



How journalists from *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper prepared dishes from presidential potatoes

4



The architectural heritage of the Middle Ages impresses tourists in Belarus today

10

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 45 (955) ● THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2022 ● WWW.SB.BY



Police captain Viktor Shipkov provides the order at the district, brings up four children and revives ancient rituals in his native village

With love for the native land

Viktor Shipkov works as a senior district police inspector of the Gomel District Department of Internal Affairs. Residents of Ulukovye and the surrounding villages respect their policeman: if there is any question, they know that Viktor will help. However, there is another matter that unites the local and rural residents — love for the culture of their region. For more than 15 years, Viktor Shipkov and his family have been supporting local rituals in his native village of Markovichi, playing the harmonica, and participating in competitions. National clothes are another hobby of Viktor. He himself makes embroidered shirts, suits, weaves belts using the unique sprang technique — weaving on a circular basis. Viktor Shipkov is one of the few who has mastered this skill. A father with many children finds time for his job and finds time for his work of love.



Lukashenko: ‘Today is the moment of truth’

The President of Belarus held a meeting in Gomel dedicated to the development of the agricultural industry of Gomel Region. Opening the event, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that it would not only be about the state of affairs in the Gomel Region — many aspects are relevant for the whole country, “The tasks remain the same, complex. New challenges emerge. I want to warn you right away: this is going to be a serious conversation. Therefore, take it like a man and without any offense... We constantly talk about the importance of food security and the agricultural sector. But we made sure that we were right to focus on food production. This proved true for Belarus and foreign countries. This year, our country has rolled up its sleeves, figuratively speaking, and produced a decent result.”

This year Minsk Region cropped over 2 million tonnes of grain, Grodno Region and Brest Region gathered 1.5 million tonnes each, Vitebsk Region and Mogilev Region crossed a one-million threshold. At the same time, the task for the central region of the country for next year is to crop three million tonnes of grain, said the Head of State.

“What is the contribution of Gomel Region to the country’s harvest? Unfortunately, there is nothing to be proud of. We passed the one-millionth milestone here only including maize. How are things with meat and milk production? The whole country is moving forward, and you are moving back,” the President remarked.

Over the past five years agricultural production in the region went down by more than 13 percent. At the same time the country in general posted a 4 percent growth.

“I know all your excuses — the weather (drought or rains), the low land quality (sand or wind or something else). I would like to say: you are not the only one who blames these circumstances. This is the same everywhere. But there is not the same result everywhere, or rather the absence of a result, as in Gomel Region. I understand, as you do, that there are objective circumstances beyond our control. There are such factors. Do you take into account local peculiarities of soil composition in Gomel Region? Do you know how to adjust to climatic conditions?” the President asked.

Virtually all the inspected farms have violations in livestock breeding. Every fourth farm has had the facts of presenting false information about livestock mortality. One third of the agricultural organisations violates the technology of fodder storage.

“Farms are in a mess, with constant false reporting and theft. Any distortion of statistics leads to a wrong decision. These are disastrous mistakes not only for Gomel Region, but for the entire country. That is why any

do whatever they want or not to do anything at all — this is not going to happen in any country. Freedom and independence mean having opportunities,” said the President.

Aleksandr Lukashenko warned: the beginning of 2023 is a litmus test for farmers in the Gomel Region.

“The main thing is the following: there will be no more persuasion, no more talks with Gomel residents (just like with Mogilev and Vitebsk residents). You know what to do. Most

importantly, you need to move and act. Do not wait for someone to give you money or buy you a new tractor or a truck, in case you do not have an engine yard. We need a plan today. Everything should be spelled out in it in detail, including activities, responsible persons, deadlines and resources. We need a plan for the development of the agro-industrial complex of Gomel Region, similar to those of the other regions,” the Head of State claimed.

The President emphasised that agriculture has unique opportunities today. The demand for products is big, and the prices are high. For Belarus, which had a record harvest this year, the situation is just the right one, “God has spared us, and we have produced an excellent result in the country’s agriculture this year. Before, we didn’t know what to do and where to sell. Today, we do not even need to look for clients. They offer good money for products. Sell, earn and improve the situation in Gomel Region.

No one bothers you, and I will only protect you in this. But you have to earn that money first... Today is the moment of truth. Markets are waiting for you. And not only in Russia. China is ready to consume great amounts of products.”

The Head of State noted that, as he was informed, dealers cash in on Belarusian goods: they buy products at Belarusian enterprises for notional two rubles and sell them in Russia for nine rubles. The President demanded the companies to develop their trade networks and to be engaged in sales themselves, but not just sought to quickly push products out of their gates.

“I would like to reiterate: we need order and technological discipline. Each farm manager, each employee must clearly understand their role, place and responsibility. This is the only way we can get results. That is all I wanted to say. I really want you to hear me and understand,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said in conclusion.



BELTA

statistical report is the most important element in the management of the state. I do not understand why you lie at all. Who needs this lie? It is easy to verify.

Believe me, we are living in a crunch time: either we retain our state, or we need to consider other options, but count me out in the latter case. We have been nurturing our state for 30 years because we wanted our children to live freely, independently. If someone understands this freedom and independence as an opportunity to



Belarus is ready to give a hand to Russian regions

Head of the Belarusian State Aleksandr Lukashenko met with Governor of Primorye Territory of the Russian Federation Oleg Kozhemyako



Welcoming the guest, the President emphasised, “We see that all economic problems that we are dealing today in both Russia and Belarus can be overcome. We are working to overcome them. There are some impediments, unfortunately some bureaucratic moments.

We’ll talk about that. This does not apply to Primorye Territory but

to our co-operation with Russia in general. We will meet with the President of Russia soon. These issues will be on the agenda of our meeting too. If we address some minor issues, then we can make significant progress in terms of import substitution. That’s the most important thing for us now. This year has already shown that we will cope. We just need a little time, but we will cope.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that he was happy to meet with him, “To hear what has changed in our Far East, what the economic state of affairs is, whether there is any progress in co-operation with neighbours. Naturally, what are the difficulties? And in this regard, in what way can Belarus help? We are ready to welcome you at any time, in any weather.”

In turn, Oleg Kozhemyako noted that the situation in the economy is developing quite well. He attributed it to the increase in trade with the East,

which resulted in bigger workloads for ports of Primorye Territory. For example, several dozen containers have recently been sent through the ports of Vladivostok upon the order of the Belarusian car manufacturer Geely.

“So far, our economy is working steadily. Of course, there are some issues related to import substitution. But we are working on them,” said Oleg Kozhemyako.

He emphasised that the trade between Belarus and Primorye Territory has grown 3.5 times over three years and the growth trend is expected to remain in place this year.

The deliveries of Belarusian food products to Primorye Territory have significantly increased, the Governor informed. According to him, they have grown eight times from 2019 to 2021. And by the end of 2022, this growth will be even bigger.

“Residents of Primorye Territory appeared to like Belarusian products,” Governor emphasised.

Oleg Kozhemyako also spoke about co-operation with industrial enterprises of Belarus. In particular, in January-October 2022, Primorye Territory purchased about 109 units of equipment, including 21 BELAZ vehicles with the carrying capacity of 130 tonnes. Work is underway to create a service centre where about 40 units of various Belarus-made equipment will be presented at one site.

The three-day visit of Primorye Territory delegation to Belarus also included negotiations in the government, visits to a number of enterprises in Minsk and Brest. In January-October 2022, the trade turnover between Belarus and Primorye Territory of the Russian Federation amounted to about \$40 million and increased 1.8 times compared to the same period last year. At the same time, Belarusian exports increased by 2.2 times.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



‘Through solidary and co-operation towards peace and security’

The President of Belarus took part in the session of the CSTO Collective Security Council. During the narrow-format talks, Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled the thesis that the unipolar world order is irrevocably a thing of the past.

