



Based on Napoleon Orda's drawings, the iconic historical objects are being restored throughout Belarus

9



Travellers to Belarus will definitely enjoy magnificent Orthodox monasteries

10

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Participants of the 'Memory Road Train' patriotic marathon — Leonid Kuznetsov and Galina Dyachenko — on a rare GAZ M-20 'Pobeda'

Along the roads of memory

Over the past weekend, columns of cars with national flags were driving along the roads of our country. Two large-scale motor rallies took place in Belarus, with patriots reaching the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve on the eve of the 35th anniversary of the tragedy at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and another group setting out on the Vitebsk — Shunevka — Stalin Line — Khatyn route on Saturday morning. → 6





The agenda included a wide range of issues of Belarusian-Russian relations. The heads of state spoke about international and regional issues and the joint response to current challenges and threats. As Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, those were ‘the hot topics on which we have to work harder’, “Including the security and defence of our Union State. Although generally speaking, we’ve been managing and will continue to do so. We’ll draw the lines that no one is allowed to cross and we’ll give a proper answer to those who don’t understand that one has to be calm and friendly in this crazy world.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko believes that Belarus and Russia have made significant progress on the Union State programmes. He stated,

A talk between two allies

The Kremlin hosted a meeting of the presidents of Belarus and Russia. The negotiations lasted almost four hours.

“Probably, 26 or 27 programmes have already been reconciled at Government level. There is not much left: two or three key programmes related to the economy, including taxes; it’s a well-known issue, the decision on which was taken in Minsk.”

The President also recalled that a Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia will take place in summer; the Moscow Region will host this. “We’ll then decide on an autumn session of the Supreme State Council, during which we will be able to formalise all our agreements by signing certain documents,” Aleksandr Lukashenko added.

Vladimir Putin appreciated the development of Belarusian-Russian co-operation, “I’d like to note that, despite controversial topics, our relations are developing successfully. Despite the pandemic and a certain decrease in trade turnover, the trade volume is nearly \$30bn — a significant figure.”

The President of Russia

expressed confidence that the previous volumes of mutual trade will be restored. He also said that both sides continue working on improving the legal framework of the Union State of Belarus and Russia.

According to him, Belarus and Russia are also strengthening liaisons in the areas of military-technical co-operation and security in the broadest sense of the word.

During their conversation, the presidents also touched upon Ukrainian issues. In particular, Vladimir Putin responded to the yet absentee and unofficial initiative of his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to hold talks in Donbass to discuss the settlement of the conflict in this region, “Recently, the current leadership of Ukraine has taken steps that destroy Russian-Ukrainian relations... However, if President Zelenskyy wants to start restoring these relations, we will welcome it.”

Vladimir Putin asked a logical question, “What do we want to discuss at this meeting? If we

are talking about discussing the Donbass problems, then, first of all, the Ukrainian leadership should meet with the leaders of the republics — LNR [Lugansk People’s Republic] and DNR [Donetsk People’s Republic] — and only then discuss these problems with representatives of third countries, which in this case is Russia.”

If there is a need to discuss the development of bilateral relations, then, the Russian President stressed, Moscow is ready to welcome the President of Ukraine at any time convenient for him.

Aleksandr Lukashenko agreed with this approach, “If they want to talk to Donbass, then it’s possible to do this in Donbass — let them meet, right? It’s their business.” He added then, “It seems to me, Vladimir Vladimirovich, it’s time for Zelenskyy to learn to behave diplomatically, among other things. This applies to Donbass.”

Perhaps the same can be said about Kiev’s initiative to move the negotiating venue of the tri-

lateral contact group on Donbass from Minsk. Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded that the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and the then President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, had initially contacted him with a request to organise a negotiation platform in Belarus, “Everyone who was present then contacted me and said it was necessary to organise one. I said it will be done.

“If they don’t like it now, they are free to choose any other country. However, one should bear in mind that they will need a consensus of those who made the suggestions back in the day [negotiating sides].”

The President of Belarus added that if the presidents of Russia and Ukraine, as well as other parties involved in the process, make the relevant decision, then certainly the trilateral contact group on Donbass will work somewhere else.

Based on materials of belta.by

Politics of common sense

Belarusian-Ukrainian relations, the situation in Donbass and the lack of an alternative to Minsk as a venue for peace talks were on the agenda for the President’s meeting with the Ukrainian politician

By Yevgeny Kononovich,
Dmitry Umpirovich

The President welcomed a member of Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada, Evgeny Shevchenko, at the Palace of Independence. Recently, this politician has become well known in our country. Despite the changing moods among the Ukrainian political leadership, he doesn’t hide his sympathy for Belarus and the Belarusian leader, while advocating the strengthening of Belarusian-Ukrainian co-operation. With this in mind, Aleksandr Lukashenko commented,

“I hope this will be a good signal, based on what I know about you and your position on Belarusian-Ukrainian relations and on Belarus in general. I really hope that this will be a good start to co-operation between the true patriots of Ukraine and Belarus.”

Win for those who are smarter

Ukraine has always been a friendly state for us and one of our main economic partners. It remains so now. Alas, this cannot be said about the position of Kiev; since last August, it has changed significantly. Zelenskyy’s visit to our country scheduled for October 2020 and the 3rd Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine had to be called off. It came to the point that the Ukrainian side, for spurious reasons, announced the termination of its participation in meetings of the trilateral contact group in Minsk.

As for our President, he has never concealed that he has special feelings for Ukraine. Therefore, for him, the recent meeting was not only an occasion to talk about Belarusian-Ukrainian re-

QUOTE

Evgeny Shevchenko, a member of Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada:

I believe that Ukraine and Belarus are two close nations. No matter who is in power, no matter what happens, these peoples will never be estranged. Many might argue that the things I’m saying don’t resonate with all Ukrainians. But I know (and opinion polls prove this) that Ukrainians, in the sense of a political nation (not only ethnic Ukrainians but all ethnicities who live in Ukraine) love Belarus and Belarusian people... Opinion polls show that today 36 percent of Ukrainians would like to see Aleksandr Lukashenko as the President of Ukraine. It’s for a reason. Therefore, it is unacceptable to make such statements as some of our politicians do.

All policies aimed at destroying economic, friendly ties with neighbours will never bring anything good. I personally believe that we should use diplomacy to build relations with everyone around us.



lations (unfortunately, this topic has not always been discussed positively in recent times), but also a good signal for the beginning of co-operation between the true patriots of Ukraine and Belarus, “You know my stance on Ukraine. It remains unchanged.

I would very much like Ukraine to be ours so that three brotherly Slavic nations could be together — for the benefit of the nations. Nobody intends to enslave each other. Nobody intends to pressure each other. However, politics is politics. You understand there are various issues to consider. This is why those who are smarter win in politics — instead of those who are simply the strongest — and those who exploit the situation in a way to make everything better.”

This refers to the situation in Donbass as well. Aleksandr Lukashenko ex-

pressed his principal vision of the issue,

“Let me tell you sincerely: the normalisation of the situation in problem spots in Ukraine, primarily in Donbass, depends primarily on Ukraine. If, starting tomorrow, one begins to act upon the Minsk agreements and so on, people’s nerves and some Ukrainian interests may be affected. But trust me, Ukraine will benefit in the medium term.”

No alternative to Minsk venue

Sometimes some Ukrainian politicians go too far. An example of this is the recent statement from the first President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, who proposed to move the negotiations of the trilateral contact group on the settlement of the situation in Donbass from Belarus to a ‘neutral’ country — i.e. to Poland. Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed his bewilderment in this regard,

“This is purely political. But, believe me, we are not particularly worried about this. It’s just a pity for Ukraine that this process could be delayed or even destroyed. There’s no need to do this.”

Evgeny Shevchenko hastened to calm down — firstly the Belarusian President and then journalists, “This was the statement of a trilateral contact group member; later, other members refuted these rumours. So far, Ukraine has not left Minsk for the venue of peace talks. There is no alternative.”

Trade relations as the foundation

Speaking about economic co-operation with Ukraine, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that mutual trade turnover with this country approaches \$5bn. “You know that we have never, even in this situation, done any harm to Ukraine. We gave everything Ukraine asked for, including electricity when there was a problem with it.”

