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INTERNATIONAL

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Harvest time. Staritsa-Agro JSC fields

## Bread season

It's really hot in our 'golden fields' these days. Farmers face a paramount task: to harvest all grains, with not a single corn lost. Although industrial and scientific achievements of civilisation are at hand to help them, the grain-growers' work still remains one the most stressful and difficult.

The cold spring, extreme overwatering of the soil in May and high temperatures in June-July fairly stretched the nerves of agricultural workers but it's all in vain: the main thing is to approach the matter wisely. This year, the harvest is expected to be rich and, by now, about 5m tonnes of grain have already been harvested.

Each area has its own leaders: some have harvested more while others boast a greater crop yield. However, all — from night to morning — continue working for a common loaf, not slowing down the pace and quality of work.

Belarus will have its own bread — as always happens. The country will feed its own people and others — to their hearts' desire.



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# Dialogue with

By Varvara Morozova

Aleksandr Lukashenko set the tone for the meeting at its start,

**“Belarus is now the focus of attention for the whole world and you know just as well as me how and why this has happened. I note that it’s not of our own making. We’ve had a difficult year.”**

According to the President, much of what has been happening in Belarus recently has been deliberately distorted and even turned upside down. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that digital dictatorship has long taken the place of democracy in the modern world, “Blatant lies, hype, hate, bullying, trolling and other communication innovations rule this world. Today they create a negative emotional background in society or, as you say, information noise. The saddest thing is that this artificial virtual world affects the adoption of real fundamental political decisions in the international arena.”

The President urged the people who form public opinion to comply with professional ethics,

**“Today, despite all the negative experience of the past, I say that the only antidote against information poison in the form of fake news is the truth alone.”**

The Head of State said that Belarus has withstood a serious test for national unity and we have done everything to pass this period in our newest history with dignity, “We have people who are educated, thinking critically, committed to the interests of sovereign Belarus. There is a general understanding that in terms of national interests we are all looking in the same direction: that of the state.”



2021 was declared the Year of People’s Unity since Belarusians managed to keep the country intact in the fight for their historical choice and for their future. The President stressed that this would not have been possible without the consolidation of society in the desire to ensure peace in their native land.

## On economic growth and the fight against the pandemic

During the pandemic, our country made the right choice — not to close the country and stop its economy, reminded the Head of State.

Aleksandr Lukashenko added that Belarus was the only country which invited the WHO representatives to open the doors of all the healthcare institutions. Following the results of that visit, the WHO specialists — albeit privately — admitted to themselves that it’s necessary to talk about how medical care is organised in Belarus in the West, so that those who criticise the Presi-



**Amendments to the Constitution, the work of the economy, Belarus’ relations with its neighbours, the response to the sanctions policy, the situation on the border with Lithuania and dozens of other topical issues were high on the agenda of the Big Conversation with the President which brought together almost three hundred representatives of the public, expert and media community from 12 countries, including Belarus. The detailed conversation about the most important matters for the state and its people lasted more than eight hours.**

dent can hear about it: this is because the level of treatment and security to combat COVID in Belarus is unprecedented.

The President considers the fact that Belarusians did not stop the work of the national economy to be the basis for the stable development of the Belarusian economy in the first half of the year. Aleksandr Lukashenko added that, in 2020, GDP decline was huge in some countries, including in the leading states. He said, “We only lost 0.1 or 0.2 percent last year against the

**“...? No. All these were brought there. There was no ‘repression’ when they had come there with those weapons. Why did they bring sharp instruments, knives and other explosives to peaceful campaigns? This is because there was nothing peaceful about their actions.”**

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Belarus responded to such events in a much more moderate way than, for example, the United States did to similar events. “How many people were thrown in jail after the Washington incident, a coup attempt? Will you tell us how many investigations were opened and how many people are in prison? You don’t know. In Belarus, any journalist will tell you: at least five hundred people are now in prison, they are behind bars according to the law. You cannot break into the US Parliament. They did it, they got it,” he said. “What do you want to punish us for? For defending ourselves without shooting women in the head? As for peaceful protests, we saw how peaceful they were. We will show you the footage of how they attacked the riot police and others. In two days, police officers suffered 11 serious injuries. We saw this. Watch this footage online. Tell me, did we unleash this massacre? Did I need a conflict? Quite the opposite, I was interested in peace and calm.”

The Head of State noted that the unauthorised protests were sponsored by the West. “You started this carnage. You attempted a coup d’état before the election results were announced. You came with weapons and with support from abroad. This is a terrible crime under the Constitution of any country. For the first three days, our law enforcement tried to bring back order on the streets by peaceful means only, but when I saw violence against the law enforcement, I gave a command to put everyone in their place without shooting them.”

## On the Wagner Group private military company

Aleksandr Lukashenko told those present of the details of last year’s situation with the detention of 32 militants of the Wagner Group private military company. According to him, when this group arrived in Bela-

rus, the special services were instructed to take control of the situation. “They did not commit any illegal actions. In the evening, they stayed at a hotel and we kept watching over them. By the night, they moved to another hotel and then unclear actions were seen. It was desirable to see what they would do. By all the signs, it was clear that these people were connected with the special services and it was no coincidence that they were here. We were afraid that they might commit a terrorist attack,” the President commented.

The Head of State added that, late in the evening, the Chairman of the State Security Committee called him to inform him that there was no guarantee that the group would not disperse around the country. “I then decided to detain and isolate them all. I acted absolutely honestly. Ukrainians began to demand the extradition of the group to Ukraine. Russians asked us not to do this, since there were Russian citizens among them. I made a wise decision: I instructed the Prosecutor General’s Office to invite the prosecutors general of Ukraine and Russia to the country for negotiations... No one came,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Then the Belarusian leader invited his eldest son and asked him to meet the detained people and ask where they wanted to go. He added, “Everyone who came asked to go to Russia — including citizens of Ukraine. I asked my son to feed them, take a bus and take them to Smolensk. On the way, they called someone in Russia and were met at the border. At the border one of them asked whether they could come to Belarus again and Viktor said that the President did not forbid them from entering Belarus. We treated them humanely and some of them came to the country with their wives — as tourists.”

## On relations with Russia

Belarus has never been against the closest alliance with Russia, but any union should rely on uniform terms and equality. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that equal rights for ordinary citizens of the two countries have been largely ensured, “But how can two countries integrate if prices for natural gas differ by as much as two to three times? Some individuals make hints that they understand the integration as the incorporation of Belarus into Russia.

**“Our people greatly value the fact that, after many centuries, we have become sovereign and independent. When I hear these hints that Belarus will become part of Russia, I ask the question of whether Russia needs another headache? No, and the Russian President understands this.”**

The President described how Belarus is in a dialogue with Russia in order to get S-400 air defence systems delivered to Belarus. “The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, has been asked to allow us to buy them at a bulk price, on credit. I’m convinced we will get these systems.”

Dwelling on the matter of improving the military hardware stock, Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked, “In the past, we bet on the Tor-M2 air defence missile systems. They are good weapons. We know how to use them. We also know how to upgrade, restore, and repair them because everything wears out with time. We have the relevant equipment, a plant for repairing armoured vehicles, and several private enterprises.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also commented on reasons for the possible deployment of Russian troops in Bela-

previous year if I’m not mistaken. So, we had a really high level last year. We’ve gained about 3.5 percent on top of that since then. These are good figures for us. It is understandable that everything that is happening is largely determined by external and internal factors.

**“Prices for food and other commodities have increased considerably on foreign markets. Since we didn’t shut down last year, we had enough merchandise to sell it at a high price. This is why we’ve had a good result — including a foreign trade surplus.”**

## On street protests

The President of Belarus stressed that last year’s mass actions in the country were not peaceful and were planned in advance,

**“What kind of peaceful actions were they — with explosions, fire-crackers and so on? It was obvious where they were coming from. Would you say that was a response to ‘repression’?”**

# no closed topics



rus, “If necessary, it will not be just a base here: all the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation will be deployed here. In what conditions? If a new world war is imminent.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that multiple NATO bases are located in countries of the European Union and pro-Western countries, some of them store nuclear

spreading fake news about it, even started accusing high-ranking people in Belarus. It has to be sorted out. If you make any accusations against us, then provide facts.”

The President also spoke of the involvement of Ukraine’s official authorities in the transfer of weapons to Belarus. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he has always supported Ukraine and the

## On relations with the United States

Aleksandr Lukashenko agreed to be interviewed by American CNN whose representative was present at the press conference. “I am not ruling it out,” he said. “Yet I have one condition: no editing. These are my terms. You can negotiate all the rest with my press secretary.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also invited CNN journalists, who recently released a fake story about a camp for political prisoners near Minsk, to visit the area and see the place for what it is. This is an ordinary military unit, which American journalists made into a place of imprisonment for some reason.

