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During *Unity Marathon* in Vitebsk, the *Feats and Fates of Partisans in Documents* exhibition, based on materials from the unique multimedia internet project of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House and the National Archives *Partisans of Belarus*, became one of the most popular projects

Our strength lies in unity

Diverse exhibitions, vibrant meetings, and electrifying concerts in workshops — the *Unity Marathon* national socio-cultural campaign is making its way across Belarus. Vitebsk is the seventh city to host the event, with Orsha next in line to take up the baton. The project *Let's Work and Sing Together!* is one of the main highlights of *Unity Marathon*. The good Soviet tradition of concerts in workshops has received a new resonance. Musical rhythms and enthusiastic applause filled the workshop of the Vitstroytekhmash private enterprise, and the Polymer Construction plant. Meanwhile, at the Vitba confectionery factory, popular Belarusian bloggers were shown how they make the sweets familiar from childhood.

The *Unity Marathon* campaign also featured masterclasses from the Presidential Orchestra. The performers provided a masterclass at the Vitebsk State Music College named after I. I. Sollertinsky and at the children's art school. Each meeting with the youth during the *NOT Boring NOT a Lecture* event was special. A mutual exchange of creative energy took place in Vitebsk. The project *My Life. My Path. My President* brought together students and teaching staff at the Vitebsk State University named after P. M. Masherov for a meeting with Vladimir Andreichenko.

Two murals titled *Future is in Your Hands* were unveiled near the Vitebsk Ice Sports Palace — the main hub for all participants of the campaign — where the youth traditionally tested their skills in the intellectual quest *This is All My Native Place*. Numerous interactive platforms, appealing to both adults and children, operated in front of the sports centre.

Unity Marathon in Vitebsk concluded with a festive concert featuring both well-known Belarusian performers and emerging talents from various regions of our country.



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‘Belarus can do a lot for Pakistan’

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko has paid an official visit to Pakistan

Belarus has always viewed Pakistan as a valuable and reliable partner in South Asia and the Muslim world, President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised during his talks with Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad

The Belarusian leader stressed that our countries have brilliant diplomatic relations, and we see the international agenda in the same way, “But we are far behind in trade-economic liaisons in terms of the opportunities that exist between our countries.

We need to deepen and develop trade-economic relations. We will develop everything that interests Pakistan. We have everything that Pakistan needs today and, perhaps, even tomorrow. I mean the technologies that we have preserved since the Soviet Union, modernised and developed. We are ready to share this with Pakistan: defence industry, agriculture, transport, logistics, agricultural machinery, heavy trucks, electric transport... We can do a lot for Pakistan.”

For its part, Belarus is happy to buy goods produced in Pakistan. The President thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan for taking control of the issue of the supply of Belarusian equipment to Pakistan, including tractors and BelAZ machinery, “You know that we can supply you with the necessary amounts of food, including baby food. Our ministers will negotiate concrete actions.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko asked Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov to lead this work, “I would like to ask you to ensure that not a single minister who is here as part of the delegation would leave the country without



at least a couple of proposals for Pakistan. There should be no tourist trips, we need practical steps. Therefore, come to an agreement today as you meet in person, or meet tomorrow as much as you need — but agree upon something.”

The President sincerely expressed gratitude for the warm welcome of the Belarusian delegation in Islamabad and invited the Pakistani PM to pay a return visit to Minsk.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed that the Belarusian leader is a great friend of Pakistan and the parties have already been able to discuss a number of pressing and important issues in a one-on-one format. “You are a person of practice, so today we will try to

talk less, but do more practical things,” Shehbaz Sharif said.

According to him, Pakistan is interested in the technologies available in Belarus — i.e. in heavy industry, mechanical engineering, and agriculture.

“We have our own products in the field of agriculture, as well as the textile industry which in many ways needs technology. Belarus can give us these technologies, and we believe your great country will be able to significantly help Pakistan achieve its goals,” the Prime Minister said.

During his official visit to Pakistan, President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko also held a meeting with the Chief of Army Staff, General Asim Munir.

FRIENDLY ADVICE TO PAKISTANIS: TAKE CARE OF YOUR COUNTRY

Aleksandr Lukashenko, as an experienced and wise politician and statesman, allowed himself to give personal friendly advice to the leadership of Pakistan and the entire Pakistani people, “For me, Pakistan is not something far away. It is a very close and friendly country for us. Nawaz and I once agreed to intensify our relations, and we have done a lot since then. We are always concerned about what is happening in Pakistan. We were worried about you when the terrible flood happened. We are very worried about you if something happens here that is not supposed to happen in your society. We are also very concerned and worried about all the things that are going on today.”

It is no secret that the internal political situation in Pakistan has recently caused some concern. Opposition protests are taking place in the cities, and the police have to use force to subdue the rioters. The situation in the country has not been stable in this respect in the past years. In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that ‘there are scary changes in the world today that haven’t happened in centuries’, “The world is very turbulent, with changes happening every day. In this difficult time, only those countries will

survive that will be united and whose people will be worried about the future of their country. The world is being re-divided. Strong, rich countries clashed in this ironclad fight. There are more than 50 wars and conflicts in the world today. There is a fierce struggle for leadership today, tomorrow and in the future. Your country, as a giant country, the fifth most populous in the world, is naturally involved in this whirlpool. You are well aware of Pakistan’s position in the international arena. You know what Pakistan wants. However, what you want is not in line with the desires of the major countries that are fighting for leadership nowadays. **The US, the UK, India, Australia, (Japan and South Korea may join in) want to create a kind of Pacific NATO here, in the Pacific region. Pakistan, which wants to develop peacefully, may not be interested in this. So there will be attempts to destabilise the situation in your country, to stir up tensions. And the main thing I want to say (this already concerns the population): take care of your country. If you preserve it, you will have a place to live. If you do not preserve it, you will be in trouble. This is my friendly advice to you.”**

ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO, SHEHBAZ SHARIF ON SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST AND UKRAINE

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko and Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif called for an immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities without preconditions in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon in their joint statement, adopted following the two leaders’ talks in Islamabad.

“Both leaders expressed deep concern over the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, which has led to a devastating humanitarian crisis and significant civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. The parties called for an immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities without preconditions in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, strikes on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, ensuring uninterrupted and safe delivery of humanitarian aid, restraint against the threat of expansion of the conflict zone, and stressed the need to intensify efforts to achieve peace, stability and security for the entire region,” the document reads.

In a joint statement, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of a two-state formula, in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council and the UN General Assembly.

Aleksandr Lukashenko and Shehbaz Sharif also stressed the paramount importance of a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine, the need for diplomatic efforts and constructive dialogue. They noted that the ongoing conflict has far-reaching consequences not only for the region, but also for global stability and security.

After the ceremony, Aleksandr Lukashenko presented Shehbaz Sharif with a certificate for two BELARUS-1025.3 tractors — to be donated to the Pakistani company Heavy Industries Taxila.



INFORMAL MEETING

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko had an informal lunch meeting with Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif. The two leaders met at the family residence of Shehbaz Sharif in the resort town of Murree. In the format of an informal lunch, the President of Belarus met with members of his family, including former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif.

PEACEFUL RESOLUTION NEEDED

Belarus is strongly against escalating the situation between Pakistan and India — as noted by Aleksandr Lukashenko during his talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in an extended format.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he is well aware of the situation developing in Jammu and Kashmir. The uncertain status of this territory has long been the cause of conflict between Pakistan and India.

“[Former Prime Minister of Pakistan] Nawaz Sharif showed me this territory from his house. We are strongly against escalating the situation between the neighbouring states. We will support you in this regard. There should be a peaceful resolution of this issue,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.



Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



CSTO to become one of pillars of Eurasia's security architecture

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko has taken part in the meeting of the Collective Security Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) in Astana



In the beginning of his speech, the Belarusian leader noted that he was to speak first, since Armenian colleagues had not come to participate in the meeting. "This actually characterises the current geopolitical situation in the region and, to some extent, our organisation. From year to year, we record that the situation in the world is getting worse," he said.

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, the problem is not due to the fact that the system of checks and balances that ensured international security and strategic stability has vanished,

"We have been rocking for an unforgivably long time to create alternative legal mechanisms. Apparently, this state of affairs — when the norms and principles of international law are replaced by some subjective and situationally changeable rules, tools of military and information blackmail — is beneficial to someone."

The Belarusian leader added that, against this background, the arms race is rapidly gaining momentum. The Eastern European region, especially Poland, continues to be militarised. NATO is intensifying its activity in Europe and in the world as a whole. Military conflicts and hotbeds of tension are expanding, covering the Middle East, Yemen, and the Korean Peninsula.

"Clinging to elusive dominance, the West is increasingly speaking the language of weapons, turning a blind eye to the threat of nuclear confrontation, fraught with the destruction of the entire planet," the President stated.

At the meeting, President of

Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to a number of new tasks that the parties would have to solve when forming a new architecture of Eurasian security and strengthening the Collective Treaty Security Organisation.

Point one

According to the Belarusian leader, it is necessary to strengthen the interaction of international organisations working in the Eurasian space. "In this regard, I propose to work out the issue of organising a meeting of senior officials of the regional organisations: ASEAN, CSTO, CICA, SCO, CIS, and the Gulf Co-operation Council. We have a proven mechanism for regular meetings of the leadership of CIS, CSTO and SCO. Why not try to expand this format in order to share unique interregional experience? We are ready to hold this meeting in Belarus upon your consent," he said.

There, the parties could also discuss issues of enhancing co-operation between CSTO and SCO on international security issues in line with the decision of the Collective Security Council on the development of co-operation between CSTO, CIS, and SCO. The Belarusian leader stressed that the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation has a broad agenda on security issues in the Eurasian space, and this potential needs to be used.

Point two

The necessity has emerged within CSTO to seriously address the issues of artificial intelligence and deepen co-operation in the field of information security. With this in view, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that this idea is not new,

The leaders of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation member states signed 14 documents

following the summit in Astana, including the Declaration of the CSTO Collective Security Council, which expresses the CSTO's position on topical problems of international security and is aimed to underline the fundamental principles of the organisation's activities.

The sides also adopted a decision on a targeted CSTO interstate programme to strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border and a decision to further strengthen allied relations within the CSTO. The heads of state signed a statement of the CSTO Collective Security Council in connection with the 80th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. The next session of the CSTO Collective Security Council will be held at the end of 2025 in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan.



but the parties have not yet started practical steps towards it within the framework of the organisation.

"Meanwhile, Western countries are already dealing with this problem with might and main. We also need to think about how to increase the practical impact of the 2017 agreement on co-operation between the CSTO member states in the field of information security. We must keep pace with the rapid development of cyber technologies in order to effectively respond to the challenges and threats to the security of our countries in this area," the Belarusian leader addressed the meeting participants.

Point three

According to the President, new deadly types of weapons

capable of destroying all of humanity are likely to be available soon. Laser, hypersonic, quantum, electromagnetic and other advanced developments have already been added to this arsenal.

"In our opinion, CSTO can and should be at the forefront of efforts to create a common contractual and legal mechanism that will allow for the control of such weapons in the future. This should be done now. At least, we need to start working in this direction," the Belarusian leader said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced that the above steps will not just strengthen security in the region, but also contribute to the cohesion of the CSTO member states and enhance the image of the organisation.

TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES: INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, AI, CYBER THREATS

There are a great many transnational challenges and threats in today's world that can and should be fought together — as stated by President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The Head of State regretted that the West is spending all its efforts to combat fake problems that it itself creates, while there are a great many transnational challenges and threats in today's world that can and should be fought together. A vivid example is the climate agenda, which Western politicians have long turned into a business.

"The EU fashionable 'green deal' is nothing but a project of unfair competition, working exclusively in the interests of Western countries, which are in the first row of those responsible for atmospheric pollution," the Belarusian leader pointed out.

Aleksandr Lukashenko singled out the following problems:

International terrorism

"Terrorist organisations take every opportunity to remind about themselves. At the same time, Western countries refuse to co-operate in good faith with our organisation in the fight against this evil," the President noted.

Artificial intelligence

According to the President, AI is increasingly being used to plan and solve military tasks. With its self-learning ability, this tool can destroy humanity if it is let out of control.

Information security and cyber threats

On the one hand, the Head of State noted, modern technologies create thousands of new opportunities and prospects. On the other hand, they give rise to many risks and threats: fakes, disinformation, attacks on critical infrastructure. "Traditionally, the West's readiness for dialogue on these and other important issues is not seen," said Aleksandr Lukashenko.

'RUSSIAN ORESHNIK MISSILE HAD STRONG IMPACT ON GLOBAL COMMUNITY'

When asked whether Russia's use of the new Oreshnik intermediate-range missile would cool the West, the Head of State noted, "It has already cooled down. We can immediately see this from the statements in the media. It is true that there is no unified line in the West, everything has been going in different directions, which shows that they are a little confused. The weapon is definitely good. It is not a nuclear weapon, but in terms of its power it is comparable to a nuclear weapon, but without penetrating radiation and contamination of terrain and facilities. That's why it has had such a strong impact on the so-called global community and especially those who thought that everything would be all right. It won't."

Referring to the Union State security, the Belarusian leader added that he made a joke in his conversation with Vladimir Putin, "The places for deployment are ready. When?"

"We'll think about it," was the reply from the Russian leader.

FOR REFERENCE

The CSTO was established on October 7th, 2002, and unites six states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

In accordance with the CSTO Charter, the main objectives of the organisation are to strengthen peace, international and regional security and stability, and to protect the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the participating countries.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The subject of, how do we put it politely, overall quality of the Western leadership in general and European elites in particular, has come up in public discussions again and again. It seems the age of de Gaulle, Churchill, Willy Brandt, and other statesmen whose portraits you can find in every history textbook is well and truly behind us. Why did that happen? And can it be reversed?

By Vadim Gigin, deputy of the House of Representatives, Candidate of Historical Sciences

People deserve the leaders they elect

When talking to journalists at the Traktor Stadium, President Aleksandr Lukashenko answered the question if the EU can ever run policies independent from the US, saying, “Europe can, when such a leader as Trump appears there. As it is, there is no one there. Look. I don’t want to speak ill of them: that’s not right. But the Americans have started to wipe their feet on Scholz, calling him a ‘lightweight’ and so on. I don’t want to say things like that. He is a son of his people: whom Germans deserved, whom they elected — now let them work with him. But there’s no one [who deserves to be elected]. They are all seeking publicity, but they can’t make a decision and act.” This was a short, but extremely pertinent analysis.

We have indeed been witnessing a crisis of European political leadership for decades. Angela Merkel, a German Chancellor who kept very few promises out of those she’d given her voters in 2005, looks like something of a giant against this lacklustre lot. At least she didn’t back down in the face of economic difficulties and could stand up to the Americans from time to time to defend her national interests, like she did with Nord Stream.

Small potatoes

You can list all the mistakes and gaffes done by people like Macron, Scholz, Duda, or Borrell. There’s no point in even remembering British prime ministers’ names: they just come and go like the wind.