“This process is provoking an unprecedented crisis in the system of international relations with many hotbeds of tension around the globe. A number of these hotbeds, unfortunately, are in the European and Eurasian space, including in the CSTO area of responsibility,” stated the Belarusian leader.

The President of Belarus drew attention to the developments unfolding in Europe. According to him, the North Atlantic Alliance has made a final decision to pursue the anti-Russian and anti-Belarusian policy in the foreseeable future and has interrupted all contacts on its own initiative,

“Under the pretext of containing the allegedly aggressive Russia and its allies, the United States and other NATO countries have been systemically building up military presence near the western borders of the CSTO, i.e., near our borders. The West continues to deploy troops, weapons and military hardware to the eastern flank of NATO. The intensity of their operational and combat training activities is increasing.”

In this regard, the President called the recent decision to deploy a regional task force of Belarus and Russia a natural reaction to the existing challenges, “Countries that strive to follow their own path of development and pursue an independent foreign policy course come under severe pressure. International organisations, including the UN, are also trying to put them under their control. Spendings on weapons are growing at an unprecedented pace reaching terrible levels. NATO governments, instigated by Washington, are willingly spending billions on the supposedly growing threat from the East, while stimulating the U.S. military-industrial complex.”

The Head of State remarked that the possibility of using nuclear weapons is mentioned increasingly frequently these days,

“Nuclear rhetoric of individual Western leaders is way over the top. The Polish leadership declares readiness to host nuclear weapons in the country. It is good that, credit where credit is due, Americans still have sensible people, who understand perfectly well the danger of nuclear games, particularly with unpredictable partners. We strongly believe that nuclear blackmail has no place in international politics!”

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled the well-known saying



that there will be no winners after a nuclear war, “The great physicist Albert Einstein said once: ‘I know not with what weapons World War 3 will be fought, but World War 4 will be fought with sticks and stones.’”

The President of Belarus spoke about the conflict in Ukraine in his speech,

“Belarus has continuously and persistently warned about the dangerous escalation of the military and political situation in the European region. We pointed to the degradation of the international security system and devaluation of disarmament and arms control agreements. Unfortunately, they did not heed our warnings then. Now we see the tragic result of this arrogant position in Ukraine.”

The President recalled that since 2014, Belarus has been doing everything possible to end this conflict.

Speaking about existing challenges and threats, Aleksandr Lukashenko stated that a complicated situation is evolving in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, too, “We’ve repeatedly said that attempts are being made to stir up trouble in societies inside our countries right along the perimeter of the Russian Federation. Ukraine flared up first. An attempt to destroy Belarus was made in 2020. Belarusians have gone through that in January 2022 (it is good that Kazakhstan’s leadership managed to deal with this conflict). A conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. I will repeat: we would like the conflict between the two neighbouring countries that are friendly to us to be resolved peacefully.”

At the same time, Aleksandr Lukashenko asked an important question, “But in view of that I fail to understand why the European Union and the OSCE have

to be involved in this conflict in addition to Russia, which acts as a mediator. Can someone explain it to me? Are they here in order to continue driving a wedge into relations between us, between allies? We know where this kind of ‘mediation’ can lead. This conflict will be simply frozen for many years once again at least. They don’t need stability and peace in our region but the devastation that they control.”

The President pointed out that the conflict situation at the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border is a similar one, “We are being played off against one another.”

After the meeting in a narrow circle, the leaders of the countries held a meeting in an expanded format, where Aleksandr Lukashenko delivered an important keynote speech.

The President noted: Belarus is taking over the presidency over the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in a period of a systemic crisis of international relations. The unprecedented deterioration of the military and political situation on the Eurasian continent is obvious as well as further polarisation of approaches to the matter of the new world order.

“In emerging conditions we see the following fundamental goals of Belarus’ presidency. Domestically we have to improve the unity of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation member states. These are fundamental goals: to increase our unity, reduce the level of tensions, and address contradictions between them for the sake of strengthening the organisation itself, for the sake of ensuring security and stability in the organisation’s responsibility area... The targets in foreign policy are as follows: enhancing the role and the significance of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the system of international relations,” emphasised Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The President noted that Belarus’ presidency is expected to proceed under the ‘Through solidary and co-operation towards peace and security’ slogan. Several priority areas have been identified:

First. The resolution of crisis situations and the prevention of further destabilisation in the CSTO’s responsibility area should remain in the centre of our attention... All of us need peace! Nobody needs war!

Belarus’ presidency would undertake all the possible diplomatic efforts to deescalate tensions, reduce the conflict potential, and raise the level of mutual trust through joint actions of the CSTO members. It will allow securing the leading role of the organisation in matters concerning the enabling and enhancement of regional security in our responsibility area. Our joint efforts should have a positive impact on the situation in the CSTO’s responsibility area, including in Eastern Europe.

Second. Effective positioning of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the system of international relations by advancing co-operation with international organisations and third countries represents a key factor for our organisation’s inclusion in the most pressing problems on the international agenda. The organisation has to be at the forefront of international life and live up to the constantly changing challenges of regional and global security.

The expansion of partnerships with global players such as China would contribute to the enhancement of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation’s standing in the international scene. Why not? With this in mind Belarus’ presidency intends to initiate a strategic dialogue between the Collective Security Treaty Organisation and the People’s Republic of China (we may think about India, too) by means of organising meetings in Belarus of representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs, defence, offices of the security councils of the CSTO

member states and the corresponding countries like China, for example.

Third. The military component of the CSTO is an inalienable component of the organisation. As for priority tasks in this field, we believe it is necessary to increase the readiness of components of the CSTO forces to carry out their missions and to step up military technology co-operation of the member states... A number of joint exercises involving command and control bodies and forces and assets of the CSTO collective security system will be planned and carried out in Belarus’ territory in 2023.

Belarus’ presidency intends to pay close attention to stepping up efforts to work out common approaches in the area of standardisation and inventorying of defence products and the promotion of manufacturing co-operation for making defence products.

Fourth. This is why we are going to focus on building up the institutional potential of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the sphere of information and analysis... The formation of a network of national analytical institutes for strategic studies in the member states will be a concrete practical contribution to the accomplishment of this task. It will allow uniting the scientific and expert potential of our countries in the name of ensuring peace and security. We see it as an important tool for preparing conceptual and strategic documents on topical matters of international and regional security in our organisation.

The Belarusian side proposes to hold a meeting of the heads of national analytical institutes for strategic studies of the CSTO member states in Minsk in 2023 to organise systematic work in this direction.

After the CSTO summit, the President of Belarus talked to Russian journalists on the sidelines of the summit and answered a number of questions related to ensuring security, including in connection with the conflict in Ukraine.



Aleksandr Lukashenko often and willingly works on the ground.

And he passes on this tradition, instils a love for this hard work to everyone who is nearby.

The President often talks about his personal plot: potatoes and numerous vegetables, melons and berries, apples grow there... The President loves to experiment on his own beds — he is the first to plant new varieties and types of various crops.

Working on your land, you get a hundredfold in return — this is the firm conviction of the Belarusian leader. We also know for sure that happiness, goodness and delight is multiplied by sharing. And the meaning of work gives the opportunity to share it with loved ones, to share the results of your work with those who need it more. From year to year — this is a long standing tradition — the harvest from the President — in pantries and on tables in orphanages and nursing homes. Aleksandr Lukashenko presented four sacks of elite potatoes to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in December 2018. In addition, the President recently decided to give a sack of potatoes to local journalists.

