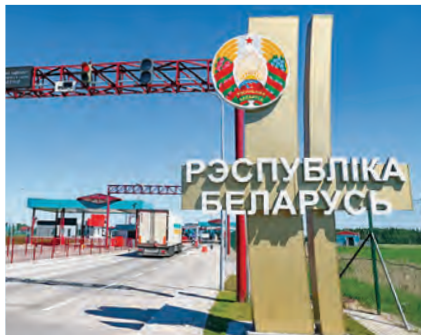




July 16th marks a milestone event — a parade of Byelorussian partisans 80 years ago to celebrate Minsk’s liberation from German Nazi invaders

5



Unprecedented and sincere openness: Belarus has expanded visa-free travel to 35 more countries

8

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 28 (1034) ● THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2024 ● WWW.SB.BY



30 Years under the Sign of Quality patriotic forum in Vitebsk — marking the 30th anniversary of the institution of presidency in Belarus — has brought together over 6,000 participants

We are building the country together

The grandiose Forum of Belarus’ Patriotic Forces dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the institution of presidency was held on July 20th in Minsk. The venue — the capital’s Sports Palace — was not chosen by chance. It is here that a pivotal event — the first Belarusian People’s Congress — took place in 1996 and had a major impact on the development of Belarus. This time, supporters of Aleksandr Lukashenko have also gathered in the same hall. The forum was attended by leaders of key public organisations and party structures — well-known people, the President’s core team. A large-scale patriotic forum *30 Years under the Sign of Quality* has been held in Vitebsk.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin has congratulated Aleksandr Lukashenko on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of his tenure as President of the Republic of Belarus. “The entire modern history of Belarus, that is inextricably linked with your name, heralded the establishment of modern state institutions and considerable success in social and economic spheres. Belarusian voters have entrusted you with the highest state post six times in a row, and this, undoubtedly, testifies to your tremendous authority and prestige among compatriots,” the congratulatory message reads. “It is hard to overestimate your personal contribution to the development of friendly relations and fruitful co-operation between our countries, to asserting and strengthening the Union State and promoting mutually beneficial integration processes in the Eurasian space.”



9 771991 297007 2 4 0 2 8

Belarus strengthens co-operation with Russian regions

Belarus and Russia's Chuvash Republic have the potential to double their mutual trade by the end of 2024, as stated by the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, during his meeting with Oleg Nikolayev, the head of this Russian region, at the Palace of Independence in Minsk. According to the President, the Chuvash Republic is a new but very promising partner for Belarus. In 2023, the trade turnover amounted to \$122 million, which was similar to the previous year. Aleksandr Lukashenko has outlined promising areas where enhanced bilateral co-operation aligns with mutual interests.



Oleg Nikolayev

Manufacturing sector

The Chuvash Republic ranks among Russia's top ten regions, and is within the top three on such indicators as industrial production growth and manufacturing sector, as the Head of State pointed out. "Belarus is ready to expand the existing co-operation and implement new projects, which we will surely agree upon as part of your visit," the President said, mentioning the existing areas of interaction.

Thus, Belarusian tractor makers and engine manufacturers supply components and engines to the assembly lines of the Cheboksary Industrial Tractor Plant. Chassis by MZKT (Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant) are

in demand at the Shumerlya Special Vehicles Plant. MAZ (Minsk Automobile Plant) makes a tailored all-wheel drive version of the wheelbase for Chuvashia. A number of Belarusian enterprises supply components for Chuvashia's electrotechnical cluster.

Transportation and machinery building

Belarusian passenger vehicles are well-known to Chuvashia, as the President noted. MAZ trolleybuses assembled at the Ufa plant are used in Cheboksary. This year, the contract for almost 100 new vehicles has been supplemented by another 40. "I know that the region is actively buying Belarusian trucks, agricultural, municipal, road and special-purpose machinery. We have something to offer you, especially since the model range is regularly updated," Aleksandr Lukashenko highlighted.

Agro-industrial complex

The parties praised active development of agriculture both in Chuvashia and Belarus. Chuvashia builds cattle-breeding com-

plexes. In this regard, the President emphasised Belarus' readiness to participate in the construction of modern turnkey livestock and poultry farms, and share technologies. According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, Belarus has made significant progress in this area and has good experience and competencies.

The Russian region may also be interested in the products of the Belarusian National Biotechnology Corporation, which produces mixed fodder and premixes for all areas of animal husbandry, including fish farming.

Humanitarian sector

Aleksandr Lukashenko also believes it is necessary to enhance co-operation in the humanitarian sector, including science, education, culture and sports. "We will not have any problems here," the Belarusian leader said.

The President emphasised the reliability of Belarus in fulfilling its partnership obligations. "I want you to know that everything we agree on will be fulfilled in full," the Head of State assured. "If there

are any issues on which we should make a decision right now, I will do it with great pleasure. If not, stay for a while here, visit production facilities, enterprises, talk to the government members and make the corresponding decisions," the Head of State said.

Construction and healthcare. Additional proposals for co-operation from Chuvashia

Oleg Nikolayev thanked Aleksandr Lukashenko for close attention to the interaction with Russian regions and, in particular, with the Chuvash Republic as part of integration processes. "Thanks to this, our areas of interaction are constantly expanding and deepening," he said.

According to the head of the Russian region, a large delegation of more than 70 specialists from Chuvashia has arrived in Belarus. "In addition to the areas you have mentioned, we have made serious progress in construction and healthcare. We see great prospects in these areas for mutually enriching and supporting each other," Oleg Nikolayev remarked.



Oleg Kozhemyako

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko has met with Governor of Russia's Primorsky Krai Oleg Kozhemyako

"Vladivostok is geographically distant, but we have close ties with it. A testimony to that are our frequent meetings and agreements that we reach during them. There is no point in discussing what Belarus and the Primorsky Krai can or cannot do, because we already know it. I often talk with Russian President and inform him on our meetings, on the needs of the Far East — which is actually not that far for

us — on requests of the governor of the Primorsky Krai. I even say jokingly that he has already taken everything out, and when there is not enough money in the budget, he uses his personal funds to work for the benefit of Russia," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

Oleg Kozhemyako remarked that the Primorsky Krai attaches great importance to partnership with Belarus. "Thanks to our co-operation,

residents of the Primorsky Krai have an opportunity to buy Belarusian products that they really like. Our trade in agricultural and mechanical engineering products is growing year by year. It was worth \$1.5 billion at the outset, while the current figure stands at \$22.5 billion. This is mutually beneficial as our export has also increased threefold, Belarus started buying more goods from us," the governor noted.

The store with merch from the Head of State unveiled at Minsk National Airport has become the fourth in a row in Belarus, with three more branded outlets located at Stolitsa and Zamok shopping malls and the First [Persh] National Trade House.

The store's assortment includes branded T-shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts and hoodies with quotes, signatures and images of the President. There are also haberdashery products and pillows. The prices are affordable. Thus, a children's T-shirt costs Br21, and a polo shirt — Br43.

According to the Chairperson of Bellegprom [Belarusian light industry concern], Tatiana Lugina, the location for the new store was not chosen by chance. "A large number of tourists and our colleagues from different countries arrive in Belarus, so we have decided to open a store at the airport, near the check-in counters. I think this is a good and convenient place, especially for people who did not have time to visit this store during their stay in our country," Tatiana Lugina explained. She noted that sales of the *Pervyi* merch for six months of this year increased significantly compared to the last year's level. The brand's outlets participate in all significant events of the country, whether it is the *Slavianski Bazaar* Festival or the Forum of Regions. Merch from the President is always much-in-demand there. "We have created this brand in good time to support the Head of State. The opening of these stores once again confirms our intentions. We are always mentally and emotionally with our President, supporting his policy," the Bellegprom Chairperson stressed.

The *Pervyi* [First] new merch store from the President has opened at Minsk National Airport



"In addition, the leader of our country has a good sense of humour and knows how to clearly note pressing issues, give instructions through interesting quotes or send important messages to the people. I think products featuring the images and photos of our President will be especially popular among the guests of the new store."

Vadim Pravlotsky, Deputy Director General for Aviation Security and Regime at Minsk National Airport, also visited the opening of a new outlet selling the President's merch. "The *Pervyi* merch is a great idea for gifts and souvenirs from Belarus. I have my own

favourite T-shirts with quotes from the Head of State, such as 'It will be very interesting', 'Don't give away your beloved' and 'We will not let you bend us down' — these are very clear and meaningful phrases," Vadim Pravlotsky said.

The *Pervyi* store at Minsk National Airport will be open around the clock, seven days a week.



Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

President has instructed to organise a large-scale revision of the legislation

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko has met with judges of the Constitutional Court

At the beginning of the meeting, the President recalled that communication in such a format took place quite a long time ago (more than six years ago). At that time, the key topic of conversation was the preparation of amendments to the Constitution. Extensive work was carried out to make the amended version of the Basic Law, and the judges of the Constitutional Court also made their contribution to that.

gal acts with the Constitution.

The second question outlined by the Head of State was related to another important innovation in the Basic Law — the institution of constitutional complaint. “This implies the initiative of the court itself. Citizens have the opportunity to appeal to the Constitutional Court not only through authorised state bodies but also personally,” the Head of State explained.

“You can see how the current government in the United States acts and what is behind their ‘democracy’,” the Head of State noted. “You see how such a powerful country, which does not really need to demonstrate its fervor, protects its state interests. They do not care about the whole world, let alone a single country.”

The President reminded that probably no state had actually done as much as Belarus to ensure the independence of its courts. “We must be united more than ever in order to stand up and preserve our state,” the Belarusian leader urged. “The Constitutional Court cannot be isolated. It is necessary to build constructive co-operation with other government agencies.”

The Head of State noted that 175,000 acts are currently in force in Belarus. Some of them are difficult to read and perceive, and many norms are repeated. Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to the fact that when making significant adjustments, the regulatory legal act should be re-issued in an updated, relevant version.