Unfortunately, there have been a lot of contradictions between our countries recently. The strategy of behaviour voiced by Aleksandr Lukashenko is the following: we are not going to confront Ukraine head-on in any issues and behave independently. We will of course have to react ‘if we cross these forbidden red lines’.

What exactly is alarming? These are, for example, relations in the economic sphere and various confrontations. “I believe that being a person familiar with business processes, you understand that we should not create tensions in our trade, because trade is the base. If there is no trade (our trade is more or less balanced), what kind of relations can we have in other areas?” the Head of State said.

New life for Chernobyl regions

For over a decade, on the anniversary of the Chernobyl accident, the President of Belarus has visited the regions of the country most affected by the nuclear disaster. The Head of State's attention to the restoration and development of these lands does not weaken. This year, the President visited the Narovlya and Bragin districts — showing interest in people's lives and the possibility of developing ecologically friendly industries.

Aleksandr Lukashenko views the future of the Chernobyl territories as follows, "We should contribute to Belarus at the expense of its south. This is our reserve which we didn't pay attention to. It's time to make a definite decision and raise up these lands. If we, the current generation, fail to do this, then no one will do it for another 35 years."

Do the best for people

After reviewing the development of the Narovlya District on Saturday, the Head of State recalled that the first task of more than 20 years ago was to make sure that the fear around the Chernobyl issue disappeared. Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, "The situation wasn't easy. We needed to calm people down, get things in order. It was necessary to overcome this fear psychologically... We made some steps forward and showed people that it's necessary and possible to live here. We overcame this psychological barrier and then began to slowly explore the lands. We see they should be used."

Time has shown that was the right way. "Well, we can't give the south of Belarus to nature. We must get something from this nature — carefully, without external pressure. The main thing, of course, is to ensure people feel safe and are not afraid," concluded the President.

Details of Moscow negotiations

Journalists asked about the details of Aleksandr Lukashenko's recent working trip to Moscow. Odious Internet resources have expressed all sort of fantasies about his negotiations with Vladimir Putin. It was said that the President virtually went to sell Belarus. Commenting on speculation that 'Lukashenko has been driven into a corner and there's nowhere to go since Russia has swallowed up the country', the Head of State said, "There was no talk of this at all! At present, they [opponents of the authority] want to push us along this path. Therefore, we need to act and not make mistakes. If I went, as they said, to sell or rent Belarus — it would be a gift for them. *However, I've said so many times: I'm the first President of our independent Belarus. We were lucky to build the first independent state. I'm most interested in us being independent.*"

The role of a shadowy person in a bad story

One of the questions asked by journalists concerned the 'Winnie-the-Poohs' — as those detained for preparing a coup were nicknamed by the Internet resources and certain 'experts' sympathising with them. In an effort to obscure the topic and distract attention from the key point, some said these chubby 'Winnie-the-Pooh' figures were unlikely conspirators. However, the Head of State commented, "*The investigation is underway. I don't want to get ahead of it. In the near future, we will inform you in full how dangerous or not these people are.*"

The talk concerned one of the detainees: Aleksandr Feduta. This man worked in Aleksandr Lukashenko's election headquarters during the first Presidential campaign in 1994; and after the election, he headed the department of public and political information of the President Administration of the first elected Belarusian leader. Later, he moved to the opposition camp. The Head of State recalled how this man moved between different near-political centres in the following years.



Chaos scenarios

The President also spoke about several scenarios regarding the overthrow of the legitimate government in Belarus — thought of by the authors of this action; these were revealed by our special services. The first idea was suggested by Aleksandr Feduta: a copy of the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during a military parade in Cairo in 1981. Aleksandr Lukashenko commented, "Actually, that's impossible. Shooting Lukashenko at the parade is not about us. It won't be possible. The idea was rejected."

According to the Head of State, other ideas were as follows,

State, and \$1m for the sniper. We have watched them for a long time. We've been following them."

The Head of State drew attention to details of the operation to detain the conspirators, "You saw there was allegedly our general there. We can say openly: he was our agent. I appreciate what he has done. He helped us a lot, he was not afraid. They wanted to raise a revolt in the army through him... We knew of this and watched their every step."

The Head of State particularly noted the co-ordinated work of the Belarusian and Russian special services in preventing irreparable damage.



2021. Bragin welcomes spring.

"They have already brought grenade launchers to Belarus. Later they gave up the idea. Why? The President's motorcade moves at high speed for security reasons. These are their words: 'The probability of hitting the target is very low. If we are spotted, then we'll be shot dead right there'. A machine gun cart [the third idea]: a car and a large-calibre machine gun with armour-piercing ammunition in the back. To ride out on the road and eliminate the motorcade. Another idea was to attack a countryside residence. They openly named it: in Ozerny. Where have they got this from? Those were Fedutas who said it..."

According to the information from our special services, disclosed by the President, the appropriate funds were also prepared for the campaign, "\$10m was allocated for the destruction of the residence together with the Head of

To save the country

The President revealed some details of the previous decision to ensure the country's governability in a hypothetical crisis situation. He modelled the situation, "Tell me, if there is no President tomorrow, do you guarantee that everything will be fine? No. Therefore, in this case I am going to sign a decree in the near future as to how the power in Belarus will be structured."

A clear algorithm for action will be envisaged. "If the President is killed, the Security Council will take over powers immediately. A state of emergency must be instantly declared, up to military level, if someone approaches the border. The Security Council should make the decision," Aleksandr Lukashenko said. He added that such a need is unlikely to occur, "*However, it's not the time to let one's guard down. I have to envisage everything.*

That is why this decree will be signed. We will actually have a collective president in the form of the Security Council."

The Head of State also spoke of some mechanisms of decision making under the modelled circumstances, "Yes, there will be a chairperson: when there is no President, the Prime Minister replaces him. He will preside, but all decisions will be made by secret ballot to avoid any pressure. Both the civilians and military in the Security Council will decide when the Presidential election will take place, how to act and so on."

Tasks for the next five years

The Head of State's working trip to the Gomel Region continued on Monday. On the day of the 35th anniversary of the tragedy at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the President was welcomed in Bragin — the closest Belarusian district centre to the nuclear power plant.

The President's working day was intense. He took part in a requiem rally and the planting of the Avenue of Memory. Aleksandr Lukashenko also talked with local residents and held a meeting on the revival of the affected areas. Summing up its results, the Head of State said, "35 years have passed, and we can see what needs to be done to solve the main problem. We need a programme of land regeneration, the

purpose of which should be to restore the level as it was before the Chernobyl tragedy — with some special features." The President has set a task to develop an appropriate programme by September and immediately begin its implementation.

In addition, five state Chernobyl programmes have already been realised and great success has been achieved in reviving the pearl of our Belarus: Polesie. Much more needs to be done. The President concluded, "I know for certain that we can solve these problems together. *We will do everything to ensure that, in the near future, the trace of this man-made disaster remains only in the historical chronicles and in the memory of the heroes who helped.*"

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



By Varvara Morozova,
Maksim Osipov

Summing up the results

The past five years were not easy for Belarus' socio-economic development. Only twice, in 2017 and 2018, was a favourable price environment for exports registered. The rest of the time, the global economic crisis didn't contribute to the growth of prices. The past year was unprecedented: tough restrictive measures in connection with the pandemic in most of our partner countries, the departure from the usual format of dialogue and the widespread increase in protectionism led to a decrease in economic activity on a global scale.

The World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund estimate that global trade declined by 9.6 percent in 2020. However, despite negative external factors, our country has managed to maintain its presence in foreign markets and even ensure positive dynamics of export development in general.

"Last year, Belarusian products were exported to 176 countries. By the end of 2020, the volume of Belarusian exports of goods and services increased by 12.7 percent compared to 2015. At the same time, the growth of exports of services reached 31.6 percent, while their share was almost a quarter of the total volume of exports," the First Deputy Foreign Minister, Aleksandr Guryanov, told the *SB. Belarus Segodnya* edition.

Although export prices have generally declined over the past five years, Belarusian exports increased by 8.9 percent due to an increase in their physical volumes, along with an increase in industrial production and a qualitative diversification of the commodity structure.