Happiness is multiplied by sharing

How journalists from *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper prepared dishes from presidential potatoes

A little later, the Telegram channel *Pul Pervogo* already posted photos of culinary masterpieces prepared by journalists from presidential potatoes — roses, hearts, boats and even burgers. Belarusians were creative, reminding everyone and everything that they are bulbashy [potato lovers in Belarusian], and they are proud of it. They experimented, cooked, remembered what mothers and grandmothers treated them to in childhood, shared recipes, proving for the thousandth time that their favourite potatoes are not only boiled and fried.

The competition for the best photo of the potato dish was first announced by *Pul Pervogo* for their journalists. But then all the other connoisseurs of the Belarusian potato joined the initiative. Here, it would probably be worth discussing that the ‘challenge’ itself is such a gift to farmers, an opportunity to please them on the eve of the Day of Workers of Agriculture with the results of their work. Or to remind that Belarus, no matter how hard the West tries to protect us from its world

with sanctions, can easily ensure its own food security and feed not only itself, but also others. Or rejoice at how the presidential potato (as, by the way, the recent chopping of firewood) was able to unite compatriots.

Journalist of Belarus Segodnya Publishing House Dmitry Umpirovich shared his recipe for cooking presidential potatoes,

“Potato dishes are always delicious, so on Sunday afternoon, my son and I foremost expected a hearty lunch.

Potato roses, boats and burgers, it’s not for me. As well as not for the President. He repeated more than once: he loves simple country food. So we decided to make pancakes in pots with sausages, mushrooms, sour cream and cheese. Everything is simple. Everything is our own. Not for nothing that at one time I travelled dozens of Belarusian villages in search of original recipes. Do you remember ‘Five dishes. Relish with SB’ heading?

So, let’s take a potato. The variety is called *Pershatsvet*, it’s from the presidential field. Two potatoes were enough. They are huge. Grate, add an egg, two tablespoons of flour, taste for salt, mix, fry potato pancakes. There are never too many potato pancakes for a Belarusian. We ate two at a time while the sausages boiled. I sent them to boiling water for just a couple of minutes — so that they remain juicy. So my grandmothers in the villages taught me. We cut sausages into large ‘kavalki’ [pieces in Belarusian], mushrooms into smaller plates. Grease the pot with oil. We use sunflower-olive, the President would certainly advise rapeseed. But to be honest, I haven’t tried it yet. Lay the sausage, pancakes and champignons in layers, pour sour cream, pour cheese over it — and put it in the oven for half an hour. Oh, it’s a pity that there is no oven. There —

tested by experience — it turns out much tastier... Taste — it’s just unbelievable. It is understandable: potato pancakes are a dish that cannot be spoiled by anything. We ate it with zest — and immediately I wanted more. I know for sure: I will continue culinary experiments, I read a lot of recipes under the #bulba hashtag. My colleague Polina Konoga decided to cook delicious potato-zucchini waffles with celery, cream cheese and salmon, sprinkled with grated goat cheese with black truffle. I look at the photo — and my mouth is already watering. However, we have enough potatoes until the New Year. Thanks to the President!”



Downside turns into plus

The Belarusian industrial, petrochemical and energy complexes are working with positive dynamics in the face of modern challenges



What are the results of the work of the Belarusian industrial, petrochemical and energy complexes in the current world circumstances, and what are our prospects? Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Parkhomchik reported about this in the Oval Hall of the House of Government at a joint meeting of the chambers of the National Assembly. We bring to the attention of readers the most interesting figures and facts.

By Svetlana Isaenok, Maksim Osipov

Growth in the face of adversity

The industrial complex forms almost a third of the country's GDP and about 80 percent of exports of goods. Despite all the challenges and threats, the government determines the following indicators: in the first ten months of this year, the volume of industrial production amounted to 94.1 percent compared to the corresponding period of 2021. The enterprises of the Industry Ministry (plus 6.5 percent), woodworking (plus 6.9 percent) and the Belgospisheprom Concern (plus 2.4 percent) worked with growth compared to last year. As for oil refining and light industry, the level of last year has not yet been reached here, although the dynamics of production recovery is positive.

Piotr Parkhomchik specified that Belneftekhim posted the output at the level of 87.5 percent year-on-year, Bellegprom — at the level of 96.4 percent.

Speaking about the industry as a whole, the Deputy Prime Minister emphasised that the indicators of its development have been showing positive dynamics over the recent period of 2022.

Thus, the balance of foreign trade in goods and services amounted to about \$4 billion in January-September 2022. In addition, the maximum level of sales profitability has been

reached over the last 10 years — 10.9 percent; net profit has increased by 14 percent to Br7.5 billion. The Deputy Prime Minister also said that the number of unprofitable organisations decreased by 42 companies compared to the previous year.

At the same time, the revenue per employee is Br175,000. It amounted to Br140,800 in general across the country.

Not surprisingly, the nominal accrued average monthly wage in industry is higher than at the republican level. According to the results of 2022, the volume of industrial production is expected to reach 96 percent by 2021.

"I would like to note that the positive results of the work of the industry are ensured amid significant deterioration in external conditions this year. For example, in the petrochemical complex, the majority of large producers operate under sanctions — Naf-tan, Mozyr Oil Refinery, Belaruskali, Grodno Azot. Sanction restrictions change the geography of our exports and imports, break the existing foreign economic relations and require their constant transformation. According to the results of nine months, the export of goods amounted to \$27.3 billion, or 96.7 percent of the level of 2021. At the same time, in machine building and light industry, export growth was ensured compared to last year — 9 and 2.9 percent, respectively," emphasised Piotr Parkhomchik.

OUR RESPONSE TO FOREIGN COMPANIES

Currently, more than **2,500 organisations** of various forms of ownership, including more than **600** small and medium-sized businesses, are involved in the production of import-substituting goods. However, in 2022, the country is implementing more than **200 import-substituting projects** in various industries worth over **\$10 billion**. Over the nine months of this year, import-substituting products worth **\$19.7 billion** were produced, while half of the goods were exported.








REVERSAL OF DIRECTIONS

Over the nine months, the export to Western and Ukrainian markets dropped by **\$6.1 billion**. Yet, due to our efforts to redirect export flows, the export to friendly countries increased by **\$5.2 billion**. At the same time, the export of engineering products to friendly countries rose by **\$1.2 billion**, while the export to unfriendly countries dropped by **\$325 million**.

EXPORT GROWTH

Over the past period of 2022, exports reached \$7.8 billion, up 9 percent year-on-year.

Exports increased significantly for such commodity items as:

- machines and mechanisms for harvesting crops — by **65 percent** compared to last year, 
- tractors and tractor units — by **40 percent**, 
- refrigerators and freezers — by **35 percent**, 
- trucks — by **22 percent**. 
- The number of electric vehicles in the country increased by 39 times due to the measures adopted in 2020 to stimulate the use of electric vehicles. 



FACT

More than **100,000 cars** were produced by the BelGeely plant in four years of operation.



VERBATIM

Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Parkhomchik, "Sanction restrictions pushed us to even more productive work, forced us to think innovatively, work intensively on new technical solutions and products, and complete tasks in a short time."

FOREIGN MARKETS

The departure and suspension of activities of foreign companies in Russia have re-opened the Russian market for literally all branches of the Belarusian industry.

In the nine months of this year, exports of goods to the Russian market increased by 34 percent compared to the same period in 2021, in other words, by \$4 billion.







At the same time, the share of the Russian market in the export of goods increased from 41 to 57 percent. And the export of goods to China also doubled (in the first nine months of this year it amounted to \$1.3 billion).



FIGURE

1.3 billion — the amount of exports of Belarusian light industry goods. Of these, **1.1 billion** are exports to the Russian Federation. 