In order to tackle the existing problems, Aleksandr Lukashenko has instructed to conduct a large-scale revision of the legislation, with the Presidential Administration in charge of organising the process.

The purpose of the revision is to reduce the legal array, eliminate contradictions in legal regulation, as well as identify by-laws that do not comply with the Constitution, laws or Presidential decrees.

Chairman of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Belarus Piotr Miklashevich



reported on how constitutional legality is being strengthened in the country. As highlighted by Piotr Miklashevich, the effectiveness of constitutional control as a guarantee of ensuring constitutional legality and constitutional order is due to the following factors:

1. There has been completed the stage of mandatory preliminary constitutional control of laws adopted by Parliament before signing by the President, which had a positive impact on strengthening constitutional legality. The Constitutional Court has reviewed 698 laws, and more than 300 legal positions were taken into account by the legislator and law enforcement officers in their activities. In accordance with the updated Constitution, preliminary control of the constitutionality of laws has been established only on the proposals of the President.

2. The Constitutional Court is by its nature a passive body — in other words, it does not have the right to initiate constitutional proceedings on its own initiative. The initiation of constitutional control is carried out by other specially authorised state bodies and citizens. “If we see a situation where it is necessary, we will suggest that the authorised state bodies make an appropriate pro-

posal,” emphasised the Chairman of the Constitutional Court.

3. Ensuring the implementation of the constitutional complaint related to the protection of citizens’ rights and freedoms. The Constitution and the Law on Constitutional Proceedings envisage the admissibility conditions for a constitutional complaint. The constitutionality of the law applied in a particular court case after October 1st, 2023 and after the exhaustion of all judicial remedies in courts of general jurisdiction (first instance, appellate, constitutional and supervisory) is checked.



Piotr Miklashevich

4. Constitutional legal proceedings consist of the stages for initiation of constitutional control, consideration of cases, and execution of decisions of the Constitutional Court. “Some countries experience problems with the consideration of cases due to the workload of their constitutional courts. We do not have such problems at the moment,” Piotr Miklashevich assured.



“When drafting constitutional amendments, we set the task of strengthening Belarus’ sovereignty and independence, consolidating the system of state authorities that meets the requirements of the time and the traditional values inherent in our people,” Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out.

The Head of State outlined several topical issues that required discussion.

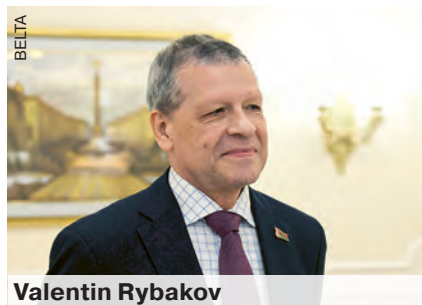
The first of them concerned the new constitutional function of the court — the interpretation of the Basic Law. According to the President, this requires the initiative of competent state bodies — the Presidium of the Belarusian People’s Congress, the houses of Parliament, the Supreme Court, the Government. These bodies also have the right to address the issue of compliance of normative le-

The third aspect discussed referred to the interaction of courts. After all, courts of general jurisdiction have the right to appeal to the Constitutional Court. When considering a particular case, the judge who questions the constitutionality of the act applied in the case can raise the subject of checking it for compliance with the Constitution.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the supreme body of constitutional control should not be an outside observer of the processes taking place in society and at the same time should not position itself as something exceptional in the structure of the state. In this regard, the President cited the example of the United States, which operates on the principle of ‘America first’ and is ready to neglect anything for the sake of its interests.

Belarus will work to make the UN more effective

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko has received Valentin Rybakov, Belarus’ Permanent Representative to the United Nations, with a report



Valentin Rybakov

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the decisions taken at the UN should be fair for all countries. “It should not be the way it is happening now due to the policies pursued by the West, primarily by the United States, which use their dominant advantage in the economy and finance. Therefore, we stand for the United Nations. We will support all sensible initiatives that correspond to our understanding of a just world order and multipolarity. We will act in this direction,” the President noted.

The Head of State also underscored that all Belarusian human initiatives put

forward at the UN site were not becoming less important for the global community. “On the contrary, they are very significant. We will stick to them,” Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked.

The Belarusian leader asked Valentin Rybakov to report on the situation in the United States and the United Nations. “What efforts do we need to make in some areas in order for our voice to be more compelling in the UN?” the President inquired.

Valentin Rybakov highlighted that despite the great importance of Belarus’ participation in various integration structures

on international platforms, the UN is the only universal international organisation where all states of the world are represented. “This is a valuable opportunity for Belarus, which we actively use to convey our position so that the voice of Belarus can be heard on all issues that are of priority to us,” the Permanent Representative to the UN pointed out.

“The meeting is also relevant because recently, as you know, we have met with António Guterres and had an interesting conversation. It was interpreted in different ways by some media, especially on the

Internet: as if Guterres made some claims against us. You know perfectly well, being there in New York, that no claims were made against us. Quite the opposite, we received a positive assessment,” the Head of State noted, stressing that the assessments are not the main thing. “We see what is going on, especially at your place of residence. We now assess the world’s ‘democracy’ and the hegemon accordingly. However, these are their questions.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

He became a legend, and his name is mentioned among the greatest diplomats of all time. He was the man, thanks to whose efforts the Cold War never turned into the third world war. The international influence of the USSR under him reached its peak. He is also the highest-ranking Byelorussian of the Soviet era, and looking ahead, this is not about his position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Yes, all of this refers to Andrei Gromyko. He would have turned 115 on July 18th.

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

Real Poleshuk

The author of these lines happened to visit Staryye Gromyki [Gomel Region] — the village where the future chief Soviet diplomat was born. It is the Chernobyl zone now. That place strikes with an amazing silence, and only birds chirp and twitter tirelessly around. The wooden peasant houses have sunk into the ground and are overgrown with moss. However, the graves are clean, well-groomed, with white roshniks [Belarusian traditional embroidered towels] on the crosses. In this regard, we can recall the first riddle of Andrei Gromyko: who is he by nationality? The fact is that different information has been preserved. Some documents list him as Russian, others — as Byelorussian. According to legend, Joseph Stalin once called him ‘a stubborn khokhol’ [ethnic nickname for Ukrainians]. Andrei Gromyko himself, in his memoirs, thoroughly analysed the history of his native places, focusing on Old Believer traditions. It turns out that he was a real Poleshuk [nickname given to a person living in Polesie, Gomel Region] both by origin and by nature. Poleshuki seems to have absorbed the features of all the East Slavic nations while remaining an authentic ethnographic group.

In any case, Gromyko spent the first 25 years of his life, when a human personality is formed, on Byelorussian land, where he received an education and joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at a fairly young age of 22 years old. He married a Byelorussian girl, Lidiya Grinevich, and the first child of the Gromyko family was born in Borisov. According to eyewitnesses, Andrei Gromyko, like his wife, retained a recognisable Byelorussian accent. Here is how Andrei Gromyko described the influence of his native places in his book *Memoirs*,

“A sense of patriotism is born literally from the beginning of life. It encompasses the attraction to the house where you were born and uttered the first word, the devotion to your city, town, village, which will forever remain in your memory, the hills and rivers next to which you grew up. All this together is love for the Motherland.”

From conferences ‘on the front porch’ to the UN

The fact that a native of a small village in Polesie managed to become a diplomat and then rise to the political Olympus is just no mystery. The Soviet government, especially in the first decades of its existence, gave such a chance. Many children of illiterate odd-job workers and peasants became marshals and generals, party leaders and academicians. However, it is still not completely clear how Gromyko managed to master the English language so quickly and almost perfectly, and how his fate turned



‘Ten years of negotiations are better than one day of war’

On July 18th, our legendary countryman Andrei Gromyko would have turned 115 years old



Andrei Gromyko signs the United Nations Charter on behalf of the Soviet Union. San Francisco, June 26th, 1945



The Potsdam Conference, July 18th, 1945. In the first row from left to right: Joseph Stalin, US President Harry S. Truman, Soviet Ambassador to the United States Andrei Gromyko



Andrei Gromyko at a meeting with John F. Kennedy



Andrei Gromyko and his spouse

out to be connected with work in the United States.

In 1934, a young graduate student from Minsk was transferred to Moscow, where he defended his thesis on a somewhat unexpected topic about the development of agriculture in the United States. At the same time, learning English was surprisingly easy for him. This can be explained by the phenomenal memory that Gromyko retained until the last years of his life. Yet, some researchers suggest that his father, Andrei Matveyevich, had managed to go to Canada to work before his son was born, and returned home due to an injury he got there. In general, the case was not uncommon in the early twentieth century, but there is no evidence of that. It is known, though, that his father had a great impact on the future prominent diplomat. Conferences ‘on the front porch’ — this is how Andrei Gromyko called conversations with his father and fellow villagers. Olga Evgenyevna, Andrei Gromyko’s mother, who was also an avid book reader, was called ‘professor’ in the village. Obviously, the skills, knowledge and training acquired in childhood and adolescence came in very handy for the future politician. Taking this into account, it can be assumed that Andrei Gromyko was fibbing a little when he said that any peasant or working-class guy could have been in his place. The origin did make a difference in Soviet times, although personal qualities played a decisive role.

It is not a mystery but is a rarely mentioned part of Andrei Gromyko’s life that he never broke ties with Byelorussia, even when working far from his native places. This does not refer to nostalgic feelings at all.

Throughout seven convocations, from 1958 to 1989, Andrei Gromyko was elected deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the Byelorussian districts: Molo-dechno, Gomel city, Minsk rural, Minsk

city and Minsk-Moscow. As you can see, the geography is quite extensive. It is curious that for the first time, he ran in the elections in the same district with Sergei Pritytsky, the national hero of Belarus. They were not competitors, though. The clue to this is simple — the Supreme Soviet of the USSR consisted of two chambers. Gromyko ran for the Soviet of the Union, and Pritytsky — for the Soviet of Nationalities. The election was not a formal act. The Byelorussian deputy regularly visited his fellow countrymen, spoke in labour collectives, and actively worked with voters’ requests, no matter what part of the globe he was in at that time.