In his talk to the CNN journalist, the Head of State rejected accusations of repression, “It is very simple for me to talk to Americans. Can you tell me please (I am answering your question): why did you [in the USA] shoot a girl who had participated in wars in defence of the United States of America and its interests, in the Congress? After this, the question about my repressions of the population just fades away. You are accustomed to thinking you are the top dog and can do anything. How many people have you jailed after events in the Congress? Was it legal when you stomped all over the legally elected President (I mean Trump), removed him from mass media, from YouTube and the rest, and installed your own President?”

## On relations with Poland

Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke in favour of building normal relations with Poland. Answering the question of a Polish newspaper journalist on what he is ready to do to improve Belarusian-Polish relations, the President said, “I did everything to ensure good relations with Poland. You decided to go a different way and did everything the CIA told you to do. Therefore, it is you who should think about what to do. I’m ready for anything, I mean any talks, and they are underway.”

The Head of State noted that even now contacts are continuing with representatives of Poland at various levels, in particular, on humanitarian issues. “We are conducting this dialogue quietly. We see that the Polish government realised what they got them-

selves into. We, Poles and Belarusians, are smart people and we need to have normal relations,” the President said.

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, there are examples of Poland’s successful business in Belarus and Polish businessmen are ready to continue to work here and invest in the country.

The road to a dialogue through preconditions is impossible, the President is convinced. “You are not in the situation to impose any conditions. Sooner or later, we will find a common ground,” he added.

## On threats from the West

Aleksandr Lukashenko is not afraid of threats from the West and attempts to intimidate him with an international tribunal. “They are trying to intimidate me or really bring me to an international tribunal, so that I will falter. I will answer: guys, I’ve lived my life. I have done something in this life. Therefore, to intimidate me with a tribunal, with a firing squad... Actually, it’s pointless to scare me with this,” he said.

The Head of State recalled that he had recently signed a decree for ‘in case’. It envisages that, in the event of the President’s death, powers will pass to the Security Council,

**“They will never take us with their bare hands again. Even more so, we have a tough military-political alliance with Russia, here we do not retreat an inch anywhere, we do not even have any disputes. They are rightly afraid of Lukashenko and Putin. They are doing the right thing; they should be afraid. We are not cowards. This is not so much our personal interest but the interests of our peoples.”**

Addressing the western countries which are imposing sanctions against Belarus, the Head of State said, “It’s necessary to calm down, come to your senses and think about how we can get out of this situation. You will unleash the third World War! There will be no winners in it, and if there will — those will be not you. Therefore, calm down — and let’s sit down at the negotiating table while we are still patiently enduring all this and start talking about how to get out of this situation. If not, we will get so bogged down that there will be no way back. This is my advice to you!”



weapons. They will be put on combat alert if the slightest danger is present. However, if the deployment of Russian military bases in Belarus is contemplated, the West starts worrying.

## On relations with Ukraine

Aleksandr Lukashenko believes Belarusian-Ukrainian political relations are at their lowest point. “Our relations should not be ruined with different fake stories and unpleasantness,” he stressed.

As an example of misinformation, the President mentioned the story with the head of the Belarusian House in Ukraine, Vitaly Shishov, who was found hanged, and the accusations against Belarus and its alleged involvement in it. “He was in Ukraine and he was supported by the security services of Ukraine. He either hanged himself or was hanged in your country. Please carry out the investigation and then answer who hanged the citizen of Belarus,” the President emphasised. In his words, even US mass media criticised Ukraine for this approach, “We were not trying to fuel tensions around it. But mass media started

Ukrainian authorities and even understands why they are taking unfriendly steps towards Belarus to please the West.

Belarusians are the people Ukraine should be afraid of least of all. “We will never do bad things to Ukraine if you don’t come into our land bearing weapons first,” stressed the President, also warning Ukraine against possible attempts to resolve the crisis in Donbass by force. He said, “If you dare to do this with the support of third countries, I will never be on your side.

***If you lock horns with Russia again in Donbass, I will be between you. This is a position I have long taken — even if it would be life-threatening. But I’m sure neither the first option nor the second one is feasible. It won’t happen since there are enough reasonable people in Ukraine. However strong the Ukrainian army is, any attempt to resolve the crisis by force will end in tragedy for Ukraine. I beg you to not even consider this option. In no case plan to solve this issue by force.”***



# Close-up inhumanity

**Lithuania has begun to kill migrants, to kill on a national basis, to kill those who came for help, to kill those who cannot stand up for themselves. Lithuanian politicians have stated that 'they allowed their border guards to return migrants to the territory of Belarus with the use of force'. On August 4th, the Lithuanian fascists returned the first corpse. They are outside the law. They violated all moral human commandments and international principles. They turned EU migration policy inside out. They used 'democratic' clubs and bullets. Lithuania has staged a real genocide.**

Shocking news about the death of an Iraqi refugee — forced out by the Lithuanian authorities — instantly flew around the news agency feeds. “At night, according to information from local residents, a man of non-Slavic appearance was found near the Belarusian-Lithuanian border in the area of the village of Benyakoni. Outwardly, his condition was assessed as very serious. Belarusian border guards provided first aid on the spot, but, despite this, the man died,” BelTA learnt with reference to the State Border Committee.

The murder of an Iraqi refugee who was returning from Lithuania was immediately reported to the President. The reaction was immediate. The Investigative Committee, under the control of the Prosecutor’s General Office, was instructed to immediately begin an investigation and interview local residents (it was they who reported the beaten man, who later died in the arms of the border guards). The task was also set to find the relatives of the deceased, issue visas, provide all assistance upon arrival in Belarus to pick up the body. The investigation and the situation as a whole are under the control of the Head of State.

Later, details of the incident became known, which were reported to journalists by the head of the Benyakoni frontier post, Maksim Khvalko. Information about the unknown person arrived at the frontier post on August 3rd, at about 22:00. A local resident said that a man was moving in the area of the Yetkishki settlement towards the Voronovka settlement. “To check the information, I moved in this direction together with the squad. At about 23:00, a man was found in a field 150 metres from the road. He was in a semi-recumbent state. I received no clear answers to the questions of who you are and what you are doing here. The man was coughing and gasping for breath,” said Maksim Khvalko.

The man’s condition worsened. He threw himself over on one side. The border guards tried to give him first aid, and also called an ambulance, as a pulse could not be felt. The medics arrived within ten minutes and ascertained the death of the man.

Meanwhile, an official representative of the State Border Committee, Anton Bychkovsky, said that at the site of the Lida border detachment, directly on the border line, five Iraqi citizens were identified on August 4th who were forcibly expelled by

Since the beginning of the year, almost four thousand illegal migrants have been detained in Lithuania, which is **50 times more** than in the entire last year. Two thirds of them are Iraqi citizens. In total, by the end of the year, there may be **10,000 refugees** in Lithuania.

the neighbouring party to Belarus: ‘The foreigners had external signs of violence from the use of firearms and traces from service dog bites’. First aid was provided to the injured, after which they were taken to medical institutions.

The return of asylum seekers doesn’t agree either with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, or the EU Charter of Fundamental Human Rights, or other human rights instruments. This was stated by the representative of the Lithuanian Red Cross Eglė Samuchovaitė, Delfi reports.

The representative of the Lithuanian Red Cross noted that ‘vulnerable’ people are not allowed into the country. “Official information from the Department of Statistics shows that in



**Pictures of wounded refugees shot by the Lithuanian security forces. They walked across the border in the same group as the deceased Iraqi citizen.**

the flow of migrants, almost a quarter are minors and almost a third are women... Their safety may be at risk,” she said.

Last week, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Lithuania, Agnė Bilotaitė, adopted an order, according to which the departments — providing and helping to ensure the protection of the state border — are instructed to ensure that persons cross the external land border only through border control points. Those doing this in other places should not be allowed into the country. To ensure this, officials are allowed to use psychological pressure and physical force against illegal migrants. What this means and what the consequences may be is shown by the incident on the

Lithuanian border.

In the European Union, migrants are treated like cattle, being beaten and deprived of normal human conditions. The State Secretary of the Security Council, Aleksandr Volfovich, drew attention to these facts in an interview with journalists, “Unfortunately, they are treated like cattle in Europe, as once in concentration camps, prisoners of war were treated. They are driven into closed areas, surrounded by barbed wire, kept in inhuman conditions. They suffer from lack of water, food and other normal common human basic needs. They are doused with water cannons and gassed so that people who are beginning to be indignant become silent.”

## The state and people under reliable protection

**The situation on the border, Lithuania’s actions regarding refugees and the President’s reaction were among the key points of the recent meeting with the Head of State**

The situation on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border and Lithuania’s actions in relation to an increased flow of migrants are the number one topic on the Belarusian agenda. It was also discussed recently at a meeting with the President. Aleksandr Lukashenko voiced his instructions: to strengthen work on the protection of the state border and prevent its violation, **“From now on, not a single person should enter the territory of Belarus from a neighbouring side — whether from the south or from the west... Every metre of the border must be secured.”**

Below are the five key quotes from the Head of State:

- I’ve invited the leadership of almost all the main law enforcement agencies to discuss the situation that is developing not only on the western and partly southern border of Belarus, but also to discuss the issue of what is happening around Belarus, and first of all with regard to the policy of the North Atlantic Bloc of NATO in the

western direction. In this context, it is very important to hear your point of view on the position of our fraternal Ukraine. Its people are close and dear to us but the leadership of Ukraine — while pursuing an anti-people policy there — has focused on confrontation. We are not speaking of where they are moving — to the West, to the East, to the South; it doesn’t matter. It’s up to them to decide. However, their policy is based on confrontation which is an additional threat that we have not faced previously.

