



June 22nd
is National
Remembrance
Day of the Victims
of the Great
Patriotic War

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for travelling
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Arina Sobolenko and Victoria Azarenko pose with their trophies

Doubles success

Victoria Azarenko and Arina Sobolenko win the doubles event at a representative tennis tournament — Grass Court Championships Berlin 2021. In the final, the Belarusians saw off Nicole Melichar of the United States and Demi Schuurs of the Netherlands who were seeded first among the doubles — 4:6, 7:5, 10:4, in an hour and 23 minutes. → 11



Being able to protect ourselves

Belarusian pistols and machine guns, cartridges, aircraft missiles and modern armoured vehicles: the Head of State visited the military-industrial complex in the Orsha District

By Yevgeny Kononovich,
Dmitry Umpirovich

The last working week for the President began with a trip to the Vitebsk Region, with the work of the enterprises of the military-industrial complex being the centre of attention of the Head of State. In the Orsha District, Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the Aircraft Repair Plant, got acquainted with the domestic production of small arms and ammunition and clarified their main task,

"Localisation should be developed here. This is the most important thing. Not even new types, but localisation. This is the most important question. We must do our own."

Unique object

This trip continued the conversation started earlier at the Palace of Independence. On June 8th, hearing a report on the state of affairs in the military-industrial complex, the President stressed the importance of developing the country's own production of small arms. This does not in the least contradict our peace-loving policy. It will remain so in the future. But any country, if necessary, must be able to stand up for itself and protect its people. To do this, it is necessary to have enough modern weapons and ammunition for them.

Earlier, on the instructions of the President, Ustye manufacturing and technical cluster was established in the Orsha District. Today it is one of the most closed facilities of the State Authority for Military Industry. Not everything can be shown or detailed.

On arrival, Aleksandr Lukashenko first toured the production premises which house the high-tech production facilities of Kidma Tech OJSC. The Chairman of the State Authority for Military Industry of Belarus, Dmitry Pantus, told the President that the cluster is located on a site of 277 hectares. However, production facilities occupy only one tenth of this area. In the coming years, it is planned to master the entire site.

The President went to the shops of Kidma Tech OJSC, where they are engaged in the development, modernisation, production and testing of weapons of various types and classes.

"The emphasis is on aviation guided missiles of various types and classes," said Dmitry Pantus. "There is a production site for the repair and modernisation of anti-tank guided missiles and a site for the assembly of cartridges of different calibres, as well as a unique laboratory — the only one in Belarus — which is engaged in testing and verification of all types of powders and cartridges that we produce."

Belarusian specialists have already mastered the production of three types of cartridges for pistols and machine guns. Every year, they are capable of producing 20 million cartridges: both combat and hunting, which are in demand not only in the domestic market.

Nothing is impossible

First, the President was shown the workshop for the regulation and repair of aircraft guided missiles, and then innovative small arms. At first, it's hard to believe that this is all domestically produced. In any case, only yesterday it seemed impossible.

Aleksandr Lukashenko believes that it's impossible to

weapons while ammunition is expendable supplies, we must have it."

In this context, the Head of State deemed it necessary to teach the population the basics of handling small arms. Among young people there are many who don't serve in the army and have no idea how to use weapons. The President is convinced that it's essential to focus on them, "Why not teach students and other people to handle weapons, to assemble, strip and fire a gun? People need to know how to handle weapons so that they don't have to learn to do it in the battlefield at difficult times."

for flameless and almost silent shooting.

"It will be impossible to hear it from 50-100m," the company representative

pects for the development of the Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant. Several helicopters are currently being repaired in the workshops of the enter-

FACT!

By Presidential Decree No. 602 dated December 8th, 2009 (as amended by Decree No. 208 dated June 12th, 2017), BSVT — New Technologies LLC (currently Kidma Tech JSC) is classified as an organisation in the defence sector of the economy which is a part of the State Authority for Military Industry. Kidma Tech JSC has three production sites: Minsk, Orsha and Stankovo. The Orsha production unit in the agro-town Ustye of the Orsha District of the Vitebsk Region was transferred to the enterprise from the Armed Forces in 2017.



rest on what has been achieved and insists on the maximum localisation of production. For example, when dealing with the aviation missile, not only should the shell be Belarusian-made, but also control and guidance systems. The same refers to all other weapons. The world is too restless, and external threats are not diminishing.

"Why am I clinging to ammunition and small arms? Who can guarantee that we will not be at war?" the President questioned the Head of the State Authority for Military Industry. "I cannot, no one can.

The world has gone crazy. Wars can erupt in any place at any moment, God forbid it starts here. Our territorial defence has been created and now it needs to be armed. That was the point of creating ammunition production. We'll buy a machine gun, we have lots of automatic

assured the President. "That is, we have an advantage over any aggressor due to the possession of such weapons. A set of modern shooting gadgets significantly increases the firepower of an infantry or reconnaissance unit."

The innovation has already passed tests and was put into service in the Belarusian Army in January of this year.

The President was also shown a Belarusian-made sniper rifle, a Saiga-9 submachine gun, a PV-17 pistol, as well as thermal imaging and optoelectronic sights, and observation devices for armoured vehicles.

Aleksandr Lukashenko greatly appreciated the guided antitank missile 9M114 Shturm which is designed to destroy modern tanks and other armoured vehicles, including enemy air targets. According to experts, the missile cannot be thrown off course thanks to a secure control channel. As a result of the Belarusian upgrade, the missile was fitted with Belarusian components, it became lighter and more controllable.

Helicopters come second

The Head of State was no less interested in the pros-

prise. The area of the plant is now being brought into proper condition. Moreover, in 2023, it is planned to put into operation a new workshop for the repair of parts and assembly of aviation equipment. Availability is 41 percent. Pavel Sluchak, the General Director of the Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant, speaks of this workshop as a production for the 21st century, "Its introduction will enable us to minimise the entire procurement part, ensure full time work for people and create new jobs.

The scale of the project together with the equipment is approximately \$13-14m (in equivalent).

They also talked about the utilisation of the enterprise. "This year we are at capacity. Our traditional markets are Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa and South America. There are a number of countries with contracts under detailed discussion, so we are moving on," stressed Mr. Sluchak.

The future of the Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant, however, should be considered in conjunction with the development of the Orsha airfield, which is just a couple of steps away. The airfield is ready to accept any type of aircraft and this is a definite plus.

Nationwide protection

By Dmitry Umpirovich,
Yevgeny Kononovich

In Shklov, under the leadership of the President, the issue of territorial defence has been discussed. This is actually one of the key topics of national security which is under the personal control of the Head of State. It relates to the most important component of our country's defence capability. The situation in the world is such that no one knows what may happen tomorrow, and people clearly realise this. True, Belarus is a peace-loving country but we should stand up for ourselves if necessary. Aleksandr Lukashenko shared his view,

In the event of a conflict, each neighbourhood, each house, each head of the household, at least, should be able to defend their families, themselves and, of course, the land, the territory where they live. This will be nationwide defence."

What else the Head of State said about territorial defence:

On the right solution

Throughout last year, we experienced first-hand how destructive information, economic and political pressure from the West influenced the worldview of our people and pushed some of them to actually betray their own people. It is always necessary to produce such a response that will be remembered by the enemy for many years. And only nationwide defence — if we all jointly defend our land — is capable of such a response. The decision, taken 20 years ago, to establish territorial defence forces has proved right. I had my concerns about the viability of this decision. Today, we can see that we did the right thing. We needed to do this.

On what has been done

We have done a lot to develop territorial defence. The ways of carrying

out different tasks have been improved. Co-ordination of actions of various enforcement structures has been ensured and the efficiency and sustainability of territorial defence management systems have been enhanced. Officials, from governors to commanders and privates of territorial troops, undergo necessary training. Work is underway to ensure the availability of weapons, hardware and material resources for the needs of territorial defence of cities and regions.

On arming territorial troops

The weapons we have are good in general. We just need to conduct an overall review (which we will be doing during this and next year) — to see whether the ammunition and armaments are in good condition.



DIRECT SPEECH

Viktor Khrenin, Minister of Defence:

It took about 20 years to create an effective system of territorial defence. Today, there is no such area where the appropriate material base has not been created. The most important thing that we have achieved is the creation of an organisational and staff structure, bodies and management tools. We have reached the level where the military and chairmen of regional and district executive committees correctly understand how and what needs to be done. The structure has proven its functionality and efficiency. The most remarkable thing is the attitude of people to these issues. I haven't heard anyone complain or say, "I don't want to, I won't do the tasks." On the contrary, people go willingly, their eyes are full of fire, they understand that they will protect their relatives and friends, their piece of land, and in general — our Republic.