On July 17th, 1983, a bronze bust in honour of Andrei Gromyko was unveiled in Gomel, during his lifetime. There is nothing extraordinary about it. By that time, our countryman had twice become a Hero of Socialist Labour. Thus, according to Soviet laws, it was necessary to erect a bust in the homeland of a person awarded a high title.

High takeoff

There has been increasingly more talk recently about Andrei Gromyko’s role in another event that is not directly related to Belarus but certainly influenced the fate of our republic. This is his role in Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power. By the mid-eighties, Gromyko was a member of the supreme ‘Areopagus’ of the Soviet leadership.

Gromyko was not only the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but also a member of the Politbureau of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) Central Committee, and the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. By the way, shortly before that, Kirill Mazurov — another native of Gomel Region — held the same position in the government. Even in

the Politbureau, Gromyko enjoyed special authority. In 1985, he was the oldest member of this body, which concentrated all the powers in the USSR. In March of that year, after the death of Konstantin Chernenko, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, the Politbureau held a meeting to decide who would occupy the highest post in the party and the state. It was arranged in such a way that the most respected participant in the meeting was the first to take the floor and express his opinion, which was supported by everyone else. Gromyko proposed Mikhail Gorbachev’s candidacy and the Politbureau approved that decision. Soon, in July 1985, Gromyko was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In other words, he formally took the highest public position in the country, which was sometimes called the ‘Soviet president’.

Now we know that there was a deliberate and carefully considered political combination behind those actions. Gromyko, who had already held the post of head of the Foreign Ministry for 28 years, felt that the years were taking their toll and decided to switch to an honourable but less stressful job in a nice way. Gromyko contacted Mikhail Gorbachev through his son Anatoly and conveyed his thoughts to him. Gorbachev agreed to that ‘exchange’. Nevertheless, let us not jump to conclusions and accuse Andrei Gromyko of such short-sightedness. At that time, few people could foresee what dramatic changes the reforms of relatively young and charismatic Mikhail Gorbachev would bring to the Soviet Union.

Whatever the case may be, Gromyko turned out to be the Byelorussian who took the highest position in the Soviet state.

Andrei Gromyko lived a long life. He died on July 2nd, 1989, just a few days before his 80th birthday. Researchers will continue to comprehend his legacy for a long time. Gromyko set the diplomatic style in work and life — strict, self-possessed, concise. In spite of speaking English perfectly well, he preferred to use the services of an interpreter in order to have time to think about what his counterpart said. Nowadays, one of Gromyko’s statements sounds especially relevant: ‘Ten years of negotiations are better than one day of war’. A Poleshuk will not advise anything bad.

History had never known such a parade



By Oleg Usachev

Squad orders: arrive in the capital!

On July 3rd, 1944, Soviet troops liberated Minsk from German Nazi occupiers, and 13 days later a partisan parade took place there. Sticking to the exact terminology, it was a rally of workers in honour of the liberation of Byelorussia's capital. In any case, this is exactly what the *Sovetskaya Byelorussia* newspaper dated July 18th, 1944 called this event in the publication *Holiday of Liberated Minsk*. A fragment of it quotes:

MINSK, July 16th. Today, a rally of workers of the city of Minsk and partisans of Minsk Region has been held in the capital of Byelorussia, dedicated to the liberation of the capital of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) from German Nazi invaders.

Initially, the partisan march was not part of the organisers' plan, which was confined to a workers' rally. However, due to the overwhelming number of partisans who arrived in the capital on the orders of the High Command, it was decided to change the format of the event. Piotr Kalinin, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia (CPB) and leader of the Byelorussian headquarters of the partisan movement later recalled in his book *The Partisan Republic*:

On the evening of July 14th, 1944, a meeting of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPB took place. It was decided to organise not only a rally on the occasion of the liberation but also a parade of Byelorussian partisans. The city hippodrome was chosen as the venue for the parade, which had been checked in advance by miners, cleared of mines and guarded by the Burevestnik partisan brigade.

Thirty thousand partisans arrived in the capital of the BSSR not only for the sake of celebrations but also in order to bolster the defence of Minsk in case of a possible German counterattack, to organise the protection of warehouses and prisoners of war, as well as to disband and further determine the fate of each individual arriving. Some partisans joined the ranks of the regular Red Army and went to finish off the fascists in their lair, while others remained to help raise the national economy from the ruins.



How it was

A lot of stories have been filmed about how the rally parade took place, hundreds of articles and many books have been written to bring into limelight that milestone event. However, let us turn again to the original source — the 80-year-old issue of the *Sovetskaya Byelorussia* newspaper, which covered the course of the rally parade:

The huge hippodrome field is full of people. Fifty thousand Minsk residents and over 30,000 partisans have come here. The rostrum is adorned with Byelorussian folk ornaments, slogans and portraits of comrades Lenin and Stalin, as well as famous partisans. Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the BSSR comrade Ponomarenko, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR comrade Natalevich, Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia (Bolsheviks) comrades Kalinin, Malin, Gorbunov, Commander of the 3rd Byelorussian Front, Army General Chernyakhovsky, Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Leninist Communist Youth Union of Byelorussia comrades Zimyanin, Liventsev are going up to the rostrum.

Chairman of the Minsk City Council comrade Budarin opens the rally. The first word is given to Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the BSSR comrade Ponomarenko. "Com-



rades! Workers of the city of Minsk, partisans of Minsk Region!" comrade Ponomarenko said. "On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia (Bolsheviks), the Council of People's Commissars and Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Byelorussia, I congratulate you on the liberation from the oppression of German Nazi invaders!"

Additionally, L. K. Popova, a teacher and mother of two front-line soldiers, gave a speech at the rally on behalf of the workers. She spoke about the atrocities and torture inflicted by the occupiers on the peaceful population of Minsk.

Major General Bogdanovich spoke at the rally on behalf of the Red Army. He expressed gratitude to partisans and residents of Minsk for their sturdy resistance against the enemy. At the conclusion of his speech, the military officer proclaimed 'hurrah' in celebration of the liberation of Byelorussia's capital.

On July 2nd, 2024, while presenting state awards on the eve of Independence Day, the President of Belarus recalled how 80 years ago the surviving civilians of Minsk greeted Soviet tanks with glee. Operation *Bagration* was not over yet, and the Red Army soldiers were heading to the west to finally destroy the enemy on our territory, liberate the country, and reach Berlin. "They had long months of war ahead of them — almost a year. However, it was already obvious at that time that victory would be ours," Aleksandr Lukashenko mentioned in his speech the parade of Byelorussian partisans in Minsk, emphasising that the definition was not entirely accurate since underground fighters and many others took part in the fight against the enemy. "Belarus is not only a partisan republic, and there was not only a partisan parade. It was a parade of our resistance movement." Soon after the parade, colossal work began to restore the tortured country. The President is convinced, "In those July days of 1944, people saw Belarus in their brightest dreams exactly as we see it now: independent, beautiful, and most importantly — peaceful."

Thanks to granddad for the Victory!

After a brief official part, the right to open the parade was granted to the Voronyansky People's Avengers partisan brigade.

Minsk resident Artur Strekh, whose grandfather Yakov Strekh participated in the historical partisan parade, shared his grandfather's memories with the *Sovetskaya Byelorussia* newspaper,

"He fought in the *Burevestnik* partisan brigade. My granddad told me with a smile that when their brigade was passing by the rostrum with the republic's leadership and military command, Piotr Kalinin waved his fist angrily in their direction. There was a good reason for that... While the partisan brigades that arrived in the capital were mainly located on the outskirts of the city, *Burevestnik* tasked with protecting the hippodrome, set up its camp nearby. On the opposite bank of the Svisloch River, there was a distillery plant that produced 279 decalitres of alcohol on July 10th — unfortunately for the plant and fortuitously for the *Burevestnik* partisans. On July 11th, Fyodor Glebov, Secretary of the Minsk City Committee of the CPB (Bolsheviks), reported to Regional Committee Secretary Vasily Kozlov about an outrageous event — 14 *Burevestnik* partisans broke into the distillery and seized 200 decalitres of alcohol."

"Not only was the brigade not punished, but many of its members were even rewarded, including my granddad who received the medal *Partisan of the Great Patriotic War* 1st degree on the eve of the

parade. As for the parade itself, my grandfather recalled that it was quite a sight! The partisans, proudly marching in front of the stands with distinguished guests, looked motley, to be honest. In other words, everyone was wearing whatever they could afford: civilian jackets, trousers, boots, hats were combined in an unimaginable fashion with accessories of the Red Army and German uniforms captured from the enemy. The weapons raised even more questions — there were German Schmeisser rifles, Mosin rifles of the First World War, and homemade guns of forest craftsmen... The parade also featured tanks, self-propelled units, cannons. Interestingly, one of the anti-tank cannons was put by craftsmen on wheels... taken from a horse cart. After the parade, that rarity was placed in the Museum of the Great Patriotic War History. The parade was a spectacular sight. My grandfather recalled that Minsk residents welcomed cordially the partisans, who, without rehearsals and drill practice, marched properly in front of the generals and party leadership of Byelorussia. What my granddad regretted is that immediately after the parade, all participants had to hand in their weapons."

Perpetuated on the canvas

The rally parade ended at four o'clock in the afternoon, closed by a consolidated cavalry squadron. The entire event was filmed, yet only a few renowned minutes received from Moscow in 1962 reached the general public.

