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The National Children's Technopark. Aleksei Yavorsky

Navigating the future

The country's scientific and technical elite is being successfully formed in the National Children's Technopark. Future engineers, biotechnologists, programmers are selected from among gifted students in order to develop their talents and motivate them to choose a future profession in the field of science and high technology. The National Children's Technopark appeared in Minsk in 2021 in accordance with the instructions of President Aleksandr Lukashenko. And recently, in December 2023, the National Children's Technopark signed roadmaps with the country's ministries so that the children's projects would find practical application. A new concept for the development of National Children's Technopark was approved. The key idea is not only to find and prepare the most gifted schoolchildren from all over the country, but also to accompany them to their first job. The individual educational trajectory will be structured so that the enterprises receive students who are able to generate new ideas and improve the production process. → 5



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The President of Belarus: the world is on the eve of grandiose events



“Belarus has crossed the threshold of the new year. We met it with bright and kind hopes, which are inextricably linked with the events of the past year. The Old New Year gives us a great chance to take stock and take into the new year all the best that we managed to do, and what we were all proud of, are proud of and admire. First of all, the invaluable talents and conscientious work of the professionals who are present in this room today — journalists, artists, teachers, social workers,” the President said.

Among those invited to the evening were also those whose activities are related to making government decisions, improving the public health system, protecting peace and stability in society, ensuring the inviolability of borders and the security of the country, Aleksandr Lukashenko added.

“Today, dear friends, the world is very turbulent, but we must do everything to make the souls of Belarusians light and comfortable. I want to warn you: the world is on the eve of tremendous events. We are in such a difficult situation today that it is like we are walking on thin ice. A careless step and we could drown and overturn the state. Therefore, this year will be very difficult. Based on all the events, it should be very noisy. But we must do everything to keep him quiet and calm. Facts show that the world is unsettled. Maybe there will be more,” the Belarusian leader emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated that the powers that be do not want multipolarity, “None of the powers that be, especially the Americans, want this multipolarity. They want to rule the whole world, as they

did after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukraine, the Middle East, today already the border of the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, the Houthis and so on — there are demonstrative bombings just to show their ‘heroism’, ‘how cool I am’ before the upcoming elections in America... The whole planet may burst into flames. This cannot be allowed! Think about what I said. But our task is one — peace and tranquility in our state.”

Addressing Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, the Head of State said, “If there is an economy, there will be peace, there will be tranquility. This largely depends on you, on the government, and on all of us. What we have to do and what we have done — behind all this is the personal contribution of each of those present.”

The President recalled that over the past 2023, Belarus has been moving towards peace through creation, strengthening the unity, values and foundations of the Belarusian state.

This year has been declared the Year of Quality in Belarus.

“I want you to understand: quality is not only about economics and production. But this is primarily about a person. What’s the point? If every person, Belarusian, our guest, our neighbours, friends live this year with us and remember it as the Year of Quality, then it will work. Therefore, everything must be done to ensure that quality permeates every person,” the Head of State noted.

The President emphasised that Belarus knows how to do everything for people’s lives, but sometimes there is a lack of quality. This is especially important on the information front, where jour-

The world is very turbulent now, and everything needs to be done so that Belarusians stay calm and feel comfortable — as noted by Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko at a reception on behalf of the President of Belarus dedicated to the Old New Year

nalists and experts have to work almost in a combat situation, the Head of State highlighted.

“We do not yet have (although we often talk about it) an information war. Not yet. We must do everything to prevent it from happening. But there is a fierce confrontation. It always and everywhere begins with internal confusion, and this is accompanied by information confrontation, and then by information war. I would not like this process to continue in this direction. We need to stop him,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Addressing reporters, the President noted,

“Be very careful and precise. Remember: we are walking on thin ice. The word today is very important, and it must hit the target, in a certain direction, but it must be very careful and careful. And you can’t overdo it. Words and facts are our main weapons in the fight for spirituality, traditional values and true meanings.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko wished everyone that 2024 would

valuable,” the Head of State said.

The President wished the participants of the reception that this meeting would leave warm and joyful impressions in their memory.

The Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko also awarded workers of the media and healthcare institutions.

The President presented the Order of Francysk Skaryna to the Chairman of the Interstate Television and Radio Company Mir Radik Batyrshin, who was awarded for his significant personal contribution to strengthening peace, friendly relations and co-operation between states, fruitful work to bring together and mutually enrich national cultures, the formation and development of a common information space, and high achievements in charitable and humanitarian activities.

Special sheets of gratitude from the President of Belarus were presented by Aleksandr Lukashenko to Sergei Baranovsky, Deputy Head of the Special Projects Department of the TV News Agency Main Directorate at the National

State Television and Radio Company; Gleb Gorbatenko, executive editor of the Production Department of the TV News Agency Main Directorate at the National State Television and Radio Company; Olga Korshun, political observer of the Political Observers’ Department at the Information Broadcasting Directorate of the Stolichnoye Televidenie; Andrei Mokhor, Director of the Information Broadcasting Directorate of the Second National TV Channel; and Yekaterina Tumas-Tishkevich, Head of the Department of Leading Information and Analytical Programmes at the Information Broadcasting Directorate of the Second National TV Channel. They were awarded for their significant personal contribution to the implementation of state information policy, high professionalism, objective and comprehensive coverage of events in the socio-political and socio-cultural life of the country.

Among those to whom the President presented special sheets were the Chief Physician of the City Clinical Emergency Hospital Olga Svetlitskaya, the Deputy Chief Physician for Surgery of the Republican Clinical Medical Centre of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus Yuri Slobodin and the Epidemiologist of the Infectious-Epidemiological Department of this centre Maria Alekseeva. The President expressed his gratitude for many years of fruitful work, high professionalism, and significant personal contribution to the protection of public health.



be generous with bright, memorable, good events, that the most cherished dreams would come true, and that it would become a happy time for new ideas and new achievements.

“I am absolutely convinced that we will cope with all problems and tasks with dignity. Indeed, for true patriots, who create the present and future of our Belarus with deeds and thoughts, the fate of the Fatherland is the most important and most



Individual approach and fairness

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting on certain issues of improving legislation on criminal liability

unconventional way... We consistently insist: the activities of state bodies and public institutions must be based on the principle of justice. This also applies to criminal policy. Justice must permeate the entire criminal law and the practice of its application,” the Head of State said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the crime situation in the

country is normal and there are no emergency situations.

“Questions arise: do the penalties imposed correspond to the gravity of the crimes and the danger that these people pose to society. Specifically, in popular terms, I will say: we need to be more careful when handing out punishments, especially in court. For a Belarusian, just appearing in court

is already a heavy punishment before society, for the majority of Belarusians,” the President said.

The Head of State added: out of more than 40 thousand places in the relevant places, only half are filled, and this percentage is decreasing all the time.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Peace is the greatest treasure, and we know its value in Belarus

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, presented the Spiritual Revival awards, special prizes to art luminaries and the Belarusian Sports Olympus awards.

“As before on these bright holidays, we meet to thank those who selflessly serve their people and country. We assess the cultural and spiritual life of the past year which brought unusually talented, sensitive, and sincerely dedicated Belarusians to this stage. It is also thanks to them that we have achieved our goals in the Year of Peace and Creation, thus becoming spiritually stronger and even more confident, especially against the background of the events that are happening around us,” the Head of State said during the awards ceremony.

The President especially emphasised, *“It is obvious to us: peace is the most important value. For any people, especially Belarusian. Because we know its value.”*

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the Last Witnesses and Genocide Without the Right to Life projects are a tribute to the memory of the innocent victims and heroes of the Great Patriotic War, “Today we thank the team of authors of the Prosecutor’s Office, the Belarusian Telegraph Agency, and the National State Television and Radio Company, who experienced all the pain and suffering of the people of the war. These films are a chronicle of terrible crimes that we will not allow ourselves and those who bear historical responsibility for them to forget...

Our memory is a guarantee of peace in the future. Let’s forget the road to the temples and monuments of that war — expect war. With a feeling of pride and confidence in our tomorrow, we look at the successors of the generation of winners — the patriots who put straps on their shoulder.”

Among the laureates of the award For Spiritual Revival are military personnel of the honour guard company and orchestra of the Minsk Military Commandant’s Office, as well as the Polotsk Cadet School, from which pilot Nikita Kukonenko, Hero of Belarus, also graduated.

“We know, remember and honour our heroes of the past and present. These are people with a pure heart, sincere love for their native land and their people. In them, we see the strength of spirit of Belarusians,” the Head of State said.

According to the President, patriotism and spirituality are inseparable concepts, because all the best things in life begin with love — for family and friends, one’s small homeland, one’s Fatherland. This is what inspires us to serve truly noble goals.

