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Konstantin Kabarikha — a 10th grade student at secondary school No. 155 in Minsk — has an unusual hobby for his age: the guy creates dioramas on military-patriotic themes

Step into the future

On September 2nd, the first bell of the new academic year rang for 1 million 72 thousand schoolchildren. Solemn assemblies dedicated to Knowledge Day were held in schools and gymnasiums across Belarus. They were followed by the long-awaited and exciting first lesson, the theme of which is new every year. It is determined primarily by our unshakable values that need to be conveyed to children, as well as by important historical events and socio-economic priorities of the country's development. This year, the conversation was about the undeniable achievements made by Belarus. Therefore, the title of the lesson was We Have Something to be Proud of, We Have Something to Cherish! Teachers put a lot of creativity and talent to tell children about the most important things and leave the first lesson in their hearts for a long time. Some of them created an interactive game about the major historical events, some spoke about the leading Belarus' enterprises, and others focused on the small motherland — after all, pride in the country begins with love for their land.

Aleksandr Lukashenko traditionally congratulated students and teachers on Knowledge Day. The President wished everyone that the academic year would be successful for the national education system and give a lot of reasons to be proud of the achievements of our children and youth.



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There will be no country without educated youth!

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, took part in the Nationwide Conference on Teaching held on August 27th

The event gathered over 2,500 attendees, predominantly comprising representatives from delegations across Belarus' regions and the city of Minsk, including heads of higher education institutions. Also present were leaders of public administration bodies and national public associations, members of the public, and parliamentarians.

Following a report by Education Minister Andrei Ivanets on the current state and development prospects of the national education system, the Head of State asked what problems remained in the field of education and whether schools had truly become places of reverence in the minds of students.

According to Andrei Ivanets, one of the key tasks is to cultivate genuine citizens and patriots at all levels of education. The second task is to restore the prestige of the teaching profession. While efforts are being made in this regard, the minister emphasised the need to revive the sacred significance of the teaching profession — the respect and status it once held in society. Third, it is crucial to recognise that young people are not merely a labour resource but rather human capital. Therefore, the learning process should not be viewed solely through the prism of training narrow specialists for specific industries or enterprises, but as a preparation for the country's future development as a whole.

Regarding the attitude towards the school, the minister noted that considerable results had been achieved in recent years, with discipline and order being maintained at a good and high level.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the teaching conference should not be a perfunctory bureaucratic event. After all, if problems are not identified and tackled, they will persist.

The President outlined several points of concern that were not covered in the minister's report. Thus, there has been a shortage of enrollees at universities this year, particularly in agricultural specialities, with engineering and technical specialities taking the second place.

Another aspect is labour education. The minister reported that initiatives had been undertaken in this area, and many schools had their plots of land. However, Aleksandr Lukashenko revealed



that not all schools had implemented this practice.

“Believe me, this is a very serious question. I see the dynamics. It is true that we have reached unprecedented heights; no one could have imagined 20 years ago that we would be able to reach these heights. However, if we fail to notice the emergence of long-term problems, we will sink into the same abyss we faced after the collapse of the Soviet Union,” the Head of State urged. “There is no need to obscure, lie or embellish the reality. There has never been such complexity around Belarus as we observe now. Therefore, we must ensure that our country stands its ground — since we all want to be sovereign and independent — and we should jointly think how to do that and be ready for it. Everything starts with us, teachers.”

The President reminded that as soon as restrictive measures had been introduced against Belarus, he immediately demanded that the Government forget about the sanctions and focus on economic development. In those conditions, it was necessary not only to produce, but also to sell products abroad. For countries with export-oriented economies, this situation is a big challenge. However, the authorities have coped with it, and ordinary Belarusians did not feel the large-scale sanctions pressure, as Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out.

“We are getting all kinds of advice from the outside now. They are throwing in ideas and urging

us to back down and turn our back on Russia. They encourage me to stand with Ukraine and fight against Russia, while NATO troops will be deployed near Smolensk [Russian city]. This is how far it gets. I am getting proposals from all sides today, and 99 percent of them are unacceptable for us. This is why I want you to understand in what situation we live. That is all I can tell you, and I just cannot tell you as much today. All other questions are for me to deal with. Do your job, and I will do my job together with my colleagues in the Government and senior officials,” the Head of State underscored.

Heads of educational institutions of various levels — from the gymnasium in Borisov District, Minsk State College of Innovative Construction Technologies, Gomel and Grodno State Universities — spoke at the teaching conference. They talked about improving the quality of education, developing the system of training workers and specialists, the interaction between universities and personnel customers, and the ideological component of education. The President enquired in detail about the subjects of the speakers' reports, asked clarifying questions, and sometimes spoke out himself on various topical issues.

“The main thing is that in no case should we destroy vocational education,” the President warned, emphasising that otherwise there would be huge problems. In this aspect, Belarus compares favourably with many countries in the post-Soviet space, which was also noted at the highest level. Thus, at one of the summits of the EAEU

leaders, a request was made for assistance in training qualified workers. “[Russian President] Putin replied to that, ‘You know, we still have a problem with that. It is only Belarus that can help you — certainly, not to the extent that you would like. They have retained their vocational education in Belarus, and we abolished it after the collapse of the Soviet Union’,” Aleksandr Lukashenko cited the content of that conversation.

Summing up the discussions, the Head of State stressed that he really disliked formalism and bureaucracy in work. According to the Belarusian leader, the main outcome of the event is not only that its participants had a chance to meet with the President and find out his point of view on various issues. The teachers also had the opportunity to communicate with each other, especially since many of them once studied at the same educational institutions.

In his speech, the Belarusian leader outlined the major tasks and challenges faced by the national education system.

The President highlighted that educators and teachers lay down value guidelines for the younger generation, which is the highest responsibility. The Head of State stressed that there are no small things in the work of the education system.

“The field of education is a state-forming industry. It requires serious investments, and we are investing and will continue to invest in it. If there are no educated, well-mannered youth in our country today, there will be no country tomorrow,” the Head of State remarked.

According to the President, nearly Br30 billion has been allocated for the development of the education system over the past three years. Seventy-three educational institutions have been built or overhauled, and nine more will be constructed by the end of the year.

An important indicator attesting to the high quality of Bela-

rusian education is the results of schoolchildren at international Olympiads. Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to the fact that they had won more than 200 medals in the last three years alone. “We are especially pleased with the victories in STEM disciplines that are essential for training personnel for knowledge-intensive and high-tech sectors of the economy,” the Head of State said.

The prestige of Belarusian universities is confirmed by the annual growth in the number of foreign students, which now exceeds 30,000 from over 100 countries of the world. The demand among foreigners for education in Belarus is constantly increasing, as stated by the President. “While the sanctions policy forced us to adjust our plans for the development of the industry, we quickly got our bearings, maintained positive dynamics and found new growth points. We began to work more actively with Russia, China, and countries of the Global South,” Aleksandr Lukashenko recounted.

The President underlined that Belarus was seriously committed to advancing science. The authorities are working to refocus the National Academy of Sciences, directing its efforts and expertise to the implementation of promising high-tech projects.

The Belarusian leader confirmed plans to equalise the salaries of education workers with the national average by 2025,

“The teacher has always been a pillar of the state. You know how much respect I have for your work. By 2025, we will ensure that the salaries of education workers are equal to the national average.”

According to the President, the national education system, likewise the whole country, faces serious tasks. “The way they are solved depends on each of us. Yet, I have no doubt that we will cope with them,” Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

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Media to play leading role in upcoming election campaign

The media will play a leading role in the upcoming presidential election campaign — as noted by the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, while being reported on topical issues of information policy

The participants of the meeting included Deputy Head of the President Administration Vladimir Pertsov, Information Minister Marat Markov, President's Press Secretary Natalya Eismont, and Beltelecom Chairman Ivan Eismont.

Starting the conversation, the President noted that he wished to discuss a number of topical issues regarding the mass media, "There is nothing to hide here: we are about to enter the election campaign. The media, fortunately, will play almost one of the leading roles in this situation. I say fortunately because it will be mass media and not some problems, wars and so on. It is better to fight on this field, although it is not easy at all."

During the election campaign, the Belarusian media should work calmly and show the public the results of what the country has achieved recently, as stated by Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The Head of State stressed that the media cover the most relevant topics and underlined the importance of their preparation for the election campaign, "During this election campaign, we need to demonstrate what we have achieved over this time. There is no need to fabricate anything. We obviously have a lot to show our people. It is true that we have drawbacks, but everyone has them. In any case, much has been accomplished, and we need to show it to our people. Let them decide what to do and whom to choose."

The Belarusian leader stressed that it was not necessary to be staunch supporters of the current President if he decided to run for presidency, "We need to calmly show what we have."

The interaction between the Belarusian and Russian media should be bolstered, Aleksandr Lukashenko underscored.