- It was not for nothing that we invested huge funds in the border troops and in our law enforcement agencies in general. **Our people should feel secure. They should know that there are men who are ready to protect them.**

- The recent events on our borders with Lithuania and Latvia are alarming — not so much with Latvia, but with Lithuania and even Poland. I think that if we compare all the factors that we have been observing

recently, we can see that having implemented seven or eight stages of the so-called ‘colour revolution’, they have nothing left. **Therefore, they have returned to long-tested tactics — blackmail, pressure. They have already started issuing threats of force. Of special note are their threats that they will allegedly concentrate several hundred, and maybe even a thousand illegal migrants at checkpoints (official checkpoints between, say, Lithuania and Belarus) and force them out into the territory of Belarus at gunpoint...** God forbid they will begin to implement the tactics of forcing out the people they called there through official checkpoints. You know the consequences, so do they. We have warned them, so let them think it over. The ball is in their court. To go so far as to kill people and throw them half-dead on our territory is what even the fascists failed to do. They are the Nazis — and that’s all that can be said about them...

- They have passed a law enabling them to

shoot, beat and poison migrants, which is outrageous. Nevertheless, it is their right, they’ve showed their true face. We should be primarily concerned with our border.

- You understand, according to our laws, to protect the border [in a similar situation — editor’s remark] poses a threat of conflict for us since we cannot allow the violation of the state border. Therefore, openly speaking, a very dangerous situation is developing. However, it would be wrong to say that we did not foresee and anticipate this. At the time, we (and myself, first of all) warned you to be very attentive in this regard to our friends and neighbours, especially in the West.

- ▶ A day later, an official representative of the State Border Committee, Anton Bychkovsky, announced that — by order of the Head of State — the protection of the state border had been strengthened. “The border service agencies have used all the necessary forces and means to prevent illegal crossing of the border of the Republic of Belarus,” he said.

**Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by**

The President has signed Decree No. 292 which lays down the programme of Belarus' socio-economic development for 2021-2025: its main provisions were approved by the 6th Belarusian People's Congress. The document outlines the goals, tasks, priority directions of socio-economic development of the country for the five-year period, measures for their implementation, target indicators for the development of industries, economic spheres and regions, as well as expected results. The key task of the programme is to ensure stability in society and increase the well-being of citizens through modernisation of the economy, increase of social capital, creation of comfortable conditions for people's life, work and self-realisation. Its implementation is to result in a qualitatively new level of economic development of the state and, accordingly, the welfare and quality of life of people. Experts told us more about how the intended goals are planned to be achieved.

# Drivers of development



By Vladislav Sychevich

The programme of Belarus' socio-economic development for 2021-2025 approved by the President will become a blueprint for the next five years not only for civil servants but also for economists, experts and all those who care about the future of the Republic. Briefly, Belarus' development will be based on such priorities as happy families, strong regions, intellectual country and state as a partner. They are aimed at strengthening mutual trust between the state and society, the state and its citizens, the state and businesses. The solution of the most topical issues for each citizen is envisaged. These are income, employment, affordable housing, safe transport, affordable and high-tech health-care services, high-quality education, and

regional development. The basis for the well-being of people will be an increase in income by more than 20 percent, as noted by the Deputy Economy Minister, Dmitry Yaroshevich.

"The programme-2025 is a key strategic document prepared to develop and detail the main provisions approved by the 6th Belarusian People's Congress in February. It is based on the collective work of state agencies, the expert community, scientists and business for the sake of the country's future," he said.

Structurally, the programme consists of four key blocks: strengthening economic potential and digital transformation, improving the quality of life of the population, regional development and creating a favourable regulatory environment.

The approved document contains only

specific tasks and ways to solve them. Its results are a mirror of the country's future. The current situation requires comprehensive, thoughtful and co-ordinated actions for the state and society. The comprehensive message of the programme-2025 is to maintain the course of development based on national interests. At the same time, the development strategy focusing on the struggle for foreign markets is decisive. Our task is to increase the presence and recognition of the Belarusian brand with a high quality mark in the world.

High-tech investments in the country as a region with the most favourable conditions for doing business and working as an investor will facilitate the achievement of the goal and this will become the key to high quality economic growth and, as a result, a high standard of living for people.

"Currently, the forecast for the next year is being developed. And I can say with confidence that the key indicator — economic growth — already shows the real prerequisites for the successful implementation of at least the first two starting years of the five-year plan: to grow by 1.8 percent this year and by 2.9 percent next year. The institutional foundations that we are working on today (the launch of a new investment cycle, conditions for a favourable business environment, improvement of the efficiency of the public sector, development of digitalisation, and others) will become the basis for the successful implementation of the programme's goals after five years; GDP is expected to grow 1.2 times and salaries — 1.5-2 times," added Mr. Yaroshevich.

## Mirror of sociology

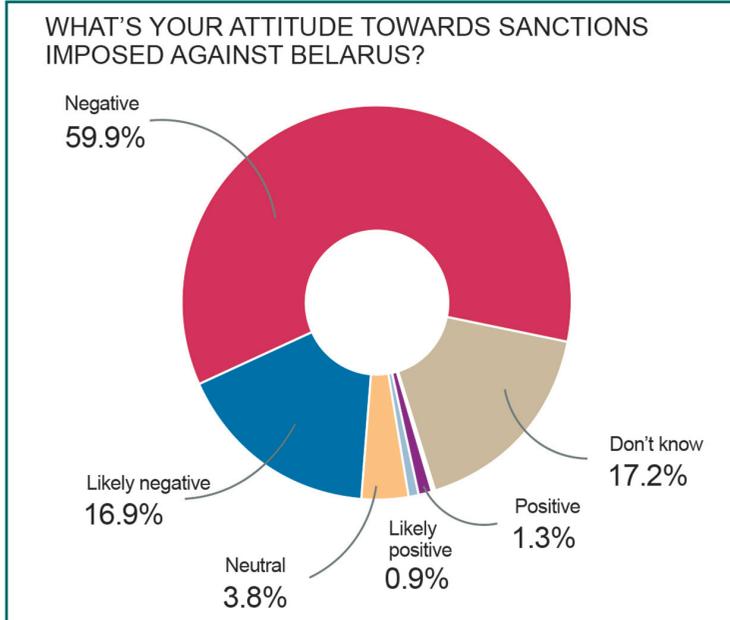
From the 5th to the 21st of July, 2021, the EcooM Analytical Centre - with the involvement of the Ukrainian Politics Foundation — conducted a Republican public opinion poll entitled *Social Thinking and Media Systems* at the request of the Second National TV Channel CJSC

In the course of this large-scale work, 1,890 respondents were interviewed across 126 settlements of all regions of Belarus, categorised from 18 years old by sex, age, employment, type of settlement and region of residence. The statistical standard error does not exceed 2.5 percent. The Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre, Sergei Musienko, commented on the results for BelTA reporter.

"In my opinion, we received illustrative answers.