“Each award list of today’s laureates contains the story of our entire lives, the history of the country. All of you are shaping the image of the future of Belarus, especially those in this room. We shape the future of Belarus by preserving our cultural heritage, reviving ancient traditions of folk craftsmanship and creativity in festivals and holidays, giving new life to masterpieces of high art, welcoming the first born babies, educating the younger generation on age-old spiritual values, showing mercy and taking part in the fate of compatri-



Batskava Bulka bread loaf fest awarded a special Presidential prize, with Deputy Chair of the Board of the Grodno Regional Consumer Society Yelena Chikova receiving an honorary award from the President

ots who need special care, rising to the sports Olympus for the glory of the Motherland, helping their students conquer this peak, covering the victories of our athletes in the media,” the Belarusian leader emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to the fact that today not only Belarusians have only one thing on their lips, ‘If only there was no war’.

“Some once laughed at this: ‘Oh, these Belarusians again: if only there was no war...’ Today they don’t laugh anymore. Because if there is a war — that’s all. There can be no talk about any culture, any production, or quality,” the Belarusian leader noted.

“But I repeat once again: there will be no war if we, each in our place, do what we are obliged to do if our economy works. Our enemies and enemies, let’s be honest, choose the right moment to bring us to our knees. We shouldn’t give them that chance. And for this we have everything. Everything depends on us. And most of all from those who are in this room, as they say — the elite of our country,” the Head of State emphasised.

During the ceremony, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised the importance of the people of Belarus preserving their cultural sovereignty.

“We, Belarusians, are creators at our core. Since ancient times, we have lived by our own minds, which is why we have preserved our way of life, culture and spirituality in the most difficult periods of development. It is very important. Many today, especially our fugitives, are shouting loudly about the ‘zanyapad’ [a decline in Belarusian] of spirituality and culture. There will be no ‘busy work’ if we show our people the masterpieces of this creativity. No one will strangle anyone for creativity. This has never happened in our recent history and will never happen. But we will not allow anyone to destroy what has been created and developed by generations of Belarusians for centuries — our traditions, our spirituality and the highest feelings are based on the past,” the Head of State said.

At the same time, according to the President, Belarus is open to the world, respects the customs and traditions of other peoples, and is receptive to new ideas, “But on one condition: everything that comes into our lives, Belarusians, must resonate, correspond to our national values, spiritual world and enrich our nation culturally.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that the future of the nation depends on the personal example of all participants and guests of the ceremony, on their civic position and professional choice. “You don’t need to explain how important it is to keep our cultural sovereignty in your hands. It naturally begins with a careful attitude towards the purity of our native speech (Russian and Belarusian), the priority of the traditional content of creative projects and holidays, the traditional design of our national product and the entire living space.”

The Head of State called deep respect for the native culture created by folk artists, Soviet and Belarusian classics a matter of national dignity, “Under no circumstances should we give up what we have achieved. For the question will arise: what inheritance are we refusing and on what will we build our future?”

Aleksandr Lukashenko wished all residents of Belarus success in the coming year — both creative and production, “We will, as before, strive for perfection and a decent level of our cultural, spiritual and socio-political life.”

The President thanked the award winners for their contribution to the development of their native Belarus and personally presented them with diplomas.

Laureates of the Spiritual Revival Award shared their emotions and impressions

Stanislav Krasovsky, Director of the Polotsk Cadet School,

“Patriotism is not a training course that can simply be laid out in the paragraphs of a textbook. This is a special spirit, aspiration of the soul, a requirement of life. Love for the Motherland cannot be instilled artificially. And I am glad that our teachers are able to find strings in the soul of every cadet, helping tomorrow’s defenders of the Fatherland understand their role in civil society. I am proud that true patriots are leaving the walls of the school. Let me note right away: without the support of the state, our success would have been unrealistic. So the For Spiritual Revival Prize is a reward not only for teachers, but also for everyone who in one way or another contributed both to the history of the Polotsk school and to the development of the cadet movement in the country.”



Sergey Vasiliev, Director of the National Research Centre Mother and Child,

“Mother and child health is not a purely physical category. It includes both psychological and social components. Without the right attitude towards one’s parental purpose and harmonious interaction in society, it is difficult to imagine a happy family and a strong state. Our centre did a lot last year not only in terms of maintaining trends — low maternal and infant mortality rates, but also in promoting traditional family values and responsible parenthood. As the director of the centre, a father of many children and a believer, I support state policy regarding the family and am glad that our collective work in this direction has received such high praise as the For Spiritual Revival award.”



Abbess Anfisa (Lyubchak), Abbess of the Holy Protection Convent (Tolochin),

“Receiving such a high award is both pleasant and responsible. By doing good to others, we do good to God. Spiritual rebirth is the rebirth of the soul of each of us. Today, more than ever, it is important to be compassionate. No matter how difficult the moments may be, we must do good: for the sake of ourselves and others. If a person does not deny God, it means that in his life there is a certain limit to all actions. The unbeliever believes that he is a king and God. When the soul is dead, a person knows only his own self. Thanks to spirituality, there is peace in our soul, not rage or hatred. Only prayer can cleanse and inspire us.”



Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



A resident of the agro-town of Alexandria, class teacher of the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko, mathematics teacher Tatyana Nikolaevna Karpechenko turned 100 years old on January 12th. Tatyana Nikolaevna's house was noisy and crowded from early morning — one delegation replaced another, but she traditionally received the first congratulations and gifts on her birthday from her famous student, Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The President's teacher: life only happens once, so you need to live it with dignity!

With a smile, she says that he never forgets her and pleases her with his attention. She also remembers with pleasure and bright nostalgia the years when Aleksandr Lukashenko studied in her class — she says he was very capable of languages, wrote excellent essays and presentations, had an inquisitive mind and excellent memory.

"We have a good President, we don't need anyone better.

I was once asked what I would do if I knew that a future President was studying in my class? I answered: I would keep a diary, write everything down and tell you even more about him today. He's a wonderful person. He did an internship at our school and even worked for a year. And subsequently we always kept in touch with him," she notes.

Tatyana Nikolaevna is a teacher with more than 40 years of experience, 35 years of which she spent at Alexandria Secondary School. She was born in a taiga village in the Vologda Region, although on her maternal side her roots lie in the Shklov District. The fate of this amazing woman is full of interesting facts and events. For example, the teacher's work biography began at the age of 18 — during the Great Patriotic War, then she devoted her entire

life to teaching mathematics. Tatyana Nikolaevna was a kind and at the same time demanding specialist, she treated children with love and respect.

The birthday woman approached her venerable milestone in life with a clear mind and strong memory, as well as a wonderful sense of humour. I want to listen to stories from her biography and wise advice without interrupting. The woman lived a rich life, for which she is infinitely grateful.

"They say that you have to manage your life? Build a house, plant a tree and raise a son — I've already done all this. With my husband, with whom I lived in perfect harmony for almost 40 years, we built a house, planted a garden, raised three sons and a daughter: they are great guys — they worked honestly and are already retired, they are all over 70 years old. When people ask me what I'm doing now, I joke: nothing, in 100 years I've tried everything!" Tatyana Nikolaevna smiles.

At some point the teacher's voice becomes serious, and she says, "Life only happens once, so you need to live it with dignity."

And how many people Tatyana Nikolaevna gathered around her on this centennial anniversary is the best confirmation of this postulate. By the way, the teacher is rich not



only in years and invaluable life experience, but also in family and friends: she raised and raised children with her husband, and now enjoys the success of five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. And they themselves are proud of their successful ancestor. In addition, she is never forgotten by numerous students who also came to congratulate their beloved teacher on such a significant celebration.

The centenarian speaks about her secret of spiritual youth and longevity, "Firstly, a lot depends on genetics: healthy parents make strong children. Secondly, work and a quiet life give strength — there should be respect and mutual

understanding in the family. Work honestly and conscientiously, live in peace and harmony — let it be so both at work and at home."

Tatyana Nikolaevna has lived in Belarus since 1946 and notes that since that time the country has changed a lot — there was both post-war devastation and restoration.

"Everything is comparative: that period and the present are a big difference.

For so many years, life in Belarus has never been as good as it is now. Let's take our generation: pensions are delivered on time, the stores have everything... But before it used to be that you

would work at school, come to the store, and there would be no bread. We're not even talking about other products — you can't buy the main ones. And today, thanks to our President, we live in such a beautiful country," she says.

Looking back from a distance of many years, Tatyana Nikolaevna gives a separate instruction to young people: to work selflessly and love their native land, to be patriots of their country.

"In our generation, patriotism was brought up from the first grade, including being accepted into the Octobrists, Pioneers, and Komsomol. At one time, due to such unity and love for the Fatherland, we won the Great Patriotic War. And today we need to educate young people in the same spirit, because the future of all Belarus lies with them. It is important to always remember the past, appreciate the present and think about the well-being of the future, so that our country remains as beautiful, quiet, calm and prosperous," she recalls.