Leonid Zayats, Chairman of the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee:

The Mogilev Region has adequately ensured the formation of territorial defence on its land. In December, we created three territorial defence headquarters: in the Bobruisk, Mogilev and Krichev districts. 500 servicemen were mobilised into three rifle battalions. People treated the mobilisation with understanding and approached it very responsibly. Without grumbling and resentment, they arrived at the assembly points and provided a decent performance of the task: they took up arms, provided protection and defence, participated in the fight against conditional sabotage and reconnaissance groups and armed formations. At the same time, they showed fairly well co-ordinated work. We are very grateful for that.

On training of executives

The overall success of territorial defence depends on how well executives in local governments know the state of things with the training of their subordinates, as well as the tasks and ways to fulfil them. The General Staff, people in charge of the army and the country will help you, we will send you the military that will establish the necessary communication and help you manage the territorial defence troops. We will send one or two people. Heads of district and regional executive committees also need to learn how to fight.

Field tasks

You need to know the sites that you will protect. You should know everyone in person, along with the military

What should territorial defence look like?

commissar; they are all present in your list. We have 500 people in the Shklov District, haven't we? You need to know where they are, so that we don't have to mobilise them over five or six months, but, if necessary, raise the alarm and they will come to you within twenty-four hours. There must be an appropriate strategy. All managers of enterprises where this equipment is concentrated in peacetime should know that it is subject to mobilisation. Conditionally, you should arrive at any time, raise the alarm and ensure all are in place in just three days. The sites that need to be protected should be guarded. Everyone in the country should prepare for this after today's event.

One of the goals of the meeting is to send a signal to the local authorities so that they are ready to mobilise in each zone (we have seven of them), in each district during the period designated by the President. Chairmen of local authorities, together with heads of district and regional military enlistment offices, should be ready — similarly to farmers when they are preparing for a harvesting campaign.

On reorganisation of military enlistment offices

I once received a proposal to put military commissariats under the command of local authorities. At that time, I did not accept the proposal. I was afraid to change the structure and the system. This issue, however, is still on the table, and we can keep on looking into it. The most important thing here is not just to align local military commissariats with the Defence Ministry, but also to ensure the management of local authorities — district and regional executive committees. At the time I was afraid of making things worse with this reorganisation. If there are reasonable and convincing proposals on reorganisation of the military system, we can consider them. The current system, however, has worked quite well so far.

EXERCISES

Command and staff exercises, with the participation of the territorial defence troops, will be held in the near future in the Grodno Region — to continue a series of exercises that have already taken place in the Mogilev Region and are now taking place in the Brest Region. The territorial defence forces are also planned to be involved in the joint Belarusian-Russian 'Zapad-2021' [West-2021] exercises.



OBJECTIVES OF TERRITORIAL DEFENCE:

- making state defence nationwide;
- increasing the capabilities of the military organisation of the state to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country;
- creating conditions for the sustainable functioning of state bodies and organisations, the economy, infrastructure facilities and the life of the country's population in the event of a military threat and in wartime.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TASKS OF TERRITORIAL DEFENCE:

- protection and defence of sites;
- performing separate combat missions together with formations and military units of the Armed Forces in repelling an act of armed aggression;
- fight against paratrooper-sabotage forces and illegal armed groups;
- conducting armed struggle in the territory temporarily occupied by the enemy;
- participation in strengthening the protection of sections of the country's state border;
- participation in the elimination of the consequences of the use of weapons by the enemy;
- participation in the implementation of measures to ensure the maintenance of martial law and other measures for the defence of the country.

FIGURE

The structure of the territorial defence forces includes today 92 districts and seven zones with the corresponding set of troops.



FACT

One of the important tasks for territorial defence is to increase the training and conformity of troops' actions. For this purpose, 50 events were held last year, and this year — 37.



Political turbulence

The topic of the briefing at the National Press Centre was reported to be intriguing. It was announced that representatives of the Aviation Department, the State Border Committee, the Investigative Committee, the Armed Forces and the Foreign Ministry will provide a full picture of the incident with the Athens-Vilnius flight, of which Roman Protasevich was on board. However, several minutes before the start, a new name plate was placed on the briefing participants' table — with the name of Protasevich; immediately after, the man himself came in. He was cheerful, fresh and — as it appeared later — very talkative. Meanwhile, the BBC reporters suddenly changed their minds regarding the communication. A report on the details of the flight — which was of interest to all — was not yet finished when they left the room. Some representatives of the foreign diplomatic corps — invited to the event — also followed them. They saw what they wished to see: no truth is actually needed for them. They have their own — which they are promoting, no matter how stupid it may look.



Fakes instead of evidence

The Director of the Aviation Department of the Belarusian Transport and Communications Ministry, Artyom Sikorsky, recalled that Belarus was the first to make an official statement to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) about the need for an international investigation in order to exclude the politicization of aviation security, as well as in connection with a wave of fake news that quickly filled the minds of even aviation experts. The reaction of the countries of Europe and North America — the ICAO Council members — is truly surprising: by a majority of votes, they removed Belarus' initiative to conduct a transparent investigation and bring to justice the guilty parties from the ICAO Council resolution.

Mr. Sikorsky clarified, "On June 4th only, the ICAO Secretary General notified us about setting up a commission. Surprisingly, they did not inform us either about the composition of the commission or its competences. The visit of the ICAO commission members to Belarus is not under discussion at the moment. We were simply asked to send the materials which, by the way, had been already partially sent to ICAO on May 24th."

That is, Europe — which stands for 'the rule of law' — without waiting for the preliminary results of the ICAO investigation, has flouted the norms of international aviation law, creating instability and unpredictability in world aviation.

These are the main enemies of security, stated Mr. Sikorsky. "That is why we are now observing that the results of the investigation are not needed by anyone — except for Belarus. Generally speaking, what rights can we talk about if we were not allowed to take our citizens away from Europe: we had to fly over neutral waters and work out new fully-fledged operations. We literally ploughed through for our citizens," he said.

The interdepartmental commission cannot complete the investigation without the presence of the data of the negotiations from the aircraft. On June 1st, the department asked Poland (the country of registration of the aircraft) and Ireland (the country of the aircraft operator) to provide objective control data. No response has yet been received. Without this information, it is unclear, for example, why the plane was moving to the border

at a cruising altitude and speed, why it was decided to head to Minsk.

Mr. Sikorsky is convinced,

"In general, regarding this situation, the behaviour of our European colleagues is calling attention to itself. When there are no facts, proofs and airtight arguments, open fakes come into play."

Mr. Sikorsky demonstrated the map, the transcript of the negotiations between the dispatcher and the pilots, the recording of the conversation between the flight manager and Vilnius — debunking the fake that the crew was not allowed to contact the destination.

Air terrorism

The Investigative Committee has opened a criminal case on the fact of a report about the danger (namely, about the bombing of a RyanAir plane en route from Athens to Vilnius). The preliminary investigation bodies are now carrying out all the necessary actions. In general, as noted by the Chairman of the Investi-

gative Committee, Dmitry Gora, the cases of electronic terrorism have become more frequent in recent times,

"Since 2019, about 295 criminal cases have already been initiated on such facts. This year alone, there are 130 criminal cases. Of these, 14 deal with reports on bombs on the Minsk-2 Airport sites and 11 — on aircraft explosives. All these cases are pending."