The Foreign Ministry emphasises the achievement of a key parameter of the effectiveness of foreign economic activity: the balance of foreign trade in goods and services. In late 2020, the positive balance was \$1.9bn. According to Mr. Guryanov, this became possible thanks to the outstripping development of exports over imports.

"The physical volume of imports of goods increased only by 9.4 percent in five years — which is a direct result of the modernisation of existing and the creation of new export-oriented facilities (Stadler, BelGee, Belagroterminal, the Bleached



Bleached Pulp Plant

Pulp Plant), as well as the implementation of branch and regional import substitution programmes.

Tasks for the next five years

Increasing exports remains the most important strategic priority for the development of the open Belarusian economy in 2021-2025. The Government's programme of activities adopted at the end of last year sets the goal of ensuring export growth in 2025 to \$50bn. To meet it, it will be necessary to diversify



Belagroterminal JSC

exports by product and by country. This will make our economy sustainable to external challenges. The First Deputy Foreign Minister stresses, "Product diversification is based on increasing the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector through the accelerated development of existing and the creation of new high-tech industries. The most important issue is attracting foreign investment, primarily for the creation of new export-oriented facilities in high-yield industries and the implementation of the planned infrastructure projects."

Such comprehensive measures to increase the production of highly liquid and qualitative products should ensure the



BelGee

growth of the share of high-tech goods to the level of at least 5 percent of the total volume of Belarus' exports.

In 2021-2025, priority will also be given to increasing exports of services and their share in total exports. At the same time, the task of growth and diversification will be solved by developing the infrastructure of the service sector, optimising the regulatory system, as well as actively promoting the brand of Belarus in foreign markets. In terms of geographical export diversification, the main efforts will be focused on the implementation of a balanced export strategy.

"We are focused on developing mutually beneficial eco-

economic integration within the framework of the Union State, the EAEU and the CIS, strengthening strategic partnership with China and expanding foreign economic relations with other states," continues Mr. Guryanov.

The presence in the traditional markets will remain, but diplomats will also focus on increasing Belarusian exports to the countries of the European Union and the Far Arc, and developing new niches in the

been extended for 2021-2022. Non-residents are given the opportunity to purchase Belarusian goods with loans from non-resident banks not only in foreign countries (from the subjects of the commodity distribution network), but also directly from our manufacturers.

Amendments have already been made to Presidential Decree No. 534 'On Promoting Exports of Goods (Works, Services)' which provide for pre-export lending, expanding the list of lending banks and insurance organisations, lifting the limit on the amount of export credit (previously, the threshold were at \$200,000) amongst other measures.

Since 2020, for the first time, exporters began using support mechanisms for participation in international specialised exhibitions and certification of products for foreign markets (as part of Presidential Decree No. 412 'On Export Support'). The pandemic has put a bit of a brake on this endeavour, but a surge in activity is forecast this year — especially from small and medium-sized businesses.

"Taking into account the tasks set in the programme, work will continue on the introduction of additional measures to compensate exporters' expenses that are not prohibited in the WTO and the EAEU. In this context, it is planned to use the potential of the EAEU in order to create mechanisms to support and promote products jointly produced in the member states of the Union on foreign markets," adds the official.

The National Centre for Marketing and Price Analysis and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry will also take part in the work on the expansion of non-financial mechanisms to support exports. Mr. Guryanov explains, "Today, there is a great demand for assistance in entering international e-commerce platforms, certification and product design development, creation and promotion of new brands."

In this area, it's also important to pay attention to the development of consulting services for the development of export strategies, the assessment of the export potential of enterprises, the definition of competitive advantages of products, as well as legal support for the creation of export-oriented joint ventures with foreign partners.

Efficient and profitable

How did Belarus manage to increase exports during the difficult times of the pandemic and how did it replace imports?

There are no blank spots on the map of our country's foreign economic activity. The 'Made in Belarus' brand is somehow present on all continents; our products have long been popular and appreciated in many countries. Diplomats and economists are not going to dwell on these successes and a separate section of the Government's programme of activities to 2025 is devoted to increasing exports.

Well-being is a common goal

The 6th Belarusian Entrepreneurship Week was held in the country — with the support of the Government — and was included in the 2021-2025 state programme for the development of small and medium-sized businesses. The event was dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the formation of the private sector of the Belarusian economy and the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the declaration on state sovereignty.

The programme for the Week included about 150-200 events countrywide and the 3rd Republican *Entrepreneurship Development in Belarus: Strategy. Priorities. Prospects for Consolidation Business Forum* was its key event — held at the National Library. It gathered about 250 participants: heads of leading private enterprises, representatives of ministries, departments and local authorities, science and foreign embassies and experts. After the 6th Belarusian People's Congress, it's become another venue for conducting a constructive dialogue between businesses, authorities and civil society. Topical issues of domestic business were considered as part of the campaign.

By Ilya Kryzhevich

New growth points

The Chairman of the Supreme Co-ordinating Council of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship, Andrei Kopytok, emphasised that the 3rd Republican Business Forum is of great importance for society, the state and business owners. According to him, the realities are such that it's necessary to pay special attention to the observance of national interests, the protection of the domestic market, national producers and business entities. "The theme of the forum aims to contribute to the solution of these problems when discussing the strategy, development priorities and prospects for the consolidation of entrepreneurship in the context of improving the business climate in the country, optimising the dialogue between the authorities, businesses and society, to which the Confederation and its partners are always committed," he stressed.

Mr. Kopytok also drew attention to the fact that the private sector of the country's economy is now able to form new points of economic growth, "As of January 1st, 2021, according to the Belarusian Statistical Committee and the Tax and Duties Ministry, 373,000 business entities conducted economic activities — which is almost 10,000 more than on the same date in 2020. This positive trend is remarkable

against the background of negative phenomena caused by coronavirus infection."

In turn, the Chairman of the Union of Non-Profit Organisations Confederation of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Anatoly Kharlap, noted that the process of changing the structure of private business and the movement of private capital to



Andrei Kopytok being interviewed

make a cheaper and more competitive product in terms of technical and export potential. However, this opportunity is not being used today as it could be. The Belarusian Fund for the Financial Support of Entrepreneurs has joined the import substitution programme and the first contact and co-operation exchange related to im-

been committed to creating conditions for the activation of entrepreneurial initiatives and is interested in making the contribution of business to the development of the economy grow. At the same time, he drew attention to the fact that business activity and successful business development largely depend on the basic conditions of the general economic situation in the country, "After the shocks of the past year, the economy has entered a path of recovery growth. In Q1, GDP grew by 0.9 percent, which is slightly higher than we had predicted in our forecast. There are prerequisites for this: we register the revival of foreign markets and the growth of demand for our products. External conditions have become more favourable and stable. Despite the third wave of coronavirus, economic activity is recovering."

Industry is now the main driver of growth — accounting for 109.2 percent. The IT sector is next: 103.5 percent. The high industrial growth is ensured not so much due to oil refining and potash fertilisers, but thanks to the industries that produce investment goods.

"Over two months, the growth of exports of goods and services amounted to 16 percent," said Mr. Yaroshevich. "At the same time, we maintain the balance of foreign trade. The positive balance was about \$750m in the first two months. At the end of the quarter, we expect almost \$1bn."



More than 250 representatives of business, society and authorities took part in the event

wards the industrial sector has begun.

Piotr Arushanyants, the Director General of the Belarusian Fund for the Financial Support of Entrepreneurs, stressed that the topic of industrial co-operation of business is becoming one of the most interesting issues today, "Thanks to the production co-operation between private and public businesses, it is possible

port substitution issues will soon be held. Private businesses will be able to discuss supplies to large production enterprises of MAZ and MTZ there."

External factors

During the forum, the Deputy Economy Minister, Dmitry Yaroshevich, stressed that the state has for many years

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Government has established a list of goods prohibited for import and sale in Belarus



To ensure the protection of national interests and taking into account unfriendly actions towards the Belarusian people, the Government has established a list of goods prohibited for import and sale on our territory. The relevant decision is envisaged in Resolution No. 240 of the Council of Ministers as of April 23rd, 2021.