Based on materials of belta.by



В этой школе
в период с 1961 по 1971 годы
учился первый Президент
Республики Беларусь
Лукaшeнko
Александр Григорьевич



Navigating the future

The country’s scientific and technical elite is being successfully formed in the National Children’s Technopark



National Children’s Technopark

Nadezhda Andreychik



Elizaveta Gurman

Ilya Shvedko

Future engineers, biotechnologists, programmers are selected from among gifted students by the National Children’s Technopark in order to develop their talents and motivate them to choose a future profession in the field of science and high technology. The National Children’s Technopark appeared in Minsk in 2021 in accordance with the instructions of the President Aleksandr Lukashenko. And recently, in December 2023, the National Children’s Technopark signed roadmaps with the country’s ministries so that the children’s projects would find practical application. A new concept for the development of National Children’s Technopark was approved. The key idea is not only to find and prepare the most gifted schoolchildren from all over the country, but also to accompany them to their first job. The individual educational trajectory will be structured so that the enterprises receive students who are able to generate new ideas and improve the production process.

By Taisiya Azanovich

Extend an iron hand

Ksenia Belikova presses a button — and the iron hand comes to life, begins to move its fingers like a person. This is the girl’s third time at the National Children’s Technopark; she came from Voronovo, an urban-type settlement in the Grodno Region.

“The work has begun! This is a collaborative robot, a human companion. Equipped with a ‘computer vision’ system that tracks people’s movements. As soon as you find yourself in the zone of his actions, he immediately slows down. Try to get closer and the mechanism will stop. Everything is for safety!” the schoolgirl happily snaps her fingers.

The car actually freezes as soon as the ninth grader takes a step. The girl’s area of interest is robotics. He dreams of launching a budget analogue of a bionic prosthesis for a human hand. I have already developed a project based on a pneumatic system. She remembers: when she first entered the laboratory, her breath took away. The ‘stuffing’ of each is impressive: robotic cockroaches, 3D printers, signal generators, microscopes, unmanned aerial vehicles. The equipment that university students use and work in enterprises became available to schoolchildren overnight.

Students in 9–11 grades study in the technology park in 15 areas — from architecture and design to aerospace technologies and nanoindustry. For example, today they need to prepare a technological task for creating parts on an industrial laser installation. And tomorrow — to prescribe from start to finish a programme for the virtual rehabilitation system. Seems difficult? Undoubtedly! University teachers help you cope with difficult projects. So Sergei Prokhorovich, who usually gives lectures to BNTU students, is giving the guys another lesson in robotics. He emphasises that future scientists

and innovators are trained here,

“Our task is to show promising trends in the industry. Together we come up with a technical idea, refine it and develop it. They have already created a robotic manipulator, a guide. Later, the future student will be able to work on the project at the university and, finally, release it into production. This is ideal. It is clear that not every idea will be realized, but competencies will not go away. I believe that our graduates, after studying at universities, will be able to come up with new technical solutions and occupy high positions.”

The right environment

A child from any part of the country can come here to study. However, simply submitting an online application is not enough. Already at the first stage, you will have to prove your knowledge — submit a research project to the court or have a diploma from an educational competition at least at the regional level. At the second stage — complete a test task to test technical, analytical and spatial thinking. Then go through an interview and choose directions in accordance with the number of points scored. Why such a complex and multi-step path? So that the best of the best come here. They are given support for development and formed, as it is fashionable to say today, an appropriate environment.

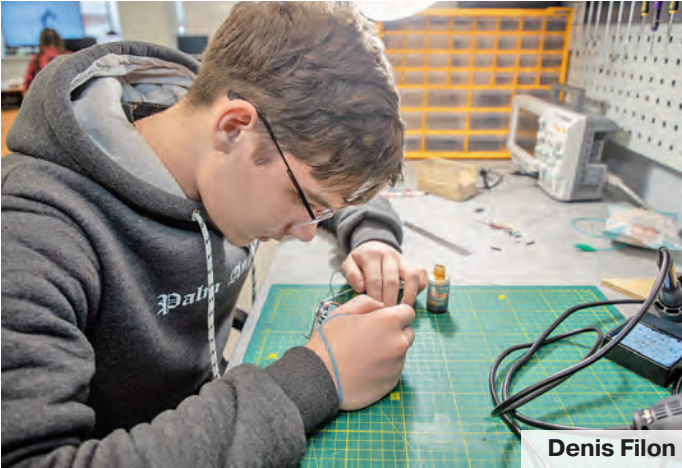
Aleksei Yavorsky came from the small village of Videborets, in the Brest Region. The whole school sent off him to Minsk,

“I wanted to prove that anything is possible, first of all, to myself. It is not necessary to study at any special educational institution. For example, we have about 40 students, a simple rural school, but the teachers are excellent.”

Now the guy lives in a techno-house, where each block has two rooms for two people, a toilet

and a shower. There are gyms and sports halls, self-training rooms, and a rhetoric hall. Five meals a day are provided for children. “You didn’t have to take any money with you,” Aleksei laughs.

The state covers all expenses — just study! Shift duration is 24 days. Regular school subjects are also planned in the children’s schedule. Additionally, they organise events, excursions, and can attend clubs: swimming pool, dancing. But the main emphasis is on classes in areas.



Denis Filon

Ilya Shvedko



Nikita Bruev and Sofia Martinkevich

HOWEVER

Competition in the National Children’s Technopark — more than three people per place. Over 2.5 thousand students from all over the country have studied here since 2021: 2118 from cities, 412 from rural areas

Mask, I know you

In the hands of the head of the aerospace laboratory, Dmitry Yakovlev, is something mysterious, reminiscent of a golden mask. Together with students, they create an aircraft that is useful in agriculture. This miracle device is bound to be a godsend for farmers: it flies at the speed of an airplane, and can hover in the air like a quadcopter. He is capable of finding and photographing problem areas of crops, taking air samples, and spraying plants in hard-to-reach places. The Technopark is already negotiating with the Academy of Sciences about creating a real flying model. And it was invented by Anastasia Gubernatenko from Novopolotsk.

Children’s thinking is amazing, and if you add the rationality of an adult to it, joint discoveries can be even more interesting, says Vera Klintsevich, head of the Green Chemistry laboratory, “Our

guys were very inspired by Belarusian scientists Dmitry Grinshpan and Tatyana Savitskaya, who developed biodegradable edible films based on polysaccharides. Schoolchildren came up with a new use for this packaging: they created a useful film for packaging candies containing fish oil. As well as chewing tablets with valerian, cough syrup, and activated charcoal.”

The National Children’s Technopark has agreed on roadmaps with the country’s ministries and co-operation plans with organisations. The task ahead is not easy: the formation of a personnel reserve for knowledge-intensive and high-tech industries, notes the director of the educational institution, Sergei Sachko,

“Today there is a struggle for talented, motivated children — you see what policies individual countries are pur-

suing. To retain our golden youth, we must definitely support them. And with deeds, not words! By our example, we must show that in our country it is possible to create, develop and earn money. Therefore, on behalf of the President, we are organizing work with representatives of the real sector of the economy. Our main goal is the practical application of students’ developments in factories, plants, and enterprises.”

About 100 projects are defended here every shift. Be sure to invite potential employers so that they can notice the future employee. If they wish, they can supervise it already at the university. Today, university educational programmes are very flexible — a student can receive exactly the knowledge that he needs in the workplace, especially when it comes to targeted training.

From repairing wheel sets to energy containers: how the oldest enterprise in Gomel restores rolling stock and develops new equipment for the railway



In 2023, five snow removal trains were repaired at the Gomel Carriage Works



Milestones of the company's rich history are kept in the museum

The work of the Gomel Carriage Works is focused on the market of the post-Soviet space, which is due historically. Since the times of Tsarist Russia, and later in the USSR, the width of the railway gauge has been the same size, which, in turn, determined the standards for wheel sets, the design and dimensions of the cars. Most orders come from the Russian Federation. Clients include not only Russian Railways, but also other large companies, including Russian Post, Rosatom, Roscosmos. Kazakhstan is actively repairing rolling stock, and spare parts are supplied to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Thanks to this, export figures are growing from year to year. It has more than tripled in the past eight years, reaching \$14 million.

The carriages continue their journey

By Ruslan Proleskovsky

Hotels on wheels

Today, more than half of the production structure is occupied by car repairs. About a third falls on the restoration of wheel sets. The rest is the production of spare parts, which are also in stable demand.

On average, about 35 cars are repaired at the enterprise per month for different types of work performed. The hot season is the spring-summer period. In 2023, from March to August, all Saturdays were working, and some areas switched to a two-shift mode.

“Old, heavily worn, and in some places completely rusted cars come to us at the plant. We strengthen the bodies, check the rigidity of the structures and, if necessary, strengthen them. The interior is being completely replaced. Biotoilets are being installed, double-glazed windows are being installed, new energy systems are being installed, each place is equipped with an outlet and a connector for connecting gadgets,” Andrei Gulevich, deputy head of the car assembly shop says.

Modern materials, furniture and technical equipment allow you to turn the compartment practically into hotel rooms. And most importantly, overhauls extend the standard service life to 42 years. Often this approach is more rational (and certainly cheaper) than buying a new car.

Through the snow

The carriage works are also modernising special rolling stock designed to serve the railway itself. For example, mobile laboratories, track measuring systems, flaw detector cars and others. More recently, snow removal trains have been added to this list.