This degradation of European ruling elites is not coincidental. It wasn’t caused by poor education, either: many of those politicians are graduates of best universities.

Presidents are born

Strong leaders defend their national interests and make their countries flourish. Belarus is a great example.



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“I have already told you, you can’t become a President. Presidents are born. A person should inherently have the fundamental qualities that will be useful in the office. There are many qualities like that. One, two, or maybe all of them. That’s very important.”

From the speech at the renovated Traktor Stadium (Minsk), on November 14th, 2024

FOR REFERENCE

Emmanuel Macron who replaced Hollande as the French President, used to have ties to Rothschild&Cie Banque, a major financial company linked to American oligarchs. Many think that partnership was what really launched Macron’s political career.

After the end of World War Two, negative selection started among the ruling class in Western Europe that had found itself in the American sphere of influence. The US didn’t need talented statesmen leading its satellites.

It’s common knowledge that Americans hated Charles de Gaulle, starting with President Franklin Roosevelt’s bitter distaste for the Frenchman. An unbowed patriot dreaming about his country’s greatness was a wrench in Washington’s entire policy.

Western Germany’s Chancellor Willy Brandt is another example: his ‘Eastern policy’ was a symbol of the détente age. He took it upon himself to make some serious policy changes without consulting the US. Unforgivable!

Talent pipeline, US style

Americans are quick learners. They took those lessons to heart and took charge of the European political selection. There’s a whole talent pipeline system for that. All you have to do is browse CVs of many European ‘new wave’ politicians. Each of them features some superficially unremarkable, but very telling details.

Take François Hollande, one of the most mediocre and inept people to ever

lead France. He was into politics from a very young age and got noticed. In 1996, the promising young Socialist was invited to the *Young Leaders* programme run by the French-American Foundation and focused on strengthening the US influence in France. His career really took off after that: he became the Socialist party’s First Secretary in 1997, then got elected to the National Assembly.

About the deep state

The US intelligence agencies keep a close eye on politicians from their satellite countries. In 2013, former CIA analyst Edward Snowden released information on the continent-wide total surveillance network run by the US National Security Agency (NSA). Turned out, they were tapping phones of nearly every German politician, including Angela Merkel herself. The scandal was colossal. Merkel personally called President Barack Obama to demand explanations. German prosecutor’s office launched an investigation, but it soon started faltering, until it ran off the rails completely in June 2015. The case was closed, and that should tell you something about how dependent on its American hegemon Germany is nowadays.

Open Society foundations controlled by billionaire George Soros select politicians in Central and Eastern Europe and train them to act in a certain way. This is ‘the deep state’ Donald Trump mentions so often. He means a conglomerate of individuals and organisations that control politicians. In other words, it’s an oligarchy the real power belongs to.

Make decisions and act

But the above quote was not all President Lukashenko had to say about European politicians. After stating that there are no real strong leaders in Europe now, he added confidently,

“Leaders like de Gaulle will appear, they will definitely appear. And someone like Kohl. Chirac was a real man, one with his people... Europe is ready. Europe needs real leaders who would make decisions and act.”

And politicians like that are starting to appear. Take Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban with his clear ideology and his focus on sovereignty. That helped him earn respect from Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, while Donald Trump considers Orban his key political ally in Europe. And by the way, like Aleksandr Lukashenko back in the day, Orban started his fight for the Hungarian sovereignty with purging his country from George Soros’ structures. So let’s not discount Europe just yet. Its fate is now in Europeans’ hands.

THE BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING

US intelligence services collect dirt on German politicians in order to control them. How else could you explain the political evolution (or, rather, devolution) of Olaf Scholz? His political convictions went through a complete about-face. A former anti-war activist and critic of capitalism who fought against the American influence in Europe is now an obedient patsy of Washington.

No child is somebody else's

Traditional charity events focused on children and the elderly are about to kick off in Belarus

In order to properly celebrate the New Year holidays, preparations begin well in advance. The resolution from the Council of Ministers regarding the *Our Children* and *From the Bottom of Our Hearts* charity campaigns was issued back in early October. In November, a meeting of the organising committee took place, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Igor Petrishenko. There is a lot of work ahead, as confirmed by the statistics: last year, gifts and greetings from teams of enterprises, state institutions, and organisations reached over a million young Belarusians and more than 330,000 elderly citizens.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"We wish for only one thing — to see the smiles of children and to know that they live in peace and safety. If a child smiles, it means the state exists and society is healthy."

At the charity celebration in the Palace of the Republic as part of the *Our Children* campaign on December 29th, 2022



By Olga Bebenina

Measure of kindness

They say that not everything in this life can be measured in money. Yet, why not assess the scale of help for those in need from this perspective? After all, it would be foolish to ignore the practical side of the issue — sweets with toys, laptops with sports complexes, exercise machines, and so on do not simply fall from the sky. Last year, Br6.5m were spent on gifts and support for families and boarding houses where children in need of special care are raised, as part of the *Our Children* campaign. Additionally, Br100,000 raised during a charity marathon were directed to the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Paediatric Oncology, Haematology and Immunology. It is worth noting that this is only a portion of the funds, not including what was collected by employees of enterprises and organisations on their own initiative. Such money cannot be dismissed as mere base metal, can it?

Judging by the fact that each year, more and more participants join the campaign, the contents of the New Year 'piggy bank' will increase. This means that even more children will be able to realise their wishes and dreams. The formula for nationwide charitable assistance is particularly relevant in this context. To put it simply, chipping in a rouble won't leave you impoverished, while the donation brings joy to children.



JOIN US

The New Year charity campaign *Our Children* starts on December 16th and will run until January 15th. From December 26th, the *From the Bottom of Our Hearts* campaign will commence, also concluding on January 15th. There are enough good deeds for everyone!



Aleksandr Kulenskiy

So said so done

It is hard to believe, but the *Our Children* initiative will celebrate its 30th anniversary next year. In the early 1990s, it was an initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, which periodically reached out to businesses and large enterprises, asking them to choose an orphanage or children's home and congratulate the children on New Year and Christmas.

In 1995, the *Our Children* campaign became a national project, as President Aleksandr Lukashenko took it under his patronage. Now, all state enterprises and organisations have their own establishments to support. Thus, the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House is respon-

sible for the Gorodeya special boarding school. Each year, substantial funds are allocated from the national and local budgets, as well as from individual enterprises and organisations, for New Year gifts, festive events, and other purposes. The scale of the initiative has also changed, now encompassing the entire country. Take, for instance, the culmination of the celebration — the Presidential New Year Tree. In 1995, 500 children participated in the event, which took place at the Belarusian State Circus. Now, it is held at the Palace of the Republic, with over 2,400 guests each year. Despite the busy schedule, the Head of State always finds time to communicate with the young citizens of the country in a warm atmosphere.

Part of the *Our Children* initiative also includes New Year morning celebrations at the Palace of Independence, which take place over several days. The participants are children from large families, residents of orphanages and family-type homes, as well as schoolchildren who have achieved high results in their studies, sports, and community life. Each of them leaves the residence of the Head of State with a memorable gift.

Warming hearts

On the eve of 2023, the President proposed a new initiative aimed at elderly people. The initiative was immediately taken up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry



Aleksey Bibikov

of Education in liaison with the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM) and the Belarusian Republican Pioneer Organisation (BRPO). Thus, the *From the Bottom of Our Hearts* campaign was born.

Today, around 1.6m citizens over the age of 65 live in our country. Of these, 40,000 have crossed the 90-year milestone, and more than 600 have reached 100 years and older. To the credit of our social services, no one has been left to their fate. Across the country, social services are provided by 146 territorial centres for social services of the population and 81 social care homes.

