very cool! As soon as flights resume, tickets will go back on sale."



ing celebrated this year. Mr. Panov's great friend, fashion historian Aleksandr Vasiliev, will host the evening. It will be possible to talk to both of them before the curtain. We are introducing the idea of such meetings with directors and main actors of productions this year at the *Slavianski Bazaar*."

tor of the Yakub Kolas Vitebsk Drama Theatre for a long time. On July 19th, the audience and guests will enjoy Sergey Shakurov, Daniil Spivakovsky, Mikhail Politseymako and Albina Dzhana-bayeva in the *Bad Habits* play. For the first time in many years, guests from abroad, the Sfumato troupe from Bulgaria, will

calculate the logistics of delivering artists to Belarus. Due to the fact that the contracts with the European Broadcasting Union have not been signed yet, we cannot reveal the names of the performers, though, believe me, they are very cool! As soon as flights resume, tickets will go back on sale."

Paulinka goes online

The legendary production *Paulinka* at the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre streamed live to the whole world for the first time



By Olga Korneeva

The event took place on World Theatre Day, March 27th: *Paulinka* was streamed live — enabling not only Belarusians but also representatives of the Belarusian diaspora in other countries, our compatriots who are currently abroad and everyone interested in Belarusian culture to enjoy this theat-

rical masterpiece. The live stream was available to any device, anywhere in the world.

The high-quality multi-camera filming enabled every spectator to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the theatre hall and see everything happening on stage from various angles. Russian subtitles were available for the live stream.

"*Paulinka* staged by Lev Litvinov in 1944 is the calling card of the Yanka Kupala Theatre. The production opens every season and has been in the theatre's repertoire for almost 80 years. In 2019, *Paulinka* was added to the list of Belarus' intangible historical and cultural heritage," announced the theatre.

Almost two dozen talented actresses have played the main character in the history of the production, including Raisa Koshelnikova, Zoya Belokhvoshtik and Marta Golubeva, who performed on March 27th. The cast also included Maria Zakharevich, Pavel Kharlanchuk-Yuzhakov, Andrey Kovalchuk, Alena Sidorova, Nikolay Kuchits, Natalya Kochetkova, Marina Gordienok, and Dmitry Tumas.

It is the first time *The Week of Kupala Theatre Online* campaign has been organised. On March 29th, *The School of Taxpayers* was streamed: a bright and ironic French comedy based on the work of Louis Verneuil and Georges Berr. On March 31st, the audience enjoyed *Weltmeister-Accordion* — a popular performance-concert based on Mark Merman's work; it's directed by Nikolay Pinigin, with the participation of the orchestra of the Kupala Theatre. On April 2nd, *The Harvest* — a recording of the performance from the repertoire of the Chamber Stage — is streamed. Dmitry Tishko's distinctive production is based on the works of one of the most famous modern Belarusian playwrights, Pavel Pryazhko.

Links to the online streaming and recordings of performances are available on the theatre's website and in social networks.

Hurry to blossom

By Irina Sergeeva



The Belovezhskaya Pushcha witnesses mass flowering of the isopyrum thalictroides — a month earlier than usual

It is noteworthy that earlier flowering of a rare protected species was recorded only in the southern parts of the forest, in particular, on the territory of the Belyansky forestry. In the more northern regions, only the first blooming buds are seen.

Such early flowering is not peculiar for isopyrum. According to long-term phenological observations, in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha this species blooms in the second week of April, that is, actually a month later. Scientists associate this unusual phenomenon primarily with warm and snowless winters.

Isopyrum thalictroides is a rare protected plant of national conservation interest. This is in its origin, a Central European mountain species; in Belarus it's located on the north-eastern border of the range. Belovezhskaya Pushcha accounts for the largest occupied area (up to several hectares) and population of this species. They are an indicator of indigenous old-growth forests and are located in ash, oak and hornbeam massifs.

Knight's move

Eat, walk, find out about relationships: how wild horses — tarpans — live in the Nalibokskaya Pushcha

Last August, 150 tarpans of the Konik breed were relocated from the Netherlands to the Naliboksky National Landscape Reserve. These wild horses originally lived on our lands and now, decades later, they are back to their native places. The tarpans have already passed their period of quarantine and now graze carelessly in the meadows. The MT reporter got to know these new inhabitants of the reserve and observed their way of life.

By Ilya Krasovsky

New-settlers of the forest

Tarpans were once part of our wild nature. Heavily built, they quickly made their way through windbreaks and swampy terrain. In times when there was no Lenin or Lennon, wild horses were kept semi-wild. Lithuanian cavalymen caught tarpans for raids in the woods and after their 'service', freed them. This is how Vytautas 'recruited' horses for the Battle of Grunwald.