Each of these consists of several sections, including a storage car, where snow removed from the tracks is collected. After which it is scattered on the sides of the track in those areas where the surrounding terrain allows it.

Overhauling such machines is much more profitable than purchasing new ones. During the work, the main components, the elements most susceptible to corrosion, and the cabin interior are updated. In 2022, the first snow removal complex was restored. And in 2023 there will already be five, which is almost half of the fleet of such machines in the country. The plant is ready to fully satisfy not



The interior of the carriages is being transformed beyond recognition



Overhaul extends the service life of rolling stock

only the needs of Belarusian Railways, but also to accept orders from abroad. The material and technical base of the enterprise and the qualifications of the personnel allow this.

We make better

Gomel Carriage Works is proud of its own, including unique, developments.

“We pay considerable attention to this topic. Almost every year we try to expand our product range: we master new types of repairs, produce new equipment and spare parts. A lot has been done over the past ten years,” head of the marketing department Yuri Makarov notes.

One of these developments is an energy container that provides power supply to refrigerated cars when transporting perishable goods. That is, in essence, it is a mobile power station. Analogues produced in the USSR fail due to many years of use.

Previously, they were accompanied and served by two people on the route, which meant additional costs. The energy container developed at the carriage works operates autonomously, without human intervention. And it is controlled through an application from a mobile phone. In

this case, the user himself may be hundreds of kilometres away.

Depending on the cargo and the temperature maintained, the energy container can serve up to 16 refrigerated cars for 20 days. And therefore it is used on long routes. For example, from St. Petersburg to Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok.

“The diesel generators and other equipment used are certified specifically for railway transport. If you install a conventional one, then, taking into account the operating conditions, it will not withstand vi-

To help Baikonur

During operation, railway locomotives are filled not only with fuel, but also with oil and dry sand. (The latter is fed to the wheels during movement to prevent slipping). Typically, refuelling is carried out at stationary stations.

However, over long distances, access to them is difficult. There are other inconveniences. For example, stations need to be built and equipped even when it is obvious that they will be in operation for a limited period. Let's say, when developing a quarry with minerals. This is a significant expense.

The carriage works specialists proposed a solution by developing a mobile equipment complex from scratch, which will automatically come to the locomotives. This will improve reliability and reduce costs. The demand and prospects of the complex are evidenced by the fact that the first of them was purchased by the customer to service the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Another one is operated at a large metallurgical enterprise.

There is every reason to believe that market demand for refuelling complexes will grow.



The energy container is a unique development and a source of pride for the Gomel Carriage Works

HOWEVER

Today, Gomel Carriage Works employs almost 1,300 people. Among them, by the way, are members of 16 labour dynasties. The average salary exceeds Br2,000. The forecasted economic development indicators are being fully met. The order portfolio for 2024 has already been formed.

bration, loads and will quickly fail. Here everything is done taking into account the increased requirements for strength. There is also a maritime register certificate, thanks to which the energy container can be used on ships,” Yuri Makarov says about the feature.

The first energy container was produced by the company at the request of one of the largest container shipping operators in 2018. To date, about three dozen of them have been sold.

Spiritual dialogue of cultures

The team of the Mogilev Regional Methodological Centre for Folk Art, awarded the *For Spiritual Revival Prize*, preserves the cultural heritage of the country through the *Kupala* night national festival.

The small agro-town of Alexandria is located on the border of the Mogilev and Vitebsk Regions. And what a huge event! The *Kupala* night national festival (*Alexandria Gathers Friends*), in the Shklov District, which has been held in the homeland of the President since 2010, has become the personification of friendship between peoples, a place of meetings and cultural discoveries. Here artists and folk craftsmen demonstrate their talents, and the concept of the festival always reveals a piece of the country's heritage. A large layer of work in the preparation and implementation of the republican project is carried out by employees of the Mogilev Regional Methodological Centre for Folk Art and Cultural and Educational Work. This year the team was awarded the prize For Spiritual Revival for its significant contribution to the preservation of the cultural heritage of Belarus and the implementation of the cultural and tourism project — the *Kupala* night festival.

By Tatyana Sedunova

Area of cultural interest

Today, few people will remember that the first festival in Alexandria was local. And it very quickly grew into an international one — in 2023, the agro-town attracted 80 thousand guests, the holiday was held under the auspices of the Union State. All this time, his permanent ideological inspirer is the Mogilev Regional Methodological Centre for Folk Art and Cultural and Educational Work: the opening of the festival, the 'city of masters', the concept and memorable symbols of the *Kupala* night — all on the creative team. The director of the centre, Oleg Khmelkov, half-jokingly and half-seriously says: when the holiday has not yet died down, their team is already starting to think about the idea of the next *Kupala* night.

"And now our preparations are in full swing. In 2024, the festival will definitely surprise. We are doing what we love. And, of course, it is very pleasant when the results of this work are celebrated at such a high level. We were appreciated by the President, the Culture Ministry, and the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee. We hold a number of festivals: Forum of Traditional Cultures, the musical festival for children Golden Bee, and *Wreath of Friendship* — there are many directions. This is our profession, and we do everything with love,"



Staff of the department of information-analytical and repertoire-publishing activities

Oleg Khmelkov is keeping the intrigue and plot of the *Kupala* night a secret.

The whole concept of *Alexandria Gathers Friends* is based on the method centre of folk art: the opening of the festival, the fair, amulets. It's hard to imagine that about 4 thousand people are working on preparations for the holiday! This is a method centre team — almost 60 employees, each in their own field, plus an average of 150 creative workers from all districts of the Mogilev Region.

Professional development in effect

No matter how tempting the smells of aromatic food from the food court are, guests of Alexandria always first rush to the 'city of craftsmen', where the works of local craftsmen are presented. Thanks to their creativity, you can touch the Belarusian traditions, believes leading methodologist of the department of traditional artistic culture Natalia Domenikova, who has been with *Alexandria Gathers Friends* from the first day, "Behind the bright holiday, which is watched by guests and television view-

ers, there is long, painstaking work. After all, we need to develop a concept for the upcoming festival, come up with a project around which we will unite artists from our regions. Every year we have a new theme. For example, during one of the festivals, our craftsmen wove the *Kupala* night belts, which were then presented at the festival, made dolls, reconstructed the costumes of our area, presented modern images with traditional elements, and wove towels."

By the way, for the towel, which was exhibited in Alexandria in 2021, folk artist from the Khotimsk District House of Crafts Tatyana Kovaleva won a first degree diploma. The craftswoman, and she is 75 years old, has not missed a single festival, "I am happy to bring my works to my favourite festival — these were embroidered shirts and belts. We also bring a loom for the holiday, on which we conduct weaving master classes. What a queue for us!"

With the assistance of the Methodological Centre for Folk Art and Cultural and Educational Work, master classes are held for folk craftsmen on the types of crafts that need attention. This is at the same time an advanced training for local craftsmen.

"Often we even attract folk craftsmen from other regions — Minsk, Vitebsk, we are supported by the Belarusian Union of Folk Art Masters. After all, in order to make a worthy product, the craftsmen need to be directed and prompted. They do a lot of creative work on the spot — they reconstruct costumes, towels, and also analytical work — they study the characteristics of their region. Our colleagues take the *Alexandria Gathers Friends* festival very seriously. Everyone can show their own creativity, conduct master classes, present themselves and popularise their type of craft. Weavers, embroiderers, blacksmiths — everyone strives to demonstrate their skills and achievements in this type of craft. That's



BELTA



why we have such beautiful, spectacular holidays. And the guests are imbued with the national culture, flavour, and are spiritually enriched," Natalia Domenikova points out.

The Spiritual Revival Award is the result of a great deal of joint work. We have been working since the very foundation of the festival. And we are glad that it not only lives, but also becomes larger every year.

Today, the centre's methodologists are reviving folk crafts and also passing on the secrets of technology to the next generation. The list includes about 20 directions: from weaving, embroidery to ceramics and beadwork.

Under the wings of goodness

Anyone who was at the *Kupala* night last year probably remembered the large stork — the figure of this bird hovered above the stage podium. The idea is also a method centre. A whole team is working on the opening of the holiday, notes leading methodologist of the department of amateur creativity and cultural and leisure activities Aleksandr Kuznetsov, "In 2023, *Alexandria Gathers Friends* was based on a symbol of the cultural heritage of the Slavic peoples — a talisman. At the opening of the *Kupala* night, all regions of the country presented their amulets, and the most important one was the stork. This became the leitmotif of the opening ceremony of the holiday. Choosing a concept is a real brainstorming session: we propose it and begin to develop ideas. We have a responsible mission — we open the festival every year. For us, *Alexandria Gathers Friends* is a very important festival. The methodological centre popularises folk art, we can tell and show what our people are rich in: folklore, folk theaters, games, rituals. This is a great opportunity to gain new knowledge. The scale of the *Kupala* night is amazing. And this is due to numerous people."