The list includes goods made by the group of companies: LIQUI MOLY, ŠKODA AUTO and BEIERSDORF. These are trademarks NIVEA, EUCERIN, LA PRAIRIE, LABELLO, HANSAPLAST, FLORENA, 8X4, SKIN STORIES, GAMMON, TESA, CHAUL, COPPERTONE, HIDROFUGAL, STOP THE WATER WHILE USING ME.

If these products are detected while being imported into Belarus, they will be sent back out of the country.

Belarus conducts innovative therapy for oncology treatment

Belarusian paediatric oncologists have performed innovative CAR-T therapy for two patients. CAR-T-therapy is a personalised method of treating malignant neoplasms using the patient's own resources from their immune system. Its essence lies in the fact that doctors remove immune cells from the patient's body, reprogramme and return them to the body. Changing the structure of their DNA makes them fight cancer more actively.



At the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Paediatric Oncology, Haematology and Immunology, a working group has been created, comprising of doctors of various specialisations and biologists. Their efforts have developed a protocol for the treatment of patients with refractory and recurrent B-linear acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. Clinical testing of the method began in autumn 2020.

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'Vytinanka' art to receive the status of a historical and cultural treasure of Belarus

This decision was made at a meeting of the Belarusian Republican Scientific and Methodological Council on issues of historical and cultural heritage.

'Vytinanka' is the art of cutting lace patterns from white and coloured paper, which has reached a high artistic level. It became widespread in the folk life of Belarusians in the mid-19th century as



a way to decorate the interior of a traditional dwelling and was restored as a form of decorative-and-applied art in the late 20th century. Modern 'vytinanka' has become a real art, while also continuing the traditions of our ancestors.

This year, the Ministry of Culture plans to prepare a nomination for the 'Belarusian Art of Vytinanka' for its submission to the UNESCO Secretariat of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The second stage of ticket sales for the Slavianski Bazaar launched

The second stage of ticket sales for the *Slavianski Bazaar* presented programmes in Vitebsk Concert Hall, as well as the traditional projects of the forum: *Theatrical Meetings*, *Festival without Borders* and *The Puppet Quarter*. Projects in the Vitebsk Concert Hall will delight audiences this year with their colourfulness. However, the 19th Vitebsk International Children's Music Competition will be the main event.

The 30th International *Slavianski Bazaar* in Vitebsk Festival of Arts will be held from July 14th to 19th. In addition to projects, tickets for which are already on sale, there are also other items on the programme. These include an exhibition programme, the *Seven Winds* street art fest, a Youth Day on Victory Square and the *Slavianski Blagovest* Festival of Choral Music.



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Along the roads of memory

The report on how the patriots of Belarus spent last weekend

Over the past weekend, columns of cars with national flags were driving along the roads of our country. Two large-scale motor rallies took place in Belarus, with patriots reaching the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve on the eve of the 35th anniversary of the tragedy at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and another group setting out on the Vitebsk — Shunevka — Stalin Line — Khatyn route on Saturday morning.

By Svetlana Isaenok,
Yulia Demeshko

Polesie chronicles

The desire to go to the Polesie Reserve gathered about one hundred and fifty people. We talked with Nina Kremnevskaya, who has already taken part in the race several times. She now lives near Baranovichi, but was born in the Buda-Koshelevo District, in the village of Potapovka, which was resettled after the Chernobyl accident. The woman knows about the problem first-hand and tells us that one day in autumn she was unsettled by a situation in one of the Telegram chats, “I was a reader of one of the chats, and when they wrote ‘let’s blow up the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets’ I couldn’t believe it. How can you write that?! You can’t even imagine all this horror. These are strange people who clearly don’t understand the meaning of the words they write. Maybe, they don’t even live here. It seemed the person was local, but no one knows where he really is. Our people can’t call for explosions under their own feet. This is an obvious provocation.”

Let’s meet the participants of



Ivan Yarivanovich



Anton Stepanishchev

the race who also include bloggers, as is traditional. The well-known TikToker and presenter, Styusha, shoots mostly positive videos but she came to this rally with a different approach, “We try to cover not only positive moments in the history of our country, but also remember the tragedies so that this doesn’t happen again in future. We need to appreciate the peace and tranquillity that we have. The memory of the harsh pages of history contributes to this.”

Among those who were awaiting the start of the column was Marek Jarczyński of Poland, a student at Poznan Uni-

versity. “I’m here to express support for co-operation between Poland and Belarus and to show that relations between our countries should be like friends, not enemies,” says the young man. “I’m sure that we — the citizens of the two countries — must do everything to ensure interaction at our level and that everything is good between us. We should also respect each other.”

From generation to generation

The route of the Vitebsk regional ‘Road Train of Memory’ marathon — which cruised

from one memorial place to another on Saturday — can rightfully be called patriotic. This rally brought together people of different professions and ages (the youngest participant was only four years old), but united by a common desire to know and remember their history. Furthermore, they want to pass it on to the growing generation. Therefore, excursions were conducted especially for the youngest participants in the Stalin Line Historical and Cultural Complex and Khatyn State Memorial. However, a mourning staging of the events that took place in this village

during the war was presented in the Shunevka Memorial.

People of a very respectable age also took part in the marathon, including former juvenile prisoners of concentration camps. For them, the word ‘patriotism’ is not just a spiritual feeling, but the very conviction that prompted them to return to their homeland and rebuild Belarusian cities anew. So, for example, Yevdokia Kolosova, while still very small, ended up with her mother and sisters in the Bruchsal concentration camp. She says, “When the camp was liberated, we were persuaded to stay in Germany, they promised us mountains of gold. This, they say, is better than going to the Soviet Union, where Siberia and prison were supposedly waiting for us. But our mothers said a clear ‘no’ and rushed to go home. Those children who were left alone also returned home to bow to their parents’ grave. That’s where patriotism was. When we returned to Vitebsk, thin as blades of grass, we had to restore the destroyed city. We dragged stones, bricks and planted trees. There is only one homeland. The Motherland is where you were born and raised. It can’t be traded.”

Abandoned land

By Irina Sergeeva

At 01.23:47 on April 26th, 1986, an accident occurred at the fourth power unit of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, 12km from the southern border of Belarus, which completely destroyed the reactor and became the largest in the history of nuclear power. Numerous photographs and archival materials at the *Abandoned Land* exposition

tell us about the accident, its consequences for Belarus, their liquidation and activities to restore the territory, as well as about the fate of people whose lives turned out to be connected with the Chernobyl theme.

The project was prepared jointly with the Belarusian Telegraph Agency, the Museum of Ancient Belarusian Culture of the Centre of Studies of Belarusian Culture, Language and Literature at the

The *Abandoned Land* exhibition project — timed to coincide with the 35th anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant — opens at the National Historical Museum

National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Fire and Rescue Museum of the Ministry of Emergencies of the Republic of Belarus, the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus, and the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve.

The finds of ethnographic expeditions of the Institute of Art History, Ethnography and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences of the 1990s from the regions — affected

by the accident — demonstrate the life and culture of villages that don’t exist today.

Photographs of the flora and fauna of the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve, which is the habitat of rare and endangered species, are also on show.

The exhibition features works by painters Georgy Poplavsky, Viktor Shmatov and Sergei Davidovich-Zosin. The event is available until May 23rd.

Being united

Gomel resident Sergei Kovalevich is one of those who took part in dealing with the consequences of a man-made disaster 35 years ago

He found himself in the zone of radiation contamination two weeks after the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. He did this not for the sake of benefits, awards or bonuses but because the Motherland said: 'We must!'



By Ruslan Proleskovsky

Prediction

His choice of profession happened in early childhood, jokes Sergei Kovalevich. An emergency helped, “In summer, I stayed with my grandfather in the village of Korma, Dobrush District. Somehow a large fire started. There was a commotion, adults were running around, collecting children to take them to a safe place. And they couldn’t find me. As my aunt told me later, the cellar door suddenly opened, I went out and shouted: ‘Here I am!’ Then the adults realised that this was the best refuge. It turned out that I not only chose it myself, but also suggested it to others. When they’d managed the fire, I went to the ashes to see that it was quenched so that it wouldn’t flare up again. And there someone poured water over me from head to foot: I even fell into the stream. I remember how one man laughed and said, “Well, that’s it, you’ll be a firefighter!”