One of the issues that the Head of State is considering today is interaction with



BELTA

leading Russian media, which needs to be expanded. "This co-operation needs to be strengthened. Recently, our voice — the voice of the Belarusian mass media, especially TV channels — has been very much heard in the world. People worldwide are closely listening to us. But, let's be honest, Russia's voice sounds louder. Therefore, it is important for us to be there. Moreover, Russia is our major partner, the main market for our products. We need to be present in the Russian regions, where we also have our interests," Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

The Belarusian leader stressed that the heads of the leading Russian media met Belarus halfway and are ready to maintain relations and liaise. According to the Head of State, the Union State media holding should be created on equal terms.

One of the issues that the Head of State is considering today is the creation of the Union State's media holding company. According to the Belarusian leader, a lot is being said about its appearance, "Of course, taking into account Russia's media policy. You are aware of it, you have negotiated with them and you understand that it is even more an economy there. Russia is huge, it is impossible to do without the media."

Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced that the friendly and warm relations that have developed between the partners today will contribute to the establishment of a 'normal independent media holding on equal terms', "That is the main thing. If we are building our union, the main principle is equal conditions. No one is subordinate to anyone. Everything is on equal terms. Vladimir Putin and I have discussed this topic extensively. I have never heard him say, 'We are big, you are small, so let's do this and that'. The last time I posed the question directly — how long we will talk about this, we need to move, and first of all, the Russians need to create an independent holding company. The Russian President replied, 'I am all for it'."

Moreover, the agenda of the Union State should be actively disseminated on the Internet, across various messaging platforms and channels, as well as through bloggers. The President acknowledged that the Russian partners may have their own interests in this matter, but directed those responsible for the media work in Belarus, "We must act within the framework defined by the heads of state."

VLADIMIR PUTIN HAS AWARDED ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO ORDER OF ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE THE FIRST-CALLED

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree *On Awarding the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle the First-Called to President of the Republic of Belarus, Chairman of the Supreme State Council of the Union State Aleksandr Lukashenko*, BelTA reports with reference to the information published on the Kremlin official website.

"The Order of St. Andrew the Apostle the First-Called is bestowed upon Aleksandr Lukashenko, the President of the Republic of Belarus and Chairman of the Supreme State Council of the Union State, for outstanding achievements in developing the allied relationship and strategic partnership between Russia and Belarus, for boosting friendly ties between the Russian and Belarusian peoples, as well as for his great personal contribution to the establishing and effective functioning of the Union State," the decree reads.

OPEN MICROPHONE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Aleksandr Lukashenko has taken part in the *Open Microphone with the President* event at Vitebsk State University. The Head of State was briefed on the state and development prospects of the university, talked with university students from Vitebsk Region, and answered their questions.

Countries and nations involved in race for technological superiority

The peculiarity of the current moment of historical development is that countries and nations of the planet are involved in a race for technological superiority — as noted by Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko during the *Open Microphone with the President* event held at Vitebsk State University named after P.M. Masherov, featuring students of Vitebsk Region universities.

Starting the conversation, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that it was a special day for this university and its students, not only due to the President's visit, "Firstly, I asked university rectors during our meeting in February this year to plan my

visits to universities both in the Belarusian capital and in the regions. Secondly, we have a topic for a serious conversation with you — the generation that will continue Belarus' historical path in the world changing at an unprecedented pace."

The President addressed the audience with a question, "You probably feel this pace? Today we look at yesterday's innovations as at museum exhibits. It is not just about science, technology or the real economy. This also applies to the social sphere, the relations between people. Anyway, the problem is not in the rapid pace. The problem is that countries and peoples are involved in a race for technological superiority. Nothing new."

Our task is to conduct new sci-tech revolution in accelerated mode

It is necessary to carry out a new sci-tech revolution in Belarus in an accelerated mode — as underscored Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko during the *Open Microphone with the President* event.

Addressing the audience, the Belarusian leader emphasised, "Our task is to carry out a new sci-tech revolution in an accelerated mode. Only in such conditions will there be a chance to survive as a state and prevent a major war on our land. This is the harsh truth of life, and I want you to understand the seriousness of the historical moment."

The President noted that the state and the older generation rely much on the current youngsters, 'since tomorrow you will work in production or in the laboratory, moving forward scientific thought', "We count on you. We hope that you will be ready to make tremendous efforts to achieve the goal set for the state."

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Minsk — Tashkent: vast range of possibilities

Initiatives of the 2nd Uzbek-Belarusian Women's Business Forum revealed in the comments of the participants

Over 60 agreements, commercial contracts worth \$50 million, along with arrangements for the creation of joint ventures — these are the main outcomes of the 2nd Uzbek-Belarusian Women's Business Forum, which took place on August 26th-27th in Tashkent. The initiative to hold this event annually was proposed by the heads of the upper houses of parliaments. The Belarusian delegation at the forum was led by Natalya Kochanova, Chairperson of the Council of the Republic. In addition to purely business topics, the participants discussed issues related to the global agenda, women's entrepreneurship and the friendship of peoples.

By Yulia Demeshko, Olga Anufrieva

With care for the future of the planet

The stated theme of this year's forum was the transition from traditional business to green business. In this regard, Belarus had prepared a number of initiatives, thanks to which not only products, factories and enterprises will become more environmentally friendly, but also new social standards of human life will be formed. This will serve to strengthen environmental safety from man-made and natural phenomena and will have a beneficial effect on the environment, in which we and our children live. Thus, Belarus offered the Uzbek side to:

- create an action plan for the development of green business. To this end, it is necessary to analyse the legislative framework and determine common strategic goals, as noted by Natalya Kochanova;

- introduce preferential tax regimes, favourable conditions for the purchase of products of joint Belarusian-Uzbek production, and a simplified procedure for certification of goods so as to stimulate green entrepreneurship;

- work on the creation of a biodesign farm laboratory that will focus on crop



breeding and develop climate-adaptive technologies;

- collaborate to enhance the quality of pharmaceuticals, drinking water and food, urban ecosystems, smart energy, housing standards and the spread of electric transport;

- expand the practice of mutual exchanges and internships for students, teachers, specialists from various services and departments.

Secrets behind a successful business

About 40 percent of entrepreneurs in Belarus are women, as stated by Belarus' First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Snopkov. In particular, women in our country hold almost half of all senior positions (46 percent). More than 70 percent of government employees are also women. "Many enterprises headed by women are founded on the principles of environmental friendliness, hence green principles, and social equality," remarked the First Deputy Prime Minister. "According to a number of studies, 45 percent of female investors tend to invest to make the world a better place — that is, they are socially responsible, and their number is almost twice that of men. A successful business is the one that not only generates profit but also benefits society as its underlying principle."

Olga Shpilevskaya, Head of the Belarusian Women's Union (BWU), holds a supportive stance and believes that women's entrepreneurial activities often focus on addressing social problems, such as providing employment for vulnerable groups of the population, supporting environmentally friendly technologies and developing local communities. "The wing of women entrepreneurs within the BWU currently has about 500 participants, and they are truly active women leaders," emphasised Olga Shpilevskaya. "This is clearly evidenced by the results of the 1st Belarusian-Uzbek Women's Business Forum, during which co-operation in the field of woodworking was established, and contracts with Uzbek counterparts were signed. Thanks to this, our enterprise increased revenue — from August 2022 to July 2024 — by more than \$150,000. There are cases of successful collaboration in the light industry. Thus, the import of cotton fabrics from Uzbekistan contributed to reducing the cost of finished products at one of the clothing manufacturing enterprises."

Mechanisms of ecological growth

Over the past five years, trade turnover between Belarus and Uzbekistan has grown by 2.4 times, with positive dynamics continuing following the first half of this year. Investment co-operation is also developing: in 2023, the volume of foreign direct investment from Uzbekistan into Belarus' economy rose by more than 1.5 times compared to the level of 2022.

"Our countries are interested in establishing modern high-tech enterprises, producing competitive goods, and developing new markets," pointed out Belarus' Economy Minister Yuri Chebotar. "All this requires additional investments in production. Belarus strives to create the most favourable conditions for investment by improving national legislation. The emphasis is on reducing

NUMBERS

- In recent years, the mutual trade volume between Belarus and Uzbekistan has increased 4 times, reaching \$620 million. The task has been set to bring this figure to \$1 billion.



- Over 100 representatives of the business community, government agencies and departments took part in the forum from the Belarusian side.

- More than 50 Belarusian enterprises were represented at the national industrial exhibition Made in Uzbekistan.



costs in project implementation. We have also created effective tools to stimulate the transition from traditional business to green business.

- Firstly, our country has strict environmental regulations on the emission of pollutants into the environment.

- Secondly, incentives in the form of investment and tax deductions are provided for the implementation of projects aimed at the protection of ambient air and water bodies, the use of renewable energy sources, and waste disposal.