A hundred years ago, tarpans lived in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha and, during the Great Patriotic War, they appeared in Germany to eventually relocate to the Netherlands. By the mid-1970s, there were no more than 20 tarpans in our country and they were distributed among the forestries as a workforce. There, they finally assimilated with their hard-working brothers.

However, the Naliboksky Reserve has decided to restore the population of tarpans — a link in the chain that was missing in the local fauna. Its employees began to negotiate with the Dutch to restore this lost species of wild horse. The Dutch willingly handed over the animals as the difficult-to-pronounce Oostvaardersplassen Reserve cultivates the concept of natural grazing of wild horses — along with deer and tours. The population of tarpans there grew to several hundred and, over time, wild horses began to eat their neighbours' food. As a result, the balance in the ecosystem was disrupted.

The animals came to us slim but are already fattening as there is enough food for them. Moreover, there was no true winter this year and there no need to rake the snow away for them as the grass was right under their hooves, which was real fast food. In general, low temperatures are not terrible for tarpans; their shaggy mane slide

down over their eyes like a fringe. In size, the animal resembles a domestic horse: stallions weigh 400kg and mares are slightly lighter. Their wild life has left its marks on these animals: zebra stripes on the legs and a dark 'belt' along the spine. The red deer also carries it on its back. Most tarpans are mouse-coloured and fit well into the local landscape; only one red horse stands out of the herd.



To the free meadows

Tarpans were brought in three stages: 50 at a time. In the Netherlands, they passed medical examination and were chipped. Each animal has a passport. The horses are doing well at Naliboksky. The reserve is located on the territory of Nalibokskaya Pushcha — one of the largest woodlands not only in the country but also in the

whole of Eastern Europe. Bison, deer, wolves, bears, as well as more than 50 species of animals listed in the Red Book of Belarus live in an area of almost 90,000 hectares.

The agreement with the Dutch stipulates that the tarpans must live without human interference. Horses cannot be used for agricultural work or riding. It is also forbidden to feed the animals, except during the winter season. It's also prohibited to provide them with veterinary assistance.

Wolves have already come to look at the herd and a bear also came out of the forest to see them. However, the tarpans have



also bring benefit: they are vegetarians and thus form meadow ecosystems. People don't need to do ploughing and hay making. Tarpans are not afraid of humans, and people can approach them, although the animals don't like abrupt movements.

"They are cheerful and frolic about now but — when the rut starts — the males can tear pieces of meat from each other," the specialist continues. These are the true 'dark sides' of tarpans which is no surprise: the mating season is a nervous time.

Following eastern laws

Tarpans are very social animals. They live not simply in a herd but a harem: one stallion and one to ten mares with youngsters. The stallion keeps order, protects its 'family', though the mare is the head. The latter gives commands, while the 'husband' follows them.

A group of 'single males' graze separately. They keep the harem in good shape as they can take the leader's place at any time. Stallions compete and the best is the animal with the largest pile of poo. If the score is equal, the second round involves a duel. A horse without 'a family' may manage well but instinct will sooner or later call it to find a mate.

One of the dark horses' sides is bulging: it is pregnant and will give birth in the spring. After a foal is born, it stands on feet in a couple of hours — to join the herd with its mother. No 'childhood' exists for these animals. In autumn, two foals were born in the reserve: Ivanych (in honour of Aleksandr Kozorez) and Susan (after Oostvaardersplassen's director).

Tarpans have become fully-fledged wild inhabitants of the Nalibokskaya Pushcha and this will help maintain biological diversity, restore the trophic food chain and contribute to the development of ecotourism.

nothing to fear as predators would not cope with the whole herd. Moreover, the scavenger bear and wolves are not so strong in recent years. The lynx will also not dare to attack.

Tarpans quickly explore new open spaces and now scatter over an area of 400 hectares. The comfortable space of their habitat is met: one hectare per one animal. They graze on shrubs and weeds, running around, trying to build up relationships. Hedonism reigns. Animals all gather at the feeding place where they are usually given oats. "Supplementary feeding is needed to keep the borders of the tarpans' habitat, otherwise they will spread throughout the entire territory of the forest," explains Aleksandr Kozorez who heads the Hunting Department of the Forestry Ministry.

Horses, without knowing it,





UN Chief calls for global ceasefire to focus on ‘the true fight of our lives’

UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged warring parties across the world to lay down their weapons in support of the bigger battle against COVID-19: the common enemy that is now threatening all of humankind

“The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war,” he said. “That is why today, I’m calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.”