Before the army, Sergei graduated from technical school and managed to work at the Gomel Machine-Tool Plant named after Kirov. Returning in 1985, he wanted to go back to the factory but the personnel department said there were no vacancies. Sergei had to contact the city employment service, where they offered him a job in the fire department. It should be noted that the profession wasn’t considered prestigious at that time. Moreover, the salaries — before the service became military — left much to be desired. However, Sergei decided to try and this is how the prediction from his childhood came true.

Calm after the storm

His place of work was the fire department, which served two large enterprises — Raton and Korall. The daily routine during his shifts was reminiscent of that in the army and included inspection of facilities, training sessions and training in fire-applied sports, alongside regular medical examinations. His dentist was particularly concerned, and for good reason. In those



Sergei Kovalevich



Sergei Kovalevich’s badge: ‘A Participant in Dealing with the Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster’

years, firefighters used oxygen insulating gas masks to work in smoky rooms. Where there was any decay, oxygen aggravated the disease, contributing to its development. Now there is no such problem, as compressed air is

in the breathing apparatus used by the Ministry of Emergencies.

By the spring of 1986, Sergei Kovalevich had been a firefighter for just under a year. Describing Saturday of April 26th, he talks about a tornado that suddenly swooped in, resembling a sandstorm. A natural phenomenon — uncharacteristic for the Gomel Region — is mentioned by most of those who remember that fateful day.

There was no official announcement of the accident. However, rumours multiplied at an astonishing rate. Sergei learned about the incident from one of his colleagues, “To be honest, at first we didn’t attach much importance to his words. People didn’t know about the Chernobyl nuclear power plant at all, they had never heard of it before. Well, let’s say there was an accident, something was burning. So, they put it out, what’s the problem? At that time no one could imagine the scale of the catastrophe that happened.”

A week later — when it was no longer a secret — the firemen were informed

about the formation of consolidated detachments to deal with the consequences of the explosion. Volunteers were needed. Sergei Kovalevich emphasises that this is how the question was posed. There were no categorical orders, threats of dismissal or other forms of coercion. No awards or bonuses were promised either. Anyway, neither a stick nor a carrot was required, because there were enough people. The man says, “The thought didn’t occur to me to refuse. My comrades were going to the zone, with whom I would then work and literally go into fires. How would I look them in the eyes?”

The firefighter confronted his relatives with the fact that he was going on a duty trip. Nobody tried to dissuade him. Most Soviet people were brought up on the principle: if it has to be done, it has to be done.

Exclusion zone

The destination was the village of Strellichevo in the Khoiniki District. A kilometre away there was a checkpoint where firefighters were on duty. Their task was to decontaminate equipment that left the affected area, as well as the usual work to extinguish fires. They happened regularly because of the heat, but not only then. After a hasty evacuation, electrical appliances remained switched on in some houses, lights were on. The deserted villages made a weighty impression.

“We were driving, and dogs were running after the car, barking, as if asking to be taken away. The gates were open, domestic animals wandering, chickens getting under the wheels on the road. There was not a single inhabitant; only the military used armoured personnel

carriers. The scene that I saw in one village — that had not yet been resettled — is engraved in my memory. There was a sign for radiation danger, next to it there is a pile of sand, and kids were swarming in it...” the man recollects.

Touching on the topic of everyday life, we recall an episode from the sensational American TV series *Chernobyl*, particularly, the scene in which boxes of vodka are brought to the ‘liquidators’. The veteran considers this fiction to be complete nonsense, “This simply couldn’t be! Let’s start with the fact that in those years vodka was one of the main shortages, since the anti-alcohol campaign announced by Gorbachev was going on in the USSR. I won’t lie: we didn’t have an absolute dry law there. Guys could drink one or two before going to bed to relieve stress. However, no one got drunk to unconsciousness and didn’t drive drunk. Everything was just like in ordinary life.”

People are united

The first Chernobyl trip for Sergei Kovalevich lasted a week. Two years later, he once again found himself in the exclusion zone. At that time, efforts had been focused on extinguishing forest and peat fires in the Bragin District. They had to struggle against the fire for two weeks, “There was enough water in the tankers only for a few minutes. We pumped water out of the drainage ditches, sometimes emptying them dry, with snakes, frogs and turtles remaining crawling at the bottom. The trucks were often loaded in peat bogs. One gets stuck, the second vehicle tries to pull it out, and now both are slipping — so you need to drive a third. All this happened in thick smoke against the background of a fire. Much depended on the skill of the driver. Our driver was a master, we never got stuck, though we helped pull out other vehicles. The work was difficult, but the experience was colossal. It was very useful when I had a chance to extinguish peat bogs in Polesie in the early 2000s.”

For participation in the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, Sergei Kovalevich was awarded the ‘Military Valour’ badge of the Central Committee of the Komsomol of the USSR. Until 2008, he continued to work in one of the parts of the Gomel city department for emergency situations. He retired in the rank of captain of the internal service.

At the end of the conversation, Sergei recalls another episode that impressed him greatly, “During the first duty trip to Chernobyl we extinguished a fire in a residential village. For some reason I vividly remember the behaviour of its inhabitants. There was not a single indifferent onlooker! Everyone — regardless of age — ran, carried water, and passed buckets. They came up to us and asked what other help was needed. It was then that I realised that the main quality of our people is the ability to unite in the face of a threat. It has always been so, and I’m sure it always will be.”

MEMORIES

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7



A demonstrator holds signs of world leaders during a climate change protest near the White House, in Washington

Leaders summit on climate

The United States and other countries hiked their targets for slashing greenhouse gas emissions at a global climate summit hosted by President Joe Biden

Mr. Biden unveiled the goal to cut emissions by 50-52 percent from 2005 levels at the start of a two-day climate summit kicked off on Earth Day and attended virtually by leaders of 40 countries, including big emitters China, India and Russia.

The United States, the world's second-leading emitter after China, seeks to reclaim global leadership in the fight against global warming after former President Donald Trump withdrew the country from international efforts to cut emissions.

"This is the decade we must make decisions that will avoid the worst consequences of the climate crisis," Mr. Biden,

a Democrat, said at the White House.

British PM Boris Johnson called the new US goal 'game changing' as two other countries made new pledges.

Japan's PM Yoshihide Suga raised Japan's target for cutting emissions to 46 percent by 2030 while Canada's PM Justin Trudeau raised his country's goal to a cut of 40-45 percent by 2030 below 2005 levels.

Greenpeace UK's Head of Climate, Kate Blagojevic, said the summit had more targets than an archery competition. "Targets, on their own, won't lead to emissions cuts," she said. "That takes real policy and money. And that's where the whole world is still way off course."

Most of the countries did not offer new emissions goals. Chinese President Xi Jinping said China expects its carbon emissions to peak before 2030 and the country will achieve net zero emissions by 2060.

President Vladimir Putin said that Russia is 'genuinely interested' in international co-operation to solve climate crisis and it may propose introducing preferential terms and conditions for foreign investment in clean energy projects.

Actually, this year was missing the enormous protests that have been a hallmark of the climate movement, but some groups gathered in smaller ways to drive home their messages.

A painting by Nikolai Gogol discovered in Rome

The picturesque painting, signed 'Gogol', found in the Italian capital in a private collection

As the writer and publicist Luca Pisanelli, who met with the owner of the canvas, said, the examinations, including by the famous authoritative graphologist, art critic and President of the European Union of Art Experts, Stefano Liberati, prove the authorship of the painting.

"I learned about the existence of this painting a few months ago. I met the owner of the work, who said that he'd received it from his grandfather. He worked in the house of a high-ranking French diplomat from whom he acquired it," said Luca Pisanelli.

The owner of the painting wants to draw attention to the fact that Gogol, who, as you know, made sketches with pencil and pen, left the painting unfinished. The canvas depicts a red star or glow with a black 'tail' against the dark blue background of the night sky. Presumably, the writer painted the picture during his stay in Rome, where he communicated often with artists. It's known that, whilst in the 'Eternal City' he worked on his *Dead Souls*, the first chapters of which he read in the famous house of Princess Zinaida Volkonskaya. He immediately burned the second volume, and in this context, the picture is interesting from the point of view of 'decoding' its meaning, says Luca Pisanelli.

