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Darya Titova

Batskava Bulka National Bread Festival has, in a short period of time, become a Belarusian brand

National bread festival

Last weekend, Svisloch cordially welcomed guests of the *Batskava Bulka* National Bread Festival, which has, in a short period of time, become a Belarusian brand and received a special award from the Head of State. The quiet streets of the small district centre were filled with the sounds of live music, blossomed with smiles and bright outfits of the holiday participants. Golden pies, multi-tiered loaves of bread, fragrant gingerbread, as well as a variety of fascinating theme-based works — a pie in the form of the Brest Fortress, a loaf of bread in the form of a partisan hut... This year's fest is dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the institution of presidency and the 80th anniversary of our country's liberation from German fascist invaders. The exhibition *Motherland: Peace. Welfare. Host* was especially impressive. The highlight of the *Batskava Bulka* Fest was the tasting of the famous Porozovo-style bankukha — a traditional handmade pastry that is considered an intangible cultural heritage. According to participants from other regions, the festival is not only delicious, but also useful for professionals in terms of sharing experience. As Vladimir Karanik, Chairman of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee, noted on the sidelines of the holiday, the much-loved *Batskava Bulka* National Bread Fest can receive the status of a Union State festival.



We are allies — that says it all

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, gave an interview for the *Big Sunday News* programme of the Rossiya TV channel on August 15th

Yevgeny Popov, a journalist and presenter of the *60 Minutes* socio-political talk show, deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, acted as an interviewer.

The interview with the Belarusian Head of State lasted about two hours. Aleksandr Lukashenko gave detailed, sincere and open answers to the journalist's questions on a wide range of topics, including Belarusian-Russian co-operation, issues on the regional and international agenda.

In particular, they discussed measures to ensure the security of Belarus and Russia, as well as the Union State as a whole, the situation in Ukraine and ways to resolve the conflict, the response to the behaviour of Western neighbours and the situation on the border. The interview touched on certain aspects of domestic policy, the President's personal role in the development of the country and his plans for the future. The hot topics, on which Aleksandr Lukashenko gave substantive answers, included the incident with the violation of Belarus' airspace by Ukrainian drones, the 'red lines' in security issues, and events in Kursk Region. One of the questions concerned the boorish answer from the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry to the statement of Belarus' Foreign Ministry regarding the violation of our country's airspace by drones. Ukrainian officials replied that there was nothing to talk about and that it was not anything worth thinking about.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that such obnoxious behaviour had been going on since the days of the *Studio Kvartal 95* [a TV entertainment production company co-founded by Vladimir Zelensky]. "Real diplomats will never permit themselves to say that, in the first place, even if there is 'nothing to talk about'," the President remarked. "Secondly, diplomats constantly say things other than those on their minds. So there is something to talk about."

According to the Head of State, after the incident with the drones, the statements and actions of the Belarusian side, a reaction from Ukraine followed. "We immediately received signals from those who conduct politics in a responsible way, and from the



Ukrainian military. They showed concern asking for the incident's details," the President drew attention to the fact that the situation was unfolding against the background of additional measures to protect the state border.

"They redeployed additional units to our border when they saw that we were forming appropriate units at the border. Our units took their positions, which we had determined long ago. I am in favour of taking every precaution. If the time comes, each unit, company, battalion must come out and take its assigned position," Aleksandr Lukashenko explained.

According to the Belarusian leader, brigades and battalion tactical groups have been determined in Belarus for operations in the area of the Belarusian-Ukrainian state border. More than 20 of them are planned there. "Each group knows what area and territory they are responsible for. This is crucial in order to prevent a

breakthrough. This is why we did it," the President clarified. "And the Ukrainian side saw it."

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the absence of belligerent intentions is due to the fact that Belarus and Russia are not interested in expanding the line of hostilities, and not because the other side acts in a friendly manner. "The entire border is 1,200km long. The frontline of the special military operation now is 1,000km. Are we ready to cover 1,200km? No. And Kursk has shown that. We would have to organise mobilisation [if events unfolded according to that scenario]. This is what the West wants us and, primarily, Russia to do in order to stir up society from within. Therefore, we are not ready for this, we do not want this," the Belarusian leader stressed. The President placed a special emphasis,

"We do not want escalation, and we do not want a war against the entire NATO. But if they go ahead with it, well... We will have no other choice,

ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO STRESSED THAT HE NEVER CHANGED HIS VIEW WITH REGARD TO IMPORTANT ISSUES AND HISTORICAL PROCESSES AND ALWAYS KEPT HIS WORD

There are cases in history when leaders try to disown their past, radically change their views. "There were Polish leaders who had worked almost in the special services or had been agents. We know such 'great' figures in Poland and the Czech Republic, they have refused [their past]," Aleksandr Lukashenko noted.

"Sometimes I look back at my life, at what I have done publicly, even as a deputy, and I am not ashamed. It never happened that I said one thing in the past and say something different at present," the President said. "This is because — as a historian — I understood and evaluated the whole policy properly, according to certain criteria. As a result, I am clean now."

and there will be no 'red lines'. There is one red line only — the state border. As soon as they step on it, as border guards say, our response will be immediate. It has been prepared by an order that is kept in the safe, as it should be."

"A direct question that the West likes asking leaders: Are you ready to press the 'red button'?" journalist Yevgeny Popov asked. "First of all, I have heard the discussion of these issues. I am not talking about nuclear weapons anymore, but you have asked me. As Putin says, 'I did not raise this topic, you asked me'. As for the nuclear weapons, they 'have already pushed red buttons' all around, including along the perimeter of Belarus and Russia. It remains only to press the real 'red button'. Therefore, from a moral point of view, it is probably even uncomfortable for Putin and me, who will have to make such a decision, to talk about it," the Head of State pointed out.

"Secondly, when tactical nuclear weapons were deployed here, I told them [opponents abroad] straight that we are not going to use any weapons until they step on our state border. It is also the border of the Union State."

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that according to the existing agreements, Russia, in the event of aggression against Belarus, shall send its troops to Belarus to provide military support. "According to our agreement, Russia shall send its designated units to Belarus. We take the first blow, and then Russia will back us up. This is Belarus and Russia's common war against these beasts. Should we wait until they destroy our country, as it happened with the Soviet Union [reference to the initial stage of the Great Patriotic War]? No! Therefore, we will respond instantly and adequately," the President said.

The Head of State added, "If they do not want this to happen, let's sit down at the negotiating table and end this fight, which neither the Ukrainian people, nor Russians, or Belarusians need. It is our opponents who need this conflict. I cannot disclose certain facts — they are strictly confidential — where high-ranking officials openly say, and I quote, 'Let Ukrainians and Russians kill each other, let them die in this cauldron'. High-ranking officials are saying this. They are of U.S. origin — I will lift the veil for you a little bit here. Is this normal? They want us to destroy each other."

"IF NATO TROOPS ENTER UKRAINE, IT WILL RESULT IN WWII"

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko sees the danger of WWII in the event of NATO troops entering Ukraine. "[There seems to be] an opportunity to bring Russia to heel! Ukraine will not do this, but who can? It is NATO. We need to see this, and — together with President Putin — we see that NATO troops can openly join in (without even hiding this intention). They are redeploying weapons, mercenaries, former military personnel (so that they can operate F-16s) there, and so on. This is already happening. As regards planning operations and carrying them out with the hands of NATO members from the territory of Ukraine... Moreover, it is actually their dream, they would like these vile Poles, the leaders of Poland, to seize Belarus and stretch the [front] line almost to Leningrad, as it once was," the Head of State said. "In this case, of course, it would be almost impossible for us to defend ourselves in such a situation. [In this case] there should be mobilisation and a real war."

"If they use NATO troops, then World War III will break out, since both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons will be used there. The response will be immediate and terrible. They understand it, and we understand it as well. Therefore, it is necessary to sit down at the negotiating table," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.



Yevgeny Popov

'SPECIFIC ANSWERS, A VERY BUSINESSLIKE APPROACH, A BALANCED POSITION'

Following the event, Yevgeny Popov shared his impressions of the interview with Aleksandr Lukashenko, "The conversation was very detailed and specific, from the perspective of a very hot and stressful time we live in. It is hard to overestimate the importance of co-operation between Russia and Belarus. It was very interesting to hear Aleksandr Lukashenko's vision of the future of our relations within the Union State, as well as of the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict. His

answers were specific, the approach was very businesslike, and his position was balanced. To the credit of the host party, I must admit that there were no pre-conditions, and no topics or questions were discussed in advance. It is clear that your President is immersed in the situation like no one else, and in this sense I asked the questions that were interesting for me as a journalist. It seems to me that Aleksandr Grigorievich [Lukashenko] was extremely frank. It is a great success, and I am grateful for it."