The ceasefire would allow humanitarians to reach populations that are most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19, which first emerged in Wuhan, China, last December, and has now been reported in more than 180 countries.

As the UN Chief pointed out, COVID-19 does not care about nationality or ethnicity, or other differences between people, and ‘attacks all, relentlessly’, including during wartime. It is the most vulnerable — women and children, people with disabilities, the marginalised, displaced and refugees — who pay the highest price during conflict and who are most at risk of suffering ‘devastating losses’ from the disease.

The UN Chief called on warring parties to pull back from hostilities, put aside mistrust and animosity, and ‘silence the guns; stop the artillery; end the airstrikes’. This is crucial, he said, ‘to help create corridors for life-saving aid. To open precious windows for diplomacy. To bring hope to places among the most vulnerable to COVID-19’.

While inspired by new rapproche-

ment and dialogue between combatants to enable joint approaches to push back the disease, the Secretary-General said more still needs to be done.

The UN launched a \$2bn Global Humanitarian Response Plan to fund the fight against the coronavirus pandemic in the world’s poorest countries, warning that it is threatening the entire human race, Mr. Guterres said.

Properly funded, it will save many lives and arm humanitarian agencies and NGOs with laboratory supplies for testing, and with medical equipment to treat the sick while protecting healthcare workers, the UN Chief said, adding that the plan also includes additional measures to support host communities that continue to generously open their homes and towns to refugees and displaced persons.

‘Alternative Eurovision’ being planned after 2020’s contest was cancelled

Organisers of the Eurovision Song Contest are investigating an ‘alternative’ show after this year’s event was cancelled due to coronavirus

Although the format has yet to be decided, they stressed the programme would not be a competition. However, the show will ‘honour the songs and artists’ that were due to take part of the contest this May.

It’s the first time that *Eurovision* has not taken place since it first aired in 1956.

After the Dutch Government banned large public gatherings, the European Broadcasting Union called off the event to protect the ‘health of artists, staff, fans and visitors’.

The event’s executive supervisor, Jon Ola Sand, added, “We are very proud of the *Eurovision* Song Contest, that for 64 years has united people all around Europe. We regret this situation very much,” he added, but promised the event would return ‘stronger than ever’ next year, preferably in the Netherlands, which won the contest in 2019.

The decision to stage an alternative event came just 48 hours after *Eurovision* was called off, and was prompted by the ‘overwhelming’ response of fans.



“The EBU is very aware of how much the *Eurovision* Song Contest will be missed,” organisers explained. “The contest’s values of universality and inclusivity, and our proud tradition of celebrating diversity through music, are needed more than ever right now. We ask for your patience while we work through ideas in the coming days and weeks.”



An empty Broadway Theatre district in New York City

Trump: ‘We should return to work. Otherwise, the crisis can kill more people than coronavirus’.

Donald Trump has said he wants to reopen the US for business in weeks, not months, as he claimed continued closures could result in more deaths than the coronavirus itself

“We can’t have the cure be worse than the problem,” the President told reporters at a press briefing. “We have to open our country because that causes problems that, in my opinion, could be far bigger problems.”

Mr. Trump claimed that if closures stretched on for months there would be ‘probably more death from that than anything that we’re talking about with respect to the virus’.

In recent days, tensions have been rising between those who argue the country needs to get back up and running to prevent a deep economic depression.

But with the economic impact now snapping into focus with millions out of work, businesses shut and stock markets in freefall the chorus of backlash is growing louder.

“We can’t shut in the economy. The economic cost to individuals is just too great,” Larry Kudlow, Mr. Trump’s top economic adviser, said. “The President is right. The cure can’t be worse than the disease, and we’re going to have to make some difficult trade-offs.”

That opinion has been echoed by others in the White House, and some Republicans in the Congress.

Diamond samples in Canada reveal size of lost continent

Geologists in Canada have found that an ancient continent was 10 percent larger than previously estimated after analysing rock samples dug up during diamond exploration work

Researchers from the University of British Columbia (UBC) made the chance discovery while studying diamond samples from Baffin Island, the largest island in Canada.

They identified a new part of an ancient fragment of the Earth’s crust known as the North Atlantic Craton, which ran from Scotland to North America and broke up 150 million years ago.

The scientists said the samples they analysed had a ‘mineral signature’ displayed in

other parts of this particular craton, a large block of the Earth’s crust that forms the nucleus of a continent.