It is important to note that the parade was not only filmed and covered in newspapers but it was also depicted on canvas. The future People's Artist of Belarus, Yevgeny Zaitsev, was not a participant at the parade, but a spectator. In 1950, Zaitsev painted a large canvas titled *Defence of the Brest Fortress in 1941*, which has become iconic. A reproduction of this artwork can be seen in the pedestrian passage under Victory Square. Yevgeny Alekseyevich Zaitsev died in 1992 in Minsk at the age of 84.



Partisan Parade in Minsk by Yevgeny Zaitsev, 1944

MEMEMORY

The Minsk Times
Thursday
July 25
2024

5

Comment by Natalya Kochanova, Chairperson of the Council of the Republic, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the partisan parade in honour of Minsk's liberation from Nazi invaders



Partisan Belarus



Natalya Kochanova

The day after the parade, many of its participants, having put on the uniform of regular units, went to the west. The partisans won their war, but the Red Army still had ten months of fierce battles ahead... Some of the former partisans had to deal with the restoration of the national economy or even return to school desks, from where they were so unfairly torn out and thrown into the crucible of harsh ordeals during the troubled war years.

The courageous, proud, unbroken Byelorussian

July 16th marks a special date in the fate of Belarusians and the entire Soviet people. Exactly 80 years ago, a milestone event took place in Minsk — a parade of Byelorussian partisans, a real Byelorussian resistance movement, to celebrate the liberation of our capital from German Nazi invaders. It was already obvious at that time — the Great Victory was near and inevitable.

It was a triumph of the victorious people — 30 partisan brigades and two separate detachments lined up on the former hippodrome and the streets adjacent to it. About 30,000 people's avengers marched in the solemn formation, and 50,000 Minsk residents who survived the occupation filled a vast territory. With great joy, delight and uncontrollable happiness, people greeted the great holiday that symbolised the beginning of peaceful life in long-suffering Belarus.

people had a lot of work ahead of them to restore the liberated territories, years of hard work and colossal efforts to overcome the post-war devastation, a long way to build a sovereign, truly people's state. In their brightest hopes and dreams, people saw our country as independent, beautiful, well-groomed, prosperous, comfortable to live in, and most importantly — peaceful. The way we have it now.

On these July days, we traditionally remember the tragic and heroic history of our country, pay tribute to the memory of the fallen heroes, and honour veterans, participants and children of the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War. We are eternally indebted to the older generations who defended the freedom and independence of the Motherland at an incredi-

bly cost and gave us the right to the future.

It goes without saying that we express our deep respect and gratitude to the representatives of the Armed Forces, state security agencies, internal affairs agencies, border service agencies and all those who are now safeguarding peace and quiet with weapons in their hands, holding the clear sky of our country on their shoulders, as well as to workers of all industries and professions who give their talent and skills to the glory of our dear and beloved Belarus.

Imperishable lines vividly resonate with every true Belarusian: 'People! As long as hearts are pounding, remember! At what price happiness was won, please remember! Tell your children about

them, so that they will remember! Tell the children's children about them, so that they will remember that, too!' After all, it is now our turn to write new pages of Belarusian history, preserve and protect the truth about the events of the past and present, and pass down to the youth our kind attitude towards the country and the people.

In order to ensure the continuity of the historical memory of the heroic feat of the Byelorussian people during the Great Patriotic War and in view of the particular role of the Byelorussian partisan and underground movement in our history as one of the foundations of national and state identity, we deem it advisable to establish a new landmark date in Belarus — Day of Partisans and Underground

Fighters. In the nearest time, we are ready to hold an open discussion on the site of the Council of the Republic, during which we will determine the date most appropriate to this event, as well as will develop relevant approaches to perpetuating the memory of the participants in the Byelorussian resistance movement and their contribution to the Great Victory.

We must do everything possible and even impossible for our country to be strong and become even stronger, successfully develop and prosper, confidently take its rightful place in a new, more just and humane multipolar world. This is our sacred duty to the victorious people, to the older generations, to ourselves. Time has chosen us!



Partisan parade in Minsk, July 16th, 1944



Fragment of the monument Partisan Belarus in Minsk



Vasily Davzhonak, who fought in the Borba (Struggle) partisan detachment of the People's Avengers brigade, is today one of the few — if not the only one — participants in the partisan parade that took place in liberated Minsk 80 years ago, in July 1944. Vasily Petrovich devoted his entire life to safeguarding the borders of the Motherland. A partisan, a public security officer, a border guard — he was on duty for half a century! At the age of 99, Colonel Davzhonak is brimming with optimism and plans. Despite his age, the historian and publicist continues to explore the partisan movement in Belarus.

By Natalia Tyshkevich

— How do you remember June 22nd, 1941?

— It was hectic and tense. I was born on October 20th, 1925 in the village of Dalkovich in the Pleshchenitsy (now Logoisk) District of Minsk Region into a large family, with 11 children. By the time the war broke out, I had finished seven years of school. We found out about the start of the war in the afternoon from a neighbour, who was the only person in our village with a radio. On the eighth day of the war, our district and village were occupied by the Germans. A large military garrison of SS detachments and regular units was stationed in Pleshchenitsy. Our village found itself in the deep rear. It was occupied but not broken.

— How did your partisan life begin?

— The chairman of the collective farm, Ivan Kononovich, organised an underground group in Dalkovich that included both adults and schoolchildren. Our first meeting was held in the forest on July 5th, 1941. There were about 20 of us, teenagers. Boys and girls alike served as the ears and eyes of the partisans, obtaining valuable information about the location, numbers and movements of fascist troops. We participated in sabotage and military operations on a par with adults. The polizei [traitors who defected to the Nazi] constantly dragged us for interrogations, including me. Therefore, both adults and children were acutely aware of what a ramrod and a horsewhip felt like. At first I was a liaison person, and from April 1942 I became a partisan in the Borba detachment of the Peo-

Vasily Davzhonak, a participant in the 1944 partisan parade, “We paid too high a price to forget those to whom we owe our lives”



Vasily Davzhonak and successors of his work

ple's Avengers brigade named after Voronyansky. Our entire big family joined the partisans.

— What was your first combat mission?

— On a July day in 1941, the fascists arrived at the village and began looting. They filled cart after cart. We informed Kononovich, who was in the forest, about this situation. He ordered us to gather with weapons on the road between the villages of Dalkovich and Prusovichi. The drunken krauts did not expect an ambush, so we managed to recapture three of the four carts.

— Your native village of Dalkovich took a blow more than once.

— At least three times. First, the village was burnt by the French in their retreat in 1812, then by the White Poles in 1920, and by German Nazis in 1943. On the morning of May 13th, a scout reported to the commander of the detachment that the 118th police special battalion was advancing towards Dalkovich. When around 200 punishers entered the village, my mates and I were at the opposite end. We had warned the locals to expect a fight. The Germans surrounded Dalkovich from three sides and opened fire with machine guns. The battle lasted for several hours, but the forces

were unequal and the detachment's command ordered to withdraw to the second line of defence — towards the villages of Glebovshchina and Prusovichi.

The fascists did not come up with anything better than to vent their anger on the villagers who did not have time to escape. A few torches — and Dalkovich was engulfed in flames. However, before burning the people, the Nazis subjected them to brutal torture — beating them with sticks, binding them with barbed wire, cutting them with knives, stabbing them with bayonets, gouging out their eyes, cutting off their noses and ears...

In the same way, just a couple of weeks earlier, they had tortured my father to coerce him into giving away the partisans' location. Together with German policemen, my father and other villagers were interrogated by the commander of the 118th battalion, Major Erich Körner and his deputy Konstantin Smovsky, a former White Guard officer, a native of Volyn Region. They carved a star on Anna Kononovich's back and even tormented the dead people's bodies...

— The Germans repeatedly blockaded the partisans.

— Recognising the significant strength

of the partisan movement and aiming to confront it at any cost, the fascists announced an anti-partisan punitive expedition codenamed Cottbus in May 1943. Approximately 70,000 Germans took part in the blockade, which lasted for more than two months. Despite the considerable superiority in manpower and hardware, the enemy was unable to subdue the partisans. During the Nuremberg trials, the anti-partisan Cottbus operation was revealed in numbers, according to German reports: ...4,500 partisans killed, 5,000 people killed on suspicion of being affiliated with the partisans.

— There are dozens of awards on your ceremonial uniform, including the Orders of the Patriotic War II degree, the Red Star and Kutuzov III degree. What did you get the first award for?

— It was for the rail war. On July 14th, 1943, the Stavka (General Headquarters) of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief decided to conduct this operation in the territories occupied by the Germans. In order to ensure a simultaneous massive strike on the enemy's railway communications, 167 partisan brigades and separate detachments — amounting to about 100,000 people — were involved. The large-scale operation unfolded across the territories of Byelorussia, Ukraine and Russia. On the night of August 3rd to 4th, 1943, our group was already working on the Vileitka-Kurenets railway segment. We covered nearly 30 kilometres and destroyed over a thousand rails. In total, the partisans of the three countries blew up 42,000 rails on the first night. For my role in this operation, I was awarded the medal For Bravery. Just a week later, I was accepted into the Komsomol right in a partisan dugout.

— In August, you also defeated the Pleshchenitsy garrison.

— The garrison in Pleshchenitsy — the deployment site of German policemen, Gestapo [Nazi Secret State Police], SS units and detachments — was well fortified. Along the perimeter, it was surrounded by a system of dug-out positions, trenches and bunkers. Our Borba detachment set out on the evening of August 16th, 1943. After walking 25 kilo-

metres, we reached the concentration area by 4 a.m., located in a triangle between the villages of Podchernitsa, Stanovishche, Kruglaya Gora and Korgovo. By 7 a.m., we had already captured the front edge of the defence.

The fascists, who had taken refuge in a two-storey school that served as their headquarters, put up fierce resistance. However, the Komsomol commander of our 3rd company, Andrei Balas, managed to climb onto the roof and hoist a Red Banner. In the same battle, Timofey Shilo heroically blocked an enemy firing port with his body, echoing the brave deed of Aleksandr Matrosov. By 2 a.m., the enemy garrison had been destroyed.