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has taken part in the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, which was hosted by India and held as a videoconference. The Head of State participated in the forum at the invitation of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The purpose of the forum was to discuss the development priorities of the Global South and the solutions to the specific problems of developing countries.

The key states of the Global South include China, India, Iran, the UAE, and South Africa. Last year, India chaired the G20 and hosted two online Voice of Global South Summits, in which heads of state, government and line ministries from more than 150 countries were invited to participate. The forum has become a significant international platform for discussing topical issues of economic and technological co-operation, energy security, healthcare, and human resource development.

Speech by President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko at the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit

Dear Mr. Modi,
Dear friends,

Thank you for the invitation to speak at the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, which is turning into one of the major forums for discussing issues of the modern world order and the future of humanity.

We are united by common goals and approaches to solving global problems. These include building a multipolar world, creating a system of indivisible security, ensuring sustainable development, and strengthening equitable co-operation, as well as the most important thing — raising the standard of living of our peoples.

The era of Western domination is fading into the past. The centre of global progress, economic gravity, and political decision-making is shifting to the South and East. This requires us to actively show leadership in international affairs. The voice of the Global South must be heard in full force and match its gigantic potential.

Opponents feel this increasing power and try to counteract it.

The Indian Prime Minister is absolutely right when he says that 'most of the global challenges have not been created by the Global South, but they affect us more'.

Belarus knows this well from its own experience. For a number of years, we have been living under illegal, unfair, barbaric sanctions that not only have an impact on our country, but also have a disastrous effect on your people.

Thus, restrictions on the export of Belarusian min-

'No development is possible without sustainable peace and resolution of global contradictions'



eral fertilisers have exacerbated the problems of food shortages and hunger in the poorest countries.

The West continues to provoke conflicts that generate flows of millions of refugees, and then cynically blames the Global South and Belarus for the migration crisis. However, the real reason is the siphoning of resources and the imposition of a system of unequal exchange on developing countries. Today, many regions are shaken by wars and conflicts, and the arms race is gaining unprecedented momentum in favour of multinational corporations. Yet, no development is possible without sustainable peace and resolution of global contradictions.

That is why Belarus has repeatedly come up with peace initiatives and assumed the role of a negotiating platform for conflict resolution. We will continue to steadily continue this work.

Belarus aims to contribute to the strengthening of the Global Majority by actively participating in unifying international structures, such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, as well as the BRICS, whose partners we expect to become in the near future.

Dear friends!

The world system of colonialism collapsed more than half a century ago but this did not lead to the real liberation of the so-called 'third world' countries, which had the status of colonies. De facto, economic and technological dependence on former metropolises remains in many ways.

Therefore, the main focus of our work today is the economy as the basis of any sovereignty. It is in the economic sphere that we have something to offer the countries of the Global South.

Belarus has been actively co-operating with the states of Asia, Africa and Latin America for a long time, since the Soviet times. We constantly provide humanitarian assistance to countries in need. However, our capabilities are much broader.

Belarus is one of the world leaders in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite the pressure exerted from the outside, our country demonstrates a high level of stability and continues to develop steadily.

As a republic with well-developed industry, agriculture, science, and education system, we are ready to offer the Global South food, industrial products, technologies, including digital ones, advanced healthcare practices, including telemedicine, personnel training services and more.

We already have experience in effectively contributing to the progress of a number of countries in the Global South, their industrialisation, enhancing the quality and standard of living of the population.

In this regard, the Republic of Zimbabwe can be cited as an example — with the help of Belarus, it successfully ensures food security, develops a system of medical care, as well as maternity and child welfare services.

We may be geographically far from you, but we are always ready to be there for you in solving the most pressing tasks.

I am sure that together we are able to give a fitting response to any challenges of our time. As great Mahatma Gandhi said, "If you want to change the world, start with yourself." I am convinced that together we can change this world, and the voice of the Global Majority is the voice of our common future.



At the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, held as a videoconference, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for unity among the nations of the Global South, as reported by India TV channel

"It is the need of the hour that nations of the Global South unite and stand together in one voice and be each other's strength," the politician stressed. He underscored that the world is currently in an uncertain environment, and situations, such as military confrontation, create problems for the development of countries. "We are meeting at a time when there is an atmosphere of

INDIA HAS INVITED THE GLOBAL SOUTH COUNTRIES TO CONCLUDE A GROUNDBREAKING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COMPACT

uncertainty all around. The situation of war has posed challenges to our development journey. We are already facing the challenges of climate change, and now there are also concerns about health security, food security, and energy security. Terrorism, extremism and separatism remain a serious threat to our societies. The technological gap, economic and social challenges related to technology are also emerging. Global governance and financial institutions created over the past decade have proved unable to fight the challenges of this century," News18 quoted him as saying.

According to Modi, the Voice of Global South is a platform 'to give voice to the needs and aspirations of those who have been unheard till now.' "I believe that our strength lies in our

unity, and with the power of this unity we are moving towards a new direction," Modi concluded.

The Prime Minister of India proposed the countries of the Global South to conclude a comprehensive Global Development Compact, which will be based on India's development journey and experience of development partnership. Modi clarified that India would start a special fund of \$2.5 million in order to strengthen trade promotion activities, and would contribute \$1 million to build up capacity in trade policy and trade negotiation.

In his closing remarks at the summit, the Indian Prime Minister emphasised that the discussion paved the way for the Global South countries to move forward together, and expressed confidence that it would

contribute to efforts to achieve the goals set by the countries.

The summit participants reaffirmed their commitment to the global multilateral system and international law, recognised the need to bolster international solidarity and interaction, as well as to promote the reform of multilateral mechanisms in order to reinforce the voice of international law in developing countries and ensure a human-centric approach. The countries stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by strengthening financial resources, sharing experiences in development, digital transformation, developing the private economy and promoting technology co-operation.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

In October 2023, the President of Belarus approved crucial forecast parameters for the country's development in 2024. The major aim is to ensure economic stability and enhance the welfare of the population. The GDP is projected to grow by 3.8 percent, while inflation is expected not to exceed 6 percent. Preliminary results for the first half of the year indicate that there are ample conditions to meet these targets. Andrei Kartun, First Deputy Minister of Economy, has spoken about the development of the Belarusian economy and the reserves available for its further growth.

Dynamics of steady development

GDP growth and rising household incomes — how the Belarusian economy is operating in current conditions

By Vladislav Sychevich

Meeting the target

— How did the economy perform in January to June? Which sectors have driven growth?

— It is necessary to highlight that the economy as a whole is operating quite steadily. According to the results of the first half of the year, four out of five forecast indicators were met, significantly ahead of the plan. Thus, from January to June, GDP growth reached 105 percent, exceeding both the forecast and the global average.

The primary drivers of this growth are industry, agriculture, trade, and construction. Industry undoubtedly remains the engine of the economy, showing a growth rate of 7.1 percent from January to June 2024.

Agriculture is also performing well, with growth exceeding 10 percent. The construction sector maintains a high pace with a growth rate of 108.8 percent. Positive trends prevail in trade as well, with retail turnover rising by 11.5 percent over January — June 2024 and wholesale turnover up by 7.8 percent.

It is noteworthy that products from the real sector of the economy are in high demand. Compared to the same period last year, the ratio of stock reserves to the average monthly production volume has decreased by 8.9 percent. This is facilitated by increased sales on external markets, with an export growth rate of 104.2 percent from January to June 2024.

Belarus is dynamically expanding its presence on the markets of far arc countries, significantly building up sales to Asian countries by 16.6 percent and to Africa by 3.7 times. Enterprises are planning their development with growing confidence, while investments in fixed capital rose by 7.6 percent in the first half of the year. Along with that, expenditure on acquiring machinery and equipment grew by more than 14 percent. The effective functioning of the economy enables a high wage level — on average, Br2,270 in June 2024.

— What reserves will be leveraged in order to maintain this momentum and achieve the targets set?

— To achieve the anticipated growth rate of 103.8 percent this year, it is necessary to ramp up production and export volumes, enhance domestic demand, and elevate real disposable income levels among the population.

Under the Comprehensive Measures for the Protection of the Domestic Market for 2023-2025, initiatives are being implemented to promote Belarusian products, shape a positive image of national brands, and protect the internal market.

As is known, since the start of 2024, Belarusbank has been offering attractive consumer loans for the purchase of domestic goods, including furniture, household appliances, motorcycle and bicycle products, and other goods in demand by our citizens.