- Thirdly, environmental projects can receive preferential financing from the Development Bank.

"In addition, a promising area, such as government green bonds, is being developed — in December 2022, the first issue for \$73 million took place," the minister added. "The Ministry of Economy is currently formulating recommendations for the implementation of ESG principles in the activities of business entities in order to provide methodological support to the real sector in this direction. Belarus and Uzbekistan should more actively implement their promising business ideas, create new ones and expand the existing co-operative ties between our states."

DIRECT SPEECH

Following the meeting with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Chairperson of the Council of the Republic Natalya Kochanova summarised the results in a conversation with journalists,

"Belarus and Uzbekistan are friendly countries, our peoples are close in spirit. Of course, our leaders set the tone for this friendship. Both the visit of our President to Uzbekistan, which took place in February 2024, and the signing of the co-operation roadmap for 2024-2025 have given a new impetus to our collaboration. We discussed with the head of Uzbekistan issues of further interaction between the two countries within the framework of the agreements concluded. The role of Parliament in the implementation of these tasks is undoubtedly significant. The Council of the Republic and the Senate of Oliy Majlis are chambers of territorial representation; therefore, the question of regional co-operation was also discussed at the meeting. Friendship groups have been established between the parliaments of Belarus and Uzbekistan, but during the visit, we agreed to elevate our co-operation to a new level and create an Interparliamentary Commission on Co-operation."

Path of continuous innovation

Each product has its life cycle, which comes to an end sooner or later. In this regard, SvetlogorskKhimvolokno OJSC exemplifies the necessity of flexibility, particularly in strategically adapting its product portfolio to align with market needs. Throughout its history, the enterprise had to undergo significant transformations, including the closure of some production facilities and the establishment of new ones. This dialectical process allowed SvetlogorskKhimvolokno to successfully go through all the drastic changes in its main sales markets, maintaining production volumes in monetary terms and avoiding workforce reductions while ensuring the continuity of expertise.

By Vladimir Volchkov

From cord to polypropylene

The initial specialisation of the Svetlogorsk-based enterprise was the production of viscose technical yarn and cord fabrics. In the late 1960s, our artificial fibre plant was the largest in Europe, producing 35,500 tonnes of products per year. The cord it manufactured was supplied to numerous tyre enterprises across the Soviet Union.

However, the situation began to change gradually in the 1990s. The market saw the emergence of polyamide, polyester and other synthetic cords, which were significantly cheaper than viscose ones and gradually squeezed the latter out of the market. Sales volumes began to decrease, and by 2011, the viscose production had been completely closed. Despite this, the market transformation of SvetlogorskKhimvolokno occurred relatively smoothly and without major upheavals, since the enterprise had been progressively implementing projects to develop polypropylene production since the mid-1990s in the facilities previously occupied by viscose production.

The new production began with the acquisition of relatively small lines for the production of woven and nonwoven polypropylene materials. In 1993, the enterprise mastered the production of flat bags designed for packaging a wide array of bulk goods — from cement to sugar and salt. The products proved to be in demand, leading to multiple expansions in production, which increased more than four times in volume over 30 years. The enterprise now produces a diverse



Aleksandr Kulevsky



Flexible modernisation to adapt to changing market demands has enabled SvetlogorskKhimvolokno OJSC to achieve sustainable development

range of products: threads, twine, multipurpose fabrics, and various packaging solutions — flat and box-type bags, big-bag containers, and wagon liners.

In parallel, the company developed its nonwoven production capabilities. In 1994, they purchased a small line for producing spunbond, which is well-known among vegetable gardening enthusiasts, with a capacity of 3,000 tonnes per year.

“We were the first in the CIS to start manufacturing these products,” stressed Ruslan Nemeryuk, Deputy General Director for Production at

SvetlogorskKhimvolokno. “At that time, there were queues for our material. Having identified the market, we have been continuously developing this direction and have mastered the production of next-generation materials for various applications. Today, SvetlogorskKhimvolokno produces 23,000 tonnes of such products per year. They are used in medicine, the production of hygienic goods, the light and furniture industries, agriculture, construction, and other fields. The next stage was the production of duplicated nonwovens based on SpunBel [the manufacturer’s trademark for nonwoven spunbond fabric] and breathable polymer film — superdiffusion membrane and hygienic materials that are used, for example, in diapers.”

At the end of 2020, at the instruction of the Government, the enterprise mastered the production of meltblown nonwoven fabric, with an output of 400 tonnes per year.

“Our material is capable

of filtering out 95-99 percent of microorganisms,” Ruslan Nemeryuk assured. “Not only does it filter them out, but also retains them. Previously, such materials were imported, but life has demonstrated that in strategic matters — particularly when it comes to the lives and health of citizens — reliance on foreign supplies is inadequate. In this regard, SvetlogorskKhimvolokno is able to fully meet the needs of the domestic market for materials used in the production of personal protective equipment, medical respirators, and other products.”

In 2022, the company implemented an investment project for the production of medical gloves, following the instruction of the Head of State and the Government’s decision. A full cycle import-substituting production of nitrile and latex gloves made of synthetic and natural latex, with an annual output capacity of 170 million items per year, has been established.

Smart threads

Another serious production area of SvetlogorskKhimvolokno is the manufacture of polyester textile threads for various types of fabrics and knitted cloth. The polyester thread factory was put into operation in 1985. “German technologies and bold technological solutions were implemented,” shared Ruslan Nemeryuk.

At that time it was the most modern production facility in Europe. In the following years, the enterprise had to face fierce competition from Turkish and Asian manufacturers. Yet, thanks to ongoing modernisation and technological re-equipment, the company managed to maintain its market niche. As Ruslan Nemeryuk pointed out, the workshops are now equipped with advanced European equipment. In recent years, emphasis has been placed on the development of polyester threads with special properties — the so-called smart threads — having the effect of UV radiation reflection, with antistatic and antibacterial properties, absorption or reflection of infrared radiation, the effect of moisture management, and more.

Another promising area includes the production of nonwovens made of carbon threads. Carbon materials possess a lot of interesting characteristics, such as high strength, thermal stability — melting at temperatures above 2,500 degrees Celsius — the ability to absorb radio emissions, and a number of others. This makes the material strategic, as it is also used in various security systems, spacecraft and other specialised products. In short, this direction holds significant promise.

Co-operation vector

Undoubtedly, many product positions of SvetlogorskKhimvolokno are not unique, and there are plenty of analogues available in the global market. The competitive edge of the Svetlogorsk-based enterprise lies in its focus on the needs of the domestic market. Practice has shown that goods in demand within Belarus are also competitive in export markets.

The second point is deep co-operation. The Svetlogorsk-based enterprise receives key raw materials from its partners — MogilevKhimvolokno, Polymir Plant of Naftan OJSC, and Mozyr Oil Refinery. The third aspect, which is arguably the most important one, is the commitment to consistent quality. Ruslan Nemeryuk admitted that several manufacturers from Southeast Asia offer similar products at significantly lower prices. Although some consumers of SvetlogorskKhimvolokno’s products occasionally switch to alternative suppliers, many of them ultimately return to collaborate with SvetlogorskKhimvolokno.

Distance is not a hindrance

Given the constructive political relations between Belarus and the far arc countries, there are no closed topics for co-operation

“The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“Belarus is doing the right thing by expanding co-operation with foreign countries and building long-term partnerships. At the same time, the government must enhance the efficiency in implementing agreements with foreign partners.”

During the meeting on international affairs, on July 29th, 2024

By Vladislav Sychevich

Balance of interests

— **What is Belarus’ interest in the far arc countries?**

— *The intensified co-operation with the far arc countries is due to the need to strengthen our positions in the markets of friendly countries. It is the continuation of purposeful work to establish strong ties between Belarus and the countries of this region, as well as the search for strategic partners.*

The Asian region is an absolute priority for Belarus — both as a deep, promising and rapidly expanding market for Belarusian goods and services, and as a potential source of investment in our economy. Traditionally, the key direction of Belarus’ foreign policy and foreign economic activity in Asia is deepening comprehensive strategic partnership with China. For several years now, China has been maintaining the second place among over a hundred countries importing Belarusian goods, with a share of about 7 percent and good prerequisites for its further growth. There are a lot of points of contact with Asian countries. It is worth noting the sevenfold increase in exports of Belarusian light industry products this year to Uzbekistan — a country that is famous for its sewing products and that used to be perceived solely as a competitor in this area. The success has been ensured due to the use of more progressive forms of economic interaction — industrial co-operation and outsourcing.

Africa is a promising market in terms of diversifying supplies of Belarusian products. The economy of Belarus and African countries is complementary. African countries can import from Belarus products of mechanical engineering, chemical and petrochemical industries, basic foodstuffs, and export to Belarus products of tropical crop production and strategic raw materials.