Maya Kopylova, a geologist at UBC and the lead author of the research, said in a statement, “The mineral composition of other portions of the North Atlantic craton is so unique there was no mistaking it.”

She added that neighbouring ancient cratons in Northern Canada showed different mineralogies and that her team’s discovery was ‘like finding a missing piece of a puzzle’.

The samples of kimberlite, an igneous rock which sometimes contains diamonds, came from deep beneath Chidliak Kimberlite Province in southern Baffin Island.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

A long-awaited movie

Blood, love, intrigue and honour: to be continued

The Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich is a new milestone in the history of Belarusian cinema

By Irina Ovsepyan

It had seemed to me for a long time that modern cinematography is more dead than alive. Monotonous Hollywood-made movies, 'shop-worn' special effects, catchy colours and 'ketch-up' advertisement montages, banal scenarios and poor acting generate the feeling that you're chewing on cardboard. Finally however, enlightenment has appeared in this kingdom of typically dull offerings: Belarusfilm National Film Studio finished *The Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich*, based on the novel of the Belarusian writer, Lyudmila Rublevskaya. This is our answer to the *Gardes-Marines* and is first fully-fledged adventure film with a historical background since Soviet cinema.

At the centre of the narrative is the struggle for the throne of the Rzecz Pospolita; the sacred relic — the Rhomphaia — could help the power-hungry magnates, but everyone is chasing it. The classic storyline, starting with *The Three Musketeers* and to the already mentioned *Gardes-Marines*: to throw ordinary people into the grindstone of history and keep viewers watching their adventures intensely. The fact that the events take place on the Belarusian soil gives additional zest: cheering for one's own people is always special.

Director Aleksandr Anisimov gathered a purely domestic team for the shooting — a fundamental decision, this is the way national projects should be done. The Belarusian novel, Belarusian composer (the music for the film was composed by Viktor Kopytko and historian and musician, Yarosh Malishevsky, appears in the final with a wheeled lyre and a dose of authentic folk melodies), not a single foreign star in shot — an unexaggeratedly brilliant acting ensemble.

The duet of main characters was successfully put together: the young impoverished nobleman Prantish Vyrvich (Georgy Petrenko) and doctor Butramei Lednik (Ivan Trus) who came into his service. In some ways, the idea resembles the movie *Toy*: in the power of a young man, almost a teenager, is an adult. But Vyrvich was initially nobler than the young Rambal-Cochet. For Georgy Petrenko, this is his first main role and the young artist squeezed the most out of it, creating a memorable living image. To portray a cute guy in the frame is not a trick, it's enough just to be yourself; however, showing the moral development of the character is much more difficult. Prantish, performed by Georgy Petrenko, turned out to be excellent. Ivan Trus in the role of the Lednik still overwhelms the viewer with his brutal masculine charm and given that, for the role, the actor had to lose about 40kg, it's time to applaud not only his acting but also his professional heroism. Lednik's beloved Salome, the guardian of the Rhomphaia, was played by Veronika Plyashkevich, the actress is in demand not only in theatre and not only in Belarus: she has many films, including international ones, and her own circle of fans.

Watching the supporting actors is also pure pleasure: "*The Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich* gathered almost all the stars of the Belarusian stage. A well-known pattern: the more talented acting improvisation is, the deeper the artists grew into their characters and the more the film cap-

tures. What is a colourful pair of Radziwill dukes performed by two famous Yanka Kupala Theatre actors: Great Hetman Michal Kazimierz Radziwill Rybenko was embodied by the People's Artist, Viktor Manaev, who smiled cunningly into his red moustache, while Vyacheslav Pavlyut played his brother Jerome Radziwill, known for his cruelty, a kind of ruling monster with maniacal desires. Another hero of the Yanka Kupala Theatre stage is Dmitry Yesenevich; thanks to his efforts, German mercenary Hermann Watmann turned into an extremely charming monster, whom the audience observe with no less interest than Prantish and Lednik, laughing heartily and, strangely enough, wishing the villain all the best.

Some may complain about the 'unfashionable' shooting: in fact, no computer editing, delayed explosions and landslides where the bricks are beautifully scattered in the dungeons. Everything is made in the traditions of Belarusian cinema: soft colours of nature, subdued colours, if the lighting is made with candlelight, then the shot shows honest twilight.

In fact, what is missing is a more detailed development of storylines, including secondary characters. But we will wait for this in the 4-episode television version, which is promised to appear by May and where all characters should reveal themselves.