Foreign trade remains a key priority for our open economy. In 2023, despite sanctions, record levels were achieved on certain indicators. The export of goods was the highest in the last 11 years, with supplies to Russia and China reaching historic highs. At the same time, Belarus continues to diversify its exports of goods and services, stepping up its presence on the markets of far arc countries and establishing new trade and economic connections, as well as new logistical chains.

The Head of State has set an ambitious task to increase export by 7.6 percent this year. To this end, new entities in industry-specific commodity distribution network will be established in the Chinese market, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and other friendly countries.

Income growth

— The increase in household income is one of the priorities of government policy. What measures are taken to achieve this?

— From January to May of the current year, the real disposable income of the population rose by 9.6 percent. For the period of January to June 2024, the real growth of retirement pensions reached 110.9 percent. By the end of June, real wages increased by 11.2 percent.

The rise in the minimum subsistence budget has positively affected the size of supplements and additional payments to pensions, as well as benefits for families with children.

It is anticipated that household income will continue to grow this year. The basic rate for state-funded organisations has been raised to Br250, marking a 9 percent increase as compared to 2023. Salaries for teachers are set to increase by no less than 16 percent in nominal terms, while additional incentive payments for medical professionals, social workers, and cultural employees will also rise.

Given the projected economic growth rates for this year, we expect that real disposable incomes of the population will grow by at least 3.5 percent by the end of 2024.

MADE in Belarus



Technological response

— In the current climate, significant attention is given to technological security. What efforts are being made in this direction with the Russian Federation?

— In order to ensure technological sovereignty and reduce dependence on imports, the Republic of Belarus, in collaboration with the Russian Federation, is implementing 25 import-substituting integration projects worth over P144 billion. An additional project has been approved at the level of the industrial ministries of both countries.

Belarusian flagships, such as Gomselmash, BELAZ, AMKODOR and other leading enterprises, are setting up production for new products, including timber harvesting equipment, agricultural machinery components, and a wide range of automotive parts. In addition, co-operation with Russia is actively developing in other areas of mutual interest.

In microelectronics, our countries have agreed a development roadmap involving the production of over 80 types of electronic components for use in civilian and space technology based at the INTEGRAL plant facility.

In the machine tool industry, we have agreed to create centres of competence based at machinery manufacturing

enterprises in both countries, aimed at jointly developing units and components for the production of new metalworking equipment.

A promising direction is aerospace — it is planned to master joint production of aircraft by 2026.

— What is the situation with investments in the Belarusian economy today? What legislative initiatives contribute to improving the investment climate in the country?

— The Belarusian economy continues to attract foreign capital. In 2023, net foreign direct investment exceeded \$1.64 billion, representing a 7.3 percent increase compared to 2022.

The growth rate of investments in fixed capital last year was 117.8 percent.

In 2024, this positive dynamics continues — as previously noted, during the first half of the year, investments in fixed capital grew by 7.6 percent.

To foster business development and implement new projects in the regions, the government is consistently working on measures to stimulate investment. In July 2024, an updated Investment Law came into effect. The key innovations include the creation of conditions for the implementation of major projects, and the stimulation of investment activities in the regions.

Efforts to improve the investment legislation are ongoing, with amendments being made to subordinate acts and new procedural tools being introduced.



Andrei Kartun

In liaison with the Celestial Empire

The comprehensive and all-weather strategic partnership established between Belarus and China allows expanding our co-operation

Our liaison is based on mutual respect, sincerity and friendship. The SCO and BRICS summits, along with major forums and conferences, serve as vital platforms for discussing key areas of Belarusian-Chinese collaboration. What are the specific projects currently underway between our countries?

By Igor Savostenko

Multi-dimensional interaction

The co-operation between Belarus and China encompasses various dimensions. Our friendship rests on the relationship between the heads of state Aleksandr Lukashenko and Xi Jinping. High-level agreements have paved the way for collaborative projects that are being implemented in several areas, such as trade, security, transport, education, culture and many others.

As noted by political expert Piotr Petrovsky, the joint Belarus-China anti-terror exercise *Attacking Falcon* finished at the Brestsky training ground in July. The military men of Belarus' special operations forces, together with their Chinese colleagues, practiced night landings, overcoming water barriers and conducting combat in a populated area. Such joint drills are not a new experience for Minsk and Beijing: similar exercises took place in Belarus in 2011 and 2015, and in the Celestial Empire in 2012 and 2018. The joint actions of the Belarusian and Chinese military will continue in the future.

It is symbolic that the current exercise commenced shortly after Belarus had received the status of a full member of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation at the summit in Kazakhstan on July 3rd-4th. Notably, the drills were held just a few kilometres from the Belarusian-Polish border and from the only operating border crossing, which official Warsaw wanted to close during the visit of Polish President Andrzej Duda to Beijing.

According to political expert Piotr Petrovsky, "Any exercises, especially joint ones, serve not only to train military personnel but also to achieve certain military and diplomatic objectives aimed at warning, demonstrating determination, sending a signal. The joint military drills at the Brestsky training ground and



Joint Belarus-China anti-terror exercise *Attacking Falcon* was held in July in Belarus



Pavel Bogush



WORLD OF NEW POSSIBILITIES

Political expert Piotr Petrovsky has noted that the concept of *Charter of Diversity and Multipolarity in the 21st Century* aligns closely with China's initiative for *Community of Common Destiny for Mankind*, designed to establish a balanced and just world order. Official Minsk also supports Beijing's proposals aimed to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. They make part of *Global Security Initiative (GSI)*, which was put forward by the People's Republic of China in the spring of 2023. In this regard, Petrovsky asserts that Minsk and Beijing are united by a common philosophy of international relations. Our countries reject any kind of duumvirate model, advocating instead for a multipolar world order based on a variety of elements and centres of power. This approach, in particular, implies that no exclusive blocks or closed alliances can guarantee 'maximum' security for their members.

A crucial unifying component is the principle of indivisible security. President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko told Kazinform about this on the eve of the SCO summit in Astana, "I am deeply convinced that genuine and indivisible global security in the 21st century must be built through a broad dialogue, without discrimination, on conditions acceptable to all. You cannot demand safety for yourself while ignoring the safety of others."

Piotr Petrovsky concludes that establishing a new security architecture within a multipolar world will serve as a significant impetus for the development of nations.

Belarus' accession to the SCO have clearly illustrated the readiness and irreversibility of the pan-Eurasian security system formation. It is worth noting that the *Antiterrorism Interaction-2024* joint exercise held in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which involved the special services of the SCO member states and incorporated advanced information and communication technologies, received a high assessment from specialists."

Form and content

Piotr Petrovsky stressed that the SCO was initially conceived for security co-operation to address regional security concerns, particularly

related to the Afghan issue. Over time, its focus has extended to encompass continental security challenges. The range of issues has also expanded. Now it includes not only the fight against manifestations of terrorism and extremism, but also the eradication of drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the co-ordination of participating countries in preventing disruptions in the global balance of power. The latter aspect is particularly concerning. "NATO's expansion to the East has become one of the causes of the Ukrainian conflict. Western countries are striving to create a Pacific analogue of the North Atlantic Alliance —

the AUKUS bloc, which aims to reinforce Western dominance in the region and deter the SCO member states," highlighted political expert Piotr Petrovsky.

Given the evolving landscape, there is a pressing need for Belarus and China to deepen their co-operation on security issues. Thus, in addition to regular joint exercises and active interaction between the defence agencies of the two countries, there are tangible results in a military and industrial sector. A notable example is the development and production of Polonez Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) complexes in Belarus.

Diversity and multipolarity

According to Piotr Petrovsky, the creation of a common security space is driven by the current challenges emanating from the escalating international relations. Belarus and China have found themselves in a situation of intense pressure from the West that opposes to the emerging multipolar world and seeks to preserve its hegemony by all means. However, the real situation indicates a different trend — the countries of the collective East have significantly strengthened recently, and started to beef up their economic and political weight. Notably, the SCO member states now represent more than half of the world's population and approximately a third of global GDP.

In light of this situation, the priority task on the agenda is to prepare and organise specific mechanisms for the effective functioning of institutions of a multipolar world. To this end, at the Astana SCO summit, official Minsk extended an invitation to all countries to participate in a forthcoming security conference, which will take place in Belarus this autumn, in order to develop the ideas outlined in Minsk's *Charter of Diversity and Multipolarity in the 21st Century*. This document aspires to serve as a fundamental value and international declaration of all constructive forces ready to support the emerging new global world order. Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed Moscow's support for Minsk's proposal to develop this programme document. China has also shown readiness to join the work, as became known following the recent talks between Belarus' Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhenkov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing.