— The year 1944 marked another anti-partisan operation Kormoran — one of the largest punitive campaigns.

— It started on May 25th. The Germans wanted to restore traffic on the Dokshitsy — Lepel, Minsk — Vitebsk roads and capture Begoml. In order to achieve this, they needed to confront the partisan formations in the Borisov-Begoml area. A little over 20,000 partisans opposed the 60,000-strong army of punishers. Having surrounded the people's avengers at Lake Palik, the Nazis systematically tightened their grip, destroying villages and settlements on their way while looting and shooting innocent civilian population. The Germans sought to eliminate the last remnants of resistance. They dropped hundreds of aerial bombs and carried out relentless artillery and mortar shelling. It was crucial for us to find a vulnerable place in the blockade ring. And we managed to do that. With the assistance of a local guide, our squad bypassed all the checkpoints almost without firing a shot and broke free from the encirclement. As soon as Operation Bagration was launched, the punishing forces retreated in haste, unable to match the strength of our Red Army.

— On July 16th, 1944, you were among those who proudly marched in the ranks of the people's avengers at the partisan parade in Minsk.

— On July 3rd, 1944, Minsk was liberated by the troops of the 1st and 3rd Byelorussian fronts. A few days later, all partisan formations

received an order to come to the city. Thirty partisan brigades arrived in the capital, totalling over 30,000 people. In this regard, the leadership of the BSSR decided not to limit itself to a rally alone, but to hold a parade. However, it turned out to be quite unusual. First of all, there was no uniform and the participants were wearing whatever they could find. Secondly, the variety of weapons was striking, ranging from a brand-new Soviet PPSh [Shpagin's machine pistol] or a captured German Schmeisser rifle to rifles from the First World War and even homemade guns assembled from various parts.

Motley clothes, different ages, miscellaneous weapons, but a common cause, one Homeland and one Victory!

The rally was opened by the pre-war Chairman of the Minsk City Council, Konstantin Budarin. Following him, the 1st Secretary of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, Panteleimon Ponomarenko, took the floor. The Commander of the 3rd Byelorussian Front, Army General Ivan Chernyakhovsky, also arrived at the parade. The People's Avengers brigade opened the solemn march, and our Borba squad was the first to go. In terms of combat accomplishments, our brigade took the first place. Over three years behind enemy lines, we killed 11,000 Hitlerite soldiers and officers, and captured over 1,500. We derailed three armoured trains, 161 echelons, and defeated 20 enemy garrisons. This is why Brigade Commander Pokrovsky ordered us to lead the march.

Our squad was followed by partisans from the brigades named after Shchors, Chapayev, as well as Belarus, Burevestnik, and more. Many of them proudly wore newly awarded medals to a Partisan of the Great Patriotic War on their chests. Later, historians noted that the counter-offensive near Moscow, the heroic defence of Stalingrad and the Kursk Bulge, the liberation of Byelorussia and Ukraine would not have been possible without the partisans' help.

— Where were you sent after the parade?

— By July 20th, the People's Avengers brigade had been disbanded, and on July 21st I was already enrolled in the 7th Infantry Di-

vision of the NKVD [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs] troops, where I served for two years. I participated in the destruction of pockets of banditry.

— Three times — in 1973, 1975 and 1987 — you testified against the Nazis.

— Yes, I testified against Vladimir Katriuk, Hryhoriy Vasiura, Vasyi Meleshko, Erich Körner, Konstantin Smovsky and other perpetrators who burnt not only Khatyn and Dalkovich, but also many other Byelorussian villages. All their crimes were established by the military tribunal in 1986. The investigators failed to catch Körner and Smovsky, while Katriuk managed to escape justice by fleeing to Canada. However, Vasiura was sentenced to an exceptional measure of punishment — execution by shooting. In the 1980s, he lived in Ukraine where he worked as a deputy chairman of a collective farm. Evil must and will be punished! The restoration of historical justice affirms that crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations.

— After retiring, you discovered your writing talent and published a dozen books, including Partisan Sons of Belarus, Their Fate is Border, History of Belarus of 16th–17th Centuries, Great Military Commander of Modern Time (about Kutuzov), Partisans Went on a Campaign...

— All of them are documentary evidence. The theme of the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War and the memory of it is a tribute to the courage of the Soviet people, many of whom I knew in person. This is the memory of the generation of winners. Our land is soaked in blood, and there is no need to shy away from talking about it. The Great Patriotic War had no age — both the young and the old forged our Victory. Take my schoolmates, for example. Fifth-grader Zina Ivanovskaya was pasting flyers in the village Pleshchenitsy. In the winter of 1941, the Germans captured her and tortured while interrogating. Having learnt nothing from the girl, the fascists threw her into the yard to be torn to pieces by dogs. We paid too high a price to forget those to whom we owe our lives.

Unprecedented and sincere openness

Belarus has expanded visa-free travel to 35 more countries

The history of the renowned Belarusian visa-free regime — a window into a new multipolar world for residents of neighbouring Western countries — has reached a new level. On Wednesday, the President supported the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies to establish a procedure for temporary visa-free entry, exit and stay in the Republic of Belarus through all road and railway checkpoints additionally for citizens of 35 European countries.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“Some opposition media outlets, journalists and others argue that the President of Belarus has introduced a visa waiver because of economic considerations, in order to earn money. Who doesn’t want to make money after all? The state wants it, and I want it, too. However, that is not the main thing. The main thing is to let our neighbours see that normal people live next to them. People that look like Poles live here, and they are not aggressive, they are ready to help out in times of need. Once our neighbours see this, they will not be belligerent towards us. This is important.”

During a conversation with journalists in Myadel District, on August 2nd, 2022

By Anton Popov

Belarus is an open country

Belarus’ foreign policy has always been aimed at good neighbourliness and maintaining respectful relations with all countries of the world. People’s diplomacy, skilfully guided by the leadership of our country, has played a significant role in this. The famous Presidential Decree No. 8 dated January 9th, 2017 *On the Establishment of a Visa-free Entry and Exit Procedure for Foreign Citizens*

became its pinnacle in the pre-COVID era. Based on the introduced document, we allowed citizens of 80 countries to enter Belarus through the Minsk National Airport’s border checkpoint visa-free and stay for a period of up to five days.

The pandemic followed by the hybrid aggression against Belarus from the West, contrary to the expectations of the instigators of the conflict, did not shake the Belarusians’ commitment to the principles of hospitality. Quite the opposite — this led to completely unexpected consequences for them.

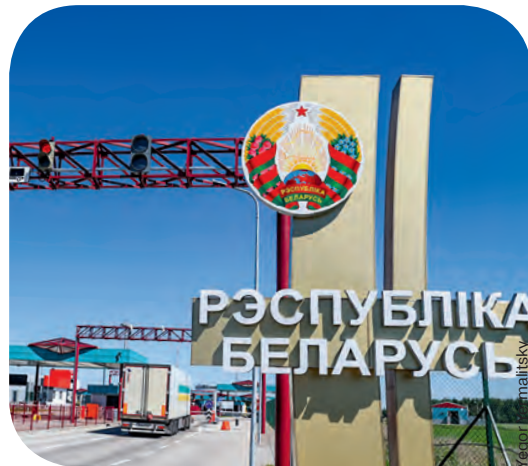
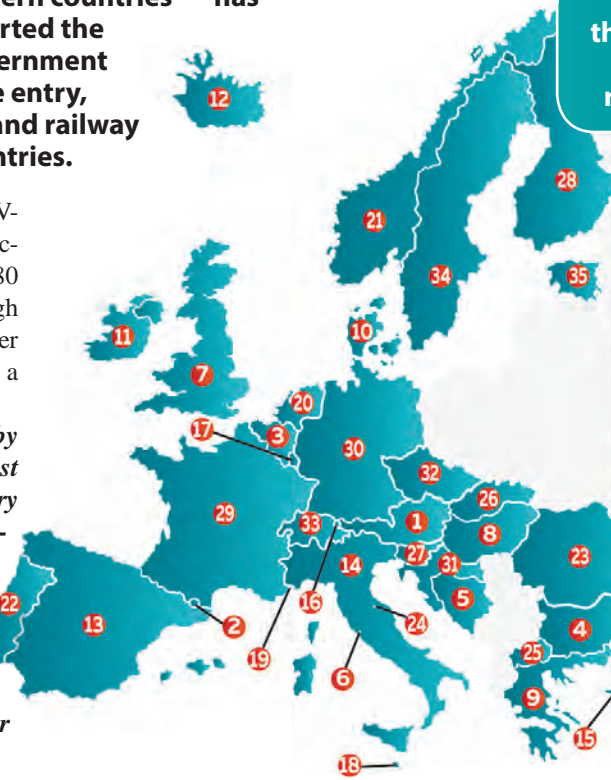
Under the conditions of ongoing pressure, Minsk chose not to build a new ‘iron curtain’ but to make one of the most elegant and powerful moves in our foreign policy in recent times. Starting from April 15th, 2022, the Presidential Decree established a visa-free entry procedure to Belarus for citizens of Lithuania, Latvia (including persons with the status of a non-citizen of Latvia), and from July 1st of the same year — for Polish citizens.