Mr. Gora stressed that the Investigative Committee is most interested in establishing the truth: to find a person who sent the message through the Proton-Mail anonymous mail service, the localisation of which is determined in the Swiss Confederation. "Therefore, we would be very grateful for proper international co-operation on this issue. Unfortunately, it leaves much to be desired. For example, in January 2020, the Investi-

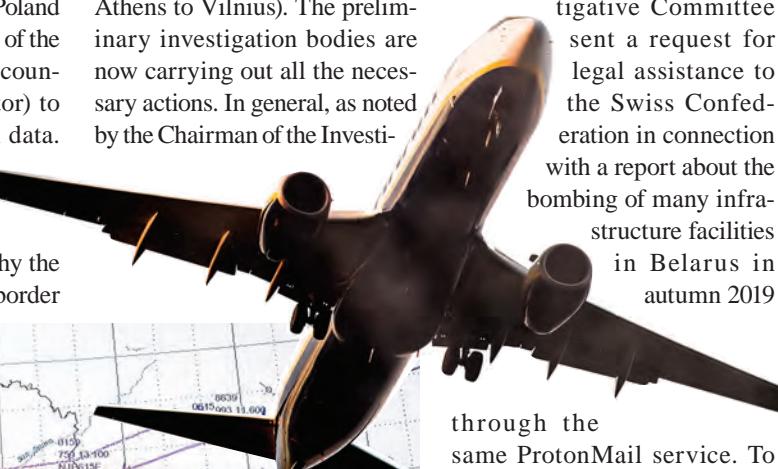
tigative Committee sent a request for legal assistance to the Swiss Confederation in connection with a report about the bombing of many infrastructure facilities in Belarus in autumn 2019

of the Armed Forces of Belarus, Major-General Igor Golub, demonstrated the screenshots showing the position of aircraft in Belarus' airspace. He explained the terms used, "There is a helicopter in the air at the border; it performs border protection tasks. But it is located at a distance of 700 metres from the ground, while the Boeing flies above at a height of more than 10,000 metres. The Boeing began a U-turn when it was two minutes away from Lithuanian airspace. There's no fighter nearby. No one forced it to make a U-turn. Only 20 minutes later, at 13:06, the Boeing is taken with the accompaniment of a MiG-29 fighter. There are 130km between the plane and the fighter. When the Boeing is on pre-landing planning, the distance between them reaches 55km. The MiG-29 did not approach it closer than 55km. This data once again confirms that there was no interception, no U-turn from the border."

The Defence Ministry has carefully studied the flight path of the Boeing and the flight production instructions. The captain's long silence (12-14 minutes) during the flight to the southern section of the state border (the beginning of the turn) remains unclear, as well as the behaviour of the aircraft commander at the airport.

As a military specialist, Mr. Golub has questions for the commander of the aircraft, "Why didn't he start the descent if he was going to land in Vilnius? After all, there was no decline in the indicators. Meanwhile, if the glide path is not reached smoothly, the health of the crew and passengers is put at risk. A barotrauma from a sharp descent is possible."

Another question is why did the crew commander decide to turn from the state border (2 minutes before entering the territory of Lithuania) into the interior of the country, while the Minsk-2 dispatcher gave him only recommendations — not an order?



through the same ProtonMail service. To date, we have not received any response. We hope everything will look different in this situation," he concluded.

There was no interception

Anyone who wants to objectively understand this situation has repeatedly been proved and shown that there was no interception, forced U-turn from the state border and forced landing of the RyanAir plane. However, the topic is so attractive for speculation...

The Chief of the Air Force and Air Defence Command

When there's a desire to talk and when there's an opportunity...

By Dmitry Kryat, Svetlana Isaenok,
Yulia Demeshko

After all, it wasn't the best idea for foreign reporters and diplomats not to wait for the part of the briefing in which Roman Protasevich spoke. They could have learnt much that was interesting. However, there is no doubt that they watched and reviewed the broadcast eagerly...

Protasevich started talking to the journalist cheerfully and with a smile. How else could he respond to a question from not quite the wisest correspondent? The lady-reporter decided to check out a clear case of fake news that had spread across the network: allegedly, on the very first day after his detention, Lukashenko personally broke Protasevich's nose with a punch in the pre-trial detention centre. Protasevich's nose didn't look broken at all. Its 'host' laughed heartily, thanking the lady for a good joke at the beginning of the conversation. The key message was clear:

Don't spread rumours!

Protasevich admitted that he'd learned of the opportunity to participate in the conference two hours before it began. He urged his colleagues from the opposition media not to spread fake news about his health, "I feel fine, I have no complaints. I am ready to pass any independent medical examination. I appeal to my colleagues: no one has ever laid a finger on me. Don't spread rumours."

Roman Protasevich expressed a particular concern about his parents who, according to him, are now in Poland in an information vacuum. He is convinced that his parents are simply being used, while political figures are behind them, "However, I'm sure my parents can safely return home now. Mom, Dad, don't worry, I'm doing great."

The detained young man also told reporters that he wanted to leave the political movement because of his frustration with what was happening, "My leaving the project [the extremist channel] was related to the fact that I saw what processes were taking place, and I was afraid that it would follow the path of 'Khartiya-97' (Charter-97) — starting to gradually lose its audience, getting involved in political games. When was leaving the project and going away from Warsaw, I hoped that I would come to Vilnius, work at the Tikhonovskaya headquarters and meet people who firmly believe in the ideals. At first, I saw many people around me who were like me. However, then the situation began to change. More internal contention began to emerge, more political games and personal ambitions were appearing.

Everything began to turn into personal wrangles. What has been happening since the end of autumn and up to now has left me deeply disappointed. In general, I wanted to leave the Telegram channels and political movements. I wanted to get out of politics, out of these feuds, internal games, because it has always been completely alien to me.

If we talk about Latushko, then even based on the information that I had before I appeared in Belarus, things are not so good with him. One of the employees of the National Anti-Crisis Management (NACM) anonymously sent information about the life of Pal Palych [Pavel Pavlovich Latushko] to the Polish Sejm and that he really lives in an apartment for 3,000 Euros [rent]. His biggest problem is related to the ultimatum from the Polish authorities."

Roman Protasevich explained: Poland and Lithuania are in direct competition on the Belarusian issue. The Lithuanian side has the headquarters of Tikhonovskaya, while official Warsaw has only Latushko. Since he did not show any activity, the 'head' of the NACM was given a specific condition: to become more active, to show support and to hold his own actions until September.

"What has happened of this? Nothing. There is no need to talk about any success here," added Roman Protasevich. "I know what information appears on the Internet. Many people call me virtually a traitor. My conscience is absolutely clear. I don't betray anyone, I don't sell anyone out. I co-operate with the investigation, I help the investigation, I help my country and I intend to help further..."

I have not changed my political views. I can honestly and openly say that I will not be a political supporter of the President. True, I sincerely respect him as a person who was able to withstand the onslaught that began last summer and continues until now. However, I will not be a supporter of the President, I do not say that I've completely switched to the side of the state."

Meaningful afterword

Actually, Protasevich's communication with journalists did not end there. Since the journalists' attention logically turned exclusively to him, while other participants of the briefing provided all the information they had, the media representatives had an opportunity to ask any questions. Roman willingly answered them.

On complaints

Absolutely nothing. I have stated this before and I am ready to repeat it again. I am treated exceptionally well.

Of course, the pre-trial detention centre is a pre-trial detention centre, though at the same time I've experienced the most respectful attitude — especially against the background of all the rumours that were spreading about the state of my health. I was regularly examined by a doctor. I was even offered the 'Sputnik V' vaccine. I think I will be vaccinated soon.

Therefore, there are absolutely no complaints about the conditions of detention, about the attitude towards me.

On financing the extremist channel

Until September, I can assure you, it generated exclusively advertising revenue. The Telegram channel was the largest one; it was the market leader. The cost of advertising positions was appropriate. The money that the channel produced from advertising was more than enough to live and save something. In fact, I left the project in mid-September. I don't know how things developed further, but I think you can pay

A political brain teaser

At the end of the briefing, Roman Protasevich asked the journalists a political riddle — saying that, since the conversation began with a joke, why not end it on the same note. He proposed they identify a person, "It's a person, a woman, a politician. She lives in a European country. She urged us not to pay taxes, not to recognise an illegitimate government and also called on the army to switch sides. She began creating an alternative government and embassies of her country. Who do you think it is?"

The audience pondered. All the parallels obviously fit the well-known Belarusian fugitive who settled in Vilnius. However, there was a catch in the question — and so it turned out. Protasevich spoke about the Austrian Monika Unger who was sent to prison for 14 years in 2019 for an attempted rebellion in her country. This is, of course, a different situation...

attention to one very interesting detail.

Since about last September, advertising has stopped appearing on the channel at all — despite the fact that the editorial office is expanding: video studios and new employees have joined. I'm almost convinced that, since September of last year, grants are being allocated.

Moreover, I know that now there is a tense situation within the team, because many project participants haven't received salaries for 2-3 months.

On Tikhonovskaya

If we talk about these numerous visits — I filmed one of these visits, these are basically short visits that sometimes last a few minutes but are sometimes presented as a serious meeting.

There are no serious discussions going on there — simply an exchange of pleasantries. The people around her are experienced politicians. Naturally, they set vectors and directions in many ways. They dictate statements to her. I can give you a simple example when I was shooting in Athens. There was a moment when Vecherko came up with a text on his mobile phone screen and said: 'Read it now in front of the cameras'. She asked: what? why? 'Read it out — and that's it!' he said. Then this video appeared.