One of the main areas of our interest on the African continent is mining.

Belarus has been forging relationships with Latin American countries since the mid-2000s, when the so-called ‘leftward shift’ took place in Latin America, characterised by the ascent to power — in a number of countries in the region — of progressive governments that criticised neoliberalism with its free market policies, privatisations and deregulation. It was at that period that Belarus established stable friendly relations with Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador.



Yulia Abukhovich

— **By the way, there have been announced and launched major economic projects — in fact, complexes of socio-economic transformations of developing countries in the region. How can Belarus get involved in this process?**

— *Today we are rediscovering the countries of Latin America. We put economic co-operation on the basis of good political interaction. As we can already see, this is the right strategy. We have started to convert political friendship into an economic result.*

Belarus is interested in receiving Cuban products, in particular rum, sugar, and various tropical products. Imports of cocoa beans and tropical fruits from Nicaragua are interesting, too. Belarus’ investments in Nicaragua are also possible. This country is ready to provide its land so that Belarusian companies could grow agricultural products and then export them. They have

a great interest in growing potatoes; there is not much of it there, but the land is suitable.

As for collaboration with Venezuela, today we need to talk about rebooting our relations, first of all, from the economic point of view. There is production and trained specialists. The capacity of the established production facilities in Venezuela is up to 10,000 tractors and up to 5,000 MAZ trucks per year. These volumes enable to cover not only the capacity of the Venezuelan market, but also to cater for the needs of the countries with which Venezuela has traditionally had good trade relations. At least half of the output can be exported and provide for joint ventures. Along with that, Belarusian manufacturers MTZ [Minsk Tractor Works’ trademark] and MAZ [Minsk Automobile Plant’s brand] have their own interest in Venezuela. In particular, this refers to metal — aluminium, hot briquetted iron (HBI), cast iron.

Demand begets supply

— **It is clear that the far arc countries are mainly interesting to us as promising sales markets. What can Belarus offer?**

— *To say it openly, Belarus is a more developed country than most countries in Africa and Latin America. We can offer the far arc countries goods that they will not be able to produce for decades — from ready-made modern equipment to production technologies.*

Given the constructive political relations between Belarus and these countries, we will have practically no closed avenues of co-operation. The more developed these

countries become, the more interesting Belarus will be to them.

Belarus boasts competence and experience in various aspects of the food problem, as many countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America have already seen for themselves. The solution to this problem is still topical for many peoples of the world.

African countries need to improve food production technologies since mere food imports will not solve their problem; they need to create their own capacities. In parallel, they can invest in projects that will generate cash proceeds from the sale of local goods on the global market.

Over the past two decades, a solid economic groundwork has been formed with Latin American countries, which makes it possible to say that Belarus and Venezuela have set about to restart joint projects in industry and other areas.

The work in Nicaragua is just beginning after a long break, since Soviet times; for now, it has a purely commercial format, with contracts for the supply of ready machinery signed. Agreements have been reached with Cuba on the supply of products it needs, as well as new co-operation agreements in the pharmaceutical field, which is traditionally interesting for our countries. These are big open markets for Belarus.

Fine tuning mechanism

— **These countries are certainly of great interest to us. What are the specifics of the work in this area, and what should be taken into account?**

— *Of course, there are a number of features that need to be taken into account.*

Despite the difficulties, we find opportunities to sign contracts for the supply of Belarusian products to the countries of the region. The solution was found by concluding supply contracts both with direct payment and through the use of commodity exchange schemes. In the future, it will be possible to switch to clearing.

The potential of the far arc countries is great, yet it will be implemented slowly without the help and momentum on our part. In prospect, the better developed relations with these countries Belarus has, the fewer risks there will be.



Daria Titova

Ends and means

Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the signing of an agreement to establish a unified energy market for the Union State, drafted last year. The launch of the unified energy market, as previously reported, may occur on January 1st, 2025. This is a crucial step that allows addressing many issues between economic entities of both countries, and opens avenues for further progress along the integration path.

The energy sector today is not merely a part of the economy; it embodies substantial political significance. The West instantly declares any country attempting to assert independence in this area as an adversary. Washington exerts pressure on Belarus partly for this reason.

Suffice it to recall how a few years ago, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo rushed to our country when a hypothetical contract for the supply of US oil to Belarus emerged. No one had expected such eagerness from the hegemon: all of a sudden, our country seemed to meet all the standards set by the White House.

It was extremely important for the United States to hack an energy window through to Europe and make it dependent on American raw materials. To this end, the USA promptly began to create a special energy hub in Poland for its supplies to replace the German ones, based on eastern raw materials.

Blocking the *Nord Streams* through sabotage, and the pipelines traversing Ukraine by provoking a direct conflict with Russia fits perfectly into the US logic. As a result, Germany has ceased to be the main player in the energy game, while Poland is now aiming to become a major euro hub for resources supplied from the USA. The plans to construct a Polish nuclear power plant using American technology no longer seem spontaneous in this context. This is exactly the case where the end justifies the means.

Moved away from uranium

The focus in the Ukrainian conflict is increasingly shifting towards fuel and energy complexes, with both sides involved. Washington and Brussels, under the guise of assisting Ukraine, are supplying it with long-range weapons not to let it achieve military superiority, but to inflict damage on energy facilities in Russia. Indeed, strikes are being targeted at power stations and oil refineries.

Statements regarding the potential supply of F-16 fighter jets to Kiev should be viewed in the same context. The number of Ukrainian pilots who have undergone retraining, and the quantity of aircraft transferred to the Armed Forces of Ukraine are clearly insufficient to ensure a decisive advantage in the ongoing war; yet it could be enough to inflict serious damage on Russian energy infrastructure. About 60 American-made fighter jets are planned to be supplied to Ukraine, with 30 pilots starting out, while Russia has 30 oil refineries, 11 nuclear power plants, and 15 hydroelectric power

If we take a closer look, we will see that many current conflicts are connected to the issue of energy resources. It is precisely due to these resources that entire nations are being destroyed and regions are being shaken. What can be done to counter this?

Let's explore what constitutes the big politics chain

Watts as leverage

FACT
According to the US National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), electricity for Lithuania is classified as a deficit category, even with the prospect of transitioning to green sources.

DIRECTIVE INSTEAD OF BENEFIT

After joining the package of sanctions against Belarus and Russia, electricity prices in Poland and the Baltic States have skyrocketed by three to four times compared to ours. For Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn, synchronously disconnecting from the BRELL energy ring is a political decision that is far removed from economic feasibility. In order to remain aligned with the energy euro-strategy, they are essentially sacrificing their own population and are now entirely dependent on market whims, procuring resources not from the most advantageous sources, but from those permitted by Washington and as directed by Brussels.

especially considering the United States' plan to rapidly develop its own uranium enrichment capabilities and introduce a ban on uranium imports from Russia. It might be a gamble, but a significant one.

Price ceiling delusion

It is worth recalling the Belarusian nuclear epic. How much ado there was on the part of the West about our nuclear power plant! The Belarusian NPP posed no threat to Lithuania whatsoever, regardless of the pseudo-activists' moans and groans. If you trace the logic behind the liquidation of the Ignalina NPP and the fuss about disconnecting European consumers from the single BRELL [Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania] energy ring, it becomes clear that the Belarusian NPP did not fit into the Brussels and US concept of the energy needle, which the Baltic countries are hooked on.

It is obvious that electricity is becoming a luxury for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Whatever their governments may be planning with the use of wind and sun, their citizens have to save on electricity, which is especially expensive for pensioners. Energy availability in the Baltic States is one of the lowest in Europe, which makes them outsiders in the Euroregion.

The most powerful European enterprises are swept away to the United States amidst crazy diversification coupled with bankruptcy cases. In Germany alone, it is a case of thousands of companies. The reason for this failure lies in the rejection of Russian energy resources, the cost of which provided a helpful base for German economic well-being. Taking into account Europe's current trends, it may well need a new Marshall Plan.

The price ceiling policy regarding Russian energy resources devised by Wash-

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"We are considering the construction of a second nuclear power plant. Electric energy will never hurt. There will never be a surplus of it in the country. We build houses with electric heating, and we are seriously committed to electric vehicles. These are not mere developments — we have solid production capabilities, particularly for buses and trolleybuses. Electricity is needed everywhere. Therefore, we need to look ahead."

During reports by Head of the President Administration Dmitry Krutoi and Belarus' Ambassador to Russia Aleksandr Rogozhnik, on July 2nd, 2024

ington also looks wild and delusional. The United States, unable in some cases to rob with weapons, resorts to the dollar and sanctions as a tool of coercion and subordination. Thus, it manipulates prices upward or downward, depending on whether it wishes to give a certain country an opportunity to earn money or not. In case of the price ceiling policy, the USA tried to oblige Russia to sell at a loss. That is a kind of casino — the one who invented the game owns the rules. However, it seems that the market itself is laughing at this nonsense, flying over these ceiling restrictions like over speed bumps.