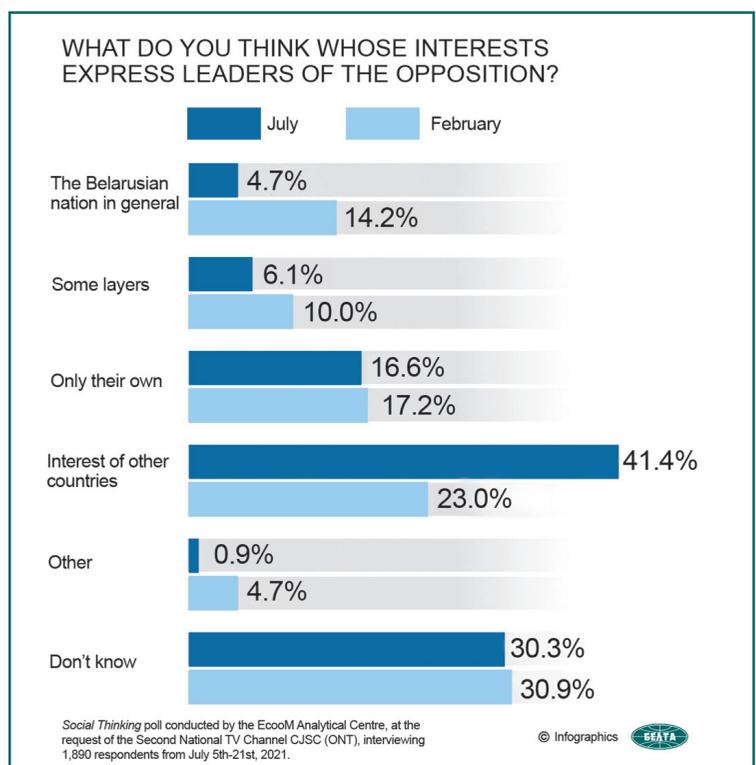
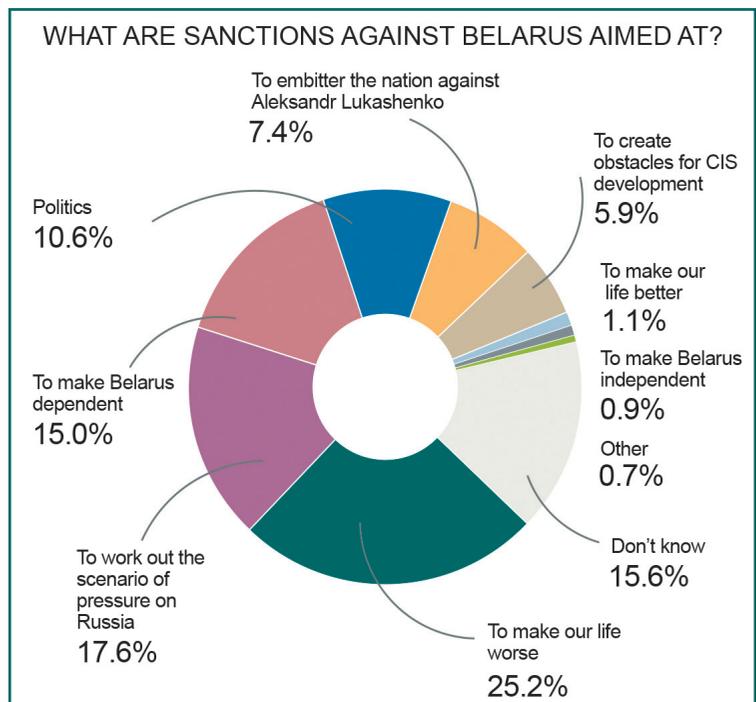
Only about 2 percent of people believe that the imposed sanctions will make our life better and Belarus independent.

The opposition itself (or what is left of it), which has the support of the West, does not hide the purpose of introducing these sanctions, it asks for them to be introduced in the interests of the 'customer'. We see the result: a quarter of the respondents understand that sanctions will make our life worse. A very high percentage of those polled believe that this is reducing pressure on Russia. However, the percentage of people who think that the goal is to embitter the nation against Lukashenko is less — 7.4 percent. Everyone understands who imposed the sanctions and why. Therefore, Aleksandr Lukashenko is mentioned here to a lesser extent," said Mr. Musienko.



"In total, 78 percent have a negative attitude. This is the price of the efforts of those people who are now shaking up society, demanding toughening up and making moves against us. That is, the people make a choice not in favour of sanctions."

Sergei Musienko added, "This is the first time we have encountered such a form as aviation sanctions. This applies to a larger category of people. For the first time in the history of Belarus, sanctions have been imposed against the entire nation."





# Interconnected by a single network

Modern messengers and communication services are increasingly becoming a tool for riots and enrichment

**Over the past decade, social networks have significantly changed the global information space. They are no longer just for personal or business communication and entertainment but sometimes take on completely different functions — acting as newsmakers, producing fakes or going into purely entertainment content. Online business also brings a good income. However, there is a dark side to this. In recent years, messengers and communication services are increasingly transforming into a tool for organising ‘colour revolutions’. They are used to shake up society and escalate the situation. Together with experts, we are investigating the trends of social network development.**

By Polina Konoga, Oleg Poleshchuk

### Questionable content

There are currently 4.2bn social network users around the world, with almost 4m in Belarus.

This figure is impressive and continues to increase every year — as well as the time spent by people on the Internet. Technologically, this sector is always changing: new communication forms appear — such as video calls, audio chats, streams...

*Our social network feed is becoming ‘smarter’, adapting to our preferences and habits. However, for the younger generation — who are growing up with gadgets in their hands — it is more natural and comfortable to scroll the news or simply pictures rather than to read serious analytics or books.*

Analysts say that this is the direction in which social networks will move: they are made so that we spend time on changing ourselves in line with the trends. Their goal is to create suitable conditions. However, these trends have their own side effect: the growth of second-rate content and ‘social media currency’, the appearance of fakes and distortion of the truth, the displacement of real communication and the increasing frequency of bots.

Some bloggers see social networks as a threat to traditional media but political scientist Andrei Lazutkin does not agree with this opinion, “An active use of messengers does not mean the replacement of traditional media. Rather, we are talking about a sharp expansion of the field for illegal activities. For example, Telegram was used for two reasons during the protests.” The expert explains that, firstly, it

was assumed that the messenger had some kind of protection and unique encryption. Initially, in Eastern Europe, it was actively used by online stores selling drugs, trafficking in child pornography and for other destructive purposes that require anonymity. Secondly, by 2019-2020, Telegram already had a relatively large audience that used it for ordinary communication so it was widely used, unlike specialised secure messengers. “This made it possible to create a number of channels that called for protest actions and — at the same time — could rely on a significant increase in the audience,” adds Mr. Lazutkin.

At the same time, TikTok was used much more actively in Russia during the actions in defence of Aleksei Navalny in the winter of 2021. Mr. Lazutkin explains, “There are different thoughts about the reasons for this, but it’s obvious that the main one is the age of the target audience which, figuratively speaking, is subject to abuse. TikTok is a teenage social network with an average user age of 13. It’s obvious that a 13-14-year-old who is accidentally involved in a protest and has received penalties will be radicalised and politicised and, by 2024 (Presidential elections in Russia), will already be an adult radical with the right to vote. Here is an example of how a protest audience is being modelled in advance, for years to come.”

**On the web**  
In other countries, as the expert notes, Facebook is used almost everywhere



for destabilisation: Myanmar, Cuba, Venezuela, the countries of the Arab arc. The main reason is that the popular network is outside national jurisdiction; in this respect, Facebook is universal.

Mr. Lazutkin comments, “At the same time, American law enforcement agencies — i.e. the National Security Agency — can legally obtain any information about any user of the American social network upon request. However, US actions are directed not only externally, it seems to us, but also at its internal voter. What is meant here is the processing of so-called big data and the creation of so-called ‘voter databases’.”

These databases are formed in the United States on the grounds of location, gender, religion, career and other factors. They’re subsequently used for political campaigning during elec-

tions, searching for supporters and other similar purposes. The expert adds,

*“We must understand that social networks are a universal tool, the main task of which is not to make ‘colour revolutions’ but primarily to earn money. These are actively used against us only because they are outside our jurisdiction, and we cannot influence their policy in any way.”*

The expert mentions China which has built a duplicate system of social networks that does not depend on the West in any way. It has also its own TikTok but it is not used to promote inflammatory behaviour, Navalny’s actions, the distribution of pornography or support for radical groups.

Why did only one-sided information reach the audience of social media for a long time? This is due, among other things, to the number of subscribers on particular sites, the expert explains,

*“The Telegram channels that set the tone in the ‘Belarusian Maidan’ — it turned out later — were inflated. This platform makes it possible to purchase so-called bots: by investing a certain sum of money, you can buy certain number of fake subscribers for yourself.”*

Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki, Instagram and Facebook are the most popular sites in our country, according to surveys conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. According to the Google Play app store, the most downloaded communication services among Belarusians are the TikTok video exchange platform and the Telegram messenger.

### FIGURES AND FACTS

**0** — in the period from 2020 to 2021, the number of users of social networks in Belarus has not changed while, in the period from April 2019 to January 2020, the number of users decreased by 400,000, or 9.3 percent.

**3.9 m** users of social networks were registered in Belarus in January 2021.

**41.3 percent** — the level of penetration of social networks in Belarus in January 2021.

**95.3 percent** — the share of Belarusians who use social networks via their mobile devices.

### 2021 TRENDS

An increasing number of older users are joining social networks.

A typical social media user now spends 2 hours and 25 minutes every day which is about one working day per week.

The number of social network users in the world has increased by more

than 13 percent over the past year and now accounts for 53.6 percent of the world’s population; one of key reasons for this is the isolation due to the coronavirus pandemic.