New heights

The Belarusian aviation industry continues to explore promising areas



Pavel Bologush

Restrictions imposed by a number of countries have not fundamentally affected the consistent work of domestic aviation organisations. As before, the services continue to be provided in full compliance with all international norms and standards. The airline network is expanding, and the industry continues to offer the most favourable conditions for air transportation and high-quality service for both Belarusian citizens and guests of our country. Igor Golub, Director of Aviation Department at Belarus' Ministry of Transport and Communications, has spoken about this and many other developments in the industry.

By Dmitry Shamko

Union sky

— Despite the sanctions pressure, regular flights between Belarus and friendly countries continue. Igor Vladimirovich, how is the industry functioning today?

— Indeed, we continue to fly despite the imposed restrictions, the suspension of flights by Western airlines to Belarus and domestic carriers to Europe, and the overall decline in air traffic. We primarily carry out flights to Russia, countries of the Caucasus region, Central Asia, the Middle East and others. Foreign air carriers from friendly countries also continue to operate flights to Belarus. Today, the national airline Belavia offers regular flights from Minsk National Airport, as well as from the regional airports in Gomel and Brest to 22 destinations in 10 countries. These include Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Kaliningrad, Makhachkala, Murmansk, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye, the UAE, India. In addition, Minsk National Airport sends and receives flights from nine foreign carriers from Russia, Uzbekistan, China, and the United Arab Emirates. We are actively working to attract partners from the Eurasian integration member states and the CIS to resume existing routes and open new ones.

— How popular are regular flights to cities and regions of Russia?

— The close co-operation within the Union State is reflected in the development of air traffic. Our countries are currently connected by flights of Belavia and six Russian airlines to 18 destinations. In 2023-2024, Russian carriers initiated or resumed flights to Minsk from Cherepovets, Kaluga, Nizhny Novgorod, Perm, Ufa, Samara, Ulyanovsk, Arkhangelsk, Chelyabinsk, and Mineralnye Vody. Along with that, work is underway to open new routes connecting

the Belarusian capital to various regions in Russia, such as Barnaul, Vladikavkaz, Volgograd, Omsk, Tomsk, Tyumen, and more. In January — May of this year alone, over 600,000 passengers were transported on flights between Minsk and Russia's regions, which is 27 percent more compared to the same period last year.



Igor Golub

According to the law of demand

— What prospects for tourism and recreation do charter programmes offer Belarusians?

— Tourist charter flights to resorts in Egypt, Türkiye and Qatar are currently operated from Minsk National Airport, as well as from Gomel, Vitebsk and Brest regional airports. In addition, taking into account the growing interest among our fellow citizens in exotic destinations, our aviation marketing policy is focused on expanding the route network from friendly countries of the Persian Gulf, Central and Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa.

— How does the pricing policy in terms of air ticket costs contribute to an increase in passenger traffic and air transport competitiveness compared to land transport?

— The development of the route network and the opening of flights to new destinations is a complex issue that we tackle in collaboration with interested departments of our country and other countries, major state-owned travel companies, the main Belarusian carrier Belavia Airlines OJSC and foreign airlines in order to organise tourist and business flows. Before launching any new direction, it is required to calculate the economic component, which should be feasible for both passengers and service providers. If customers are willing to pay a certain amount for the convenience of faster travel to the desired destination, they will benefit from the flight

anyway. The expanded geography of flights and increased number of air carriers will contribute to the growth in passenger traffic and air transport competitiveness. This will enable passengers not only to explore new destinations for leisure and business trips, but also to buy air tickets at more attractive prices.

Regional reserves

— What role do Belarusian regional airports play in enhancing the air traffic volume today, and what are the plans to increase their workload?

— Our regional airports are international and meet all the necessary requirements for flight service. In October last year, Belavia Airlines launched flights from Gomel to Moscow, followed by the introduction of flights to St. Petersburg in March. In April of this year, we opened air service from Brest airport to the Russian capital. Since the beginning of these programmes, the frequency of flights in the specified directions has been increasing. This strengthens the already established business relationships with partners from Russia and fosters new connections, as well as opens up prospects for the development of tourism and cultural exchange between our regions. Since spring, Belarusian regional airports have been engaged more actively due to charter programmes, with flights to Türkiye and Egypt operated from Gomel and Vitebsk, and to Türkiye from Brest.

We see everything from above

Minsk National Airport has launched the Secret Passenger service quality monitoring programme, which is a kind of feedback channel that, along with the methods already used, will allow gathering additional information about passengers' wishes and taking prompt decisions to improve service quality and making the airport more comfortable, safe and hospitable. Proactive passengers interested in enhancing the airport service quality can participate in the programme. In order to become a secret passenger, participants are required to fill out an application form on the airport's website in the corresponding section, receive and fill out a checklist after each flight — departure or arrival — via Minsk National Airport (by any airline), and submit their feedback with a photo of the boarding pass attached no later than 10 days from the date of the flight. Participants who have prepared the most informative reports will be awarded certificates for free service in the airport's business lounge for a certain period.



Igor Shvachko

Bloc factor

Why Western metallurgy, mechanical engineering, and electronics may take a blow soon

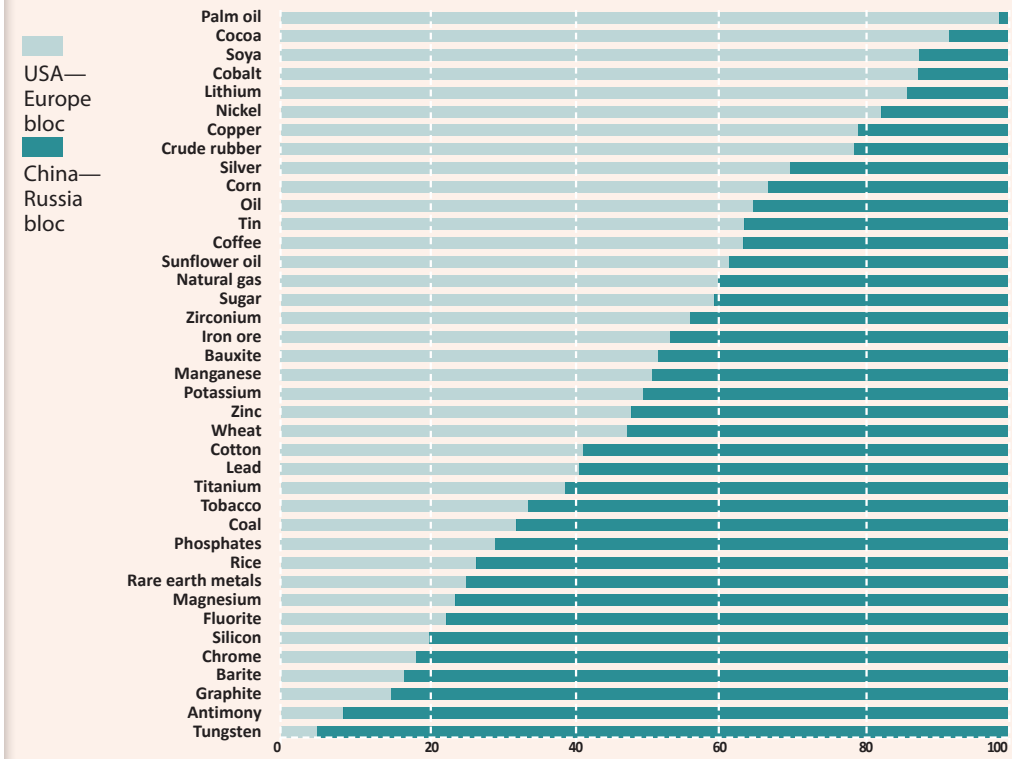


GATEWAYS FOR CO-OPERATION

The ongoing localisation process in the global economy is a fact. The interaction between states is becoming measured, limited, and to some extent, politicised. However, it cannot completely cease. This has never happened, even during the most dramatic and tragic periods in human history. Almost all models of extreme fragmentation of the global economy demonstrate that complete polarisation is fundamentally impossible. There will always be critical raw materials and products that economic centres will continue to exchange. It is evident that there will be countries acting as gateways for interaction between the economic poles. In this regard, Belarus has every chance and capability to serve as a business hub. The current unfriendly rhetoric prevalent in global politics should not be misleading. Sooner or later, a détente occurs, and Belarus is ready for it. The visa-free regime, for instance, is one element of developing the business sphere. Today, our country is arguably one of the most convenient places for business negotiations and consultations for partners who, by a geopolitical twist of fate, have found themselves on the opposite economic sides. There is a strong likelihood that, in the near future, Minsk will acquire the status of a Eurasian business platform.