Nations should be friends

Since then, the visa-free period has already been extended twice and has become a real knight’s move in a multidimensional chess game with the West. First, Belarus has firmly and clearly stated that it is not going to abandon the principle of good neighbourliness, which is one of the axioms of our foreign policy. Secondly, the Belarusian leadership has made it clear to Poles, Lithuanians and Latvians that our country does not put an equal sign between people

List of countries covered by the new rules on visa-free entry to Belarus through road and railway checkpoints includes:

1. The Republic of Austria
2. The Principality of Andorra
3. The Kingdom of Belgium
4. The Republic of Bulgaria
5. Bosnia and Herzegovina
6. The Vatican City State
7. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
8. Hungary
9. The Hellenic Republic
10. The Kingdom of Denmark
11. Ireland
12. The Republic of Iceland
13. The Kingdom of Spain
14. The Italian Republic
15. The Republic of Cyprus
16. The Principality of Liechtenstein
17. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
18. The Republic of Malta
19. The Principality of Monaco
20. The Kingdom of the Netherlands
21. The Kingdom of Norway
22. The Portuguese Republic
23. Romania
24. The Republic of San Marino
25. The Republic of North Macedonia
26. The Slovak Republic
27. The Republic of Slovenia
28. The Republic of Finland
29. The French Republic
30. The Federal Republic of Germany
31. The Republic of Croatia
32. The Czech Republic
33. The Swiss Confederation
34. The Kingdom of Sweden
35. The Republic of Estonia (including stateless persons permanently residing in the Republic of Estonia)



and the ruling regimes established in their countries, and we want to maintain friendship between nations despite the unfriendly attacks of Warsaw, Vilnius and Riga. Thirdly, we have successfully eliminated one of the hostile propaganda’s preferred methods of attacking Belarus. From now on, residents of these three countries can freely cross the border after hearing negative narratives about our country and then see for themselves that their local media is blatantly spreading lies that have no foothold on reality.

Statistics also attest to the fact that the Belarusian visa-free regime is a necessary and conceptually important idea. Since the first day of 2024 year,

116,249 foreigners from the European Union have used it, including 50,552 citizens of Lithuania, 31,214 citizens and 9,369 non-citizens of Latvia, as well as 25,114 citizens of Poland.

As for the total number of guests of our country throughout the entire duration of this border crossing regime, it has already exceeded **900,000** and is confidently approaching one million.

New horizons

Now, at the peak of the confrontation with the West and after the visa-free regime with the closest neighbours has proved to be effective and feasible, Belarus has expanded its effect to 35 countries at once. As the Foreign Ministry has stressed, this was done ‘in order to further demonstrate the openness and peacefulness of our country, commitment to the principles of good neighbourliness, as well as to simplify interpersonal contacts and

improve freedom of movement’. Thus, from 8 a.m. on July 19th, citizens of all European countries will be able to visit the Blue-eyed country [Belarus’ nickname] with valid documents and stay in Belarus for no more than 30 days from the date of entry. So far, the visa-free regime has been established until December 31st of the current year. However, as practice has shown, Belarusian hospitality has no temporary borders.

The recent decision made by the Head of State undoubtedly has significant implications both economically, with an expected boost in tourism contributing to the budget, and in terms of challenging the portrayal of Belarus by Western media.

Now that our doors are open not only to Lithuanians, Poles and Latvians, but also to everyone else, they will be able to see firsthand that the gap between the distorted image of Belarus created by bellicose propaganda and real Belarus is truly huge. In fact, the more ordinary citizens visit our country, the better. Once they get to know Belarusians better, fall in love with our sights, appreciate our culture, they will be able to form their own opinions and evaluate the unfriendly actions of their authorities against Minsk more critically. Ultimately, they may prevent their distraught politicians from committing a fatal provocation.

How often can I enter Belarus without a visa?

You can use the right of visa-free entry to Belarus an unlimited number of times during the entire validity period of this procedure until December 31st, 2024 inclusive. The number of days to stay in Belarus on a visa-free basis should not exceed 90 days in a calendar year.



Which territory of Belarus can I visit with a visa-free entry?

Foreign citizens who have arrived in Belarus have the right to visit and move throughout the country.



What documents are required to cross the border without a visa?

- valid document for travelling abroad
- green card (when travelling by car)
- medical insurance
- document on payment of the local fee
- electronic control stamp confirming payment for disinfection services.



What are the conditions for visiting the border area with visa-free entry?

In order to visit the border area, you are required to inform the border guard at the checkpoint of your intention, indicating the settlements and the purpose of their visit.



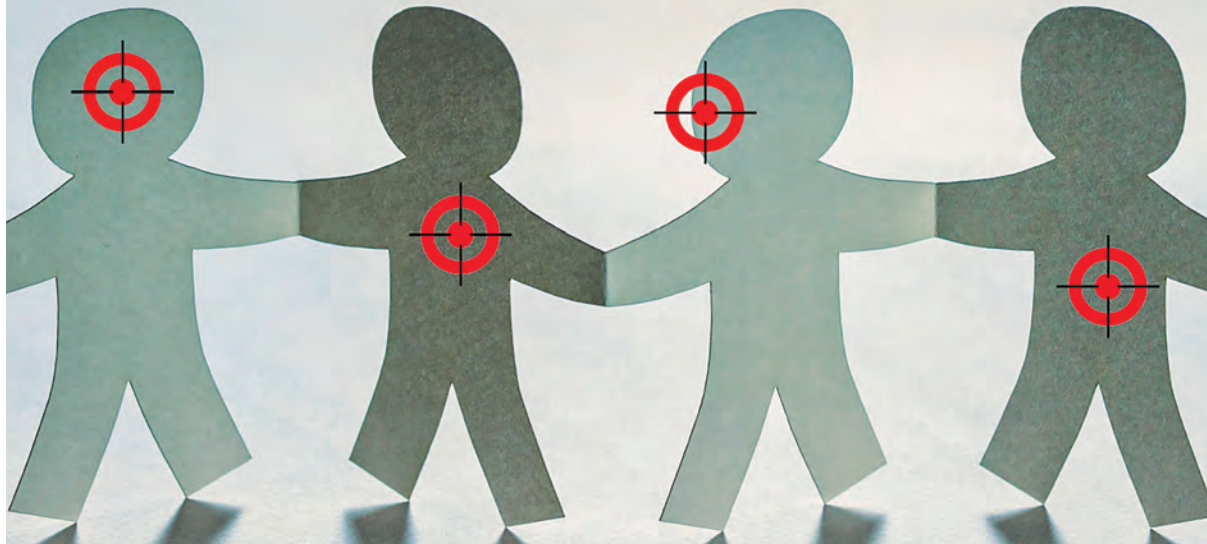
Do I need a PCR test or a vaccination certificate when entering Belarus?

No. The COVID restrictions on entry to Belarus have been lifted — a PCR test or a vaccination certificate are not needed.



Source: gpk.gov.by

What electoral passions in the United States indicate and how the White House may change its course in the future



From bullying to gunshots

The events of July 2024 resemble a surreal detective film with action thriller elements. What is behind the assassination attempt on the ex-president of the United States?

By **Aleksei Avdonin**, analyst at Belarusian Institute for Strategic Research (BISR)

Fight for a king's ransom

First, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held talks in Russia and China. Then, his meeting with US presidential candidate Donald Trump followed at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Palm Beach, Florida.

The conservative political elites of the West did not appreciate Hungary's peace initiatives and began to blame and put pressure on official Budapest. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sharply criticised Donald Trump for meeting with the Hungarian Prime Minister, "It is horrifying to see the leader of a major American party align with foreign autocrats like Viktor Orbán. Trump is telling you exactly who he is here. His idea of 'peace' is to give Putin exactly what he wants."

Viktor Orbán in an interview with *The Financial Times* stated that Donald Trump would quickly demand peace talks between Russia and Ukraine if he wins November's US presidential election. Following his mission to Russia, the United States, China and Ukraine, the Hungarian Prime Minister sent proposals on the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict to the leaders of the EU countries. The draft was also handed over to Moscow, Kiev, Washington, London and Beijing. A number of publications listed the key points of the proposals made. First, the plan envisages signing a ceasefire as soon as possible and without preconditions. Secondly, it specifies the exchange of prisoners based on the 'all for all' formula according to the lists of the UN, Kiev and Moscow. Thirdly, a buffer zone must be created.

Such peace initiatives and positions, however, run counter to the efforts of the Biden team, the corporate elites of the United States and Great Britain, who are focused on snatching a king's ransom while maintaining the war on the territory of Ukraine.

As a result, Orbán was exposed to pan-European bullying, while Trump, by some unfathomable coincidence,

faced an absolutely weird assassination attempt — 'weird' due to the absence of attention from the intelligence services to the shooter on the roof of the building and his imminent murder.

Fed and theatre of many actors

South China Morning Post has written that official Beijing tried to convince the EU to accept the plan of the People's Republic of China and Brazil to resolve the Ukrainian crisis. A joint memorandum stating the need to hold negotiations as the only way out of the crisis was signed between the two countries in May 2024. Beijing invited European countries to consider it before the conference in Switzerland. But Biden, Clinton, Obama and their corporations do not need any peace!

The lack of common sense and outright belligerence of the Democrats frightens not only the whole world but also the 'deep state' in the United States. Consequently, the choice of Trump as a presidential candidate and ardent Trump supporter J.D. Vance as a vice president on behalf of the Republican Party has already become predictable and natural. It is clear that some of the political and corporate elites have decided to move away from shaky Biden and his team and move towards greater pragmatism in relations with Europe, Russia and China.

Still, who is conducting global processes anyway? Many agree that the US Federal Reserve System, aka the Fed, has the last word now. It is on this private financial corporation that the so-called 'power' of the United States rests.

It is the Fed that controls the operation of the entire mechanism on dollar enslavement of the world. Biden has not justified the money invested in him on the Ukraine project: Europe is becoming increasingly more independent (the Orbán effect), Rus-

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"Against the background of what is happening, we are dealing with the collapse of the entire architecture of international and regional security, which has been formed for decades. You do not have to look far for examples. The conflict in Ukraine is one of many examples of how Western elites are throwing trillions of dollars to militarise and ruin states."

At a meeting with the Secretaries of the Security Councils of the CSTO member states, on June 8th, 2023

US President Joe Biden announced on Sunday, July 21st, that he would not seek a second term from the Democratic Party, but intends to serve out the remainder of his term in office to the end. Biden has endorsed the candidacy of Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic presidential nominee in the November 2024 presidential election.