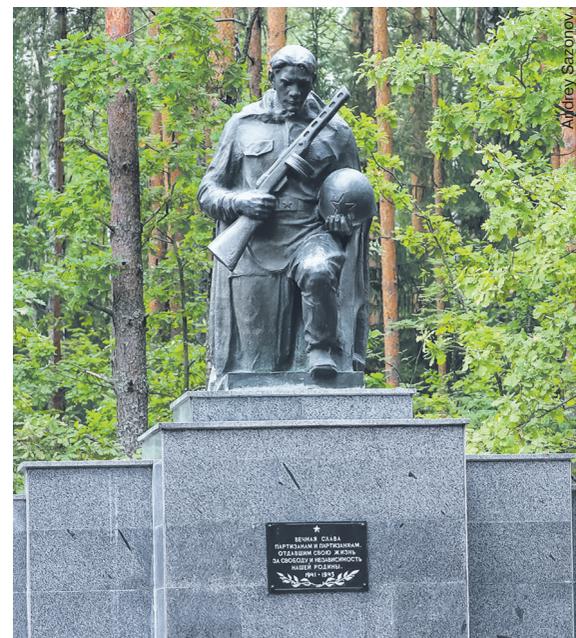
The popularity of social network search is growing currently, about 45 percent of global Internet users claim that they turn to social networks when they are looking for information about goods or services.

Source: Global Digital 2021

# Another holy place on the map

## Usakino Memorial Complex of Partisan Glory opened in the Klichev District after reconstruction

A symbol of courage and heroism — the Usakino Memorial Complex — was erected in 1985, on the eve of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Victory. During its existence, much has fallen into disrepair, and last year it was decided to restore the monument. The Mogilev Regional Executive Committee has developed a comprehensive reconstruction plan; builders and the public have joined in the restoration of the military memorial.



By Tatiana Bizyuk

The reconstruction took place in several stages. The memorial to the burnt villages of Vyazen and Selets was repaired. The foundations on which the memorial stones were installed had begun to deteriorate over time. They were completely replaced. The second point of the complex — the memorial at the partisan cemetery — has also noticeably improved. The wall bearing the names of the people killed in those places has been updated, and the approach towards it has been lined with new tiles. The eternal flame is now framed by a star on a pedestal. The monolith honouring the time the Mogilev Underground Party Committee spent in the Klichev partisan zone was also refurbished. The partisan camp now looks different.

The opening of the memorial was attended by representatives of the Belarus President Administration, the National Assembly, regional and district authorities, as well as the deputy corps and youth. They became participants of the requiem rally, laid flowers and wreaths at the places of partisan glory, thus honouring the memory of those who died during the Great Patriotic War.

The Head of the Belarus President Administration, Igor Sergeyenko, also took part in the opening of the memorial complex, “Literally every settlement of Belarus has monuments, obelisks, mass graves that remind us of the war, perpetuate the heroism of our grandparents and great-grandparents.

*Such memorials are sacred places for all Belarusians. After all, the memory of the past is a link with the present. We bow our heads to the heroes who sacrificed their lives for our independence and our victory, and thanks to whom we look confidently into the future. The heroic example of the fallen gives us strength to live.”*

Mr. Sergeyenko also noted, “Before the war, there were 46,000 residents in entire Klichev District, while during the war the partisan zone numbered 70,000 people. People lived here, fought bravely and won against all odds. It is difficult to imagine how hard the path to victory was. The Usakino swamps became a place of life and death for our compatriots. Representatives of 69 ethnicities fought here shoulder to shoulder. This fact is particularly important and symbolic in the Year of People’s Unity.”

This memorial combines items of both a monumental and popular demonstration nature. It consists of four sites: a memorial at the site of the destroyed and unrestored villages of Vyazen and Selets; a monolith in honour of time spent by the Mogilev Underground Party Committee in the Klichev partisan zone; a partisan

cemetery where more than 500 soldiers are buried in 18 mass graves; and a restored partisan camp.

“This land keeps voices from the past: a mother’s cry, children’s cries and deep fatherly grief. It was

not only reconstruction conducted here, but the memory was revived of the heroes who — sacrificing their lives — rebuffed the enemy,” said Leonid Zayats, the Chairman of the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee, speaking to the audience. “This is the history of our people, and no one will be able to rewrite it...”

*Our strength is in the historical memory. We must be united especially now, in this difficult time, when a hybrid war is unleashed against our state.”*



## The island of freedom behind enemy lines

By Aleksandr Nesterov

During the Great Patriotic War, the Usakino forests were the centre of the Klichev partisan zone — one of the largest in Belarus. It was also called the Small Soviet Land. It was here that the governing bodies of the region, Klichev and neighbouring districts, and the headquarters of the military-operational group were based.

The appearance of the Klichev partisan zone was preceded by a meeting under the leadership of Marshal Klim Voroshilov on July 1st, 1941, at the headquarters of the Western Front near Mogilev. There it was decided to organise sabotage groups, partisan detachments and send them to the rear of the enemy. However, the first to move into the Usakino forests was not a detachment, but a partisan group, which in just a week managed to establish contact with the patriots and soldiers who remained in the rear. A little later, five patriotic groups formed a detachment.

*By the end of 1941, seven fully-fledged partisan detachments were already operating in the Klichev Dis-*

*trict. In early January 1942, at a meeting of their leaders, it was decided to destroy all enemy garrisons on the territory of the Klichev District, which was soon done. In total, according to the surviving information, the partisan zone was defended by 18,000 people’s avengers, united in 5 brigades and 16 detachments.*

The partisans had their own printing house, which published underground newspapers: the regional *For Radzimu* (For Motherland), Klichev’s *Golas Partyzana* (Voice of the Partisan), as well as

the newspapers of the neighbouring districts. On April 3rd, 1942, at a meeting of the district’s communists in the village of Usakino, a resolution was adopted to restore Soviet power in the Klichev District. Residents of the neighbouring districts began to flock here in the hope of a speedy liberation from the occupiers. In early summer, a permanent aviation connection with the ‘mainland’ was established. In late 1942, the liberated territory was about 1,900 sq.km, and in early 1944 — 3,000sq.km, where more than 70,000 civilians lived!



The population supported the people’s avengers in every possible way: people took part in military operations, helped in collecting and repairing weapons, organising everyday life, and also providing the partisans with food, sheltering, collecting household items and caring for the wounded. In turn, under protection and with the help of partisans, the villagers sowed and harvested crops.

However, there were many bitter pages in the history of the Resistance. In August 1942, when the Klichev partisans were fighting under the blockade, the Nazis brutally dealt with the civilian population, burning 22 villages, including Vyazen and Selets, which were not revived after the war. The invaders drove 140 residents of these settlements to a pit in a field and shot them, and their houses were plundered and burned...

The invaders repeatedly tried to block and destroy partisans, but their attempts were not greatly successful. On the contrary, the people’s avengers fearlessly crushed the fascists until June 28th, 1944, on that day, partisan units joined forces with the advancing Red Army.

MEMORY

The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
August 12  
2021

7

# Economy: the forecast is positive

In six months, the country's GDP grew by 3.3 percent and experts assure us that this is naturally-determined growth

The forecasts of the World Bank and the IMF, international organisations who voiced opinions about the development of our country's economy, were pessimistic — to put it mildly. They predicted a significant drop in GDP. Our Government was more optimistic in its assessments and planned at least a slight increase. As the statistics show, from January-June 2021, Belarus' GDP grew by 3.3 percent against the same period in 2020. Experts state that there is nothing to be surprised at: the growth is logical.

By Vladislav Sychevich

## In disregard of sanctions

The GDP growth against the background of restrictive unfriendly measures imposed by the West and negative forecasts about the development of our country is the best answer to the sceptics who predicted a capitulation development scenario for Belarus. True, a weak country would not have survived even one day under such massive and well-organised pressure that is being exerted on Belarus. However, regarding our Republic, even four packages of so-called sanctions are not enough to undermine the model of year-long socio-economic development that has proved its efficiency. All these restrictions, on the contrary, have spurred our industrialists to actively reduce costs and increase their presence in foreign markets. As a result, all industries perfected their figures in the first six months of the year.

The Deputy Economy Minister, Dmitry Yaroshevich, notes, "Belarus' GDP rose by 3.3 percent from January-June 2021 against the same period last year to make Br78.9 (\$30.7bn in equivalent) in current prices. Importantly, it's a qualitative growth on a balanced basis. The recovery affected almost all industries and most of the economy is in the growth zone. The main driver is our industry and, here, the growth is ensured not through the replenishment of warehouses: stocks of finished products are at the lowest level since 2013."

Experts note that the recovering demand in foreign markets was among the prerequisites for high dynamics in the industry. Exports of goods are growing rapidly and the increase in export revenue was registered for all groups of goods — not only oil refining and potassium. Our trucks, agricultural machinery, passenger cars, food products and much more are in demand in foreign markets.

"We have not only maintained stability externally but have also further consolidated our positions," adds Mr. Yaroshevich. "The positive foreign trade balance is several times higher than the same level last year. Positive trends are observed not only in the industry; growing demand has also spurred related areas — such as wholesale trade and cargo transportation. The IT sector demonstrates steady growth, as does the service sector. The catering, hotel and sanatorium business is progressively developing and the decline in retail trade is already a matter of the past."

## Industrial driver of the economy

Economists emphasise that consumer demand is supported by the growth of wages and people's income. Economic growth makes it possible to fulfil the social obligations of the state and increase the level of well-being of the population. All this is due to the success in the industrial development, believes the Head of the Department of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Belarusian State University — Valery Bainev.