NATO has once again started to inflate the narrative about the threats posed by China to the alliance and the necessity of containing Beijing. In the European theatre of military operations, Americans and their partners are also flexing their muscles. The arms rattling taking place in various regions suggests that the fragmentation of the global economy along bloc lines is a very realistic prospect that may happen in the near future. Experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have conducted research to model the future of various regions based on the availability of resources — raw materials and foodstuffs. The findings indicate that the USA and the EU are facing challenging times ahead.

Shares of geopolitical blocs in raw materials production, percent



By Vladimir Volchkov

Tentative possibility

The IMF's trade split model is certainly somewhat tentative. The world was divided into political blocs based on the voting on the UN General Assembly resolution concerning Russia and the Ukrainian conflict on March 2nd, 2022. The resolution was supported by some states which can be tentatively classified as the Western coalition of the USA and Europe. There were abstentions, including China and India, while Russia and a number of other countries voted against it. IMF analysts categorised them as conditionally belonging to the Eastern bloc of Russia and China.

Undoubtedly, the global economy has never experienced a rigid fragmentation. Even during the most acute phases of geopolitical confrontation, trade in goods between blocs has persisted.

There always remain a certain number of neutral countries that exert a limited economic influence on the antagonists. There remain various trade channels for mutual commerce. Nevertheless, it can be observed that, perhaps for the first time since the 1970s — when the notorious Arab oil embargo took place — raw materials are used as a tool for economic pressure, and in increasingly harsh and un-

compromising forms. The number of sanctions in raw material markets has doubled since 2021, with a clear trend toward expanding these restrictions. Therefore, the split of international trade in raw materials and foodstuffs represents a very plausible scenario.

Not by energy alone

Events in the oil and gas markets traditionally dominate the headlines. However, the fragmentation of the energy sector might be less impactful than initially perceived. While there are certainly leaders in hydrocarbon extraction, its production is geographically distributed fairly evenly across the planet. Thus, both blocs could manage to sustain their needs for this resource, although market regionalisation may have potentially adverse effects on volatility and pricing strategies. Within the blocs, certain producing countries may gain greater influence than they had in a globally integrated supply market. On the other hand, not all raw materials are traded exclusively on exchanges. Significant quantities of oil and gas are shipped under long-term agreements, both at corporate and inter-governmental levels. Therefore, it seems likely that pricing factors could be adjusted at a bloc integration level.

However, there are minerals crucial for production. For instance, 85 percent of tungsten production is located in China, along with 70 percent of rare earth

metals and 65 percent of graphite. The Eastern bloc also leads in the production of antimony, barite, chromium, silicon, and magnesium, all of which are vital and indispensable for micro- and radioelectronics, a wide range of special alloys, and refractory materials — components, without which practically no industry can function — and catalysts for the chemical industry. Consequently, in the event of a complete severance in external trade, it is primarily the high-tech sectors in the West that would suffer the most.

Over half of the world's lithium is mined in Australia, with 24 percent sourced from Chile and 12 percent from the People's Republic of China. Approximately 67 percent of cobalt is extracted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These resources are essential for mechanical engineering and the production of electric batteries.

Interest in the African continent

The thing is that this IMF model is based on a rather tenuous criterion of voting on just one resolution. Furthermore, this event took place two years ago. A great deal has changed since then. A whole necklace of countries in Latin America and Africa no longer unequivocally support the USA—EU bloc.

Indeed, IMF researchers recognise that a number of countries may shift from one camp to the other, or even

maintain neutrality while co-operating with both global poles. From this perspective, the raw material security of the so-called Eastern bloc appears quite robust, perhaps with the exception of palm oil, cocoa, and soya. These are important commodities, but not critical ones if there is an abundance of other food products available.

It is worth noting that Belarus, China, and Russia have made considerable progress in their collaboration with many African nations, including in enhancing the food security of the region. This is fundamentally important.

Food security is one of the key factors in the foreign policy of states and undoubtedly serves as a significant argument for establishing economic relations. It can be stated with confidence that a meticulous competition for key resources is currently underway. Today, as evidenced by the IMF data, alternative integration structures, which encompass Belarus, China, Russia, and their partners, appear to be quite promising in comparison to the Western bloc.

“Have you heard of Pen — my first teacher, the artist, the tireless worker who eternally resides on Gogolevskaya Street?” Marc Chagall would exclaim. The name of Yudel Pen is enveloped in both legends and glory, although the painter was remarkably modest, humble in his everyday life, and steadfastly refused all the advantages he could have gained from his unique talent. His thin figure, with glasses perched on his nose and a wedge-shaped beard, remains immortalised in self-portraits and in the memories of those he taught and inspired — not only Marc Chagall but also Ossip Zadkine, El Lissitzky, Ilya Chashnik, Oscar Meshchaninov, Zair Azgur, and many others. Yudel Pen, a chronicler of the shtetl [a Yiddish term for a small town with Jewish population], is regarded as the ‘father of the Jewish Renaissance’, for he nurtured a brilliant generation of artists who would flourish years later in the bohemian enclaves of Montparnasse and Soviet studios. He left behind a truly great legacy — without making a penny — as well as a bright memory tinged equally with love and tragedy.

Between the muse and death

Yudel Pen was born in 1854 in the town of Novoaleksandrovska in Kovno Governorate. As he later wrote in his biography, “...that year cholera was expected, but God took pity on our little town and sent famine instead.” He chose his birthday — May 24th (June 5th in the new style) — for himself at the age of 27, when he needed to obtain a birth certificate. His father passed away early, and his mother struggled tirelessly to feed their ten children. The rare days when the orphaned household had enough to eat were considered fortunate. Yet, from a young age, the burgeoning passion for drawing never left the boy, even in the depths of poverty.



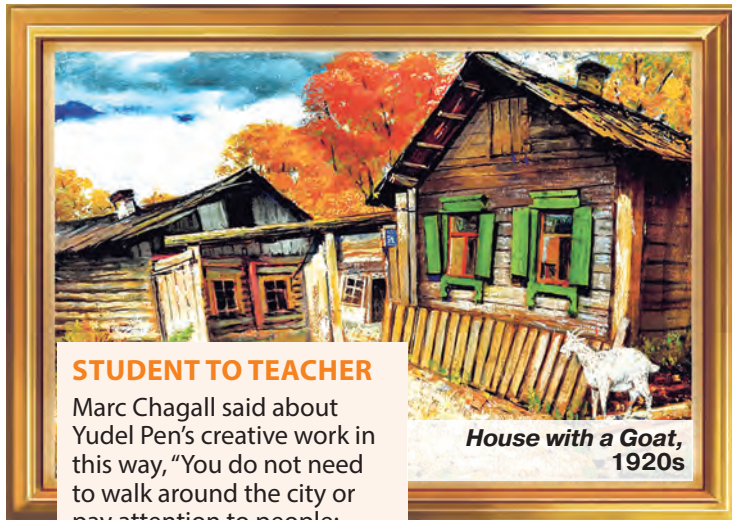
Watchmaker, 1914

Pen drew while studying in the cheder; he received reprimands for his artistic pursuits and sometimes was even beaten, as the Torah forbade the depiction of living beings and allowed drawing plants only. Therefore, both his rabbi and mother were generous with their punishments. Nevertheless, Pen persevered, sketching portraits of his classmates and teacher. Observing the shifts of emotion on people’s faces and capturing them on paper — what could be more fascinating?

At the age of 13, Yudel packed up and moved to Dvinsk [now Daugavpils, Latvia] — a larger and wealthier city. Pen became an apprentice to a painter who specialised in shop sign drawing and had heard from acquaintances about the boy passionate about drawing. It is from him that Pen received the first guidance and first money for the ‘artistic’ work. Wishing to play a small prank while simultaneously decorating the hall of a client’s home, the budding artist added non-existent railings to a wooden staircase. He portrayed them in such a lifelike manner that the owner was unable to determine at first glance that the railings were fake. Impressed by the young man’s talent, the painter not only refrained from punishing Yudel but also paid him his first genuine fee — 25 roubles, which was an astonishing sum by the boy’s standards. Upon receiving this, Pen made the most significant decision of his life — he needed to study, properly. In 1879, he set off for St Petersburg.

At the Imperial Academy of Arts, his teachers were the renowned master of historical and portrait painting, Pavel Chistyakov, and sculptor Nikolai Laveretsky. Among his contemporaries were Valentin Serov, Ilya Repin, and Mikhail Vrubel...