During the New Year and Christmas holidays, the centre had a lot of things to do: concerts, meetings. Now, for example, the team is preparing for the Traditional Culture as a Strategic Resource for Sustainable Development of Society International Forum, which will be held in April. The Methodological Centre itself initiated such a large-scale event, which takes place every two years and raises issues of folklore, culture and art. The list includes not only nationwide, but also regional projects. Interest in folk art, they notice in the team, is only growing every year.

AWARD



Expansion of the war in the Middle East

Britain and America launch massive airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen

On the night of January 12th, US and British warplanes, ships and submarines launched dozens of air strikes across Yemen against Houthi forces. In an official address, Biden called the strikes ‘defensive’ and said the bombing was a direct response to Houthi attacks on shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also justified the attack on Yemen saying that the UK acted in ‘self-defence’.

The strikes were against ‘command and control nodes, munitions depots, launching systems, production facilities, and air defence radar systems’, US Air Forces Central said in a statement.

President Joe Biden said the strikes

— supported by Australia, Bahrain, Canada and the Netherlands — were meant to demonstrate that the US and its allies ‘will not tolerate’ the militant group’s ceaseless attacks on the Red Sea. And he said they only made the move after attempts at diplomatic negotiations and careful deliberation.

British PM Rishi Sunak urged the Houthi rebels to cease their aggression. “Despite the repeated warnings from the international community, the Houthis have continued to carry out attacks in the Red Sea,” he said in a statement confirming the strikes.

In a statement the Houthis’ Supreme Political Council threatened that ‘all

American-British interests have become legitimate targets for the Yemeni armed forces in response to their direct and declared aggression against the Republic of Yemen’.

“A brutal aggression against our country, for which they will pay absolutely,” Nasr Aldeen Amer, Vice President of the Houthi Media Authority, said. “Without hesitation, and we will not back down from our position in supporting the Palestinian people, whatever the cost.”

American forces conducted another airstrike on a Houthi-controlled site in Yemen on January 13th, US officials confirmed.

US’ first execution using nitrogen gas

Alabama will be allowed to put an inmate to death with nitrogen gas later this month, a federal judge ruled, clearing the way for what would be the US’ first execution under a new method the inmate’s lawyers criticise as cruel and experimental

US District Judge R. Austin Huffaker rejected Alabama inmate Kenneth Eugene Smith’s request for an injunction to stop his scheduled January 25 execution by nitrogen hypoxia. Smith’s attorneys have said the state is trying to make him the ‘test subject’ for an untried execution method, and are expected to appeal the decision.

The question of whether the execution by nitrogen gas can ultimately proceed could end up before the US Supreme Court.

The state’s plans call for placing a respirator-type face mask over Smith’s nose and mouth to replace breathable air with nitrogen, causing him to die from lack of oxygen. Three states — Alabama, Mississippi and Oklahoma — have authorised nitrogen hypoxia as an execution method, but no state has attempted to use it so far.

Smith, now 58, was one of two men convicted of the murder-for-hire slaying of a preacher’s wife in 1988 that rocked a small north Alabama community. Prosecutors said Smith and the other man were each paid \$1,000 to kill Elizabeth Sennett on behalf of her husband, who was deeply in debt and wanted to collect on insurance.

Smith survived the state’s prior attempt to execute him. The Alabama Department of Corrections tried to give Smith a lethal injection in 2022 but called it off when authorities could not connect the two in-



Ecuador plunges into crisis

At least ten people have been killed in Ecuador in a series of attacks blamed on armed gangs, as the country plunges into chaos in what the new president has called an ‘internal armed conflict’

Scared residents too afraid to leave home for work or even the basics. Tourists learning flights to a dream Galapagos vacation had been cancelled. Farmers left stranded on rural roads, waiting for public buses that wouldn’t come.

Ecuador’s war with narco gangs has dramatically spilled into the open, paralysing the Andean nation and sending images of prison riots, police taken hostage and masked gunmen taking over a live TV broadcast rocketing across the world.

The mayhem, which began when a pair of notorious drug lords escaped from prison and escalated after President Daniel Noboa launched a nationwide manhunt, has highlighted the country’s tragic descent from tranquil tourist destination to warzone.

It also laid bare the litany of problems plaguing Noboa, the 36-year-old president who is battling both an economic crisis and

a surge in organised crime that has turned once-peaceful Ecuador into one of the world’s most violent places.

Police and soldiers have arrested 329 alleged terrorists and shot dead another five, while securing release of four kidnapped police officers and some of the more than 130 prison guards being held hostage at several different jails, Admiral Jaime Vela, Head of Ecuador’s Armed Forces, said.

Even before last week’s violence began, Noboa — who took office just six weeks ago — had been widely expected to unveil a plan to reform the prison system, which has experienced a rash of deadly riots in recent years. He was also preparing to submit a raft of new security and investment measures for referendum.

Noboa’s administration ramped up security Wednesday, closing public schools

UK parliament cold, damp, and mice-infested

Politicians and aides alike ‘dread’ coming to work at Westminster Palace, Politico reported, describing how the crumbling Victorian building is driving them to work elsewhere in order to avoid the cold, the mould, and the rodents

Westminster Palace offers little respite from the winter weather, multiple staffers told Politico, citing persistent heating failures, power cuts, and mouldy bathrooms. A report compiled by the GMB trade union — which represents parliamentary aides — in 2022 also noted crumbling masonry and falling glass even in one of the more modern buildings of the complex, as well as an outbreak of the legionella bacteria in showers on the estate.

According to some members of the Labour Party quoted by the article, even the leader of the opposition, Keir Starmer, prefers to work out of his party’s modern headquarters across the River Thames at least two days a week. At the same time,

according to other sources, politicians continue to regularly go to the headquarters of Parliament out of a simple ‘lure of power’: ‘the fierce competition for jobs forces them to put up with conditions few employees elsewhere would countenance’.

“If it wasn’t a protected heritage site, there would be absolutely no way — with the current health and safety regulations — that we would be allowed to even set foot in a building this broken and damaged,” a Conservative Party staffer the edition.

Much of Westminster Palace was built in the 19th Century and has not been renovated since before World War II. Some politicians have been demanding restoration works for years, but a vote authoris-



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Will the German Chancellor lose power this year?

Amid a sharp deterioration in the situation in the Middle East in the first days of January, the sensational information published in the German tabloid *Bild* that supposedly this year German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will give way to the current Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius at the helm of the German state remained in the shadows. Earlier, the Italian *La Repubblica* also wrote about ‘bad rumours’ from the Bundestag.

Farewell, Herr Scholz?

By Anton Popov

Good reasons

The Bild newspaper also spoke about the reason why the chancellor will be retired. We are talking, firstly, about a catastrophic drop in the ratings of the Social Democrats and, secondly, about a financial scandal worth almost two billion dollars.

With the first point, everything seems to be clear. The authors of the material in *Bild* rely on the final rating of the popularity of political forces in Germany, published on December 31st, where the Social Democratic Party, which Scholz represents, lost five percentage points at once — now only 15 percent of Germans support their policy. The chancellor himself is doing even worse: in his personal ranking, as *Der Spiegel* reports, he has slipped to 14th place out of 20, while defence chief Pistorius is at the top of the list, while Sarah Wagenknecht, known for her anti-war position, is in eighth place.

The second reason to dismiss Scholz is the scandal surrounding the fraudulent scheme of the Wirecard company, which erupted back in 2020, when the current chancellor was Finance Minister in the government of Angela Merkel. Let us remember that Wirecard was engaged in issuing cryptocurrency cards and was considered one of the most successful companies in this segment. However, in the summer of 2020, the company suddenly went bankrupt — it turned out that the documentation was full of inconsistencies, and someone withdrew almost two billion euros from the accounts. Further inspection showed that all Wirecard activities strongly smacked of a fraudulent scheme. The company demonstrated success only on paper, but in reality the business became unprofitable long before bankruptcy. The icing on the cake was the fact that the company had the status of a partner of the federal government and Scholz, as part of

his civil service duties, had to exercise financial control over its activities.

Scholz’s legacy from that long-standing scandal still lingers to this day: opponents never miss an opportunity to remind him of the Wirecard story.

‘Impressive’ results

However, low personal and party ratings and an unpleasant incident almost four years ago are in themselves unlikely to be the true reason for Scholz’s possible resignation.

The problem is actually much deeper and lies in the inability of the current chancellor to effectively manage the state entrusted to him.

Scholz is weighed down by the burden of economic problems that he himself has placed on his shoulders and on the shoulders of every German personally. We are, of course, talking about the notorious sanctions against Belarus and Russia, which turned into a terrible blow to the economy of Germany itself. The rejection of connections that had been established over decades triggered a domino effect: first, exports and imports dropped significantly, then enterprises important for the economy began to close or move to other countries,

and unemployment increased — from December 2022 to December 2023, 186 thousand Germans lost a stable income, which brought the total the number of unemployed up to 2.7 million.