He explains, "In difficult and unusual situations — such as, for example, the pandemic, many countries start realising that there are true values. Of course, services are good but a person needs food, clothes and furniture — simply put, ordinary material goods produced by the real sector of the economy. Time has shown that, in difficult periods when people are not up to luxury and



really urgent needs come to the forefront, it is the real sector of the economy that manifests itself as a basis for stabilising the economy and a source of funds for further development. In this sense, Belarus is a wise country. We did not follow the lead of the whole world and did not destroy the real sector of the economy, agriculture, industry. On the contrary, we developed them and attracted investment. In the COVID lockdown situation, most countries literally ruined their economies, while Belarus tried to occupy the sales markets — and succeeded."

Undoubtedly, the industrial sector is a key in the Belarusian economic model. It's also the main export factor since it boasts corresponding potential. The 3.3 percent GDP growth in the first half of the year confirms that our industry is not just coming to life, but has already got on its feet and is developing dynamically.

## Effective model

We asked Svetlana Gorval, a member of the Standing Committee on Economic Policy at the House of Representatives of the National Assembly, to comment on the success of the economy in the first half of the year.

"Indeed, a year ago, the forecasts were not very favourable. Almost no one expected a quick rise. Nevertheless, it is there. The growth of the main

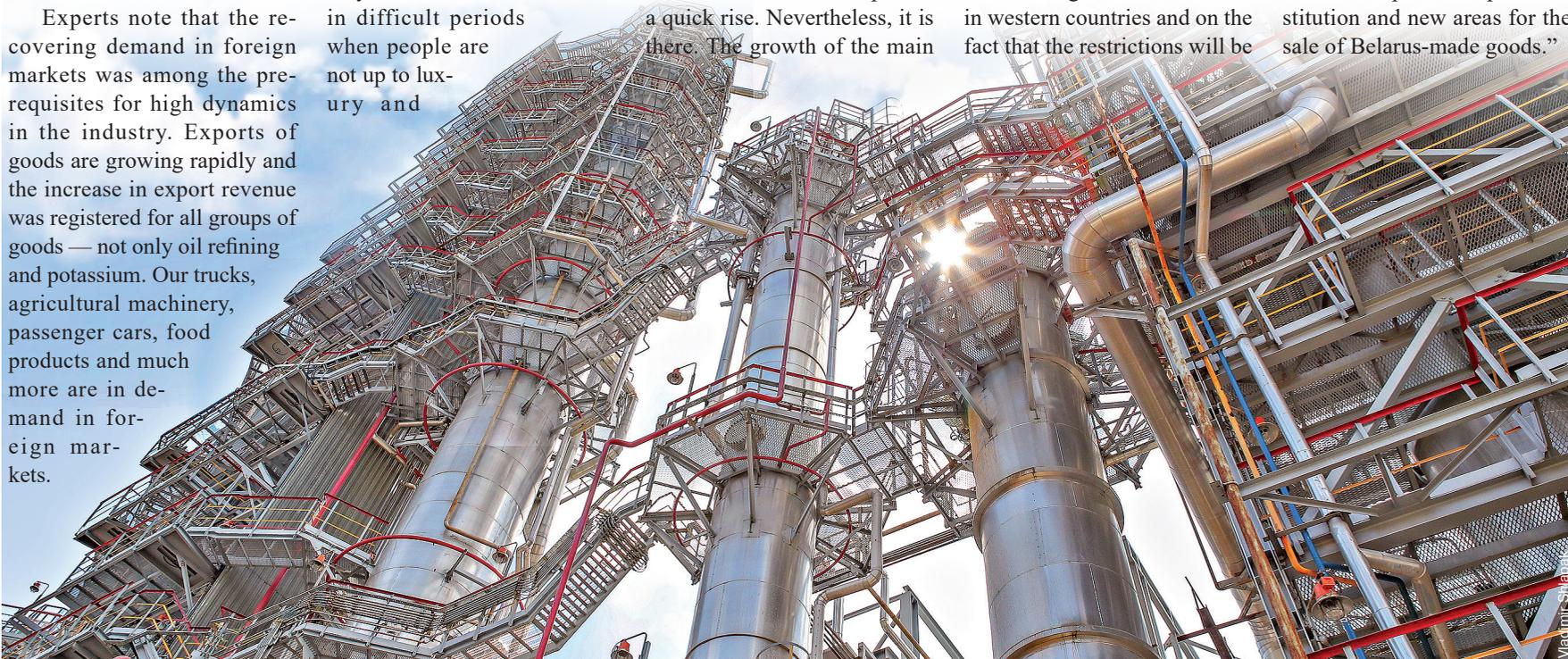
indicator was mainly due to the industrial sector. Of the six most important parameters of the forecast of socio-economic development, four have been fulfilled. Two have not been met: the share of investment in fixed assets in GDP and the consumer price index for socially important goods. In my opinion, the consequences of the pandemic prevented the launch of a new investment cycle. But let me remind you that the Government has adopted a programme of action until 2025. It lists the areas of industry on which the forecast is made: the electrical industry, bioindustry and pharmaceuticals, robotics, wood-working, composite materials. Ideas and directions where it is possible and worth investing have been developed. Let's hope that all this will be implemented in the near future," says Ms. Gorval.

"As for the current topic — sanctions, I would like to note that Belarus has learned to live under restrictions. We have already been under various sanctions for several years. Our country always conducts a balanced foreign policy for the benefit of its people. The package of protective measures has already been developed and partially implemented by the Government. Of course, we are counting on common sense in western countries and on the fact that the restrictions will be

lifted. However, if necessary, we will respond symmetrically. Belarus has always adhered to the model of a socially oriented market economy, which has proven its viability and effectiveness," continues the official.

Ms. Gorval adds, "For the implementation of the socio-economic development programme, the interconnected complex development of all its elements is provided on the basis of compliance with the main criteria. Belarus is developing on the basis of macroeconomic and financial stability, low inflation, foreign economic balance, and a sufficient level of gold and foreign exchange reserves.

The sectoral structure of the industry has been changed, the basis of which is high-tech production and innovative industrial clusters. The active use of the public-private partnership mechanism has enabled us to create a modern infrastructure: high-speed transport highways and a well-developed logistics system. We should not forget that the main wealth of our country is its people. We have created safe and comfortable conditions for living, spiritual and creative growth for people and also boast a developed social infrastructure. Special attention is paid to import substitution and new areas for the sale of Belarus-made goods."



**Patients who were saved by organ transplantation are infinitely grateful to the people who gave them life. Doctors do not disclose donor data, therefore, to honour the memory of their saviours, patients go to church and plant avenues in their memory. There are such alleys in Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. This year, it also appeared here, in Brest. Moreover, a monument to an organ donor was erected in the Republic for the first time. Sculptor and designer Maksim Petrul told us how he created his 'Angel'.**



# Symbol of hope

For the first time, a monument to an organ donor was installed in Belarus: the 'Angel' sculpture was unveiled near the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre of Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology

By Olga Kosyakova

## On the brink

Life does not end with death, and this is the miracle of transplantation, thanks to which the living organ of a deceased donor after transplantation supports the full life of the recipient, who would also have died before the operation. According to experts, one posthumous donor can save seven to eight lives by donating two kidneys, two lungs, liver, heart, pancreas and also the skin and corneas of the eyes.

The 'Angel' has become a symbol of donation in the name of saving lives in our country. It was installed near the new building of the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre of Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology. According to the author, Maksim Petrul, this artwork shows the very fine line on which transplantologists always work.

"For me, transplantation is a new topic. It's amazing how medical technologies have advanced today," says Maksim Petrul. "It's fantastic: doctors give people a new life! Therefore, the angel is also a symbol of faith for those who hope for its continuation. I studied a lot about what an angel means in cultural traditions and art history.



Maksim Petrul

I learned about the angels with which cathedrals are painted. After all, there is a whole angelic hierarchy: cherubim, seraphim... To create a serious work, a number of integral components are required. I think this is how it worked out. Oleg Rummo and Oleg Kalachik are customers with a high level of culture. They turned to me to create a work of art — the image of the 'Angel' as a symbol of faith and memory at the same time about those who donated their organs and passed away, and about those who hope for the continuation of life."

"I wanted to do something that would be associated with eternal life," says Oleg Kalachik, the Deputy Director of the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre of Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology. "This is a transplant angel: it is empty inside, leaving his organs to those who need them."

In addition to artistic plastics, a specific environment was required, as well as an appropriate space for the image to work fully. Architect Vadim Drazhin helped with this.