Ramping up potential

Belarus confidently maintains its line of energy security. Contrary to the West's expectations of sanctions, our fuel and energy complex meets all contemporary criteria.

The Head of State has set tasks for the long-term future, considering the development of the country and the world as a whole. Ramping up our energy self-sufficiency is at the core of national priorities, potentially leading to the establishment of a second nuclear power station.

The demand for electricity worldwide is projected to experience a significant deficit. The new technologies driving humanity's development appear to be energy-intensive and resource-consuming. This means that soon, watts may be equated with currency. Elon Musk will confirm it — cryptocurrency and AI require substantial amounts of electricity. In this regard, Belarus has already done a lot to align itself with the future.

stations. This totals to 60 against 60, or a 1 to 1 ratio. There is a feeling that the pilots and fighter jets with missiles are programmed for a single use and aimed at specific targets, with attacks focused on the lifeblood of the economy — energy sector facilities.

Was the situation with the French uranium failure in Niger truly spontaneous? The government of that country has revoked French fuel producer Orano's permit to operate at one of the world's largest uranium mines.

There is hardly any need to speculate whose interests the European nuclear burner will serve,

School education in Germany leaves even Germans themselves asking questions

By Alena Krasovskaya

All hands on deck!

The German magazine *Der Spiegel* characterises the educational realities in its country in this way, “Schools demonstrate how unnecessary politicians are in the field of education: dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms, cancelled lessons, and teachers who are hardly subject to any control. Some are lazy, others are overworked — both adds to the problems that are increasing year by year in German schools.”

The problems are indeed quite serious. The Deutsche Welle news website has reported, “In 2023, Germany recorded the most dramatic shortage of teachers — 12,341 vacancies. The German Teachers’ Association claims that the situation is even worse: the country is short of up to 40,000 teachers. As the new academic year begins, some German schools are simply cutting back on teaching hours, resulting in a situation where the teaching staff meets the needs on paper, but in reality it does not.”

By the start of the new academic year, the situation in German schools has slightly improved thanks to the hiring of teachers without pedagogical qualifications.

According to the Central German Broadcasting website (www.mdr.de), 8.6 percent of all school teachers in Germany have no relevant qualifications. Despite the high demand for the profession, the number of graduates from teacher training universities in Germany continues to decline. In 2022, 28,700 individuals passed their final exams, which is a 10 percent decrease compared to a decade ago. It is far from certain that all these specialists will work in the field.

Yet, German politicians, detached from the realities of education, are convinced that by hiring teachers without relevant qualifications, they are promoting practical and life-oriented preparation for children as they transition from school. This is exactly what *Der Spiegel* has written. Could it be the Germans’ offbeat approach to career guidance? A waiter will train schoolchildren in their trade, while a cleaner will share the secrets of their profession.

Illiterate and untrained

Despite the fact that teaching in a German school is generally well-paid, it is becoming increasingly difficult, meaningless, and even dangerous each year. Indeed, what is the value of teaching a schoolchild who often has little understanding of where they are and what is happening?

The Saarland regional news portal (www.sr.de) has reported that the number of first-graders with insufficient knowledge of the German language in Saarland has increased nearly fourfold over the past eight years. In the spring of 2023, there were 2,257 first-grade students in Saarland who lacked sufficient German language skills to follow lessons. The number of such schoolchildren is growing.

MOTIVE FOR A CRIME

Recently, Germany was shocked by the murder of a 12-year-old schoolgirl near the town of Freudenberg, in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The killers turned out to be her friends, aged 12 and 13. Prosecutor Mario Mannweiler told Focus, “What may be a motive for a child to commit a deed may not necessarily be apparent to an adult. Presumably, emotions could play a role in the terrible murder of a schoolgirl, investigators said.”

Whether it was emotions or not, no one intends to punish the underage killers — they are too young. They will be supported in coping with the psychological trauma inflicted upon them by... the act of murder. Does anyone truly fail to grasp why attending a German school can be fatally dangerous?

Worshippers of everything foreign — hopefully their numbers have significantly dwindled in Belarus lately — sometimes say breathlessly that education abroad has achieved unattainable heights. Let us dispel this misconception. What do foreign media write in the lead-up to the new academic year?

Meanwhile, the state government nonchalantly commented that compulsory school education was not linked to achieving minimum language or other standards. That sounds perplexing. After all, why do young Germans go to school then? They used to have a programme called *German Language Before Starting School*, which somehow taught preschoolers the language, but it has been scrapped now due to lack of budget.

Murder is not improbable

Moreover, German schools can be quite a hazardous place. Here is what an online portal has written, “Almost the first thing that parents and students are told when moving from elementary school to the next educational institution is where to turn in case of mobbing or other conflicts.” Cyberbullying is not the worst thing that can happen to a schoolchild or even a teacher in a German school.

A fight broke out in a German language class between two students. One of the participants in the altercation pulled out a knife, previously used by the students while doing a task at an art class. “He lunged at the student and started shouting that he was going to kill him,” a teacher recounted to journalists. The man stepped between the teenagers, but the attacker was in such a state that he could not be stopped. The teacher was injured.

This may not be an everyday occurrence in a German school, yet the level of violence towards teachers and students is genuinely on the rise. Psychologist Albert Zimmermann, in an interview with the Focus news magazine, urged teachers ‘to be more attentive and to take seriously in elementary school situations when deviations appear in the behaviour of students’.

Weird trainings

What is certainly going well in German schools is the education of children regarding gender and sexual diversity. As reported by the Bild newspaper in 2024, “LGBT co-ordinators will be introduced in German schools. They will advise teachers in this area and organise ‘special conferences and in-school training sessions’. Each educator will receive an additional 10 hours a week for this.” This will be at the expense of other, less important subjects, such as the German language, mathematics, and biology.

“Age-appropriate information and awareness-raising can reduce prejudices and biases, which may help to strengthen the mental health of children and young people of non-traditional orientations,” Bild has quoted the statements of German politicians and public figures who are keen on the idea of introducing children to gender perversions as early as possible.

Interestingly, similar issues, albeit with a local flavour, are also present in school education across other European countries. But where are the innovative programmes and high-tech equipment that fans of foreign education speak of so confidently? Apparently, they reside in the same place as everything else — in the imagination of those for whom the term ‘foreign’ still remains synonymous with ‘better’.

Equation without a solution



WORD FOR WORD

As reported by the German newspaper *Bild*, nationwide tests have demonstrated that every second German third-grader has still not mastered reading, arithmetic, and writing. Forty-six percent of students fall short of the minimum standards in mathematics, while 43 percent do not meet the required standards in reading. **In 2023, one in three German schoolchildren could not count, one in four could not read, and nearly one in five was unable to apply basic knowledge from the natural sciences to everyday life.**

Is the confrontation between politicians and tech giants gathering pace?

Default settings

Google, Apple, Microsoft, and other tech corporations serve as strongholds for the United States. Firstly, they are a powerful tool for promoting American interests in the geoinformational landscape. Secondly, they largely underpin financial stability. However, these multinational corporations have become not just large, but excessively influential. They are so powerful that they can essentially fulfil the role of a global — shadow — government. Yet, many still rise up against this.



PRECEDENT HAS BEEN SET

According to law enforcement practice, following the verdict against Google, judicial decisions condemning large tech corporations for dominance may now come in bunches. Meanwhile, a significant number of lawsuits are already in courts. Are Washington and the traditional American establishment tightening their grip on the technology sector?



By Vladimir Volchkov

When the fuss dies down

The outrage against American technological corporations has been brewing for a long time, steadily and consistently, with doubts about the activities of these companies arising largely outside the United States. To speak impartially, the world blinked at the excessive empowerment of communication giants and the rapid penetration of their products into the consumer audience. Many only realised what was happening after Google had taken a dominant position in global markets.

Lawsuits against Google, Apple, and their industry allies have already become routine in the European Union. The problem is that American corporations are not particularly afraid of legal sanctions as they keenly understand that Europe would suffer significantly if their products were pushed out of its market. Therefore, courts in the EU issue rulings and impose fines that are passionately reported by tabloid publications. However, when the fuss dies down, negotiations commence, agreements are made regarding instalments, delays, and other concessions in the enforcement of court decisions. Thus, any punishment de facto boils down to mere formalism.

In Washington, those vain attempts are met with sheer amusement. Ultimately, up to a certain time, the USA has strengthened its own power through the dominance of its electronic business.

At the same time, the personal data of billions of people collected by various applications have invariably ended up in the hands of Americans, while tech giants have sworn by all that is holy that they do not co-operate with intelligence services.