NEW GENERATION TECHNOLOGY

- This year, the first Belarusian combined harvester with a rotary threshing and separation scheme was demonstrated for the first time. Its developer is Gomselmash. The equipment is fully prepared for mass production in 2023. 
- BELAZ has developed a 130-tonne hybrid dump truck with an innovative operation scheme: a combination of a low-power diesel engine with batteries and an energy recovery system. Most of the components of this machine are based on Belarusian and Russian components. BELAZ also manufactured samples of mining dump trucks with a carrying capacity of 90 tonnes (on batteries) and 220 tonnes of a diesel trolley type. 
- Another new development is a specialised wagon repair combine for the repair of freight gondola car bodies. The harvester was developed by the specialists of the Kuzlitmash plant and is almost completely made of materials and components of domestic manufacturers. 
- Belkommunmash has developed an experimental model of an electric truck with a carrying capacity of 10 tonnes, at MAZ — a cargo electric vehicle with a carrying capacity of up to 4 tonnes was developed. In addition, the Minsk Tractor Works got the first Belarusian unmanned tractor. 

ECONOMY

Food scam

The UN Black Sea Grain Initiative turned out to be just a way to cash in on speculation

The UN suddenly reported that the hike in world prices for wheat and vegetable oil was 'not due to supply shortages as such, but rather due to the actions of buyers, traders and financial speculators who took advantage of fear and panic'. This is the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (it turns out that there is such a position) who very unexpectedly spoke out in his report to the next committee of the same United Nations.

By Alena Krasovskaya

Grain of profit

The name of this 'bold' Special Rapporteur is Michael Fakhri.

Wheat prices are not jumping because tonnes of the same wheat are hanging somewhere. And not because Russia is to blame for everything. There are simply unscrupulous speculators who make good money on this.

So, Fakhri even names specific speculators and their level of income in his report. From the report, "In 2021, Cargill, one of the world's largest food suppliers, posted a net income of nearly \$5 billion. This is the biggest profit in its entire 156-year history." And then Michael Fakhri declares that the crisis that worsened in 2022 and the price surge are connected precisely with speculators...

True, there is no certainty that speculation is generally confirmed by any documents or studies. After all, if there are food speculators in the world and children die of starvation from their activities, then this is a reason not to write out reports, but to flee with information at least to the UN International Criminal Court. Moreover, we are talking about the death of thousands of children from starvation around the world!

But no, there will be no trial, of course. It seems, as always, that there is nothing to hand over to the court, except for the fantasies of the next commission.

Is Ukraine suffering more than Syria?

Of course, Michael Fakhri tried to get out and wrote in a report that the food crisis, which began during the pandemic, is now aggravated by the fact that Russia is in conflict with Ukraine and this must be stopped immediately. Otherwise, it will be a complete disaster.

We would like to object to Michael that in 2005 the UN frightened all of us with the fact that 6 million children die of hunger every year. However, in the UN they liked to juggle with terrible numbers much earlier. And they were generally frightened that every minute another child, emaciated from hunger, appeared in the world after the start of the special operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

It was hinted to everyone that it was necessary to urgently take out grain and food from Ukraine.

And all these psychological manipulations of suffering and dying children have already dulled the compassion of UN members. Especially in the light of yet another food scam that the UN itself, which is so worried about starving children, pulled off. After all, the Black Sea Grain Initiative for the export of food from Ukraine cannot be called otherwise, any scam is always a scam.

Even the statistics of the work of the UN in the Ukrainian direction shows that Ukraine causes bouts of overly active concern in the UN, and one can practically not give a damn about other countries.

According to The New York Times, the UN Humanitarian Office has requested more than \$6 billion this year specifically to help Ukrainians.

The required money is almost collected. But not in order to help people in most other parts of the world. Programmes for Haiti are funded by only 11 percent, for El Salvador — 12 percent, for Burundi — 14 percent, for Myanmar — 17 percent. Saving people suffering from major humanitarian crises in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia is slightly better funded, but still much lower than in Ukraine.

Everything becomes more than obvious, considering who is the main donor in the UN and who unleashed the conflict with Russia through the hands of Ukraine. The US will finance the 'war to the last Ukrainian' by

any means possible. And the UN will continue tirelessly to 'advertise' assistance to Ukraine.

Starving children will wait...

Closer to the spring of this year, it became clear that the special operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine broke the usual ways in which food was exported from Ukraine. It should be noted that the trade in grain and other foodstuffs is a huge amount of money, which, in the new realities, actually got stuck in Ukraine.

It is difficult to say who put pressure on the UN — Ukraine itself or its big brother under the Stars and Stripes flag, but the UN began to actively promote the idea that it is the special operation that condemns millions of children to death in underdeveloped countries instead of the standard regular horrors about starving children around the world.

According to the UN, only the immediate export of food from Ukraine could be a salvation for everyone. Moreover, there were enough options for export routes. Our President, for example, offered transportation through Belarus, which could be one of the most inexpensive of all possible, but they chose the Black Sea direction.

Others will make money

For some reason, the UN kept silent about the fact that Ukraine will earn about \$6 billion on the export of grain and food products. As well as the fact that starving children will not get practically anything from what is taken out of Ukraine. No, of course, they will receive some food, but later, at different prices and from European countries that are actively buying it from Ukraine.

Nevertheless, now they are actively profiting from exported grain from Ukraine. A little later they will send their contributions to the UN to buy food for the starving children of Africa, Asia and Latin America... Excellent business: they gave Ukraine good money, and Europe is not at a loss, and the UN will still receive its billions. True, the children continue to starve...

It turns out that Michael Fakhri wrote the truth in the report, only he made a mistake with the main speculator. Or he was not mistaken, but was afraid to voice something that one can't really hide anymore: the UN has long become the main speculator in the world. And this applies not only to food. Everywhere you look, you find things that make speculation in Ukrainian food seem like a small episode. True, while no one is particularly looking, but it's only a matter of time. Sooner or later, the UN will either cease to exist and the whole world 'with surprise' will learn about the deeds and affairs that were being turned 'for the sake of world peace', or a fundamental reform of the UN will exclude even hints of the possibility of such scams.

In the meantime, the starving children of the world will wait — it is important for well-fed uncles and aunts from the UN to get the maximum income from their tragedy, of course, covering all this with concern for them. Indeed, money is definitely money for such uncles and aunts.







FIGURES ALONE





As of November 23rd, 2022,

11.7 million tonnes

of food products have already been exported from Ukraine.

Of these,

	Spain 2 m tonnes
	Turkey 1.5 m tonnes
	China 1.3 m tonnes
	Italy 1 m tonnes

	The Netherlands 0.765 m tonnes
	Egypt 0.429 m tonnes
	Germany 0.307 m tonnes
	Bangladesh 0.269 m tonnes

In which of these countries, besides Bangladesh, do hundreds of thousands of children go hungry? This is a rhetorical question.



“Russia left Moldova in the dark... We cannot trust a regime that leaves us in the dark and cold, that deliberately kills people simply to keep other peoples in poverty and humiliation,”
Maia Sandu wrote on her Facebook page.

The southern republic has been rocked by protests since September. People come forward with simple and understandable demands to lower the prices of gas and electricity, to control cost of food, breaking record after record. However, both President Maia Sandu and the Moldovan government seem to have opted for a European way of communicating with fellow citizens. Only the police come out to the dissatisfied people, who gather every Sunday in the centre of Chisinau. Since September 18th, when the first spontaneous tent camp appeared in the country's capital, not a single official has deigned to ask the rebellious Moldovans what they want.

It is unfortunate, but true

Moldova is reaping the fruits of the ‘pivot to the West’. Winter will be hard.