"Participation in the project is a contribution to the development of art, enrichment of the centre territory,"

*"The monument to donors is very important for us. It is both a memory and a reminder of the importance of donorship in general. It's a sign of gratitude and appreciation to the donor for the chance for a new life. Many thanks to the donor," says Ms. Ilyushchenko.*

Vadim explains. "The support of the architect is very important for a sculptor. Then his work takes on a special resonance. A unique green area was formed here during the construction of the buildings. The platform for the 'Angel' is based on a cross as a symbol of Christianity and medicine. In this case, it is functional. One part of it is a pedestrian link, and the other is a place in front of the sculpture. We added lanterns that create abundant lighting in the evening and preserved trees. The bypass path will enable people to observe the sculpture around the perimeter."

## In contrast

The angel embodied in the sculpture by Maksim Petrul is static, having folded his wings. He does not take off, because someone needs his help. He only has a hint of his face. Inside is a hollow heart as a symbol that the donor has donated his organs in the name of other people.

"An angel is a metaphysical figure. He lives in our system of faith and beliefs, connecting us with something transcendental. On the one hand, this is a devastated image, on the other, an image of hope," explains the sculptor. "These are contradictory concepts, and at the same time they balance each other. The devastated heart glows, and life goes on."

Lyudmila Ilyushchenko from Brest, a member of the Donorship. Dialysis. Transplantation community, had a liver transplanted in 2013. From this moment, says Lyudmila, the donor's life and her own continue in her. Transplantation is an area of faith, hope, sacrifice, and life. This is what the sculpture 'Angel' is about.

"The monument to donors is very important for us. It is both a memory and a reminder of the importance of donorship in general. It's a sign of gratitude and appreciation to the donor for the chance for a new life. Many thanks to the donor," says Ms. Ilyushchenko.

"The struggle between life and death, which was going on with me before the transplant, was replaced with a full life after the operation. Every day I enjoy the sun and even the rain, which I did not notice before."

The famous Belarusian sculptor, Aleksandr Botvinenok, died two and a half years ago. He had kidney problems. He didn't manage to live to the moment when a donor was found. It so happened that Maksim Petrul is now working in his workshop. It was there that, for six months, he created a sculpture dedicated to donors.

"At first, everything was sculpted by hand, then it was cast from bronze, processed and patinated," says the author, reconstructing the course of events. "The sculpture is deliberately made in black and gold — as a kind of contrast between life and death, the divine world and the human world, the past and the present."

Indeed, this is not a memorial to a specific donor who donated their organs. This artistic composition bears many more meanings. It is like a classic literary work — about everything.

Maksim Petrul is known for making graceful, philosophical and extravagant creations that require a particularly sensitive perception. His works are present in collections around the world.

"For a serious examination of works of art, a well-prepared spectator is needed, and I'm glad that Oleg Rummo and Oleg Kalachik — unique specialists in their field — have become such spectators," adds the sculptor.

Nevertheless, the main viewer for whom Maksim creates works, in his words, is the Creator, "I create for him. Every idea is a gift from God. You live with the theme of sculpture, think about it, accumulate material. I looked at the works of colleagues, church artists, and thought about many different things."

As an artist, Maksim puts his personal experiences into his works. While the sculptor was moulding an angel, his aunt died in this hospital from an incurable blood disease. The event exacerbated the problem of understanding life and death.

Being asked about how this job had changed the artist, Maksim Petrul responded, "Each piece is like a journey from which you return as a different person. It affects you and changes you. I think those who encounter my angel will also experience changes in the area of the divine."



Aleksandr Gorbash



The church in the village of Gervaty was built in 1903. A brick factory even had to be opened nearby.

traveling.by

Sharp spires pointing to the heavens, gargoyles and narrow windows directed upwards: this architectural style cannot be confused with any other, even if you understand almost nothing about architecture

By Sofia Arsenyeva

**Relaxing like a king**

Belarus is a country of castles. To be convinced of this, just go to the town of Kossovo in the Brest Region. The reconstruction of the magnificent architectural ensemble of the early 18th century — the palace of the Puslovsky family aristocrats — is being completed here. They usually say that such places are luxurious and obscenely rich. For its construction, Duke Vandalin Puslovsky ordered the best Italian craftsmen. They spent their money with imagination: twelve crenelated towers symbolise the number of months and each of the 132 rooms is completely filled with sunlight for two days a year. And if, on the second floor of the eastern side, you stand on the windowsill and clap your hands, you can hear the vaults ‘singing’. Wonderful!

They say that for protection two hundred years ago, the owners kept a lion, which was released at night to wander through the corridors. Nowadays, anyone can look around the palace without fear for a day trip, a themed evening or even a ball. Dances are arranged here by modern nobles!

**Finding the apostle in the garden**

Almost every Belarusian has a photo set against the background of a luxurious neo-Gothic church in honour of the Holy Trinity in the village of Gervaty. Narrow lancet windows, an abundance of details and a tall spire (61 metres!) made this church one of the most recognisable sights in the west of the country.

It was built in 1903 on the site of a wooden one, which was founded in the distant 15th century. They worked all over the world: the peasants collected thousands of eggs every day for cement while even a brick factory was erected next to Gervaty.

A well-groomed garden gives the place mystery, where statues of the apostles hide among the thujas, bushes and flowers. Not far from the church, there is a 19th century half-timbered water mill. It has not been used for its intended purpose for a long time: there is a cafe inside. Lunch in the interior after a tour of the surroundings will be very pleasant.

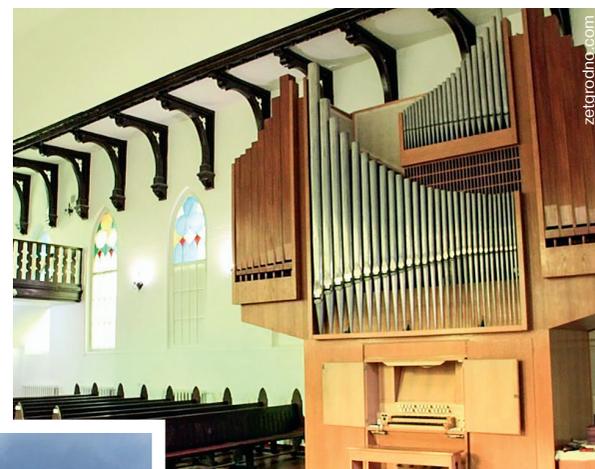
**Visiting the duke**

What do the Moscow Mayor’s Office and the Town Hall in provincial Chechersk have in common? Both were built by Duke Zakhar Chernyshevsky. Before being

# Gothic Belarus



The chambers boast furniture and interior items from the past



The instrument has 2,500 pipes, ensuring a mystical sound!

appointed governor-general of the capital, he ruled the Mogilev and Polotsk lands for ten years, and also personally owned the town of Chechersk. For visits by the imperial family, Chernyshevsky built a great deal on the estate: three churches and a Catholic church, a theatre, a distillery, a glass factory... But the main decoration of the central square was the town hall in the classical style with elements of Russian pseudo-Gothic. The wonderful turrets with spires have survived to this day in their original form.

The interior decoration of the town hall, alas, has not survived. But now there is a local history museum with 16,000 unique exhibits. You can look at the findings from one of the first Palaeolithic sites in Belarus or marvel at the ancient images of



Town Hall in Chechersk

the masters of the Babichi icon-painting school. Local icon painters in the 18th century, with the support of the same Duke Chernyshevsky, adopted the experience of the Italians.

**Distinguishing Rococo from Classicism**

The Poklevsky-Kozell estate in Krasny Bereg (Gomel Region) is often called by connoisseurs ‘a guide to architectural styles’. All styles are mixed here: Alhambra, Romanism, Rococo, Mannerism, Baroque, and Classicism, with Gothic features dominating. Real gargoyles look at passers-by from the scaly roof and the

main entrance greets visitors with open-work stucco moulding and colourful



The Poklevsky-Kozell estate in Krasny Bereg

stained-glass windows. Inside the house, the floors are connected by a wrought-iron staircase. Literally in every room there are either painted or carved ceilings. The chambers are decorated with original furniture from the past, and the winter garden still blooms and smells like it did under the first owners of the estate.

Around the estate there is an English-style park. Here on a hot day it is nice to hide in the shade of trees or wander along the river and not rush anywhere.

**Listening to jazz in the church**

A snow-white miracle, directed upward, lurked in the very centre of Grodno. The history of the only functioning Lutheran church in Belarus began in the 18th century. It was then that the Germans arrived in the city above the Niemen River to work at royal manufactories. The Polish monarch, Stanisław August Poniatowski, personally donated the building of the former tavern to them. On the first floor people dined, on the second they prayed in German.

Later they started a construction project that lasted for more than a hundred years. Only by 1912 did the church acquire a well-defined Gothic appearance — filled with symbols and meanings, such as an ever-flowering, one-altar window. The stained glass ornament is laid out in the form of a Lutheran symbol — a rose with a heart beating inside. And if you look at the ceiling of the temple and figuratively turn it over, you find yourself in a boat on which Jesus Christ appears.

The main decoration of the church is the organ, weighing eight tonnes and boasting 2,500 pipes. Over time — apart from services — concerts have often been held here: not only classical music, but also jazz.