After completing his studies, Pen encountered an arts patron in the face of Baron Nikolai Korf — a well-known publicist and social activist concerned about



House with a Goat, 1920s

STUDENT TO TEACHER

Marc Chagall said about Yudel Pen’s creative work in this way, “You do not need to walk around the city or pay attention to people; there is no need to go to the theatre, to the church, to the synagogue — you have everything in front of you as everything moans and cries in Pen’s paintings every minute, both in the daytime and in the evening, on Saturday, on a holiday...” Chagall confessed, “I cannot describe Pen’s paintings. I heard, smelled, and touched Pen’s paintings as a child. I do not see them from afar. That is why I am a bad critic, and thank God.”



A Komsomol Shoemaker Reading a Newspaper, 1925

educational issues in the Russian Empire. The artist spent several years at Korf’s estate in Kreitzburg, situated between Dvina and Vitebsk. Contrary to expectations, he did not return to St Petersburg but settled in Vitebsk. Governor General Levashov, a friend of the baron, invited Pen three times to establish an art school in the city. The artist declined the offer twice, but on the third occasion, Korf persuaded him to accept the offer. In Vitebsk, which ultimately became the artist’s home for the rest of his life, Pen was warmly welcomed and given a room in the governor’s house. He later acquired a flat combined with an art studio, where he opened his school.

The ‘classes’ of Yudel Pen became a harbour for many future prominent artists.

Having suffered from hunger and poverty in his childhood, Pen did not demand fees from the children of the poor; their education was funded by a local arts patron. Pen took care of his pupils as best he could. “When we studied with him — six boys — he treated us as his most beloved sons,” recalled the Vitebsk artist, Piotr Yavich. “Pen was everything to us — our art, our school, and even our home. His endless

CHRONICLER OF A JEWISH TOWN

Since 1927, Yudel Pen was granted a pension and awarded the *Honoured Jewish Artist* title. The justification read, “Artist Pen is a singer of the old, already dying Jewish way of life. Dozens of his works are incomparably far from October, from a house of a Belarussian peasant. However, this is — albeit an old one — a brick of cultural heritage that is laid collectively by the entire population of Byelorussia: Byelorussians, Jews, Poles, and Russians. Therefore, they are dear to workers and peasants.”



Portrait of Marc Chagall

openness, simplicity, and yet high culture were astonishing. Without asking whether we were hungry or not, Yuri Moiseevich [Pen] would brew tea for us, boil potatoes in their skins, and set out lump sugar, butter, and cottage cheese on the table.” Throughout his life, Pen remained deeply involved in the affairs and problems of his former trainees scattered around the world, offered assistance and financial support to those unable to continue their studies due to poverty. He remembered all too well how hard it had been for him and endeavoured to ease his students’ paths to their dreams.

On his canvases, the world of the Jewish shtetl came to life — the most impoverished, vulnerable, and unfortunate part of society.

Tailors, bakers, glaziers, watchmakers, seamstresses, and soldiers that returned from war — they, the labourers, were separated from the wealthy and well-fed by an abyss that was virtually insurmountable. The artist came from the same background as many of his students, including famous Marc Chagall, whose memories of Pen are filled with pain and tenderness.

It was Pen whom Marc Chagall, beaming with hope, invited to teach



Yudel Pen



Two Cats. Portrait of Raisa Idelson, 1908

at the newly established Vitebsk Folk Art School. After all, whom else could he trust to nurture young talents other than the very man who had once been his own teacher?

However, after Chagall’s departure from Vitebsk, Pen found himself at odds with the changing environment of the Art School and soon left its walls behind. He continued to gather a few students at his studio on Gogolevskaya Street and gave them lessons free of charge. In 1927, he was awarded a pension and the *Honoured Jewish Artist* title, which allowed him to make ends meet.

For the rest of his life, Pen remained single. He had parted ways with his first love — the daughter of the Hasidic painter he was once apprenticed to, simultaneously relinquishing any dreams of a happy and prosperous life. The other love, unrequited and unattainable, belonged to the daughter of the governor who had invited him to Vitebsk. The girl departed for Paris in 1905 since the future looked bleak... Pen was no match for her. Yet, he forever remained loyal to the city and its streets where his beloved once walked. In 1924, he completed another self-portrait, depicting the muse gently caressing the strings of a harp, juxtaposed with death playing the flute — two opposing forces, with the aging artist caught between, counting the hours and days of earthly existence.

“Throughout my life, despite the diversity of our art, I remember his trembling figure,” Marc Chagall fondly reflected on his teacher Yudel Pen. “He lives in my memory like a father. Often, when I think of the desolate streets of the city, I feel his presence here and there... And I cannot help but ask you to remember his name.”

Stitch by stitch

A Vitebsk resident has built up a collection of legendary sewing machines, and dreams of creating a museum exhibition based on them

Businessman Yuri Sergeyev has long been fond of remaking old things into lamps. The search for the next base for the lamp marked the beginning of a new hobby — collecting pre-war sewing machines. So many of them have been collected in a year that they have occupied an entire apartment.

By Yelena Alimova

In search of the base

We met with Yuri at the art gallery *At the Fountain* on Suvorov Street in the regional centre. A variety of creative and offbeat lamps made of an iron, a corkscrew, a frying pan, a meat grinder, a clock, and a hat resembled the atmosphere of the exhibition hall. “There are enough people willing to buy them, but the atmosphere is not for sale,” Yuri noted.

We approached the next lamp. According to the master, that was the sewing machine that started it all. “I had an idea that it would be interesting to use an old sewing machine as a base for the lamp. When I started to get more of them, I realised that sewing machines were ‘alive’ and good in themselves. You do not need to make anything out of them. So I used a non-working copy for the lamp,” the collector shared his story.

It turned out that the entire collection was housed in another place, so we headed to the location to admire the unusual exhibits first-hand.

Model range

Yuri Sergeyev has allocated a one-room apartment to store his collection of sewing machines. The kitchen is used as a workshop where he reanimates new exhibits, while the living room serves as a museum. Sewing machines are everywhere — on the shelves and under them, on the right, on the left and in the middle of the room. All of them are captioned. In the corner of the room is a device that maintains the necessary microclimate, just like in a real museum. The main characters of the exhibition are the famous Singer sewing machines, although there are also copies of other brands. “It is the pre-war Singer, in cast iron, that is of special interest. After the war, the mass production of electric sewing machines began in different countries. There were a huge number of models, but all of them were standard,” the collector explained.

Responding the question how long it took him to compile the collection, Yuri revealed, “It took me one year. In order to collect the pre-war model range, I purposefully searched for certain copies through advertisements in Belarus and Russia. Most of them are from western Belarus. The only exhibit missing from my collection is a children’s sewing machine.”

Intricacies of spelling

For those who still think that real Singers are spelt with the letter Z due to the well-known pronunciation, Yuri reminded the history of its origin, “According to some reports, the father of the founder of Adam Reisinger corporation emigrated to the United States from Germany and changed his surname to a ‘less German-like’, shortening it to Singer. According to the rules of the German language, the letter S between or before vowels is pronounced as Z. Therefore, we spell Singer but read ‘Zinger’. That is how it established.”

Singer Corporation was set up in New York and had branches in different countries. Each copy of the sewing machine has its number plate, which can be used to determine where and when



the item was made. In Podolsk, Russia, sewing machines with the Russified Singer logo were produced.

Singer conducted an advertising campaign around the world. Since 1905, a series of postcards with Russian proverbs was released in Russia. The collector showed a postcard with the caption: ‘In the house where they work hard, abundance flows, but in the house of lazy people, emptiness crawls’. Among the exhibits of the home museum, there are also a few instructions on how to use sewing machines.

Unraveling the threads

When Yuri plunged into the new field, he decided to study the biography of Isaac Singer. The book *Unraveling the Threads*, which the collector dubbed the ‘Bible by Singer’, helped him understand better the personality of the famous entrepreneur.

It turned out that the enterprising American had never studied anywhere. He performed in the theatre, and the ‘Singer’ surname suited perfectly for concert activities. He also patented a couple of inventions which did not bring him success, though. In 1851, Isaac Singer did something that turned the world upside down. “Singer did not invent the sewing machine, but he put together the best what had been invented before him, improved and added a few things. So he replaced the curved horizontal needle with a straight vertically moving one, abandoned vertical fabric orientation, came up with a convenient platform, a presser foot, made a bobbin sit horizontally in a holder, and later installed a foot drive,” Yuri clarified.