During the pre-premiere screening it was possible to receive an autograph of Lyudmila Rublevskaya for a novel that became a film



Leading actor Igor Petrenko



Actress Veronika Plyashkevich and director Aleksandr Anisimov



DIRECT SPEECH



Vladimir Karachevsky, Director General of Belarusfilm National Film Studio:

For the first time in recent years, we turned to the topic of the history of our area. The film is based on the work of a modern Belarusian author, which is also a landmark event. It's a great responsibility to make such a serious movie.

'The Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich' is a purely Belarusian product. Work on the film began in April 2018. A lot of locations are involved: Lida, Bobruisk, Nesvizh, Mir, film studio pavilions. There is a place for historical battles in the film, with computer graphics used in some scenes. Moreover, the famous tank was created especially for the picture, according to the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci. It can be seen in the exposition of the film studio. Belarusfilm plans to continue developing historical themes, as well as making films about the present. In addition, the task is to enter the international markets with the national product, therefore, subtitles in different languages will be created, and if the partners are interested, dubbing in English will be created.



wikipedia.org

A bomb for the gauleiter

An exhibition dedicated to Soviet intelligence officer Nadezhda Troyan has opened at the Victory Museum on Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow. Most of the documents on show have only recently been stripped of their ‘top secret’ label.

By Boris Orekhov

The tip of the trident

‘Troyan’ in Belarus is a pitchfork with three prongs. The family name proved to be prophetic. It was Nadezhda Troyan, along with Maria Osipova and Yelena Mazanik, who was destined to become the striking ‘trident’ that would destroy the executioner of the Belarusian people, gauleiter-fanatic Wilhelm Kube. The three girls would do what detachments of male partisan saboteurs failed to do.

The war ‘caught up with’ Nadezhda’s family in Minsk. The 19 year old medical student had just finished her second year when, on June 28th, 1941, the city was captured by Germans. Almost from the first days of the occupation, Nadya began her struggle. She refused to give away her radio — though she could have been killed: the young girl listened to Sovinformburo (Soviet Information Bureau) reports at night, wrote leaflets by hand and placed them around the city. Together with her friends from the Institute, risking their lives, they threw pieces of bread and rags soaked in water over the barbed wire of the Drozdy concentration camp near Minsk, so that the prisoners could quench their thirst. They even managed to organise an escape once when the girls collected their civilian clothes in bundles and crept to the camp gates. Nadya, who spoke German, began a playful conversation with an officer while the others handed their belongings to the prisoners and then helped them get under the barbed wire and escape.

At six o’clock near the oak

In early 1942, Nadezhda and her parents moved to Smolevichi where she got a job as an accountant in the office of

a peat plant. She guessed that one of the local girls was connected with the partisans but when she tried to start a conversation with her, she was surprised, showing fear in her eyes and waving her away: ‘What partisans, what are you talking about, God help you!’

An accident helped break the ice of distrust. Once Nadya overheard a conversation between German officers who were talking about the upcoming punitive operation. She told her new friend about it. As a result, the Nazis found only empty dugouts at the partisan site.

Eventually, the partisans trusted her and set up a meeting in the forest, near a spreading oak tree. The signal was to whistle three times. The girl was however, unable to whistle and put a police whistle, given by a boy who was in love with her at school, into her pocket. As a result, Nadya became a fully-fledged fighter of the partisan detachment ‘Storm’ which was part of the intelligence-sabotage unit: Uncle Kolya’s Brigade. The latter was in touch with the NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs). She acted as a nurse initially but then became the number two of the machine-gun crew. She participated in many combat operations, but her main task lay ahead.

In February 1943, all partisan detachments operating in the Minsk area received a categorical order from Moscow signed by Stalin to destroy gauleiter Wilhelm Kube at any cost. A pathological Nazi, one of Hitler’s closest associates, imposed a new regime on with savage cruelty. “My name should make Belarusians’ blood run cold,” the executioner often repeated. During the two years of his rule, more than four hundred thousand civilians of the Republic were shot, hanged, burned alive and killed in gas chambers. That was just the beginning. In total, following the ‘Ost’ plan, 80 percent of Belarusians were planned to



The woman devoted her peaceful life to saving people as she became a surgeon. She also published dozens of articles in scientific journals, which are still relevant today.

Nikolay Sitnikov, TASS



be killed. The remaining were to become slaves, unable to read or write, unable to have children or receive any medical care. Wilhelm Kube was implementing his plan with sadistic consistency.

Partisans began hunting for the bloody executioner. Nine attempts to kill him were unsuccessful: ‘Lucky Kube’ — as the Nazis themselves called him — remained unharmed or, sensing danger, simply did not appear at the designated place.