By Stanislav Fedoruk

Blind and deaf

Representatives of the authorities, on the contrary, can often be seen in the media. Madam President especially shines there, who obviously likes to be on camera or on the front pages of Western newspapers. True, Moldovans have long learned a simple formula: trouble begins when Sandu appears in the press. People do not expect to hear good news, as well as adequate proposals on how to get out of the crisis that has engulfed the country from Maya Grigorievna.

According to an iData survey, 77 percent of Moldovans believe that the country's government is not taking effective measures to combat the energy crisis, 36.4 percent say that the authorities are doing nothing at all, and 63 percent believe that their standard of living has seriously fallen over the past year. No wonder, because inflation in the country is approaching 35 percent and it seems that no one is going to turn on the brake light for it.

The only thing Sandu responded to the claims of fellow citizens was a recent lengthy article in the *Politico* newspaper, where the President admitted: 65 percent of all Moldovan incomes will be spent on heating this winter.

Moldova, it seems, has seriously decided to follow the ‘cut off one's nose to spite one's face’ principle. Residents of the country are now paying the highest price for gas in Eastern Europe. At the moment, its purchase price is \$1,031 per 1,000 cubic metres. And it could have been no more than \$250 if the extremely beneficial agreement with Russia of 2019, concluded under President Dodon, was extended. But the desire to be independent of the ‘Mordorian’ gas led to sovereignty from common sense, and now ordinary residents will be forced to give half of their salaries so as not to die from the cold in the winter.

Gas schematosis

True, in order to pay for gas, one need to at least receive it. But a serious problem suddenly showed up with this matter the other day. Gazprom recorded a discrepancy between the volumes of gas that is supplied to Sudzha GIS for transit to Moldova through Ukraine, with the volume of blue fuel, which is physically transferred by our southern neighbour to the Moldovans. In other words, part of the Russian gas

settles somewhere in Ukraine and does not reach the end consumer.

It would seem that the Ukrainian authorities are stealing someone else's gas — an old story about which many anecdotes have appeared. However, it turned out that Kiev and Chisinau work in the same conjunction, and Gazprom revealed not a scheme of theft of Moldovan gas by Ukraine, but attempts to deceive the supplier himself. Thus, the operator of the gas transmission system of Ukraine called the justified claims of Gazprom ‘gross manipulation of facts’ in a characteristic boorish manner and noted that the supplied blue fuel reaches Moldova, and Gazprom is allegedly trying to prevent the ‘virtual reverse’ of gas and the use of storage facilities by Moldovans on the territory Ukraine. The words of the operator of the Ukrainian GTS were also confirmed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Moldova Andrei Spinu.

“Those volumes of gas that Gazprom calls remaining in Ukraine are our savings and reserves stored in warehouses in Ukraine. These volumes have been and will be fully paid for by our country,” he shared in his telegram channel. The purpose of this leapfrog, according to the Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister, is to avoid alleged pressure, blackmail and threats from Russia.

However, no one approaches Moldova in any way — the only thing Gazprom wants is the repayment of the debt from Chisinau, which by November reached \$590.8 million. So what is the full payment for the supposedly Moldovan gas stored in Ukraine is Spinu talking about?

At the same time, it is unlikely that it will be possible to find out all the peculiarities of the scheme born between Kiev and Chisinau in the near future — as Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita said, Moldova, in agreement with Ukraine, classified all information related to the country's energy sector.

Will there be help?

While the Moldovans and Ukrainians are trying to play cat and mouse with Gazprom, Maia Sandu is actively trying on the image of Zelenskyy — she is trying to get at least some money from the West under the pretext of helping the sinking economy. So far, three European countries have responded to the president's pleas — Romania, Germany and France, which are included in the Moldova Support Platform. And even then it was possible to agree on a tranche in the amount of €100 million only at the third meeting.

“Dear Maya, the courageous and ambitious efforts that you are making in Moldova are needed not only by your country, but by the whole of Europe. You can count on the support of France,” French lover of telephone diplomacy Macron wrote in Romanian on his Twitter.

However, even though Sandu scattered in gratitude in response, her mood was hardly elated. Moldova expected at least €695 million in aid. However, developed countries are not eager to take on the second freeloader after Ukraine with their own mortified economy. In addition, no one has cancelled the highest level of corruption in the country — according to only official data, the total amount of funds circulating in ‘grey’ schemes reaches 12 percent of the country's GDP. Moreover, the activity of the Security and Intelligence Service of The Republic of Moldova (SIS) to identify the facts of money laundering and fraud in recent weeks is more connected with the search for a mythical Russian trace in the protests than with a real desire to defeat corruption.

Moreover, the fate of the country in the current crisis could have turned out completely differently if Maia Sandu had not come to power with the help of American NGOs. Her European path turned out to be a one-way road, and the choice of partners for negotiations spoke for itself: the first was the Romanian President (by the way, if anyone is not in the know, Ms. Sandu also has Romanian citizenship), and the first foreign visit was to Ukraine, where she greeted the guard of honour with a resonant ‘Glory to Ukraine!’.

Then there was a tense confrontation with the parliament, where, according to the President, traitors found themselves a comfortable hideout, but in fact — patriots and supporters of, perhaps, the most effective manager in Moldovan history, Igor Dodon, and then the arrest of the ex-president himself.

True, while Sandu fought the spectre of the Russian threat and burned out sedition, the Moldovan economy smoothly dived to the worst indicators over the past two decades. The logical result of the deliberate destruction of their own country was the impoverishment of the population, protests and multimillion-dollar debts.

Anyway, the time will come when they will have to be repaid. And who knows what the creditors will ask for: maybe the very independence of Moldova, or maybe the unleashing of a bloody massacre in Transnistria. Thus, they won't be able to slime away.



Resolution on Russia criticised

French MEP Thierry Mariani said that by adopting a resolution recognising Russia as a ‘state sponsor of terrorism’, the European Parliament is pushing Europe to war with Russia instead of promoting a peaceful solution to the conflict

“The EU has exhausted all means in this conflict. After eight months of war, we are already discussing the ninth package of sanctions against Russia. And some have decided to impose a shameful sanction on Russia, which we did not dare to apply to the Taliban [is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities] in Afghanistan, nor to Islamist groups in the Sahel. What remains for us after all sanctions against Moscow have been exhausted? The war remains,” Mariani said in a video message posted on Twitter.

“This is what the initiators of this resolution are pushing us to, putting the wishes

of Volodymyr Zelenskyy above the interests of the French people,” he added.

The MEP drew attention to the fact that only 5 out of 27 EU countries have made such a decision, and the European Parliament is imposing a foreign policy on European countries that they do not want to adhere to.

“It is in the interests of France to put an end to the war in Ukraine. It is in the interests of Russia and Ukraine and their peoples to come to peace negotiations as soon as possible in order to end the conflict. Naturally, Moscow, like Kiev, seeks to achieve its military goals. But it is un-

natural that that the EU is contributing to the escalation of the conflict instead of seeking peace,” Thierry Mariani stressed.

Last week, European lawmakers voted in favour of a resolution calling Russia a state sponsor of terrorism. This decision of Brussels was not met with approval even in Washington.

Meanwhile, Moscow has criticised the European Parliament’s resolution. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova proposed to ‘recognise the European Parliament as a sponsor of idiocy’ in a message published on her Telegram account.

Price growth reaches multi-year highs

According to RIA Novosti calculations based on data from national statistical services, annual inflation across 69 countries in September was at multi-year highs, making Europe the most ‘inflationary’ region — price increases in 27 countries in this region are at their peak

The study was conducted by RIA Novosti based on statistical data from 193 UN member states. The final sample included 155 states that released September data from seven regions of the world as of mid-November: Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Europe, Oceania, South and North America.