The *From the Bottom of Our Hearts* campaign is a continuation of good deeds, but now with the involvement of caring citizens — and there are a lot of them in our country. Schoolchildren, students, trade union workers, representatives of government structures and local authorities, and even younger pensioners visit lonely people, the disabled, and veterans during the New Year and Christmas holidays. They bring gifts, help with cleaning, shopping for groceries, chopping firewood, and more. Concerts, heartfelt tea parties, and birthday greetings are organised. The reward for volunteers is the genuine joy and gratitude in the eyes of those they assist. This, perhaps, is the true meaning of the New Year and Christmas days — to warm hearts and foster a sense of unity.



BELTA

On morality and amorality

Biden's permission for Ukraine to use long-range ATACMS missiles is crime against humanity

'Elections have consequences' is a key slogan that has been repeatedly voiced in liberal democracies for decades. As we know, this concept is ever true.

By Davide Carbonaro

A problem with the way of thinking among Westerners is that they separate the right to govern the country (by whoever wins the election) from the moral right to influence politics. According to liberals, the latter is vested in them only because of some inexplicable and unjustified sense of moral superiority.

An attempted coup — that took place four years ago in Belarus — is one of the best examples of this moral absurdity. Despite the defeat in the Presidential election, the Western-funded liberal terrorists calling themselves the 'opposition' tried to destabilise the situation in the country by force and illegally seize the reins of government then.

The true meaning of the word 'opposition' in real democratic countries stands for a group of elected or unelected people who disagree with the majority on political, economic or general issues, but still share the most important value of all: they love their country and want the best for its people. They value their country. Nothing of this happened in Belarus four years ago, and nothing of this is present today. There is just a group of criminal terrorists living abroad who want to foment instability in the country from which they cowardly fled, to destroy its basic values, traditions and foundations.

Looking at the results of the US elections, we clearly see who actually won and who lost. We

know the names, but the fight was not just between candidates or parties this time: it was a real choice between war and peace. During his election race, Donald Trump made it clear that a prompt and peaceful solution to the current Ukrainian conflict is needed, and the people of the United States supported him.

However, what happened just a few days after the results of the vote were announced? President Biden has given the green light to the Ukrainian government to use long-range ATACMS missiles to hit targets on Russian territory, and this is definitely a clear sign of escalation.

Mr. Biden, elections have consequences! The military policy of yours focusing on constant escalation has been rejected by

Italian Davide Carbonaro is a journalist who lived and worked in Poland over the last 20 years. The authorities began to persecute him for his bold, truthful and incisive materials, and the journalist was eventually forced to flee Poland. Davide Carbonaro chose Belarus — a country of equal opportunities, kind people and national accord — as his new home.



the American people in a clear and irrefutable way. Voters made it clear: peace was their choice, and no one has the right to act differently, not even you — with all due respect.

That is why there was and is no legal and even more moral right to aggravate the situation in Ukraine again by allowing the Ukrainian government (which still extols murderers like Bandera) to use long-range missiles against Russia on its territory. This escalation is illegal and immoral even more than all those that have happened before.

This decision is a crime against humanity, whatever the consequences.

I should warn all those who seek to view Western society as an example to follow: look at it carefully and with your eyes wide open. You cannot love your country only when you win. You cannot respect your country and your people only when you have the upper hand. Liberal fanatics ignored these sacred rules and destroyed the true meaning and foundations of democracy.

There will always be issues on which we can disagree, and this is completely normal. However, when the time comes to make a choice, let's choose love for the country, peace and stability, rather than hatred, war and chaos. Let's give our children a future full of hope.



Belarus enjoys record rate of nursing premature babies

In Belarus, the survival rate of children born weighing up to a kilogram exceeds 90 percent, which is 'a record number' — as informed by Professor Margarita Devyaltovskaya, who heads the laboratory of problems of children and adolescents at the Mother and Child Republican Scientific-Practical Centre

According to the specialist, the Mother and Child medical facility has been developing and using cellular technologies for premature babies for almost six years, and it was the first in the world to create such methods.

"The results are excellent," Ms. Devyaltovskaya stated. "Babies born deeply premature develop perfectly, and at the age of twelve months, they have no differences with children born on time. We also use artificial intelligence technologies to predict the development of boys and girls born prematurely. In late premature infants weighing more than

2.5 kilograms, hyperbaric oxygenation is used to improve the condition of their nervous system. All high technologies ensure very high rates of maternity and childhood services. In some points, Belarus is ahead of almost all countries in the world."

The Mother and Child Republican Scientific-Practical Centre provides specialised care to infants who were born from 22 weeks of gestation, including those weighing up to one and a half kilograms. Thanks to such support, babies under a kilogram not only survive, but have good health in the following years.

Verona Eurasian Economic Forum to focus on new co-operation architecture for contemporary economy

Themed New Co-operation Architecture for Contemporary Economy, the Verona Eurasian Economic Forum — organised by the Italian non-profit Conoscere Eurasia Association, the Roscongress Foundation and the UAE Chamber of Commerce and Industry — will be held in Ras Al Khaimah (United Arab Emirates) on December 5th-6th

By Marta Astreiko

The forum will gather representatives of government and business circles, and among the event participants there will be also political and public figures from Europe and Asia, including Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Italy and other states.

The agenda of the upcoming forum will include sessions covering a wide range of global topics, such as the development of energy, infrastructure, transport, finance, digitalisation, and medicine. The focus will be on the development of business dialogue and effective ways of co-operation between countries and organisations in the territory of Greater Eurasia.

"For the 17th year now, the Verona Eurasian Economic Forum has been gathering the business and political community interested in the long-term development of economic and trade co-operation on the space of Greater Eurasia. Discussions on topical issues of interaction between economic entities on its side-lines contribute to the outlining of a new economic structure through joint efforts. In the context of growing geopolitical challenges, it is important to realise the value of such a platform that enables to ensure a direct



and open dialogue on Eurasian integration, and also to develop reliable partnerships with the participating countries of the macro-region," Anton Kobayakov, the Adviser to the President of the Russian Federation, said.

An expert discussion on ensuring food security and combating desertification is planned at the forum. The speakers will also share their opinions on social development as a condition for an inclusive economy.

"The Eurasian partnership is formed on the principles of equality and mutual benefit. The Verona Eurasian Economic Forum supports the core values and allows all participants to jointly discuss the prospects for trade and economic co-operation between countries and international organisations in the developing macro-region. We are convinced that our regular meetings on the side-lines of the forum effectively reveal the potential of Greater Eurasia and identify ways of promising business co-operation for all participants," Professor Antonio Fallico, the President of Conoscere Eurasia Association, noted.

The agenda will include not only business meetings: a rich cultural programme is planned — for both forum participants and locals.

Viruses embracing planet

West engaged in microbial biotech in foreign territories, why
Currently, over five dozen US-managed biolabs operate near the Union State, and 30+ of them are located on the territory of Ukraine and financed by the Pentagon. In general, the American military department already controls 336 (!) biolabs in 30 countries.

By Aleksandr Tikhansky,
Candidate of Sociological
Sciences, military-political expert

Grants allocated

Within the framework of a special American programme, research aimed at developing components of biological weapons is underway, and strains of dangerous microorganisms are being collected and exported to the United States. In addition, methods — that can influence the epidemiological situation in various regions of the world — are undergoing tests.

Thus, a new laboratory may appear in Armenia, research in the field of advanced biological and environmental sciences is likely to be conducted there. As reported by Arminfo on October 11th this year referring to the information provided by the American University of Armenia (AUA), a grant of \$1.8m from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is envisaged for the implementation of the project.