The only way out was to recruit a person from Kube’s inner circle who ‘had access to the body’ and then carry out retribution through him. Nadezhda Troyan was ordered to find such a person.

With a gun close to her head

The single suitable candidate was the gauleiter’s maid, Lena Mazanik. She was the only servant able to leave the protected territory of the mansion on Teatralnaya Street. A liaison officer from one of the units had already tried to establish contact with her but was too rude: in the evening, he jumped out of the bushes in a deserted street and, threatening Lena with a gun, began to demand she agree to kill Kube. She was afraid that this was a trick by the Gestapo and ran away.

Sometime later, Nadya Troyan got to know Lena as if by accident. The two women had a conversation in a costume jewellery store; it did not look unusual. A subtle psychologist with an unmistakable sense of people, Nadezhda acted delicately, not pressurising, so as not to frighten Lena. They met several times and Mazanik finally agreed to help. She even made an accurate plan of the interior rooms of the mansion.

Poison was not suitable as servants could be forced to taste the food before the host. A bomb seemed to be a solution. The following events were truly interesting for wartime. A decision was made to act and, with this in mind, several groups participated in the preparation

of the assassination attempt on the gauleiter. The information obtained by Troyan was also sent to the Military Intelligence Service which later contacted Mazanik through Maria Osipova. They talked once, in detail. It was September 1943. After the Battle of Kursk, the front inexorably rolled back to the West. The liberation of Minsk was only a matter of time and then everyone would have to answer for what they did during the occupation. The argument was convincing. Mazanik agreed to plant a mine in the gauleiter’s bedroom. Nadezhda Troyan agreed. It’s possible to assume that the two groups, subordinated to different departments, competed with each other regarding which of them would kill Kube; the GRU was ahead of the NKVD.

The British Clam Mk-3 device with an acid exploder, in contrast to a watch blast, was absolutely silent. It was given to Mazanik by Osipova and tore into the bed of the sleeping gauleiter at exactly three o’clock in the morning on September 22nd, 1943. Kube was killed. The left side of his body was torn apart. His pregnant wife, who was sleeping on the other side of the bed, got off with a shock. She had no scratches and later gave birth to a perfectly healthy baby.

SCENARIO NO. 2

A cake with a surprise

Knowing nothing about the explosion in the gauleiter’s bedroom, Nadezhda Troyan was walking from the forest to the city. She had a box of cake in her bag; a similar device was hidden in it. The city was already cordoned off and there were checkpoints at every intersection. Officers checked everyone. Just imagine what a cool and charming a person she must have been to go through all the checkpoints without the guards even thinking of poking their noses into her bag. When she got to the city, she found out that Kube had been killed. Nadya now needed to get back out — with the bomb. “In the squadron, every such weapon was counted, so I could not throw

it away. I had no right to,” the brave woman explained after the war.

Twice during the war, Germany declared national mourning: after the defeat of Paulus’ army at Stalingrad and on the day of the assassination of Kube.

All three girls — Nadezhda Troyan, Yelena Mazanik and Maria Osipova — were taken by plane to Moscow where each of them was interrogated by the People’s Commissar of State Security, Vsevolod Merkulov. When the picture of the operation became clear, a decision was made to reward the heroes.

“I think each of these girls is worthy of the title of Hero of the Soviet Union,” Stalin concluded.

The transfer of the Olympics to 2021 has created serious problems for athletes and organisers. We figure out how and who specifically will be affected by the Olympic shift, which has no precedent in history.

By Dmitry Komashko

Technical issues

The International Olympic Committee opposed the transfer of the Games up to the last possible moment. The Head of this organisation, Thomas Bach, had serious reasons for this. These are partly image related: until now, the Olympics have been cancelled only because of world wars. But for the most part, the reasons are financial and organisational. Already, the cost of transferring the Olympics to 2021 is estimated at least \$5bn, and this is not the limit. For example, the organisers will have to think of how to maintain 43 empty Olympic venues for a whole year. How to explain to companies that have already agreed on the rental of complexes and use of the exhibition pavilion as a press centre that the previous agreements are cancelled? We need to figure out what to do with the shortage of hotel rooms: many hotels have already been booked for 2021 without reference to the Olympics, and simply can't cancel these reservations. Finally, the Olympic village. Two dozen buildings of 14-18 storeys is a commercial project, and already in August, immediately after the end of the Olympics, residents who bought the apartments there should have moved in. The owners who have spent a lot of money are unlikely to agree to wait another year and a half. Moreover, contracts with sponsors and broadcasters also have very substantial figures involved. However, this is not the only problem.