Blindly following instructions from Washington led to the fact that a number of German industrial giants were forced to close production and radically reduce staff — including the largest ammonia producer SKW Stickstoffwerke Piesteritz, the world leader in the market for the production of optics for the visually impaired Eschenbach Optik, and chip supplier Hellma Materials. Other companies, like Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, Bayer, as predicted back in the fall of 2022, are gradually moving production to the USA, where they are lured by low taxes and cheap energy.

Trying to plug holes in the state budget, the Scholz government found nothing better than getting into the pocket of a respectable burgher. The list of new taxes that Berlin has ‘delighted’ citizens with only recently can be long and persistent. Consider, for example, the increase in VAT on gas and centralised heating from 7 to 19 percent. VAT on kindergarten and school meals has increased similarly. Taxes on carbon emissions, trucks and real estate have all risen sharply. A high-profile law on heat supply came into force, obliging, from January 1st, to install only heating systems powered by 65 percent renewable fuel sources.

The people are indignant

Scholz and his government never took any clear measures against forced deindustrialisation. Moreover, the terrorist attack on Nord Stream also remained unanswered, although it seems that even small children know the organisers of the sabotage and their motives.

There are also serious complaints against Scholz regarding the situation in Ukraine. The desire to please both the Washington overlord and not to completely quarrel with



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“Scholz is a political newbie who does not understand a thing about politics and is not willing to... He will grow up a little, if the Germans don’t kick him out, and he will understand that he is a talker. That’s all.”

During a conversation with journalists during a visit to Minsk Mechanical Plant named after S.I. Vavilov on August 26th, 2022

his own opposition has led to a paradoxical result: on the one hand, Berlin is one of the most active sponsors of the Zelensky regime, and on the other hand, it is constantly under fire for refusing to supply Taurus cruise missiles, which Kiev is going to use it in an attempt to massively attack the Crimean Bridge.

Rumours about Scholz’s possible resignation emerged amid a large-scale strike that swept across Germany from January 7th–8th. Literally everyone is on strike: from bus drivers to farmers and catering workers. The main complaint is the decline in living standards amid the chancellor’s statements about continued support for Ukraine. Experts note that publications in *Bild* and other publications may be placed deliberately, preparing public opinion in case it is not possible to contain popular discontent and a solution has to be sought in Scholz’s resignation.

However, this scenario is still unlikely: the security bloc makes no attempts to disobey, and the Social Democrats, although dissatisfied with the drop in ratings, are not ready to lose their homes by throwing out their appointee in the chancellor’s chair.

Six of one and half a dozen of the other

Changing Scholz as chancellor at the moment does not seem to be the most likely event. This character of the German politician is primarily convenient for the United States, which, with the hands of a Social Democrat, successfully dismantled the largest economy in the eurozone, and now plans to use the remaining resources to assist Ukraine until the internal political situation in Washington becomes clearer.

“Germany must be ready to increase aid to Ukraine when others begin to waver,” Herr Scholz said at the Social Democratic Party congress in Berlin in early December.

However, even if he leaves his post, it is unlikely that Germany will face tectonic shifts in domestic and foreign policy.

The likely replacement, Boris Pistorius, is a notorious militarist who believes that in 5–8 years NATO will face Russia on the battlefield, for which he called for immediate preparation. He is also the main lobbyist for the deployment of a German brigade in Lithuania, the first unit of this level to be permanently stationed outside German borders after World War II.

In order for Germany to be able to cast off the American morose and try to restore previous ties with Russia and Belarus, it is necessary not just a change of figures in the Bundestag or in ministerial posts, but a change in the paradigm of strategic thinking, a new setting of priorities. However, alas, such changes are not yet visible even on the horizon.



We pay more and fight more

At the end of last year, the UN General Assembly approved the organisation's budget for 2024. Compared to 2023, it has grown by \$190 million. But that's it for now. How much more expensive the UN 2024 will cost will only be clear at the end of the year. Because they asked for 3.1 billion dollars for 2023, but spent 3.4. In any case, the UN is not going to limit its spending. And we are talking only about the regular budget of the organisation. All other UN budgets, programmes and other black holes that absorb billions of dollars annually are financed separately. One might assume that the United Nations needs more money to tackle global problems, which have increased in the world in 2023. But no. The budget increase is due to the need to hire new employees. And these are by no means the employees who will decide anything. The UN Secretariat employs about 40 thousand people — one Secretary General has more than 20 deputies, and each deputy has the same number of his own deputies, and so on down the chain. In fact, the organisation's regular budget is mainly spent on 'feeding' them. So what staff is the world's most powerful bureaucracy missing in 2024? It turned out to be interpreters. There are no other problems in the world other than translating yet another empty UN chatter into all the official languages of the organisation...



By Alena Krasovskaya

From 22 to 0.001 percent

UN budgets are formed from contributions from member countries. How much each country pays is decided by a special Committee on Contributions, which closely monitors the economic performance of member states to determine how much they are able to pay into UN budgets.

The maximum contribution to the UN regular budget is currently limited

to 22 percent, and the minimum is 0.001 percent of the budget. Based on the \$3.59 billion requested for 2024, the maximum contribution this year will be \$789,800,000 and the minimum will be \$35,900. The United States pays the maximum rate to the UN budget; states such as Lesotho, Liberia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Vanuatu pay the minimum rate.

But there are problems with replenishing UN budgets. At the end of 2023, the Secretary General of the organisation called on all countries to make their mandatory contributions on time and in full. Because in 2021 the UN collected only

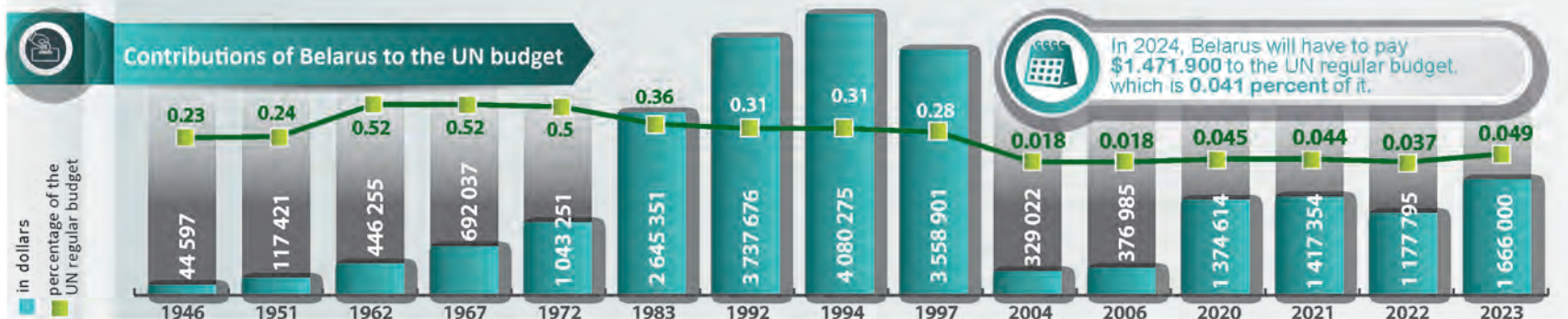
82.7 percent of the regular budget, and in 2022 even less — 71.9 percent.

The United States has the largest debt to the UN (about \$1 billion). And the States are not alone in the list of debtors, although all other defaulters together have a debt amount that is significantly less than the US one. Regarding punishment, the UN Charter has Article 19, which deprives debtors of the right to vote in the General Assembly if the amount of debt equals or exceeds the amount of contributions due for the previous two full years.

As of August 31st, 2023, the debt described in Article 19 of the UN Char-

ter is owed by four member states: Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Venezuela.

But the UN always provides for loopholes, and the same Article 19 of the Charter specifies that the General Assembly may allow debtors to vote if the payment is late due to circumstances beyond their control. Therefore, the Comoros Islands, Sao Tome and Principe, and Somalia continue to vote until the end of the 78th session (until September 10th, 2024). But Venezuela was deprived of voting rights for this period, apparently, the circumstances of the formation of its debt did not suit the UN.



How much does Belarus pay?

In 1945, when the UN was created, the Belarusian SSR and the Ukrainian SSR, together with the USSR, became the founders of the UN. Accordingly, they also had obligations to the organisation. And first of all, these are, of course, contributions to the UN budget, which only grow larger from year to year.

In 1946, the Byelorussian SSR paid \$44,597 (0.23 percent of the UN regular budget). In 1951, the amount increased to \$117,421 (0.24 percent).