It is noted that these funds will be used to purchase modern equipment and create a research environment that will meet the US bioethical and regulatory standards. Interestingly, when trying to find the original message on the AUA website, the request returns an error.

Checking for transparency

According to the Turkish edition of *dikGAZETE*, Armenian experts express concern about the location of American biolabs near local schools and residential buildings. The development of dangerous pathogens should not be carried out in crowded areas, especially in territories used by children.

In addition, outbreaks of dangerous infections that are not endemic to these regions have recently been recorded in the countries of Transcaucasia and Turkiye. Among them are Newcastle disease, a new foot and mouth disease Sat-2, and West Nile fever.

As noted by experts, it is quite possible that this is due to the close co-operation between Yerevan and Washington in the field of the implementation of biological projects by Americans in Armenia.

It is known that the United States has funded the creation of a number of biolabs in Armenia; pathogens of African swine fever, influenza, plague, tularemia and nodular dermatitis are studied there.

There are calls in Turkiye to pay attention to the activities of biolabs in the neighbouring states and to investigate their transparen-

cy. Experts insist on the need for international control over the activity of such facilities in order to exclude the possibility of their use for military purposes.

Bypassing obligations

The United States is still seriously involved in military biological activities on the territory of Ukraine, and it plans to enhance activity after the end of the conflict. However, some projects have been so far relocated to the countries of Eastern Europe, Africa and Southeast Asia.

It was earlier informed that Washington had already removed more than 16 thousand biological samples from the territory of Ukraine to create agents that pose the greatest danger to the population of this region. In addition, more than 10 thousand samples of pathogens and their vectors were sent to an unknown direction.

The international community has repeatedly expressed concern about the true nature of the Pentagon's military biological programmes being implemented outside its national territory. The stated goals of such research — such as monitoring of infectious diseases and assistance to developing countries — do not correspond to reality. In practice, there is an increase in the military biological potential of the United States, bypassing the obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention.

This is manifested in the construction of military laboratories along the borders of geopolitical opponents, the collection of strains of particularly dangerous microorganisms characteristic of certain territories, as well as in the testing

of toxic drugs on humans. The African swine fever, which affected many countries more than ten years ago, is also considered to be due to the activities of biolabs.

The example of Ukraine shows that the declared nature of interaction only formally corresponds to Article 10 of the Biological Weapons Convention, which provides for international co-operation and exchange of information for peaceful purposes. The implementation of biolab projects has not led to an improvement in the morbidity situation, and in the countries bordering Ukraine the situation has worsened in many respects. Other signs of 'peaceful co-operation' are also not available.

Atypical diseases

It is worth noting that the package of western integration for the post-Soviet republics always contains biolabs, American military and intelligence bases, as well as the need to constantly teach democracy to everyone. The US Department of State actively supports such projects in foreign countries, including the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa and Ukraine. The surroundings of Mariupol were chosen as a location for 'scientific objects', but — by the time the Russian troops arrived there — the laboratories had been thoroughly 'cleaned'.

Dozens of American biolabs are located near the borders of Russia and Belarus, and their activities result in the deterioration in the epidemiological situation in the countries where these facilities are situated. As a rule, this includes dangerous infections and diseases atypical for these regions. Taking into account the growing threats to the Union State from NATO, Minsk and Moscow are currently increasing co-operation in this area in order to strengthen biosecurity.

It is necessary to understand that the West's financing of such activities on the territory of the post-Soviet states forces their leadership to keep the true nature of the work that is carried out secret. Meanwhile, the European Union is already actively promoting the initiative to deploy a network of centres of 'excellence' in the field of CBRN protection, providing for the deployment of biolabs in the countries of the former USSR. Based on this, the issue of countering this threat was first included in the text of Belarus' updated National Security Concept.

In the new technological order, where the biotech achievements will play a decisive role, the network of laboratories is to be regarded as a prerequisite for deliberate interference in our life by a foreign state with hostile goals. The response to this should be appropriate.

MEANING OF DESTRUCTION

The West and Ukraine are striving to create biological weapons to destroy specific peoples, and that was voiced by ex-CIA analyst Larry Johnson. "After all, this is the meaning of the current war: to destroy Russia and take control of its resources," he said. "This is a war for spiritual values, but at the same time it is a classic war in terms of fighting for control of oil, gas, gold, uranium, nickel, aluminium, and so on."

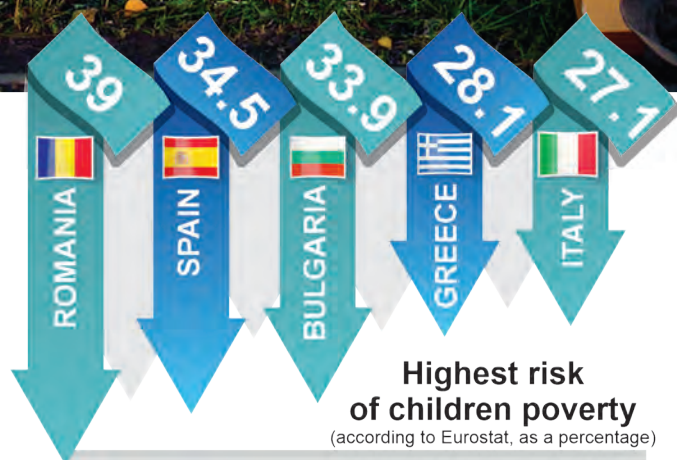


Not princes, but beggars

An increasing number of people in the West are falling below the poverty line

One of the pillars of propaganda in the EU and the USA has always been the assertion that there are almost no poor people there, that anyone can become wealthy, and that the middle class lives in clover. Many have bought into these tales. Even now, time and again, a representative of the dwindling species of supporters of the 'prosperous West' can be found. Meanwhile, such clichés have little in common with reality, and even influential foreign media are compelled to acknowledge the scale of the problems.

NUMBER
94.6m people, or 21 percent of the EU population, are at risk of poverty or extreme poverty



By Anton Popov

In the risk zone

The UK is often cited as a benchmark for Western living standards. However, the former empire, whose development was built on the exploitation of colonies, has always shown a significant income gap between the rich and poor segments of society, and this disparity continues to persist today.

According to *The Guardian*, a study by the UK's largest food bank network, Trussell, found that one in seven residents in the UK is struggling with deep poverty. Approximately 9.3m people are living in 'hunger and hardship'. Notably, around three million of them are children.

What is the life like for those unfortunate inhabitants of the monarchical reserve on the fringes of the 'European garden'? *The Guardian* has painted a picture worthy of great Dickens, "They are on low incomes, have little or no savings, and may also have debts. Typically, they struggle to afford enough food, energy bills, and basics such as new clothes. An unexpected financial crisis, such as job loss, a large bill, or even the breakdown of a fridge or cooker, can swiftly trigger reliance on food banks."

The publication has noted that the 9.3m impoverished individuals in the country are just a part of a broader group

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"The nonsense has come to an end. Moreover, they made significant investments in this Ukrainian venture. The pandemic, lockdowns, and helicopter money drops are now all surfacing. Therefore, there are many problems, and indeed, they will no longer enjoy abundance."

During a visit to the Vavilov Minsk Mechanical Plant, on August 26th, 2022

of 14.4m people living in poverty. Children, families with at least one disabled member, and migrants are considered the most vulnerable within this demographic.

The Labour Party had pledged to address the issue of rapid impoverishment among Britons before the elections, which they won. However, six months later, *The Independent* reported, citing charities, that 'even more children have fallen into poverty since Labour came to power, due to the benefit cap'.