Keeping the reason in mind

The US legal system is rather insidious. On the one hand, it assumes the presumption of innocence, oral statements of the parties in court, and other complex procedures. On the other hand, the US legislation is so convoluted and multifaceted that, if desired, a reason for a judicial decision can always be found.

Everyone understands well that technological giants have all the means to influence public opinion, social sentiments, and, consequently, politics and the econ-

omy. However, proving any of their actions is quite difficult and unlikely to be possible. Therefore, it seems that antimonopoly legislation has been used to curb the dissenters, at least for preventive purposes.

It is common practice in the USA that the reason behind legal action differs significantly from the actual impetus. Thus, the notorious gangster, Al Capone, was incarcerated not for his criminal activities but for federal income tax evasion. He lived beyond his means, which ultimately led to his downfall at the hands of the American authorities. This was because they could not, or perhaps did not want to, charge him for his primary criminal enterprise.

A similar situation appears to be unfolding today with tech giants, particularly Google. A federal court in the District of Columbia has recently fulfilled the demand by the US Justice Department, ruling that the company violated antimonopoly legislation by entering into agreements with Apple and other smartphone manufacturers that required Google to be pre-installed as the default search engine on smartphones. Along with that, the court has acknowledged that Google's search engine is convenient and, for this reason, has become objectively popular among users.

Business on the hook

Alphabet, the company that now owns Google, will now have to somehow address the issue, including through not improbable negotiations with the authorities. The latter have virtually put the corporation in a subordinate position, or at least created a platform for business trade or blackmail

— each can interpret this in their own way.

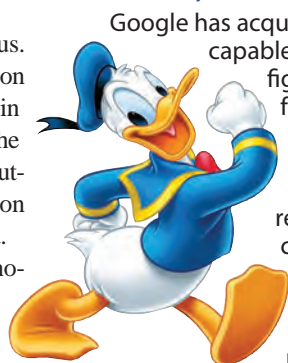
It is no coincidence that the court case, rooted in purely commercial interests, has received a political assessment. “This victory against Google is a historic win. No company — no matter how large or influential — is above the law,” US Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement.

Not long ago, these corporations were regarded as unprecedentedly independent entities that could largely disregard the state. Has the White House taken revenge? The outcome of this confrontation remains unclear at the backdrop of an emerging risk for users of applications such as Google.

The thing is that American legislation compensates for its severity and definitiveness with the possibility of entering into deals with the government. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that this could be the eventual outcome. Official authorities may leave the commercial aspects of these tech giants unaffected, allowing them to continue as monopolists. In exchange for this possibility, they would have to share personal data, which they collect worldwide, with the government, or provide other services to Washington — naturally, in an informal manner.

As for privacy while using applications, social networks, and other American-origin platforms, subscribers have a risk of completely losing it. The preservation of confidentiality raised doubts before, but now it almost certainly will cease to exist. Overall, it is a reason to seriously consider one's personal information strategy and online behaviour.

DONALD, BUT NOT THE ONE



Google has acquired far too many unchecked powers — so immense that it is capable of affecting American politics. Elon Musk, another prominent figure in the information space, has recently queered the pitch for his counterparts at Google. On his account, he posted a screenshot claiming that Google had configured its search engine against the Republican presidential candidate. When searching for ‘President Donald’, the results displayed links relating to another well-known Donald — Duck — a funny cartoon character in numerous iconic Disney animated films. It may seem like no big deal; yet such details contribute to the public perception of politicians. Then again, technology giants nowadays possess virtually limitless capabilities to manipulate public consciousness.

TO THE POINT

GEOPOLITICAL TOOL

We are opposed by tech giants from unfriendly states, as remarked by Vladimir Pertsov, Deputy Head of the Belarus President Administration, during a meeting with ideological activists of Minsk Region

“We had constructive meetings in Gomel and Brest. A Media Community Forum was held in Mogilev. The participants heard the messages of the Head of State concerning the organisation of information and ideological work, public awareness campaign, and counter-propaganda. Should any negative developments go under our radar, all resulting vacuums will be instantly filled by people who can no longer be called representatives of alternative journalism. These definitely include at least biased media, and at most the emergence of information and psychological special operations centres that pursue certain goals in the interests of states and special services that finance them,” Vladimir Pertsov stressed. According to Pertsov, we are confronted by an effective high-tech machine, ‘technology giants run by corporations and people that pursue global goals, including geopolitical and economic, in relation to the collective East as a whole, not only our country;’ “They use digital capabilities as a tool to communicate their geopolitical strategic goals. Therefore, it is impossible to be naive about this.” By the way, last year alone, Belarus’ Ministry of Information restricted access to 3,388 destructive resources (according to BELTA).

The wealth of remarkable discoveries hidden beneath Belarusian soil is inexhaustible. Unique findings emerge from time to time, prompting us to rethink our understanding of history. Excavations are currently underway at the ancient city ramparts and the settlement along the Menka River, where the historical city of Minsk once stood. Each day brings new artefacts which prove that Minsk's history is far older than we previously believed. Journalists from SB. *Nedelya* [Week] have visited the excavation site to delve into the archaeological mysteries, immerse themselves in the spirit of antiquity, and understand how life unfolded in these regions a thousand years ago.



Sensational discoveries in the history of architecture

Let's get an insight into the groundbreaking revelations in architecture — what mysteries are unveiled at the millennia-old settlement at the Menka River

By Oksana Nevmerzhtskaya

Two cities by two rivers

The first mention of Minsk, as we all know, dates back to the year 1067. Along with that, even the sparse lines in *The Tale of Bygone Years* prompt reflection. "In the year 6575 (1067), three Yaroslavich brothers — Izyaslav, Svyatoslav, and Vsevolod — gathered troops and marched against Vseslav in severe frost. They approached Minsk, and the men of Minsk locked themselves in the city..." the chronicle states. It becomes clear that by 1067, Minsk was already a sufficiently large and fortified city. However, the defensive structures did not aid the inhabitants a lot, "These brothers captured Minsk, slaughtered all the men, took the women and children captive, and went to the Nemiga, while Vseslav marched against them. The opponents met at the Nemiga on the third day of March; and there was heavy snow..." This raises the question: where did the invaders take the captured townsfolk, considering that Minsk was already located on the Nemiga? This is why researchers have long looked towards the Menka River, which flows about 17 kilometres from the medieval Minsk settlement. There have been vast earth ramparts along its banks since ancient times — clearly manmade and undoubtedly concealing intriguing historical artefacts.

The mysteries of the ancient settlement give no peace to Andrei Voitekhovich, Head of Archaeology Department for the Middle Ages and Modern Times at the Institute of History of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences.

In 2022, large-scale excavations of the settlement's rampart section began, yielding numerous sensational finds. The most significant discovery was a pot base featuring an image of a trident with a cross-shaped top — the personal family coat of arms of Prince Izyaslav, the son of proud noblewoman Rogneda of Polotsk and Prince Vladimir, 'the son of a slave woman'. This indicates that the ancient city belonged to the Principality of Polotsk and was large enough to host a prince.

Wild boar and Zmey Gorynych

They say that ships once sailed along the Menka River and there was a port in the city. Nowadays, after a thousand years of changes in the terrain, this is hard to believe — the stream, barely a metre wide, hardly resembles a navigable waterway. However, the earth ramparts overgrown with grass and trees look impressive, and not without reason — they conceal formidable defensive fortifications. These are wooden structures several metres wide and about nine metres high. "They are classic ancient Russian fortifications — gorodnya [log framework filled with earth or stones]," noted Andrei Voitekhovich. "There are no other defensive constructions in Eastern Europe preserved like that!"

The klet' [simple wooden structures] are built from logs, mostly oak, with thick branches intentionally left in place to serve as hooks for better binding. Thanks to the clay soil, the logs have been preserved quite well. However, once they appear on the surface and are exposed to oxygen and sunlight, they become vulnerable. Their conservation is managed by a company with extensive experience in bog oak extraction and preservation.

The process is accompanied by intriguing discoveries. For instance, a branch was found carved in the shape of a zoomorphic figure looking like a dragon's head (more specifically, Zmey Gorynych's head) or a ram with twisted horns, or a bird with a long beak.

Regardless of what our ancestors intended to depict, the find is truly sensational, as no other ancient wooden zoomorphic figures preserved like that have been found in our region. The researchers are also interested in a wild boar's jaw, which appears to have been literally hammered into the trunk, presumably as a talisman. The boar is an animal dedicated to the god of thunder and military power — Perun — symbolising warrior spirit and invincibility, expected to instil apprehension in foes.

The cleaned logs will be dried and then treated under vacuum with a special

preservative solution. After this, it will be possible to restore the ancient klet' structures and display them in a museum or an open-air ethnographic complex. Notably, radiocarbon analysis has shown that the defensive fortifications were built in the 990s. This suggests that by that time, Minsk had become a fully-fledged city, while the settlement itself had appeared much earlier.