Sports issues

Modern sport is a complex industry, whose mechanism is smooth and arranged very tightly. Even the abolition of one major tournament can introduce a sig-

nificant imbalance. Today, the sporting calendar has been completely destroyed. Thomas Bach and the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, named summer 2021 as the deadline for the postponed Olympics. However,

implementing plans is much more difficult than voicing them. For the same period, for example, two top tournaments have already been planned: the World Aquatics Championships and the World Athletics Championships.

Moreover, swimmers had to compete in Japan. World forums should be held for gymnasts and representatives of a whole range of other sports disciplines. The International Association of Athletics Federations has already an-

nounced its readiness to move the tournament, but any world championship held before or immediately after the Olympics automatically loses not only its status, but also its meaning. There are also many questions around selection. If, in team sports, it's possible to finish the qualification tournaments that have already begun, then in many other disciplines it will be necessary to start qualification anew. For most athletes, including Belarus, this could be a difficult challenge.

For instance, Vladimir Samsonov, 44, was planning to perform in Tokyo. At the time of the Olympics, he will be 45, and each year at this age can mean a lot. Ivan Tikhon also turns 44 in July. The hammer thrower has, for a long time, been open about the fact that he remains only for the sake of the Olympics. Now he has to keep in shape for at least another year... Olga Mazurenok, a marathon runner, was also speaking about her plans to reach Tokyo. Traditionally, the Olympic Games launch a generational change in rhythmic gymnastics. An interesting situation is seen in boxing, as several of our leading fighters have turned professional, and we can only guess how the Games fit into the schedule of their fights within a year. Our kayakers and canoeists were also rowing powerfully in the direction of the Tokyo Olympics. Now they have to accelerate again, and this is an unpredictable process. The situation in trampolining is also changing very quickly. There is also another side to the coin. For example, an extra year in preparation will certainly come in handy for athletic youth. Among those who claimed a place in the Belarusian Olympic team, there are many young athletes, and in a year their ambitions and chances will surely turn out to be even more serious.

A shift in years



The symbolic clock counting down the days to the Olympics seems to have stopped...

WHAT THEY SAY

Andrey Lipnitsky, acting head coach of the Belarusian national swimming team: *I'm convinced that at least in swimming no one will benefit from the transfer of the Games. To evaluate the consequences, it's important to remember that athletes are not going to the Games spontaneously. Four-year training is being organised and the work is being done so that it is in the fourth season that the maximum results are achieved. The guys approached the Olympic season in a serious form, being ready to claim high places. Now they will have to start anew. The psychological aspects of this situation may be even more important than physical readiness. Moreover, it's completely unclear what to do with other swimming tournaments.*

Yuri Moisevich, head athletics coach: *The transfer of the Olympics wasn't a surprise for us. It was clear that against the background of all the current problems, the choice between human safety and the con-*

duct of the competitions seemed obvious. As far as our athletes are concerned, for most of them such a transfer was even good news. Those who make up the backbone of our team — young guys and girls — now have a year to reboot, an opportunity to gain a foothold and to mature. It isn't a secret that previous seasons were very difficult. Hurdler Elvira German, for example, constantly brought home medals from top tournaments since her youth. For three consecutive years, starting from a junior, jumper Maksim Nedosekov has jumped no lower than 2.33 metres. It's extremely difficult to constantly stay at such a high level without a break. There should be a reboot, and now the guys have it. Of course, for more experienced athletes such as Ivan Tikhon, Alina Talai, Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova, the transfer of the Olympics will create more problems. But even in their case, the situation does not look catastrophic. Let's remember at what age Ellina Zvereva performed at the Olympics. I think our leaders will still be able to declare themselves at the Games in Tokyo.

Distraction for football fans around the globe

The start of the 30th Belarusian Premier League has drawn a lot of attention from around the world. The Belarusian tournament is the only one in Europe continuing to be played and the one of the few on the planet that continues regardless of the spread of the coronavirus.

By Igor Svetlov

The rights to broadcast the Belarusian football championship have been bought by Ukraine's Sport 1 and Russia's Match TV. Belarusian TV channels offer live broadcasting of all the national championship matches. Online broadcasting of the matches is watched by fans from all over the world, said the Belarusian Football Federation.

Judging by the huge amount of comments, the quality of football showed by the Belarusian teams was a revelation for foreign fans. Many thought that the Belarusian championship was behind the world's leading leagues. Opinions have changed dramatically after fans watched a number of games. Fans note that the level of the Belarusian football is good and the results are unpredictable. This is exactly what attracts true football fans.