He himself plans to put the story of the painting as the basis of the plot of his story. "I'm collecting materials about Gogol's stay in Italy, in Rome, about his work, but, of course, I can only offer an artistic version," the writer said.

Bringing under control

The world can bring the global COVID-19 pandemic under control in the coming months provided it distributes the necessary resources fairly, the Head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) told a news briefing

"We have the tools to bring this pandemic under control in a matter of months, if we apply them consistently and equitably," said the Head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

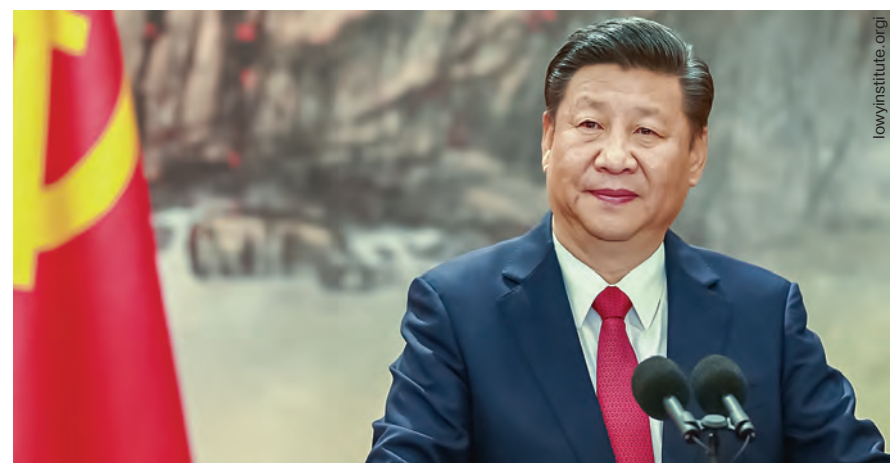
However, he also expressed concern over the 'alarming rate' at which COVID-19 is spreading in those aged 25-59 worldwide, possibly due to much more contagious variants.

Mr. Ghebreyesus added that the WHO has expressed its interest in establishing a 'COVID-19 technology transfer hub' for mRNA vaccines, in a bid to bolster production of this type

of vaccine in low- and middle-income countries. The call for technology transfer follows the news that over three million deaths from COVID-19 have been reported to WHO across the globe.

"It took nine months to reach one million deaths; 4 months to reach 2 million, and 3 months to reach 3 million," he noted.

A leading WHO epidemiologist, Maria van Kerkhove, told the same briefing that the latest surge in COVID-19 infections worldwide included increases among age groups previously less affected by the pandemic.



Xi calls for new world order

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for greater global economic integration and warned against decoupling while calling on the US and its allies to avoid 'bossing others around'

"International affairs should be conducted by way of negotiations and discussions, and the future destiny of the world should be decided by all countries," Xi said at the Boao Forum on Asia. "One or a few countries shouldn't impose their rules on others, and the world shouldn't be led on by the unilateralism of a few countries."

In a veiled critique of US efforts to reduce dependence on Chinese supply chains and withhold exports of goods like advanced computer chips, Xi said 'any effort to build barriers and decouple works against economic and market principles, and would only harm others without benefiting oneself'.

"What we need in today's world is justice, not hegemony," Xi said, adding that China would never engage in an arms

race. "Bossing others around or meddling in others' internal affairs will not get one any support."

After cancelling the forum last year because of the coronavirus outbreak, China is signalling it's open for business with the resumption of the conference, billed as an Asian version of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Officials have in the past used the event to announce major steps to open up the financial system, including the establishment and expansion of the stock connect programme that links mainland exchanges with Hong Kong.

China is making a concerted effort to improve ties with US businesses in particular.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



To look at Belarus through Napoleon Orda's eyes



By Sofia Arsenyeva

Pray in the oldest church

The 12th century Boris and Gleb Church — known as Kolozhskaya, or simply, Kolozha — shines on a high bank of the Neman in Grodno. Legend says it was built during the reign of the Grodno princes — Boris and Gleb Vsevolodovich — and consecrated in honour of their heavenly patron saints. According to another version, the church was constructed by their descendants. Geologically, its location wasn't the most suitable but the building is already almost a thousand years old.

In the 19th century, Napoleon Orda made a series of sketches of the Kolozha Church, each featuring it without a roof. It's true that the remaining monument of Black Russian architecture was almost lost: during the Rzech Pospolita, cattle were kept in the building and, in 1853, it even collapsed. Fortunately, everything was restored.

The unplastered outside walls look unusual: the facades are decorated with polished red, brown, dark crimson, grey-green and olive pebbles. A glass floor inside makes it possible to see the ancient foundations. There is also a sound secret: numerous voice 'cups' are hidden in the walls. Definitely, it's worth attending the service just for the sake of the choir.

Visit a friend of Pushkin

"What a genius! What sacred fire! What am I compared to him?" Aleksandr Pushkin exclaimed when he first heard Adam Mickiewicz's poetic improvisation in the literary salon of Zinaida Volkonskaya. In St. Petersburg and Moscow, the famous poets met more than once. It's known that once Pushkin, seeing a colleague on the street, stood aside and jokingly said, "Out of the way, deuce, ace is coming." Mickiewicz replied, "The trump deuce beats the ace."

Fans of Pushkin's talent go to Boldino, while those fond of Adam Mickiewicz are welcomed at Zaosie, in the Brest Region. A spacious wooden house covered with straw, barns, a well with a pulley and old lime trees could be found in the poet's family estate which looks like an illustration for the world-famous poem *Pan Tadeusz*. The images for many poems and ballads were inspired by the native land. Napoleon Orda also frequently visited the Mickiewicz family. Based on his sketches, the original appearance of the manor was recreated the late 20th century.



Lovers still roam the ruins of the castle — the Black Monk and White Panna



Grodno. Kolozha Church. Napoleon Orda

Get scared by ghosts in Golshany

Bogies and ghosts live not only in gloomy British estates and palaces. Otherworldly forces have long chosen the ruins of the Golshany Castle in the west of Belarus. "Sinister, monstrous! Not on a hill, not at a distance, so that a person has time to somehow prepare, but face to face — like an unexpected sword strike," wrote Vladimir Korotkevich.

According to legend, a few centuries ago, a magnate's daughter — Ganna-Gordislava Golshanskaya — fell in love with a peasant man. Because of their social inequality, their marriage was impossible, and the couple began to meet in secret. The young man came to meet his love wearing monk's clothes. However, the girl's father revealed the lovers and, according to one version, ordered them both to be buried in the castle walls. O tempora, o mo-

res!.. Since then, the castle has been haunted by the ghosts of the Black Monk and White Panna.

This year, a major reconstruction is being completed in Golshany: one of the towers has been restored to shortly house a museum.

Visit the count's treasure-house

A family estate of the legendary Hutten-Czapski counts is situated a couple of dozen kilometres to the south-west of the capital. Jan Karol — the most famous of them — was Minsk mayor in the late 19th century. Thanks to him, the city received public transport (horse-drawn trams), a power station, a telephone and a brewery which still operates. At the same time, Czapski personally hurried from the city's noisy streets every evening to his family manor in Stankovo.

It hasn't been fully preserved but there is still some-



Golshany Castle. Napoleon Orda



Today, Kolozha Church is not only a historical and architectural treasure, but also a functioning church

thing to see: a gate with the remains of the caretaker's house, a kitchen wing with a stepped gable, a barn and a stable. The jewel of the estate is a two-story 'skarbych' [depository for valuables]; once depicted by Napoleon Orda. In this unusual place, the owners kept tens of thousands of books, antiquities and works of art. Minsk residents have long chosen the old park for picnics. There is also a location for romantic photo shoots: an authentic gazebo-rotunda on the bank of a lake.

Take a day off at the Skoki ball

Napoleon Orda became famous not only in the visual arts, but also in music. He left behind beautiful polonaises, mazurkas, waltzes and nocturnes. In the late 1840s, he even directed the Italian Opera in Paris. It is not surprising that he also visited the famous Nemtsevich manor in Skoki, which was famous for its social receptions.