Another group that is currently in a particularly vulnerable position in Britain today is the elderly. Having dedicated the best years of their lives to the state, they are forced to make ends meet with continually dwindling payments. *The Independent* shared the

story of 71-year-old Sue, who worked nearly 40 hours a week, 'because private and state pensions do not allow her to live a decent life'. "My rent increases by £50 per month every year, and now that I've lost my winter fuel allowance, which was a huge blow for me, I'll have to move in with someone for weekends to avoid turning the heating on at home," lamented the pensioner.

From Madrid to Berlin

The situation is no better on the other side of the English Channel. The television channel *France Info* has reported, citing an annual study by Secours Populaire Français: 'Sixty-two percent of French people have stated that they have experienced or already have been on the brink of poverty, which is four percentage points higher than last year. Eight out of ten French citizens say they pessimistically assess the risk of their children one day falling into a precarious situation'. As a result, the citizens of the Fifth Republic are forced to economise on everything. *France Info's* correspondents quote the same study: 'Forty-three percent of French people say they hardly heat their homes when it is cold. Thirty percent have difficulty eating a healthy diet allowing them to eat three meals a day, and near-

ly one in three parents restricts the food they consume to be able to feed their children'.

Among the most vulnerable categories of citizens, as in the UK, are the elderly. In another article, *France Info*, referencing the association Petits Frères des Pauvres, emphasised that in France, 'two million people aged 60 and older live below the poverty line'. That report includes the story of 66-year-old Alain, a former driver who survives on €700 per month, while the lower threshold of poverty is €1,216.

According to the latest data from the Alerte association, Paris loses about €120bn annually due to insufficient measures to combat poverty: €50bn in assistance to the poorest segments of the population and approximately €67bn as 'hidden costs'.

The situation is equally grim in neighbouring Germany. German media pay particular attention to the risks faced by children, adolescents, and women, especially the elderly. According to the newspaper *Bild*, 'one in seven children and young people in the country faced the threat of poverty last year', while one in four was at serious risk of crossing the poverty line.

The symptoms of the economic crisis afflicting Ger-

many are most pronounced in the regions. *Bild* has reported that 'in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, more than three million people are affected by poverty'. From reports by the broadcaster Buten un binnen, it is known that the situation is deteriorating in Lower Saxony as well. In an interview with the reporters, 72-year-old postwoman Helga Kerr recounted, "I was really looking forward to retiring to pursue other activities and hobbies. But I have to work just to get by. If I didn't work, I'd have a roof over my head but nothing in the fridge."

Spain's situation is close to catastrophic. The newspaper *La Razón* has reported that 'a quarter of the Spanish population is at risk of social isolation, amounting to 13m people.

Spain ranks fifth among EU countries with the highest levels of severe material and social deprivation. The authors of the article highlight that 'one in three Spanish children under the age of 12 suffers from extreme poverty'.

The rapid impoverishment of the population is one of the main socio-economic issues facing Europe. Wrong decisions during the pandemic, thoughtless sanctions against Belarus and Russia, as well as colossal military expenditures have undermined the EU's economy and directly impacted the well-being of its citizens.

European media raise this issue, but coherent analyses that would directly expose the true causes of the crisis are virtually absent. Meanwhile, without understanding them, rectifying the situation is impossible.

FACT

According to data for 2023, the level of extreme poverty in Poland has reached its highest since 2014, with 1.8m people classified as extremely poor.



Tall, calm, with an almost eternal cigarette in hand — this is how his contemporaries, fellow writers, described him. He spoke little, preferring to listen to others. It was evident that he had a wealth of life experience behind him and an unconventional understanding of reality. The son of simple parents — his father was a railway worker and his mother was a railway crossing guard — Lynkov achieved unimaginable heights in literature. Even today, readers from around the world are discovering his unique children's prose as well as his works on military themes. It is believed that his famous character Mikolka the Steam Locomotive from the eponymous novella was based on himself, but this is just one of the many intriguing facts about his creative work. Let us peep into the National Library, where an exhibition dedicated to the anniversary of Mikhas Lynkov is currently taking place, and share some of the most interesting exhibits that reveal the personality of the People's Writer from unexpected angles.

Alongside a literary classic

It has been 125 years since the birth of Mikhas Lynkov — the People's Writer of Belarus

By Olga Nevmerzhitskaya

Almanac *Uzdym* with Lynkov's signature

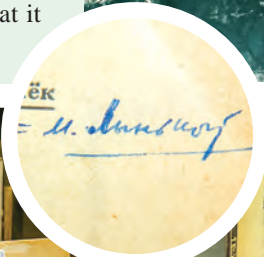
Mikhas Lynkov became one of the six founders of *Maladnyak* [young generation] — the famous literary association. The creative work of the *Maladnyak* members marked the beginning of the proletarian movement in domestic literature and became one of the prominent phenomena of Soviet literature as a whole. However, Lynkov went even further: in Bobruisk, he organised and headed a branch of the association at the *Communist* newspaper, where young talents were also based. The archives of the National Library have preserved two issues of *Uzdym* from the Bobruisk branch for the years 1926-1928, one of which features a work by Lynkov signed under the pseudonym *Vasilyok* [cornflower]. Even more unique is the inscription beneath it '—Lynkov'. A handwriting analysis has not been conducted, but the style of writing clearly indicates that it was penned by Lynkov himself.



Yelizaveta Kobetskaya

Photo by the campfire

On the banks of the river near a campfire, Mikhas Lynkov and poet Maksim Tank are captured in conversation: the literary classics were close friends. Lynkov acknowledged his companion's considerable talent and supported him in every way, introducing him to the literary elite, taking Tank with him to Moscow, where they attended the Bolshoi Theatre, and even allowing him to stay in his flat for a time when his friend had nowhere to live. Mikhas Lynkov was known for his ability to admire the talents of others, he did not envy other writers their fame, and he possessed a rare generosity. Interestingly, contemporaries recalled that Lynkov loved visiting his dacha near the Naroch, where he would happily light a campfire and engage in philosophical discussions with his guests. This became almost a ritual, a captivating event. He also enjoyed photographing through the flames, which earned him the nickname 'the Naroch wizard' among his friends.

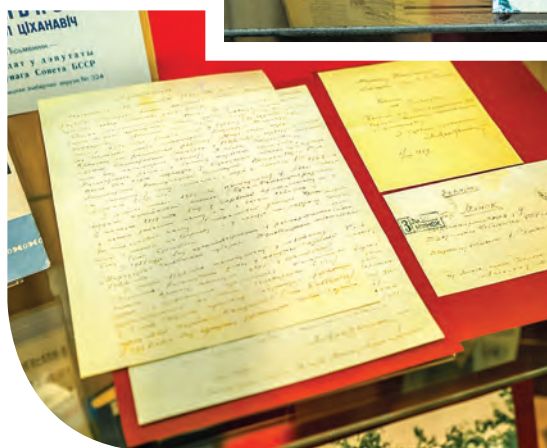


Magazine *Chyrvonaya Belarus*

The archive of the National Library possibly stores the only such issue in the country. Dated 1932, it contains a rare article by Lynkov titled *A Bit of Airy Romanticism*, where the author describes the feelings of a person flying on an airplane for the first time, along with their experiences and emotions. The magazine *Chyrvonaya Belarus* was published biweekly. It depicted the labour achievements of the Soviet people and also printed literary works. The pages of the publication featured both renowned and emerging authors.