Everyone noted the unsuccessful start for last season's medal winners. Only the Belarusian champions, FC Dinamo Brest, avoided a defeat, drawing 1:1 against FC Smolevichi. FC Shakhtyor Soligorsk, bronze medallists, lost 0:1 to FC Torpedo BelAZ Zhodino. The main sensation was a 1:3 defeat of the 15-time champion of Belarus, FC BATE Borisov, to FC Energetik-BGU, a team little known abroad. 22 year old Uzbek forward, Jasurbek Yakhshiboev, scored twice into the BATE net and was named the player of the match for day one. FC Rukh Brest, a newcomer to the Belarusian Premier League, edged FC Dinamo Minsk 1:0. Out of the top five in the Belarusian Football Championship 2019, only FC Isloch celebrated victory over FC Neman Grodno (1:0). Momo Yansane's goal in the net of FC Neman Grodno was named as the best in the first round.



Energetik-BGU players sensationally beat BATE with a score of 3:1 in the opening match of the 30th Belarusian Premier League

Foreign fans also showed interest in the FC Slutsk v FC Slavia Mozyr fixture (3:1). Referee Sergey Chistov awarded five penalties during the game, which is a record for the Belarusian championship. Internet users noted that all the penalties given by the Belarusian referee were leg-

itimate and in line with the latest UEFA recommendations.

New fans of Belarusian football were unanimous in saying that they would continue to follow the season with great interest. True, it's a distraction for fans from around the world.



Photo of the week

Springtime in Minsk

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 15th April. *We'll Be Understood in 100 Years: Lazar Khidekel*
Until 21st May. *Sacred Images*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 19th April. *Prototype of European Constitution*

BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM

13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street
Until 25th April. *Frantishkek Bogushevish's Blessed Kushlyany*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street
Until 26th April. *I'm Monet; I'm Shishkin; I'm Malevich*
Until 26th April. Personal exhibition of Sergey Grinevich

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 26th July. *Live Exotics*
Until 5th October. *Born by Sea*

CAT MUSEUM

23 Internatsionalnaya Street
Until 5th April. *March Cats*

LIBRA

37 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 7th April. *Sand and Blood: Francisco Goya and Pablo Picasso*
Until 7th June. *Pop Art*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 22nd April. *War and Peace. Return*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 3rd May. *Porcelain Stories: Famous People in Porcelain*

MUSEUM OF MAN

1 Oktyabrskaya Square
Until 31st December. *Museum of Man*

PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

11 Sovetskaya Street
Until 3rd April. *March Cats*

LEONID SHCHEMELEV CITY ART GALLERY

10 Revolutsionnaya Street
Until 19th April. *Leonid Shchemelev is 97: Graphics from Family Collection*
Until 19th April. *About Women and Spring*

HIGH PLACE

2A Gertsen Street
Until 12th April. *My Way*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
02.04. Prince Igor
03.04. Sleeping Beauty
04.04. Iolanthe
05.04. The Fountain of Bakhchisaray
07.04. Macbeth
08.04. Corsair / Whether It's Day Which Reigns...
09.04. Traviata

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
02.04. Doctor Raus' Career
03.04. Wedding with Wind
04.04. Concrete
05.04. Serezha

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Masharov Avenue
02.04. №13
03.04 and 04.04. Oh, Anna
05.04. Jubilee / Proposal
06.04. The Same Place Next Year...
07.04 and 08.04. Wolves and Sheep
09.04. Concert on Attic

BELARUSIAN ARMY THEATRE

3 Krasnoarmeiskaya 3
02.04. Inspector
03.04. I'm Your Officer
04.04. Suffering from Tender Heart
05.04. Romeo and Juliet

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
02.04. People on Marshes
03.04. Elza's Land / Local Cabaret
04.04. Inspector/ Love as Militarism
05.04. Pinsk Gentry / The First
06.04. Musical Nights at Kupala Theatre: Legends of Kupala Theatre. Maria Zakharevich
07.04. Jeweler's Jubilee
08.04. Tolerance
09.04. ART

MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
02.04. Summer Cottage Residents
03.04. Edip
07.04. Bridal Shower
08.04. How to Become Rich
09.04. Oscar and Pink Lady

CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street
04.04. Corporate
08.04. Clinic

MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
02.04. Titanic
03.04. Women's Revolt
04.04. The Bat
05.04. Jewish Happiness
07.04. True Story of Lieutenant Rzhnevsky
08.04. Jane Eyre
09.04. Tristan and Isolde