China has not collapsed, and China has not become a semi-colony of the Anglo-Saxons. The Biden project has failed. It is necessary to move away from the war and continue waging trade wars against the main competitor of the United States — China.

Trump is a suitable presidential candidate for this taking into account that he has already done this before. Further pressure on China will make it possible to ensure the outflow of global investments from the Celestial Empire to the United States, including the relocation of production, as well as to the United States Treasury securities.

Therefore, the current 'theatre' with the participation of Trump and Biden is a mere game of financial structures focused on preserving the hegemony of the United States and the dollar on the global stage as a crucial tool for its unlawful enrichment at the expense of the rest of humanity.

The assassination attempt on Donald Trump has triggered new political developments in the United States — the ratings of the ex-president are growing, and many who previously questioned his victory are now predicting his imminent return to the White House.

It can also be stated that gunshots at presidents are a common occurrence in the United States. Throughout U.S. history, there have been several incidents. Thus, in 1865 Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, in 1881 — James A. Garfield, in 1901 — William McKinley. Theodore Roosevelt was wounded in 1912. John F. Kennedy was fatally shot in the head in 1963. Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously wounded in 1981.

Experts even suggest that the United States either targets its own presidents or is involved in assassination attempts on leaders in other countries.

Al-Qaeda, which was nurtured by the United States, was later recognised as a terrorist organisation. On May 2nd, 2011, its leader Osama bin Laden was killed during an operation by the United States Special Forces, under orders from US President Barack Obama, in his own compound hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

On May 15th, 2024, an assassination attempt was made on the Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, who was shot and critically injured.



The sudden death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash on May 19th also raises many questions.



One can recall a series of other mysterious deaths and assassination attempts on prominent political figures.

In March 2003, Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was shot dead by sniper's bullet from a high-powered rifle in Belgrade.



In September 2003, Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh was assassinated (she opposed the euro and the European Union).



In December 2007, former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated by a suicide bomber.



In 2008, there was an attack on Afghan President Hamid Karzai.



In 2013, the suspicious circumstances behind the disease and death of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez took place.



In August 2018, an assassination attempt was made on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.



In July 2021, the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated at his residence by a group of armed men.



In December 2021, an assassination attempt on Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was prevented.



In July 2022, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot dead during an election rally.



Along with that, Western military operations against Libya, Iraq, and Syria can be safely considered mechanisms for eliminating Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, and attempts to eliminate Bashar al-Assad

Pushkin's places in Belarus



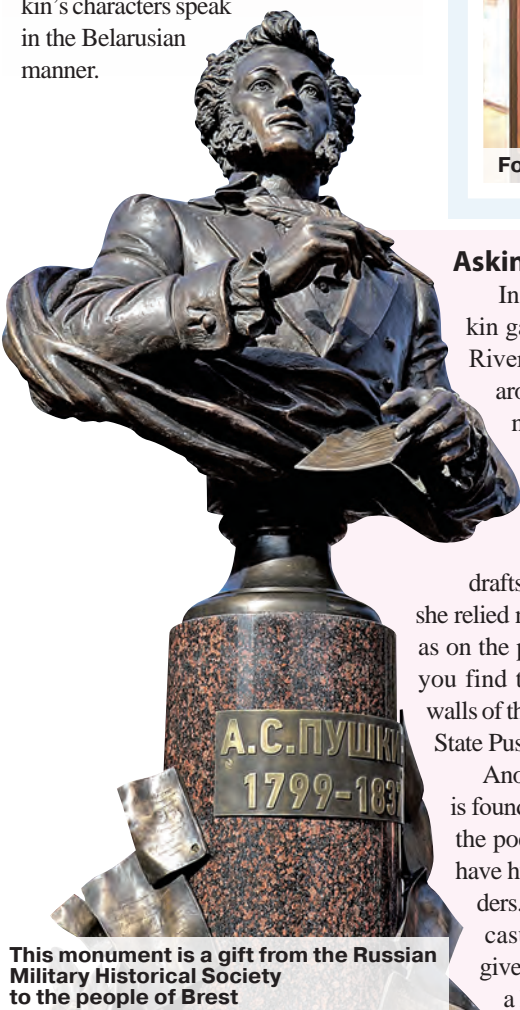
Alexander Pushkin

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Going on a spree in Mogilev

In 1820, Alexander Pushkin went into exile from St. Petersburg to Chisinau, and in 1824 he returned to the Mikhailovskoye family estate under police supervision. Both times he was going through Mogilev [the city of modern Belarus]. Rumours that the capital's poet would come by to the provincial city were spreading quickly. Everybody was looking forward to seeing the 'Sun of Russian Poetry'. And Pushkin did not disappoint — he was walking along the ancient streets wearing a traditional Russian shirt and boots. He had an officer's great-coat over his shoulders and a yarmulke on his head. The poet was usually followed by a servant dressed up as a Tatar boy. Officials and most of the officers ignored Pushkin's arrival, but ordinary people and the military of the lower ranks gave him a magnificent reception, in gratitude to which Pushkin read poetry to them until four o'clock in the morning.

According to the testimonies of contemporaries that have been preserved, the genius liked Mogilev. He was especially impressed by the city architecture, the outfits of the locals and their eloquence. The confirmation of these words is easy to find in his poem Boris Godunov: 'Drink, but do not forget yourself', 'Let us drink a cup to the tavern keeper!' — Pushkin's characters speak in the Belarusian manner.



This monument is a gift from the Russian Military Historical Society to the people of Brest

It is known for certain that Alexander Pushkin passed through the Belarusian provinces twice. What traces did he leave there?



In the village of Telusha, admirers of the genius gather for the annual poetry

Discovering real Dubrovsky

"I am not what you assume. I am not Frenchman Deforge, I am Dubrovsky," says the main character of the famous novel to his beloved Masha.

Few people know, though, that the romantic robber had a prototype — Byelorussian Pavel Ostrovsky. A 22-year-old nobleman lost his estate and set out to rob the rich to help the poor. However, unlike the literary character, the real leader of the gang was caught by the police. This story was told to Pushkin by his friend Pavel Nashchokin, who often visited Vitebsk Region, where Ostrovsky was actually imprisoned. The most amazing thing is that the young robber managed to escape!

Looking for rebel Pugachev

Have you heard anything about the schismatic settlement of Vetka [the town of modern Belarus, Gomel Region]? They say it was there that Don Cossack Yemelyan Pugachev — the leader of the peasant uprising — was hiding. In any case, that is exactly what is said in Pushkin's poem.

Nowadays, the small town of Vetka, located in the border area between Belarus and Russia, is one of the most popular regional centres for tourists. There are plenty of sights to see there. It boasts a Red square, colourful houses adorned with carved shutters, and a unique Museum of Old Believers and Belarusian Traditions named after Shklyarov. In the 17th century, after the church reforms of Patriarch Nikon, at least forty thousand Old Believers fled there in search of refuge. Moreover, they brought with them rare books, sacred images, and jewellery, all of which have been preserved in the museum.

So what about Pugachev? It is true that he was there. However, there is no accurate information as to where exactly and on what occasion. Therefore, each tour guide presents their own interpretation of the trails associated with him.



For centuries, Vetka has preserved the spirit of Russian merchant culture

Visiting the genius' granddaughter



The image of Natalya Vorontsova-Velyaminova clearly reveals features of the famous granddad

Residents of Bobruisk willingly share with tourists the story of the poet's direct heiress who once lived in their town. Many locals can even show the place where her house was located, and lead you along the chestnut alley that she laid out.

Natalya Vorontsova-Velyaminova, Pushkin's granddaughter, was known for her beauty and philanthropic nature. She did not shy away from communicating with peasants and tried to help them in every possible way. St. Nicholas Church now stands in the village of Telusha near Bobruisk — the woman is buried just behind it. She also helped open a school for rural children. Therefore, it is not surprising that a museum dedicated to her life has been established in the village.

Asking for inspiration

In Minsk, a bronze statue of Pushkin gazes thoughtfully at the Svisloch River, while in Brest... the Muse flits around him, rhymes swirl in the air, new poems come to life! The author of the unusual monument is sculptor Daria Uspenskaya. During her work, she studied a great number of sketches and drafts. When creating Pushkin's image, she relied not that much on existing portraits as on the poet's own drawings. Where can you find this statue? Obviously, near the walls of the Philological Faculty of the Brest State Pushkin University.

Another impressive statue of Pushkin is found in Vitebsk. The realistic figure of the poet is quite small, yet he seems to have huge stone wings behind his shoulders. The iconic bowler hat and a cloak casually draped over one shoulder give the impression that Pushkin is in a hurry somewhere.



St. Nicholas Church in the village of Telusha

Happiness is when you enjoy life!



The incredible story of Fiodor Feshchenko

No offense to Andrey Arshavin and Aleksandr Hleb, but in the recent legends match of Belarus and Russia, which gathered more than ten thousand spectators at the Dinamo Minsk Stadium, it was not they who were the main stars on the field but Fiodor Feshchenko, to whom the organisers entrusted the right to make the first honourable shot at goal. A 98-year-old veteran, who is about to turn 99, a participant in the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War and the liberation of Byelorussia, who reached Berlin, fulfilled his mission so clearly and smartly that all viewers had the same thought in their heads — this man might as well play at least one half, he would definitely not spoil the game. Fiodor Feshchenko was jokingly annoyed after the match, “Oh, it is a pity they did not let me shoot the post-match penalty, I would have shown them class. I am pretty sure that Ruslan Nigmatullin would not have coped with my shot.”

By Sergei Kanashits

They say that the most common and trivial question to ask an elderly person, whose age surprises and delights while their physical condition, as well as the state of health fill you with almost sacred awe, sounds like this: What is the secret of your longevity? It was with this question that we began our conversation.