Autobiography with a letter

Some exhibits of the exposition are presented by Belarus' National Archives. Among them is a letter from Mikhas Lynkov, dated 1959. On two well-preserved A4 sheets, he recounts his work biography. The letter is addressed to Joseph Simanovsky, the director of the State Library of the BSSR (the first director of the National Library). The purpose for which Lynkov sent this information is now impossible to ascertain, but at least the writer's address is provided: Stalin Avenue, 12, flat 43.



Book *Fateful Days*

This is the author's last major work, completed in 1958. Life during the years of fascist occupation, the cruelty and atrocities of the invaders, and the bravery of Soviet people are vividly and multifacetedly reflected in this novel about the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War. The book about the struggle of partisans

and underground fighters against German Nazis captured the hearts of millions of readers. Notably, the author almost immediately planned to translate the novel into Russian, but the specialist commissioned for the task inexplicably ignored the assignment. As a result, the Russian-speaking world did not see the book until much later, in 1968.

Book *Yanka the Parachutist* from 1937

The creative works of this acclaimed literary genius include a number of children's stories. One of the most famous is *Yanka the Parachutist*, which narrates the tale of a boy who dreamed of conquering the sky. Restless Yanka wanted to jump with a parachute. His friends supported the idea and joined in on the 'training', attempting to jump from a tree with an improvised parachute. They even took a cat to keep them a company, which soared into the air with the help of a kite. Fortunately, everything ended well.

Even more popular among children is *Mikolka the Steam Locomotive*. This beloved story was even adapted into a film by the Belarusfilm studio in 1957, with Mikhas Lynkov contributing as one of the scriptwriters.

Legacy through the ages

Today, Mikhas Lynkov's works have been translated into dozens of languages. They can be found in major global libraries. Some copies in Arabic, Latvian, Spanish, Lithuanian, Polish, French, Estonian, and Russian are available at Belarus' National Library. In the USSR, the writer's books were published 92 times, with a total circulation of 1,670,500 copies. In the BSSR, they were published 73 times, with a total circulation of 1,045,500 copies.



CULTURE

Protected forests of Belarus

Belarus is rightly considered one of the greenest countries — forests cover 40.2 percent of its territory. There is almost a hectare of emerald land for every resident. What secrets do they hold?

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Returning to the past

The Belovezhskaya Pushcha is the largest area of relic lowland forest in Europe. It is there that you can find five-hundred-year-old oaks and three-hundred-year-old pines, while the height of the fluffy spruces reaches 50 metres. For comparison: the New Year tree in the Kremlin is half that height. During car, electric scooter, and walking tours, there is a high chance of encountering a graceful deer or a playful raccoon. For the most impatient tourists, enclosures have been set up where they can meet all the inhabitants of the ancient forest — from majestic bison to handsome capercaillies.

The winter season in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha will begin on December 7th with the arrival of the country's main wizard — Belarusian Ded Moroz [Father Frost]. Before that time, you can still enjoy the silence and tranquillity without the throngs of tourists. You will feel a special atmosphere in the open-air archaeological museum that not only features a primeval forest but also provides a complete immersion into the life of primitive man showcasing raw-hide tents, two-thousand-year-old pottery, and pre-Christian idols.



Feeding wild horses

The favourite eco-route of Minsk residents runs through the Nalibokskaya Pushcha nature reserve, located 60 kilometres from the capital. The length of the *Syabrynsky Crossroads* eco-trail is only 960 metres, yet it passes through a forest, a meadow, and a swamp. Marvel!

However, the main attraction of the site is the wild horses, also known as tarpan horses. They are unmistakable compared to domestic ones, and stand out for being stockier, having a mane without a forelock, and growing thick fur for winter. Other distinctive features include a dark stripe running along the back, and stripes on their legs like those of a zebra. Their gastronomic preferences are quite ordinary, though — they never refuse a juicy apple.

In the vicinity of the Nalibokskaya Pushcha, there are a lot of farmsteads, where tourists can enjoy a bathhouse, sleep on a stove, and taste real homemade game sausages.



Admiring corals on land

Scientists compare the Prip'yatsky National Park in the south of the country to the Red Sea. It impresses with a variety of unusual bright plants and mushrooms of bizarre shapes. They do not even need water, and grow directly on fallen trees. In autumn, the coral tooth fungus, also known as the comb coral mushroom, appears in all its glory. Some think it resembles corals, while others stubbornly see a resemblance to a sea urchin. One thing is clear: it looks magical! Touching the comb coral mushroom is strictly prohibited — it is included in Belarus' Red Data Book — whereas admiring and photographing it is perfectly fine. In the Prip'yatsky National Park, this exotic mushroom can be found along the *Khlypinskaya Buda* eco-trail.

Exploring the bear's habitat

The Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve is renowned for being home to Europe's Big Five of large mammals: the bison, bear, moose, wolf, and lynx. All these animals can be seen at once in the forest zoo. However, the truly exclusive experience is an outing into the wild to observe bears. The likelihood of encountering a brown bear in its natural habitat there is very high: about a third of the entire Belarusian population of brown bears lives in the reserve and its surroundings.

Entertaining programmes with the grey-haired Swamp Spirit are organised for children. As the reserve's staff jokingly admit, this character from Belarusian mythology — that was once a mischievous spirit, but now legally delights and teaches the little ones to protect nature — is the rarest Red Data Book species.



Wandering the giants' trail

If Russia is associated with bears in the animal kingdom, then Belarus is associated with the bison. These mighty giants nearly became extinct in the early 20th century due to thoughtless hunting. Luckily, they have survived! Today, we have the largest population of bison. Moreover, they are mainly found grazing freely; during the cold season, they can even be spotted in fields along the highways. There is no need to be afraid — they are peaceful if left undisturbed.

In the Prip'yatsky National Park, tourists are offered not just to admire the symbol of the country, but to study it in detail by following bison traces through oak groves and swamps, collecting and examining the clues they leave behind, and deciphering secret signs. The park's staff promise that the experience will feel as if you have found yourself at the centre of a wildlife documentary.

Determined to win

Female players of the Minsk FC are preparing for the 'gold match' of the Belarusian championship

The climax of the Belarusian women's football championship will unfold at the Minsk FC stadium on Mayakovsky Street on December 7th. The 'gold match' might not have taken place, but in the 33rd round, the Minsk FC players defeated the capital's Dinamo-BGUFK with a score of 1:0, resulting in both teams accumulating an equal number of points — 83 each. Now the intrigue is at its peak. Will the Dinamo-BGUFK secure the championship title for the fifth consecutive time, or will the Minsk end their rivals' dominance? We have found out what mindset the Minsk FC players are bringing to the main match of the tournament and what tactical surprises they are preparing.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

"On the football pitch, they are piranhas, but behind the sidelines, they are good, calm girls who support each other with words and actions," succinctly described his team the head coach of the Minsk FC, Andrei Pyshnik. The girls have yet to show their teeth to their opponents during the game; meanwhile, we were able to witness the second part of his statement by attending a training session with the players. The girls were in excellent spirits, smiling a lot and playfully teasing each other in front of the camera.