On Kristian Shinkevich

This person is a former employee. He escaped from the project [the extremist channel]. I don't know the exact circumstances, but he wrote about the threats he was receiving when he was there. He wrote that some sort of showdown had begun.

What do you think if a person escapes to Latin America from Poland, how serious are the suspicions that something may happen to him? I'm pretty sure that the safest place for Kristian right now is here, in Belarus.

This is because he is not in any danger here, either in terms of responsibility or serious procedural actions. Because he wasn't even a journalist. However, these threats are coming. I personally know examples when Stepan [Putilo] threatened his friends — allegedly saying: if you start talking, my guys will meet you in a Vilnius' side street. I can name them but I don't think it's appropriate. One of the former employees filed a complaint with one of the supervisory authorities for not paying her salary for three months. The case escalated. The salary was in cash, with no payrolls or registration. Do you think the case was given a go? I don't repaint myself in other colours. I simply want to show that the other side is very dirty.

On service in the Azov battalion

I did not take part in the fighting, I was just a photographer. Everything else is the materials of the investigation.

On feeling safe

The place I'm in now is the safest one for me. I understand perfectly well that many people consider me a traitor or someone like this — although I've not betrayed anyone. Taking into account a group of radicals, including from the Ukrainian side, anything can happen. If I were offered the chance to go free now, I would definitely ask for state protection. Of course, I'm in a pre-trial detention centre but I'm treated normally.

On the life of Belarusian political emigrants

I'd like to tell you an interesting story. I think this will come as a surprise to many. It's about how Belarusian political emigrants live. At one time, while I was living in Vilnius, I had an apartment issue. I settled in a hotel in Vilnius for a month. It is located right next to the airport.

People who allegedly fled for political reasons now live there. I saw them every day, communicated with them. I was surprised that many actually left because they had simply been given a fine. The vast majority of these people have never been threatened with anything.

Moreover, I can say that the political situation in our country is used as a legal reason to leave. To be honest, I don't know what people who run away and just hide behind formal reasons reckon upon.

On discontent within the fugitives' get-together

Interestingly, real discontent is boiling in these circles. They tell each other: if you return, you will definitely go to jail. This fear is being cultivated, although many people were not objectively threatened with anything.

A person (who signalled as part of a street campaign) was given a fine, and he left the country. Sorry but it's just ridiculous. Moreover, this person is going around in a panic that he would be put in jail. No one will put anyone in jail unless a real crime has been committed, if you didn't throw Molotov cocktails or something similar. I know a lot of people would like to come back but they are also afraid of these rumours which are being spread on a large scale. The situation with me is clear but I am accused of particularly serious crimes. I understand why I'm here, in custody, and so on — and I don't understand what threatens these people.



In expectations of an unbiased assessment

Investigative Committee expects answer to query sent to Pavel Durov

"Mass riots happened in Belarus in August 2020. They were accompanied by pogroms, acts of arson and violent actions against law enforcement personnel. Carrying out their duty to protect public order, law enforcement personnel suppressed illegal actions, including by employing special gear. In order to put psychological pressure and other kinds of pressure on law enforcement personnel and representatives of government agencies, a number of Telegram channels were created where personal data (names,

addresses, telephone numbers) of representatives of the specified professions were published. These publications were accompanied by calls for taking violent action against the personnel, their children and close relatives," the Investigative Committee reported.

As a result of detailed analysis and comparison of destructive Telegram channels in the territory of our country with similar (blocked) channels in Russia, their complete similarity was determined with regard to the aggressive rhetoric

and calls for violent actions against citizens of Belarus and their families.

Taking into account the precedent of blocking of such channels in the territory of the Russian Federation, the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Belarus has sent the query to Pavel Durov and his team.



"Bearing in mind that 'the terms of use directly forbid public calls for violence' and that 'the rules apply to all violators regardless of their political views', the Investigative Committee expects Telegram Messenger Inc. to produce an objective evaluation of the query sent to the company," the Committee concluded.

Politization of air space is inadmissible

Ryanair CEO against a ban on use of Belarusian airspace

As announced by Reuters, Ryanair does not support a ban on the use of Belarusian airspace, Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary said.

Speaking in the Transport Select Committee of the UK Parliament, Michael O'Leary said the aviation industry depends in the long term on unrestricted access to all airspace and that it should be restored. He added that, in the long term, politicizing the airspace is not an answer since it will damage the aviation industry and international relations. "The freedom to overfly states is something that we have perhaps taken for granted for the last 70-80 years," Mr. O'Leary said. "We must restore it as quickly as possible."

Earlier, Wizz Air CEO Jozsef Varadi criticised European governments for banning flights over Belarus in response to the forced landing of a passenger plane saying that such moves make aviation 'a toy of politics'.



A Ryanair plane en route from Athens to Vilnius landed at Minsk airport on May 23rd after a bomb alert. After the landing, the information about the bomb was not confirmed.

On June 2nd, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) called on EU states to stop flying in Belarusian airspace due to the incident with the Irish airline Ryanair. It issued a Safety Directive calling on the National Competent Authorities in EASA mem-

ber states to instruct aircraft operators with their principal place of business in their territories, that conducting operations in Belarus airspace is no longer allowed.

On June 4th, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) stated the EASA Safety Directive related to the safety of flights in the Belarusian airspace is politicizing air safety. IATA called for an independent investigation into the Ryanair incident.

Maximum assistance

Belarus helped more than 700 foreigners to obtain exit visas

More than 700 foreign citizens were assisted in obtaining entry visas after the termination of air traffic with Belarus by some EU countries, the Telegram channel of the press secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus, Olga Chemodanova, has announced.

Foreign guests arrived in our country under the visa-free regime and could stay in the Republic for no more than thirty days. Mandatory conditions for the application of the visa-free regime are crossing the checkpoint of the state border of the Republic of Belarus — Minsk National Airport — and returning home by air.

Due to the impossibility of departure by this method for foreigners who arrived in the country on a visa-free basis, the Ministry of Internal Affairs decided to issue exit visas to these citizens so that they could cross the border and return home by land transport.

So, from May 25th to June 13th, more than 700 exit visas were issued: for Lithuanian citi-

zens — 208, for Poles — 126, for German citizens — 84, for Latvians — 56, and for Italians — 32.

The source clarified that employees of the internal affairs bodies are focused on offering maximum assistance to all foreigners who are in such situations.



Based on material of sb.by and belta.by

NEWS IN BRIEF

Workers urge the European Union to stop suppressing the Belarusian economy



Hundreds of relevant applications from businesses in all spheres of the economy were sent to the European Union. Employees of the enterprises call on European officials to abandon the policy that is discriminatory towards Belarusians.

"Those who call for sanctions abroad hide behind the name of Belarusian workers, saying that the workers themselves want to be left without work and wages," noted Mikhail Orda, the Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus. "In reality, we see that people want to have a stable job and wages and live in a peaceful country. However, western politicians don't want to hear this and continue to ignore the opinion of millions of workers. We understand that the threat of new sanctions is nothing more than an attempt to intimidate and punish Belarusians for not giving in to calls to destroy their economy and their country."

A new excursion route opened on Komsomolskoye Lake on June 22nd

The event was dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the planned grand opening of the lake, which was disrupted on June 22nd, 1941, due to the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War.



The guides guarantee that the route is more interesting than the sightseeing tour. The motor boat departs from the pier, which is located next to the stopping point 'Komsomolskoye Lake' on Pobediteley Avenue. The boat offers a view of the entire area of the lake, Victory Park and Troitsky Suburb. The ship also passes near the fountains, which are illuminated at night.

The excursion route was developed by the Minsk Information and Tourism Centre of the Main Department of Sports and Tourism at the Minsk City Executive Committee together with the Belarusian Society of Guides and Escort Interpreters Republican Public Association and partners.

Tests of Belarusian vaccine against coronavirus have begun

The development of a prototype is planned to be completed by autumn while production should be launched in 2022.

Five laboratories of the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology are involved in the creation of a Belarusian vaccine against coronavirus, which is about 50 specialists. They have already decided on the type of vaccine and selected several candidate drug options.



When there is confidence that the drug is safe, immunogenic and does not cause adverse reactions, preclinical trials on different animals will begin. They will be immunised according to the same scheme as when vaccinating people. This will be followed by a three-phase human clinical trial. They will check the effectiveness of the immune response, the toxicity of the vaccine, what allergic reactions it can cause, and other parameters. The third phase is the longest.

BELAZ ships dump trucks to North Macedonia

Four BELAZ-75454 mining dump trucks with a payload capacity of 45 tonnes were shipped to North Macedonia for Sinpeks d.o.o. Bitola. This is the first delivery of BELAZ equipment there.