City was bustling with life

The main excavation works took place in the settlements — areas beyond the city ramparts where craftsmen and peasants lived. Around 80 students from Vitebsk, Polotsk, Mogilev, Gomel, and Brest are working hard there. The work is painstaking and not easy under the scorching sun. However, the discoveries are encouraging — Vitebsk students Daniil Tolstov and Rodion Zapolskikh have just uncovered an impressive fragment of a ceramic jug. "The finds indicate that ancient Minsk was a vibrant place; it was a major trade and cultural centre, where paganism co-existed with Christianity," emphasised Andrei Voitekhovich.

The military theme is represented quite modestly, with a few arrowheads, a combat knife, and a ring from a chain mail. This indicates that our ancestors did not change their ways — for many centuries, we have remained an exclusively peaceful people. Even the urban fortifications served only a defensive purpose.

What happened to the city? The researchers believe that its decline was due to several factors. By the end of the 11th century, the territory of Mena District became a principality. Prince Gleb Vseslavovich established a new capital at the confluence of two rivers — the Svisloch and the Nemiga. It is clear that the nobility, traders, and craftsmen gradually flocked to this new centre, which retained its previous name. Apparently, the two cities existed side by side for some time, but one thrived and the other fell into decline.

New chapter in history

According to Andrei Voitekhovich, the answer to the question of where our capital actually originated is crucial for understanding the country's history, "We can now assert that by the 11th century, it was already a major city with a vibrant life and formidable fortifications. For the first time in the history of archaeology in Eastern Europe, such a combination of wooden structures has been identified in such remarkable condition. This marks a new chapter in the history of Slavic defensive architecture that everyone will study."

This season, archaeologists plan to conduct two excavations within the ancient settlement, specifically within the area surrounded by the ramparts, as well as to cut through the city rampart leading into the settlement. However, excavations are far from the most complex aspect of the work. The most important work will begin later as the findings need to be preserved, studied, interpreted, and the mosaic needs to be pieced together to form a coherent picture.

What will be created at the Menka? "This unique archaeological site is a national treasure," underscored Vadim Lakiza, Director of the Institute of History of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences. "There is an idea to create a historical and cultural reserve at this location. It will include a pavilion with a controlled temperature setting where visitors will be able to see the restored wooden structures in their original form. There will be space for several residential buildings constructed using the techniques of that time, allowing tourists to get an insight into the daily life of that period. Naturally, a museum is necessary, where all the findings will be exhibited. Those interested will have the opportunity to participate in the excavations — there will be enough work here for decades to come. This complex will be unique; there is nothing like it in Eastern Europe."

Photos by the Institute of History of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences, Sergei Dupanov, Ivan Yarivanovich, and Yelizaveta Kobetskaya

Golden marathon

Ihar Boki is rewriting the history of Paralympic sports

For Ihar Boki, sport has no prohibitions or buoys, behind which it is not recommended to swim. An ordinary guy from Bobruisk has become a true legend of Paralympic sports. At the Paralympic Games taking place in Paris these days, Ihar climbed to the highest step of the podium for three days in a row. Having won the 100-metre butterfly and backstroke, the 30-year-old athlete knew no equal in the 400-metre freestyle on Saturday and thus secured 19 Olympic gold medals in his collection. That is amazing! However, there is more to come. Boki has stormed another podium, reaching the final of the 50-metre freestyle with the best time.

Ihar became a Paralympian due to serious vision problems. “For as long as I can remember, I have always been prescribed glasses because of high degree myopia. When I reached adolescence, visual acuity devices showed from -17 to -19. Without correction, the picture is extremely blurred, I can only see some outlines of objects and a bit of colour,” the athlete recounted. He started swimming as a 6-year-old boy and after some time, the first results appeared. However, in the same period, the doctors issued their harsh and inexorable verdict: high-performance sports are contraindicated! The doctors associated the drastic deterioration of vision with the rapid development of the body — in the sixth grade, the guy grew to 190

cm, and has grown only a couple of centimetres since then. All his dreams of great sporting glory almost collapsed overnight.

In Paralympic sports, Ihar Boki works with coach Gennady Vishnyakov. They first met in the swimming pool in 2008. The mentor recalled that moment, “Even though he was still weak back then, as a professional coach, I saw him as a swimmer with a capital letter. When it turned out that Ihar had vision problems, we decided to practice the Paralympic programme. The first two years of training were very gentle, and after the athlete got stronger, we began to work more efficiently and professionally. The most remarkable thing about Ihar is his character. In a difficult moment, he knows how to

concentrate and achieve maximum mobilisation — the stronger the opponents, the higher it is. He is not afraid of anyone and is always ready to fight to the last metre of the distance.”

In Paris, Ihar Boki has proved this once again.



President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko has congratulated Belarusian swimmer Ihar Boki on the gold medal earned during the 2024 Summer Paralympics, sb.by reports with reference to the Belarusian leader's press service

“Thanks to your brilliant victories and records, you are already on a par with the most famous Paralympians on the planet, proving again and again that there are no obstacles on the way to Olympus for an outstanding sports talent. We are proud of you, we cheer for you and look forward to new victories,” the congratulatory message reads. Aleksandr Lukashenko wished the athlete strong health, peace, good spirits and inexhaustible energy.

Motorsport driver as a vocation

Sergei Vyazovich has spoken about MAZ-SPORTauto, the Dakar Rally which holds no surprises, and his spouse — a navigator, not only in rally racing

To find Sergei Vyazovich in Minsk in summer is a rare piece of luck. The season for the Belarusian MAZ-SPORTauto team is not finished yet: the crews have recently returned from the prestigious Silk Way rally raid, where the MAZ headed by Vyazovich took third place, and in September they will set off for Russia to take part in the final stage of the Russian Rally Raid Championship. The team leader and, concurrently, its most decorated driver — a multiple Dakar podium finisher, a winner and medallist of the Silk Way and other major starts — easily agreed to a big interview and offered to meet at the Minsk Automobile Plant checkpoint.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

One big team

— What does your typical working day look like when you are not at the competition?

— It is just like everyone else's. At 8am sharp, I have to start my work. The members of our sports team do not belong to the main production — we are engaged in the piece production of sports cars. We come up with ideas, design, and send engineering documentation to departments. We use the extensive capacities of the Minsk Automobile Plant [MAZ trademark] to manufacture the necessary parts.

— The MAZ-SPORTauto crews have recently returned from the Silk Way rally. This time, you have secured the third place. After the victory last year, did you set up for a higher result?

— Looking at the third place in the final standings, I can say that our ambitions were obviously higher. However, when I recall the struggle on the track and how competitive our automobile was, the race was almost perfect for our crew. Our team had counted that Sergei Vyazovich's crew would end up on the podium, and it worked — we did not allow KAMAZ-Master [Russian motorsport team] to occupy the entire podium.

Mutual assistance, mutual support, team spirit and understanding of the goals — we had all of this. So I will give a rather positive assessment of the race.

— Due to the sanctions, the focus of attention has shifted — it is the Silk Way that is the main start of the season now, while before it was Dakar. Do you follow this competition now?

— I watched it in the first years. We had a lot of attempts to get back into this rally raid, and we are taking certain steps now. The race organisers and representatives of various structures and teams would like to see both MAZ-SPORTauto and KAMAZ-Master return to the international arena. They are closely watching our fierce competition on the Silk Way, at the Russian Championship,



and they envy us in this regard. I do not follow the Dakar anymore. It is not interesting to watch when the class of drivers varies dramatically and there is no intrigue. Even now, in summer, I can tell you what the top three of the future Dakar will be.

— The unfair suspension from the Dakar, which happened in 2022, was painful for you. Have your emotions subsided over time?

— Yes. Besides, the attitude towards everything has changed.

Participating on the terms that are put forward to us is absolutely out of the question. Restrictions on the truck name, participation without a national flag and anthem, equipment and outfit without national symbols — this is unacceptable to me. Everyone understands which teams are the strongest in the world. If anyone doubts, come to the Silk Way, to the stages of the Russian Championship and prove the opposite.

— The word ‘team’ has been used many times in our conversation. Does it refer solely to MAZ-SPORTauto or have a broader concept for you?

— First of all, it is our sports team. A huge number of people are involved in its preparation and participation in competitions. All enterprises of the holding are involved in fitting our trucks — without the support of MAZ and other enterprises, nothing would have been possible. This year, the Ministry of Industry has helped us a lot, and the enterprises belonging to the machine-building complex took over part of the team's operating costs. Of course, there is a contribution on the part of the country and the Head of State — the support he provides to us is invaluable.

The praise from the President after last year's victory on the Silk Way rally raid became a great motivation to continue in the same spirit and, no matter what, show that Belarus' machine-building complex is competitive, and Belarusian athletes are not inferior to the most famous ones in this sport. Therefore, each of our victories is our common victory.