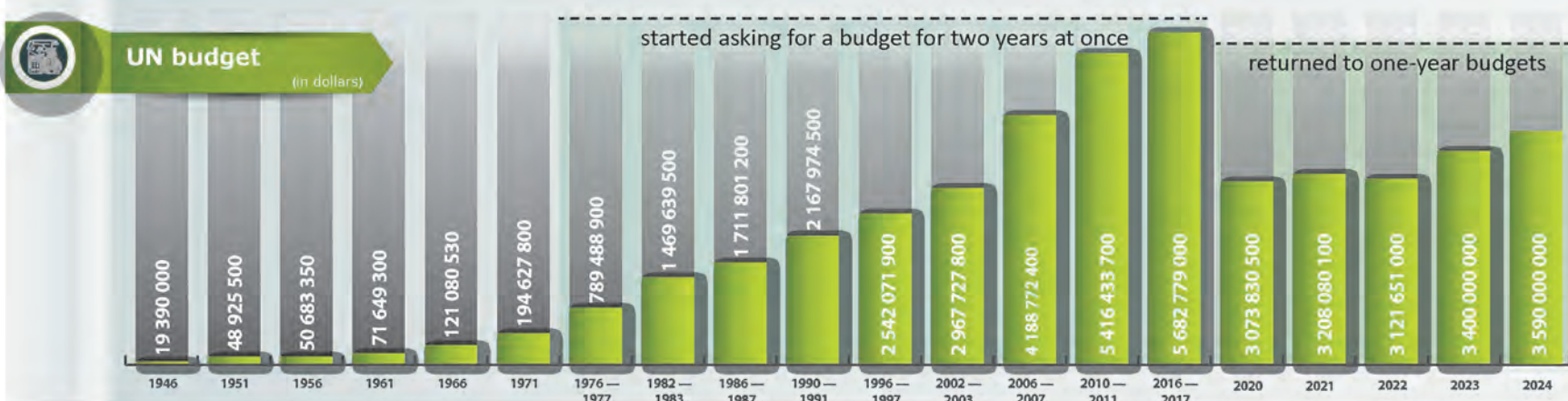
In 1962, the payment amounted to almost half a million dollars — 446,255. And in 1972, the BSSR crossed the \$1 million mark. By the early 1980s, the BSSR's contributions to the UN budget exceeded \$2 million.

Independent Belarus, which after the collapse of the USSR became the successor of the Belarusian SSR at the UN, in 1992 had to pay \$3,737,676 (0.31 percent) to the organisation's budget. And in 1994 it was already \$4,080,275 (0.31 percent). In 1995, the contribution

for Belarus soared to \$4,870,005 (0.37 percent). And this despite the fact that after the collapse of the USSR and several years of nationalist rule, the economy of our country was not in the best condition. In this regard, the activities of the UN Committee on Contributions, which in such a strange way assessed the solvency of a country teetering on the brink of economic disaster, raises many questions. Since 1995, Belarus began a gradual reduction in the amount of its contribution as a percentage of payments

to the UN regular budget. By 2004 it was 0.018 percent, or \$329,022.

But the UN's appetite continues to grow. And again we pay millions. In 2020, the annual contribution to the UN for Belarus amounted to \$1,374,614 (0.045 percent), in 2021 — \$1,417,354 (0.044 percent), in 2022 — \$1,177,795 (0.037 percent), in 2023 — \$1,666,000 (0.049 percent). In 2024, Belarus will have to pay \$1,471,900 (0.041 percent of the UN regular budget) to the UN regular budget.



Another billion in five years?

It is clear that the ever-increasing amounts that the UN demands from countries are associated with the growth of the regular budget itself. Moreover, this growth recently can be called rapid.

The first regular budget was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1946 and amounted to only \$19,300,000. The following year, 1947, the UN already needed \$28,618,568. And starting in 1948, the UN realised that it was possible to plan one amount, spend another and then simply report on the overspending. There were, of course, years when planned expenses decreased rather than increased, but there were not many of them.

Since 1974, UN budgets began to be re-

quested for two years: they were motivated that it would be better to plan expenses this way. But improved planning did not stop the growth of budgets, quite the contrary.

The UN was able to increase its regular expenses to a billion dollars a year already in 1990–1991. Initially, \$1,974,634,000 was planned for this period, but in 1991 it turned out that \$2,167,974,500 had been spent.

And if the UN 'grew' to the first billion a year for 45 years, then the UN's appetites grew to two billion in 2006–2007, that is, in 16 years.

In 2010–2011, the regular UN budget was already more than two and a half billion a year.

When eight years later it became clear

that the annual budget was about to grow to \$3 billion a year, the UN decided not to scare its members and return to planning annual budgets.

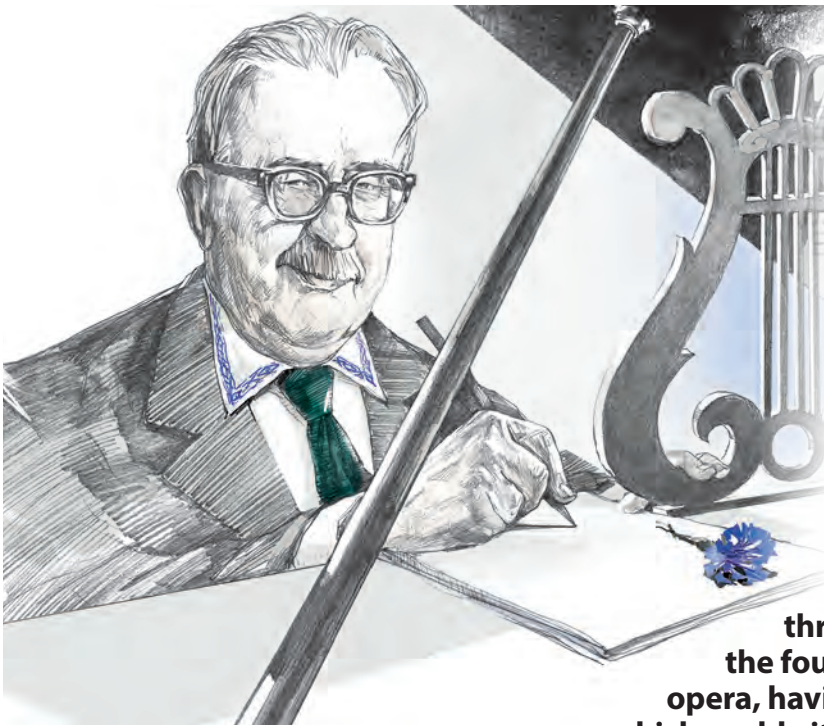
For 2024, the UN asked member states to chip in in the amount of \$3,590,000,000. Following the logic of the organisation's expenses, if not this year, then in 2025, expenses could grow to \$4 billion per year.

And what do we get in the whole world for that kind of money? Well, we have nothing. There are more and more wars on the planet, children still die from hunger and disease, education and medical care remain an unattainable luxury in many regions of the world. And the organisation that was created to combat

all this is only engaged in the distribution of humanitarian aid.

True, sometimes humanitarian actions look more like major economic scams under the guise of the UN. Suffice it to recall the Black Sea Initiative, which was presented to the world as a 'Feed the hungry in Africa and Asia' operation, but turned into an outright resale of Ukrainian grain to wealthy European reseller countries...

Isn't the hub for distributing humanitarian aid too expensive? And in general, does the world need a bureaucratic monster that annually devours the budget of a small country and ceased to perform its functions several decades ago? Isn't it time to think about these questions?



Unfinished melody

In memory of composer Yevgeny Tikotsky

The fate of Yevgeny Tikotsky is a unique monument to the history of the twentieth century, with all its grandiose ups and deep faults, artillery cannonade and triumphant melodies of Victory. He, a nobleman, the son of a rear admiral, who seemed destined for a completely different life, exchanged brilliant St. Petersburg for modest Bobruisk, went through two world wars, became a musical classic, people's artist, the founder of the Belarusian school of composition and national opera, having experienced and having survived all the zigzags of the era, which could either lift to the top or easily scatter any destiny into dust...

By Irina Ovsepyan

According to various sources, Yevgeny Tikotsky was born into a noble family on December 25th or 26th, 1893, in St. Petersburg. His father Karl Tikotsky was a military sailor, commander of the cruiser Africa, squadron battleships Gangut and Poltava, rear admiral, and later vice admiral, first mayor of the Black Sea city of Nikolaev. The family was not wealthy, but like any young man of the noble class, Yevgeny Tikotsky studied at the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum and also received an excellent education at home, which included the ability to play music — his father himself was a good cellist and flautist. The boy's extraordinary talent manifested itself very early, but, of course, a career as a professional musician for the son of a nobleman and a high military rank was nonsense at that time. Therefore, to comprehend science, the young scion of the Tikotsky family, at the insistence of his father, went to the St. Petersburg Bekhterev Psychoneurological Research Institute: medicine at the turn of the century was experiencing a period of rapid development and, without exaggeration, fateful discoveries — a worthy path for a young man from a worthy family. True, at the same time, Yevgeny negotiated for himself the right to study music at a private educational institution. He tried to create his own works under the influence of his friend, a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Vladimir Deshevov, a future pioneer of the Soviet school of composition. He started with piano pieces and arrangements of folk songs, but for many years he cherished the dream of someday composing an opera. True, he had to comprehend the basics

of composition on his own. But during the medical course, Tikotsky met his future wife Maria Sergievskaya, who throughout her life walked side by side with him, accompanying her husband even on the fronts of the World War I.