BELAZ-75454 is equipped with a Scania DC 16 (Stage 4f) 478kW engine. This is a new generation of BELAZ heavy-duty dump trucks with engines that meet modern environmental standards. The dump truck is equipped with an automatic transmission, enabling the driver to select the most optimal traction and speed mode of the dump truck, and an automatic transmission control system, which improves the performance



of the vehicle by maintaining optimal operating modes. Moreover, multi-disc, oil-cooled brakes ensure safe and efficient operation.

In the near future the enterprise plans new supplies and new sales markets.



TV crew try to interview a woman vacuuming a red carpet outside Villa La Grange ahead of the US-Russia summit

Few gains and little easing of tension

The presidents of the US and Russia have praised their talks in Geneva but have made little concrete progress at the first such meeting since 2018

Disagreements were stated, said US President Joe Biden, but not in a hyperbolic way, and he said Russia did not want a new Cold War.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Mr. Biden was an experienced statesman and the two 'spoke the same language'.

These talks were the first meeting between the pair since Mr. Biden took office in January and lasted around three hours — less time than was scheduled. Mr. Biden said they did not

need to spend more time talking and there was now a genuine prospect to improve relations with Russia.

The two sides agreed to begin a dialogue on nuclear arms control. They also said they would return ambassadors to each other's capitals — the envoys were mutually withdrawn for consultations in March, after the US accused Russia of meddling in the 2020 Presidential election. However, there was little sign of agreement on other issues, including cyber-security and Ukraine.

Prior to the summit, expectations for any substantial breakthroughs had been low, with Moscow and Washington both openly cool on the prospects of significant progress. The pair are currently at odds over a range of issues from arms control and cyber-hacking to election interference and Ukraine.

After the summit, Mr. Putin said there was 'no hostility' during the 'constructive' summit and Mr. Biden described the talks as 'positive', as the two leaders held separate press conferences.

Joint lunar station

Russia and China unveil a roadmap for a joint International Lunar Research Station

Chinese and Russian space officials revealed the plans at the Global Space Exploration conference in St. Petersburg, stating that the ILRS has received the interest of a number of countries and organisations. It is planned to be developed concurrently but separate to the United States' Artemis lunar exploration programme.

Wu Yanhua, the Deputy Head of the China National Space Administration, introduced the science objectives, facilities and transportation, lunar surface infrastructure, development phases and co-operation frameworks for the venture.

The first phase of ILRS involves gathering data and verifying high-precision soft-landings across 2021-2025.



The second 'construction' phase consists of two stages (2026-2030, 2031-2035). The first involves technology verifications, sample return, massive cargo delivery and the start of joint operations. The final 'utilisation' phase beyond 2036 would see the start of crewed landings.



Dragon Boat Festival

Various activities are being held throughout China as people celebrate Dragon Boat Festival, or Duanwu Festival

Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month on the Chinese lunar calendar. The Duanwu Festival is a tradition dating back more than 2,000 years and an important annual event in China. The festival supposedly originated as a commemoration of the life and death of Qu Yuan — a poet, statesman, ideologist, diplomat and reformer who lived in the latter part of the so-called warring states period (476 BC — 221 BC).

People traditionally eat Zongzi, a Chinese rice pudding wrapped up with bamboo or reed leaves, during the festival, with many different varieties available.

In Guangyuan City, in southwest China's Sichuan Province, a new type of Zongzi made from wild strawberries was a favourite this year.

The city of Miluo, a city in central China's Hunan Province where Qu Yuan died, is considered the home of the festival and base of dragon boats.

Thirty-two teams from all across the country took part in the 200m boat racing competition there this year, with each team consisting of 12 members.

The dragon boat industry has become an important pillar of the city's economy. Miluo has a complete industrial chain for the production and sale of dragon boats.



Extravagant hats

Royal Ascot is back: royals, celebrities, wacky hats, flamboyant fashion and racehorses

A pink and yellow rose the size of a satellite dish blooms out of the head of one guest. Another is engulfed by a canopy of cascading feathers. Perched on the hairline of one blonde attendee sits an enormous sequined strawberry. These are the zany hats currently on show at the prestigious Royal Ascot 2021, an annual horse racing event and high point of the British social calendar.

Every June, Royal Ascot hosts more than 300,000 visitors at its location in Berkshire, England. First founded by Queen Anne in 1711 — and regularly frequented by members of the royal family ever since — the crown's presence at Royal Ascot has meant those who wish to cheer at the sidelines must adhere to strict sartorial

codes. In recent years, hats — a mandatory accessory required for attendance — have become a conduit for creative expression.

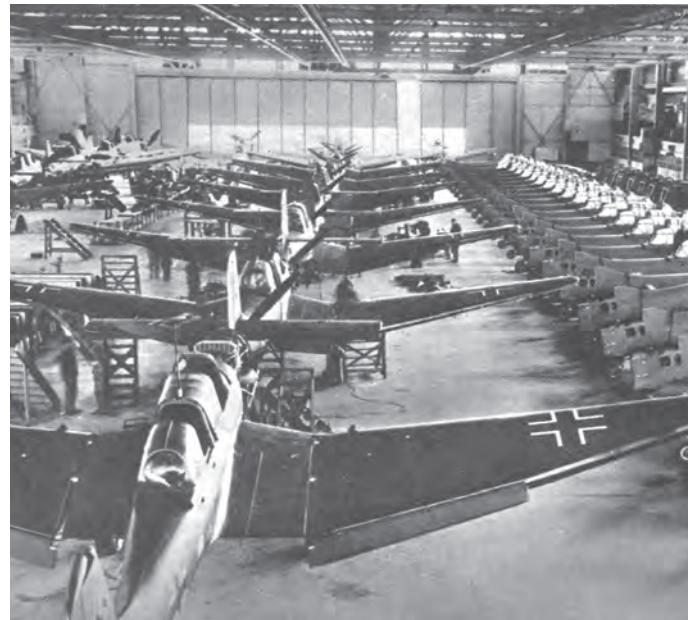
"Hats certainly are the stars of the show at Royal Ascot and guests continue to embrace them as part of the theatre and tradition of the occasion," Sarah Burton, acting head of buying for fashion and beauty at the London department store Fortnum & Mason, said.

This year, Royal Ascot is set to look different as guests pair quirky face-coverings with their outlandish hats, in line with current coronavirus restrictions.

A number of the Royal family were in attendance, including Prince Charles and Camilla, and the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall.

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On the eve of the war, Nazi Germany increased its production of military equipment

Operation Barbarossa

On June 10th, 1941, the Wehrmacht High Command set the final date for the start of the invasion of the USSR — June 22nd. It was announced that Operation Barbarossa was well thought out and the troops were ready to carry out the operation.

By Dmitry Okunev
(gazeta.ru)

Adolf Hitler ordered the preparation of plans for an invasion of the Soviet Union back in July 1940. In September, the Berlin station received from agent Arvid Harnack (his operational pseudonym was ‘Corsican’) information from the High Command of the Armed Forces of Nazi Germany about the preparation of relevant plans. It was indicated that the purpose of the war was to sever from the Soviet Union the territory stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and to establish a government on the occupied lands entirely dependent on Berlin.

On December 18th, 1940, Hitler signed the famous Directive No. 21 — a strategic plan for the war with the USSR, which went down in history as Operation Barbarossa. The operation takes its name from the 12th century Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, who participated in the Third Crusade to the Holy Land. The attack on the USSR, obviously, was given an equally sacred character. The plan set a specific goal: ‘The German armed forces must be ready to smash Soviet Russia in a short campaign even before the war against England is over’.

At a meeting of graduates of military educational institutions, Hitler was outraged that 160 million Russians own 1/6 of the globe, and 90 million Germans ‘huddle on a piece of land’. The Führer called on young officers to put an end to this, in his opinion, injustice.

Playing on the nerves

The concept was based on

the idea ‘to split the front of the main forces of the Russian Army — concentrated in the western part of the country — with fast and deep blows of powerful mobile groupings north and south of the Pripyat River swamps and — using this breakthrough — to destroy the disunited groups of enemy troops’. It was envisaged to destroy the bulk of the Soviet forces west of the Dnieper and Zapadnaya Dvina rivers, preventing them from retreating deep into the USSR.

The approximate date for the completion of military preparations was set: May 15th, 1941. It was emphasised that ‘decisive importance must be attached to ensuring that our intentions to attack are not recognised’.