Price increases in September were at historic highs in three European countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina (17.3 percent), the Netherlands (14.5 percent), Germany (10 percent) and Sri Lanka (73.7 percent).

The oldest record was broken in Austria, where inflation hit 10.5 percent: the highest level since 1952. In Belgium, price growth also hit double digits in early autumn, reaching 11.3 percent: the highest level since 1975. Inflation in the UK, Denmark and Malta returned to its level forty years ago, when it amounted to 10.1 percent, 10 percent and 7.4 percent respectively.



Europe’s mental health crisis

Global consumption of antidepressant drugs has increased dramatically in the last two decades, with Europeans the largest consumers

Use of antidepressants increased by nearly two and a half times between 2000 and 2020 across 18 European countries, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data shows. OECD data also reveals a dramatic increase in anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The datasets used by the OECD use the term ‘defined daily dose’ or DDD to quantify antidepressant consumption. In 2000, the average antidepressant consumption across 18 European countries was 30.5 DDD per 1,000 people. In 2020, that rose to 75.3 DDD, an increase of nearly 150 percent (or two-and-a-half times).

In 2020, the average use across 24 countries was 68 DDD. The largest three

countries by population — Turkey (49 DDD), France (55 DDD) and Germany (62 DDD) — all recorded below average use.

The biggest increase in the 20-year period was in the Czech Republic, where usage rose by 577 percent. It was lowest in France (38 percent), though from a higher baseline. The countries spending the most on antidepressants in 2020 were Germany (€783 million), Spain (€626 million) and Italy €440 million).

Surveys released by the OECD suggest that mental health has deteriorated significantly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The prevalence of anxiety in early 2020 was double or more than double that observed in previous years in some European states.

Java quake kills scores

Indonesian rescuers use jackhammers, circular saws and sometimes their bare hands to shift the rubble of flattened buildings as they search for the dead and missing from an earthquake that killed at least 310 people

With many missing, some remote areas still unreachable and more than 1,000 people injured in the 5.6 magnitude quake, the death toll is likely to rise. Hospitals near the epicentre on the densely populated island of Java were already overwhelmed, and patients hooked up to IV drips lay on stretchers and cots in tents set up outside, awaiting further treatment.

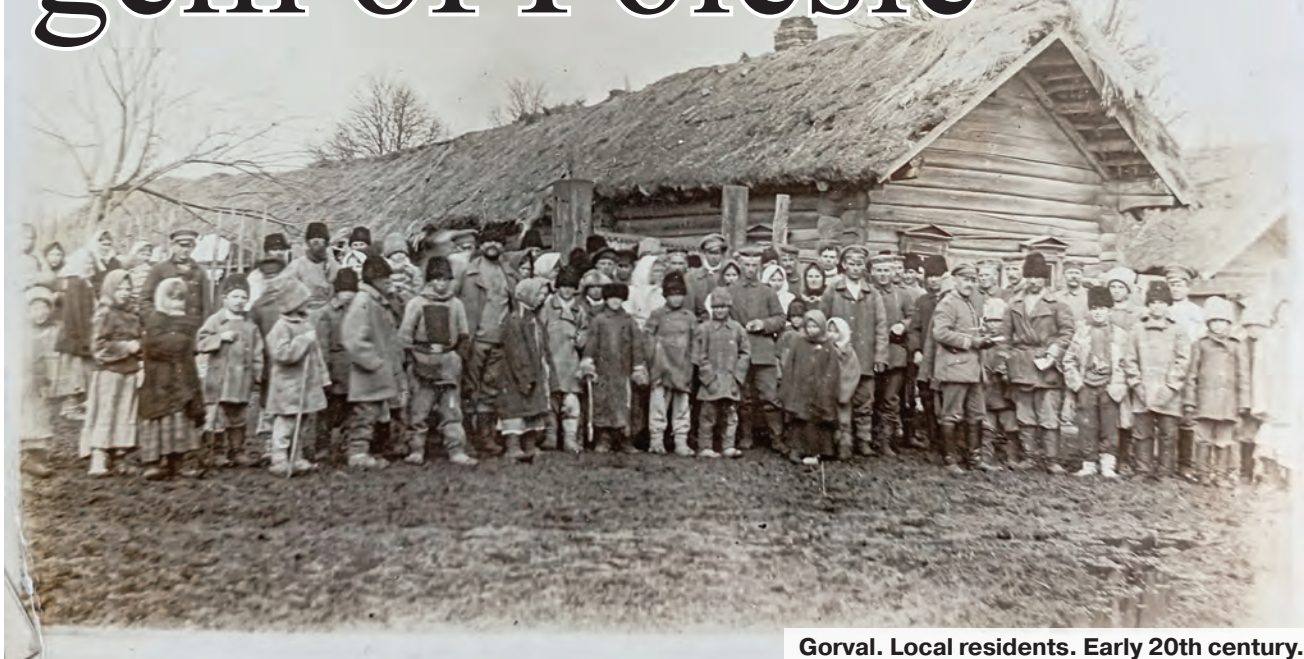
The quake struck at a depth of 10km and also caused panic in the capital of Jakarta, about a three hour-drive away. Rescue operations were focused on about a dozen locations in Cianjur, where people are still believed trapped, said Endra Atmawidjaja, the public works and housing spokesperson.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has sent condolences to Indonesian President Joko Widodo in connection with this tragic earthquake, “It is with deep pain and sadness that the Republic of Belarus learned about the catastrophic consequences of the earthquake in the Province of West Java. At this difficult time for your country, on behalf of the Belarusian people and myself, I am sending words of compassion and support to Your Excellency, the relatives and friends of the victims, and I wish a speedy recovery to those affected and also convey sincere condolences to the entire Indonesian people.”



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Gorval — a modest gem of Polesie



Gorval. Local residents. Early 20th century.

There are not so many villages in Belarus that have not only a solid age, but also a tangible historical value. Gorval is definitely one of them — a quiet place in the Rechitsa District, in which today only about 150 inhabitants live. The Neolithic site and two nearby settlements discovered by archaeologists in the very centre of the village indicate that people settled in this place a very long time ago, and the settlement arose back in the days of Kievan Rus...

By Vladimir Likhodedov

Since it is customary for us to start the chronology from the first mentions in written sources, we note that the toponym Gorval was first mentioned in the 15th century as a settlement of the Minsk Voivodeship of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, located in the possession of the Vilna voivode Wojciech Moniwid and his heirs.

At the very beginning of the 16th century, Gorval received the status of a town, and already in 1510 it was designated as the centre of the Gorval Volost, located on the Bobruisk-Chernigov highway. In 1528, it



Gorval. View from the Dnieper River. Early 20th century.



Gorval. Orthodox church. Early 20th century.



Gorval. The outside. Early 20th century.

was transferred as a state estate to the temporary possession of B. G. Shelukha, and then Bona Sforza, the Milanese princess and wife of King Sigismund I the Old. The latter in 1543 ceded the place to the princely House of Sanguszko.

In 1535, during the reign of Grand Duke Vasily III of Russia in Rus (although his three-year-old son Ivan the Terrible was considered the nominal tsar), the town was destroyed to the ground by the Moscow army during the Starodub war. And barely having time to rebuild, Gorval was subjected to an unfriendly visit by the warriors of Tsar Alexis of Russia, who also left burning ruins behind them.

At the same time, a castle was built on the right bank of the Berezina River in the 16th century, which was first looted and burned by the Cossacks of the Ukrainian hetman Ivan Zolotareno, the brother-in-law of Bogdan Khmelnytsky (1648), and after restoration was finally destroyed during the fighting of the Great Northern War of 1700-1721.