Winding paths

— In your childhood and youth, you were seriously engaged in cycling. What other sports are you interested in?

— In addition to cycling, I follow the MotoGP World Championship in road and circuit racing, and also the World Rally Championship.

— Hardly at a young age did you dream of becoming a sports truck driver. Do you remember who you wanted to be?

— I remember exactly that I told my dad: I want to be a driver. He replied that it was a good profession but not the one to be made a goal. My wish did not impress him. The desire to become a sports team driver was also there. First, I bought a Subaru GC8 and drove the first race with a zero crew in 2010, and in 2011, thanks to my friends and their support, I won the Belarusian Rally Championship. The following year, I joined the MAZ-SPORTauto team.

Navigator in rally and in life

— You and your wife have already celebrated the 20th wedding anniversary. It turns out that your formation as a sports truck driver took place before her eyes...

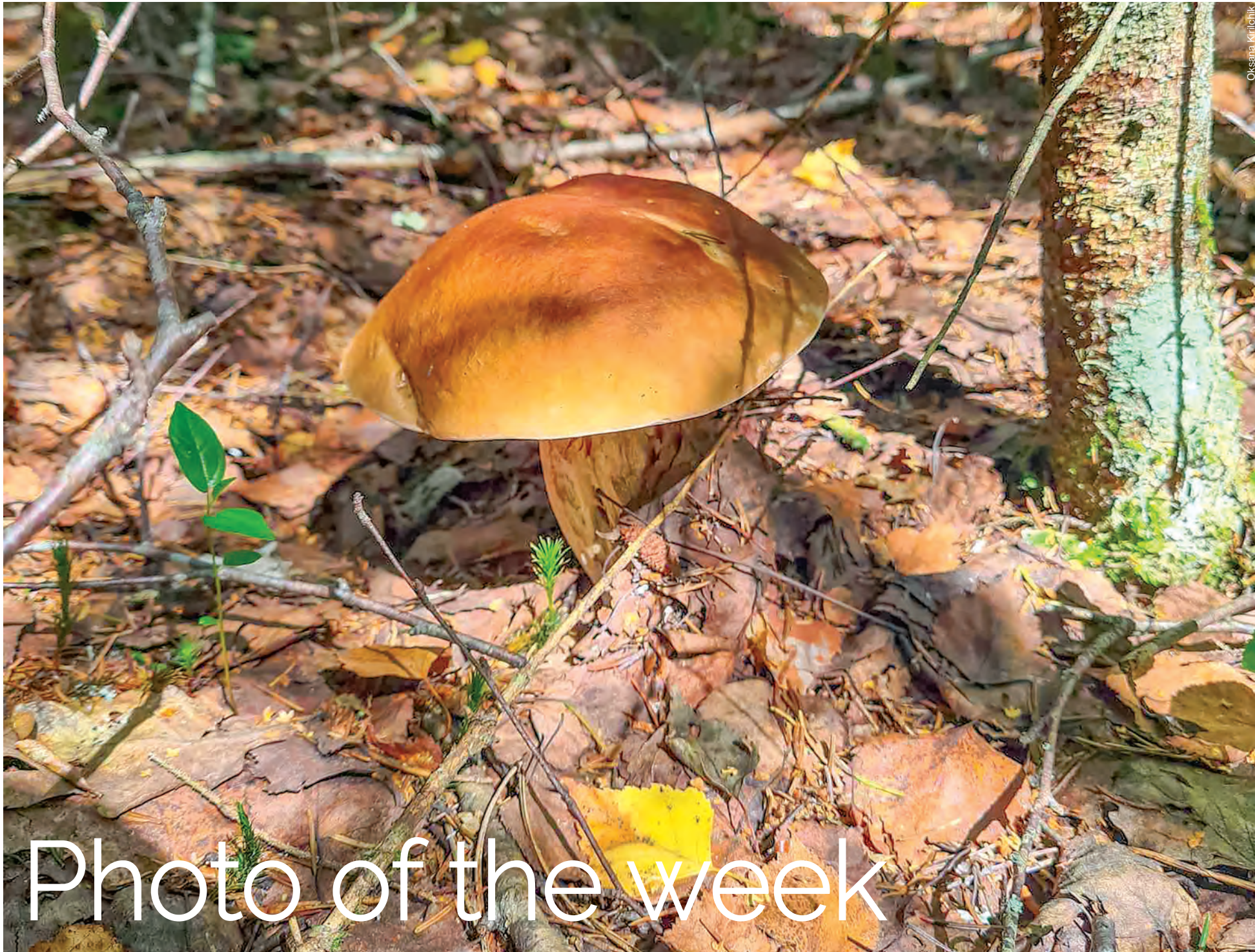
— And with her huge support. My wife Masha is the very person who always said ‘Yes’ at the right moment, and supported me.

On new ideas

The team has ideas about improvements to be made in MAZ-SPORTauto trucks after each trip. “The most important period in preparation is the off-season. The way the team has held it affects the readiness for competitions — when they start, there will be no time to make changes to the cars since the race schedule is tight in the calendar, with a considerable distance to the sites,” clarified Sergei Vyazovich.

Plans for the end of the season

The team has ambitious plans for the last race this season. “There is a strong desire to win the final stage of the Russian Championship. This year, we took the second and third places, but we could not climb to the highest step of the podium. We want to fix it,” shared Sergei Vyazovich.



Oksana Kitchik

Photo of the week

Autumn is a mushroom season

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



September 5th is the International Day of Charity, dedicated to providing gratuitous assistance to those in need. Charity helps

to overcome the consequences of severe crises and complements state efforts in areas such as healthcare, education, housing construction and protection of the population.

September 7th

is World Beard Day. The story of beards, whether one chooses to have it or not, is the story of preferences, tastes, fashion trends, religious beliefs, ideas of beauty and masculinity — that is, the story of human life. Nowadays, the choice to grow a beard is often influenced by fashion trends in men's grooming.



On September 7th, 1812, the Battle of Borodino took place — a major battle fought during the Patriotic War of 1812. On June 24th,

1812, Napoleon's army invaded the Russian Empire without declaring war. By September, Napoleon's army had already suffered significant losses. By the end of December, the remnants of Napoleon's army had been expelled from Russia.



On September 8th, 1973, the Vilia River was dammed to create the largest artificial reservoir in Belarus, known as

the Vileika reservoir, which is called a 'man-made monument of nature'. The main goal of the project was to provide water to Minsk, which was facing insufficient water supplies from the Svisloch River. Therefore, together with the reservoir, a water channel was constructed to connect the Vilia and Svisloch rivers. The Vileika reservoir today is also a picturesque place for Belarusians to relax.

September 8th

marks Tanker Day in the Republic of Belarus. It was established in July 1946 to commemorate the outstanding achievements of armoured and mechanised troops in the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War. The tank remains the primary combat unit of the ground forces. It has great firepower, resistance and is capable of carrying out a wide range of tasks.



On September 8th, 1504, Michelangelo's masterpiece — a sculpture of David — was unveiled in Florence. This

iconic marble sculpture of the biblical hero took the master two years to complete. Michelangelo carved it from a single block of marble. Leonardo da Vinci supervised the transportation of the giant statue to the site chosen by its creator.

On September 8th, 1941,

the 872-day siege of Leningrad began. According to Hitler's plan, the city was to be wiped off the face of the earth, and the troops defending it were to be destroyed. The Nazi fascists were unable to break through the defence of the Soviet troops inside the blockade ring and decided to starve the city out. Of the 2.5 million Leningrad residents, over one million people died from hunger, cold and bombing during the blockade years. The siege of Leningrad entered the history of mankind as the bloodiest blockade.



September 9th, 1828 marks the birth of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) — one of the greatest writers and thinkers in the world. The writer's literary legacy comprises 90 volumes of artistic and journalistic works, while he was repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Nobel Peace Prize. He is the author of the epic novel *War and Peace*, the novels *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection*, and more.

September 9th, 1913 is the date when Russian military pilot Pyotr Nesterov performed the first ever 'loop-the-loop' — a full circle in a vertical plane in the air — thus becoming the founder of aerobatics.



This manoeuvre subsequently became known as *Nesterov's loop*. During the First World War, Pyotr Nesterov made the first air ram in the history of world aviation and died a hero.

On September 10th, 1984, British geneticist Alec Jeffreys discovered the DNA fingerprint.

This molecule encodes hereditary information about the functioning of a living organism. Every DNA is unique to each person. Genomic identification is now widely used in criminology, medicine, and in establishing kinship.



On September 12th, 1940, the Lascaux Cave was found in France. French teenagers from the town of Montignac accidentally discovered a cave, the walls of which were completely covered with amazing drawings of people and animals. The age of the images was estimated at 15,000 years. The Lascaux Cave has been classified as a French historical monument and is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