The Germans paid great attention to the capture of Moscow: ‘The capture of this city means, both politically and economically, a decisive success, not to mention that the Russians will lose the most important railway junction’. The Nazis were going to stop only on the line Arkhangelsk-Volga-Astrakhan.

Only six to eight weeks, in an extreme case, three to four months were given for the total defeat of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, the seizure of Moscow and other key industrial centres in the European part of the USSR.

Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb wrote in his personal notebook on January 31st, 1941: ‘A meeting with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. In spring — Russia!’

In March 1941, the Berlin station received information from the ‘Corsican’ that the attack on the USSR was a settled issue.

Until now, the question of when and to what extent Joseph



Stalin learned about Operation Barbarossa remains unclear. There are several versions of the story. According to one of them, which has gained popularity in our time, the leader of the USSR learnt about the content of Directive No. 21 or its main points even before the New Year. Nevertheless, Stalin either did not believe in Hitler’s intentions — accepting the reports about the preparation of the operation as a game of western intelligence services — or pretended that he was unconcerned about the situation — and made no negative statements so as not to spoil relations with Germany. It is known that, from Japan, information about the accumulation of Wehrmacht units near the Soviet border was reported by Richard Sorge.

In January 1941, US President Franklin Roosevelt received information about Operation Barbarossa.

Towards the end of World War II, Hitler admitted that the start of Operation Barbarossa had been delayed by the campaign to seize and occupy Greece in April 1941. A number of historians are convinced that it was Operation Marita

that confused Stalin about Germany’s plans. He thought that the Germans were preparing to seize the Suez Canal, rather than invade the USSR.

Code word ‘Dortmund’

Already on June 5th, 1941, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel of the Führer Headquarters sent a document on the final alignment of forces for an invasion of the USSR to the commanders of armies and groups.

The plans to mislead the Soviet command about the true intentions of the Nazis were clearly carried out. Parts of the Wehrmacht were transferred by rail in the strictest secrecy so that the maximum number of arriving formations, especially tank and motorised ones, was deployed near the Soviet border immediately before the start of hostilities.

On June 6th, the Wehrmacht High Command issued an ‘order on commissars’, which cancelled all principles of compliance with international conventions in relation to prisoners. In accordance with this document, all political workers of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, members of the All-Un-

ion Communist Party (bolsheviks) and Jewish men were to be shot on the spot.

By June 10th, 1941, the concentration and deployment of contingents under Operation Barbarossa was fully completed. Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, who visited Army Group Centre and spoke with its leadership, wrote praising them: ‘The overall impression is pleasing. The troops are excellent. The preparation of the operation by the headquarters is generally well thought out’.

On June 10th, 1941, the Operations Directorate under the leadership of the Chief of the Operations Division of the General Staff of Army of the Third Reich, Adolf Heusinger, prepared final instructions for the start of Operation Barbarossa. The final date for the start of the war was set: June 22nd, 1941. The very next day the station in Helsinki announced this date. On June 18th and 19th, it was confirmed by the Roman and Berlin stations.

On June 16th, 1941, the ‘Corsican’ reported to Moscow information received from the Luftwaffe officer and Nazi enemy, Harro Schulze-Boysen, about the beginning of the war ‘at any time’.

The report prepared for Stalin and Molotov underlined that the Nazis intended to erase the concept ‘Soviet Union’ from the geographical map, and also noted that Hungary would take an active part in hostilities on the side of Germany.

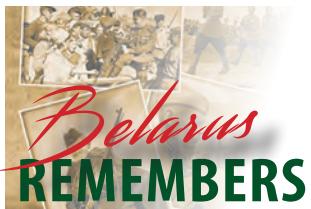
As a number of sources emphasise, Stalin did not believe this information and suggested that one of the chiefs of state security, Vsevolod Merkulov, ‘tell a ‘source’ from the headquarters of German aviation to bugger off’.

On the night of June 20th, the Wehrmacht High Command transferred the code word ‘Dortmund’ to the troops. The following entry was made in the journal: ‘Thus, the beginning of the offensive is finally scheduled for June 22nd. The order has been passed on to all army groups’.

National memory is everlasting



June 22nd is National Remembrance Day of the Victims of the Great Patriotic War. On this date, we recall all those who — at the cost of their lives — fulfilled their duty to protect the Motherland, all those who were killed, were tortured in Nazi captivity or died in the rearguard from hunger and deprivation.



By Valentina Kozlovich

At dawn on June 22nd, 1941, Nazi Germany violated the Nonaggression Pact and began a war against the Soviet Union. The implementation of Operation Barbarossa began. According to it, the German military leadership expected to conduct a blitzkrieg and defeat the USSR with a single blow.

The most powerful group of German troops advanced into the territory of Belarus. Enemy aircraft bombed railway junctions, airfields, as well as Brest, Grodno, Volkovysk, Baranovichi and other Belarusian cities.

On June 22nd, movement near the Soviet border was first noticed by border guards. Then planes with black crosses began flying over their heads and deafening explosions of shells and mines began. The line outposts of border guards were subjected to heavy artillery and mortar-machine-gun fire at 4am. After the first stunning volleys and inevitable momentary confusion, the commanders shouted, "Frontier troops, take your guns!"

Under the cover of artillery, the German fascist troops began to cross the border rivers. From the west bank, boats and rafts with enemy infantry were leaving, while floating tanks began to get out on the east bank. The latter did not slow down but headed to the

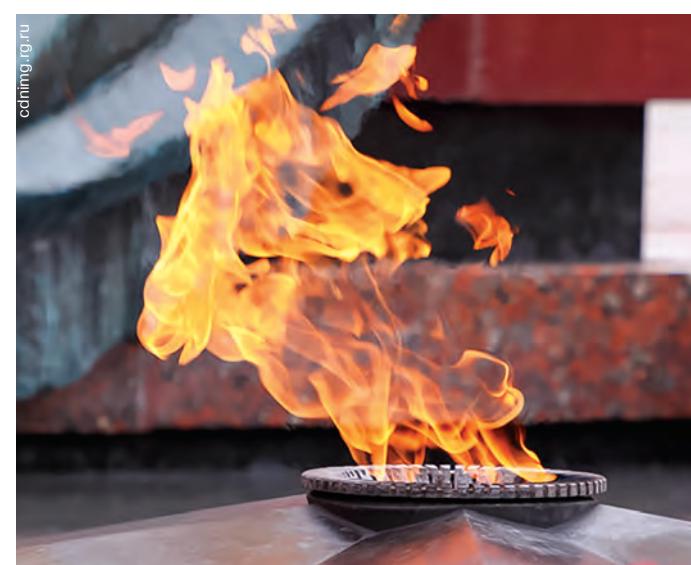
east — approaching the main highways and roads. To destroy the border outposts, special detachments of machine gunners were allocated.

By 10.45am, on June 22nd, the Deputy Chief of the Western Border District, brigade commander P. Kurlykin, reported to the headquarters: 'Fighting is going on all over the front, communication is broken in almost all detachments, border guards are fighting to the end'.

The steadfastness of the border guards and their true heroism violated the plans of the German command, which allocated thirty minutes for the suppression of border outposts, while our border guards



planetbelarus.by



were fighting them off from several hours to several days.

By 9.00am, on June 22nd, the Nazis captured Brest and completely surrounded the fortress but its defenders demonstrated persistent resistance to the invaders. Separate groups of Soviet soldiers continued to fight in the for-



tress until July 20th, 1941.

German troops faced strong resistance also in the south of Brest: on June 22nd, 1941, the Soviet 75th rifle division under the command of General Semen Nedvigin, together with the ships of the Pinsk Military Flotilla, stopped the offensive of the

53rd German army corps near Malorita. Thanks to the skillful actions of the Soviet group in this area, three German divisions, including a tank division, were forced to switch to defensive combat tactics on June 23rd-27th.

Despite the fierce fighting, the Soviet troops failed to stop the enemy's advance and, by late June 22nd, German troops advanced 60-80km into the Baltic States, 40-60km in Belarus, and 10-20km in Ukraine.

In the first days of the war, the troops of the Western front fought heavy defensive battles in Belarus and counterattacked. The Red Army soldiers demonstrated unparalleled courage and selflessness, which led to a complete collapse of the blitzkrieg plans.

During the war, more than 1.3m Belarusians and natives of Belarus fought on the

fronts of the Great Patriotic War. Military formations during the war were commanded by 217 Belarusian generals and admirals and the names of many of our compatriots have become legendary — known on all fronts. In the battles near Moscow, Dovator and Lizyukov, Piotr Sychenko distinguished themselves. In one of the battles on the Kursk Salient, pilot Aleksandr Gorovets shot down 9 enemy aircraft, while Zinaida Tusnolobova-Marchenko carried 128 wounded soldiers from the battlefield. Piotr Kupriyanov closed a bunker embrasure with his body in a battle for the liberation of Latvia. He was the youngest of five sons of Anastasia Kupriyanova; all of whom died during the Great Patriotic War.