Gorval. Market Square. Early 20th century.

However, Gorval was no stranger to rising from the ashes, and after a few years the place came to life, acquired its own pier and crossing. One of the most popular annual fairs in the area is also located here.

After the Second Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the town ended up on the territory of the Russian Empire and experienced, perhaps, one of the best periods in its history. It is not known for certain when and by whom the

wooden Holy Trinity Church was built (there is an assumption that it was built during Gorval's ownership by the Vilna chapter in the 17th century), but it is documented that in 1851, during the then ownership by Kholodovskys, it was 'utterly rebuilt by the patrimonial owner, for which up to 5,000 rubles were spent'. In 1864, a public school was opened in Gorval.

At the end of the 19th century, the Gorval Volost included 15 settlements with 471 households. The famous traveller and stat-

istician Veniamin Tyan-Shansky described the place in his book called *A Complete Geographical Description of Our Fatherland*, published in 1905, as follows: 'The area around the place is Polesian, but not poor; the estate consists of 53,000 morgs (an obsolete unit of measure equal to approximately 0.56 hectares) of land; resin is being crafted in the forests and turpentine is being produced. There are 900 inhabitants in the town, who are mainly engaged in timber rafting and trade. In Gorval there is an Orthodox church, a district police office, a volost government, three Jewish prayer houses, a hospital, a school, and quite a few shops. Based on the previous privileges, markets are held here weekly. Up to 500,000 poods of timber cargo are loaded on the pier in Gorval.' In addition, according to the 1897 census, a telegraph office, an inn and a tavern operated in the volost centre.

With the advent of Soviet power, the town survived short-term periods of German and then Polish occupation, after which it became part of the Rechitsa District (since 1923, the Rechitsa Volost), then for a short time it was the centre of the district of the same name. During the Great Patriotic War, strategically important, and therefore the bloodiest battles were repeatedly fought in the vicinity of Gorval. In 1943, the invaders burned 93 yards in the village and shot 69 local residents — a monument to them was erected on the eastern outskirts.

Today, Gorval is a slumberous, beautiful, quite typical Polesian settlement in the Rechitsa District, chosen by tourists who appreciate the stunning natural beauty of these unique places. It is a pity that the last historical landmark — the Holy Trinity Church — was destroyed in the 1930s. And so, really, there is still something to see here: such views open from the steep banks of the Berezina River — it's just breathtaking!

Photos from the personal collection of Vladimir Likhodedov



Gorval. Steamship pier. Beginning of the XX century.



Belarusian fortified churches



St. Michael's Church

According to legend, it was in the vicinity of this temple at the end of the 14th century that Prince Vitovt was hiding from his cousin Jagiello, who wanted to kill him. One can readily believe in a beautiful story when one looks at the massive walls, loophole windows and towers for observing the enemy. For a long time, scientists insisted that the building was built no earlier than the beginning of the 16th century. They were wrong! Recent archaeological excavations have proven: not later than 1320.

St. Michael's Church from a red brick is actually located in an open field. The current parish is small, but the doors are always open for pilgrims. The rugged exterior contrasts with the warm atmosphere inside. The decoration has both Gothic and Byzantine features. There are ancient inscriptions in Greek, Latin and Church Slavonic.

However, there is always a long queue of pious girls from all over Belarus to the icon of the Virgin, called *The Tsaritsa*. They say that the image helps to get married happily.

Where: *Synkovichi, Zelva District, Grodno Region*

The Orthodox and Polish Roman Catholic churches that look more like ancient fortifications are common in Belarus. The architectural heritage of the Middle Ages today impresses tourists, and once saved lives in a string of endless wars.

Church of St. Michael the Archangel

Dreamed of seeing the Sistine Madonna, but is it difficult to get to Dresden? Drive to Gnezno. In the church of St. Michael the Archangel, a local artist painted the altar no worse than Raphael. The imposing red-brick tower looks modern, but it was actually built at the dawn of the 16th century. Thick walls served as protection for local residents not only in the Middle Ages, but also during the First World War and the Great Patriotic War.

The ancient temple has an amazing history. It was built on the site of a pagan sanctuary. And at some point, the owner of the town, Jerome Chodkiewicz, gave the church to the Protestants. Not for political reasons or religious beliefs, but to spite his wife, so that she would spend less time outside the house.

Where: *Gnezno, Volkovysk District, Grodno Region*



Church of the Transfiguration

The snow-white Church of the Transfiguration is striving upwards in the heart of the city-museum of Zaslavl. Originally it was Calvinist, now — Orthodox. It looks like a real fortress from the outside, which is partly true.

In the Middle Ages, it was the church that served as the last refuge for the townspeople hiding from uninvited guests. The cathedral was built in the second half of the 16th century on the territory of a fortified bastion, the remains of which are still clearly visible. The church is surrounded by earthen ramparts and powerful ditches, and on the belfry tower one can see loopholes — it used to be a sentinel.

Where: *Zaslavl, Minsk Region*



Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The main attraction of the village of Murovanka is a 16th-century church in the Gothic-Renaissance style. For several centuries, it has repeatedly moved from one denomination to another. But in our time it has returned to Orthodoxy, in which it was initially erected. Attentive tourists can see traces of bullets and buckshot on the walls — during the wars, the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary was repeatedly attacked by the enemy.

In the 19th century, Emperor Alexander I of Russia paid attention to this church. By his order, the building was given the shape that it has today. At the corners of the building, towers with loopholes have been preserved, which are reminiscent of wartime times. If one wishes to look inside, it's possible to see the church on Sunday or on church holidays — these are the rules of the village church.

Where: *Murovanka, Shchuchin District, Grodno Region*



Church of St. John the Baptist

One of the oldest Polish Roman Catholic churches in Belarus was built in 1603-1606, but already in the middle of the century during the Russian-Polish war it was burned down and rebuilt in a new way. During the Northern War, the Swedes fired on the church from cannons, but they never took it. During the reconstruction, the enemy cannonballs were walled up in the walls, where they remain to this day.

Despite the 'combat' biography of the temple, its interior decoration impresses with elegance. Openwork paintings under the vaults, glass chandeliers, icons in gilded frames. The main decoration is the oldest organ in Belarus, which was presented to the temple for the tercentenary.

Where: *Kamai, Postavy District, Vitebsk Region*

Campaign in support of Paralympic athletes starts in Belarus

Give a hand

Paralympic athletes are often referred to as physically challenged athletes. Nevertheless, over and over again performing at the largest competitions, people who have had many tests (some required the full-time use of a wheelchair, some lost their sight) prove that their will to win is limitless. Now, alas, the opportunities and rights of athletes are deliberately limited. Recently, the International Paralympic Committee temporarily suspended the membership of the Paralympic Committees of Belarus and Russia, effectively depriving the athletes of the two countries of the opportunity to compete at the international level.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

This is not the first time the IPC has taken such decisions. Let us remember that the national teams of Russia and Belarus were suspended from participating in the Paralympic Games in Beijing in March — a competition for which athletes have been preparing for more than one year. Such precedents leave few people indifferent, which is proved by the events of recent days. The day before, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, taking into account numerous requests from public associations, disabled people with active citizenship and all Belarusians who disagree with the unfair and unprecedented situation, launched a 'No to the Double Standards of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' campaign in support of Belarusian Paralympic athletes.

"The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the enjoyment by persons with disabilities on an equal footing of all human rights. The imposition of sanctions against Paralympic and Deaflympic sports limits the physically challenged people of Belarus



At the 'We are together. Sport' Paralympic Winter Games in Khanty-Mansiysk in March this year

in exercising equal rights to go in for sports, guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which our country ratified in 2016 and is consistently developing its norms through legislation. Sports should not have borders. It must remain a symbol of accessibility, objectivity and impartiality," noted Labour and Social Security Minister Irina Kostevich.