“Sports and physical culture,” Fiodor Feshchenko replied cheerfully without a moment’s hesitation. “Before the war, I was very fond of playing sports and was quite good at them. Of course, I liked football the most. I played it for a long time afterwards, in the midfield position. I was like a little round bun — thanks to a small height and speed, I could easily break from all rivals, and scored a lot. I played in Germany for the GSOFG [Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany] Championship, where I served for several years after the war. I can say that the level was quite high there. Then I played in Minsk, for the team of the Belarusian State University.”

Fiodor Feshchenko has an amazing mental sharpness and a fresh memory for someone who is almost a centenarian. Talking to him is like flipping through a book of time. One page features Ukraine of the late 1920s, where he was born and grew up. The next page takes you to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War and Nizhny Tagil, where 15-year-old Fedya [short for Fiodor] worked at a tank-building plant being promptly evacuated there from Kharkov at the very beginning of the war. Next, he volunteered for the front at the age of 17 and took part in Operation Bagration, which liberated Byelorussia and Minsk. This was followed by an eventful peaceful life, family, studies, the Belarusian State University (BSU), where he worked for four decades, holding the positions of senior lecturer, associate professor and later professor at the Department of Economic Geography of Foreign Countries in the Faculty of Geography at the BSU. An amazing biography!

“I remember very well how Spartak Minsk played and won the bronze medal in

the USSR Football Championship for the first time in 1954, I remember Dinamo of 1963 and 1982 when it became the USSR champion,” Fiodor Feshchenko seemed to be turning the film of an invisible movie projector and the words flying from his mouth came to life, acquiring clear outlines. “Those teams were wonderful, the audience really liked their game, and there were always a lot of fans at the stadium. Now the stands are empty... Why? Because there is nothing to look at. Mikhail Mustygin and Eduard Malofeyev used to play in Minsk. Bobrov and Streltsov, Yashin and Netto — football geniuses — came here. Also Prokopenko, who was a football player with a God-given talent! Now, however, football has turned into philistinism, where players and coaches are more focused on higher earnings than on the game itself.”

— **What advice could you give to our players? After all, they have not been at their best lately, you know...**

— What sort of advice can be there? Train hard! If you lose, it means that you did not work well — there are no other explanations.

— **It is said that movement is life!**

— Exactly. I get up very early every day and do morning exercises, including stretching and breathing exercises. In the evening, I always go out for a walk. Up to the age of 80, I regularly jogged for long distances and went skiing.

Fiodor Feshchenko’s life has given him a lot of experiences. Listening to his captivating stories, you find yourself thinking that you are reading Ian Fleming’s Bondiana collection.

“In the late 1970s, the Motherland sent me to Cuba,” the veteran recalled enthusiastically. “Initially, I was to create a department at the new university on the friendly Island of Freedom. Soon I was retrained as the head of education group in order to be able to move around the country without suspicion. The thing is that my military speciality is the commander of a military sabotage group. Just at that time the revolution was maturing in Nicaragua, and I received a task to help, so

I collected information, communicated with Cuban counterparts. As you know, the revolution in Nicaragua eventually took place and won — the Somoza regime was overthrown, after which José Daniel Ortega was elected president. By the way, he is still in power, and the country under his leadership is pursuing an independent policy, not yielding to the US pressure.”

Here is some unexpected twist — a military sabotage group! Fiodor Feshchenko turned out to be a real commando!

— **Where did you get prepared for that?**

— In the late 1950s, I completed special military training marked as ‘Strictly Confidential’. Those were the years of colossal political tension and the height of the Cold War, which later resulted in the notorious Caribbean Crisis. The USSR was preparing for possible conflicts. Candidates were selected from across the country, military enlistment offices conducted medical examinations on the ground, followed by a strict check of all parameters and directions, and the most suitable candidates who had passed the war were taken for training. There were guys of diverse specialities, including journalists — some of them were involved in partisan activities, others engaged in underground combat, while many of them served at the front line, too. We were trained at assault training bases near Tula and Pskov in Russia to be engaged in special operations.

— **Have you ever been scared in your life?**

— I have always controlled my state, being able to overcome fear. When I did sky jumping, I used to take a newspaper on the plane and seemed to be reading it so as not to show excitement. Everyone thought: wow, he has nerves of steel! At the front, everything was simple and no questions arose — if it had to be done, it had to be done. I saw everything there: victims, death, agony...

— **Veterans do not like talking about the war. My granddad never talked about his combat experience in detail. Why is that?**

— It is a grim topic, which you do not want to recall once again. Once you revisit those past events, the images come back before your eyes, and — believe me — they are such that it is better to forget about them forever.

We remained silent for a while, thinking about the same thing. About how beautiful our native Belarus has become now, how joyful it is to live in a fragrant, peaceful country, how Minsk has brightened up and become even prettier. And how important it is to preserve and multiply all we have achieved. Fiodor Feshchenko was the first to break the silence.

“The guiding star of our development is love for our people and Homeland, readiness to defend its territory, the chosen path of development and sovereignty. I saw Minsk in July 1944. It actually did not exist as the city was razed to the ground. I remember a huge building of the Opera House on a hill, all smashed up, with ruins and ashes around. Then I returned here in 1950. I got out of the heated freight car at the Tovarnaya station wearing a great-coat, with one suitcase, and went along the sleepers to check into the BSU dormitory. The city was being rebuilt before my eyes, it was rising out of the ashes anew and has become a graceful beauty with its own unique image and personality. Today I am very pleased and glad to see our capital and our Belarus getting prettier every day, happy people living here, a lot of smiles and children’s laughter. In my opinion, Minsk is generally one of the most modern, beautiful and convenient cities in the world. Our President has been developing the country for 30 years and may he lead it for as long! I am sure he will not allow Belarus to fight again.”

Saying goodbye to each other, we still talked for a long time standing in the hallway. I shook Fiodor Feshchenko’s very strong hand. As I was leaving, I could not resist asking, “What is happiness, in your opinion?”

The veteran smiled broadly and replied, “I am often asked about this. Happiness is when you enjoy life!”



Pavel Bogush

Photo of the week

Belarus-China joint anti-terrorist drill *Attacking Falcon* took place at the Brestsky training ground

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

July 26th is Esperanto Day. This iconic system was created by eye doctor Ludwig Zamenhof (1859-1917). Zamenhof's neighbours were Russians, Byelorussians, Poles, Jews, Germans, and Lithuanians. Communication with people of different nationalities prompted the young man to create a language that anyone on the planet could understand. The number of people who speak the invented language is approximately 2 million people.



On July 26th, 1730, Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna signed the decree to cast the Great Assumption Bell, also known as the Tsar Bell. It is considered the largest in the world, with a height of 6m 14cm, a diameter of 6m 60cm and a weight of more than 200 tonnes. A fire in 1737 damaged the bell — due to uneven cooling, it cracked, and a piece weighing 11.5 tonnes fell off.

On July 26th, 1951, the first birch bark letter was discovered during the archeological excavations in Veliky Novgorod, Russia. It was a short letter by a commoner who lived in the 15th century, and was found on the



ancient pavement of Kholopya Street in the 14th-15th centuries' layers at the Nerevsky archaeological site. Subsequently, birch bark letters were also found during excavations in Moscow, Pskov, Smolensk, Staraya Russa, Tver, Torzhok, as well as in the Belarusian cities of Vitebsk and Mstislavl. Today there are over a thousand such birch bark letters.



July 27th, 1900 marks the birth of the hamburger. On this day, an American grocery store of Louis Lessing sold the first hamburger in his hometown of New Haven. It was he who put the traditional German steak between two round buns, added sauce and a lettuce leaf and made it convenient to eat on the go. In this form the hamburger has become a symbol of the New World gastronomy. The main American sandwich owes its name to immigrants from Hamburg.

July 28th is known as Trade Workers' Day in Belarus, celebrated on last Sunday in July and honouring over 630,000 professionals of this sphere. Trade stands as a pivotal sector in the country's economy and is currently developing in leaps and bounds. New commercial enterprises emerge in Belarus every year — from shops within walking distance to ultramodern



shopping centres and hypermarkets. Noted for their customer focus, goodwill and diligence, Belarusian trade workers epitomise attention, dedication and conscientious attitude to their duties in their roles.



On July 28th, 1586, the first potatoes arrived in Europe, brought over by Englishman Thomas Herriot to his homeland from Colombia. The British believe that they were the first to taste potatoes and introduce them to European cuisine. However, initially, Europeans viewed potatoes as a rare exotic vegetable and planted them in the best botanical gardens due to the exquisite beauty of their flowers. It was not until the 17th century that the overseas vegetable began to establish itself in European culinary traditions.

On July 28th, 1858, fingerprints were used for the first time in criminology. Fingerprint identification is nowadays the most widespread biometric technology. In Ancient Babylon and China, fingerprints were pressed onto clay tablets and seals for business transactions, while in the 14th century in Persia, various government documents were 'signed' with fingerprints. Thus, it was already noted at that time that a fingerprint is a unique characteristic of each individual enabling to identify a person.



July 28th, 1914 is the date when the First World War broke out. It was one of the large-scale armed conflicts in the history of mankind (July 28th, 1914 – November 11th, 1918), as a result of which four empires ceased to exist: the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. The participating countries lost about 10 million people killed and 22 million were injured.



July 29th is International Tiger Day. Over the last century, the number of tigers has decreased by 25 times, and today these animals are endangered. Unfortunately, no more than 5,000 tigers have been preserved in the wild.

July 31st marks Uncommon Instrument Awareness Day. Among the currently existing musical instruments, the flute is considered the oldest. According to scientists, its age is about 40,000 years. However, there are also very rare musical instruments in the world that are not so widely known. These include the clavichord, Jew's harp, chitarrone, recorder, steel tongue drum, hang, didgeridoo, hurdy-gurdy, gusli, and more.