In this war, Belarus lost every third resident and the memory of them will live forever.

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Around Belarus with children

Family vacations in Belarus are very popular. There are many places for entertainment where parents — like their children — will find it interesting and not boring. We invite you to plunge into the world of childhood and have a great time with your offspring!

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Going down in history

Everything flows, everything changes... and only the Belovezhskaya Pushcha oaks have stood in their place for more than one hundred years! The oldest relict forest in Europe is an ideal place for families with children, offering open-air cages with handsome aurochs and red deer, endless cycling routes through strawberry meadows and pine forests, as well as walking excursions on a narrow-gauge railway from the early 20th century. In summer, children can get to see Father Frost without queueing. In the warm season, he changes his warm jacket for sunglasses, but is still ready to fulfil cherished desires.

Teenagers will be interested in the recently opened archaeological museum: to look at the meticulously recreated settlements of the first millennium BC or to get acquainted with the life of the early Middle Ages in the quaint dwellings of their ancestors.

It is also better to choose Pushcha places for spending the night: on the reserve there are several comfortable hotel complexes while there are numerous agro-estates for every taste and budget in the district.

Where: Brest Region, Kamenets District.

How much: a three-day tour with accommodation, meals, a visit to the pool and excursions will cost a family (two adults and two children) about \$180 (in equivalent).

Taking a ride on an armoured train

Let's put aside toy tanks and PlayStation, as we go to the largest site with military equipment in Belarus: Stalin's Line Historical and Cultural Complex. You can't find better scenery to play war: to hide in pillboxes and trenches, to ride tanks or an armoured train, and even give a burst from an empty machine gun. To fully immerse oneself in the atmosphere of the place, it is worth taking an excursion, since experienced specialists know how to correctly build a dialogue with young visitors and focus their perceptions of what they see.

On holidays, be sure to visit a realistic reconstruction of the events of the First World War or the Great Patriotic War. Fire, explosions, the roar of engines and soldiers falling on the battlefield are by no means an impressive



Sula village, Stolbtsy District, Minsk District



In summer, Father Frost can hardly be recognised. However, he is ready to make wishes come true even when dressed in such a stylish outfit.

sight, but just another reminder that there is nothing worse than war.

Where: Minsk Region, 20km from the capital in the direction of Molodechno.

How much: an adult ticket is about \$6, a child ticket is about \$3.

Experiencing puppy delight

In the Glebovka Biological Reserve, near Minsk, it is possible to plunge into a Siberian fairy tale even in the midst of hot summer. In the thickest of coniferous forests, there is a huge family of friendly and loyal huskies. Puppy delight is guaranteed for everyone! You can play and take pictures with fluffy blue-eyed dogs, stroke them without stopping, or even harness them for a breezy ride.

The beauty of this breed is that, like children, they are ready to jump, run and have fun all day long. This means that no kid will get bored. Moreover, adults are unlikely to resist taking a selfie with these cute creatures. At the same time, there are no age restrictions for visiting the kennel: dogs easily make friends with strangers and are ready to trust new people from the first moments.

Where: Minsk District, Snezhnaya Zavetsya Husky Park.

How much: an adult ticket is about \$12, a child ticket is \$6.



Chelyuskintsev Culture and Recreation Park



Snezhnaya Zavetsya Husky Park, Minsk District

Mastering 'Super-8'

A favourite place for Minsk families with children is the Chelyuskintsev Culture and Recreation Park. Opened back in the 1930s, it still holds the brand in terms of entertainment. On the west side there is an ever-blooming and fragrant botanical garden. People come here not only to admire the outlandish plants, but also for the fashionable city festivals — from gastronomic to music and light events. In the heart of the park, there are numerous attractions, shops with snacks, and playgrounds. There is always a queue for the legendary 'Super-8' slides, which went down in history thanks to the song by the Leprikonsy band. Yes, *Hali-Gali* is about Chelyuskintsev Park.

If you don't plan to soar higher than the fir trees, we advise you to look at the Children's Railway, located just east of the park. Despite the name, everything is real here: diesel locomotives with wagons, traffic rules, rails and sleepers. Children act as drivers, guides, station masters and, of course, passengers. This 'piece of iron' differs from a large highway only in its track width and track length (4.5km) while trains run only on weekends.

Where: Minsk, Park Chelyuskintsev

metro station.

How much: tickets for attractions — from \$1 to \$3.

Taking an oar on a Viking boat

In the wake of the popularity of historical series, it's worth stopping in the town of Sula. A fully-fledged historical town with a market, a town hall, a mill and a tavern has grown on the site of the 18th century manor. Moreover, there are also settlement sites of ancient people and a pantheon of pagan gods. Here you can also walk around the Gothic castle, look into the pottery workshops, the smithy and the witch's house, and then sit in a wooden boat, grab the oars and... sail from the Varangians to the Greeks! The interactive history park is adored by children and adults alike. Meanwhile, among the numerous locations from the past there is a real distillery lurking which offers the opportunity to taste the local 'medovukha' (a honey-based alcoholic drink) served with dishes of Belarusian cuisine. It is also pleasant to zip through the vast area in a chaise.

Where: Minsk Region, Stolbtsy District, Sula village.

How much: an adult ticket is about \$6, a child ticket is \$4.

Dreams come true

Boxer Vitaly Bondarenko makes it to his first Olympics at the age of 35

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Vitaly Bondarenko has won a place at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. As a very young athlete, he tried to make it to Beijing but lost at the World Championship and didn't participate in the European qualification. In a fight for a place in London, he lost to a boxer from England. Moreover, when he failed to join the list of the Rio de Janeiro Games participants, he was going to give up boxing. However, the sportsman decided to carry on and, at the age of 35, he made it to the tournament which has become new in his long and eventful career.

Was qualifying for the Tokyo Games your last chance to win qualification for the Olympics?

Yes. After the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, I seriously wanted to quit sport. My coach Stanislav Glushenkov, who died not long ago, told me, "Take a break for a month, and then we'll talk." Some time passed, and we decided to go through another cycle which stretched for five years. When it became known that the Tokyo Games were being postponed for a year, I had no thought of leaving. I started qualifying for this Olympics last year, at a qualifying tournament in London which was stopped due to the pandemic. I won one fight there... How was it possible to stop halfway? This is not for me. I always go to the end and try to finish what I started.

How did you spend the year when there were almost no competitions due to the coronavirus pandemic?

I was preoccupied with my

self and worked with my coach on an individual programme. It was difficult to have no competitions since combat practice is necessary. However, I quickly regained my competitive mode. In addition, shortly before the Olympic qualification, I participated in a tournament in St. Petersburg and had three fights there.

Did the fact that you had to get to Paris via Kiev, with an eight-hour bus ride and a flight, affect your condition at the qualifying tournament?

The road was exhausting. I felt tired but, fortunately, we arrived in Paris a couple of days before the tournament. We had time to recover. Some teams arrived just half a day before the start of the competition. If we were in such a situation, for example, I would not have had time to recover.

What were your emotions when you realised that you had won a place?

They went off the scale. They raised my hand — and that's all, I don't remember anything else. Later, while looking on the Internet, I saw I was shouting with joy... Those were real emotions. This is the only tournament I haven't been to yet. Of course, I would like to have all the major events in my career — not only world and European championships, but also the Olympics. I want to feel the atmosphere of these competitions.

Did you follow the previous Olympic Games, which you failed to qualify for?

For the Rio Olympics, I was thinking about retiring. I tried to relax psychologically, so I did not watch the tournament, so

as not to pressure myself, not to blame myself for not being able to get through to it.

Who will be the most challenging opponents in Tokyo?

I already know most of them, but not all: a couple more boxers will join under the ranking system. I never single out the main rivals. I believe that every athlete who gets to the Olympic Games is already a serious competitor who will be dangerous in some ways. True, there are world, European and Asian champions but — in the ring — we all are the same. A single blow can decide the outcome of a fight. I have nothing to lose in Tokyo.



REUTERS

We communicated on the Internet even when I was in Paris. Of course, he is very happy, and this is also a great achievement for him. As a children's coach, he probably did not think that his pupil would grow up and get to the Olympics. He noticed us in a yard. We were hooligans and guys like us were taken to boxing in the first place. He invited us to train — saying that we should present. My wife, by the way, always watches my fights and is very worried. The children are also interested.