In 1915, Yevgeny went to the front. In 1916 he took part in the Brusilov's breakthrough. After the revolution, he remained in the cadres of the Red Army, clearing Belarus of White Poles. Rogachev, Mogilev, Pukhovichi, Bobruisk, Brest — how many kilometres did he walk across Belarusian land in a soldier's overcoat? But even then, in rare moments of rest, there was energy for music: playing the piano in clubs, amateur performances, improving his compositional talents — composing musical scores for performances of the amateur army theatre. The Battle of Warsaw, a wound in the neck, which had to be treated for a long time... After returning from the campaign, Tikotsky ended up in Bobruisk, where he was demobilised, deciding not to return to Petrograd, but to settle in Belarus and finally seriously take up what he loved — music. He lived here for 14 long years,

“Bobruisk, where I came with the Red Army, and through it all of Belarus, became my second homeland. Here I plunged into Belarusian reality for the first time and soon fell deeply in love with Belarusian nature and its people.”

It was then that he became acquainted with Belarusian folk songs — and filled his first symphony with national melodies. He communicated with the local intelligentsia, becoming close friends with the writer Mikhas Lynkov. He taught at a music

school (today it bears his name), nurturing young talents, including teaching the future classic of composition Vladimir Olovnikov. In 1934, Tikotsky received an offer to work at the Belarusian Radio, composing music for broadcasts, creating vocal and choral works. Of course, he is happy to move to Minsk — he is attracted by the breadth of creative opportunities. The beginning of his long-term collaboration with the Kupala Theatre (Tikotsky composed music for a total of 25 performances) and other theatre troupes of the Belarusian capital dates back to the same period.

In 1939, he wrote the *Mikhas Podgorny* opera, taking as a co-author the poet Petrus Brovka, who



The Alesya opera became a real wartime sensation

acted as a librettist. This is the first national performance of the Bolshoi Theatre of the BSSR — a folk-heroic drama, in which the magnificent Larisa Alexandrovskaya shines in the role of Marysia in the very prime of her beauty and vocal talent.

Mikhas Podgorny makes a splash at the decade of Belarusian art in Moscow; Stalin himself was in the audience, who does not skimp on applause, and then on awards:

Tikotsky returns from the Kremlin as an Honoured Artist of the BSSR, Alexandrovskaya — People's Artist of the Republic.

The peaceful course of life is again interrupted by the Great Patriotic War. She overtakes the composer in Crimea, where he went on a creative business trip, planning to write the ballet *Bela* based on Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time*. He is trying to return home, but Belarus is already occupied, there is only one way — to evacuation. First to Ufa, then to Nizhny Novgorod, knowing nothing about the fate of his wife and children who remained in devastated Minsk, captured by the Nazis.

The composer was already approaching fifty, his health left much to be desired — the road to the front was closed for him. They say that he turned grey overnight from grief — just like the soldiers who miraculously emerged alive from hopeless battles turned grey. Tikotsky had no information about his family or loved ones for several more years.

From evacuation he was called to Moscow — the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, under which Panteleimon Ponomarenko launched the broadest cultural and ideological activities, recruiting artists, writers and musicians, set the task: we need an opera that will glorify the feat of the Belarusian partisans. Tikotsky gets to work, again involving Petrus Brovka as a librettist. The evacuated troupe of the Bolshoi Theatre of the BSSR lives in Gorky, and the composer creates his opera *Alesya*, seeing Larisa Alexandrovskaya in the title role of the heroic partisan. The

famous director Boris Pokrovsky, who was also evacuated to these parts, undertakes to stage the work.

And at this time, a whole special operation is secretly unfolding to rescue the Tikotsky family from the occupied territory: Panteleimon Ponomarenko has never been anyone, but a cracker, insensitive to the misfortune of others. And while Tikotsky served his homeland in the field of music, creating a grandiose work that would glorify the partisans, the Minsk underground secretly took his wife and children out of the city, who were hidden in the forests for six months in one of the partisan detachments. And then there was a plane that broke through the front line and took the composer's family to Moscow...

The premiere of the Alesya opera took place in 1944 in liberated Minsk. The city was in ruins, the opera house was almost completely destroyed, so the performance was hosted by the House of the Red Army.

The *Alesya* opera became a real sensation during the war. The triumph also lay in the fact that, like Dmitry Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony, Yevgeny Tikotsky's opera was written in a warring country — and nothing like it had been created in Western art. The play was performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre for many years. In 1955, *Alesya* in a new edition and with an updated cast went to conquer Moscow for the next decade of Belarusian art — from there the composer returned with the title of People's Artist of the USSR. In 1968, the next edition of *Alesya* entitled *Girl from Polesie* received the State Prize of the BSSR.

Yevgeny Tikotsky left a great creative legacy: six symphonies, operas, concerts, symphonic poems, choirs, music for films and plays, many songs... He headed both the Belarusian State Philharmonic Society and the Union of Composers of the BSSR, taught for many years, was a deputy of the Supreme Council, but, despite to the social load, he continued to compose. He said, “I am a happy person: I don't know what boredom, insomnia and headaches are.”

So he left, not having time to finish his last opera, Anna Gromova... Not a day without a note, until his last breath.



Children's school No. 1 in Bobruisk is named after the composer Yevgeny Tikotsky



Daya Titova

Photo of the week

The series of winter holidays continues with Epiphany, which is accompanied by a long-standing folk tradition of plunging into an ice hole in any frost. In the photo: at the Tsnyanskoye water reservoir

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

On January 11th, 1959, the Minsk Refrigerator Plant, an enterprise famous throughout the Soviet Union, was founded on the basis of workshops for the production of household goods. In 1962, the then revolutionary Minsk-1 rolled off the assembly line. The model was designed to be built into a kitchen table. Minsk-1 was in great demand not only in the USSR. It was highly praised in Sweden, England, France, Norway, Finland and other countries.



On January 14th, 1948, Valery Kharlamov was born in Moscow — one of the best forwards in the history of world hockey, two-time Olympic champion and eight-time world champion. In October 1968, Valery Kharlamov, as part of CSKA, first entered the team with Boris Mikhailov and Vladimir Petrov in a match against Torpedo Gorky. Subsequently, it was this trio of attackers (they also played in this combination in the USSR national team) that became the strongest in the history of world hockey.



January 14th is Old New Year — a rare historical phenomenon, an additional

holiday that resulted from a change in chronology. Due to the discrepancy between the Julian (or otherwise Old Style calendar) and the Gregorian calendar, a number of countries celebrate two 'New Years' — according to the Old and New Styles. The divergence of calendars in the 20th and 21st centuries is 13 days. Thus, on the night of January 13th–14th, everyone can afford to 'pre-celebrate' their most favorite holiday.



On January 14th, 1939, Vasily Sharangovich was born (1939-2021), a Belarusian graphic artist, professor, Honoured Artist of Belarus, People's Artist of Belarus. He worked in the field of book and easel graphics. Designed the books *New Land* by Y.Kolas, *My Belarus* by T.Khadkevich, *The Nightingale* by Z.Byadulya, *Forty-Third* by I.Naumenko and others.



On January 14th–15th, 1969, the Soyuz-4 and Soyuz-5 spacecraft were launched into low-Earth orbits. The world's first experimental orbital station was created by docking spacecraft.



On January 15th, 1909, Yefim Fomin was born, one of the leaders of the defence of the Brest Fortress. On June 22nd, 1941, he organised and led the defence near the Kholm Gate of the citadel, and from June 24th — deputy commander of the combined combat group of the fortress defenders. The seriously wounded Fomin was captured and shot by the Nazis.



On January 16th, 1919, Vladimir Olovnikov (1919-1996) was born, a Belarusian composer, Honoured Artist of Belarus, People's Artist of Belarus, professor. He is the author of *Partisan True Story*, *Songs of Peace*, *Partisan Songs*, *Naroch Lake* symphonic works, chamber instrumental and vocal music, choirs, romances, well-known songs *My Dear Motherland*, *Forest Song*, *Somewhere in the Village* and others. He wrote music for children, for plays and films.



January 16th is World Beatles Day. On January 16th, 1957, The Cavern Club opened in Liverpool, where the then-unknown young musicians John Lennon, Paul



McCartney and George Harrison began their path to fame. A few years later, they were joined by Ringo Starr. The group received worldwide recognition in 1963 after the release of the single *Please Please Me*. From that moment on, a madness began on the planet, called Beatlemania. According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, The Beatles are number one on the list of the greatest artists of all time.



January 17th is Kid Inventors' Day. As it turned out, there are a great many children's inventions — water skis, fur headphones, popsicles on a stick, Braille, the Alaska flag, a trampoline, fingerless gloves, a paper bag with a square bottom, a calculator — all this was brought into our lives by the brilliant minds of young inventors.

On January 17th, 1999, the Bezdezh Phartushok Museum of Folks Arts was opened in the village of Bezdezh, Drogichin District, Brest Region. The exhibition is located in 6 halls. A wealth of weaving and embroidery material from craftswomen from Bezdezh and surrounding villages has been collected. The main place in the exhibition is occupied by aprons.