Chairman of the Paralympic Committee of Belarus Oleg Shpel also considers the decision

of the International Paralympic Committee egregious, "During the Extraordinary General Assembly, 117 countries took part in the voting on our issue, but there are 184 countries in the Paralympic Movement, and only 54 of them voted against Belarus. We are well aware that many countries did not make it to the meeting due to the lack of visas. Many of them were also for us. We say that sport is out of politics, but, unfortunately, this is not actually so. In our country, there

are caring people, public organisations of the disabled, who came out in support of the Paralympic athletes. I think our athletes are pleased that they are remembered and taken care of."

According to the Labour and Social Security Ministry, everyone can take part in the 'No to the Double Standards of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' campaign: to do this, one need to record a video in support of athletes and send a link to

press@mintrud.gov.by by December 23rd. The videos can be viewed on the ministry's website and social media. In addition, the stories will be sent to the International Paralympic Committee, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international organisations that are called upon to promote inclusion and ensure respect for the human rights of physically challenged people.

In the meantime, our athletes continue to



prepare for future competitions. The Paralympic Committees of Belarus and Russia are developing a schedule of joint events to provide athletes with competitive practice. Competitions are planned to be held on the territory of both countries.

It will be tough!

The second edition of the CIS Games will cover the entire country in August

Another year is drawing to a close. 2022 started with the bright Olympic Games in Beijing, and hardly anyone could have imagined that just a few days after their completion, our country, like Russia, would be excommunicated from world sports. But despite the huge pressure from outside, as well as the recommendations of the International Olympic Committee not to allow athletes to participate in international competitions and other sanctions imposed on our states, a rich sports life continues. Interaction with Russia has become even closer, and thanks to this, nearly 500 joint events have been held this year alone! There are also many plans for next year. However, there is a special line in the 2023 calendar, the tournament, which promises to be the main sporting event of the year. This is the second edition of the CIS Games, which will be held in Belarus in August.

There is still a lot of time before the start of the multisport forum, but preparations for it are in full swing. According to Deputy Sports and Tourism Minister Aleksandr Baraulya, an organising committee has been created, and a plan has been developed to prepare for the second edition of the CIS Games — the work has already entered an active phase. Recently, a regular meeting of the organising committee took place, at which they discussed the rules of the Games, financial support and much more.

"If the first edition of the CIS Games were held only in Kazan, then we will have competitions in all regions of the country," notes Aleksandr Baraulya.

Minsk will host the largest

number of sports. Tournaments in volleyball, rhythmic gymnastics, athletics, modern pentathlon, shooting, beach football will be held in the capital city. In Grodno — in 3x3 basketball and weightlifting competitions, in Brest — in handball. Wrestlers will compete for awards in Soligorsk, basketball players and representatives of Thai boxing in Orsha, archers in Mogilev, judoists and sambists in Zhlobin. Molodechno will become an arena for beach volleyball, Borisov — for mini-football...

Our country has repeatedly

hosted major international sporting events. Huge experience has been accumulated in organising such events, and the sports infrastructure created in the country meets the highest requirements.

"The sports infrastructure is ready for the second edition of the CIS Games. Competitions will be held at existing facilities — no additional buildings need to be erected. It is expected that about 4,000-4,500 participants will come to Belarus — athletes, coaches and members of delegations. We also have enough places to accommodate them," says Aleksandr Baraulya.

By the way, participants are expected to come not only from the CIS countries. When the rules of the Games were being developed, it was decided to make the multisport forum open,

so representatives of any country can compete for the awards of the competition. True, for now, says Aleksandr Baraulya, it is too early to name the countries whose athletes will come to Belarus, "The composition of the participants will be known later: according to the regulations, preliminary applications must be submitted four months before the start of the Games, final applications — one month before the start of the competition."

The second edition of the CIS Games will be held from August 4th to August 14th, at the height of the holiday season, so the organisers expect that many tourists will come to the multisport forum. We also have something to show them: a rich cultural and tourist programme has been prepared.



Our athletes won 69 medals at the first edition of the CIS Games in Kazan



Photo of the week

Sledding down the snowy hills is the favourite winter activity for children

Anton Stepanishchev

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

December 1st is World AIDS Day. It is celebrated in accordance with the decision of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the decision of the UN General Assembly, adopted in 1988. The Day has become one of the most important international days related to health issues and a key opportunity to raise awareness about expanding access to treatment and prevention efforts.



On December 3rd, 1872, the beginning of the legend of the Flood myth was discovered on a fragment of one of the clay cuneiform tablets with an excerpt from the Sumerian Epic. Textually, it was close to the biblical one, but 700 years older than it! An employee of the British Museum, George Smith, a typographic copper engraver and a unique expert in Assyrian cuneiform, managed to read an excerpt from the Sumerian Epic of 3,000 BC. about Gilgamesh, which told the beginning of the Flood myth.

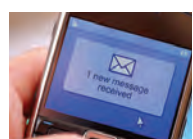
On December 3rd, 1875, the Moscow premiere of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 took place. The Piano Concerto No. 1 in B



Flat Minor was written by Pyotr Tchaikovsky in 1874-1875. Composer's First Concerto gained tremendous popularity even during his lifetime. This work remains one of the most popular piano concertos in world musical literature to this day. It has been performed by the world's leading pianists Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, Emil Gilels, Sviatoslav Richter and others.

December 3rd, 1992, is considered the birthday of SMS — the world's first transmission of SMS messages (Short Message Service) took place. The possibility of transmitting short text messages, which later became widespread, only confirms the fact that the event has become a landmark in the history of cellular communications.

On December 3rd, 1966, a solemn burial of the remains of the Unknown Soldier took place near the Kremlin wall during the days of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the defeat of the Nazi troops near Moscow. The inscription on the granite slab of the gravestone reads: 'Your name is unknown, your feat is immortal'. On the right, along the Kremlin wall, blocks are placed in a row, under which the soil of hero cities is stored in urns: Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Volgograd, Sevastopol,



Odessa, Kerch, Novorossiysk, Murmansk, Brest Fortress, Tula and Smolensk. At the Eternal Flame on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier there is a permanent guard of honour from the Presidential Regiment.

December 4th is International Day of the orders of souvenirs and letters spellings to Santa Claus. Usually, it is on December 4th in many countries of the world that post offices begin to provide services for sending letters to Santa Claus, or special post offices open where all children and their parents can send letters wishing a long-awaited gift, which will certainly be delivered to the grey-haired miracle worker.

December 4th is Lawyer's Day in Belarus. The establishment of this holiday is foremost a tribute to people who stand guard over the rights and legitimate interests of citizens, recognition of the merits of all those who have devoted their lives to legal activities that are so necessary for the state. Lawyers are entrusted with an important mission to form the legal culture of society, respect for the Law, and the legal policy of the state.



December 5th is International Volunteer Day. It is celebrated at the suggestion of the UN General Assembly in 1985. Volunteers are people who spend their free time for the benefit of society. The areas of activity in which one can see the voluntary work of volunteers are truly numerous and diverse.



On December 5th, 1957, the nuclear-powered icebreaker Lenin was launched in Leningrad, which became the world's first surface vessel with a nuclear power plant. It was designed and built to serve the Northern Sea Route (between the Far East and the European part of Russia), as well as expedition sailing in the Arctic. For 30 years of service, the ship travelled more than 650,000 nautical miles and steered 3,741 ships through the ice. Currently, there is a museum on the icebreaker.



December 8th is International Artist Day, which was established by the International Association 'Art of the Peoples of the World'.