Are they going into the sport?

My eldest daughter was engaged in rhythmic gymnastics, but the doctors did not recommend she continue. The middle one also tried this sport, but at some point did not want to continue. I did not insist: I do not want to feel guilty later that she made the wrong choice, so let her be interested in what matters to her. My son is only three years old. When he grows up, he will decide what he wants to do. Whatever he chooses, I will teach him boxing: I believe that every boy should know some style of martial arts. It doesn't matter if it's boxing, wrestling or judo.

Have you thought about what to do after you finish your career?

I wish so much to be a coach. I want to work with children — training them and seeing how they are progressing. I'd wish to look at the path that I have passed — but from the other side. I think it will be very interesting. After all, a coach should not only train: he should also educate an athlete. Therefore, ideally, I would like to be engaged not in any particular stage of training, but to take athletes and go with them from the beginning to the top.



Alexey Stolyarov

Vitaly Bondarenko with his son

Where do you plan to train during the final stage of preparations for the Games?

In Vladivostok. First of all, it is closer to Japan, and it will be possible to acclimatise. Secondly, the Russian team will also be preparing there; we plan to prepare for the tournament jointly.

How did your first coach, Aleksei Marguzh from Ostrovs, take the news that you made it to the Olympics?

better show our skills in the gym rather than on the street. Aleksei Marguzh repeatedly said that he always knew that I would be good, but I'm very grateful to him for seeing my capabilities and not letting me to give up boxing.

You have a large family, three children... Did they support your desire to continue your career?

My family is the most important support; it's always

The caravan leaves for Gobi

Belarusian team to partake in the Silk Way international rally



Sergei Vyazovich

By Tatiana Khoroshilova

The Minsk Automobile Works team — MAZ-SPORT auto — will take part in the Silk Way Rally which starts in Omsk on July 1st.

A difficult and exciting route with a length of five and a half thousand kilometres will lead the racers through the forests of Siberia and the Altai Mountains to Mongolia. During the rally, the Belarusian team will carry out engine diagnostics for engine oil in the G-Energy mobile laboratory — the technical partner of the races.

The MAZ-SPORTauto team was established in 2010. To create a sports car, the MAZ-5309 se-

rial four-wheel drive truck was taken as a basis. The machine was assembled in a short time at the facilities of the MAZ experimental workshop. In addition, a model of the first sports truck was installed in the Zubrenok children's summer camp.

Since 2016, the team has been led by Sergei Vyazovich, who is also the pilot of the main crew. Sergei is a cult hero for both children and adults, a participant of such international rally-raids as Dakar and the Silk Way.

Sergei Vyazovich took second and third places with the team at the Dakar in 2018 and 2020, and won the Morocco Desert Challenge in 2019. Since it was formed, the MAZ-SPORTauto team has participated in 37 national and international races.

On the eve of the races, the correspondent inquired about the mood of the riders:

— The mood is a fighting one! The eleventh stage of the Silk Way Rally has the status of stages of two of the world's most prestigious rallies: the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies and the FIM Cross-Country Rallies World Championship (an international rally raid competition for motorbikes and quads). Before Omsk there will be a pre-rally across Russia. The race itself will take place from July 1st-11th, connecting Russia and Mongolia and passing along the route Omsk — Novosibirsk — Barnaul — Gorno-Altaisk — Ulgii — Khovd — Altai — Bayankhongor — Gobi Desert — Ulan Bator.



Doubles success

(Continuation. The beginning is on page 1)

Overall, the match was equal regarding such key indicators as winners (22:23) and unforced errors (13:9), the purely Belarusian pair were perhaps slightly more inconsistent. However, the tremendous experience of Sobolenko and Azarenko — who significantly improved their performance in the decisive moments of the second and third sets — enabled the representatives of the Belarusian tennis school to capture the title.

There was only one break in the first set — made by the opponents who took Azarenko's serve in the seventh game. The second set — like the first — actually worked to the advantage of the servers over the returners. However, even here, the fans could see one break: the Belarusian duo showed their mettle — snatching a serve in the 12th game. The result inspired the Belarusians and they won the third set — held in line with the rules of the championship tie-break — with great confidence.

On the way to the final, Victoria Azarenko and Arina Sobolenko beat the Czech duo of Karolina Muchova and Karolina Pliskova (6:1, 6:3), the Croatian-American pair of Petra Martic and Shelby Rogers (6:3, 6:4), and Sharon Fichman of Canada and Giuliana Olmos of Mexico (7:5, 3:6, 10:6).

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CALENDAR

The Minsk Times

Thursday, June 24, 2021

Photo of the week



Bright summer colours

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On June 24th, 1941
— 80 years ago — the poems of the poet V. Lebedev-Kumach, entitled *The Sacred War*, were published simultaneously in the newspapers *Izvestiya* and *Krasnaya Zvezda*. A. Aleksandrov wrote the music for them. A few days later, *The Sacred War*, a song which later became legendary, was performed in Moscow, at Belorussky Railway Station — for the soldiers leaving for the front.



On June 24th, 1941
— 80 years ago — the Bobruisk death camp (N 131) began to operate — a place of the mass destruction of Soviet prisoners of war and civilians by the Nazi invaders during the Great Patriotic War. It operated from the summer of 1941 to the end of June 1944 on the site of the Bobruisk fortress. In December 1941, it housed about 60,000 people, of which over 20,000 were in the open air. By August 1942, about 40,000 people were killed in the camp from hunger, cold, disease; by January 1944 — all the prisoners of war had been killed. At the end of June 1944, the Red Army released 5,000 surviving civilian prisoners.

June 25th marks 860 years since the creation of the unique monument of ancient Belarusian applied art — the Cross of St.

Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya — by the Polotsk master, Lazar Bogsha in 1161. In 1928, the relic was transported from Polotsk to Minsk, and then to Mogilev, as they were going to move the capital of Belarus there. At the beginning of 1941, during the battle for Mogilev, the cross disappeared and its trail was lost. In 1997, the Brest jeweller N. Kuzmich made a new cross in the image and likeness of the lost shrine. A copy of the Cross of St. Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya took its place in the Exaltation of the Holy Cross Cathedral at the Convent of the Saviour and St. Yevfrosiniya in Polotsk.



On June 25th, 1991, a branch of the Maksim Bogdanovich Literary Museum — Belarusian Khatka — opened in Minsk. The exposition was located in the house where the classical writer of Belarusian literature,

Maksim Bogdanovich, lived from October 1916 to February 1917. The branch received the name Belarusian Khatka to honour the club of the

same name of the intelligentsia, in which the poet and his friends were active participants. The exposition of the branch is dedicated to the Minsk period in the life of the classic, as well as the literary and social movement at the beginning of the 20th century in Minsk.

June 25th is Day of Inventors and Innovators in the Republic of Belarus, celebrated on the last Saturday of June. This is a holiday for people of different professions and specialties who boast out-of-the-box thinking, courage and creative energy, thus driving fundamental science, economics and manufacturing forward. Their inventions make life easier, help make a technical revolution and transform the world.



On June 26th, 1941, Soviet pilot Nikolai Gastello — Belarusian by origin — was killed. During the bombardment of an enemy tank column on the Molodechno-Radoshkovichi road, as a squadron commander, together with the crew members, he sent the plane engulfed in flames (the gas tank was damaged) at the accumulation of enemy tanks, cars and gas tanks, which exploded together with the plane. For this feat, Nikolai Gastello was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.



June 27th is Youth Day in the Republic of Belarus, celebrated on the last Sunday in June. This is a holiday of creativity and inspiration, energy and enthusiasm, knowledge and self-affirmation, love

and romance. In Belarus, youth policy has long been one of the priorities in the activities of the state. In the last few years alone, many youth programmes and projects have been implemented.



On June 28th, 1946 — 75 years ago — the Gorky Automobile Plant assembled the first USSR's first post-war serial passenger car, the GAZ-M-20 'Pobeda' which also became a symbol of the post-war revival of the country. From the very beginning of the design of the future car, the official name 'Pobeda' (Victory) was given to it to honour the imminent Victory of the Soviet people over Nazi Germany. More than 240,000 cars were produced by May 31st, 1958.



On June 28th, 1941 — 80 years ago — the three-year occupation of the capital of Belarus — Minsk — began. In the first six months of the war alone, the city was 85 percent destroyed. Minsk was liberated by Soviet troops on July 3rd, 1944. 37,000 people remained in the city out of the pre-war total of almost 270,000.