Balls are still held here to this day. Ladies and gentlemen in luxurious suits, to the sound of an orchestra, circle the lacquered parquet several times a year. Many tourists from different countries come to look at the leisure activities of high society from the past. In addition, the estate has another claim to fame, in December 1917, there were negotiations between Soviet and German representatives which later resulted in the signing of the Brest Armistice. In fact, the end was put to the First World War here.



Estate Zaosie

Belarusian monasteries

planetabelarus.by



Holy Dormition Monastery in Pustynki

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Gain sharp vision

Looking for a miracle? Go to Pustynki on the border of the Mogilev and Smolensk regions. The local Holy Dormition Monastery was founded there back in 1380 but, by the 21st century, it was almost destroyed, without its brethren or abbot. Only in 2003, did the

monks returned here. The first night they went to sleep in one of the more or less intact rooms and, in the morning, they found an image of Jesus Christ on the wall. Every year the image becomes clearer. Experts and art critics throw up their hands in disbelief — the face is not made by human hands!

The flow of pilgrims nowadays continues in winter and summer. The bell tower and

residential buildings have been restored and the reconstruction of the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos will soon be completed. Believers go not only to see the image of Christ on the wall, but also for the holy water. According to the chronicles, the Pustynki spring at the end of the 14th century restored the sight of Prince Lugveny Olgerdovich.

BELTA



St. Yevfrosiniya Monastery in Polotsk

Ask for the heavenly patroness' protection

Thousands of years ago, the ruling dynasty of the Polotsk Principality was famous for its special piety. The first woman to become a monk in Russia was Duchess Rogneda. Her son Izyaslav went down in history as a scholar-prince, while her grandson Vseslav the Magician

built the amazingly beautiful St. Sophia Cathedral on the banks of the Zapadnaya Dvina. The heavenly patroness of the Belarusian lands is considered to be the great-granddaughter of Rogneda and Vladimir: Duchess Predslava who, at the age of 12, refused to marry and secretly took the tonsure under the name of Yevfrosiniya.

She copied books with her own hands, opened schools and libraries (in the 12th century!) and founded monasteries for men and women. The pearl of Polotsk architecture, built by order of Yevfrosiniya, is the Transfiguration Church. Impressive outside but tiny inside, it has been preserved almost in its original form. The stone walls are decorated with unique frescoes from the 1150s and a small cruciform cell, where the monk retired for prayer, is on the second floor.

However, the legendary cross of Yevfrosiniya of Polotsk disappeared during the Great Patriotic War. It kept inside it fragments of the Cross of Christ with drops of his blood, as well as a stone from the tomb of the Mother of God, a part of the Holy Sepulchre and other relics. The St. Yevfrosiniya Monastery in Polotsk now keeps an exact copy of the shrine — created by the Brest jeweller, Nikolai Kuzmich.

Spend the night in a monastery among the swamps

On the high bank of the Pripyat River, near the ancient village of Yurovichi, stands the Holy Nativity-Theotokos Monastery. According to legend, the Mother of God herself chose the steep hill site. In the 17th century, a young priest went with a dear icon of the Virgin on a long journey, he walked for a long time, until the horses

stopped dead, nothing could make them move. It was then that a voice came from above: the image must remain in Yurovichi. The huge monastic

architectural complex is made in the style of mature Baroque, surrounded by a high brick wall and, despite the restoration work that has been going on for several decades, it looks luxurious surrounded by the forests and swamps of Polesie.

Every year, on September 12th, a religious procession to Mozyr is made from Yurovichi. Ahead of it, as usual, is a list of the most miraculous icons brought here more than three hundred years ago.



The Holy Nativity-Theotokos Monastery in Yurovichi

Old monasteries — founded by princes and monks, built on the banks of rivers and in city centres — served as outposts, religious and cultural centres. Each has its own shrine, history and destiny. Travellers to Belarus will definitely enjoy magnificent centuries-old Orthodox monasteries.



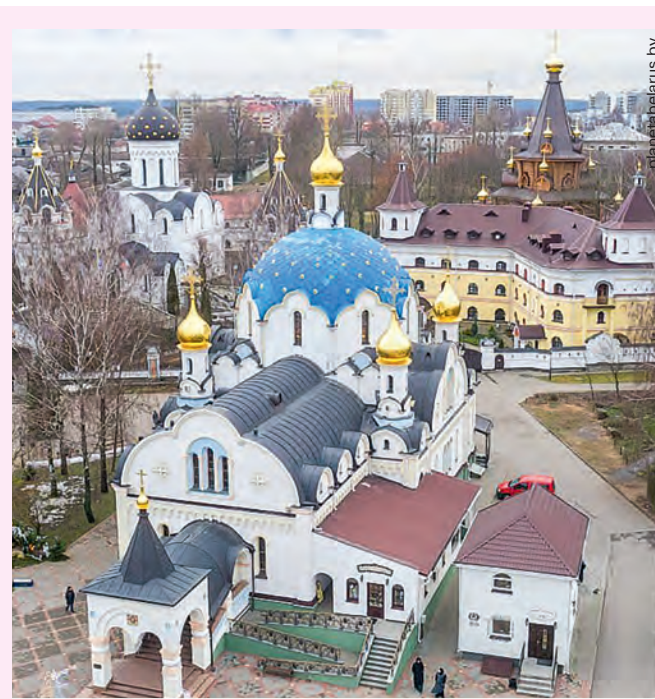
This small icon was found on a tree in the 15th century and is believed to be not man-made

See paradise on earth

The Holy Dormition Zhirovichi Monastery appeared thanks to a pear tree. It was in its branches in 1470 that young shepherds discovered a small radiating icon of the Mother of God. The incredible icon made of jasper soon demonstrated the miraculous power of healing the sick and a church was built on the site where it was found. The pilgrims came from all over the land and founded a monastery here.

Last year, the monastery

celebrated its five-hundredth anniversary. The main shrine is kept here to this day and, as before, shows faithful miracles. In memory of its discovery, a huge orchard was laid out at the monastery, which the novices among themselves call the garden of Eden. Among the endless rows of fruit trees live dozens of wild animals — from roe deer and foxes to camels and bears. Everyone can try apples from the Zhirovichi Eden today, as well as visit the zoo.



St. Elizabeth Convent in Minsk

Stay in joy

In the Belarusian capital, unlike the Russian one, there is only one monastery. But what a place! It was founded in honour of the Holy Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna. Eight temples, dozens of workshops, a school, refectories and shops with treats and souvenirs are here. There's a whole city within a city that beckons with its glittering domes and stained-glass windows.

The best time for pilgrimage is the Christian holidays, which the monastery usually coincides with festivals and mass festivities. So, before Christmas, you can always immerse yourself in the world of batleika (this is an old folk puppet theatre). Before Easter and the Intercession, the Joy festival is held; it's attended by representatives of farmsteads from Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and other countries.

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Great swimming

The future has several names. For a faint-hearted person, the name of the future is uncertainty while for a weak person — it's impossibility. However, a strong person always turns dreams into goals and goals into reality. Aleksei Talai is just that. Recently our Paralympian athlete and patriot made another incredible sporting feat at the Paralympic Swimming World Cup stage in Italy, winning the 50m breaststroke with a new world Paralympic record.



Aleksei Talai

Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated the athlete on his success. "Your victories, unbending willpower, unparalleled striving for creative work help many thousands of Belarusians overcome difficulties on the way to their dreams while also serving as a guide in finding the right attitude to life," the congratulation reads. The Head of State wished the athlete and his family well-being, good health and success.

By Sergei Kanashits

Firmness, tenacity and perseverance as well as selflessness, courage, iron character and fortitude: it's possible to say many things about Talai and mean nothing. Because words in this case are unimportant; no matter how you try, but it's simply impossible to express in words even a fraction of what Aleksei has had to experience on his way to the present, what he's overcome and what he's gone through. In terms of his qualities, he is, if you will, like a Nietzschean superman, who must surpass modern man as much as the latter surpassed the ape. A real Hyperborean, 'on the other side of the north, ice, death is our life and our happiness; we have discovered happiness, we know the way, we have found a way out of the whole millennia of the labyrinth'.