In the middle of the 19th century, an experienced seamstress could only sew 40 stitches per minute, while Singer produced 900 stitches. Sewing machines used to be custom-made, therefore ordinary people could not afford such a luxury. It was difficult even to repair them, since there were no spare parts. Isaac Singer introduced conveyor assembly, used standardisation and unification methods. Consequently, it became possible to repair sewing machines in any workshop. “This is the story behind the creation of the device that, if lubricated, will work for hundreds of years. The main thing is that sewing machines became cheaper. From that moment on, women were able to sew at home for the needs of their families, and even earn money by completing orders,” Yuri Sergeyev underlined.

TO THE POINT

Yuri Sergeyev recalled that, as a student, he harnessed a children’s sewing machine to make fashionable things for himself, like pipestem trousers, as well as take in shirts, “I have a Japanese sewing machine at home with all the accessories. I sometimes use it. If there is a ready-made sewing pattern, I can easily sew it. What am I going to do with the collection? I would consider proposals for the creation of a permanent museum exhibition. It should be established. Especially in Vitebsk, where there are so many clothing manufacturers and educational establishments related to sewing industry!”





Tunnel thinking

Hamster resettlement, bat bridges and amphibian tunnels — the European Union, obsessed with the 'green' agenda, is spending exorbitant amounts of money on all these projects while scrapping many social programmes due to crisis

By Alena Krasovskaya

Millions for resettlement

According to statistics, industrial production in Germany decreased by 1.5 percent in 2023 compared to 2022. This does not seem like a big deal but there was also a decline of 1.8 percent in 2022. What is the reason? It lies in the disappearance of available energy resources coming from the east, including through Belarus, coupled with the thoughtless sanctions policy. Consequently, European factories are closing one by one, and large companies are moving their production to other continents. The current decline in economic production is comparable to the recession of 2008, when the financial crisis broke out in the world. The West did not suffer great losses at that time and managed to deal with the economic turbulence thanks to its functioning enterprises. The current situation is completely different and does not bode well for the 'golden billion', as the unemployment rates remain high and wages are falling.

The EU's ardent commitment to the green agenda, which requires citizens to replace heating systems, reconstruct houses, eliminate natural gas furnaces and appliances in homes, forces mandatory landscaping and imposes climate taxes in favour of the state, does not contribute positivity. All of this, naturally, is paid for from the severely depleted wallets of the population.

Against the backdrop of the economic downturn and the understandable dependency among Germans, there are those for whose well-being no money is spared. Thus, the authorities of the city of Erfurt have allocated €2.5 million for... the resettlement of wild hamsters.

A local high school is planning an expansion for 2026, and an additional building is to be constructed on a territory currently occupied by 39 hamsters. Eighteen other proposed sites have been deemed unsuitable for construction while the hamsters' habitat is just right. The animals were thoroughly counted to avoid mistakenly relocating any extras.

"Even if the school is not built, we must do something large-scale for the hamsters," Matthias Bärwolff, the head of the construction department at the local administration,

explained to reporters. Given the budget of €2.5 million, it is indeed possible to carry out something large-scale for bigger representatives of the fauna.

What will happen if, by the time of the relocation, the territory is occupied not by 39 hamsters but by 45? Where would they find the funds for the additional ones?

This is far from being a solitary case of paranoid 'care' about flora and fauna. In Hamburg, four tunnels for toads and newts have already been built at a cost of €465,000 in order to protect them from traffic. Previously, the situation was managed using conventional barriers that closed off the passage during amphibian migrations, much to everyone's satisfaction. However, local animal rights activists felt such measures were not enough.

In 2021, eco-activists counted all toads in Hamburg, revealing a decline to 616 from 1,002 in 2018. The situation with pond newts is even more alarming as conservationists were shocked to discover only one specimen in 2021. No one has even considered the possibility that amphibians' deaths might be related to excessive attention to them from animal rights activists.

The blame was immediately put on transport, which led to the construction of four tunnels for toads and newts, which ended up being used by... no one. While the newt has remained alone and must be vigilant to stay alive and not hop recklessly through any tunnels, ignorant toads could have stopped migrating along their usual route — after all, there are safe passages with direction signs installed for them. Yet, things are not working out.

Useless care

The German Autobahn 17 boasts three bat bridges, the construction of which cost German taxpayers €1 million. As a result, bridges 11 metres wide and 60 metres long each, with specially designed echolocation-friendly features and a system of guide barriers to aid bats in navigation, over one year of observations were used... by one bat.

Despite the failure on Autobahn 17, the authorities have decided to try again and allocate between €3-4 million to build a bridge over the A94 motorway for the convenience of bats in Bavaria in 2024. Along with that, some biologists believe that the new bridge must be built to look like a big hedge, making it appear more natural to bats. Others claim that bats prefer to fly through tunnels. Apparently, both structures should be built so that bats have a choice. All of this, of course, should be planted with grasses.

Local citizens express their sadness on social networks, recalling that in Bavaria, a bridge for the hazel dormouse has already been built at a cost of €93,000. Does it need to be mentioned that no dormouse has ever approached the bridge?

In 2023 alone, Germany spent €119,000 to pay for the services of hamster relocation consultants who conducted 'selective monitoring of field hamsters to determine their distribution range in Saxony-Anhalt'. Expenditure for bat consultants and monitoring amounted to €49,000, beetles and spiders — €39,000, beavers — €37,000, amphibians and reptiles — more than €250,000.

However, there seems to be much less care for Germans in Germany. The government has chosen to reduce pension subsidies by another €2 billion, marking the fourth reduction in three years. In total, German pension funds have lost €8.8 billion since 2022.

During the discussion of the 2025 budget in the Bundestag, funding for education, transport and infrastructure was cut, while health care costs were slashed by €8 billion.

As Germany sinks into crisis and its citizens face impoverishment, hamsters obviously enjoy greater care than any burgher. From the perspective of the green agenda, this might appear justified. After all, Europe aims to become the first climate neutral continent by 2050, and according to green activists, people are an impediment to this goal.

ABSURD PROJECTS

In its pursuit to become the first in the implementation of the EU green agenda, Germany has already

lost nuclear energy — on April 16th, 2023, the last German nuclear power plants stopped electric energy supply. However, they remain operational since it is impossible to shut down a nuclear power plant instantly like an electric kettle. The decommissioning process is expected to take another 8-10 years. As a result, Germany is forced to purchase electricity generated by... French nuclear power plants. The current government aims to eliminate coal use for electricity generation in Germany by 2030. To achieve this goal, all coal mines in Germany will be mothballed. Germany has also refused Russian oil and gas, opting to buy those... from other countries at significantly higher prices. Moreover, the commissioned wind turbines and solar panels have not yielded the expected results so far.

BY THE WAY

The issue of recycling expired solar panels and wind turbines has already surfaced. Any proposed disposal options pollute the environment far more than all the coal-fired power plants in Europe combined.



TWO IN ONE

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) states that despite the forced decarbonisation, Germany's green transition does not work. On the contrary, more issues are emerging that negate Germany's aspirations to consume 80 percent of electricity from renewable sources — wind, solar, water, biomass — by 2030. And by 2045, Germany wants to become a climate neutral industrialised country. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the 'two in one' approach will not succeed — it is about being either industrially developed or climate neutral. Nonetheless, German eco-activists stubbornly insist that everything is going according to the plan...

Platform for experiments

The volleyball teams of Belarus and Russia have participated in a tournament in Minsk dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from German Nazi invaders. Both the women's and men's teams played two matches each, with our compatriots emerging victorious in all four encounters.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

It should be noted that the Russian team did not come to the tournament with their strongest squad. Concurrently with the friendly matches at Minsk's Sports Palace, the first ever Channel One Volleyball Cup was taking place in Moscow. In the men's division, teams led by Konstantin Bryansky and Vladimir Alekno faced off, while in the women's division, teams headed by Nikolai Karpol and Zoran Terzić competed. While the first numbers of the national teams shone bright in Moscow, the squads with experimental lineups set off for Minsk. The Russian men's national team, under the guidance of the Zenit Kazan head coach, included players not only from Zenit Kazan, but also from Fakel, Yenisei, Zenit St. Petersburg, Kuzbass, Ural,

and Dinamo Leningrad Region. The women's team, led by Yuri Marichev from Proton, brought together the players from Proton as well as from Dinamo-Metar, Dinamo Krasnodar, Leningradka, Uralochka, Tulitsa, and Zarechie-Odintsovo. The fight on the court proved to be captivating.