# Arigato, Tokyo!

## Belarusian athletes win seven medals at the Tokyo Olympics

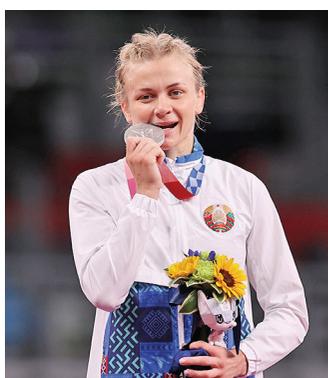
The long-suffering Tokyo Olympics — which were postponed for a year and often expected to be cancelled — took place and ended safely. Yes, the Games were not as usual. Yes, they didn't happen without complaint and accusations. However, we should admit that the organisers did their best to smooth out the rough edges and make the Games as comfortable as possible. In the end, Tokyo coped with the task. The winner was the one who was more worthy of it, who was stronger both physically and psychologically in the moment.



Ivan Litvinovich

By Sergei Kanashits,  
Tatiana Pastushenko

Tokyo 2020 threw in more food for thought than ever before, and while there is clearly no need to draw hasty conclusions: there is something to think about. The finishing spurt, which our athletes made, having won four medals on Friday and Saturday (two silver and two bronze awards), brought the total medal balance to a decent level: seven medals are, of course, not the most outstanding result, but



Iryna Kurachkina

still a reason for optimism.

After the gold medal was claimed by the trampolinist Ivan Litvinovich and the bronze was earned by the high jumper Maksim Nedasekau, Belarusian wrestlers put three medals in the team's medal box at once. Iryna Kurachkina — who at the age of just 16 switched from athletics to wrestling — reached the final in the weight category up to 57kg, where she lost in a confronta-

tion to Risako Kawai of Japan, who has now become a double Olympic champion. Clutching a silver medal in her hand, our athlete said that this was a reward for many years of hard work. However, Mahamedkhabib Kadzimahamedau, silver medalist of the Tokyo Olympics, was not happy with his result. He went to the Games for gold, so he hopes that he can eventually



Maksim Nedasekau

feel the joy of the gold medal. He will without doubt do all he can next time. Moreover, bronze medal of Vanesa Kaladzinskaya bears the golden glow. In the semi-finals, our athlete made a single mistake: she was leading the score, and when there was almost no time remaining, she looked at the scoreboard to see how long she needed to hold out. At this very moment she missed the attack of her rival from China, who left Vanessa without a final. The very next day, Kaladzinskaya took her own, snatching bronze from the US Jacarra Winchester, having carried out a gorgeous capture. You may be surprised, but the statistics of performances at the last Games suggests that the wrestlers are the most stable Belarusian national team. Our wrestlers brought three awards from Tokyo, from Rio de Janeiro they returned with the same number, and this stability is a sign of skill.

The winners of two more medals — earned on the penultimate day of the Olympics — were the women's kayak four consisting of Volha Khudzenka, Maryna Litvinchuk, Marharyta Makhneva and Nadzeya Papok, as well as our 19-year-old gymnast-artist Alina Harnasko. The rowers in the final race almost reached the gold in pouring rain yet finished second. The Belarusian women's four takes medals at the third Olympics in a row which is an amazing result! Alina Harnasko's bronze won in the individual all-around is another result of many years of hard work. The results of the gymnastics in Tokyo turned out to be sensational. For the first time since 1996, the Russians were left without gold in the individual tournament; taken by the Israeli Linoy Ashram. Russian prima Dina Averina was second while her twin sister Arina finished fourth. Their training schedule was hard while the work of coach Irina Leparskaya is an example of strategy and wisdom. After the awards ceremony, Alina Harnasko said, "Every year we came here to Tokyo for training camps to try ourselves in this heat and



Vanesa Kaladzinskaya

humidity. I have been to Japan for the sixth time, if not the seventh. So I was ready for anything. During our previous visits, we kept special diaries, noting our well-being and body's reactions towards acclimatisation. There-

fore, we knew in detail what awaited us and on what days after our arrival." It is impressive, isn't it? So let's repeat: you can't win Olympic medals by accident!

Objectively speaking, Belarus should have had more awards in Tokyo, missing out in kayaking and canoeing, tennis and weightlifting, as well as athletics, pentathlon and swimming. Why were there no awards in shooting, judo? What about table tennis? Rowing? Fencing and track cycling? After all, these are sports with a long history in Belarus. Why have there been no Olympic medals in boxing for twenty years? These questions are seri-



Alina Harnasko

ous ones, requiring thoughtful and detailed answers.

The Ministry of Sports and Tourism has recently started to reformat the entire industry. This is troublesome and slow but must be taken one step at a time. This process should continue, because the Games in Tokyo showed that we have character, prospects, and talented youngsters who have gone through a baptism of fire.

### Goodbye and thank you!

The 32nd Summer Olympic Games ended with a colourful closing ceremony. Yes, like the whole Olympics, it was held without spectators and without additional drive. When summing up the result, IOC President Thomas Bach called on every-

one to gather in Paris in three years. But what about Tokyo? These were truly unprecedented Games. "It is an incredible story.



Volha Khudzenka,  
Maryna Litvinchuk,  
Marharyta Makhneva  
and Nadzeya Papok

I express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the organising committee: no one has held a transferred games before," added Mr. Bach. To the music of Claude Debussy, the Olympic flame was extinguished, this happened when the plinth in the shape of a lotus flower was closed. After that, the inscription on the screens appeared: Arigato (meaning 'thank you' in Japanese). As the organisers noted, this was not only a reference to the 1964 Games in Tokyo (then the word Sayonara, meaning 'goodbye' was projected on the screens), but, above all, grati-



Mahamedkhabib  
Kadzimahamedau

tude to the whole world for the opportunity for the Games to take place.

## Photo of the week



BELTA

The Day of Paratroopers and Special Operations Forces celebrated in Brest

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**On August 12th, 1851**, American businessman and inventor Isaac Merritt Singer received a patent for the world's first household sewing machine (created by him), which was launched into mass production. The Singer Corporation is now a manufacturer of space and military equipment, as well as sewing machines, electrical appliances, engines, furniture and other products.

**August 12th** is International Youth Day, proclaimed in accordance with the resolution of the UN General Assembly of December 17th, 1999, which approved the recommendations of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, August 8th-12th, 1998). It is celebrated annually to remind the world of the role of young people in the development and building of peace.



**On August 13th, 1926**, Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz was born (1926-2016) — Cuban statesman and politician. He was the leader of the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959), the First

Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba (1965-2006), and Chairman of the State Council (1976-2006).



**On August 13th, 1961**, the border between East and West Berlin was closed by the decision of the authorities of the former GDR. The construction of the Berlin Wall began which became a symbol of the division of Germany into two states for many years (being destroyed only on November 9th, 1989).

**August 13th** is International Left Handers Day, proclaimed in 1984 at the initiative of the International Left-Handed Confederation. This day is intended to draw public attention to the problems faced by left-handed people in the right-handed world.



**On August 14th, 1941**, aboard the British battleship Prince of Wales, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter on the general goals of the war against Nazi Germany and on the post-war world order. On September 24th, 1941, at the Inter-Allied Council in London, the

USSR announced its accession to the main provisions of the charter, which created the preconditions for the formation of an anti-Hitler coalition.



**On August 15th, 1981**, the Khoiniki Museum of Local Lore was founded. The exposition is dedicated to the history and culture

of the region. Among the exhibits there are flint stone accessories for work, 11th-13th centuries ceramics, and 17th-18th centuries ceramic items from the excavations of the Khoiniki Castle, alongside materials on the activities of the underground and partisan movement in the Great Patriotic War. Peasant clothes, straw-weaving items, wood carvings, knitting, paintings by local artists, herbarium of plants, stuffed birds and animals of the area are also on show.

**On August 15th, 1991**, in order to preserve unique lowland bogs, reference areas of marsh-meadow and forest lands with a complex of rare and endangered species of plants and animals in the Bereza, Drogichin and Ivanovo districts of the Brest Region, the Sporovsky Biological Reserve of Republican significance was founded.



**August 15th** is Air Force Day in the Republic of Belarus. The holiday is celebrated by employees of the Air Force and Air

Defence Forces. This custom has been going on since 2001, when the two types of troops were united into one unit, the purpose of which is to protect the settlements and military bases of the country from enemy air strikes, as well as — if necessary — to defeat the enemy's troops. Today, the unit includes the Air Force of the Republic of Belarus, anti-aircraft missile troops, radio-technical troops, as well as special troops and services.

**On August 16th, 1956**, according to the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus and the



Council of Ministers of Belarus, the State Literary and Memorial Museum of Yakub Kolas was founded in Minsk. The museum was created in the house where the poet lived after the Great Patriotic War. Its archives contain manuscripts of the poet's works, his correspondence with relatives and friends, lifetime portraits of Yakub Kolas, as well as documents from the personal archive of the classic of Belarusian literature.