The path of Aleksei Talai is cooler than any Hollywood story. A beautiful cinematic fiction with all the accompanying glitter will never compare to the naked truth in all its subtle details — the salt of life with pain and tears. Everything that happened to him can be safely attributed either to a miracle or to God's providence, which are essentially the same thing. Until the age of 16, he was an ordinary boy: kind, naive and unremarkable. But one moment changed everything — it's scary to imagine, and you'd think it would be completely impossible to survive. The mine, which had been hidden since the Great

Patriotic War, literally tore him apart. Aleksei himself recalled it during our recent meeting, "You know, I'm scared to imagine the state of my beloved grandfather, a partisan who went through the war and saw what was left of me. I loved him very much and wanted him to

putting the severed limbs next to me — knowing that most likely, it would be possible to sew them back on. Then the doctors — to whom I'm very grateful — during the many hours of the operation pulled me back from death several times. The fragments pierced

from the inside. Aleksei didn't only survive and learn to live anew — to walk, rejoice, laugh, dream — he will give a huge head start with his optimism and determination to others — the so-called healthy people. This is a philosophical point, who is considered healthy and who is

came a real athlete, which in his condition is no less than the accomplishment of Maresyev [Aleksei Maresyev was a Russian military pilot who became a Soviet fighter ace during World War II despite becoming a double amputee].

Swimmers in parasport are divided into ten classes depending on the degree of functional disability. Talai has the heaviest group — SB1. In this category, Aleksei is actually the only participant in the world — a unique case, once again emphasising and proving his heroic steel character. You may find on the Internet swims by our athlete. Watch and see how much strength and will there is inside this person, how he strives for the finish, how strong his inner core is and the desire to live. Therefore, it is completely incomprehensible, disgusting and repulsive when those who aren't fit to hold a candle to Aleksei Talai begin to persecute, hate, insult and question his obvious achievements and successes, including sporting achievements, as happened after the new world record. No wonder people say that the devil is fighting with God, while the battlefield is the hearts of people.

Time puts everything and everyone in their places, rewarding everyone according to their merits. Wise people say: the lion responds to the voice of thunder, and not to the howl of jackals. Who is the lion in this story, and who is the jackal, it seems, is clear.



REUTERS

live a long time. I often came to his house and helped with the housework. And that day, having come to the sound of the explosion, he saw that his adored grandson — who had just picked up grass and fed the rabbits — had turned into bloody scraps. Nevertheless, he managed to maintain his composure, ran for a driver, found some kind of blanket, onto which they carried me in parts in the literal sense of the word,

my whole body, a millimetre to the left or to the right and there would've been no one to save."

In the hustle and bustle of modern life, we often lose our orienting points and sail without a rudder or sails, not understanding who we are, where and why. True values are sidelined or erased, being replaced by false and destructive concepts, with human hearts becoming covered with corrosion and cynicism eating people away

sick, because many today have crippled souls, and here they are real invalids in the full sense of the word.

Aleksei Talai managed to keep his true self, remaining kind and helpful, sincere and fair. He has established his business, he has a family and four children, being a happy husband and dad. Moreover, he is a motivational coach and successful personality. He not only learned to swim, but be-

ARENA

● Olympic motto set to be altered

The Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) discussed the proposal of IOC President Thomas Bach to change the Olympic motto. Plans are to add the word 'together' (communis) to the 'Faster, Higher, Stronger' (Citius, Altius, Fortius) motto.



The discussion to change the motto began at the 137th session of the IOC in March 2021, after Thomas Bach was re-elected IOC President.

The proposal has already received support from within the global Olympic

movement. The IOC Executive Board has approved the idea and will ask the IOC members for their comments. Depending on the results of these consultations, the proposal to change the motto could be put forward at the IOC session in Tokyo this summer.

The previous version of the motto was approved by the first Olympic Congress in 1894.

● Belarus' Open Swimming Championship hosted by Brest

More than 340 athletes from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Latvia took part in the Belarusian Open Swimming Championship held at the Centre for Aquatic Sports in Brest. The event was is



a qualifier for the 2021 European Aquatics Championships (Budapest, Hungary; May 17th-23rd), the Olympic Games in Tokyo, the 2022 FINA World Championships in Fukuoka and the World University Games in Chinese Chengdu.

● Belarus' first National Athletes Forum held in Minsk

The event — held in the form of an interactive training seminar and an expert discussion — brought together about 170 people: champions and medallists of the Olympic Games, well-known Belarusian

athletes, coaches, leaders and representatives of Belarus' physical education and sport organisations.

Socialisation of professional athletes after retirement and the use of their potential as employees and active members of society became the key topic of the project.

The forum also elected members of the Athletes Commission of the NOC of Belarus.





Ivan Yafimovich

Photo of the week

The zone of exclusion and resettlement on the site of the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve. The village of Tulgovichi, Gomel Region.

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On April 29th, 1921, Nikolai Yermolovich was born (village Malye Novoselki, Dzerzhinsk District, Minsk Region) — a Belarusian historian, critic and literary scholar. In 1947, he graduated from the Minsk Pedagogical Institute. He taught at the Molodechno Teachers' Institute and the Regional Teachers' Improvement Institute. He is the author of works entitled *Ancient Belarus: in the Polotsk and Novgorod Periods, Along the Traces of One Myth, Ancient Belarus: Vilnya Period*. He wrote articles about the works of Frantishkek Bogushevich, Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas. He was a laureate of the State Prize of Belarus (1992). He died in 2000.

On April 29th, 1386, the battle of Mstislavl took place when Smolensk Prince Svyatoslav Ivanovich plundered the area and laid siege to the city of Mstislavl; in a decisive battle he was killed. As a result, the Mstislavl Prince Lugven captured Smolensk, Vyazma and Vorotynsk.



April 29th is Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare, celebrated since 2006 by decision of the Organisation

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. On April 29th, 1997, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction entered into force.



On April 30th, 1881, Yanka Zhurba (true name Ivan Ivashin) was born in the village of Kupnino, Chashniki District, Vitebsk Region; he was a Belarusian poet and translator and worked at the Institute of Language at the Academy of Sciences of

Belarus. He wrote lyrical and nature poems, in which he used folk-song forms and intonations. He is the author of collections of poems entitled *Dawns* and *Clear Ways*. He wrote publicist articles and stories, as well as works for children (collections entitled *Swallows, Sunny Morning, Bright Days*). He translated poetry and prose of Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian and Kazakh writers into Belarusian. He died in 1964.

April 30th is International Jazz Day, proclaimed at the 36th session of the General Conference of UNESCO (2011) in recognition of the contribution of jazz to cultural life.



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On May 1st, many countries around the world celebrate an international holiday — Labour Day (Spring and Labour Day), which was originally called

the Day of International Workers' Solidarity. It was established by the Congress of the Second International (1889) in memory of the workers' protest in Chicago (USA), who organised a strike on May 1st, 1886, demanding an 8-hour working day. Labour Day is celebrated in the Republic of Belarus on May 1st. It was established by Presidential Decree No. 157 (as of March 26th, 1998) and has more than a century-old history.

May 2nd is the Resurrection of Christ. It's the biggest and brightest Christian holiday. This holiday is the day on which the transition from death to life and from earth to Heaven took place. Easter is the oldest and most important holiday of the liturgical year.

Christ is risen! — and for the whole universe, true spring has begun, a bright, joyful morning of a new life. The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the first real victory of life over death.



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May 4th is International Firefighters' Day. It appeared after the tragic events associated with extinguishing a forest fire in December 1998 in Australia. When, in the line of duty, five firefighters were killed. This event



prompted the establishment of an International Day, when it would be possible to honour the heroic firefighters, as well as to honour the memory of those killed in the line of duty. As the date of the celebration, the day was chosen to honour St. Florian, who is considered the heavenly patron saint of firefighters.

May 5th is the Printed Press Day in Belarus. The date of May 5th was chosen for the holiday in honour of the first publication of the newspaper *Pravda* in 1912, though the Belarusian press has much deeper roots and many significant dates. For example, on August 6th, 1517, Francysk Skaryna published his first book in Prague. On May 5th, 1581, the Ostrog printing house of Ivan Fedorov in Volyn printed Andrei Rymsha's calendar *Chronology in the Old Belarusian Dialect*. It was the first printed calendar of the Slavs.



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