Andrei Pyshnik

It is hard to imagine now that at the beginning of this season, the Minsk FC women's team had to be almost completely reformed — 12 players left the squad during the off-season! However, it can already be said that the club has managed to tackle this challenge. Andrei Pyshnik summarised the still provisional results of the season. "For the first time in 20 years, the 'gold match' will be held in the national championship, which means our team has done everything possible to achieve the main goal — winning the championship. The season has been quite challenging: the joy of winning the Belarusian Super Cup, the disappointment of losing in the Belarusian Cup [in both tournaments, the Minsk FC competed against the

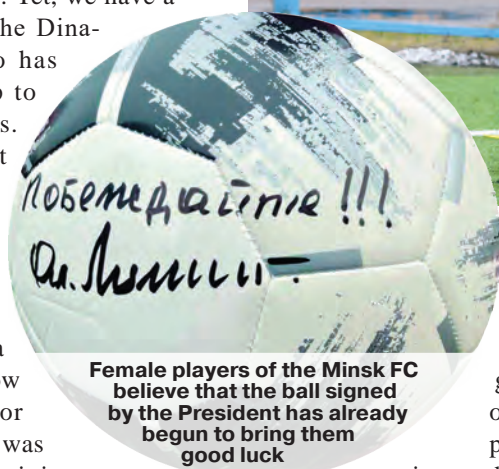


Aleksandr Kulevsky

Dinamo-BGUFK] and the Champions League. Now ahead of us is the 'gold match'. We are preparing for it without our full squad: seven players are with the national teams. Yet, we have a fighting spirit! The Dinamo-BGUFK also has players called up to the national teams. One could say that the conditions are equal. Whoever is stronger will win."

The team's forward, Viktoriya Tsikhan, shared how the preparation for the crucial match was going, "We are training according to a well-established cycle, with each session having its own focus. Of course, fatigue has built up; there have been many games, and we are currently in a very tough period. But we want to finish the season on a positive note!" Midfielder Liana Mirashnichenka completely agreed with Viktoriya. Both girls have been champions of Belarus as part of the Minsk FC and do not hide the fact that they want to once again experience the victorious emotions, which are beyond words. "We are only focused on winning!" Liana assured. "This year, we have slightly turned the tide against the Dinamo-BGUFK. This team has won the championship for four consecutive years, and this time we managed to put up a very good fight against them."

Lada Pashkouskaya, who has already scored against the Dinamo-BGUFK this season, remembers the emotions from that goal very well. She admitted that scoring against such an opponent is extremely pleasant. Reflecting on her rivals, she noted that they have quite a few good attacking players, but the Minsk



Female players of the Minsk FC believe that the ball signed by the President has already begun to bring them good luck

has its own strengths to counter them. This includes good execution of set pieces, playing qualities, and an additional trump card — their home stadium. "This is definitely a plus for us," agreed midfielder Anna Godinskaya. "At our home stadium, even the walls help. I think that mums, dads, grandmas, grandpas, brothers and sisters, and friends will all come to support us!"

It is planned that in the next season, the Minsk FC will play home matches of Belarus' championship at the renovated Traktor Stadium, which was recently visited by Aleksandr Lukashenko. The President spoke with the coaches and players — the meeting left a lot of warm impressions on the players. "At first, it was a bit exciting, but once our conversation started, everything fell into place," recounted Liana Mirashnichenka. "The discussion took place in a friendly atmosphere. The President shared stories and joked. He did not give us any specific advice, but he said and wrote on the ball: 'Win!' We have already secured one victory over the Dinamo-BGUFK since then." Lada Pashkouskaya also believes that they can outplay their rivals once again.

The footballer hopes that the ball signed by the President — which is now kept in the club's museum — will indeed become the talisman for the Minsk FC. Anna Godinskaya, for her part, emphasised that the meeting with Aleksandr Lukashenko left only positive emotions, and the encounter with the Head of State greatly motivated the team ahead of one of the championship's key matches.

"Of course, the Traktor Stadium has been significantly renovated. The pitch is superb, and the internal facilities are great too. Everything is excellent. The opening of such complexes is a big plus for Minsk. It is gratifying that the Head of State visited this sports facility and spoke with the team. He wished us to win, and we will try to keep doing that," said Andrei Pyshnik. "I have noticed an interesting point. Towards the end of the season, the girls' emotions had calmed down, but this meeting really inspired them. The President is a sporty person. He motivated our players and suggested areas for improvement. I think this will provide a boost of energy for many years to come."

Photo of the week



The Belarusian capital has become the epicentre of innovation! An international conference on artificial intelligence — *One AI Forum* — has taken place in Minsk. This is the major IT forum in the CIS for investors, startups, developers, and students.

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



December 5th is World Soil Day. Land fertility plays one of the crucial roles in our lives. In this context, ecologists and representatives

of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation are concerned that about one-third of the world's soil resources are degrading, and some areas are at risk of desertification. Soil and water are vital resources for sustaining life on Earth, and the relationship between soil and water underpins all agricultural systems.

On December 5th, 1924, the Palekh art workshops were established in the ancient Russian village of Palekh. As early as the 16th and 17th centuries, Palekh became a centre for the ancient icon-painting craft of Vladimir-Suzdal Rus. Palekh icons were renowned for their exceptional delicacy of painting. From 1920 onwards, the residents of Palekh began to paint wooden items.

On December 5th, 1924, several artists united to form the Artel of Ancient Painting. Present-day Palekh is regarded as one of the recognised centres of lacquer miniature art.

December 5th, 1957 remembers the launching of the *Lenin* nuclear-powered icebreaker in Leningrad, which became the world's first surface ship with a nuclear power



plant. It was designed and built to service the Northern Sea Route as well as for expeditionary voyages in the Arctic. Thanks to its power installation and high autonomy, the icebreaker demonstrated excellent operational capability during its early navigations. The use of the nuclear-powered icebreaker significantly extended the navigation period.

December 5th, 2014 marks the opening of the Scientific and Medical Centre for Cell Technologies at Belarus' National Academy of Sciences. Its main activities focus on developing scientifically grounded approaches and creating advanced therapeutic medical products for cell and gene therapy, as well as tissue and organ engineering. The centre includes the production of biomedical cell products, a stem cell bank, and a polyclinic department.

On December 6th, 1904, US President Theodore Roosevelt, in his message to Congress, proclaimed the right of the United States to intervene militarily in other nations of the

Western Hemisphere (the *Big Stick* policy). The practical embodiment of the *Big Stick* policy included US interventions in Cuba from 1906 to 1909, in Nicaragua in 1909, and in the Dominican Republic in 1912. The *Big Stick* policy continues to be actively applied by the USA in the 21st century, extending its scope beyond Latin America. The USA continues to interfere in the internal political affairs of many countries.

December 7th, 1764 marks the founding of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg — one of the largest art museums in the world. Its collection was assembled during the reign of Catherine the Great, who signed the decree for the construction of buildings to house paintings, sculptures, and other works of art. Today, the museum complex consists of six buildings, the main one being the Winter Palace. Visitors can explore 365 exhibition halls, which contain around three million exhibits. The Hermitage is among the top ten most visited art museums in the world.

December 9th, 1968 is the birthday of the computer mouse. On this day, American inventor Douglas Engelbart demonstrated the world's first computer mouse at a computer conference in San Francisco. It was a

wooden shell on wheels with a single button, and its cord resembled the tail of a real mouse — hence the name. Later versions included laser and wireless mice, while one of the latest developments is gyroscopic mice that can detect movement in space.

On December 10th, 1821, Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-1878) — a famous Russian poet and literary figure, regarded as a classic of world literature — was born. His poetic work ranks alongside the genius creations of Pushkin and Lermontov. Throughout thirty years, Nekrasov published the most progressive magazines of his time — *Sovremennik* and *Otechestvennyye Zapiski*. He is best known for his works such as the epic poem *Who Lives Well in Russia*, the poems *Frost*, *Red Nose*, *Russian Women*, and the verses *Grandfather Mazai and Hares*, and *The Railway*.



December 11th celebrates International Tango Day, coinciding with the birthday of Argentine singer and film actor Carlos Gardel (1887—1935), known as *King of Tango*. At the heart of the dance are the Man and the Woman, embodying their relationships, passions, conflicts, reconciliations, love, jealousy, and hatred that enrich human life.