The Belarusian women's team gave the Russian players no chance, defeating them in both matches with a score of 3:0. One of our team's leaders, Nadzeya Stoliar, shared in an interview with the Belarus 5 TV channel that the volleyball players had missed such an atmosphere, as they had not played at home as part of the national team for a long time. She thanked the fans for their tremendous support and acknowledged that the girls lacked enough competitive practice

with the national team, emphasising that a club career and playing for the national team are different things. The head coach of the women's national team, Siarhei Chasnavitski, summed up the matches with the Russians, "Such victories give confidence to the girls. To secure them, they worked hard during this training camp to prepare well and bring joy to the fans. And they have succeeded. We were a bit more composed, made fewer mistakes, and played well tactically."

The composition of our team can be considered optimal. As Siarhei Chasnavitski noted, most of the volleyball players came from the Minsk volleyball club and played together for the national team. The team backbone was preserved; therefore, it did not take long for the



girls to recall their combination plays.

In the men's division of the friendly tournament, the competition was far more intense. The Belarusians secured a decisive victory in the first match, winning 3:0 (25:23, 25:17, 25:20). However, the second match stretched to five sets, ultimately ending in the victory of the hosts with a score of 3:2 (22:25, 25:23, 25:21, 15:25,

15:10). Our national team head coach, Andrei Tolochko, summarised the results of the second match, "We knew it would not be easy against the squad that faced us, and that everything would be decided by just a couple of points for which we battled hard. The Russian national team is represented by very serious and strong players, and both teams showed a very good game at this stage."

Meshkov Brest still knows no defeats

The handball players of Meshkov Brest have won the Belgazprombank Cup for the tenth time in history. This pre-season tournament, held in Brest, featured four teams — in addition to the hosts, the reserve squad of Belarus' national team, CSKA Moscow and Zenit St. Petersburg took part in it.

Focus on victories



Meshkov Brest, who did not suffer a single defeat last season and clinched all possible titles, including the Championship, Cup, Belarus Super Cup and SEHA League, has continued its victorious march. In their first match, the Brest team prevailed over CSKA with a score of

27:23, and defeated Zenit in the second match — 26:24. Since Belarus-2 lost to the Russian teams in the opening games, Meshkov Brest players had already secured victory by the second round of the tournament. However, they did not let up, wrapping up their campaign by

beating the reserve team with a three-goal advantage — 32:29.

For Meshkov Brest's line player Viachaslau Shumak, the current victory has also become the tenth in the Belgazprombank Cup. In a conversation with the club's press service, he said that the win was pri-

marily driven by desire. After all, everyone missed handball, exciting matches and serious rivals, as well as fans' support. The head coach of Meshkov Brest, Eduard Koshkarov, noted that he considered the tournament as a preparatory event, "It is important to look at the play-

ers, evaluate their condition, and work on combination plays after a rest. The games that took place at this tournament really gave us the insights into who we can rely on and who needs to step up to join the main team. Now let's move on!"

Next, Meshkov Brest is going to play in the *Final Four* of the SEHA League, alongside Chekhovskie Medvedi from Russia, Eurofarm Pelister from Northern Macedonia and AEK Athens, Greece. The Belarusian handball team will play their first match of the tournament in Türkiye on Friday against AEK. The matches for the third and first places are scheduled for Saturday. According to Viachaslau Shumak, our team is well acquainted with Chekhovskie Medvedi, having faced them frequently on the court; Eurofarm is also familiar to the Belarusians, even though its composition has changed. Eduard Koshkarov has assured that his team will approach every match with the aim of winning, since the task is to win and continue their preparation for the new season.

ARENA

● Falling short of the final

The Brest hockey players have finished their participation in the Euro-Asian Friendship Cup, failing to advance to the final four. In the opening match, they lost to Humo Tashkent with a score of 2:7; then they beat Arlan Kokshetau from Kazakhstan — 3:1. In the decisive match that determined a place in the next stage, Brest suffered a defeat against AKM Tula, losing 1:2. Humo and AKM have reached the final four and will face Metallurg Zhlobin and Neftyanik Almet'yevsk in January.



● They showed class

Belarusian athletes have secured 21 medals in the final of the *Queen of Sports* international series, which was held during the Russian Athletics Championships. Our athletes have five gold medals, four silver and 12 bronze in their piggy bank. The winners of the competition were shot-putters Aliona Dubitskaya and Aleh Tamashevich, javelin thrower Tatyana Kholodovich, hurdler Elvira Herman and decathlete Maksim Andraloits.



● Fifth Cup in Belarus

TSOR from Mogilev has won the Belarusian Beach Soccer Cup for the fifth time. In the final match of the 15th cup competition held in Brest, the Mogilev team defeated Brest-Volga with a score of 4:1. This season, TSOR has also clinched the Super Cup and Belarus Championship. In the game for the third place in the Belarusian Cup, Yurkas Vitebsk was stronger than the Shchuchin athletes — 6:3. Yury Piatrouski (TSOR) was recognised as the tournament's best player, while Vadzim Aliashkevich (Brest-Volga) became the best goalkeeper, and Mikhail Kanstantsinav (Yurkas), who scored 11 goals, was named the best scorer.

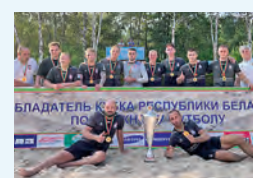


Photo of the week



Ivan Yarinovich

Call of Polesie Festival of Ethnocultural Traditions in the agrotown of Lyaskovichy, Petrikov District, is a centre of attraction and a power place for enthusiasts of Belarusian folklore

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On August 22nd, 2014, the Belarusian record holder — the first BELAZ 75710 mining dump truck with payload capacity of 450 tonnes — was put into operation. The solemn ceremony took place in the Chernigovsky opencast coal mine included in the Siberian Business Union Holding Company CJSC in Kemerovo Region, Russia.

August 23rd is Day of State Statistics Workers in the Republic of Belarus. Statistics permeate all aspects of modern life and are a vital tool for the economic and social development of any country. They serve as the basis for many government decisions in the field of business and public activities. As part of the state programme, a new advanced platform is being created to automate all statistical production processes.



On August 23rd, 1913, a monument to the Little Mermaid was unveiled in Copenhagen. Danish sculptor Edvard Eriksen, commissioned by philanthropist Carl Jacobsen, presented the

city with a bronze sculpture inspired by the ballet based on Hans Andersen's fairy tale. Since then, the Little Mermaid, located in the port of Copenhagen, has become a symbol of the Danish capital. The height of the sculpture is 1.25 m.

On August 23rd, 1943, the Soviet Red Army defeated the German fascist troops in the battle on the Kursk Bulge. The Battle of Kursk, which



lasted 49 days, consolidated the fundamental turning point during the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War, which began with the defeat of the German fascist troops at Stalingrad.

August 24th, 1959 is the date when the Minsk Refrigerator Plant (Atlant CJSC) was founded. It quickly turned into a leading manufacturer of household refrigerators in the USSR. Now Atlant produces a range of high-quality modern household appliances that are in demand both in Belarus and in many countries worldwide.



August 24th, 1853 is known as Potato Chip Day. George Crum, the chef of a restaurant in Saratoga Springs, New York, first cooked potato chips on this day. One customer was displeased with the fried potatoes served,

saying that the cubes were too thick. In response, Crum cut the potatoes into paper-thick slices, sprinkled with salt, and fried them in boiling oil until they crunched. The client was delighted with the new dish. Very soon, chips became one of the most common and favourite foods.



On August 24th, 79 AD, the infamous and deadly volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius destroyed the cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae. The excavations revealed that everything in the cities was preserved as it had been before the eruption. Streets, fully furnished houses, people and animals who did not have time to escape were found under metres of volcanic ash and pumice. The eruption was so powerful that its ashes reached even Egypt and Syria.



August 25th marks Miner's Day in the Republic of Belarus. The country produces oil, brown coal, peat, agrochemical raw materials — potash and rock salts, spropel, dolomite for the production of limestone fertilisers, raw materials for cement and lime



production, sands and clays, fresh and mineral groundwater. In terms of extraction and export of potash fertilisers produced at Belaruskali JSC, Belarus ranks among the world's leaders.

August 27th is International Boxing Day. The earliest evidence of boxing-like contests dates back to the third millennium BC, being imprinted on Sumerian, Egyptian and Minoan bas-reliefs. Boxing became a martial arts sport in 688 BC, when fist fights were first included in the programme of the ancient Olympic Games. At present, boxing, as a sport, is popular all over the world and attracts more and more fans.



On August 27th, 1955, the first edition of The Guinness Book of Records was published. This annual reference publication features information about the outstanding

achievements of humans and animals, unique phenomena and extremes in nature and human society. In 2005, it was called 'the world's best-selling copyrighted book'. Today, The Guinness Book of World Records, published annually in over 100 million copies in 40 languages, is sold in more than 100 countries around the world.